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talks about

Coping with the Pain

Pain hurts. Physical pain hurts. Emotional pain hurts. Mental pain hurts. Spiritual pain hurts. Pain is awful, horrible, unwanted. We don't like it. And, when it is present, it is difficult to notice anything else. Pain dominates our experience, pushing everything else to the side.

Pain is a signal, a signal that something is damaged, broken, violated, abused or lost. The pain signals the significance to us of the loss, the value we have for what has been damaged or lost. This aversive signal directs our attention towards what in our body or our life needs attention, care and healing.

Cost of Avoiding Pain

- Avoidance of the pain delays or blocks our adjustment to the losses.
- "It is what it is". The avoidance does not change reality. The losses still exist; the work to adjust to the changes still remains. Now, the work is more complicated.
- Avoidance relies on our own strength to cope. In doing so, we isolate from others, our own real self, and God.
- During avoidance of pain, we can develop destructive habits and patterns which can harm our health, relationships, and make our adjustments significantly more difficult. Thought patterns, relationship patterns, or the use of alcohol, medications, or other drugs and substances may give us temporary relief from the pain but create additional problems of living that must be dealt with in addition to adjusting to the losses.

Cost of Dwelling in Pain

- Dwelling in the pain can be an attempt to make a connection with what has been lost.
- Development of a new identity. The old identity may have been lost with the trauma. Who am I now? A potential answer may be a person who is in great pain.
- Pain may come to serve as a marker of how much the lost person or other loss means.

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Rewards of Going Through the Pain

- Moving through pain facilitates our adjustment to being without what has been lost. The pain prompts us to let go of our attachments to what has been lost so that we can have an openness to interact with the world today and form new attachments.
- Going through the pain allows us to remain in contact with reality in this fallen world. By not distorting or denying our experience, we are able to be present focused, living in the moment and available for relationships with others, self and with God.
- Jesus went through the pain of this fallen world, including the excruciating pain of the betrayal and cross. In pain, we may find that God is present, sufficient and loving.

Some Suggestions on Coping with Pain

- Remind yourself of the value or purpose of the pain. What is it signaling? What is the message of the pain?
- Remind yourself that pain is temporary. We may not know when it will change, but it will.
- Let the pain be with me. Instead of fighting it, recognize it as an expected, natural reaction to the trauma and loss.
- Fill in the picture at this moment. What else is occurring at this moment? What do I see? Smell? Taste? Touch? Hear? Focus my attention in this moment.
- Invest in being with someone else. Learn what they are experiencing, what it is like to be them at this moment.
- Listen to music, sing, play music.
- Find something beautiful, good, noble, praiseworthy to focus on. Recognize that there is both pain and goodness, pain and beauty. In the reality and midst of our pain, implement Philippians 4:8.
- Recognize that the experience of pain changes frequently and in an unsteady way. Recognize that you will feel better at some times, worse at others. This is normal.
- Be aware of Spontaneous Temporary Upsurges of Grief, or STUG reactions. We experience pain each time we encounter something that is associated with, attached with, who or what we have lost. The first time we encounter something is often the most painful. After we have made many adjustments and the pain has lessened, we will still encounter events, cues, or stimuli which remind us. For a brief time, the pain may sweep over us as if the loss just occurred. This is temporary. As we adjust to this, the pain subsides and the next time we encounter this we will have a less intense or maybe no reaction.



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