

Training News & Updates



June was an exciting month as we conducted our first Rainbows of Hope month-long training for candidates. We

had four ROH candidates and one we have adopted! Sunyoung (Korean), our adopted one, and her husband will serve in Mexico. He will be engaged in church planting and she has a burden to work with the children. Our four ROH appointees are: Evangeline McMillan (Canada/South Africa); Gloria Garcia (Puerto Rica/Spain), Margaret Lin (Chinese American/Spain) and Laura Eib (USA/South Africa). Five students-five nationalities; a true and delightful WEC International mix.

The first two weeks were spent in classes and learning activities. The second two weeks the group was "thrown to the lions" in Philadelphia's inner city. They first spent time in a project for Vietnamese and Cambodian children, then in another ministry to the urban youth in Kensington, one of Philadelphia's worst inner-city areas. The latter were predominantly Hispanic and Black youth. One exciting event took place when Margaret led a Buddhist girl to the Lord. This was especially meaningful as Margaret herself comes from a Buddhist background.

While the gals were in the inner city, I plugged away at yet more curriculum rewrites while Marj continued with the layout. The first half of the curriculum is now ready to be turned over to a professional proofreader and three professional counselors/psychologists to check for accuracy. I am sure there will be still more rewrites

but hopefully they will just be minor ones! Keep praying for perseverance in the task. We are still aiming to have this completed by the end of July but it will depend on how quickly our reviewers can accomplish their task.

An ex-ROHer wrote to ask if a children in crisis training was going on anywhere during August. Well, I will conduct a training in Scotland, August 16-20. I'm passing this information on to you in case you or someone you know has the same question.

Last year Thirza encouraged Tami, a missionary in her country, to attend the Scotland training. It was a delight to have Tami with us and to follow the case of Tabi, a little girl she brought to America for surgery. Tabi had severe facial deformities from a double cleft palate. Tabi has gone through about a dozen surgeries now and is a radiant, happy child with the most beautiful smile in the world. Tami is now trying to adopt Tabi.

This will be my second year to go to Glasgow International Christian College for a week-long intensive children-in-crisis training. This year will be twice as good, since Andrew Serton, Oasis' newly appointed International Director for Children at Risk, will be co-teaching with me. He will do a track on street children while I do a track on crisis care, and a few classes will be combined. Andrew has worked extensively with street children.

I also will have the joy of speaking at some WEC meetings, including a special annual meeting of Christian women.

Along with the above prayer requests, keep praying for more personnel to assist in the training program, including trainers and curriculum developers. AND...I am still waiting for those good articles for future issues of Barnabas! Do share with us some of what you are doing. Also let me know what you would like to see included in future editions.

The training focus for this issue is on care of the caregivers. Each project necessitates understanding the needs of the children, how to develop programs to meet those needs and how to provide care of the caregivers. Too often we get so involved in understanding and helping the children, we forget the emotional toll that compassionate caregiving takes on workers. In her article "Am I Falling Apart?" Thirza Schoots takes a personal look at the stresses she has experienced in caring for children in crisis.

My article, "Compassionate Caregiving Demands Care for the Caregivers," gives insights into why stresses in crisis care ministries occur and how workers can weave safety nets to protect themselves from becoming overpowered by the stresses and emotional impact of compassionate caregiving.

Am I Falling Apart?

—Thirza Schoots

Last November I noticed something was wrong. I felt this heavy, black cloud move over me, and I couldn't find my way out of it. Desperately I tried to reach out to Jesus, but it was hard to see Him. Feelings of depression, irritation, frustration and hopelessness took charge of my life, and I felt desperately overwhelmed with all that I was doing in ministry. I fought back: I prayed more, spent more time studying God's Word, tried to set boundaries to reduce the physical and emotional stress in my life and asked people to pray. Nothing worked. The darkness kept getting thicker. I thought I was going crazy, wondered if I had to leave the field as a spiritual failure and just wanted it all to end.

Sound like something you are going through? In that case, like me, you may be suffering from secondary post-traumatic stress (PTS), to which caregivers of traumatized people are prone. Secondary PTS is not something to be ignored. Left untreated it can lead to burnout to the point of never wanting to work with children in crisis again. Is that where you want to go?

Some of the symptoms of secondary PTS include: numbness/insensitivity towards others' pain ("I just don't want to help anymore"); feeling overwhelmed and incompetent (doubting your calling); emotional and physical fatigue ("I just feel tired all the time"); perceptions of evil/abuse everywhere, along with a general mistrust and suspicion ("everyone abuses their kids"); feeling alone, a lack of support ("I'm doing it all by myself"); isolating oneself and not listening to others' advice; believing everything or nothing; feeling helpless and hopeless ("it's never going to get any better"); change in eating and sleeping patterns (increase in or lack of appetite, insomnia, bad dreams or sleeping too much); loss of joy, sense of humor and ability to have fun ("I can't remember the last time I laughed"); developing or intensifying addictions; contemplating suicide; feeling angry or more negative than usual.

For me, I think it all started on a trip to Africa in 2000 where I focused on the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS on children. I saw children terribly ill and die, attended a funeral and witnessed the rapid increase of little graves and the traffic jams to the graveyards. Upon my return from that trip, I went straight back to work and did not take the time to really reflect on what I had experienced. The African children's trauma became my trauma. The following year I went to Cambodia to research child prostitution. Once again, my heart and life were rocked to the core by what I saw and learned. Their suffering became my suffering.

In 2002 I moved to Central Asia to start a new project for street children. For the last two years I have

daily been confronted by the suffering, abuse, injustice and trauma in the lives of the children with whom I work. Their abuse has become my abuse. I place it all upon my shoulders, as if I am strong enough to carry it. Oh yes, I do give it to the Lord every day, but somehow end up taking it all back again. Sound familiar? It's called "Savior-complex" and many of us suffer from it. But let's get real—the job of the Savior has already been taken! And as we carry burdens that are not ours to carry, we are crushed by the heavy load.

Secondary PTS can also set in if the trauma of the children you work with triggers unhealed trauma in your own life. For example, if a caregiver has been abused in her own childhood, she may not only feel driven in an unhealthy way to protect other children from abuse, but her ministry with abused children also keeps her own unhealed childhood wound sore and open. Her work reminds her of her own past abuse and continually triggers negative emotions and responses.

We need to be sensitive to the indicators of PTS symptoms in ourselves and our coworkers. We need to be open and honest with ourselves and with trusted others, especially within our teams. Share when you feel overwhelmed and seek help if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms. Remember, deeper root issues from your own past may need to be dealt with! So don't feel like a failure if you need to remove yourself from your ministry environment for a time to get professional help. Set boundaries and make it clear to everyone if you cannot take it anymore. Learn to say "no."

One of the main ways to prevent secondary PTS is regular debrief. Dr. Tom Marks, WEC's international member care coordinator, recommends setting aside one hour every day to share within your team what everyone felt and thought during the day. Questions should include: What did you do? What do you feel you need to express? What did not make sense to you? What did you notice? What did you think? What was your first thought? What was the worst thing for you? How did you react? Have you ever felt this way before? How are you doing generally, are you experiencing any PTS symptoms? What was the best thing that happened today? What good could come out of this awful situation?

During this debrief it is important to simply share your thoughts and feelings. Prayer can be part of the debrief session but should not dominate it. When you pray, give all you have dealt with during the day to the Lord and ask Him to further intervene in difficult situations. Ask Him for His peace in your own spirit. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light," says the Lord Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30. Don't be too proud or busy to accept His invitation!

Compassionate Caregiving Demands Compassionate Care

—Phyllis Kilbourn

Caring for hurting, suffering children is no ordinary job! This task demands compassionate caregiving and, therefore, deeply affects caregivers' emotions.

Caregivers' stresses arise from the challenge of demonstrating Christ's compassion to hurting, suffering children—children who have lost hope through horrible abandonment, betrayal and exploitation. A great help to understanding the compassion that drains our energies—physically and emotionally—is an examination of Henri Nouwen's definition of compassion:

"Compassion is:

"Crying out with those in pain" —

—involves an identification with the children in their suffering.

"Tending the wounds of the poor and caring for their lives" —

—suggests responding with active involvement that offers help to hurting children in a variety of ways—

- establishing meaningful trust relationships with them
- listening to their painful stories and resulting woundings
- demonstrating unconditional love.

"Defending the weak and indignantly joining with the oppressed in their struggle for justice" —

—highlights the urgent need to become a voice for the children, seeking justice for the weak and oppressed. Advocacy could include speaking out against laws that do not protect or keep the children safe or lobbying for new laws to meet the need for protection and safety or provision of basic needs. Advocacy is a risky business—perpetrators of evil who exploit the children for profit do not want them to be helped.

"Pleading for help with all possible means" —

—implies that compassionate caregivers must be willing to do whatever it takes to bless the children. The "whatever" could include sitting up all night at a hospital, watching an HIV/AIDS baby slowly die, or it could mean extra hours of work to meet a vital need.

So, what do caregivers do when their compassion dries up or when the stresses simply become too overwhelming? How can compassionate caregivers maintain their emotional health? Scripture contains several examples describing how God cared for His compassionate, weary, stressed out servants. The lives of Elijah and Christ's disciples are just two of many examples.

Elijah

Elijah had just won a tremendous victory at Mount Carmel, demonstrating that Yahweh was the one true God (1 Kings 18). But Jezebel was not happy about his victory and vowed to take his life. Afraid of Jezebel, Elijah ran into the desert to hide and even prayed he might die. He was totally exhausted and discouraged. God didn't berate Elijah because he didn't trust Him for safety and protection. But God did provide an angel to bring him some freshly baked bread and cool water. Elijah ate and drank and then laid down to rest. On a subsequent visit, God again sent an angel to give him food because "the journey is too much for you." Perhaps we sometimes, like Elijah, feel the journey is too much for us. God wants to encourage us, too, by making provision for our physical and emotional needs.

Jesus' Disciples

Jesus similarly showed care for His weary disciples. The disciples, with their busy and hectic lives (often they didn't even have time to eat), sound like today's busy and stressed-out caregivers. On one occasion, when the number of people seeking His touch overwhelmed them, He said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31).

Weaving Safety Nets

Jesus' invitation to His disciples is the same invitation He gives to weary, stressed-out caregivers today:

Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

One way to accept Christ's invitation to rest lies in weaving tight safety nets into our lives that will ease the pressures of stress and keep one emotionally healthy.

Safety Net 1—Our Relationship with God

Our relationship with God is our first and most vital safety net. He is the well from which we must daily draw our strength and claim provision for all our needs. To keep in close contact with the source of our

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daily strength, we must continuously guard our time for private worship, prayer and Bible study.

Safety Net 2— Our Co-workers

To have open communication with God, we must be rightly related to those with whom we live and work. Instead of gossiping or holding wrong thoughts in our hearts toward a co-worker, we must seek to keep open and honest communication with them. We must remove any blockages stemming from unforgiveness (of ourselves or others), wrong attitudes or sin. Sometimes this means going, as Scripture teaches, to a person and being reconciled with him or her before offering our gifts to God (Matthew 5:23).

Safety Net 3—Our Relationships Outside the Work Place

Caregivers need to develop relationships outside their work environment. These friends will be able to observe problems more objectively, not taking sides on issues. Such friendships away from the work place will also help you detach emotionally as well as provide additional prayer support. If these are local friends, living in the neighborhood, the relationship will also provide a closer bonding with the community and its culture.

RESOURCE

www.LINKCARE.org/lc

Link Care is a missionary and ministry counseling and training center with a wide range of services. Various free resources include their newsletter. An article currently on their Web site entitled "Am I Burning Out?" presents signs of burnout (a check list) and contains suggestions for prevention and cure.

Caregiver's Time Out



The Comfort of the Lord —Betty Hund

The needs of the children can be overwhelming. Our identification with their needs will result in our carrying at least part of their burdens. When we cannot fully identify with their pain, Jesus can. He is our High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses because of His own sufferings. In seeking Him we will "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16 NIV). This statement is the most powerful message we can bring to the hurting children.

As caregivers, finding our comfort in the Father of Compassion is vital, enabling us to comfort the children. Second Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV) speaks about this truth: "...who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received (the NKJV says "are receiving") from God."

Often we see that people who have experienced a lot of grief and loss in their lives have been brought closer to the Father. They have received abundant comfort from Him and are able to pass this comfort on to others. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:7 (NIV): "And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort." The intense suffering caused their roots to grow very deep in the Lord, giving them a strong foundation. Because of this deep foundation, their "building" can grow sky high.

The prerequisite to being able to comfort and being available for children in crisis is that we, ourselves, have received healing and comfort. To be able to contain the child's grief, this qualification is crucial for us in our ministry.

We know that trials will come. They are part of our lives as Christians. The question is not "if" trials come but rather "when" they come. When we find our shelter in Jesus and let Him comfort us, then He will use the trials for good (Romans 8:28). The Lord will use the problems in our lives to build us and to restore others who are in need.

The children we minister to are experiencing severe losses. If we comfort them with the comfort we ourselves are receiving, we open the door for a deep process of God's healing and restoration in them. Being restored, the children also will be able to help others, because the depth of their suffering has given them a deep and strong foundation in Christ.

Let us look forward to the day in which they will be restored into oaks of righteousness and skyscrapers of comfort to be used by the Lord!

Betty Hund and her husband Chris are from Holland. They led the team at the ROH project in Madrid, Spain prior to being appointed international directors for Rainbows of Hope. The Hunds live in Fort Mill, South Carolina.

Note new address

Effective NOW
Phyllis' new e-mail address is:
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