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Dear Faith Family,

The past few weeks we've been going through the BLESS method of administering care for people going through crisis situations. Last time I wrote to you about this, we talked about what to do when someone's livelihood is in jeopardy. Today I would like to talk about ministering to someone's emotional needs.

All of us during this time have been impacted one way or another emotionally. The stress of being cooped up in the house, the stress of a spiraling economy, fears over getting sick or having loved ones get sick, all of these and more pile up and can leave us feeling vulnerable. And even now that things are starting to open up, mental health concerns can still be a problem. In spite of this, the disaster health institute insists, "the more you are able to address gaps in a person's emotional needs, the more likely they will be able to identify and practice healthy coping strategies, thereby reducing future stress."

Let us follow the steps to learn how to identify emotional needs gaps, ask appropriate questions, and provide appropriate forms of help.

- Step 1: Attend & Observe
 - Look for stress signals and significant impairment of normal functioning to identify if emotional needs need to be an area of focus for this person. Emotional stress signals can include:
 - Unstable emotions
 - Rapid or slow speech
 - Erratic behaviors
 - Disheveled appearance
 - Negative thoughts and communications
 - Dramatic changes in their routines
 - Problems at work or with other relationships
- Step 2: Ask
 - If a person persistently exhibits any of these signals, you want to begin asking the following types of questions:
 - How are you doing emotionally?

- Are you feeling stressed out about this pandemic? What specifically makes you feel stressed?
- What's the hardest part of this pandemic/lockdown for you?
- Do you have anyone you can talk to about your fears or concerns?
- How does your family respond when you share these things with them?
- Is there anything I can do to help you feel less stressed/afraid/angry/etc.?
- Have you ever gone through times of struggle in the past? What helped you make it through those?

➤ Step 3: Act

- If the person is feeling frustration, sadness, grief, anxiety, anger or other strong emotions, take time to listen to them share their feelings, encouraging and facilitating lament. You may also consider the following actions as means of helping this person cope:
 - Create a safe space for them to share their feelings, listen and try not to fix anything right away.
 - Empathize with their pain and let them know it's ok to be feeling this way.
 - Remind them of authors in the Bible who also cried out to God in pain. Job and David are perfect examples. It's ok, God can handle our pain!
 - Allow the person to grieve, but don't push them to share more than they are comfortable with.
 - Encourage them to take deep breaths, and to occasionally take breaks from their pain (mental and physical breaks).
 - If possible, invite them to go for a walk with you or play a game together.
 - Encourage them to journal or share their pain with other trusted friends or family.
 - Reassure them you are there for them. Let them know intense emotions come and go, and that they can reach out to you when their feelings are at their worst.
 - Offer to pray with them and for them, seeking God's help through this crisis.
 - Connect them to a pastor or counselor if needed and wanted.
 - Remind them of their strengths, and let them know they will get through this, that God is here with them.

➤ Step 4: Repeat

- Continue to check-in with the person regularly, assessing their emotional needs as well as others.

Other coping strategies you can suggest (or practice yourself) include:

1. Breathe – Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply. Deep belly breaths.
2. Talk – Share your feelings with someone you trust.
3. Mental picture – Envision a stop sign to halt painful thoughts. Then picture yourself moving past that to a safe place where you can meet and spend time with Jesus at your side.
4. Entertainment – Let yourself laugh or learn.
5. Walk – Engage in light exercise (if able).
6. Grieve – Find a space to cry or yell, etc., and let out any emotions holding you down.
7. Music – Listen to or sing a soothing song.
8. Journal – Don't avoid facing your experience and pain. Let them pour out onto the page.
9. Connect – Find others' inspiring stories through writings, podcasts, documentaries...
10. Rest – Give your body permission to recover.

Finally, remember if you or someone you know is struggling, please feel free to reach out to us at the church. We are here to help!

God bless you and have a great rest of the week!

Pastor Andrew

Announcements

- ✓ At this time our plan is to re-open the church building sometime in July. Stay tuned for more information as well as other possible "soft-opening" options.
- ✓ Next Kids' Zoom Hang-out: Friday, June 19 @ 2 p.m. Talk to Pastor Andrew for the zoom link.
- ✓ Teen Bible Study: Teens have 2 more zoom meetings, June 14 and 21, wrapping up their study of 2 Thessalonians. Talk to Pastor Andrew for the zoom link.