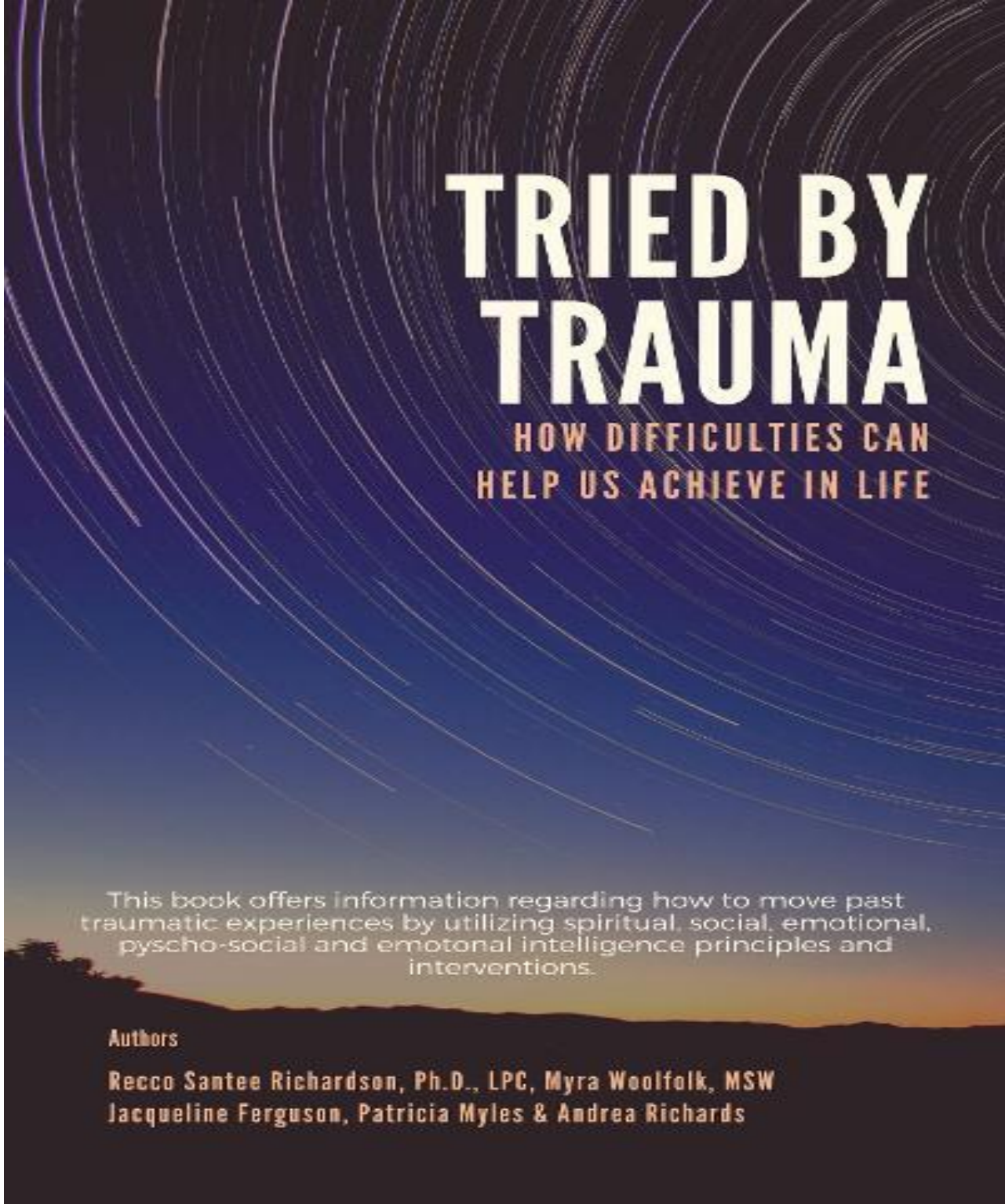




TRIED BY TRAUMA

HOW DIFFICULTIES CAN
HELP US ACHIEVE IN LIFE

This book offers information regarding how to move past traumatic experiences by utilizing spiritual, social, emotional, psycho-social and emotional intelligence principles and interventions.

Authors

Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC, Myra Woolfolk, MSW
Jacqueline Ferguson, Patricia Myles & Andrea Richards

Tried by Trauma

How Difficulties Can Help Us Achieve in Life

“Moving past the trauma by utilizing spiritual, social emotional, psycho-social and emotional intelligence principles and interventions.”

Authors

**Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC, Myra Woolfolk, MSW, Jacqueline Ferguson,
Patricia Myles & Andrea Richards**

Dedication

This book is dedicated to those of us who continue to struggle with the fall out of a traumatic life experience. Time after time, we are expected to get over it and be strong, when in all actuality, what we really want is closure and a normal life.

RSRC

**Published by Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc.
2500 S Linden Rd #321252
Flint, MI 48532-9998**

Tried by Trauma

How Difficulties Can Help Us Achieve in Life

-Moving past the trauma by utilizing spiritual, social emotional, psycho-social, and emotional intelligence principles, and interventions-

**2020 Recco S. Richardson
Published by Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc.
2500 S Linden Rd #321252
Flint, MI 48532-9998**

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without the expressed written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

**Send all inquiries to
Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc.
reccorichardsonphd@gmail.com... reccorichardson.com
(810) 394-7815**

First Edition: June 2020

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Preface

-The Importance of This Book-

This book is important because millions of good-hearted people continue to struggle with what happened to them. The trauma experienced and its long-lasting impact continues to be a barrier to fulfilled living. At some point, for all of us, the time comes to accept what happened, move past the blame, and guilt and focus on what is important in life. So often, survivors of trauma are lumped into categories or totally misunderstand the balance of their lives. Having serviced traumatized and at-risk populations for several years, it is time for me and a host of my peers to offer world trauma solutions from a spiritual, social emotional, psycho-social, and emotional intelligence approach.

In our own lifetime, we have come to believe that traumatic experiences do not have to haunt and define us forever. Rather, they can help us achieve in life and enjoy things to the fullest. We know within ourselves that there is always a way and opportunity to grow beyond what happened to us. Our message is that no one must become and remain a victim of what happened to them. This book offers solutions, strategies, and interventions for securing closure.

About the Authors



Jacqueline Ann Ferguson was born November 23, 1961 in Hamilton, Ohio. She and her family relocated to Flint, Michigan in the early seventies. She graduated from Flint Community Schools, attended Mott Community College, and graduated from Ross Medical Education Center as a Medical Administrative Assistant in 1987. Upon graduating, she immediately began working in the medical field. For the last 26 years she has worked as a Medical Administrative Assistant for several prominent local medical doctors. She enjoys her professional occupation. Her employment centers around touching and helping people have happy lives and their dreams come true. Her mission in life is to heal souls and teach people to have faith no matter what the situation is that they are facing. She is a deaconess and an active member at Flint's Grace Cathedral Community Church.



Patricia Myles was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Flint, Michigan. She graduated from Flint Central High School, attended Baker College, and received a Certificate in Medical Secretary & Assistant. Upon completing, she worked for several physicians. She attended Mott Community College for Phlebotomy and received her RPT Certificate from the American Society of Certified Pathologist (ASCP). She worked as a Phlebotomist for 20 years at Genesys Hospital, for 2 years at Hurley Medical Center, and for 23 years at Quest Diagnostics where she also served as a supervisor. She attended Mott Community College taking Photography and Filmmaking classes, which led to her creating VIDEOVISION, a Videography & Photography business. She is a Breast Cancer Survivor and an active member of Grace Cathedral Community Church where she serves as the leader in the Media Department.



Andrea Lavette Richards experienced the hand of God on her life at nine years of age. Happily married to Senior Pastor Kelly Richards for 33 years, she is the mother of three unique and good-hearted adult children.

Currently a licensed hair designer, she has 36 years of experience in the field. She previously was a barber and owner of Andrea's Beauty, Barber & Massage Studio in Las Vegas, Nevada. While living in Las Vegas for 12 years, she served as assistant to the Pastor's wife, and helped plant two churches. She selflessly gave of herself to help people of all levels of society.

She is a helper and encourager in the Body of Christ. She strongly believes in uniting for the truth and telling people about Jesus.

For the last 18 years, she has served as the First Lady of Grace Cathedral Community Church in Flint, MI. In her spare time, she enjoys bowling and fellowship with friends and family.



Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC, was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. He and his four siblings graduated from the Flint Community Schools. His father worked as a chef for many years and then eventually on the production line at General Motors. His mother was a stay-at-home mother. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business from Ferris State University. He earned a Master of Arts in Counseling Education from Central Michigan University. He also graduated from Walden University with a Doctorate Degree in Professional Psychology.

In 1990, he began implementing human services programming, supervision, and program management duties within the workplace. He has mentored some of Genesee County's most outstanding counselors, case managers, supervisors, and directors. In 2005 he pioneered Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc., a multi-faceted human services agency that provides effective mental health services, seminars, and research. The organization is registered with the State of

Michigan as a Mental Health Service provider. Currently over 500 persons per month are serviced through his office in Oakland County (Clarkston, M) and two offices in Genesee County (Flint, MI).

Dr. Richardson was licensed as a minister in 1987 and ordained an elder in 1992. He has held every position in the local church setting including youth pastor, janitor, associate pastor, singles minister, outreach coordinator, etc. He was a King/Chavez/Parks Future Faculty “Graduate School Scholar,” King/Chavez/Parks Future Faculty “Doctorial Studies Fellow” and currently is a Licensed Professional Counselor (State of Michigan),. He has a keen eye towards helping individuals remove emotional and social barriers. Dr. Richardson has over 25 years of counseling experience, 20 years of clinical supervision experience and 15 years of college adjunct faculty experience. He has traveled extensively throughout mid-Michigan performing Limited Licensed Professional Counselor (LLPC) group supervision sessions.

He has self-published a dozen books and authored 20 scholarly articles. In 2011, he received the Ferris State University Alumni “Pacesetters” Award for his contributions to his field of study and community. In February 2020, he received the “Award of Excellence” from the Genesee District Library for his commitment to serving others. He has been interviewed by local TV stations and newspapers. As well, he has performed keynote addresses and workshop trainings through-out America. Currently he is an in demand mental health therapist and serves as a staff pastor at Grace Cathedral Community Church (Flint, MI). He is an avid golfer and loves to travel.



Myra Woolfolk earned her BA in Criminal Justice and MS in Addiction Studies, from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and an MSW from Louisiana State University. Myra has at least 19 years’ experience in addiction and correctional treatment programming and development. She has long been an advocate for the emotional health and wellness of individuals experiencing challenges from untreated mental health and substance use issues. She brings a wealth of experience ranging from administrative management, developing substance use treatment, educational and vocational programs for individuals in the State of Arkansas as well as professional development for behavioral health clinicians. In 2016 she founded harbor City Health and Wellness to equip and empower individuals desiring optimal emotional wellness.

She is the Operations Director for Exodus Life, a faith-based nonprofit program offering pre- and post-release services for offenders in Arkansas. She is also a professor in the Social Behavior Sciences Department at Arkansas Baptist College.

Myra has conducted workshops and presentations on Mental Health First Aid, clinical supervision, women issues in treatment, holistic self-care practices, and identifying warning signs of anxiety and depression in college students and adolescents. She has been a presenter for the Clinton Health Matters-UAPB College Initiative, Ark-AHEAD annual conference, UAPB Student Affairs and Faculty Development retreats, as well as participated in programming funded by the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Center for Excellence. She currently serves as treasurer for REFORM, Inc and is Vice-President of the Arkansas Substance Abuse Certification Board.

Myra loves studying African American History, reading, writing, spending time with her family, and helping others empower themselves. She resides in white Hall, AR with her husband and three children.

Chapter #1

The Origin of This Book

Introduction

As the primary author, it is important for you to know the 30-year writing process of this book. Back in the early 90's, my Pastor asked me to transport Chuck Pierce, the guest-traveling minister, from his hotel room to our local church for the evening worship service. The weekend revival/conference was going well and hundreds of faithful believers pressed their way out to the services.

The protocol and rules for transporting guest ministers was simple, "Be on time picking them up, don't say a word unless they ask you something and be pleasant." At the time, Chuck Pierce was a national speaker who had a strong gift to deposit life, energy, and faith into church congregations. He also was blessed with a prophetic ministry mantle, meaning that with the help and authority of God, he was able to see, hear and say things that eventually happened. He was well known for being a very casual and personable individual who loved God and loved God's people. However, when in the pulpit ministering and declaring the word of God, he changed into an intuitive mouth piece of God. He became another person and it was marvelous to behold.

Armed with all this knowledge, for sure I was not excited about being responsible for picking him up from the hotel. I say this because at the time, I was not necessarily a young minister, but I was not anywhere close to being as seasoned and powerful as him. As I pulled up to the Riverfront Hotel in downtown Flint, MI, he strolled out to my car and got in the front passenger seat. I did not say a word, look his way, or try not to breathe. Within 30 seconds of being in the car, looking straight ahead and with little expression he said these brief words to me, "You shall bridge the gap between the spiritual and psychology." I did not reply to him, say a word, or look at him. I was determined to keep my eyes on the road and get him to the service safely.

Little did he know that within me I was rejoicing and shouting. The words he spoke confirmed my next steps in my life, career path and ministry desires. I was struggling with separating my academic training in counseling and desire to pursue doctoral studies (in sociology or psychology) from my bible training and call into the ministry. For me, at the time, the two were conflicting realities that were demanding more of me. I wanted to do them both and excel at both. Over the last 30 years, I have self-published dozens of books, written just as many scholarly research articles and presented workshop trainings to over 200 organizations. The books, articles and presentations were either about psychology, counseling or human services or about biblical principles, God, or the Christian faith. Never until this book have I full scale merged my academic and spiritual trainings. Hence, with the help of the co-authors, this book offers critical information regarding how to move past traumatic life experiences with the help of spiritual, social emotional, psycho-social, and emotional intelligence principles and interventions.

We all know that life is not fair! The good, the bad, and the ugly happen to us all. The issue is not what happens to us. Rather, it is how we respond to what happened. Here lies the problem. We all have been touched with some level of trauma in our lives. In truth, some people respond

better to life happenings and traumatic experiences than other people do. It is just how it is. However, it does not have to be, or stay this way. There is help, hope, guidance, and support for moving past life altering traumatic situations that have a hold of us. The trauma has happened and is long gone. Now the mandate is for us to cope as best as we can and experience victorious living over the impact and fruit of the trauma (see chart #1).

Chart #1 Impact & Fruit of Trauma

Depression	Trauma/PTSD	Anxiety	Moodiness
Irritability	Fragile	Fatigue	Agitation
Isolation	Inadequacies	Loss/Grief	Dependency
Acute Stress	Low Tolerance	Sadness	Fear/Phobia
Loneliness	Poor Esteem	Sense of Failure	Abandonment
Vulnerability	Despondence	Dejection	Low Self-Efficacy
Dread	Stress	Cognitive Delays	Poor Decision Making
Self-Sabotage	Annoyance	Poor Boundaries	Drama

It is our hope and intent that this book, and the presented personal stories, testimonies, experiences, insights, Biblical teachings, and current research in the field of psychology, social work and counseling helps each reader move forward.

Chapter #2

Trauma, Tried & True

Introduction

To begin with, we have all experienced some level of trauma in our lives. Sometimes early childhood events can negatively influence us well into adulthood. Trauma is no respecter of person, creed, or color. In fact, I have found that traumatic experiences can find their way into two-parent and single parent homes (Richardson, 2017). Traumatic experiences, and the associated fall out, distracts and works against the intelligence and life outcomes of children in ways that most professionals, educators, and religious leaders have no frame of reference to comprehend (Richardson, 2017).

A collection or category of early life traumatic experiences are known as adverse childhood experiences. Adverse childhood experiences can affect the body and mind well into adulthood (Davis, 2019). This is double shocking news for certain groups because children from certain racial and ethnic groups are more likely to experience adversities that can cause trauma (Bartlett & Stebel, 2014). The racial and ethnic groups and other groups such as Indigenous, rural, and urban communities often must deal with their own set of vulnerabilities (Luthar, Sawyer & Brown, 2007). I gather that their vulnerability eventually interacts with various risk factors that puts them in line to be traumatized over and over the balance of their lives.

Knowledge about childhood negative experiences is critical when attempting to understand and address trauma. This is true because due to early life traumatic experiences, many of us do not secure adequate life self-esteem, procure much needed socio-emotional healthiness or experience proper emotional intelligence (Richardson, 2017). Children (and adults) failure to cope and adjust to life can be attributed to experiencing on-going emotional trauma that is never addressed.

Traumatic events are common and not ordinarily life-long in their toxicity to the lives of those experiencing them. However, traumatic events that feature threat and fright with no escape can leave adults living with residual anxiety and fear that are highly toxic violations of the body, mind, and soul (Davis, 2019). I have found that unresolved childhood issues can continue to be triggered or repeated in adulthood and can move on to the status of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I want to point out that the stress from situations is endured post, or after the trauma, and tends to take on a life of its own to the point of being labeled a disorder. A growing number of people have been diagnosed with PTSD. It is a prevalent mental health problem associated with substantial psychiatric morbidity (Sareen, 2014).

People presenting with PTSD symptoms are often exposed to multiple traumatic events. Such repeated exposure can interfere with intelligence, emotions and learning outcomes (Richardson, 2016). As well, it is important to understand that the traumatic event that triggers PTSD may be an accumulation of multiple exposures to various traumatic events (Sareen, 2014). Life events like rape, assault, poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, terror, medical problems, death, and school failure can team up and cause problems the balance of a lifetime.

How to Deal with Trauma/PTSD

There are several solutions and answers that help individuals address their trauma/PTSD. Specifically, the availability of social support and pain management are helpful (Sareen, 2014). For survivors of trauma, the presence of social support and social interactions cannot be minimized. Let us be clear here, social support is a critical player in the pursuit of managing trauma. While much of the research on resilience focuses on individual strengths, it is social support that may matter the most (Suttie, 2017). Why? Because it is thought that positive social interactions facilitate the cognitive and emotional processing required for successful adjustment, and support the development of more positive appraisals of the traumatic event and its consequences (Kelly, Scott & Bryan, 2015).

A closer look at social support and other players that help and matter are:

Social Support: As humans, we have a need for affiliation and belonging. My early years of studies in sociology exposed me to valuable theories and views regarding how much we need each other. While some of us can thrive alone and in a state of alienation, it does not mean that we are safe or whole. I have found that those of us who have been traumatized do not do well alone. When we are alone, it means we are surrounded not safe. There is only safety in the multitude of other's and their counsel. Individuals traumatized tend to lean towards isolating and withdrawing from society and others, which is not the healthiest thing to do. If nothing else, the goal should be to avoid self-quarantine or signing up for solitary confinement to adjust and deal with life. The poet John Donne said it best, "No man is an island." There are certain things in life that we cannot bear, or do alone. One of those things is fully addressing our trauma.

Engrafted in social support is the idea of utilizing meaningful and trusted relationships that add strength to our lives. Unbelievably, there are still people out in the world that are trustworthy, loving, supportive, genuine, honest, and willing to aid us in our journey back to emotional liberation and wellness. Our trauma has taught us to not trust, and to do it alone. It is as if we want all the credit for coming out of trauma by our own merit. Just as substance abusers and alcoholics cannot overcome their struggles alone, traumatized individuals cannot do it alone either. Gospel recording artist Kirk Franklin said it best, "I need you, you need me, we need each other to survive."

Support systems have a unique role in the addressing of trauma because it requires other humans to be actively involved. With this involvement comes a sense of responsibility to one another and accountability. I have found that the real benefits of these two concepts is their ability to encourage traumatized individuals to be consistent. It is reported that consistency and routine can address trauma because they can deposit within us a sense of control, importance, personal resolve, purpose, satisfaction, and empowerment. Suttie (2017) offered that people who are happier have a strong purpose in life, or higher levels of self-efficacy tend to believe that they have control over their situation and seem to have an easier time recovering after disaster.

Task Completion: The confidence and personal resolve of accomplishing a task goes a long way towards recovery from negative experiences. It is as if the human mind, soul, heart, and mind stores various victories and success stories in a vault that not only protects us, but also serves as a resource for future endeavors. I have found that consistent task completion and moving from small victory to small victory does wonders for our perspective and can ignite our

drive to be free. Regardless of their size and purpose, completing projects helps us to overcome self-imposed restrictions, on-going flashbacks, panic attacks, fear, shortness of breath and stressors. Over the years, I have learned that regular task completion requires that I have a level of independence when tackling something. Independence can best be described as moving and acting in spaces and places that allow my creativity, inspiration, and passion to lead me. Within myself and for myself, I do this because others may not be able to sufficiently walk this road with me. As I talk with traumatized people, the subject of task completion and their level of independence often becomes the focus.

Wholesome good people can struggle to complete things because their sense of self is too intertwined with other people's ideas and beliefs. There is not adequate personal independence. Due to the stated lack, there is unnecessary fear, low esteem, unhealthy boundaries, and poor decision-making regularly when task completion is needed. For traumatized individuals, this absolutely cannot continue to happen and go unchecked. Why? Because there is nothing to fear. In his 1933 inaugural address, Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." As well, there really is nothing to be ashamed of, or embarrassed by, regarding our trauma. The healthy and consistent addressing of fears, self-esteem, boundaries, and quality decision making can be learned and embraced. These are not difficult or magical occurrences set aside for the elite. They are available to ordinary people like you and I who have been traumatized and want help.

Address Agitation: At the core of traumatic experiences is the presence of agitation. I view agitation as the intersection of nerves, excitement, and arousal. Agitation is a natural response to life and comes when meaningful things are attacked right before our eyes. When the actions of others, or our own actions cause an inner alarm, it is time to make plans to address things. The addressing of situations or people that agitate us is an on-going activity. The agitation is not a onetime thing; thus, we must develop coping skills.

The best way to cope with agitation is to process each situation faster and accurately. To do such, our perspective in that moment of agitation or later in the day must accurately assess the level of harm and trouble at hand. There are millions of things and people that do not agitate us because we have a quality perspective regarding it and have reduced the situations at hand down to something that is manageable and not worth disrupting our day.

I personally have learned to view and address my levels of agitation as something that is fluid. The agitating and annoying person or idea is fluid, meaning that it is passing by. It will pass by briskly and with less harm if I do not give it life by responding out of character or by responding as if I am defenseless. I have power over my agitations. Agitation is one of several weapons and assaults against us that should not work. In fact, the King James Bible states, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17, 2003)

Agitation does not have power over me. In fact, most agitating ideas and people are just for that moment of the day when we are exposed to them. When not in our presence, they have no frame of reference or prowess regarding us. Thus, for those brief moments, or hours, that we are in their presence or must deal with them, why not make it a habit to let things run their fluid

course? To truly address our agitation rooted in trauma, we must set ourselves to not feed or supply the agitation with a life source. Our goal should be to not let a temporal fluid situation become a full-blown lake of problems. As we keep our cool and respond appropriately, the agitation should dry up and hopefully wither away.

Body Heals Its Self: Our body will heal itself if we take care of it and allow it adequate time. There is research that suggests the body tries to soothe and heal itself after the trauma in that natural adaptation takes place and a natural heterogeneity of the human stress response happens (Macedo, Wilhelm, Goncalves, et. al. 2014). There are many reasons why the body does not adequately heal itself after traumatic experiences. I have found that poor boundaries are one reason. We tend to not set proper boundaries with other people, our diet, and our rest. Thus, we alienate our body from natural healing properties because we do not give it enough distance and time to do so. Unhealthy and toxic people have a way of impacting our physical body and restricting its ability to heal.

Healing is a process that can take time. It is not a miracle which is instant in nature. I often encourage traumatized individuals to take care of their physical bodies better by getting proper rest, exercising as much as they can, managing their food intake, finding places of relaxation, enjoying a hobby or past time activity, distressing throughout the day, and clearing their mind daily. The stated might sound basic but it works and helps alleviate the fall out of traumatic experiences and despair.

We can learn to de-stress, rest, eat healthier, find places of relaxation within ourselves and in the world by taking part in mental health counseling. For example, Cognitive Behavior Therapy-Trauma Focused (CBT-TF) is an evidence-based psychotherapy/counseling that aims at addressing the needs of children and adults with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other difficulties related to traumatic life events (Macedo, Wilhelm, Goncalves, et. al. 2014). The approach helps clients identify and cope with emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). If there is one thing, I am learning each day is that improved emotions, thoughts, and behaviors can positively impact our physical bodies. Why? Because it is believed they help our body to rest and be at ease long enough to heal itself.

Trauma Informed Care: Often over looked in the treatment of trauma is consistent trauma-informed care. This approach to helping individuals overcome intrusive life experiences is macro in nature and not micro. As a systematic approach, when delivered with fidelity and intention, this type of care can mitigate the effects of trauma on survivors by addressing head-on the fact it occurred, and that the expectation is a full recovery (Davis, 2019). For example, children are far more likely to exhibit resilience to childhood trauma when child-serving programs, institutions, and service systems understand the impact of childhood trauma, share common ways to talk and think about trauma, and thoroughly integrate effective practices and policies to address it—an approach often referred to as trauma-informed care (Bartlett & Stebel, 2014).

Chapter #3

Social Emotional Learning, Emotional Intelligence & Trauma

Social competence and emotional intelligence can help move children (and adults) forward by promoting experiences and memories that enhance esteem levels (Richardson, 2017). Definitions of social emotional learning and emotional intelligence have commonalities. Both include coordination of cognition, affect, and behavior including the awareness and management of one's own emotions and awareness and understanding of others' emotions (Richardson, 2018).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship (Jones, Brush, Bailey, et. al 2017). Social emotional learning programs focus on the development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies to include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, 2005). The frameworks of social emotional learning theories and ideas provide an understanding of the foundation for maintaining high-quality social relationships and for responding to the challenges of life (Vega, 2017).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, understand, and use emotions positively to manage anxiety, communicate well, empathize, overcome issues, solve problems, and manage conflicts (Drigas & Papoust, 2018). It is the rudder for feeling, thinking, learning, problem solving, and decision-making (Drigas & Papoust, 2018).

At the root of most traumas is a complex disruption of our social life and emotional life. As a result, it behooves us to better understand social-emotional learning and emotional intelligence and how they can assist healing from traumatic experiences. The following information can help us better understand trauma and how it can be addressed by socio-emotional learning and emotional intelligence concepts.

Effective Practices: There are dozens of concepts and ways to practice and strengthen our social-emotional learning competencies. The most popular are mindful breathing, doing one daily activity with mindfulness, and recognizing yourself in others (Srinivasan, 2018). The ability to see ourselves in others can help us avoid violating social and emotional rules that govern human behavior. This is not an easy task because most people are not aware of their own issues and inabilities, thus, to be asked to see themselves in others is a little ambitious. However, what can be asked and expected is the ability to be open-minded and willing to make the necessary adjustments that promote quality social interaction practices that address horrific life experiences.

Internalized Beliefs: Over time, mastering socio-emotional learning competencies results in a developmental progression. The progression can lead to a shift from being controlled by external factors, to acting increasingly in accord with internalized beliefs and values such as caring and concern for others, making good decisions, and taking responsibility for one's choices and behavior (Richardson, 2018). From the cradle to grave, the stated must be placed at the forefront of our parenting, educational system, religious education, and society in general because it gives

each of us a chance to progress beyond our trauma and make meaningful changes. Trauma demands an adequate response from us. One such response is internalized beliefs.

Adjusting, Achievement & Self Esteem: In general, it is held that emotional intelligence promotes the ability to adjust, negotiate life and avoid emotional trauma (Richardson, 2018). This is thought to be true because emotional intelligence is likely to underlie social competence and mediate the contribution of achievement to self-esteem (Cheung, Cheung & Hue 2015). Achieving can take place because of necessary adjustments in attitudes, expectations, reasoning and hopes taking place within the mind of traumatized individuals. As a result, there is value in raising emotional intelligence to consolidate the basis for the young adult's self-esteem (Cheung, Cheung & Hue 2015).

The more we address and focus on the esteem level of traumatized individuals, the more likely they will receive quality help. This is true because healthy esteem levels can help assuage coping and adjustment to life that can offset on-going emotional trauma that is never addressed. The last thing we want is something as basic as self-esteem, being the wrench that emotional trauma, social stigma, and the lack of guidance used to stymie intellectual development and emotional intelligence (Richardson, 2017). Kelly, Scott & Bryan (2015) argued similar thoughts. They held that emotional intelligence may be implicated in coping with trauma and that the relationship needs to be empirically explored more in the future.

Emotional Control: In general, many people misinterpret their own emotional reactions, fail to control emotional outbursts, or act strangely under various pressures. This can result in harmful consequences to themselves, others, and society (Drigas & Papoust, 2018). However, the fore-mentioned is compounded even the more when trauma is involved. For traumatized people, it is important to be able to manage their emotions and use emotional intelligence to read them and those of others. They must also be able to understand, label, express and regulate their emotions (Gabriel, 2018). This is true, and critical, for the traumatized because the ability to read, understand and respond to their emotions and other people is a crucial factor in predicting health, happiness, and personal and professional success (Gabriel, 2018).

Chapter #4

Addressing Trauma Through Resilience

Introduction

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines resilience as, “The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress,” or “bouncing back” from difficult experiences (MacLeod, Musich, et. al., 2016). It means to have a positive adaptation despite adversity (Fleming & Ledagar, 2008). The common qualifying definition for resilience is the presence of demonstrable, substantial risk facing the individual. In addition, it is held that resilience is efforts made by individuals to be successful regardless of facing distressing life conditions and demanding societal conditions that feature significant threats or severe adversities (Lee, Cheng & Kwong, 2012). In addition, resilience has been defined as positive adaptation despite adversity (Fleming & Ledagar, 2008).

Resilience can be defined as the process of effectively mobilizing internal and external resources in adapting to or managing significant sources of stress or trauma. To address levels of depression, anxiety, grief and trauma, resilience must be developed and cultivated. Cultivation of resilience means fostering capacity, flexibility, and coping strategies to face changes and life stresses to “bounce back” from difficult life experiences and achieve positive outcomes.

Resilience is efforts made by individuals to be successful regardless of facing distressing life conditions and demanding societal conditions that feature significant threats or severe adversities (Lee, Cheng & Kwong, 2012). Resilience is the ability to take a punch, not quit due to the inflicted pain and fight back because you feel you must. It is like the famed heavyweight boxers. They could take a punch and keep on punching, many of them took a licking every fight but kept on ticking and swinging.

In general, being able to take a blow and live and keep moving forward is not easy to do. It is not easy to respond adequately to the blows delivered by trauma. If it were easy, more people would do it. It is possible for re-occurring traumatic experiences to feel like a heap of things, struggles and burdens coming at the same time. They present as blow after blow and take on the feeling of being chastised or punished. Like a threshing, the goal of re-occurring trauma is simple, to knock the life force out of us and loose havoc and conflict on every hand. Even when at peace and in good places in the mind, traumatized individuals must remain vigilant and wary because their life experience tells them that something bad or unexpected is on the way.

Resiliency, The Link and Solution

To overcome trauma and address the resulting issues, resilience is needed. Basic inquiries into resilience have attempted to answer the question of why some individuals from high-risk backgrounds such as single-parent homes thrive while others fail (for a summary see Rutter, 1990). Researchers have had difficulty defining and measuring resiliency and agreeing on specific individual characteristics of resilient individuals. It is believed that effective communication, community support and levels of autonomy promote resiliency in individuals.

To have a fighting chance for normality and future life success, resilience must be instilled in children and adults in that it can help matriculation in school and success in the work place. As well, it helps to sustain meaningful relationships, manage stress, and negotiate being vulnerable to life experiences that are harmful.

Resilience Is Not Motivation or Determination

There is a difference between resilience, motivation, ambition, drive, determination, initiative and will power. The main difference being that resilience is a process that helps individuals address and overcome risk, distress, threat, and adversities. On a personal and professional level, I have come to learn and realize that resilience is a process that fragile traumatized individuals need to experience.

Motivation can be defined as the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way. It can also be defined as the general desire or willingness of someone to do something. Ambition is a powerful desire to do or to achieve something and typically requires determination and hard work. Determination can be coined as possessing firmness of purpose and resoluteness. Drive is defined as what compels a person to do or act. Initiative has come to mean the ability to assess and initiate things independently; imagination · ingenuity · originality · creativity · enterprise · drive · dynamism · ambition · motivation · spirit · energy · vision · get-up-and-go · pep · moxie · spunk · gumption it is an act or strategy intended to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation. Lastly, will power is the combination of determination and self-discipline that enables someone to do something despite the difficulties involved.

By merely reflecting on the definition of the stated words, a marked difference can be observed regarding resilience and the other words. This slight but crucial difference is not a matter of linguistics or personal preferences. It is a matter of a person securing sustainable help and progress in the face of troubles and perils. Psychologists and others have begun to recognize that much of what seems to promote resilience originates outside of the individual. This is not the case with ambition, drive, and initiative. As well, resilience requires the presence of an immediate danger or perceived on-going disadvantage (i.e., poverty, family history of incarceration) that can shake the core of a person.

When it comes to trauma discussions, resilience should be a major stakeholder. The level of poverty, health problems, fear, failure, depression, confusion, abandonment, and sub-par living environments experienced by most traumatized individuals is best addressed by manifesting resilience as a way of life and not placing all the eggs in the basket of motivation, will power and determination. Why? Because it is believed that resilience (and not the other concepts) can address life outcomes barriers. Only resilience because it is a process, can provide sustaining power that propels at-risk populations past “undaunting and uncircumcised” life barriers that have never been defeated.

If surveyed, mental health providers, teachers, medical professionals, and others would say that most traumatized individuals, at one point or another, had adequate motivation, ambition, and determination. They would go on to say that at critical times, they were not able to sustain the necessary level of drive, initiative and will power because of the grip held on them by trauma, generational cycles, environmental deprivation, unrelenting lack in several areas of their lives

and iniquities passed down through the bloodline. One way to sustain the necessary level of inner fortitude and other concepts is to successfully negotiate resilience and its process. The negotiating requires solutions offered by ongoing support, effective programming and education promoting resilience.

Frameworks of Resilience & Why It Works

Over the past 40 years, resilience research has gone through several stages. From an initial focus on the invulnerable or invincible child, psychologists began to recognize that much of what seems to promote resilience originates outside of the individual. This led to a search for resilience factors at the individual, family, community, and cultural levels (Lee, Cheng & Kwong, 2012).

Contemporary researchers have found that resilience factors vary in different risk contexts and have contributed to the notion that resilience is a process. Research on resilience has been a major theme in developmental psychopathology focusing on the question why some individuals maintain positive adaptation despite experiences of “distressing life conditions and demanding societal conditions” such as violence, poverty, stress, trauma, deprivation, and oppression (Chauklu & Ping, 2012).

Three waves of research on resilience have been identified and have set the path for the fourth wave which focuses on multilevel analysis and the dynamics of adaptation and change. There is a wide range of theories about the relationships between resilience and positive youth development.

There are models and frameworks that help to better understand resilience. As such, it is held that there are three general classes of resilience models/frameworks (compensatory, protective, and challenge) that explain how resilience factors operate to alter the trajectory from risk exposure to negative outcome (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Compensatory: The compensatory model best explains a situation where a resilience factor counteracts or operates in an opposite direction to a risk factor. The resilience factor directly affects the outcome, one independent of the risk factor's effect. In CIET's ACYRN-East study, for example, alcohol abstinence or moderation is compensatory in the sense that it is directly and independently associated with lower risk for youth suicide (Anderson & Ledogar, 2008).

Protective: In the protective model, assets, or resources moderate or reduce the effects of a risk on a negative outcome. Protective factors may operate in several ways to influence outcomes. They may help to neutralize the effects of risks; they may weaken, but not completely remove them; or they may enhance the positive effect of another protective factor in producing an outcome. In the ACYRN-East study (Anderson & Ledogar, 2008), being drug-free, though not directly associated with lower suicide risk, is associated with lower alcohol use and thus is protective in the sense that it enhances the latter's anti-suicide potential.

Challenge: A third model of resilience is the challenge model. In this model, the association between a risk factor and an outcome is “curvilinear”: exposures to both low and elevated levels

of a risk factor are associated with negative outcomes, but moderate levels of the risk are related to less negative (or positive) outcomes.

Altering the trajectory and impact of risk and negative outcomes is just what the doctor ordered to address the impact of trauma in a person's life. To experience strength and on-going help, survivors of traumatic experiences must consistently redirect and change the trajectory and bloodline issues that target them.

Resilience as A Beneficial Intervention

Resilience interventions for those impacted by prolonged exposure to trauma and other chronic stressors tend to be beneficial so long as the efforts focus on common mental, social, and physical characteristics (MacLeod, Musich, et. al 2016). The key to the interventions is for individual, social and family characteristics to be strengthened. For health and human services and medical practitioners and other services providers, several scales have been developed to help measure characteristics that facilitate the process of resilience (Macedo, Wilhelm, Goncalves, et. al. 2014). In addition, integrating models, findings, methods, and training across multiple systems and levels holds great promise for elucidating resilience processes that will inform efforts to build capacity for healthy adaptation in the face of rising threats to families and societies around the world (Masten, 2018).

Resilience is beneficial because it can shape human development over the life span. Masten (2018) reported that there is a growing impetus to integrate knowledge and strategies to inform practice and policies to mitigate risk and promote resilience in systems that shape human adaptation over the life course. Resilience is also beneficial because as a process, it can effectively mobilize internal and external resources when attempting to adapt or manage significant sources of stress or trauma (Richardson, 2017).

Resilience, Risk, Vulnerability & Protective Factors

With the help of resilience, individuals can overcome their initial and re-occurring traumatic life experiences. Types of traumatic experiences include growing up in the home with a mentally ill family member, life threatening accidents, physical assault, church wounds, abandonment, abuse/neglect, residing in a divorced or blended family home, being emotionally, physically, or sexually abused and incarceration.

Few of us escape life without experiencing some type of trauma. Therefore, it behooves us to ensure that through resilience, quality and proper guidance is available and a faulty bond with traumatic happenings does not take place.

As stated previously (and in the book *Secrets to Great Outcomes for Children from Single Parent Homes*, Richardson, 2017), the common qualifying condition for resilience, as viewed by most researchers, is the presence of demonstrable, substantial risk facing the individual. Many define risk in terms of statistical probabilities: a high-risk condition being one that carries high odds for maladjustment (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001).

Substantial risk is closely related to vulnerability. Vulnerability can be defined as how prepared a person is for a presented task and can interact with a risk factor to intensify one's reaction to risk (Rutter, 1990; Luthar, 1991, 2006).

There are many kinds of vulnerabilities including economic, social, environmental, and psychological. The traumatized, Indigenous, rural, and urban communities often must deal with their own set of vulnerabilities. The identification of risk, vulnerability and protective factors is important because risk factors can have a greater effect when occurring together with other risk factors than they do when occurring in isolation (Rutter, 1990; 1999; 2000; Sameroff et al., 1987; Sameroff & Rosenblum, 2006). The identification of vulnerability factors helps to understand, find processes, view causes, and identify solutions for individuals who are at risk of marginalization and additional traumatic harm.

Protective Factors

The main difference between individuals who adapt very well despite facing risks and individuals who end up in mal-adaptation is the existence of protective factors. In summary, protective factors are internal and external ideas and concepts that help us negotiate life experiences that can stymie development, offset growth, oppress emotions, afflict the soul, cast down hopes and deter success.

Regardless of the root or cause of traumatic experiences, protective factors are critical and play a significant role in achieving better emotional outcomes and a sense of purpose. Why? Because protective factors can help adults and children develop, adapt to stressful situations and side-step risk taking behaviors. In general, internal protective factors can promote optimism, perceptions of control, self-efficacy, and active coping skills associated with better health. External protective factors help individuals learn to function socially and maximize their participation in their environment.

Categories of Protective Factors

Protective factors can be grouped into four main components (bonding, competence, optimism, and environment).

Bonding: Bonding explains our emotional attachment and commitment to others and various activities. Healthy and unhealthy bonding can be found in all relationships including peer, coach, love interests and community groups. To promote bonding and attachment with and within survivors of traumatic experiences, simply spend quality time with them, explain universal truths to them, practice acceptance and mercy with them, communicate with them about relevant topics and give them opportunities to explore and express themselves.

Competence: In general competence can be viewed as the by-product of knowledge and intelligence. It is critical for traumatized individuals to have competence. Specifically, emotional, cognitive, moral, behavioral, and social competencies help humans secure the ability to make good decisions, regulate their emotions, have a proper view of themselves, and have a good relationship with others. When the throws of life come, we all must have access to reservoirs of competencies to overcome and keep moving forward.

Optimism: A jewel, optimism is the ability to hope against hope (Romans 4:18). It is the presence of a resilient mindset that embraces the belief that one way or another, things will work out. Optimism has been known to have solid roots in spiritual truths, understanding the meaning of life and possessing a positive sense of self. It could promote a “future orientation” approach to life that helps us stay focused on a desired goal. Cultural enrichment and exposure to other’s ways of life can help trauma survivors experience optimism and future orientations.

Environment: Of all the protective factors, environment tends to have the biggest impact on individuals who have been exposed to life changing traumatic events. It takes dedication, unrelenting effort, an intense sense of self and acceptance to break negative bands created by unhealthy environments. The most common environments that affect us all to the positive and negative are home, relationships, school, work, and community.

In closing, in case you missed it, the treatment plan or actions steps necessary for helping traumatized individuals achieve and move on in life is a process. The process includes securing protective factors, bonds with healthy experiences and the development of a resilient mindset takes place.

Chapter #5

Addressing Trauma Through Stress Tolerance

Introduction

In humans, acute stress is defined as and characterized to be immediate danger that occurs within a short span of time. Chronic stress is defined and characterized by the persistent presence of sources of frustration or anxiety that a person encounters every day. Traumatic stress is defined and characterized as the occurrence of a life-threatening event that evokes fear and helplessness (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). Failure to address chronic and traumatic stress can increase the risk of illness, depression, and early mortality, among other things. (McGonigal, 2015). As well exposure to long-term stress can be toxic and lead to medical concerns like high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, and a mental illness diagnosis such as Anxiety, Depression and Bipolar. Humans respond to stress through basic physiological mechanisms, like all other organisms; however, in humans, stress is an especially complex phenomenon, influenced and complicated by modern lifestyles and technologies (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

Stress Tolerance

Stress tolerance is defined as the threshold at which an individual can effectively and consistently deal with and manage stressful situations. It allows them to avoid undue anxiety, panic attacks, and health concerns (Workplacetesting.com, 2019). Stress tolerance is a way of thinking, responding, and reframing that is critical to trauma management. It is considered be one of the 12 executive functioning tasks of our brain. Within the brain, stress tolerance is believed to be housed in the emotion control task area and is key to individuals being able to thrive in stressful situations, cope with uncertainty and manage change (CIO, 2007).

A literature review reveals that psychologists believe that embracing stress requires high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty (McGonigal, 2015). From a psychological perspective this fact leads us to believe that various mental health treatment approaches and interventions can be used to address trauma by stress tolerance. Various clinical counseling treatment strategies such as psychotherapy and behavior therapy have been successful in treating stress. The success is due to the interventions helping clients to be more aware of internal processing and thereby gain some control over bodily reactions to stress (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

Benefits of Stress Tolerance

The securing of adequate stress tolerance is monumental in efforts to address traumatic experiences that continue to hound us. Below are some benefits of stress tolerance enhancement.

Coping Skills: Interventions that help us gain skills, perspective and confidence tend to fight off stress and enhance our tolerance levels. This is thought to be true because stress tolerance often relies on developing coping mechanisms to handle stress such as calm behaviors, healthy diet, sufficient rest, positive attitude, and a support system (Workplacetesting.com, 2019)

Positive View of Stress: The viewing of stress more positively encourages us to cope in ways that let us thrive, embrace life better, increase strength, be smarter and experience happiness more. When we appreciate that going through stress makes us better at it, it can be easier to face each new challenge (McGonigal, 2015). It is important to view stress more positively because it helps us to cope in ways that help us to thrive, whether it is tackling the source of stress, seeking social support, or finding meaning in it (McGonigal, 2015).

Learning Opportunity: One thing that can help us face and find the good in the stress in our lives is to view it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Psychologists call the process of learning and growing from a difficult experience stress inoculation. In a sense, going through the experience gives our brain and body a stress vaccine (McGonigal, 2015).

Exercise Regularly: A regular exercise routine can decrease the effects of stress on the body, improve mental health and mood, and even enhance memory and cognition (APA, 2020). Along with mitigating the negative effects of chronic stress on the mind and body, habitual exercise can improve mental health. As a result, some researchers are looking at links between exercise and brain chemicals associated with stress, anxiety, and depression. One theory is that physical activity triggers a release of dopamine and serotonin, which can improve mood and address anxiety and panic attacks (APA, 2020).

Chapter #6

Sadness, The Unsung Hero

Introduction

Here is something to think about regarding sadness. Just like marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes are gateway drugs for risk of subsequent involvement with illegal drugs, sadness is the gateway emotion to depression, anxiety, and is at the core of traumatic struggles. For adults and children, sadness is one of those words that is tossed around carelessly. Because of this, when most of us experience sadness, we tend not to address it immediately. On the emotions respective pecking order, for many people sadness is low and tends to be an accepted feeling and afterthought.

Sadness means to feel or show sorrow. It is the state of being unhappy, low in spirit, down, despondent, cheerless, dejected and given to gloom. Sadness and depression are often used interchangeably. They are remarkably similar if not identical. The mere difference between them is the level of severity of the sadness. Severe and persisting sadness moves on to become known as depression (i.e., chronic adjustment disorder with depression, persistent depressive disorder, major depressive disorder). For this reason and many others, efforts should be made to make sure that our sadness does not intensify and move towards depression. And our level of depression should be watched and addressed because it can touch and agree with our past traumatic experiences. Let it be known to all that will listen. A person who struggles with various levels of depression is more at risk of being traumatized consistently. Thus, to stop the spread of trauma, we must stop the development of depression, which means when sadness arrives, we must let it do its job and not let it move on to depression.

The Cause of Sadness

We all can experience things that cause sadness. The loss of a family member, a change in schools, new employment, being bullied, poor academics, struggles with siblings, broken promises, divorce, low esteem, the environment, and other ideas can serve as the pro-generator of sadness. Most people define and describe their sadness/depression in a similar fashion. They approach and define it as having bad feelings about things. The bad feelings are due to being angry about something or missing something that was once a source of joy, esteem, thrills empowerment, importance, or care for them. For most people, sadness comes into their life when “People, places or things,” that once were a sense of security and were once accessible are no longer available.

The Benefits of Sadness

As human beings, we have a plethora of emotions. To be whole beings and to experience all that the world has for us, we need to have, and display, positive and negative emotions such as sadness, joy, fear, disgust, worry, excitement, trust, surprise, love, calm and anger. This truth was played out and serves as the core theme of the 2015 Walt Disney movie, “Inside Out.” The movie’s focus is on 11-year-old Riley who experiences joy, sadness, fear, disgust, and anger when her family moves to San Francisco from Minnesota.

It was after joys, the de facto leader of the gang of emotions, efforts to help Riley fall short and sadness comes in like a hero and saves the day. Sadness, and not the other emotions, was the

balm in Gilead because of its ability to console, facilitate the proper emoting of hurt, deliver beneficial isolation, and successfully induce healthy apathy.

It is important for all our emotions, including sadness, to have breath and space to exist in our lives. I have found that when allowed to work its magic, sadness can serve as some sort of equalizer or unsung hero for dealing with, and stifling, future depression, and trauma. It is an unsung hero that can keep us from moving towards intense depression and poor responses to traumatic experiences. To intentionally shut down sadness and other positive/negative emotions for extended periods of time, leaves room for us to experience imbalance. The imbalance moves us towards being at-risk of future highs and lows that can play out in the form of excessiveness, addictions, rigidity, character flaws, mental health disorders and a vicious trauma cycle. For these reasons and others, when sadness comes, we should recognize it and allow it to do a complete work in us.

There are myriad benefits of sadness available daily that help avoid full blown depressive states and be victimized repeatedly by trauma. The benefits can help us progress and defeat things that continue to nag us for years such as fatigue, irritability, flashbacks, panic attacks and PTSD. Below are ways sadness can help us.

1). Strengthen and Energize: When fully experienced properly and, sadness can add to us and take away. It is as if the negative feelings and pain recycles within us and returns as strength, vigor, energy, hope, creativity, resilience, and empowerment.

2). Motivation to Achieve: When understood, embraced, and allowed to run its course, sadness can serve as a motivator. As humans, we do not like to feel unpleasant such as sadness, thus we work hard and diligently to achieve different outcomes. Sadness can motivate us towards positive results because we really do not want to face the angst of the said culprit again. Of truth, most people do not desire to sign up for the same story line of sadness that does not help overcome the associated trauma.

3). Helps Us Learn from Situations: Because of the level of pain that often is associated with it, sadness is uniquely qualified to help us learn from situations. Emotional hurts and pains are an indication that something needs to change. Sadness comes when we sit down and process what happened. In a natural and unprovoked manner, the fullness of negative experiences must flow through our soul, desires, plans and heart. When the flow through is blocked depression, anger, anxiety, and the triggers of traumatic experiences flare up and can happen

It is during or after the flow through process that we can begin considering the why's, when's, where's and how comes regarding our sadness and what happened to us. Such sincere questioning and wondering can lead us to self-discovery and learning from the incident at hand. When both the light bulb comes on and revelation is revealed to us for our learning and perfection, we can then move on to accepting what traumatized us and focus on more meaningful things.

4). Encourages Us to Push Through: Unlike depression and trauma, sadness is not debilitating. It does not leave us lifeless, zapped of energy, trodden down, in despair or battling with suicidal ideations. Why? Because sadness knows that once we, within ourselves, internalize the importance and value of what was taken from us, we can push our way past the hurts and harms

inflicted. In an intentional manner, like the hero that it is, sadness can spark our resolve to make things better and to not be stopped.

5). Helps Us to Be Grateful: Of all the benefits associated with sadness, I must say that gratefulness is the jewel of the crown. Gratefulness is the coming to know, or act of realizing how fortunate we are. For sure, things could have been much worse, and our lives could have been filled with even more darkness and gloom because of what happened. Sadness helps us keep things in perspective and helps us to be thankful for what we had and what we still have.

Instead of complaining and blaming, we should express gratitude for the time we had to enjoy what was taken from us. Being grateful requires maturity, introspecting, a positive mindset, and the will to see how various experiences can make us better and not bitter.

How to Avoid Unnecessary Sadness

Like other perceived negative emotions, some levels of sadness can be avoided. The avoidance is not necessarily efforts to enter denial, but rather taking caution to ensure that more severe sadness does not develop and move on to a full-blown depressive state and trigger traumatic experiences. It is imperative that we try to avoid unnecessary sadness by making good decisions, remaining balanced in our expectations, listening to wise counsel, managing our affairs wisely, seeking healthy relationships and developing positive character traits. Below are several concepts that can help us to avoid unnecessary and unhealthy sadness.

1). Stay Away from Toxic People: Let us face it, some people are not emotionally healthy and thus not good for us to be around. For some reason, we tend to draw toxic people to our lives and then act surprised when they strike at the core of our being and leave us sad, traumatized, worried, dejected and on edge. Our job is not necessarily to change toxic people, but rather to not let them get close enough to tamper with what we love and flatten our emotions.

2). Learn to Agree to Disagree: We do not have to be rocket scientists to know that some people simply love to argue and disagree with us. Their whole goal for the day, or week, is to get us to engage in discussions or thoughts that open the door for them to disagree with us. I have found that when dealing with people like this, for the sake of avoiding the potential of becoming sad and set-off emotionally once again, I merely let them know that I agree to disagree with them so that we all can move on. It takes two people to argue, tangle and disagree. By removing ourselves from the equation by agreeing to disagree, there is nothing else to consider or quail about.

3). Take Proper Responsibility: Avoiding unnecessary sadness requires that we take responsibility for our actions and ways. Typically, most of us are okay with the part and role we played in the dysfunction that produces our sad states. However, we miss the mark when we take responsibility for other people's roles and needs. If there is one thing I have learned in life, it is the importance of me being responsible for my actions and my actions alone.

We cannot and should not be responsible for some else's sadness. That is their burden and cross to carry. Sadness has a place in our lives according to our purposes. It does not have a role in our lives when it belongs to someone else.

4). Learn to Let Things Go: At some point in our lives, we must be willing and able to let things go. The sting of the event does not have to last forever and plays out repeatedly like a bad dream and broken record. We do not have to waddle in self-pity and sadness the balance of our days. We can, and should, eventually let things go. The sooner we do this, the better for us and those that we love.

It is a selfish act on our part to hold on to hurtful things that prompt sadness to arise. When we refuse to let things go, the experiencing of, “Glorified,” unnecessary sadness is the pinnacle of selfishness, a reflection of our immaturity and an indication that we have other character flaws. It is also an indication that we somehow have wedded our trauma and conceived betrayal babies named anxiety, moodiness, and poor decision-making.

Chapter #7

Being A Person of Character, Honesty, Integrity, Respect & Passion

Introduction

Of all the ills created in our lives by traumatic experiences and let downs, the tampering with and disengaging of our character, honesty, integrity, and passion can take a lifetime to fix. It takes time because at the least, the stated targets our core being and can negatively change how we approach life, problem solve, interact with others, and view ourselves. I have come to realize a few things. I am now aware of the need for children, teens, and adults to be people of Character, Honesty, Integrity, Respect and Passion (CHIRP). This, my friend, is necessary if the goal is victory over traumatic experiences, maximized earthly living and homes filled with optimum love, virtue, and purpose.

I have been watching things for a while from afar and close. One thing I recall is about 30 years ago the Character Counts framework was initiated and delivered to K-12 school systems throughout America. Developed at Drake University, the framework and its 6 pillars of character were successful (Character Counts, 2020). To do well in school, children need character education and exposure to other social and emotional learning ideas. Character development tends not to be at the fore-front of government funded K-12 education as evidenced by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The initiative has a focus on academics and not social and emotional development of students (Dodds, 2015; Elias, 2009). Adulthood is not left out of the need for character development. Merritt, Huber & Bartkoski (2018) reported that character strength is important in the workplace and for understanding what a person's (adult's) signature strength is.

Character

Character is defined as the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. It is the substance of who we are emotionally, socially, mentally, and spiritually. To be, and remain, a person of character, we must use our skills, pursue excellence, and stay humble.

1). Use Our Skills: We can be a person of character and build it by using our skill sets and charisma to stay inspired and devoted. Being inspired or inspirational should not be used to harm or take advantage of our circumstances and trials. Rather, as people of character, our aim is to move forward by using what we have. What we have is a skill set at our disposal. Our skills are our greatest ally and cheerleader. They help us overcome low trust, inadequate efficacy, fear, and frustration that are the offspring of our trauma.

2). Pursue Excellence: Our wholesome character is what leads and guides us towards excellence and success when working to put our lives back together. It is because of character, we can lead a normal life, establish goals and dreams, secure better life outcomes, and perform tasks on a large scale. It is this same call to character that puts us on the pathway of being traumatized by life and people. This should not fret us and cause acts of retreating, less than efforts or mediocrity. Being mediocre does not require excellence or character. I have found that exceptional and true

survivors of abuse and trauma ascribe to truths that promote character and excellence in their affairs.

3). Stay Humble: In all truth, humility should be a fruit born from our character. True character does not exalt itself and is not demanding. Character does not make us a big shot or the boss of everyone. If anything, it promotes humility, helps us to heal properly, and molds us into well-rounded human beings that overcome circumstances. It is critical for traumatized individuals to build up and restore their character by being humble and meek. Well-developed character helps us weather storms, and with the aid of humility, quantify our past hurts and move on.

Honesty

In all truth, consistent honesty with themselves and others can be difficult for traumatized people to do. The pain and anguish of being honest can sometimes be too much to bear. For some people, the actual pain from the trauma is easier to deal with than being honest.

Honest means to be free of deceit and untruthfulness. It is the state of being sincere, open, forthright, and straight. Being honest requires a level of being honorable and a person of high moral value. I happen to know hundreds of honest individuals who are kind and desire to be the best human being possible. Being an honest person and upholding honesty is not difficult to do. Concisely it merely requires that we do what is right, esteem honesty and accept honesty as being enough.

1). Do What Is Right: At the core of honesty is an intense sense of doing what is legal and what is right. We can all seek to be original and authentic which at the end of the day, promotes honesty. Doing what is right is something not always present in the lives of wounded souls, thus, honesty may not be held in the highest regard. However, it should be regarded and esteemed because of its ability to straighten out crooked places and guide us all to places of peace.

2). Esteem Honesty: Honesty is no longer esteemed and viewed as a critical aspect of stability. The inability to be honest does damage in our lives and mocks foundational truths and pillars that can ground us all. Dishonesty on any level creates an alternate narrative and serenades ideas of chaos that once unleashed are difficult to address in society. We must be vigilant and make sure dishonesty does not replace honesty as a way of life. We must be able to hang our hats and hopes on honesty. Honesty is our hope because it can dash and break the spirit of heaviness and the intentions of the trauma cycle.

3). Accept Honesty as Enough: Being honest and honest alone is a basic concept that should drive society and our actions. As reported by Ashkenas (2011) in the Harvard Business Review, honesty should be a basic building block. I have found that being honest is sufficient because it can steer lives away from the dysfunction created by traumatic experiences. We often look for short-cuts, new revelations and the spectacular. This is all good and well but not necessary when seeking to be honest and free from the trauma. Being honest can fulfill us and meet our needs. Honesty will get us to the places and people that we are tempted to cheat and negotiate our way to.

Integrity

As a social scientist, I am fond and appreciative of words like integrity, reliability, and validity. Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. It is the state of being whole, unified, unimpaired, and undivided. In my mind, it means to be at one and at peace. Integrity is doing what is right and lawful when no one is watching. For some reason, it is difficult for some people and the traumatized to have integrity. They are unsure regarding their allegiance or affiliations to integrity. To live in such a state can be vexing and unfulfilling. To secure integrity and remain a person of integrity, we must maintain our convictions, successfully negotiate adversity, and stay committed to addressing our problems, fears, and uncertainty.

1). Maintain Our Convictions: For those who seek to be persons of integrity, becoming weary or wayward in our personal convictions and standards should not happen. There must be continued belief and standing for what is true and expedient. Our integrity is who we are and how we approach life and difficult things. To move away from integrity would be a move from who we are and what upholds us as we move through the healing process.

2). Adversity: In the face of adversity and various challenges, we can bunker down and find additional truths and purposes that fortify our integrity and our commitment to being made whole again. This is what we do and what we have become. Just like leopards can desire to but cannot change their spots, a person of integrity can try but cannot change who they are because we just do not fit in. This is a key truth for individuals who battle with flashbacks and traumatic experiences. The goal is to be fortified and not let belittling past experiences lead to permanent changes for the worst. We deserve better! Our children deserve better!

3). Stay Committed: We cannot divorce our integrity for the sake of temporary relief and an unnecessary season of pleasure. We are not being different than other people, we are merely being ourselves and holding true to values and beliefs that undergird us and that help us be free of the turmoil. As we stay committed to our integrity, others around us will buy into our integrity and better be able to rally around us and an identified cause. Yes, integrity can become the expected and a culture. Duggar (2009) reported that when a culture of integrity is found, consensus around shared values can take place and goals are achieved easier. The crux of the issue is simple. Traumatic experiences desire that we buy into a weak and defeated mindset. We must use our integrity to set the record straight and change the culture of our homes and lives. This we can do.

Respect

Like the word love and friend, respect is thrown around and used too often. As a result, its importance in life and society tends to be taken for granted or taken out of context. Respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities or achievements. Organizations often talk about the need to respect and value each other but rarely do they do so because concepts of me and we are often ignored or not met (Rogers, (2014). To have genuine respect for ourselves and within the work place, church and other places, efforts need to take place to meet our basic human behavior needs. By doing this, issues of, “Me” and “We,” can be resolved and produce ideas and positive energy associated with, “Us.”

For traumatized individuals, feeling and being respected is important. Their trodden down desires and lives deserve to be respected. Respect is the regard, consideration, attentiveness, acclaim, and civility rendered to us and others because it is the right thing to do. Feeling respected, showing respect and being respectful does not require that we pass through the eye of a needle or split a neuron. It is not complicated. When everything else is laid aside, respect for ourselves, life and others come down to acceptance and appreciation for what we have been through. I, and most of my closest friends, embrace the idea that respect is not necessarily earned or given. Offended and traumatized individuals must respect themselves and then expect that others will respect them too. It is difficult to respect someone who does not respect themselves. For us all to be happy and fulfilled, respect must be given even when not deserved or warranted.

Contrary to street creed, the message proposed by music artist and long-standing family traditions, respect is a mindset and approach to life that heals and promotes growth. For these reasons, and others, individuals like you and I must steadfastly exist and proclaim with our lifestyle, the relevance and solution focus that respect carries. Like a char banc, respect can carry our lives and deeply afflicted souls in the right direction. I have learned that respect requires seeing the big picture, taking one day/one experience at a time, and embracing the process.

1). The Big Picture: Being mindful and viewing the big picture helps promote respect. The biggest enemy to respect is narrow minded approaches that are steeped in tradition, fear of being replaced, forgotten, uncertainty, frailty, and vulnerability. Like Woody in Toy Story I, we all must overcome the fear of being discarded and at-risk. The proper respect for others can remove inadequacies, fears and not wanting to be replaced. I have learned that there is enough abundance and resources in this world for all of us to have our share of things and then some. What we must not do is succumb to narrow minded and small picture thinking that is a precursor to morbid pictures being developed in our minds and hearts. Thinking small and being co-dependent on fear of the unknown and fear of failure is a sure recipe that cooks up poor trauma management.

2). One Day/One Experience: Taking life one day and one experience at a time helps promote respect and emotional healing. So often, we, and the traumatized, get overwhelmed and psyched out because we look too far down the road without proper vision and support. In doing so, we become anxious and skip over basic respect truths that are available. An important life lesson to learn, and become one with, is taking things as they come and addressing them one day and one experience at a time. It is well worth the effort and attempt to deal with things in the here and now with the tools and resources available. By doing this, the proper level of respect regarding us and situations can be relied on and aid us all in our efforts to manage anxiety, depression, and unfortunate assaults.

3). The Process: Ideas associated with being responsible and appreciating processes are beneficial when the goal is to promote respect. Failure to do the or similar actions can lead to the accumulation of dead ideas that eventually alienate and release disrespect, hate, envy, selfishness, and other cruelties that feed the trauma cycle. The releasing of the stated is neither good nor wholesome. As a result, and as an indication of our level of respect and desire to overcome our past, we must develop and initiate processes and procedures that govern our actions and expectations.

Passion

In life, there are very few words that prompt us to get up and make things happen. Passion is one of those words. Briefly, passion means a strong emotion that can be controlled. It is the culmination of sentiments and feelings that unction us to tread every mountain and forward every sea. Passion is somewhat of an all-consuming fire that is shut up in us. Unfortunately, passion is one of the several casualties that traumatic experiences rob us of. It is high treason, betrayal, and sabotage at its worst and it never comes at a suitable time.

Over the years I have studied the lives of massive world leaders such as Protestant Reformer Martin Luther, Sir Winston Churchill, Anwar Sadat, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Mahatma Ghandi. Far from being perfect vessels, they each used their passion to change the culture and landscape of the world. If studied out, at the core of their beliefs and message we would find CHIRP concepts. For every Churchill and Ghandi to ever live, there are millions of ordinary people who have an impact in our communities. This is true because passion is no respecter of person. Passion is not a racist or sexist. It will reside in, and with, whomever, especially the traumatized.

Depending on the task, and burden, passion can play a role in our work duties as it relates to job performance and innovation. Though not discussed, often there is a complex relationship between work passion, fit, organization, identification, and job performance (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). The complex relationship can better be understood, and harnessed, if we, as individuals, made it a point to follow our passions, get over emotional humps and never look back. To keep our passion, we must remain visionaries, focus on the long haul and find comfort at critical times that complements our competence and drive to be free.

1). Remain Visionaries: At the darkest moments and when others stop caring, we are to then hold on tighter and press towards the things that we see and that are true. Without a vision, the people perish and cast-off restraints. When what we see afar off is fueled by passion, it is only a matter of time before it materializes and lands in our lives. For this, and other reasons, there is a mandate to lock in on our personal vision and allow passion to facilitate our comings and goings.

2). The Long Haul: Passion requires us to have a long-distance runner's mentality, not a sprinters mentality. It mandates that we operate like a long-distance truck driver and not a pizza delivery worker. I say this because there is nothing short or cute about passion. It will cost us time. It will cost us planning. It will cost us adjusting and standing firm of getting back to the place we were in before the incident and failures.

3). Finding Comfort: When it comes to passion, we must become comfortable with it and the lifestyle that it brings. The toiling upwards through the night, long isolative days and frustration's bay are part of passion and part of our trauma. For many people, passion is a bed of affliction that becomes more comfortable as we lay in it and accept the calling to make things and our lives right.

To be honest, sometimes our passion to negotiate life better and improve our emotions pulls us out of bed and drags us to places that char our flesh and opens our mind, soul, and spirit. When this happens, and at this moment, we come to the end of ourselves, and passion and soul care healing takes over and carries us onward.

Chapter #8

Strategies for Successful Trauma Free Living

Introduction

A few years ago, I found myself writing and writing. I was writing and documenting everything related to families, individuals, children, and the workplace. It was during this writing frenzy that I wrote about strategies and successful living that can aid traumatized individuals who continue to struggle with stress, unstable situations, poor boundaries, and drama. So yes, now is a suitable time to dust the writings off and add their flavor to topics associated with trauma.

Strategies

Over the last couple of months, I have been using one of the single-page work sheets to help clients focus on what is important and move towards more successful living. Below is a review of steps that the hand-out discusses.

Break the Cycle: At some point, the counter-productive cycle found in a family must be broken. It is believed that most negative life cycles have their origin in unplanned pregnancies, an abundance of poor decision-making, depression, crisis, trauma, poverty, dependence, poor role models and low motivation. If nothing else, to move forward in our lives and towards success, we must overcome the tendencies, and ill ways found in our bloodline and family history.

Completion of Tasks: To ensure that learning, development, and personal growth takes place, tasks must be completed. Task completion requires skills and dedication to our physical being including getting proper rest and having a balanced diet. It also requires healthy emotions that include securing contentment, being calm, and personal confidence. Lastly, our social life must be above par, including our ability to accept ourselves, trust others, being compliant, and embracing differences. The presence of the stated in our lives helps us complete more tasks and move toward success.

Make Good use of Free Time: Successful trauma free individuals tend not to waste time and occupy their free time with meaningful activities. They have suitable time management that serves as their foundation for success. The importance of how we use our time, especially our free time, cannot be underestimated. The engagement in sports, clubs, community initiatives, hobbies and special interest groups is critical to maximizing free time and securing successful living.

Addressing Mental Health Issues: Most of us have experienced some type of abuse, neglect, trauma, or loss that had a negative effect on us. One way to address the stated is to participate in mental health counseling services. Counseling can help experience emotional healthiness and promote positive behavioral changes. Recalling and discussing things with a trained professional is sometimes necessary to move forward and have more success in life.

Secure Gainful Employment: Gainful employment and the presence of adequate personal and household income is the cornerstone of on-going successful living. The intentional and effective management of a career path, finances and assets is a sure way to not only enjoy living, but also, a way to create revenues of wealth and income for the next generation. For most people, the first

and best way to experience gainful employment is to secure, “in demand,” job skills, take advantage of community resources and network effectively.

Safe & Adequate Housing: Where we live, and our personal safety can play a significant role in levels of success experienced. We must be at peace and comfortable in our housing and community to maximize our potential to excel. With no doubt, a wholesome and safe living environment helps to meet our expressed needs that propel toward success. Our actual neighborhood or housing unit is not the focus, rather, the focus is dwelling in a place that meets your needs and helps you, secure success.

Substance Abuse Free Life: The smart choice is to avoid usage and the presence of substances that have an, “addiction,” producing effect. It simply is not worth the risk to use substances that are addictive. Successful living now, and in the future, calls for not only educating ourselves about substance abuse, but also making a conscious effort to manage our lives successfully, and never reaching the point of needing a substance to alter our mood or emotions.

Develop Healthy Relationships: It is no secret that our relationship with other people can make or break us. Thus, the interaction and commonality with the right people can lead to a lifetime of success. Healthy relationships feature positive support, levels of inspiration, opportunities to grow as a person, identify, and exposure to the larger society.

Chapter #9

How Far Can You See

Introduction

At the core of securing productive and happy life experiences that are free of trauma is the ability to see. What may be obvious and a, “No brainer,” can present itself as a major mountain and barrier to efforts to see. Without doubt, our eyes and brain have not been trained to see what is there and what is not there. As a result, with such blind spots, we often travel the wrong path in critical areas and find ourselves in yet another crisis, position of lack and frustrating situations.

Seeing Concepts

Over the last several years, I have realized, and appreciate, what it takes for me, and others, to see things properly. The several, “Seeing,” concepts are not new or profound. The ability to move on, address stress and staying power are practical ideas that make an enormous difference.

Moving On: The inability to move on from things, people and situations can stifle what we see. For many of us, we see only as far as our previous steps or previous decisions. From the position of looking back, opportunities presented in front of us can be ignored or totally missed. For this reason, it is good to make every effort to continue looking, pressing, and hoping forward.

The wholesome things that we long for typically are in front of us, not behind us. It must be established within our hearts to move on and towards the things we see ourselves enjoying and experiencing. It does not help us to focus on the past and dwell on various misgivings. To see ourselves and lives being filled with joy takes effort and the eventual confronting of things head on. Change can be scary and a burden within itself. To recognize, accept, prepare for and process change effectively, the ability to see ourselves in the future and further down the road is necessary.

Address the Stress: In this life, there will be burdens, weights, trials, tribulation, and stressors. While we cannot control what comes our way, we can control how we respond to it. I have found that things build up and become stressful because of failure to deal with issues early. Early detection is one of the best preventative and proactive things we can do to address stress, struggle, fear, and pain. Yet, we dismiss small molehills that become mountains of stress because we are too busy, or not concerned enough, to take initial action.

To address stress to be able to see better, a decision to plan better can be made. Planning can help us get ahead of situations, process our feelings, research options and secure support. That is right, planning can, and will, subdue stressors while they are still small and vulnerable.

Staying Power: One main reason we tend to avoid addressing issues and moving towards change is fear of failure. It can be demeaning and embarrassing to finally make the decision to see better, only to eventually lose sight of the goal and quit. The key to maintaining and keeping the fire going is to secure staying power.

Staying power, resiliency, grit, and internal motivation help us to keep seeing and going when things get tough, and the way gets darker. We each have within us the ability and power to finish

strong. The more we see the outcomes we desire coming into focus, the stronger our will to finish becomes.

We must see the end at the beginning. Focusing on, and seeing what could go wrong, who did not do their part and how difficult things are, does not help our cause, or plans. Rather, our focus and seeing should be on the desired end results. To lock in on the desired results, a change in our desire system, perspective, environment, friendships, goals, and beliefs will need to take place or be enhanced.

The older I get, the more I realize that life is interesting and something to behold all by its self. Like so many people, I can now clearly see how life is what you make it, one adventure after another. The making of life, and the associated adventures, should be valued, held dear and never forgotten. Through the good and troubled times, at the end of the day, all we have is life and the responses we rendered to it. The good thing about life is the reset button. We can reset things when the desired outcomes and experiences are not sufficient or worth the effort.

Contrary to belief, because of the reset button, no one is stuck or doomed. Traumatized individuals, and others, are not as stuck as believed. No, not even close. Sometimes the only thing needed is courage. Courage to click the reset button is all that is needed to get things moving in the right direction. Right now, new opportunities, new families, new finances, new health, new vision, and newness of life are available to everyone. There is no need to wait or delay. We do not need anyone's permission to reset our lives. It is our life, and we need to live the best life that we can.

If there was time and space, I could tell you story after story of people like you and I who hit the reset button and now are living a better life. They stood up and made the quality decision to not settle for what was becoming a normal life that was filled with frustration, lack, moodiness, fatigue, disappointment, boredom, and isolation.

Everything you and I need to reset our lives, and dreams, is available and accessible. Trust me, it is there for the taking and edification of our lives. It is my personal hope that the balance of this proves to be fruitful and bountiful to those who dare to hit the reset button and strike out to make things happen daily. Why not hit the reset button? You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Chapter #10

The Importance of Pursing Knowledge

Introduction

I have always been enamored with the word knowledge. My father always told me to seek to know everything that you can about everything. Back in the early 1980's during my undergraduate studies at Ferris State University, the buzzword on campus was, "Knowledge is Power." Now is a suitable time to discuss a good working definition of knowledge.

Definitions

As it is my custom, I tend to rely on the Hebrew and Greek dictionary when seeking to find out what a word means. One of the Hebrew words for knowledge is daath. It means concern, to know, premeditation, creative skill, truth, perception, knowledge possessed by discernment and to understand and wisdom. As well, one of the Greek words for knowledge is epignósis. It means recognition, discernment, knowledge of a particular point (directed towards a particular object), perception, discernment, intuition. It also means to cognate, which is knowledge gained through first hand relationship that is fitting and appropriate. Lastly, knowledge means real, acknowledge, precise and correct knowledge of things ethical and absolute.

The abundance of information regarding knowledge can be overwhelming. One of the best ways to tackle the stated is to place knowledge in various categories of understanding. The placing of concepts in categories was introduced to me in 1995 by Dr. Anne Rawls, then a graduate school sociology professor at Wayne State University. We were studying social theories written by Durkheim, Weber, and Kant. The categorizing of in-depth concepts is called something else now, but I will stick with calling it categories of understanding.

My brief personal research efforts reveal that there are main categories of understanding regarding knowledge. I am convinced that traumatized individuals, parents, mental health therapists, and religious leaders need more knowledge in the following areas.

Knowledge of Ourselves: We must place an expectation on ourselves to, "Know thyself." Know thyself and knowledge of ourselves is not a new concept. The Ancient Greek aphorism, "Know thyself", is one of the Delphic maxims and was inscribed in the promos of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Socrates later expounded upon this phrase, when he taught that, "The unexamined life is not worth living." What I have found is that when we set ourselves to know ourselves, other important things like success, insight, happiness, healing, trauma free living and self-worth follow.

Knowledge of What to Do: It is hard pressed to do something when there is no frame of reference for doing it. This is where some depressed and traumatized find themselves. They know they need to do something to improve their lives but are not sure of what to do.

Many times, they fear trying something and failing, thus they opt to try nothing and set themselves up to be re-traumatized. Many times, the solution and balm in Gilead is caring adults and mental health providers offering a pathway direction. I am often reminded that today's culture, and world, features no time for people to continue fumbling their plans and heart's

desire. Because of this, it is critical that we, and the hurting, have adequate knowledge and information that steers our relationships and the future.

Knowledge to Lead People: A quick glance reveals that most of our knowledge is needed when dealing with people and situations that may not directly involve us. Because of this, there is a need to know how to lead others. Those of us trying to overcome life circumstances need the ability to judge situations and actions to ascertain the best possible outcomes for all involved. Good judgment and understanding can be experienced because of having knowledge and a sense of how to interact, associate with, and process our regular, chronic, and toxic relationships with others. For the stated to take place, our trust gate, personal boundaries, and fears must be addressed consistently and effectively.

Knowledge Produces Stability & Strength: Of all the aspects of knowledge, what I love and appreciate the most is its ability to produce stability and strength in our lives and in the lives of those that we encounter. Even in the face of perceived, or real danger, we can manage things because of knowledge that produces renewed strength. We are only as strong as the knowledge that we stand firm on, comprehend and release in our daily lives.

When seeking strength, and to be established in certain areas of our life, many times the answer is the securing of knowledge regarding our request. The knowledge allows us to accurately pursue, plan and set our affections on outcomes that arrest the influence of our traumatic experiences. Our strength, deliverance and stability come from walking therein.

One thing that I have learned about knowledge and trauma is the importance of embracing what it is and meditating on it. It would serve us all well if we meditated more often. Meditation clears the mind, clarifies things, and puts us in a position to understand.

Knowledge Is Like a Precious Gem & Reward: I am often reminded of the rewards of possessing knowledge. Knowledge can lead us to solutions and depths of truth that can break forth new beliefs, places of peace, relaxation, and life changing ideas. We can come to know the bases of most subjects and situations regarding life and our trauma by tapping into the knowledge that is at our disposal. The problem is that most people are too lazy to find out, make too many excuses, take on the role of the victim or are not aware of the power and depths that knowledge can reveal.

I do not know about you, but I have been where I did not know the answer and have had little frame of reference for what was going on in my life. I was able to secure answers and understand things after seeking knowledge and insight into what was going on.

Chapter #11

Strategies That Heal Emotional Pain & Trauma

Introduction

Emotional pain (also known as psychological or mental pain) is an unpleasant feeling of suffering of a psychological discomfort. When people feel emotional pain, the same areas of the brain get activated as when people feel physical pain (the anterior insula and the anterior cingulate cortex). For many people, overcoming emotional pain and traumatic circumstances is difficult to do.

Daily, a tremendous amount of success could be experienced if it were not for past trauma, low confidence, the presence of self-defeating behaviors, fear and the lists go on. For this reason, we and others are charged with securing healing and better days. To facilitate the stated, we must have faith in ourselves and faith in the healing process. I personally happen to believe that we can help ourselves just as much as others can help us.

There are a growing number of us who battle emotional pain from trauma, immorality, gross mistreatment, wickedness, foulness, obscenity, and atrocity. As a result, we are left to deal with guilt, faulty relationships, fatigue, qualms, infections, torment, frailty, irritations, anger, twistedness, depression, lameness, an overall disregard for life, oppression, flashbacks, afflictions, malady, moodiness, soul ties, anxiety, and hard laborious living that mirrors pining.

Psychological & Spiritual Perspective

From a psychological and spiritual perspective, I have been watching the fore-mentioned for years and finally feel like I have solutions to offer. The solutions that promote emotional healing and trauma healing are obvious, but nevertheless worth discussing, and documenting in treatment plans and added to someone's curriculum. I have found that personal empowerment, accountability, support systems, forgiveness, confession, and learning can help those of us who are hurting emotionally, socially, psychologically, and spiritually because of what traumatized us.

1. Personal Empowerment: When adequate personal regard and esteem are present, we have a good chance of being empowered past our emotional pain and rough life experiences. Personal empowerment can lead to effective change that lasts a lifetime. As a type of protective factor or hedge, it sets the tone for adequate motivation, resilience, and grit to take center stage when they are called upon and needed at strategic times. I see it as personal empowerment taking on its own form of, "Life force and will to do," that neutralizes trauma and emotional pain and exceeds the benefits of psychotropic medication and years of individual counseling.

2. Accountability: Let us face it, being held accountable for anything is not something that we tend to sign up for eagerly. By nature, being held responsible is not a comfortable feeling. It is just not! However, with being accountable also comes the necessary fortitude and favor to achieve at levels beyond our wildest hopes. When accepted consistently accountability weighs in and makes a difference when the hounds of despair and agitation nip at our heels. I have witnessed tricky situations and circumstances work out for the good of emotionally pained

persons who submitted to accountability, did not fold, and held on to what was hoped for. Accountability is a message to those in need of emotional healing and trauma free living.

3. Forgiveness: Some of us have emotional wounds that were inflicted by close friends, family members or someone that was trusted. A deep sense of betrayal, devastation, broken trust, and abandonment can come from a breakdown in close knit relationships. A feasible way to move past the pain is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a process that can be taught and instilled in a person. It is not automatic and does not always feel good. To forgive, the sorting out of feelings, experiences, expectations, needs and dependency should take place. This allows for healing to take place in a safe and controlled way that appeases and not disrupts.

Forgiveness also requires some form of acceptance of what happened, the associated pain and the belief that things will get better. Emotional pain and the associated trauma are real. However, it is important to remember that, “Things are never as bad we think, and things can get better.”

4. Confession: Closely related to forgiveness is confession. A sure way to start the healing process is for us to confess or discuss several topics and emotions. When ideas and experiences are verbalized, relief can be experienced and pathways to success can come into focus. We can talk and confess our way in and out of trauma and emotional pain. Words have life in them and are an excellent way to get moving in the right direction. Confession and talking things out help to set parameters and allows for the expression of desired outcomes.

The desired outcomes become goals and motivation sources that can stifle our pain or use it as a springboard. Confessing, talking, and expressing thoughts is an effective way to experience cleansing from various experiences. It is as if confession promotes some type of conscious realization, washing away or purging that is pliable, easily entreated, and safe.

5. Learning: A key point to stress with addressing emotional pain and trauma wounds is the idea of learning from our experiences. I have found that the long-term benefits and rewards of successfully negotiating trauma, and pain, need to be interwoven into our belief system and healing plan.

This takes intent, creativity, and risk on our part. At some point, the discussion of a life free of pain, void of restrictions, and filled with opportunity must take place for our emotions to be healed. As humans, we must have something pleasant to look towards and forward to. The joy set before us helps to manage current trials and inabilities that are temporal if addressed properly. When approached properly, learning is an effective way to experience enhancement, invigoration, edification, or strength to endure the trauma and pain.

Chapter #12

What I Want to Say to The Traumatized

Introduction

Like so many other people, the more I think about something, the more I have to say about it. When it comes to trauma, what I would say to someone has been stirring in my heart and soul for years. I finally quantified what I want to say to the millions of traumatized people who are looking forward to better days. I call my thoughts, the words of life.

Words of Life

Addressing Life Issues: I want to say now is the time to address life issues. Looking back, one of my favorite sayings is, “Things not discussed will haunt the future.” For each of us there comes a time when the addressing and facing of life altering situations and circumstances must take place. There are several things I have learned over the years. One thing is that regularly successful people seek ways to address the small and large unpleasant things in their lives. While they may not be successful 100 percent of the time, the goal and mindset is to not quit and give in to external and internal issues that threaten progress. They have a mindset of growth and are willing to discuss real and up-to-close issues.

In my mind, now is the time to rise and discuss life situations and the future that is desired. I personally challenge you to put forth yet another valiant effort to overcome and prevail against whatever has happened to you. Crippling life events such as mistakes, misunderstandings, wrongdoings, the past, unmet expectations, and previous failures do not have to be a lifetime sentence. We are not criminals and we are not married to them. There should be, and can be, an end to what keeps replaying as less than pleasant themes in our lives. The willingness to talk and discuss significant issues can help release achievement in critical areas for us all. Today and tomorrow are a suitable time to set ourselves to finally conquer the things that try to haunt our future. Everyone can, and should, look forward to securing peace with our past, reaching the finish line and feeling good about us.

Feeling Good About Ourselves: What I am about to say is a hard saying. At the end of the day, it is our responsibility to feel good about the efforts we put forth. We must be able to look at ourselves in the mirror and report feeling good about ourselves. When we consider our needs and wants, somewhere in the equation, the onus must also be placed on us. It is our life, and ours to live by the grace that is bestowed on us. In other words, “If it is to be, it is up to me.” I am not convinced that most people, including the traumatized, subscribe to this belief. If so, this is not good, and may cause the next 25 years to be interesting and tumultuous.

You and I must stand forth and vote for self-accountability, self-sufficiency, and all the other, “Self,” concepts that can be thought of. This is not a liberal or conservative issue. Rather, it is a call for the betterment of our lives. We all should have a responsibility and personal mandate to promote self-actualization and maximum life experiences. We must move towards more critical discussions and debates about our own overall welfare and then be concerned about our families and the world. This is no easy task, but a necessary one all the same.

The under-estimating of our individual abilities should not take place. This is not the conversation for this hour. Like a reed blowing in the wind, our message and guidance can be impactful. There is no limit to what we can do and achieve. Let us make it a point to push ourselves at every level. It is a push that would benefit our lives and would be well worth the effort. It is also a push that should help us be nicer and accepting of others.

Be Nice & Accepting of Others: As we seek to experience healing, there are several things that we should be mindful of. One of the main things that should remain at the forefront of our thoughts is the level of personal depression and re-visiting trauma that can come. We all know that depression, anxiety, trauma, and chronic stress are real, and impact way too many people. In other words, you are not the only one, so stop acting like it. While there have been advances and improved treatments for the stated conditions, they remain a source of concern for thousands of people. Just decide to be nicer to people and more accepting. We all are hurting in some shape or fashion. It would help you, them, and me if a conscious decision were made to be more sensitive and supportive of other people. Everyone and I mean everyone, are battling something in their life, and from time to time need support and understanding. There is a good chance that the very person living with you, or working across the aisle from your desk, is dealing with some form of despair. There are blessings set aside for those of us who stop thinking about ourselves and seek to at least be more understanding and supportive of others.

We all could stand to be more open-minded and accepting of others. Period! For some reason, we as a people, and nation, tend to struggle with others who are not like us. It is as if we feel that something is wrong with them, or that they do not deserve the right to enjoy the things that we enjoy. Honestly, who are we to establish the standard of what is to be viewed as acceptable and right. I mean, who died and left us in charge to pass judgment and accessibility.

Regardless of our enlightened personal preferences and unfounded perceptions, all people are created equal and the expectation is that everyone is to be valued, respected, accepted, appreciated, acknowledged, celebrated and everything else. The stated is basic human universal truths that do not require intelligence beyond grade school.

When I look at myself, you, America, and the community in which I live, I see acceptance that can produce discovery, diversity that is important, differences that is a breath of fresh air, change that is long overdue, established legal pathways that help us all, and determination for a better tomorrow that should be based on commonality and unity and not trauma history, color, creed, culture, or anything else.

It cost us nothing to be nice, considerate, and patient with others. With the same measure that we extend an olive branch, mercy, and love towards others, will be the same measure we receive it back. The law of sowing and reaping and karma are real, and true to their calling (scripture). So, let us do our part and start seeking ways to support and accept others. A little of what we yield to them can go a long way towards their success and help them hit the reset button.

Hit the Reset Button: The older I get, the more I realize that life is interesting and something to behold all by itself. Like so many people, I can now clearly see how life is what you make it, one adventure after another. The making of life, and the associated adventures, should be valued, held dear and never forgotten. Through the good and tough times, at the end of the day, all we

have is life and the responses we rendered to it. The good thing about life is the reset button. We can reset things when the desired outcome and experiences are not sufficient or worth the effort.

Contrary to belief, because of the reset button, no one is stuck or doomed. No, not even close. Courage to click the reset button is all that is needed to get things moving in the right direction. Right now, new opportunities, new families, new finances, new health, new vision, and newness of life are available to you and me. There is no need to wait or delay. We do not need anyone's permission to reset our lives. It is our life, and we need to live the best life that we can.

If there was time and space, I could tell you story after story of people like you and I who hit the reset button and now are living a better life. They stood up and made the quality decision to not settle for what was becoming a normal life that was filled with frustration, lack, disappointment, boredom, and isolation.

Everything you and I need to reset our lives, and dreams, is available and accessible. Trust me, it is there for the taking and edification of our lives. It is my personal hope that the balance of your life proves to be fruitful and bountiful if you dare to hit the reset button and strike out to make things happen daily. Why not hit the reset button? You have nothing to lose and everything to believe in.

Believe: Traumatic experiences can bring out lots of emotions for people like you and me. Of all the valuable things in life to learn, one truth that rings out louder than any national weather alert siren is the need for us to always believe. What a good message and thought. It is incumbent upon each of us, to always, and I mean to always, believe. We believe in ourselves when no one else does. We must believe that hard work still pays off. We must believe that truth crushed to the earth will rise again. We must believe that the darkness of the night still must yield to the eventual light. Yes, regardless of what life dishes out, somehow the redemptive power of believing can help us try harder and forge a better tomorrow.

Are you ready to believe when and where it matters the most? Many, many, many of us have come too far to turn away from believing. We cannot afford to embrace what once were less than optimum situations that should now be a distant memory. It is not necessary that we consult our past to excel in our future. We do not have to return to former ways and thoughts that have served their purpose and brought us to the place wherein we now stand.

Why not make a resolution to yourself that you will believe in something like never before? Why not step out and step up to the place of believing? Why not let your professions of hope lead you to believing as if your life depended upon it? To believe and not back down will take higher moral.

Taking A Moral Stand: There comes a time when you and I should stand for something. Our nation is founded and built on historical events and causes that have changed the western world's fabric. Just as Ronald Reagan, Kahlil Gilbran, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John F. Kennedy stood at critical times, right now even in our time of hurt and trauma, you and I must stand too. By embracing every moment and responding to our internal cues to make a difference, we play a part in the unfolding of our lives. You and I can no longer be comfortable, silenced, unsure and too busy to take a stand on small and large meaningful issues that have the potential to finally

break us free. Currently, a true and vibrant call to get over the things that happened to us is going forth to ordinary people who want better living.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with taking one last stand for what is right for our lives, even if we must stand alone. Those that stand tall cast a defining shadow that cannot be ignored. It is time to identify causes in our lives and seek better things.

Chapter #13

Overcoming Medical Trauma Through Faith, Peace & Comfort

Introduction

For a few moments, I want to discuss various medical traumas with you. Medical Trauma is a, "Set of psychological and physiological responses of patients and their families to pain, injury, serious illness, medical procedures, and invasive or frightening treatment experiences." In general, an individual's responses to medical trauma varies in intensity and disruptiveness to their daily functioning. Medical Trauma is widespread, and the symptoms include those found with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Evidence shows that traumatic stress responses such as PTSD are common to medical diagnoses and treatment for heart attack, stroke, childbirth, depression, cancer, and admission to the intensive care unit for medical attention. Below is a brief blurb about a few medical diagnoses.

Traumatizing Medical Diagnosis

Heart Attack: A heart attack is a life-changing event. For some people, surviving a heart attack brings renewed appreciation for life. For others, the event is so traumatic that worrying about having a second heart attack can consume their lives.

Childbirth: Giving birth can be one of the most painful experiences in a woman's life, yet the long-term effects that trauma can have on millions of new mothers are still largely ignored. It can take months or years for a woman to adjust to and learn to manage life effectively after giving birth to a child.

ICU: A stay in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) can be traumatic. The trauma arises for the patient from being confronted with their own mortality, being rolled in to a hospital room and hooked up to machines or being ventilated or catheterized. Trauma also can come from drifting in and out of consciousness, seeing a separate set of faces each time they wake up and experiencing confusion, sedation, and delirium at various times.

Cancer: Cancer is a complex illness that can set off multiple reactions and changes in the mind, body, and spirit. Make no mistake about it, being diagnosed with cancer can be a traumatic experience. And like most traumatic experiences, it can leave a lifelong and lasting imprint on a person.

Definitions

There are several critical words, terms, definitions, and thoughts associated with medical trauma and how to address it through faith, peace, and comfort. The first word is trauma. Trauma is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. The event causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes the sense of self and dulls the ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences. One of the most common ways that people cope with trauma is through the comfort found in religious or spiritual practices. Over the years, psychologists of religion have performed multiple studies to measure the positive and negative effects of this coping style.

Trauma Drama

*Experiencing Trauma
Can cause great Drama*

*Giving it to the Lord
Can be a reward*

*When you have no control in a situation
Give it to God for clarification*

*When your troubles are dark and grim
Turn to our Savior, give them to him.*

*The drama of trauma can cause despair
Remember Jesus is always there*

By: Patricia Myles

The second word is faith. For me, faith is a strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof. The putting of faith in God means we believe that even though things look tangled up, God can untangle them and help us. When tragic things happen, putting faith in God means we believe, no matter how bad things look, that God will work them together for our good.

I Walk by Faith

*I believe in what I can't see
Because of the Blessings I receive*

*Like walking in darkness without a light
"I walk by Faith, not by sight"*

*"Seeing is believing" is what people say
I say when trusting in God, come what may*

*Trusting in God takes me to new heights
"I walk by Faith, not by sight"*

*Miracles, Miracles God can perform
Believing in God, I had to conform*

*Brought into sunlight out of the night
"I walk by Faith, not by sight"*

By: Patricia Myles

The third word is a set of words, peace, and comfort. Peace is the absence of turmoil and comfort is peace amid turmoil. How awesome it is that we have a God of comfort and peace to help us in our time of need. The Holy Spirit, which is also called the Comforter, lives within us, and is a very present help in the time of need. We can pray to Him for comfort, encouragement, and for daily strength. He will remind us of God's faithful words whenever we are traumatized, hurting, or discouraged in life.

How Faith Helps Us to Achieve in Life

One of the best ways to find fulfillment is through faith in our religious practices and activities. When expressed properly, faith gives us reasons to be grateful and allows us to see the amazing blessings the Lord has given us. Faith helps us to accept and learn that we have a path for our lives and that we are not alone in the universe. Without faith, we are lost souls that have no meaning or purpose. The Christian faith teaches us that God has a plan for our lives. His plan is the reason He made each of us. Trauma and problems should not keep us from fulfilling God's plan for our life. Faith in God and His plan is the key to pleasing God. Contrary to belief, it is right and okay to have faith in God because God is reliable. So many things can be said about faith. One thing that can be said is that faith releases the blessing of God. It brings God onto the scene. Many people fail to get answers to prayer because their faith fails them. They lack adequate faith and the kind of relationship with God that makes them confident that He is going to answer them.

Faith causes us to know in our heart before we see it with our eyes. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Faith brings answers to prayer. "And whatever things you ask in prayer, really believing, you will receive." Faith does the impossible because it lets God undertake for us, and nothing is impossible for God. How great, without limitation, the power of faith is! If doubt can be banished from the heart and unbelief is made a stranger, what we ask from God will surely come to pass. Prayer throws faith on God, which prompts God to get involved in the world. Only God can move mountains, but faith and prayer move God. Always remember, God is in control!

Having personally gone into surgery twice, of which one for cancer, I know a thing or two about trauma and sickness. Finding out that you, or a loved one, have cancer can be overwhelming and discomfoting. We do not always know what God's purpose is in such devastating afflictions, but we can trust that God has a reason and a plan for us. When faced with cancer and sickness, we can turn to bible verses for inspiration, comfort, and peace of mind.

My faith in God helps my being a cancer survivor. It helped me when I was going through surgery and undergoing chemo and radiation. My faith in God gave me peace and comfort. God was there with me and in full control.

Addressing & Resolving Medical Trauma Issues

Medical trauma and other trauma wounds the soul and creates barriers to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is true because trauma can shatter our faith. It targets our beliefs about God and leaves us questioning all that we ever knew or thought about the goodness of God. When this happens, we can begin to doubt His love for, and towards us. We then doubt His power and we doubt our lovability. We wonder, "If God loves me, why did He let this happen?" I have found

that doubts often leads to distorted beliefs that become the norm. From the place of doubt, we can easily start believing that God must not exist or that we are being punished. Survivors of trauma, and the rest of us, need to remove doubts and distorted beliefs about God so that the healing power of the gospel can be experienced!

Dealing with Medical Trauma

Below are some ideas that can help deal with medical trauma and other types of trauma. By doing, or considering the information, avenues, and ways for dealing with medical trauma can enter our lives.

1). Do not Fear: Illness, pain and surgery can be scary for the patient and the family. Rest assured that God is in control of the situation. Keep your mind on Christ and your mind will be at peace. Tell the Lord all that is on your mind. Leave it all in God's hands. Ask the Holy Spirit to comfort you. Trust that you are secure in our omnipotent God. Let your faith be bigger than your fears. Believe that nothing can shake you and those who are secure in God's hands know that the perfect cure for worry is trust in God.

2). Find Comfort in The Word: When I lost my mother, I would not have made it without my faith in God, which gave me peace. No one travels through life without, at some point, experiencing the loss of someone dear. The loss of a loved one through death is one of life's most intense challenges, and the pain can be overwhelming. But God does not leave you and I to suffer alone. We can find comfort in His Word. How do we find comfort in God despite pain? I am glad you asked. We can find it by realizing God never promised to isolate us from pain. He did, however, promise to enter our pain with us. He is our together-strength and ever-present comfort. Because of the comforting of the Lord, we can feel pain without blame.

3). Do not Break: Whatever we do, do not allow cancer (or any other sickness) to break us! Do not allow it to lead us into despair! Many godly people asked what I did to get through my sickness. Here is what I did. I always remembered what the scripture says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth them out of them all."

4). Avoid Wasting: For me, I decided that since I had cancer, there was no use in wasting the opportunity. People can waste having cancer by not using it to get closer to Christ. It can be wasted by us not being an inspiration and testimony to others. You can also waste the opportunity by not developing or having a new affection for God's Word. Whether the cancer is lung, colorectal, prostate, liver, leukemia, skin, ovarian or in the breast, you and I can defeat it in Christ. The key is to not waste the experience and have faith in the Lord. The Lord always has a plan and all things work together for good. Our trials only make us stronger.

5). Get Closer to God: I used my sickness to get closer to God and to inspire others. To get closer to God during a medical trauma like cancer or another sickness, seek peace in the Lord and continually thank Him. We already have hope in the Lord, so continue to commit to Him and get closer. Use cancer and sickness to revive our prayer life. Do not be discouraged! Get closer to Him. God loves us and He is faithful! Get close to God and love Him. Let His love, and our love for Him; bear all things, including sickness. Remember, love bears all things. The goal

should be to use cancer and sickness as a testimony. So, get closer and hold on to God's promises. Treasure and hold on to Jesus because He will never let go!

6). Gradually Confront: It is human nature to deny or block negative things that impact us. Please do not try to block out a medically traumatic experience. In all actuality, trauma cannot be blocked, or erased from your memory. Thus, the best thing to do is to accept it and confront it so that healing in the soul can take place. The last thing we want to do is enter into denial or avoidance to deal with things. Trust me, it does not fix the problem.

7). Do not Bottle Up: If not careful, there is a tendency to bottle up what happened to us medically. Instead of bottling up, talk to someone who can support and understand you. Many patients suffer the effects of their traumatic medical condition in silence. In error, some of us have been taught and socialized, to endure the ills of medical treatment in silence. We expect ourselves, and others expect us, to just deal with the emotional effects of the care we need and ask for. We are okay with asking the sickly, 'How is your pain?' or 'Any side effects of the medications?' But we rarely field inquiries about our fears, sadness, worry, and other emotions faced by a medical event or illness. We all need to start talking about the emotional fallout and issues that medical traumas present us with.

8). Seek Professional Help: It is possible for us to need professional help when attempting to deal with life. In cases when patients experience medical trauma because of unforeseen medical crises, clinical social workers and mental health counselors can help. They provide interventions and services to patients and their families during the hospital stay and ensure that everyone is linked to community mental health resources upon discharge.

Biblical Perspectives on Peace

The Peace of God is like a compass for our souls, leading us in the direction that the Holy Spirit intends for our lives. We can take great comfort in knowing that God is so involved in our lives that He supplied us with this internal compass as we seek to do His will.

Peace is related to the actions and attitudes of individuals. It is a gift from God. The presence of peace indicates God's blessing on a person's obedience and faith. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit and an attribute of God. If we allow the Spirit of God to rule in our lives, we will experience His peace. God's peace can reside within us.

Peace

*When life brings you problems that seem to not cease
Look to our Father to bring you Peace*

*In times of sadness and disappointment
God's Peace and love can bring you contentment*

*When sickness consumes you
and you don't know what to do*

*Look to Our Father above
to give you Peace and love*

By: Patricia Myles

The residing in fullness promotes what is called inner peace. Inner peace comes from knowing that circumstances are temporary and that God is sovereign over all (Isaiah 46:9–11). Peace within us comes from exercising faith in the character and personal of God and His Word. We can have peace amid challenges when we remember that “All things work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” We can have, and choose, peace, rather than give way to fear and worry. Inner peace resulting from a relationship with God allows us to keep things in proper perspective. We can accept demanding situations by remembering that our help is in God and comes from God. We can also accept inconvenient situations by remembering that our citizenship is in heaven.

Christian Comfort

Christian comfort, the Bible teaches us, is different from the comfort that people seek in this world. The comfort of this world is a comfort of body and senses. The Christian comfort is comfort of the soul. To me, the soul is the deep part of us that powers our body and five senses. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would be our Comforter. In our troubles and trauma, God comforts us because He loves us. He also comforts us so that that we may one day give comfort to others who experience a set of trials. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be at peace and able to comfort those who are in any affliction. As Christians, the comfort we received from God can be used to comfort others.

Comfort

*Being in the presence of God can give us Comfort and joy
by taking over whatever the enemy tries to destroy*

*God gives us The Holy Spirit to guide and Comfort us
Just pray and give Him our undivided trust*

By: Patricia Myles

When we need comfort and encouragement, the Bible is an excellent place to turn. There are Bible verses that will bring comfort amid whatever trials life throws our way. Whatever we are facing, God can provide supernatural peace and comfort! In times of discouragement and sorrow, we can look to the Bible to be encouraged and consoled by the God of all comfort. One thing for sure, hurt and pain are guaranteed in this world. Jesus tells us that we will have trouble, but we can take heart because He has overcome the world.

Through the Holy Scriptures we can take comfort by knowing that God is faithful, and is always looking over us. He genuinely cares and is our protector and comforter in times of need. The bible states, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” How awesome it is that

we have a God of comfort and peace to help us in our time of need. In the time of trauma and need, the Holy Spirit comforts us. Personally, I pray to Him for comfort, encouragement, and for daily strength. Because of the Holy Spirit, comfort is unique. It is infinite, inexhaustible, immutable, indestructible, permanent, everlasting, and available all the time. This cannot be said of our afflictions and trauma. Among many things, they are temporary and transient in nature.

Chapter #14

Securing Peace in Life

Introduction

Discussions on peace are important because we need it in our lives. We need to know why it exists and how to deal with it. This is a critical issue in our life, and in the world today, because without peace there is only discord or stress surrounding our lives. As defined, discord is the presence of strife, conflict, contention, dissension, and variance. It is a state of condition marked by a lack of agreement or harmony that frames quarreling, factiousness, or antagonism. The meaning of stress is the state of personal anxiety, strain or tension resulting from the pressure of human life. When discord and stress are present, it is only a matter of time before they manifest or become the foundation of a traumatic experience.

My motivation for writing on peace comes from me seeing, and hearing people with no peace within their souls. So, I will be sharing biblical principles, and psychological principles on how to obtain peace in life. With all the things going on in this world today people really need to have guidance on how to achieve peace amid trouble, pandemic, and loss.

I have noticed during my lifetime people go through so many traumas trying to live their life, which robs them of their peace. The trauma of losing someone so dear to you, the trauma of getting pregnant and having a miscarriage after years and years of trying to conceive are just a few of life's traumatic experiences. Speaking of conceiving, about one third to one half of all pregnancies end in miscarriage. It was reported that 10 percent to 20 percent of women who know they are pregnant miscarry. In my work career, I have seen firsthand how traumatic this can be for women. They have expressed to me that they feel less than a woman, useless, and the blame for putting additional strain on their marriage. The trauma of not being able to start a family and please their husband starts to destroy their inner peace and causes a great deal of stress and discord in their family.

Definitions

I want to share some thoughts with you about how I see and seek peace. Let us start with some definitions and meanings. As you are aware, one of the Greek words for peace is Eirene. It means one, peace, quietness, and rest. In Greek mythology, the goddess Eirene was one of the Horae, the personification of peace. She was depicted in art as a beautiful young woman carrying a cornucopia, sceptre, and a torch or rhyton. One of the Hebrew words for peace is shalom. Shalom was translated in the Septuagint most often as the Greek word Eirene. It has a wide semantic range including the notion of totality or completeness, success, fulfillment, wholeness, harmony, security, and well-being. The spiritual meaning of peace, or inner peace, is the state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord or stress. Being, "At Peace," is considered by many to be healthy and the opposite of being stressed or anxious.

There are so many things that come up against us daily that try to keep us from attaining inner peace and peaceful living. The trauma going on in the world today with this Corona Virus-19 (COVID-19) is causing stress and discord amongst people. It has disturbed a lot of people's peace. There are just so many traumatic things that happen in this world, and in our lives, that

brings discord and harmonious imbalance in our life. Unbelievably there are some people in this world who love to see us stressed out and feeling down. These actions tend to happen when we let the wrong people, and the enemy, into our life and start listening to voices that tell us we are unworthy, this is the right way it is supposed to be, no one loves us and so on. If we are not careful, soon we start to believe these lies and miss our peace. As human beings, and children of God, we are supposed to live peaceful lives.

Peace is so important because of what it offers us, and the pillars and values by which it stands. Annan (2003) stated that peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights, and human dignity are shared values needed. The founder of Justice for Life, advocate for humanity stated that peace is important because of four universal shared values which are individuality, wisdom, community, and change.

Universal Shared Values

1). Individuality: We are all unique, and yet we share common heritage. In peace we can express our full potential and enjoy our lives to the fullest.

2). Wisdom: We are connected through one shared reality. In peace we can know with clarity what the reality is, and discover elegant solutions to our most pressing problems.

3). Community: We need each other in peace, because together we can bring change to our communities, and enjoy each other's company.

4). Change: Humanity is breaking free from our survival past, leaving aggression, strife, conflict, and a lack of harmony.

I found the four values to be extremely important. As individuals we are supposed to enjoy life and have peace in all areas of our life. If we use peace principles and the wisdom that God gave us, we could be a blessing in our communities and bring about peace and change in a lot of people's lives.

Some argue that peace could be considered the closest sensation to our natural base-state of consciousness, contentment, happiness, elation, joy, and even hysterical joy. These concepts share peace as their root feeling and are just more energetic sensations that foreground themselves with their added intensity. Peace is important in our life if we desire to have true happiness. True happiness can be achieved by being true to oneself. The most vital way to achieve peace in our life is to take it to God. God left us scriptures and guidance for all that we go through in our life. So, when we start feeling our peace slipping away, and stress and discord taking over our life, we can pray to God and read our bible.

II Thessalonians 3:16 Now the Lord of peace himself gives you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace, In the world ye shall have tribulations; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Numbers 6:24-26 The Lord Bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lifts his countenance upon thee and gives thee peace.

Securing Peace

There are hundreds of ways and means to secure and maintain our peace. While gathering information, I came across a Psychology Today article that stated we should follow the following to obtain peace in our lives.

- 1). Learn:** Learn to trust yourself, learn a new way to think and master a new way of being at peace.
- 2). Focus:** Focus on what you are learning. Mistakes and setbacks are simply a form of practice.
- 3). Ease Your Expectations:** Life is under no obligation to give you what you want, because what we want is sometimes not the best for us.
- 4). Trust:** Open to someone you trust. Let someone special in when you are in the dark.
- 5). Hope:** Use hope to drive positive action. Only in dark can you see the stars. The stars are hope. Look for them.
- 6). Move:** Move towards something instead of away. Choose to focus your energy on moving toward.
- 7). Step Back:** Take a few steps back sometime. When you look at things from a distance, they look much clearer.
- 8). Time:** Give yourself time. Take time to explore the parts of your life that is draining your peace.

In summary, when we are going through traumatic times and moments in life, we should learn to trust our inner feeling and listen to the voice inside of us. We can learn and obtain the peace we are looking for by reading books, meditating, and studying our Bible. To secure peace, we must stop expecting so much from others and depend on ourselves more. We can help ourselves by finding a good support system, confiding in a trusted elder in our church and stop worrying what others and the world thinks. We must build up our confidence, and never give up on the hope of reaching peace through positive thinking. To secure peace, we must remove things from our life that cause us trauma, discord, and stress. Sometimes we must step back and look at a situation from a distance to realize the cause and effect. After we have evaluated situations in our life, then comes the time to start the healing. Healing is a process, so we must take it one day at a time and do not rush the process.

Toxic People of Discord

You better believe when our peace is gone, discord is coming up waiting to enter our life to make things worse than they were. A person who intentionally causes discord, strife and division

has a spiritual problem, and is toxic. Such a person is a scorner, talebearer, angry, proud, forward, wrathful, wicked, hateful spirited and a bunch of other things. They come to steal our peace. Toxic peace stealers are persons who are not happy when other people are getting along. They constantly seek to disrupt the peace and cause people to fight with one another. We see this at all levels of society and in our communities. It happens in social gatherings, churches, businesses, and schools. These people have a spirit of divisiveness that drives them to bring discord to people. They are not happy when everything is running smoothly and peaceful. These people have a hidden agenda; they are bad news to social order. The Bible, in the book of Proverbs, has much to say about causing discord that targets our peace.

Proverbs 6:12-19: A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a forward mouth: He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teaches with his fingers: Forwardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord: Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly, suddenly shall he be broken without remedy: These six things doth the Lord hate: yes seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood: A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief: A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Proverbs 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Proverbs 22:10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; Yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

Proverbs 26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so, where there is no talebearer, the strife ceases.

Proverbs 28:25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

God wants us to have an orderly world and life. We are sinful by nature; so many carnal spirits are warring against God. Right now, in this world this very hour, most of the people of this world are warring against God. These actions have brought great chaos to our lives, and our world.

The Truth About Stress

The entire trauma that we experience in our lives daily has a way of bringing and releasing stress that is not good for our lives, because stress can kill us. For years, it has been held that somewhere between 75 to 90 percent of all physician office visits are for stress related ailments and complaints. Stress is linked to six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide. In addition, over 43 percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress. The Bible tells us about the experience of stress, the probable causes of stress, the effects of stress, and it also tells us about appeals to God in stressful situations, and how God comforts the believers under stress. Experiencing stress weakens us and causes pains in our bodies. It promotes grief and our soul is at unrest. The result of stress in our bodies can be physical pain in our stomach and heart.

Below are potential causes of stress in our lives.

1). Disobedience To God's Will: Psalms 38:8 I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart; Job 6:2 O that my grief were thoroughly weighed and my calamity laid in the balances together; Psalms 77:2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my soul refused to be comforted; Jeremiah 4:19 My bowels, my bowels And David said unto God, I am in a great strait; let us fall now unto the hand of the Lord: for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man; Psalms 38:4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

2). Family Ties: I Corinthians 7:33 Be he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, hope he may please his wife; Genesis 21:11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

3). The Burden of Leadership: II Corinthians 11:28 Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

4). Threats of Injury or Violence: Lamentations 1:20 Behold, O lord; for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me. For I have grievously rebelled abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death; Genesis 32:7 Jacob was afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him. And the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two hands; I Samuel 28:5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled.

5). Unjust Leaders: Exodus 5:19 And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task; Nehemiah 9:37 And it is yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins; also, they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure and we are in great distress.

6). The Wickedness of Others: I Kings 19:14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of host; because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left: and they seek my life to take away; Romans 9:2-3 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

7). Academic Study: Ecclesiastes 1:13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out to wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

8). Cares Of This World: Proverbs 12:25 Heaviness is in the heart of man, maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad; Mark 4:18-19 And these are they which are sown among thorns: such as hear the word, 19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the world, and is becometh unfruitful; Psalms 31: 9-10 Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: thine eyes is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my body. 10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

In summary, stress is a leading cause of trauma and ailment in our life today. I find that 75 percent to 95 percent is an extremely high number for visits to the doctor's office for stress related incidents. That means that stress is a big reason we have no peace in our lives. Stress

causes so many different unhealthy symptoms in our body, mind, and soul. The bible gives us examples of what happens when we experience stress, the thing that you feel.

The effects of stress is also covered in the bible:

Matthew 13:22: States it gives you heaviness in the heart of man and maketh it stoop

Mark 4:18: Says It causes lust and other things to enter in.

In the bible people appealed to God in their stressful situations

Psalms 102:2: A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

Psalms 18:6: A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of the song to the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

God comforts the believers under stress

Psalms 94:19: Tells how in multitude of thoughts God comforts delight within your soul.

Matthew 11:28: The Lord Jesus Christ says come unto him when we are burdened and heavy hearted and he will give us rest.

In closing, when we start to experience stress in our life, we will start to notice certain changes in our health and our mental state. We will feel our peacefulness starting to slip away. We will also not be able to rest, feel weakness, experience headaches and so many other symptoms. This is when we need to take a good look at our life and see what is causing so much stress. First, we should start with searching our soul to see if we have been obedient to the will of God. In our daily lives there are so many stressful things that come upon us (i.e. the stress of our family ties, job and being in leadership, threats of violence). The effects of stress can cause so many traumas to our well-being, our spirit, mind, body, and soul. It will rob us of our peace and cause discord in our life. So, when stressful moments come to our life, make sure we appeal to God in each situation because God will comfort believers when we are under stress.

Now is a good time to share something personal with you. I went through a traumatic and stressful situation when I was nineteen years old. I was raped. This caused me to go through so much anger and displacement in my soul. I became an angry person and I had a total dislike for people. The rape caused me to cry in silence because I refused to tell anyone that it happened to me. I was so ashamed and felt as if I had lost all the peace and joy that I had within me before it happened. My soul became grieved and my mental state was all messed up. I sat and thought about how I got into this predicament. Well, during this time in my life, I was so far out of the will of God, I had stopped going to church and became a very worldly person, I felt unloved, worthless and like damaged goods. I was spending time together in bars and associating with the wrong people. This all led to me putting myself in harm's way. The trauma and pain lasted four years.

I remember crying out to the Lord with everything I had, asking Him to please save me from myself because I was spiraling out of control. After that cry out for help, each day of my life

began to get a little better. I started attending church again. I met a man that cared for me and I ended up getting pregnant. Once my son was born, my peace was fully restored. From that point on I have learned to deal with whatever comes my way, and not let anything or anyone destroy my peace. I will not let someone, or something, take my peace because they did not give it to me. God gave it to me. To this day, I separate myself from any and everyone who tries to bring discord and stress into my life. This world will destroy us if we are not grounded in God, and walk within our spiritual realm daily. To avoid discord, stress and trauma read the scriptures, meditate on God's word, pray, cry out to the Lord, and make requests known unto God. When we do this, and other things, He will give us peace, remove stress, and bind discord from our lives.

God Helps Us When We Are Stressed

As good hearted and loving people, we all are subject to cares and concerns daily. God knows this; thus, He makes Himself available to aid us during our times of stress. Perhaps He will deliver us out of the stressful situation. Perhaps He will be in the situation with us. Perhaps He will give us guidance and the strength to deal with the present problem. Or He will comfort us during the storms of life. Regardless of how you slice it, God can, and will, help us when we are stressed out. The following are things we can do to evoke the help of God.

1). Appeal To God: Psalms 102:2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble: Incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily; II Samuel 22:7 In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears; Psalms 18:6 I my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even unto his ears; II Chronicles 20:9 If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword judgment; or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

2). Seek & Ask For Comfort: Psalms 94:19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul; I Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you; I Samuel 30:6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for the daughters; but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God; Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God.

Chapter #15

Living in Peace Through Unity

Introduction

I like the definition of peace that refers to it as a concept of societal friendship, harmony in the absences of hostility, reconciliation, agreement, and cessation from violence. I view peace as something that we allow God through His word to do in our heart and mind that results in a transition. The transition is internal, or inner, and helps us deal with experiences that are challenging times in life, in our home, on our job, when at school, while at college, during trade school, or at church.

Peace helps us to rely on God for answers in challenging times and when we simply do not understand. But that is okay. God does not expect us to understand it all or have everything figured out. We can trust that He knows, and will take care of everything that concerns us. He wants us to look to Him, and say, “God I have no idea what I’m going to do, but I’m trusting you to take care of me.” Because of God, we can always have peace and trust. Romans 8:28 tell us that, “And we know all things work together for the good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” We can know, and believe, that things will work out for us in the end.

Facing Difficulties

When dealing with difficult and unsure times that threaten, I have found several things that help me make the necessary changes and transitions to a place of success and peace. The ideas are not new and have been shared by others.

- 1). Practice Acceptance:** In this life, things will go wrong. As a result, we should practice and be ready to accept what happens. We all know that practice makes perfect. By practicing acceptance, we set ourselves to be able to better deal with things and experience peace.
- 2). Listen to Soothing Sounds:** Words and sounds can carry peace in them. For this reason, it is a good idea to listen to sounds that refresh and soothe our soul. Nothing can uplift the human spirit like sounds that settle us.
- 3). Get Outside:** Being active and going outside can be liberating and a source of personal joy and peace. Outdoor enthusiast regularly report that when outside, a sense of fulfillment and inner peace is at their disposal.
- 4). Smile:** The decision to smile during tough times is a quality decision. It is believed that smiling can release within us positive energy, calmness, easement, and vitality. Most people would be surprised at how beneficial a simple smile can be and the wonders of its powers.
- 5). Volunteer:** Something happens within us when we unselfishly give of ourselves to others. Within volunteering is a sense of service and the ability to not focus on our own needs to meet others'. For these, and other reasons, volunteering can help us secure peace.

6). Affirmations: Words and thoughts of affirmation are a powerful source of perspective and peace potential. The life found in words can speak directly to our inner man and the need to be at peace with ourselves and others.

7). Show Gratitude: Being appreciative and grateful for things is a great way to experience peace. When we decide to be content and recognize how fortunate we really are, the essence of harmony and peace can flood our hearts.

8). Keep Breathing: One way to release stress and experience peace is to take part in intentional breathing that soothes. There are several treatment approaches, exercise activities and mindfulness acts that are based on breathing patterns and transitioning our thoughts from singular to co-existence with our emotions.

From Peace to Victory

When we set ourselves to do the fore-mentioned, trauma can and will start helping us to achieve, do good, and experience greatness. Practicing the stated and using God's word can take us from being average to awesome, and help us experience joy and victories. We will feel, and see the lows in our life dissipate and we will experience healing in our mind body, and soul. Yes, the disease will cease. Peace will give us the grace to leave lack, and positively grow as we get closer to God. Draw closer to God, and He will draw closer to us (James 4:8). We need God and we need peace globally. Happiness and joy that stem from peace can calm us and help us to co-exist with people and nature.

A Moment of Reflection

Today is May 31, 2020. I am sitting at my desk writing about peace, unity, and inadequacy. Currently, the entire world is in outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and what looks like a pending race war. My mind and heart are heavy now. One of the first things that come to mind is sadness. I know I cannot let sadness overtake me; I cannot stay in this frame of mind. There are instructions in God's word that we must seek out during troubled and callous times. The Bible clearly tells us in Mathew 11:28 what to do when heaviness is on us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is a byproduct of peace. We can be at peace during tumultuous times. Isaiah 26:3 states, "Thou will keep us in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Peace will come when we trust in God. I plead with you! If, or when, you feel inadequate, restless, or alone, stop and take some time to meditate on God's words and instructions.

I have found that John 16:33 is a great scripture to read for peace. It says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." It is good to rehearse these words because they give us hope and help us have peace. As a result, we can let go of the drama, stop looking for an argument, think about things before speaking about them, surround ourselves with order, and enjoy the resulting tranquility (1 Corinthians 1:10; Colossians 3:13-14; John 17: 23; Philippians 2:1-4). With peace in place, we can build respect for one another, have unity, get rid of strife and secure victory (Ephesians 4:3).

God is not the author of confusion (1Corinthians 14:33). It is of essential importance for us to have the peace of God in our minds. Why? Because it will allow us to conquer anxiety, low self-esteem, fear, disease, stress, depression, substance abuse, self-hate, debt, homelessness, injustice, and so many more negative things. I have witnessed friends, and loved ones suffer from confusion and shortage of peace in their lives. My sincere hope is for people to be able to overcome traumatic issues that press against them, and that may arise.

When I am talking with people who are traumatized and confused, I tell them that peace can, and will, give them the strength needed to conquer difficulties. Proverbs 3:56 tells us to trust God with all our heart. God gave us His all! When we let the triumphant peace of God reconcile us in unity, we will be able to rise to build, stand tall, and win in our purpose. Why not allow God to help us stop the madness? Let us all get to know God on a deeper level. We can start by forgiving ourselves and moving on towards victory. Victory is ours. We are our best when we unite with God.

Testimony

It was forty-six years ago the first time that I remember sensing the peace of God. I felt a beautiful warm sensational, feeling overwhelm my face. I remember the tears streaming down my chubby cheeks, I was sitting in church next to another little girl which was rare because back in my day we were not allowed to sit with friends. I can still see the day clear in my head today, as if it just happened last week. My friend, and I were sitting at a slight angle, directly behind my dear, and precious grandmother. While the tears ran down my face I could sense a strong presence of Jesus, as my Pastor was teaching. This is when I first came to know that God was real and that everything would be fine in my life. I knew I would experience some great victories in my life, and I did not have to worry. Looking back, this experience was my introduction by God to not living a life of worrying and feeling inadequate.

Mad

*I'm mad
Do you see,*

*Nah cause' you don't know me,
Head hung low*

*So, you don't know
Coming and going...*

*Tripping and crying
You keep sighing*

*Out of school
No rule*

*Failing grades
Mom cruel*

*Can't apply
That's why*

*Now it's late
Burnt the cake*

*Go to bed
Start to pray*

*Lift my hands
Feel God's spirit right away!*

By Andrea Richardson

Chapter #16

We Do not Have to Feel Inadequate

Introduction

Feeling inadequate can cause us to perform below our potential, which then causes us to feel inferior and unaccepted. Sometimes no matter the achievements earned in life, insecurities that stem from feeling inadequate will not allow us to celebrate our success. We all need to know our specific areas of incompetence that promote feelings of inadequacy. It is feelings of inadequacy that can cause us to keep making the same mistakes in life, and prompt us to keep falling short of our goals. Knowing our inadequacies can help us acknowledge our insecurities and overcome challenges in our life, business, spirituality, physical being and emotional life. Inadequate feelings can be found in the lives of adults, teens, children, and governing officials.

Definition

Inadequacy is the state of feeling inadequate due to lack of the quality required (Webster, 2020). It means to feel within ourselves a sense of insufficiency, shortage, deficiency, scarcity, undersupply, meagerness, want or the inability to handle a deplorable life event. Closely related to feeling inadequate is fault. Fault is taking on feelings and ideas of blame due to a lack of skill or inability to complete a desired goal due to weakness. When we start feeling that we are inadequate, at fault or not good enough, an overall gloominess of being ill-equipped can grab us.

I first started noticing feelings of inadequacies in my life when I was in the ninth grade. During the bus ride to school, a mean boy would loudly, and single handedly, point out everyone's flaws. He did this repetitively, week after week. For some reason, his actions and words stuck with me and continue to do so. I say this because I can still feel the sting of inadequacy at work, church, and home. I have felt this way at work in various hair salons because of my age, health, and for not feeling as though I had enough street savvy. It did not help that other staff members often labeled me as a minority because of my race, and Christian beliefs. The inadequate feelings at church stemmed from me feeling that I should know the bible more than I do. I included home as a source of my feeling inadequate because I have the least amount of college education in my immediate family.

Defeating Inadequate Feelings

I have learned that if we seek peace and restrain ourselves from evil thoughts, evil talk, and evil deeds, we can overcome inadequacies in our lives. All we must do is stop being so obstinate, think about things longer, and question ourselves if our stubborn attitude is helping us. To me, peace is a decision. The decisions that we make today determine our tomorrow, and our level of peace. We can fix sadness, evil, division, strife, and stressful living by sitting down to talk, breaking bread, planning, praying, committing to act, being honest and forgiving ourselves, and others. As for our children, we can promote peace, and do the right thing, by strategizing how to help them and the future generation, volunteering time to support them and others, teaching them how to eliminate their inadequacies, instructing them that they are our leaders for tomorrow. I

can hear all this echoing in our ears. God gave us His all! He does not agree with our madness. We are at our best when we unite with God and each other.

There are several practical things we can do to address our feelings of inadequacy.

- 1). Be Honest with Yourself:** Being honest with ourselves is not an easy thing to do. It is difficult to do because it requires that we confront ourselves. When we confront ourselves, we begin freeing ourselves.
- 2). Talk to God:** God is always there for us. He never leaves us or forsakes us. It is in His nature to be there for us during difficult self-discovery times. We can go to God and cast all our cares and inadequacies on Him (1Peter 5:7).
- 3). Talk to Someone:** Trying to deal with feelings of inadequacy is not something that can be done alone. We all need to talk with someone about the feelings. A good person to talk with is your local pastor, a good friend, or a highly recommended mental health counselor.
- 4). Read:** For many people reading a good self-help book, or articles, is an effective way to deal with things. This is true because reading is safe, personal in nature and allows us to process current information in a private and non-threatening way.
- 5). Self-Care:** Participation in activities and hobbies is an excellent way to overcome feelings of inadequacy. Something soothing, effective, energizing and relaxing happens when we take care of ourselves. Taking care of ourselves can take on the form of eating healthier and exercising regularly.
- 6) Better Boundaries:** It is through better personal boundaries that we cut off the flow of counter-productive experiences that damage our emotions. To remain whole and feel adequate, we must choose better friends, cut off bad influences, be aware of our conversations and move past having a need to rescue others.
- 7). Focus on Positives:** As humans, we could focus on things that are positive and bring joy to our lives. We must figure out how to see the good and best in situations and people. Being positive is a decision.

My concluding thoughts and views regarding feeling inadequate are straightforward. Inadequacy is not part of God's plan for our lives. I say this because John 10:10 reads, "Jesus came that we may have life and that we might have it more abundantly." We are to feel abundant and not inadequate. I am going to go ahead and say that people that work in the United States Government need to address their feelings of inadequacies and be skilled in their jobs. Our children need to be taught about feeling adequate and how it plays a role in their ability to be respectful to others and more positive in life. Individuals who work in the service industry (i.e., hair stylists, barbers, personal trainers) would benefit from addressing inadequacies in their lives and in the lives of their clients. Marriage counselors, social workers, and case managers are good candidates to further the cause for others to address their inadequacies.

The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery

If we want to go from trauma to peace and triumph, I suggest we start with God. We were created from love, of love, for love, by the divine love of God. We must learn to accept this love that eventually leads us to self-acceptance and away from feelings of inadequacy. Christians throughout the ages have agreed that there cannot be deep knowledge of God without deep knowledge of thyself. The discerning of our true and accepted self is inextricably related to discerning God's love and His purpose for us. Our body and soul contain thousands of possibilities. It only takes one of them to find our true self. When we discover ourselves, our unique vocation and deep fulfillment can be realized and we can get rid of superficial feelings of inadequacy and fleeting traits that hold us back.

There are many false ways to achieve uniqueness. These all result from attempts to create our self, rather than receive the gift of our self in Christ. God wants to help us to forgive ourselves and realize ourselves by moving away from spiritual laziness. We must make consistent strides to move away from feelings of inadequacy and other things, by getting to know our self in a deep and intimate way. As we learn to know ourselves on that deep and inner most level, we will have a more intimate relationship with God. This can lead to, and cause us to believe that when God made us, He made us with greatness inside and out. This truth carries out until the end and beyond the trauma, because nothing can stop the good God began in us.

There are a few things we can do to activate our uniqueness and draw closer to God. By doing the below, not only do we discover ourselves and move forward, but we can experience victory over our past mistakes, and life events, that need to finally be addressed.

1). Self-Confidence: Confidence in ourselves is the starting point of progressing. We must feel good about ourselves and be convinced that we have what it takes to get the job done. With self-confidence, we can conquer anything that may try and hinder us from using the talents entrusted to us.

2). Walk in the Light: To secure and enjoy the things in life that mean the most to us, we must walk in the light. There is no future in walking in dark, cold, and deep holes and places that are full of lack and meagerness. In the light, there awaits immense joy and accomplishments that we longed for.

3). Renewed Mind: The mind is a powerful tool if used properly. The first step in having a renewed mind is to trust the transformation process. By meditating on pure things and seeking to be honest and true, our minds can begin to transform and be new.

4). Believe: When we believe, we can find the gift of wholeness and authenticity. It would do us all well to practice believing in ourselves and believing in God more. I pray that we all discover, and believe, the qualities and uniqueness of whom we were called to be from eternity.

Unity Is the Key

For a moment, I want to talk about unity. Unity is needed for the survival of us all. I say this because unity can protect us from hurt, harm and evil doings. Unity with, and among us, requires acceptance on our part. According to an article written by John Bossong (2002), unity can help us accept differences found in our cultures, spark courage and promote growth. The threats of unity include defeated mindsets, decisions to be mediocre, fear, hostility, and a lack of integrity.

I believe that for true unity to take place, we must ask ourselves questions about our role in current events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

My personal testimony regarding unity is real and true. Close to two decades ago my husband, our three children, and I made a tough decision. With much seeking of God's direction, and counsel we made the decision to move back to Flint, Michigan, from Las Vegas, Nevada. We moved to continue with our new ministry unto the Lord. Once back in Flint, nine other families committed to unite, and work with us. Soon many other families would join in unity. Because of all the families uniting for the great commission of spreading the gospel to all nations, hundreds of families and lives have been changed for the better. Healthy relationships have been forged, we have helped several communities thrive, businesses have succeeded, and so much more. It is obvious to me that uniting works!

I have always tried to teach my family (especially my children) that we are a team. The purpose and goal of a team is to help and support one another. I learned valuable lessons about unity and team work in high school. I still get butterflies thinking about and remembering when I ran relays on the school track team. I was fast, so I ran the last leg of the heat. Our four-person relay team had to work together for us to win races. If the team were not unified, we would not have achieved success. So, it is with our families and churches. We must unite to be successful and achieve victory over things like lack and inadequacy.

Each day, I am learning that unity makes us stronger. It is like a piece of iron that is hard to destroy. One thing that can destroy iron, is its own rust. Its rust becomes its own worst enemy. Let us all decide to unite and stay united so that we do not be the cause of our own demise and defeat. I genuinely believe in uniting. For over forty more years of my life, I have united with several churches and several beauty salons. What I have observed is if the people do not come together and unite, success for the organization and one will not survive. When unity takes place, issues of individual inadequacies, inabilities, fears, and lost dreams are absorbed and become the strength of the group.

Chapter #17

Moving on From Childhood Sexual Abuse

Introduction

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a particularly sinister act of violence in part because it often results in a villainization of the victim that is subsequently, internalized. This tragedy is made worse by the alarming prevalence rate of CSA throughout and across societies.

Findings from a recent study conducted by Darkness to Light, a child advocacy organization, reveals that: 1 in 7 girls, 1 in 25 boys and 7 percent to 12 percent of children in the United States will experience contact sexual abuse (i.e., rape, sexual touching) before the age of 18. Each of these statistics have faces, lives and families attached. For example, in 2018 4 million babies were born in the U.S. and of them at least 400 thousand will suffer contact sexual abuse during their childhood. These children will represent every race, culture, and socioeconomic status in the United States. Sadly, the average rate of incidence is similar throughout the world. The study cited limits its focus to contact child sexual abuse as it is deemed more accurate and objective because of clearer definitions (contact abuse requires touching). I will detail the equally devastating outcomes and fallout that attends both contact and non-contact child sexual abuse (i.e., sexual harassment or exposure to sexual activity either firsthand or via print and electronic media).

The following pages will examine CSA through multiple perspectives including personal experience, culture, psychology, and Christianity. However, this writing is not an attempt to contribute to the body of scholarly literature on the subject, but rather, to guide the reader through a journey of reflection and realization. Reflection on the traumas currently inherent in the human experience and the realization of all of us, especially Christians, has the power to prevent and/or prevail against all forms of human suffering. The task before us is to eliminate and mitigate against human trauma such that our journey does not end in tears, but triumph!

*In his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night,
but joy (JOY) cometh in the morning-Psalm 30:5 KJV*

A Night I Will Remember

One night when I was 14 years old my Dad, whom I loved, trusted, and admired invited me to watch a movie with him in my parent's bedroom. Growing up it was common for our family to watch the network, "The movie of the week," or some other family program in my parent's room, which was large enough to accommodate all 10 of us children, as there was a sitting area, as well as space for kids on their king size bed.

This night, however, it was just my Dad and I because Mom, after years of running the family businesses, took a job working third shift at a local hospital. While watching TV, I fell asleep and woke up to the weight of my father on me, he was naked and rubbing his penis on my leg. I managed to get up, I cannot remember what I said to him, but as I was leaving to return to my room, I heard him say, "If you tell Mom she will kill me and you, too."

I did not believe that my Mom would kill me, but his words had their intended effect. Instead of processing what had just happened to me, I spent the night awake and thinking about what would

happen if I told. I was old enough to know there would be consequences for my whole family, and I had wondered if it would be selfish of me to tell. I thought about how my father could go to jail, and what the financial and emotional impact of his absence would mean for my mother and the 7 minor children (4 boys and 3 girls) still at home. I thought about how hurt my mom would be to find out that her husband of 27 years was a sick man who could not be left alone with his own daughter. I also imagined how ashamed I would be if the word got out that my father (well respected in the community) was perverted, and how I would be viewed.

All night I vacillated between telling and not telling, between anger and disgust. But his words kept coming back to me. Mom will kill me and you, too. Why would I be killed, what had I done? Until that night, I thought I was living the American middle-class dream. I had two loving, supportive parents, and a big, happy, family. I was an exceptional student, athlete and popular in school, there was nothing more a 14-year-old could ask of this world. Now, everything I thought about myself, and my family, was in question. My father had planted the seeds of self-doubt and self-blame in my head; I could not decide what to do.

The Day After

The next morning was the worst. My father told me he would be driving me to school. Most of the time I happily walked to school with friends, so I knew something was up. But I was growing up during a time when children were trained to be obedient, and he was still my father who I had considered my hero less than 24 hours ago. I got in the car, but what I felt was beyond expression, the anger, pain, and sense of betrayal was overwhelming. I was sick to my stomach, so I sat as far away from him as I could and stared out the front passenger side window.

The ride to school only took about 5 minutes and he used that time to do more damage. He asked me questions trying to gauge whether I intended to tell my mother. I refused to say a word. I kept staring out the window, defiant and determined to hold back the tears as I thought about what he had tried to do, and might have done to me. The hope I had of an apology and promise not to worry about it ever happening again were gone, and this hurt as much as the night before. My spirit was broken, I could feel the excitement I had always had for life fading away. When we arrived at school the last thing he said was, "It doesn't matter if you tell because no one will believe you anyway." Now, that, I thought, was a real possibility. I was having trouble believing it myself. At that moment I did not hate him, I despised him, and I knew I would never respect him again. The terrible consequence of discovering, and labeling your father a sick, immoral man is that it makes you ask yourself, "What does that make me?" Part of my positive self-image was because I thought I had a loving father. His taunting remark as I got out of the car shook my confidence, my self-esteem, and my self-worth.

Things did not get better, in the days and weeks that followed my father would sneak into my room at night, and I would awake to his face inches away from me whispering lies about how he loved me and how a father teaches his daughter in ways of sexual relations, especially important now that I had a boyfriend and might become curious. My father who was a Bible Scholar even manipulated scripture to try to convince me that what he was asking of me was perfectly normal. He was trying to get me to willingly participate in sexual activity. When Bible stories and offers to teach me the ways of adult intimacy failed, my father stooped lower than I thought possible. He made me a proposition that cut deeper, even than the original trauma of contact sexual abuse. He offered me \$100 if I would let him kiss me.

To this point I had assigned everything to his failings: he lacked self-control, integrity, and morality, he was a hypocrite, a sick man with a total disregard for anything other than his own satisfaction. But with his proposition he had labeled *me* a whore, nothing more to him than an object to be purchased. It was a crushing blow to my identity. If he, who had known me from birth, and helped to cultivate my values, thought no more of me than to suggest that I could be purchased, what could I expect from the rest of the world? I began to think that it would not matter if I told because if he did not care about me, who would? I was hurt but also enraged.

I made up my mind, I was not going to go on wondering when my father was going to give up and leave me alone. I decided I had to tell no matter what the costs to our family. I just needed a little time to figure out how? But before I could muster the courage to approach my Mom, the unthinkable happened.

To Tell or Not to Tell

I awoke one night to the sight of my father carrying my crying 11-year-old sister into our room. Her bed was on the other side of the room, so I pretended to be asleep until my father left the room. I could hear her as she continued to cry. At first, I was overwhelmed with guilt. If I had had the courage to tell my mother, I might have spared my little sister. I felt that I was as much to blame as my father. When I was able to compose myself, I went over to my sister and asked her what was wrong. I cannot remember what she said, only that it was bad and I told her that he had tried the same thing with me a few weeks ago, and that we had to tell Mom as soon as she came home from work in the morning.

The next morning, we played sick until Dad left for work and then we told our Mother what had been going on. It was difficult for me to see the pain on my mother's face, but it did not last long, her immediate reaction of pain and anguish turned to resolve. She asked us no questions, we had said enough. She called my father and demanded that he leave work and come home at once. Ten minutes later my father was home, Mom did not even let him make it up the stairs. She met him on the landing and told him he had to leave our home. He was not to return after work and that arrangements would be made for him to retrieve his clothing. Even now, as I write these words, I am brought to tears by the strength of my mother's actions and the way she defended my sister and me, because my father, as expected, denied everything, and attempted to get up the stairs to us and make us recant. I was relieved my tormentor was gone, Mom was my new hero, a little bit of my trust in adults was restored.

I have shared my story in a matter of fact tone, including context and emotion to the extent necessary to render it useful as a case study in both contact and non-contact child sexual abuse. This is not to diminish the depth of pain caused by my initial trauma, and the impact this experience had on my life. However, the purpose of this writing is to demonstrate how trauma can drive achievement.

The following pages will examine how culture, psychology, and faith contributes to the outcomes for children of abuse.

The Role of Culture in The Aftermath of Abuse

The worst of my experience suffering child sexual abuse had passed, but nothing occurs in a vacuum, history and culture had a part to play in my recovery. I was growing up in the 60s and

70s. The civil rights movement was in full swing, parents were teaching their children about the importance of working hard, to take advantage of opportunities that black men and women had fought and died for.

Mom had fulfilled her duty to us, she had gotten rid of the problem. It was understood that we would not speak of this again. There would be no counseling or coddling. This approach was not considered cold or callous. It was simply a reality for many black families. Self-pity was a recipe for failure; to pamper a child in the environment of my time would be considered reckless and irresponsible. Mom had to continue to care for seven minor children; she served as a taxi, cheerleader, cook, housekeeper, laundry cleaner and now primary breadwinner working two, sometimes three, jobs to provide financial stability and keep us in our family home, and she was not complaining. Our job was to overcome.

An example of this cultural mindset is beautifully conveyed in Langston Hughes' poem titled, Mother to Son.

Mother to Son

By Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor-
Bare,
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's
And turning corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there aint been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you sit down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now-
For I'se still goin,' honey,
I'se still climbin'
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

The abuse had splintered my soul, financial adjustments took our family from Cadillacs to the Ford Pinto, some days were dark with horrible feelings of pain and disappointment, but I was going to keep on climbing and reaching landings and turning corners. I was determined to succeed; I just had to figure out how?

The Psychology of Abuse

The science of psychology, has for a long time, studied the impact of abuse experienced in childhood. The result of this study has been the revealing of the multiple adverse effects of child sexual abuse on the psychological wellbeing of the victim and play out as one of the below.

- 1). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- 2). Depression
- 3). Low self-esteem
- 4). Anxiety and Panic Disorder
- 5). Guilt and Shame
- 6). Anger and Apathy
- 7). Body Image concern and Eating Disorders
- 8). Substance Abuse
- 9). Suicide
- 10). Hopelessness
- 11). Arrested Development both Cognitive and Emotional

Additionally, physical, behavioral, and interpersonal problems are associated with child sexual abuse. These problems include:

- 1). Physical Injury
- 2). Sexually transmitted disease
- 3). Pregnancy
- 4). Genital Injury
- 5). Improper social conduct
- 6). Lower academic performance
- 7). Prostitution
- 8). Increased tendency to become perpetrators
- 9). Communication Problems
- 10). Insecurities in Personal Relationships
- 11). Lack of Trust

I was struggling with many of the negative emotions and behaviors associated with abuse, but what I felt most profoundly was shame. A common definition of shame is - a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute. The two key components of shame are 1) disgrace from the Italian *dis-* (signifying reversal) plus the Latin *gratia* (signifying favor) and 2) disrepute *dis-* (reversal) plus the mid English *repute* meaning of good and favorable reputation.

The question to be answered was, “upon what had my original feeling of favor and reputation been built?” My self-esteem was sustained by the world reflecting my feelings of self-worth in the form of approving nods, compliments, high grades, athletic awards trophies, etc. My shame was wondering what the world would think of me now.

Returning to Faith

I had built my foundation on worldly things, the shifting sand of people and circumstance. When trauma tried my heart, it revealed an unacknowledged and unconfessed sin of pride. And the consequence of my pride was shame.

***When pride cometh, then cometh shame;
but with the lowly is wisdom-Proverbs 11:2 KJV***

I had been riding high on foolish pride. It was time for me to get low and wise! The book of James 4:10 instructs, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” Trauma and other trials are great teachers, my lesson was in humility. When I let go of my pride and the fallacy of the power of my own strength, and with humility asked God for help, instantly the weight of shame was removed, and as promised, I was lifted!

The power of humility is revealed in its many blessings throughout the Bible. Some of the ways are:

- 1). God hears the humble (2 Kings 22:19, 2; Chronicles 34:27)
- 2). God delivers the humble (2 Chronicles 12:7)
- 3). God forgives the sins of the humble (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- 4). God lifts up the humble (James 4:10)
- 5). God withholds his wrath from the humble (2 Chronicles 32:26)
- 6). God saves the humble (Job 22:29)
- 7). God gives grace unto the humble (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5)
- 8). God exalts the humble (1 Peter 5:6, Luke 14:11)
- 9). God forgets not the cry of the humble (Psalm 9:12)
- 10). God prepares the heart of the humble (Psalm 10:17)
- 11). God heals the land of the humble (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- 12). God revives the spirit of the humble (Isaiah 57:15)
- 13). The humble are greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:4)
- 14). The humble shall receive a crown of glory (Jeremiah 13:18)

Humility is so powerful because it is only from a position of humility that we approach an understanding of our true relation to God. It is the ultimate reality check as we come to know that we are not in command even of our next breath. By our own might, we cannot achieve anything. Yet, on the condition of our humility, and in accordance with the will of God, who withholds no good thing from us, who causes all things to work in our favor, which gave his only son that we may live.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me-Philippians 4:13 KJV

A Final Word on Pride

The danger of slipping into a position of pride is that it does not always manifest in obvious ways. Outwardly, I was the picture of humility. As an athlete I was known for good sportsmanship. I did not taunt my opponent, or brag about winning. As a good student I was

compelled to assist other students as a volunteer tutor. I genuinely enjoyed sharing my gifts with others. The problem was, I enjoyed too much the praise of man, and had not guarded my faith in a way that acknowledged that the gifts I had were from God, and the praise that I received belonged to God, and not me. I felt that I had used my unmerited God given gifts for the good of others, but had failed to measure my achievements against the word of God. I was not intentional in the way that I used my gifts such that it was pleasing to God, therefore, if my actions aligned with the word it was simply by chance, as I leaned on my own understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths-Proverbs 3:5-6

I had not kept my faith at the forefront of my mind, so when I experienced abuse, I did not see myself as God sees me, I cared only about how man would see me, damaged, dysfunctional victimized and abused. I feared that I would no longer be seen as the perfect person I was striving (unrealistically) to be.

I languished in misery and shame. All the while, God's grace was available if only, I would acknowledge and receive it. I had not reached out to God. But God in His mercy reached out to me. In His grace he leaned toward me and spoke to my heart. The word grace means favor. In Hebrew it is Chen which means to bend or stoop in kindness to another as a superior to an inferior. Even when we forget, or neglect, or sometimes in ignorance or defiance pull away from God; He in His mercy extends His grace to us because He loves us and is inclined to reach out and lean toward us when pride or lack of wisdom prevents us from leaning toward, and on Him.

Concluding Thoughts

I decided to share my experience of abuse because too often it is concealed. There was no, "Me Too," movement for me, but I was able to survive because I had a loving mother and close friends, and as an athlete a natural stress reliever in the form of exhausting physical activities. These supports helped me to survive and function, but to thrive, I needed to feel the presence of God's love for me, individually. It is easy to accept that God loves the world, but another matter to believe He loves you personally. For that assurance I have always turned to Job.

***Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation
hath preserved my spirit-Job 10:12***

As Christians we are taught to pray and watch but in the space between praying and watching we must work, for we know that faith without works is dead. I ask that any adult reading these words, Christian or otherwise, watch over the children in your lives, communicate with them, be present in the moment, leave distractions aside and find a time each day to look for any signs of distress and abuse. Be watchful to ensure that children are provided the guidance and supervision necessary to their total wellbeing. This will decrease the likelihood of abuse of any kind. Let us as guardians of our children commit to pray for our children, work for our children and watch them prosper.

Chapter #18

Me and My Anxiety

Introduction

For as long as I can remember, I have made sure I knew the rules, followed the rules, and the powers that be, administered the rules fairly. It was not until I was about 35 years old that I realized this was not necessarily a “Good thing.” Making sure I set the bar, lived as an example for everyone else, being a problem-solver, and advocate for others eventually became exhausting and never-ending. In 2011, I experienced my first panic attack. Hindsight lets me know it was being built for an exceptionally long time, but at that moment, I was blind-sided by what felt like a freight train driving across my chest. Daily pressures of advancing in a fast paced, male dominated career field, a new marriage (blended family), and maintaining close family ties and connections, revealed that I was a human being and not a machine.

After being rushed to hospital by my husband for what I thought was a heart attack, the ER doctor tried as nice as possible to tell me that it was not a heart attack, but an anxiety attack. I decided to reassess my lifestyle and my spiritual relationship. As I began this journey, I started to research anxiety and depression for my own well-being, instead of as a clinician/supervisor in my daily profession. What I began to see was a pattern followed by so many women, specifically black women. It was a pattern of perfectionism, high functioning, and in my case mild obsessive-compulsive disorder. The more I looked for answers, the more I found a category of women suffering in silence. Since I was showing up at work each day, excelling in leadership positions, multitasking to the point I would win every award I was nominated for, and being a great daughter, wife, and mother, no one even knew the true struggle I was experiencing.

A Closer Look at Anxiety

Today, I realize it is imperative that I share with others what high functioning anxiety can look like, and how to recover. So many women deliberately create a lifestyle and work ethic under the assumption that this is what it takes to be successful, and even a worthy person. Although high functioning anxiety is not a specific diagnosis in the DSM-V, it is a term widely used to identify a percentage of individuals who live with anxiety, maintain, and even excel at many daily activities.

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, approximately 40 million (18 percent) people in the United States experience an anxiety disorder in any given year. Data also shows black women experience anxiety at a higher, and more intense rate, than other races of women. Images and obligations have played a significant role in how society, and women themselves, have created lives that manifest anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder, for some. Many times, the pressures of making it in a world that does not expect to see you in certain spaces takes a toll on us. The belief that I had to be the strongest, smartest, kindest, and most resourceful person in any room I entered, was not only my belief, but also that of so many others.

After taking a brief leave of absence from my job, I started making lifestyle changes that impacted every area, and relationship in my life. I started taking small steps to find out who I was, what I wanted, and what my true purpose and passion in life was to be. As I began to

prioritize what was important, I realized what I was waking up doing every day would never lead me to the personal fulfillment deep down I desired, and deserved.

During my leave of absence, I implemented what I called practical holistic and spiritual approaches into my daily life. I knew I wanted to make changes, but I also wanted to be realistic about what I could, and needed to do. I started with small achievable goals, and more importantly, things that did not create a financial burden. The treatment of my whole being made me emphasize my mental, physical, and spiritual, rather than just accepting a medical diagnosis and moving on like that is all that was needed. I identified and engaged in practices (natural and spiritual) that would preserve and improve my health and overall wellness. I took control and kept an active role in my own well-being and happiness, especially in stressful situations.

Physical Wellness

Categorizing my well-being into three categories made my life so much easier and effective. Intertwining my physical health, emotional wellness, and actively engaging in spiritual renewal, created a life that was not only changing my entire existence, but was positioning me to empower and encourage other women experiencing similar issues.

Ironically, during this time, my pastor was covering a series titled, “Physician Heal Thyself.” This sermon really made me understand that all the guidance I needed was in the Bible, and if I genuinely believed, and followed the word, it would lead me to Christ and the life I truly desired. The series was centered around Luke 4:23, “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.” This message challenged me to take the lead on my life.

Every day my life’s work was making those I served better people, allowing their needs and the needs of their families to take precedent over mine. In this moment I understood to truly be of service to anyone, I had to, “Heal myself,” and so my journey begins. At this time, my life consisted of driving from the four corners of my state each week, staying in hotels, and mastering how to eat out of my lap and talk on my cell phone through car. My days would start as early as 4:30 am and end at 11:30 pm in another city, working on my laptop until I went to sleep, in my hotel suite. This pattern went from once a month to every week for two years. This cycle was not leaving much room for my husband, three children, aging parents, and certainly not me. To reignite my physical health, I started to assess my environment. I had to assess my eating habits, exercise, and lack thereof and my sleep habits as well.

Deciding to make an overall lifestyle change as opposed to just stopping what I did not like about myself or circumstances quickly revealed I needed a roadmap, and the word would serve as such. Meditating and interpreting on verses like 3 John 1:2, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth”; and 1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” prepared me for the adjustments to my diet, exercise patterns, and ability to emphasize proper rest in my daily routines. I felt like the verses gave me permission to make my physical health more important to me than what my career, and society, was demanding from me.

Addressing specifically what I was putting in my body was difficult yet liberating. Once I realized that eating healthy food was a spiritual practice, my ability to be obedient was much easier. Eating foods as close to its natural state as possible consistently resulted in me achieving optimum health. I started to eat food that was grown and nourished from the earth, rather than

manufactured or passed out of a window in a bag. I did not deny myself things I wanted, I made choices grounded in self-care rather than restriction and tradition. I was eating lot of things because that is what was cooked and readily available. I started to plan my meals, pack my lunch, and eat at regular scheduled times, no matter where I was or what was going on. Instead of eating the doughnuts and pastries in the weekly staff meeting, I would pull out my fruit, water, nuts, or granola bars.

Although I was not a gym person, I did incorporate practical movement into my life. I started taking the stairs, instead of the elevator. I stopped circling the parking lot looking for the closest parking space and I sought those farthest from the door. I started walking my dog more and instead of sitting in the car talking on my cell phone for an hour and half while my daughters had practice, I found somewhere to walk or someway to move around. I started stretching during the workday and for a brief time, joined a walk away the pounds group challenge at my job. When viewing these small steps as spiritual practices, I continued to find myself more in tune with God, as well as happier and healthier. Some of my greatest revelations about myself would happen when I was walking a small walking trail across from a crowded softball park. God would reward me with his presence because I was making space for him with my daily rituals.

Emotional Wellness

The next step, and the most difficult, was to address my emotional wellness. After experiencing an anxiety attack, I was no longer able to shoulder the life I was creating. Being the competitive, perfectionist, overachieving person I was, having a panic attack was a complete sign of failure to me. I was supposed to be able to handle anything that came my way, and for me to get overwhelmed meant I was not good enough, or so I thought. Truth is, what it was really was the collapse of a life that had edged God out and put me as my source. My gifts and talents had become strongholds. 2 Corinthians 10: 4-5 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"; I had allowed the strongholds of drive for achievement, authority, and the appearance of being a Savior take the lead in my life, resulting in a life filled with fear, anxiety, stress and depression.

Now it was time for me to face reality, and this was the hard part. Not only did I have to turn and seek God, I also had to seek professional help. Yes, God and a therapist had to guide me here. I would meditate on Philippians 4: 6-7, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." See, I was clearly able to repent and return to consciously cultivating a relationship with God, but what I was not able to do was stop the over functioning behaviors that were my response to the world. I had to acknowledge, and be obedient to the fact, that Gods instruction in this situation was to seek counsel in conjunction with his word. There were over 100 Bible verses about seeking counsel, but one that made me pick up the phone and dial the number was simple, Proverbs 19:20, " Listen to advice and accept instruction that you gain wisdom in the future." There it was in scripture, instruction to tend to my mental health just as much as physical, medical, and spiritual health. A therapist was able to help me realize most of my success, focus, and drive was a response to insecurity, a constant need for approval, affirmation, and attention, and the fact that I was over functioning and destroying myself.

Having someone else to help me process insecurities and perfectionist behaviors allowed me to analyze each habit I needed to discontinue, and which ones I needed to implement. Replacing defense mechanisms and unhealthy behaviors like, poor boundaries, unrealistic goals and beliefs, micromanaging, working long hours, over parenting, over scheduling, and multi-tasking with productive healthy behaviors like prayer and meditation, setting intentions, organizing, planning, scheduling, and journaling. Instead of being disappointed, frustrated, constantly feeling like a failure and my close relationships being strained, I started to feel more confident and was having results I wanted in my life.

Getting organized reduced the feeling of being overwhelmed that was ever present. Habakkuk 2:2, "Write the vision make it plain upon tables, that he may run the readeth it," clearly set the foundation for writing and creating a schedule, and plan. I was getting things done in less time, with more accuracy. I was saving time because I was not spending time looking for things. Immediately, I saw my finances improve because I was not buying unnecessary items, and since I was creating list, I was not buying things I already had. Getting my home and workspace organized, and free from clutter gave me a sense of control, which allowed me to engage more with my children and family, in more meaningful activities. Projects at work flowed better and my stress level was drastically reduced. 1 Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order," continued to be a scripture that reaffirmed the importance of organization. My life was more appealing and inviting to me. Cleanliness and order were spiritual practices, and like the other habits I was creating, they had to be cultivated, appreciated, and continued.

Every facet of my inner circle went under a microscope and I viewed it through a lens of vulnerability and transparency. I screened my closest and most intimate relationships and identified if those relationships were primary or secondary, healthy, or unhealthy, supported, or unsupported, and empowering or toxic.

Doing What Is Best for Me

Once I started to make changes in my life, I noticed how many of the people in my inner circle were no longer in the position I initially saw them in my life. When I had to set boundaries for my own sanity, certain people did not take kindly to me CHOOSING me! For a while I struggled, because honestly, it was not their fault. I had created a life that had a lot of people depending on me for a lot of things, and now I was not showing up. As I continued to reduce my stress level and anxiety responses like people pleasing and over functioning, my relationships shifted. I shared with those closest to me that my mental and physical health required these changes and I was doing what was best for me.

Many family members and friends praised me and even joined me on my wellness journey. However, a few did not see the importance, or believe my motives, so those relationships were categorized as unhealthy, unsupported, or just toxic and dissolved on their own. It was hard, and a place I had never been before, but as uncomfortable as it was to lose some lifelong companions, I quickly realized it was harder and more detrimental to my health, maintaining one-sided relationships. I did not just lose a few friends and co-workers, I had to separate myself from relatives and close family members as well. I had to accept I could not change the family I was born into, but I could choose my family.

Putting my time and energy into healthy relationships that supported and empowered me only made my life more magical. I saw the law of reciprocity manifest beyond my imagination. My

relationship with my husband started to solidify, and we were creating a foundation for our children that we could have never known were even in our means to do. Consistency and obedience (faithfulness) allowed God's blessings to pour into my life from the smallest of changes in my life. Things started shifting so that I could become a living inspiration and example to individuals beyond my immediate circle. I started being positioned to share with others in all types of areas, churches, workplaces, and conventions etc.

Creating a lifestyle that honored my whole person, and to see myself as a whole person, not just a wife, mother, daughter, and worker allowed me to embrace all the spiritual practices I shared in this writing. Acknowledging God in everything from the smallest of acts, to the biggest decisions one will ever have to make, removes the ability for strongholds to infiltrate our daily lives. So, acknowledging Him in the smallest of acts like writing and eating, to petitioning Him to remove people, places, and things that did not serve Him, out of my life, no longer created space for anxiety, depression, and over functioning. My life was filled with love, joy, happiness, and a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Bible Verses

Luke 4:23: And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

3 John 1:2: Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth,

1 Corinthians 10:31: Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Philippians 4:6-7: Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 19:20: Listen to advice and accept instruction that you gain wisdom in the future.

Habakkuk 2:2: Write the vision make it plain upon tables, that he may run the readeth it.

1 Corinthians 14:40: Let all things be done decently and in order.”

All Author's References

- American Psychological Association. (2020, March 4). Working out boosts brain health. <http://www.apa.org/topics/exercise-stress>
- Annan, Kofi. (2003). United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. Retrieved June 6, 2020 from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sgsm9076.doc.htm>
- Barlett, Jessica & Stebel, Kate (2014). How to implement trauma informed care to build resilience to childhood trauma. Child Trends. <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/how-to-implement-trauma-informed-care-to-build-resilience-to-childhood-trauma>
- Cherkil, Sathaya. (2010). Coping styles, stress tolerance, and wellbeing and their correlations in women spouses of the mentally ill. Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 32 (2), 99-103
- Cheung, Chau-Kiu , Cheung, Hoi Yan Cheung & Hue, Ming-Tak.(2015) “Emotional Intelligence as a Basis for Self-Esteem in Young Adults.” The Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied ,149,63-84.
- CIO Staff. (2007). Stress tolerance. <https://www.cio.com/article/2442746/stress-tolerance.html>
- Davis, Shirley (2019). The introductory article to our Series on trauma-informed care, Center for PTSD Studies. <https://cptsdfoundation.org/2019/01/25/the-introductory-article-to-our-series-on-trauma-informed-care/>
- Drigas, Ahanasios & Papoust, Chara. (2018). A new layered model on emotional intelligence, Behavioral Sciences. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5981239/>
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, (2017) Stress, Psychology and Biology. <https://www.britannica.com/science/stress-psychology-and-biology>
- Fleming, John & Ledogar, Robert (2008). Resilience, an evolving concept: A review of literature relevant to Aboriginal research. Canadian Institutes of Health Research 6(2): 7-23.
- Gabriel, Erin. (2018). Understanding emotional intelligence and its effects on your life, CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/11/health/improve-emotional-intelligence/index.html>
- Hall, M. F. & Hall, S. E. (2016). Managing the psychological impact of medical trauma: A guide for mental health and health care professionals. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Hall, M. F., & Hall, SE. (2013). When treatment becomes trauma: Defining, preventing, and transforming medical trauma. <http://www.prolibraries.com/counseling/?select=session&sessionID=2800>.
- Holy Bible: King James Version (2003). Thomas Nelson Bibles, Nashville, TN.
- Inadequacy. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster's online dictionary (11th ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inadequacy>.

Jones, Stephanie, Brush, Katherine, Bailey, Rebecca, Brion-Melsels, Gretchen, McIntyre, Joseph, Kahn, Jennifer, Nelson, Bryan & Sticle, Laura. (2017) Navigating social emotional learning from the inside out. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Navigating-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-from-the-Inside-Out.pdf>

Kelly, J., Scott, H. & Bryan, H. (2015). Emotional intelligence, coping style, and social support as predictors of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Search & Rescue*, 1, 3.

Lee, Tak, L., Cheung, Chau, K. & Kwong, Wai, M. (2012). Resilience as a positive youth development construct: A conceptual review. *Scientific World Journal*, 2012.

Luthar, Suniya, S., Sawyer, Jeanette & Brown, Pamela, J. (2007). Conceptual issues in studies of resilience. *The New York Academy of Sciences*, <https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1376.009>

Macedo, Tania, Wilhelm, Livia, Goncalves, Raquel, Freire, Vandro, Vilete, Liliane, Figueria, Ivan & Ventural, Paula. (2014). Building resilience for future adversity: a systematic review of interventions in non-clinical samples of adults. *BMC Psychiatry*, 14 (227). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4149241/>

MacLeod, Stephanie, Musich, Shirley, Hawking, Kevin, Alsgaard, Kathleen & Wicker, Ellen. (2016). The impact of resilience among older adults. *Geriatric Nursing*, 37 (4).

Masten, Ann. (2018): Resilience theory and research on children and families: Past, present, and promise. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jftr.12255>

McGonigal, Kelly. (2015). Embracing stress is more important than reducing stress, *Stanford News*. <https://news.stanford.edu/2015/05/07/stress-embrace-mcgonigal-050715/>

Richardson, Recco S. & Vasquez, Amanda. (2012). "Teaching urban students: Perspectives for teachers and administrators." Unpublished manuscript.

Richardson, Recco, S. (2017). *Secrets to great outcomes for children from single parent homes*, Recco S. Richardson Publishing, Flint, MI

Richardson, Recco, S. (2018). Traumatized clients: Clinical treatment interventions that strengthen emotional intelligence & builds resilience, Conference Presentation, Flint, MI

Sareen, Jitender, (2014). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Adults: Impact, Comorbidity, Risk Factors, and Treatment. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4168808/>

Srinivasan, Meena, (2018). Social-emotional learning starts with adults. *ASCD Publications*. 14 (4). <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol14/num04/Social-Emotional-Learning-Starts-with-Adults.aspx>

Suttie, Jill. (2017). Four ways social support makes you more resilient. *Greater Good Magazine*. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_social_support_makes_you_more_resilient

Vega, Vanessa. (2017). Social and emotional learning research review. George Lucas Educational Foundation, Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/sel-research-learning-outcomes>

Vogt, Dawne. (2012). Research on women, trauma, and PTSD. National Center for PTSD
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/specific/ptsd_research_women.asp

Workplacetesting.com. (2019). Creating a safe and productive workforce.
<https://www.workplacetesting.com/definition/2384/stress-tolerance>

Non-Cited Reviewed Sources

Coelho, K., (2012). Emotional Intelligence: An untapped resource for Alcohol and other drug related prevention among adolescents and adults. Depression Research and Treatment, 2012, 281019.

Hodas, G. (2006). Responding to childhood trauma: The promise and practice of trauma informed care. Retrieved 8/1/17 from
http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/manual/s_001585.pdf

Welsch, Antoinette, (2013). Effects of trauma induced stress on attention, executive functioning, processing speed, and resilience in urban children. Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs). Paper 1907.