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Living at a
Time of
Intense Fear

It is important to check in with people regarding how they are feeling at this time.

Many people have very busy lives and in fact spend such a considerable amount of time and energy doing things that they have limited time to think.

It has been known for years that, when they retire, busy people can face challenges to their emotional well-being as they have the time to think. The things they have been running from for decades have a chance to catch up with them.

We are all living at a time of enforced change.

For some it will be a chance to positively slow down and reflect and take stock of life.

For others it will give space to think which can be intimidating and challenging.

The Stuff of Life: Facing challenges, living life

We all face challenges in our lives, times when our plans do not happen as we expect.

We all face stuff that happens

We may not be able to stop the stuff happening but it is how we respond to it that matters.

The one thing that is certain is that life is not a constant predictable experience.

It has ups and downs.

We are all looking for safety, security, significance, meaning, self worth.

There are things that make us feel safe and secure, there are other things that unsettle us.

Are you aware of this in your life?

It is good to try to understand what you rely on and also what seems to unsettle you.

Things happen that challenge this, shake us up.

It depends on what we are relying on.

Think about a four legged chair or stool.

If one leg becomes wobbly it becomes less stable.

If two, it is decidedly unstable.

If three, it takes a great deal of effort to keep in balance, if all fail, you are on the floor!

What is it that gives us stability? Asked in a different way, what makes us vulnerable, where are the weak spots in our lives?

I like to illustrate this by using the illustration of a wall – built with bricks, the experiences of our lives to date.

Some of these experiences are good, some neutral and some bad.

The neutral and good are part of a wall which has strength and integrity.

The bad experiences create weaknesses in the wall.

If there are negative experiences close together or built on top of each other, this creates flaws in the wall's integrity.

Negative experiences create vulnerability and this affects what is resting upon them.

We all have a life wall, and we have an assortment of bricks in it. The way the wall is built depends on the circumstances of our life experiences.

We are all different.

What makes one person strong can be the thing that creates vulnerability in another.

Never judge another because you are not aware of why they are vulnerable or what they have been through.

Also never assume you are safe because you do not have their vulnerabilities. Yours may be different and may only be apparent when they are challenged.

It is important to be willing to talk, to keep lines of communication open for support.

We keep things to ourselves for a variety of reasons.

But the more we bottle up, the more chance there is that pressure builds inside and, like a pressure cooker left on heat without a safety valve, eventually it blows.

Often the longer we keep quiet, the harder it is to begin to talk.

But by talking and sharing we have an opportunity to release the steam and stop the pressure building.

However, it is important to keep working at it. To find support for ourself and to support others.

Do not ever feel embarrassed to admit to struggling or feel a failure for having mental health issues.

You are not alone.

In the past people have hidden how they feel and because of this there have been many feeling unique in their feelings –isolated and alone – when what they were going through is common and normal.

1 in 4 people in a year will have experiences that could lead to a diagnosis of one or other mental health issue.

This sounds a lot. However, there is a range of mental health issues, and they vary considerably in type and degree.

It is normal to have mental health issues in the same way that we have physical health issues.

Some are short term, others longer, some are the equivalent of injuries, others disorders or illnesses.

We should be just as willing to seek appropriate help for our mental health as we are for our physical health.

We should also be willing to work at building good physical and mental well-being.

This can be done by finding a balance between work and social life, maintaining a good sleep pattern, eating sensibly, exercise, hobbies and creativity, and, for those with faith, keeping in touch with God.

Tips

Beware of high points in life – mountain top experiences are often followed by a drop – Elijah.

Hope lost – when we have something happen leaving our hopes dashed or our dreams at risk then we can plummet in our mood.

Trauma and loss – sometimes something happens out of the blue, it shakes us up and we reel with the shock.

This can shake up the most stable person – it comes out of the blue, it is us dealing with unreasonable circumstances – Spurgeon; response to the ongoing current pandemic and its effects.

Watch out for drugs – even legal ones, avoid relying on them for uppers, or relaxation.

However be aware when medication has its place, such as helping those with diagnosed depression.