

# Perfect Liberty II

A Guide to Freedom  
From Addiction



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# ***Dedication***

I am keenly aware of the quiet suffering of those who are bound down by impulse control problems. Hope may diminish as time begins to tarnish precious dreams of what could have been. It is my sincere prayer that this manual will provide some key ideas to both strengthen and encourage individuals. *Perfect Liberty* is dedicated to those who are courageous enough to fully commit themselves to the path of faith and truth. May the Savior of the world bless you in your recovery journey.

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## Preface

Niagara Falls is an incredible place to visit. One cannot help but be impressed by the power and majesty of that natural wonder. It also reminds us of an important principle as well. The falls are fed by the mighty Niagara River. Boats like to travel close to the edge of the falls for excitement and to get a better view. There is an important sign placed on the bank whose warning should be heeded. It says, "The point of no return." Experience has shown that boats going past this point run the risk of being swept over the falls. Whenever we ignore the commandments, we also place ourselves in grave jeopardy. We may think that it is OK to take short forays into the domain of evil, but there are too many risks. Once we place ourselves in Satan's territory, he has the advantage. Those who become accustomed to a sinful activity will eventually become careless and go too far. They will find that they are in the grasp of Satan's chains and an easy escape is no longer possible.



Acquiring greater knowledge and spiritual power are the keys to overcoming addictive behavior. Addictions damage lives and have the potential to destroy our souls. They are a bad bargain. We remember that Esau in a moment of hunger and weakness traded his birthright (or inheritance) to his younger brother Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup. We must be wiser than that. The stakes involved in passing this earthly test are higher than can be imagined. This book is concerned with helping individuals gain more power in the fight against temptations. Its foundational belief is that the answers for psychological questions about addictions will ultimately be found within the gospel of Jesus Christ. May you be blessed in your search for knowledge, as "the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

# The Twelve Principles of Addiction Recovery

## 1. Faith

It is through faith in Jesus Christ that we can receive the power and knowledge to overcome addictions. Addiction comes not from lack of willpower, but from emotional vulnerability and the conditioning effects of sin. The Lord can be a pillar of strength and a fountain of wisdom as we demonstrate the humility to reach out to him. Recognizing that one's life is out of control and deciding to rely upon the Lord is the first step in the recovery process.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:  
(Matthew 7:7)

## 2. Monitoring desires

The continual monitoring of impulses in the context of rules, boundaries, and triggers is an important element in abstinence. True intent to change can be seen by the actual steps taken to alter behavior patterns. Inner attitudes that perpetuate sin must be detected and rooted out. Complete honesty is a requirement for lasting growth.

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?  
Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? (Proverbs 6:27-28)

## 3. Changing desires

True success in recovery involves changing the desires of the heart. This can be accomplished through three means: 1) obtaining the purifying influence of the Holy Ghost, 2) educating the inner self by cultivating truth in thoughts, 3) becoming converted to a spiritual lifestyle through faith-generated positive experiences. Understanding these processes can increase our capacity to live by correct principles in all areas of life.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalms 51:6&10)

## 4. Seek the gift of the Atonement

We can obtain forgiveness and added peace and strength as we receive the blessings of the Atonement. Heavenly Father requires of us honesty, humility, remorse, restitution as able, and a sincere willingness to relinquish our sins. Godly sorrow includes recognition of how we have offended the Lord and others. Sincere prayers, confession to priesthood leaders, appropriate disclosure to family, and a mighty effort to refrain from sin are signs of a changed heart.

For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23)

## 5. Trust in God

Turn your life and will over to Jesus Christ by making spirituality your greatest goal. Spirituality could be defined as: 1) being obedient to the commandments and promptings of the Holy Ghost, 2) maintaining a positive emotional state by cultivating right thoughts and actions, 3) focusing on service to others and personal growth, 4) seeking to be in harmony with other people, nature, and truth.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

## 6. One day at a time

Maintain a spiritual focus. Concentrate on the experience of the moment. Keep your thoughts off the past and the future and be in the present 95% of the time. Constructive activities create positive emotions and disrupt negative thinking patterns. Find joy and purpose in each day.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

## **7. Peace through acceptance**

We can find greater peace by utilizing the wisdom of the Serenity Prayer from the 12-step model. The majority of negative emotions come from our resistance to accepting our present reality (truth). We can be fortified in pursuing righteous goals as we pray to the Lord for knowledge and spiritual strength.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

## **8. As a man thinketh**

Correct thinking is a vital element in recovery and spiritual living. Learn to change your thoughts and more effectively manage anxiety, anger, guilt, depression, and low self-worth. The adversary strives to weaken us with powerful lies that create doubt, despair, and self-condemnation and distance us from our Heavenly Father. These self-defeating ideas must be challenged with logic, scripture, and corrective emotional experiences. The Holy Spirit can help guide us in our quest for truth.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

## **9. Take care of the inner self**

The inner self is the core part of man and the center of our emotions and desires. Greater inward harmony can be achieved by becoming more aware of deeper thoughts, emotions, and desires, and by providing effective conscious direction. Emotional success involves developing the wisdom and self-discipline to lead a moral and responsible life, while also taking care of personal needs.

President James E. Faust: The basic program of the Church today is to strengthen the inner self.

## **10. Individual worth**

All souls have equal worth in the eyes of God. Cease to base your value upon the approval of others or the achievement of perfectionistic standards. Particularly avoid comparisons as this is pride. Secure self-worth comes through humility, acknowledging personal progress, and accepting our value as children of our Heavenly Father.

Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. (D&C 18:10)

## **11. Healthy intimacy**

Love is all-important. Being part of a community of family, friends and neighbors provides joy and emotional strength. Learn to overcome fears of rejection and be a friend to all. Service is an integral part of the spiritual path and increases self-confidence. Perform acts of kindness for those around you every day.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

## **12. Continual self-improvement**

Eternal progression is an important gospel concept. Resolve to change defects in behavior and character and strive to become a better person—more kind, sensitive, honest, disciplined, and temperate. Also focus on gaining new skills, developing positive health habits, and acquiring knowledge. Goals give life more meaning and are the building blocks for our dreams. Strengthen motivational abilities and take things step-by-step. Gradual progress is real progress.

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things (D&C 88:67)

# Chapter 1

## Faith in Jesus Christ

### Principle #1 Faith

It is through faith in Jesus Christ that we can receive the power and knowledge to overcome addictions. Addiction comes not from a lack of willpower, but from emotional vulnerability and the conditioning effects of sin. The Lord can be a pillar of strength and a fountain of wisdom as we demonstrate the humility to reach out to him. Recognizing that one's life is out of control and deciding to rely upon the Lord is the first step in the recovery process.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: (Matthew 7:7)



### The Path of Faith

It is a serious enterprise to squarely face the problem of addiction. Self-doubt and fears readily spring to mind. It is not easy to make a firm decision to abstain from a habit that has been a ready source of pleasure and distraction. However, the Lord loves you dearly and will render invaluable support if you demonstrate the humility and faith to ask for his help.

And now as I said concerning faith- faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true. (Alma 32:21)

The Prophet Joseph Smith noted that there are three basic levels of faith.

1. Believing that God exists
2. Believing that he loves each of us personally
3. Believing that He is perfect in all his attributes

In Revelations 19:10 we are told that “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The first thing we must know in our spiritual walk is that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Holy One of Israel. All people have the opportunity to come to know for themselves by studying the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. Those with a sincere desire to have God in their lives can ask for a witness by the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Savior of the world as prophesized in these two books of scripture.

God's love for all his children is made evident by the many millions who sing his praises because of all that He has done for them. Spiritual and temporal blessings do come to those who believe. Heavenly Father loves all his children, even those who have gone astray. This love is well illustrated in the Parable of the Lost Sheep recorded in Luke.

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. (Luke 15:4-7)

However, to really know God, that He loves us and is perfect in every way, we must let him into our lives. Only by experiencing his love and his mercy and by testing the wisdom in his counsel can we more fully strengthen our faith. Some believe that God will not help them as long as they are sinning. Nothing could be further from the truth. Heavenly Father understands addictions perfectly. He knows that people will have lapses at times as they learn new ways of coping. All he wants from those seeking recovery is to give a good effort. However, one must be fully sincere as God knows our very feelings, thoughts, and desires.

Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and the extent of his doings none can find out.  
His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand.  
From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail. (D&C 76: 2-4)

Those struggling with addictions carry unseen burdens. The road of life appears steep and rocky, and the extra baggage of problems and stress often feels impossible to bear. Addictive behaviors offer a temporary but costly solution. Instant relief can be purchased, but it becomes increasingly expensive and one can only write so many checks on the bank account of the future.

Fortunately, though trials and temptations can seem overwhelming and we may feel helpless to withstand the storms of life, there remains a bright hope. He who has power to calm the raging seas and raise the dead has the ability to help us right our lives and find new hope and new direction.

It appears to be part of the plan of salvation to allow us the opportunity to experience challenges that are beyond our ability to master. These experiences, though mostly undesired, provide priceless opportunities to humbly seek solutions at the feet of the Master. In times of distress, bowed and broken, we are most open to counsel and more willing to learn the Lord's ways.

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:27)

Spiritual progress is accomplished through attaining ever-higher levels of faith and knowledge. If we view trials as mountains to climb in order to build character and testimony, we re-establish hope and meaning in our lives. Comprehending God's plan is like finding water in the desert. This understanding can be utterly essential to our emotional and spiritual survival. This is not our real life! Earth life is but a finishing school for gods in embryo. We are eternal creatures placed in this sphere to receive important life lessons and gain invaluable training. If we are faithful, we will return home to a better existence, and our sorrows will be lost in the joy of our Lord.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:  
And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;  
And patience, experience; and experience, hope. (Romans 5:1,3-4)

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Admittedly, it is very hard to maintain this long-term perspective. We tend to get very absorbed in the things of this world and neglect to think about who we are and why we are here. It seems that scripture study is an essential aspect of keeping

our eyes on the true prize. By reading the holy writ daily, we increase our power to stay focused on spiritual goals. In the stormy seas of depression and despair, our life raft can be the hope obtained through prayer and scripture study. When all seems lost, we can find solace in our knowledge of the purpose of life and look forward to eternal glory. By fully turning to the Lord and dedicating our lives to him, we can find an inner peace that transcends worldly problems.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. (Moroni 8:26)

### **Lost, But Not Forsaken**

Addictions tend to be very misunderstood sins. These problems encompass much more than repeated decisions to disobey important guidelines or commandments. Addictions represent the misguided attempts of troubled people to cope with stress and to get their inner needs met. Life is complex and it is normal to feel overwhelmed and discouraged at times. Addictions are enticing because they provide immediate satisfaction and relief. Those who struggle to find emotional stability or who have difficulty getting close to others are particularly vulnerable to these temptations. Additionally, their faith may be weakened as inner turmoil can make it more difficult to feel close to God.

Mosby's Medical Dictionary provides the following precise definition for addiction: a compulsive, uncontrollable dependence on a chemical substance, habit, or practice to such a degree that either the means of obtaining or ceasing use may cause severe emotional, mental, or physiologic reactions. Other definitions add the obvious provision that the user knows his practice of the behavior to be harmful to himself.

Some other signs that one is addicted are:

1. Repeated unsuccessful attempts to stop or control the strong desires to perform the behavior.
2. Preoccupation with the behavior at the expense of other more important activities.
3. A need to increase the intensity, frequency, or variety in order to achieve the same effect.
4. One experiences significant anxiety, restlessness, or irritability if unable to engage in the behavior.

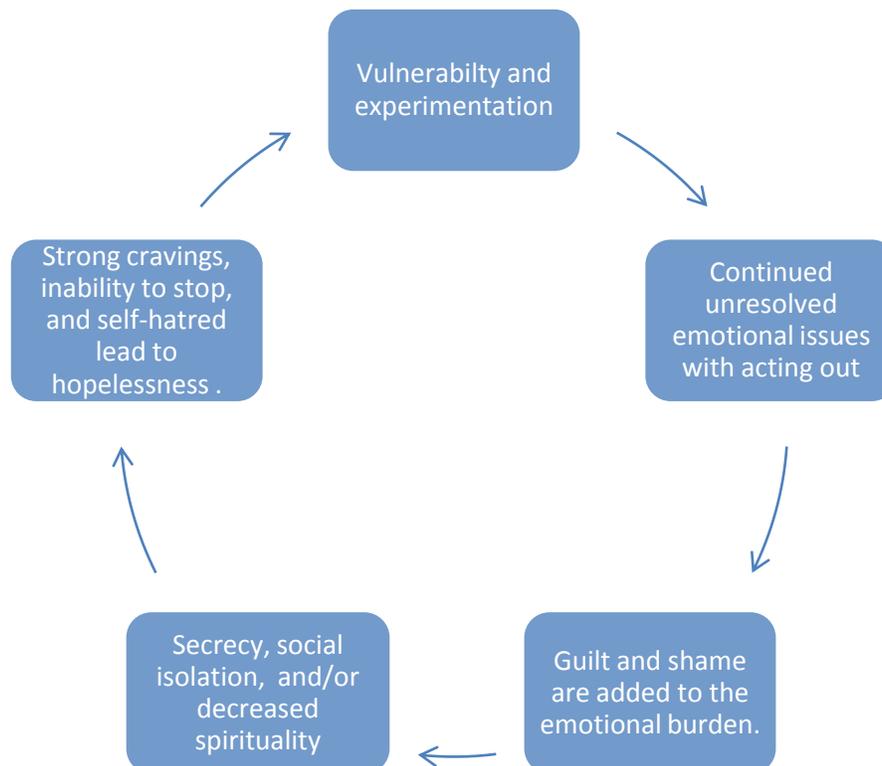
There are many issues that can contribute to addictions. Most problems of concern would fall into one of the following categories: family, marriage, social, environment, past trauma or abuse, career, finances, self-discipline, negative emotions, obsessive thoughts, personality traits, health, or religion. However, it is not difficulties that cause people to turn to addictions, but a lack of effective coping skills plus a personal tendency to use escape as a defense mechanism. Each reader can note in which of the above areas he or she might feel pessimistic, overwhelmed, or even hopeless.

Addiction is an spiritual/emotional sickness that requires deep changes in lifestyle and the acquisition of effective coping skills in order to fully recover. Once a pattern of addiction has been established, it requires a mammoth effort to turn things around. Greater willpower is insufficient in most cases to resolve the problem.

Complete honesty is a pre-requisite to change. Denial and minimization are common personal reactions. No one likes to admit that he has a serious addiction, or to face the shame that lies just under the surface. It is also hard to accept that one's personal efforts to cut down or quit continue to fail, and that the problem is taking over one's life.

Isolation, fear, resentment, and secrecy push one further and further from a normal life. Life can appear unmanageable as consequences such as problems in relationships, negative moods, spiritual darkness, and difficulty maintaining church activity intrude more and more. The self-deception eventually becomes too large to easily ignore. One can only tell himself so many times that he will quit later on. Family, priesthood leaders, or possibly even a judge may have pointed out that it was time to exit from this destructive course of behavior. Whatever the circumstances, no matter how great your doubts, now is your opportunity for change. The first step is to admit you are overwhelmed by your problems and need the help of the Lord and others to get your life back.

### **The Compulsive Cycle**



### **Accomplishing the Impossible**

As we strive to be faithful in obeying the commandments, the Lord will bless us with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. The Holy Ghost can provide immeasurable help as we try to cope with life's many challenges. The Spirit enhances our natural abilities

and gives us peace, emotional strength, and clarity of mind even when storms rage around us. It is important to stay positive and exercise faith that the Lord will help us to overcome all obstacles standing in the way of sobriety. However, we must be diligent and seek always to improve, learn, and serve. If the winds of the Spirit are to fill our sails and speed our life's journey, we need to be willing to pull up the anchor.

Now if He chose to do so, the Lord could miraculously take away most of our problems. We will ever be frustrated if we demand miracles that are not in accordance with God's will. Although these quick fixes seem appealing, this type of approach does not correspond with the Plan of Salvation. The Lord would not be a perfect parent if He did everything for us and kept us dependent. As we struggle through our problems, we learn to more fully appreciate divine principles. Without trials and adversity, we could not gain the wisdom and character necessary to qualify us for life in the celestial kingdom. Remember that the main feature that separates Heavenly Father from man is his supreme intelligence. He truly desires for us to learn his ways of thinking and problem solving.

The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. (D&C 93:36)

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. (D&C 130:18-19)

In seeking the assistance of the Lord, there is one very important principle to remember. The Lord will not always do mighty miracles such as parting the Red Sea to help us with specific problems. More often than not, He will bless us with inspiration (powerful ideas that offer new solutions). However, before God provides this invaluable insight, He requires that we search and pray about the concern. He desires that we first take some real strides to solve the problem ourselves. Heavenly Father wants us to ponder the challenge at hand, derive creative solutions, and perhaps take some initial steps toward the goal. As we do this, He will step in and teach us important principles or make key ideas known to us. These ideas from the Holy Ghost come very gently and often seem like our own thoughts. Occasionally the Lord will communicate with us through another person, or lead us to read a specific book or article. This principle of active participation in the revelatory process was made keenly evident to Oliver Cowdery when he missed his opportunity to translate from the Book of Mormon plates.

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me. (D&C 9:7-9)

Give the Lord a chance to strengthen you and bless you. Seek his wisdom that you may approach your goals with renewed determination. Whether you are concerned with emotional burdens or practical concerns, the Master of the Universe can teach you how to move any mountain. We would do well to remember the trials of

the people of Alma after they fled the Lake of Mormon area in order to evade the soldiers of King Noah.

And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.

And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions. (Mosiah 24:13-14)

These scriptures remind us to have faith when the way ahead is not marked and lighted. Greater faith in Jesus Christ is the antidote for the dilemmas of today as well as for concerns about the future. Whether our worries are connected to fear of failure, financial concerns, health problems, addictions, or family issues, we can bring our problems to the Lord and plead for his direction and support. If we demonstrate faith, submit our will to his and are obedient to his counsel, we can be assured of divine support. In the end we will see that all things will work to our good.

Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.

Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. (D&C 6:34, 36-37)

This chapter will conclude with some very fitting words from the 1989 conference address of President Benson:

We must not lose hope. Hope is an anchor to the souls of men. Satan would have us cast away that anchor. In this way he can bring discouragement and surrender. But we must not lose hope. The Lord is pleased with every effort, even the tiny, daily ones in which we strive to be more like Him. Though we may see that we have far to go on the road to perfection, we must not give up hope.

So, my beloved brothers and sisters, as we seek to qualify to be members of Christ's Church—members in the sense in which He uses the term, members who have repented and come unto Him—let us remember these six principles. First, the gospel is the Lord's plan of happiness, and repentance is designed to bring us joy. Second, true repentance is based on and flows from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Third, true repentance involves a change of heart and not just a change of behavior. Fourth, part of this mighty change of heart is to feel godly sorrow for our sins. This is what is meant by a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Fifth, God's gifts are sufficient to help us overcome every sin and weakness if we will but turn to Him for help. Finally, we must remember that most repentance does not involve sensational or dramatic changes, but rather is a step-by-step, steady, and consistent movement toward godliness. <sup>1</sup>

## **Action Steps**

1. Consider what you have learned about addiction in this chapter. Ask yourself if any of these criteria fit you. Next, ask yourself if you truly believe you can overcome this addiction by yourself? If not, do you have the faith and humility to turn to the Savior that He might guide and strengthen you in the recovery process?

2. Read the scriptures daily. Start with the number of pages you know you can definitely read each day, even if it is only one page. Increase the amount as this positive habit develops.

**President Marion G. Romney:** If we would avoid adopting the evils of the world, we must pursue a course which will daily feed our minds with and call them back to the things of the Spirit. I know of no better way to do this than by reading the Book of Mormon. <sup>2</sup>

3. Have regular individual and family prayers. Make a firm resolve to honestly face the problem and fully abstain. Keep a prayer in your heart throughout the day that the Lord will help you in your recovery process.

Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work. (D&C 10:5)

## Notes

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "A Mighty Change of Heart," Ensign, October 1989, 2.
2. Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, April 1960, 110.

# Chapter 2

## Monitoring Desires

### Principle #2 Monitoring desires

The continual monitoring of impulses in the context of rules, boundaries, and triggers is an important element in abstinence. True intent to change can be seen by the actual steps taken to alter behavior patterns. Inner attitudes that perpetuate sin must be detected and rooted out. Complete honesty is a requirement for lasting growth.

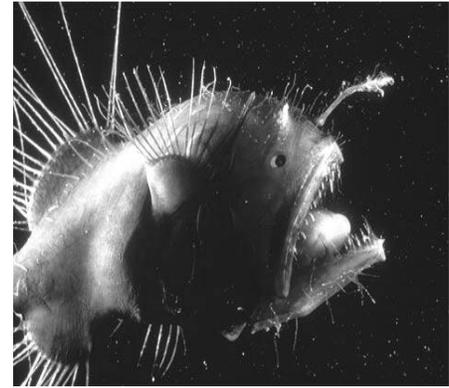
Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? (Proverbs 6:27-28)

### Entrapment

The angler fish lives in what is easily Earth's most inhospitable habitat, the lonely, lightless bottom of the sea, up to a mile below the surface. Generally dark gray to dark brown in color, they are one to three feet in length with grotesque features, massive heads, and crescent-shaped mouths filled with sharp, translucent teeth.

Their most distinctive feature, worn only by females, is a piece of dorsal spine that protrudes above their mouths like a fishing pole—hence their name. Tipped with a lure of luminous flesh, this built-in rod attracts prey close enough to be snatched. This light displays highly advanced technology—it gives off no heat! A compound called Luciferin is oxidized with the help of an enzyme scientists named Luciferase, and this reaction produces heatless light. Their mouths are so big and their bodies so pliable, they can actually swallow prey up to twice their own size. <sup>1</sup>



Much like the angler fish, Satan tempts individuals with sins that can initially appear very enticing. His bait provides short-term pleasure and relief from stress. His unique method of entrapment is to prevent individuals from being able to think clearly enough about their predicament to extricate themselves. Because of the power of conditioned habits, the attractive pull of sin grows greater and individuals become increasingly less able to maintain their perspective. They become partially “blinded” to their dangerous circumstances.

**Compulsivity:** The chains of addiction. Preoccupation in thoughts, strong cravings, and ritualistic patterns of behavior cause the person to begin to feel out of control.

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. (2 Nephi 1:13)

**Loss of perspective and honesty:** Denial, rationalization, justification, and minimization are tools the corrupted heart utilizes to avoid squarely facing the problem. Strengthening one’s ability to see things truthfully leads to change.

And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell.

And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost. (1 Nephi 12:16-17)

**Dependency:** A strong false belief is the idea that a person cannot manage his life without relying upon the crutch of the addiction. However, by exercising faith in the Savior and seeking greater knowledge through learning and revelation, he can develop new understanding, strength and skills. Additionally he can receive the healing power of the Spirit through heart-felt prayer, repentance, and greater obedience.

If they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then I will make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:27)

**The consequence of sin is unhappiness:** Transgression of the laws of God brings the loss of the Spirit, troubled relationships, and loss of hope.

Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. (Alma 41:10)

## **Definitions**

A. **Preoccupation:** The trance or mood wherein the individual's mind is completely engrossed with thoughts of indulging in the addiction. This obsessive mental state makes it very difficult to resist acting out.

B. **Ritualization:** The special routines that lead to the addictive behavior. The ritual intensifies the preoccupation, adding arousal and excitement.

C. **Compulsive Behavior:** The actual behavior which is the end goal of the preoccupation and ritualization. Addicts feel they cannot control this behavior.

D. **Rationalization:** Excuses a person makes to lessen his own sense of responsibility and accountability for a behavior.

E. **Minimization:** Pretending a problem behavior is not as serious as it really is.

F. **Justification:** Providing reasons supporting the necessity of the behavior given the circumstances.

G. **Denial:**

Denial of facts: It didn't happen

Denial of awareness: It did happen, but I didn't know it was wrong or hurtful.

Denial of impact: It did happen and it was wrong, but it didn't hurt anybody.

Denial of responsibility: It did happen and it was wrong, but it wasn't my fault.

H. **Compartmentalizing:** Placing addictive behaviors in little boxes and pretending that they are separate from the rest of one's life.

## **The Great Escape**

### *Establishing Truth in Thoughts*

Becoming more aware of present patterns of behavior and self-deception is crucial to victory. Satan's most successful strategy is to alter men's thoughts. The battle between light and darkness, truth versus falsehood, that began in the pre-existence rages on in this life. Some of Satan's favorite specific tactics are the 3 D's (denial, deception and discouragement). The exercise below is designed to help you better understand yourself. For the sake of confidentiality, it would be better to fill this sheet out on a separate piece of paper.

## Truth Exercise

### **1. I have a significant addiction that will lead to serious consequences in the future.**

- a) Consequences I am already experiencing are: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Serious consequences that are likely to occur if I do not change are: \_\_\_\_\_

### **2. I am practicing self-deception that perpetuates the problem.**

- a) Evidence that I sometimes use denial is: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) My favorite things to say to myself to rationalize or minimize my addictive practices are: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Some ways I deceive other people are: \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. My pattern of addiction is as follows:**

- a) Most common time of day, place, circumstance: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Triggers that tend to set me off are: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) The emotions that are most likely to lead me to indulge are (stress, anger, boredom, feeling rejected etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- d) The most effective rules and boundaries I could set are: \_\_\_\_\_
- e) My inner resistance to living by these rules and boundaries is: \_\_\_\_\_

### **4. Positive habits.**

- a) Healthy practices I could develop that would help substitute for the addiction are: (scripture study, exercise, reading, hobbies etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- b) My inner resistance to making these changes is: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Strategies for Change**

Having identified certain patterns of behavior associated with one's addiction, the next step is to interrupt the sequence. When people with a habit begin to develop cravings, they often move themselves into position to indulge without full conscious awareness. It is important to be aware that there are certain *triggers*, or stimulating situations, that make an episode more likely to occur. Someone with an alcohol problem might be used to having a beer with lunch when he eats at a restaurant. People who smoke have many patterns such as having a cigarette during their break at work. Triggers can also be associated with certain emotions such as anxiety or anger. Once one has identified his triggers, it is prudent to be especially vigilant when these occur and to take pre-planned emergency measures to get back into a safe mode. Someone who has an eating disorder should not trust himself to keep an open bag of chips next to him while watching TV. Resistance to temptation makes us spiritually stronger just as lifting weights make muscles stronger.

It is helpful to recognize that we cannot always prevent having undesirable thoughts enter our minds. Our responsibility is to manage them once they enter. Satan is the great fisherman and he has the power to put ideas into our minds. If we become excessively critical because of these thoughts, we are playing into the devil's hands. Inappropriate guilt ruins our peace of mind and actually makes us more

vulnerable to temptation. We can take heart by remembering that even the Savior was tempted by Satan. Our job is to resist temptation with all our strength. It is what we do in those few seconds after we know problematic thoughts are there that counts.

Recovery and healing are a process, and if a relapse occurs it is part of that process. A relapse provides an opportunity to learn more about personal patterns and to strengthen one's coping skills. Thus, every setback can potentially make one stronger. Armed with faith and determination, there is no doubt that the Lord can help us all to achieve victory over self.

***AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS***  
***by Portia Nelson***

I

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk  
I fall in.  
I am lost ... I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes me forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place  
but, it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in ... it's a habit.  
my eyes are open  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street. <sup>2</sup>

## **Action Steps**

The degree of seriousness with which a person attempts to manage an addiction can be seen by his willingness to take initial steps to regain control. A key to recovery is interrupting the cycle in as many ways as possible. Compulsive thoughts and actions can then be replaced with spiritually healthy substitutes.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:6-8)



1. Acting out does not usually happen spontaneously. There is a chain of behavior that leads up to sin. These behaviors include not only actions, but also thoughts. Unless a person is totally steeped in sin, he will have reservations about committing transgressions. To manage these pricks of conscience, people distort the truth so that their actions no longer appear to be so wrong. Using the format given in the

table below (but on a separate piece of paper), list one of your more common sequences of behavior that leads up to acting out. Also list the accompanying thought error (rationalization etc.) that accompanies each step.

	ACTION	FALSE THOUGHT
Link #1		
Link #2		
Link #3		
Link #4		
Link #5		

2. Having listed and analyzed one pattern that can lead to addictive behavior, correct each false thought. Then decide at which link you could most effectively interrupt the behavior chain.

## Notes

1. Angler Fish, <<http://www.animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/anglerfish.html>>, December, 2009.

2. Portia Nelson, *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*, <<http://www.mhsanctuary.com/healing/auto.htm>>, January 2010.

# Chapter 3

## Changing Desires

### Principle #3 Changing desires

True success in recovery involves changing the desires of the heart. This can be accomplished through three means: 1) obtaining the purifying influence of the Holy Ghost, 2) educating the inner self by cultivating truth in thoughts, 3) becoming converted to a spiritual lifestyle through faith-generated positive experiences. Understanding these processes can increase our capacity to live by correct principles in all areas of life.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalms 51:6&10)

The greatest conflicts we ever face are those within ourselves. Man is confronted with a constant struggle between impulse and reason. Millions are enslaved to cigarettes, gambling, food, drugs, alcohol, or sexual pleasures and are daily casualties in the battle of willpower. The Lord's commandments are strict regarding the confines of acceptable behavior, and our eternal salvation is jeopardized when we give into certain temptations.

As with all sin, these various forms of disobedience eventually result in emptiness and misery. Unfortunately, by the time many individuals realize their behavior is no longer working for them, they may already be hooked. Satan, the great fisherman, knows that if people rely upon sin to meet their emotional needs, they eventually become highly conditioned to seek their outlet during times of stress. They will find themselves regularly plagued by strong cravings for gratification, even when consciously trying to avoid these behaviors.

### Balance in All Things

There is one other important element to consider in the battle against impulse control problems. Success is unlikely if all the emphasis is placed on merely stopping the problem behavior! The addictive behavior is a symptom and not the root cause of the problem. People who are susceptible to addictions almost always have weaknesses in the way they cope with life. Insecurity, perfectionism, social fears, unresolved anger, poor health habits, and difficulty managing stress are just some of the problems that can contribute to a chronic state of emotional discomfort.

Addictions provide temporary relief from tension as well as a moment of pleasure. The addictive behavior remains enticing until new skills are learned to bring about greater peace and contentment. The spirit of man wants to enjoy life. If we cannot find happiness and peace through normal means, we are easily tempted to look elsewhere. Once an individual is further along the path of spirituality and healthy mental living, addictions become much less captivating because a better way has been found.

***I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is victory over self.***

- Napoleon Bonaparte

## Heart and Mind

What is needed in order to find more success with self-discipline is not only greater determination, but also additional light and knowledge regarding the nature of these enterprises. There is great value in recognizing the different qualities of the spirit and the physical mind and how they interact. This knowledge helps us to increase our personal motivation and strengthen our impulse control.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve wrote a book called *Pure in Heart*, which was published in 1988. In this work he explained in detail the complex process of perfecting the human spirit. He made it very clear that this change is neither instant nor easy:

We can suppress evil desires and substitute righteous ones. This involves education and practice. Through our divinely granted willpower we have ultimate control over our desires. But the desires of our hearts are so deep-seated that it may take many years of practice for us to be sure that education and practice have perfected our desires to the point where all are entirely righteous. <sup>1</sup>

The underlying mechanism for addictive behaviors is not commonly understood. Many people appear to believe that sin is a conscious choice and advocate greater self-control. Others blame sexual sins on the evil impulses of the body and suggest strengthening the more pure spiritual side of man. While there are elements of truth in each one of these philosophies, impulse control can be better understood by fully considering what the scriptures have said about the dual nature of man.

The word *heart* appears in the standard works over 1000 times. Many like to view this word as a metaphor, which is an implied comparison. That is, when the scriptures say to “love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart” in Matthew 22:37, it just means to worship with passion. However, if we can consider a more literal meaning, we will notice that the Lord appears to identify the heart as a separate part of the human personality.

Purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:8)

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. (D&C 8:2)

For I the Lord, I will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts. (D&C 137:9)

**President James E. Faust:** The basic program of the Church today is to strengthen the inner self. As we undertake to strengthen the inner soul, we move beyond concern for things that we can hold and possess. A wise man said, “The wealth of a soul is measured by how much it can feel; its poverty, by how little.”

The inner soul, with all that it has stored within it, is what continues beyond this life. We are comforted by the knowledge that those who strengthen their inner selves shall see the face of God. <sup>2</sup>

## The Human Personality

### 1. Man is a dual being - physical and spiritual.

**President David O. McKay:** Man is a dual being, and his life a plan of God. Man has a *natural* body and a *spiritual* body. In declaring this fact the scriptures are very explicit: <sup>3</sup>

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. (D&C 93:29)

There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. (Job 32:8)

## 2. Man's spirit is an integral part of his mind and personality.

**President Brigham Young:** The spirit is the intelligent part of man, and it is intimately connected with the tabernacle. <sup>4</sup>

**President David O. McKay:** Personally, I have felt that nobody keep much of a record about me, except what I keep myself in my mind, which is a part of my spirit. Thought is independent of the five senses. My thesis is that which claims the thought is the spirit. The spirit in man controls this physical body just as the driver of an auto may control that machine. <sup>5</sup>

**President David O. McKay:** You know you love, and love is not part of your physical body, but a definite and divine attribute of the human soul. <sup>6</sup>

And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. (Moses 6:65)

## 3. The heart (associated with the spirit of man) contains both good and bad.

**President David O. McKay:** The man who hates his brother, and kneels down for prayer with that hate in his heart, has in his spirit a disease that will impair his spiritual life. <sup>7</sup>

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: (Matthew 15:19)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. (Matthew 12:35)

**President James E. Faust:** There is a defense mechanism to discern between good and evil. It is called conscience. It is our spirit's natural response to the pain of sin. A sensitive conscience is a sign of a healthy spirit. <sup>8</sup>

***The ancients knew something which we seem to have forgotten. All means prove but a blunt instrument, if they have not behind them a living spirit.***

-Albert Einstein

## 4. The importance of purifying the heart

**President David O. McKay:** The highest purpose of man is to develop the spirit within him. <sup>9</sup>

**Delbert Wright, former president of the Minnesota Stake:**

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) In the Jewish tradition the heart was the seat of thought and intelligence. Hence, to be pure in heart is to be pure in mind-no room for evil desires, but full of righteous plans and ideas. <sup>10</sup>

## The Mind/Body/Spirit Connection

Fasting provides a good example of the mind/body/spirit interaction. The body signals hunger to the brain via nerves in the empty stomach. Other sensors signal thirst and lowered blood sugar. In our spiritual heart we may, at times during the fast, have an intense *desire* to eat or drink. Our physical mind reminds us not to eat and why, and controls our impulses.

It is important to recognize the difference between the appetites and senses of the body and the desires of the spiritual heart. First of all, not every sin has to do with the body. Strivings for pride and power are significant sins that are more spiritual in nature. Some vices that are experienced via the physical body such as the drinking of alcohol are not natural drives, but learned behavior. The heart begins to associate alcohol with pleasure and develops impulses to seek it. Except for sexual sins and excessive food intake, there are actually very few transgressions that are generated by the physical drives of the body.

Sin occurs when men trade their future happiness for momentary pleasures of little lasting value. The conscious mind properly educated about gospel principles can serve as a bridle to help direct the spirit and check any wayward desires. The mind is able to influence the spirit by providing reminders about consequences and goals. We can literally preach the gospel of common sense to ourselves!

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.  
(Proverbs 25:28)

***Reason should direct and appetite obey.***

- Cicero

### **Habit and the Inner Self**

The spirit of man operates according to what has been called the "pleasure principle." This means it seeks constant satisfaction from the environment and only reluctantly accepts restraint and discipline. The inner self learns from experience to associate different stimuli with either pleasure or pain. For this reason when we think about or encounter a stimulus that felt good previously, the inner self generates impulses toward obtaining that satisfaction again. This is why we place ourselves in peril when we break the commandments. If we expose ourselves to sin, we can develop cravings toward particular vices that may prove quite difficult to extinguish.

Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. (D&C 93: 38-39)

The gospel advocates that we acquire wisdom by learning to make sacrifices and to delay gratification. The commandments and the words of the living prophets guide us toward activities that are both enriching and bring long-term rewards. Sin provides temporary pleasure and release from stress, but leads to long-term destructive consequences. We have an opportunity here on earth to learn to discriminate between good and evil and to develop desires for righteousness. Only by doing this can we hope to become like God and live with him in the celestial kingdom.

He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (D&C 93:28)

One common approach used to overcome impulse control problems is to try to force the spirit to do what it should. This "get tough" approach generally works for a while, but fails over time because the spirit of man is too strong and too willful. We can only control the inner self when it lets us. It can rebel at any time. That is why so many people are unable to diet successfully or give up smoking. Whipping ourselves

with guilt for giving into impulses is another popular method for gaining more self-control. While this has some effect, we find that the inner self is too often willing to accept some future guilt for the pleasure of giving into desire now. This very human problem of managing impulses is more complicated than it appears to be on the surface.

***Habits are at first cobwebs, then cables.***

- Spanish proverb

### **Higher Education**

The real key to self-control—and quite possibly the cornerstone of true happiness—lies in educating the inner self. Our only power lies in *persuasion*, not force or guilt. Once the spirit believes that something will not bring real satisfaction, it has less drive toward it. The strength of our impulses will actually decrease because our mental associations have changed. In a similar way, we will be more motivated to perform difficult behaviors such as exercise if we have strong positive associations.

And herein lies true freedom. Once we harness the power of the inner self and work as one toward our goals, we will achieve inner peace and self-mastery. We become the architects of our own fate rather than the victim of our bad habits.

However, gaining control over our impulses involves much more than the mind directing the heart onto the right paths. The spirit of man, through obedience to the commandments and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, can eventually learn to change its desires to more virtuous ones. The spirit learns that only through self-discipline, sacrifice, and obedience can individuals find true joy. The overall goal is to become converted to righteousness. The heart and the mind must become one. This is the Lord's will for us. This process is called sanctification, which means "to make holy."

And unto him that repenteth and sanctifieth himself before the Lord shall be given eternal life.  
(D&C 133:62)

**The Prophet Joseph Smith:** The nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater are his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin. <sup>11</sup>

### **Formula for Changing Desires**

#### **Spirituality**

Prayer and obedience to the commandments bring the promised "living waters" which cleanse and renew us. The Holy Ghost works in a different way than the other method mentioned previously in this chapter. The Comforter works directly on the heart and changes us from the inside out. When we have the Spirit with us, we just do not *feel* like sinning. We feel happier and cope better with our problems. Our testimony is renewed daily and we are able to focus on eternal goals. Having the Spirit of the Lord as a constant companion will actually purify our souls and purge us of evil desires.

Keeping our spirituality up is the essence of being "born again." What a great blessing the gift of the Holy Ghost is. It is essential to maintain this spiritual connection as we allow the Master to heal and strengthen us. We must be aware, however, that Satan is always waiting to wrap his chains around any who dare give him an opening.

And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. (Mosiah 5:2)

Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God. (Alma 13:12)

## **Education**

To change our desires and impulses to righteous ones, we must educate the inner man. To accomplish this, we must change our associations. We desire those things we associate with pleasure and avoid those things we associate with pain. Sin by its nature tastes sweet going down, but afterwards is a poison to the belly. Therefore, it is essential to use correct advertising in our thoughts and fantasies so as to remain continually aware of the consequences of transgression.

### **Impulse Control Techniques:**

**1. Covert conditioning-** Make a movie in your mind using visual imagery. Picture yourself for just a few seconds about to commit a sin you are troubled with. Then as dramatically as possible, portray yourself suffering the resulting consequences of that sin. For example, a smoker could visualize himself in the hospital suffering from the pain and agony of lung cancer.

**2. Self-talk-** Whenever you are confronted with temptation or sinful desires, remind yourself in your thoughts that this action won't make you happy, but will instead cause serious problems. We can in a kind manner speak reason to ourselves. PERSUADE, ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT.

**3. Symbolism-** If a temptation enters your mind, choose a symbol to visualize such as fire, poison, a gun, or an angel with a flaming sword to remind you metaphorically of the consequences that would follow.

### **Emergency Life-Saving Kit**

This step involves increasing one's awareness of the real dangers of engaging in your particular addictive behavior. Allowing one's impulses to reign supreme can bring about significant temporal and eternal consequences. Some things are too important not to remain fully aware of. The purpose of this "kit" is to provide powerful direction and reminders about staying out of temptation's way.

**Part A** Write out a convincing message to yourself about the positive reasons why you wish to stay free of your addiction.

**Part B** List all the possible consequences for continuing in this perilous behavior. Do not pretend that they cannot be serious. Add some personal messages to yourself that highlight not just what can happen, but how you will feel about these consequences should they occur.

**Part C** Add other information that can inspire you. These can be scriptures, statements by General Authorities, quotes, encouraging statements from loved ones, pictures of family members, or anything else that touches your heart.

**Part D** Add some last minute instructions to yourself suggesting what to do when sorely tempted (e.g. pray, read scriptures, call someone, take a walk, get involved in work or a hobby). You may also wish to add a couple of especially pointed remarks aimed at encouraging you to do the right thing immediately.

Read and ponder the things you have collected in your emergency kit at least once per day and especially when in a crisis situation. Visualizing the potential consequences in graphic detail can add power to your review of the kit (covert conditioning technique).

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: (Proverbs 23:7)

### **In Summary**

We can overcome impulse control problems by learning to alter our inner advertising about the problem behavior. Setting boundaries to clarify safe limits and finding new, more positive ways to get our needs met are other important elements of this process. We can also learn to focus more on the many short- and long-term rewards of self-control. Subsequent experiences will reinforce these benefits. Make the Lord a partner in your recovery process. In the strength of the Spirit we can do all things.

*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Phillipians 4:13)*

### **Action Steps**

1. Resolve to stay ever closer to the Spirit of the Lord through prayer, scripture study, and service.
2. Experiment with each of the three impulse control techniques given above and practice those that work best for you.
3. Fill out your personal Emergency Life-Saving Kit and read it daily and whenever seriously tempted.

### **Notes**

1. Dallin H. Oaks, Pure in Heart (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988) chapter 9, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
2. James E. Faust, "Strengthening the Inner Self," Ensign, February 2003, 3.
3. David O. McKay, "Gaining the Abundant Life," in Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay, Compiled by Clare Middlemiss (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 14, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
4. Brigham Young, Discourses of Brigham Young, compiled by John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 191. Quote used by permission of the publisher.
5. David O. McKay, "The Nature of Man," in Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 25, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
6. Ibid
7. David O. McKay, Improvement Era, 1952, no. 4, "The Editor's Page," <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
8. James E. Faust, "To Receive a Crown of Glory," Ensign, April 2004, 2.
9. David O. McKay, Deseret Church News Section, 2 January, 1952, 3. <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.

10. Delbert F. Wright, "Spirituality and the Full Life," BYU Speeches of the Year, 1963, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.

11. Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 51.

# Chapter 4

## Justice and Mercy

### **Principle #4 Seek the gift of the atonement**

We can obtain forgiveness and added peace and strength as we receive the blessings of the Atonement. Heavenly Father requires of us honesty, humility, remorse, restitution as able, and a sincere willingness to relinquish our sins. Godly sorrow includes recognition of how we have offended the Lord and others. Sincere prayers, confession to priesthood leaders, appropriate disclosure to family, and a mighty effort to refrain from sin are signs of a changed heart.

For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23)

Excessive brooding about past sins and unrelenting self-criticism are self-defeating behaviors. Guilt by itself does not make one a better person! We must accept our imperfect natures and concentrate our energies upon change. True remorse is related to grief from truly understanding how we have offended God and our fellow man. Unhealthy guilt has more to do with denying our worth as children of God. Denial of individual worth serves only to discourage us and prevent us from achieving our eternal salvation. Self-hatred is one of Satan's favorite tools because it is so destructive and can trip up even the most righteous spirits.

***How blunt are all the arrows of adversity in comparison with those of guilt.***

-Blair

We are commanded to repent, but it is important to understand why. Feeling remorse and guilt and confessing our sins are certainly part of the process, but repentance encompasses much more than just those elements. The oldest translations of the New Testament are in Greek. The Greek word that is most commonly used to signify repentance in the New Testament is *metaneo*. *Metaneo* means more than feeling sorrow and regret, and additionally signifies a transformation of attitude and thought. The end goal of repentance is to not only let go of the sin, but to become enlightened and wholly converted to a new way of life.

God wants us to repent so we can learn celestial principles and be as successful and happy as our circumstances permit. This earth life is an opportunity to change our very nature, so that doing what is right becomes more automatic. The Lord does not want us to suffer unduly, but instead wants us to be persuaded to always strive for righteousness. This chapter will consider five elements of the repentance process.

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit-- and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink-- (D&C 19:16-18)

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:17)

Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. (D&C 58:42)

## **Recognition: Overcoming Denial**

Many who struggle with addictions tell themselves that they are not harming anyone else, that it is a private matter. This is a falsehood that must be brought out into the light of truth. While some addictions are certainly worse than others, they all end up affecting other people and violate God's laws in some way. Therefore, increasing awareness of the serious nature of these offenses is an important part of the repentance process

Addicts sometimes exhibit a tendency to isolate that interferes with relationships. They are often consumed with their own thoughts and habits, and other people may take second place. Additionally, as their lifestyle is emotionally and spiritually unhealthy, they may often feel tense or irritable. These emotional side-effects can disrupt family harmony. Children are especially sensitive to a parent's mood and behavior, and can suffer if their needs are not met.

Friends and extended family will worry about your happiness and/or eternal salvation. Church duties may go unfulfilled because of feelings of unworthiness and people you might have served will struggle. It is important to think about these things and feel appropriate remorse. These repentant feelings will allow you appeal at the throne of grace for forgiveness and help.

Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. (Alma 34:31-33)

Certainly, an essential part of the repentance process will be confessing serious misdeeds to the proper priesthood authorities. This provides protection for the Church and the transgressor can receive necessary guidance for his reformation.

And whosoever repented of their sins and did confess them, them he did number among the people of the church;

And those that would not confess their sins and repent of their iniquity; the same were not numbered among the people of the church, and their names were blotted out. (Mosiah 26:35-36)

## **Remorse**

Remorse is the pain of conscience and guilt we feel when we more clearly see how we have harmed others and violated the commandments of our righteous Heavenly Father. Remorse demonstrates humility and a correct attitude of heart. Though true remorse is painful, it is also healing in nature. A repentant person wants to please God, bless mankind, and zealously obey the commandments. Reflection is also part of remorse. Beyond feeling badly, it is important to understand precisely where we went wrong, and to plan how to do things differently in the future.

The prophet Alma was guilty of some very serious sins and the scriptures tell us something of what he thought and experienced during his period of greatest remorse.

But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.

Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked even with the pains of a damned soul. (Alma 36:12-16)

President Spencer W. Kimball offered some additional ideas about the role of remorse in the repentance process in his book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*:

When a true consciousness of guilt finally settles down upon the one who has sinned and he feels the heaviness of its throttling force and crushing power only then can the sinner begin to realize how powerless he is on his own to rid himself of his transgressions. Only then can he begin to understand how futile are his unaided efforts to wash away the stains so indelibly stamped on his life and character. In his anguish he must come to lean heavily upon the Lord and trust in him, acknowledging that "with God all things are possible."

Jesus Christ the Only Way. The purging out of sin would be impossible but for the total repentance of the individual and the kind mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ in his atoning sacrifice. Only by these means can man recover, be healed and washed and purged, and still be eligible for the glories of eternity. On the Savior's great role in this, Helaman reminded his sons of King Benjamin's comments: "There is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come, yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world." (Helaman 5:9) <sup>1</sup>

But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven. (Moroni 6:8)

And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them. (Mosiah 4:10)

I, the Lord, forgive sins, and am merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts. (D&C 61:2)

## **Receive**

The Plan of Salvation contains the concept that we are weak spiritually and dependent upon the Lord for assistance. The plan assumes that errors will be made. Part of having a broken heart and a contrite spirit is being able to acknowledge our sins. Try as we might, perfection is out of reach during our sojourn on earth. Therefore, it is essential to accept the mercy the Atonement offers. Forgiveness of self frees us to move ahead to the next goal and is an essential part of the repentance process.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23)

However, some people feel so burdened down by sin that they assume that they are beyond the reach of mercy. They feel ashamed and unworthy and believe that God

will not help them until they are able to let go of their sins. Others struggle so much with feelings of self-hatred that they believe they deserve to be punished and are unworthy of the blessings of the Atonement.

While such feelings may be understandable, they do not take into account the depth of love Heavenly Father has for his children. It is not the Lord's design that people suffer endlessly with guilt, or feel cut off from his help. For one thing, we are not much use to the Lord or anyone else when we are depressed and self-absorbed. Heavenly Father needs soldiers for Christ who have the energy and motivation to do his work. He also wants to save all his children who will come unto him in faith. He did not send Jesus because we are worthy of so great a blessing. He sent his perfect Son because we needed a savior. The Atonement is a precious *gift* that He would have us all receive with thanksgiving.

Far from being a sign of righteousness, self-condemnation and excessive guilt are ultimately selfish and willful behaviors. People who waste energy focusing on their sins and weaknesses deny the Lord's love and reject the Atonement. Their negative self-absorption hurts those around them who feel compassion for their suffering and also renders them less able to serve. This self-betrayal also weakens people emotionally and makes them more vulnerable to sin.

People who condemn themselves generally were conditioned to do so because of ill treatment by others. Their self-hatred may actually be a manifestation of their deep-seated anger toward those who have betrayed them. Nevertheless, it remains their responsibility to demonstrate the faith and humility to accept the Atonement, the Lord's infinite sacrifice. They would do well to heed Jesus' wonderful counsel, "He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:39) Sometimes we just need to get over ourselves and think more about others.

The gospel clearly is meant to bring us peace of mind. The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to pay the price for our sins. The only perfect man suffered in innocence that we might be cleansed from our transgressions. How very sad He must feel when we do not take advantage of his marvelous gift, purchased with the price of his blood.

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (3 Nephi 11:10-11)

True remorse is related to the inner man sensing a separation from the Spirit of the Lord and understanding how he has hurt others and offended God. It is a heart-felt form of grieving for past mistakes. Although Satan would tell us that we cannot be forgiven, we know that his deceitful message is untrue. There is a way back for all who diligently seek help and forgiveness through the mercies of Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. (2 Nephi 2:6-7)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

## Restitution

**President Joseph F. Smith:** True repentance is not only sorrow for sins, and humble penitence and contrition before God, but it involves the necessity of turning away from them, a discontinuance of all evil practices and deeds, a thorough reformation of life, a vital change from evil to good, from vice to virtue, from darkness to light. Not only so, but to make restitution, so far as it is possible, for all the wrongs we have done, to pay our debts, and to restore to God and man their rights that which is due them from us.<sup>2</sup>

Make a list of those you have harmed and consider in what particular ways you have hurt each one. If appropriate (such as with family members) you can have a dialogue with them. Ask how you have injured them and then apologize without defensiveness or excuses. A spirit of humility and remorse should be present as apologies are made. If there are some particular ways you can make restitution, it should be done.

**Elder Richard G. Scott:** You must restore as far as possible all that is stolen, damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can do to repent.”<sup>3</sup>

Alma and the sons of Mosiah are excellent examples of those who, having obtained forgiveness, sought to make restitution. They not only apologized, but went about doing much good. They overcame their pride and fear and were very diligent, traveling all through the land despite stiff opposition.

And now it came to pass that Alma began from this time forward to teach the people, and those who were with Alma at the time the angel appeared unto them, traveling round about through all the land, publishing to all the people the things which they had heard and seen, and preaching the word of God in much tribulation, being greatly persecuted by those who were unbelievers, being smitten by many of them.

But notwithstanding all this, they did impart much consolation to the church, confirming their faith, and exhorting them with long-suffering and much travail to keep the commandments of God.

And four of them were the sons of Mosiah; and their names were Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and Himni; these were the names of the sons of Mosiah.

And they traveled throughout all the land of Zarahemla, and among all the people who were under the reign of king Mosiah, zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen, and explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them. (Mosiah 27:32-35)

## Relinquish

Take this opportunity for change seriously! Study the readings in this manual and do the assignments. If you are in class, participate in an open and disclosing manner. You will never have a better opportunity to repent and get your life on track. Things can only get worse if you wait. Habits get stronger, opportunities are missed, and relationships can be strained or broken. In the end, do not be one of those of whom Samuel the Lamanite spoke.

But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing

iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head. (Helaman 13:38)

Now it certainly would be wonderful if most individuals reading this manual immediately gave up all their sins. However, the conditioning in addictions runs so deep that this is highly unlikely. Many individuals err in thinking that because they are yet in their sins they cannot receive the Lord's help and support. He is full of grace and mercy and is very willing to be part of your change process. What He wants to see, however, is honesty, humility, and sincere effort. In previous chapters, methods were provided to identify patterns of behavior, set firm boundaries, and change thoughts and desires. If you have the faith to ask for the Lord's help and you are working hard to resist temptation, He can bless you with the power of the Spirit and with vital knowledge.

It is important to ask yourself a few questions regarding giving up your sins. Am I happy? Where is this lifestyle leading me? Do I value my relationship with the Lord highly enough that I am really willing to give up my sins? The king of the Lamanites went through this kind of mental process.

And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy. (Alma 22:13,15)

### **Relapse Management**

Healing is a process, and if relapses occur, they are part of the journey. A relapse signals that there is additional learning and work to be done. Learning and work are essential elements of eternal progression. Relapses properly analyzed serve to make us stronger as each experience can provide additional information about how to intervene to disrupt negative patterns. It is important to appreciate these ideas since Satan, the master deceiver, will often use a relapse to convince an individual that recovery is hopeless. He will also try to weaken individuals by tying them up in a perpetual cycle of shame and guilt.

The Lord is infinitely kind and patient. As long as He knows we are sincere in our efforts to change, the mercies of the Atonement are available, and He will bless and support us in our goals. Those who do struggle with developing the proper repentant attitude can work on, at least, being honest about their motives. There is generally a reason behind a person's reluctance to change. Chronic feelings of stress, depression, or hopelessness all tend to erode confidence in one's ability to manage without the crutch of the addiction. Years of unsuccessfully trying to escape the stranglehold of an addiction can cause serious discouragement as well. Bringing reservations or fears to the Lord, and then searching diligently again for answers or direction, can help create needed momentum.

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. (Alma 7:11-12)

## Action Steps

1. Those who are truly remorseful and serious about change will immediately begin focusing on the five following areas:

- a. Work through the five aspects of repentance: recognition, remorse, receive, restitution, and relinquish. Because of the power of the Atonement, the Lord can forgive you and help you if you are sincere.
- b. Openness, honesty, and appropriate disclosure or confession.
- c. Increased obedience to the commandments.
- d. Taking into account your patterns, firm up your boundaries and develop a set plan to control your impulses toward your addiction.
- e. Diligently follow your daily plan and ferociously fight impulses with the tools you have learned.

2. Make sure to have chosen a couple of methods from chapters 2 and 3 that will help you manage your thoughts and decrease your desires. Also, it is essential to have filled out the Emergency Life-Saving Kit. Employ your pre-planned tools when impulses to sin strike. Here is where a true desire to fully repent may be seen. In most cases, the first 30 minutes after being tempted is the most crucial time period in which to strongly resist. As we struggle, we grow our spiritual muscles and gain additional information about our thoughts and patterns of behavior. Over time, the general plan can be tightened and improved.

3. If you are not ready to fully relinquish your addiction, then first focus on being more honest and aware. People generally engage in vices to either obtain pleasure or to escape from stress and problems. Consider what your deeper needs may be, versus merely labeling yourself as immoral or impulsive. Addictions are a symptom of inner spiritual struggles, and compassion is the lens by which these may be viewed more clearly. There may be specific areas of your life where you feel hopeless or overwhelmed? Some common areas of concern are finances, relationships, career, unmet personal needs, and unremitting negative emotions? The acronym BLAST stands for *bored, lonely, angry, stressed, tired*.

There appears to be a significant relationship between unresolved inner distress and the strength of impulses for sin. Therefore, developing new ways to solve problems can have an extremely beneficial effect on the recovery process. Note your critical areas and pray for the Lord's guidance. Then strive with all your might and intelligence to find solutions or understanding. Several tools for managing emotions will be provided in future chapters.

## Notes

1. Spencer W. Kimball, Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, March, 2010.

2. Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 100.
3. Richard G. Scott, "Finding Forgiveness," Ensign, May 1995, 76.

# Chapter 5

## Choosing the Spiritual Path

### Principle #5 Trust in God

Turn your life and will over to Jesus Christ by making spirituality your greatest goal. Spirituality could be defined as: 1) being obedient to the commandments and promptings of the Holy Ghost, 2) maintaining a positive emotional state by cultivating right thoughts and actions, 3) focusing on service to others and personal growth, 4) seeking to be in harmony with other people, nature, and truth.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

### Men Are That They Might Have Joy

Trusting in God is an essential element in our walk of faith. People often fear this step because it means to a degree giving up their own will and desires. However, there are some important questions that those who are addicted can ask. The first question is related to honesty, “How well am I doing managing my life my way?” The second question is related to faith, “Does the Lord care about me and can He provide the help and knowledge I need?”

Making the decision to trust in the Lord is a serious one. This decision will require commitment and sacrifice. In return we can receive peace and consolation, continual knowledge and guidance, and eventually eternal salvation with our families. Those who have received the priesthood or their endowments have already promised God that they will be obedient. The question is whether or not we choose to honor those sacred covenants.

And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (D&C 84: 43-45)

God is good and God is understanding. He is aware of our needs and desires, and He is reasonable. He will not ask of us more than we are able to perform. He wants us to trust him so He can help us. Think of how you would feel if you had a son or daughter mired in an addiction that could result in dangerous consequences, and possibly even jail or prison. Would not your heart go out to them? Would you not be merciful? Is our perfect Heavenly Father less compassionate than you are?

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve described his decision to yield his will to God and the freedom that decision gave him:

Perhaps the greatest discovery of my life, without question the greatest commitment, came when I finally had the confidence in God that I would loan my agency to him—without compulsion or pressure, without any duress, as a single individual alone, by myself, no counterfeiting, nothing expected other than the privilege. In a sense speaking figuratively to take one’s agency, that precious gift which the scriptures make

plain is essential to life itself, and say, 'I will do as you direct,' is afterwards to learn that in doing so you possess all the more. <sup>1</sup>

An individual who is admitted to a university is not truly a student until he applies himself to the learning process. In the same way someone who recognizes Jesus Christ as his Savior is not truly a disciple until he fully submits to God's will. Earth life is God's university and sometimes we stop at Obedience 101 when there is much more to learn. Discipleship includes more than obeying certain well-known commandments. The Plan of Salvation requires that we travel the steep and narrow path lovingly designed for the sons and daughters of God. Heavenly Father desires that we strive to become like Jesus Christ and to fully seek the spiritual life. This upper level course is known as the sanctification process and is the true way to stability, sobriety, and joy.

**President Benson:** The road lies before us. It is clearly marked. The means to travel it are richly provided. We must follow the path set for us by the Son of God in all that we desire, think, and do. <sup>2</sup>

Sanctification has three main elements to it. These elements are 1) obedience to the commandments, 2) being born again and experiencing the transforming effects of the Holy Ghost, and 3) bringing our thoughts, words, deeds, desires, and emotions into harmony with the Spirit of the Lord.

Though this task may seem overwhelming, it is important to bear in mind that you have a perfect support team. Also, remember that this is not a sprint, it is a long distance race. (We have sufficient time to work out our salvation.) To make an analogy, the circumference of the earth at the equator is 24,901 miles. If there was a path through the oceans, you could walk around the whole earth in less than seven years if you walked at the fairly relaxed pace of ten miles per day. The basic plan is to single-mindedly focus one's energies on the goal of living each day well. By doing this, each individual can learn what is perhaps the greatest lesson in life—that happiness and peace really do come more from spiritual living than outer circumstances.

### **Step 1 Obey the Commandments**

Obedience to the commandments brings us blessings, keeps us on a safe path, and is an integral part of our walk with God. Although obedience is an outward manifestation of our faith, compliance with the commandments also allows God to begin teaching us his ways. Human beings learn more deeply through experience than any other method. Obedience follows faith and is the first level of discipleship.

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. (John 7:16-17)

He doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; (Mosiah 2:24)

### **Step 2 Seek the Purifying Influence of the Holy Ghost**

One of the significant truths that Jesus taught the Jewish people was that they must be "born again." As Israel had not hitherto received the gift of the Holy Ghost, this was a difficult concept for them to understand. Obtaining the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a very important part of our spiritual progression. (The Holy

Ghost is a spirit personage and a member of the Godhead.) The Spirit is obtained through obedience and faith, as well as diligence in our habits of prayer.

Though we may stumble on the path to perfection, the cleansing power of the atonement of Jesus Christ makes forgiveness possible. Therefore, we are able to continue to remain eligible for the transforming and sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. As we live so as to continually receive the blessings of the Holy Ghost, profound changes occur within our souls. Our sinful natures begin to turn as a ship that sails with the wind. The prophet Alma asked the Nephite people, “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5:14)

And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. (Mosiah 5:2)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. (Galatians 5:22)

Regular heartfelt prayer is an integral component of maintaining the influence of the Holy Ghost. Prayer is not only about the communication of words, but is also an exchange of emotions. We must develop the capacity to generate appropriate feelings of love, humility, and gratitude as we pray to our Heavenly Father. As we exercise stronger faith and contemplate the greatness of God, his love for all mankind, and all the things He has blessed us with; these higher emotions will be expressed more naturally in prayer.

Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing— (D&C 19:38)

And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. (Moroni 7:9)

Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God. (Helaman 3:35)

**Step 3 Changing the Inner Man** (the process of bringing our thoughts, words, deeds, desires, and emotions into harmony with the Spirit of the Lord)

Those struggling with addictions often have at their core a pervasive sense of feeling unhappy or overwhelmed. Therefore, activities that provide temporary relief from this chronic emotional pain become quite compelling over time. Despite the fear of consequences, addicts will struggle subconsciously to hold onto their habit because it is meeting a need. Only when they have new positive experiences in coping can they gain an alternative vision for the future and fully move on.

A profound transformation in outlook may be required before an individual can truly let go of his sinful desires. As noted previously, this involves surrendering to God’s will and fully seeking the spiritual life. This profound change requires not only being obedient to the laws of the Church, but also considering one’s total way of life. This significant challenge involves taking into account our interactions with the Light of Christ.

The Light of Christ is a dynamic force that emanates from the presence of God and has a profound effect on all life. This source of energy and goodness is freely available to all who live by the laws that attract it, regardless of religious belief. This latter element is a critical component in finding happiness in this world. This access to the Light of Christ by all God's children explains why there are non-religious people who are quite content and Latter-Day Saints who struggle emotionally.

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space--

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, (D&C 88:12-13)

And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified.

For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy. (D&C 88:38-40)

Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation. (D&C 93:31-32)

Church members can dim the Spirit by polluting their personal spiritual reservoir with undesirable emotions such as anxiety, anger, guilt, envy, low self-esteem, and pessimism. Negative thinking is the prime source of these disagreeable feelings. The cumulative effect of these spiritual miscues can have a very deleterious effect upon one's overall spirituality. It seems that things of a negative tone can crowd out the light from God.

Harsh speech, light-mindedness, unkindness, gossiping, viewing unwholesome media, and other sins great and small have a similar adverse effect. Let us recognize that it is the general state of this inner spiritual reservoir that largely dictates man's happiness, and in many cases his stability. President Brigham Young counseled the Saints to thoroughly examine their spiritual state in order to prepare for the end times. "Do not be too anxious for the Lord to hasten his work," he said. "Instead, let our anxiety be centered upon this one thing, the sanctification of our own hearts, the purifying of our own affections, the preparing of ourselves for the approach of the events that are to come." <sup>3</sup>

The Apostle Paul provided some very pertinent advice in Galatians 5:25 when he wrote, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." My interpretation of this scripture is that after we obtain the Spirit through prayer, scripture study, and obedience to the commandments, we then try to maintain the same feelings throughout the day. In order to accomplish this goal, we must be continually filling our spiritual reservoir with good feelings and be vigilant about avoiding contamination. It is not as difficult as one might think. Joy, after all, is addictive.

### **Truth in Thoughts**

This part of our spiritual development program is sometimes overlooked, although its importance is clearly delineated by the scriptures and the prophets. Our emotions and desires are highly influenced by our thoughts and perceptions. Improper desires must be considered in terms of our long-term goals and not only immediate pleasures. Negative thoughts associated with anger, fear, self-criticism, or depression must be converted to more logical and positive thoughts using correct gospel principles.

Now to some the idea of managing thoughts might seem as likely as throwing a lasso on the wind. Thoughts do appear to arise both spontaneously and quickly. Some thoughts arise beneath the surface of our awareness and are difficult to detect. We may first notice negative emotions or desires and then have to backtrack to recognize any associated false perceptions. Providing oneself quiet time for prayer and contemplation can aid in this very important goal of changing thought patterns.

**President David O. McKay** An upright character is the result of continued effort and right thinking, the effect of long-cherished associations with God-like thoughts. <sup>4</sup>

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. (D&C 121:45)

### **Set Goals for Self-Improvement**

Learn skills for motivation and self-discipline. Establish those qualities and habits that will help you to develop character and become more like the Savior. Lasting happiness does not come from engaging in pleasurable activities, achieving success in the secular world, or in owning many possessions. True joy comes from maintaining a preponderance of those higher emotions associated with Jesus Christ—love, peace, truth, hope, and humility. Establishing achievable goals and utilizing positive self-talk help us to grow “line upon line and precept upon precept.” (D&C 98:12)

Read the scriptures often and follow the counsel of the Lord. Keep involved in positive activities and avoid sinful behaviors. Dedicate yourself to a life of service to the Lord and mankind. We can strive to live our lives so as to keep our behavior in harmony with the Light of Christ.

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. (D&C 98:11)

And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. (D&C 4:5-6)

**President Benson:** Spiritual strength promotes positive thinking, positive ideals, positive habits, positive attitudes, and positive efforts. These are the qualities which promote wisdom, physical, and mental well-being, and enthusiastic acceptance and response by others. <sup>5</sup>

President David O. McKay shared these inspired thoughts on the subject of spirituality, or what we might also call the *sanctification process*.

Christ has asked us to develop the spiritual within us. Man's earthly existence is but a test as to whether he will concentrate his efforts, his mind, his soul upon things which contribute to the comfort and gratification of his physical nature or whether he will make as his life's purpose the acquisition of spiritual qualities. Every noble impulse, every unselfish expression of love, every brave suffering for the right; every surrender of self to something higher than self; every helpfulness to humanity; every act of self-control; every fine courage of the soul undefeated by pretext or policy, but by the being, doing, and living of good for the very good's sake—that is spirituality. <sup>6</sup>

## Keys to Spiritual Living

- 1. Values and principles**– Strive to live according to higher laws. Treat all others and yourself with dignity and respect. Be an influence for good.
- 2. Meaning**- Seek truth and knowledge and create a personal philosophy and life style that suits your unique personality, talents, and interests.
- 3. Enriching daily activities**- The “4 L’s” can fill our hearts with positive emotions.
  - **Love**- Love is the royal emotion. Our ability to value and care about others has the greatest effect upon our disposition.
  - **Learning**- Gain knowledge through reading great books. Improve skills and talents and spend time contemplating important ideas.
  - **Labor**- Work provides balance and focus, helps us to find meaning, and builds self-discipline.
  - **Leisure**- Recreation adds to our joy in life and also serves as a valuable mental release.
- 4. Centering activities**- Prayer, meditation, reading in books of wisdom, music, communing with nature.
- 5. Positive thoughts**- Be optimistic, thankful, and compassionate in your outlook. See beauty and goodness in all your experiences. View difficulties as opportunities for learning and personal growth.
- 6. Mindfulness**- Savor each minute and each day through mindful living. Live in the moment and divert attention from the negative.
- 7. Detachment**- Things don’t have to be a certain way for us to be happy, we just want them to be different. It is fine to wish to have more as long as we are also willing to strive to be happy with what we have right now.
- 8. Wellness**- Learn and follow the principles for maintaining good physical and mental health so you can maintain your vital energy.
- 9. Service**- Think beyond just one’s self. Render compassion and service to family, community, and the world.
- 10. Continual progression**- Set goals small and great. Develop the skills of self-discipline. View personal progression as the central purpose of existence, the existential pearl of great price.

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (Moses 1:39)

## Notes

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3. Brigham Young, “The Last Days,” in Discourses of Brigham Young, compiled by John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), chapter 10, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
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# Chapter 6

## One Day at a Time

### Principle #6 One day at a time

Maintain a spiritual focus. Concentrate on the experience of the moment. Keep your thoughts off the past and the future and be in the present 95% of the time. Constructive activities create positive emotions and disrupt negative thinking patterns. Find joy and purpose in each day.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

The Church was organized in 1830 in Fayette, New York. The Saints first gathered in Ohio and then Missouri, only to be forced to leave both places because of persecution. The Saints next settled in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1839 where a temple was built and the population swelled to 11,000, making it one of the largest cities in the state. The martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum only briefly slowed down opposition to the Church. In September of 1845, foes burned more than 200 Mormon homes and farm buildings outside Nauvoo, and civil war appeared imminent. The state government then sent troops to provide temporary protection, but asked the Saints to leave Illinois. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles promised that the Church would leave Nauvoo by the following spring.

However, it was in early February of 1846 that the first Saints began the evacuation from Nauvoo. The original plan was to leave in April, but false charges had been brought against Brigham Young and eight other apostles, the city charter had been revoked, and there were rumors of Federal troops coming to intercept the Saints.

As a result of the haste in which the evacuation began, the refugees from Nauvoo were not sufficiently prepared or organized. Lack of provisions, snow, cold temperatures, and inadequate shelter caused great suffering as the faithful gathered to the Sugar Creek Camp across the Mississippi River. Several women had to give birth in tents. After reorganizing at Sugar Creek, the Saints began the journey west on March 1, 1846.

The travel across Iowa that spring was incredibly difficult. Melting snows and frequent rains turned the prairie into a quagmire. The mud was often up to the axles of the wagons. Difficult terrain, lack of guides, frequent creek and river crossings, and the ever-present scarcity of food made things extremely difficult. The groups were only able to travel two to three miles per day, or less. Some were assigned to stop to build way stations to help those coming behind. Other men sought work in communities along the route so they could obtain much needed cash. The advance party finally reached the Missouri River at the western edge of Iowa in June of 1846. It had taken them over 131 days to travel that torturous 265 miles. By contrast, the Pioneer Company a year later took only 111 days to travel the 1,032 miles from Winter Quarters to the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Scurvy, malaria, and tuberculosis plagued the destitute Saints on their journey. Seven hundred people died out of about ten thousand who spent the winter in Winter Quarters and the other encampments by the Missouri River. Also five hundred able-bodied men had enlisted in the army as part of the “Mormon Battalion” and had left in the summer. It was a time of great sacrifice for the Church, but also a time for the strengthening of faith and the purification of hearts. <sup>1</sup>

The Saints had to maintain hope and courage, and focus their energies on the challenges that each day of the journey brought them. They had to completely trust in the Savior as they ventured forth into the frontier, far beyond the reaches of civilization. He always has the wisdom and power to provide comfort and guidance, even in the most perilous and difficult circumstances.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.  
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Recovery from addictions is brought about in a similar way. The basic plan is to single-mindedly focus one's energies on the goal of living each day well. Cravings for sin will be greatly decreased as one becomes converted to this truth and learns to walk in harmony with the light of the Lord. This chapter will look at several important aspects of mood management— maintaining a spiritual outlook, engaging in positive activities, and organizing and subduing negative thoughts.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Romans 8:6)

## **Making Beautiful Music Each Day**

Those who are struggling emotionally usually want things outside themselves to change first. They often feel that their social life, status, income, career, or other life conditions must improve before they can be content. However, all these concerns, except for the most extreme situations, must be temporarily suspended. Attitudes need to be changed and coping skills strengthened before people are likely to see major changes in their circumstances. Accepting this truth and letting go of the very human need to try to control everything is very difficult. There is a saying from Alcoholics Anonymous that says, "Let go and let God." To truly follow the Lord's will, we must begin to change our life situation by concentrating on what He is likely to advise first—repentance.



As noted in an earlier chapter, repentance means more than giving up bad behavior. Repentance is also associated with developing improved attitudes and new habits of living. Rather than miraculously changing the circumstances of our lives as we would desire, our Heavenly Father would first have us learn the ways of joy. In his wisdom, he knows that in order to obtain lasting happiness, we all need to focus more intently on living in a Christ-like manner. If he blessed us with riches and removed the majority of our burdens, most people would forget the Lord and unwisely pass up their opportunity to progress.

And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not

declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.

Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths! (Helaman 12: 1-3,5)

As previously noted, the Apostle Paul provided some very pertinent advice in Galatians 5:25 when he wrote, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." My interpretation of this scripture is that as we obtain the Spirit through prayer and obedience to the commandments, we then try to maintain the same feelings. In order to accomplish this goal, we must be continually filling our spiritual reservoir with good feelings and be vigilant about avoiding contamination.

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth; (Ephesians 5:8-9)

Gaining a testimony of living a more spiritual life is a wonderful adventure. Not only will it change your life, but making spirituality your greatest priority will also bring forth priceless eternal rewards. One starts by focusing on this objective one day at a time. To skip the necessary mental and emotional preparation and then to expect good fortune in life is comparable to swimming across river rapids, merely hoping you will make it across. The spiritual practice of living for the day can be your bridge to success.



But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

### **Man Overboard!**

What would you do if you were a tourist on a cruise ship two hundred miles from land and you fell overboard at midnight? Imagine the ship steaming ahead leaving you all alone in the dark waters. A person might be tempted to give up in the

face of such incredible adversity and just sink beneath the waves. In 1995 such a situation actually occurred and was reported in the news. United States Marine Lance Corporal Zachary Mayo was walking on the deck of his ship early one morning because of insomnia. A sudden gust of wind and a swinging door knocked him overboard, right in the middle of the Arabian Sea. He shouted, but no one heard him, and the ship sailed on without him. The Navy did look for him once he was reported missing, but gave up after a lengthy search. He stayed afloat by using a survival tactic he had learned in boot camp. He took his pants off, tied them in a knot, and inflated them to serve as a crude life preserver. He floated for a day and a half in shark-infested waters before a fishing boat came by and gave him passage to land in Pakistan. <sup>2</sup> It is essential when fighting inner battles to keep busy. We tread water emotionally by staying active—physically, intellectually, and socially. Activities provide an important distraction from negative thoughts and help fight discouragement and depression. They also contribute to a spirit of joy and make life meaningful. Never give in to the emotions of the moment; tomorrow can be a better day!

***Active natures are rarely melancholy. Activity and sadness are incompatible.***

-Bovee

As briefly noted in the previous chapter, the main positive activity areas of life are the “4 L’s”—love, labor, learning, and leisure. All people can participate in these endeavors regularly in order to fill each day with spiritually positive activities. It may be helpful to make a written list of chosen daily activities. The list might include such things as prayer and scripture study, service, work (paid or volunteer), reading, walking, playing sports, taking a class, or visiting friends, etc. Happy people are active people and finding more joy starts with getting busy.

In all labor there is profit: (Proverbs 14:23)

For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward. (D&C 58:26-28)

### **Mindfulness Prerequisite for Spiritual Success**

As we engage in the activities of the day, it is important for our inner peace and contentment to give those pursuits our full attention. The Buddhist practice of mindfulness means being fully aware of one’s thoughts, actions, and feelings in the present moment, non-judgmentally. The end goal is to more fully and richly experience life. Not judging is important because typically judging oneself or others leads to negative emotions that cloud the moment and put a dent in our happiness. We are told in 2 Nephi 29 verses 7-12 in the Book of Mormon that the Lord gives his words to all the peoples of the world. The principle of mindfulness was included in

this chapter because it seems very relevant to the goal of maintaining the Spirit of the Lord. Psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn had this to say about mindfulness:

Fundamentally mindfulness is a simple concept. Its power lies in its practice and its applications. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality. It wakes us up to the fact that our lives unfold only in moments. If we are not fully present for many of those moments, we may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives but also fail to realize the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth, and transformation. <sup>3</sup>

### **Living for Today (Mostly)**

We can find greater peace and contentment as we are able to experience life moment by moment. Unfortunately, the beautiful music of life cannot be heard clearly if there is too much inner disturbance. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to spirituality is to dwell too much on the many problems and disappointments that encumber each person. Mindfulness helps us to become expert surfers on the treacherous waves of life. As illustrated in the picture below, it is essential to stay ahead of the waves of negativity that can envelope us. The outcome can be deadly if too much thought is given to what is not right in one's life.



Learning to not dwell on difficulties is like asking someone not to worry excessively about a man-eating tiger running about the jungle. Nevertheless, it has to be done. There is no other way. Most large problems cannot be fixed in a day, a week, or even a month. And, similar to being stuck in quicksand, struggling only makes a bad situation worse. Wonderfully though, learning the skill of mindfulness will benefit you the rest of the days of your life. It is a skill that all people regardless of status or situation could do well to practice.

One essential principle of spirituality involves living in the present moment 95% of the time. This leaves each person just one hour and 12 minutes per day for focusing on the problems. While people sometimes become negative and dwell on present concerns such as family difficulties, they seem to spend more time focusing on the past and future. They can fall into a trap of feeling sad, angry, or guilty about the past and anxious or hopeless about the future. In short, they make themselves miserable by focusing on things they actually have little control over.

Therefore, the idea of setting aside a daily “contemplation hour” is proposed. This hour can be in the morning, evening, or anytime that appeals to you. This hour is dedicated to finding solutions to challenges, processing emotions, developing personal philosophies, and sorting out the past. For some people making a list of the issues to go over can be helpful. It is fine to be flexible about the times and duration of the exercise. The hour can be any time of day, or performed spontaneously when problems pop into consciousness. If you are feeling good that day the time can be shortened. Some people who spend multiple hours per day fretting might actually need two periods per day. Those who strive mightily to never feel their negative emotions might commit to just two contemplation hours per week until they become more skilled at managing feelings.

If concerns arise after the contemplation hour, the individual mentally notes that the issues have to wait until the next contemplation period. Now, some might say that this sounds far too simplistic to actually work. However, please understand that the subconscious mind is intelligent and powerful. Once the inner self believes in the contemplation hour plan, it will automatically begin to cooperate.

It is advisable to write down a sound mental argument in order to convince the inner self to support this unique strategy. The rationale for doing things this way is very solid. Most individuals have had their share of heartaches and disappointments. There are many difficult questions about life to ponder. Present challenges may seem overwhelming or impossible to solve, and the future may appear bleak and difficult. There is little payoff for thinking more hours each day about such a complex collection of difficulties. Answers will only come after considerable work and thought, and even then they will come in their own time. Those who have troubled thoughts have everything to gain and nothing to lose by altering their patterns.

This ability to “turn the mind” can make all the difference in the world. By limiting the time spent thinking about the chaos to 5% of the day, the other 95% can be used to seek greater richness of life. We do not have to solve all our problems in order to find more joy and stability. Changing the way we think about the problems will go a long way toward changing one’s life for the better.

The Holy Ghost can provide immeasurable help as we try to cope with life's many challenges. However, it is more difficult to feel the effects of the Spirit if we are creating a negative emotional climate. If we are pessimistic about the future or worrying about things we have little control over, we are just getting in God's way. A popular saying suggests the faithful attitude of "Do your best and let God take care of the rest." If the winds of the Spirit are to fill our sails and speed our life's journey, we need to be willing to pull up the anchor.

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:20)

## **Journey to the Center of the Mind**

In order to fully utilize the benefits of the contemplation hour, there are some added instructions. Not only should we carefully monitor our thoughts after the contemplation hour, but also our emotions. We do not want to even feel the burden of

our concerns after the designated time period. I added the word *feel* because the subconscious mind can focus on problems beneath our awareness. The negative emotions we are experiencing are a clue that this is occurring. If there are any inner thoughts about problems, we will notice feelings of tension, anger, depression, etc.

It tends to be a common practice to try to cope with problems by suppressing negative feelings and diverting one's attention with activities. While containing emotions is a valuable adult function, it can be overdone. It is a serious psychological error to suppose one can suppress all their negative emotions indefinitely, locking them up in a safe so to speak. Life is just not that simple. Additionally, people often have other thoughts and feelings they are not aware of at all. As noted above, the subconscious continues to generate



feelings about important issues that we push away, whether we are aware of them or not. This causes internal pressure to build up which we may notice as tension or racing thoughts. Individuals also may experience increases in psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, depression, mania, or obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Certainly people are more prone to turn to addictive behaviors when they feel emotionally overloaded.

Mindfulness incorporates full awareness, including the subconscious. Knowing what issues are contained in the subconscious may seem like a tall order, but it is less difficult than one might think. There is an important principle of emotional management that comes into play. Emotions form a link between subconscious ideas and thoughts and the conscious mind. Barring untreated medical conditions, sustained negative emotions or tension always indicate internal distress. Oftentimes individuals only know they are upset, but are unsure just why. In order to properly process the concerns, emotions must be tied to thoughts and events.

This greater awareness is very possible because, first of all, the subconscious (or inner self), always knows exactly what is bothering us. Secondly, it wants the problems to come back out into the open to be analyzed and resolved. We can notice this automatic tendency to process events both in our dreams and in remembrances of past events.

It is common for individuals to be emotionally upset, even for several days, without actually knowing why. There is a very simple, but highly effective, technique to deal with this problem. Here are the steps:

### **The Magic List Method**

- 1) Tell your inner self you would like to know what the issues of concern are.
- 2) Write on a piece of paper the five greatest possibilities for what could be bothering you. Be creative and try to not censor anything.
- 3) Slowly read the list out loud to yourself.
- 4) As you read, note which issues bring forth the greatest levels of emotion. This is the way the inner self communicates "yes." If desired you can visualize each concern as this will intensify the emotions.

Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:7)

### **What Do Human Beings and Geysers Hold in Common?**

Yellowstone National Park is a great place to visit. However, it is a bit disconcerting to know that it lies over a supervolcano. According to the U.S. Geological Survey Team, Yellowstone Park in Wyoming sits on top of three overlapping calderas forming an area measuring about 34 miles by 45 miles. Caldera's are large basin-shaped volcanic depressions more or less circular in form.

No one has ever seen and reported on a volcanic explosion on the scale of the previous Yellowstone eruptions, which only occur about once every hundred thousand years. However, smaller explosions from other volcanoes have been observed and their activity described. Consider Mount Tambora, on the island of Sumbawa, Indonesia to grasp some idea of what's involved when a caldera forms from an ash flow eruption. The eruption of Tambora caused booming explosions that could be heard on Sumatra, 1600 miles to the west. Lombok, 124 miles to the west, was covered by a blanket of ash two feet thick. Tidal waves crashed on islands hundreds of miles away. Waves and ash falls killed more than 88,000 people.

Tambora's eruption was the largest and deadliest volcanic event in recorded history. The first Yellowstone caldera eruption was seventeen times greater than that of Tambora and 2,400 times more powerful than the recent Mt. St. Helens eruption in Washington State in 1980. Yellowstone is not expected to go off in our lifetime, but if it does, hope to be in Australia on vacation!



Yellowstone is believed to lie on top of one of the planet's few dozen hotspots where hot molten mantle rock rises towards the surface. Observable evidence of this unique geographic location are the mud pots, hot springs, and geysers which we tourists like to go see. The Old Faithful Geyser is the best known of all the park attractions.

Geysers demonstrate the signs of the release of heat and pressure. The intense heat from the magma (molten rock) creates steam, which because of its increased volume seeks release. Surface water trickling down cools it and the pressure of the water above contains the steam. However, when the steam coming up finally heats enough surface water to boiling, the system becomes unstable. Soon there is a virtual explosion as the steam expands to over 1,500 times its original, liquid volume. As the geyser erupts, water is ejected so rapidly that it is thrown into the air.

Human beings also need to find ways to release inner tension or else they become more vulnerable to addictions and physical and mental disorders. The contemplation hour provides an excellent (and safe) way to help with this process of inner release. Just paying some attention to one's thoughts, emotions, and desires during the contemplation hour is enough to maintain stability. It is not essential to immediately resolve all the problems. Usually some appropriate way to express one's

emotions or to successfully manage the concerns can eventually be found. Tension is released as we pay daily respect to our feelings, perhaps not so unlike the way geysers in Yellowstone National Park vent steam and release pressure so they do not explode in more destructive ways.

Many people who habitually suppress their emotions find this idea of facing all their feelings rather scary. But remember, those who typically do not let their emotions out are usually experts at keeping their feelings in. Holding those perturbing emotions in until the next contemplation hour should not prove too difficult, especially when some of the pressure has already been released. At any rate, there really is no other choice. It is a fantasy that one can successfully suppress all difficult emotions and not suffer very painful consequences. Those who are particularly skittish about dealing with their emotions could take some license and experiment with having just a couple of contemplation hours per week.

Let us recognize that those who suppress their feelings have their reasons. Either in the past or present they felt emotionally overwhelmed whenever they let themselves face certain problems. Acquiring some effective coping tools will be necessary in order to get a better outcome with the tough problems. For some it might be very helpful to work closely with a therapist in learning these new skills. No matter how you view this challenge of managing emotions, becoming more proficient can help you achieve more stability and bring you closer to Heavenly Father. Also know that He will help you every step of the way.

## **Centering Exercises**

One of the first steps toward being more centered is to become more aware of one's breathing. An easy way to relax and get more focus is to sit down with your hand placed on your abdomen. Then take a deep slow breath from your abdomen and slowly release it. Notice how the extra oxygen makes your body tingle and feel more alive. Hold your breath as long as you comfortably can. Become aware of your surroundings and surrender to the moment. Performing this exercise in any setting for just a few minutes can help you slow things down and feel more relaxed and centered.

The following is another exercise to help you improve your ability to focus and successfully practice mindfulness.

### **Focused Attention Exercise**

1. Sitting in a comfortable chair, focus on one small part of a picture on the wall (or an object you can place in front of you.)
2. Keep all your attention on the item you have chosen. If you begin to think about anything else, switch your attention right back.
3. When your eyes begin to feel tired, feel free to close them. Breathe deeply from the abdomen about every 15 seconds or longer as possible. Say the words PEACE AND TRANQUILITY after each breath. Focus on feelings of peace and relaxation in your body.
4. If thoughts begin to interfere with your relaxation, open your eyes and stare at the object again.
5. Do this exercise for five minutes once or twice per day.

After performing the Focused Attention Exercise you will find that you are in a more relaxed state and can pay better attention to the things you are doing. The goal is to try and walk through your day remaining in the same state. Prayer and scripture study also bring a spirit of peace and focus and have a like effect. Other activities such as music or being out in nature can also help you find your center. Certainly you are free to choose and encouraged to do whatever you feel is right for you.

Attempt to stay in a peaceful flow for whatever activity you are engaging in regardless of its relative importance. When you are walking to the bus, enjoy the walk. When you are washing dishes, pay attention and enjoy washing dishes. While walking outside, enjoy the beauty of nature. Avoid the temptation to spend too much time thinking about other things. Be kind and loving to others you encounter during the day and accept what they can give and who they are.

Seize the moment and be single-minded as much as possible. Practicing mindfulness increases our ability to find joy. The more time one spends being mindful, the less time he or she spends thinking about problems. As this practice is developed, it can do much to reduce stress and thus aid recovery.

### **Action Steps**

Experiment with increasing your spirituality by doing the following for one week:

- a) Add one or two positive activities from “4 L’s.”
- b) Utilize the contemplation hour method. Plan to take a specific time period or two each day for focusing on problems. Monitor your thoughts and feelings and remind yourself of the importance of staying positive the rest of the time.

### **Notes**

1. Church Educational System, Church History in the Fullness of Times, (Salt Lake City, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: 1989).
2. Associated Press, “Marine Recounts Sea Ordeal,” The Herald Journal, Logan, Utah, Thursday, 30 November, 1995, 12.
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# Chapter 7

## Peace through Acceptance

### Principle #7 Peace through acceptance

We can find greater peace by utilizing the wisdom of the Serenity Prayer from the 12-step model. The majority of negative emotions come from our resistance to accepting our present reality (truth). We can be fortified in pursuing righteous goals as we pray to the Lord for knowledge and spiritual strength.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

### Accepting Reality

Siddhartha Gautama, later known as Buddha (the Awakened One), was born a prince in what is now southern Nepal about 2,500 years ago. At the age of 29 he left his life of privilege to devote himself to learning and spirituality. After six years of experimenting with rigorous spiritual practices, he founded the middle way, a balance between carnal living and self-deprivation. This was the Noble Eightfold Path which advocated right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. <sup>1</sup> This reminds us of King Benjamin's exhortation to his people.

And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not. (Mosiah 4:29-30)

Buddha then sat under a fig tree in the town of Bodh Gaya, with the express purpose of more fully understanding human suffering. After some time, he came to some profound realizations. Buddha saw suffering as an inherent part of life due to such things as physical illness, old age, and death. Ignorance and ill will toward others were also viewed as factors in the unhappiness of man. However, Buddha viewed "selfish desire" as being perhaps the main factor in suffering. He said that when people become overly focused on worldly goals and pleasures, they end up sad and frustrated when things do not work out. Buddha therefore proposed that most pain could be eliminated by letting go of desires. He exhorted people to focus on living in a righteous and positive manner, to practice meditation, and basically give up the world.

The LDS viewpoint differs in some significant ways. We see ourselves as being in the world, but not of the world. We also do not view personal desires as particularly problematic, as long as our greatest desires are for spiritual growth and service to others. We know that "Men are that they might have joy." (Nephi 2:25) If we had no desires, we might struggle to find joy. Nonetheless, it is wise to quickly recognize when circumstances are not cooperating with our desires. Life is full of disappointments, and we have much less control than we would wish. The vast majority of negative emotions come from our strong reactions to life not going our way.

The thoughts we generate when we are frustrated or discouraged in our goals can make us miserable if we allow them to.

The best way to overcome this suffering is to practice acceptance of things as they actually are. One term that has evolved out of the Buddhist tradition to describe this focus on accepting reality is “radical acceptance.” The LDS way of practicing radical acceptance is accepting the truth. Doctrine & Covenants 93:24-25 says that, “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.”

He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (D&C 93: 28)

Acceptance does not mean being totally resigned. The Serenity Prayer petitions the Lord that we might have “the courage to change the things we can.” Hope and faith can embolden us to go forward in the Spirit, encouraged like Nephi that the Lord will provide a way if it is his will. As noted in chapter 1, Heavenly Father does not always perform miracles to instantly ease our burdens. Although the Spirit is always available to strengthen and support us, the Lord expects us to use our intelligence and ability to obtain revelation to search for solutions.

Now, of course, it is not the Lord’s will that everything go perfectly in life. To the contrary, the Lord tells us in D&C 95:1 as follows: “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation.” Additionally, we are exposed to a variety of complex life situations that we might grow in understanding and character. Joseph Smith while in despair in the Liberty Jail was told: “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:7-8)

As we practice acceptance, we can find more of the Lord’s peace in this world. Acceptance implies not that we merely give in or fail to react to provocation, but more that we see things as clearly as possible with an unprejudiced mind. As we exercise faith and take thoughtful action, we can accomplish great things if we do it for the glory of God.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. (D&C 59:23)

### **Be a Cork in the River**

Radical acceptance does take some serious reflection to understand, and much emotional resolve to practice. Human beings do not like to face certain difficult truths, such as the fact that we have limited control over events and other people. Things are as they are, but not often as we would prefer.

If we place our sense of spirituality and inner peace first, we can become like a cork in a river. A cork floats on the surface of the water. It does not resist the current, but flows with it. If a cork hits a rock or bumps into a surrounding cliff face,

it just bounces back. If a wave washes over the cork and pushes it under the water, it soon bobs back to the surface.

### **The Miracle Solution**

Consider the problem of anger. When we are angry, we struggle to accept that others are not ready or willing to live the standards of conduct we believe in. There is one key idea that can help us to extinguish the flames of anger before they become a forest fire. It is God's miracle advice. This involves recognizing that the real cause of anger is judging others' behavior. It is almost impossible to get angry without judging others. We become frustrated when someone does not live up to our expectations of how we think they should act! We decide that his behavior was immoral, unethical, or socially substandard. We use the universal link words to anger "should" or "should not" and, at least mentally, demand that he change.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matthew 7:1-2)

In actuality, these inner thoughts are more of a wish than a realistic possibility. Other people are not running around trying to understand and then live by the "rules" we have set up for their behavior. It is a fantasy that other people will act the way we think they should. In short, getting angry is often the result of a vain wish to control our environment.

It is a waste of time and energy to focus on the fact that someone did something wrong. It is much more helpful to accept that people act the way they really are. We would all do well to eliminate the word "should" from our vocabularies and substitute the phrase "I wish." The more aligned with reality we are, the better we do emotionally.

This first step in letting go of anger is to recognize that people are doing their best given their values, level of knowledge, and self-management skills. The next step is to follow the Savior's example by striving to look at those who have offended us with eyes of compassion and to try to understand their pain or point of view.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

The scriptures advocate showing love to those who afflict us. This is a very powerful, proactive approach to resolving conflict that requires both faith and humility. If there is a need to set down consequences or limits to stop further offenses, we will do a much better job if we have a spirit of charity. By truly caring, we might be able to help the offender repent and find a higher path to walk. Regardless of outcomes, when our hearts are right toward others we can enjoy the wonderful gift of inner peace.

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,  
Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. (Luke 6:27-29)

### **Situations in Which to Employ the Therapeutic Tool of Radical Acceptance**

Guilt about past actions	Past difficult events or circumstances
Anxiety about the future	Limitations of present life situation
Personal inadequacies	Anger about others' weaknesses and past actions

When we are anxious, we cannot accept that unpleasant things can happen to us that we do not desire. For instance, when flying as an airline passenger, we can choose to recognize the truth that there is a small possibility that the plane could crash. If we accept that we have no control and place our fate in the hands of the Lord and the pilot, we have accomplished phase one. The second phase is to accept the inevitability of death for all and the need to surrender gracefully should our time to go arrive. Once this mental feat is accomplished, the flight will be much more relaxed and enjoyable. Since most emotional agitation comes from trying to control things that are out of our control, acceptance is generally the perfect solution for changing undesirable emotions.

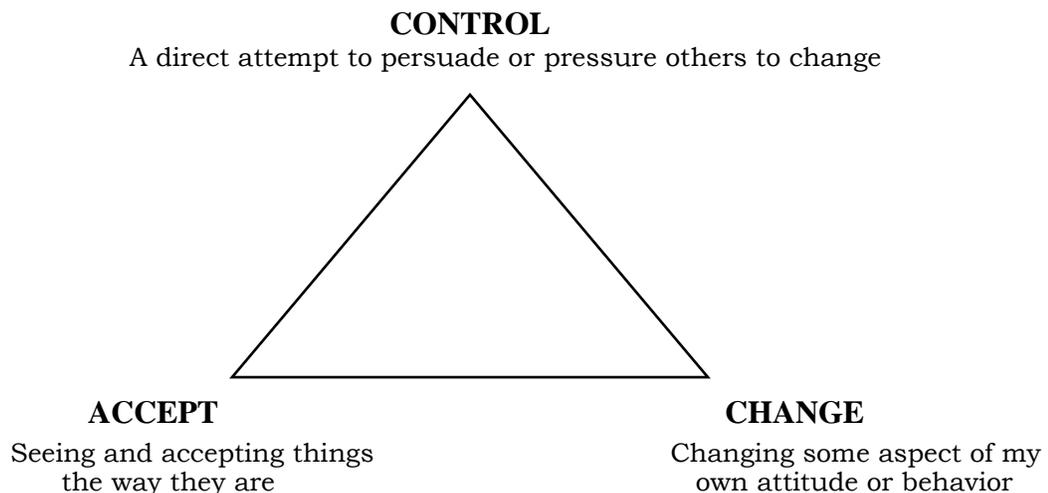
Another example to consider is the common problem of low self-esteem. People feel bad about themselves because they are not as good or skilled as they would like to be. They often use the word "should," as in "I should be more successful in my career." However, our desires to instantly be more proficient, good, or wise are merely wishes. It is important to accept the reality of our limitations since getting sad or upset does not change anything. Rather than being self-critical or comparing our self to others, we can choose to focus only on becoming more effective in our behaviors.

#### **Happiness can exist only in acceptance.**

- George Orwell

The following diagram illustrates the three choices we have in facing problems. Generally speaking, trying to maintain control against all odds is the most common mistake.

#### **The Solutions Triangle**



## **The Solutions Questions**

1. Am I trying to maintain control of something that I have little power over?
2. What is the fantasy I am using to try to retain control?

*If I diligently remind my family members about their faults, they will be sure to change.*

*If I think about the past enough, I can reverse history.*

*I should be perfect!*

*Everyone else must be perfect!*

*If I think enough about my worries, they will never happen.*

*Severely punishing myself for my sins and mistakes actually makes a difference.*

*Bad things should never happen to me because that would not be fair.*

*If I stay really angry long enough, things will have to change for the better.*

(Feel free to add one of your own fantasies, as there are endless possibilities.)

3. What do I need to accept?
4. What changes could I realistically consider making?
5. What steps are necessary in order to make these changes occur?
6. What fears or negative ideas are keeping me from taking these steps?

## **Achieving Righteous Goals**

The Serenity Prayer advocates changing the things we can. Heavenly Father loves us all and wants us to be successful. He will perform miracles to help us achieve righteous goals. If we have patience and vision and go to work in a positive manner, great things can happen for us.

But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul. (2 Nephi 32:9)

There is a story about a renowned musician who was told by an admirer, “I would give my life to play like you.” To this statement the musician replied, “I have.” This anecdote well illustrates an important principle. No matter the talent level, there is no substitute for practice. Depth of character is another important element of success in any field. Honesty, kindness, humility, responsibility, diligence, obedience, and the ability to cooperate with others are always valued in the workplace and at home.

Little is impossible when the Lord is on our side; however, many worthy goals take time to achieve. Personal goals such as finding a new career (or conquering an addiction) can seem out of reach. Know that faith by itself is not enough. The Lord will not fix a problem for us simply because we do not know what to do or because we have suffered a long time. If there is a solution out there or if there are some things we have neglected to take care of, He will not take away our opportunity for learning and growth. This tough love can severely test our faith. However, if we reach out in faith we can experience his tender mercies as He helps us to conquer our challenges.

Some goals are worth fighting for, even if they take years. It can take great courage, intelligence, persistence, and spirituality to keep climbing one’s personal mountains. It is very important to focus on putting together the ingredients for success and not on what might go wrong or personal limitations. Knowledge and

experience can be gained in the fields of disappointment. Familiarity conquers fear. Success comes through perseverance and the humility and wisdom to make improvements in the critical areas involved with attaining each goal. Chapter 12 will take an in-depth look at the process of goal achievement.

***Face the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.***

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

### **Action Steps**

1. Use the Solutions Triangle and Solutions Questions to practice the art of acceptance. Take a few opportunities during the next week to experiment with using acceptance to deal with stress.

### **Notes**

1. Spencer Palmer, Roger Keller, Dong Choi, & James Toronto, Religions of the World, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1997).

# Chapter 8

## As a Man Thinketh

### Principle #8 As a man thinketh

Correct thinking is a vital element in recovery and spiritual living. Learn to change your thoughts and more effectively manage anxiety, anger, guilt, depression, and low self-worth. The adversary strives to weaken us with powerful lies that create doubt, despair, and self-condemnation and distance us from our Heavenly Father. These self-defeating ideas must be challenged with logic, scripture, and corrective emotional experiences. The Holy Spirit can help guide us in our quest for truth.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

We all have the ability to dramatically transform our lives. It is not faith alone that will bring us success, but faith-directed actions. Our achievements and personal growth do not depend solely upon the winds of fortune, but more upon how we choose to react to life's challenges and opportunities. The main ingredient in this process is the purposeful changing of our thought patterns. It is invaluable to learn that it is not events that cause our emotional responses, but how we choose to think about those circumstances. This concept is explained by the ABC theory of Albert Ellis, a leader in cognitive psychology: <sup>1</sup>

#### **A ( actual event ) > B (beliefs) > C (consequences )**

It is always our perceptions, no matter how brief in duration, that produce the subsequent emotions. Once we recognize the great significance of our thoughts, we then have the power to begin taking control of our emotions, and ultimately our lives. In his book *A New Guide to Rational Living* Dr. Ellis makes the following point:

Humans do not get upset, but they upset themselves by devoutly convincing themselves at point B of irrational beliefs about what happens to them. <sup>1</sup>

Distortion, exaggeration, and fear all serve to make problem situations far worse than they actually are. It is always our perceptions, no matter how brief in duration, that produce the subsequent emotions. We can control our moods by managing our thoughts effectively. Positive and logical responses will help us to safely navigate the stormy seas of life.

The physical conscious mind serves as a guide to the inner self. Our thoughts and perceptions affect not only our desires for righteousness, but also our emotional well-being. Patterns of action are set largely by the ideas and decisions we have already brought forth in our minds. Thus a person who feels frustrated and tells himself he will “never get a job” or that he will “always be depressed” experiences those thoughts as true. The spiritual self is quite dependent on the interpretations of the physical mind.

if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, . . .ye must perish. (Mosiah 4:30)

***Your tools are ideals. The thought in your mind at this moment is contributing, however infinitesimally, almost imperceptibly, to the shaping of your soul. <sup>2</sup>***

- President David O. McKay

## The Editing Technique

### Keep your thoughts in harmony with truth.

Man's nature is to strive mightily to change the world to suit his desires and fantasies. We hold tightly to our belief that happiness is tied to our script of how things must and should be. The great majority of negative emotions are closely connected to our ineffectual strivings to control our earthly experience. We make ourselves miserable mainly by using dramatic repetitive self-talk in response to perceived problems. Our errors in thinking fall into four general areas.

#### THE FOUR GREAT THINKING ERRORS

Exaggerating



*Is it really that big?*

Labeling



*Labels are for soup cans.*

Denial of reality



*If we would just run faster, we would get out of here.*

Predicting



*100% accurate?*

#### Instructions for the editing process

1. Write out your distressing thoughts about the present problem.
2. Cross out lines that contain exaggerating, labeling, denial of reality, or predicting from your self-talk. Re-write the issue of concern in strictly logical and practical terms.
3. Read the new statement five times. Note how your feelings and problem-solving abilities change.

Negative thinking is addictive and self-defeating. Our emotions are produced not by life events, but by our thoughts and perceptions of those events. Take your life back! Peace comes through truth and the acceptance of reality.

And truth is a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;  
(D&C 93:24)

The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. (D&C 93:36)

An expanded technique for correcting cognitive errors is given below. The Key Thoughts Guide can be used when there is not a convenient time or situation to write out one's thoughts. This technique also covers some additional areas not given in the Editing Technique. However, be aware that the Key Thoughts Guide, although effective, is not as powerful as the Editing Technique. Repeating the corrected thoughts five times appears to be the most critical component in cognitive mediation. The repetition seems to help the inner self accept the reality of each situation. For some reason, human beings are only addicted to dwelling on their negative thoughts, not thoughts boiled down to the absolute truth.

### **Key Thoughts Guide**

1. Am I using any of the four principal thinking errors?
2. What are some logical and rational statements I can make to help me view this problem more clearly?
3. Am I being positive in my attitude? What are some encouraging declarations I can make? What things are working in my favor?
4. If the worst did come to pass, how could I handle it?
5. What are some of my personal strengths that will help me to overcome this challenge?

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (2 Corinthians 10: 3-5)

### **Be Cool**

Anger is a normal human response to frustration. However, the Spirit cannot dwell where there is contention. In the realm of human emotions, our first line of defense against angry outbursts is to control our response, and take a time-out in order to think rationally about the situation. Hot emotional thoughts can be replaced by cool rational thoughts.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. (Proverbs 16:32)

The place to begin changing our patterns of anger is to consider our attitudes about managing anger. What we have decided is right or acceptable will later dictate our behavior when we are frustrated. We will only change when we commit to taking full responsibility for our feelings and behavior. Since emotions are caused by our perceptions and not events, we can learn to change our feelings, speech, and actions. The following card provides a formula for structuring our thoughts in positive ways.

### **Anger Management Card**

1. Why is the person acting this way—bad mood, not understanding the situation clearly, personality trait?
2. What did I do to possibly contribute to the problem?
3. What emotion lies beneath my anger—frustration, hurt, jealousy, resentment, guilt, or insecurity? Am I being totally logical?
4. What rule of mine is this person breaking? Can I accept his behavior and not judge him?
5. What would the consequences be if I do not choose to control my anger?
6. Is there any solution or compromise that would resolve this situation?
7. What could I say to appropriately express my feelings?
8. Is this problem so great that I can't forgive the person or just put it aside? What would Jesus do?

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:21-22)

***When anger rises, think of the consequences.***

- Benjamin Franklin

## **The Art of Positive Thinking**

It is not enough to seek only for logic in our thinking. It is quite advantageous to be POSITIVE. We need to learn to notice what is good, recognize our strengths, and believe in a bright future for ourselves. Positive thinking means to downplay the negative and to be optimistic in one's attitude of mind. These skills usually do not come naturally, but must be developed and practiced.

Many people inwardly groan when they hear the term positive thinking. They do not believe it really makes a difference and view themselves as tough realists. However, there are many advantages to being a positive thinker.

***We are what we think.***

***All that we are arises with our thoughts.***

***With our thoughts we make our world.***

- The Buddha

Thomas Edison is renowned as the inventor of the electric light, the phonograph, and many other wonderful inventions. It is not as widely known that he developed the first car batteries used in those Model T automobiles for Henry Ford. But Edison had actually wanted to go further. What he had been trying to accomplish was to develop storage batteries powerful enough to run an automobile, the first electric car.

He conducted approximately three thousand experiments with the electric light; however, he may have conducted as many as ten thousand experiments trying to perfect the storage battery. When a friend came over to offer his condolences over the lack of results, Edison replied: "Why man, I have gotten a lot of results! I know several thousand things that won't work." Edison's tenacity and optimism were some of the personal qualities that helped him achieve his tremendous success as an inventor. <sup>3</sup>

Had Edison been a doubter, had he let negative thoughts erode his belief and vision, we could still be using candles for light. We all need successes to be positive about our lives. We must persevere in the face of adversity and never let go of our dreams. Knowledge and experience coupled with practice and perseverance almost always bring forth victory. We also have the Lord to rely upon in every worthy endeavor. Faith is always a key component in receiving blessings.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.  
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

As positive thinking becomes a habit, many potential problems disappear or are worked out before they are scheduled to arrive. There is little to be gained by worrying about the future prematurely. Listed below are five principles of positive thinking.

### **Principles of Positive Thinking**

Principle #1 - Focus on the good qualities of others.

Principle #2 - Do not let negative thoughts limit your vision.

Principle #3 - Believe you will succeed at your goal and try, try, try.

Principle #4 - Find something positive in every situation.

Principle #5 - Utilize the power of faith and pray for the Lord's assistance in reaching your goals.

Anyone who is willing to experiment with these principles will soon notice significant changes in their emotional life. Gaining a tested and true belief in the power of positive thinking is an important stepping-stone to emotional health and happiness. President Gordon B. Hinckley made this statement about positive thinking in his book *Standing for Something*: "I am an optimist! My plea is that we stop seeking out the storms and enjoy more fully the sunlight. I am suggesting that as we go through life, we accentuate the positive." <sup>4</sup>

### **Action Steps**

Positive and logical responses to stress help us to safely navigate the stormy seas of life. We can control our moods by managing our thoughts effectively.

1. For one week make a concerted effort to notice and correct your negative thought patterns. Utilize the *Editing Technique* and the *Key Thoughts Guide* provided in this chapter to aid you in this endeavor. Gaining a testimony of the power and significance of managing our thoughts is one of life's great lessons.

2. Practice using the *Anger Management Card* when frustration gets the best of you.

It might be helpful to make copies of some of these thought guides and keep them in your wallet for quick reference.

### **Notes**

1. Albert Ellis and Robert Harper, *A New Guide to Rational Living* (North Hollywood, California: Wilshire Book Co., 1975), 213. Quote used by permission of the publisher.

2. David O. McKay, "Determining Your Own Future," in *Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay*, Compiled by Clare Middlemiss (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 31, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, March 2010.

3. Wynn Wachhorst, *Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981).

4. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something* (New York, New York: Times Books, 2000), 101. Quote used by permission of the publisher.

# Chapter 9

## The Heart of Man

### **Principle #9 Take care of the inner self**

The inner self is the core part of man and the center of our emotions and desires. Greater inward harmony can be achieved by becoming more aware of deeper thoughts, emotions, and desires, and by providing effective conscious direction. Emotional success involves developing the wisdom and self-discipline to lead a moral and responsible life, while also taking care of personal needs.

President James E. Faust: The basic program of the Church today is to strengthen the inner self. <sup>1</sup>

The inner self, the spirit of man, is not just a construct or idea, but an actual vital part of our being. The spirit does not disappear when we are born on earth and then just reappear in heaven after we die. Your spirit is present within you, and if you pay attention you can feel its presence. There is no adventure so amazing as discovering this truth. When we have strong emotions and experience sadness, anger, love, or joy, we are sensing our inner self. When we focus on an activity we have passion for such as skiing, dancing, or art, our real self is engaged and we feel alive and focused.

**President David O. McKay** You know you love, and love is not part of your physical body, but a definite and divine attribute of the human soul. <sup>2</sup>

**President James E. Faust** Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the hearts of the fathers and the children to each other. The heart is the center of the emotions and a conduit for revelation. <sup>3</sup>

Chapter 3 explained how the spirit is a dynamic part of the human personality and the driving force behind our desires. It was also brought out that the thoughts of the mind can help bridle our passions and change our desires. This chapter will further address the relationship between the conscious mind and the spirit or inner self.

We begin to lose touch with the spirit within as we grow older. Children suppress their emotions and develop negative beliefs about self in response to rejection, criticism, or abuse. To conform to social pressure and avoid getting hurt further, people create a facade or social mask that they show to the world. Carl Jung called this social mask, the *persona*. Sometimes we are so involved in presenting this false self that we lose sight of who we really are. If we become too removed from our inner self, we may feel detached and empty. The more real and congruent we are, the more joy we can experience from life. Those who are familiar with the scriptures and have faith can receive reassurance from the words of Job: "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." (Job 32:8)

**Know thyself.**

- Socrates

### **The Need for Nourishment**

As we mature, we can become overly socialized and learn to ignore the desires and feelings of the inner self. There is an emphasis on being polite, controlling our emotions, disciplining ourselves to work, and taking care of others. These things are

good and essential, but they can be taken to extreme proportions. Too often people neglect themselves and disregard their own needs. They can become unhappy, negative, and resentful. They live in a beautiful garden without allowing themselves to smell the flowers.

An adult with a wounded inner self struggles mightily to make life work, but the odds are stacked against him. Life just does not go perfectly, and adversity sets off old insecurities. Adult children of dysfunctional families instinctively fear facing their real emotions and dealing with their inner pain. Getting in touch with their feelings proved disastrous in the past. Little desire now exists to repeat those experiences.

This effort to remain in control by shutting off the emotions takes many forms. Many wounded adults have one or more addictions they use to escape feeling. An addiction is a coping mechanism that people become dependent upon, is carried to extremes, and has long-term negative consequences. Addictive substances would include alcohol, drugs, tobacco, caffeine drinks, and even food. Activities that can take the form of addictions are work, television viewing, sex, gambling, shopping, exercise, and others.

People who try to satiate themselves with pleasure are like men stranded on the ocean in a rowboat who drink salt water to satiate their thirst. There is the illusion that they will obtain real satisfaction, but afterward they are more dehydrated and in need than before. In both cases the inner self is not being sufficiently nourished. Despite strenuous attempts to find it, real joy and satisfaction elude them. They are empty inside, their needs overwhelm them, yet they stumble and cannot find the way.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. (Proverbs 3:13-14)

One of the first steps to any healing is to practice better self-care. We often have dozens of reasons why we cannot do positive things for ourselves. Once we decide to begin nurturing ourselves, we communicate the powerful message that we too are important. We will have more energy, renewed interest in life, and more capacity to love others.

Make a promise to yourself that you will take care of "you" every day. If we are constantly taking care of others, we eventually end up frustrated and burned out. We cannot fully love others unless we are taking care of ourselves. Additionally, the body needs sufficient rest and relaxation or it breaks down. Being kind to oneself is a good investment. It is not selfish. It is realistic!

And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order. (Mosiah 4:27)

The more real that we are, the more joy we can experience from life. Both emotionally and spiritually we function far more effectively when we are in touch with the core self. The benefits for being more congruent with our spirit self cannot be measured. Creativity, passion, warmth, and faith all come from the center of our souls. True genius also comes from the heart. Those who excel in music, writing, or the arts could attest to the importance of connecting with those marvelous powers within. Similarly, in a spiritual sense, we cannot communicate fully with our Father in Heaven unless we are sincere and pray from the heart.

And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. (Moroni 7:9)

### **Care and Maintenance of the Inner Self**

We are not, as we might believe, totally dependent upon others for nurturing and approval. Because of its unique properties the inner self actually responds to input from the conscious mind almost as if it were another person! And because the spirit in man recognizes the physical mind (the ego) as its guardian, it really values what you have to say. True emotional healing starts from within, and not from outer sources. This is one of the secrets to greater happiness and healthy relationships!

***That man never grows old who keeps a child in his heart.***

- Steele

Now let's put these ideas to the test. A good experience is worth ten thousand words. For the initial structured contact with the hidden person of the heart, I would suggest a writing exercise. Write to the spirit within as if he or she were a separate individual, a twin part of you who has experienced your every emotion and problem. Because this inner core of the self is so emotional and sensitive, it is like a little child in many ways. We might imagine speaking with our self as a young person when we communicate with our spirit.

This process is very safe and largely non-threatening, but actually quite helpful as an introductory exercise. The majority of individuals who experiment with this procedure have a valid emotional experience. Here is a sample of this type of communication:

*Dear inner self,*

*I know that I have often ignored you for many years, but I would like to change that. I want to be more sensitive to your needs and feelings. I promise to be a better protector. I hope you can let me back into your life and learn to trust me. I think that you are wonderful. You have endured much and have been strong in so many ways.*

*I will work very hard to be more positive in the way I treat you. I will never leave you again. We will do everything together. I will guide you and teach you, but also listen. Your feelings are important to me. You are loved.*

*Your older self*

At first glance, writing a letter to one's self may seem unusual, even absurd. However, if you leave yourself open to the experience, you will find that this inner person of the heart is really there. He or she will actually communicate to you through the gentle surge of emotion you will feel. Writing a letter is one of the most non-threatening ways to begin to reclaim the lost inner self. I believe you will find it to be the start of a wonderful adventure. Be assured that you will be in full control throughout and will get out of this experience only that which you are ready to receive.

The following is a format that can be used for developing this very important introductory message.

### **Format for a Letter to the Inner Self**

- ◆ Greeting - Dear heart of my soul
- ◆ Recognize its existence
- ◆ Empathize with his or her difficult journey
- ◆ Point out positive actions and accomplishments throughout life
- ◆ Apologize for less than perfect parenting
- ◆ Suggest a closer working relationship in the future
- ◆ Promise to be kinder and more sensitive in the future

Once you do the above exercise, you will gain a testimony of the reality of your inner self, if you do not already believe. A key concept is to exercise respect, concern, and compassion in your self-talk. We need to treat ourselves as well as we would a best friend or son or daughter. Self-talk should be positive. Persuasion, not force is the always order of the day. Perhaps a good way to say this is that we should treat ourselves as we would expect a bishop to act toward us. A bishop is helpful and encouraging and leads people along the gospel path. And we know a bishop would never be condemning or overly critical, and certainly not call people names. As we talk to ourselves in a more spiritual manner, we will get much more cooperation from the spirit within, the energy source for our actions.

### **Managing Emotions**

Dealing with emotions has some similarities to river rafting. While afloat in an inflatable rubber boat, one must respect the might and power of the river. You cannot stop paddling and just enjoy watching the scenery go by when there are rocks and rapids to contend with. Managing emotions has some important similarities. When our problems are small, we can suppress our emotions and just move on. The negative energy just fades away over time. However, with larger problems the same strategy will backfire. The power of our pent-up emotions becomes too strong for us to handle. The mind becomes overwhelmed by all this poorly channeled energy, and concentration becomes difficult. We might feel like a person floating down a powerful river who recognizes he is about to go over a gigantic waterfall.

Serious symptoms can develop from pushing down emotions. Some of these are insomnia, headaches, tension, poor concentration, irritability, dissociative episodes, or even psychosis. While we must respect any defenses an individual used to survive a difficult environment growing up, we must also recognize that blocking feelings simply does not work for adults. In fact, avoiding emotions is a major factor in most addictions and anxiety disorders, complicates depression, and contributes to the development of stress-related physical illnesses. It is a paradox that giving up attempting to control our feelings brings greater control.

The executive part of the personality is our guide when dealing with emotions. Once the necessary skills are obtained, it is essential to good mental health to allow ourselves to experience and process our feelings. The thought of letting go and trying to manage these packed-in emotions can admittedly be terrifying. Typically those growing up in dysfunctional families have not had good models for learning effective coping skills. There may also have been family prohibitions about expressing certain

emotions. Nonetheless, processing emotions is an essential life skill that must be learned. It takes true courage to get in touch with the inner self and live with greater awareness, spontaneity, and connectedness to others.

***It is only when you don't run from yourself that you begin to get somewhere.***

- Author unknown

## **Working Together**

God gave us our marvelous physical brain to aid in our eternal progression. The physical mind has its own sense of identity and serves as a tutor or guide to the spiritual self within. The job of this executive part of the conscious mind is to analyze and plan appropriate strategies to help the inner self cope with a very complex world. Inner communication or *self-talk* is the key to changing thoughts, beliefs, impulses, and starting new positive habits. Most of us use some sort of self-talk to help us manage stress. Because the executive can distance itself from problems and has excellent logical skills, it can provide invaluable assistance to the highly emotional inner self.

Every day we should be cognizant of the need to guide and support the inner self through the many decision points we must face. Some of the tasks the physical mind can perform to assist the spirit within are given below.

### **Executive Tasks**

Logical thoughts to manage strong emotions  
Supportive thoughts (self-acceptance)  
Impulse control – reminders of long-term consequences  
Motivation and goal achievement  
Problem-solving  
Taking safety measures  
Finding satisfaction by meeting needs appropriately

***The gods plant reason in mankind, of all good gifts the highest.***

- Sophocles

We can enjoy a better future if we learn to effectively utilize the executive and its superior logic and reasoning. Remember, it is not events that cause emotional pain, but our perceptions of those same events. The following cue sheet, *The Event Card*, has been provided to help you shine the light of truth upon emotionally-based thoughts.

***Passion costs too much to bestow it upon every trifle.***

- Thomas Adams

### **Event Card**

1. In reaction to the event (or thought), what is my inner self thinking and feeling?
2. What action does the inner self impulsively want to commit? Would this action create problems?
3. In thinking about the event, what is a more logical and rational response?
4. Am I being overly self-critical? What words of encouragement and support can I give to myself?

Please feel free to copy the Event Card, or make your own card that you can laminate and carry around. It is just like carrying a therapist in your pocket. Skill in using the Event Card can be developed by writing down your responses in a notebook (or therapy journal). It is suggested that the card be used to process any problem or worry that bothers you for more than half an hour. To obtain the most powerful effect, the corrective thoughts (the answers to numbers 3 and 4) can be read four or five times.

### **Performing the Right Actions**

The scriptures and the General Authorities are very specific in telling us how the Lord desires us to behave. We have made sacred covenants with the Lord that He expects us to honor. However, as human beings we are prone to impulsivity, procrastination, laziness, selfishness, and shortsightedness. Thus the impulses that come from our spirit (the heart of man) can often be misguided due to spiritual immaturity, lack of knowledge, and sinful habits.

The problem many of us have with obedience is not due to insufficient knowledge of what is expected. The problem lies in increasing one's motivation to do what is right. The spirit of man is independent and willful. It cannot be forced (even by ourselves) to always do what is right. Guilt or pressure from others is never sufficient to obtain lasting behavioral changes. The natural man within us generally desires those things associated with immediate pleasure and wishes to avoid those things associated with immediate pain or discomfort. Although this shortsighted approach to life clearly leads to unhappiness and spiritual destruction, the appeal of instant gratification is very powerful.

To ensure lasting success, the inner self must be persuaded that each righteous action is in its best interest. Self-talk is used to break through the resistance to change. Constructive self-talk usually begins by noting the short- and long-term benefits of any desired positive action. Then we persist with kind but persuasive language until we feel motivated to experiment with these righteous goals. Conversely, by reminding ourselves of the consequences of giving into our impulses, we can feel strengthened to resist counter-productive habits and evil desires. It is also helpful to try to meet one's legitimate needs in positive ways. For instance, a good book can serve as a wonderful substitute for a questionable movie.

The spirit of man eventually learns that it can find true joy through obedience to the commandments and obtaining the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost.

Once we are converted to righteous living, it becomes progressively easier to discipline ourselves. We have chosen the spiritual path and all that this encompasses over the ways of the world.

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

## **Beliefs and the Subconscious**

There is a new emphasis in psychology on understanding *schemas*, fixed inner beliefs about self or life. Experienced psychotherapists know that these conditioned ideas are highly resistant to change. Problems generally have their roots in inner decisions we made as children in response to our interpretations of painful events. These thoughts became firmly entrenched in the subconscious and continue to exert their negative influence throughout the course of the person's lifetime.

Our every action is but a reflection of our beliefs. According to Webster's New World Dictionary a belief is "a conviction that certain things are true." Beliefs provide a frame of reference for interacting with our complex world. We have to have faith that our ideas are valid and that acting on them will bring us positive results. Some beliefs are scientific in nature and easily tested. Others are more philosophical or personal. Many individuals strongly hold onto self-defeating ideas. Reason and logic do not seem help these people to overcome their negative patterns. They already know that their thoughts and/or actions do not make sense, but feel powerless to change. Fortunately, there is an explanation for this puzzling human behavior.

There is a part of our functioning and intelligence connected with subconscious processes that is little understood. However, it is so important that it alone can dictate success or failure in our lives! It can be called the *subconscious map*. This aspect of our intelligence is composed of the collection of beliefs the spirit of man uses as a frame of reference in order to operate in the world. Because the spirit of man has intelligence and awareness, it is always interpreting its experiences. Since the spirit is much more powerful than the physical mind, its preferences tend to predominate over conscious intentions.

As we move through life, our inner self makes conclusions about the world based upon its experiences. It associates various stimuli and situations with either pleasure or pain and makes simple approach-avoidance decisions. It also develops concepts regarding complex issues such as socializing, work, and religion. These ideas, or *schema*, can become so deeply impressed that we later respond to them automatically without any conscious effort. The basic rule of thumb would be "the more powerful the experience, the stronger the schema." Insecurity and low self-worth, jealousy in relationships, fears of being alone, suspiciousness, and inappropriate anger all have their roots in childhood conflict. In order to maximize our potential and find more inner peace, there must be some resolution regarding past conflicts. Learning how to perform this important task of reprogramming is of immeasurable worth. It provides limitless possibilities for growth, and opens doors that previously may have seemed totally shut.

The subconscious map functions as an effective survival mechanism. It tells us how to think and behave without having to fully evaluate every situation. It works almost like a computer program. These ideas and beliefs can be non-personal "fire burns" or personal "I can't do anything right." Our awareness of the origin of each idea is often limited. Every time we get close to situations we link with pain, inner alarm bells start to ring. We become extremely uncomfortable and generally initiate a hasty retreat. If we see items we have learned to enjoy such as specific foods, we generate impulses to obtain them.

Let us consider the example of someone suffering from claustrophobia. The claustrophobic knows logically that nothing will happen to him in a small closet or room. Nevertheless, the prospect of being confined is terrifying. The idea that small, enclosed places are dangerous was most likely formed when he was shut in a dark closet as a child. Fears conjured up in his imagination made it a terrible experience. The incident may have happened at a very young age, or else been so repressed that later in life the individual would have no conscious memory. Despite the present lack of awareness, the inner program still remains active. Each time the adult phobic is exposed to the prospect of being enclosed, he or she experiences overwhelming feelings of terror.

The above example illustrates one of the greatest limitations of the subconscious map. Programs can be necessary and advantageous at one point in time, but counterproductive years later. Our world and the rules of life change as we go from child to adult, but the inner beliefs do not. The inner self judges new situations almost entirely from the past, and so has difficulty projecting different outcomes into the future. Barring mountains of new evidence, everything will continue to be viewed the same way. These negative associations to past events can cause us to live a fear-based life. These inner beliefs can affect our productivity, our social life, our ability to be intimate, and our self-esteem. In a very real sense we can be conditioned to fail.

***The heart has its reasons which reason knows not of.***

- Blaise Pascal

#### **Common Mistaken Beliefs about Self**

I will never have friends.  
I am stupid.  
I am no good.  
I will always be depressed.  
I am unlovable.  
I cannot change.  
I will never be successful.  
My sins can never be forgiven.  
I am unworthy unless I have my parents' approval.  
I cannot do anything right.  
I am weaker than other people.  
I don't deserve to be happy.

Notice how these statements tend to be absolutes. They can easily become self-defeating prophecies because our actions tend to follow our beliefs. The person who

believes he is stupid will likely not attempt to attend college. The person who believes that no one could ever like him will not seek out friends. It takes true courage to overcome fears and risk the uncertainties of change. The subconscious map has a tremendous influence upon our lives. It must be reckoned with or we will make the same mistakes over and over again.

We can become aware of programs from our subconscious map when we approach related situations. Individual “programs” are consistent and can be detected by the presence of intense emotions and illogical thoughts and behavior. Although these programs never wear out, they can be changed through insight and corrective experiences.

***It is one thing to be moved by events, it is another to be mastered by them.***

- Socrates

### **Rewriting Subconscious Programs**

Once the faulty beliefs within the subconscious map have been identified, we can look forward to altering this negative conditioning. Without this type of deep change, improvements are often superficial, and there is a constant battle to avoid falling back into negative habits. Learning how to perform this important task of reprogramming is of immeasurable worth.

While psychotherapists tend to focus on correcting negative beliefs, we should note that there are schema that are very positive. The concept of “being born again” is an example of a positive schema. This is a deep and lasting gospel decision to be faithful and to love and serve the Lord. The greatest changes are when we make firm inner decisions to change. These types of changes are emotionally based and enduring, the “mighty change of heart” noted in the scriptures. Once these schema are in place, we tend to respond automatically in the manner we have previously chosen. It is almost as if we have designed personal computer software for the soul.

The knowledge of how to both create positive schema and deactivate and replace negative schema is essential to our success in life and in the gospel. The mind and heart can then work in concert with the Holy Spirit to enable us to progress far beyond our own expectations. With our hearts set in the right ways, we can become sharp tools in the hands of the Lord. It is amazing to recognize that our Heavenly Father designed this elaborate system with a very complex physical brain to help our spirit self work out its eternal destiny.

***The business of life is to go forward.***

- Samuel Johnson

Insight and logic are essential for correcting the distorted interpretations of past events. The following technique will get you started in untangling the past. Write down the answers for each part in a notebook. It is important to point out as a precaution that if there has been significant abuse or trauma in your history, or if the prospect of exploring your past seems frightening or overwhelming, please seek the assistance of a competent professional therapist.

### **Critical Events Analysis**

1. Select an undesirable behavior pattern or negative belief.
2. Tie the behavior or belief to a past significant event(s). (If necessary, use the Magic List Method from chapter six to help with recall.)
3. Recognize what your younger self was feeling and thinking in response to this situation.
4. What explanations or beliefs did you develop at the time to understand those events?
5. Were those beliefs totally logical? Can you interpret things differently now? (Use the Editing Technique from chapter eight. See instructions below.)
6. How would you act or think differently if you had your present adult knowledge and intelligence and were back in the same situation?

### **Instructions for the Editing Technique**

- a) Write out your distressing thoughts about the present problem.
- b) Cross out lines containing exaggerating, labeling, denial of reality, or predicting from your self-talk. Re-write the issue of concern in strictly logical and practical terms.
- c) Read the new statement five times. (Say the words out loud or silently mouth them.)

### **Action Step**

1. Try the writing exercise to begin contact with your inner self.
2. Ask yourself often as you go through your daily routine "What am I really feeling?" or "What do I really want?" and resolve to appropriately meet more of your needs.
3. Practice using the Event Card when bothered by a negative emotion for more than a half hour.
4. If applicable, use the Critical Events Analysis with any self-defeating patterns.

### **Notes**

1. James E. Faust, "Strengthening the Inner Self," Ensign, February 2003, 3.
2. David O. McKay, "The Nature of Man," in Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 25, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
3. James E. Faust, "Fathers, Mothers, Marriage," Ensign, August 2004, 3.

# Chapter 10

## The Worth of Souls

### Principle 10 Individual Worth

All souls have equal worth in the eyes of God. Cease to base your value upon the approval of others or the achievement of perfectionistic standards. Particularly avoid comparisons as this is pride. Secure self-worth comes through humility, acknowledging personal progress, and acceptance of our value as children of our Heavenly Father.

Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. (D&C 18:10)

### The Emotional Revolution

We tend to view things in set mental frameworks. These models are called paradigms. Sometimes change is only possible by considering a problem and its solution in a totally new way. True and lasting improvement in self-esteem is only possible if there is a dramatic change in the way we conceptualize the problem.

Do you know the old story about a sailing ship blown off course by storms near the eastern coast of South America? After the storm there was a great calm, and the ship drifted for many days for lack of wind to fill the sails. The crew eventually ran out of fresh water and feared they would perish from thirst. Their hope was kindled again when they saw smoke from a steamship on the horizon. They fired their cannon to hail the other vessel and frantically cried for water when it came closer.

The reply from the other ship's captain was short and to the point, "Lower your buckets into the sea and drink." The sailors did not respond at first. This did not fit their model for obtaining water at sea. They knew that drinking salt water when dehydrated can cause death. The other captain shouted again, "Lower your buckets into the sea." Finally they complied. They filled their buckets and carefully tasted the contents. To their amazement it was fresh water. The ships were floating near the mouth of the Amazon River. The outflow from this mighty river is so prodigious that the water in the ocean at its mouth is fresh seventy miles out to sea.

It is important that we be willing to "lower our buckets" and consider a totally new paradigm that is truly awesome in its implications. The world is very focused on the concept of building self-esteem. However, this is not a true gospel principle. The Lord does not believe in self-esteem in the popular sense of the word. In fact, what the world considers self-esteem, the Lord generally considers to be pride. Pride exists when worth is determined or earned through comparisons with others or personal achievement. The Lord loves his children perfectly. All individuals are of equal worth to our Heavenly Father regardless of beauty, stature, or accomplishments. We do not have to *do* anything to earn our value. To believe otherwise is to deny the word of God and to limit his goodness.

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. (Psalms 82:6)

The worldly view of self-esteem suggests that people are only valuable if they meet certain conditions or are validated by significant others. It also seems that there is a measuring system and that some people have more value than others. This notion that we must earn our worth is a great deception and causes untold grief in the world. The gospel emphasizes unconditional worth and humility as the answer for the widespread problem of low self-esteem.

President Benson covered this topic extremely well in his 1989 LDS Spring Conference address on pride. He said: "In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin." <sup>1</sup> He emphasized the concept that, "the central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and toward our fellowmen."<sup>2</sup> President Benson went on to explain that pride places us in a state of opposition. He said that when we are prideful in our hearts, we resist the authority of God and suppose that we know more than him. He stated that the proud, "pit their perceptions of truth against God's great knowledge." <sup>3</sup> President Benson further explained that pride is essentially competitive in nature. Men and women feel they have no worth unless they surpass others in a myriad of worldly contests and competitions. In this same talk, President Benson also stated the following:

We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them. The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their interests, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C.S. Lewis: "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man...It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride has gone." <sup>4</sup>

The Prophet then went on to declare something else that was extremely profound. He made the point that even those with low self-esteem and a lack of the worldly trappings of success can be guilty of pride. President Benson also suggested that gossiping, fault-finding, murmuring, coveting, envy and other such sins are all related to pride because they are associated with *competition*.

Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others, but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and learned, looking down at the rest of us. There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up. <sup>5</sup>

Seeking glory for oneself leads to evil. If only winners can have self-esteem, then ultimately there must be a lot of losers. The battle for pride produces many casualties. In many ways pride appears to be Satan's greatest weapon. It makes men fight among themselves for recognition. It causes people to hate themselves when they cannot achieve greatness or perfection. Worry about gaining others' approval creates constant tension and turmoil. Pride is a thorn in the side and can greatly interfere with the quest for eternal salvation. Individuals who feel they are worthless are very vulnerable and become easy prey for Satan's temptations. They forget who they really are and give up on their eternal goals out of pain and discouragement.

**President Benson:** The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily. Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures. The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, "If you succeed, I am a failure." <sup>6</sup>

Satan even wins when people compete successfully and feel really good about themselves. These individuals can become so puffed up and self-assured that they feel they know more than God and do not need him. They may stop caring about those who are less fortunate and, in their eyes, less important. The Lord has given us many warnings about the dangers of pride.

And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you. (Jacob 2:13-14)

### **Differences between pride and self-worth**

<u>Self-esteem (pride)</u>	<u>Humility and self-worth</u>
Distorted view of self	True estimate of self
Competitive	Self-directed
Only a minority can win	All have worth
Trying to stay on top creates stress	Brings peace
Value is measured by status and talents	Worth comes from being a child of God
Those of lower status treated differently	All treated equally
Dependent upon the approval of others	Set one's own achievable standards
Enemy to God	Gateway to spiritual power
Causes alienation and conflicts	Brings love and unity
Rejects counsel	Teachable
Vulnerable to depression	Resilient

Our society is so enamored with the idea of building self-esteem that it can be difficult to accept that this is a false doctrine. Many people are perplexed when they begin to more fully comprehend the concept of forsaking pride. They say such things as, "Why would you try to succeed at all?" or "Why have goals then?" The answer is that we should have goals for righteous reasons. Personal growth, taking care of our families, and service to others should be our chief objectives in life, not seeking fame. Pride is no more capable of making us happy than is cocaine. It is all an illusion, a great deception.

***Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness. It is the broken heart and contrite spirit.*** <sup>7</sup>

- President Ezra Taft Benson

And other directions concerning my servant Martin Harris shall be given him of the Spirit, that he may receive his inheritance as seemeth him good;

And let him repent of his sins, for he seeketh the praise of the world. (D&C 58:38-39)

The commandment to be humble is clear. Apparently, what is lacking is faith to believe that humility is actually a prerequisite for true happiness. Let us consider the following blessings the Lord promises for the humble and stir up some real enthusiasm. Remember that Heavenly Father has created worlds without end. He speaks only perfect truth.

### **The Blessings of Humility**

They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with *joy and consolation*, (Helaman 3:35)

Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find *rest* to their souls. (Alma 37:34)

Humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, . . . (and) be *filled with the love of God*, (Mosiah 4:11-12)

Be thou humble and the Lord shall give thee *answers to thy prayers*. (D&C 112:10)

If they humble themselves before me, I will *make weak things strong* unto them. (Ether 12:27)

He that humbleth himself shall be *exalted*. (Luke 14:11)

Let him that is ignorant *learn wisdom* by humbling himself. (D&C 136:32)

By humility and the fear of the Lord are *riches and honor and life*. (Proverbs 22:4)

Humility is the true key to self-esteem problems as well as the gateway to spiritual power. Though it seems a paradox that it could be so effective, humility is one of the most powerful emotional tools available to us.

## **Steps for Improving Self-Worth**

### **Step 1 Accept that Self-Worth is a Gift**

All have equal worth by virtue of our status as Heavenly Father's children. Worthiness does not depend upon our efforts. Our value to God is relationship-based. Our power and goodness is so small that we cannot even begin to give back what we have received from the Lord. Heavenly Father has given us this earth to live upon, our physical bodies, sustenance, scriptures, prophets, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Atonement, as well as the very power to live and breathe. And besides all these blessings, He will reward us with unlimited riches and power if we are faithful in this life

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—

I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.

(Mosiah 2:20-21)

Men try to pretend that they can increase their worth merely because they surpass others of the Lord's children in some small ways. However, earth life is not a worldly contest, but a school for gods. We are celestial beings in training. We should compare ourselves to Jesus Christ, the Great Exemplar and not to other men and women. Our job is to follow the Savior and continually try to improve. Comparisons to other people bring forth pride and take us off the true path.

Oftentimes individuals will say, "I don't deserve to be happy (or forgiven)." The best answer for this is to agree that, indeed, they do not deserve it! It is a gift of God and Christ suffered that they might inherit the joy of the celestial kingdom.

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23)

Our main choice is whether or not we elect to receive the gift of worth. Consider the options. What will happen if we refuse the gift and try to deny our worth

as children of God? What will be the life consequences if we ignore the Atonement and insist on trying to be perfect or punishing ourselves for our sins?

On the other hand, what will the results be like if we accept the Lord's gift of worth? What would our attitude be? I believe we would be as Alma the Younger who gratefully accepted the mercies of the Savior and rose from the depths of guilt and despair to mightily serve the Lord the rest of his days. Accepting the gift of worth is the first step toward developing a positive self-concept.

Heavenly Father does ask some things in return for his gifts. The sacrifice the Lord asks from each individual is to give up willfulness and pride. He seeks our obedience and not our opinion regarding how we should live the gospel. His instructions include how we should view ourselves and others. Though individuals may feel emotionally driven to be self-punitive (or prideful), they can turn things around more quickly if they are willing to accept the Lord's love and direction.

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. (D&C 59:8)

## **Step 2 Affirmations (Healing Self-Talk)**

In the February 2003 First Presidency Message, Elder Faust clarified several extremely important points of doctrine in a very straightforward and eloquent manner. Some of the main points he made were: <sup>8</sup>

- 1) Man's spirit is not perfect, but must be "purged and cleansed of transgression."
- 2) The basic program of the Church is to transform the spirit within man, "to strengthen the inner self."
- 3) The inner soul with all that is stored within it, is what continues beyond this life.

In addition to the effects of the Holy Ghost, a part of strengthening the inner self comes from speaking words of truth to ourselves. We must teach our spirit within that he or she has great worth, that error and sin are part of the plan and the very reason we needed a Savior.

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:10)

The first step in changing a negative self-image is making the decision to strive to be kind to the inner self. To be kind means to be supportive and positive. Many people express negative feelings, even hatred, toward themselves for their imperfections and mistakes. This is self-defeating behavior of the highest degree. Consider whether this behavior helps you to be more productive, helps you to be closer to others, or makes you hopeful about the future? Clearly, the answer to all of the above questions is a resounding no. Self-punishers are on a crusade to punish themselves. This may also be a way to express their disguised inner anger toward those who have hurt them. It may be the only control they feel they have.

Despite the strong emotional pull toward self-abuse, it may be helpful to point out that it is clearly selfish to spend so much time and energy thinking about yourself. It hurts those who care about you and prevents you from being effective in serving others. The past is too heavy to continue to carry around. A new chapter begins when we accept reality and start to make our life work one day at a time.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:25)

Wouldn't it be wonderful to free yourself of guilt, shame, and insecurity? Assume your adult responsibility as the caretaker of the heart, the inner person of the soul. You and only you can provide the twenty-four hours per day acceptance and guidance you need to thrive in life. Your inner self will listen to you more than anyone else. Your happiness depends upon your willingness to accept the inner self as a wonderful, vibrant, essential part of your being. You must recognize that you are in a developmental state that involves exploration and, oftentimes, learning by trial and error. Looking for some other person to improve your self-esteem is like searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Be confident that your own sincere efforts will be more than adequate. Perfection is not a requirement for increasing self-worth. Everyone wishes they were better and that they had made fewer mistakes. Though the concept of positive self-talk may still seem unusual, persevere and it will eventually seem like the most natural thing in the world.

***So much is a man worth as he esteems himself.***

- Francois Rabelais

### **a) The Emotional Bill of Rights**

The following is a personal bill of rights we can read to our inner self. As adults we literally have the power to give ourselves permission to enjoy these essential emotional freedoms. Some of these may strike a deep chord. For the purposes of this exercise, read each freedom out loud and speak to your heart using the following procedure. Before each personal freedom, repeat the words, "I have the right." Say the permissions slowly and with meaning.

to be safe	to be loved	to be responsible
to have feelings	to love others	to be competent
to explore new things	to make mistakes	to be strong emotionally
to say no	to gain knowledge	to express my emotions
to have friends	to relax	to be happy
to live without fear	to work	to take care of my needs

### **b) Lifetime Achievement Award**

Most individuals have made very significant progress in developing their character over the years. The problem is that we generally do not recognize this progress, seldom give ourselves credit, and tend to compare ourselves to others. This exercise highlights change over time and provides a good opportunity for recognizing change. There is a train of thought that says it is bragging or prideful to consider our strengths. However, for those who are self-critical, positive self-talk mainly serves to counterbalance the frequent negativity we feed ourselves. It is refreshing to be able to appreciate our strengths and talents without giving into the temptation to feel superior to others.

The procedure is to simply check the attributes that mostly apply to you on the list below. Then slowly read out loud the list of good qualities placing "I am" before each one. This experience is invariably a very safe and positive one. It can be repeated many times. The inner self always appreciates positive feedback.

## Personal Strengths Inventory

appreciative	aware	calm	chaste
cheerful	compassionate	confident	conscientious
considerate	cooperative	courageous	creative
curious	disciplined	energetic	enthusiastic
fair	faithful	firm	flexible
forgiving	fun	generous	genuine
grateful	happy	honest	humble
independent	industrious	insightful	kind
likable	listener	logical	obedient
optimistic	organized	patient	quiet
realistic	receptive	respectful	responsible
serious	sensitive	sincere	spiritual
strong	temperate	tolerant	trusting

After this initial positive contact, one must follow through on the commitment to continually guide and support the inner person with constructive self-talk. It cannot be emphasized enough that this decision is a prerequisite for achieving emotional stability and peace of mind.

### c) Achievable Standards

It would be terrific if we could simply accept ourselves as having divine worth as children of God, and then just move on, never again to be bothered by self-esteem issues. Unfortunately, people are more complicated than that. Although it may be doctrinally correct, few individuals seem able to accept themselves unconditionally. We are far too aware of our imperfections to offer ourselves blanket immunity from personal prosecution.

Some individuals have very difficult standards to reach. The following are examples of common, unrealistic goals: *Everyone must like me. I must be perfect. My parents must approve of me. I must be rich and successful. I must weigh 115 pounds. I must have a college degree and a professional career.* Although these types of ideas are obviously rigid and illogical, people hold tight to these criteria because of subconscious forces. They punish themselves unmercifully whenever they fall short, and consequently suffer endlessly.

Since most people insist on standards to judge themselves by, it is suggested that we switch to standards that are achievable and associated with short-term goals. We actually have the power to do this. After all, we decided upon the ones we are using now. While everyone is free to choose for themselves, I would like to suggest some criteria that I think are reasonable—*I will accept myself if I give a good effort on the tasks of each day and strive to be kind to others.* Once we logically agree to the new standards, we need to ride close herd on our thoughts lest we become self-critical and desert the new compact.

### d) Self-Respect

Giving up negative self-statements is an important component of improving self-concept. In fact, it seems quite difficult to maintain feelings of low self-esteem without insulting ourselves with derogatory statements. People regularly sprinkle their self-talk with labels such as *stupid, worthless, lazy, hopeless*, etc. Now these types of words are exaggerations born out of frustration. Since we want to establish a policy of

truth in thoughts, the language in our minds should be held to a high standard. We are made in the image of God and deserve respect, even from ourselves.

One new deal we can make with the inner self is to strive to be both accurate and positive in our self-talk. Instead of using labels to put ourselves down, we can focus on describing situations exactly the way they are. This places us in greater harmony with the process of self-development where limitations are recognized and corrected. For example, rather than calling myself a “terrible musician,” I could say, “I am largely untrained in music and need to practice more to get good results.” The sting of the first phrase feels far worse emotionally than the challenge of the second.

### **Step 3 Practicing Humility**

Because of man’s fallen nature and inexperience, we are prone to sin and error. Additionally, those who have experienced significant shame or abuse, have a painful core feeling of not being good enough. To avoid the additional pain caused by recognizing weaknesses, many people choose not to think about their faults, pretending they do not exist. If criticized they become defensive and angry. The sad reality is that sooner or later the charade must end. Like an inflated stock pushed beyond its true market value, the bubble of false pride must eventually burst. When this occurs, the individual feels utterly worthless and plunges into an abyss of despair and self-loathing.

Attempts to feel better about ourselves through achievement and gaining the approval of others ultimately fail. Other people are often stingy or inconsistent in giving praise or acceptance. Sometimes we do not make the cut. Not everyone can be a star. There is also an inner pressure to explain our frequent mistakes and past failures. Too often the answer we come up with is that we are bad or worthless. We can deal with this kind of criticism by accepting our imperfect nature. There is awesome power in humility! It cushions our eternal soul from much of the pain of a very harsh and competitive world. By accepting our personal weaknesses, we can overcome fears of the judgment of man and concentrate upon progressing as our Heavenly Father wishes us to.

. . . Even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel. (Mosiah 4:11)

Young, pampered seedlings that were grown either indoors or in a greenhouse need a period to acclimate to outdoor conditions prior to planting in the garden. This transition period is called "hardening off". This process gradually exposes the tender plants to the elements and toughens them up by thickening the cuticle on the leaves. Hardening off usually involves placing plants outdoors in partial sun for a few hours per day for about a week. This helps prevent transplant shock.

Most people, and particularly addicts, spend a good deal of energy avoiding being honest about their faults. Therefore, to begin facing one’s deficiencies honestly can be a bit of a shock to the human psyche. However, we set ourselves up for a fall when we try to pretend we have no faults. Although the Lord’s advice to be humble seems counter-intuitive, those who have the faith to experiment will find that it works like a charm. So rather than trying to avoid the reality of human imperfection, we are going to focus on identifying and accepting personal weakness.

First, list ten areas where you have some clear limitations. You can use the personal strengths list from a few pages earlier to get ideas, but do not necessarily limit yourself to these items. Be careful to state these areas that need improvement in a respectful manner. The inner self will be shocked enough doing this exercise.

Next, read the list in the following manner. "I cannot be perfect in this lifetime, but I can be a person who is willing to develop myself. Here are some areas that I intend to focus on over the years so I can be a more effective person." (Then read the list several times. It is OK to change the wording if there is a certain way you prefer to state the objective.) Read the list regularly and remind yourself of your worth and the importance of not using unrealistic standards or comparing yourself to others.

The value of reminding ourselves of our limitations is to provide emotional balance. Once we adjust to the reality of who we truly are, we become somewhat immune to the noxious effects of criticism and setbacks. We can then focus more intently upon our goals and on being of more service to our fellow man. The person who is not moved by fear of failure can conquer any obstacle and reach any goal. His direction is always forward.

***If you are humble, nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are.***

- Mother Teresa

The Worth Protection Formula below provides an antidote to the stinging barbs of the inner critic. It seems to work instantly and has no negative side effects. We must never let a negative thought go by unchallenged. We feel what we think. The Worth Protection Formula gives individuals a powerful weapon for dealing with setbacks or criticism from others. It simplifies the task of learning how to be sufficiently humble.

#### **Worth Protection Formula**

1. Is this criticism 100% accurate, or do I just strongly feel that way? What is the evidence that it is not totally true?
2. Describe the specific weakness or limitation that actually does exist. It is true that I: (Make sure to avoid using negative labels.)
3. But I still have worth. I am a human being. I am a child of God.
4. Say something positive about yourself, past efforts, or future plans for change.

#### **Example for Use of the Worth Protection Formula:**

*A person gets a C on a big test and calls himself a stupid loser.*

1. This is not totally true. I am not a complete loser. Sometimes I do OK academically. Some of the professors in the program seem to respect my abilities. I have an overall 3.2 GPA.
2. It is true that I am not the brightest person in the program. I certainly struggle with physics.
3. However, I still have worth. I am a human being. I am a child of God.

4. There is still a chance to get a B in this class. I received an A- on the first test. I think I will see a tutor a couple of times to get help with the difficult material.

#### **Step 4 Rewriting History**

If your practice of the techniques provided in this chapter has helped you to gain the conviction that you are a person of value, keep it up. On the other hand, if you encountered strong inner resistance to self-acceptance, then some deeper work may be required. It is helpful to appreciate that our self-esteem was formed largely in reaction to our perceptions of how others viewed us in the past. These ideas, or schema, can become so deeply impressed that we later respond to them automatically. Without identifying and revising these faulty beliefs within the subconscious, improvements are often superficial and there is a constant battle to avoid falling back into negative thought patterns. A process to accomplish this was discussed in the previous chapter on the inner self. As was also mentioned, if there has been significant trauma in your life, it would be wise to employ a capable therapist to help you work through those issues.

When working through past issues, the invaluable tool of humility can be used to gain perspective. Rather than only focusing on the events that produced feelings of shame or guilt, we can acknowledge and accept the lack of knowledge, skills, or abilities that contributed to the problem. By accepting personal limitations without resorting to the use of labels or absolutes, the meaning of past negative events can be dramatically changed.

In a similar way, those who were offenders can also be viewed differently. We can strive to look with eyes of compassion to recognize the individual's limited level of moral development. It is important to accept the reality of how very *deficient* the offending party was in his or her ability to be loving, reasonable, and empathetic. Acceptance of others' weaknesses and compassion for their pain can free us from our own anger. While it can be difficult to see how abusive individuals can be in pain; recognize that the worse a person's behavior, the further away they are from the Spirit and other people. Evil people often feel depressed and lonely, and unless they repent, they face a very difficult time in the hereafter. By exercising true charity and feeling compassion for those in spiritual darkness, forgiveness becomes possible.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.  
Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:  
forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. (Luke 6:36-37)

To begin to get in touch with the critical events that contributed to your damaged self-worth, you can begin to construct a "wall of shame." This is in essence a list of those situations that appeared to be the most damaging. Writing them down helps provide greater objectivity, and the list also can be used as a reference. Over time more logical interpretations can be gained.

When working through one's history, deep feelings of hurt, anger, guilt, or sadness may arise. It is important to validate and express these feelings in safe ways. Attempting to suppress emotions indefinitely can carry serious consequences and certainly trigger desires to revert to addictive behavior in order to escape. For those who are afraid to let their feelings out, plan short periods of an hour or so where you can feel your emotions and express yourself. Besides talking to others, writing feelings out in a journal can be helpful.

Many individuals who have been abused turn anger inwardly as they begin to get in touch with these feelings and can become self-destructive. It is essential to form a plan to handle these powerful emotions. These feelings build up so much energy over time that it is almost impossible to just forgive and move on without some outward release! The objective is to recognize the feelings of anger and develop a plan to safely express them.

To manage anger, cathartic activities such as vigorous exercise may be necessary. It is also essential to make decisions to keep oneself and others safe if aggressive feelings are present. In general, feelings can be expressed through talking, writing, art, or music. Tools such as the contemplation hour from chapter 6, radical acceptance from chapter 7, and the editing technique from chapter 8 can help one work through the troublesome thought patterns associated with painful past events.

### **Action Steps**

1. Work through the four steps to change self-worth. Be aware that the process is complex and may take several weeks.

### **Notes**

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," Ensign, May 1989, 4.
2. Ibid, page 5.
3. Ibid, page 5.
4. Ibid, page 5.
5. Ibid, page 6.
6. Ibid, page 6.
7. Ibid, page 7.
8. James E. Faust, "Strengthening the Inner Self," Ensign, February 2003, 3.

# Chapter 11

## Healthy Intimacy

### Principle #11 Healthy intimacy

Love is all-important. Being part of a community of family, friends and neighbors provides joy and emotional strength. Learn to overcome fears of rejection and be a friend to all. Service is an integral part of the spiritual path and increases self-confidence. Perform acts of kindness for those around you every day.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

Love is the most important element in a spiritual life. The gospel, in its essence, is concerned with relationships. Loving relationships with friends, family, and co-workers do much to bring us joy. Service represents our compassion for all mankind and is integrally connected with discipleship.

Addictive behavior can not only separate individuals from the Spirit of the Lord, but also alienate them from others. The allure of quick and easy escape and satisfaction can pull people away from those things that can truly satisfy the soul. There can be no real healing from addiction without building increased capacity for rich and meaningful relationships. An empty glass cannot satisfy one's thirst.

Intimacy is comprised of trust, commitment, loyalty, support, shared experiences, empathy, and support. While this kind of intimacy is most likely to occur with family members, it also can happen with good friends. Many who struggle with addictions have unbalanced relationships or difficulty feeling emotionally intimate. They often feel unworthy to be loved for themselves due to a history of impoverished or conflict-ridden emotional connections. These developmental experiences can lead to such issues as difficulty with trust, emotional distancing or clinging behavior, selfishness or excessive pleasing behaviors, impaired empathy, control issues, or fears of abandonment.

Emotional wholeness and positive relationships are primary gospel goals. Making progress in establishing healthy intimacy in relationships is an important factor in healing. A truly spiritual person is a loving person capable of sustaining a variety of rich relationships. We can seek the Savior's assistance with full confidence that He will provide ample direction and support. The primary purpose of the Plan of Salvation is to teach us how to develop and maintain enriching relationships.

### Establishing a Foundation for Positive Relationships

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.  
(Matthew 22:37-39)



Let us consider five aspects of establishing better relationships:  
sharing, sensitivity, agency, charity, and change.

**1. Sharing** – participating in mutually positive experiences and letting others into our lives.

Most of the really precious experiences in life are made infinitely better by sharing them with someone else. Human beings bond closer together by having mutual experiences. We can share time with others through activities such as recreation, work, and learning. We can also share thoughts and feelings. Addicts, who are often more private by nature, deprive themselves of many rich experiences. So important are work and quality recreational time for family togetherness that they are mentioned in the *Proclamation on the Family*.

Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, stress can help be relieved by talking about problems with others. Those with addictions tend to come from families with closed communication. They are not used to sharing their feelings or asking for help. Not only that, they have longstanding habits of avoiding dealing with difficult issues. Therefore it is especially important to share feelings with one's spouse who naturally wants to help. This helps establish a new habit of facing problems, communicating feelings, and relying upon others. Naturally, talking about problems does not relieve all difficult emotions, but it is a step in the right direction.

**2. Sensitivity-** being aware of others' present experience and comfort as well as our own effect upon them.

**Elder Neal Maxwell:** Some of us have a tendency to use others, even for beneficial purposes, without their consent or in ways that are inappropriate. Remember the simple but searching self-query suggested earlier: "Whose needs am I trying to meet?" To answer honestly is to achieve some emancipating empathy.<sup>2</sup>

- Recognize social signals and body language.
- Checking in – asking how others are doing in a sincere accepting manner.
- Courteousness – please and thank you, find ways to express appreciation.
- Accept feedback and requests. Be cooperative.
- Place others' need and wishes on a high level.
- Be cautious about making jokes at others' expense.
- Acknowledge growth, change, and improvement in others.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:25-26)

We want to communicate in an effective manner in which we state our message clearly and express no ill feeling toward others. The ways of the fallen world are very different than the Lord's ways. In D&C 121:43 we are told to only speak sharply when inspired to do so. It is said that there are two languages—logic and feeling. It is best when we seek first to validate others and to respectfully listen to what they have to say. We can then express interest, empathy, or support depending upon the topic. There will be sufficient time for our point of view afterwards.

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:8)

- Seek first to understand.
- Listen before speaking.

- Inspire versus criticize.
- Strive for balance in speaking, only taking your portion of the conversation.
- Be a good listener and remember to actively engage others.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)

### **Proper Assertiveness**

The main two things we can do to be assertive are 1) share our feelings, and 2) just say “no.” We need to stick up for ourselves. Usually there is a positive way to do this in a relationship. However, if you feel trapped and not listened to, you may be in an abusive relationship, or at least a one-sided relationship.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (Matthew 18:15)

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. (Proverbs 15:1-2)

## **3. Charity – Empathy and service**

### **Empathy**

**Elder Bruce R. McConkie:** Above all the attributes of godliness and perfection, charity is the one most devoutly to be desired. Charity is more than love, far more; it is everlasting love, perfect love, the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. It is love so centered in righteousness that the possessor has no aim or desire except for the eternal welfare of his own soul and for the souls of those around him. <sup>3</sup>

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Awareness and concern about others' inner experiences is known as empathy, and it is crucial to good relationships. We would be wise to follow the admonition of Aristotle, "We should behave to our friends as we would wish our friends to behave to us." However, we ought to remain sensitive to individual differences as well. The first level of empathy is recognizing that other people have emotions and reactions to events just as we do.

The next level of empathy is appreciating that others may feel different than us about the same experience. For instance, going to a basketball game works for many men, but some women might not be as excited about that opportunity. We might find a book, movie, new food, or exercise plan we think is great, but a friend or partner might not appreciate it at all. People are very different, and we must learn to respect (and even appreciate) these important differences.

To maintain relationships over time, we must always be sensitive to the feelings of those around us. When those we care about are in physical or emotional distress, we are obligated by the law of love to share in their emotions. If we struggle with this form of caring, it is possible to get more in touch by imagining how we would feel in the other person's position. Only as we vicariously experience another's pain are we able to generate true compassion and understanding.

These emotional sacrifices narrow the distance between ourselves and those we love. As we continue to develop true empathy, our human tendencies to be selfish or cruel decrease. With an active concern in the happiness of those around us, we will find a greater sense of intimacy and joy. Those who choose to focus mainly on themselves will remain empty and dissatisfied, whether in a relationship or not.

And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life. (Mosiah 18:8-9)

## Service

Pierre Anthian is an LDS dental technician now living in Montreal, Canada. While serving meals as a volunteer at a homeless shelter in Paris, he felt the desire to help beyond meeting basic needs. He wanted to find a way to help the homeless find more dignity and self-confidence, and he contemplated how this might be done through music.

After moving to Montreal in 1995 to live near his family, he continued his path of service. Pierre began to volunteer at Accueil Bonneau, a shelter on Montreal's waterfront that provides meals to homeless men. It was here at Accueil Bonneau that he decided to place his vision of a homeless choir into motion.

The project has been a great success. The choir of 22 men meets twice per week at the shelter for practices and puts on regular performances at Montreal subway stations. The group has also traveled to Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and even Paris, France to perform.

They collect donations and split the profits among themselves. Besides offering them a way to help support themselves, being in the choir has given their lives more meaning and structure. Almost all of them now accept the social assistance they need and maintain permanent living quarters. Pierre Anthian has shown us all the power of love in action and he has truly taken to heart the words of the Savior as recorded in Matthew 25:40: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." <sup>4</sup>

**The Prophet Joseph Smith** It is a time-honored adage that love begets love. Let us pour forth love — show forth our kindness unto all mankind, and the Lord will reward us with everlasting increase; cast our bread upon the waters and we shall receive it after many days, increased to a hundredfold. Friendship is like Brother Turley in his blacksmith shop welding iron to iron; it unites the human family with its happy influence. <sup>5</sup>

**The Golden Rule:** Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. (Mark 9:35)

#### **4. Character** – Following the Savior in our moral development

We must accept that if we want meaningful relationships, there is a price to pay. That price entails a willingness to 1) sacrifice our own desires to the needs of others within reasonable limits, 2) be genuinely empathetic and allow ourselves to feel others' emotions and pain, 3) examine our shortcomings and make appropriate changes, 4) love freely and deeply.

Character is the glue that keeps relationships and families together. Love is not always enough. There are high expectations for adults to be productive and responsible. Character cannot be put up instantly like a set in a movie, but like a diamond needs the press of time. Character implies a built-in consistency. Controlling one's temper, making sacrifices, honesty, and dependability are always mini-victories over the impulses of the moment. These small victories can become relatively simple tasks if a person has already trained himself to do what is right and good. Plainly put, we are creatures of habit. The best predictor of future behavior is always past behavior. There are no shortcuts to maintaining positive relationships. Good habits represent the moral victories of yesterday.

People often resist changing because of resentments, selfishness, or fear that others will not respond in kind. Whatever our inhibitions, the Lord expects us to change anyway. He has placed us here on earth to change our natures and He knows that all good things follow our willingness to become more like the Savior. Some of the positive qualities that help us to be effective in relationships include:

Loving, giving, kind, gentle, empathetic, respectful, responsible, communicative, loyal, honest, dependable, faithful, practical, appreciative, humble, temperate, thrifty, forgiving, and peace-loving.
--

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. (D&C 98:11)

### **Making Friends**

The following is what President David O. McKay had to say about friendship:

Among life's sweetest blessings is fellowship with men and women whose ideals and aspirations are high and noble. Next to a sense of kinship with God come the helpfulness, encouragement, and inspiration of friends. Friendship is a sacred possession. As air, water, and sunshine to flowers, trees, and verdure, so smiles, sympathy, and love of friends to the daily life of man! To live, laugh, love one's friends, and be loved by them is to bask in the sunshine of life.

One of the principal reasons which the Lord had for establishing his Church is to give all persons high and low, rich and poor, strong and feeble an opportunity to associate with their fellow men in an atmosphere of uplifting, religious fellowship. This may be found in priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, sacrament meetings. He who

neglects these opportunities, who fails to take advantage of them, to that extent starves his own soul. <sup>6</sup>

How do we develop better friendships? We can make friends by welcoming newcomers, deepening relationships with longtime acquaintances, and being more worthy friends to others. Friendships develop in different ways during different times in our lives, but each stage of life brings with it unique opportunities to make friends.

Dale Carnegie's classic book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has sold over 15 million copies. He suggested that we strive to do the following behaviors: be genuinely interested in others, be a good listener, talk in terms of the other person's interests, and compliment others. The point of his book is that we can change by employing simple principles that will bring us much more success in making friends. The main emphasis is on turning the focus away from ourselves and giving others what they need. This unselfish attitude is the *magic* that truly activates relationships.<sup>7</sup>

***We are interested in others, when they are interested in us.***

- Publilius Syrus

Negative beliefs are the greatest obstacles toward developing new relationships. When we truly believe that others will not like us, and that making overtures of friendship will result in painful rejection, we understandably avoid getting close. It is the "flawed self" concept, the idea that there is something intrinsically wrong with us that creates the most problems. It is better to reach out to all with no set expectations and a willingness to accept whatever level of friendship others offer.

***True friends enrich life. If you would have friends, be one.*** <sup>8</sup>

- President David O. McKay

It is important to give our friends empathy, support, unconditional love, and our time. A true friendship is a celestial relationship. One of the great friendships in the scriptures was that of Alma the Younger and Amulek. When Alma was told to return to the city of Ammonihah, an angel appeared to Amulek in a dream and told him to feed Alma. Alma taught Amulek and then they went out together to preach the gospel. Though they had much success, they suffered a great deal doing the Lord's work. They were placed in prison as well as seeing many of their recent converts put to death. Amulek lost his wealth and was deserted by his friends and family. Alma's magnanimous response was that of a true friend.

. . . therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and strengthened him in the Lord.  
(Alma 15: 18)

A friend loveth at all times, (Proverbs 17:17).

## **Celestial Marriage**

A major change in perspective is required in order to strengthen most marriages. There is only one way to ensure greater success in one's marriage and family—doing things the Lord's way. The following is an excerpt from the Proclamation on the Family:

Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established

and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. <sup>9</sup>

### **Marriage is governed by celestial laws**

Marriage is a challenging enterprise for the best of people. Far too many marriages are in trouble, even among the more faithful. One way to conceptualize this difficulty is to recognize that we too often turn to worldly methods to handle a celestial problem. Marriage is a celestial institution and can only be managed well by employing celestial principles. Examples of celestial principles noted in the Proclamation on the Family are forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, and work.

And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. (D&C 88: 21-22)

### **Marriage is a covenant relationship**

Sacred obligations are made in the temple that bind us to correct conduct in our families. Behavior must be based upon God's standards rather than dependent upon the actions of a spouse. Ideally, our relationship with the Savior is the cornerstone of our marriage and He is viewed as presiding over the family.

And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God. (D&C 132:6.)

President Harold B. Lee gave the following counsel:

If young people would resolve from the moment of their marriage, that from that time forth they would resolve and do everything in their power to please each other in things that are right, even to the sacrifice of their own pleasures, their own appetites, their own desires, the problem of adjustment in married life would take care of itself, and their home would indeed be a happy home. Great love is built on great sacrifice, and that home where the principle of sacrifice for the welfare of each other is daily expressed is that home where there is a great love. <sup>10</sup>

### **Priesthood leadership and oneness**

**President Marion G. Romney:** A husband and wife should be one in harmony, respect, and mutual consideration. Neither should plan or follow an independent course of action. They should consult, pray, and decide together. Remember that neither the wife nor the husband is the slave of the other. Husbands and wives are equal partners.

<sup>11</sup>

The husband is the assigned head of the home. Each priesthood holder has the responsibility to teach his family the joy of living by celestial principles. He has agreed to obey every word out of the mouth of God (D&C 84:44) and his wife is to follow him in righteousness. Through her gospel study and inspiration, she can know what is good and true, as well as offer valuable counsel.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18)

The priesthood leads through righteousness and persuasion, and not by force. The wife is not expected to blindly obey the husband, but instead shares power as the queen of the family. The priesthood holder points out general gospel areas such as respect or work for the family to make improvements in. The couple then uses a team approach to determine the specifics of implementing change. No final decision should be made where strong opposing views exist. Decisions need to be unanimous. Therefore, both the wife and husband have veto power!

When there are disagreements, the couple can pray, ponder, and search the scriptures and other sources to find what principles can guide them. Principles are fundamental rules or concepts upon which actions and other ideas can be based. Individual feelings need to be placed aside as the couple seeks truth and inspiration. The best decisions will be made when the couple is united. The husband and wife must strive to be one as led by the Spirit of the Lord.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: (John 17:22)

And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other— (D&C 107:27)

### **Strengthening the Marital Relationship**

The eternal rewards for obedience to our temple covenants are greater than we can imagine. The blessings we can enjoy in this life are wonderful as well. However, all too often individuals allow selfishness, resentments, and lack of faith to get in the way of their fully keeping the promises they have made to the Lord. Contention and/or emotional withdrawal are the inevitable result, and the strength of the marriage will be weakened.

There is a positive approach that can be taken to end marital stalemate. The couple can agree to make a total commitment to live by celestial standards. Three very important areas to focus on would be love, responsibility, and respect. Showing greater love would include such things as expressing love and affection, spending time together, and making those small and large sacrifices that help our mate know he or she is first in our heart. The area of responsibility takes in major roles such as wage earner, managing the home, and parenting; but also encompasses related areas such as financial management and church activity. Respect includes being sensitive and honoring our mate's feelings. The goal is to concentrate on behaving as the Lord would have us do, allowing Jesus Christ his proper place as the superintendent of the family unit.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. (Ephesians 5:25)

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

The most important ingredient in building a celestial marriage is changing one's heart. The key to a happy marriage generally lies in changing ourselves, not our mate. Consistent adherence to the highest standards of attitude, emotion, and behavior can only be made possible by submission to the Lord's perfect plan of repentance and growth.

**Elder Robert E. Wells:** As we invite the Lord to soften our hearts toward one another and as we sincerely repent of our weaknesses, he will change our hearts. He will turn us from our selfish, petty, worldly attitudes and fill us with pure, Christlike love. <sup>12</sup>

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

This mental renewal of covenants with the Lord and each other helps both spouses start at the same time to make important changes. Personal motivation and harmony increase, and a positive cycle begins. As long as the couple continues to obey higher laws, their marriage will enjoy the wonderful blessings of a celestial spirit.

**President Ezra Taft Benson:** Marriage, designed to be an eternal covenant, is the most glorious and most exalting principle ordained for the mature development of man. It has the greatest capacity to develop to the fullest the positive virtues of life—unselfishness, tenderness, compassion, love, devotion, integrity, honesty, service, purity, nobility, and a host of others. No ordinance is of more importance and none more sacred and more necessary to the eternal joy of man. <sup>13</sup>

### **Agency**

Since we are all imperfect, our weaknesses and shortcomings can affect our spouse's sense of happiness and eternal direction. It is human nature to be able to see the faults in others better than we can see our own deficiencies. Therefore, the most common problem in marriage is to attempt to fix the marriage by coercing our mate to change. We are usually quite sure that our spouse is to blame for the problems, and if he or she would just change, things would be fine. Typical negative methods of influence include shame, guilt, nagging, shouting, arguing, manipulation, intimidation, withdrawal, verbal abuse, and even physical force.

These efforts to control one's mate through coercion almost always cause resentment and bring about only small changes at a great price. Regardless of our thoughts and feelings on any specific issue, each partner must be allowed to freely choose to do the right thing. Agency is the most important of all the celestial principles and violation of this law results in serious consequences. Contention must be completely done away with or the marriage cannot enjoy the full blessings of the Spirit of the Lord.

Nevertheless, my servants sinned a very grievous sin; and contentions arose in the school of the prophets; which was very grievous unto me, saith your Lord; therefore I sent them forth to be chastened. (D&C 95:10)

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned. (D&C 121:41)

**President Gordon B. Hinckley:** I have long felt that happiness in marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion. That involves a willingness to overlook weaknesses and mistakes.

Unfortunately, some women want to remake their husbands after their own design. Some husbands regard it as their prerogative to compel their wife to fit their standards of what they think to be the ideal. It never works. It only leads to contention, misunderstanding, and sorrow. <sup>14</sup>

Neither partner will find lasting marital satisfaction if either one chooses to dominate the other. Agency is a precious God-given liberty over which the battle of

heaven was fought. Using control and taking away the freedom to choose was Satan's plan, and such tactics grieve the soul of man. Regardless of our thoughts and feelings about any specific issue, each partner must be allowed to willingly choose to do the right thing in the marriage.

Some people believe that they cannot control their tempers. To begin to better manage one's anger requires two simple steps 1) Adopt the personal belief that displays of anger are never acceptable or effective except when "moved upon by the Holy Ghost." (D&C 121:43) Having accepted this philosophy, take full responsibility for your anger by avoiding blaming others or rationalizing inappropriate behavior. 2) When not in good control, take a time-out and reason with yourself until you are calm. Pray for assistance in this great task of taming your passions. Seek the peace and counsel of the Spirit of the Lord when aroused.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy perceived, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, (Colossians 3:12&15)

***Any attempt to impose your will on another is an act of violence.***

- Mohandas Gandhi

### **Keeping the Love Alive**

It is ever so important to continue the courtship after being married. Spending quality time together and doing special things for each other will fan the flames of love and keep the marriage vibrant. A weekly date, couples prayer and scripture study, and regular temple attendance all help increase the strength of the marriage. Shared recreational activities can also be very positive. It can be very helpful to understand the love language of your mate. That is, what are the most meaningful expressions of love for him or her? Five main ways to show love include gifts, words (verbal or written), physical touch, romantic activities, and acts of service. We must not assume our partner has the same preferences as us, but should discover his or her true favorites.

Physical intimacy is a wonderful part of married life. This special love is ordained by God to both create life and to bond couples together. It is important that the sexual relationship be approached with love and sensitivity. Too many individuals are overly focused on what they want versus having a mutual goal of beautiful and spiritual lovemaking. Couples should be careful to not sacrifice the holiness of their union and let carnal excitement dominate. Love should always be the presiding force.

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 9:9)

The desire to maintain a celestial spirit in the home is a major motivation for continuing a high rate of positive behaviors. Another reason for appreciating this approach is that it likely advocates cooperation in those specific areas most important to you. Perfect compliance with celestial behavior is not required, only an open and willing attitude regarding change. It is more possible to be patient (and even long-suffering) if one sees that his or her mate is making a sincere effort to progress. I firmly believe that couples who try the Lord's way for even a few weeks will never want to return to their previous patterns.

And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. (4Nephi 1:15-16)

## **Communication**

Do you know what people argue the most about in relationships? There is much power for good contained in understanding the answer to this one simple question. The thing people argue about the most with their partners is *who is right*. Controversy arises over attempting to determine whose perception of the problem is correct.

The most natural thing to do in an argument is to try harder to get our own point across. Unfortunately, this generally guarantees that we will neither be heard nor understood. Most of us have had enough frustrating experiences to recognize instantly that this is the sad truth. The reality of interpersonal relations is that we will have little success until we learn to talk *with* each other, and not *at* each other. The most powerful form of communication is good listening.

A marital researcher named John Gottman found that he and his colleagues could predict in 93% of cases which couples would be divorced within fourteen years. They did this by watching videos of the couple trying to solve marital problems and looking for certain communication errors.<sup>15</sup> We need to first listen and show respect for the other person's point of view before they will feel inclined to hear us out. Once there is mutual understanding, it is a relatively simple step to problem-solve and come up with workable solutions for concerns.

**President Ezra Taft Benson:** Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marital relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.<sup>16</sup>

**President Gordon B. Hinckley:** I hear so many complaints from men and women that they cannot communicate with each other. They must have communicated with each other when they were courting. Can they not continue to speak together after marriage? Can they not discuss with one another in an open and frank and candid and happy way their interests, their problems, their challenges, their desires?

But let that talk be quiet, for quiet talk is the language of love. It is the language of peace. It is the language of God. The voice of heaven is a still small voice. The voice of peace is a quiet voice.<sup>17</sup>

## **A Formula for Resolving Differences**

### **1) Sharing portion**

Each person gets to share their feelings about the problems. (3 minute limit on sharing) The other person practices listening skills. Use the Listening Skills format on the next page.

No interrupting    Reflective listening    Empathy    Unequivocal support

The following method entitled *Listening Skills* is a straightforward formula to improve communication. As you practice, you will eventually become more adept at going through the four steps. The rules must be strictly observed. Any interrupting or

attempts to impose your point of view before your turn will severely compromise the effectiveness of the communication. However, if patience, respect, and caring prevail, you will be amazed at how much easier it becomes to resolve problems.

Practicing good listening skills is the Mt. Everest of self-control and wisdom. There is probably no relationship skill that takes more attention and determination. It is amazingly hard to hold one's tongue when you think the truth is not being well represented. Remember, oh remember, that if you maintain a diplomatic respect and try very hard to understand, a wonderful middle ground will eventually be uncovered. The rewards of this kind of patience and love are incalculable. If you can learn to be an empathetic listener, the people you have relationships with will sing your praises.

### **Listening Skills**

- 1. Find common ground** - Search for something that has been said that you can agree with.
- 2. Show concern** - Reflect back the other's emotions. You must feel... (Use emotion words such as sad, hurt, frustrated, angry, rejected, or discouraged.)
- 3. Seek to understand** - Ask questions. Sincerely try to find out what your partner thinks, feels, and wants. Feed back the information you have acquired to make sure you are correct.
- 4. Provide support** - Tell how you would like to help.

**Avoid attacking, defensiveness, or making your own points** (no matter how tempting). Wait until it is your turn. It is essential that your partner feel thoroughly understood before you add your concerns. Once each feels fully heard, resolving the problem is usually fairly simple.

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. (Proverbs 18:13)

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. (Proverbs 13:10)

## **2) Problem-solving portion**

In this segment of communication, it is essential for the couple to act as a team, working together to identify general principles and guidelines for both to follow. This is an exercise in logical thought, and emotions and biases need to be left out of the discussion. It is generally a fantasy to believe one can convince their mate to change unilaterally. The object is to establish a framework of behavior guidelines under which each feels he or she can thrive. Rather than each person striving for control or for needs to be met, security is found within covenant laws.

### **Discussion rules**

- No strong emotions
- No debating
- No manipulation or slanting the discussion toward one's objectives
- No labels or disrespect
- Use a time-out strategy

## Guidelines

- Pray for assistance learning Heavenly Father's principles.
- What do the scriptures or General Authorities have to say about this subject?
- How do most people handle this kind of problem?
- What seems right and reasonable?
- Are there any suggestions from professionals in books or other media?
- What celestial principles are involved in this issue?
- What would Jesus do?

### **3) Resolution phase**

In this segment, the couple works with the principles that have just been established. On more important matters, the couple can pray for a confirmation from the Holy Spirit on decisions. Generally, a *quid pro quo* agreement (If you will do this, I will do that) or some kind of compromise can easily be reached. In this covenant approach to marriage, each person agrees to respect and follow all correct principles. Therefore, once an agreement has been established, each continues to make a good effort to live by those guidelines.

## **Action Steps**

1. Analyze your patterns of behavior in your relationships. Write out a master plan for changes you could make over the next year or two.
2. Set one or two specific goals that you can get started on.

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# Chapter 12

## Eternal Progression

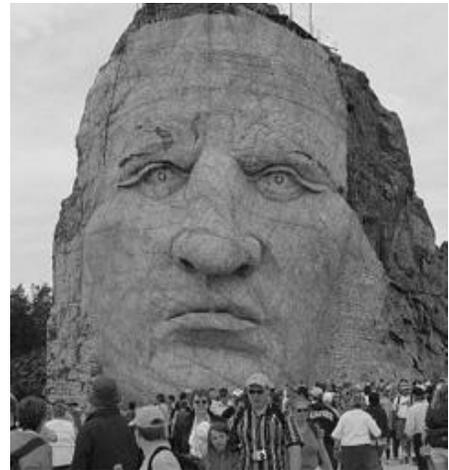
### Principle #12. Continual self-improvement

Eternal progression is an important gospel concept. Resolve to change defects in behavior and character and strive to become a better person—more kind, sensitive, honest, disciplined, and temperate. Also focus on gaining new skills, developing positive health habits, and acquiring knowledge. Goals give life more meaning and are the building blocks for our dreams. Strengthen motivational abilities and take things step-by-step. Gradual progress is real progress.

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things (D&C 88:67)

### The Sculpture

Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski was an orphan who grew up in foster homes in the Boston area and was largely self-taught in art. His sculpture *Paderewski: Study of an Immortal* won first prize at the New York World's Fair in 1939. In 1947 Korczak was asked by Chief Henry Standing Bear of the Lakota Sioux to carve a monument of the Sioux Indian hero Chief Crazy Horse. Korczak began work on the memorial in 1948 and worked on the project until his death in 1982. Ziolkowski started carving the mountain with dynamite and bulldozers and blasted away millions of tons of granite, roughing out the basic shape of the statue. He knew he would not live to complete the project, but he let his large family know that he expected them to continue the work.



His family did not disappoint him. Ruth Ziolkowski, who turned 83 years old in June of 2009, and most of the ten Ziolkowski children continue to work on Korczak's "impossible dream." The huge statue is being constructed on the top of Thunderhead Mountain in the Black Hills of South Dakota. When completed the sculpture will be 563 feet high and 641 feet wide, the largest sculpture in the world. By comparison, the Washington Monument is 555 feet tall and the Great Pyramid at Giza 451 feet tall. The head of Chief Crazy Horse was completed in 1998 and is 87 feet in height. The presidential heads at Mt. Rushmore 8 miles away are 60 feet high each. The eyes of the face are 17.9 feet wide and 8.6 feet high, large enough for a car to fit. The outstretched arm of the chief, pointing to the Indian lands, will be 263 feet long, almost the size of a football field.

The head of Crazy Horse's stallion will be 219 feet high, as tall as a 21-story skyscraper. The nostrils will be 25 feet in diameter and nine feet deep. A giraffe, the world's tallest land mammal at 20 feet in height, could fit comfortably inside its nostril. The eyes will be 16 feet wide and 13 feet high.

The Ziolkowskis say the sculpture honors all Native Americans. Every year, a million tourists visit the work in progress and marvel at the magnitude of the statue,



the product of one man's great vision. Grand plans for the monument include a university and medical training center for all North American Indians. The center will be funded by money collected from visitors' fees. In 1952, Korczak wrote his children a letter and asked them to reread it every month if they chose to carry on the project. The letter ends: "You will find in the darkest hours a feeling of great strength, of great satisfaction, of great joy and happiness, in carrying out even the mundane tasks that go towards living for something far greater than yourselves." <sup>1</sup>

## Values and Character

We plot our course according to our values. Values are the code of conduct we profess to believe in and follow, our rules of life. Our values guide us through a confusing world of temptations and difficult circumstances. They form the basis for the specifications for our self-sculpture. Painstakingly we chip away at our faults and weaknesses trying to form a more perfect image. The qualities inherent in a worthy character are clearly prescribed in the scriptures. Once our character is sculpted, it will hold its form for years and years unless we ignore its upkeep. When we are energetically engaged in this magnificent work of transforming our souls, we are obeying the will of our Heavenly Father.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;  
And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience  
godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Supreme Court Justice, once said, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Benjamin Franklin, the great American statesman and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, well understood the importance of actively building one's character. He kept a journal in which he noted his ongoing efforts in cultivating virtues such as humility, kindness, and honesty. He would give himself a daily grade in each area. We are not born great. Men and women become great from the small improvements they make each day. Those who are wise enough to plan for the future by investing in character development will yield great dividends.

**Pres. Thomas S. Monson:** In a very real sense, we are builders of eternal houses. We are apprentices to the trade—not skilled craftsmen. We need divine help if we are to

build successfully. The words of instruction provided by the Apostle Paul give the assurance we need: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? It was said of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Do we have the determination to do likewise? <sup>2</sup>

See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace. (D&C 88:123-125)

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.

For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith. (D&C 98:11-12)

## **Success through Self-Mastery**

It seems to be a law of nature that the things that bring the greatest rewards require the greatest effort. Being valiant in church service, succeeding in school or business, raising a family, and maintaining one's health all require discipline and perseverance. The rewards are not immediate, but can take weeks, months, and even years to come to fruition. We all want the important successes in life, but many lose track of their long-term goals and are unable to persevere.

How is it that some individuals can be so highly disciplined, while others struggle to get even their basic responsibilities accomplished? As explained in previous chapters, our inner drives are highly influenced by our mental/emotional associations. Our success is largely determined by how we feel about the activities we are engaged in. If we are enthusiastic and motivated, we will be much more likely to accomplish what we desire. People spend substantial amounts of time and energy on their favorite hobbies or pastimes. Increasing self-discipline is not a process of using more will power, but of learning to redirect the will. This chapter focuses on establishing positive patterns of behavior, an essential ingredient for success.

Anyone and everyone can learn how to develop self-discipline. It starts with vision, but the key is learning how to motivate and energize the inner self. Small steps, positive self-talk, advertising the rewards of discipline, and techniques for disarming fears and negative beliefs are tools which can be utilized to gain control. We must convince the inner self that each goal is really a great opportunity. Positive habits lead to a brighter future. The person who can direct his will to energetically pursue worthy goals has the power to progress in the gospel and in life.

. . . he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; (Mosiah 2:24)

***Enthusiasm is the mother of effort and without it,  
nothing great was ever accomplished.***

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

## **Visions Of Tomorrow**

Given the realities of life, we all have a mandate to progress. There are always mountains to climb in the form of new skills and habits that need to be developed. Eternal progression is an integral part of the gospel. Though we may avoid change out of fear, our spirits are never ready to accept anything less than victory. Change is never comfortable, but stagnation is deadly.

We cannot achieve the goals of tomorrow unless we first think that they are possible. We must believe in our personal capacity to grow and develop. Otherwise we consign ourselves to a bleak and limited future. It is important that we recognize the seeds of greatness within us. With God (the master shaper of souls) behind us, we can do far more than we might envision. Heavenly Father wants us to succeed, and He is willing to bless us in all our righteous endeavors.

We can exercise faith that, with God's help, there is little we cannot accomplish. An airplane taxis at a high rate of speed down the runway in order to create enough air resistance on the wings to push the plane aloft. The pilot must have faith in the laws of aerodynamics or he would not keep the throttle open, but would panic and hit the brakes. We have the same challenge as the pilot as we try to lift off our present plateau in life. We need faith and momentum to establish new positive habits. Our doubts are greatest at the beginning when we are trying to get off the ground. Lack of confidence and inner conflicts must be overcome before we will dare to fly toward success.

***We are what and where we are because we have first imagined it.***

- Donald Curtis

## **Success Comes One Step at a Time**

One of the great acts of faith in the scriptures was Nephi building a boat. His brothers laughed at him for undertaking such a complex project because they knew he had little or no previous experience. However, Nephi knew that he had an assignment from the Lord and he would be entitled to divine assistance.

He broke the task into steps and got to work. We know from the scriptures that the first thing he did was ask the Lord where he could find ore for making tools. After he got the problem of making tools out of the way, he relied upon the Lord for additional help in the design of the boat.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters.

And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to smelt, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?

And it came to pass that the Lord told me whither I should go to find ore, that I might make tools.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. (1 Nephi 17:8-11)

And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship. (1 Nephi 18:1)

Intelligent planning and meticulous execution resolved all the various challenges inherent in the shipbuilding project of the sons of Lehi. Many of life's problems can be approached and solved in a similar manner. It is wise to break down difficult tasks into small segments and focus on each step separately. Worrying about a whole project at one time can be emotionally overwhelming.

It is helpful to "get your feet wet" before you talk yourself out of moving ahead. Becoming actively engaged in a task and completing even one step buoys one's confidence. Additionally, the deeper we get into a project or new habit, the more information and feedback we can obtain. This data is often indispensable to dispel fears and strengthen motivation. While positive thinking is important, only success and experience can bring true confidence. In short, "Don't worry, get started!"

***The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying  
away small stones.***

- Chinese proverb

Another reason to break a task into steps is that sometimes skipping a step almost guarantees failure. One of the top reasons new businesses fail is because of poor accounting practices. Individuals often enter college with a very limited knowledge of study skills. Many colleges now offer classes to help students prepare for the increased workload of higher learning

Sadly, when people fail because of not taking all the variables into account, they often feel there is something intrinsically wrong with them. They label themselves as "losers" or "failures," as if they came into the world without the right genes for success. Fortunately, there is a formula for success that will work for the majority of individuals.

**Eliminate the Word "Failure"**

The Prophet Joseph Smith had mixed success in the beginning of his ministry. Although he was able to translate the Book of Mormon, he promptly lost the first 116 pages of the translation. He had ignored the Lord's original advice and allowed Martin Harris to take the manuscript home to show it to his wife. Brother Harris reportedly showed it to several people besides his wife, and this poor judgment resulted in the manuscript being stolen. Although Joseph was distraught and humbled by the experience, he did not allow that setback to defeat him. He used the experience to strengthen himself by incorporating a valuable principle. He developed an important motto, "When the Lord commands, do it."

Positive attitudes and determination are essential to being successful in achieving goals. Focusing on fears and doubts can cripple our ability to perform up to our potential. At the first sign of trouble we convince ourselves that we will not be successful. If we allow ourselves to believe that our value as a person depends upon immediate success, we increase the pressure upon us ten-fold. We tell the inner self that failing would be horrible to bear. We might think, "Why try if I am going to fail anyway?"

After experiencing some setbacks, it often becomes more difficult than ever to take risks. Anxiety builds as new challenges are contemplated. When we inwardly anticipate failure and disaster, attempts to progress may be thwarted by an emotional bombardment of doubt and fear. The individual may begin to label himself as the

problem. He tells himself he does not have what it takes to be successful, or decides he has no talent or ability in the area of interest. This type of labeling is the kiss of death. The endeavor has now been diagnosed as completely hopeless.

Unfortunately, since many individuals do not appreciate the power of self-talk, they do not realize that they have created a mountain of fear. The inner man of the heart does not like to take emotional risks. It likes a sure thing. We may have done such a good job of convincing ourselves that there is no hope of success that the heart resists following us back into the battle. This type of inner conflict can cause a loss of enthusiasm and concentration. We must appreciate that the inner emotional self is many times stronger than the logical mind. There can be no victory until we are first *inwardly* convinced that success is possible.

***They conquer who believe they can.***

- Virgil

It is generally our emotions that get in the way and not our abilities. One way to “plan for success” is to write out the reasons we can be successful. In this way we can literally talk ourselves into a more positive attitude. Use the guide in the box below to provide cues on what types of supportive statements to list.

### **Victory Sheet**

1. Logical statements to reduce fears
2. Past positive experiences in this area
3. Problem-solving strategies
4. Personal strengths
5. Other advantages (resources, information sources, supportive people)
6. Positive and hopeful messages

There is always a chance of failure, but successful people are willing to take risks. We must be willing to experiment with new goals, recognizing that there is no disgrace in failure, only in lack of effort. The truth is, as adults we invariably possess the intelligence and experience to make most things turn out successfully. However, we must provide ourselves the time, opportunities, and emotional freedom to learn the knowledge and skills required to achieve our goals. Confidence is the key byproduct of doubt-filled struggles transformed into hard-earned victories.

***It does not matter how slowly you go, so long as you do not stop.***

- Confucius

### **Start Small - Finish Big**

Many individuals become discouraged about reaching their goals simply because they have expectations that exceed their abilities. When we set goals that are unrealistic, we usually fall short of our desired pace and can become emotionally or physically fatigued. At that point, we typically get self-critical, become even more discouraged, and then give up.

The key element is to correctly assess the amount of effort and discomfort our inner self is willing to tolerate. We must be honest with ourselves and ask, “What am I *really* willing and able to do each day?” This means we have to ignore what others are

doing and accept where we are, even if that means limiting our jogging to the mailbox and back. Competition and perfectionism only defeat the main purpose, which is to progress. If we push our spirit too hard, it will rebel and take away the power it supplies toward our current and future efforts.

If we proceed gradually with our self-discipline, wonderful things will start to happen. Our confidence in our ability to succeed grows, and we will begin to feel a sense of satisfaction in our achievements. We will also find that these new positive habits bring significant rewards, even at the beginning of the change process. Most importantly, it soon becomes progressively easier to do the same tasks.

And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order. (Mosiah 4:27)

Consider a different example involving jogging. As we stick with a reasonable training program, our leg muscles get stronger and our wind capacity increases. We become able to run our normal workout distances with very little fatigue. It is this conditioning effect that allows long distance runners to cover incredible distances that most of us could not imagine traveling by foot. In 1976 Joss Naylor of England's Lake District set a record that still stands. He ran 108 miles in twenty-four hours at the mature age of forty. Not only that, his route also included scaling seventy-two mountains, all over two thousand feet in elevation. <sup>3</sup>

It is said that a habit can be formed in six to eight weeks. If we can just hang in there at the beginning, we will soon start reaping the benefits of consistency and conditioning. At first, practicing the new behavior will seem like climbing a steep mountain. However, over time that mountain becomes a gentle hill. If we set small, achievable goals, few tasks will be beyond our reach!

***That which we persist in doing becomes easier, not that the nature of the task has changed, but our ability to do has increased.***

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

### **The Power of Advertising**

There is a natural tendency for people to avoid doing anything that takes effort. Most of us are long on good intentions, but short on motivation. Besides death and taxes, procrastination is the one thing that can be counted on in life. We do mankind a disservice by ever using the word "lazy" to describe anyone, especially ourselves. People are not lazy, they are merely uneducated as to the rewards of hard work and discipline. They have incorrect mental associations regarding work, productivity, and self-improvement. There are few things so satisfying as accomplishing a significant goal through intelligent planning and hard work. People who seem undisciplined just have not had the right life experiences to get them excited about self-mastery.

Advertising is a key aspect of motivation. Ads are designed to motivate people to buy the seller's product. They want folks excited about what they have to offer. It works! Advertisement spots during special athletic contests go for millions of dollars because the television ads pay for themselves by boosting sales. Most people will pay more for a name brand without really knowing why it is different than less expensive

comparable products. Advertising not only works well in business, but also can be quite effective on a personal level.

To generate enthusiasm within the heart, one must be a *super salesperson* and point out the advantages of performing desired behavior. There are several aspects to these benefits:

### **The Advertising Cue Card**

1. Present benefits - how we feel as we perform the behavior
2. Intermediate benefits - how we feel afterwards (that same day)
3. Long-term benefits - the eventual reward (the big payoff)

Unless we focus on the positives, there is a good chance our goals will never amount to much more than wishes. We must convince the inner self that each goal is really a great opportunity. We must be persuasive and generate some inner energy and enthusiasm for the task. It can be done, but it takes creativity.

In the Middle East the prices in stores are not always set. One haggles with the merchants to get a good price. It is the same way when dealing with the inner self. We have to sell the projects we are interested in to ourselves (rewards), and then haggle about the prices (expenditure of energy) until we get some cooperation. It is always to our advantage to consider our inner feelings and not "run faster than we have strength." In the long run it gets us much further.

Initial investments of hard work and discipline reap tremendous dividends. There is nothing like the hard-earned sweet taste of success. The more we experience positive outcomes and the accompanying rewards, the easier it is to summon the power and energy of the inner man. Willpower increases as we develop some firm beliefs about the value of discipline and hard work.

Obedying the commandments can provide plenty of opportunities to exercise our spiritual muscles. Service is not always convenient or easy. A regular routine of prayer and scripture study requires diligence and concentration. Family history and missionary work require considerable initiative and perseverance. However, as we follow the Lord's ways, we will discover the many sweet blessings that obedience brings. Commitment and willpower grow greatly when we conclude that the gospel fruits are worth sacrificing for.

All victory and glory is brought to pass unto you through your diligence, faithfulness, and prayers of faith. (D&C 103:36)

### **Knowledge**

Change is difficult for mankind. We seem to prefer to do things in the old patterned way, regardless of outcome. This is referred to as *persistence of set*. Although it is uncomfortable to try things in a new way, we are certainly guaranteed poor results if we continue to use the same faulty methods. Whenever we are unsuccessful in some behavior, we will continue to fail unless we begin to use a more effective method. People are much more willing to blame themselves than their technique or lack of knowledge.

College students with one particular flaw in their study technique frequently become discouraged with their grades. They read the appropriate chapters in their

textbooks several times in preparation for tests, and then are dismayed when their performance is mediocre. They often attribute the problem to being less intelligent than the other students when the problem actually lies in their approach to studying. Many colleges now offer study skills courses that include mnemonics (memory skills) to help their students be more successful.

The Lord is very interested in our progression in all aspects of life. He is a wondrous teacher in that He has a perfect knowledge of all things. In every enterprise He can help us learn true principles that will bring us success. Heavenly Father wants us to think, plan, and move forward so he can inspire us as we proceed. Whether our concern is making friends, raising children, fixing our car, or getting good grades, we will do better to focus on *solutions* and not personal inadequacies. Labeling ourselves as stupid or incompetent only brings forth feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. Limitations, unfortunately, are part of our reality and cannot be vanquished by displays of emotionality. The sooner we accept our level of ability, the sooner we can get going. The highway to success invariably involves gaining more knowledge and experience.

***Knowledge is essential to conquest, only according to  
our ignorance are we helpless.***

- Annie Bessant

### **Emotional Blocks**

Sometimes we find ourselves going absolutely nowhere despite our best intentions to change. Our resistance to progress is too great to overcome, and we can be left defeated and frustrated. Rather than give up, we must recognize that this resistance tells us to closely examine our feelings and attitudes. Illogical thoughts or strong emotions serve as clues that there is an inner block to be reckoned with.

A negative self-image can also play a major role in blocking the development of positive habits. Essentially, to believe in our goals means we must have confidence in ourselves. Low self-worth affects the ability to grow by limiting the capacity to project positive future outcomes. A person who believes he has "no will power" will not put much effort into dieting since he expects to fail anyway. A person who feels he is a "loser" may inwardly struggle against doing something positive. Many people fear success because they believe they will ultimately fall from the heights of victory.

How can one tell if there is a subconscious program interfering with success? This is like asking how you can tell if there has been a serious auto accident. Just look for the wreckage! These programs, which were discussed in chapter nine, are so powerful and so consistent that an individual might literally fail in almost every attempt in certain areas of life. Thus the first corrective step is to look at past patterns of behavior. Secondly, consider the degree of negative emotions and irrational thoughts that crop up when the specific area of conflict is approached. Those with addictions often have some destructive subconscious programs. Their inner sense of hopelessness actually contributes to their cravings because they believe they can never be happy or successful anyway. Their addiction serves to soothe their inner unrest and dissatisfaction.

***Whether you believe you can or believe you cannot, you are right.***

- Robert L. Backman

## Remain Faithful and Diligent all Your Days

Never give up! Continue to strive to progress. Analyze any problems that come up and use logic, faith, and positive self-talk to overcome fears and negative thoughts. Make the Lord the chief partner in your personal progression and stay close to him through constant prayer.

Anyone and everyone can learn how to develop self-discipline. It starts with vision, but the key is learning how to motivate and energize the inner self. Small steps, positive self-talk, advertising the rewards of discipline, and techniques for disarming destructive beliefs are tools we can utilize to put ourselves in control. The person who can direct his will to enthusiastically pursue worthy goals has the power to actualize his dreams.

Daniel from the Bible is an excellent example of a man of God who was appreciated for his character and good qualities. He and three other youth of Judah were chosen to be trained in the language and learning of the Chaldeans, the dominant culture of Babylon at the time. Despite his lesser status as a young man from a conquered nation, he rose to become president of the vast Persian Empire, second only to the king in authority. The Lord blessed him and strengthened him in all he did because of his faithfulness. Our abilities to acquire knowledge, to act righteously, and to get along with others are all greatly enhanced by the Holy Spirit and our obedience to God's laws.

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. (Daniel 6:1-3)

**President David O. McKay:** Spirituality, our true aim, is the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite. Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength. To feel one's faculties unfolding, and truth expanding in the soul, is one of life's sublimest experiences. <sup>4</sup>

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:20)

## Action Steps

1. Choose a goal you wish to work on and pray for the Lord's assistance.
2. Using visual imagery, project into the future and see yourself having established this positive habit. Imagine how good it will feel.
3. Set small, achievable steps that you know you can perform daily. Get started, then progressively move forward to other realistic steps.
4. Write out an Advertising Cue Card listing the benefits of the behavior. Read the card each morning as part of your daily preparation.
5. Actively seek greater knowledge about the goal you are interested in. Pray for inspiration, read books, watch others with more experience, ask questions, be creative, and ponder new ideas.

6. Remove any subconscious blocks that surface and impede your progress. Use the skills given in earlier chapters to process any emotional conflicts that arise.

## Notes

1. Crazy Horse Memorial, <http://www.crazyhorsememorial.org/>.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "The Master's Blueprint," Ensign, Jan. 2006, 2.
3. Bill Bryson, "England's Lake District - Beauty Beseiged," National Geographic August 1994, 1.
4. David O. McKay, "Something Higher than Self," in Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay, compiled by Clare Middlemiss (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 13, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.