

The Pearls of Adversity

Life can sometimes throw lots of curve balls but our responses to them can make a world of difference. Nobody ever expects to go through the devastation of the death of a child, infertility, unplanned teen pregnancies, or the birth of children with disabilities. We don't expect to have terminal cancer or debilitating illnesses in our early adulthood. There is no way our family members could possibly be victims of a brutal rape or murder. Our children certainly would never use drugs or abuse alcohol and they absolutely will not end up in prison. Our homes will never catch on fire or be destroyed by some other natural disaster. Our spouses will definitely love us until death do us part and of course we'll always have steady meaningful employment.

Unfortunately, real life can be full of adversity. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations which we could have never imagined. We are clueless about how to respond since we haven't been taught "curve ball first-aid" or rehearsed for the "fire drills of life." Often we find ourselves experiencing denial and anger. Debilitating self hatred, guilt, and an array of addictive behaviors can set in. Our knee-jerk reactions sometimes make the whole situation even more devastating. Our negative thoughts can exacerbate the problem too. It is easy to become bitter when our lives do not turn out as we have planned. Sometimes our pain is so great that we fail to realize that our emotional wounds have become "infected." We must guard against the "germs" of unforgiveness, hopelessness, rage, and loss of our identity. These "germs" can transfer into all aspects of our life, including our relationships....

In these difficult times it is important to model good stress management especially in front of our children. It is important to reassure them during scary times. Our children are like sponges. They count on our honesty. They are keenly aware of the stress in our homes and they often react to it. Many times they learn how to respond to stress from those around them. They often imitate profanity and angry outbursts. Younger children sometimes respond to stress by an onset of bed wetting and upset stomachs. Babies can also sense stress. Surprisingly many adults still carry emotional wounds from the times their own parents did not deal with stress well.

Sadly, this topic of responses has been in the news a whole lot these last few months. It is easy to sit back in shock and to wonder how someone could Sometimes the answer can only be that it made sense to the individual at the time. Often when people make desperate decisions in a time of crisis they feel that they have no other options. In severe situations the mind can go on overload and reasoning capabilities can be reduced. In extreme cases hospitalization may be needed.

During stressful periods it is critical to get good sleep. Exercise can serve as a stress reducer too. Medication may also be helpful. Sometimes simply talking with family members, friends, clergy, and therapists can help us to see new options and resources. They frequently can help us sort out stinkin' thinking.

As the economic "games" change in our country we must learn to play by new and different rules. We have to learn to reframe our ideas. We can not allow ourselves to feel worthless if we can not provide for our families as we once did. Families may have to reside together. New training may be required. **My military friends have it right, "we must adapt and improvise to overcome."**

Times of crisis provide the perfect opportunity to return to our faith for strength. Research tells us that people who have faith, pray and turn their problems over to God are better able to adapt to challenges. Remember, some of our greatest heroes became heroes because of their response to the "pearls of adversity."