

Health

School_Nurse Daily Newsletter

By: Tamra Douglas

Devotional Highlight

“Small Kindnesses” - Colossians 3:12

How does it feel to carry out small acts of kindness to those around you? Isn't it just a fulfilling feeling to see those around you happy? When we show compassion and kindness, we reflect our God who is gracious and compassionate.... and rich in love' (Psalm 145:8). That's why the apostle Paul urged us, as God's people, to 'clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience' (Colossians 3:12). Because God has shown great compassion to us, we naturally long to share His compassion with others. And as we do so intentionally, we 'clothe' ourselves in it.

Paul goes on to tell us: 'over all these virtues put love, which binds them all together in perfect unity' (v14), 'doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus' (v17).

Prayer: Most gracious God, help us to show kindness to others as you have shown us so abundantly. Amen.

Extract from
Our Daily Bread

Diagnosis of the Week “Grieving”

N.B. This week's newsletter is dedicated to my lecturer who lost her mother recently. My prayers are with you.

Last week we took a deep look at suicide, this week we'll be looking at grief and the process it takes us through. Even with the aftermath Post-COVID, we are still surrounded by death. Be it illness, accidents, or without a specific cause, many of our friends and family are mourning. Let's see how best we can be there for them.

So, we all grieve for different reasons, and it is a normal, healthy process that we all go through - in response to loss. Grieving describes the emotions we feel when we lose someone or something important to us.





This could be:

1. Death of a loved one, including pets
2. Divorce, or changes in relationships, including friendships
3. Changes in your health or someone else's health, this means you may have been diagnosed with an illness or lost a body part.
4. Losing a job or something that financed you
5. Changes in our way of life, such as change in schools, community, retiring, and even changes in the things you like to do

Just like depression, grief looks different on everyone. Some may experience emotional turmoil, while others won't. It is important that we do not judge someone based on our measure of what grief should look like. Because in doing so, we are invalidating their feelings; and we do not want that.

Physical and emotional symptoms include:

1. Feelings: Anger, anxiety, blame, confusion, denial, depression, fear, guilt, irritability, loneliness, numbness, relief, sadness, shock, or yearning
2. Thoughts: Confusion, difficulty concentrating, disbelief, hallucinations, or preoccupation with what was lost
3. Physical sensations: Dizziness, fast heartbeat, fatigue, headaches, hyperventilating, nausea or upset stomach, shortness of breath, tightness or heaviness in the throat or chest, or weight loss or gain
4. Behaviours: Crying spells, excessive activity, irritability or aggression, loss of energy, loss of interest in enjoyable activities, restlessness, or trouble falling or staying asleep

Grief is not a linear process, it does not happen in one order. You can be crying today, and laughing tomorrow. Depressed today, and ready to take on the world tomorrow; then back to being depressed 3 months later. Others may not even react at all. But, with whatever way it happens, we do not determine how we grieve, we accept the cycle as it comes, and do our best to cope with what we are experiencing. So no, do not tell someone that 'it's been 5 months now, it's about time you moved on with your life'. No, we don't do that around here.

According to Kubler-Ross, we experience grief in 5 different stages, and as mentioned before, they occur in no specific order.

Stage 1: Denial

For some, this may be the first response to loss. As an immediate action, we may doubt the reality of the loss. We typically experience a few things in this stages, for example:

1. Fantasising that someone will call to say there has been a mistake and nothing really happened, if it's a death.
2. Convince yourself your partner will soon regret leaving and come back to you, following a breakup.
3. Thinking that your former boss will offer you the position back after they realise they've made a mistake, after losing your job.

This is a temporary response that carries you through the first wave of pain. You may go numb for a while, and by going numb, you're giving yourself time to explore the changes at your own pace. Eventually, when you're ready, the feelings and emotions you have denied will resurface, and your journey of grief will continue.

Stage 2: Anger

According to Ross, the pain we experience from the loss is often redirected into anger. This sudden intense anger might be frightening to some, but for some, it's a necessary emotion in the healing process. During the anger stage of grief, you might start asking questions like "Why me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?". You may even become angry at objects, people, and even life itself. It is even common to become angry at the individual, even during death.



Rationally, you may know that the person isn't to blame, but emotionally it is being perceived as someone else, thus the anger. At some point, you may even feel guilty for being angry, and this could make you more angry.

After isolating yourself in the denial stage (if you did), becoming angry might be a way to reconnect to the world. When we are angry, we connect (for some), even if its through emotions.

Apart from anger, we may experience other emotions in this stage, including: irritability, bitterness, anxiety, rage, and impatience. They are all a part of the same process.

Stage 3: Bargaining

This stage helps you to hold onto hope in a situation of intense pain. During this process we may engage in internal negotiation using terms such as "what if" or "if only": what if I did XYZ, then everything would go back to normal; if only I had done something differently to prevent the loss. You may think to yourself that you're willing to do anything to restore things back to normal.

The emotion 'guilt' may also accompany this stage, trying to regain some control of the situation, even if it's at your own expense.

Stage 4: Depression

Depression is experienced in different ways, and there is no right or wrong way to go about it, nor does it have a deadline. It is also important to know that, in this instance, depression is not regarded as a mental health condition. It's a natural and appropriate response to grief.

This intense sadness could cause you to feel different in other aspects too. You could feel:

- fatigued
- vulnerable
- confused and distracted
- not wanting to move on
- not hungry or wanting to eat
- not able or willing to get ready in the morning
- not able to enjoy what you once did

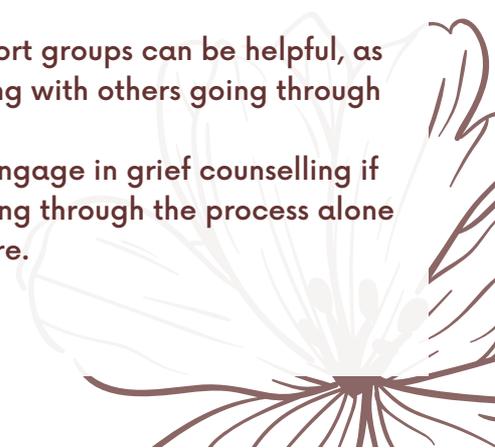
Stage 5: Acceptance

Getting to this stage for everyone, just like every other stage, is not going to look the same. Generally, it is not about being 'okay'. Actually, for some, they may never feel this way - understandably. It is more about acknowledging the losses you're experiencing, and learning how to live with them, and adjusting to life accordingly.

You may want to reach out to friends and family at this time, or you may want to also withdraw. You may also feel like you have accepted the loss at times and move on to another stage in the grieving process. And at other times you may find yourself staying at this process for a long period of time. But that does not mean you'll never feel sadness or anger toward the loss, but your long-term perspective about it and how you cope with the reality will be different.

For our loved ones grieving right now:

- Reach out for help if you find it hard to concentrate on tasks for long periods.
- Reach out for help if your emotions are increasing in intensity and frequency, rather than lessening with time-this may be complicated grieving.
- Reach out for help if you have thought of hurting yourself or others.
- Talking with friends and family might give you a sense of relief.
- Engaging in support groups can be helpful, as you are connecting with others going through similar losses.
- You can always engage in grief counselling if you think that going through the process alone is too much to bare.





How can we help someone who is grieving?

1. Listen - at times we may want to offer comforting words, but in some instances, the best support comes from just being there for the person and making it clear that you are available to listen to whatever they want to share (or not share).
2. Reach out - it may be hard watching someone you care about having a rough time, but leading with empathy is one of the best things to do.
3. Be practical - look for ways to ease some weight off their shoulders. This could be through helping with groceries, food preparations, organising their room, or helping with their assignments.
4. Don't assume - a smile on the face doesn't mean they have accepted the loss. Wait for them to express how they feel (or ask), if they are ready, and go from there.



A Herbal Remedy

"New Mood, Good Mood"



(Hurley, J.B., 1995, pp 160, 213, 222)

In light of the diagnosis of the week being 'grieving', let's take a look at some herbs that'll help put us in a good mood.

1. Lemongrass (fever grass): though popularly known for its effects to reduce body temperature, it is also helpful to elevate our moods. It can be found in oil form which can be combined with rosemary oil and used for a massage. If not, then have a nice glass of fever grass tea to calm you down.

2. Peppermint: due to its relaxing effects to treat stress, anxiety, and restlessness, it is a good herb to help improve our mood. So, get some peppermint essential oil and add a few drops to your bath and just sit for a few minutes. Or, let a friend or loved one give you a massage with the oil every now and then. And when needs be, have a glass of peppermint tea to drink.

3. Rosemary: a glass of this helps to soothe headaches, nervousness, and depression too. Have a glass of rosemary tea, or just like the others, get some rosemary essential oil and add it to your diffuser, bath, or to do a massage.

Read a book with me!

'feeling good - the new mood therapy'

The clinically proven drug-free treatment for depression by David D. Burns, M.D

Chapter 4: Start by Building Self-Esteem

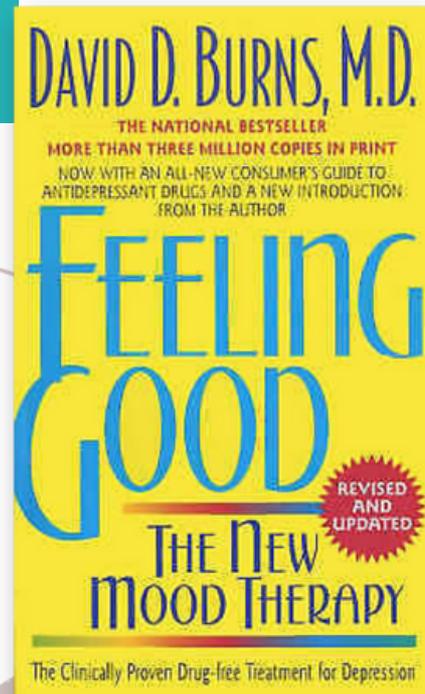
Last week we took a look at understanding how we are feeling. This week, we'll take a look at building our self-esteem.

When we are depressed, we always believe that we are worthless. The worse the depression, the more we feel this way. A survey conducted by Dr. Aaron Beck shows that over 80% of depressed patients expressed self-dislike. He said a depressed self-image can be characterised by the four D's: You feel Defeated, Defective, Deserted, and Deprived. A poor self-image is the magnifying glass that can transform a trivial mistake or an imperfection into an overwhelming symbol of personal defeat.

The way a therapist handles your feelings of inadequacy is crucial to the cure, as your sense of worthlessness is a key to depression. The question also has considerable philosophical relevance—is human nature inherently defective? Are depressed patients actually facing the ultimate truth about themselves? And what, in the final analysis, is the source of genuine self-esteem? This, in the author's opinion, is the most important question you will ever confront.

First, you cannot earn worth through what you do. Achievements can bring you satisfaction but not happiness. Self-worth based on accomplishments is a "pseudo-esteem," not the genuine thing! My many successful but depressed patients would all agree. Nor can you base a valid sense of self-worth on your looks, talent, fame, or fortune. Marilyn Monroe, Mark Rothko, Freddie Prinz, and a multitude of famous suicide victims attest to this grim truth.

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Nor can love, approval, friendship, or a capacity for close, caring human relationships add one iota to your inherent worth. The great majority of depressed individuals are in fact very much loved, but it doesn't help one bit because self-love and self-esteem are missing. At the bottom line, only your own sense of self-worth determines how you feel.

The author usually leads his patients through a systematic reevaluation of their negative self-image. He first allows them to take the first step of taking a closer look at what they say about themselves when they insist they are no good. The evidence presented in defence of your worthlessness will usually, if not always, make no sense.

During periods of depression we lose some of your capacity for clear thinking; you have trouble putting things into proper perspective. Negative events grow in importance until they dominate our entire reality—and we can't really tell that what is happening is distorted. It all seems very real to us. The illusion of hell we create is very convincing.

Overcoming the Sense of Worthlessness

As a cognitive therapist, the author has three aims in dealing with a sense of worthlessness: a rapid and decisive transformation in the way you think, feel, and behave.

These results will be brought about in a systematic training program that employs simple concrete methods you can apply on a daily basis. If you are willing to commit some regular time and effort to this program, you can expect success proportionate to the effort you put in.

The author has developed many specific and easily applied techniques that can help you develop your sense of worth. It is recommended that you set some time aside each day to work at improving your self-image because only in this way can you experience the fastest and most enduring personal growth.

You are
STRONGER
than you seem, &

Specific Methods for Boosting Self-Esteem

1. Talk Back to That Internal Critic!

A sense of worthlessness is created by your internal self-critical dialogue. It is self-degrading statements, such as "I'm no good," "I'm inferior to other people," and so on, that create and feed your feelings of despair and poor self-esteem. In order to overcome this bad mental habit, three steps are necessary:

- a. Train yourself to recognize and write down the self-critical thoughts as they go through your mind;
- b. Learn why these thoughts are distorted; and
- c. Practice talking back to them so as to develop a more realistic self-evaluation system.

One effective method for accomplishing this is the "triple-column technique." Simply draw two lines down the centre of a piece of paper to divide it into thirds, Label the left-hand column "Automatic Thoughts(Self-Criticism)," the middle column "Cognitive Distortion," and the right-hand column "Rational Response (Self-Defense)."

In the left-hand column write down all those hurtful self-criticisms you make when you are feeling worthless and down on yourself.

Just as fast as these thoughts cross your mind, jot them down. Why? Because they are the very cause of your emotional upset. They rip away at you like knives tearing into your flesh. I'm sure you know what I mean because you've felt it.

The "triple-column technique" can be used to restructure the way you think about yourself when you have goofed up in some way. The aim is to substitute more objective rational thoughts for the illogical, harsh self-criticisms that automatically flood your mind when a negative event occurs.

Using the list of ten cognitive distortions you've learned before, see if you can identify the thinking errors in each of your negative automatic thoughts. For instance, "I never do anything right" is an example of overgeneralization. Write this down in the middle column.

You are now ready for the crucial step in mood transformation—substituting a more rational, less upsetting thought in the right-hand column. You do not try to cheer yourself up by rationalising or saying things you do not believe are objectively valid. Instead, try to recognize the truth.

For example, in answer to "I never do anything right," you could write, "Forget that! I do some things right and some wrong, just like everyone else. I fouled up on my appointment, but let's not blow this up out of proportion." Suppose you cannot think of a rational response to a particular negative thought. Then just forget about it for a few days and come back to it later.

As you work at the triple-column technique for fifteen minutes every day over a period of a month or two, you will find it gets easier and easier.

You are
Enough

One note of caution: Do not use words describing your emotional reactions in the Automatic Thought column. Just write the thoughts that created the emotion. For example, suppose you notice your car has a flat tire. Don't write "I feel crappy" because you can't disprove that with a rational response. The fact is, you do feel crappy. Instead, write down the thoughts that automatically flashed through your mind the moment you saw the tire; for example, "I'm so stupid—I should have gotten a new tire this last month," or "This is just my rotten luck!" Then you can substitute rational responses such as "It might have been better to get a new tire, but I'm not stupid and no one can predict the future with certainty." This process won't put air in the tire, but at least you won't have to change it with a deflated ego.

Writing down your negative thoughts and rational responses may strike you as simplistic, ineffective, or even gimmicky. You might even share the feelings of some patients who initially refused to do this, saying, "What's the point? It won't work—it couldn't work because I really am hopeless and worthless."

This attitude can only serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you are unwilling to pick up the tool and use it, you won't be able to do the job. Start by writing down your automatic thoughts and rational responses for fifteen minutes every day for two weeks and see the effect this has on your mood, as measured by the Burns Depression Checklist. You may be surprised to note the beginning of a period of personal growth and a healthy change in your self-image.

2. Mental Biofeedback.

A second method which can be very useful involves monitoring your negative thoughts with a wrist counter. You can buy one at a sporting-goods store; it looks like a wristwatch, is inexpensive, and every time you push the button, the number changes on the dial. Click the button each time a negative thought about yourself crosses your mind; be on the constant alert for such thoughts. At the end of the day, note your daily total score and write it down in a log book.

At first you will notice that the number increases; this will continue for several days as you get better and better at identifying your critical thoughts. Soon you will begin to notice that the daily total reaches a plateau for a week to ten days, and then it will begin to go down. This indicates that your harmful thoughts are diminishing and that you are getting better. This approach usually requires three weeks.

Once you are regularly writing down your distorted negative thoughts and answering them as outlined previously, you can then use your wrist counter to nip your painful cognitions in the bud at other times.

3. Cope, Don't Mope!—The Woman Who Thought She Was a "Bad Mother."

As you read the previous sections, the following objection may have occurred to you: "All this deals with is my thoughts. But what if my problems are realistic? What good will it do me to think differently? I have some real inadequacies that need to be dealt with."

The author highlighted a conversation he had with the Mother, the author hoped to show her that no matter how she defined "bad mother," the definition would be unrealistic. Once she gave up the destructive tendency to mope and label herself as worthless, we could then go on to coping strategies for helping her son with his problems at school.

They then worked on answering several "automatic thoughts" she had written down after the call from Bobby's teacher. As Nancy learned to refute her self-critical thoughts, she experienced much-needed emotional relief. She was then able to develop some specific coping strategies designed to help Bobby with his difficulties. ([please see link to pdf version of the text](#))

When you are experiencing a blue mood, the chances are that you are telling yourself you are inherently inadequate or just plain "no good." You will become convinced that you have a bad core or are essentially worthless. To the extent that you believe such thoughts, you will experience a severe emotional reaction of despair and self-hatred.

You may even feel that you'd be better off dead because you are so unbearably uncomfortable and self-denigrating. You may become inactive and paralyzed, afraid and unwilling to participate in the normal flow of life.

You must always remember that your error is in emotional reasoning. Your feelings do not determine your worth, simply your relative state of comfort or discomfort. There is no such thing in this universe as a worthless human being.



You don't have to do anything especially worthy to create or deserve self-esteem; all you have to do is turn off that critical, lecturing, inner voice. Why? Because that critical inner voice is wrong! Your internal self-abuse springs from illogical, distorted thinking. Your sense of worthlessness is not based on truth, it is just the abscess which lies at the core of depressive illness.

So remember three crucial steps when you are upset:

1. Zero in on those automatic negative thoughts and write them down. Don't let them buzz around in your head; snare them on paper!
2. Read over the list of ten cognitive distortions. Learn precisely how you are twisting things and blowing them out of proportion.
3. Substitute a more objective thought that puts the lie to the one which made you look down on yourself. As you do this, you'll begin to feel better. You'll be boosting your self-esteem, and your sense of worthlessness (and, of course, your depression) will disappear.

Ask the Nurse



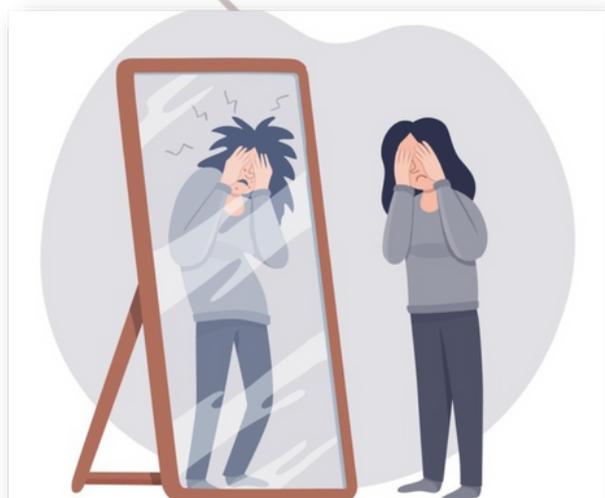
Question: How do you cope with stress and low self esteem?

Response: So.. stress and low self-esteem. Well, first I would need to know what is causing both of them. Do I have low self-esteem because I constantly compare myself to others? Do others compare me constantly to other people? Do I have abnormally high standards for myself? Or do I think I lack something that other people seem to have? Am I stressed because I have too much work to do? Or because I don't know how to balance my activities well? Do I have emotional issues to deal with? Are home situations becoming unbearable?



How we deal with our situations will depend on what is causing it. For me, I was insecure about my acne while I was younger. Not because it was made fun of, but because I constantly compare myself to girls with clearer skin and deemed them more beautiful. So, I had to learn how to accept my flaws. Remind myself that I am beautiful with or without acne. I also learned how to be consistent with a skincare routine that worked for me.

As for stress, whenever school became unbearable I turned to exercise and mediating. Exercise is a good method to use to clear the head and boost your energy, both physically and chemically (mentally). Meditation helps me to still the moment and focus on things within my control and let go of things that are out of my control. I meditate using music and worship. Earbuds in, world out (and just sit in a dark room). I also resort to taking walks when I am emotionally drained, it helps because nature naturally calms us down.



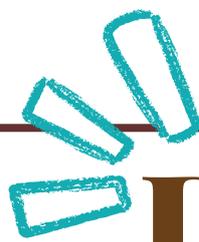
Dear Parents:

"Hey there guardians, hope we are having a great start to our week, and I pray it continues too. So, grieving, right? Sometimes we have some misconceptions about how people are to grieve, IF they are even allowed to grieve about certain things. When our children get a bad score on an exam, how do we deal with it? If they came and told us that they aren't friends with a certain friend anymore, how do we deal with that? What if they told us they are going through a breakup right now, what would we do? Better yet, what if you are going through a loss right now, how would you teach them how to help you?"

We can all help each other to become better individuals through different ways, one of which I will highlight right now, stigma. Here are a few [misconception](#) of grieving:

- 'I am doing it wrong' - grieving is unique to everyone, no two people grieves the same way.
- 'I should be feeling...' - not everyone experiences all the stages mentioned, and there is no indication that your journey is faulty either.
- 'This goes first' - remember, there's no specific or linear order for the stages of grief. The emotions you experience, and how you express yourself is natural and part of the healing process, no matter where you are.
- 'It's taking too long' - it may be useful to not set a deadline to your process. Coping with loss is ultimately a personal experience, and many factors affect how long it takes.
- 'I'm depressed' - going through the stages of grief is not equivalent to clinical depression. You are grieving, not depressed, no matter how similar the symptoms seem, there are still key differences between both.

With that, help your loved ones through the stages of grief, and help them help you.



Den Cu Yah!



There are other known stages of grief that overlap the 5 stages proposed by Kubler-Ross; it's an adaptation called the Kubler-Ross Change Curve. It extends the 5 core stages of grief to 7 overlapping stages.

1. **Shock.** Intense and sometimes paralyzing surprise at the loss.
2. **Denial.** Disbelief and the need to look for evidence to confirm the loss.
3. **Anger and frustration.** A mix between acknowledgment that some things have changed and anger toward this change.
4. **Depression.** Lack of energy and intense sadness.
5. **Testing.** Experimenting with the new situation to discover what it actually means in your life.
6. **Decision.** A rising optimism about learning how to manage the new situation.
7. **Integration.** Acceptance of the new reality, reflection on what you learned, and stepping out in the world as a renewed person.

Disclaimer: The content on this newsletter should not be used in place of medical/professional consultation or advice, but to be used for educational purposes only.

Reference

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Thank you