



FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

2 Timothy 2:15

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needs not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth."*

CHILDREN & YOUTH COUNSELING



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Dear Student

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*Our Vision is to Empower, Edify & Equip the Body of Christ in
The Word of Truth, So that we can be Leaders of Today
& Teachers for Tomorrow.*

*"Leaders are those whose aroma lingers long after they have completed
the task and others who sniff it, wants to be like them"*

*"Leadership is not a title but a Function
& that Function pulls you to its Position
& the Position determines your Title"*

*Blessings & Graceful Studying
Professor Ronnie Moodley*

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

The teenage years, are a critical time in everyone's life. This is when young adults begin to form their own unique identity that defines who they are. Teens today face so much more pressure during their developmental stages than ever before. Issues like low self-esteem, depression, eating disorders and substance abuse need to be addressed, not ignored. Many adolescents are victims of accidents, suicide, homicide, substance abuse, and many other problems. Even if a teenager is not a victim of an accident, he/she could be the casualty of an unhealthy relationship with a person of the opposite/same sex, a dysfunctional family, eating disorder, or one of many other obstacles facing teens in our culture.

Counseling for pre-teens and teenagers is therefore important in raising another generation of well balanced and godly young men and women who will be able to fulfill their purposes in God. As a counselor you need to know issues young people of today are experiencing and how these issues are affecting their ability to function emotionally, physically, relationally and spiritually. In this course we will be looking at how to counsel teens and children who are experiencing problems in the following areas:

- Problems with me
- Problems with my family
- Problems with my friends
- Problems with my actions

EXPOSING FALSEHOODS AND REPLACING MISBELIEFS

John 17:17-19 says, "Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth. As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself entirely to you so they also might be entirely yours."

Josh McDowell writes that if God is love and God is truth, the major premise of Christian counseling should be to expose falsehood and replace misbelief with truth. He continues that even though not all crises or problems are spiritual (in their cause or correction), they are interrelated with a person's spiritual beliefs and spiritual state.

Therefore the number one quality that the counselor of pre-teens and teens needs to have is that of knowledge of the Word of God and an ability to easily convey these truths to them. It is only through the Word of God that falsehoods and misbeliefs can be dealt with in the teenager's heart and therefore it is this that places Christian counseling in a different sphere to that of normal psychology and counseling. To help the adolescent start the healing process in any number of the different issues that they face, we need to start by helping them to first establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

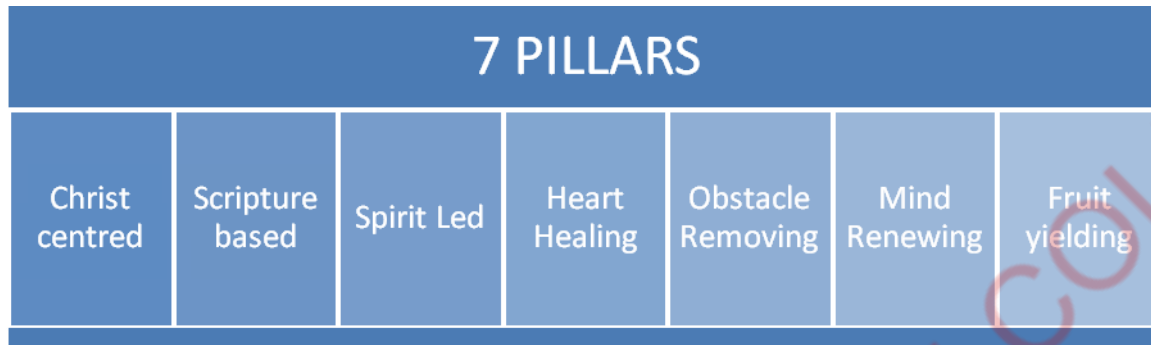
The Bible places importance on the Word of God:

- David said, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul..." (Psalm 19:7).
- Paul said, "Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)
- Paul said, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

It is the Word of God that is sufficient and adequate to provide the answers to life's many problems. The objective of counselling therefore is to teach the young person the truth according to the Word of God so that they will be able to say no to ungodliness. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God,"

THE SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

There are seven pillars that should be evident in your counseling:



Pillar 1: Christ-centered

Christ-centered counseling means that the person's relationship with God through Jesus Christ will be the primary focus in counseling. As a counselor therefore you need to co-labour with the Holy Spirit in bringing the truth of the Word of God through to the counselee. 1 Corinthians 3:9 "We work together as partners who belong to God. You are God's field, God's building—not ours."

Pillar 2: Scripture-based

The Bible is the Truth of God. It is the very compass that we have been told to live our lives with and by. Therefore as a counselor you need to ensure that you are counseling not according to human reasoning and compassion but according to the Word of Truth. It is only through His truth that the counselee will be set free. It is only through His Truth that bondages will be broken and misconceptions will be corrected.

Pillar 3: Spirit-led

John 14:26 "But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you."

The Holy Spirit is vital in counseling because:

- He is called the Counselor.
- He is called the Teacher.

The Holy Spirit already knows the heart of the counselee and therefore can show you exactly how to teach them the Word of God.

Pillar 4: Heart-Healing

"God's diagnosis" for hurting people is "Broken-heartedness". Psalm 147:3 says "He heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds." Isaiah 61:1 says "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed."

As a counselor recognize the biological, psychological, or social context of the counselee and assess the problem upon the heart and its healing. Why is the heart so important to heal in counseling?

- God's own focus is upon the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7); the heart is the core of who you are (Proverbs 27:19)
- It is with the heart that people believe (Romans 10:9-10) and commune with God;
- It is the heart that is broken and needing mending (Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).

Pillar 5: Obstacle-Removing

"Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people" (Isaiah 57:14).

As a counselor it is required that you remove the obstacles that seem to plug up the pipeline between God and His people that keep them from enjoying the abundant life of God's presence through Christ.

What are these obstacles? There are typically four obstacles that God's people experience that prevent them from enjoying His presence, and keep them from being fruitful:

- Anger and resentment towards people who have hurt us (that is, the effects of others' sins on us).
- Guilt and shame (the effects of our own sin)
- Unexpressed emotions (or close-heartedness) often related to our psychological defenses and unhealed wounds frozen in our past.
- Lies we believe about God, ourselves, other people. Jesus said "The truth shall set you free" (John 8:31).

Pillar 6: Mind-Renewing

The Bible says "Be transformed [literally *tranfigured*] by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). As the obstacles to experiencing God's presence are removed, the mind is renewed through an inner transformation by the Holy Spirit, who is called Spirit of Truth (John 16:13).

Pillar 7: Fruit-Yielding

After all the obstacles between the counselee and God are removed, and they learn to renew their minds in the Word of God, their habits begin to change. Where before they might have made choices that would lead to further hurt and sin, now they make choices based upon the Word of God and therefore the consequences of their choices lead to them bearing good fruits.

PART ONE

PROBLEMS WITH “ME”

The first sets of problems that we will be looking at are those problems that are usually the root cause of all the other problems that we will be looking at through this course. These problems are based upon a false understanding and belief system in who they are. In this section we will be looking at

- Identity Crisis (Who am I?)
- Self image (Am I worthy?)
- Hopelessness (Is there hope for my future?)
- Failure (Am I good enough?)

Why are these problems so prevalent in teenagers?

Due to the many changes that a teenager undergoes as they travel from being a child to becoming a responsible and accountable young person, they begin to question who they are and where they are going. It is during these years that they begin to question their purpose and will develop their own identity that is apart from the identity of their parents.

In most of the problems that the teenager will experience with their family and friends, the root cause of their actions and reactions will stem from their belief in who they are. If teenagers believe positive things about who they are and why they are here, they will be able to react positively to the experiences that they face and therefore will not need counselling. However, if they believe negatively about themselves, then their reactions and actions towards their experiences and situations will produce negative consequences that will affect them emotionally, physically, spiritually and relationally. It is this that will lead them to a position where they will need biblical counselling.

The counsellor will therefore be responsible in guiding the teenager through these important areas showing them the truth from the Word of God that will counteract any thoughts that are negative and contrary to His Word. Thereby helping them to gain a good perspective of themselves based on what God says about them and not what others or the world says about them.

IDENTITY CRISIS – “WHO AM I?”



The media and our culture has created great pressure upon the youth of today by presenting them with what is right and what is wrong in the way that they act, the way they dress, the way in which they are to choose their friends and the way that they are deemed to be a success. A teenager, who therefore desires to fit into society and be a part of the accepted group, needs to do the “things” that are required to fit in and be a part of the crowd.

They begin to find their identity in these groups. Instead of being the person whom God created them to be in their uniqueness, teenagers begin to wage war against who they want to be and who will be accepted by their “society”.

Instead of learning how to own “who they are,” they become conditioned to become someone they are not and therefore they begin to face issues which lead to identity crisis.

WHY IS KNOWLEDGE OF SELF IMPERATIVE?

To make healthy life choices:

The first reason for the importance of self-identity is the youth's special capacity to recognize and develop a self-consciousness which can think, evaluate, choose, love, hate, and live in this unique human manner. To act meaningfully an adolescent must develop an adequate self-image, to guide in the construction of an adult personality.

To truly know themselves

The second reason for the development of self-identity is the number of problems facing the adolescent today. These problems overwhelm the youth and demand answers, forcing the youth to identify himself. Too often Christians think the major question facing teens is finding the will of God or making correct choices. The identity question is deeper. The teen who knows himself has a clear picture of what he is. He is the teen who can make the correct choices. He can find God's will and implement it for his life. Some teens who do not have ego strength-that is to say, they do not have self-identity-may be manipulated to make correct choices in the present; but when they are removed from parental influence, they will probably not be able to stand against outside pressure. The Christian teen who knows himself, his strengths, weaknesses, values, and aims in life, is the one who can properly guide his life.

To decide carefully about their future:

The third reason for identifying self is the demand of finding a satisfying vocational path in life. The question of a lifework needs solutions quickly. In the immediate future the youth will be brought face to face with life's great choices. In the next few years he must make critical decisions that will irrevocably shape his life. Knowing who they are and what their strengths and weaknesses are will help them to make decisions that are based on what they really want instead of what others expect of them.

WHY DO SO MANY ADOLESCENTS STRUGGLE WITH IDENTITY CRISIS

Adolescence is a period of stress and turmoil for many young people. While the difficulties that occur in adolescence are due in part to a lack of experience, at least five common experiences may exacerbate or create significant struggles:

- **Physical Changes**

The body of a child to that of a teenager is very different. As the child grows into his/her preteens and teens, the body undergoes natural changes (hormonal) so that they will mature and develop into adulthood.

- **Sexual Changes**

As the adolescent's body begins to take on the characteristic shape of his or her sex, new behaviors, thoughts, and physiological processes occur. Each teenager thus begins to react to the cultural stereotype of sexual changes.

- **Social Changes**

While the biological changes of puberty are dramatic, they are no more significant than the social changes that occur during adolescence. Between the sixth and eighth grade, the structure of school becomes a very different experience. Most young adolescents move, from a relatively small school, to a much larger and more impersonal high school. This move has many social ramifications. It disrupts the old peer-group structure, exposes the students to different achievement expectations by teachers, and provides new opportunities for different extracurricular activities.

- **Religious Changes**

Contrary to popular opinion, adolescents are genuinely interested in religion and feel that it plays an important role in their lives. Adolescence is a time when young people question the religious concepts and beliefs of their childhood. They may become skeptical of religious forms, such as prayer, and later begin to doubt the nature of God. However, they are on a genuine spiritual quest. This is sometimes mistakenly interpreted as skepticism or doubt. In reality, it is sincere questioning. Adolescents investigate their religion, to make their own faith, rather than that of their parents. They question, not because they want to become agnostic or atheist, but because they want to accept religion in a way that is meaningful to them personally.

- **Moral Changes**

An important change occurs in adolescents when they realize that their behavior must conform to social expectations without the constant guidance, supervision, and threats of punishment they experienced as children. To become adults, they must replace specific childhood rules with their own moral principles.

WHAT ADOLESCENTS DO WITH THEIR STRUGGLES

It is difficult to predict exactly how a specific adolescent will attempt to manage his or her identity problem. A number of personality traits and environmental factors influence the struggling adolescent's coping style. There are, however, at least three common ways young people contend with their struggles. They will hold them in, act them out, or work them through.

HOLD THEM IN

Many adolescents cope with difficulties by keeping them to themselves. Like Adam and Eve hiding in the bushes (Genesis 3), these adolescents camouflage their struggles, hoping they will eventually disappear.

- Some adolescents conceal their anxiety by blocking - allowing unconscious conflicts to interrupt their flow of thought.
- Another way adolescents hide their problems is through sublimation - transforming impulses that are unacceptable into behaviors that are more socially acceptable. Angry at his alcoholic father, a young man might disguise his hostility by investing a tremendous amount of energy into basketball.
- Adolescents who feel hurt sometimes hide their struggle through emotional insulation - keeping potential pain at bay.
- Related to emotional insulation is intellectualization - interpreting a situation only at a cognitive level in order to avoid dealing with uncomfortable feelings.
- The most common form of hiding one's struggles is through repression - pushing thoughts, feelings, impulses, desires, or memories out of the mind.

ACT THEM OUT

Some adolescents cope with struggles by acting out - expressing their feelings through impulsive actions to reduce tension. There are five most common ways in which young people demonstrate their struggles with their identity:

- **Through status symbols:**

The first way in which a teenager will reveal that they are experiencing an identity crisis is by trying to establish themselves through prestige. This is done by

wearing the right clothes and having the right possessions. The purpose of purchasing these symbols is to help them form an identity that will be accepted by a specific group. They therefore will decide which group they would like to fit into, a group that they feel has made it in society and will follow their dress code and materialistic possessions.

- **Through forbidden behavior:**

Another way that teenagers will show their crisis with their identity is that they will start to engage in practices they associate with adulthood because they often feel that appearing mature will bring recognition and acceptance. They therefore will begin to practice in tabooed pleasures — such as smoking, drinking, drugs and sexual activity.

- **Through rebellion:**

Rebellion demonstrates separation. Teens can show that they differentiate themselves from parents and authority figures, while maintaining the acceptance of their peers when they exhibit behavior that rebels against authority (this is authority of any kind and not necessary only parental).

- **Through idols.**

Celebrities may become “models” for teens who are looking for a way of experimenting with different roles. They may identify with a known figure, trying to become like that person, and in effect, losing hold of their own identity. This identification with a well known personality gives teens a sense of belonging.

- **Through cliquish exclusion.**

Teens often can be intolerant in their exclusion of their peers. Since they are constantly trying to define and redefine themselves in relation to others, they do not want to be associated with anyone having unacceptable or unattractive characteristics. They try to strengthen their own identities by excluding those who are not like themselves.

WORK THEM THROUGH

This is the purpose of Christian counseling. It allows the young teen to talk about their struggles with who they believe they are and then providing them with the truth from the Word of God so that they will be able to work on choosing to create an identity that is true to the Word of God and who they have been created individually to be.

GUIDELINES TO HELPING A TEEN “KNOW WHO THEY ARE”

INTRODUCE THEM TO A LIVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD:

God has no difficulty in identifying Himself. Moses said to God as he was sent by Him to Pharaoh to set the children of Israel free: "Indeed, when I came to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them" (Exodus 3:13) God said to Moses, "I Am who I Am." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you'" (Verse 14). When God said "I Am" He meant there was no one before Him; He is the absolute, ever-present and therefore the only unchanging and eternal Being.

Therefore if we are going to show the young person who they are then we will need to take them to God, the One who created them. They will only be able to find their real identity in Him because before time began He called them (2 Timothy 1:9). People who choose to ignore God or leave Him out of their lives or even deny His existence will continue to struggle with their identity; they will continue to be in identity crisis. However as you bring the young person to God, they will begin to know who they are.

Every Christian - every person who has received Jesus Christ into his life - is a new and different person (2 Corinthians 5:17). God has added to his life. God has created, or actually re-created, the person into a new being with a new nature. When Jesus Christ spoke of this process, He called it a birth from above, a spiritual birth or rebirth produced by God the Spirit (John 3:3). The old manner of life for the Christian has been left behind, and a new one has taken its place. Therefore, the Christian has, or should have, a new lifestyle and a new mind-set i.e., a new way of thinking and looking at things. Therefore, the Christian is a new and different being or self.

SHOW THEM THAT THAT THEY HAVE BEEN MADE BY GOD

King David wrote in Psalm 139: 13-14, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Both Jeremiah and Isaiah confirmed David's writings by saying that they had been uniquely made by God. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5). "... he who formed me in the womb to be his servant ..." (Isaiah 49:5). Job said, "Your hands shaped me and made me." (Job 10:8)

Because they have been made by God, they are:

- **Unique:**

Every person whom God has made is unique and therefore there is none like them nor will there ever be. There are no two people in the world who have the same footprint or the same fingerprint. Why did God make each person different? Because He wanted everyone to know that they are special and that they matter to Him. Teach the teenager that each individual is "fearfully and wonderfully made," as Psalm 139:14 describes. The teenager needs to know that they are unique. That they have their own plan and that no one can compare to them.

- **Wonderfully complex:**

Each individual is wonderfully complex and is a mystery. Only God truly knows who they are – what they feel, what they think, what makes them respond etc.

- **Shaped for a purpose!**

God created everything in the world for a purpose and no one created is an accident. Explain to the young person that they have been designed by God and it was His idea to make them. It was not a mistake. They were planned before birth. The Bible clearly says that you were purposefully, personally and orderly planned and designed by God. His loving hand made them to be exactly the way they are. They are who they are because God wanted them to be like that.

- **Help them develop and understand their identity.**

What is their identity?

They are valuable:

They are God's child (John 1:12). They are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). They are His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)

They are loved:

Nothing can separate them from God's love (Romans 8:35-37). They have been transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13-14). They can come boldly to His throne (Hebrews 4:16).

They are victorious:

They can do all things through God (Philippians 4:13). They are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). They have been set free (John 8:36)

They are complete:

They are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). They have become the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

They are chosen:

They are a part of a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). They have been given a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

They are forgiven:

They are justified by grace (Romans 3:24) and now therefore do not need to feel condemned (Romans 8:1).

SELF CONFIDENCE AND SELF IMAGE – “I AM WORTHLESS”



At the root of many of the problems we face today is the failure to develop an appropriate self-image.

WHAT IS SELF IMAGE?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines self esteem as a “belief or confidence in your own ability and value.”

Self-image is the evaluation that a person makes of himself in comparison to some standards that are believed to be important. Sometimes that estimate is accurate; sometimes it is not. Sometimes it is conscious. At other times, it is unconscious. Sometimes our self-concept is unconscious because it is too painful to face what we really think about ourselves.

Self esteem is the way that a person has come to think about themselves habitually—whether he accepts himself or not. Self-esteem, by its very words—‘esteeming self’—often results in either arrogance and superiority (for those who think they deserve a lot of esteem) or self-consciousness and self-loathing (for those who think they deserve little esteem). The right kind of confidence can only be based on true self-worth—believing you are a valuable person to be respected and loved. Without this deep sense of worth the teens can never be truly happy.

A HEALTHY SELF IMAGE

WHAT IS A HEALTHY SELF IMAGE?

A good self esteem is a blessing. It is not a self confidence that says, "I can do anything I want to be" or "I deserve more" or "I don't need anyone's help". It is not self conceit where one thinks more highly of himself as he ought. Instead it is having self respect that rests on a fair assessment of real strengths and weaknesses. A healthy self esteem expresses itself with confidence that says, "My life has a purpose", "I belong here" "I can love and be loved" and "I can be anything that God enables me to be".

A healthy self image measures self with heaven's standards and not the world's standards. It is based upon loving ourselves.

Matthew 22:39 "A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Ephesians 5:28-29 "In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church."

WHY IS A HEALTHY SELF IMAGE IMPORTANT?

How we feel about ourselves can influence how we live our lives. People who feel that they are likable and lovable (in other words people with good self-esteem) have better relationships. They are more likely to ask for help and support from friends and family when they need it. People who believe they can accomplish goals and solve problems are more likely to do well in school. Having good self-esteem allows you to accept yourself and live life to the fullest

INGREDIENTS TO A POSITIVE SELF IMAGE

There are four central ingredients in having a good self-image:

- **A sense of worth;**

The first of these, a sense of dignity or worth, is the basic attitude about our significance or value. If the young person is aware of their worth then they will be on the road to a strong inner sense of identity. They will believe they are valuable and that they have a right to live. Without a sense of worth, however,

they will become discouraged or depressed and fall prey to feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and condemnation.

- **Love;**

The second ingredient in their self-concept is the feeling of being loved. Perhaps more than any other, this is the central ingredient of a positive attitude about themselves. If the young person is to be happy and go through life with a minimum of problems, they need an assurance that they are loved and accepted and that they belong. When they feel loved they will have a deep abiding resource that emboldens them in relationships, their work and all of life. When this is lacking, they will feel alone, isolated, and depressed.

- **Confidence; and**

A third ingredient in their self-concept is an attitude of confidence. Confidence, which implies a basic level of trust in their own abilities and a sense of inner strength, is the quality that will enable them to reach out and try new tasks or tackle new challenges. It is the opposite of inferiority. When confidence is lacking, a teenager will feel tense, anxious, frightened, or insecure.

- **Security**

Closely tied to a feeling of confidence is the need for a feeling of security. Whereas confidence is more of an internal matter ("I can do it!"), security is more external ("Others can be trusted" or "The world is safe"). Security relates to their environment and their relationship to it. It reflects their assurance that the world "out there" is sufficiently safe and ultimate harm will not come upon them. This doesn't mean that the world is always a beautiful place or that everyone can be trusted. But it means that they will have had sufficient positive experiences with others to know that they do have friends they can depend on, that the whole world isn't bad, and that they don't need to live in constant fear of starvation, physical disaster, or some other impending doom. People without a sense of security are constantly worrying about these and other potential tragedies and are unable to feel comfortable and relaxed.

A LOW SELF IMAGE

WHAT IS A LOW SELF ESTEEM?

Low self esteem is the feeling of being unimportant and unloved. A person who has a low self esteem will have the following thoughts about themselves:

- There is something wrong with me
- I don't belong here
- I don't like myself
- I don't have what it takes
- I don't compare well
- I want to hide

Low self image is like a self fulfilling prophecy as it believes that they have nothing to offer and therefore they will not provide input. The person instead of encouraging new relationships will rather back away from intimacy and new relationships.

HOW DOES A LOW SELF ESTEEM DEVELOP?

Self image is developed by what a person deems to be valuable. What a person values will determine how they feel about themselves. A person's natural inclination is to think that their well being and ability to feel good about themselves lies in values such as:

- Beauty
- Possessions
- Brains
- Brawns
- Aptitude
- Affluence
- Ability
- Power

When looking at how negative self esteem is developed we see that it can be a result of some of the following:

Physical appearance: A person's idea of what is and is not beautiful can determine whether they will have a positive or negative self image. Many people have personal esteem problems due to what they perceive as unattractive physical features. From their own viewpoint they may be too heavy, too thin, have a bad complexion, crooked teeth, etc. More likely than

not, all of us have physical traits that we would like to alter if such were possible. But the truth is, while physical characteristics may make an initial impression upon others, they are subordinated rapidly to personality qualities.

Education: Some feel badly about themselves because of their limited formal education.

Tragic Circumstances: Low self-esteem may result from the tragic circumstances in one's past. For example, a person may have been conceived out of wedlock, or as the result of rape, and so harbor a self-disgust.

Physical or Emotional Abuse: Abuse can ravage one's self-esteem. Not infrequently a parent or spouse will berate a child or a companion persistently and viciously, so that the feeling of personal worth in the victim becomes almost nil.

Sin: One of the most prominent causes of low self-esteem is an involvement in personal sin.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM

The attitudes that dwell within the mind frequently are reflected in the conduct of a person. An inspired writer affirmed that, as one "thinks within himself, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Jesus himself taught that the state of one's mind is the fountain of his activity. "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed" (Mark 7:21). If an individual harbors an unhealthy view of himself, such can be manifested in a variety of distressing ways.

GUIDELINES TO HELPING TEENS CHANGE A LOW SELF ESTEEM

- **Change their relationship with God**

The first thing that we need to do as counselors is to find out what their relationship is with God and bring them to a place where they are more intimate with Him. The greatest and ultimate source of a good self-concept is the knowledge that we are created, gifted, loved and watched over by the God of the universe. After all, God did make us and we are loved by Him. The Bible declares, "You are created a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5). And the Bible speaks to every aspect of our self-esteem-our needs for a sense of worth, love, confidence and security.

- **Help them understand that they are loved:**

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

1 John 4:10 "This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."

Here, in a nutshell, is the best foundation for a lasting attitude of self-love. Even before we were born, God chose us to be His children. The apostle Paul writes, "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:4-5).

Just as the fact that God created them can provide them with a deep, abiding sense of worth, the fact that God loves and chose them can provide a lasting source of assurance. What a strong foundation for self-acceptance they have, since God has chosen them to be His sons and daughters! This acceptance doesn't come and go according to their performance. It is a love that is completely unconditional. As David puts it: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand will hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to You" (Psalm 139:7-12).

- **Show them that they are worthy:**

Our ultimate foundation for our self esteem is found in the fact that:

We are a product of God's handiwork: "For You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:13-18).

God loves them so much, that He created them in His own image. Gen. 1:27 "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them." Since they are created in the image of

God, they are precious and valuable in His eyes. Mt. 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Knowing that we are made in God's image should provide us with a solid basis for self-worth. Our human worth is not based on possessions, achievements, physical attractiveness, or public acclaim. Instead it is based on being made and created by God. Because we bear God's image, we can feel positive about ourselves. When we criticize or downgrade ourselves, we criticize God who has made us. Knowing that we are a people of worth helps us to love ourselves, which in turn will help us to love others.

God sent His Son to pay for our sins: Show them how valuable they are by explaining that God sent His only Son to suffer and die and pay the penalty for their sins. Not only are they of great worth to God; they have been completely forgiven for all their sins and failures. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). He values us even when we make mistakes. Some times we think that God loves and values us one day, however, when we sin or make a mistake, we think that He dislikes us. God values us even though we are not perfect.

- **Help them to understand that they are gifted:**

Next to the knowledge that God created us and loves us stands another pillar of our self-esteem- the awareness of our abilities and potentials. This pillar speaks directly to our need for confidence. It is the knowledge that God gives unique talents to each of us. No two people are exactly alike. Yet every person who has ever walked the face of this earth has been given gifts by God. Paul puts it this way:

"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

In a unique way, each of us has a broad range of capacities, attributes and potential. While differing widely in the way our gifts fit together, we each possess a beautiful, complex arrangement of capabilities that forms the nucleus of our real self-the person God designed and intends us to be.

"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).

- **Help them to replace negative self talk with positive self talk**

Prov. 23:7 "As a man thinketh so he is."

If you think negatively, you will be a negative person. If you think you are a failure, you will fail. If you think you are successful, you will be a success. We carry on an inner dialogue with ourselves at an astounding rate of about 1,300 words per minute. What we say to ourselves influences our self-concept.

How do we change our negative self-talk to positive self-talk? We need to replace our irrational negative thoughts, with positive truthful thoughts. Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable –if anything is praiseworthy—think about such things."

- **Encourage them to learn to love themselves**

Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Ephesians 5:28-29 "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

Gain self respect: A teenager, to gain a better self image, needs to learn to respect themselves. Self respect is important to developing self-esteem. If you learn to respect who you are even with all your flaws and weaknesses you will be able to see what you are actually capable of.

Stop making comparison: This is very important because low self esteem often develops when people compare the achievements of others with their own and feel small.

Learn to accept compliments. People with low self esteem often have a hard time accepting compliments as they do not feel that they deserve it. By accepting the praise of others you can learn to feel good about yourself and know what positive qualities you have.

Highlight your strengths. By highlighting your strengths you can easily develop your self esteem, as you will learn to understand what makes you who you are.

By playing on your strengths you can achieve the confidence you need to develop your self worth.

- **Help them to focus more on Jesus and less on themselves**

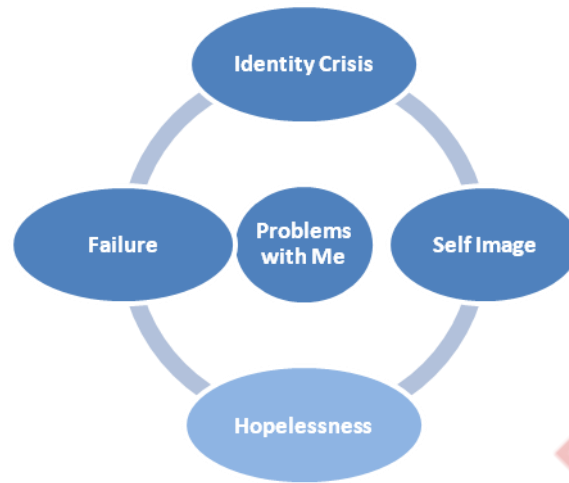
Even though we need to love ourselves and believe in ourselves, we must not spend all of our time focusing on our own desires and ourselves.

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”

Matthew 16:24 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Jesus is saying that if we want to be His disciples, we must deny ourselves which in the Greek means “to lose sight of ourselves.” In other words, we must focus on ourselves less and Jesus more. Every day, instead of asking, “What can I do for myself today,” we should ask “What can I do for Jesus today! How can I serve the Lord today?”

HOPELESSNESS AND DEPRESSION – “WHERE AM I GOING?”



WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a troubled state or mood that consists of several ongoing disturbances in energy levels, sleep, appetite and the ability to concentrate. Depression comes from the word “depressed”. Simply stated, it is a feeling of having been pressed low in spirits. It is a condition of feeling dejection and heaviness in heart. It has been described as feeling down, feeling blue, or feeling disheartened. It is often a state of desperation which gives a person the feeling of hopelessness. It is a close relative of despair, despondency, and discouragement.

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

Stress can cause depression:

The most common cause of depression is stress. Life is filled with pressing difficulties, delays, disappointments, setbacks, and tragedies. If we do not deal with the problems of life properly, they can gradually wear us down, weaken us, and create a growing sense of depression. Often, these pressures are beyond our control. When it appears that we have no real control over the problems we experience, depression and discouragement are often the result. Sometimes it seems we have no say concerning the events which crowd into our lives.

Occasionally, we feel like we've lost control and become a helpless victim of circumstances. At times like this, we may feel like we've reached a dead-end with no way out. When we feel like we are unable to do anything to change our situation, a sense of hopelessness and frustration sets in.

Negative thinking can cause depression and helplessness:

Depression can usually be traced to negative thinking. Negativity is so strongly rooted in the thought life of some people that it adversely affects every area of their life. Our thinking patterns have a great influence upon our emotions, our attitudes, and our will.

Depression and discouragement are often a result of wrong thinking. Depressed people see only the dark side of life. They usually have a pessimistic outlook. Life to them is an endless succession of burdens, obstacles, and disappointments. They have convinced themselves that life is hopeless. Having painted a picture of despair in their own minds, they reinforce their feelings of despondency.

Many who suffer from depression also have a negative view of themselves. They have little or no self-esteem. They often feel deficient, inadequate, and useless. They constantly minister self-doubt and criticism to themselves. This negative feeling of failure inevitably breeds self-pity and a deep sense of depression.

Negative thinking not only affects the way we think about ourselves, but it also causes us to view the future pessimistically. All the future holds is continuing failure, hardship, and frustration.

This common tendency to think negatively is an extremely destructive pattern. Negative thinking only encourages despair and self-pity. It is a mental rut which many people have fallen into. It is a habit which must be broken.

Sin and guilt:

A person can experience depression because of unresolved sin in his life. He may become despondent because of guilt from a particular sin which has not been properly dealt with.

Depression is often the result of ignoring sin or failing to deal with it promptly. Occasionally, we may try to conceal sin rather than face up to it honestly. When we try to cover up sin, it inevitably takes its toll. A spirit of heaviness and condemnation can develop as a consequence of sin which has been allowed to stubbornly remain in our life.

Often the sin of self-pity is a common cause of depression. Pent up resentment, lingering anger, unforgiveness, a critical spirit, or a tendency to murmur and complain can all be contributing factors to depression.

Pressures and responsibilities:

Sometimes the trials, deadlines, and responsibilities that we face can create pressures which contribute to depression.

Occasionally, we all fall short. At times, we don't quite measure up. We fail to meet deadlines, achieve goals, or fulfill expectations. The many demands of life can overwhelm us and produce depression and discouragement.

When facing the responsibilities of entering Canaan land, the Israelites were overwhelmed by the challenge and sank into discouragement (Numbers 13, 14). When we sometimes face our own formidable giants of responsibility, we can also sink into depression.

Physical factors:

Some depression is caused by physical problems. Improper diet, lack of exercise, and not enough sleep can all contribute to depression. In addition, many illnesses can cause depression. A healthy body is less susceptible to mental and physical illness.

Outside influences:

External influences can influence the way that we feel about ourselves. These external factors can be family background, past abuse, loss and unfairness.

Deferred hope:

Proverbs 13:12 "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when dreams come true, there is life and joy."

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION AND HOPELESSNESS?

People who wrestle with hopelessness and depression usually display a number of symptoms.

- Lack of energy
- Loss of appetite or eating too much
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Inability to concentrate
- A feeling of being consistently sad or numb
- Having no interest in activities that used to be enjoyed
- Feeling overwhelmed by the burdens of life

- Feeling powerless and unworthy

WHO SUFFERS FROM DEPRESSION?

Depression is so common and widespread that everyone experiences it in some form at some point in their life. It cuts across every conceivable boundary. It is considered to be the most common mental and emotional problem affecting mankind.

Though the word “depression” is not mentioned in the Bible, the scriptures contain many references to this common problem. The Bible points to many incidents of depression in the lives of godly men. It appears that Job, Moses, David, Elijah, Jonah, Peter, Paul, and the entire nation of Israel suffered from depression. Jeremiah even expressed his deep depression in a book entitled, Lamentations. Paul stated that he “*despaired even of life*” because of the intense pressures he experienced (See Job 3; Numbers 11:10-15; Psalm 42, 43; 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:1-3; Matthew 26:75; 2 Corinthians 1:8; and Exodus 6:9].

HELPING THE TEEN OVERCOME DEPRESSION

King David probably suffered from depression more than any other Bible character. He experienced great depths of prolonged depression, yet he learned some vital lessons for dealing with this problem. The Psalms are filled with examples of his suffering: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” (Psalm. 42:5; see also Psalm 42, 43, 69, 88, and 102). Though he had many bouts with depression, he discovered some important keys for finding victory.

Point them to God:

First and foremost, point them in the direction of God. He is the answer. Make them understand that God’s power is not limited to our outlook on life. Nor is it limited by the odds that are against us. God has given us a Book full of history and of people whom all odds were against! But they had God on their side!

Romans 8:31 “If God be for us, who can be against us? Our God is a God of hope! It is one of His titles that He has given himself.”

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

Ensure that they take immediate action:

One of the most important things that they can do is to deal with the problem of depression immediately. Depression must be challenged promptly. If allowed to remain, it will spread like a cancer and corrupt every area of their life. A common tendency is to brood over our problems and quietly nurse our depression, rather than taking decisive steps against it. Many sink into depression simply because they do nothing about it – instead they dwell upon self-pity and reinforce their despondency. David recognized this important first step and responded by forcefully challenging himself and his depression: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? Hope in God!” (Psa. 43:5) Take action now!

Teach them to discipline their thoughts:

“ . . . bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Christians must discipline their negative thoughts by submitting them to the Lordship of Christ. If we don’t, they can become very destructive. This involves submitting our thoughts to the reality of God’s Word. Christians must guard their thought life. The counselee must not yield to corrupt thinking or indulge in negative confessions.

The Word exhorts us to “meditate on” whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report (Phil. 4:8). They must look at their life, their situations, and their future from God’s point of view. They need to fix their thoughts obediently upon the reality of God’s Word, meditate upon the scriptures, and cleanse their minds with the cleansing water of God’s Word.

Encourage them to hope in the Lord:

David challenged his soul to “*HOPE IN GOD!*” (Psa. 42:5). In 1 Peter 1:3 we see that God has called us to a “living hope.” Our hope is not dead but alive because it is fixed upon a living God. It is a hope that is never disappointed because of God’s loving commitment to us. When the counselee gets their attention off of their problems and upon the power of God, they have access to confidence, courage, and strength. David affirmed this in Psalms 31:24: “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord.”

Teach them to stand on the promises of God:

They must stand upon the reality of God's Word. They must recognize that "ALL THINGS" are working together for their good. When they receive this truth, they can accept their circumstances realizing that God has not forsaken them. There are no hopeless situations in Christ because God is in the midst of their circumstances. This is the absolute guarantee of God's Word! When we trust in the reality of God's Word, we have great hope. The scriptures contain all of the answers to life's problems. They sustain us and encourage us in every way. The counsel of scripture can minister genuine hope in spite of our circumstances. David confirmed this when he wrote: Psalm 119:81.

Teach them to rejoice in the Lord

Philippians 4:4, "*REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS. AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE*" This is the Christian's way to escape depression. The answer is not in running from their circumstances or withdrawing from life, but in rising above them through praise. Paul said we are to rejoice always. He also said "Rejoice evermore ... in everything give thanks" (1 Thes. 5:16, 18, KJV). We don't rejoice because we feel like it, but as an act of obedient faith, realizing that "in the Lord" we have grounds for confidence and rejoicing. We know that the Lord is bigger than our problems, and is working everything for our eventual good!

Teach them to pray - to go to God with their problems

James 5:13 "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

Psalm 55:22 "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Study God's Word

Psalm 1:1-3 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Luke 11:28 "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

John 13:17 "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Jeremiah 15:16 "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Teach them to do something for others

When we in our uncertainties and hopelessness begin to find purpose for life by doing things for others, we find that a new purpose for life begins. Instead of the young person thinking – where am I going? What is my purpose? They will begin to see that with their gifting and talents make a difference in their immediate world. This brings them to a place where they see that there is hope for their life - that they have a purpose and a reason for being.

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

John 13:14-17 "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

FAILURE AND “NOT MEASURING UP” – “AM I GOOD ENOUGH?”



Often time young people experience guilt and pressure of not measuring up to what their parents, teachers and their peers think of them. In order to overcome this feeling of guilt of letting people down, they begin to live their lives to please people. They therefore become guided by decision made by others rather than by their own desires and the guidance of God. Living to please people for personal gain or protection is an issue that the Bible addresses. It is one of the issues that Paul confronted Peter about in Antioch.

Galatians 2:11-14 “But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him publicly, speaking strongly against what he was doing, for it was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who don't bother with circumcision. But afterward, when some Jewish friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore because he was afraid of what these legalists would say. Then the other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was influenced to join them in their hypocrisy. When I saw that they were not following the truth of the Good News, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you trying to make these Gentiles obey the Jewish laws you abandoned?”

Paul admonished Peter by saying that he was in the wrong when he stopped eating with the Gentiles because he was “afraid” of how the group of Jewish people would view him.

In his letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul wrote about the danger of putting too much emphasis on human approval. 2 Corinthians 10:12 “Oh, don't worry; I wouldn't dare say that I am as wonderful as these other men who tell you how

important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, and measuring themselves by themselves. What foolishness!"

A life that is lived with guilt over not being able to achieve another's person's expectation is no way to live. It can drain a person spiritually, emotionally and physically and leave them enslaved to the opinions of others – trapped in pleasing others instead of following after their own heart.

THE EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS

All of us live by expectations that are seldom expressed but always felt at some level. Expectations in themselves are not something evil. They are able to encourage a person to strive to achieve and reach their full potential. However, depending on how they are imposed or how accurately they are perceived, personal, family and community expectations can be brutal demands that can cause an individual to feel stress that is not necessary to feel and will eventually lead to guilt when they are unable to fulfil the full expectations.

Where do expectations come from?

- **Personal expectations**

Personal expectations are those expectations that an individual will place on themselves.

- **Family expectations**

Most of the expectations that come from family are those which are placed on the individual by their parents. These expectations are placed on an individual usually when they are very young. They are expected to behave in a certain manner, they are expected to achieve as well as their siblings, they are pressured to become someone they do not wish to become etc. Whether stated or implied these expectations are clearly understood.

- **Community expectations**

Where we live, where we work, where we go to school, the friends that we associate with and the church we attend are some of the elements that combine to form one's community. Within each community is a set of certain expectations. Because of the desire for every individual to fit in and become accepted by the community and peers, it is important that certain expectations are met. No one wants to be an outsider. Within every community acceptance and approval is based on our ability to live up to stated and implied rules.

WHY ARE PEOPLE DRIVEN TO ACHIEVE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS?

Guilt feelings over not being able to measure up can be harmful and can lead to destructive problems such as obsessive attempts to please, eating disorders, substance abuse, perfectionism, stress and could even lead to suicide.

But what is it that compels a young person to ruin their lives in trying to live up to unrealistic expectations that they are not able to meet?

A fearful heart:

Near the core of our burden to please others is often a fear of disapproval or rejection. When Jesus healed a young boy, the parents of this boy pleaded ignorance to knowing what happened because of fear of being “put out of the synagogue” (John 9:1-23). They were too afraid of what would happen to them by others so they did not share their true opinion about the role that Jesus had played in healing their son. Their fear of being disowned and disgraced by the religious leaders caused them to act in this manner.

Because pain is associated to criticism and rejection, many people vow in their hearts to try everything that they can in order to not receive these actions from others and therefore they strive to achieve what is expected of them. Little do they realise that the more they try and achieve these unrealistic goals, the more they will not be able to measure up to them and the more they will experience feelings of disapproval, rejection and failure.

A hungry heart:

A deep hunger for acceptance and approval spurs a person forward to trying to please others. Out of desperation to fill our hunger for approval and acceptance we live our lives trying to achieve.

COMMON STRATEGIES WE USE TO RESPOND TO OUR FEAR AND HUNGER

Internal strategies:

Sometimes a person may explode at others when they are not able to achieve but generally the internal strategy that most people use when they are unable to achieve is by having contempt of self. Instead of being objective about the unrealistic expectations that are placed on them they adopt the idea that they are at fault at not being able to achieve and that they are responsible for not being who they are expected to be.

External strategies:

Self contempt convinces them that they are to blame for not being enough and in turn causes them to use external strategies.

- **They try to hide their flaws:** Instead of showing others that they feel that they are a failure, they may hide behind a façade of competency.
- **They will try and fix what is wrong:** Self contempt is always a strong reminder that they are not good enough and that they are the problem. They therefore try and fix their failures by always trying to live to please others. For example, if they feel that they are not thin enough, then they lose weight to fix the problem so that they are accepted and fit in.
- **They try and earn acceptance and approval:** They will work hard so that they receive the acceptance and approval of others.

These strategies are used so that:

- Their disappointment in not measuring up is lessened
- They can protect themselves from more hurt, rejection and disapproval
- They earn acceptance

OVERCOMING THE FEELING OF BEING A FAILURE

As a counsellor, it is imperative that you help the teen to overcome feelings of not measuring up and feelings of being a failure. The way that this can be done is by:

Help them to face the truth:

God wants us to know the truth (Psalm 51:6) as it is an effective piece of armour in the battle against the devil (Ephesians 6:14). If we are to help people who are burdened by unnecessary guilt then the first thing that we need to do is to help them start facing the truth that they are allowing the expectations of others to make them unhappy and feel like a failure.

Secondly they need to admit that they have placed other people's desires for their life above that of God's and their own and they have tried to please man before Him. Facing the truth about ourselves and the guilt and self contempt that we feel about ourselves is the first step to moving beyond a life that is characterized and controlled by fear of disapproval and rejection.

Teach them to forgive themselves and others:

The next step in receiving healing is to forgive themselves for not being able to measure up and secondly to forgive those people who we have allowed to place these unrealistic expectations on us.

Help them understand that they are approved of and accepted by God:

John 1:12: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His Name."

John 15:14-15: "You are my friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

You cannot have a closer friend than Jesus. His promise is that He will never desert us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Though this promise may not be true to many of our friends and family, it is very true to our relationship and friendship with Jesus.

Satan knows he can get to teenagers through insecurity, low self-esteem and negativity. He surely will until they learn not to look his way and receive his lies. When they know how much God loves them—they will learn to like and love themselves. Become rooted and grounded in God's love so you will be at peace and succeed at being yourself.

Teach them to accept themselves just as God has approved and accepted them:

God wants every person to accept themselves and to like who they are! God accepts them as they are. The devil wants to steal self-confidence from them. He tries to make them "feel" that they don't "measure up" in one way or another. But our worth is not found in what the world or the devil says about us. Our worth and value is not in what we are—but who we are in Christ Jesus. As they apply God's Bible based principles in their life—they will be able to overcome any insecurities that they may have and learn to succeed at being who they are and like themselves in the process. Here are some ways they can do this:

- **Begin to say what God says about them:** And not the negative things they may “feel” about themselves. God works by faith—the devil works with feelings! it does NOT matter what they “FEEL” about themselves. His Word IS truth! Encourage them to repeat what God says about them and they will begin to change.
- **Stop them making comparisons with others:** They will have to learn to deal with criticism without thinking that there is something wrong with them. They must not allow criticism to concern them. They must realize that they do not need the approval of other people to be happy with themselves and be a success!
- **Focus on strengths and not weaknesses!** Help them to find something that they like to do and do it well. Let God show them what they are good at and not to just copy others. We all have different gifts and talents—but as Christians we are all part of the body of Christ.
- **Never settle for just being average.** As people travel through life, teachers might label them “average.” Family members might limit their dreams. Bosses might stifle them. All too often people respond by simply settling into a boring, mediocre life. But that's not the kind of life God wants for anyone. Encourage them never to settle for what other people may say about them. If they refuse to be satisfied by a life of mediocrity, they'll be free to pursue excellence. In the process, their life will become the unique adventure God has planned for them - and they'll fulfill your highest potential.

God wants to lift them up! When they pursue His plan for their life they will succeed every time and be at peace, because they are doing what He has planned for your life. God wants them to be blessed, joyful, fulfilled and happy. He wants them to enjoy life and have life more abundantly. God doesn't want them to focus on what's wrong with them—but what's right with them.

ASSIGNMENT

Task one:

As a school counsellor, you have received the following letters about problems that a teenager is going through. Write a letter including the biblical counsel that you would provide for each of the following cases:

Dear Mary

I used to be a happy thirteen years old until I started high school this year. Now I feel like I do not fit in at all. Everyone is either great at sport or they are great at academics, but I don't fit into either category. Where do I belong?

Dear Mary

I want to get a tattoo like my friends but my mom says that I cannot get one. What she does not understand is that everyone is getting one and if I don't get one my friends will think that I am a sissy. How can I get one without my mom knowing and then getting into really big trouble? How can I not get one and then be kicked out of my group?

Dear Mary

Yesterday I went for career guidance because I need to start choosing my subjects for next year. I really don't know what I want to be when I am out of school. There seems to be so much pressure from my parents to take all academic subjects as they want me to go to medical school. Both my mom and dad are doctors and they are determined that I follow in their footsteps. I don't really think that is what I want to do but I am too scared to tell them. Should I just choose the subjects that they want just to keep the peace and make them happy?

Task Two:

Compile a Bible study that you would be able to give to a person who is thinking about committing suicide because of the hopelessness that they are feeling.

PART TWO

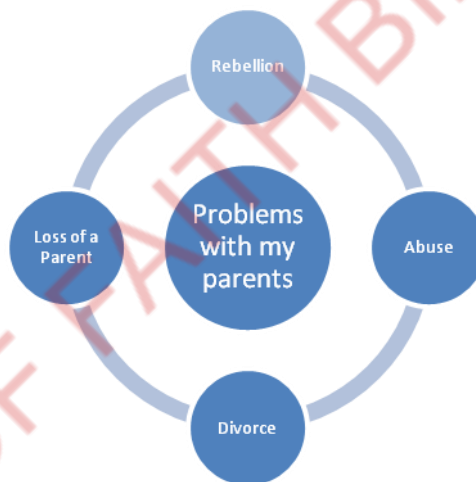
PROBLEMS WITH “MY PARENTS”

There are a number of problems that a young person can have with their parents. For example:

- They can have problems with honouring their parents
- They can experience abuse at the hands of their parents
- They can be in a family that is being split apart by divorce and separation
- They could have experienced the loss of a parent

As a counsellor you will need to be able to deal with these issues providing the teen with Biblical counsel.

REBELLION: LEARNING TO HONOUR THEIR PARENTS



WHAT IS REBELLION?

A rebel is a person who willfully and consistently disobeys or resists and defies a higher authority.

Rebellion is a stage of development that occurs in many teenagers. Some may go through their rebellion against rules as teenagers and some may rebel all of their lives.

There are two kinds of rebellion:

Passive rebellion: A passive rebellion is the state where a teenager will rebel by coloring their hair, piercing their body or having tattoos.

Active rebellion: An active rebellion is the stage where the parental figure and the teenager are in constant battle. For example: The parent will have set a time limit for the teenager to be at home and he or she will rebel against this.

UNDERSTAND THAT REBELLION IS SIN

1 Samuel 15:23 "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Rebellion and sin are almost synonymous. Daniel 9:5 says, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:"

To sin is to rebel, and to rebel is to sin. Rebellion, however, is an even more serious term than sin, however, because it involves a deliberate action of the WILL. To rebel is to CHOOSE to disobey the authority over you.

WHY DO TEENS REBEL?

It's normal for a teen to show a little bit of rebellion now and again. Teenage rebellion which is constant, interferes with normal daily functioning and is destructive to themselves and others calls for much more attention. Teenagers rebel for a variety of reasons:

- **Carving out an Identity:**

The role of the teenager is to find their identity and they cannot do this without rebelling against the one they love who has set rules to follow in the home. The teenager needs to feel that they are different and not like their parents. They also need to feel that they have a voice in what goes on in their lives. Teenagers are at a point in their lives when they are trying to figure out who they are as a person, their likes/dislikes and what they will be doing for the rest of their lives. They use this time to test and try out many identities until they find one they are most comfortable with.

- **Independence:**

These years are a constant struggle between dependence and independence. Rebellious teens want to have total independence and prove to their parents that they can do things themselves. At the same time, they are overwhelmed and still desire parental protection.

- **Hormonal changes:**

As teenagers bodies are changing, hormone fluctuations can bring about all sorts of mood changes.

- **Peer pressure:**

The Bible says: "He that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20). Many times friends and peers can cause the teenager to rebel against authority as they follow the crowd.

- **Home atmosphere:**

For example, if one parent is an alcoholic, abuses drugs, or is violent toward the other parent, the teenager's view of life can be warped. Even in relatively tranquil homes, rebellion may break out when a child feels that his parents have no interest in him.

- **Parents:**

Something else that has led to teenage rebellion is an unbalanced view of child rearing on the part of the parents (Colossians 3:21). Some conscientious parents severely restrict and discipline their children. Others are permissive, not providing guidelines that would protect their inexperienced adolescent. It is not always easy to strike a balance between these two extremes. And different children have different needs. One may need more oversight than another.

Here are some of the things that parents do that might cause rebellion:

They are too strict: Parents who have rules that are much stricter than the norm for families in their community will naturally bring a sense of unfairness to the child or teen who is protesting. Rehoboam exemplifies the other extreme in handling authority. He was the last king of the united kingdom of Israel, but he was not a good king. Rehoboam had inherited a land whose people were discontented because of the burdens placed on them by his father, Solomon.

Did Rehoboam show understanding? No. When a delegation asked him to remove some of the oppressive measures, he failed to heed mature advice from his older counselors and commanded that the people's yoke be made heavier. His arrogance provoked a rebellion by the ten northern tribes, and the kingdom was ripped in two (1 Kings 12:1-21; 2 Chronicles 10:19).

They are too lenient: King Solomon said that a child left to himself (to do whatever he wants to do) will end up bringing his mother to shame. If you spare the rod of discipline, Solomon said, you will spoil your child. We are born with a sinful nature, but love and discipline help us grow out of it sufficiently to live a normal Christian life. Ancient Israel's high priest Eli was a father. He served for 40 years, no doubt being well versed in the Law of God. Eli likely carried out his regular priestly duties quite faithfully and may even have thoroughly taught God's Law to his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. However, Eli was too indulgent with his sons. Hophni and Phinehas served as officiating priests, but they were "good-for-nothing men," interested only in satisfying their appetites and immoral desires. Yet, when they committed disgraceful acts on sacred ground, Eli did not have the courage to oust them from office. He merely gave them a feeble rebuke. By his permissiveness, Eli honored his sons more than God. As a result, his sons rebelled against Jehovah's clean worship and Eli's whole house suffered calamity (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25, 29; 3:13, 14; 4:11-22). Eli's children were already adults when these events took place, but this history underscores the danger of withholding discipline. (Compare Proverbs 29:21.) Some parents may confuse love with permissiveness, failing to set and enforce clear, consistent, and reasonable rules. They neglect to apply loving discipline, even when godly principles are violated. Because of such permissiveness, their children may end up not paying attention to parental or any other type of authority (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

They are inconsistent: Often one parent is too strict and the other too lenient. Children will do just fine in a home that is a little bit too strict or a little bit too lenient, but will not do fine in a home where parents do not provide a united front. Parents can argue peaceably with each other in front of the kids about other things, to teach them how to resolve conflicts when they get married some day, but *never argue about discipline in front of them.*

They expect their children to go by rules that they do not obey: Children do as we do much more than they do what we say. If you don't want your children to be addicted to drugs or alcohol, don't abuse alcohol or drugs yourself, including abusing prescription drugs. If you want them to be kind, unselfish and helpful to others, model that yourself.

They do not listen to their children's feelings: Children who feel free to share their anger don't have to rebel to act it out!

They project their own faults onto their children: Matthew 7:3-5 says we often see the toothpick in our friend's eye (or our child's eye or our mate's eye) instead of the log in our own eye. We probably all do this to some extent. It is part of being human.

- **Sin:**

We are all born with a sinful human nature so sometimes rebellion is simply the child being selfish and rebelling for sinful reasons. Some children turn their backs on parental values despite having parents who apply godly principles and who shelter them, to a great extent, from the world around them. Why? Perhaps because of another root of our problems—human imperfection. Paul said: "Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) Adam was a selfish rebel, and he left all his offspring a bad legacy. Some youths just choose to rebel, as their forefather did.

- **Divorce and Remarriage**

Adjusting to changes in their home life may cause the child to feel insecure, angry and unsettled. Many times in the teenage years, these emotions are expressed by exploding at their parents in the form of rebellion

SIGNS OF REBELLION

How your teen chooses to rebel, depends on their own individual feelings and problems. Some forms may include:

- Spending more time with friends away from family members
- Rejection of rules/curfews
- School problems - cutting classes, missing school, drop in grades
- Substance abuse - experimenting with alcohol and illicit drugs
- Change in appearance/interests - trying out new clothing styles, hairstyles, tastes in music
- Argumentative - quick to anger, overly defenseless
- Running away from home
- Consistently breaks rules and ignores consequences
- Stays out late or has large blocks of unaccounted time
- Gets into frequent verbal or physical fights
- Skips class, gets in trouble with teachers, or has been suspended or expelled

- Lies, cheats or steals with no respect for authority

HELPING THE PARENT AND CHILD THROUGH REBELLION

TO THE PARENT:

Pray, Pray, Pray! The parent must give the child and the circumstances into God's hands. They need to ask God for His wisdom and perspective regarding their child. They need to ask God to expose sin in their own life that may have been one of the root problems in their child's rebellion.

Take the first step. Even though they likely have experienced pain, cost, insult or embarrassment due to their child's behavior, they must not wait for their rebellious son or daughter to come to them. They are the parent – the adult – in the relationship, so it's their responsibility to reach out first.

Identify with their pain: It's not unusual for parents to look to their own pain when their child rebels, particularly when the child is responsible for inflicting the pain they feel. But, parents ought to look beyond themselves to their child's pain. Think about it – kids don't get angry and rebel for no reason. It may be necessary for them to look beyond their child's behavior to identify the source of their pain. This can be a painstaking process in and of itself, but well worth the effort.

Fill their basic needs: Although parents rejoice to see their youngster grow physically from babyhood to adulthood, they may feel disturbed when their adolescent child begins to move from dependence to appropriate self-reliance. During this transitional period, they must not be surprised if their teenager is occasionally rather stubborn or uncooperative. Keep in mind that the goal of Christian parents should be to raise a mature, stable, and responsible Christian (1 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:13, 14).

As difficult as it may be, parents need to break the habit of responding negatively to any request from their adolescent for greater independence. In a wholesome way, a child needs to grow as an individual. Indeed, at a relatively young age, some teenagers begin to develop quite a grown-up outlook. For example, the Bible says of young King Josiah: "While he was still a boy [of about 15 years], he started to search for the God of David." This outstanding teenager was clearly a responsible individual (2 Chronicles 34:1-3). However, freedom brings with it accountability. Therefore, allow the emerging adult to experience the consequences of some of their decisions and actions. The principle, "whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap," applies to teens as well as to adults. (Galatians 6:7) Children cannot be sheltered forever.

Provide them with as much help that they need: Without help, a child can be corrupted by the world's spirit (Proverbs 13:20; Ephesians 2:2). As the teenager is going through a period of change in their physical body, in their emotions and in their responsibilities ensure that the parent provides them with all the help and assistance that they can without taking over their lives and controlling their decisions.

Determine to cooperate rather than compete. Browbeating the rebellious child ("Do this..." "Don't do that..." "I wish you would..." "Why don't you...") simply doesn't work. Instead, work on rebuilding the relationship and reconnecting hearts. Find the time to just talk – not about issues dealing with "rebellion" – but about life.

Deal with wrong actions: Wrong conduct must be dealt with, but in a spirit of mildness (Galatians 6:1). Just because the parent is trying to help their child over their rebellious attitude does not mean that they have to overlook their bad habits, their disrespect and the way that they talk to them and others in authorities. Ensure that they do not let go of the discipline baton but maintain the same rules that they did when they were younger. Deal with the problem and not with the person. Don't attack the rebellious child's character. Instead, deal with the inappropriate behavior.

Forgive them when they ask for forgiveness: Those who commit serious sins can be "healed" if they repent and accept help (James 5:14-16). Do not hold a grudge over children, over what they have said and done in the past. Be quick to forgive and show them unconditional love. Aim at restoring rather than resolving. A parent may never be able to resolve all the problems the rebellious child has encountered or caused, nor the consequences of his or her behavior. Do what you can do in terms of resolution, but focus your aim primarily on restoring relationship. The role of Christian parents, when it comes to conflict resolution with their child, is not victory over the child, but unity *with* the child.

Do what you can to enforce boundaries: It is important to show your rebellious teenager that there are still rules. This means doing your best to enforce consequences.

Try to avoid big fights: Part of the reason why children are rebellious is so that they can get a reaction from their parents. If a parent makes a commitment not to create a big fight over their child's actions, but to react calmly, will defeat what the child is trying to do. Calmly state that you don't approve of something your teen is wearing, saying, or listening to, and leave it at that. If the behavior is offensive, you can enforce consequences.

Be available to talk: Encourage the parent to be available to talk and to withhold all judgment until they have finished speaking. If the teen wants advice, give to him or her candidly and calmly. If he or she is admitting wrongdoing, calmly point out that there is a consequence attached to all such actions, and that it will be enforced. Try to help the teen, or just listen on occasion.

Be clear in your unconditional love: It is difficult, but when dealing with rebellious and defiant teens, parents need to be clear about their unconditional love for their teenager. Make sure that they are clear that it is the behavior they do not approve of and not themselves.

TO THE YOUNG PERSON:

Repent:

Repentance is the act of changing one's mind. Webster defines the word as "to feel sorry for or reproachful for what one has done or has not done". Webster also gives the definition as to feel such regret and dissatisfaction over some past action or intention as to change one's mind about it or to change one's way.

Repentance requires:

- The right attitude towards sin. This is Godly sorrow.
- The right attitude toward God, it is a return to God.
- The right attitude toward self. The Prodigal Son came to himself.
- The right attitude toward others. The Philippians jailer took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.

Ask for forgiveness:

- They must first get rid of their anger and take ownership of their actions. They must not blame the other person or place any guilt on anybody else except themselves.
- Find the right moment, the right place, and make sure they have enough time available to solve the conflict. Let the other person express the way he/she feels about the offense without complaining, reacting or answering back. They must always, be specific about why they are asking for forgiveness.
- When asking for forgiveness, never say: "Forgive me IF I did anything wrong". This will denote you are not really sure of what you did. Get the "IF" out of your way. Always say: "Please forgive me because I was wrong when I did ...,"

when I said ..., when I didn't ...", etc. Talking like this you are taking ownership of your actions and the other person will see it. They must acknowledge their actions without making excuses.

- Share their feelings about what happened - avoid blaming, exaggerating or saying empty words.
- Offer to make amends if appropriate.
- Move on. Once they have apologized, they must learn to let it go

Make a decision to change your ways and honour your parents:

Show the teen through the Word of God what the Bible says about honouring their parents:

- Proverbs 20:20 "If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness."
- Colossians 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."
- Ephesians 6:1-3 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."
- Proverbs 23:22 "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

Help the teen to write a list of things that they can do that will show their parents that they honour and respect them. Help the teen to make a commitment to start to put these things into practice.

Spend non confrontation time with your parents doing something fun

PARENTAL ABUSE



Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, or a combination of any or all of these. Abuse can also be neglect, which is when parents or guardians don't take care of the basic needs of the children who depend on them.

Physical abuse is often the most easily recognized form of abuse. Physical abuse can be any kind of hitting, shaking, burning, pinching, biting, choking, throwing, beating, and other actions that cause physical injury, leave marks, or cause pain.

Sexual abuse is any type of sexual contact between an adult and anyone younger than 18; between a significantly older child and a younger child; or if one person overpowers another, regardless of age. If a family member sexually abuses another family member, this is called incest.

Emotional abuse can be the most difficult to identify because there are usually no outward signs of the abuse. Emotional abuse happens when yelling and anger go too far or when parents constantly criticize, threaten, or dismiss kids or teens until their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth are damaged. Emotional abuse can hurt and cause damage just as physical abuse does.

Neglect is difficult to identify and define. Neglect occurs when a child or teen doesn't have adequate food, housing, clothes, medical care, or supervision. Emotional neglect happens when a parent doesn't provide enough emotional support or deliberately and consistently pays very little or no attention to a child.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse

Abuse constitutes any physical injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means including injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation. Abuse includes reckless and negligent use of drugs during pregnancy.

Possible Indicators

- Bruises or welts in various stages of healing
- Bruises or welts reflecting the shape of objects
- Cigar or cigarette burns
- Immersion burns that are sock like or glove like
- Patterns burns
- Rope burns
- Fractures
- Lacerations

Behavioral Indicators

- Wary of adults
- Apprehensive when other children cry
- Behavioral extremes such as aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Frightened of parents
- Afraid to go home

Neglect

Neglect is negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child which causes actual harm or substantial risk of harm to a child's health, welfare and safety.

Possible Indicators

- Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress
- Consistent lack of supervision
- Unattended physical/emotional problems or medical needs

Behavioral Indicators

- Begging, stealing food

- Staying at school and avoiding going home
- Constant fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep in class
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- States there is no care taker
- Shunned by peers

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any incident of sexual contact including, but not limited to rape, sodomy, incest, sexual penetration with a foreign object, sexual exploitation for purposes of pornography, or prostitution.

Possible Physical Indicators

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Bruises, bleeding or infection in external genitalia, vagina or anal areas
- Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens

Possible Behavioral Indicators

- Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior
- Poor peer relationships
- Delinquent or run away behavior
- Indirect allusions to problems at home such as "I want to live with you"
- The child reports sexual assault
- Fear of a person or an intense dislike at being left with someone
- Unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters, expressing affection in ways that are inappropriate for child of that age
- Behavioral extremes
- Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking)
- Attempted suicide
- Conduct disorders (antisocial, run away, fire setting, destructive)
- Emotional neediness

PHYSIOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS OF ABUSE

A child that has been abused may exhibit some of the following:

Guilt: Children may feel guilty believing that they are in some way responsible for the abuse

Shame: The guilty secret may make them feel worthless

Fear: If the abuser tells them that something terrible will happen to them if they told anyone, the abused will become fearful.

Grief: Children stop seeing the world as a safe and friendly place.

Anger: They may feel intense and often uncontrollable anger. Because they are unable to strike out at the offender, they may lash out at the wrong people

Depression: Abused children and teens seem sad and less playful. They often lose interest in school, friends and other activities

Poor basic trust: Due to a betrayal of trust, these children have a lack of trust in people. Since the abuser is often times a loved and trusted person a deep sense of betrayed trust pervades the child's view of life.

HOW TO COUNSEL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED

Help them learn to trust again:

Abused children normally have a hard time accepting faith in God as they often wonder why it is that God never stopped the abuse. They therefore have the wrong perception of Him – they see Him as cruel, unloving, far off etc. As a counsellor it is vital that before any other counselling is done that the counsellee gets a proper understanding of God. This is done through Bible study and showing the care and love of God through the Word of God. Remember that true healing can only come through God and therefore the restoration of this relationship is imperative to the healing that they are seeking.

Teach them about their identity:

Abuse feels like an experience that has stamped them and has the final word on their identity. But the truth is that God gives them a different identity. No

matter what terrible atrocities happened to them, they are not their identity. Their identity as God's child is far deeper than the abuse suffered.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1). They have a perfect Father in heaven who loves them and wants to fill their life with the good gift of Himself (Luke 11:13).

Because they are God's child, they are not alone in a nightmare of pointless suffering. It's true that "the heart knows its own bitterness" (Proverbs 14:10), and even their dearest friend can't fully understand the terror, the aloneness, the pain, and the horror experienced. But Jesus does understand, and He is with you. Jesus experienced every form of suffering when He was in the world. "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He was betrayed and tortured. He is well acquainted with your grief, and he will never leave you (John 14:18).

Encourage them to claim the past:

Every one of us is a sum total of past experiences and perceptions. When we cut ourselves off from our past we cut ourselves off from our own identity. We begin to operate life through self denial and repression of past pain. The whole and healthy person embraces both the past and the future. The next step in healing is admitting what has happened and accepting it as having happened. The child needs to put into words what happened in the past and speak about it. Speaking helps to not only admit what has happened to them but it also acts as a purging of painful memories. What remains hidden in the darkness of the heart will not be exposed to the love and truth of God's light. However when we begin to expose this hurt to God through speaking, He is able to remove the pain of our experience and bring us to a place of truth.

Why is speaking transformative? Though speaking they will

- Move through the shame and secrecy that keeps them isolated.
- Move through denial and acknowledge the truth of their abuse.
- Make it possible to get understanding and help.
- Get more in touch with their feelings.
- Get a chance to see their experience, and themselves, through the compassionate eyes of a supporter.
- Make space in relationships for the kind of intimacy that comes from honesty.
- Establish themselves as a person in the present who is dealing with the abuse in his/her past.
- Help end child sexual abuse by breaking the silence in which it thrives.

To help them talk about what they experienced, read through Psalm 55-57:

- **What happened to you?** Take the first marker, and underline all the phrases in each psalm that express the sort of thing that happened to them as a child. You will find phrases like “the stares of the wicked...they bring down suffering upon me...my companion attacks his friends” (Psalm 55:3, 20), “men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack...many are attacking me...they conspire, they lurk; they watch my steps” (Psalm 56:1, 2, 6), “they spread a net for my feet...they dug a pit in my path” (Psalm 57:6).
- **What does it feel like?** Now take a second marker and underline all the phrases that express how they felt—anguish, fear, terror. Look at phrases like these, “I am distraught...my heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me; fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. I said, ‘Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest...’” (Psalm 55:2, 4–6), “When I am afraid...my lament...my tears” (Psalm 56:3, 8), “I am in the midst of lions...I was bowed down in my distress” (Psalm 57:4, 6).
- **What is said about God?** Use the third marker to underline what the psalms say about God and what He is doing. Start with some of these phrases, “the Lord saves me...he hears my voice...He ransoms me unharmed...he will sustain you” (Psalm 55:16–18, 22), “For you have delivered my soul from death, and my feet from stumbling,” (Psalm 56:13), “He sends from heaven and saves me; rebuking those who hotly pursue me...for great is your love reaching to the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies” (Psalm 57:3, 10).
- **What does faith say?** Use the fourth marker to underline all the phrases that are cries of faith. “Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me...but I call to God and the Lord saves me...but as for me, I trust in you” (Psalm 55:1, 2, 16, 23), “Be merciful to me, O God...when I am afraid, I will trust in you...in God I trust: I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me...Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll...God is for me” (Psalm 56:1, 3, 4, 8, 9), “Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed...I cry out to God Most High...My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;” (Psalm 57:1–2, 7).

Help them deal with grief:

Grief is an emotion that is difficult to deal with when pursuing healing; however, it is a necessary emotion to confront. Grief is a deep sadness that affects all survivors of child abuse, regardless of age. This grief is associated with the loss

that they feel which resulted from the abuse. For instance, perhaps survivors feel as though they lost their childhood. They don't have the normalcy's of a childhood that is filled with joy, laughter, playing etc. Neither are they able to make mistakes, because they often get punished for mistakes they make.

Help them to deal with anger:

Anger for the abuser generally does not get off loaded on that person but rather explodes on those who have done nothing wrong – teachers, parents, friends, self, even at God. They are to realise that they have a right to be angry with the pain that has been caused and turn this anger over to God in prayer.

Teach them to forgive:

Forgiveness is a choice that we make to free ourselves from the bondage of resentment and hatred. Forgiveness does not excuse the perpetrator of what they did but it:

- Transfer's the case to the high court: When we chose to forgive we give up all claim to punish and exact a penalty on the offender. When we forgive we acknowledge what the person has done to us and let go of the right to punish them and we hand them over to God, our High Judge. 1 Peter 2:23 "He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly."
- We let go of our resentment: We give away our anger and resentment. We choose not to explode in anger but to deal with feelings that come to us
- We empty our heart of hatred and we make room for God's love and forgiveness.

Teach them to renew their mind:

Romans 12:1-2 "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."

Encourage them to declare themselves to be free:

"Free to be me. Free to be responsible to myself. Free to enjoy life. Free from guilt. Free to feel good about me."

They no longer have to please people to feel good, have to eat, sleep, buy things, or use people or things as a means of escape from themselves or the difficulties of life. They no longer have to react to, or accept others judgments of themselves.

They are free to love according to the values found in their acceptance of, and relationship with God, as they understand Him. They are free to be human; to make mistakes, to have shortcomings, to not be perfect, and still be 'ok'. They are free to believe that they are valuable, worthwhile, acceptable, capable, loveable person.

DIVORCE AND SEPERATION



WHY DIVORCE IMPACTS CHILDREN

Divorce and separation deeply impacts both children and teenagers. This can be a result of:

Fear of Change:

The children in a divorcing family know that nothing will ever be the same again, and their previously secure world is in a state of change. Many things will change, not just that mother or dad will not be around. They may lose contact with extended family on one side or the other. Their bedtime, mealtime and after school routines may change.

Fear of Being Abandoned:

When mom and dad are at odds and are either separated or considering separation, children have a realistic fear that if they lose one parent, they may lose the other. The concept of being alone in the world is a very frightening thing for a child.

Losing Attachment:

Children who have a natural attachment for their parents also fear losing other secure relationships-friends, pets, siblings, neighbours, and so on. Sometimes children are simply attached to their surroundings, and moving into new surroundings can cause an understandable negative reaction.

Coping with Parental Tension:

Even though many divorces follow years of tension between husband and wife, the tension level typically increases during and shortly after a divorce. And parents who try to turn their children against the other spouse create an absolutely impossible situation for that child.

Trying to Bring Parents Back Together:

Some children have the mistaken notion that the breakup of the family is somehow their fault. These children typically either "act out" in negative ways, or try to be perfect in an effort to be "so good" that the parents won't need or want to divorce.

Aggression and Defiance:

Aggression and defiance is normal behaviour even when there are no marital differences however the key is being aware of uncharacteristic aggression in children. Are they more angry and uncooperative than usual?

Depression and Withdrawal:

Many children in a family under stress will withdraw or show signs of depression. These might include hermit-like behaviour, the early signs of eating disorders, discussion or threats of suicide and the like.

Anger:

Children whose parents are divorcing have a great deal to be angry about. Just about every child going through divorce is an angry child. There may be exceptions, but not many. Many children who portray a calm, even cheerful demeanor through divorce are seething inside, and they may later express their anger in destructive ways, like depression ("anger turned inward"), substance abuse, and/or delinquency. In addition, repressed anger often shows up disguised as sickness, for example, headaches, sleeplessness, nausea, and diarrhea.

Insecure and afraid of the future:

The many and often unavoidable changes that accompany divorce can undermine a child's sense of security and make them fearful of the future – about "what's next?" Will we be poor, will we have enough to eat, will I have to

go to a new school, will I lose my pet rabbit, will I still see my friends? In short, they will fret about all the things that are important in their world.

Rejection:

Children of divorce may feel rejected and unloved by the parent who has left. This makes little sense until we remember that children perceive themselves as the center of the universe. Therefore, everything that happens must have something to do with them.

At fault:

For the same reason, children may believe the divorce is their fault, caused by something they said or did, or just the way they are, and feel a deep sense of guilt and shame. Even difficult teens may be afraid that their behavior has contributed to the divorce and made it easier for a parent to leave.

Powerless:

Children who feel responsible for problems between parents tend to believe they can also fix things. They may go to great lengths to be a “better child” – a more helpful and appealing child – or believe they have the power to “wish” their parents back together again. When this doesn’t happen – when their often elaborate plans and hopes for reconciliation fail – children feel powerless and upset that they cannot make a difference.

Torn in two:

The most damaging effect of divorce on children is the emotional trauma caused by parents who fight or belittle each other in front of their children. Children feel expected to take sides but cannot do this without being disloyal to the other parent. However, by not taking sides they fear disapproval and rejection by both. They are trapped in a no-win situation where it is “wrong” to love both parents.

Stressed:

During divorce, children may feel stressed and under pressure to do more than they can realistically cope with at a time that is already stressful enough. For instance, they may volunteer to take on extra duties at home or be burdened with extra responsibilities like it or not. They may also be used as a confidante and advisor by one or both parents, a role that even teens are not qualified for

or comfortable with. Eager to help out and seem “grown up,” they may hide how stressed they really are.

Lonely:

Children of divorce may feel lonely. They may miss the intimacy, comfort and particular parenting skills of the absent parent. The parent at home may be so wrapped up in their own problems that they are not available to their children. Circumstances may have cut them off from their usual playmates. Children may seek intimacy and comfort elsewhere, or become withdrawn.

Feelings of Isolation:

Teens who have experienced divorce in their family will feel isolated and left behind. A split in the family may even make a teen feel as if he is no longer a whole person. And, when the parents remarry, teens respond to the change as a signal that they really are now all on their own. After all, the parents who came together to create them have each gone their different ways, and may have already connected with someone new. Younger kids are pretty resilient and can cope, but the older the teen is at the time of the divorce, the more betrayed and disconnected they may feel when separation becomes reality.

HOW TO HELP THE CHILD AND TEEN THROUGH DIVORCE AND SEPERATION

Listen and reassure:

Support the child or teen by helping them to express what they feel.

- Listen. Encourage them to share their feelings and really *listen* to them. They may be feeling sadness, loss or frustration about things you may not have expected.
- Help them find words for their feelings. It's normal for children to have difficulty expressing their feelings. You can help them by noticing their moods and encouraging them to talk.
- Let them be honest. Children might be reluctant to share their true feelings for fear of hurting their parents. Let them know that whatever they say is okay. If they aren't able to share it, they will have a harder time working through it.
- Acknowledge their feelings.

Clear up misunderstandings:

Many children believe that they had something to do with the divorce, recalling times they argued with their parents, received poor grades, or got in trouble. You can help the teen let go of this misconception by:

- Setting the record straight. Repeat to them why their parents decided to get a divorce. Sometimes hearing the real reason for their decision can help.
- Be patient. Children may seem to “get it” one day and be unsure the next. Treat their confusion or misunderstandings with patience.
- Reassure. As often as you need to, remind the child that both parents will continue to love them and that they are not responsible for the divorce.

Encourage by giving reassurance and love

Children have a remarkable ability to heal when given the support and love they need. Their words, actions, and ability to remain consistent are all important tools to reassure their children of their unchanging love.

- Both parents will be there. Let them know that even though the physical circumstances of the family unit will change, they can continue to have healthy, loving relationships with both of their parents.
- It'll be okay. Tell them that things won't always be easy, but that they will work out. Knowing it'll be all right can provide incentive for them to give a new situation a chance.
- Closeness. Physical closeness—in the form of hugs, pats on the shoulder, or simple proximity—has a powerful way of reassuring the child of parental love.
- Be honest. When kids raise concerns or anxieties, respond truthfully. If you don't know the answer, say gently that you aren't sure right now, but you'll find out and it will be okay.

Help them deal with anger:

Children of divorce love their parents, but they can feel deep anger toward one or both parents for deciding to end the marriage. The first principle they need to understand is that anger as a feeling is normal, appropriate, and healthy. They therefore should not try and suppress angry feelings.

Help them to deal with anxiety:

Worry is normal and sometimes healthy. When fears continue over several days or weeks, however, or when they interfere with the ability to carry out normal routines, they may need help to deal with them. Children of divorcing parents often struggle with anxiety. Anxiety comes about through feelings of abandonment, changes in living conditions, embarrassment, guilt, concern about additional separations, and a haunting fear of additional unknown trouble that must be lurking somewhere in the future. Some of the physical symptoms of continuing anxiety are: nausea, diarrhea, headaches, and dizziness, as well as (particularly in younger children) thumb-sucking and bed-wetting. Children suffering from anxiety often become demanding or clingy, and they may pull back from pre-existing friendships with their peers. When parents split up, it can cause a number of problems in the life of their children; especially if the children are in the pre-teen or teen years.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP?

Despite the marital challenges, divorcing parents still have a responsibility to assist their children in both short- and long-term processing. Parents should offer a clear, age-appropriate explanation for what is going on and why. As much as possible, tell them what lies ahead and assure them they'll be told about all major developments.

Encourage two-way communication.

Parents of divorce need to allow their children to be open and honest about what they are feeling and going through. Create times where the parent will be able to sit and talk to the parent about what is happening inside them.

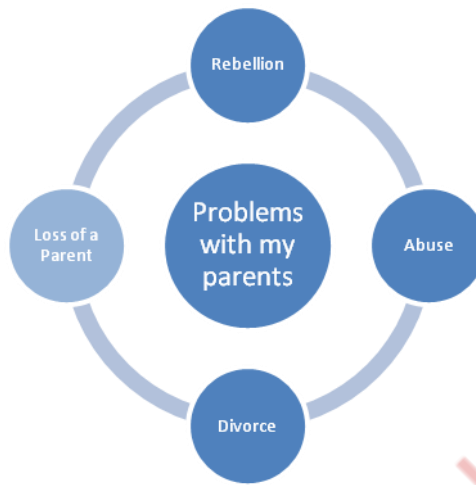
Permit grieving.

Grief can take many forms, including anger. Accept the fact that the teenager will be angry with the parents and help them to get over this anger.

Give them two loving parents.

The relationship between the parents is a critical component to a child's proper development. The need for a father continues and even increases during adolescence. Both parents need to be present in their child's life.

GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A PARENT



WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering a person feels when something or someone they love is taken away through death. But any loss can cause grief, including:

- A relationship breakup
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- Loss of financial stability
- A miscarriage
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a cherished dream
- A loved one's serious illness
- Loss of a friendship
- Loss of safety after a trauma

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried – and there is no “normal” timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years.

The five stages of grief:

- Denial: “This can't be happening to me.”
- Anger: “Why is this happening? Who is to blame?”

- Bargaining: "Make this not happen, and in return I will ____."
- Depression: "I'm too sad to do anything."
- Acceptance: "I'm at peace with what happened."

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

A multitude of emotional, physical, and psychological responses can accompany a loss. As a child or adult experiences these disturbing reactions, behavior may be altered in ways that impact his or her learning style, relationships and behavior.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

- **Sadness** may be observed in a variety of ways. Crying is the most obvious indication that something is disturbing someone. It can be a great relief for the griever to have an opportunity to share tears with another, or even solitude to release the tears. Children report that there will be moments when in a classroom that they will feel overwhelmed with feelings of loss, but they don't want to cry in front of peers. Providing an option for newly bereaved students to go to a quiet spot in the school to release their feelings creates a safer emotional environment. Sadness may manifest in other ways, such as through deep sighing.
- **Anger** – Grief isn't just about crying. Anger is common among those who have lost someone important in their life. They may feel that it just isn't fair, that life is unjust. The loss may be understood as preventable, giving rise to blaming and outrage. There are many possibilities of carelessness, neglect, and deliberate intent to kill that bring tragedy into the lives of children and their families. A child may be angry at the one who died. Displaced anger arises when the energy of anger is directed at someone or something other than the true source of pain. It may be easier for a child to express anger than sadness because there is less perceived emotional vulnerability in being angry versus being sad. Acknowledgement of anger can be an effective way of deescalating the intensity of anger.
- **Irritability** - The bombardment of unpleasant feelings of loss can create a sense of irritation. Feelings of anger over the loss may not come out in explosive ways, but in a general sense of irritation.

- **Guilt and self-reproach** - Because children are ego-centric (the cause and effect of the world revolves around them), they are likely to feel like they are the cause of the loss regardless of the circumstances around the death. Children may believe that “if only I had”put my toys away, made better grades, helped around the house more, asked her to wait five minutes more, not talked back to my mom, etc, etc, etc. their loved one would still be alive. There are times when these thoughts may be the only sense of power and control the child feels. At other times, these beliefs may be carried into adulthood, contributing to difficulties in later life. There are times when a child may be responsible for a death, such as the tragic stories of teen drivers who are involved in fatal accidents due to reckless driving, or road conditions for which they were unprepared, accidental shootings, falls, etc. Under these circumstances, it is likely that these feelings may need to be addressed by a grief therapist.
- **Anxiety, insecurity and fear** - After the loss of a loved one, a child's world may feel unfamiliar and unsafe. The question, “Who is going to take care of me?” is important to answer. Family circumstances may have changed dramatically. The remaining parent is required to take on the responsibilities left by the other parent. This leaves less time for nurture and care of the children in the family. This further destabilizes grieving children. In these cases, we see either an overly parentified child, one who takes on adult mannerisms and responsibilities, or attention-seeking, often disruptive behavior. Even negative attention is better than no attention at all. In addition, the loss of a loved one creates high loss awareness. To the child this means that since this happened once, the reality of potential future losses is underscored. Children express concern over what will happen to them if the remaining caregiver dies. There are times when children lose both parents simultaneously, or within a brief period. When a sibling dies, the child may wonder if he or she is next. This further complicates feelings of anxiety.
- **Abandonment** - The absence of a loved one may contribute to a feeling of abandonment regardless of whether the loss appears to the child to be caused by the one lost, is accidental or the result of a lengthy illness. This feeling may attack the child's sense of self-esteem. The cry, “Why did you leave me?” is common in both children and adults.
- **Worried** - Children have concerns about many things. They may worry about other family members who are grieving, finances, and the overall welfare of the family. These worries may be grounded in true difficulties facing the family. Children will often hide their pain from family members to try to “protect” others.

- **Loneliness** - When a significant loved one is removed from a child's life, a pervasive sense of loneliness often sets in. The talks, emotional interactions, and activities once shared are also lost, leaving a void in the child's life. Extended family members, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and friends may help by spending time with the child, but the special role of the one lost is still missing. In today's society, many families are far from extended family, so the needed support is lacking.
- **Yearning** - Longing for and seeking the lost one is common in the first year or two following a loss. Life adjustments are in progress, but aching and longing for the loved one remains. During this time, children may talk with the deceased, have vivid dreams about interacting with the person, or think they see the person in a public place. A scent, song, phrase or other sensory experience may throw the griever into a place of acute yearning and sense of loss.
- **Helplessness and Powerlessness** - The child who cries out, "I WANT MY DADDY BACK!" is faced with the continued absence of Daddy. No matter what she says or does, Daddy does not return. She has no impact on engaging the return of her father. She is powerless to change this critical issue so vital to her emotional and physical health. It is important for the child to find areas that allow her to produce her desired outcome.
- **Shock** - Shock may work as a defense against the loss, shutting down mental and emotional circuits that are overloaded with feelings and loss. This is a time when feelings of numbness and being "out of body" may happen. Shock is more likely to occur following an unexpected death, but happens even when a death is anticipated.
- **Numbness** - Absence of feeling can create a surreal sense for the child. No feelings replace intense feelings about things and people before the loss. This experience does not usually last more than a few months, but can be disconcerting and confusing while it lasts.
- **Emancipation** - There are times when a relationship is so painful that there is relief when the person is gone. There may have been physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. While there may be conflicted emotions following a loss, the sense of freedom from the abuser can be exhilarating for the griever.
- **Relief** - When someone has suffered through a lengthy illness, families may be relieved that the suffering is over for their loved one. This feeling is most common in an anticipated death. A child may be at peace about feeling

relief, or may question his loyalty to the loved one and feel guilty for feeling relieved.

- **Turmoil** - A melting pot of emotions can create inner turmoil as children try to sort through the feelings. A child is not likely to tell you, "I'm feeling inner turmoil." She, however, may demonstrate it through chaotic artwork, disorganization, forgetfulness, and disruptive behavior in the classroom.

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Grief is about more than emotions. Feelings of loss have physical components as well. These feelings may be frightening to a grieving child and his or her family. After medical causes have been ruled out, the following physical symptoms may be attributed to normal grief reactions:

- Fatigue
- Stomach pains
- Appetite changes
- Headaches
- Tightness in throat, chest
- Short of breath
- Weakness
- Low energy
- Dry mouth
- Sensitive to noise, light, alcohol

THOUGHT PATTERNS

- **Denial** - "I can't believe it happened" is a defense that allows the unprepared bereaved person time to absorb the reality of the loss. When someone first learns of an unexpected death, the first response is often "NO!". This response changes over time as a person is psychologically able to tolerate the loss without being completely overwhelmed. One should not attempt to convince the bereaved of what they are denying. Allow the natural process of grief to unfold this defensive thought.
- **Confusion** - Short term and long term memory may be impacted for a period. This can be disconcerting to students. They may or may not have done their homework, and cannot remember anything about it. This is frustrating to the teacher, parents, and disheartening to the student.
- **Thoughts about deceased** - Shortly after a death, it is common to think about the deceased almost constantly. It is also common for the bereaved

unconsciously to adopt behavior characteristics of the deceased. This will diminish over time. If not, referral to a grief therapist is appropriate.

- **Sense of presence of the deceased** - Children and adults alike may experience a sense that their loved one is watching over them. This sense of presence may help the bereaved cope or may be disturbing.
- **Difficulty concentrating** - In the first few months, most bereaved individuals find that it is difficult to stay focused on a task. Intrusive thoughts about the deceased and moments of overwhelming feelings contribute to these lapses of concentration.
- **Nightmares** - Nightmares are common for children. When safety and security are threatened, thoughts and feelings are likely to be expressed in the form of frightening dreams.

BEHAVIORS

- Eating changes, more or less
- Absentmindedness
- Withdrawal from others
- Avoiding places or people who remind one of deceased
- Searching and crying out for the deceased
- Sighing
- Crying

WHEN GRIEF PROLONGS AND DOES NOT GO AWAY

It's normal to feel sad, numb, or angry following a loss. But as time passes, these emotions should become less intense as they accept the loss and start to move forward. If teens aren't feeling better over time, or the grief is getting worse, it may be a sign that the grief has developed into a more serious problem, such as complicated grief or major depression.

COMPLICATED GRIEF

The sadness of losing someone never goes away completely, but it shouldn't remain center stage. If the pain of the loss is so constant and severe that it keeps them from resuming their normal life, they may be suffering from a condition known as *complicated grief*. Complicated grief is like being stuck in an intense state of mourning. They may have trouble accepting the death long after it has occurred or be so preoccupied with the person who died that it disrupts their daily routine and undermines their other relationships.

Symptoms of complicated grief include:

- Intense longing and yearning for the deceased
- Searching for the person in familiar places
- Intrusive thoughts of the loved one
- Avoiding things that remind them of their loved one
- Denial of the death and a sense of disbelief
- Extreme anger and bitterness over the loss
- Feeling that life is empty and meaningless

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRIEF AND DEPRESSION

Distinguishing between grief and clinical depression isn't always easy, since they share many symptoms. However, there are ways to tell the difference. Remember, grief is a roller coaster. It involves a wide variety of emotions and a mix of good and bad days. Even when in the middle of the grieving process, they will have moments of pleasure or happiness. With depression, on the other hand, the feelings of emptiness and despair are constant.

Symptoms of depression are:

- Intense, pervasive sense of guilt
- Thoughts of suicide
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Slow speech and body movement
- Inability to function and work

HOW TO HELP THE TEEN DEAL WITH LOSS

Encourage them to take care of themselves:

When grieving, it's more important than ever for the teen to take care of themselves. The stress of a major loss can quickly deplete their energy and emotional reserves. Looking after their physical and emotional needs will help them get through this difficult time.

- Face feelings: Help them to not suppress their grief but acknowledge what they are feeling. Trying to avoid feelings of sadness and loss only prolongs the grieving process. Unresolved grief can also lead to complications such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and health problems.
- Express feelings in a tangible or creative way. Encourage the teen to write about their loss in a journal.

- Look after their physical health. The mind and body are connected. When they feel good physically, they'll also feel better emotionally. Combat stress and fatigue by getting enough sleep, eating right, and exercising. Encourage them not to use alcohol or drugs to numb the pain of grief or lift their mood artificially.
- Help them to plan ahead for grief "triggers". Anniversaries, holidays, and milestones can reawaken memories and feelings. Be prepared for an emotional wallop, and know that it's completely normal.

Be prepared to answer their questions:

Answer their questions about death simply and honestly. Children can be fearful about death. Give them a chance to talk about their fears and listen when they express their fears. Death is an ever-present fact of life, yet even adults face it only with difficulty. Teach them that death is part of life. Parents often avoid talking about death in an effort to protect children from unpleasantness. Instead, look for teachable moments. Wilting flowers, changing seasons or the death of a family pet provides an opportunity to show death as a part of life.

Help them to recognize fears and overcome them.

Allow the child to talk about those things that are causing them to be fearful. Work through feelings such as what is going to happen to us? Who will look after me? Etc.

Help them to cherish their memories:

Allow them to talk about the loved one who died. Look through photo albums, talk about funny things the deceased said or reminisce about pleasant experiences.

ASSIGNMENT

Task one:

Mrs Jones has come to you needing help with her young son who is not listening to her rules about staying home when she has to go to work. Her 15 year old son is sneaking out the house to go and be with his friends instead of doing his homework when she is working night shift. Mrs Jones is a single parent because of an ugly divorce that occurred when her son was 10 years old. In an essay discuss the various issues that you will deal with when counselling her son, Jim.

Task two:

Prepare a Bible Study on the “Love of Father God” that you will be able to use to teach a twelve year old girl who has experienced sexual abuse from her father.

Task three:

Provide a brief point form summary of how you would counsel the follow people who are angry because of:

- Unrealistic discipline of their parents
- Being constantly shouted at by the parents for not doing anything (the parents are alcoholics)
- The loss of a sister
- A mom and dad having a trial separation

Task Four:

What advice would you give to a mother who has come to you for some counselling for her daughter who is taking the divorce of her parents very hard?

Task Five:

If you were to explain death and why God has allowed it to come to a father of a happy family of three children, how would you go about doing this?

PART THREE

PROBLEMS WITH “MY FRIENDS”

Friendships during the early teens and teenage years are vital to every teenager. This is as a result of:

Changing Patterns: As they mature, their friendship patterns change. The preadolescent child tends to have friendship activities that focus on their neighborhood, activities, school classes and sports teammates. It is usually not a matter of much choice when being with friends. They tend to pal around with the people who are proximate. But teenagers, as they mature into adults, tend to be more selective of their friends. Friendships for teens are based more on status, common interests, values and personalities.

Teens' Friends Become Part of their Baseline: During their childhood years, children tend to look to mom, dad and siblings for their emotional needs. As the teenager years unfold, and the teen becomes more independent from parents, the close emotional relationships tend to move more toward their peers. The teen will largely find their needs for understanding, support and guidance coming more from friends than from family.

Friends Define Social Status: Every high school has its groups or cliques. Teens usually will find themselves in one of these groups, largely based on the friends they choose.

Teen Friendships Move From Same Gender to Other Gender: For most children, their early friendships are mostly same gender. Best friends are almost always two boys or two girls. But as teens mature and the hormones take over, friendships begin to shift into mixed groups of boys and girls, and later to some level of pairing off. Early teen friendship groups help teens explore their new feelings and get to a comfort level with the opposite sex.

Peer relationships are very important to teens.

- Friendships provide teens with opportunities to develop conflict resolution skills. Teens can learn how to end a fight and still remain friends.
- Friends provide fun and excitement for teens through companionship and recreation.

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- Friends also give advice to one another. Teens talk through lots of issues and problems with their friends.
- Loyalty is a valued trait in friendship. Teens are looking for loyal allies that can help them out at school or in their own neighborhood.
- Friendships also provide stability during times of stress or transition. It is helpful to teens to have a friend who is going through the same situations and can ease the anxieties of the times.

However, with the changes in the priority that friendships have on the teenager, some problems may develop that will cause the teen to experience the need for a counsellor. These problem areas can be negative peer pressure, bullying, loneliness and the inability to make the right choices when making friends. The counsellor therefore needs to be aware of these friendship issues and help the teen through this.

PEER PRESSURE



Every person wants to be loved and accepted by their family and friends and therefore it is natural to desire approval, affection and good will of friends. However, the desire to be accepted by others can be good (Hebrews 10:24) but it can also be negative in that it takes a person in the wrong direction.

WHAT IS PEER PRESSURE?

Peer pressure is defined as being social pressure by members of one's peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted. It is a pressure that is exerted so that a person acts a certain way or does a certain thing.

POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE

The ability to develop healthy friendships and peer relationships depends on a teen's self-identity, self-esteem, and self-reliance. At its best, peer pressure can mobilize the teen's energy, motivate for success, and encourage them to conform to healthy behavior. Peers can and do act as positive role models. Peers can and do demonstrate appropriate social behaviors. Peers often listen to, accept, and understand the frustrations, challenges, and concerns associated with being a teenager.

NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE

The need for acceptance, approval, and belonging is vital during the teen years. Teens who feel isolated or rejected by their peers — or in their family — are more likely to engage in risky behaviors in order to fit in with a group. In such situations, peer pressure can impair good judgment and fuel risk-taking behavior, drawing a teen away from the family and positive influences and luring into dangerous activities.

A powerful negative peer influence can motivate a teen to make choices and engage in behavior that his or her values might otherwise reject. Some teens will risk being grounded, losing their parents' trust, or even facing jail time, just to try and fit in or feel like they have a group of friends they can identify with and who accept them. Sometimes, teens will change the way they dress, their friends, give up their values or create new ones, depending on the people they hang around with.

WHY DO PEOPLE GIVE INTO PEER PRESSURE?

- They want to fit in,
- They are worried that others make fun of them if they do not go along with the group,
- They are curious because “everyone is doing it”,
- They do it for personal gain (job, promotion, get girlfriend or boy friend, popularity, etc.)

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PEER PRESSURE?

The Bible warns a person to avoid any peer pressure that will lead to do evil:

- Exodus 23:2 says, “Do not join a crowd that intends to do evil. When you are on the witness stand, do not be swayed in your testimony by the opinion of the majority.”
- Proverbs 1:10-15 “My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them! They may say, “Come and join us. Let's hide and kill someone! Let's ambush the innocent! Let's swallow them alive as the grave swallows its victims. Though they are in the prime of life, they will go down into the pit of death. And the loot we'll get! We'll fill our houses with all kinds of things! Come on, throw in your lot with us; we'll split our loot with you.” Don't go along with them, my child! Stay far away from their paths.”
- Proverbs 4:14-15 “Do not do as the wicked do or follow the path of evildoers. Avoid their haunts. Turn away and go somewhere else,”

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- 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 "Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character." Come to your senses and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't even know God."
- Psalm 1:1-2 "Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with scoffers. But they delight in doing everything the Lord wants; day and night they think about his law."

EXAMPLES OF PEER PRESSURE FOR GOOD AND BAD

- Noah stood alone for 120 years while he built the ark (Genesis 6:5-9, 22)
- Aaron built the golden calf because of pressure (Exodus 32:1, 21-24)
- Joshua & Caleb stood alone in their description of Canaan and were almost going to be put to death because of their testimony (Numbers 13:26-14:10)
- The rulers chose the glory of men rather than God (John 12:42-43)
- Peter scared to be counted with Jesus, denied Him (Matthew 26:69-75)

HOW DOES PEER PRESSURE AFFECT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND FAMILY LIFE?

ACADEMICS:

Positive peer pressure might:

- Improve grades
- Improve confidence
- Result in trying more things or getting involved at school

Negative peer pressure might:

- Lower school attendance
- Drop grades
- Impact ability to get into college
- Change group of friends

FAMILY LIFE

Positive peer pressure might:

- Help relationships
- Result in more time with family
- Improve communication

Negative peer pressure might:

- Increase distance from family members
- Result in less time spent at home
- Increase negative behaviours/attitude
- Hurt communication

HOW TO HELP THE TEEN WHO EXPERIENCES PEER PRESSURE

Teach them that their love and acceptance is from God

Acceptance of self is grounded in the fact that we are loved and accepted by God. When a teenager has grasped the fact that they are loved by God and are accepted even in a sinner state, they will learn to find their acceptance in God and not others.

Make a commitment to please God not others

The teenager needs to decide what they want the most. Whether being popular and accepted by men, or to be right with God is most important to them. Help the teen to see the difference between these two positions from the Bible's viewpoint. Remember to tell them that God's "rules" for their life are for their own security – it is because He loves them that certain things are not condoned.

Galatians 1:10 "Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 "Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You are doing this already, and we encourage you to do so more and more."

Help them know who they are:

Enable them to develop a strong sense of identity. Being clear about what they want out of life, what their values are so that they will be less likely to compromise them for someone else. It is easier to cope with negative peer pressure when it is in opposition to your beliefs.

Help them build their self esteem:

Feeling bad about themselves makes them more vulnerable to peer pressure.

Encourage them to dare to be different:

Joshua 24:14-15 ""So honor the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. But if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

Help them to be wise in their choice of friends

Encourage them to surround themselves with like-minded people. Everyone needs a support system. If their confidants are people who wouldn't steer them in the wrong direction, then that's one less source of negative peer pressure for them to worry about. It is easy to stand with the crowd, but it takes courage to stand alone! They will need to decide ahead of time whether they will stand with others and do things that they are not comfortable with or whether they will stand alone when they are called to compromise their moral purity.

Teach them to listen to their own morals and values:

Teach them to listen to their conscience and the voice of the Holy Spirit. If they feel uncomfortable, even if their friends seem to be OK with what's going on, it means that something about the situation is wrong for them. This kind of decision-making is part of becoming self-reliant and learning more about who they are.

Teach them to think for themselves when making decisions

Exodus 23:2-3, "Don't join mobs intent on evil. When on the witness stand, don't be swayed in your testimony by the mood of the majority present, and do not slant your testimony in favor of a man just because he is poor."

Teach them that peer pressure can lead to bad decisions and consequences:

Peer pressure often leads to bad decision making. Matthew 14:9, "The king was grieved, but because of his oath, and because he didn't want to back down in front of his guests, he issued the necessary orders."

Peer pressure can lead to tragic consequences. Luke 23:23-24, "But they shouted louder and louder for Jesus' death, and their voices prevailed. So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded."

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR TEENS

Parents can support positive peer relationships by giving their teenagers their love, time, boundaries, and encouragement to think for themselves.

- Having a positive relationship with their teen. When parent-teen interactions are characterized by warmth, kindness, consistency, respect, and love, the relationship will flourish, as will the teen's self-esteem, mental health, spirituality, and social skills.
- Being genuinely interested in the teen's activities. This allows parents to know their teen's friends and to monitor behavior, which is crucial in keeping teens out of trouble. When misbehavior does occur, parents who have involved their children in setting family rules and consequences can expect less flack from their children as they calmly enforce the rules. Parents who, together with their children, set firm boundaries and high expectations may find that their children's abilities to live up to those expectations grow.
- Encouraging independent thought and expression. In this way, teens can develop a healthy sense of self and an enhanced ability to resist peer pressure.
- Getting to know the friends of their teen. Learn their names, invite them into your home so you can talk and listen to them, and introduce yourself to their parents.
- Try to not attack their child's friends. Remember that criticizing your teen's choice of friends is like a personal attack.
- Help the teen understand the difference between *image* (expressions of youth culture) and *identity* (who he or she is).
- Keep the lines of communication open and find out why these friends are important to their teenager.

BULLYING



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Most kids have been teased by a sibling or a friend at some point. And it's not usually harmful when done in a playful, friendly, and mutual way, and both kids find it funny. But when teasing becomes hurtful, unkind, and constant, it crosses the line into bullying and needs to stop.

Bullying is intentional tormenting in physical, verbal, or psychological ways. It can range from hitting, shoving, name-calling, threats, and mocking to extorting money and treasured possessions. Some kids bully by shunning others and spreading rumors about them. Others use email, chat rooms, instant messages, social networking websites, and text messages to taunt others or hurt their feelings.

It is similar to other forms of victimization and abuse in that it involves:

- an imbalance of power
- differing emotional tones: the victim will be upset whereas the bully is cool and in control
- blaming the victim for what has happened
- lack of concern on the part of the bully for the feelings and concerns of the victim
- a lack of compassion

WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE ARE BULLIES?

Bullies are very often young people who have been bullied or abused themselves. Sometimes they are teens experiencing life situations they can't cope with, that leaves them feeling helpless and out of control. They may be teens with poor social skills, who do not fit in, who can't meet the expectations of their family or school. They bully to feel competent, successful, to control someone else, to get some relief from their own feelings of powerlessness.

WHO GETS BULLIED?

Not all teens are equally likely to be victimized by bullying behavior. Those who are more prone to be "picked on" tend to have the following characteristics:

- low self-esteem
- insecure
- lack of social skills,
- don't pick up on social cues
- cry or become emotionally distraught easily
- unable to defend or stand up for themselves

Some teens actually seem to provoke their victimization. They may tease bullies, make themselves a target by egging the people on, not knowing when to stop and then not being able to effectively defend themselves when the balance of power shifts to the bully.

Teens who are NOT bullied tend to have better social skills and conflict management skills. They are more willing to assert themselves about differences without being aggressive or confronting. They suggest compromises and alternate solutions. They tend to be more aware of people's feelings and are the ones who can be most helpful in resolving disputes and assisting classmates to get help.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING ON A PERSON'S HEALTH?

Bullying causes injury to health and can make the teen ill. For example:

- constant high levels of stress and anxiety
- frequent illness such as viral infections especially flu and glandular fever, colds, coughs, chest, ear, nose and throat infections (stress plays havoc with your immune system)

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- aches and pains in the joints and muscles with no obvious cause; also back pain with no obvious cause and which won't go away or respond to treatment
- headaches and migraines
- tiredness, exhaustion, constant fatigue
- sleeplessness, nightmares, waking early, waking up more tired than when you went to bed
- flashbacks and replays, obsessiveness, can't get the bullying out of your mind
- irritable bowel syndrome
- skin problems such as eczema, psoriasis, athlete's foot, ulcers, shingles, urticaria
- poor concentration, can't concentrate on anything for long
- bad or intermittently-functioning memory, forgetfulness, especially with trivial day-to-day things
- sweating, trembling, shaking, palpitations, panic attacks
- tearfulness, bursting into tears regularly and over trivial things
- uncharacteristic irritability and angry outbursts
- hypervigilance (feels like but is *not* paranoia), being constantly on edge
- hypersensitivity, fragility, isolation, withdrawal
- reactive depression, a feeling of lethargy, hopelessness, anger, futility and more
- shattered self-confidence, low self-worth, low self-esteem, loss of self-love, etc

HELP FOR THOSE WHO ARE BULLIED

Show them that God does care:

Probably the worst thing about being bullied is the feeling that they are being picked on and that there seems to be nothing that they can do about it. However, knowing that God is there with them - even when they are being bullied, can really help. God understands completely how they feel. He shares their fear, sadness and sense of isolation. Joshua 1:5 says, "No one will be able to stand their ground against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you." Deuteronomy 31:6 says, "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid of them! The Lord your God will go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you."

Help them to overcome their fear:

Fear can hold a significant power over people. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Help them to use the Bible, and the truth about God to combat fear.

Teach them how to react:

Bullies tend to pick on people who they can get a reaction from; they choose kids who get upset and who take the teasing to heart. They also look for kids who won't stand up for themselves, or who they can overpower. It's important to teach them how to react. Teach them to remove themselves away from the person who is bullying them and find a counselor or administrator who can help them.

- **They must not retaliate:** As tempting as it might be to take matters into their own hands, they need to realize that this is not going to solve their problems. Retaliating won't help solve the problem nor will it help them to feel better about themselves. Matthew 5:38-42 "You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it.' But I say, don't resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too. If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow."

- **They must learn to love their enemy:** Leviticus 19:18 ""Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."
- **They must forgive:** Matthew 6:12 "and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us." Colossians 3:13 "You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."
- **Help them to pray for the bully:** Matthew 5:44 "But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!"

OVERCOMING LONELINESS



Loneliness is a difficult thing felt by many people. In a time when people move often, spend less time with their families, and struggle to find a place to really "belong," loneliness is bound to creep in. Loneliness is a feeling of being isolated. It is a feeling of being empty and hollow inside; it is a feeling of isolation and separation from the rest of the world; loneliness is feeling cut-off from ones with whom a person would like to have contact.

Loneliness:

- is an uncomfortable feeling of isolation
- is a negative feeling of being disconnected from others
- causes a person to feel alienated
- happens when a person feels there is no one with whom to share joys and disappointments
- can result in an overwhelming feeling of sadness
- can cause a person to become despondent if nothing is done about it

Loneliness can occur when a person does not have: someone to depend on, someone who understands, a close group of friends, collegial relationships at work or at school, opportunity to express private feelings to another, friends to share enjoyable experiences.

TYPES OF LONELINESS

SITUATIONAL LONELINESS:

Situational loneliness is a response to physical or emotional separation. Death, divorce, life transitions, and personal mobility are the most common causes of situational loneliness. In situational loneliness, intimate relationships are severed, changed, or forever disrupted in some way. This may be brief and contained or long term and overwhelming. The person knows there are those who care, whose support is, perhaps, only a phone call away, but the situation (a job or school) demands separation. The longing that accompanies the separation is intense and compelling. When the separation is permanent (such as through death), the loneliness is more difficult to handle.

EMOTIONAL LONELINESS:

Emotional separation can also lead to loneliness. People can feel lonely when they are surrounded by those with whom they perceive little or no intimate connection. The loneliest people are often in crowds. This sense of disconnectedness accentuates the loneliness and often leads to greater despair. This kind of loneliness is often felt as a form of anxiety, driving some to frantic efforts at superficial connection. When physical separation is coupled with emotional separation, the loneliness can seem unbearable.

CHRONIC LONELINESS:

Chronic loneliness can result from persistent feelings of not belonging or being understood. Chronic loneliness is often rooted in deeply held personal beliefs or social deficits. The person feeling chronically alone and isolated has no hope of “connecting” again in the future. Chronic feelings of loneliness can lead to deep personal isolation and despair, often ending in suicide or angry, violent alienation.

HOW DOES LONELINESS AFFECT PEOPLE?

People experiencing loneliness often feel depressed, anxious, and/or angry. Some may experience physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach pain, and reduced energy. They are often overly self-critical and self-absorbed in their unhappiness.

A primary problem with loneliness is that when people experience it, they often engage in defensive behaviors that may provide some immediate relief from the pain, but in the long run perpetuate the feelings of loneliness. For example, some people who feel lonely withdraw from many of their existing social contacts or from opportunities for contacts with others because they fear rejection. They retreat to the security of their home after school or work and narrow their activities to reading, watching television, or hobbies they can do alone. While learning to spend enjoyable time alone is important and helpful, avoiding social engagement is counterproductive.

Others compensate for their feelings of loneliness by over activity. By working long hours, immersing themselves in campus activities, or occupying themselves with other types of constant activity, they avoid the painful feelings that loneliness can bring. Still others unintentionally sabotage their relationship by exhibiting overly possessive, clinging, depended behavior. Some attempt to anesthetize themselves with food and/or alcohol and other drugs.

All of these behaviors are self-defeating because, while they may provide immediate emotional relief, they tend to confirm the lonely person's irrational self-beliefs about not being worthy of others' friendship or companionship.

HELPING THE TEEN DEAL WITH LONELINESS

Coping with loneliness is a very important skill because at some point teens will experience feelings of loneliness. Teens who know how to recognize loneliness as the temporary feeling it is, use their support system and work through their loneliness do just fine. But those who are overcome by their loneliness are apt to make rash and wrong decisions about where and how to live or who to live with, become severely depressed perhaps turn to drugs or alcohol to feel better and thereby never get a chance to reach their life goals. Success alludes those who are not capable of coping with their loneliness.

Help them to accept the reality of loneliness:

If we deny or dull our senses to loneliness, we may become more alienated from ourselves or become dependant on others. The teen must admit that loneliness is painful, that they cannot continue feeling this way or they will be plunged into despair.

Help them to express their loneliness:

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Encourage them to use a way that feels right for them – words, tears, writing thoughts on paper. As people express it, they usually begin to see the reasons for their state, begin to find sources of strength and experience renewal.

Help them to recognize that loneliness can be changed:

The alternative to viewing loneliness as a defect or as an unalterable personality characteristic is to recognize that loneliness is something that can be changed. It is also important to know that loneliness is a common experience. According to a recent national survey, one quarter of all adults experience painful loneliness at least every few weeks, and the incidence among adolescents and college students is even higher. Loneliness is neither a permanent state nor “bad” in itself. Instead it should be viewed more accurately as a signal or indicator of important needs that are going unmet.

Teach them that God is always with them

2 Timothy 4:16-18 says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Psalms 68:6 says, "You find families for those who are lonely. You set prisoners free and let them prosper, but all who rebel will live in a scorching desert."

Psalms 27:10 says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up."

Help them to develop a relationship with God:

A close relationship with God means that they will

- Know Him personally
- Know His presence
- Know His purpose
- Know His promise

Help them to develop themselves:

They need to think of themselves as a total person and use the time of loneliness to develop themselves.

- They should use alone time to enjoy who they are rather than just existing until they will be with others.
- Keep things (such as books, puzzles or music) that they can use to enjoy in their alone time. Start interests and hobbies.
- Explore the possibility of doing things alone that they usually do with other people (like going to the movies).

Teach them to build friendships:

The cure for loneliness is not to isolate themselves or to gather a great crowd of just anybody around them. The answer is not quantity but quality. Beware of whom you "yoke up with" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Show them that they need to develop characteristics for good relationships. For example the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) and the ability to serve others (Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:2).

To build new relationships they need to:

- Put themselves in new situations where they will meet people. Engage in activities in which they have genuine interest. In so doing they will be more likely to meet the kind of people they are interested in meeting, people with whom they have something in common.
- Work at developing social skills. Practice getting to know others and letting them know you.
- Don't judge new people on the basis of past relationships. Instead, encourage them to see each person from a new perspective.
- Intimate friendships usually develop gradually as people learn to share their inner feelings.

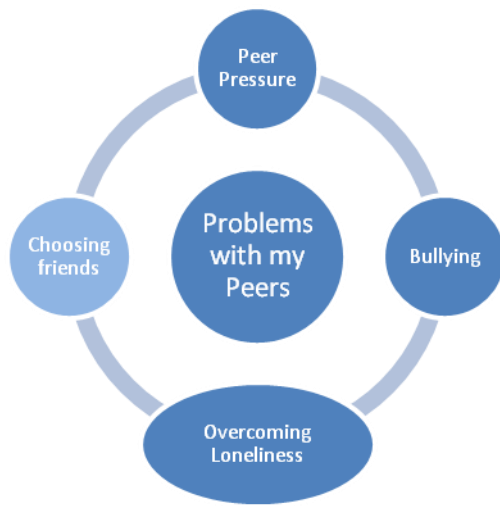
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- Value all of their friendships and their unique characteristics rather than believing that only a romantic relationship will relieve loneliness.

To enrich the friendships and relationships they already have, ensure they contribute the following:

- Stand up for a friend in his or her absence
- Share information and feelings about successes
- Demonstrate emotional support
- Trust each other and confide in one another
- Offer to help a friend when in need

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE WHEN CHOOSING FRIENDS



Everyone has friends of some kind. Some have many friends while others have few. Some have good friends while others have bad friends. All people, especially Christians, need to stop and consider the importance of friends and the impact those friends have on one's life.

THE NEED FOR CLOSE FRIENDS

Since man was created a social being (Genesis 2:18), he needs the close association of others. As humans, we cannot live happy or meaningful lives to ourselves. We need to be with other people. Romans 14:7 states, "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself."

Friends satisfy many needs:

- The need for someone to share our joy and happiness (Rom. 12:15);
- The need for someone to cheer us in times of sadness (Prov. 27:9); and
- The need to help us relax and recreate from the routine and pressures of life.

WHAT IS A FRIEND?

The dictionary defines a friend as "a person who has a real liking for and confidence in another person." W.E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, says it is one who is "loved, dear."

The term "friendship" is found only once in the New Testament (James 4:4). It comes from the Greek word *philia* which is akin to *philos* which is translated "love." Vine suggests it includes the idea of "loving as well as being loved."

The Bible contains examples of friendship which illustrate this idea. Its most classic example is that of the friendship of David and Jonathan. "Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1). The apostle Paul and Timothy developed a liking for and a confidence in one another. "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Tim. 1:3-5).

Sadly, some whom we think are our friends are not good friends. For one to be a good friend he must not only be good to us but also good for us. We need to be careful in choosing only those friends that are good for us. We must not choose a friend like Jonadab who led his friend Amnon, David's son, astray (2 Sam. 13:1-14).

CHOOSE FRIENDS CAREFULLY

"The righteous should CHOOSE HIS FRIENDS CAREFULLY, for the way of the wicked leads them astray." (Proverbs 12:26)

Benefits of Choosing Good God-Friends

Here are six very interesting verses showing why God wants them to have other good, solid Christian friends to share your walk with.

- "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 11:14)
- "A wise man is strong, yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; for by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 24:5)
- "Every purpose is established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war." (Proverbs 20:18)
- "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established." (Proverbs 15:22)

- "Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days." (Proverbs 19:20)
- "Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." (Proverbs 19:27)

SIGNS OF A DESIRABLE FRIEND

- A desirable friend tells you the truth in love. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" Prov.27:6
- A desirable friend gives you good advice. "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from earnest counsel" Prov.27:17
- A desirable friend helps you grow in wisdom. "he who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffer harm" Prov.13:20
- A desirable friend stays close to you. "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" Prov. 18:24
- A desirable friend loves and stands by you. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" Prov. 17:17
- A desirable friend helps in time of trouble. "two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up" Eccl.4:9-10

SIGNS OF AN UNDESIRABLE FRIEND

- An undesirable friend is immoral and has no regard for others. "But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." 1 Corinthians 5:11
- An undesirable friend is changeable and unstable. "Do not join with the rebellious, for those two will send sudden destruction upon them, and who knows what calamities they can bring? Proverbs24:21-22
- An undesirable friend gives ungodly counsel. "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers." Psalm 1:1

- An undesirable friend is a lawless unbeliever. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 2Corinthians.6:14-15
- An undesirable friend is irreverent toward God and His laws. I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. Psalm 119:63

SOME GUIDELINES IN CHOOSING FRIENDS

In order to choose friends wisely, there are certain principles they must employ.

They must begin by applying the principle stated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33 -- "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"

They must then realize it is better to have a few friends, even just one, who will be the right kind of friends than a multitude of the kind who could cause them to lose their souls (Matthew 16:26).

They must choose friends who will be good examples to them and others. In that light, choose friends who:

- Have good morals (1 Cor. 15:33)
- Are modest (1 Tim. 2:9)
- Abstain from drinking alcohol (1 Pet. 4:3)
- Can bridle their tongues (Jas. 1:26)
- Are honest (Luke 8:15)
- Are law-abiding (Rom. 13:1-7)

They must select as friends those who respect God and things spiritual -- those who regard spiritual things as more important than material things. They must not be deceived into thinking that they can choose otherwise and not be affected.

The main quality to look for in a close friend is how much that person loves and fears God.

ASSIGNMENT

Task one:

Provide the counsel that you would give to a person whom the school counsellor has asked you to counsel who is known as the “School Bully”. In what way would you be able to help this child stop doing what they are doing to others? What are the underlying causes for their actions?

Task two:

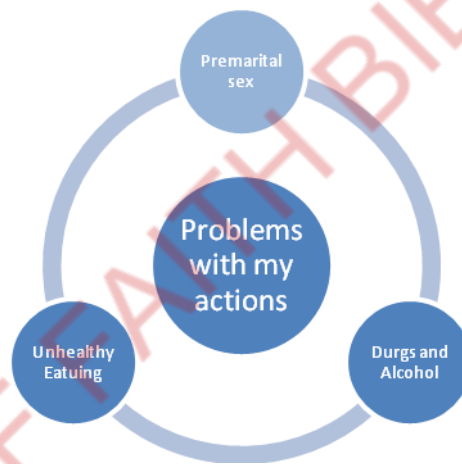
Provide a Bible study that you would be able to give to a person who lives in fear because of being bullied. What scriptures would you provide them so that they could meditate on being bold and courageous?

PART FOUR

PROBLEMS WITH MY ACTIONS

When a teen suffers from low self esteem, when they feel like they do not fit in or are unable to meet the high expectations of their teachers and family, often times, they will begin to act in a negative manner. In order to fill their love needs they will begin to crave love from wrong relationships that could end in pregnancy. In order to drown their hopelessness and sense of being a failure, their depression could lead them to substance abuse and eventually suicide. The counsellor therefore needs to deal with not only the actions of the teen but the underlying causes of their feelings that they need to behave in a certain manner to fill their needs.

PREMARITAL SEX



WHY TEENS HAVE SEX

Inner drives:

Normal adolescents have sexual interests and feelings. They also deeply need love and affirmation. As a result, they can become emotionally and sexually attracted to others around them and drawn toward physical intimacy. Sadly, our culture practically drowns kids in sexual temptation.

Seductive messages:

Virtually all popular media (movies, TV, videos, music, the Internet) as well as educational, healthcare and governmental organizations have been

influenced by the sexual revolution of the 1960s. As a result, unless they live in complete isolation, adolescents are regularly exposed to sexually provocative material that expresses immoral viewpoints, fires up sexual desires and wears down resistance to physical intimacy. Even in the "safe" confines of the classroom, a teenager's natural modesty may be dismantled during explicit presentations about sexual matters in mixed company.

Lack of supervision:

Because of fragmented families, complex parental work schedules, easier access to transportation and at times, carelessness among adults who should know better, adolescents today are more likely to find opportunities to be alone together for long stretches of time. In such circumstances, nature is likely to take its course, even when a commitment has been made to wait until the wedding night for sex.

Overbearing, overprotective supervision:

Adolescents who are smothered in a controlling, micromanaging, suspicious environment are strong candidates for rebellion once the opportunity arises. Ironically, a big (and dangerous) rebellion may represent an effort to break loose from an overabundance of trivial constraints. Parents can set appropriate boundaries while still entrusting adolescents with increasing responsibility to manage themselves and their sexuality.

Peer pressure:

This ever-present influence comes in three powerful forms:

- A general sense that "everyone is doing it except me."
- Personal comments from friends and acquaintances — including disparaging remarks like "Hey, check out Jason, the last virgin!"
- Direct pressure from another person who wants a sexual experience or an invitation from a willing potential partner. Come-ons, smooth talk and outright coercion by men who want sex with a woman are timeworn negative behaviors. Resistance to them may be lowered by a need for closeness and acceptance and the mistaken belief that physical intimacy will secure a man's love. In recent years a turnabout has become common: A young man is informed by his girlfriend that she wants to have sex with him. In a situation like this, personal convictions that sex is intended for marriage will be put to the ultimate test.

Lack of reasons (and desire) to wait:

The majority of teenagers keep an informal mental tally of reasons for and against premarital sex. Inner longings and external pressure pull them toward it, while standards taught at home and church, medical warnings and commonsense restraints put on the brakes.

For many teenagers (even those who intend to abstain until marriage), decisions about sex tend to be made based on the drift of this internal "vote count." When the moment of truth arrives, the tally may be close — or a landslide in the wrong direction. Adolescents with a shaky or negative self-concept may be particularly vulnerable to sexual involvement when one of the reasons is the possibility of winning approval from their peers.

PREMARITAL SEX - POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

"Is it ok to have premarital sex?" That is a common question among teens and engaged couples. On the positive side of the scale, there is acceptance from peers, hope for pleasure, and the fulfillment of sexual desires. The negative side of the scale carries the weights of morals, fear of pregnancy or disease, and guilt.

PREMARITAL SEX - IS IT MORAL?

Morality is a factor for many people when deciding whether or not to have premarital sex. The Bible refers to premarital sex as fornication. Fornication is sexual intercourse between people who are not married to each other. The only distinction the Bible makes between premarital sex and adultery is that adultery involves married persons while fornication involves those who are unmarried. Premarital sex is just as much of a sin as adultery and all other forms of sexual immorality. The Bible explains, "...The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13). Verse 18 of this chapter goes on to say, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body." Galatians 5:19 speaks the same, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity..." Ephesians 5:3 says it most plainly, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." From these verses, we see that the Bible promotes complete and total abstinence from premarital sex.

PREMARITAL SEX - IS IT SAFE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY?

Another consideration when deciding about premarital sex is safety. Condoms do not significantly reduce the risk of contracting other sexually transmitted diseases. Most people don't consider the emotional effects of premarital sex. After engaging in premarital sex, many people express feelings of guilt, embarrassment, distrust, resentment, lack of respect, tension, and so much more.

TEN REASONS WHY TEENS HAVE SEX

- **Everybody Does It**

While the media and people in school may make it seem like everyone is having sex, there are just as many Christian teens (and non-Christians, too) waiting until marriage.

- **It's No Big Deal**

Sex is a big deal. There are a lot of emotions and spiritual struggles that come from having had sex outside of marriage. It is one of the reasons God placed such an emphasis on sex and relationships in the Bible. Sex is a beautiful act that comes out of the marriage covenant, and it means more than just an action.

- **Virginity is a State of Mind**

Some people use the term "technical virgin" when describing their sexual status. Usually this means that the person has not had a sexual act that involved penetration. Virginity is more than that. Virginity is not a state of mind, but it is the conscious choice to not involve oneself in sexual acts until after marriage. Usually this excuse is used if someone wants to justify participating in sexual activity.

- **Sex and Love are the Same Thing**

Sex and love are very different, but they are meant to complement one another. If you are in love it does not mean you should have sex. Sex is an act. Love is an emotion. They are very different, and it can be dangerous to mix them up. The teen should never feel like they have to have sex with someone just because they want to show them they love them. There are plenty of non-sexual ways to show love to someone.

- **Sex is a Minor Sin**

Pre-marital sex is sin. Sin is sin. However, it is dangerous to think that sex is a minor or equal sin to all others, because it can put you in a frame of mind to make bad choices. Sexual sin is still a defiance of God, and no sin is acceptable to God. Yes, they can be forgiven, but they will have to live with the sin they have committed, which can be difficult if they are not prepared to deal with sex emotionally.

- **Oral Sex Isn't Really Sex**

Oral sex is a sexual act. Just because Christian teens are not having sex in the textbook fashion, it is still a sexual act that bonds a man and a woman together.

- **Third Base Isn't a Big Deal**

Third base, also known as "heavy petting," is a big deal, because it can lead to other things. Not only is it a form of sexual action, but it can lead to sexual intercourse. It is very easy for Christian teens to get caught up in the moment and forget about any desire to stay abstinent. Sin is very tempting, and it does not always come with warning or stop signs. Going to Third Base can be a danger zone.

- **My Will Can Overcome Any Temptation**

God's will can overcome any temptation. If a teen feels they have the strength alone to conquer any temptation, they are setting themselves up for trouble. Man is known for falling into sin, especially when there is an overconfidence in the self. Christian teens need to keep their eyes on God, and allow God to help set boundaries so they can resist the temptation. The Bible is full of helpful advice when it comes to coping with temptation, and it can be a useful tool.

- **Watching Porn or Masturbating is Less of a Sin Than Having Sex**

A lot of people believe that pornography and masturbation are helpful in preventing a person from having sex. However, having sex is not just about the act, but it is about the frame of mind. If you have lust in your heart while you are watching pornographic movies or masturbating, then there is sin there.

- **I've Already Had Sex, So It's Too Late for Me**

It is never too late. While the idea of "born-again virgin" may seem a little like "technical virgin," it is not the same thing. Many Christian teens that have already had sex choose to act as if they have never had sex and vow to wait

until marriage. Having sex is not the end of the world. God is very forgiving, and He smiles at those who return to Him with a desire to do His will. While the temptation for someone who has had sex can be even stronger than the virgin, it can be overcome with God's help.

THE EFFECTS OF PREMARITAL SEX

PHYSICAL EFFECTS

1 Corinthians 6:18 "Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body."

- Peace of mind: Sex before marriage is a sin against the body. Sinning against the body means losing respect for your body, as well as the body of the one you are involved with. Once respect is lost, it becomes easier to indulge in promiscuous sex. Losing respect then leads to a warped view of love and centers the definition of love around the physical. The emotional needs which God created are not met in casual sex but in the loving commitment of a mate. Only in marriage is it possible for sexual relationships to reaffirm the dignity and uniqueness of each sex partner. Sex combined with love in marriage makes us want to give to our mate — not take. Waiting as God commands gives peace of mind which affects our physical health.
- STD's: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) can kill or cripple them. There are now over 50 STDs, and AIDS is not the only one that kills.
- Pregnancy: Birth control methods are sometimes unreliable, and the high rate of failure for condoms is not understood among many teens. At best, among those who are sexually active, 1 in 6 condoms will fail, and at worst 1 in

SPIRITUAL EFFECTS

God blesses purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (*Matthew 5:8*). "Watch your heart with all diligence, for from it spring the issues of life" (*Proverbs 4:23*). We are to be "wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil" (*Romans 16:19*). "Abstain from sexual immorality ... God has called us for purity" (*1 Thessalonians 4:3-5,7*). Clearly God's word forbids any type of sex outside of marriage. There are spiritual consequences any time we disobey God.

"God will judge fornicators and adulterers" (*Hebrews 13:4*). Sexual sins brought destruction to Sodom and Gomorrah in *Genesis 19*. Many Bible characters committed sexual sins and were judged by God. Great trouble and grief came

to Lot and his daughters, to Shechem, Reuben, Judah and Tamar, Samson, and David. Judgment from God may be immediate as in the death of David's son or come in future consequences we will face. Medical science may eliminate or lessen some consequences of sin, but it cannot remove my accountability before God. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Hosea 5:6). It causes us to be a bad influence on others, both Christians and non-Christians. Sexual purity is a way to show respect for others and to confirm their dignity as human beings. It is impossible to show someone the love of God while engaging in immorality with that person. When we maintain sexual purity, we can be channels of God's love and can accurately represent him to others.

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit, and *"against such there is no law"* (Galatians 5:23). Waiting for something builds excitement, as in waiting for a birthday. Sex is something we wait our whole life for until we finally partake of it. A godly character results from patience and perseverance. When we wait for sex till the proper time and place, our character is developed and self-esteem is built. We develop self-control which is required to live a godly life. Waiting builds trust, and God's plan is for marriage to be built on a basic trust factor. Sexual involvement almost always wipes out trust in a relationship. In surveys conducted, it is found that "sexual intimacy produces more broken relationships than strengthened ones."

EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

God's plan gives protection from being put on a performance basis. When put on a performance basis with another person, one is accepted only if he or she acts or does something the way the other person wants. They are respected not for who they are, but for what they do. Their value and dignity is lost. A boy says, "I love you if you will have sex with me" or "because you are pretty," rather than "I love you." That is conditional love, and is worthless for building a committed relationship. Without the committed bonds of marriage, sex is inherently a selfish act done for personal satisfaction or gain. We must continue to please for the relationship to continue and that leaves one in a constant state of insecurity. God protects us from being put on a performance basis by reserving sex for the commitment of marriage.

The emotional baggage that often comes with premarital sex includes sexual dysfunctions in marriage. Many end up in counseling or therapy to deal with problems related to "teenage" sex. Studies have shown that premarital sex also increases the rate of cheating after marriage. Teens don't know that when they are young, but God knew it when he gave the rules in his "Owner's Manual."

Guilt is another consequence of violating God's standard of chastity until marriage. This has long-term effects on future relationships in marriage, and may haunt and affect a person longer than any other consequence. To have the sex act linked with guilt in one's emotions because of premarital activity, causes the joy intended by God for husband and wife to be robbed and clouded.

Guilt is an awareness of having transgressed a standard of right and wrong. Or it may be just a lingering doubt of thinking that some act was wrong. Our society is plagued by those two kinds of guilt. The first is a moral guilt, which Christians are subject to, which tells us specifically when we have stepped outside God's boundaries of conduct. It is a conscious awareness of specific transgressions. The other kind of guilt might be called a floating sense of guilt.

HELPING THE TEEN WHO HAS HAD PREMARITAL SEX

Encourage them to repent and confess their sins:

1 John 1:9 "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong."

Psalms 32:3-5 "When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone."

Teach them that they are forgiven:

There is no sin that God cannot forgive. The Bible promises that they can be forgiven and spiritually purified as long as they repent, confess their sins and believe in the name of Jesus Christ. God's forgiveness means that He will never use their mistakes to hold against them.

"Neither do I condemn you; *go and sin no more*" (John 8:3-11).

Many who have violated God's laws of sexual conduct have come to see the kind of damage such sins have brought on themselves and others. They rightfully wonder what they can do next. Jesus' words provide clear direction. Jesus told her that if she made a clean break from her past sexual sins she would be completely forgiven. This is the essence of what the Bible calls *repentance*—to recognize our sinful ways, to determine to leave that sinful life and, with God's help, to *change*, to replace our greedy, selfish nature with a godly nature focused on obedience to Him.

God forgives every sin upon repentance. Jesus, as the Son of God, had authority to tell the woman she could be completely forgiven. As the Son of Man, He provided compassionate understanding and support.

Help them to forgive themselves:

Upon repentance, we should also strive to *forgive ourselves* so that guilt regarding past sexual sins doesn't carry forward in a negative attitude towards God's gift of sex and jeopardize a happy, joyful, loving intimate relationship in marriage. Once forgiven, we need to see ourselves as God sees us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "some of you" were formerly "fornicators, ... adulterers,... homosexuals, [and] sodomites," but they had been washed and sanctified—made *holy*—through the forgiveness made possible by Jesus' sacrifice and God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Though some physical penalties may have persisted, the spiritual penalty of their sins was completely removed. God will clear the record if they seek Him in heartfelt repentance. He promises us that, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Provide them with ways that they can overcome temptations

- Help them to recognize their tendency toward sin.

James 1:14 explains that we are tempted when we become enticed by our own natural desires. The first step toward avoiding temptation, is recognizing our human tendency to be tempted by our own fleshly desires. Temptation is a given, so don't be surprised by it. Rather, expect to be tempted. Be prepared for it.

- Encourage them to avoid places, people, and things that tempt them.

"Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14) "Do no think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

- Teach them to flee temptation

The Bible does not tell us that we should fight against temptation. It says we should run away from the things (and the people) that tempt us. Paul wrote:

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	<i>New King James Version</i>	<i>New Century Version</i>
1 Corinthians 6:18	Flee sexual immorality.	Run away from sexual sin.
1 Corinthians 10:14	Flee from idolatry.	Run away from the worship of idols.
1 Timothy 6:9-11	Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things...	Those who want to become rich bring temptation to themselves and are caught in a trap. They want many foolish and harmful things that ruin and destroy people. The love of money causes all kinds of evil. Some people have left the faith, because they wanted to get more money, but they have caused themselves much sorrow. But you, man of God, run away from all those things...
2 Timothy 2:22	Flee also youthful lusts.	But run away from the evil young people like to do.

How do we do this?

When you unexpectedly find yourself in a tempting situation, GET OUT FAST! Don't be so foolish as to think you can stay in the situation but not give into temptation. Joseph gives a good example. (Genesis 39:11-12)

- Pray!

"The only temptation that has come to you is that which everyone has. But you can trust God, who will not permit you to be tempted more than you can stand. But when you are tempted, he will also give you a way to escape so that you will be able to stand it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

We are not strong enough to resist temptation alone. We need God's help. When you see temptation coming, *immediately* cry out, "Lord, help me! Show me Your way of escape!"

- Help them to resist with the Word of truth.

Hebrews 4:12 says God's Word is living and active. 2 Cor. 10:4-5 "We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds. With these weapons we break down every proud argument that keeps people from knowing God. With these weapons we conquer their rebellious ideas, and we teach them to obey Christ."

Though it can be helpful to read God's Word when they're being tempted, sometimes that's not practical. Even better is to practice reading the Word daily, so that eventually they have so much of it inside, they are ready whenever temptation comes. If they are reading through the Bible regularly, they will have the full counsel of God at their disposal.

- Remember that sin always has consequences.

"For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23) Our sins are never secret. God sees and knows them all. When we deliberately choose to sin, we reject God's authority as God, and we remove ourselves from His protection. We see this cycle played out repeated in Israel's history through the whole Old Testament. Even though we may not recognize it, sin always has destructive consequences. The Bible is full of examples of "small" sins that eventually destroyed people's lives..

- Eve's desire to be "wise as God" and Adam's failure to protect her (Genesis 3)
- Cain's hatred of his brother Abel (Genesis 4)
- Abraham and Sarah's impatience (Genesis 16)
- David's lust (2 Samuel 11)
- Solomon's polygamy (1 Kings 11)
- Greed and dishonesty (Joshua 7; 1 Samuel 15; John 12; Acts 5)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23 NIV)

- Show them the importance of repenting quickly when they fail

In several places the Bible tells us the best way to resist temptation is to flee from it (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). Yet still we all fail from time to time. We fail to flee.

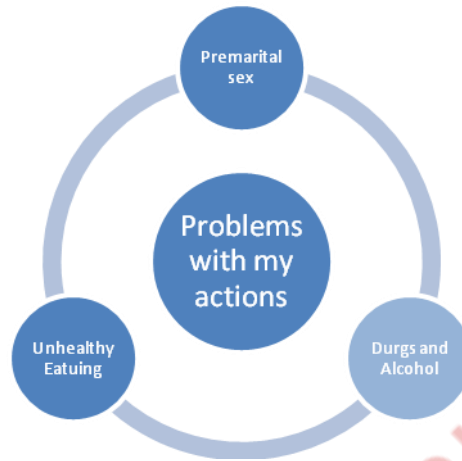
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Teach them the benefits of abstinence from now on

Why is abstinence important?

- They will have a clear conscience with God.
- They will have peace of mind in life and future relationships, and marriage.
- They will have more self-respect and more respect for each other and will be respected by other people. Always remember, in a healthy relationship, respect precedes love. And premarital sex only throws away self respect and respect for their partner.
- They will one day enter marriage with a more positive outlook and without carrying emotional baggage.
- They will have a significantly better chance in having a more satisfying and more stable marriage.
- They will have longer lasting relationship. Premarital sex surprisingly breaks up more dating couples than any other factor.
- There will be no comparing or being compared sexually in marriage. It also means "being free to enjoy maximum sex, maximum leisure, maximum satisfaction, and maximum liberty, in the way God intended" that is in the covenant of marriage.
- They will have no worries about pregnancy and STDs.
- They will have less worries about having a bad reputation.

SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS



WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

Substance abuse is a broad term for addiction or inappropriate use of a chemical substance to alter one's mental, emotional or physical state, whether the substance is ingested orally, injected intravenously or inhaled. Abuse doesn't always involve or lead to addiction, while dependence is the therapeutic term that defines addiction. Substance abuse generally damages one's health, because the substances are often extremely toxic and dangerous.

An addiction is an enslaving, destructive dependency on something in order to help cope with life.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Teenagers at risk for developing serious alcohol and drug problems include those:

- with a family history of substance abuse
- who are depressed
- who have low self-esteem
- who feel like they don't fit in or are out of the mainstream

WHY DO TEENS CLING TO ADDICTIONS?

Addictions are not merely diversions of choice. They are used as lifeboats for survival. They give something that will be able to bring order to the teen's life. They provide a predictable relief in an unpredictable and painful world.

Therefore teens become addicted because:

- Of the pursuit of the relief:

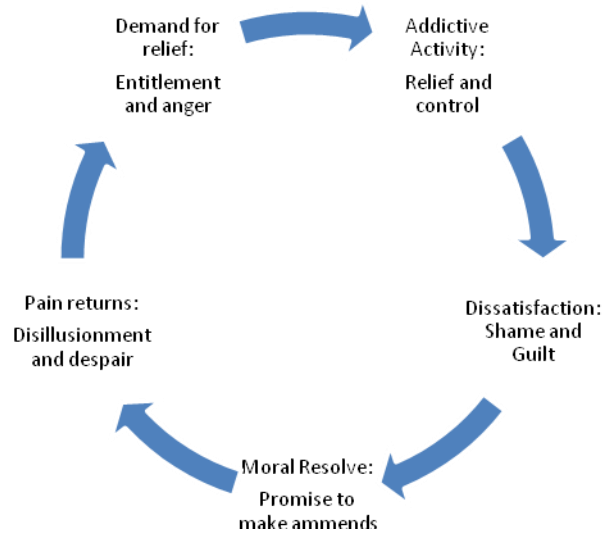
It is natural to try and relieve pain that is felt. The addict uses addictions to provide for the remedy to forget pain – even if only for a while. Alcoholism drowns sorrows whilst drugs turns a person's lows into highs. Addictions often begin as a pursuit of pleasure to numb the discomfort of pain but this pain soon multiplies as the teen becomes more addicted.

- Of the pursuit of power

Addictions also provide an illusion of control. They provide a predictable way of changing the way we feel about ourselves and others.

WHAT IS THE ADDICTIVE CYCLE?

As the teen loses more and more of himself to the addiction the pleasure decreases. Moments of relief are replaced by lingering shame. They feel guilty having a habit that is socially unaccepted and become afraid of being discovered. They therefore try and quit only to find that they are unable to do so. This draws the teen even closer to the addiction



WARNING SIGNS OF TEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PHYSICAL

- fatigue
- repeated health complaints
- red and glazed eyes
- lasting cough

EMOTIONAL

- personality change
- sudden mood changes
- irritability
- irresponsible behavior
- low self-esteem
- poor judgment
- depression
- general lack of interest

FAMILY

- starting arguments
- negative attitude
- breaking rules
- withdrawing from family
- secretiveness

SCHOOL

- decreased interest
- negative attitude
- drop in grades
- many absences
- truancy
- discipline problems

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- new friends who make poor decisions and are not interested in school or family activities
- problems with the law
- changes to less conventional styles in dress and music

WHAT ARE THE MARKS OF AN ADDICT?

There are at least five tell tale signs of an addict:

- Absorbing focus:

All addictions consume time and energy. They are not merely past times. They are obsessions and preoccupations that demand more and more from the teen.

- Increasing tolerance:

The teen will find that they need increasing amounts of the drug / alcohol to maintain the same effect that they previously had.

- Growing denial:

Because there is so much to lose if the addiction is taken away from them, addicts usually hide their addiction. They begin to convince themselves that they can stop whenever they want to and therefore become accomplished actors.

- Damaging consequences:

There is no such thing as a harmless addiction. All addictions are destructive either directly or indirectly. They destroy relationships, health, ability to have self control etc.

- Painful withdrawal:

Anything that is habitually used in order to take away pain will cause more pain if removed. Addictions give the teen a sense of well being especially if they are battling to cope with certain things in their life. The removal of the addiction can result in angry outbursts, panic attacks, depressions, physical problems etc. When deprived of their addictions that usually feel lost.

ARE THEY ADDICTED?

2 Peter 2:19 "They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves to sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you."

Illegal substances—like heroin, cocaine and methamphetamines—are extremely addictive. If any substance becomes so important that you are willing to break the law, risking legal consequences, you are becoming addicted.

Help them fill out the following questionnaire

- Do you ever use alone?
- Have you ever substituted one drug for another, thinking that one particular drug was the problem?
- Have you ever manipulated or lied to a doctor to obtain prescription drugs?
- Have you ever stolen drugs or stolen to obtain drugs?
- Do you regularly use a drug when you wake up or when you go to bed?
- Have you ever taken one drug to overcome the effects of another?
- Do you avoid people and places that do not approve of you using drugs?
- Have you ever used a drug without knowing what it was or what it would do for you?
- Has your job or school performance ever suffered from the effects of your drug use?
- Have you ever been arrested as a result of using drugs?
- Have you ever lied about what or how much you use?
- Do you put the purchase of drugs ahead of your financial responsibilities?
- Have you ever tried to stop or control your using?
- Have you ever been in a jail, hospital or drug rehabilitation center because of your using?
- Does using interfere with your sleeping or eating?
- Does the thought of running out of drugs terrify you?
- Do you feel it is impossible for you to live without drugs?
- Do you ever question your own sanity?
- Is your drug use making life at home unhappy?

- Have you ever thought you couldn't fit in or have a good time without drugs?
- Have you ever felt defensive, guilty, or ashamed about your using?
- Do you think a lot about drugs?
- Have you had irrational or indefinable fears?
- Has using affected your sexual relationships?
- Have you ever taken drugs you didn't prefer?
- Have you ever used drugs because of pain or stress?
- Have you ever overdosed on any drug?
- Do you continue to use despite negative consequences?
- Do you think you might have a drug problem?

HELPING THE ADDICT

DEAL WITH SHAME AND GUILT:

2 Corinthians 7:10 "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Once addicts realize the enormity of their problem, they often become plagued with shame and guilt. Shame promotes a sense of worthlessness, full of self-recriminations. Guilt, however, can help them acknowledge their bad choice, which is the first step toward godly sorrow and repentance. Guilt can provide motivation as it spotlights the outcome of bad choices so they can make the opposite right choice. Shame erodes their ability to accept support from a recovery community, putting them at a greater risk of relapse. They may find themselves triggered to self-medicate in an attempt to relieve internal discomfort, emotional pain and isolation.

What is God's solution for shame?

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

God's love transcends all other love. Although difficult for us to understand, we must believe God's Word that He values us highly. When we repent of our sins, even in our darkest moments, God is eager to forgive us. If He did not love us and value us, why would He have allowed Christ to die an excruciating death for us? God loves us and wants us to have a life full of His blessings (Romans 8:32; 1 John 3:1). As the ultimate parent, God loves us as His children, making us heirs to His creation (Romans 8:16-17). Prayer and godly repentance will open the way to finally accept and understand this.

ENCOURAGE TRUE REPENTANCE

John 16:24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Repenting means changing. Godly repentance includes realizing that our sins caused the death of Jesus Christ and asking God to forgive us. This requires a firm commitment to change. It is a process of asking God for strength and developing character to resist urges to use the substance. Repentance follows a change of heart, not just empty remorse and regrets.

Repentance is replacing the choices to act sinfully with the choices to do the right things (Ezekiel 18:27-28). No one can overcome without being absolutely ready to stop wrong behaviors, which begins with an honest commitment to be absolutely done! Although the process may often be punctuated by successes and failures, when they continue to do their part, God will help them to avoid and escape temptations (Matthew 6:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Deal with temptations:

John 17:15-16 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

Jesus prayed this prayer the night before His crucifixion, thinking about what His followers through the ages would have to face in this evil age (Galatians 1:4). Though we are in the world, we must not be of the world. Likewise, one must come out of the world of addiction to minimize and avoid temptations (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). Avoid old environments, "friends" who are bad influences, even sights of drug paraphernalia. And pray to God every day for commitment, strength and wisdom to make right choices (Philippians 4:13).

Recovery is more than not using or simply remaining abstinent. Recovery is rebuilding a better life by no longer choosing a self-destructive lifestyle. If they immerse themselves in reading the Bible, strengthen themselves through prayer and run from all temptations, they will succeed!

Help them set goals for their life

Philippians 3:13-14 "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended [attained the goal of the resurrection and perfection, verses 11-12]; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A major key to overcoming substance abuse or addiction is to keep their eyes on that goal of recovery! Paul certainly understood the necessity of being goal-oriented. If you "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33) and align your other goals with this powerful vision, God will faithfully help you with all your goals. They need to stay focused and they will walk out of their addiction, one day at a time.

- **Encourage them to stay away from sinful behavior:**

If they have a godly attitude, they will stay away from sin.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

Romans 12:9 "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good."

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals." If we abstain from everything remotely connected with sin, abhorring even the thought of it, we'll never become addicted to sinful behaviors.

- **Teach them the importance of exercising self-control**

To avoid and overcome bad habits and addictions, we must exercise self-control. Jesus teaches us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). To do this, we must control our mind, by which we control our bodies. He says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matt. 15:19). Paul expresses these thoughts with an athletic metaphor, saying, "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (1 Cor. 9:24-25). Like an athlete, we must exercise self-control in all things. If we do, we'll control our minds, which controls our bodies, and overcome bad habits and addictions.

- **Teach them to walk By The Spirit**

If we walk by the Spirit, we'll avoid and overcome bad habits and addictions. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). Since we walk by the Spirit, we exercise control over sin, bad habits, and addictions. We walk by the Spirit because we belong to Christ, having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24). We don't engage in bad habits and addictions because Christ doesn't engage in sin. We've been crucified with Christ, who lives in us; and the life which we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself up for us (Gal. 2:20).

- **Teach them about the Power of God in their Lives**

Walking by the Spirit, God's empowers us to avoid and overcome bad habits and addictions. We're empowered by God's word and prayer. Rom. 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. . . ." 1 Thessalonians 2:13 ". . . the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." 1 Pet. 3:12 "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

- **They must foster a "I can do all things...." Mentality**

UNHEALTHY EATING



WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

Eating disorders have specific diagnostic criteria. Anorexics and bulimics refuse or cannot achieve a body weight of 85% of the “normal” weight and height for their age. Teens that have an eating disorder are often severely afraid of gaining weight and have a distorted body image – even if they are severely underweight.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA?

The technical name for anorexia is anorexia nervosa. Anorexia is mainly associated with the restriction of food, meaning they lose weight by not eating or severely restricting calories. Some anorexics can purge, but they do not binge.

The technical name for bulimia is bulimia nervosa. Bulimics will binge eat and then purge their food. The purging comes via self-induced vomiting, laxatives, diuretics, enemas, or even excessive exercise.

HOW CAN WE RECOGNIZE AN EATING DISORDER?

Teens with eating disorders often:

- Have an obsession with weight.
- Have a distorted body image
- Weigh themselves several times a day
- Eat very little
- Will not eat around others

- Are very picky about what they eat
- Deny that there are food issues

WHERE DO EATING DISORDERS COME FROM?

Teens develop eating disorders — such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder — for many reasons. For example:

SOCIETAL PRESSURE

Modern Western culture tends to place a premium on being physically attractive and having a perfect body. Even with a normal body weight, teens can easily develop the perception that they're fat. This can trigger an obsession with losing weight, dieting and being thin, especially for teen girls.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Teens who have low self-esteem may use their eating habits or weight loss to achieve a sense of stability or control.

Family stress

Problems at home, including perceived high parental expectations for achievement and appearance, can play a role in the development of teen eating disorders.

Favorite activities

Participation in sports and activities that value leanness — such as wrestling, running and ballet — sometimes contribute to teen eating disorders.

Personal factors

Some teens may be more likely to develop eating disorders due to personality traits or genetics. Eating disorders can run in families.

SIGNS OF EATING DISORDERS

Here are some signs that a person may have anorexia or bulimia:

Anorexia

- becomes very thin, frail, or emaciated
- obsessed with eating, food, and weight control
- weighs herself or himself repeatedly
- counts or portions food carefully
- Only eats certain foods, avoiding foods like dairy, meat, wheat, etc. (of course, lots of people who are allergic to a particular food or are vegetarians avoid certain foods)
- exercises excessively
- feels fat
- withdraws from social activities, especially meals and celebrations involving food
- may be depressed, lethargic (lacking in energy), and feel cold a lot

Bulimia

- fears weight gain
- intensely unhappy with body size, shape, and weight
- makes excuses to go to the bathroom immediately after meals
- may only eat diet or low-fat foods (except during binges)
- regularly buys laxatives, diuretics, or enemas
- spends most of his or her time working out or trying to work off calories
- withdraws from social activities, especially meals and celebrations involving food

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF AN EATING DISORDER?

Eating disorders truly wreak havoc on the body. Eating disorders are serious medical illnesses. They often go along with other problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, and substance use. People with eating disorders also can have serious physical health problems, such as heart conditions or kidney failure. People who weigh at least 15% less than the normal weight for their height may not have enough body fat to keep their organs and other body parts healthy. In severe cases, eating disorders can lead to severe malnutrition and even death.

With anorexia, the body goes into starvation mode, and the lack of nutrition can affect the body in many ways:

- a drop in blood pressure, pulse, and breathing rate
- hair loss and fingernail breakage
- loss of periods
- lanugo hair — a soft hair that can grow all over the skin
- lightheadedness and inability to concentrate
- anemia
- swollen joints
- brittle bones

With bulimia, constant vomiting and lack of nutrients can cause these problems:

- constant stomach pain
- damage to a person's stomach and kidneys
- tooth decay (from exposure to stomach acids)
- "chipmunk cheeks," when the salivary glands permanently expand from throwing up so often
- loss of periods
- loss of the mineral potassium (this can contribute to heart problems and even death)

The emotional pain of an eating disorder can take its toll, too. When a person becomes obsessed with weight, it's hard to concentrate on much else. Many people with eating disorders become withdrawn and less social. People with eating disorders might not join in on snacks and meals with their friends or families, and they often don't want to break from their intense exercise routine to have fun.

People with eating disorders often spend a lot of mental energy on planning what they eat, how to avoid food, or their next binge, spend a lot of their money on food, hide in the bathroom for a long time after meals, or make excuses for going on long walks (alone) after a meal.

HOW TO HELP THE TEEN WITH AN EATING DISORDER?

- **Teach them about the love of God:**

Because many teens have not had their love needs satisfied, they begin to feel that they are un-loveable unless they look a certain way. Show them that they are loved by God.

John 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

"See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" (Isaiah 49:16).

- **Show them the importance of confession:**

James 5:16 "Confess faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous one avails much."

Hiding prevents healing. Isolation increases shame, so they fear to rely on anything but the disorder. God not only wants them to confide in Him, He also wants them to confide in counselors and friends they can trust, asking for their support, prayers and guidance. Doing so leads to healing. Talk candidly to God every day, and learn to open up with others as well. Ask God to give them the courage.

- **Help them to deal with the shame and guilt:**

Psalms 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

God wants to heal them! He will empower them to break the vicious cycle—shame leading to an eating disorder that contributes to more shame, etc. They *are not a bad person and they are not alone!*

- **Teach them what the Word says about their bodies**

The Word does emphasize that our bodies are the Temple of God, and we are to care for them as such. Anorexia and bulimia are dangerous disorders that can severely harm our bodies. Besides the damage to the body, the Bible also tells Christians to be more concerned with what is going on inside ourselves rather than on how we look. Appearance is not the most important factor in faith. While the Bible calls Christians to be in the world, not of the world, the pressures to be thin surround all of us.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

1 Samuel 16:7 – "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Romans 12:2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- **Teach them what it means to be attractive**

If we're going to start believing the truth about appearance and weight, we've got to go to the ultimate Source. What does our loving heavenly Father have to say about our bodies and real beauty?

- Genesis 1:27 — You were made in the image of God.
 - Psalm 8 — In the whole wonderful universe, He gives you a place of honor.
 - Proverbs 31:30 — Outward appearances don't matter as much as what's inside.
 - Zechariah 3:17 — The God of the universe takes delight in YOU!
 - Romans 5:8 — God loves you enough to send His Son to die for you.
 - 1 Peter 3:3 — How you look is not what really makes you beautiful.
- **Encourage healthy attitudes toward food, weight control, and body image, by example and encouragement.**

Talking to the teen about eating disorders may not be easy. Still, it's an important topic. When you discuss teen eating disorders, you might:

- Encourage healthy eating habits. Talk to the teen about how diet can affect his or her health, appearance and energy level. Encourage them to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and to avoid skipping meals.
- Discuss media messages. Television programs, movies, Web sites and magazines may send the teen the message that only a certain body type is acceptable. Encourage them to talk about and question what he or she has seen or heard — especially from Web sites or other sources that promote anorexia as a lifestyle choice, rather than an eating disorder (commonly called "pro-ana" sites).
- Encourage a healthy body image. Talk to them about his or her self-image and offer reassurance that healthy body shapes vary. Acceptance and respect can help them build self-esteem and resilience. Encourage family and friends to refrain from using hurtful nicknames and joking about people who are overweight or have a large body frame.
- Discuss the dangers of dieting, obsessing about food and emotional eating. Explain that dieting can compromise nutrition, growth and health. Remind

them that eating or controlling his or her diet isn't a healthy way to cope with emotions. Instead, encourage them to talk to family, friends or a counselor about problems he or she may be facing

- **Deal with the underlying cause:**

Another important way to work towards prevention of eating disorders is to address any issue that might be an underlying cause in an appropriate way. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Addressing underlying causes, such as effects of physical or sexual abuse
- Encourage and/or teach strategies to deal with negative emotions or stress

ASSIGNMENT

Task one:

How would you provide counsel to a teenager who has just found out that she is pregnant? Deal with the spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of this. Be sure to include what decisions she will be able to make concerning her and her babies future.

Task two:

How would you provide counsel for someone who has had an abortion and is having terrible nightmares about what she did?

Task three:

Provide a Bible study that you would be able to give to a teen on the following:

- Beautiful Me

The Bible study should have personal reflection questions that they will be able to use to work on alone at home.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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