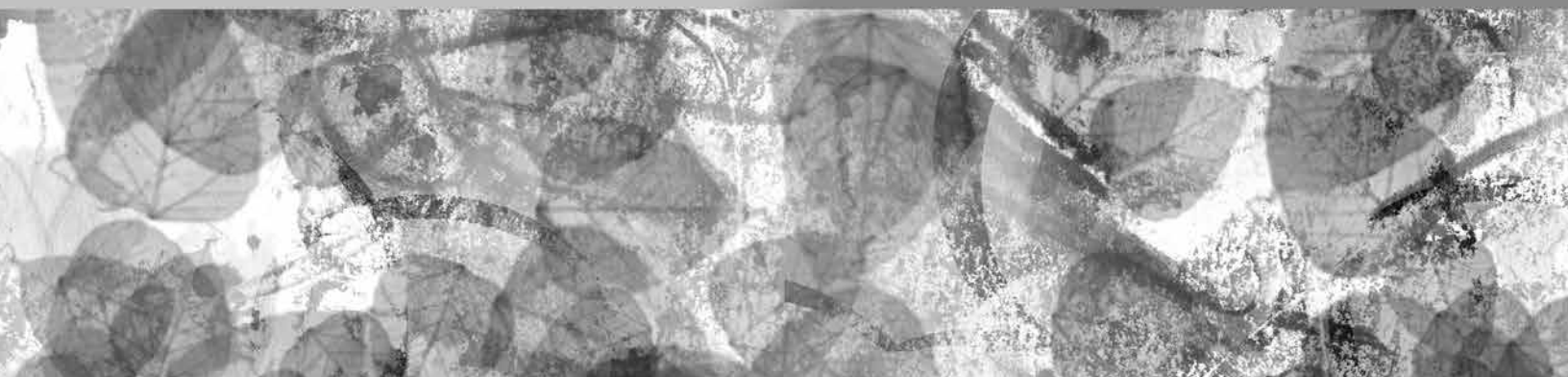


A black and white photograph of several lavender flower spikes. The flowers are small and numerous, clustered along the stems. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

WOMEN'S
MENTAL HEALTH
Training

THINKING WELL,
Living Well



Prepared and Published by the Women's Ministries Department of the General Conference of
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“

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:2

foreword

Dear Reader: The material you are reading is on a topic that has been on our minds and hearts for many years. Within Christian circles, mental health is a topic rarely discussed. Many in our churches suffer with various mental health problems, but do so in secret. Often families are ashamed to speak about it if a family member suffers from a mental health problem, and those with such problems may be ashamed to seek help. The time has come for us as a church to recognize that there are those in our church family who need help. They cry silently, live in pain and shame, and sometimes leave the church because they feel God has forsaken them.

Solomon writes, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute” Proverbs 31:8 NIV. These words have guided many of the initiatives General Conference Women’s Ministries has addressed, such as abuse, illiteracy, poverty, women’s health, women’s education, and now women’s mental health.

This series of ten seminars is meant to educate and also to bring to the forefront a vital topic. Our prayer is that God will give us hearts of compassion and love for those in need of help, understanding as we study, and strength to speak up for those He brings into our lives who need our care and concern. We pray for wisdom to help those with mental health problems find professionals who can help them and medications that can help remove the darkness of mental health problems, opening the door for the sunlight—and the Sonlight—to shine into their lives.

Let us do our part by learning well, by sharing lovingly, and by praying faithfully for all who need our care to draw them to a loving Lord and Savior.



General Conference Women’s Ministries Department



Message from General Conference Health Ministries

Around the world, mental health disorders are increasing, rapidly becoming the number one cause of disability and illness. This increase is fuelled by ignorance and stigmatization. The emerging devastation is aggravated by the real, but mostly denied, scourge of domestic violence and spouse abuse.

It is both exciting and refreshing to see this much-needed, intentional and professionally prepared resource launched. The purpose is not only to educate and inform women about emotional and mental health, but also to empower them to live life to the full.

Experts from many disciplines give a broad understanding of mental health, followed by a clear description of the mind-body connection. Health is not only physical; we are wholistic beings created in God's image to enjoy physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. Our physical, emotional, spiritual and social interactions are inextricably linked. The material in these seminars helps us grasp this important connection.

Depression is very common, but often those who suffer from it are in denial, as are their families. In order to overcome a problem, one must recognize its existence. One can then seek a solution. And yes, there is hope beyond depression!

These seminars sensitively address the importance of recognizing and working through past hurts. Forgiveness—both giving and receiving it—plays a key role in the healing process, especially in recovery from abusive and destructive relationships. These processes are comprehensively covered, giving hope for a more meaningful life.

Valuable health information encourages a lifestyle that will promote health of body, mind and spirit. This entails better eating and regular exercise, adequate sleep, drinking pure water, and avoiding tobacco and alcohol. Emphasis is placed on the importance of healthy relationships with others and importantly, also with God. Blend all these



with a good helping of faith and optimism, and by God's amazing grace, the new you emerges!

I commend Heather-Dawn Small and Raquel Arrais for compiling this timely resource. The comprehensive and sensitive treatment will make a tremendous difference in the lives of women and their families in both the Church and the communities we serve around the world. Their work points our gaze heavenward, confirming the promise from God's word: "You will keep him [her] in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he [she] trusts in You." Isaiah 26:3 NKJV

Peter N. Landless,
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Director, Health Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Executive Director, International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug
Dependency (ICPA)

authors



Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson

Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D. (Brown University) is a professor of Spanish Language and Literature at La Sierra University. Her field of interest is religion and literature. Friends have called her a “closet theologian” for her love of studying religious and theological themes in Spanish literature. Along with her scholarly publications and numerous articles in Adventist journals, she has been presenting a seminar entitled *I Forgive You, But...* for over 30 years in 15 continental states, Hawaii, Bermuda, Central and South America, Europe, Australia, and Tahiti. Her book by the same title was published in 2007 and has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, French, and German. Professor Morales-Gudmundsson is married to Dr. Reynir Gudmundsson, retired professor of Vocal Studies. The Gudmundssons have one daughter, Carmen Gudmundsson-Landry, married to James Landry-Carroll, and two young granddaughters, Juliana Noëlle and Soffia Elena. Dr. Morales-Gudmundsson can be reached at lgudmundsson04@gmail.com



Elsie Staple

MIHPE, MSc, PG, DipHE, RMN, RHV, RM, RN

Elsie is presently Director of the Health Ministries and Community Ministries Departments of the South England Conference.

Previous to her appointment Elsie was a Lecturer of Nursing and Midwifery at Kings College London where she taught both pre- and post-registration nurses.

Her career spanned all the major disciplines of nursing but it was after completing her Midwifery that she got involved in health promotion. This encouraged her to pursue a Master's Degree in Health Promotion (now Public Health), at East London University. She is also a member of the Institute of Health Promotion and Education (MIHPE).

Elsie is also involved in her local community and is a member of Brent Local Involvement Networks (Brent Links) as well as the Public and Patient Advisory Group for London. Her family consists of Eldon, her husband who supports her in her ministry, 3 children and 8 grandchildren.



Katia Garcia Reinert

MSN, CRNP, FNP-BC, PHCNS-BC, FCN

Katia Reinert is a Family Nurse Practitioner and Public Health Clinical Nurse Specialist with training in depression treatment and the integration of faith and health. Prior to accepting the call to serve as the Health Ministry Director for the Adventist church in North America she was the Health Ministry Clinical Supervisor and Faith Community Nurse Coordinator for Adventist HealthCare. She also has practiced internal medicine as a Family Nurse Practitioner in Takoma Park, Maryland, diagnosing and treating a culturally diverse patient population.

Ms. Reinert holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Washington Adventist University, and a Master of Science in Nursing from Catholic University of America, with focus in public health and the treatment of vulnerable populations. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Nursing at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and an NIH/NICHD pre-doctoral research fellow in Interdisciplinary Research on Violence in the Family.

Ms. Reinert served in the nursing profession at Washington Adventist Hospital for 15 years as a critical care nurse, occupational health nurse practitioner, Faith Community Nursing coordinator and Health Ministry Clinical Supervisor for Adventist HealthCare. In her last role she was involved in medical-religious partnerships mentoring, coordinating and teaching the Faith Community Nursing and Health Ministry Team Building training for health professionals and lay ministers.

Ms. Reinert also serves as the Director for Adventist Recovery Ministries for North America and is passionate about assisting people in Recovery. She has a special interest in Lifestyle and Preventive Medicine in the treatment of physical and mental/emotional disorders. She is frequently asked to do health presentations for women's groups and congregations in the US and abroad. She has a passion for global health and for helping populations across cultures to understand and cope with depression and anxiety through healthy lifestyle and thinking patterns.

Originally from Brazil, Ms. Reinert enjoys traveling and exploring the world while doing medical missionary work, and she envisions our churches being a center for healing and restoration where people may achieve mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wholeness. Her dream is that all of God's children—regardless of race or country, age or gender, or whatever challenges they face—may experience restoration and an abundant life through God's love and grace, reaching their full potential for service to God and a world in need.



Vicki Griffin

MS, Hum Nutr; MPA; MACN

Vicki Griffin is the Director of the *Lifestyle Matters Health Intervention* Series and the *Fit & free! Building Brain and Body Health* Series; the Director of Health Ministries for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; and the Editor of *Balance* magazine and *Balanced Living* tract series.



Kathleen Kuntaraf

MD, MPH

Associate Director, Youth Alive!

Kathleen Kiem Hoa Oey Kuntaraf, MD, MPH, serves as an Associate Director for Prevention in the Health Ministries Department at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. She has promoted, coordinated, trained and provided various lifestyle training seminars, including: C.H.A.R.T.E.R.S. (Comprehensive Health and Rehabilitation Through Evidence-based Research Strategies), C.E.L.E.B.R.A.T.I.O.N.S. (Choice, Exercise, Liquids, Environment, Belief, Rest, Air, Temperance, Integrity, Optimism, Nutrition, Social Support and Service), as well as Rural Health, Health Expos, and Youth Alive which focuses on reducing at-risk behaviors. Her work has taken her to many countries, including Antigua, Abidjan, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bermuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Canada, Cambodia, China, Chile, England, France, Gambia, Haiti, Indonesia, India, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Seychelles, Singapore, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Spain, Santo Domingo, South Africa, Suriname, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vietnam, US, Yugoslavia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Being the only female administrator in the GC Health Ministries main office, she has accepted numerous invitations to Women's Ministries conferences at the General Conference, Division, Union, and local church levels, presenting the women's Healthy Lifestyle Prescriptions.

She and her husband, Jonathan Kuntaraf, D. Min, who is the GC SS/PM Director, have conducted more than twenty evangelistic campaigns in various places using the integrated method they have developed, which presents a balanced, wholistic approach. Their daughter, Andrea Kuntaraf-Crane, MD, is in her last year of subspecialty training in Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery at the University of North Carolina. They have one granddaughter, Chelsea Crane.

Prior to her current position, Ms. Kuntaraf worked in Medan Adventist Hospital and Bandung Adventist Hospital in Indonesia, and was the ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) Child Health project director in Bandung. She later became the projects coordinator for the West Indonesian Union Mission and East Indonesian Union Conference until 1988. She then was called to serve as Assistant Director for ADRA in the Far Eastern Division and then Director of the Health Department for the Far Eastern Division in Singapore.



Jennifer Jill Schwirzer

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer lives in Philadelphia with her husband Michael. She runs a counseling practice, writes, speaks, and creates music. Most importantly, she loves Jesus and other people.



Millie Youngberg, EdD

Co-Founder of WINWellness

Doctor Millie Youngberg is a Professor Emeritus of Andrews University. She taught for many years at the School of Education of Andrews University and co-directed Family Life International for 24 years. She and her husband John have authored more than 25 books and have dedicated their last 13 years to the *WIN! Wellness—On the Path to Health and Healing Ministry*. These materials have gone global and have been translated into 24 languages. In January 2014 they were co-recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Health Ministries Department of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Their son, Wes Youngberg, DrPH, CNS, FACLM, a clinical professor of both the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health of Loma Linda University, is an important member of the WIN! Wellness team.



Dear Presenter,

Thank you for being willing to make a difference in your church and community. You are about to begin a journey that can have an everlasting affect on those who come to your presentation. This series, *Thinking Well, Living Well*, is dedicated to helping people improve their lives as they receive beneficial information and learn to apply it to their lives.

Below are the steps, as well as some helpful hints to make your presentation a success.

1. COME PREPARED AND EARLY FOR YOUR PRESENTATION.

Set up your equipment and test everything before participants begin to arrive.

2. GREET THE PARTICIPANTS AS THEY ARRIVE.

One of the goals is to build relationships within the church and community. Greeting people as they enter puts them at ease and can open doors for further dialogue.

3. START ON TIME.

Be sure to begin no more than 5 minutes past the advertised start time. The total session is designed to take less than 1 ½ hours. Honor that time limit.

4. BEGIN WITH A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION OF YOURSELF.

This introduction should last no more than one minute.

5. INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF THE PRESENTATION.

Introductions should be short and designed to get the participants' attention.

6. GIVE THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION.

Be sure to study the script ahead of time so that your presentation flows smoothly.


7. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION.

Allow time after the presentation to answer questions from those attending.

8. FOLLOW WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE HANDOUTS.

9. CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER.

10. BE SURE TO ALLOW TIME FOR FELLOWSHIP.



how to use this training

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Mental Health Training for Women packet, *Thinking Well, Living Well*, which has been prepared by the General Conference Women's Ministries Department. This is done in collaboration with many health professional and people who are concerned about the challenges to women's mental health. The purpose of this packet is to educate women in the local churches about Mental Health, providing them with information about recovery and healing—for themselves and also to share.

HOW TO USE THIS PACKET

This packet provides information, ideas, and 10 seminars which include the PowerPoints, notes for the presenter, handouts, and a certificate of attendance. How you decide to hold the Health Training will depend on the needs of your church and/or community and also the resources and the people available to help.

PLANNING YOUR TRAINING

Plan your training according to your purpose. Is your goal to serve a small group, all the women in your church, or women from your local community?

Work with the women who are supporting you, and be sure everyone who is involved knows where they fit in the event's plans and schedule.

PROMOTE YOUR TRAINING

Begin planning the event early enough so there will be time to promote it well. Consider using the church bulletin, posters, emails, and personal invitations. If appropriate, promote the event in the community and invite women from the community to attend.



CONNECTING WOMEN WITH OUR HEALTH MESSAGE

- If possible, bring health professionals to offer some simple screening tests for those attending. The opportunity for such screenings may be especially beneficial for women from the community.
- Be prepared to share a book about our health message.
- Be ready to invite those attending to join a Homes of Hope and Healing small group. Bible study lessons for these groups are available at: www.adventistwomensministries.org

PRAY

Above all, pray with the women for God's blessings to rest on the plans you have made, the women assisting, those teaching, and the women attending. Pray that His name will be glorified and women will be helped and blessed by this training.



Session 1

Understanding Mental Health

by Elsie Staple

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”

3 John 1:2

This unit will identify the components of health, attempt to define mental health, identify the determinants of mental health and then consider some of the mental health conditions which can promote mental health wellbeing, including the self system.

“There is no health without mental health.”

“I wish above all that thou prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth.” (3 John 1) is God’s ideal for mankind. However, in our sin polluted environment, disease is inevitable. We are aware that degeneration can be swift and rapid. So how can one prosper and be in health? Let us first consider the question “What is health?”

It is important to note that health is wholistic and consists of many components. These are physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, sexual, environmental, and societal. These strands are closely related and deeply interconnected. Therefore ill health in one facet can have repercussions in another aspect of one’s health.

MENTAL HEALTH DEFINED

Mental health is not mental illness! Mental health is not an absence of a mental disorder!

When one considers the term “mental” it often has a negative connotation. We frequently hear the phrase “You are mental!” but we are all mental beings with mental needs. Therefore, what is mental health?

Mental health is not easy to define because values differ across cultures as well as among subgroups (and indeed individuals) within a culture. Therefore, what it means to be mentally healthy is subject to many different interpretations which are rooted in value judgments that may vary across cultures.

- Mental health is a concept that refers to a human individual’s emotional and psychological well-being. It is the balance between all aspects of life—social, physical, spiritual and emotional. It impacts how we manage our surroundings, make choices in our lives—and is an integral part of our overall health.
- The dictionary defines mental health as “A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.”
- Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. (*World Health Organization 2006*)
- Mental health is the successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity from early childhood until late life. Mental health is the springboard of thinking and communications skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience and self-esteem.
- Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables enjoyment of life and the ability to survive pain, disappointment and sadness; and is a positive sense of wellbeing and an underlying belief in our own and other’s dignity and worth. (*Department of Health 2001a*)

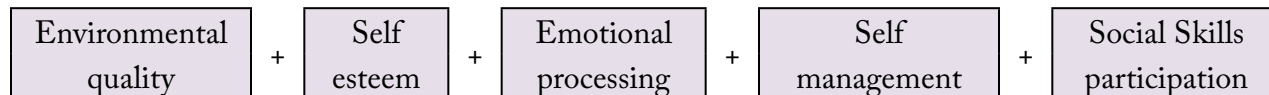
Mental health can be described in a variety of different but complementary ways. The terminology includes:

- Psychological wellbeing
- Psychosocial wellbeing
- Wellbeing
- Emotional health
- Psychosocial health
- Wellness
- Positive mental health

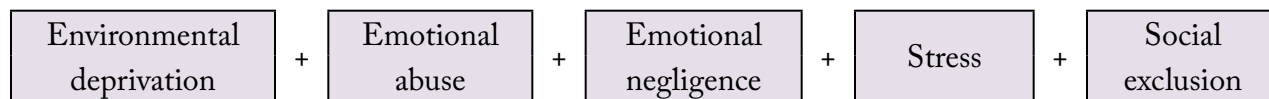
THE DETERMINANTS OF MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

According to MacDonald and O’Hara’s (1998) model, there are ten elements of mental health. These determinants range from individual to environmental factors and pair protective and risk factors to inform and design appropriate interventions. The determinants are:

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



RISK FACTORS



MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

Mental health promotion involves actions that create living conditions and environments to support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. This includes a range of actions that increase the chances of more people experiencing better mental health. Mental health promotion works from the principle that everyone has mental health needs, not just people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Mental health promotion is essentially concerned with making changes to society that will promote people's mental wellbeing.

Mental health promotion is a term that covers a variety of strategies. These strategies can be seen to occur at three levels:

- **Individual (micro)** - encouragement of individual resources by promotion of interventions for self-esteem, coping, assertiveness in areas such as parenting, the workplace or personal relationships.
- **Communities (meso)** - increasing social inclusion and cohesion, developing support structures that promote mental health in workplaces, schools, churches and neighbourhoods.
- **Government (macro)** - reduces socioeconomic barriers to mental health at governmental level by promoting equal access for all and support for vulnerable citizens.

POSITIVE MENTAL WELLBEING

Positive mental wellbeing includes:

1. A positive view of self: self-awareness, self-esteem, self-acceptance.
2. Personal growth and development: developing talents and abilities to their full potential.
3. Autonomy: being capable of independent action.

4. Accurate view of reality: not distorting the world in any way.
5. Positive friendships: the ability to build relationships of many varieties.
6. Environmental mastery: meeting the requirements of the many different situations encountered in everyday life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Ability to Enjoy Life - The ability to enjoy life is essential to good mental health. The practice of mindfulness meditation is one way to cultivate the ability to enjoy the present. We, of course, need to plan for the future at times and we also need to learn from the past. Too often we make ourselves miserable in the present by worrying about the future. We need to play and have fun.

Resilience - The ability to bounce back from adversity has been referred to as “resilience.” The ability to face problems, resolve them and learn from them. It has long been known that some people handle stress better than others.

Balance - Balance in life seems to result in greater mental health. It creates an awareness of how the mind and body interact. Just as our state of mental health can affect our physical health, the reverse is also true. We all need to balance time spent socially with time spent alone, for example the use and enjoyment of solitude. Those who spend all of their time alone may get labelled as “loners,” and they may lose many of their social skills. Extreme social isolation may even result in a split with reality. Those who ignore the need for some solitary times also risk such a split. Balancing these two needs seems to be the key—although we all balance these differently. Other areas where balance seems to be important include the balance between work and play, the balance between sleep and wakefulness, the balance between rest and exercise, and even the balance between time spent indoors and time spent outdoors.

Flexibility - We all know people who hold very rigid opinions. No amount of discussion can change their views. Such people often set themselves up for added stress by the rigid expectations that they hold. Working on making our expectations more flexible can improve our mental health. Emotional flexibility may be just as important as cognitive flexibility. Mentally healthy people experience a range of emotions and allow themselves to express these feelings. They are aware of what can go wrong. They have the ability to laugh both at themselves and at the world. Some people shut off certain feelings, finding them to be unacceptable. This emotional rigidity may result in other mental health problems.

Self-actualization - What have we made of the gifts that we have been given? We all know people who have surpassed their potential and others who seem to have squandered their gifts. We first need to recognize our gifts, of course, and the process of recognition is part of the path toward self-actualization. Mentally healthy people spend time reviewing their lives from time to time. They consider what their goals in life are and what steps are being taken to achieve them. Mentally healthy persons are persons who are in the process of actualizing their potential. They develop emotionally, creatively, intellectually and spiritually. Problems can arise when we feel that life is not satisfying and fulfilling.

Healthy Relationships - The ability to form healthy relationships with others is necessary for mental wellbeing. Social contact, having contact with others whose company we enjoy, whether at school, work,

at home or as a member of a club, helps to develop social interaction. It aids initiation, development and maintenance of mutually satisfying personal relationships. This affects how we feel about other people. It engenders awareness and the capacity to empathise with them. It aids in the development of confidence and assertiveness and encourages healthy sexuality. It is important to have someone to go to with our problems and worries, such as friends, teachers or family members—someone we can trust.

PREVENTATIVE TIPS FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

- making time to do the things we enjoy
- taking moderate physical exercise
- cutting down on coffee, alcohol, nicotine and other addictive substances
- remembering and celebrating the things we like about ourselves
- keeping things in perspective
- developing and sustaining friendships
- listening to and respecting other people, even if we disagree with them
- asking for help if we feel distressed or upset
- listening to other people who say they feel distressed or upset
- taking as much care of ourselves as we do the people we care for

THE SELF-SYSTEM

It is imperative for mental health to appreciate who you are and be honest with yourself. What are you really like? Are you both beauty and beast or wonderful and terrible? What are your strengths and limitations? The self-system is words which refer to attributes of the way we think, view and the value we place on ourselves. These are:

Self-image, self-concept, self-perception – all refer to the overall picture a person has of him or herself

Self-confidence, self-efficacy – suggests one's ability to perform

Self-acceptance, self-worth, self-respect, self-esteem – they imply judgment, value and evaluation of oneself

| People with low self-esteem | People with high self-esteem |
|---|--|
| Expect people to be critical of them | Are active self-agents |
| Are passive or obstructive self-agents | Have positive perception of their skills, appearance, sexuality and behaviours |
| Have negative perceptions of their skills, appearance, sexuality and behaviours | Perform equally well when being observed as when not watched |
| Perform less well when being watched | Are non-defensive and assertive in response to criticism |
| Are defensive and passive in response to criticism | Evaluate their performance realistically |
| Have unrealistic expectations about their performance | Express general satisfaction with life |
| Are dissatisfied with their lot in life | Have a strong social support network |
| Have a weak social support system | Can accept compliments easily |
| Have difficulty accepting compliments | |

We can only get over our problem of self-esteem if we set out to care for both ourselves and others.

The only proper mirror for seeing our true selves is God's word.

Discover:

- We are God's art work
So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (NKJV)
- What God intends us to become
For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared be beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10
- Loved and accepted unconditionally
There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:1

Understanding Mental Health

By Elsie Staple
SEC Health Ministries Director

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”

3 John 1:2

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

The dictionary defines mental health as “A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.” It is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. (*World Health Organization 2006*)

Determinants of Mental Health: What are the 5 protective factors and the 5 risk factors?

1. Protective: _____

2. Risk: _____

Mental Health Promotion involves creating living conditions and environments to support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. It is concerned with making changes to society that will promote people’s mental wellbeing.

Strategies of mental health promotion can be seen to occur at three levels. Describe each.

1. Individual (micro)
2. Communities (meso)
3. Government (macro)

Positive mental wellbeing includes:

1. A positive view of self: self-awareness, self-esteem, self-acceptance.
2. Personal growth and development: developing talents and abilities to their full potential.
3. Autonomy: being capable of independent action.

4. Accurate view of reality: not distorting the world in any way.
5. Positive friendships: the ability to build relationships of many varieties.
6. Environmental mastery: meeting the requirements of the many situations encountered in daily life.

Describe the 6 Characteristics of Mental Health. (Use the back of the page if you wish.)

1. The Ability to Enjoy Life - _____

2. Resilience - _____

3. Balance - _____

4. Flexibility - _____

5. Self-actualization - _____

6. Healthy Relationships - _____

PREVENTATIVE TIPS FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

- making time to do the things we enjoy
- taking moderate physical exercise
- cutting down on coffee, alcohol, nicotine and other addictive substances
- celebrating the things we like about ourselves
- keeping things in perspective
- developing and sustaining friendships
- listening to and respecting other people, even if we disagree
- asking for help if we feel distressed or upset
- listening to others who feel distressed or upset
- taking care of ourselves as well as we do others

God's word shows us our true value. We are God's art work (Gen. 1:27). We see what God intends us to become (Eph. 2:10). We are loved and accepted unconditionally (Rom. 8:1).



Session 2

The Mind and Body Connection – Part 1 *Connection and Community*

by Vicki Griffin

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”*

Proverbs 3:5-6

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

How do you change bad habits for good? Stephen Covey in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* reminds us that there are three things to consider when developing habits. You need to know what to do, you need to know how to do it, and you need to be motivated to do it. And there is one more vital element: You need the power to do it.

What’s the piece that’s missing for you? Do you know what you need to do to break free from your bad habit or addiction? Perhaps you know what you need to do but you don’t know how to do it. You try and try but nothing seems to be working. Or perhaps you know what to do and how to do it, but you just don’t have the passion or motivation to stick with it. You may have great intentions—“Monday I’ll quit; I’ll start over.” But the staying power seems to be lacking in your life.

As it has been explained, the brain is very responsive and changeable throughout life. You can change even when habits have been long entrenched in your lifestyle. Repetition is the creator of habits. The more times a thought or action is repeated, the more cemented it is in the brain. In these two presentations, you will learn about three keys that will help you learn to be consistent in making positive choices. You will

also discover the source for motivation and power that is essential for forming new habits. Keys number 1 (Create a Connection) and 2 (Create a Community) will be explained in Part 1 of these two seminars. Key number 3 (Create a Positive Lifestyle) will be covered in Part 2.

KEYS TO LIFE

Not only are these keys powerful tools for overcoming bad habits and addictions, they are also the keys to successful and happy living. These keys will help you realize your full potential. Simple yet powerful! Free and yet extremely valuable! They are for everyone—addicts and non-addicts alike.

Keys signify ownership, status, and worth. The keys to an abundant life are varied: Some are spiritual, some are emotional and social, and some are lifestyle. But they all unlock treasures that help develop their owner's true status and worth, and that owner is you. A key is an especially valuable thing if it opens a treasure box. It is even more valuable if that treasure box is yours. But you must use the key to unlock each treasure for yourself. No one can do that for you. These units place the keys of life in your hands.

Each key is closely linked to other keys; none stands alone. For instance, when you strengthen one area of your life, such as having a positive mental attitude, it affects your physical health. When you live a healthful lifestyle and enjoy good physical health, it affects your mental health. When you have a strong spiritual life, your mental and physical health are enhanced. Working from all three angles will give you the tools for living free. You may start from any angle; each supports the other.

KEY #1: CREATE A CONNECTION

A. Embrace God

One of the hardest struggles of the human heart is to realize the need of a power outside of oneself. It is natural to be independent; to try to solve all of life's perplexities without help. But God, who created us, knows we need His help, power, and guidance in order to successfully manage ourselves and our life situation. We need to let God have control in our lives.

Science is confirming that “spiritual well-being is at the center of a healthy lifestyle.”¹ Individuals who personalize their religion, cultivate faith in God, and internalize spiritual values generally have better coping skills and less depression under stressful life events.² The cultivation of a deeply personal religion is “strongly associated with life satisfaction.”³ One review stated it this way: “A large proportion of published empirical data suggests that religious commitment may play a beneficial role in preventing mental and physical illness, improving how people cope with mental and physical illness, and facilitating recovery from illness.”⁴

Often the single biggest issue for someone struggling to break free from an addiction is trust. It is hard to relinquish the excessive need to control people or circumstances in an attempt to factor out potential pain. But if the need to control is not replaced with trust, a person will eventually replace one addiction with another.

The Bible teaches us that when we turn our lives over to God's control, He will equip us to face life's challenges, give us a new way of looking at life, give us reason to hope and trust, guide us in the right way, and at last grant us eternal life. The counsel is inviting: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."⁵

B. Connect with God through Prayer

Prayer is a two-way conversation with God. There is no being in the universe more personally interested in you than God. Prayer opens your heart to hear His voice and receive His love, power, and guidance.

Modern science is beginning to recognize that "prayer is an integral component of the spiritual life of mankind. Clients in crisis may need prayer for encouragement, comfort, and support."⁶ In addition, "prayer allows people to express themselves during crisis and emotional turmoil. It can serve as an important source of personal strength and as a foundation for self-resilience during times of adversity."⁷ A study involving nearly 3,000 adults ages 19 to 97, found that recent alcohol disorders were less common among those who frequently read the Bible or prayed privately.⁸

Another study showed that persons who considered themselves to have a personal connection with God or a higher power were much more likely to experience better health.⁹ Among teenagers, "personal religiosity is positively correlated with rejection of substance abuse, even after controlling for individual differences in personality."¹⁰

But in reality, prayer is a phenomenon whose results defy statistics, scientific measurement, and even our limited human reasoning. Prayer is the key to a limitless treasure, because when we pray we are connecting with the Infinite God and our Creator, who asks us to come to Him with our needs. "Trust in Him at all times; O people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us."¹¹ God stands behind His promises. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."¹²

Through prayer God can cleanse us from destructive habits. "And I will make you free from all your unclean ways."¹³ He also promises us the power to stop doing the things we know are destroying us: "And I will put my spirit in you, causing you to be guided by my rules, and you will keep my orders and do them."¹⁴ "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."¹⁵

As God changes our attitude about our destructive habits, He promises to fill us with peace as He helps us negotiate life's challenges and trials: "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."¹⁶ Prayer is the key in the hand of faith that unlocks heaven's treasure-house of power.

It starts with a simple prayer: "God, teach me how to pray. Show me your way. Help me to love what you love and despise what you despise."

C. Connect with God through Study

Have you ever been hopelessly lost on a trip, with no map and no one around who seemed to know your destination? You drive around and around and get nothing but frustration and an empty gas tank. In a similar way, people try to fix their problems, find happiness, and forge a future without seeking God or reading His Word. It doesn't take long to wind up empty and frustrated.

God's Word, the Bible, provides instruction for living. It gives insight and understanding for the big picture in life as well as the details. "The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple."¹⁷ The Bible inspires hope, faith, and courage in the heart of the reader. It revives the sorrowful and depressed. "Your word [is] to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts."¹⁸ It also brings conviction of sin in our life, and offers forgiveness and cleansing through the Savior, Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."¹⁹

In the same way that we can't survive physically by having an occasional meal, we can't survive spiritually by listening to an occasional sermon or having an occasional Bible study. Transformation, growth, and maturity in our thinking and lifestyle involve a process, not an event. When you have surrendered your life to God, don't expect to wake up one morning and have everything figured out and be able to perform perfectly in every area of your life. You need daily time in God's Word. And daily, little by little, it will transform your life and character.

God's grace will cover your mistakes and give you the perseverance you need to continue your journey. Your thinking, attitude, and lifestyle will daily come more into harmony with His will. Over time, positive choices that were once difficult and took a great deal of prayer and struggle will become a part of the new character God is creating in you. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."²⁰ God will speak to you personally in His Word. He is there for you.

KEY #2: CREATE A COMMUNITY

God created us with a need for one another. It is important, so far as possible, to create a community of support. Surround yourself with people who will encourage and support you in your positive choices. Sever the relationships that you know are pulling you in the wrong direction.

Any building that stands the test of time and weather must not only have a good foundation; it also must have a solid support system built into that structure. Having an internal foundation of trust in God, hope, and prayer is vital. But social support is like the walls of that structure. It is important for developing the ability to cope with life's challenges, and developing social skills, empathy, sound judgment, and wisdom. It is not uncommon for people to retreat into a world of isolation and addiction because they lack these basic functional tools necessary for emotional and social survival.

However, support does not mean relying wholly on others or circumstances for self-esteem, security, and self-definition. People and circumstances change; but God's estimation of your value does not change. He

declares that you are His treasure, and that you are greatly loved.²¹ Having a good support system is healthy and beneficial, but frail human beings are subject to err, and our basic sense of worth cannot be based on the opinions of others. Even best friends can disappoint us at times.

The only One who loves us perfectly is God, because He *is* love.²² He loved us before we loved Him, and He loves us even though we are flawed. When we accept His perfect love and His estimation of our value, then we are free to love others in spite of their flaws. Others cannot pay back years of emotional debt that is owed. Our need for support and love from others must be balanced by an understanding of our basic worth; in this way our expectations of others will not be unreasonable and exaggerated. We will also experience less pain when people disappoint us.

Building a network of social support to aid recovery from addiction often requires severing unhealthy relationships that are destructive and feed on failure. Jane struggled with cocaine and alcohol for years, and found herself back in jail after she rationalized that she could help fellow addicts who were still using drugs. The desire for maintaining old ties was stronger than the conviction that she must change her associations. The internal strength and personality tools for helping her friends were not developed.

Predictably, she soon joined them in their destructive activities. She spent four months in jail for that decision. Now she is out of jail and, realizing her mistake, has surrounded herself with positive people who do not use drugs or alcohol. Jane attends a support group, and has established church ties and social relationships at work with people who do not live in the world of drugs and alcohol. She has completed high school, and has set her sights on college.

Someone once said: “Always be reading a book that is a little too hard for you, and surround yourself with people who are a little wiser than you.” When we associate ourselves with people who have positive attitudes, good problem-solving abilities, and healthy relationships, we can learn from their example.

Healthy social ties are worth developing. Numerous studies have linked a positive social life with improved mental health, less sickness and depression, higher levels of optimism, and longer life.^{23 24 25} Find ways to connect with people who provide a positive influence on your life. People join church groups, bicycle clubs, cooking classes, exercise classes, hobby groups, community projects, and volunteer associations. These are all great ways to connect with positive people and have fun at the same time.

It takes time to develop strong bonds of friendship and community with others. Take time to strengthen your friendships. Get closer to supportive family members. Be actively involved in your church family and community organizations. Time invested in cultivating positive friendships and activities is time well spent, and will expand, enrich, and energize your world.

EXPERIENCE FORGIVENESS

Sometimes the greatest hindrance to forming lasting relationships is unrealistic expectations of others, and holding on to hard feelings when others make mistakes. Holding on to past hurts can hinder present relationships because of unresolved bitterness, anger, and lack of forgiveness. Angry, bitter people have a

hard time making or keeping relationships for this reason. It is often difficult for them to keep problems in their proper perspective. They will catastrophize and picture the worst scenario in every situation, which usually does make it worse—this is not a formula for building lasting friendships.

Is there someone whom you need to forgive? There is an old saying that “when you forgive, you set a prisoner free—and that prisoner is you.” The dictionary defines *forgiveness* as “giving up resentment, granting relief from payment, or ceasing to feel resentment against an offender.”²⁶ Forgiving an injury is an active virtue that requires a conscious decision to part with angry, hostile, bitter feelings associated with the wrongs committed against you. It is a process of emotional release that can be difficult but is nonetheless essential to spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. “Forgiveness is not a quick fix,” cautions Robert D. Enright, Ph.D. It is a “matter of willed change of heart, the successful result of an active endeavor.”²⁷

Anger, hostility, resentment, and bitterness are associated with numerous physical and psychological ailments, and even a shortened lifespan. Often unforgiving people hurt not only themselves but others, either psychologically or physically. Hurting people hurt other people. Unforgiving people often have a hard time forgiving themselves for the wrongs they have committed; they are eaten up with denial, guilt, and shame.

Motivational speaker Zig Zigler has said that it is a dangerous thing to drive a car by looking in the rear-view mirror. People who journey through life dwelling on past wrongs and injuries miss present opportunities and the hope of a better future. Just the act of remembering a past slight is associated with increased blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension.²⁸ One study of college students showed that those who were less forgiving in general had higher blood pressure levels, even when relaxed.²⁹

Growing evidence shows that people who are inclined to forgive others enjoy better mental and physical health than those who hold grudges, unless they are repeatedly excusing someone who is abusive.³⁰ Refusal to forgive is most common among people with high anger and fear levels and low self-esteem, but easier for people who manifest humility.³¹ Humility is the opposite of pride. It is the absence of a spirit of revenge. It is the ability to reflect objectively and give consideration to the needs and perspective of others. But humility does not mean accepting responsibility for or condoning the bad actions of others. Humility is not shame, guilt, or self-blame. As a matter of fact, people who blame themselves for bad events and believe that things will never change are more likely to suffer from physical and emotional problems.³²

Is it possible to break the chains of anger, blame, guilt, self-hatred, revenge, and lack of forgiveness? Is it possible to experience the freedom of forgiveness when sexual, physical, or emotional abuse has occurred? Can peace fill the soul when you have experienced trauma, violence, treachery, or abandonment? Can you forgive yourself when your life has been riddled with drug or alcohol abuse, or compulsions and character traits that have hurt yourself or others?

Everett Worthington, the director of the Templeton Forgiveness Research Campaign, an organization that monitors and measures the physiological effects of forgiveness, was forced to transfer the principles of forgiveness from paper to practice. One day after mailing his manuscript outlining a step-by-step process of forgiveness, he learned that his mother had been murdered. After an initial reaction of disbelief and anger, in time he was able to work through those feelings and forgive the perpetrator of the crime, releasing himself from continual pain.³³

It has been said that “to forgive is divine,” and indeed it is. The Bible tells us to “forgive, and you will be forgiven.” (See Luke 6:37.) We all fall short of perfect love, so God calls us to forgive others the wrongs done to us. He tells us never to avenge ourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God: “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (RSV). We have no promise that this life or the people in it will be fair. Sin wouldn’t be sin if it didn’t hurt the innocent. God has promised that He will balance the accounts of all, for He is a God of justice as well as love. In the meantime, He wants us to be free from the pain of harboring hatred toward ourselves or others.

As a child, Joyce Meyer was sexually abused for many years by her father. She wrote in her compelling book, *Beauty for Ashes*, “Receiving forgiveness for past mistakes and sins, and forgiving others for their mistakes and sins, are two of the most important factors in emotional healing. Forgiveness is a gift given for those who do not deserve it.”³⁴ Forgiveness is a divine attribute, a gift from God that we receive when we ask for it by faith.

The Bible says God puts our sins as far away from us as the East is from the West, and cleanses us from the unrighteousness that caused the problems in the first place, replacing the vacuum with His own loving attributes. (See 1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 10:12.) We are also admonished to make restitution, as far as possible, for wrongs that we have committed. (See Matthew 5:24.) This means righting the wrongs done to others by specific confessions and paying back damage done, as far as possible. This cleansing activity helps us to reason more deeply from cause to effect, and associate wrong actions with consequences. It also helps us to face our wrongs, build new behavior, and experience the freedom of making things right.

But God knows that we can never fully pay back the debt owed for certain wrongs committed. He also knows that those who have hurt us cannot pay back the debt owed to us. Joyce Meyer concludes: “There are many Scriptures that tell us that God vindicates. (Isaiah 54:17.) God is the One who recompenses us. He is our reward. (Isaiah 35:4.) He is a God of justice, which only He can bring. He alone can repay you for the hurt done to you, and He alone is qualified to deal with your human enemies.”³⁵ She adds a personal note: “Many years ago I had a choice. I could choose to remain bitter, full of hatred and self-pity, resenting the people who had hurt me as well as all those who were able to enjoy nice, normal lives, those who had never been hurt as I was. Or, I could choose to follow God’s path, allowing Him to make me a better person because of what I had been through. I thank Him that He gave me grace to choose His way rather than Satan’s way.”³⁶ It is a choice that every human being can make, no matter how plagued with anger and resentment he or she is.

FINALLY, THE STEPS TO EXPERIENCING FORGIVENESS ARE STRAIGHTFORWARD.

1. **First, face your anger.** Recognize the feelings that are altering your attitude and behavior.
2. **Second, ask God to give you the gift of forgiveness** for the wrongs you have committed, and determine to make things right as far as possible.
3. **Third, decide to forgive those who have hurt you.** Ask God for the grace to leave others in His hands, and claim the promise that He will compensate you, or make up the difference, for any hurt done to you (Isaiah 61:7).

4. **Fourth, actively forgive.** Acknowledge your pain, but allow the experience to deepen your own wisdom, compassion, and empathy for others. Act on your new decision by the way you speak and behave.
5. **Fifth, discover release** from the emotional prison of unforgiveness. Realize that you are not alone, and that those who hurt are usually hurting people themselves. Use the experience of forgiveness to help others, and use the negative experience to grow in wisdom and develop a new purpose in your life.

This seminar has focused on two vital keys: connectedness with God and with one another. These two keys form the foundation for a lifestyle rooted in victory, growth, and security. In Part 2, we will build on this foundation by exploring practical keys to creating a positive lifestyle and environment.

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The Mind and Body Connection – Part 1 *Connection and Community*

by Vicki Griffin

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

If you are working in a group, review the sections before you meet.

1. Create a Connection. What is often the most significant challenge for someone struggling to break free from an addiction?*
2. Pray for Guidance. What are the benefits of prayer? What steps can I take to develop a positive, consistent prayer life?
3. Connect Through Study. What are the benefits of Bible study? What steps can I take to develop a positive, consistent study life?
4. Create a Community. What are the benefits of positive social support? What supports are available to me? What are 3 specific steps I can take to tap into the most important ones for me?
5. Freedom in Forgiveness. What are the effects of failure to forgive? What steps can a person take to experience the freedom of forgiveness?

Answers

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

* It is important to rule out other medical conditions. Always work with your physician or healthcare provider. Serious mood disorders or physical symptoms require clinical intervention.



Session 3

The Mind and Body Connection – Part 2 Lifestyle and Environment

by Vicki Griffin

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Philippians 4:8-9

It was 1944 and winter in Auschwitz, the concentration camp for Jewish prisoners and sympathizers in World War II. Dr. Viktor Frankl was a doctor, a Jew, and a prisoner there. Frankl noted the effects of discouragement and loss of hope on prisoners: He recorded that in December “the prisoners had lived in the naïve hope that they would be home again by Christmas. As the time drew near and there was no encouraging news, the prisoners lost courage and disappointment overcame them. This had a dangerous influence on their powers of resistance and a great number of them died.”¹

Science confirms the link between mind set and disease: “Attitude, social networks, and a healthy diet are woven together in their importance for physical and mental health. These factors affect the immune system and how a person takes care of him or herself.”¹

Attitudes such as forgiveness, faith, optimism, happiness, perseverance under stress, and trust in God are linked with reduced risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, infection, ill health, and countless other stress-related conditions. They also lessen the severity of illness and speed recovery when it occurs.

A steady state of grief, worry, hostility, hopelessness, depression and an unforgiving spirit increase the risk of infection, inflammatory conditions and disease, and slower recovery from sickness. It is true that many factors contribute to disease. Positive, perky people get sick, and critical, crabby people escape illness. However, a positive mind set is as important to good health as better-known factors such as exercise and diet.

In Part 1 of these two seminars on “The Mind and Body Connection,” we looked at Keys # 1 (Create a Connection) and # 2 (Create a Community) for creating a lifestyle rooted in victory, growth, and security. Now in Part 2 we will explore Key # 3 (Create a Positive Lifestyle).

KEY #3: CREATE A POSITIVE LIFESTYLE

You can create a lifestyle that will protect your mind, spirit, and body. Small choices make a big difference. A positive, healthful lifestyle builds security, nurture, consistency, and stability into your life. Simple strategies such as eating a healthful breakfast, drinking plenty of water, going for walks, reading inspirational materials, and cultivating habits of positive thinking and speaking can make a big difference. Some people fail to overcome addictions due to a terrible neglect of their personal lifestyle. For example, if a person gives up an alcohol addiction but consumes only junk food, caffeine, and sugar, it makes it much harder to overcome cravings and stay off alcohol. Lifestyle choices affect body, mind, and spirit.

- **Feed Your Mind**

Reading inspirational and character-building material just 20 minutes a day amounts to about 20 books a year. Reading 20 positive books a year on achieving excellence, building a solid character, building relationships, and learning about those who succeeded in life despite obstacles can have a telling effect on the mind, character, and brain. As neuropsychiatrist John Ratey puts it: “Experiences, thoughts, actions, and emotions actually change the structure of our brains.”²

Zig Zigler talks about taking advantage of “automobile university.” He encourages people to use their driving time in their cars to listen to inspiring and educational material. Your mind cannot occupy a positive thought and a negative thought at the same time. The Bible states it this way: “As the thoughts of his heart are, so is he.”³ No one is built up by looking at, contemplating, or reading trashy materials that devalue human life, discourage noble traits, and destroy godly values. When you fill your mind with that which is noble and good, it will have a powerful shaping effect on your mind, body, and spirit.

- **Choose Healthful Foods**

The proper care of the body will also have an influence on your mind and spirit. Enjoy wholesome foods that provide energy, vitality, and strength. Eating a diet rich in junk food, refined sweets, and processed food does not provide the nutrition needed for mental processing, nervous system health, and mood regulation.

Nutritionist Elizabeth Somers describes the effects of such a diet: “Repeated poor food choices can set fundamental patterns in the production of the brain chemicals that regulate appetite and mood so that you become a victim of mood swings, food cravings, poor sleep habits, and other emotional problems because of poor eating habits.”⁴

Janice Keller Phelps, a physician who ran a drug detoxification clinic in Seattle for 20 years, worked with more than 20,000 addicts. A recovered alcoholic herself, she believes that most addicts have a basic sugar addiction with an underlying depression. She writes: “Sugar addiction is the world’s most widespread addiction, and probably one of the hardest to kick. Because it is shared by so many addictive patients, I believe it is the ‘basic addiction’ that precedes all others. Most of my addicted patients tell me that at one time they craved sugar almost daily. Furthermore, few people recognize their sugar addiction.”⁵

To lessen a sugar craving, eat whole foods with complex carbohydrates that provide healthful energy to your body and brain. Choose fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, beans, nuts and seeds. These tasty, satisfying foods strengthen your physical and mental health. If you are not getting the nutrients that you need, cravings will soon take over. When you eat well, your mind will be sharper to discern temptation and stronger in judgment to solve problems. You will have more brain energy to deal with stress, challenges, and new situations.

Dietary fat influences the health of the brain as well as other organs of the body. The type of fat you eat affects how permeable, fluid, and responsive your cells are to chemical messengers. Plant fats encourage flexible, responsive cell function. Flexible cells mean healthier heart, vessel, and brain action. Some great plant sources of healthful fats include olives, avocados, nuts, flax and other seeds, olive oil, and canola oil.

Saturated animal fats such as red meat and butter, and trans fats that are commonly found in chips, fries, and pastries, are vessel hardening and not the best for optimal brain function. But omega-3 fats are good for the head and heart. In particular, they have been shown to help reduce aggression and depression in some people.⁶ Good plant sources for omega-3 fats include ground flax seed, walnuts, soy beans, and canola oil.

- **Regular Meals**

Breakfast is vital to start your day right. Eating breakfast gives a satisfying feeling so you are less likely to reach for caffeine or sugar to raise your mood or energy levels. Eating plenty of whole grains and fresh fruits gives you slow-release energy that will fuel your mind and body for the day’s tasks.

If you don’t eat breakfast, your body will run on nervous energy. When that happens, a stress hormone, cortisol, is produced which raises the blood sugar level. High stress hormone levels combined with poor nutrition will make you more edgy and more susceptible to depression and mood swings.

So, be proactive instead of reactive. Eat a hearty, high fiber breakfast. This will help you deal with stress better so you will be less likely to run to the vending machine when problems arise. A good breakfast will also lessen your cravings for sugar, caffeine, and snacks.

Don’t deprive yourself the pleasure of a healthful, well-planned lunch. Enjoy your meals at regular times. Going too long without eating can make your blood sugar and your mood take a dive. If you have supper, lighten it up. One of the big reasons that people skip breakfast is because they load up on heavy foods at night. Then they don’t sleep well, wake up feeling groggy and unrefreshed, and have no appetite. So train your appetite to enjoy foods at the time your body needs them most: in the early and middle parts of the day.

Including plenty of fresh fruit varieties, leafy green and other vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds is going to provide a rich array of vital nutrients. These nutrients work together to improve mood,

reduce cravings, provide energy, and improve mental function. With lots of high-fiber plant foods at meal-time, there will be less of an urge to snack. Try to avoid the hunger trap or the constant eating trap that can trigger a bad mood.

- **Cut the Caffeine**

Need to overcome a caffeine habit? Caffeine has been dubbed “the bad habit glue,” because it reinforces other habits such as alcohol, sugar consumption, and smoking. It is also highly addictive in its own right. When overcoming caffeine, make sure you get plenty of rest. Getting up tired in the morning makes caffeine very tempting. Go to bed earlier, especially during the first week of kicking the caffeine habit. When you get up, drink a few glasses of water. Following the guidelines for healthful eating, exercise, and rest in this section are vital to overcoming the caffeine habit.

As you implement these lifestyle tools, you will begin to experience real strength of mind and body instead of nervous stimulation. It takes time to recover lost strength and heal an overworked nervous system, but good nutrition and lifestyle immediately begin to repair the body and mind. The benefits of perseverance are inestimable, as strength, vigor, and natural vitality are restored in your life.

- **Turn on the Fountain**

Drink plenty of refreshing water all through the day. Water vitalizes your body because it eliminates toxins, improves circulation, speeds nutrients to the cells, and perks up a dull brain. Water intake prevents mild dehydration, which can trigger irritability and false hunger signals. The average adult needs about eight glasses a day. Getting plenty of water is essential for vitality and a proper functioning metabolism.

Other healthful alternatives to stimulating, dehydrating beverages include 100 percent fruit juice (in moderation), herbal teas, and grain beverages such as Roma or Postum. Keeping your body fresh and clean inside and out with plenty of water is an important key to a healthful lifestyle. A relaxing bath cleanses, acts as a tonic, soothes the nerves, and is a pleasant diversion. So, get into the water habit!

- **Exercise for Excellence**

Getting plenty of physical exercise has a powerful effect on the mind as well as the body. When you *feel* better, you *think* better. Exercise has been shown to improve mood;⁷ lower stress, depression, and anxiety levels;⁸ and increase brain power!⁹ It also helps to increase energy levels and improve the quality of sleep for most people.¹⁰

The following true story took place in the 1930s. A discouraged, despondent man came to see Dr. Harry Link, a famous doctor in New York City. The despondent man had lost his job. He felt like nobody loved him anymore. He wanted to commit suicide to end his troubles.

Dr. Link explained that he had been too sedentary, having exercised only his mind while neglecting his body. “I will give you a program of manual work,” he said, “and soon you will be feeling better.”

“I don’t like manual work,” said the man. “I don’t want to work. I want to commit suicide.”

Dr. Link did his best to persuade the man to accept a program of work, but it was no use, and at last in exasperation he said, “All right then, commit suicide. But if you do, why not do something out of the ordinary, something heroic, and get into the headlines when you die.”

The man liked the idea. “What do you suggest, Doctor?” he asked. The doctor said, “I have never heard of a man running himself to death. If you want to get into the headlines, run around the block until you drop dead, and every newspaper will have it on the front page.” “That’s what I’m going to do,” said the man, and off he went to make the news.

He went home, wrote his letter of farewell, then started running. He ran and he ran, but he couldn’t drop dead. He got so tired, he said, “I’ll have to finish it tomorrow night.” He went back home and slept better than he had for a long time. The next night he ran again, around and around; but he couldn’t drop dead, and—you’ve guessed it—he didn’t drop dead at all! He literally ran himself back to health and strength!¹¹

Exercise promotes physical health by reducing the risk and progression of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. It also improves mood and mental function.

What is the best form of exercise? The one you are willing to do! Brisk walking, hiking, bicycling, swimming, golfing, skiing, canoeing, gardening, jumping on a trampoline, stair climbing, stationary exercise machines, chores such as splitting wood—all provide good exercise and help reduce stress. Remember: Motion balances emotion. So when you feel down, get up and get moving, both mentally and physically. Beat a bad mood—just get on the move!

- **Get Your Rest**

It is difficult for some people to see that rest for their mind and body are important enough to plan for. We can be so filled with busy planning, problem-solving, and stimulating media that our minds never have “down time” for reflection, meditation, and relaxation. There is too much “brain stuff” going on, so real learning, wisdom, and growth cannot take place! The brain is too busy filtering useless “noise” and has no time for reflection.

Spending time in nature is one of the most soothing, refreshing, and yet invigorating activities for an overworked mind and body. Learning to distinguish between stimulating entertainment and refreshing recreation can help you use your leisure time to your best advantage. Walking in the woods, working in the garden, or watching a beautiful sunset are great ways to enjoy nature and absorb its calming influence.

Another vital component of a healthful lifestyle is plenty of refreshing sleep, which should optimally occur during nighttime hours, including two or three hours before midnight. Research suggests that deep, uninterrupted sleep is when the majority of memory storage takes place in the brain. In a study published in *Science*, researchers reported that deep sleep is critically important to the learning process, and that people tend to absorb knowledge about new skills while sleeping.¹² A good night’s sleep can also help to keep stress hormone levels down the next day!¹³ Other positive effects include better blood sugar control¹⁴ and a stronger immune system.¹⁵ It’s easy to overload the day with so many busy activities that there is no time for sleep! Sleep time is not wasted time—it is vital to health, good judgment, and balanced mood.

The Bible teaches the importance of rest for body, mind, and spirit. Jesus noticed His weary disciples and encouraged them to come apart and “rest awhile.”¹⁶ At Creation, God set aside the seventh day as a special day of rest, worship, and fellowship.¹⁷ And He invites us to enter into His rest.¹⁸

- **Create an Environment**

Plan for success. Create a mental environment that will help you live a healthful, successful lifestyle. Get rid of as many reminders of your past habits or addictions as possible. As the saying goes, “Out of sight, out of mind.” Focusing on new thoughts and behaviors will naturally crowd out old harmful patterns. You can’t think positively and negatively at the same time, so choose positive thoughts. Don’t wait for your feelings to guide you into positive thinking. Use positive thinking to guide your feelings.

Create a physical environment geared toward success. It would not be wise for an ex-smoker to leave ashtrays and cigarettes all over his or her apartment. For someone who has been involved with pornography, the calendars, magazines, videos, and Web sites must be eliminated. For the junk food addict, the food items that trigger bingeing must be removed from the house.

One woman who compulsively read romance novels decided to quit and burned 300 of them in her backyard. She learned from experience the truth and power of the Bible counsel: “And you may not take a disgusting thing into your house, and so become cursed with its curse: but keep yourselves from it, turning from it with fear and hate, for it is a cursed thing.”¹⁹ Decisive action makes decided changes in the brain.

Often there are other habits or associations, called triggers, surrounding addictions that also need to be changed in order to avoid “turning on” the addictive behavior. For instance, if in the past you have not been able to drive by a certain donut shop because the sight of it triggers an irresistible desire to indulge, find a new route and avoid the shop altogether. Focus on some aspect of the new route, and think about your great meal or evening that you will enjoy when you get home. Remind yourself that the craving will pass.

If you are used to having a morning cup of coffee and a cigarette while you watch the news, develop the habit of a morning walk instead. Enjoy a refreshing glass of water, juice, or herbal tea instead of coffee. Avoid the TV in the morning and listen to the news on the radio on the way to work. In this way you are dealing with the *triggers* as well as the *tokens* of addiction, and changing your routine helps engrave new associations in your brain.

Neuroscientist John Ratey puts it this way: “Each and every new experience causes the neuronal firing across some synapses to strengthen and others to weaken. The pattern of change represents an initial memory. As neurons in the chain strengthen their bonds with one another, they then begin to recruit neighboring neurons to join the effort. Each time the activity is repeated, the bonds become a little stronger, and more neurons become involved, so that eventually an entire network develops that remembers the

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skill, the work, the episode, or the color. At this stage, the subject becomes encoded as memory.”²⁰ Forming new habits to override old ones is as important as quitting the old habits themselves!

If you are living in an environment where you do not have complete control over all the triggers, you can change how you *relate* to the things that are beyond your control, what you *do* during times of temptation, and how you *compensate* for the elimination of the old behavior. If your spouse is drinking coffee, smoking, and watching the news in the morning, you can still make positive choices. Go for a walk in the morning and then enjoy a healthful breakfast together. In this way you are embossing new memories and associations in the brain, and helping old ones to die away.

Remember: Temptation usually passes in a few moments. Act quickly and divert your attention. Use the key of prayer to gain strength to resist. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”²¹ Go for a 10 minute walk. Call a friend. Take a bath or shower. Take a 10 to 15 minute power nap.

Placing yourself in a positive environment can be a powerful tool in building a better brain. It can be rewarding to volunteer at a school, church, or hospital. Another way to keep active and learning is by taking a class. You can keep your brain productive and growing by surrounding yourself with supportive people and a supportive environment.

Past weaknesses will still have to be guarded, but in time, those old triggers will weaken. You are developing new habits, new associations, and new ways of relating to your environment. You are building a new *you*! You are gaining control of your life.

- **Manage Stress**

It is important to find escape valves for stress before it builds up and becomes unmanageable. Manage your stress before it manages you. Watch for the telltale signs of stress, and diffuse it before it detonates! Be aware of stress traps that you set for yourself. Managing stress involves making choices, forming priorities, adopting attitudes, and taking actions that enable you to maximize your potential without overloading your abilities. Pare down or wear down!

People who are chronically stressed often feel that their lives are out of control. Balancing your life puts you back in control and helps you avoid unnecessary stress. Here are several stress-taming tips you may find useful:

- **Identify** your most important goals and prioritize your time accordingly.
- **Set** a realistic schedule.
- **Monitor** your schedule, including the amount and intensity of your activities. Limit the number of decisions you make in a day.
- **Avoid** clutter.
- **Regulate** the rate of change taking place in your life at one time, including jobs, moving, travel, and even holidays.
- **Eliminate** personal debt, especially credit card debt, and don't buy on impulse.
- **Take** time to help others—it's a good way to put your own life in perspective.

Giving yourself the gift of a daily schedule that includes stimulating and inspiring reading, healthful food choices, exercise, and plenty of rest is vital to mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. It is balance in these areas of life that opens a treasure chest of blessings and benefits, creates a hedge of protection against stress, depression, defeat, and addiction, and opens a doorway to a new life and a new you. It is God's plan to move you from survival to maintenance, from maintenance to success, and from success to significance. As you use God's keys to recovery, accept His love and healing power. Success and meaning will become yours!

- **Get Rid of Worry**

Worrying creates stress. When you embrace God and learn to trust Him, there's no need to worry. Worry is automatic for some people; it is the opposite of trust. One author wrote that "worry is interest paid on trouble before it falls due."²² One woman was such a habitual worrier that when her husband went on business trips, she would leave messages on his cell phone that said: "Please tell me what is going on, so I will know what to be worried about!" British writer Arnold Bennett had a unique description of the ravages of worry: "Worry is evidence of an ill-controlled brain; it is merely a stupid waste of time in unpleasantness."

People who suffer from anxiety tend to be *ruminators*; that is, like cows that chew their cud all day, ruminators tend to rehearse real or imagined difficulties over and over again until they are almost unable to think of anything else—unless it is another worry. And worry *does* alter brain chemistry and function, elevating the stress hormone norepinephrine and lowering the calming hormone serotonin.²³

Worry gives even small problems big shadows, and disables the brain for engaging in true problem solving during real challenges. Like anything else, worry can become a habit; but thankfully, like other habits, it can be broken. Jesus said: "But which of you by being anxious can prolong his life a single moment?"²⁴ As a matter of fact, the Bible is not only emphatic about the futility of worry, it also proposes a solution: "Do not be anxious about anything; but under all circumstances, by prayer and entreaty joined with thanksgiving, make your needs known to God. Then the peace of God, which is beyond all human understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and thoughts, through your union with Christ Jesus."²⁵

The decision to stop engaging in useless worrying is just that—a decision. The Bible tells us to replace the anxious feelings with thoughts of thankfulness and expressions of trust and gratitude. We are told to leave our needs in the hands of God. When we do this, God Himself has promised to teach us how to trust—and not to worry.

He says, "Come to me, all you who are troubled and weighted down with care, and I will give you rest."²⁶ The God who created you invites you to come to Him with all your brokenness, concerns, and problems. He has a plan, and He will strengthen you and give you peace, even in the midst of trouble! Developing trust also helps to "cool down" overactive areas of the brain involved in anxiety, worry, negative thinking, and fear. (These areas are the deep limbic system, the cingulate gyrus, and the basal ganglia.)

It is easy to think that if we have enough external benefits such as money, looks, friends, talent, or power, we will be happy, in control, and free from worry. Do you think that is true? People can have every earthly advantage and yet still worry. But you *can* break the worry habit—and learn to trust in God.

- **No More Pity Parties**

Pity *parties* recycle your life through reliving failure over and over again. Feeding on failure, either yours or others, fosters more of the same.

Elizabeth Elliot, who was left a young widow when her missionary husband was murdered by the natives he ministered to, has said that “self-pity is a death that has no resurrection, a sinkhole from which no rescuing hand can save you because you have chosen to be there.” Self-pity has been defined as “a self-indulgent dwelling on one’s own sorrows or misfortunes.”²⁷ It is one of the most tempting of human traits, while at the same time one of the most self-disintegrating activities a person can engage in. There is no hope in self-pity, no plan, no purpose, and no promise. It fogs our vision and is a self-indulgent counterfeit of genuine sadness or grief, which can produce valuable fruit.

It would be foolish to think that every day our path will be strewn with rose petals but no thorns; that there will never be times of grief or sadness. It is like a sign on an executive’s desk that read: “You are smiling because you don’t understand the situation.” Neuropsychiatrist John Ratey discusses how to harness the emotion of sadness to produce positive change: “Sadness takes us off-line so that we can regroup and reevaluate. It may even cause us enough ‘pain’ that we are motivated to change.”²⁸

Sadness may result in a feeling of numbness, which “may be adaptive, granting relief in the case of a terrible loss or giving a person some ‘down time’ to prepare for the next stage in life or to incorporate a major change.”²⁹ But prolonged sadness can cause sustained overactivity in a fear center of the brain and in the right frontal lobe. This can result in depression, anxiety, and an inability to adapt to new information and engage in constructive problem solving. According to Ratey, “Depression is less genetically based than any other mental illness, and is the one most dependent on environmental factors.”³⁰

How can we put a fence around sadness so it can do its work without opening a dangerous door to depression? First, learn to detect and reject self-pity. Self-pity can be our worst enemy, if we yield to it. But when sad and overcome with grief, remember that relating to life’s challenges in a positive way can turn the worst situation into a strengthening, learning experience. Second, when confronted with trouble, or if you make a mistake, don’t give up; get up—and get going! Elbert Hubbard said, “The cure for grief is motion.” Walking, gardening, or engaging in some other physical activity or project helps mental processing and helps “throttle down” an overactive right frontal lobe, which is associated with anxiety.³¹

Overactive right frontal lobe activity is associated with sadness, but left frontal lobe activity is associated with positive mood. “Happiness and sadness are separate functions, and they represent opposite patterns of activity in the hemispheres of the brain.”³² We are admonished in the Scriptures to make a conscious choice to dwell on subjects that are true, honest, just, pure, pleasant, positive, virtuous, and worthwhile (Philippians 4:8). In this way we can help to heal the broken brain and help to balance unequal activity in the two hemispheres.

Research suggests that simply changing the expression on your face from a frown to a smile can significantly impact a depressed or stressed mood state and alter brain chemistry.³³ Even the practice of quieting the mind through deep, continued thought can help reverse some of the ill effects of stress.³⁴ The Bible states it this way: “I considered my ways, and turned my steps to Your statutes.”³⁵ In another place it says: “Keep a watch on your behavior; let all your ways be rightly ordered.”³⁶ Learn to monitor your moods, and keep a conscious check on negative thinking.

As much as possible, avoid places, people, and activities that are depressing. Planting yourself in front of the television and getting lost in a violent movie will only increase overall feelings of helplessness and stress. It is not good for the mind or morals to watch or read materials for entertainment that are traumatic, violent, depressing, immoral, or worthless. But turning your energy to the needs of others helps to ward off depression and increase feelings of self-esteem. Focus on activities that are refreshing, relaxing, healthful, moral, and mentally stimulating.

We can actively cultivate the mental traits of gratitude, optimism, diligence, and perseverance under stress; they are all linked to better mental and physical health.³⁷ We are individually responsible for the choices we make, including how we relate to people, situations, and challenges. Blaming others for our own poor choices and responses never accomplishes growth or change. Taking personal responsibility is liberating—it frees you to *act* instead of *react*.

CELEBRATE LIFE

There is so much to celebrate in life—you have strengths to build on and resources at your disposal that you may never have been aware of until reading these chapters. Everyone is different, and it is important not to compare what you have or don't have in relation to someone else. You are special, and God has a special plan for your life. Begin building with what you have and the resources you can identify and use, and watch new growth happen in your life.

It is important to focus on short- as well as long-term goals. For instance, an obese person may set a goal: "I am going to walk 10 miles a day and lose 200 pounds." This is an unrealistic way to approach an admirable long-term goal. It is more realistic to say: "I have 30 minutes a day I can devote to walking, and I am going to focus on losing 10 pounds." Looking at the big picture can be discouraging and overwhelming. As the saying goes, "It's a trial by the mile and hard by the yard. But it's a cinch by the inch."

Making a plan and rehearsing it in your mind can help you practice making positive choices. Before you start your day, talk to God. Visualize your day and how you will make positive choices. Trust that God will be with you throughout the whole day helping you prioritize your schedule, make right choices, and be productive with the talents He has given you.

If you should fall down, know that you can get up again. Forgive yourself and decide right then to get back on your victory path. Learn from your mistake and grow.

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The Mind and Body Connection – Part 2 *Lifestyle and Environment*

by Vicki Griffin

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Philippians 4:8-9

If you are working in a group, review the sections before you meet.

1. Take Care of Your Mind. What positive choices can I make in the following areas to improve life skills, mental culture, and reduce addiction risk?* (Set at least 2 realistic goals in each area).

- Attitude:
- Speech and conversation:
- Reading material:
- Television:
- Internet:

2. Take Care of Your Body. What positive choices can I make in these lifestyle areas to improve health and vitality, energy and mood, and reduce addiction risk? (Set at least 2 realistic goals in each area).

- Eating habits:
- Water intake:
- Exercise:
- Sleep habits:

3. Celebrate Life. What is the difference between sadness and depression? What choices can I make in the following areas to cultivate resiliency, self-control, and hope when I face challenges?

- Mental:
- Physical:
- Spiritual:

* It is important to rule out other medical conditions. Always work with your physician or healthcare provider. Serious mood disorders or physical symptoms require clinical intervention.



Session 4

Hope Beyond Depression

by Jennifer Jill Schwirzer

“Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.”

Jeremiah 33:6

A missionary woman once said, “There is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work...’ In my heart there is no faith—no love—no trust—there is so much pain—the pain of longing, the pain of not being wanted. I want God with all the powers of my soul—and yet there between us—there is terrible separation. I don’t pray any longer.”

This woman was Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the great missionary to India. Depression affects even godly, compassionate, intelligent people! Other admirable people who suffered with depression include Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi.¹

In America alone, over 20 million are diagnosed with a mood disorder. Almost ten percent of Americans will be diagnosed with depression sometime in their lifetime. The statistics for the rest of the world are similar. There are lots of very sad people on our planet!²

Have you ever wondered if you, or someone you love, suffer from depression? Here is a summary of the criteria for diagnoses as identified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association:

Major Depression:

- Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day
- Significant weight loss when not dieting or significant weight gain
- Decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day
- Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day
- Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day
- Recurrent thoughts of death
- Thoughts of and/or plans for suicide

Does this sound like you or someone you know? If you have many of these symptoms, you may have major depression.

Sometimes Christians are afraid to admit they struggle with mental illness. We clinicians call this type of thing “secondary disturbance.” People become disturbed; then they become disturbed about the disturbance: “I’m not supposed to be sad (anxious, angry—you fill in the blank) because I’m a Christian!” I hope to dispel this idea. We need to get to work on the problem itself without spending one more moment on feeling bad about feeling bad.

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

In recent years, a very good treatment for depression has been developed called cognitive behavioral therapy. Scientific research proves it works. Few realize that the basis for cognitive behavioral therapy is found in the Bible.

Isaiah said, “Let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). God has given us these reasoning powers, this ability to think correctly. Rational, balanced, truthful thinking stabilizes us. While people with depression tend to exaggerate bad things, God has given us instruction to think in a balanced, honest, yet optimistic way. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Jeremiah said, “Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth” (Jeremiah 33:6). Notice the link between truth and healing.

ELLEN WHITE UNDERSTOOD THE POWER OF THOUGHT

“We need a constant sense of the ennobling power of pure thoughts. The only security for any soul is right thinking. As a man ‘thinketh in his heart, so is he.’ Proverbs 23:7. The power of self-restraint strengthens by exercise. That which at first seems difficult, by constant repetition grows easy, until right thoughts and actions become habitual” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 491).

“Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father’s house?” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 251)

LOVE THAT FRONTAL LOBE!

Although not a discrete organ, reason has a neurological basis. The first step in depression recovery is to do all we can to make sure our brains are healthy. The frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex rests above your eyebrows and behind your forehead, or frontal bone. The cranial bones are the hardest in human anatomy, clearly to protect the “image of God” capacity we possess.

In fact, the body protects the brain at all costs. For instance, the weight and protein content of the brain remain relatively stable during long-term starvation. The body breaks down organs and tissues before it sacrifices the brain. God designed human anatomy to preserve the “house” of the character.

In 1848, a railroad construction foreman named Phineas Gage revolutionized neuroscience due to an injury that destroyed his frontal lobe. An iron tamping rod flew into his skull as the result of an explosion. The rod crushed his forebrain, but he walked away, astonishing the world and drawing the attention of the medical community. Such a precise frontal lobectomy had never been witnessed before. This tragic natural experiment led to one essential observation: Phineas’ personality instantly changed from a decent, moral, man to an impatient, impulsive child. Especially he developed a kind of attention deficit, jumping from one job to the next, never again able to persevere or provide well for his family. He fell into a state of disconnect; the tamping rod robbed him of his reason.

The very essence of who we are, the soul, the character, resides in a physical organ. Phineas Gage taught us that to sabotage the body, particularly the physical organ of the frontal lobe, is to harm the character. Although we cannot expect to suffer a tamping rod accident, sadly, many of us perform slow frontal lobectomies on ourselves with substances and practices that compromise brain function. Some of those harmful practices include:

FRONTAL LOBE DAMAGERS

- Alcohol
- Illicit drugs
- Nicotine and caffeine
- Inappropriate use of prescription drugs
- Overuse of media such as TV and internet
- Poor nutrition
- Sedentary lifestyle

A good mood depends upon brain chemicals called “neurotransmitters.” One of the most important mood-elevating neurotransmitters is serotonin. Some people have naturally low levels of serotonin. Women overall have less serotonin than men.

Sometimes the person's natural brain chemistry is so poor that they need medication to correct it. However, before trying medication, certain lifestyle changes may help:

- Bright light therapy (10,000 lux lights can be bought for this purpose, or a person can simply spend time outside each day, preferably in the morning when they first wake up).
- A plant-based diet
- Exercise
- Supplements such as omega 3 fatty acids

THE THOUGHT-FEELING CONNECTION

Once we have a physically healthy brain, we can begin to work on our thoughts. It is important that we learn to let our reason guide our emotions, rather than the other way around. The connection between reason, thoughts and feelings resembles a boy walking a dog. Ideally, the dog “heels” and the boy decides where to walk. The dog is precious, fun, exciting, valuable, but not capable of making decisions. Too often the dog walks the boy, and both end up in the swamp. Many of us who fail to place reason before emotion end up in the same murky water.

Emotions can produce thoughts. A horror film may lead to obsession with zombies. Hormonal activity causes people to think they're in love. Political propagandists use emotion-stirring music to indoctrinate. Emotional arousal gives birth to thoughts that match the emotion. But much emotional conditioning, especially through the media, bypasses reason.

This can lead to emotional reasoning. Emotional reasoning says, “I feel sad, so something horrible must be happening,” or, “I'm anxious. This must be a dangerous place.” Emotional reasoning looks to feelings as a source of conclusive evidence. While we should respect our emotions, we should pass them through the filter of reason and evidence.

Another extreme in the thought-feeling continuum is failing to experience emotions at all. Some people so fear their emotions that they repress them, locking them away. Clinical and anecdotal experience suggests that women are more inclined to follow emotions and men are more inclined to repress them. Women tend to wallow, men tend to stuff. Learning how to use the gift of reason can actually free stuffers—those who repress their emotions, whether men or women—to experience emotions. This is because reason provides structure to help one deal with emotions.

Likewise, our worship of God, if grounded in truth, actually frees us emotionally. “God is Spirit. Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Sometimes we notice certain life events that lead to negative emotions. We might think that this is a direct cause-and-effect relationship, but something mediates between events and emotions, and that's called “cognitive processing.” You can't turn your emotions off and on like a light switch. But change your thoughts, and emotions tend to follow. Granted, they follow slowly—like two year-olds wandering behind their mother, dawdling to look at bugs and flowers—but they follow!

Often depressed or anxious people harbor extremely negative thought patterns such as, “No one loves me,” “I’m ugly, fat, and stupid,” or “Nothing ever works.” Tragically, these thoughts tend to set up a feedback loop in which their worst fears become reality. A little examination reveals how this self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome works.

A young man named Joe frequently repeated to himself the near-mantra, “I’m lonely and will never be loved.” Because of this belief, he was generally unfriendly and withdrawn, and people validated his belief by withdrawing from him. He believed they rejected him, but in reality they rejected his attitude and behaviors. When he finally started thinking differently, he acted differently, and ultimately felt differently. Finally, Joe started building relationships, one friendship at a time.

Negatively-biased, distorted thoughts are called *misbeliefs*. These misbeliefs act like hard, impenetrable ground; reality is unable to penetrate our thinking. Here’s what the scripture says about confronting our own misbeliefs: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God through the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. “Casting down” is from the Greek *kathaireo*, and can mean “demolish.” It’s a forceful process, this learning to dismantle our misbeliefs. We must be prepared to sweat.

FIND, ARGUE AND REPLACE

A three-part process may help us learn thought and emotional regulation. The process uses the acronym F.A.R., for Find, Argue and Replace. We’ll look at a brief version, then expand on each step:

FIND, ARGUE AND REPLACE (F.A.R.)

- Find:** Identify the negative event. Identify associated feelings. Identify the thoughts which support the feelings.
- Argue:** Ask yourself, “What’s wrong with that thought?” Forcefully dispute your own thinking.
- Replace:** Tell yourself the truth about the situation. Include the negative, but keep it in perspective.

Now let’s look at each of these three steps in more detail, as we learn to regulate our thoughts.

1. Find: The first step is to find misbeliefs. These misbeliefs tend to lurk in the unconscious and, like wild animals, evade detection. It can help to divide the “finding” process into three steps: Find the event, find the feeling, and find the thought. Finding the event means identifying the problematic circumstance or happening. Finding the feeling involves identifying the feeling that comes as a result of the event. Finding the thought entails identifying the distorted thinking that couples with the disturbed feelings.

For instance, Jasmine can readily identify the loss of her job as a cause for depression. But she lost her job over a year ago and could have recovered by now. The reason her depression continues is because she harbors certain misbeliefs that have paralyzed her and made finding a new job difficult. Jasmine identifies her emotions as feeling bewildered, despairing and devalued. Now she begins the process of identifying the

thoughts that underpin these feelings. Typically these distorted thoughts involve ourselves, other people, the future, and God. Here are Jasmine's thoughts: "I'm a loser," "Other people don't see me as valuable," "I'll never find a stable job," and "God doesn't care about me."

[Note to Presenter: For the following section, use handout re "Distorted Thoughts" as reference here. Later have groups do the activity.]

2. Argue. Now Jasmine is ready to argue with her thoughts. Notice this list of distorted thoughts. The list enumerates and defines such thought patterns as "catastrophizing," "overgeneralizing," and "mind reading." Jasmine identifies her thought patterns and learns to hold herself accountable for them. She learns to argue with her irrational self!

One technique used to facilitate this involves changing context. A counselor might say to Jasmine, "You're telling yourself that because you lost a job, you're a loser. If I lost my job, would you call me a loser?" Jasmine would say, "No, that would be unfair and cruel." Then the counselor would say, "So you're being cruel and unfair to yourself. Tell yourself to stop that!" Often the process of identifying core beliefs provides great relief. It resembles putting toxic waste in containers, taping them shut and labeling them.

3. Replace. Once the distorted thoughts are contained, the individual can start to replace them with truth. Truth is typically more nuanced and detailed than misbeliefs. "I'm a loser!" is replaced with, "I have failed and will fail, but I have also succeeded and will succeed. I'm not perfect, but I do make a contribution." Once the thoughts are brought under the control of reason, the emotions conform to the truthful, balanced thoughts and likewise become more balanced. We call this process "emotional regulation."

In Psalm 139:23-24, we read, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." "Wicked way" is from the Hebrew *otseb derek*, and can mean "habit of pain, toil, and idolatry." Through the guidance of God's Spirit, we can find within ourselves the habits of pain and toil that cut us off from God and contribute to our suffering and the suffering of others.

Learning to think clearly, using our God-given powers of reason, can make a big difference. God has given us the gifts of free will and of self-mastery through that free will. Through the power of His Holy Spirit, we can experience freedom from depression.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you recognize in yourself a tendency toward irrational or distorted thinking?
2. The ability to reason often involves tracing from cause to effect. Is there a recent event in your life that could be explained by looking at the cause and effect? Explain.
3. What traumatic experiences in your life may have caused you to develop negative thought patterns? How can you use F.A.R. to help overcome these patterns?

4. Do you ever allow emotion to overrule your reason? In what types of situation is this most likely to happen? Why do you think this is so?
5. From the “Distorted Thoughts” list, which thought pattern(s) are you the most likely to fall into? Explain.
6. What “ways of pain” has the Lord revealed to you—ways in which you make your own mood and situation worse?

ENDNOTES

¹ *Come Be My Light, the Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*, Brian Kolodiejchuk (Editor)

² Prevalence of Common Mental Disorders, John M. Grohol, Psy. D., downloaded from Psych Central at <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2009/10/05/prevalence-of-common-mental-disorders/>

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Nedley Health Solutions

www.nedleyhealthsolutions.com

Counseling

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, LPC, www.jenniferjill.org; jennifer@jenniferjill.org

American Associations of Christian Counselors database www.aacc.net

Hope Beyond Depression

by Jennifer Jill Schwirzer

“Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.”

Jeremiah 33:6

Many great and good people have battled with depression. Depression is one of the most common mental health diagnoses.

The diagnosis of depression is met when a person experiences many of the following symptoms:

MAJOR DEPRESSION

- Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day
- Significant weight loss when not dieting, or significant weight gain
- Decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day
- Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day
- Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day
- Recurrent thoughts of death
- Thoughts of and/or plans for suicide

One reason people develop depression is low serotonin in the brain. Sometimes medication is needed to correct this problem, but lifestyle changes should be attempted first.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy has been proven to help depression. It is actually biblical. God wants us to control our thoughts. When we do, our emotions will often follow. Cognitive-behavioral therapy helps us learn how to eradicate negative thought patterns, replacing them with positive, balanced thoughts.

ACTIVITY #1 - FEELING WORDS (ICEBREAKER)

Give each one a “Feeling Words” list. Sit in a circle and invite each person to describe how they feel at that moment using three feeling words they’ve never used before.

| | | | |
|------------------|---|---|--|
| Anger | aggravated appalled annoyed bitter cranky disgusted enraged | exasperated frustrated furious infuriated irritated offended provoked | repulsed resentful revolted troubled upset vicious |
| Anxiety | afraid alarmed agitated awkward bewildered cornered clumsy disgraced embarrassed | fearful flabbergasted frightened flustered helpless humiliated jittery | jumpy overwhelmed puzzled spooked shaken uncomfortable worried |
| Happiness | affectionate amused blissful charmed cheerful contented delighted ecstatic elated | excited fabulous fortunate giddy glad gratified high joyous jubilant | marvelous pleased proud soothed thrilled tickled wonderful |
| Hurt | abused alone betrayed broken broken-hearted damaged defeated deflated deserted | desolate despairing devalued devastated diminished grief-stricken grieved hurt insulted | intimidated miserable offended shattered self-conscious terrible wretched wounded |
| Sadness | abandoned alone anguished burdened dejected depressed deserted despondent disappointed discouraged disheartened | downcast empty excluded friendless gloomy helpless lonely inadequate incapable incompetent inferior | isolated low melancholy miserable moody powerless rejected slighted useless weary |

ACTIVITY #2 - DISTORTED THOUGHTS

Have all attendees work through the “Distorted Thoughts” document individually, following the instructions. Then form a circle and invite each person to share one distorted thought style to which they’re especially prone, including an example.

DISTORTED THOUGHTS

After each entry, rate your level of participation from 0 to 10 (10 being the most). Think of an example from your own experience.

1. **Catastrophizing:** You think that past, present and/or future events will be awful and unbearable. “If I don’t get an A, it will be horrible!”
2. **Mind reading:** Without evidence, you assume that your intuitions never misfire and that you know what people are thinking about you. “I can tell they hated my lecture.”
3. **Negative filtering:** You perceive only the worst of past and present events and circumstances. “Everyone I’ve ever known has rejected me.”
4. **Fortunetelling:** You assume the past is entirely predictive of the future, rather than allowing for change. “I failed in that relationship, so I must not have what it takes.”
5. **Discounting positives:** You trivialize the positive things you and others do: “Of course I take care of my children. Who wouldn’t?”
6. **Overgeneralizing:** You apply negative traits or actions to the entire person or situation. “My husband can’t do anything right!”
7. **Dichotomous thinking:** You regard situations and people in all-or-nothing, black-and-white terms. “Either we have fun on this campout, or we don’t!”
8. **Shoulds:** You see people and events entirely in terms of ideals rather than reality. “People should be friendly and warm.”
9. **Personalizing:** You take an undue amount of responsibility upon yourself. “If I looked better, my husband wouldn’t be into pornography.”
10. **Blaming:** You project personal responsibility onto other people or circumstances. “If he had been kinder, I wouldn’t have cheated. He made me do it!”
11. **Unfair comparisons:** You view yourself in contrast to unrealistic standards. “If I’m not as smart as he is, I won’t even try.”

- 12. Self-inflation:** You claim personal assets, achievements and abilities while lacking the courage to test your beliefs. “I’m a great singer. If I tried, I could be famous.”
- 13. Regret orientation:** You focus on past mishaps, assuming that they have been ruinous to your life. “If only I hadn’t gotten that surgery!”
- 14. Emotional reasoning:** You believe that because you feel something, it must be so. “I’m feeling guilty. I must be guilty!”
- 15. Overidentifying:** You see yourself entirely in terms of one trait or event. “My shyness makes me into a complete, antisocial reject.”
- 16. Overvaluing:** You attribute to others excessive authority or worth in contrast to yourself and/or others. “She always knows what’s best for me. She’s never wrong! I can’t take a step without her.”
- 17. Monsterifying:** You exaggerate the wrongs of others, attributing to them a global pattern of evil for which you lack evidence. “She’s wholly given over to evil and can’t be trusted.”
- 18. Projecting:** You see others through the lens of your own traits, assuming they share them. “Of course he was angry! *I’d* be angry!”
- 19. Supernaturalizing:** You interpret events and circumstances too readily and confidently in terms of direct divine intervention. “People don’t like me, so God must be judging me.”
- 20. Singling:** You place yourself in position of complete contrast to others. “God’s forgiveness is for everyone, but I’m too evil.”
- 21. Judgment focus:** You view events, situations or people completely in terms of how they measure against some arbitrary standard, rather than just seeing things for what they are. “He’s too talkative and people don’t like him because of it.” (Thanks to Leehy and Holland for some of these concepts.)

ACTIVITY #3. F.A.R.

Have each person fill out the F.A.R. sheet. Afterwards, sit in a circle and review one entry from each person’s sheet.

F.A.R. EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to assist in thought control, which helps stabilize mood and emotions. The process consists of three main steps: Find, Argue and Replace, or “F.A.R.”

F=Find: First, find (identify) the triggering event or circumstance, such as, “My boss ignores me,” or “Traffic jam.” Now, learn to identify your anxious or sad feelings and admit to yourself that you’re feeling them. You can use the list called “Feeling Words.”

Next, find the thoughts that underlie the feelings. These may be ideas such as: “I will miss this deadline, lose my job, and live in poverty.” Or “That person thinks they’re better than me. I can’t take being put down!” Finding the underlying thoughts will take time and energy, even prayer, because often these thoughts are unconscious, or nearly so. As you recognize them, write them down in the space provided.

Congratulations, you’ve accomplished the first step!

A=Argue: Learn to argue with yourself. Use the “Distorted Thoughts” list. In doing this, you are breaking up the fallow ground of your own thinking so that the seed of truth can take root. Tell yourself what’s wrong with the way you’re thinking: “I’m catastrophizing missing the deadline. I’m making it much worse than it is!” Or “Where is the evidence [Lee] thinks she’s better than I am? I’m mindreading. And I’m also catastrophizing how hard it is to deal with an arrogant person.”

In this step, you’re not beating yourself up so much as confronting yourself, holding yourself accountable for the way you’re treating yourself, just like you’d confront someone who said similar things to an innocent child. In other words, you’re telling yourself to stop hurting yourself.

R=Replace: Learn to replace misbeliefs with truth. Truth will typically be much more nuanced, complex and detailed than distorted thinking.

If the distorted thought is, “My wife is an idiot and I can’t stand it!” then the truth would be something like, “My wife gets distracted sometimes when too much is going on. She loses her concentration. Sometimes she makes mistakes, like locking the keys in the car or leaving the stove on all night. Most of the time, the mistakes aren’t catastrophic. A few times they have caused inconvenience. But she’s a PhD in Microbiology, so it’s not that she lacks intelligence. I get frustrated with her, but her occasional flakiness isn’t horrible, it’s just irritating.”

Truth has shades of gray, whereas distorted thinking tends to be extreme, very black and white.

Use the following table to write down your answers.

| FIND | ARGUE | REPLACE |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Event: Feeling word: Thought: | | |
| Event: Feeling word: Thought: | | |
| Event: Feeling word: Thought: | | |

| | | |
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Session 5

Healing Past Hurts

by Jennifer Jill Schwirzer

“Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind...”

Psalms 26:2

Susan, a frazzled single mom, moved to our community. She seemed loveable and fun, if a little scatter-brained. It came as a shock years later to learn that she abused and even tortured her children. She punished them with beatings and psychological torture, even stuffing them into laundry bags and leaving them for hours in a closet. All this ended when her son and daughter, now young adults, strangled her, stuffing her body in a steamer trunk, which they threw into the river.

What a sad result of childhood abuse!

Parenting places upon human beings a solemn responsibility to build the characters of the children after the likeness of God. Parents, psychologically speaking, stand as God to their children. Yet the picture they present can go horribly wrong. Unfortunately, parents often pass to their children curses instead of blessings.

In considering the sad case of Susan, it is quite probable that this abusive mother was abused herself. Approximately one-third of children from abusive homes go on to become abusers.¹ Generation after generation the hurt continues until something happens to stop the insanity. That person can be you. That person can be me.

But in our awareness of the prevalence of abuse, we must take care not to allow sad stories to fill our minds. We must be solution-focused. The fact is that many abused children do *not* abuse, do *not* pass the behavior to the next generation.²

How do we deal with—and heal from—past hurts? How does God remove from our souls the dysfunctional patterns that cause us to bring past pain into the next generation? Let us explore the answers to these questions.

All of us inherit a package of individual traits from our genetics and environment. The packages differ. Some of us grow up in happy homes, some in abusive or addictive homes. Some have it harder than others. But we all have past wounds from which we need to heal.

Perhaps our own wisdom can't help us heal, but Jesus can show us how to live. Because of Him, our disadvantages don't have to become disasters. Through Him, our tests may become testimonies.

NATURE, NURTURE, AND BEYOND

Science identifies biological factors, or *nature*, and environmental factors, or *nurture*, as the two contributors to our individual trait package. What makes us who we are? Is it nature? Is it nurture? A little of both? Or something more? Actually, the scientific model falls short of the complexity of the truth. Biology plays a role, environment plays a role, yes; but so does choice. The nature/nurture debaters never seem to mention this. Thank God, we have more self-determination than cells in a Petri dish or even instinct-driven rats in a cage. We possess a mysterious, wonderful free will, which mingles with nature and nurture, producing the complex reality of our present selves. We'll explore nature, nurture and choice one by one.

Tendencies come from:

- Nature
- Nurture
- Choice

NATURE

Every living organism begins with a substance called deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA—an acid that carries the genetic information in the cell. You may have seen the double helix figure that looks like a twisted ladder. That's DNA. Select a short segment of that ladder and you have a gene.

Twist the ladder over and over, kind of bunching it up to form it into either an “X” or “Y” shape, and you have chromosomes. Your mother and father each gave you 23 chromosomes, which were “cut and pasted” into the new “file” of 46 chromosomes that was *you*.³ This file of chromosomes determines your genetic make-up. Science continues to learn more about genetic factors linked to various mental illnesses.

Although establishing genetic causality for mental disorders requires an exacting, expensive process, the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) have established the heritability of several disorders:

- Schizophrenia
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

- Bipolar disorder
- Early onset depression
- Autism
- Anorexia nervosa
- Panic disorder.³

There are others, and more will be discovered in the future. But scientists emphasize that people inherit a *disposition* toward these diseases rather than the disease itself.

The biological factors in mental health reach far beyond genetics. For instance, premenstrual syndrome (PMS) can be a factor in a host of disorders such as depression and addictions. (“Why does it take six women with PMS to screw in a light bulb?” “It just *does*, okay??”) I know a lady with premenstrual dysphoric disorder, an extreme form of PMS. She’s one of the sanest people I know, except for “that time of the month,” when she simply comes unglued. Another woman had panic attacks about putting her baby in the microwave—until she received treatment for low thyroid; then the panic attacks stopped. The point is simple: that biology, or “nature,” factors heavily into mental health. This is why good medical treatment considers all the aspects of our being—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual.

NURTURE

Nurture begins with prenatal influences. Our earliest “home environment” is that warm, dark place we call the womb. At no developmental stage are we more susceptible to our surroundings than this one. Certain disorders, such as fetal alcohol syndrome, develop prenatally. Beyond these extremes, a host of traits are communicated through the umbilical cord; after all, mother and unborn child share a bloodstream. Ellen White said of the mother, “If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of her child.”⁵

The birth process itself matters. Birth is a demanding, often traumatic event requiring physical and emotional support for mother and child. If the mother has few financial and social resources, if the birth is a difficult one, or if the child wasn’t planned, a normally stressful event becomes overwhelming. Both mother and child can develop psychological complications from inadequate care in childbirth.

Humans need adequate touch stimulation, especially in infancy. A condition called “failure to thrive” (FTT) causes an infant to “give up” on life, lose interest in eating, and eventually die. FTT has been correlated with inadequate touch and face-to-face contact with the primary caregiver. Trivial as it seems, cuddling and goo-goo-gaa-gaaing a child does much to foster brain development and bonding ability. God designed breastfeeding to facilitate this; plus he made babies cute and squeezably soft.

Relationships within the home also teach tiny tots, by example and experience, how to bond. When parents fail to attach to their infants, the child can pay the price in a condition called reactive attachment disorder (RAD). A child with RAD either withdraws totally or bonds indiscriminately; in either case, the child’s trust-building “machinery” misfires.

The home environment weighs heavily in the development of the child's character. Children learn by imitation. For instance, when they observe their parents working through conflict, accepting one another, forgiving one another, and generally enjoying a healthy bond, they are likely to learn to do the same. The most valuable gift parents can give their children is their own healthy relationship.

This principle works negatively, too. Parents who argue, abuse, and reject one another hurt their child's chances of forming healthy relationships. The home, designed by God to be heaven's prep school, sometimes becomes hell's boot camp.

Any life trauma or major stressor, particularly in childhood, is part of the "nurture" package. Abuse, relational trauma, rejection, bullying, academic pressure, poverty, divorce, natural disasters, personal misfortune—any or all of these things can pour down like rain on a weary soul. People exposed to these problems can develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or the less-severe acute stress reaction.

To summarize, prenatal factors, congenital factors, early, mid, and late childhood home influences, primary caregiver relationships, and life experience together constitute the "nurture" of the nature/nurture complex. Fortunately, neither nature nor nurture has the final say about the person we become.

CHOICE

"Those who put their trust in Christ are not to be enslaved by any hereditary or cultivated habit or tendency. Instead of being held in bondage to the lower nature, they are to rule every appetite and passion. God has not left us to battle with evil in our own finite strength. Whatever may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that He is ready to impart."⁵

God has given us the precious blessing of free will. Choice has, within limits, the final say about the person we become. Our choices essentially direct the choir of our inherited tendencies. The director can't turn sopranos into basses, but he can awaken and cultivate the natural voice. Although we may be unable to change our hereditary or environmental heritage, we can learn to choose wisely.

Recently, scientists have begun to understand something called gene expression. *Epigenetics*—as the science of gene expression is called—essentially says that we can activate or de-activate our genes. Here's a brief explanation: Every cell in your body contains a nucleus with your DNA—your entire genetic code. This DNA expresses itself differently in different parts of the body. In your eye cells, the eye-color part of your DNA expresses itself; but it's switched off in your liver cells, because your liver doesn't need to know your eye color. Because of this switching off, only 10 to 20% of genes are active in any given cell. This prevents genes of one cell type from being expressed in another.

Similar to a cell phone losing function when you drive through a tunnel, certain biological processes can "turn off" genes. For instance, adults often lose the ability to digest milk because certain aspects of aging "turned off" their production of lactase. These "turner-offs" can be brought into our cells through our food, environment, or bodily processes.

Most importantly, our *choices* affect gene expression. Specifically, we can “activate” certain diseases, including mental disorders such as addiction, by choosing to engage in those behaviors. While we may have the DNA for alcoholism, it is the choice to drink, and thus expose ourselves to alcohol, that brings about changes that snowball into addiction.

IT’S NOT OUR FAULT, IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Let’s bring all these factors into to the arena of inner healing. We have been created with the purpose of reflecting the character of God. Our failure to do this is called “sin.” Secular psychology ignores this concept for the most part, but the Bible teaches that true healing includes moral regeneration. In other words, we can’t fully heal without dealing with our sin problem. Our typical, human response to genetically and environmentally inherited wounds is to worsen them by *sinning* in response to *sin*. *Sinners* do that very well. To illustrate: In 1966, Marine Corps sharp-shooter and University of Texas student Charles Whitman, after killing his mother and wife, climbed the University tower and shot 46 innocent passersby. Psychological assessments revealed that Whitman had a perfectionistic, abusive father. He probably inherited the father’s hostile temperament both genetically and environmentally. Then he raged in response to rage. He sinned in response to sin.

How do we break this reactive cycle? How can we rise above inherited tendencies to evil? How can we heal from the internal damage of sin? I would suggest three steps: gain insight, receive comfort, and take responsibility.

GAIN INSIGHT

As a first step, we must connect the dots between our past hurts and present patterns. Ellen White said, “God would have His servants become acquainted with the moral machinery of their own hearts.”⁷ David prayed, “Examine me, oh Lord, and prove me. Try my mind and my heart” (Psalm 26:2). Since “thoughts and feelings combined make up moral character,”⁸ acquaintance with our “moral machinery” requires that we have emotional *and* cognitive self-awareness.

But notice that we acquire this self-awareness in partnership with God. “*You* examine me, God,” David prayed. We need both God’s laser of truth and His balm of love in our process of self-discovery. This process can be catalyzed by fasting, prayer, counseling, and Bible study, but God’s timing also plays a part. He knows when to confront us with the past and arranges circumstances for this purpose. A young American woman visited her childhood home in Germany, and when she began speaking German with her relatives, forgotten scenes of childhood sexual abuse flooded her memory. She believed that God had prepared her emotionally and spiritually for that revelation.

Psychodynamic therapy, or “insight-oriented therapy” stresses the need for self-understanding and exploration of the past, particularly childhood. It has empirical support,⁹ but, like all therapies, can be taken too far. When people “dig around too much,” they can sometimes become depressed or alienated from loved ones. We must remember that the object of revisiting the past is to get *better* rather than *bitter*. We need to *walk through* the past without *wallowing in* it. As much as we need insight into how others’ actions to-

ward us have affected us, we need even sharper insight into how our own reactions have compounded the damage. Being sinned against hurts us, no question. Especially severe childhood abuse and neglect take a heavy toll on future health. But our destructive responses to sin sustain the worst damage. In the end, as Ellen G. wrote, “the heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin.”¹⁰

Counseling can be very helpful in processing a painful childhood. Sharing your story in a safe place with a safe, compassionate person can be healing and helpful. After venting painful emotions, identify your own destructive responses. This part can be difficult, because we generally dislike taking responsibility and prefer to blame others. At the same time, taking responsibility helps us gain back the power lost through being wounded by other people. Dwelling upon what I *can* change breeds hope and courage; dwelling upon what I *can't* change breeds despair, fear and frustration. I can't change the past. I can't ultimately change other people. But I can, by the grace of God, change myself by making better choices.

RECEIVE COMFORT

This process is very delicate. We must come to understand that Jesus knows our needs and weaknesses. The Scriptures teach that God's Son, the “brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Hebrew 1:3), “shared in the same” “flesh and blood,” was “made like His brethren,” and “suffered being tempted,” so that he could “aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:14, 18). This means something very simple, and very encouraging; when we go to Jesus with our tempted souls, He resonates. He empathizes. Somehow He retains His spotless purity, yet knows the struggles of sinful human beings.

Most of us try to purge ourselves of sin before coming to Jesus. This is like being so ashamed of my crooked teeth that I try to straighten them in order to impress the orthodontist. As pertains to our sin-inflicted wounds, the crooked must approach the Straightener in our crooked state or be doomed to everlasting crookedness!

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Our sinful tendencies give our carnal natures a specific shape, as unique as a fingerprint. One man's great sin is alcohol; a woman caves in to gossip; a youth to lust. Sin can take innocuous forms like eating too many sweets, or heinous forms such as pedophilia. One man I know developed a foot fetish—a sexual fascination with feet—which he battled constantly. Sin can morph into as many forms as there are individuals in the world.

We can't change the shape of our carnal nature, but we can choose whether or not to feed it. Feed it, and it grows. Starve it, and it weakens. It's not our fault that we receive genetic and developmental disadvantages. It's not our fault when we suffer abuse that sets us up for addictions, emotional scars and relational problems. The wounds of the past are NOT OUR FAULT! But what we do with them *is* our responsibility. We can let our lower nature react, feeding the beast within, obtaining momentary gratification, but ultimately sacrificing everything dear to us. Or we can starve the beast and feed the spirit.

The gospel of John depicts a wonderful metaphor of human choice. Pilate stood Jesus alongside Barabbas. What a strange juxtaposition—the innocent, holy God-man and the vicious thief. Pilate then said, “Which one do you want me to release to you?”

- “Barabbas!” the people shouted.
- “What should I do with Jesus called Christ?” Pilate pled.
- “Crucify Him!” they screamed.
- “Why? What evil has He done?”
- “Crucify Him!” (See Matthew 27:15-23).

We know that Pilate released Barabbas and crucified Jesus. Our destiny hangs today on the same choice. We can’t change the shape of our inner Barabbas, but we can choose whether to free him or not. We can crucify Jesus out of our hearts and free Barabbas to actuate our worst tendencies. Or, we can crucify Barabbas, the carnal nature with all its hate, lust, envy, and pride, and free Jesus to live within us. Crucify Jesus, free Barabbas. Crucify Barabbas, free Jesus. We must ultimately choose one or the other.

You know which choice I recommend. If you crucify Barabbas and free Jesus, you’ll allow into those dark crevasses of your soul the healing presence of Love. He can heal those hurts too deep to speak out loud and feed those hungers never satisfied. He can even break generational strongholds to create a new legacy for your children. The promise is, “If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers . . . if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land” (Leviticus 26:40-42). Through the gospel, the passing of sin to sin from one generation to the next can stop with you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. People don’t always respond negatively to childhood abuse and trauma. What do you think makes the difference between a constructive and a destructive response?
2. When you completed the “Mental Health Checklist,” what present, changeable contributors did you identify?
3. Do you know any prenatal, birth, or childhood traumas that may contribute to some of your present struggles? If so, what are they?
4. Did you come from a “touchy,” affectionate home, or a more reserved home? Was love expressed verbally, or not? How do these things impact you now?
5. Were there any parental or other behaviors you learned to imitate in positive ways? Have you carried on the legacy of any negative behaviors such as criticism, anger, withdrawal, etc.?
6. Have you experienced, through the power of choice and God’s grace, overcoming any negative behaviors? Explain.

7. Can people experience emotional healing apart from moral and spiritual healing? Share your thoughts on that.
8. Have you, so far in this seminar, gained insights about your “moral machinery”? Share your experience.
9. Have you ever gotten “stuck” wallowing in past hurts? Explain.
10. Does knowing the love of Jesus make you more inclined to take responsibility for your choices? Explain.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect. Child Welfare Information Gateway. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013. Retrieved from http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.cfm
- ² Oliver, J.E., Intergenerational transmission of child abuse: rates, research and clinical implications; *Am J Psychiatry*. 1993 Sep;150(9):1315-24.
- ³ Speaking of cut and paste, this is a kindergarten explanation.
- ⁴ See, for instance, www.enterthefreudianslip.com/surgeon_general_mental_health_ch2_overview_of_etiology_the_genetics_of_behavior.htm.
- ⁵ *Temperance*, pp. 171-172.
- ⁶ White, E.G., *Counsels on Health*, p. 440.
- ⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, v. 4, p. 84.
- ⁸ White, E.G., *Testimonies for the Church*, v. 5, p. 310.
- ⁹ Jonathan Shedler, Getting to know me, *Scientific American Mind*, November/December 2010, p. 53, reports a study that compiled the results of 23 randomized trials involving 1,431 patients who suffer from depression, anxiety, stress-related physical ailments and other psychological problems. The study showed a greater effect size for psychodynamic therapy than either CBT or antidepressants.
- ¹⁰ White, E.G., *Desire of Ages*, p. 328.

Healing Past Hurts

by Jennifer Jill Schwirzer

“Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind”

Psalms 26:2

Often unhealthy patterns can be passed down from one generation to another. But not always!

Three things combine to give us our package of tendencies:

1. Nature (biological factors, such as genetics)
2. Nurture (environmental factors, such as the way we grew up)
3. Choice (our own chosen responses to influences of nature and nurture)

We can't control the first two very much, but we can learn to make better choices!

1. **Nature** refers primarily to genetics. Many different mental disorders are “heritable,” meaning the tendency can be inherited. Fortunately, in most cases, there's much we can do to prevent the development of these disorders.
2. **Nurture** refers to our environment, beginning with prenatal influence, and continuing through the birth process, early infancy and childhood.
3. **Choice.** God has given us a free will. Just because we've inherited, both genetically and environmentally, tendencies toward addiction or other hurtful behaviors, we don't have to live that way. If we align our wills with His, Jesus will give us the victory.

The science of epigenetics, or gene expression, proves that we can activate and de-activate certain genetic tendencies.

Remember: “It's not our fault; but it is our responsibility!”

We can make sure our tendencies don't become hurtful practices by taking responsibility for ourselves in three steps.

1. **Gain insight.** Through counseling and/or prayer, come to understand how our past has affected us.

- 2. Receive comfort.** Come to know Jesus, the One who was tempted in all points as we are, but without sin. Come to believe His sympathy and love for us.
- 3. Take responsibility.** Use our God-given will to make healthy choices, choices that will preserve us instead of harming us, and free us up to serve God and others.

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Reframing** (icebreaker) Sit in a circle and have each person share a disappointment or misfortune from their past. Don't use devastating, horrible things such as abuse or death, but mild, even humorous misfortunes. After sharing, "reframe" the event, showing the "silver lining."
- 2. Mental Health Checklist** (see the check list at the end) Have each participant fill out the mental health checklist. The goal is to have each person identify one to three things he or she can change to raise their overall mental health level.
- 3. Sharing and Praying.** Sit in a circle and, after establishing group confidentiality (no one in the group shares what they hear outside the circle), have each person share a wound from the past. After sharing, lay hands and pray corporately for the healing of that wound.

MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST

Instructions: Check the things that apply to you. The goal is to eliminate everything "fixable," reducing the number to five or fewer total checked items.

| Past | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Family history of mental illness | |
| Early childhood trauma or abuse | |
| Previous episode of mental illness | |
| Raised by parents with mental illness | |
| Extreme home of origin dysfunction | |
| Childhood divorce or parental absence | |
| Recent major life stress | |
| Low birth weight | |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Present—fixed | |
| Brain injury or defect | |
| Premenstrual syndrome | |
| Menopause or perimenopause | |
| Recent birth | |
| Single parent | |
| Widowed | |
| Present—possibly flexible | |
| Living with an addict | |
| Serious marital conflict | |
| Raising grandchildren | |
| Chronic pain/ health problems | |
| Regular insomnia | |
| Poverty | |
| Hepatitis C | |
| Recent head injury | |
| Stroke | |
| Heart disease | |
| Terminal cancer | |
| Parkinson's disease | |
| Diabetes | |
| Thyroid disease | |
| Adrenal gland disease | |
| Lupus | |
| Infection | |

*“God grant me the
serenity to accept
the things I cannot
change, the courage
to change the things
I can, and the
wisdom to know the
difference.”*

Reinhold Neibuhr

| | |
|--|--|
| Present—flexible | |
| Lack of social support (loneliness) | |
| Irregularity in schedule (meals, etc.) | |
| Too little sleep (<6 hours/day) | |
| Too much sleep (>9 hours/day) | |
| Smoking | |
| Drug or alcohol abuse | |
| Heavy caffeine use | |
| Lack of exercise | |
| Lack of sunlight | |
| Lack of fresh air | |
| High fat diet | |
| High sugar diet | |
| High protein, low complex carb diet | |
| Nutritional deficiencies* | |
| Overuse of stimulating media | |
| Internet or electronic game addiction | |
| Immorality and/or sex addiction | |
| Total | |

*For a comprehensive treatment of diet and other medical causes for depression, see *Depression: The Way Out* by Neil Nedley



Session 6

Forgiveness and Your Health – Part 1

Adapted from *I Forgive You, But...* (Pacific Press, 2007) and other sources.

by Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D.

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

Exodus 34:6-7

The story is told of two monks who were walking along a riverbank when they came upon a distressing situation. A young woman who had evidently been trying to cross the river by jumping from one stone to another had accidentally slipped and fallen into the water. She was struggling with her heavy, water-soaked skirt to get to the other side, but the more she struggled, the more she sank into the water.

The elder monk, realizing her danger, jumped into the water, picked her up and placed her safely on the other side. She thanked him for saving her life and the old monk went back to join his brother on their way back to the monastery. Since they had made a vow of silence until sunset, neither one commented on what had happened.

But when the sun went down, the younger monk went to his elder companion and said, “What were you thinking back there? Don’t you remember that we have a vow of chastity? Why, we’re not even supposed to look at a woman, let alone *touch* one!” He continued haranguing the older monk who sat patiently waiting for the young man to finish. When he did, the elder monk turned to his companion and said, “My dear brother, I let that girl go ten hours ago. It seems to me you’ve been carrying her around all day!”

WHAT THIS SEMINAR IS ABOUT

This seminar is about letting go of long-held harmful feelings related to past or present offenses, healing those feelings and thoughts, and moving on with hope toward the future. You will learn how to honor your “temple of the Holy Spirit” by putting into practice the simple yet profoundly healing principles of forgiveness found in Holy Scripture and in forgiveness studies. In summary, you will learn how to

1. **let go** of a past hurt,
2. **release the energy** you’re now wasting on rehearsing over and over what happened to you and how angry you are about it, and
3. **focus that energy** on present projects and future possibilities.

And, finally, you’ll learn **some practical tips** on how to get past an offense through the **use of various effective strategies**. Through the biblical, psychological, and sociological principles shared here, you will experience improved mental and physical health through the **POWER OF FORGIVENESS!**

As you will see, forgiveness is not some mindless “cover up” or some spur-of-the-moment act of expediency. It requires: 1) careful consideration, 2) a willingness to hold the offender accountable, 3) a determination to set new boundaries, and 4) the generous disposition to release the debtor from the debt owed you. Forgiveness is not “cheap grace.” It always recognizes that this gift “costs” something. Therefore it should be given with the most careful thought, weighing the pros and cons as to when it will be given, but, in the end, *it should be given*.

This seminar relies on information gleaned from the book, *I Forgive You, But...* (Pacific Press, 2007) and other resources and presentations on this topic. If you want to read more deeply into this topic, a list of suggested books, DVDs, and websites is provided.

This topic, Forgiveness and your Health, will be covered in two seminars. We will cover important aspects of the significance of forgiveness to our health. These two seminars will include the 12 Biblical principles of forgiveness. The first nine principles will be presented in this seminar, and the last three principles will be covered in Forgiveness and your Health Seminar, Part 2.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS

Let’s begin with some definitions of forgiveness. This is an important first step because there are transactions between offender and offended that pass for forgiveness, but which are not.

OLD TESTAMENT DEFINITION OF FORGIVENESS

In Exodus 34: 6,7 we read, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty.”

Here we have the two sides of God's forgiveness: justice and mercy. On the one hand, *compassion and patience* motivated by untiring love, and, on the other, *boundary-setting for the unrepentant*. In His dealings with the children of Israel, God's demands for justice and righteousness (right doing) from His people are the conditions for their receiving His forgiveness. Yet forgiveness is offered, even when there is reluctance to meet the conditions. Forgiving, and giving sinners second, third, fourth or more chances, is accompanied by reprimands, outrage, confrontations, imploring, disciplining and punishing, but always leaving the door open for repentance and confession. Even after rejecting the children of Israel's central role in the "old" covenant, He created a "new" one that included them, if they chose to accept it.

Human forgiveness must also consist of justice and mercy. If we interpret forgiveness as justice alone, then it can easily become *vengeance*. If we interpret forgiveness as solely mercy, we can fall into *cheap grace*, leaving the door open for further abuse of the gracious gift. **True forgiveness balances the demands of justice and the invitations of mercy.**

NEW TESTAMENT DEFINITION OF FORGIVENESS

The New Testament picks up on the balanced understanding of forgiveness that the Old Testament prophets taught: a balance of justice and mercy.

The word *charizomai* is the Greek term that is used to refer to the forgiveness that God gave the world through His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. It means to grant a favor gratuitously out of kindness, not from any worthiness on the part of the receiver. It implies rescuing or delivering someone from certain danger or death.

God spread His *charizomai* far and wide, freely attributing our sins to the Lamb of God, leaving our record irrefutably clean, and opening the way for all to repent and be forgiven. Fallen humanity did nothing to earn this gift of forgiveness—no acknowledgements of sin, no repentance or confession. It was His love, His empathy, His compassion, His infinity of spirit that gave us *charizomai*. And that forgiveness has the potential to restore us to a life of joy here and now and to an eternal life with our wonderful Savior. The "Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) makes all of this possible through His infinitely loving *charizomai* offered to all who will but accept it by faith!

The other Greek word translated as forgiveness, *aphiemi*, applies specifically to those who have accepted God's *charizomai*, who are now believers, and who have begun their walk with Christ. The term has various meanings: "to put or send away"; "to remit or omit"; "to separate from." This is what God does through Christ every time He forgives us in order to safeguard our relationship with Him. Through the transactions of our confession and repentance, acknowledging with gratitude the gift of forgiveness that has already been given us, we, the forgiven, take hold of God's *aphiemi* to live the life of forgiveness.

This new life represents a break with the old life. Knowing that we are forgiven (God erases our past sins through the gift of undeserved **justification**) is what opens the door for a change of heart that continues through a process of transformation called **sanctification**. I call it the "**forgiveness**

journey.” Practicing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26) in order to cultivate a forgiving spirit; learning every day how to forgive—even our enemies—is precisely what it means to be sanctified. Now you can understand why sanctification is the work of a lifetime!

OTHER DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS

What is forgiveness? Let’s look at how some others have defined it.

- It is turning the other cheek in the face of a crass injustice.
 - It is an unmerited act of good will.
 - The relationship is healed to the extent that the same generousities characteristic of a true friendship are shared.
 - Paradoxically, on conceding forgiveness to the other, the injured party is healed,
 - Far from being a mere obligation, it is a gift that the injured party chooses to give, freely, to the offender.
 - The former overwhelms the latter with kindness.
- (from International Forgiveness Institute, Robert Enright, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
<http://www.forgiveness-institute.org>)

McCullough, Sandage, and Worthington define it thus:

“Forgiveness is an increase in our internal motivation to repair and maintain a relationship after the relationship has been damaged by the hurtful actions of the other person.”

Worthington defines it as follows:

“Experientially, forgiveness seems more like an act that goes beyond moral duty, a supererogatory [atoning] act rooted not in our sense of duty, but in our capability for charity and benevolence.”

These definitions developed by Christian psychologists underscore **the restorative quality of forgiveness**. What was broken is now restored, **perhaps not to its original state, but to a reasonable facsimile** that allows the forgiver and, hopefully, the forgiven, to repair the emotional damage caused by the hurtful event. **These definitions go so far as to suggest that there is a “forgiveness gene” in each of us that needs the healing that only forgiveness can bring.** We don’t forgive just to fulfill a moral duty, but to fill our need to keep the flow of love going outward.

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

The International Forgiveness Institute suggests that forgiveness is not any of the following:

- Passing over or ignoring the offense (“Time heals all wounds; this too shall pass.”)
- Denying the reality of the offense (“I never did anything. It’s all in your imagination.”)
- Diminishing the importance of what happened (“Nothing serious happened here. It was only once. It won’t happen again.”)
- Excusing the offender (“She was tired, upset, etc., and was not responsible for her actions.”)

- Holding the offender hostage (“He deserves to know that he offended me. I will not let him forget it.”)

Even though there is a profound need that God has put in each of us to forgive, there is a part of us that views forgiveness with suspicion. We withhold it because most of us want justice to be served to the offender *first* before we bestow such a precious gift on such an undeserving person! So we use **strategies of evasion and manipulation**, such as those listed above, and believe that we have taken care of the situation. The truth is that if we don’t take care of a hurtful action perpetrated against us **in a way that takes care of our own guilt at not truly forgiving**, we will continue to carry anger—in one or more of its manifestations—in our minds. This mental burden will sooner or later reveal itself as physical illness. In this sense, **unforgiveness is a psychosomatic disease!**

What happens when I perceive that I’ve experienced an injustice or a betrayal?

Anger is generally the first response to a real or perceived injustice. This is not all bad. Anger is a form of self-preservation that allows the wronged party to defend him or herself or escape the source of danger. This explains why the Bible does not prohibit becoming angry (Ephesians 4:26 and Psalm 4:4), but does **exhort us not to hang on to anger over the long haul**. Long-term anger that turns into cynicism and distrust of others can do us the most harm. Psalm 30:5 reminds us that even God gets angry, but His anger lasts only for a while. His favor is what lasts a lifetime!

After the initial anger, there follows a **sense of shame** that overwhelms the injured party. This shame arises from the assumption that the world we live in is safe and benevolent and, therefore, **we don’t deserve hurtful actions directed at us**. That assumption explains why an injustice directed at us always surprises us. We can also be surprised when we believe that we are incapable of hurting another person. Acknowledging that one is a sinner does not necessarily mean one is able to see one’s actions as hurtful from another person’s perspective. And even if one was not entirely responsible for the hurtful act, **there is the shame of being victimized**. That shame grows out of the fear that others will believe that the injustice was deserved.

The next response that arises from the sense of shame is **the need to blame**. Again, our shock at the implicit accusation in the injustice that we deserve the hurtful act causes us **to seek a source inside or outside ourselves to blame for the offense**. We may assume we did something to deserve this hurtful act (this response is typical of children who are victimized), or we may conclude that all of this offense must be laid fully at the feet of another. As we will see later, depending on our personality type as adults, we will respond differently to this need to blame. **At any rate, any response will need to take into account the fact that offenses between adults require that both the wrongdoer and the wronged party must take their share of the blame for the hurtful event.**

As an outgrowth of the shame and blame stage of responding to an offense, **denial** provides yet another **means of escaping** acceptance of responsibility (the perpetrator) or the need to address a wrongful accusation or act (the victim). If the wronged party remains in the denial stage, it will be easy for them to begin to **create the grudge story**. The story about what happened to create the offense is important to tell if you want to move on from the damage caused by the offense. But **a grudge story is a story that has gotten stuck**. Dr. Fred Luskin compares it to an airplane that flies around and around the landing field without ever landing. The same story is told over and over again with the same players, the same arguments, the same justifications for holding on to the grudge.

These are the typical responses humans have to a hurtful event: anger, shame and blame, denial, and the grudge story. As damaging as these responses are to the person who clings to them, when we are victimized by an offense, ironically we tend to cling to them for dear life! It was the Swiss education philosopher, Jean Piaget, who stated that the first human response to an offense is *CONSERVATIONAL*. That is, our tendency is **to keep things as they are**, even if they are miserable! This typical response tends to preserve anger, fear, hurt, and resentment. Initially these are meant to protect the victim, giving him or her a sense of control over an action that has caused pain or threatened their wellbeing. However, if held onto over the long run, **the pain of the past will constantly invade the present**, affecting negatively the mental, physical, and spiritual life.

Forgiveness has the potential to break this vicious cycle. Psychologists Pargament and Rye developed a *TRANSFORMATIONAL* model, based on forgiveness, for responding to an offense. The decision to forgive motivates the self from self-protection to active pursuit of peace (i.e., forgiveness and reconciliation). This decision is fulfilled through the practice of:

Reframing: A process of trying to see the offender under a different, more empathetic light, seeing him/her as a vulnerable child, for example. This process includes **humanizing** the offender (no longer seen as a “monster”), **empathizing** with the “wounded inner child” of the offender, **reappraisal** of the relationship (“Can we be friends again?”), and **social facilitation**, i.e., seeking ways back to a possible relationship with the offender, albeit different from the previous relationship.

We will deal with these strategies for transformation through forgiveness later. For the moment, we want to know what the Holy Scriptures say about forgiveness. We will look at 12 Biblical principles of forgiveness. Since this seminar is presented in two parts, we will consider the first nine principles in Part 1 and the last three principles in Part 2. These principles are not the only principles of forgiveness found in Scripture, but these will help us gain an understanding of how divine forgiveness impacts the practice of human forgiveness.

THE TWELVE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS®

PRINCIPLE #1: I will be forgiven as I forgive (Matthew 6:12)

This principle is located in the very heart of the Lord’s model prayer, and it suggests that forgiveness on earth impacts how one should expect to be forgiven by God.

Matthew 18: 23-35. **The parable of the Two Debtors** teaches that God’s forgiveness comes with an expectation that we, too, should forgive one another. It also suggests that if I, as the forgiven of God, withhold my forgiveness from those who offend me, I leave myself open to offending not only my brother or my sister, but God.

Does this mean God will not forgive me if I don’t forgive my brother or sister? Not necessarily, since **God has been known to change His mind** and have mercy on the undeserving. Nevertheless, though God forgives in such cases, He does not exempt the forgiven from having to *live with the consequences* of their actions (see Amos 7:1-6. God relents from punishing His people, but let’s them suffer the consequences

of their choices; in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, David is forgiven, but cannot build the temple because he has shed too much blood).

PRINCIPLE #2: If I don't forgive, my worship is unacceptable to God (Matthew 5:23-24)

God wants us to be at peace with our brothers and sisters before we bring our worship to Him. We also need to be at peace with ourselves and released from feelings of guilt. Our worship is most meaningful when we offer it to God with a clean conscience. This requires taking the time to repent and confess our own sins (the log in our eye) followed by seeking peace with wrongdoers (the speck in theirs). (See Matthew 7:3).

We should make every attempt at being reconciled with our offender(s) **before** we bring our worship in song, prayer, and sermon to the Lord. At the same time, our worship can be **a means** toward the end of bringing us to the decision to forgive.

Even if our forgiven **offender refuses to accept our forgiveness**, we are free from guilt in the sight of God, because we have obeyed the command to forgive. It is that intimate decision to forgive that releases us from anger surrounding the offense and guilt in the eyes of God (See Matthew 5:44).

PRINCIPLE #3: Forgiveness is for everyone, not just for those who “deserve” or “earn” it (Matthew 5:46-48).

The story of Esau and Jacob. In Genesis 32 we find Jacob sending messengers to his brother, Esau, to invite his brother to forgive him. The report from the messengers is simply that Esau, with 400 of his men, is coming toward Jacob. The purpose of the three sets of Jacob's gifts he then commands to be sent to his brother are meant “to appease” Esau (Genesis 32:20). Jacob still hasn't had a chance to say the words, “I'm sorry.”

Were these gifts enough to reverse what Jacob had done to Esau by stealing his birthright? **No, since nothing can reverse a past action or fully make up for it.** In her book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt teaches that there are two characteristics of human action: **unpredictability and irreversibility**. Since we often cannot know or understand where offenses come from nor can we reverse the consequences of those painful and unpredictable hurts, Arendt concludes that forgiveness is the only way available to humans to get past the effects of a serious offense. Even so, the receiver never is deserving of the wronged person's forgiveness.

Jacob encounters the angel and battles with this divine emissary, thinking it is his brother. God assures him, as He assures us, of His forgiveness, even if we can't always be assured of human forgiveness (Genesis 32:27-29).

In Genesis 33, when Jacob sees his brother coming with his army of men, he sets about protecting his family, assuming that Esau was coming to destroy them all. Contrary to his expectations, he sees Esau come running toward him with open arms of reconciliation. **Did Jacob, even now, deserve Esau's forgiveness?** Among the many gifts Jacob brought to Esau there was no return of the birthright. Even so, Esau accepted Jacob's gifts as **evidence** of his repentance. For Jacob's part, to receive the undeserved forgiveness of his brother was “like seeing the face of God” (See Genesis 33:10).

PRINCIPLE #4: It is easier to forgive when the offender asks for it (Psalm 32:1, 3, 5)

Jacob may have made it easier for Esau to forgive him by sending ahead gifts of reconciliation. It was Jacob's way of asking for forgiveness when he could not actually say the words. But Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages*, page 198, states that while Jacob was wrestling with the angel, God appeared to Esau in a dream, letting him go through a process of empathy for his younger brother and revealing to him that God had been with Jacob through all his sufferings. Even though Jacob had not yet *asked for* forgiveness, God's revelation to Esau made it easier for him *to give it*.

When confronted by God for murdering Abel, Cain refuses to acknowledge the crime he has committed or to ask for forgiveness. On the contrary, he comes up with an excuse to justify his wrongful act. This is the classic response of the unconverted heart—covering up, passing over, excusing, diminishing the importance of the wrong done—anything but taking responsibility for the harm done.

When we are the offenders, it is always best to quickly acknowledge the wrong done, for the sake of both the offender and the offended. For the offender, a guilt-ridden mind only serves to create a disease-ridden body (v. 3 “my body wasted away”). **Forgiveness is a gift not only to the wrongdoer, but to oneself.**

In her telling of the biblical story of these two estranged brothers in *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White points out that in Esau's dream God revealed to him Jacob's sufferings during his exile from his home and family; his grief at finding that his beloved mother had died during his absence; and Jacob's protection by the heavenly hosts. On the one hand, God appealed to Esau's capacity to empathize and reframe his brother in light of Jacob's sufferings by which he had amply paid for his sins against Esau. On the other, God reminds Esau that it was God's choice to choose Jacob over Esau and that Esau needed to accept God's will in his life and that of his brother. **It is to Esau's eternal credit that he accepted this revelation and received his brother with open arms.**

One may wonder to what extent “grudge fatigue” may have factored into the reconciliation of these two brothers. Grudge fatigue afflicts those who have carried a resentment for so long that they finally get tired of it and are ready to let it go.

This story is an example of how forgiveness and reconciliation can happen even when the offender has not first explicitly asked for forgiveness.

PRINCIPLE #5: The gift of forgiveness can elicit repentance: God's forgiveness

We often think that repentance should precede forgiveness: the offender repents, asking for forgiveness, and then, in that order, we give forgiveness. This order of events, more often than not, does not happen. **Sometimes the wronged person needs to offer forgiveness in order to elicit the offender's repentance.**

The divine model of forgiveness, in fact, follows this very sequence: God extends forgiveness to humans **before** they repent in order to elicit their repentance.

Sarah's story. Sarah is married to Pastor John whose brother Kevin was making life difficult for her. Ever since she and John met, Kevin had been doing all in his power to break them up. Kevin got into the habit

of spreading slanderous lies about Sarah at every church where she and John served, until one day Sarah asked her husband to bring the matter to the church board.

The night before the board meeting, Sarah had a dream in which she heard a voice say “Forgive him! Forgive him!” Unable to sleep, she got out of bed and spent the rest of the night in prayer. When she arrived the next morning at the church board meeting, she was asked to state her complaint. She stood up and said, “I do not have anything against Kevin. I love him and forgive him,” and she sat down. A breathless silence fell over those present, all waiting to see what would happen. When Sarah looked at her brother-in-law, he had his head in his hands, the tears seeping through his fingers. When he was able to compose himself, he stood up and confessed the hatred he had harbored in his heart toward Sarah. Now Sarah reports that Kevin has become her most ardent defender!

PRINCIPLE #6: The freedom that comes with knowing/acknowledging the “truth” (John 8:32; Psalm 139:23-24)

The maxim “Forgive and Forget” is often cited as a way of dealing with a serious offense or even continuing offenses. Women who are victims of domestic violence, for example, are told they should “forgive and forget” because they are Christians, and bearing up under abuse may open the door of salvation to their abusing husbands. 1 Peter 3:1 does exhort women to accept the authority of their *unbelieving* husbands so that their good example may win them over to Christ. Unfortunately, so-called believing but abusive husbands use this passage to justify continued abuse. Nor should one assume that Peter meant that a wife has to put up with an abusive and *unbelieving* husband. The implication is that her saintly behavior should serve to convert him, not justify his abuse.

This typical piece of advice from pastors and church leaders does not take into account that pretending that nothing is wrong will not get the wronged party to forgiveness, but will rather lead to continued resentment. **Freedom from resentment comes from acknowledging that a wrong has been perpetrated and that this wrong has created feelings of hurt.**

Once this acknowledgement has taken place, the “truth” has been recognized, and now the victim is ready to consider the possibility of forgiveness. Excusing, passing over, or diminishing the importance of a wrong will never get us to forgiveness because **forgiveness is a gift given while recognizing fully that a wrong has been perpetrated.**

The model of God’s forgiveness can help us understand the role of “truth” in forgiveness. Romans 5:8 tells us that God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were “yet sinners” with our backs turned to Him, He forgave us through His Son, Jesus Christ. God did not pretend that we had not sinned, but rather, taking into full consideration our “offense,” He chose to extend a mantle of grace and forgiveness over us.

Likewise, **forgiveness does not constitute approval of a wrong perpetrated**, but rather an acknowledgement that, despite a wrong having been done, the wronged person **chooses** to cover the wrong with his/her mantle of forgiveness, no longer demanding anything from the perpetrator, other than the love we owe one another as Christians.

In the case of divorce due to infidelity or some civil offense (offenses against society, such as murder, rape, etc.), even though the forgiver may not demand anything from the perpetrator, the state may do so by punishing the offender in some acceptable way (incarceration, payment of alimony, etc.). **That the offender must pay his or her debt to society does not remove the possibility of forgiveness at the personal level.**

PRINCIPLE #7: Seventy times seven? (Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4)

Peter asks Jesus a question that we often ask ourselves when dealing with abusers or simply “difficult” people: How many times do I have to forgive this person?

Who was Peter referring to? In the King James Version, the word is translated “brother” from the Greek *adelphos*, a word that can be translated “brother and sister” referring to the siblings of the same parents or the members of the Body of Christ, the church. He was referring to his fellow disciples!

Jesus’ response to Peter’s question has created much debate among Christians. **Does this mean that I must forever put up with an abuser?** Does forgiving him or her not suggest that the abuser has my permission to continue abusing? Anyone’s experience with an abuser will easily confirm uncertainties and even fears surrounding the act of forgiving.

When Peter asks how many times he is obligated to forgive his fellow disciples, he is acknowledging a fact that all Christians need to take into account: wherever two or three are gathered in the Lord’s name, *there will be conflicts!!* (with apologies to Matt. 18:20!). And where there are conflicts, there will be need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the matter since every situation is different. However, there are some common understandings that can help us grasp the meaning of this passage. First of all, according to *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, **the number seven is to be taken literally in this passage**: seventy times seven or, as in the New International Version, seventy-seven. Either way, we’re looking at more than three strikes and you’re out! Secondly, Jesus seems to suggest that **we need to be patient with difficult people**. However, “difficult” is not the same as “dangerous,” and when a person feels their life or that of their children is at stake in a threatening relationship, one can forgive even while taking measures to protect oneself and one’s children from danger, *even if this means physical separation from the abuser*.

In the King James Version, this passage in Luke 17:3 begins, “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him.” The NRSV uses the word “disciple” instead of “brother,” suggesting that offenses often come from our own “brothers and sisters” at home and in the church. **Those closest to us are capable of doing us the most harm due to the high level of trust we have put in them.**

What can we conclude from these passages? 1) We are called on **to bear with one another** in Christ (Colossians 3:13) and be willing to forgive beyond the first offense, and 2) in bearing with one another, we ought to be willing to also **confront the offender with his/her offensive behavior**.

In English, the term “confrontation” carries negative meanings related to attacking. However, confronting a person, in terms of forgiveness, refers to **a conversation** by which clarifications and understandings are arrived at. The “confrontation conversation” assumes that there exists the possibility that the offender truly

does not know what s/he is doing to hurt you and you are seeking ways to **bridge that awareness gap**. In doing so, you want to use the “I” word (“I felt that...” “It seemed to me that...” “It came across to me like...”) rather than the accusatory “you” word.

In cases of personality or mental disorders, one should go into these conversations with the help of a trusted and capable Christian friend or professional. Otherwise, such an encounter may backfire and leave you holding the bag of blame (“How could you do this to a poor, innocent, and sick person?”)

PRINCIPLE #8: There is no such thing as a “Christian” vengeance (Romans 12:20-21)

One may sometime hear the expression, “I’ll fix her. I’ll heap coals of fire on her head!” This statement/threat assumes that there is somehow a biblical blessing on this form of vengeance: **being “nice” to the perpetrator as “payback” and as a form of inflicting perpetual guilt related to a past offense.**

We have seen that forgiveness can contribute to a renewed relationship, albeit inevitably different from the one prior to the offense. Nevertheless, attempts at an underhanded “peace” (Ken Sande calls it “peace-faking”) is a form of payback or “Christianized” vengeance.

A misreading of the passage in Romans 12: 20-21 has given Christians the idea that they can “get back” at an offender with the Apostle Paul’s blessing. Not so!

In Paul’s times it was the custom in Roman households to have the servants come to the master’s house with a container to receive the hot coals from the master’s fire in order to go home and warm themselves and their family. Once the hot coals were placed in the container, the servant would pad his head with a wrapped cloth and place the container of hot coals on his head to take home.

In the passage, Paul is talking about how we are to treat our enemies: if they are hungry, we must give them to eat; if thirsty, give them to drink; if cold (here is the part about the coals of fire), give them something with which to warm themselves. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (v. 21).

Earlier in the same chapter, Paul says “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.” That is the forgiveness principle: **forgive without seeking payback**. This does not mean you can’t **set up conditions** for the new relationship. You can, and, in some cases, you must. But you cannot do so in a way that will keep the forgiven offender eternally indebted to you. He or she must be released from their debt through your forgiveness.

Vengeance vs. **setting boundaries**. Setting limits to what a person has a right to say to me or do to me—be that a parent, a spouse, a sibling, a child, a relative or coworker—is not an act of vengeance, but an **act of self-respect** as well as mutual respect. In every healthy relationship, there are mutual rights that need to be respected, including the right 1. to one’s own space, 2. to control of one’s own body, 3. to one’s own freedom of speech (freedom to express one’s opinion), 4. to one’s freedom of choice, 5. to one’s freedom of movement, and so forth. When one senses that another person is violating the boundaries of respect, conflicts arise and the need for forgiveness and reconciliation becomes important if the relationship is going to survive.

PRINCIPLE #9: Healing always accompanies forgiveness (Matt. 9:1-7)

A New Testament incident tells of friends who lowered a paralyzed man through the roof so their friend could be healed by Jesus. Because of the crowds, they had been unable to get into the house, and finally they had decided to go up on the roof, and let him down right in front of the Lord. An admirable act of courage and compassion!

What is interesting about forgiveness in this story is that Jesus begins by telling the sick man that his sins are forgiven! If I were in that man's shoes, I'd be expecting Jesus to say, "You are healed from your disease—get up and walk!" Previously Jesus had done so, and He would continue to do so in many other healings. But here Jesus wants to teach us that **forgiving and healing have one and the same effect: healing**. He wanted to assure the man that he was forgiven for the lifestyle that led to his present illness and that God's forgiveness would bring him all the healing he needed.

In his book *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*, Dr. Bernie Siegel, an oncologist at Yale-New Haven Hospital, tells of a patient who came to him, cancer having invaded nearly every organ of her body. Since there was nothing that he could do for her, he suggested she go home and make all the necessary arrangements for her imminent demise.

She decided to go up to a lakeside cabin she had in the mountains and spend her last days there alone. While there, she began to think of all the people who had hurt her over her lifetime: a father, a brother, her own mother, and so forth. When she had written all their names down on a paper, she stood up and said, "I forgive *all* of you!" She reports that, on uttering these words, she felt a wave of warmth invade her body. The next day she felt stronger and the next day after that, until, after two weeks of gaining strength she called Dr. Siegel to have him re-run tests on her. To Dr. Siegel's amazement, there was no trace of cancer anywhere in her body!

In the last two or three decades, increasing numbers of studies are revealing a direct relationship between the mind and the body. **Ellen White long ago confirmed the existence of the mind's effect on bodily illnesses resulting from unhealthy ways of thinking.** If ever that were true about any disease, it is true of the disease brought on by **unforgiveness**.

In their bestselling book *Anger Kills*, Drs. Redford and Virginia Williams reported on a study that was conducted with 118 male law students at the University of North Carolina. The purpose of the study was to observe the long-term effects of hostile feelings on longevity. The researchers gave these students a hostility test, a test where the student would choose his response to an annoying situation. For example, the student would be presented with the following situation: "You are standing in the express lane of a supermarket on a day you have an important test within an hour. The sign reads that you cannot have more than 10 items in your basket, and you notice that the guy in front of you has 20 items (because you counted them!). How would you react? 1. I would pull out my biology book and start studying. 2. I would complain to that #@^ man. 3. I would complain to the clerk.

Twenty-five years later, records were compiled on these 118 students. All of them had become lawyers. It was found that of those who scored in the highest quarter on the hostility scale, nearly 20% were dead by age 50, in contrast to only 4% of those who scored in the lowest quarter. High scores in the areas of cynical distrust, angry feelings, and aggressive behavior were good predictors of high mortality rates.

Although anger can be a good protection against attacks and abuse and has a positive role to play in human relationships, **long-term anger that has gone underground as cynical distrust, moodiness, irritability, impatience, fear, jealousy, aggression, hostile attitudes, and even shyness (feelings of anxiety), can negatively affect the immune system.** In fact, your body reacts to your rehearsing a wrong perpetrated against you as though it were facing an immediate, life-threatening situation, such as a near accident on the freeway. Your breathing increases; your eyes dilate; your pancreas secretes sugar into your blood stream to prepare your muscles for fight or flight. **Two hormones, adrenaline and cortisol,** are secreted by the adrenal glands. This is a process that God put into place to help us in an emergency, not to be used every day! But let's suppose that you just can't get over what So-and-So did to you—an unbelievable betrayal of your trust! And so you keep turning it around and around in your mind, all the while your body is in a permanent state of crisis as described above.

Dr. Bruce McEwen, director of the neuroendocrinology lab at Rockefeller University in New York City, has studied the effects of cortisol. He concludes that, in the long term, cortisol wears down the brain, which leads to cell atrophy and memory loss. It also raises blood pressure and blood sugar, causes hardening of the arteries, and leads to heart disease. Forgiveness, it has been found, stops the flow of this hormone.

Keeping your body in a permanent state of crisis means that what was meant to protect you in a crisis is now poisoning your body and weakening your immune system. The diseases that have been studied in direct connection with long-term, low-grade anger are cancer, heart disease, and Type 2 adult-onset diabetes.

Dr. Kathleen Lawler, one of the leading American forgiveness scholars, has presented research indicating that forgiving may lower blood pressure and muscle tension. Using the anger recall interview (asking the participant to remember something that made them angry), she studied the forgiveness experiences of 107 college students. As the students described the offense, their blood pressure, heart rate, forehead muscle tension, and sweatiness was measured. Students who were forgivers began to decrease tension during the interview while the non-forgivers remained tense for a longer period of time. Non-forgivers had higher blood pressure and muscle tension than the more forgiving students. Interestingly, researchers found women in the study tended to hold grudges longer than men.

Does this finding suggest that women are less forgiving than men? Some writers have concluded that because women tend to have less social power than men, they have more reason to be angry and this explains their tendency to hold grudges longer. That may be true—a sense of powerlessness can create angry feelings. However, researchers such as Dr. David Powell of the International Center for Health Concerns explain that **men and women are biologically hard-wired differently.** Whereas the connection between the right (emotions) and left (logic) brain in women is greater, in men access to the emotional side of their brain is not as readily available. This explains why men are less accurate at interpreting facial expressions or tone of voice, for example, and why they have a harder time remembering emotions. A wife can be brooding over a tiff for days while her husband has long forgotten it.

What we can conclude from this brief overview of anger studies is that coddling anger, in whichever form, can constitute the greatest obstacle to forgiveness and ultimate healing after a serious offense. No matter how justified you may feel about clinging to these damaging feelings, it is you, and not your offender, who will be most adversely affected by this choice. **Forgiveness is always a choice.**

As we conclude Part I of the seminar on Forgiveness and your Health, let's review the first nine Biblical principles of forgiveness:

1. I will be forgiven as I forgive.
2. If I don't forgive, my worship is unacceptable to God.
3. Forgiveness is for everyone.
4. It is easier to forgive when the offender asks for it.
5. The gift of forgiveness can elicit repentance: God's forgiveness.
6. Freedom comes with knowing/acknowledging the truth.
7. Seventy times seven.
8. There is no such thing as "Christian" vengeance.
9. Healing accompanies forgiveness.

The second part of this seminar will cover three more Biblical principles of forgiveness; it will also take a look at the R.E.A.C.H. model for dealing with serious wrongs, and will consider why it is easier for some people to forgive than for others. As we learn more about forgiveness, as we learn to forgive, we can begin to heal and to bless. For our mental, physical and spiritual health, learning to forgive provides an enduring remedy.

RESOURCES

Books

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. 1998.

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Kraybill, Donald, et al. *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*. 2010.

Luskin, Fred. *Forgive for Good*. 2002.

Morales-Gudmundsson, Lourdes. *I Forgive You, But....* 2007.

Pargament, Kenneth I. and Mark S. Rye. "Forgiveness as a Method of Religious Coping" in Everett L. Worthington, Jr., ed. *Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research & Theological Perspectives*. 1998: 59-78.

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Williams, Redford and Virginia Williams. *Anger Kills: Seventeen Strategies for Controlling Hostility That Can Harm Your Health*. 1993.

Williamson, Marianne. *Everyday Grace: Having Hope, Finding Forgiveness and Making Miracles*. 2004.

Worthington, Everett L., Jr. *Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research & Theological Perspectives*. 1998.

_____. *Five Steps to Forgiveness: The Art and Science of Forgiving*. 2001.

DVDs

Amish Grace starring Kimberly Williams-Paisley. Requires the viewer to struggle with issues of justice and forgiveness. Powerful!

Long Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Search for Truth and Reconciliation by Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffman. www.irisfilms.org. Amazing stories of perpetrators and victims told at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission meetings. 2000.

The Power of Forgiveness by Martin Doblmeier. Includes observations on forgiveness by leading international figures. A good overview of the topic of forgiveness.

Websites

On anger

www.anger.org

A wealth of information and resources on anger management.

On forgiveness

Forgive for Good

www.learningtoforgive.com

Website of the Stanford Forgiveness Project directed by Dr. Fred Luskin.

Forgiveness and Health

www.iloveulove.com/forgiveness/forgivhealth.htm

Institute of HeartMath

www.heartmath.org

Exciting new research on the heart-brain connection and its impact on emotions.

International Forgiveness Institute
www.internationalforgiveness.com
Includes a K-12 curriculum on forgiveness.

YouTube
Pastor Steve Bauer's sermon, "The Price of Forgiveness"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4vFDfqoIZ0>



Session 7

Forgiveness and Your Health – Part 2

Adapted from *I Forgive You, But...* (Pacific Press, 2007) and other sources.

by Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

I John 1:9

Welcome to Part 2 of our seminar on “Forgiveness and your Health.” In Part 1, we looked at the power of forgiveness and definitions of forgiveness. We are learning how to let go of past hurts and anger to focus on the future. We explored nine Biblical principles of forgiveness. In Part 2 of this seminar, we will consider three more principles, look at the R.E.A.C.H. approach, and grow in our ability to forgive. We will continue examining the Biblical principles of forgiveness by looking at principle number ten.

PRINCIPLE #10: Forgiveness requires that you accept changes (Jonah 4:1)

The story of Jonah is instructive in terms of the transforming power of forgiveness.

Here we have a prophet of God refusing to follow God’s command to take a message of mercy to a doomed city. Why? Because he didn’t want them to change. He was afraid that if God forgave them, they might change their ways, and he felt these pagans were unworthy of God’s mercy... or his!

Yet when he finds himself drowning in the belly of the whale, he calls on God to have mercy on him. Obviously, he felt *he* was worthy of God’s compassion. And God came through for him. Of course! He was God’s prophet!

When he's thrown up onto the beach and once again commanded to carry out God's compassionate will toward the Ninivites, he goes, but he goes reluctantly, still dragging his feet.

We can imagine Jonah trying to find some redemptive value in this unpleasant assignment. Perhaps he imagined his name recorded in the annals of the great preachers of the world, since, as a result of his preaching, fire and brimstone would come down from heaven to consume those savage Ninivites! We don't know what went through his mind as he reluctantly trudged toward that wicked city with those perverted people in it, but one thing we do know. Things did not turn out as Jonah expected. As a result of his preaching, a destroying fire did not rain down from heaven, but rather everybody, from the king on down, repented, and, to make matters worse, in Jonah's estimation, God forgave them!

In Chapter 4, we find Jonah angrily complaining about: 1) God's merciful character and 2) his own perceived humiliation at the hands of an inconsiderate God. We also find God trying to reason with him: If God chose to forgive a repentant people, why should Jonah resent that divine prerogative? Besides, who was Jonah to complain—God had rescued him from drowning. Why shouldn't He rescue these repentant Ninivites from sure destruction? That was God's business, not Jonah's.

Jonah was unwilling to forgive the Ninivites because he didn't want them to change. His unwillingness to forgive drove him to resent God's forgiving character. At the end of the book, it is not clear whether Jonah learned his lesson, but his story is there for us to learn that to forgive is to accept changes in those who have hurt us. This acceptance will open the door to trust and the possibility of reconciliation.

PRINCIPLE #11: Forgiving yourself (Philippians 4:8)

One of the hardest people to forgive is YOURSELF!

You have expectations for yourself, and when you do not meet those expectations, you can be your own most merciless accuser. Self-condemnation is the cruelest of tribunals and one that has the potential to last a lifetime.

In a 2011 Oprah Winfrey show dealing with self-forgiveness, Dr. Phil McGraw was featured counseling several women who could not forgive themselves. One of them was Treva. She was in a meeting while her 13 year-old son, Roy, and his younger sister were waiting for her in the car. She had instructed them both not to play with the gearshift, but Roy, bored with waiting for their mother, began to play with the shift when suddenly the car began to roll backwards. Fortunately a chain-link fence stopped the car, but Roy, not wanting his mother to know that he had been playing with the gearshift, began to push the car away from the fence. While doing so, he slipped, and the car rolled back, crushing him to death.

Although the accident had happened more than a decade before, Treva was still unable to "find a place where I can feel I deserve forgiveness." Dr. Phil pointed out that her insomnia and perpetual exhaustion were her way of punishing herself for the accident and keeping the memory of her son alive. She had come to believe that somehow letting go of this self-chastisement would betray the memory of her son. In the meantime, by spending all her energies in being loyal to the dead, she had made herself unavailable to the living, i.e., her daughter and her husband.

Not forgiving oneself can paralyze a person, leaving one stuck at the point of the “unforgivable offense.” Self-forgiveness allows us to move beyond such offenses and frees up our energies to live fully in the present.

Here are some suggestions that may help you get to self-forgiveness:

a. **Truly believe that God has forgiven you.** I have often asked people who cannot forgive themselves if they have asked God to forgive them. The answer is invariably “Yes.” Then I ask, “Do you believe that God has forgiven you?” Again, the answer is “Yes.” Then I ask, “Do you have a standard of forgiveness that is higher than God’s? If God has forgiven you, is that not enough, or have you set up more expectations than He has that you feel you must fulfill?” **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from ALL unrighteousness”** (I John 1:9; capitals added). That’s the standard; there are no more sins to be expiated once we have asked God to take care of the sin we perceive to be unforgivable. Naturally, you need to be patient with yourself in this process of accepting God’s forgiveness as “enough,” but when you do, you will be truly free.

b. **Value yourself as God values you.** Our value is not established by a parent or sibling or religious leader or even ourselves. God has fixed our value once and for all on the cross of Christ. An infinite price was paid for our redemption because we are infinitely valuable to God.

c. **Believe that God is merciful.** Many Christians think of God in terms of their overbearing or abusive earthly father. Being merciful is the foremost trait of our Heavenly Father. In Exodus 34:6 God is described as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” It is this positive parental view of God that is necessary to have in order to believe that, if God has been merciful in forgiving me, **I have permission to extend that mercy to myself.**

d. **Accept the power of God to live with the consequences of a mistake.** A mistake is not the same as a sin. A mistake is accidental and unintended in nature. And there is not a mortal who has never made a mistake. Some mistakes don’t carry lasting consequences. But some do. Two brothers, one eight and the other six years old, were playing in the living room when the younger of the two found his father’s loaded pistol. Before his brother could take it away from him, the gun accidentally went off, killing the older brother. **There are wonderful promises in the Word of God that can help deal with the terrible guilt deriving from such a situation.** “Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28 NRSV); “Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved (Psalm 55:22 NRSV). Professional counseling may also help to deal with such consequences.

e. **Learn to filter what comes to your mind.** Rather than review past mistakes and misdeeds, focus on what will lift your spirits and confirm your faith. Don’t accept definitions of yourself volunteered by others unless they coincide with God’s definition of how much you are really worth. **Remember, we were worth the life of the Son of God, and we are now sons and daughters of the Most High God! Don’t forget it—God doesn’t.** When thoughts of discouragement come, follow the advice in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable,... if there is anything worthy of praise, think about *these* things” (NRSV; emphasis provided).

PRINCIPLE #12: “Forgiving” God (Job 1:21; 19:25; Job 10:2)

”Forgive God?! But God has never sinned so that He needs to be forgiven. What could you possibly mean?” These were the questions written across the puzzled faces of a group of Hispanic women in San Antonio, Texas, some years back, as this title was flashed on the screen.

In order to help them understand what I meant, I asked them to picture a mother and her 17-year-old daughter. The girl had a wonderful, outgoing personality, was a model Christian, involved in church activities, community service, an honors student in high school, looking forward to attending one of the nation’s finest universities. One evening, while driving home from choir practice, she is killed instantly by a drunk driver.

Then the ladies were asked, “Do you think that one of the responses of this mother to this unspeakable tragedy might be to bow her head in acceptance while at the same time raising her fist to a God she perceives could have intervened to save her daughter?” Didn’t God see what a valuable human being this child was? Didn’t He care about the contributions she would make to society as opposed to that drunk who is still alive and well?

Evil perpetrated against the innocent is what brings humans face to face with the dilemma of forgiving God. It’s what brought Job to wonder out loud about his own suffering. Everything that could be taken away from a man was taken from Job: his material possessions, his children, his health—everything but his wife, who, in her own horrendous pain at having lost all her children and watching her husband die a slow, horrific death, told him to curse (in some versions, “bless”) God and die. She was not punished for uttering these words that grew out of her own great sorrow, for we find that eventually Job had another family. Job’s wife, who went through his suffering with him, was allowed to bear him a new family and enjoy the fruits of Job’s restoration.

Job begins his journey of suffering declaring his faith in God: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21); “For I know that my Redeemer lives...and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25, 26, NRSV).

But as the reality of his situation begins to sink in, Job demands an explanation from God: “Tell me what charges you have against me” (Job 10:2). It is clear that Job thinks God has committed a serious offense against him. The subtext of the entire book is Job’s need to find a reason to forgive God for what is happening to him, which he clearly attributes to God and none other.

After 37 chapters of hearing Job complain and his friends offer him wrong-headed counsel, God addresses Job, telling him to “gird up your loins like a man” (Job 38: 1) and proceeds to overwhelm the awestricken Job with evidences of His infinite wisdom and power, so that the “blameless and upright” Job begins to understand, for the first time, that God is eminently worthy of his trust. In the end, Job has to admit that he had “uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know...I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you, therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:3-6).

We can conclude that “forgiving God” means that there are times when we lose sight of God and begin to wonder if He cares about our lives. We can imagine the parents of spouses and children who have been victims of egregious crimes, such as we’ve experienced on 9/11 or the shootings at Columbine High School and, more recently, the innocent children who died at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Where was God, we hear people ask? As Christian believers, we understand that God is never absent from human tragedy. The One who created us feels deeply with us the mindless suffering brought on by inexplicable forces. His overarching plan of salvation is still in place, despite the actuations of the “mystery of iniquity” in our world. And evil is as much a mystery as God’s unfathomable love for humankind. It is our faith that helps us move beyond the “Why?” into acceptance of God’s inscrutable will for our lives. Ultimately, the solution for “forgiving God” is learning that God can be trusted fully, no matter how inexplicable the events of our lives.

Now that we’ve gone through these fundamental biblical principles of forgiveness, we are ready to look at why it is harder for some people to forgive and be forgiven than others. We will also look at some helpful strategies you can use to get past a hurtful event.

WHY IS IT EASIER FOR SOME PEOPLE TO FORGIVE AND HARDER FOR OTHERS?

To be sure, there are events that all would agree are difficult to forgive: genocide and mass killings, for example. But on a more personal level, have you noticed that there are people who find it either easier or harder to forgive than others? For some a similar offense will pass over them like water over a duck’s back, and for yet others, it will be cause for lifelong resentment and unforgiveness.

Psychologist Everett Worthington, Jr., has found that *certain personality traits* can either inhibit or contribute to the exercise of forgiveness.

Forgiveness Inhibitors

- Rumination: A personality that tends to rehearse a wrong endlessly and never forget it.
- Narcissism: A personality that believes the world rotates around the axis of his or her person. He or she can do no wrong and the tendency is to blame others for anything that does go wrong.
- Neuroticism: A personality that fixates on ideas or people.
- Introversion: A personality that isolates itself from others.
- Trait anxiety: Either due to experiences in the family of origin or simply a personality tendency, the person can easily become anxious.
- Trait anger: Either due to experiences in the family of origin or simply a personality tendency, the person can easily become angry.

Forgiveness Facilitators (traits either by long-term cultivation or in-born characteristic)

- Trait humility
- Trait gratitude
- Trait empathetic concern
- Openness

The next time someone “rattles your cage,” think about how your personality affects your ability to deal with the offense. Be patient with yourself if you have some of those “forgiveness inhibitors.” Remember, **prayer** will help you turn those inhibitors into healing facilitators of forgiveness.

STRATEGIES FOR GETTING PAST AN OFFENSE THROUGH FORGIVENESS

Worthington’s R.E.A.C.H. Model of Forgiveness

1. **Recall the hurt** in all its painful detail and acknowledge that the offense did hurt you and determine how it hurt you. This recognition is important as a starting point. If you excuse or pass over the offense, there won’t be anything to forgive!
2. **Empathize with the offender** by reframing him or her as a vulnerable child victimized in the same way he or she has victimized you.
3. **Altruistic gift of forgiveness is given.** Clearly recognizing how much this person hurt you, you choose to give them the gift of forgiveness. Forgiveness is always a gift because it cannot reverse the effects of an offense and return to the way things were prior to the offense. It can only ameliorate and soften the effects of an offense by intentionally covering them with a mantle of grace.
4. **Commitment to forgive.** You make the decision to forgive in order to begin the “forgiveness journey.” Forgiveness is not a one-time event, but a journey that leads, eventually, to complete freedom from the damaging emotional effects of an offense.
5. **Hold on to forgiveness.** There will be days when it is harder to hold on to your commitment to forgive than others. Even so, don’t give up too soon—you may be surprised by the rewards of gentle persistence.

How does the R.E.A.C.H. model work in cases of serious wrongs, such as murder, rape, and physical violence?

1. First of all, *there are laws* that deal with murderers, rapists, and others who commit violent acts. **Reporting these offenses to the authorities should be a first step in moving toward the possibility of forgiveness.** My decision to forgive does not mean that justice should not be carried out according to the laws of my country. As Christians we believe that we are to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God, what is God’s (see Mark 12:17). In other words, human governments are to be respected because they are set up to protect the people they govern. Governments may be corrupt and refuse to fulfill their God-given privileges, but generally the judicial system of a country is there to protect the innocent. If I, as a taxpayer, fulfill my duty in paying taxes, I should expect my government to protect me from those who would do me harm.
2. Assuming that the wrongdoer has received justice according to the laws of the nation, and you are the victim, you can begin the R.E.A.C.H. process by **recalling** the crime committed against you. It is im-

portant to give yourself enough time to process how this crime affected you. Offering forgiveness too soon will leave you feeling doubly betrayed by the same perpetrator! *This process of recalling can be carried out by writing out the facts and feelings of the offense.* Putting these elements of the offense in writing is a form of externalizing it and looking at it objectively. This opportunity for objectivity is important in order to help you move to the next phase of R.E.A.C.H., since it serves to “explain” and make sense of what happened to you. The need for “making sense” out of a senseless crime is very great in the injured party, particularly in the days and weeks soon after the hurtful event.

3. **Reframing** the perpetrator of the crime through the reasoning of **empathy** will go far in helping you to rid your mind and heart of feelings of outrage and anger. The most useful strategy for reframing is attempting to see the offender *as a vulnerable child*. Either through information gathered from authorities or simply from your imagination, you can picture the offender as the victimized child of an abusive father or mother or both, deprived of opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of parental protection and love or to access an education to prepare him or her for life. You can imagine the anger building up in this child who is regularly beaten or abandoned, and this child acting out that anger in hurtful ways toward others.

If you enjoyed a “privileged” upbringing, with loving parents, a network of supportive family and friends, access to a church family, and an education that has prepared you for a fruitful career, you might compare your life with the offender’s. In this process you are *not justifying* what this person did to you, but rather *attempting to walk in his/her shoes* and imagine how you would have reacted had your parents been abusive and denied you a life of opportunity. It must always be clear in your mind that you are not trying to explain away what this person did, but rather empathize and through this process of empathy, see this person no longer as a unilateral “monster,” but as a multifaceted and complicated human being, him or herself a victim.

4. Once you feel comfortable with the new picture you have of the perpetrator, you can now decide when you will give him/her the **gift of forgiveness**. With the new view of the offender in mind and understanding that your forgiveness does not in any way justify what s/he did, you *choose* to offer this person the olive branch of forgiveness. No one can force you to do this—it must come deeply and sincerely from your own free will, if it is going to be of any use to you or to your offender. An insincere or obligatory “forgiveness” will not do! In fact, it can leave deeper scars in you as well as the offender than if you had never offered your forgiveness. Such “forgiveness” will leave both of you diminished.
5. Once you have offered forgiveness to your offender, you have initiated the “forgiveness journey.” The decision to forgive happens as a result of a choice you made, but now you have to live with that choice! Therefore, **forgiveness is both a one-time decision and a lifetime of commitment to keeping the forgiveness promise.**

Ken Sande, author of *The Peacemaker* and founder of a Christian organization that uses Christian principles to intervene in conflict resolution, gives the following four components of the forgiveness promise: 1) I will not dwell on this incident. 2) I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you. 3) I will not talk to others about this incident. and 4) I will not allow this incident to stand between us or to hinder our personal relationship.

How this promise functions in the context of a heinous crime is best illustrated in the experience of Mr. Azim Khamisa. His son Tariq, a promising young college student who was delivering pizza that fateful summer in 1995 to earn money to pay for his studies, was shot and killed by Tony Hicks, the 14-year-old gang-member grandson of Ples Felix, a hard-working grandfather who had taken on the raising of this boy when the boy's parents had abandoned him. After some time had passed, Mr. Khamisa approached Mr. Felix to let him know that he had forgiven Tony and to invite Mr. Felix to join his efforts to address teen violence. Since that initial meeting, the two men have shared their story with thousands of elementary and middle school children across the nation.

Mr. Khamisa has taken a tragedy and transformed it into an opportunity for service to others. He and Mr. Felix are not dwelling on the incident, but using it as a springboard to educate other young people on the importance of using peaceful means to resolve their conflicts. Nor has he used the death of his dear son to work against Tony Hicks and his grandfather, but rather to demonstrate uncommon love and compassion toward them in the face of a terrible crime. When they talk about the incident, it is only as a means of engaging the attention of youth who otherwise would not give the topic of youth violence any importance. And, finally, Mr. Khamisa has used what could have easily alienated him from his son's murderer as an opportunity to build a personal relationship between his family and that of Ples Felix, including and especially, Tony.

6. Making a commitment to forgiveness carries with it **a price of re-commitment on a daily basis**. Holding on to the promise of forgiveness *will require spiritual strength and occasional battles with memories* that will attempt to undermine your commitment. You will have good days and bad days; some days it will be easier than others, but in the end your commitment will bring healing and health to you, and who knows how many others will be blessed by your example and witness to the power of forgiveness!

It is on the daily forgiveness journey that **prayer will serve you well**. Particularly on those days when hurtful memories threaten to overwhelm you, go to God in prayer and ask for strength just for that day. Prayer will keep you from taking the slippery slope toward the past and keep you firmly rooted in the present. Being mindful in the present through prayer will give you certain victory over discouraging thoughts and revive hope in your spirit.

So, how exactly do I go about giving and receiving forgiveness? How do I start if I'm the offender? The offended? Here are some suggestions for you to consider. The biblical model for conflict resolution for Christian believers can be found in Matthew 18:15-17.

WHAT IF I'M THE OFFENDER?

1. If you're the offender, you should go to the person you have hurt and ask them to forgive you.
2. You must do so without offering excuses. An apology that is loaded with excuses can do more harm than no apology at all because it indicates that, in fact, you are not sorry, but rather justifying your actions.

3. If the person you have offended accepts your apology, you have gained a friend. If the person does not accept your apology, you are no longer obligated to do anything more than continue to love this person. *This does not mean you must continue to live with a person who is taking advantage of your forgiveness to do you harm.* You can forgive while keeping your distance. In the case of married couples, the Seventh-day Adventist Church allows for legal separation not only for infidelity, but for domestic violence (see the *Seventh-day Adventist Manual*, revised 2010, page 153, #6 and #7). If your offender has indicated by word and actions that they do not want to have an honorable relationship with you, you must accept their decision not to have a relationship with you. It is what God does with unrepentant sinners—He accepts *their* decision not to have a relationship with Him.
4. Pray for this person, asking God to soften their hearts and make them realize their very salvation is at risk for their unwillingness to extend forgiveness to you, even when God has extended forgiveness to them. **As Christians and as “the forgiven,” forgiveness is a command, not a suggestion!**

WHAT IF I'M THE OFFENDED?

1. You can go to your offender and engage him/her in a **“confrontation conversation.”** This can be done at a neutral place where both of you will feel “safe” in opening your hearts to one another. You can attempt to extract an apology from the offender, but don’t go into this encounter *expecting* one. In this conversation, you can gently make the offender aware of how s/he offended you. *Their reaction can vary from immediate contrition to personal attacks on you (verbal or even physical).* For that reason, if you believe that it is not safe to confront the offender by yourself, seek a trusted friend or church leader to accompany you to this encounter. The biblical principle of going directly to the offender is a means of not only making them aware of their wrongdoing, but also letting them know that others are aware of their wrong behavior. Often removing the “secret” about what is going on in the private sphere of your relationship bringing it into the “public” sphere, where others are aware of the unacceptable behavior, will be enough to change the offender’s behavior toward you. In other cases, it may not be enough.
2. **Amber’s story:** Jay and Amber had been married for five years when Jay began to behave aggressively toward his wife. It seemed there was nothing that she could do right, and any little perceived misstep on her part set off a series of abusive behaviors. As a Christian, Amber felt she had to put up with the pushing, slapping, and verbal insults and “forgive” him. But as time passed she began feeling profound resentment against him for the contrast between his public persona and his private behavior. In church, he was a model of Christian words and actions; at home he was a completely different person.

One day, finally having had enough, Amber decided to confront him about his hurtful behavior. She prepared a nice meal of his favorite foods and began bringing the conversation around to the problem. As she did so, she noticed his face and lips tightening until he suddenly stood up and threw a cup of hot tea at her, barely missing her face. It was at this point that Amber decided to go to a trusted friend whom Jay also respected and tell him and his wife about her situation at home. The friend advised her to go to their pastor who was also a professional therapist. She did so and with the abuse now out in the open and Jay having agreed to counsel with the pastor, things began to improve at home. Eventually Jay agreed to take medication for his depression and they were able to preserve their marriage.

3. Setting new rules for the relationship. If it seems prudent to continue in a relationship after the hurtful events, it is important to set new rules for the relationship. Setting “boundaries” is important so that each person understands what s/he can or cannot do. Even if the relationship cannot continue, it is important for both parties to understand boundaries.
4. It is also important to know when to call on the intervention of civil authorities. In cases where the life of the mother and/or children is in danger, civil authorities should be called in to remove the abuser or the abused from the home. **As we have seen, the Adventist church manual grants permission for spouses to separate due to infidelity. However, that is not the only reason for separation; separation is warranted when domestic abuse or violence is the issue.**

WHAT IF MY OFFENDER CANNOT BE CONFRONTED?

1. What if my offender cannot be confronted due to mental incapacity or death? While the wronged party is still alive, it is possible that the offense will also still be alive in his/her heart and mind. Neither mental illness nor death erase a grave offense unless the victim has decided to forgive the aggressor.
2. **Melissa’s story:** Melissa was sexually abused by her father from age nine to eighteen. Her father was an elder in their local church and was deemed by church members and leaders alike to be a saintly man. Melissa, on the other hand, suffered from depression and erratic behavior due to the continued abuse. At age 18 she escaped from the house and launched on a journey of self-destruction. Like many victims of child abuse, she had come to believe that she had done something to deserve her father’s aberrant attentions. We now know through studies of child psychology that a child is never responsible for sexual abuse by an adult—it is always and fully the fault of the adult. Determined to destroy herself, she experimented with drugs and alcohol and suffered from both anorexia and bulimia. One day, however, she found Alcoholics Anonymous and began to get her life together. She was even able to get and hold down a job.

Just as her life was coming together, she learned that her father had died. Asking a friend to accompany her to the cemetery where he was buried, she made the long trip to “talk” to her father. Standing there, before her father’s grave, she began to talk, knowing that he could not hear her; then she began to scream curses at him and weep uncontrollably, telling him everything in death that she would have wanted to tell him in life, allowing all the hatred and disgust to pour out of her mind and body. Exhausted, perspiring, and shaking with emotion, when she finished, she mouthed the words “I forgive you!” She says that when she said these words, she felt that a terrible burden had been lifted off her shoulders, a burden from which she felt free for the first time in her life.

The unspeakable acts of humiliation, violation, and abuse perpetrated on her by a man she should have been able to trust implicitly had left a terrible burden of guilt, not on him, but on her! **That is the terrible irony of hurts and deep offenses—they leave the victim carrying the heaviest load of guilt and anger.** Though she knew that her father could not hear her, she was able to exteriorize her unfathomable pain and this was what, at long last, released her from the burden her father had left her with as his legacy of shame.

Before leaving her father's gravesite, Melissa prayed a prayer of release. What exactly is a "prayer of release"? Her prayer went something like this: "Dear God, I leave my father in your hands. Judge me and judge him according to your justice and mercy." In other words, she "let go" of her father, breaking the chains that had imprisoned her with him, now giving her sweet relief. In doing so, she left him in God's hands to judge and deal with as God chose. This prayer, she says, was immensely healing to her, since she now felt that judging her father was no longer in her hands, but in God's.

3. Leaving the past behind is the next step in making a clean break with a hurtful event in one's life. But how does one do that?
 - a. ***Living a life of service:*** In his first book, *A Child Called "It,"* David Pelzer tells of the nightmare he lived with his mother whose hatred for him nearly cost him his young life. It was the worst case of child abuse in the State of California up to that date. Fortunately for David, an alert elementary school teacher reported the case to the authorities, and David was removed from his home and placed in foster care with loving new parents. He was able to receive a good education and enjoy a prosperous career. Even with his accomplishments as a professional and despite David's efforts to be reconciled with her, his mother continued to despise him. In his next book, *A Man Named David,* he tells how he was able to forgive his mother, even though they could never be reconciled. Through his books and lecture tours, David Pelzer has dedicated himself to ensuring that no other child goes through what he went through. His life of service has been instrumental in putting new laws on the books of the State of California that protect children from domestic abuse.
 - b. ***Learning to trust again:*** How can you learn to trust again after a serious breach of trust by someone you fully trusted? First of all, you cannot expect trust to be regained immediately. You need to give yourself time and space so that you can settle down emotionally. Betrayals cause untold emotional havoc on the one who has been betrayed, and this takes time to overcome. No one has the right to say to such a person, "Just get over it!" There is a Spanish proverb that says "You need to give time to time" ("Hay que darle tiempo al tiempo."). Let time pass over the emotional turmoil and begin to calm the turbulent waters of your soul. Once you've reached the point where the sight or even the thought of the offender no longer makes you sick or even merely uncomfortable, you know that you have forgiven and you're ready to move forward.

FORGIVENESS AND THE OFFENDER

A lot of the emphasis of this seminar has been on the victim and the benefits of forgiveness for the person who has been wronged. What about the benefits of forgiveness for the wrongdoer? How do justice and mercy operate to benefit the perpetrator? Why even be concerned that forgiveness benefits the perpetrator?

In our practice of forgiveness as Christians, we cannot be only self-serving in our attempts to rid ourselves, as victims, of the anger and bitterness that an offense has created in us. We must also have concern for the soul of the offender.

Generally speaking, people interpret attempts to "save" the perpetrator as providing the abuser with permission to continue abusing. If we use God's forgiveness of sinners as a model, we have to conclude that

the gift of forgiveness places the offender **under obligation** to repent, confess, and change. Of course, the offender can choose not to respond as s/he should, but the obligation is there nonetheless.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION?

Forgiveness is a one-way street. The injured party chooses to forgive the offender. Whether the latter chooses to accept or reject this gift is immaterial. The injured party chooses to give the gift with no expectations of acceptance. In this case, the forgiver sets the new boundaries for the relationship.

Reconciliation is a two-way street. Reconciliation can happen when the offender has accepted forgiveness and is willing to enter honorably into a restored relationship with the injured party. (S/he does not use forgiveness as an excuse to continue abusing or hurting). The forgiver and the forgiven collaborate to set the new “rules of engagement,” that is, the boundaries that need to be respected in order to preserve the relationship. There can be forgiveness without reconciliation, but there can never be reconciliation without forgiveness.

RESOURCES

Books

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Williamson, Marianne. *Everyday Grace: Having Hope, Finding Forgiveness and Making Miracles*. 2004.

Worthington, Everett L., Jr. *Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research & Theological Perspectives*. 1998.

_____. *Five Steps to Forgiveness: The Art and Science of Forgiving*. 2001.

DVDs

Amish Grace, starring Kimberly Williams-Paisley. Requires the viewer to struggle with issues of justice and forgiveness. Powerful!

Long Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Search for Truth and Reconciliation by Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffman. www.irisfilms.org. Amazing stories of perpetrators and victims told at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission meetings. 2000.

Doblmeier, Martin. *The Power of Forgiveness*. Includes observations on forgiveness by leading international figures. A good overview of the topic of forgiveness.

Websites

On anger

www.anger.org

A wealth of information and resources on anger management.

On forgiveness

Forgive for Good

www.learningtoforgive.com

Website of the Stanford Forgiveness Project directed by Dr. Fred Luskin.

Forgiveness and Health

www.iloveulove.com/forgiveness/forgivhealth.htm

Institute of HeartMath

www.heartmath.org

Exciting new research on the heart-brain connection and its impact on emotions.

International Forgiveness Institute
www.internationalforgiveness.com
Includes a K-12 curriculum on forgiveness.

YouTube
Pastor Steve Bauer's sermon, "The Price of Forgiveness"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4vFDfqoIZ0>

Forgiveness and Your Health

by Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

I John 1:9

In your small groups of three or four, consider the following situations and questions. Attempt to see how the processes of forgiveness—**reframing, empathy, humanizing, committing to forgiveness and holding on to it**—can help deal with these situations. Remember that the processes of justice—**peaceful confrontation, dialog, conflict resolution, reconciliation**—are also part of the forgiveness process and have a role to play in achieving and retaining the promise of forgiveness:

1. Your husband has just told you point blank that he doesn't love you anymore and that he's leaving with his secretary. You spend the next weeks in utter confusion, trying to get a grip on the reality of what is happening to you. You are angry and hurt, and the pain is almost unbearable. One year goes by, the divorce is final, and you have custody of the kids, but you must see your former husband once a month when he picks them up for his authorized visitation. Your children return from these visits with a rebellious attitude, and soon you discover that he is telling them lies about you and blaming you for the divorce. How can forgiveness work in a situation like this? What might its effects be on you? On your children? On your former husband?
2. You are a supervisor in a corporation and find that one of your workers, a man, is doing all in his power **not** to be part of the team. He always has a better idea than you do, will not cooperate with decisions agreed upon by the group, and ridicules your leadership style as weak and inefficient behind your back. You have given this person every opportunity to become a team player, but he continues to undercut your leadership. Short of dismissing this worker, how can forgiveness and its processes function in this setting? How can it affect you? Your worker?
3. You have a sister who thinks your parents prefer you over her. All your life she has played mind games with you and the parents to get her way, and your parents have often succumbed to her ploys at your expense. Even so she still seems convinced that you are the problem in her life. Now that you're married, she visits you and makes fun of you in front of your children when your husband is not around. She seems intent on winning over your children's affections at your expense, a familiar ploy. How can forgiveness principles be applied to this situation?
4. You wake up one morning and have a deeply uncomfortable feeling. Your husband tries to put his arm around you, but you push him away—you don't want him to touch you. You have never felt this way

during your entire marriage to a wonderful, caring husband, but you just can't help yourself. Your husband succeeds in getting you to a counselor and in these sessions you discover that you were sexually assaulted as a child by your uncle. The trauma of this event was so severe that you had "forgotten" it until now. Your uncle is an elderly man now and lives within driving distance from your house. How would forgiveness work in this context? Should you bring this up to a frail old man? Would it be better to just forget it?

5. You belong to a group of four really good women friends, but you discover that one of them, Andrea, has been criticizing you behind your back. You feel betrayed not only by Andrea, but by the other "silent assenters" to her criticisms. Would you confront Andrea and make her aware of your feelings of betrayal? Why or why not? What circumstances would keep you from confronting her? How would you express your feelings to the others, if at all?
6. You decide to call your best friend, Callie, on her birthday. To your utter shock, she lights into you, yelling unfounded accusations that leave you totally nonplussed. As you turn this incident over in your mind, trying to make sense of this outburst, you conclude that it has to do with jealousy. You have just been promoted at your job and had your most recent book hit the best-seller list. What other conclusions could you arrive at that would prevent you from overreacting to her attack? How can the processes of forgiveness diffuse this crisis in your friendship?
7. Your brother, Sam, is a smooth talker and a wheeler-dealer. When your father died, Sam convinced your mother to give him the entire amount of the financial inheritance that your father had left to divide up between the three siblings. His argument was that he'd use the funds to fix up the family home and move in to take care of your mother. He did so knowing that you and your other brother were in financial straits. Since there was no will, Sam pulled off this ruse and now you and your brother have cut off communication with him. What issues would you need to address in order to get to forgiveness? How can the processes of forgiveness operate in this situation? Who should take the first step toward reconciliation? Why?

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How do you think forgiveness is different from condoning?
 - a. Condoning **does not hold the offender responsible** for his/her actions.
 - b. Forgiveness does hold the offender accountable for his/her actions.
2. When is it time for outside intervention (counseling, civil authorities)?
 - a. When you feel your efforts at stopping the abuse or gaining cooperation from the offender **have failed**.
 - b. When the offender has **broken a law**, biblical (infidelity, abuse) or civil (attempted murder, robbery, etc.)

3. Is it ever wrong to forgive?
 - a. **Not according to the definitions of forgiveness taught in this seminar.** Because an offense leaves the victim, and not the perpetrator, holding the bag of anger and hurt, forgiveness will benefit the victim most of all.
 - b. Because forgiveness recognizes that a wrong was perpetrated, it can always be given, even though the forgiver may never be reconciled with the forgiven offender.
 - c. Forgiveness is a choice made by the wronged party to release the perpetrator from any debt owed. However, it cannot assume reconciliation will follow, unless the perpetrator has agreed to enter into an honorable relationship with the wronged person.
4. Can we ever forgive too much?
 - a. **No!** Not if you, as the wronged party, understand forgiveness as a means to release from your mind and body the damaging effects of anger and resentments. Setting boundaries on your offender will help you keep forgiving, *even if those boundaries ensure that you will never again live or work with that person.*
 - b. **Yes!** If you, as the wronged party, understand forgiveness as giving your abuser permission to continue abusing you. *Your forgiveness gives you the power and authority to refuse any further abuse.*
5. How can I deal with my memory of the offense?
 - a. **There is nothing wrong with remembering.** It's remembering in the wrong way that contributes to the memory torturing you and keeping you chained to the offense(s).
 - b. Get busy helping people in your similar situation.
 - c. Follow the advice in Philippians 4:8.
6. What about justice?
 - a. **Follow the advice in Matthew 18:** You can take your case to your offender. If s/he does not respond, bring friendly witnesses whom you trust and who want to see you reconciled, if at all possible.
 - b. If the offender still does not respond, take it to the church authorities you trust.
 - c. If the offender still does not respond, treat him/her as a "publican." In other words, you may now see this person as an "enemy." Matthew 5 and Romans 12 tell us how to treat our enemies. If you see your enemy in want of anything, you can reach out to help him/her. Again, this does not mean you are obligated to be in a relationship with this person, particularly if there is continuing danger that this person can do you mental or bodily harm.

7. What is the price of forgiveness?

a. **In the forgiver, the price is peace; in the offender, it is a call to change and transformation.**

b. The forgiver has to “eat” the debt. Does the forgiver eat the debt so that the offender can continue to rack up more debt? Or is the offender now indebted to the forgiver to change?

c. Christ absorbed the cost of our sin so that we might change. Our sinful past is not held against us, but it is clear that forgiveness does not subvert justice. Forgiveness is meant to create change in the offender so that, ideally, though not necessarily, the latter might be reconciled with the injured party.

8. What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

a. **Forgiveness is like a one-way street.** The injured party chooses to cover the offense or “pay the debt” for the offender. The injured party hopes to see changes in the offender as a result of this generous gift, but does not expect them.

b. **Reconciliation is a two-way street** where the generous gift of forgiveness is responded to by the offender with indications of repentance, acts of confession, and changes in behavior.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM THIS SEMINAR

Write down what you have learned about forgiveness through this seminar. Be as specific as possible. Then write a prayer of commitment to forgive—this will seal your commitment to put into practice the forgiveness principles that you have learned. In it you can confess your own weaknesses in this area of your Christian walk and ask God’s help in strengthening your faith in His power to make you a more humble and forgiving person. If you have difficulty setting boundaries, ask for strength and wisdom to know when and how to balance the demands of justice and the invitations of mercy. **May God richly bless you on your forgiveness journey!**



Session 8

Healthy Relationships Behind Close Doors

by Katia Reinert

“I am with you and will save you,” declares the LORD.”

Jeremiah 30:11

ONE WOMAN’S STORY

Meet Ana. At age 24 she had many health problems but had never discussed them with a doctor. She felt a glimmer of hope when she learned about the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety during a Women’s Ministries congress. Deciding to share her struggles with a nurse, Ana told her that since the age of three she had been physically beaten by her parents for wetting her bed. As she grew older, her incontinent episodes continued and so did the beatings. The constant fear of being hurt for something beyond her control seemed to be more than she could bear. She felt ashamed and helpless. When she reached adolescence, her incontinence became less frequent, but she started experiencing nightmares and anxiety attacks. “I felt ashamed and thought no one would ever want to marry me,” she said in a timid voice. “But I thank God I did get married to a kind man.”

Thanks to her supportive husband, Ana’s incontinence lessened, but the nightmares and headaches continued. Often when waking from a terrifying dream, she would feel the bed sheets soaked. Would she ever get over this problem? Why was this still happening? Ana also had panic attacks, and she would burst with palpitations and shortness of breath. Somehow she was able to conceal this from her husband and did not tell him for fear of rejection. As she was sharing her painful experience with the nurse, Ana said she was ashamed and longed to be healed from the headaches, the palpitations, and the emotional pain. When asked about what made her feel better, she said “When I pray and sing to God I feel better. My fears and problems seem to shrink.”

Ana's symptoms are not uncommon in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an illness suffered by some who have experienced traumatic events. Like her, many women struggle quietly with physical, social, mental and emotional issues resulting from abuse or violence that may have started early in their life.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A GLOBAL CONCERN

Violence against women and girls is perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know today. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence against women (VAW) is a widespread experience worldwide, with serious public health implications of epidemic proportions. Violence against women devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development. It takes many forms and occurs in many places, including domestic violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls in schools, sexual harassment at work, rape by husbands or strangers, in refugee camps or as a tactic of war.

The consequences of this human rights violation bring major problems, not only for the woman, but also for the family, the community and the world. For the community, VAW remains a hidden problem with great human and health-care costs as a result of underreporting. For each victim, VAW leads not only to bodily injury but also has serious health consequences that can lead to life-long disability or even death.¹

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is the most common form of violence against women, and sexual violence, whether by partners, acquaintances or strangers, affects primarily women and girls. Other forms of violence against women include sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures, trafficking for forced labor or sex, and traditional practices such as forced or child marriages and dowry-related violence. Violence against women is often related to social and gender bias and, at its most extreme, may lead to violent death or female infanticide.

GLOBAL FACTS ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- Women are subjected to violence as women, irrespective of economic status, rural or urban, faith or geographic location.—UNITE to end violence against women
- The UN estimates that globally, at least one in three women experiences physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime.—New Internationalist, November, 2010
- Among women aged 15 to 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined.—Unifem United States National Committee/NCC online, November, 2010
- In South Africa a woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner.—UNWomen fact sheet
- Women and girls constitute 80% of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually, with the majority (79%) trafficked for sexual exploitation.—United Nations fact sheet
- Between 100 and 140 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mu-

tilation/cutting [FGM], with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk of the practice.—UNWomen fact sheet

- In Eritrea 99% of Muslim women experience FGM and 92% of Christian women.—The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World, 2006
- More than 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.—UNWomen fact sheet
- As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence while pregnant.—UNWomen fact sheet
- In most wars and many post-conflict situations, women and girls suffer rape and sexual exploitation on a massive scale.—The Human Rights Defender, Amnesty International, April 2004
- Domestic violence alone costs approximately US\$1.16 billion in Canada and \$5.8 billion in the USA.—UNWomen fact sheet
- Three quarters of the world's illiterate adults are women. Countless girls drop out of school because of sexual harassment and violence, or fear of violence.—WIRE, Amnesty International, Feb/March, 2010

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The United Nations (UN) defines violence against women as follows: “Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.—UN General Assembly (resolution 48/104 December 1993).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as an “actual or threatened physical or sexual violence or psychological and emotional abuse directed toward a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend, or current or former dating partner.”

Such violence may occur in the family or within the community. It may be perpetrated by the State, and it may be condoned by various cultures through traditional practices. The most common form is violence in the family. Family violence, also called domestic violence, is a pattern of coercive behavior characterized by the domination and control of one intimate partner by the other through a variety of tactics, including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal, and/or economic abuse.

VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY

Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs *in the family* includes battering; sexual abuse of female children in the household; dowry-related violence; marital rape; female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; and violence related to exploitation.

Family violence includes domestic violence; child abuse, neglect or maltreatment; elder abuse, neglect, or maltreatment; witnessed abuse; and marital rape. It consists of a pattern of behaviors used by one individual in the family to establish power and control over another without consideration for his or her individual rights.

VIOLENCE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs within the general community includes rape; sexual abuse; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women; forced prostitution; or group rape during war times.

VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY THE STATE

This includes physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

VIOLENCE BY TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

In many countries, women fall victim to traditional practices that violate their human rights. These violations include female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM), dowry murder, so-called “honor killings,” and early marriage.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Physical abuse: Physical maltreatment, injury, or damage to a person. It includes practices such as hitting, shaking, burning, forceful restraint, extreme spanking or the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). According to the World Health Organization, 85 million to 115 million girls and women have undergone some form of female genital mutilation and suffer from its adverse health effects.

Sexual abuse: Attempted or actual incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, pornography, fondling, or forced nudity. It can be contacts and interaction between a child under 18 and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person, or coercive/non-consenting sexual acts between adults, especially when one is in a position to have power over the other.

Rape is one form of sexual abuse. Rape can occur anywhere, even in the family, where it can take the form of marital rape or incest. It occurs in the community, where a woman can fall prey to any abuser. It also occurs in situations of armed conflict and in refugee camps. Sexual assault within marriage is included under the label of rape because it is the community attitudes prevalent in many areas—attitudes held by law enforcement, local leaders, neighbors, and even church leadership—which allow this type of violence to go unpunished. *Forced prostitution and trafficking* is another form of sexual abuse. Many women are forced into prostitution either by their parents, husbands or boyfriends—or as a result of the difficult economic and social conditions in which they find themselves.

Sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a growing concern for women. Employers abuse their authority to seek sexual favors from their female co-workers or subordinates, sometimes promising promotions or other forms of career advancement.

Neglect and witnessed abuse: Neglect occurs when there is an act of negligence in providing for basic needs—food, shelter, clothing, health care, or protection—of children, the elderly, or other vulnerable individuals. Witnessing abuse at home has been documented to have as much of a detrimental impact on children as if they were being abused and is considered in some regions an act of abuse in itself.

Psychological/emotional abuse: Verbal or other behavior causing damage to mental, emotional or spiritual health. It can be in the form of attacks on self-esteem and sense of self, threats, name calling, shaming, lack of affection, or isolation.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: COMMON NAMES AND TYPES

- Domestic violence or abuse
- Family violence
- Dating violence
- Gender-based violence
- Intimate partner violence (IPV)
- Child abuse, neglect or maltreatment
- Elder abuse, neglect or maltreatment
- Rape
- Neglect
- Witnessed abuse
- Spouse abuse
- Battering
- Child marriage: any child under the age of 18
- Dowry murders
- Honor killings
- Daughter neglect/son preference
- Sexual harassment
- Forced pregnancy or sterilization,
- Unwanted abortion
- Sexual slavery
- Forced prostitution
- Sex trafficking
- Inheritance customs against women
- Pornography and pedophilia

HEALTH IMPACT

The ongoing exposure to abuse and chronic stress may result in disease and even death. For example, we are learning that facing child maltreatment and poverty at an early age impacts our immune system in a negative way. In a study of adults who were exposed to child maltreatment or poverty there was an association with a dysregulated pro-inflammatory immune response in adults. This negative effect on the immune system is not only seen in the case of child abuse but also during adult conflict with a spouse or a companion. Studies show that the immune system is less effective when there is strife and ongoing conflict between spouses.⁸

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES FOR WOMEN

In adult women, violence can lead to many health problems related to stress-induced physiological changes. Some are related to cardiovascular or metabolic problems that result from the chronic stress response that the body is subjected to. Other problems may include substance use, or lack of fertility control and personal autonomy as often seen in abusive relationships.

We know that compared to their non-abused peers, abused women have higher rates of reproductive problems such as:

- unintended pregnancies
- abortions
- adverse pregnancies and neonatal and infant outcomes
- sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS)

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is the most common form of violence against women. A WHO study in 11 countries¹ found that between 15% and 71% of women (depending on the country) who experienced physical or sexual violence by a husband or partner in their lifetime, had health problems, including:

- high blood pressure
- high blood glucose
- overweight and obesity
- high cholesterol
- depression
- alcohol and substance abuse
- PTSD
- suicidal ideas and actions

These diseases often limit the ability of women to manage other chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension.

Fatalities: Intimate Partner violence may also be fatal. Studies from several countries (Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States) show that between 40% and 70% of female murders were carried out by intimate partners.¹

Additionally, in a recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) report² in the United States, when compared to men and to women who did not experience abuse, women who experienced rape or stalking by any perpetrator or physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime were more likely to report:

- frequent headaches
- chronic pain
- difficulty with sleeping
- activity limitations
- poor physical health
- poor mental health
- asthma
- irritable bowel syndrome
- diabetes

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES DURING PREGNANCY

Among pregnant women with a history of abuse, there is a significantly higher rate of complications during pregnancy, such as³:

- low weight gain
- anemia
- infections
- first and second trimester bleeding
- depression
- suicidal tendencies
- use of tobacco and/or alcohol
- illicit drug use

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES FOR GIRLS

Prevalence of child abuse also has epidemic proportions. Many children of both sexes suffer from physical and emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and commercial or other exploitation. According to the WHO¹, the evidence available indicates that girls are far more likely than boys to suffer sexual abuse.

Worldwide, child abuse has both immediate and long-term consequences for the health of women and contributes significantly to:

- depression
- alcohol and drug use and dependence
- panic disorder
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- suicide attempts

HARM TO CHILDREN

In the US, a study of low-income pre-school children in Michigan found that nearly half (46.7%) of the children in the study had been exposed to at least one incident of mild or severe violence in the family.³ Another study shows that fifty percent (50%) of men who frequently assault their wives frequently assault their children also, and the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect suggests that domestic violence is likely the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities.³ In the United States, an important group of studies shows the link between adverse childhood experiences (ACE)^{5,6} such as abuse, neglect, and witnessed abuse, to negative physical and mental health outcomes later in adulthood.

Compared to children with no abuse history, children exposed to abuse had higher risk for:

- cardiovascular disease,
- type 2 diabetes
- dysregulated immune system
- substance abuse
- depression
- cancer
- obesity
- overweight
- premature mortality

Also noted in US studies were changes in brain structure, such as evidence of smaller frontal lobes, negative psychological consequences and poor mental health outcomes which further influence the body's stress load, impacting the physical health and quality of life of the trauma survivor.⁶

Victims and child witnesses of violence often experience fear, shame, guilt, and stigma. These negative emotions contribute to severe burdens of mental and emotional problems, particularly depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as noted above.⁷

WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Witnessed abuse is considered by some as serious as child abuse. Certainly, the physical and mental health consequences do testify to that. Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioral and physical health problems,³ including:

- depression
- anxiety
- suicide attempts
- drug and alcohol abuse
- posttraumatic stress disorder (such as bed-wetting or nightmares)
- allergies
- asthma
- gastrointestinal problems

- headache
- flu

The above health consequences offer strong evidence that violence against women and girls is a serious public health problem. Prevention strategies and the development of protective factors in women and girls can have a positive impact to reduce these health consequences. It is important to be aware of the many long-term harmful effect of abuse on the health of women and girls. It is important to recognize how, as a health problem, violence against women weakens our communities and our nations. It is vital to do all in our power to make known the health consequences and the high cost of abuse.

WHAT TO DO

- Pray for wisdom
- Assess your safety and develop a safety plan
- Call your local hotline as needed
- Identify 2 or 3 people you trust to reach out to if in danger
- Learn to say NO
- Be assertive
- Get involved in advocacy
- Educate women and men to prevent violence
- Teach boys that it is not okay to hurt girls or women
- Use GCWM Abuse Day materials on the fourth Sabbath in August every year
- Urge your pastor to preach about this problem
- Sign the END IT NOW petition and pledge
- March in parades for END IT NOW
- Watch and share the END IT NOW video
- Tell your own story
- Ensure that there are adequate health services for women in your area
- Write, blog, join networks
- Provide a camp for abused women
- Be a member of your conference committee
- Help set up a shelter, or volunteer at an existing one
- Speak up in your community and government
- Encourage young women to become lawyers, educators, preachers, etc.
- Challenge and help change traditional norms

PREVENTION: BUILDING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

You do not need to be rich to prevent or stop abuse and to cultivate healthy relationships. However, it does require an investment of time, the will to intentionally set priorities, and the decision to make choices wisely. Here are some effective practical ideas that can assist you in building healthy and supportive relationships at home.

1. Include family worship in your daily schedule, and seek God's presence as a family.

One of the important protective factors is to include family worship in the daily schedule. The family that prays together and seeks God's will for them together is building resilience factors. A solid spiritual foundation is a major protective factor, and angels can make the home a little piece of heaven on earth, for "the sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides."⁹

2. Make quality time for face-to-face interactions.

Sometimes in their busy lives people choose to relate to others on social media or the internet, with little family time spent talking to each other in person. In order to invest in healthy relationships at home, we must include time for one-on-one interactions as a family. Give each member of the family quality time; listen to them, their concerns and interests, their struggles and joys. This will build a strong bond that will hold through rough spots of life.

3. Take time to share meals as a family.

There is plenty of evidence that eating family meals together can play a large part in reducing at-risk behavior in children and youth, but this time is also important for healthy relationships among adults. When the TV is turned off and people can talk and listen to each other, family bonds are strengthened.

4. Cultivate love, kindness, courtesy and respect for each other.

A hallmark of healthy relationships behind closed doors is to be intentional about being courteous, loving and kind to each other. Words of respect and kindness can do much to ensure a pleasant and happy atmosphere in the home. On the other hand, if there is conflict between parents, the children will mirror the same spirit. We are reminded that "our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another," and "if the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence."⁹

5. Forgive one another.

Forgiveness brings healing, not only to the person who is forgiven but also to the one who forgives. Carrying bitterness and an unforgiving attitude will negatively impact our health. However, the healing process of forgiving someone may not necessarily bring reconciliation. For instance, in the case of violence or abuse, forgiving may sometimes include leaving the relationship, setting limits for interactions with a "toxic" or abusive person, or making them accountable for their actions. The critical aspect of forgiveness is to pray for the one who hurt us and sincerely wish them well. We will not always have approval of everyone, and we must accept that. However, we are reminded to "do all we can to live in peace with everyone," (Romans 12:18-NIV) and to forgive those who have hurt us in any way. The benefits will be invaluable not only in this life but in the life to come.

FACTS WITH HOPE: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

FACT:¹⁰ In Rosetto, Pennsylvania, a study looked at the link between social support and health. The researchers discovered that the incidence of heart disease in this little town was 50% lower than that in the two neighboring towns, despite the same health risks. The difference was that Rosetto was composed of a close, supportive group of religious Italian immigrants. During the years that they maintained a high level of social connectedness, strong family ties and a nurturing community, residents had a lower incidence of

heart disease; but as the town gradually changed and the closeness of the community began to weaken, the heart disease rates increased to the same levels as in the neighboring towns.

HOPE: Being part of a supportive community, such as a church family or a community of faith, can go a long way toward facilitating whole person health and helping one cope in the face of trauma or abuse.

FACT:¹¹ A powerful study on supportive relationships and the risk of death was done in Alameda County, California, and followed over 7,000 people. The results of the study demonstrated that those who were lonely and isolated had a three times higher mortality rate compared to those with many social contacts. Thus, the amount of social support someone has is linked to longer life and is a predictor of better health.

HOPE: If you are feeling lonely or isolated, or if you have currently or previously experienced any form of abuse, reach out for help today. Make a new friend. Join a group with similar interests. Volunteer for an activity that involves you with other people. Be sure to speak to someone you trust, and seek God's help.

HOPE: You may also call the national hotline for domestic violence (1800-799-7233). There are some great phone apps that can provide assistance to ensure your safety (*R3* and *Circle of 6* are excellent apps).

HOPE: If you are suffering from mental or psychological problems such as depression or thoughts of suicide, please call the national hotline for suicide prevention now (1-800-273-8255). Seek help today. There is hope for you, and God is longing to bring you the healing you need. There are health professionals who can help you.

HOPE: If you are a survivor who is doing well and is healing by God's grace, reach out to someone else in need. Engage in service for those who are still suffering the consequences of domestic violence. You may want to become an advocate for ENDITNOW (see www.enditnow.org) to help stop the epidemic of abuse. As you engage in unselfish service, you will not only bless others but also build your protective factors, strengthening your own healing.

WHAT DOES GOD ASK OF US

"Learn to do good; devote yourselves to justice, aid the wronged, uphold the rights of the orphan, defend the cause of the widow." Isaiah 1:17 (Tanak - Jewish Scripture)

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10 (NKJ)

"I'm God and I act in loyal love. I do what's right and set things right and fair, and delight in those who do the same thing." Jeremiah 9:24 (The Message)

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 John 4:7-9 (NKJ)

A PRAYER

Gracious God, We know you are a God who is able. But today we come before you with heavy hearts. We will no longer ignore the abuses perpetrated against women. Empower us to help end violence against women. Give us the wisdom and the courage to end abuse—in our church and in our community.

Remembering the immense value you, our Creator and Redeemer, place on each one of us, may we reflect your love. Give us knowledge, courage, wisdom, strength, and understanding.

We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

ENDNOTES

- ¹World Health Organization (2009). Women and Health Report. Geneva, Switzerland. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241563857_eng.pdf.
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- ⁷World Health Organization (2010). UN(DESA): WHO Policy Analysis. http://allianceforchildrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/who_policyanalysis_who_undesa.pdf
- ⁸Adverse Childhood Experiences Reported by Adults. Center of Disease Control and Prevention (December 17, 2010) --- Five States, 2009. 59(49); 1609-1613. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5949a1.htm>. Accessed June 30, 2011.
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- ¹⁰Wolf, S., Bruhn, J. (Aug 26, 1993) The Power of Clan: The Influence of Human Relationships on Heart Disease. *N Engl J Med*; 329:669. DOI: 10.1056/NEJM199308263290921
- ¹¹Berkman, L., "Social Networks, Host Resistance, and Mortality: A Nine-Year Follow-up study of Alameda County Residents." *American Journal of Epidemiology* (1979).

RESOURCES

- Women's Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
www.adventistwomensministries.org
- END IT NOW Campaign
www.enditnow.org
- Breaking the Silence brochures
www.adventistwomensministries.org
- SDA Church Official Statements
www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements
- Hot Peaches pages: international directory for domestic violence agencies
<http://www.hotpeachpages.net>
- Say No to Violence Against Women
www.saynotoviolence.org
- Women and Men Against Sexual Harassment and Other Abuses
www.tagnet.org/wash
- United Nations Entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women
www.unwomen.org
- UNWomen resources to end violence against women
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>
- Men Engage Global Alliance
www.menengage.org
- CATW (The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women)
www.catwinternational.org
- Keep Girls Safe ADRA Thailand
www.adrathailand.org
- Phone apps: R3, Circle of 6
- Futures without violence
<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>
- Institutes of Medicine report: Preventing Violence Against Women and Children
<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Preventing-Violence-Against-Women-and-Children-Workshop-Summary.aspx>

Healthy Relationships Behind Close Doors

by Katia Reinert

“I am with you and will save you,” declares the LORD.”

Jeremiah 30:11

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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1. What are 10 types of gender-based violence?

2. Briefly describe the 5 types of violence against women (VAW).

3. What are the major effects of Violence Against Women on women's health?

4. What are the major effects of Violence Against Women on the health of children?

5. What are 8 things YOU can do to help prevent violence against women?

6. What are 5 ways to build healthy relationships at home?

RESOURCES

- Women's Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
www.adventistwomensministries.org
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- SDA Church Official Statements
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- Hot Peaches pages: international directory for domestic violence agencies
<http://www.hotpeachpages.net>
- Say No to Violence Against Women
www.saynotoviolence.org
- Women and Men Against Sexual Harassment and Other Abuses
www.tagnet.org/wash
- United Nations Entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women
www.unwomen.org
- UNWomen resources to end violence against women
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>
- Men Engage Global Alliance
www.menengage.org
- CATW (The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women)
www.catwinternational.org
- Keep Girls Safe ADRA Thailand
www.adrathailand.org
- Phone apps: R3, Circle of 6.
- Futures without violence
<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>
- Institutes of Medicine report: Preventing Violence Against Women and Children
<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Preventing-Violence-Against-Women-and-Children-Workshop-Summary.aspx>



Session 9

Living the Abundant Life: God's Healing Way

by Kathleen Kiem Hoa Oey Kuntaraf, MD, MPH

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

John 10:10

The *British Medical Journal* once reported an unusual case of the rare and bizarre *de Clerambault's syndrome*, in which a 36-year-old unmarried female clerk had a very strong delusion that her director was in love with her. This was amazing because she had never spoken to her boss, a married man; however, she had written fourteen love letters to him. What a one-sided affair! When doctors examined her, it was found that she was suffering from Grave's Disease. This untreated case of hyperthyroidism caused an imbalanced hormonal state, creating the delusion that her director was in love with her. Once the problem was diagnosed, the doctor was able to provide a prescription and her condition improved.

Some of us may have distorted thinking, but God, the Great Physician, has given us a wholistic prescription on how to live a healthy, balanced, abundant life.

God is interested in our enjoying abundant living. As it says in John 10:10: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

What is God's wholistic prescription that will allow us to live an abundant life? In the writings of Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we find a wholistic prescription for an abundant life: "Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies."¹

Many acronyms have been developed to help us remember these eight natural remedies. The General Conference Health Ministries department has gathered the proven practices that ensure the best possible health for abundant living using the acronym CELEBRATIONS. These elements of CELEBRATIONS help us live a healthy life.

C - choices
E - exercise
L - liquids
E - environment
B - belief
R - rest
A - air
T - temperance
I - integrity
O - optimism
N - nutrition
S - social Support and Services

We need the total package of the wholistic prescription to enjoy an abundant life. For instance, what's the use of being a devout vegetarian, if you do not get sufficient sleep to keep you from being grouchy and irritable? Or if we avoid alcohol but do not exercise, our health will still suffer.

An article in the November 2005 *National Geographic* tells of three groups of centenarians—the Okinawans, the Sardinians, and the Seventh-day Adventists living in Loma Linda, California. Examples from Loma Linda included Dr. Ellsworth Wareham, who at age 91 was assisting with heart surgery; Frank Shearer who at 100 years old is still skiing; Marge Jetton who at age 101 had her driver's license extended for another 5 years; and Lydia Newton, 112 years old, ranked among the world's 20 oldest people.

If we abide by the wholistic prescription God has given us, there is a possibility for us to live some ten years longer than those who do not follow the principles of healthful living. A quotation from Ellen G. White suggests a further benefit of healthful living: "A pure healthy life is most favorable for the perfection of Christian character and for the development of the powers of mind and body."²

It is clear that when we are healthy, beside the possibility of having ten additional years here on earth, we are also creating an environment to develop a Christ-like character, making us fit for heaven where we will enjoy an abundant life with Jesus forever. That is surely living the abundant life in its truest meaning. Yes, Jesus came to this earth so we might have life and have it more abundantly both here and hereafter. What a loving God we have!

Using the acronym **CELEBRATIONS**, let us look at each part of God's wholistic prescription.

C IS FOR CELEBRATING CHOICES

Whether we realize it or not, we are constantly making choices moment by moment. For instance we choose: whether to exercise regularly; whether to get enough sleep; whether to eat healthfully; whether to drink enough water; whether to be helpful to others.

Choosing health and celebrating the joy of life should be an intentional decision that is well informed and freely made. As early twentieth-century politician William Jennings Bryan said, “Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice.”

The entire philosophy of **CELEBRATIONS** involves individuals making their own choices backed by evidence-based information—a lifestyle which relates to the body, mind, emotions, spiritual dimensions, and social interaction.

According to the 2006 study conducted by Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne (IPFW), nearly 90% of healthcare claim costs can be attributed to an individual’s lifestyle choices. It is the consistency of making healthy choices that will turn into habits and ultimately lead to life improvement. As Abraham Lincoln observed, “The health you enjoy is largely your choice.”

What is the source of strength to make correct choices on a regular basis? Philippians 4:13 gives a very clear answer. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

E IS FOR CELEBRATING EXERCISE

The U.S. Surgeon General’s Report on Physical Activity and Health states that physical exercise is the best single predictor of longevity. In other words, if you want to postpone your funeral, exercise regularly!

An advisory committee, composed of 13 leading experts in the field of exercise science and public health, summarizes the benefits of exercise for various age groups as follows.³

Children and Adolescents – Strong Evidence of

- Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Improved bone health
- Improved cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers
- Favorable body composition

Children and Adolescents – Moderate Evidence of

- Reduced symptoms of depression

Adults and Older Adults – Strong evidence of

- Lower risk of early death
- Lower risk of coronary heart disease

- Lower risk of stroke
- Lower risk of high blood pressure
- Lower risk of adverse blood lipid profile
- Lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- Lower risk of metabolic syndrome
- Lower risk of colon cancer
- Lower risk of breast cancer
- Prevention of weight gain
- Weight loss, particularly when combined with reduced caloric intake
- Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Prevention of falls
- Reduced depression
- Better cognitive function (for older adults)

Moderate to Strong Evidence of

- Better functional health (for older adults)
- Reduced abdominal obesity

Moderate Evidence of

- Lower risk of hip fracture
- Lower risk of lung cancer
- Lower risk of endometrial cancer
- Weight maintenance after weight loss
- Increased bone density
- Improved sleep quality.

The current Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans encourage a person to accumulate at least two and a half hours a week in moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking. Physical activity up to one hour per day results in further reduction of risk for cardiovascular disease. The InStep for Life program of the General Conference Health Ministries Department recommends walking at least 8000 steps daily. Walking 10,000 steps daily would be ideal. So check your pedometer each day to see if you have reached your daily goal.

It is amazing that Dr. Kenneth Cooper, of Aerobics fame, who used to promote jogging, is currently promoting brisk walking rather than running or jogging. Remember the slogan “no pain no gain”? Unfortunately, some people may continue to run until their whole body is sore, which could be harmful rather than beneficial. However, walking puts much less stress on the body. In addition, it can be done almost any time or place. It’s fun, convenient, inexpensive, and can be enjoyed alone or with friends. It requires no special equipment. Comfortable walking shoes and clothing are all that are needed. Brisk walking results in minimal injuries while exercising most muscles and systems of the body. It stimulates the release of endorphins, which elevate the mood and improve one’s outlook on life.

More than 150 years ago Ellen White recognized the value of walking, writing that, “Walking, in all cases where it is possible, is the best remedy for diseased bodies, because in this exercise all the organs of the body are brought into use....There is no exercise that can take the place of walking. By it circulation of the blood is improved.”⁴

A daily walk can improve your health and your mood, so get your pedometer and comfortable shoes and start today.

L IS FOR CELEBRATING LIQUIDS

Liquid is indispensable for optimal health. Almost every cell and tissue of the body not only contains water but is continually bathed in fluid and requires water to perform its functions. Water, the liquid of life, is a medium in which metabolism takes place. It serves many vital purposes, as...

- the transport system within the body
- a lubricant for movement
- the facilitator of digestion
- the prime transporter of waste via the kidneys
- a temperature regulator
- a major constituent of the circulating blood

Many problems arise if we do not drink sufficient water. The body will attempt to avoid dehydration by decreasing sweat and urine output. If this compensatory mechanism proves inadequate and insufficient fluid intake persists, dehydration will occur. As a result, the body’s cooling mechanisms will be impaired, along with the possible rise in body temperature and an inefficient clearance of body waste. The blood thickens and blood flow becomes impaired, increasing the risk of intravascular clotting. This may manifest as stroke or heart attack. It also leads to constipation, to the delight of the laxative industry.⁵ Not drinking enough water also increases the risk of developing kidney and gallstones.⁶

In 1995, an article in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* called attention to the hazards facing older Americans from inadequate fluid intake.⁷ It’s estimated that by drinking enough water, older people could save thousands of days of hospitalization and millions of dollars each year. Such an observation has implications for all age groups worldwide.

Amazingly Mrs. White has counseled this more than 150 years ago, saying, “In health and in sickness, pure water is one of heaven’s choicest blessings. Its proper use promotes health. It is the beverage which God provided to quench the thirst of animals and man. Drunk freely, it helps to supply the necessities of the system and assists nature to resist disease.”⁸

To help stay hydrated during prolonged physical activity or in hot weather, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that we drink fluids during the activity as well as several glasses of water or other fluid after the physical activity is completed.⁹

In the healthy person, a practical guide to water intake is to drink water in the morning because the body is relatively dehydrated from insensible (invisible) water loss, or perspiration, during sleep. Then continue to drink water at regular intervals throughout the day to ensure that the urine is a pale color. (Urine may be a bright yellow color after taking certain medications, including vitamin pills and anti-tuberculosis medication.)

Another important use of water is cleansing. Frequent hand washing may reduce transmission of many infectious agents from person to person. If people thoroughly washed their hands with soap and water before eating and after activities that soil their hands, a large percentage of infectious diseases would be eliminated.

Aside from using water internally for our bodies, we also need to use it externally. Hydrotherapy is a simple home therapeutic application using water, and it is best applied as a help for simple muscular aches, pains, and bruises. When dealing with muscular aches, apply hot, wet towels alternated with cold, wet towels (ending with a cold application) to affected areas to improve blood flow. However, for a recent injury where bruising has occurred, cold compresses are more appropriate.

Caution should also be exercised where the skin is diseased or cut, has impaired blood flow, or where neurological damage causes the inability to feel heat. In this case, hot applications may lead to serious injury (for example, in diabetic patients).

There are many other modes of hydrotherapy, such as cold mitten friction, hot footbaths, heat compresses, and ice compresses. Unfortunately, few today utilize this most useful tool for relief.

Regarding the beneficial uses of water, Mrs. White made the following statement: "The external application of water is one of the easiest and most satisfactory ways of regulating the circulation of the blood.... But many have never learned by experience the beneficial effects of the proper use of water. All should become intelligent in its use in simple home treatments."¹⁰

Notice that she advises that *all* should become intelligent in its use. So this knowledge is valuable not only for nurses or physiotherapists but for all of us.

There is one particular type of hydrotherapy that we use regularly, which is the daily shower. It removes accumulated dirt and contaminating debris, reducing the risk of infection. For the most benefit, try using the following method.

- After exercising in the morning, start your shower at a neutral temperature (97 - 100 degrees Fahrenheit)
- After you have finished bathing, continue your shower by increasing the water temperature to as hot as you can tolerate, around 110 degrees for 1 to 2 minutes.
- Then decrease the temperature to cold (50 - 70 degrees Fahrenheit) for 20 to 40 seconds.
- Briskly rub your body down with a towel or mitten and dry thoroughly.

This stimulating treatment will not only wake you up but will help keep you going strong throughout the day.

However, when showering before you go to sleep, use warm water only so the body can relax and get you ready for a good night's rest.

E IS CELEBRATING THE ENVIRONMENT

According to the dictionary, “Environment is any conditions or circumstances that affect the development of an organism or group of organisms.” Elements of our environment include climate, atmosphere, water, soil, vegetation and sunshine.

Because of time limits, let's mention just one element of our environment—sunshine. Much of the sun's radiation is important to well-being, but over-exposure to ultraviolet radiation can be harmful. The best time for sunlight exposure during the winter is before 11:00AM or after 1:00PM. During the summer, it is before 9:00AM and after 4:00PM. In other words, get your sunrays while they are still long, but never when at their shortest length, when the sun is just above your head. During this time, there is risk for developing skin cancer.

It is especially beneficial be exposed to sunshine while you are exercising. In that way you get two prescriptions at the same time! One benefit is that when we exercise in the sunshine, the serotonin excreted by the pineal gland will later be converted to melatonin during the sleep we get before midnight. This is especially important since the nocturnal plasma melatonin concentration falls as one ages.

In children between one and three years of age, the nocturnal plasma melatonin concentration is 250pg/mL. For adolescents from eight to fifteen years, it goes down to 120 pg/mL. For those between 20 and 27 years of age, it drops to 70pg/mL; and for the elderly 67 to 84 years old, it drops even further, to 30pg/mL.

Although melatonin is produced in the pineal gland, it is not stored there. It leaves the gland through simple diffusion. As a result, we cannot rely on yesterday's melatonin for today. Therefore, as we age, we have an even greater need to exercise in the sunshine. Years ago, Mrs. White understood this, saying, “Vigor declines as years advance, leaving less vitality with which to resist unhealthful influences; hence the greater necessity for the aged to have plenty of sunlight and fresh, pure air.”¹¹

B IS FOR CELEBRATING BELIEF

In the past decade, more than one thousand research studies have been conducted by researchers from Harvard, Duke, and Yale universities on the effects of faith, prayer and meditation. Instead of documenting neurosis as a result of believing in God, five hundred of the studies demonstrated significant positive associations, such as better mental health, greater well-being; less anxiety, depression, and substance abuse; lower suicide rates; more purpose and meaning in life; and greater marital satisfaction and stability.

These studies show that believing in God is a very positive benefit and promotes health. There is nothing more reassuring than the peace and satisfaction experienced by those who place their lives in the hands of a loving God who cares for each of us.

An Ohio study¹² regarding the effects of prayer on well-being interviewed 560 respondents, 95 percent of whom classified themselves as religious people. The researchers identified four types of prayer:

- Petitional prayer: praying to God for material things one may need
- Ritual prayer: praying to God by reading the book of prayers.
- Meditative prayer: praying to God by “feeling” or being in His presence.
- Colloquial prayer: praying to God as talking to a friend, asking Him for guidance.

Of all these types of prayer, the study revealed that colloquial prayer correlates best with happiness and religious satisfaction. Talking to God as to a friend, telling Him all our joys and sorrows, can bring happiness, healing, and religious satisfaction. God wants us to develop a close relationship with Him by using this two-way communication. He speaks to us through the Bible in our private devotion, and we speak to Him through our colloquial prayer. This close relationship with our heavenly Father gives us peace of mind and helps us to cope with the stresses of life.

That stress is a major contributor to ill-health is supported by an article in *U.S. News & World Report* which states that “Somewhere between 75 and 90% of all doctor visits stem from stress.”¹³ Should this surprise us? Ellen G. White wrote more than 150 years ago: “Sickness of the mind prevails everywhere. Nine-tenths of the diseases from which man suffers have their foundation here.”¹⁴

R IS FOR CELEBRATING REST

The saying “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,” is definitely true. Ever since the discovery of “circadian” rhythms or what is known as the natural daily clock, medical science has found that there are many hormones released during sleep, such as the Growth hormone, Cortisol hormone, Prolactin, FSH (Follicle Stimulating Hormone), Luteinizing hormone, and so forth. Let’s consider just the Growth hormone:

- it is produced during pre-midnight sleep (latitude)
- it is important for growth
- it increases the amino acid transport to the brain (tryptophan to pineal gland to convert serotonin to melatonin)
- it makes learning permanent and useful
- its absence impairs immunity (production of cytotoxic T cells)

Going to bed early helps us mentally and physically. It is interesting that Mrs. White wrote about this matter 150 years ago, pointing out that “Sleep is worth far more before than after midnight; two hours good sleep before twelve o’clock is worth more than four hours after twelve o’clock.”¹⁵

Rest is vital to optimal health and vitality, and it is important to remember that there are several types of rest. We need daily rest and also weekly rest. God invites us to enjoy a special day of rest each week. He says to us, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work.” Exodus 20:8-10.

As Rev. Ashey, a Virginia pastor, wrote in *The Washington Times*, “Sabbath is the antidote to burnout.” (October 18, 2004) God who is our Creator knows that our body needs weekly rest in addition to daily rest. Guarding our health also includes taking time for our annual vacation

A IS FOR CELEBRATING AIR

A person carries approximately two quarts of oxygen in the blood, lungs and body tissues. That is enough to last for four minutes. For our health, it is important to breathe plenty of fresh air.

Ellen G. White understood the importance of fresh air: “The influence of pure, fresh air is to cause the blood to circulate healthfully through the system. It refreshes the body and tends to render it strong and healthy, while at the same time its influence is decidedly felt upon the mind, imparting a degree of composure and serenity. It excites the appetite, and renders the digestion of food more perfect, and induces sound and sweet sleep.”¹⁶

Exercise in the outdoors can be especially invigorating if we are surrounded by green trees, which are God’s miraculous anti-pollution mechanism. The trees take in the carbon dioxide we exhale and give off the oxygen we need. When we exercise outdoors, we are enjoying three prescriptions all at one time—getting exercise, absorbing vitamin D from the sunshine, and benefitting from the oxygen provided by the green trees.

T IS FOR CELEBRATING TEMPERANCE

Ellen G. White gave us guidance many years ago: “True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful.”¹⁷ As we see from her words, true temperance consists of not one but two parts: Abstinence from things that are bad for us, such as alcohol, tobacco and the other illegal drugs; and moderation in even the good things.

Even healthful things in excess may impact our bodies negatively. For instance, drinking water is good, but too much water can lead to water intoxication. Therefore even in good things one must practice moderation in order to have optimal health. We must learn to live balanced lives!

I IS FOR CELEBRATING INTEGRITY

Ellen G. White wrote, “It is not safe to permit the least departure from the strictest integrity.”¹⁸ When there is a difference between what we say and what we do, we demonstrate a lack of integrity. We need to ask ourselves “Am I always honest?” “Can I be trusted?” “Can my spouse trust me implicitly?” “Do I trust myself?” Lack of integrity causes remorse, grief and broken relationships. Remember, character is what we are when no one sees. Do we have the peace that comes from knowing we are honest in all things? Are we comfortable knowing that God sees all?

O IS FOR CELEBRATING OPTIMISM

Optimism is based on faith in God. There is no reason to be angry or depressed or sad, knowing that whatever happens in our lives is allowed by God for a reason and it is always for our best. Romans 8:28 assures us, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”

Research done at the Institute of Mental Health in the Netherlands studied 545 men between the ages of 64 to 84 who were free from preexisting cardiovascular disease and cancer. The men were given a four-item questionnaire every five years from 1985 to 2000 to assess their level of optimism. Then these men were divided into three groups based on the optimism scores, and the number of cardiovascular deaths were compared. Highest optimism scores had an approximately 50 % lower risk of cardiovascular death!¹⁹ For our health, let’s celebrate life and approach each day with faith and optimism.

N IS FOR CELEBRATING NUTRITION

God loves us. When He created Adam and Eve, He showed them what to eat to be healthy. We can celebrate at each meal, choosing a rainbow of colorful fruits and vegetables and reducing our use of processed foods, salt and sugar.

Hubert Warner, PhD, at the National Institute of Aging, says, “What we know is that diets rich in fruits and vegetables appear to be much healthier, leading to less chronic disease and lower healthcare costs, but it’s less clear how any specific dietary items affect longevity.” This advice is echoed by experts in an April 29, 2003 WebMD Feature, which states, “If you want to eat foods for living longer, consider a plant-based diet!”

S IS FOR CELEBRATING SOCIAL SUPPORT

Ellen G. White wrote, “Doing good is a work that benefits both giver and receiver.”²⁰ A study done at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) involved 129 ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged pregnant women to see if social support would improve physical and mental outcomes in pregnancy. They found that women who received more prenatal social support and those who were more satisfied with that support, experienced fewer labor difficulties, delivered healthier babies, and had higher birth weight babies. They also reported less depression.²¹

A review of 144 studies on pregnant women concluded that intimate, loving support improves fetal growth, and women who feel loved and supported have less risk of premature births.²²

What are the benefits of supporting others to the giver? A study in the 1997 *Journal of American Medical Association* looked at “Social ties and susceptibility to the common cold.” The subjects, 276 healthy volunteers, ranging in age from 18 to 55, were given nasal drops containing *rhinovirus*, the virus that causes the common cold. Their participation in 12 types of social relationships was assessed: relationships with spouse, parents, parents-in-law, children, close family members, close neighbors, friends, fellow workers, schoolmates, fellow volunteers in charity or community work, members of groups without religious affiliations (social, recreational or professional), as well as members of religious groups.

The research revealed that those who reported only one to three types of relationships had more than four times the risk of developing a cold than those reporting six or more types of relationships. These differences were not fully explained by antibody titers (levels), smoking, exercise, amount of sleep, alcohol, vitamin C, or other factors. In addition, the researchers discovered that the *diversity of relationships* was more important than the total number. In short, those involved in mutually supportive relationship with a diversity of people, regardless of their background, increased their resistance to infection with the rhinovirus.²³

God encourages us to support one another. Not only is it good for those receiving the support but also for the one giving support. There are many verses in the Bible giving specific instruction on how to provide support and service to one another as one big family. For example,

- Love one another (John 13:35)
- Forgive one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Accept/receive one another (Romans 15:7)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Comfort one another (1Thessalonians 4:18)
- Fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7)
- Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Show compassion to one another (1 Peter 3:8)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

As we maintain a strong vertical relationship with the Lord, we will reach out horizontally to support others, treating each person as a child of God. The foot of the cross is level ground. There is no distinction of caste, race, income, education, or position, for each one of us has the same price—the blood of Jesus Christ. As we understand the value of every person, we can genuinely support one another from our hearts.

God cares about His children and gave us a wonderful prescription for abundant living. He has promised success to those who maintain a relationship with Him. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Let us respond to God’s loving prescription, the health principles He has given us that we may “have life and have it more abundantly.”

ENDNOTES

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Handout

Living the Abundant Life: God's Healing Way

by Kathleen Kiem Hoa Oey Kuntaraf, MD, MPH

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

John 10:10

God is interested in our enjoying abundant living. As it says in John 10:10: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." In the writings of Ellen G. White, we find a wholistic prescription for an abundant life: "Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies."

The General Conference Health Ministries department created the acronym CELEBRATIONS. These elements of CELEBRATIONS help us live a healthy life.

Use this sheet for notes on the major points about each of the following aspects of healthful living:

C - choices
E - exercise
L - liquids
E - environment
B - belief
R - rest
A - air
T - temperance
I - integrity
O - optimism
N - nutrition
S - social Support and Services

Four types of prayer:

Petitional prayer:

Ritual prayer:

Meditative prayer:

Colloquial prayer:



Session 10

The New You

by Millie Youngberg

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!”*

2 Corinthians 5:17

Beth had never been able to stick to a diet. Hardly able to walk, she'd never felt motivated to exercise either. Over the years she had moved from small to extra-large clothing sizes, periodically having no choice but to purchase a new wardrobe. She could hardly believe she had reached 225 pounds. At a medical check-up, her long-time family doctor looked at her gravely and said, “The tests confirm what I'd suspected. You have diabetes. You are overweight and out of shape. Beth, you've got to get control of your life—now!”

The probable medical outcomes for Beth if she continued her past life-style included stroke, blindness, kidney failure, circulatory problems, and even amputation of limbs. Beth was devastated, feeling that she'd been given a death sentence. When she arrived home, she automatically headed for the refrigerator for some “comfort food” when she ran into her husband. “What did the doctor tell you?” he asked.

“No more ice cream, sweets, potato chips, Cokes—all the things I like,” she admitted in tears. Realization hit. A new lifestyle change was vital.

It wasn't easy. The whole family had a council and they decided to join Beth on her new healthy-living journey. The first hurdle they tackled was diet. They decided that the easiest way to avoid eating junk food was not to buy it in the first place. The decision was: no more unhealthful, high-calorie, weight-buster

snacks and desserts to tempt Beth and the family. Now when they opened the refrigerator, they found ready-cut vegetables instead of desserts and fat foods—and they were all the better for it!

Knowing that daily exercise was essential to Beth's health, her husband bought her an exercise bicycle. (If she had been in another country it might have been a regular bicycle.) The next morning, Beth grudgingly began to use it. She was so out of shape that after a few minutes pedaling at a low setting, she was exhausted and gave up in defeat. While she sat on her soft recliner, winded and sweating, an inner voice seemed to speak to her: "Beth, you don't have to lose all the extra pounds at once. Take them off pound by pound, minute by minute, step by step." After a few reflective thoughts, she returned to the bicycle with fresh determination. *I will spend the next five minutes of my life pedaling this bicycle*, she thought. *I'll stick with my diet just one more meal*. She also decided to eat less at each meal.

This new determination and way of looking at diet and exercise helped. All Beth had to do was make the right choices for just one more exercise session, one more meal. Sure enough, her daily cycling and better eating habits started to pay off. At her next doctor's appointment, she weighed in 17 pounds (7.7 kg) lighter! She started to feel energized, and for the first time in her life she was in control. Beth felt like a changed person, with new dreams for a new healthy future. So did her family, who were tagging along with her, improving their lifestyle.

Overweight and obesity are advancing at epidemic rates in many countries and are major causes of diabetes and other high-risk diseases. Millions who are aware of this universal health risk are moving toward changing their eating and exercise habits and becoming new, healthier persons like Beth. It is a choice.

BECOMING A NEW PERSON

If you are like most people, you'll probably have to admit that right now, at this moment, you are not the person you want to be. Maybe you've somehow "settled" for the person you are, come to terms with what you see as "reality," and given up on the kind of life you wanted to live. Let's see if we can help you.

GETTING OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Why don't we make changes in our lifestyle or develop useful skills even though it is our desire? On New Year's Day we may write resolutions for new life practices: stop smoking, exercise five days a week, cut out afternoon snacks, or—the most popular resolution—go on a diet. Perhaps on any day of the year we may be impressed to change, to get out of our comfort zone, to look for a better job, to pursue higher education, or to volunteer in our local community. Perhaps we have a deep desire to do something no one has done before, something that seems totally impossible. Many have the desire to start a new spiritual journey with God. So with these desires, what keeps us from going forward to higher and higher levels of accomplishment?

What are the obstacles holding us back from becoming a new person—a healthier and happier person, an outstanding individual, one whom God wants to use in a special way, someone who will make a significant difference in the lives of others? Could they be barriers such as not enough self-control, or thoughts of

“I’m OK as I am,” “I enjoy the status quo”? Might it be that you fear you can’t change, don’t have emotional energy to make a change, that you might fail, or that it just takes too much effort to change? What might keep you from making changes you desire?

Are you aware that habitual thought patterns may keep you from reaching your potential? What is it that really keeps you from going forward, doing the impossible, and accomplishing whatever in your inmost soul you want to do?

BLOCKERS TO BECOMING THE NEW YOU

Many want to change but fear that it is impossible. Fear can block the path to successfully accomplishing important goals and can be an obstacle to your success. We have good news!

HOW CAN I CONQUER FEAR?

- “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You....In God I have put my trust, I will not fear.”¹
- “Perfect love casts out fear.”²
- “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”³

Notice in these verses the relationship with God, who helps clear the way for us to become a New Person. God is there to encourage us to make good choices and do the impossible. He will remove the fear that blocks our progress. One person who has fearful thoughts immediately prays, “Lord, take away the fear. I choose to trust You.” And God answers her prayer.

BIOLOGICAL BLOCKERS

Biological factors may also be what block you from becoming a New You. Our physical health impacts our mind and may affect our choices. Factors involved may be: insufficient sleep, nutritional deficiencies, insufficient exercise and fresh air, and inadequate water intake. Or perhaps you need to take certain supplements. Vitamin B complex, and especially vitamin B1 (thiamine), help keep our nerves calm, memories keen, and our brains thinking straight. Fortunately vitamin B is readily available from eating whole grains. Deficiencies in vitamin B (thiamine) can cause memory problems, mood swings, irritability, and confusion.⁴

A combination of nutritious foods and appropriate supplements helps the brain, as do sufficient exercise, water, and fresh air. All of these help improve our emotions, our choices, and our total health. “As [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he.”⁵

The human brain has the power to rise above emotional moods. Negative thought patterns produce negative emotions and emotionally induced illnesses. A person may be in a “bad mood” and not make good

choices because of some chemical imbalance in the brain. However, if a person decides to have victory over negative thinking, that choice can help improve one's mood.

One family educator said we can smile even though the heart be sad.⁶ Thoughts can create moods. Good positive thoughts can produce good moods. You can try self-talk like this: *I will not let circumstances put me in a bad mood. I will make right choices that will help me be all that I can be with God's help.*

The human brain has a God-given ability not only to generate thoughts but also to exercise will-power to accept, reject, act on or not act on good or bad thoughts. You can still be a New You, make wise choices, and be the person you always wanted to be. You are the architect of your life.

“O that every one might realize that he is the arbiter of his own destiny! Your happiness for this life, and for the future, immortal life, lies with yourself.”⁷

GOD'S MAKEOVER OF ZACCHAEUS

Never underestimate the power of a divine appointment that changes your life—that changes you into a new person.

The Gospel of Luke tells of a shrewd businessman named Zacchaeus who seemed to have it all. He was the local tax collector, and rumor had it that not all of the money he took in made it into the government treasury. He probably owned a large and comfortable house and a hefty bank account. Yet, even though he was wealthy, Zacchaeus felt something was missing in his life. Here is his story from *The Living Bible*:

As Jesus was passing through Jericho, a man named Zacchaeus . . . tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. So he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree beside the road, to watch from there.

When Jesus came by he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name! “Zacchaeus!” He said. “Quick! Come down! For I am going to be a guest in your home today!”

Zacchaeus hurriedly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.⁸

Jesus announced, “Today salvation [healing of brokenness] has come to this house.”⁹ Zacchaeus was so moved by Jesus' offer of friendship that he repented of his dishonest ways and dedicated himself to helping the poor. He repaid four times as much money to each person he had overcharged for taxes to ensure he had made everything more than right.

Zacchaeus found a new dimension to his life after Jesus came to his house. One of the meanings of the ancient word for “salvation” is “to be made whole.” Wholeness had been restored to Zacchaeus' home. He became a new person. What was so exciting about this was that when Jesus came to his house, the whole family changed. And that's what this seminar is all about: bringing wholeness to the family, mending brokenness, and restoring its members to healthy relationships and right principles of living. In essence, it is fulfilling the lingering, unfulfilled dream. God had a makeover dream for Zacchaeus, and the time had come for a transformation in his life.

GOD IS A DREAMER

Let's examine some Bible characters God had special plans for before they were conceived. Some of the parents dedicated them to God before they were even born. Ultimately each of these discovered God's big, unimaginable dream for their lives.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, JEREMIAH, AND SAMUEL

Before John was conceived, Gabriel, the highest angel, appeared to Zachariah and announced to this aged priest that a son would be born to him.¹⁰ He told him what to name the child and what work this son would perform, that he would announce to the nation the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

It happened just that way. God's dream became the dream of Zachariah and his wife, Elizabeth, and ultimately became the dream of their son. Even though John died alone in a prison, he fulfilled God's dream. Jesus paid him the highest tribute: "Among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."¹¹

The Bible prophet Jeremiah lived in one of the most difficult times in the history of a nation. He was needed to encourage and guide the people in a time of invasion, destruction, and exile. At the beginning of his work, God said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."¹² God had a dream for Jeremiah and announced it to him personally. It became the prophet's own dream.

ACTIVITY

Recall a time when you had a divine appointment that changed your life and helped to make you a new person. Did it inspire you with a new dream? How? Share your story with someone.

Hannah also discovered God's dream for her. She had been childless and pleaded fervently that God would bless her and her husband with a son. She made a vow and dedicated her unborn child to the Lord for all the days of his life. When he was born, she named him Samuel, meaning "God heard" or "requested of God." As a mere child Samuel heard God calling him, and the third time he heard the voice, coached by Eli the high priest, he responded, "Speak, for Your servant hears."¹³ Progressively he became the kind of new person God wanted him to be. Ultimately God used him to appoint the first two kings of Israel. Under divine direction, Samuel founded the school system that contributed to saving the nation from downfall for half a millennium. God's dream became Hannah's dream, and through Samuel's long and fruitful life he fulfilled that dream.

YOUR DREAM

The greatest dreams don't originate inside you; the life-changing dreams come from the God of the universe. Our success in life will depend upon the degree to which we discover God's dream for us and our faithfulness in pursuing it once we have discovered God's plan. God tailors the dream to our own uniqueness, recognizing how we can contribute to the world in some special way, since only He knows just what we can accomplish through His power. But if we don't discover God, we won't discover God's dream. And because of God's gift of choice we don't have to respond to His desires for our lives. It is our choice. God's dream for each of us is not a once-in-a-lifetime event, but a continual growth in becoming a New You under His training and polishing.

There are times that Father God has to do a makeover job before His dream plan is carried out to its fullest in our lives. He did that for Abram who became Abraham, Jacob who became Israel, and Saul who became Paul, and He will do it for us today.

GOD'S DREAM PLAN FOR YOU TODAY

Is God nudging you to do something special in your life for Him? Do you have a clue as to what it might be?

- What great idea, dream, desire has been planted in your heart and mind?
- What is God nudging you to do for Him and for yourself?
- Are you ready for the faith journey into new challenges—new horizons, a New You?
- Your makeover under God's design can start at any age and any time. Are you ready?

By having a positive relationship with God, you start a new adventure. Go forward. When you follow a heaven-born idea, the dream unfolds. Listen in the early morning hours as God whispers directions to you and reveals new dimensions of your dream.

RAY'S MOMENT OF INSPIRATION

The day that began a chain of lifestyle choices was a monumental day for Ray. That day, looking at a photograph of himself, Ray realized he was overweight, out of shape, and looked unkempt in his sloppy clothes. It did not make him very happy. He decided that no one else was to see the photo.

But then it hit him. *Everyone sees me this way every day. This is the way I really look. Reality struck. I'm not taking care of my body. My life is out of control. I need to do something about it. I really don't want to change, but . . . I have to.*

Making this change would be a challenge, he realized. While thinking about adjusting his lifestyle, he saw that life is like a movie. *If I could fast-forward to twenty years from now, what would I look like, what would I feel like, if I don't change now? Will I be healthy, or ill like my parents? For the sake of my health and profession, the time has come for me to do something about this, starting today.*

At that inspirational moment, Ray became aware that if he were to achieve his lifelong goals, he must improve his eating habits. While processing his thoughts, he made a decision: *I must be more disciplined in my daily choices. I can do it. I can break old patterns.*

Ray decided to take action right away and started a new health improvement program—going to the gym to work out, eating healthful foods, drinking eight glasses of water a day, and being positive in his outlook. He ate less at mealtimes, avoiding lots of fats he had been accustomed to eating, and bit by bit the pounds came off. To get more exercise, Ray began taking walks each evening, regardless of the weather.

When he found himself backsliding on his diet plan, Ray took a nutrition class in his community. He began to focus on eating nutritious meals—fresh produce, no processed meats, more whole grains, fruits, and nuts. Ray struggled to vary his vegetables. His taste buds were not quite ready for the healthful greens, but he started by eating a small quantity. When there was a celebration such as Grandma's birthday party, he participated by eating small portions of sweets.

Ray realized this new journey was for life and was an ongoing lifestyle commitment. He was in earnest about his makeover. Finally, with his weight loss, new wardrobe, and trim haircut, Ray was ready for a job interview at a firm looking for a marketing consultant. And he got the job!

His professional dreams and lifestyle goals were being realized, and he praised God, who had helped make his dreams come true. Ray now had more energy, was healthier, happier, and enjoyed a keener mind. He was ready to go forward facing the new challenges of life. There are many stories just like Ray's. Perhaps yours is one of them—or will be.

God has a dream for all of us to reach our potential. However, research shows that many with high intelligence do not reach theirs: one-third attain high levels in their professional performance, one-third stay in the average range, and one-third are at a low level of contributing to society. Why? Did one-third give up? Were they willing to tolerate mediocrity? Were they not willing to stretch their powers and get out of their comfort zone to reach higher levels?

What are your present dreams? To get a better education? To get a better job? To be more attractive? To improve your health by eating right and exercising daily? To be a more loving spouse? To improve a relationship with family and others? To meet other people's needs? To serve the Lord?

Think back over your life, and no doubt you will see many instances where things “just worked out perfectly.” If you start searching for your unique purpose in life with intentionality, you will see instances where God works behind the scenes to help you realize your dreams. He'll put you in the right place at the right time. He'll give you new knowledge and direct your path with His guidance. He will set up divine appointments with the right people. He will make a way when there is no way for the dream to come true—when everyone you know says, “Impossible.”

God's storehouse for dreamers has infinite supplies—and limitless access! Sometimes we limit these blessings by not asking God for help, through our preference to remain in a rut, doing the same things we have done for years. Have you noticed that God sometimes allows pressures to force us to move forward out of our comfort zone? Have you noticed that struggles and challenges strengthen our faith as we go forward?

We must move out of the safe zone and leap into the faith zone. We must stretch our thoughts and our minds. This enlarges our abilities and skills. When we reach up high, miracles are ahead!

What will God do to make *your* dreams come true?
The short answer is: *anything necessary*.

There is much research indicating that a new lifestyle—which includes exercising thirty minutes five or six times a week, drinking six to eight glasses of water daily, eating veggies and fruits, and being a positive person—results in drastically improved health. It will probably prevent between 50 and 80 percent of catastrophic diseases. So why wait? Start on the New You journey by adopting a new lifestyle.

Most of us want to enjoy lifestyle victories. But it's not our power that makes this happen—it is God's power. If we do our best, God will do the rest. The changes may include being more interesting, being more kind, patient and loving, being more hopeful and caring. The New You will want to take optimum care of this marvelous body God has given and to grow stronger in muscle, mind, and abilities.

God has big plans for your life. He is willing to give you the desires of your heart. God wants you to be the amazing person you dream of being. But remember that God won't force an entrance into your life. He's not going to have a telemarketer call you. You can't charge the new dream to your credit card. You can't mend brokenness without effort. That won't happen. It is not a matter of buying something, but of befriending Someone in a personal relationship. His coming into your life depends on you opening the door every day to an exciting relationship with Him. The psalmist David says, "May He grant your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans."¹⁴

Inside every person is a sense that she can be more than she is, and a driving desire to change. Redemption gives the free gift of restoration to the "you" that you can be—God's New You!

God is the Dream Maker.
Our relationship with Him ignites our dream.

For you to be a new person and become a New You is a challenge. It isn't easy, but it's worthwhile. It is our choice to make, but we don't have to do it alone. A promise many of us can claim when the temptations of life are strong, tasks are difficult, or an impossible habit has to be broken, is: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."¹⁵

Many stories in the Bible tell us about people who had serious faults and broke God's commandments, including Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David, and Peter. But by God's grace and His miraculous power, they left the old person behind and became a New Person for the glory of God. Doesn't this bring hope to our hearts as we walk along our spiritual pathway of life? You also can choose a new direction.

THE OLD IS GONE, NEW LIFE BEGINS

Are you struggling spiritually? Are the sins of society ruling your life? Are your vital forces going downhill because of bad choices? Do you need a miracle to get you into a safer environment or on the path to real, positive, healthful living? What you need is the guidance and help of your Forever Friend. You need Jesus. All you have to do is to open the door and invite Him into your life. The Bible says: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old life is gone. A new life has begun!”¹⁶

That’s the real New You. “Old things have passed away; . . . all things have become *new*.” Will you accept Him now? Will you let Christ come into your life? He wants to be your guide, your strength, and your Forever Friend.

If you are beginning on a pathway to a New You and desire God’s guidance, quietly tell Jesus that you choose Him as the Lord of your life, and ask Him to forgive your sins. Jesus will help you do a spiritual life makeover, which will start you on an exciting and exhilarating journey. Is that your choice?

A PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You that You are the Dream Giver and the Dream Maker. I want to be a new person and submit all my dreams to you. You know what is best for me. I know you want to help me achieve my potential. Please help me to be more like You, choose a healthy lifestyle, and have a positive relationship with my family and others. Change me so that I can be all that You want me to be as a new person and reach out in incredible ways to help others. Guide by Your victorious hand so that Your dreams for me may come true. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

REFLECT/DISCUSS

1. If you could suddenly wake up one morning and be the ideal person—a New You—what would you be like?
2. What are your present personal dreams or goals? What can you do to make them a reality?
3. What experiences did you have when you started on your new spiritual journey with God? What changes did you make?
4. When you look at outstanding people you admire, what are the qualities they possess, and which of these would you like to have?
5. What are the obstacles or fears that are keeping you from taking the steps to being the person you would like to be?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. Do you see yourself as valuable? God does. What do you want Him to do for you so that you can be all you can be? Ask Him for a spiritual makeover.
2. What can you do today to begin making positive lifestyle choices? Become intentional and take action.

INTENTIONALITY

I will pursue a dream that has been in my mind for some time. It is _____
_____. I will begin by _____
_____. Even though it is out of my comfort zone, I choose to go forward in the faith zone.

ENDNOTES

¹ Psalm 56:3, 4.

² 1 John 4:18.

³ 2 Timothy 1:7.

⁴ Nancy Schimelfpening, "Is It Depression or Bipolar Disorder?" About.com Guide, May 29, 2006, <http://depression.about.com/od/bipolar/a/bipolarordep.htm>.

⁵ Proverbs 23:7.

⁶ See Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 148.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1930), 31.

⁸ Luke 19:1–6, TLB.

⁹ Luke 19:9, NIV.

¹⁰ See Luke 1:5–25, 57–80.

¹¹ Luke 7:28.

¹² Jeremiah 1:5.

¹³ 1 Samuel 3:10.

¹⁴ Psalm 20:4, NLT.

¹⁵ Philippians 4:13.

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17, NLT.

The New You

by Millie Youngberg

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!”*

2 Corinthians 5:17

HOW CAN I CONQUER FEAR?

- “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You....In God I have put my trust, I will not fear.” (Psalm 56:3-4)
- “Perfect love casts out fear.” (1 John 4:18)
- “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

ACTIVITY

- Recall a time when you had a divine appointment that changed your life and helped to make you a new person. Did it inspire you with a new dream? How? Share your story with someone.
- What will God do to make *your* dreams come true? The short answer is: *anything necessary*.

A PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You that You are the Dream Giver and the Dream Maker. I want to be a new person and submit all my dreams to you. You know what is best for me. I know you want to help me achieve my potential. Please help me to be more like You, choose a healthy lifestyle, and have a positive relationship with my family and others. Change me so that I can be all that You want me to be as a new person and reach out in incredible ways to help others. Guide by Your victorious hand so that Your dreams for me may come true. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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1. If you could wake up one morning and be the ideal person—a New You—what would you be like?
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3. What experiences did you have when you started on your new spiritual journey with God? What changes did you make?
4. When you look at outstanding people you admire, what are the qualities they possess, and which of these would you like to have?
5. What are the obstacles or fears that are keeping you from taking the steps to being the person you would like to be?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. Do you see yourself as valuable? God does. What do you want Him to do for you so that you can be all you can be? Ask Him for a spiritual makeover.
2. What can you do today to begin making positive lifestyle choices? Become intentional and take action.

INTENTIONALITY

I will pursue a dream that has been in my mind for some time. It is _____
_____. I will begin by _____
_____. Even though it is out of my comfort zone, I choose to go forward in the faith zone.



Ellen White's Quotations on Mental Well Being

In Ellen White's lifetime studies related to mental wellness and emotional healing were in their infancy, yet there emerges throughout her writings a distinctive philosophy in which guidelines to mental health are clearly portrayed. Seventh-day Adventists and others widely believe that Ellen G. White wrote under the influence of the Spirit of God and they treasure guidance in a field where schools of thought are divergent and changeable. Ellen White's statements on the various aspects of the Mind, its vital place in the human experience, its potentials, and the factors that lead to its optimum functioning, help us to comprehend what man is and to understand his relationship to his earthly environment, to God and to the universe *and set us on a path for victory in the battle for the mind.*

MENTAL HEALTH

Man Created with a Perfectly Balanced Mind. - The Lord made man upright in the beginning. He was created with a perfectly balanced mind, the size and strength of all its organs being perfectly developed. Adam was a perfect type of man. Every quality of mind was well proportioned, each having a distinctive office, and yet all dependent one upon another for the full and proper use of any one of them. **3T 72 (1872).** MCP Pg415.

Mind Adapts to That Upon Which It Dwells. - It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. As an educating power, the Bible is without a rival. In the Word of God the individual finds subject for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspiration. The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. . . . Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God. In the reverent contemplation of the truths presented in His Word, the mind of the student is brought into communion with the infinite mind. Such a study will not only refine and ennoble the character, but it cannot fail to expand and invigorate the mental powers. **PP 596-599 (1890).** MCP Pg418.

Mind Has Power of Choice. - God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for god's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ. The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The Will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ before Satan can exercise his power upon us. But every sinful desire we cherish affords him a foothold. Every point in which we fail of meeting the divine standard is an open door by which he can enter to tempt and destroy us. And every failure or defeat on our part gives occasion for him to reproach Christ. **MH 176 (1905).** MCP Pg320.

Uncontrolled Mind Becomes Weak. - The mental powers should be developed to the utmost; they should be strengthened and ennobled by dwelling upon spiritual truths. If the mind is allowed to run almost entirely upon trifling things and the common business of everyday life, it will in accordance with one of its unvarying laws, become weak and frivolous, and deficient in spiritual power. **5T 272 (1885).** MCP Pg421.

Mental Powers Depend on Health. - Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends. Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body and it must be kept in the best condition physically and under the most spiritual influences in order that our talents may be put to the highest use. Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. **RH, June 20, 1912. (MYP235.)** MCP Pg441.

How to Preserve Mental Powers. - He who will observe simplicity in all his habits, restricting the appetite and controlling passions may preserve his mental powers strong, active, and vigorous, quick to perceive everything which demands thought or action, keen to discriminate between the holy and the unholy and ready to engage in every enterprise for the glory of God and the benefit of humanity. **ST, Sept 29, 1881. (2BC 1006.)** MCP Pg445.

Bible Study Gives Power to the Mind. - Those who hunger for knowledge that they may bless their fellowmen will themselves receive blessing from God. Through the study of His Word their mental powers will be aroused to earnest activity. There will be an expansion and development of the faculties and the mind will acquire power and efficiency. **COL 334 (1900).** MCP Pg447.

EMOTIONAL FACTORS

Emotions to be Controlled by Will. - Your part is to put your will on the side of Christ. When you yield your will to His, He immediately takes possession of you and works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Your nature is brought under the control of His Spirit. Even your thoughts are subject to Him. If you cannot control your impulses, your emotions as you may desire, you can control the will and thus an entire change will be wrought in your life. When you yield up your will to Christ, your life is hid with Christ in God. It is allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers. You have a strength from God that holds you fast to His strength; and a new life, even the life of faith, is possible to you. **MS 121, 1898. (ML 318.)** MCP Pg 124.

Emotions Controlled by Reason and Conscience. - The power of truth should be sufficient to sustain and console in every adversity. It is in enabling its possessor to triumph over affliction that the religion of Christ reveals its true value. It brings the appetites, the passions and the emotions under the control of reason and conscience and disciplines the thoughts to flow in a healthful channel. And then the tongue will not be left to dishonour God by expressions of sinful repining. **5T 314 (1885).** MCP Pg124.

Study of Nature Strengthens Powers. - In these lessons direct from nature there is a simplicity and purity that makes them of the highest value. All need the teaching to be derived from this source. In itself the beauty of nature leads the soul away from sin and worldly attractions and toward purity, peace and God. Too often the minds of students are occupied with men's theories and speculations, falsely called science and philosophy. They need to be brought into close contact with nature. Let them learn that creation and Christianity have one God. Let them be taught to see the harmony of the natural with the spiritual. Let everything which their eyes see or their hands handle be made a lesson in character-building. Thus the mental powers will be strengthened, the character developed, the whole life ennobled. **COL 24, 25 (1900).** MCP Pg446/447.

IMPAIRING OF LIFE FORCES

Guilt

Guilt Impairs Life Forces. - Grief, Guilt, Anxiety, Discontent, Remorse, Distrust, Depression, Fear all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death. . . . Courage, Hope, Faith, Sympathy, Love, promote health and prolong life. **MH 241 (1905).** MCP Pg458.

How One Gains Freedom From Guilt. - This feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs of life and true happiness. Now Jesus says, '**Lay it all on Me; I will take your sin, I will give you peace. Destroy no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine; your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin I will remove.**' Then turn your grateful heart, trembling with uncertainty, and lay hold upon the hope set before you. God accepts your broken, contrite heart. He offers you free pardon. He offers to adopt you into His family, with His grace to help your weakness, and the dear Jesus will lead you on step by step if you will only put your hand in His and let Him guide you. **Lt 38, 1887.** MCP Pg451.

Anxiety

Not the Will of God. - "It is not the will of God that his people should be weighed down with care. **SC 122 (1892).** MCP Pg467.

Anxiety Tends to Sickness and Disease. - When wrongs have been righted, we may present the needs of the sick to the Lord in calm faith, as His Spirit may indicate. He knows each individual by name and cares for each as if there were not another upon the earth for whom He gave His beloved Son. Because God's love is so great and so unfailing, the sick should be encouraged to trust in Him and be cheerful. To be anxious about themselves tends to cause weakness and disease. If they will rise above depression and

gloom, their prospect of recovery will be better; for “the eye of the Lord is upon them” “that hope in His mercy” (Psalm 33:18). **MH 229 (1905).** MCP Pg467.

God’s Responsibility and Mine. - When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. We may well have anxiety and anticipate danger and loss, for it is certain to befall us. But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good, we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God. **MB 100, 101 (1896).** MCP Pg468.

Borrowed Care and Anxiety. - In trusting in God continually there is safety; there will not be a constant fear of future evil. This borrowed care and anxiety will cease. We have a heavenly Father who cares for His children and will and does make His grace sufficient in every time of need. **2T 72 (1868).** MCP Pg469.

Leaving the Future With God. - Though their present needs are supplied, many are unwilling to trust God for the future and they are in constant anxiety lest poverty shall come upon them and their children shall be left to suffer. Some are always anticipating evil, or magnifying the difficulties that really exist, so that their eyes are blinded to the many blessings which demand their gratitude. The obstacles they encounter—instead of leading them to seek help from God, the only source of strength—separate them from Him because they awaken unrest and repining. Jesus is our friend: all heaven is interested in our welfare; and our anxiety and fear grieve the Holy Spirit of God. We should not indulge in a solicitude that only frets and wears us but does not help us to bear trials. No place should be given to that distrust of God which leads to make a preparation against future want the chief pursuit of life, as though our happiness consisted in these earthly things. **PP 293, 294 (1890).** MCP Pg 469.

Undue Anxiety. - God does not condemn prudence and foresight in the use of the things of this life; but the feverish care, the undue anxiety, with respect to worldly things, is not in accordance with His will. **RH, Mar 1, 1887. (CS 159.)** MCP Pg 469.

Christians With Anxious Hearts. - Many who profess to be Christ’s followers have an anxious troubled heart because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him, for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender they cannot find peace. **MH 480, 481 (1905).** MCP Pg469/470.

Fear

Distrusting God, They Have A Thousand Fears. - Many neglect to lay up for themselves a treasure in heaven by doing good with the means that God has lent them. They distrust God and have a thousand fears in regard to the future. Like the children of Israel they have evil hearts of unbelief. God provided this people with abundance as their needs required but they borrowed trouble for the future. They complained and murmured in their travels that Moses had led them out to kill them and their children with hunger. Imaginary want closed their eyes and hearts from seeing the goodness and mercies of God in their journeying and they were ungrateful for all His bounties. So also are the distrustful, professed people of God

in this age of unbelief and degeneracy. They fear that they may come to want, or that their children may become needy, or that their grandchildren will be destitute. They dare not trust God. They have no genuine faith in Him who has entrusted them with the blessings and bounties of life and who has given them talents to use to His glory in advancing His cause. **2T 656, 657 (1871).** MCP Pg474/475.

Faith Grows in Conflict with Doubt and Fear. - The Lord frequently places us in difficult positions to stimulate us to greater exertion. In His providence special annoyances sometimes occur to test our patience and faith. God gives us lessons of trust. He would teach us where to look for help and strength in time of need. Thus we obtain practical knowledge of His divine will, which we so much need in our life experience. Faith grows strong in earnest conflict with doubt and fear. **4T 116, 117 (1876).** MCP Pg476.

Fear Reveals Unbelief. - As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help. How often the disciples' experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus and if we call upon Him to save us we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best. **DA 336 (1898).** MCP Pg476/477.

Fear Grieves the Holy Spirit. - Faith takes God at His word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come. But there are many who have little faith. They are always fearing and borrowing trouble. Every day they are surrounded by the tokens of God's love, every day they enjoy the bounties of His providence; but they overlook these blessings. And the difficulties they encounter, instead of driving them to God, separate them from Him by arousing unrest and repining. . . . Jesus is their Friend. All heaven is interested in their welfare, and their fear and repining grieve the Holy Spirit. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust His promises. When we come to Him in faith, we should believe that every petition enters into the heart of Christ. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be sent when we need it most. When we have learned to do this we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us "exceedingly abundantly," "according to the riches of His glory" and "the working of His mighty power". **GW 261, 262 (1915).** MCP Pg477.478.

What to do When Fearful. - Only the sense of God's presence can banish the fear that, for the timid child would make life a burden. Let him fix in his memory the promise, "**The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them.**" (Psalm 34:7) Let him read that wonderful story of Elisha in the mountain city, and, between him and the hosts of armed foemen, a mighty encircling band of heavenly angels. Let him read how to Peter, in prison and condemned to death, God's angel appeared; how, past the armed guards, the massive doors and great iron gateway with their bolts and bars, the angel led God's servant forth in safety. . . . **Ed 255, 256 (1903).** MCP Pg478/479.

Depression

Many Diseases Result From Mental Depression. - A contented mind, a cheerful spirit is health to the body and strength to the soul. Nothing is so fruitful a cause of disease as depression, gloominess, and sadness. – **1T 702 (1868).** MCP 482.

Removing Depression Hastens Recovery. - Because God's Love is so great and so unfailing, the sick should be encouraged to trust in Him and be cheerful. To be anxious about themselves tends to cause weakness and disease. If they will rise above depression and gloom, their prospect of recovery will be better; for "**the eye of the Lord is upon them . . . that hope in His mercy**" (Psalm 33: 18). **MH 229 (1905).** MCP Pg482.

The True Christian and Depression. – The true Christian does not allow any earthly consideration to come in between his soul and God. The commandment of God wields an authoritative influence over his affections and actions. . . . When depression settles upon the soul, it is no evidence that God has changed. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." You are sure of the favour of God when you are sensible to the beams of the Sun of righteousness; but if the clouds sweep over your soul, you must not feel that you are forsaken. Your faith must pierce the gloom. Your eye must be single, and your whole body shall be full of light. The riches of the grace of Christ must be kept before the mind. Treasure up the lessons that His love provides. Let your faith be like Job's, that you may declare, "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.**" Lay hold on the promises of your heavenly Father, and remember His former dealing with you and with His servants; for "all things work together for good to them that love God." **RH, Jan 24, 1888.** MCP Pg496.

INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BODY AND MIND

A Mysterious Interrelationship. - Between the mind and the body there is a mysterious and wonderful relation. They react upon each other. To keep the body in a healthy condition to develop its strength, that every part of the living machinery may act harmoniously, should be the first study of our life. To neglect the body is to neglect the mind. It cannot be to the glory of God for His children to have sickly bodies or dwarfed minds. **3T486 (1875).** MCP Pg373.

The Harmonious Development of Both Mental and Moral Faculties. - The improvement of the mind is a duty which we owe to ourselves, to society, and to God. But we should never devise means for the cultivation of the intellect at the expense of the moral and the spiritual. And it is only by the harmonious development of both the mental and the moral faculties that the highest perfection of either can be attained. **RH, Jan 4, 1881.** MCP Pg374.

Mental Effort Affected by Physical Vigor. - We should seek to preserve the full vigor of all our powers for the accomplishment of the work before us. Whatever detracts from physical vigor weakens mental effort. Hence, every practice unfavourable to the health of the body should be resolutely shunned. . . . Yet how many who call themselves Christians are unwilling to exercise self-denial, even for Christ's sake. How often the love for some pernicious indulgence is stronger than the desire for a sound mind in a sound body. Precious hours of probation are spent, God-given means squandered, to please the eye or to gratify the

appetite. Custom holds thousands in bondage to the earthly and sensual. Many are willing captives; they desire no better portion. **ST, June 1, 1882.** MCP Pg381.

Physical Habits Affect the Brain. - The brain is the citadel of the being. Wrong physical habits affect the brain and prevent the attainment of that which the students desire – a good mental discipline. Unless the youth are versed in the science of how to care for the body as well as for the mind, they will not be successful students. Study is not the principal cause of breakdown of the mental powers. The main cause is improper diet, irregular meals, a lack of physical exercise, and careless inattention to other respects to the laws of health. When we do all that we can to preserve the health, then we can ask God in faith to bless our efforts. **CT 299 (1913).** MCP Pg381/382.

Unhealthful Food Stupefies the Conscience. - In health reform our people have been retrograding. Satan sees that he cannot have so great power over minds when the appetite is kept under control as when it is indulged, and he is constantly at work to lead men to indulgence. Under the influence of unhealthful food the conscience becomes stupefied, the mind is darkened, and its susceptibility to impressions is impaired. . . . **Und MS 132.** MCP Pg394.

Shunning Extremes. - Those who understand the laws of health and who are governed by principle will shun the extremes both of indulgence and of restriction. Their diet is chosen, not for the mere gratification of appetite, but for the up-building of the body. They seek to preserve every power in the best condition for highest service to God and man. The appetite is under the control of reason and conscience, and they are rewarded with health of body and mind. While they do not urge their views offensively upon others, their example is a testimony in favour of right principles. These persons have a wide influence for good. **MH 319 (1905).** MCP Pg395.

Mind Controls the Whole Man. - The mind controls the whole man. All our actions, good or bad, have their source in the mind. It is the mind that worships God and allies us to heavenly beings. . . . all the physical organs are the servants of the mind, and the nerves are the messengers that transmit its orders to every part of the body, guiding the motions of the living machinery. The harmonious action of all the parts – brain, bone, and muscle – is necessary to the full and healthful development of the entire human organism. **SpTEd 33, c1897. (FE 426.)** MCP Pg396.

Few Realize the Power of Mind Over Body. - But few realize the power that the mind has over the body. A great deal of the sickness which afflicts humanity has its origin in the mind and can only be cured by restoring the mind to health. There are very many more than we imagine who are sick mentally. Heart sickness makes many dyspeptics for mental trouble has a paralyzing influence upon the digestive organs. **3T 184 (1872).** MCP Pg396/397.

Body Medium for Mind and Soul. - The body is a most important medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. His success here often means the surrender of the whole being to evil. The tendencies of the physical nature, unless under the dominion of a higher power will surely work ruin and death. The body is to be brought into subjection to the higher powers of the being. The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God. The kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace is to bear sway in the life. Intellectual power,

physical stamina, and the length of life depend upon immutable laws. Through obedience to these laws, man may stand conqueror of himself, conqueror of his own inclinations, conqueror of principalities and powers, of “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” and of “spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). **PK 488, 489 (1917).** MCP Pg406/407.

Assurance of God’s Approval. - The assurance of God’s approval will promote physical health. It fortifies the soul against doubt, perplexity, and excessive grief that so often sap the vital forces and induce nervous diseases of a most debilitating and distressing character. The Lord has pledged His unfailing word that His eye shall be over the righteous and His ear open to their prayer. **LS 270, 271 (1915).** MCP Pg410.

LIFE’S ENERGISING FORCE

Love, the Principle of Action. - When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart it will flow out to others, . . . because love is the principle of action, and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates and ennobles the affections. **4T 223 (1876).** MCP Pg205.

Love Springs Forth Spontaneously When Self Is Submerged. - When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously. It is not an emotion or an impulse but a decision of a sanctified will. It consists not in feeling but in the transformation of the whole heart, soul and character, which is dead to self and alive unto God. Our Lord and Saviour asks us to give ourselves to Him. Surrendering self to God is all He requires, giving ourselves to Him to be employed as He sees fit. Until we come to this point of surrender, we shall not work happily, usefully or successfully anywhere. **LT 97, 1898. (6BC 1100, 1101.)** MCP Pg206.

Love Not an Impulse but a Divine Principle. - Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another – this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse but a divine principle, a permanent power. The un-consecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. **“We love Him because He first loved us.”** In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. **AA 551 (1911).** MCP Pg206.

Source of True Human Affection. - Our affection for one another springs from our common relation to God. We are one family, we love one another as He loved us. When compared with this true, sanctified, disciplined affection, the shallow courtesy of the world, the meaningless expression of effusive friendship, are as chaff to the wheat. **Lt 63, 1896. (SD 101.)** MCP Pg211.

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. . . . Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases its fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others. **MS 17, 1899. (SD 101.)** MCP Pg211.

Love Binds Heart to Heart. - Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. . . . Let each give love rather than exact it. **MH 360, 361 (1905).** MCP Pg211.

Love Impulses Not to Be Stifled. - Encourage the expression of love toward God and toward one another. The reason why there are so many hardhearted men and women in the world is that true affection has been regarded as weakness and has been discouraged and repressed. The better nature of these persons was stifled in childhood; and unless the light of divine love shall melt away their cold selfishness, their happiness will be forever ruined. If we wish our children to possess the tender spirit of Jesus and the sympathy that angels manifest for us, we must encourage the generous, loving impulses of childhood. **DA 516 (1898).** MCP Pg212.

True Love Preparation for Successful Marriage. - True love is a high and holy principle, altogether different in character from that love which is awakened by impulse and which suddenly dies when severely tested. It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial and manifest kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy. Thus love will be kept warm in the heart and he who goes out from such a household to stand at the head of a family will know how to promote the happiness of her whom he has chosen as a companion for life. Marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be only its beginning. **PP 176 (1890).** MCP Pg213.

Men, Women and Youth Involved in Moral Depravity. - The moral dangers to which all, both old and young are exposed, are daily increasing. Moral derangement, which we call depravity, finds ample room to work and an influence is exerted by men, women and youth professing to be Christians that is low, sensual, devilish. **Lt 26d, 1877.** MCP Pg228.

Satan is making masterly efforts to involve married men and women and children and youth in impure practices. His temptations find acceptance in many hearts because they have not been elevated, purified, refined and ennobled by the sacred truth which they claim to believe. Not a few have been low and vile in thought and common in talk and deportment so that when Satan's temptations come, they have no moral power to resist them and fall an easy prey. **Lt 26d, 1887. (HP 199.)** MCP Pg228.

Avoid Reading, Seeing and Hearing Impurity. - Those who would not fall prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul: they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. . . . **AA 518 (1911).** MCP Pg228.

You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul. The power of grace alone can accomplish this most desirable work. **2T 561(1870).** MCP Pg229.

Salacious Novels and Pornography. - Impure pictures have a corrupting influence. Novels are eagerly perused by many, and as a result, their imagination becomes defiled. . . . The lust of the eye and corrupt passions are aroused by beholding and by reading. . . . The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the lower and baser passions. These vile images, seen through defiled imagination, corrupt the morals and prepare the deluded, infatuated beings to give loose rein to lustful passions. Then follow sins and crimes which drag beings formed in the image of God down to a level with the beasts, sinking them at last in perdition. Avoid reading and seeing things which will suggest impure thoughts. Cultivate the moral and intellectual powers. **2T 410 (1870).** MCP Pg229.

Example of Unselfish Love Irresistible. - The more closely we resemble our Saviour in character, the greater will be our love toward those for whom he died. Christians who manifest a spirit of unselfish love for one another are bearing a testimony for Christ which unbelievers can neither gainsay nor resist. It is impossible to estimate the power of such an example. Nothing will so successfully defeat the devices of Satan and his emissaries, nothing will so build up the Redeemer's kingdom, as will the love of Christ manifested by the members of the church. **5T 167, 168 (1882).** MCP Pg240.

All quotes taken from *Mind Character, and Personality*, Volumes I & II



Ellen White's Quotations, Guidelines to Mental & Spiritual Health

THE STUDY OF THE MIND

The Importance of the Mind. - Ellen White's first comment is that dealing with the Mind is "...the nicest work in which men ever engaged." She then comments that it is our duty to know the laws of life and to conscientiously obey them. We need to know the most wonderful of all organisms, the human body. We should know and understand the various organs and the dependence of one upon another for the healthy action of all. Indeed, she says, "They should study the influence of the mind upon the body and of the body upon the mind, and the laws by which they are governed." She counsels that we should Train and discipline our minds by study, by observation and by reflection. The mental faculties will strengthen and develop if we will go to work in the fear of God, in humility and with earnest prayer. **MH 128 (1905).** MCP Pg3.

Satan a Student of the Mind. - For thousands of years Satan has been experimenting upon the properties of the human mind, and he has learned to know it well. By his subtle working in these last days he is linking the human mind with his own, imbuing it with his thoughts and he is doing this work in so deceptive a manner that those who accept his guidance know not that they are being led by him at his will. The great deceiver hopes so to confuse the minds of men and women that none but his voice will be heard. **Lt 244, 1907. (MM 111.)** MCP Pg18.

Religion and Health. - Personal religion is of the highest importance. John wrote to Gaius, "**Beloved, I wish above all that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth**" (3 John 2). Health of body depends largely upon health of soul; therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. Personal religion is revealed by the deportment, the words and the actions. It causes growth, till at last perfection claims the commendation of the Lord "**Ye are complete in Him**" (Colossians 2:10). - **Lt 117, 1901.** MCP Pg27.

What Religion Does. - True religion ennobles the mind, refines the taste, sanctifies the judgement and makes its possessor a partaker of the purity and the holiness of heaven. In as exact proportion as the spiritual character is developed, the intellectual capabilities are increased. It brings angels near and separates us more and more from the spirit and influence of the world. It enters into all the acts and relations of life and gives us the "spirit of a sound mind," and the result is happiness and peace. - **ST, Oct 23, 1884. (CH629, 630)** MCP Pg34.

BASIC RELATIONSHIPS

Too Little Thought Given to Causative Factors. - Far too little thought is given to the causes underlying the mortality, the disease and degeneracy, that exist today even in the most civilized and favoured lands. The human race is deteriorating. - **MH380 (1905).** MCP Pg59.

Nine Tenths of Diseases Originate in Mind. - Sickness of the mind prevails everywhere. Nine tenths of the diseases from which men suffer have their foundation here. . . . Remorse for sin sometimes undermines the constitution and unbalances the mind. - **5T 444 (1885)** MCP Pg59.

Mind Affects Body. - The relation which exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health of the physical system. If the mind is free and happy, from a consciousness of right doing and a sense of satisfaction in causing happiness to others, it creates a cheerfulness that will react upon the whole system, causing a freer circulation of the blood and a toning up of the entire body. The blessing of God is a healing power, and those who are abundant in benefiting others will realize that wondrous blessing in both heart and life. **CTBH 13, 1890. (CH 28; see also 4T 60, 61 [1876].)** MCP Pg59/60.

A Well-nourished and Healthy Brain. - The brain is the organ and instrument of the mind, and controls the whole body. In order for the other parts of the system to be healthy, the brain must be healthy. And in order for the brain to be healthy, the blood must be pure. If by correct habits of eating and drinking the blood is kept pure, the brain will be properly nourished. - **MS 24, 1900. (MM 291.)** MCP Pg 60.

Sickness Originates in the Mind. - a great deal of the sickness which afflicts humanity has its origin in the mind and can only be cured by restoring the mind to health. There are very many more than we imagine who are sick mentally. Heart sickness makes many dyspeptics, for mental trouble has a paralysing influence upon the digestive organs. **3T 184 (1872).** MCP Pg63.

The Love of Christ Vitalizes the Whole Being. - The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part - the brain, the heart, the nerves - it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are aroused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life-forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy - joy in the Holy Spirit - health-giving, life-giving joy. **MH 115(1905).** MCP Pg65.

The Saviour's Prescription for Mental and Spiritual Ills. - Our Saviour's words, "**Come unto Me. . . . and I will give you rest**" (Matthew 11:28), are a prescription for the healing of physical, mental, and spiritual ill. Though men have brought suffering upon themselves by their own wrong doing. He regards them with pity. In Him they may find help. He will do great things for those who trust in him. **MH 115 (1905).** MP Pg66.

The Mind and Spiritual Warfare. - Our improvement in moral purity depends on right thinking and right action. "**Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.**" "**For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man**" (Matthew 15:11, 19,

20). Evil thoughts destroy the soul. The converting power of God changes the heart, refining and purifying the thoughts. Unless a determined effort is made to keep the thoughts centred on Christ, grace cannot reveal itself in the life. The mind must engage in the spiritual warfare. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. All the habits must be brought under God's control. - **Lt 123, 1904.** MCP Pg69.

Satan Strikes at the Perceptive Faculties. - Satan comes to man with his temptations as an angel of light, as he came to Christ. He has been working to bring man into a condition of physical and moral weakness that he may overcome him with his temptations and then triumph over his ruin. And he has been successful in tempting man to indulge appetite, regardless of the result. He well knows that it is impossible for man to discharge his obligation to God and to his fellowmen while he impairs the faculties God has given him. The brain is the capital of the body. If the perceptive faculties become benumbed through intemperance of any kind, eternal things are not discerned. - **RH, Sept 8, 1874. (MYP 236.)** MCP Pg73.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIND

Foundation of All Study. - The Word of God is to be the foundation of all study, and the words of revelation, carefully studied, appeal to and strengthen the intellect as well as the heart. The culture of the intellect is required that we may understand the revelation of the will of God to us. It cannot be neglected by those who are obedient to His commandment. God has not given us the faculties of the mind to be devoted to cheap and frivolous pursuits. **MS 16, 1896.** MCP Pg89.

Inspires the Mind. - In the Word of God the mind finds subjects for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspirations. Here we may hold communion with patriarchs and prophets and listen to the voice of the Eternal as He speaks with men. Here we behold the Majesty of heaven as He humbled Himself to become our substitute and surety, to cope single-handed with the powers of darkness, and to gain the victory in our behalf. A reverent contemplation of such themes as these cannot fail to soften, purify, and ennoble the heart, and at the same time to inspire the mind with new strength and vigor. **CT 52,53 (1913).** MCP Pg90.

Minds Find Noblest Development. - If the Bible were studied as it should be, men would become strong in intellect. The subjects treated upon in the Word of God, the dignified simplicity of its utterance, the noble themes which it presents to the mind, develop faculties in man which cannot otherwise be developed. In the Bible a boundless field is opened for the imagination. The student will come from a contemplation of its grand themes, from association with its lofty imagery, more pure and elevated in thought and feeling than if he had spent the time in reading any work of mere human origin, to say nothing of those of a trifling character.

Youthful minds fail to reach their noblest development when they neglect the highest source of wisdom—the Word of God. The reason why we have so few men of good mind, of stability and solid worth, is that God is not feared, God is not loved, the principles of religion are not carried out in the life as they should be. **CTBH 126, 1890. (FE165.)** MCP Pg92/93.

Search for its Hidden Treasure. - The Bible, just as it reads is to be our guide. Nothing is so calculated to enlarge the mind and strengthen the intellect as the study of the Bible. No other study will so elevate the soul and give vigour to the faculties as the study of the, living oracles. The minds of thousands of ministers of the gospel are dwarfed because they are permitted to dwell upon commonplace things, and are not exercised in searching for the hidden treasure of the Word of god. As the mind is brought to the study of God's word, the understanding will enlarge and the higher powers will develop for the comprehension of high and ennobling truth.

It is according to the character of the matter with which the mind becomes familiar that it is dwarfed or enlarged. If the mind is not raised up to make vigorous and persistent effort in seeking to comprehend truth by comparing scripture with scripture, it will surely become contracted and lose its tone. We should set our minds to the task of searching for truths that do not lie directly upon the surface. **RH, Sept 28, 1897.** MCP Pg93.

THE GROWING PERSONALITY

The Importance of Prenatal Influences. - The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought. **MH 372 (1905).** MCP Pg131.

Mother's Feelings Mold Disposition of Unborn Child. - The thoughts and feelings of the mother will have a powerful influence upon the legacy she gives her child. If she allows her mind to dwell upon her own feelings, if she indulges in selfishness, if she is peevish and exacting, the disposition of her child will testify to the fact. Thus many have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil. **ST, Sept 13, 1910. (Te 171.)** MCP Pg132.

If the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character. **MH 373 (1905).** MCP Pg132.

Fathers as Well as Mothers Involved. - Fathers as well as mothers are involved in this responsibility, and they too should seek earnestly for divine grace that their influence may be such as God can approve. The inquiry of every father and mother should be, "What shall we do unto the child that shall be born?" By many the effect of prenatal influence has been lightly regarded; but the instruction sent from heaven to those Hebrew parents and twice repeated in the most explicit and solemn manner, shows how the matter is looked upon by the Creator. **ST, Feb 26, 1902.** MCP Pg135/136.

Satan Seeks to Debase Minds. - I have been shown that Satan seeks to debase the minds of those who unite in marriage, that he may stamp his own hateful image upon their children. . . . He can mold their posterity much more readily than he could the parents, for he can so control the minds of the parents that through them he may give his own stamp of character to their children. Thus many children are born with the animal passions largely in the ascendancy while the moral faculties are but feebly developed. **2T 480 (1870).** MCP Pg136.

The Power of Heredity. - Consider the power of heredity, the influence of evil association and surroundings, the power of wrong habits. Can we wonder that under such influences many become degraded? Can we wonder that they should be slow to respond to efforts for their uplifting. **MH 168 (1905).** MCP Pg142.

Disease Transmitted From Parents to Children. - Through the successive generations since the Fall, the tendency has been continually downward. Disease has been transmitted from parents to children, generation after generation. Even infants in the cradle suffer from afflictions caused by the sins of the parents. Moses, the first historian, gives quite a definite account of social and individual life in the early days of the world's history, but we find no record that an infant was born blind, deaf, crippled, or imbecile. Not an instance is recorded of a natural death in infancy, childhood, or early manhood. . . . It was so rare for a son to die before his father that such an occurrence was considered worthy of record: "**Haran died before his father Terah.**" The Patriarchs from Adam to Noah, with few exceptions lived nearly a thousand years. Since then the average length of life has been decreasing. At the time of Christ's first advent the race had already so degenerated that not only the old but the middle-aged and the young were brought from every city to the Saviour to be healed of their diseases. **CTBH 7, 8, 1890. (CD 117, 118.)** MCP Pg143.

Satan Takes Advantage of Inherited Weakness. - In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being to take advantage of hereditary weakness and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. . . . "**Be of good cheer,**" He says; "**I have overcome the world.**" (John 16:33). **DA 122, 123 (1898).** MCP Pg145.

Christ's Teaching to be a Guide. - Christ's teaching, like His sympathies, embraced the world. Never can there be a circumstance of life, a crisis in human experience, which has not been anticipated in His teaching and for which its principles have not a lesson. The Prince of teachers, His words will be found a guide to His co-workers till the end of time. **Ed 81, 82 (1903).** MCP Pg181.

He Understands the Hidden Working of the Human Mind. - He who has paid the infinite price to redeem men reads with unerring accuracy all the hidden workings of the human mind and knows just how to deal with every soul. And in dealing with men, He manifests the same principles that are manifest in the natural world. **SpT Series A, No. 3, p 17, 1895. (TM 189, 190.)** MCP Pg181.

Mind to Become One With His Mind. - When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. **COL 312 (1900).** MCP Pg186.

SELFISHNESS AND SELF RESPECT

Developing Self Respect. - If we wish to do good to souls, our success with these souls will be in proportion to their belief in our belief in, and appreciation of, them. Respect shown to the struggling human soul is the sure means through Christ Jesus of the restoration of the self-respect the man has lost. Our advancing ideas of what he may become are a help we cannot ourselves fully appreciate. **MS c1893. (FE 281.) MCP Pg255.**

Respect for the Dignity of Man as Man. - Wherever principle is not compromised, consideration of others will lead to compliance with accepted customs; but true courtesy requires no sacrifice of principle to conventionality. It ignores caste. It teaches self-respect, respect for the dignity of man as man, a regard for every members of the great human brotherhood. **Ed 240 (1903). MCP Pg255.**

Maintain Self-respect. - Some with whom you are brought into contact may be rough and un-courteous, but do not, because of this, be less courteous yourself. He who wishes to preserve his own self-respect must be careful not to wound needlessly the self-respect of others. This rule should be sacredly observed toward the dullest, the most blundering. What God intends to do with these apparently unpromising ones, you do not know. He has in the past accepted persons no more promising or attractive to do a great work for Him. His Spirit, moving upon the heart, has roused every faculty to vigorous action. The Lord saw in these rough, un-hewn stones precious material, which would stand the test of storm and heat and pressure. God does not see as man sees. He does not judge from appearances, but searches the heart and judges righteously. **GW 122, 123 (1915). MCP Pg255/256.**

Cultivate Self Respect. - It is not pleasing to God that you should demerit yourself. You should cultivate self respect by living so that you will be approved by your own conscience and before men and angels. . . . It is your privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before the law without shame or remorse. **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."** (Romans 8:1). While we should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, the Word of God does not condemn a proper self-respect. As sons and daughters of God, we should have a conscious dignity of character, in which pride and self-importance have no part. **RH, Mar 27, 1888. (HC 143.) MCP Pg260.**

By Nature We Are Self Centred. - Naturally we are self-centred and opinionated. But when we learn the lessons that Christ desires to teach us, we become partakers of His nature; henceforth we live His life. The wonderful example of Christ, the matchless tenderness with which He entered into the feelings of others, weeping with those who wept, rejoicing with those who rejoiced, must have a deep influence upon the character of all who follow Him in sincerity. By kindly words and acts they will try to make the path easy for weary feet. **MH 157, 158 (1905). MCP Pg271.**

Talk Less of Self (counsel to one who was overbearing and dictatorial). - Let your heart be softened and melted under the divine influence of the Spirit of god. You should not talk so much about yourself, for this will strengthen no one. You should not make yourself a center and imagine that you must be constantly caring for yourself and leading others to care for you. Get your mind off from yourself into a more healthy channel. Talk of Jesus, and let self go; let it be submerged in Christ and let this be the language of your heart: **"I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me"** (Galations 2:20) Jesus will be to you a present help in every

time of need. He will not leave you to battle with the powers of darkness alone. Oh, no; He has laid help upon One that is mighty to save to the uttermost. **2T 320, 321 (1869).** MCP Pg272.

Living for Self Dishonours God. - The perils of the last days are upon us. Those who live to please and gratify self are dishonouring the Lord. He cannot work through them, for they would misrepresent Him before those who are ignorant of the truth. . . . God may see that you are fostering pride. He may see that it is necessary to remove from you blessings which, instead of improving, you have used for the gratification of selfish pride. **MS24, 1904. (1SM 87.)** MCP Pg273.

ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH

Youth are Receptive and Hopeful. - The youth are receptive, fresh, ardent and hopeful. When once they have tasted the blessedness of self-sacrifice, they will not be satisfied unless they are constantly learning of the Great teacher. The Lord will open ways before those who will respond to His call. **6T 471 (1900).** MCP Pg281.

Youth Must Choose Life Destiny. - By the thoughts and feelings cherished in early years every youth is determining his own life history. Correct, virtuous, manly habits formed in youth will become a part of the character and will usually mark the course of the individual through life. The youth may become vicious or virtuous, as they choose. They may as well be distinguished for true and noble deeds as for great crime and wickedness. **ST, Oct 11, 1910. (CG 196.)** MCP Pg281.

Discipline which Stimulates and Strengthens. - Beyond the discipline of the home and the school, all have to meet the stern discipline of life. How to meet this wisely is a lesson that should be made plain to every child and to every youth. It is true that God loves us, that He is working for our happiness, and that, if His law had always been obeyed, we should never have known suffering and it is no less true that in this world—as the result of sin—suffering, trouble, burdens, come to every life. We may do the children and the youth a lifelong good by teaching them to meet bravely these troubles and burdens. While we should give them sympathy, let it never be such as to foster self-pity. What they need is that which stimulates and strengthens rather than weakens. **Ed 295 (1903).** MCP Pg284.

Youth Need Discipline of Labour. - And now, as in the days of Israel, every youth should be instructed in the duties of practical life. Each should acquire a knowledge of some branch of handiwork by which, if need be, he may obtain a livelihood. This is essential, not only as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life, but from its bearing upon physical, mental, and moral development. Even if it were certain that one would never need to resort to handiwork labour for his support, still he should be taught to work. Without physical exercise, no one can have a sound constitution and vigorous health; and the discipline of well-regulated labour is no less essential to the securing of a strong and active mind and a noble character. **PP 601 (1890).** MCP Pg287.

Facing the Need for Counsel. - The young should not be left to think and act independently of the judgment of their parents and teachers. Children should be taught to respect experienced judgment and to be guided by their parents and teachers. They should be so educated that their minds will be united with the minds of their parents and teachers, and so instructed that they can see the propriety of heeding their

counsel. Then when they go forth from the guiding hand of their parents and teachers, their characters will not be like the reed trembling in the wind. **3T 133 (1872).** MCP Pg293.

The Highest Training Expected. - The Lord desires us to obtain all the education possible, with the object in view of imparting our knowledge to others. None can know where or how they may be called to labour or to speak for God. Our heavenly Father alone sees what He can make of men. There are before us possibilities which our feeble faith does not discern. Our minds should be so trained that if necessary we can present the truths of His word before the highest earthly authorities in such a way as to glorify His name. We should not let slip even one opportunity of qualifying ourselves intellectually to work for God. **COL 333, 334, (1900).** MCP Pg293.

Exalt the Conscience to its rightful place of Authority. - God has given men more than a mere animal life. He “**so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**” He expects those for whom He has made so great a sacrifice to show their appreciation of His love by following the example that Christ has set them, living lives that are in harmony with His will. He expects them to respond to the love he has expressed for them by denying self for the good of others. He expects them to use the powers of mind and body in His service. He has given them affections, and He expects them to use this precious gift to His glory. He has given them a conscience, and He forbids that this gift be in any way misused; it is rather to be exalted to the place of authority to which He has assigned it. **SW, Mar 1. 1904.** MCP Pg319.

Parents to Help Children to Preserve a Clean Conscience. - I am instructed to say to parents, Do all in your power to help your children to have a pure, clean conscience. Teach them to feed on the Word of God. Teach them that they are the Lord’s little children. Do not forget that He has appointed you as their guardians. If you will give them proper food and dress them healthfully, and if you will diligently teach them the Word of the Lord, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, with much prayer to our heavenly Father, your efforts will be richly rewarded. **MS 4, 1905.** MCP Pg327.

Clear Conscience Brings Perfect Peace. - Inward peace and a conscience void of offense toward God will quicken and invigorate the intellect like dew distilled upon the tender plants. The will is then rightly directed and controlled, and is more decided, and yet free from perverseness. The meditations are pleasing because they are sanctified. The serenity of mind which you may possess will bless all with whom you associate. This peace and calmness will, in time, become natural and will reflect its precious rays upon all around you, to be again reflected upon you. The more you taste this heavenly peace and quietude of mind, the more it will increase. It is an animated, living pleasure which does not throw all the moral energies into a stupor but awakens them to increased activity. Perfect peace is an attribute of heaven which angels possess. May God help you to become a possessor of this peace. **2T 327 (1869).** MCP Pg328.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN EDUCATION

A Law in Intellectual and Spiritual Worlds. - It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. **GC 555 (1888).** MCP Pg331.

Beholding Evil corrupted the Antediluvians. - By beholding evil, men became changed into its image, until God could bear with their wickedness no longer, and they were swept away by the flood. **SpTEd 44, May 11, 1896. (FE 422.) MCP Pg331.**

Changed for the Better. - Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellowmen, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity. **COL 355 (1900). MCP Pg331.**

Students to Have a Real Aim. - Teach the students to use for the highest, holiest purpose the talents God has given them that they may accomplish the greatest good in this world. Students need to learn what it means to have a real aim in life, and to obtain an exalted understanding of what true education means. **SpT Series B, No. 11, p 16, Nov 14, 1905. MCP Pg341.**

Failing to Realize One's Potential. - Many do not become what they might because they do not put forth the power that is in them. They do not, as they might, lay hold on divine strength. Many are diverted from the line in which they might reach the truest success. Seeking greater honour or a more pleasing task, they attempt something for which they are not fitted. Many a man whose talents are adapted for some other calling is ambitious to enter a profession; and he who might have been successful as a farmer, an artisan, or a nurse fills inadequately the position of a minister, a lawyer, or a physician. There are others, again, who might have filled a responsible calling, but who, for want of energy, application, or perseverance, content themselves with an easier place. **Ed 267 (1903). MCP Pg342.**

“Something Better” - The Law of True Living. - “Something Better” is the watchword of education, the law of all true living. Whatever Christ asks us to renounce, He offers in its stead something better.

Often the Youth cherish objects, pursuits and pleasures that may not appear to be evil but that fall short of the highest good. They divert the life from its noblest aim. Arbitrary measures or direct denunciation may not avail in leading these youth to relinquish that which they hold dear. Let them be directed to something better than display, ambition, or self-indulgence. Bring them in contact with truer beauty, with loftier principles, and with nobler lives. Lead them to behold the One “altogether lovely.”

When, once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its centre, the enthusiasm, the generous devotion, the passionate ardour, of the youth find here their true object. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure. To honour Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is the life's highest ambition and its greatest joy. **Ed 296, 297 (1903). MCP Pg342/343.**

No One to Live an Aimless Life. - Every soul is to minister. He is to use every physical, moral and mental power - through sanctification of the Spirit - that he may be a labourer together with God. All are bound to devote themselves actively and unreservedly to God's service. They are to cooperate with Jesus Christ in the great work of helping others. Christ died for every man. He has ransomed every man by giving His life on the cross. This He did that man might no longer live an aimless, selfish life but that he might live unto Jesus Christ, who died for his salvation. All are not called upon to enter the ministry but nevertheless they

are to minister. It is an insult to the Holy Spirit of god for any man to choose a life of self-serving. **Lt 10, 1897. (4BC 1159.) MCP Pg344/345.**

Students to Learn to Obey God. - I see that a great sentiment must be worked to, and out, under the divine direction in our schools. But the one great lesson the students must learn is to seek with all their heart, mind, and strength to know God and obey Him implicitly. The science of the salvation of the human soul is the first lesson of life. No line of literature or education in book knowledge is to become supreme. But to know God and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent, is life eternal. Let the students take the love and fear of God with them into their school life. This is wisdom more precious than words can express. Connected with God, it can be said of them, as of Daniel, God gave him wisdom and knowledge in all mysteries. Learning is good. The wisdom of Solomon is desirable; but the wisdom of a greater than Solomon is far more desirable and essential. Through the learning in our schools we cannot reach Christ but we can through Christ reach the highest end of the ladder in science; for the word of inspiration says "Ye are complete in Him." (Colossians 2:10) Our first business is to see and acknowledge God and then He will direct our path. **Lt 120, 1896. MCP Pg358.**

Brain Must be Healthy. - The brain is the organ and instrument of the mind, and controls the whole body. In order for the other parts of the system to be healthy, the brain must be healthy. And in order for the brain to be healthy, the blood must be pure. If by correct habits of eating and drinking the blood is kept pure, the brain will be properly nourished. **SpT Series B, No. 15, p 18, Apr 13, 1900. (CH 586, 587.) MCP Pg385.**

Close Relation Between Eating and Mind. - In connection with the injunction of Peter that we are to add "to temperance patience," I referred [in an address] to the blessings of health reform and the advantages to be gained by the use of proper combinations of simple nourishing foods. The close relationship that eating and drinking sustain to the state of one's mind and temper was dwelt upon. We cannot afford to develop a bad temper through wrong habits of living. **RH, July 12, 1906. MCP Pg386.**

Irregular Hours and Careless Inattention to Laws of Health. - The mind does not wear out nor break down so often on account of diligent employment and hard study as on account of eating improper food at improper times, and of careless inattention to the laws of health. ... Irregular hours for eating and sleeping sap the brain forces. The apostle Paul declares that he who would be successful in reaching a high standard of godliness must be temperate in all things. Eating, drinking, and dressing all have a direct bearing on our spiritual advancement. **YI, May 31, 1894. MCP Pg388.**

Overcrowding the Stomach Weakens the Mind. - Overeating, even of the most wholesome food, is to be guarded against. Nature can use no more than is required for building up the various organs of the body, and excess clogs the system. Many a student is supposed to have broken down from overstudy, when the real cause was overeating. While proper attention is given to the laws of health, there is little danger from mental taxation, but in many cases of so-called mental failure it is the overcrowding of the stomach that wearies the body and weakens the mind. **Ed 205 (1903). MCP Pg388.**

Overeating Blunts the Emotions. - Intemperance in eating, even of food of the right quality, will have a prostrating influence upon the system and will blunt the keener and holier emotions. Strict temperance in eating and drinking is highly essential for the healthy preservation and vigorous exercise of all the func-

tions of the body. Strictly temperate habits, combined with exercise of the muscles as well as of the mind, will preserve both mental and physical vigour and give power of endurance to those engaged in the ministry, to editors, and to all others whose habits are sedentary. As a people, with all our profession of health reform, we eat too much. Indulgence of appetite is the greatest cause of physical and mental debility, and lies at the foundation of feebleness, which is apparent everywhere. **3T 487 (1875)** MCP Pg389.

A Definition of Temperance in Eating. - The principles of temperance must be carried further than the mere use of spirituous liquors. The use of stimulating and indigestible food is often equally injurious to health and in many cases sows the seeds of drunkenness. True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful. There are few who realise as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers. The body should be servant to the mind and not the mind to the body. **PP 562 (1890).** MCP Pg394/395.



Abbreviations in Mind, Character & Personality

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| AA | The Acts of the Apostles |
| AH | The Adventist Home |
| AM | An Appeal to Mothers Relative to the Great Cause of the Physical, Mental, and Moral Ruin of Many of the Children of Our time. |
| 1BC | The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (2BC etc, for Vols. 2-7) |
| CD | Counsels on Diet and Foods |
| CEd | Christian Education |
| CG | Child Guidance |
| CH | Counsels on Health |
| CM | Colporteur Ministry |
| COL | Christ's Object Lessons |
| CS | Counsels on Stewardship |
| CSW | Counsels on Sabbath School Work |
| CT | Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students |
| CTBH | Christian Temperance (E. G. White) and Bible Hygiene (James White) |
| CW | Counsels to Writers and Editors |
| DA | The Desire of Ages |
| Ed | Education |
| Ev | Evangelism |
| EW | Early Writings |

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|-------|---|
| FE | Fundamentals of Christian Education |
| GC | The Great Controversy |
| GCB | General Conference Bulletin |
| GH | Good Health |
| GW | Gospel Workers (1892, 1915) |
| HC | Our High Calling |
| HL | Health: or How To Live |
| HP | In Heavenly Places |
| HPMMW | Health, Philanthropic, and Medical Missionary Work |
| HR | Health Reformer |
| HS | Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists |
| KH | That I May Know Him |
| LS | Life Sketches of Ellen G. White |
| Lt | Ellen G. White Letter |
| MB | Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing |
| MH | The Ministry of Healing |
| ML | My Life Today |
| MM | Medical Ministry |
| MS | Ellen G. White Manuscript |
| MYP | Messages to Young People |
| PHJ | Pacific Health Journal |
| PK | Prophets and Kings |
| PP | Patriarchs and Prophets |
| RH | Review and Herald |
| SC | Steps to Christ |
| SD | Sons and Daughters of God |
| 4SG | Spiritual Gifts |
| SL | The Sanctified Life |

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| 1SM | Selected Messages, Book One |
| 2SM | Selected Messages, Book Two |
| SpT Series A | Special Testimonies, Series A |
| SpT Series B | Special Testimonies, Series B |
| SpTBC | Special Testimonies to the Battle Creek Church |
| SpTEd | Special Testimonies on Education |
| SpTMM | Special Testimonies Relating to Medical Missionary Work |
| SpTMWI | Special Testimonies to Managers and Workers in Institutions |
| SpTPH | Special Testimonies to Physicians and Helpers |
| SR | Story of Redemption |
| ST | Signs of the Times |
| SW | Southern Watchman |
| IT | Testimonies for the Church, Vol.1 (2T etc, for Vols. 2-9) |
| Te | Temperance |
| TM | Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers |
| TSS | Selections From the Testimonies Bearing on Sabbath School Work (1900) |
| Und MS | Undated Ellen G. White Manuscript |
| WM | Welfare Ministry |
| YI | Youth's Instructor |



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