

# Viva Equip PEOPLE

The image features three stylized human figures made of woven straw. One figure is in the upper left, another in the lower right, and a third, larger figure is in the bottom left corner. Each figure has a circular head with a cross-like pattern. The figures are set against a white background with a large, textured straw pattern in the bottom left corner.

## **CELEBRATING CHILDREN WORKBOOKS**

### **Eight: Caring for Self and Staff**

Version 1\_2011

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## Introduction

Imagine that you have been invited to visit a city far away. The journey will take several days. As you prepare, you pack your clothes, personal hygiene items, and maybe some snacks to eat along the way. You make preparations as to how you will travel and with whom. Realistically, you will probably make plans as to where you will sleep each night of your journey; you will take along enough money to buy food during your stay, and you might even take an extra day or two to visit some friends or family members who live in the city where you are going.

If a friend came by to ask you about your trip, what would you think if he or she said that all your preparations were unnecessary and foolish? Would you believe him or her if s/he said that there was no need to pack clothes, that someone was sure to give you food so you didn't have to take any or buy anything, and that you would waste time by sleeping so you had better forget about that and just keep traveling? And, for all that, you might as well give up visiting your friends because relationships are a waste of time anyway? You have more "important" things to do in the Kingdom of God.

How would you respond to someone like this? Most people would think someone who said these things would be foolish, ill-prepared, and immature. And yet, that's exactly the kind of attitude some Christians have toward the concept of self-care. They think it is unnecessary. After all, God will meet your needs—if you have any. It's true; He will. But He also expects you to be wise and use sound judgment in preparing for ministry.

Self-care is similar to preparing to go on a journey. In essence, *self-care is the practice of meeting your own needs so that you can then meet the needs of others*. It is important because, if you do not meet your own needs, you will not be able to meet the needs of others. Just like preparing for a journey, it is not a good idea to start working with children at risk without some plan for meeting your own human needs while you are working with them, especially if you hope to be working with them for a long time. A "journey" with children at risk is not one that only lasts a few days—children need more than a few days in order to be restored. Your journey with them might take years. Most people wouldn't expect to go years without eating. Please don't expect to be able to work for any length of time with children at risk without meeting your own personal needs.

This workbook will give you some practical information and ideas for how you can take care of yourself within the context of your work with vulnerable children.

Part one will concentrate on understanding yourself, your needs and some of the risks that those who work with children in difficult circumstances often face.

Part two is about some practical ways in which we can care for ourselves. It also looks at the role of organisations in caring for their workers and volunteers.

Part three focuses on different ways of developing and growing within your working context. It includes management, how teams work well and how to cope with conflict, mentoring and keeping God at the centre.

## **Part I: Understanding ourselves**

This section will provide a foundation of understanding of what it means to take care of yourself and why it is important.

We will begin with why we need to care for ourselves and what our needs are (lesson 1). We will then think about what motivates us in our work with children and what good and bad motivations are (lesson 2). Lesson 3 will help us to recognize some of the things in our lives and our pasts that have an impact on our ability to do our work and remain healthy. Finally, lessons 4 and 5 will look at two particular issues that are important for child-care workers to understand and be aware of: burnout and vicarious trauma.



## Lesson 1: Why do we need to care for ourselves and each other?

### Summary

- What basic needs do people have?
- What happens if these needs are not met?
- God allows us to meet our needs

When we start out in ministry with children, we are often full of excitement and passion about the work God has called us to do. This spurs us on to achieve our goals and energises us. As we persist in this precious calling, how can we make sure that we don't lose our focus, our joy and our energy? This lesson will highlight a few areas of life where it is vital that we take care of ourselves and our needs adequately, so that we can keep on taking care of the little ones God has brought into our lives.

### What do we need?

This might seem like a very basic question, but sometimes we can miss the basics because they are so obvious. Two models that we have seen before can help to identify some of the core needs of every human being:



**Maslow's hierarchy of needs** points to 5 different levels of need starting from the most basic **physical needs** (e.g. food, water, sleep, shelter, access to adequate health care and so on) and **safety needs** (e.g. a safe living and working environment, freedom from threat and bullying). The next level of need is **social needs** – things like relationships with family, friends and colleagues and time to build them. **Esteem needs** could include

job satisfaction, the opportunity to learn new skills and use gifts and abilities. Feeling useful, valued and appreciated meets esteem needs, for example. The final level of **'self-actualization'** is about the desire to be all you can be – and all God intends for you. Maslow argued that only once the lower levels of need are met (at least in part), can the higher level needs be satisfied.

Within the context of a ministry, workplace, church or other setting, it is important for workers and volunteers to have opportunities to meet all levels of needs in order to remain motivated and be able to work more effectively.

**Grotberg's model of resilience** identifies 3 categories of needs: I am, I can and I have. Just as they are vitally important for children's resilience in the face of life's challenges and adversities, so too for adults! <sup>1</sup> This is particularly true for those working with vulnerable children and children in difficult circumstances.

- **'I am'** needs are about identity. People who know that they are unconditionally loved by God for who they are, not what they do, are better able to withstand the pressures of this kind of work. We need to know that God chooses to use us even though we are sinful, fallen vessels. We are God's instruments of mercy, not the ones who will change the world. We need space and time to build our relationship with God through reading the Bible and prayer. For the child care worker, confidence and self-esteem are also important – perhaps as important as specific skills and training.

<sup>1</sup> Wright and Taylor (2003), 327-334

- **‘I can’** needs are the factors that enable Christian workers to cope with their situations and to manage themselves more effectively within those situations. The kinds of things that are vital include: preparation for the task, life skills including establishing good boundaries and clear roles, educational skills and learning input – books to read and other forms of stimulation. Counseling and therapeutic help may also be needed, and if it is available no-one should feel ashamed of asking for help. Very often people are attracted to working with children having experienced difficulties or traumas in their own childhoods and hope to share lessons they have learnt.<sup>2</sup> This is an acceptable motivation provided the workers have received appropriate support themselves.
- **‘I have’** needs are about ways in which friends, family, church, community and others can support the person or the team. Consider how important it is to have prayer support, encouragement, and for people to say thank you. Working with children and young people can be both incredibly rewarding and incredibly challenging. In the face of the enormity of our task and the often great challenges of work and even living conditions, it is easy to lose confidence in ourselves. We need safe people in our lives who can be trusted, who do not play games with our emotions, who are consistent, who are interested in discovering and providing us with what we need to grow up in Christ. These may be mentors for us. Other needs in this category include community awareness and visits, financial support, practical support and support for our families and children.

### **God allows us to care for ourselves**

Self-care is the practice of recognising and then deliberately meeting your own needs so that you can meet the needs of others. Although we sometimes behave as if we believe the opposite, God does not expect us to ignore our own needs. Not even Jesus went into ministry without making sure His own needs were met. For example, the Bible talks about the times Jesus went away to spend time with His father or to rest (Mark 6:31; Matt. 14:23).

It is important to take care of yourself because if your own needs are not met, you will not be able to meet the needs of others, *especially* over a long period of time. While this might sound simple, it is not always easy to put into practice. There are many people, Christian and non-Christian, who think that working longer, harder, and faster makes them more productive. This is not true.

Don't feel guilty as you think about these questions but at a basic level, how many times have you skipped a meal because you were busy? How many times have you consistently gone to bed late only to get up early because you had so much to do? It is very easy to neglect some of our needs in order to accomplish what we think we need to do. And while skipping a meal or getting to bed late is fine once in a while, if they become habits, they deprive your body of rest and nutrients that it needs to function well. Of course, different people have different needs – some will feel refreshed after 4 hours' sleep while others need 8!

In the same way, neglecting your physical, emotional and spiritual needs over a long period of time can lead to more serious consequences, including physical disease, emotional stress, mental stress, poor job performance, strained or broken relationships with people, spiritual bankruptcy, and even a nervous breakdown. If these needs are not met, especially over a long period of time, your emotions, perceptions, attitudes, and ability to do your job well will be negatively affected.

Sometimes only one or two things need to change in order for your needs to be met. In the discussion questions, you will get a chance to examine your own particular situation, but some changes can be as simple as leaving work early one day a week so you can spend time with your family, friends or community. It could mean making sure you get enough food during the day, regardless of whether or not you finished the project you were working on. It could mean saying “no” to the next person who wants you to take on more responsibilities. Whatever changes you make, remember that you are changing things so you can meet the needs you have as a human being, and thus be able to better meet the needs of the children and people with whom you work.

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<sup>2</sup> See lesson 3 for more on this



## Case study

“My name is Katerine.<sup>3</sup> I’m 29 years old, and I work with street kids in Colombia, South America. I’ve been working in this ministry for three years now. The first year I got involved was exciting as everything was new. The second year was a bit harder since I began to take on more and more responsibilities. I didn’t realize it at the time, but I was actually taking on more than I could handle. I didn’t say no, however, because I thought I was helping out and because I valued my colleagues’ trust in me. I thought I could do it all. By July of my second year in the ministry, I was working in three different areas of the ministry, and I had four different supervisors.

Around September, I grew very tired emotionally and physically, but I thought that was normal so I just kept working.

Without realising it, I started to lose contact with a lot of my friends and supporters. Whenever my friends wanted to get together and do something fun, I was always busy. When my supporters e-mailed me to ask how I was doing, I didn’t have time to answer them.

I also began to cut back on my sleep. Part of it was because I had so much to do, but the other part was because I depended on ministry transportation that returned to the farm where I lived very late. Then, because I was not keeping up with my supporters, my finances began to dwindle. My times with the Lord also began to decrease since I was so tired by the time night came that I often fell asleep with my Bible open, in the middle of a prayer.

My emotions began to fluctuate, too. I could be really happy, and then really sad, angry, or impatient. I would snap at people and children very easily. Problems began to look bigger than they really were, and I couldn’t seem to think clearly. All of this increased my stress level, but I didn’t know how to handle that, so I just kept working. I thought that I couldn’t stop because people were counting on me.

Then, I started blacking-out while working with the babies at our drop-in center. Usually these spells would only last about a second, so even though they concerned me, I still kept working. The final straw came when I blacked out while holding a baby. I woke up as the baby was sliding to the floor. That did it. I couldn’t handle the possibility that I might hurt a child just because I didn’t want to change. By that time Christmas was coming, and I used the holidays to think and pray about the current state of my life.

*To be continued in Lesson 6 . . .*

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<sup>3</sup> Name changed to protect privacy

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

If we want to ensure that we don't lose our focus, our joy and our energy for our work with children, we need to \_\_\_\_\_ adequately. Maslow reminds us we have \_\_\_\_\_ needs, \_\_\_\_\_ needs, \_\_\_\_\_ needs, \_\_\_\_\_ needs and needs for \_\_\_\_\_. Grotberg highlights essential needs related to \_\_\_\_\_ (I am), coping strategies (\_\_\_\_\_) and \_\_\_\_\_ (I have). \_\_\_\_\_ is the practice of recognizing and then deliberately meeting your own needs so that you can meet the \_\_\_\_\_. Not even \_\_\_\_\_ went into ministry without making sure his own needs were met. Neglecting physical, emotional and spiritual needs over a long period of time can lead to \_\_\_\_\_ consequences.

## Discussion questions

1. What is self-care and why is it important?
2. What are some common physical, spiritual and personal needs? How does your organisation help its staff and volunteers to meet some of these needs?
3. What can happen if you do not meet your own needs? How can it affect the way that you care for others, the way you work with others in your team and organization if these needs are not met? Give examples from your own experience.
4. How can you support others on your team or in your organization in meeting their needs for self-care?
5. What beliefs or attitudes do Christians you know have toward caring for themselves? Are these beliefs based on truth? How do they affect you and your colleagues?

## Reflect

6. Using Maslow and Grotberg's model to help you, are there any areas of need that are not being met in your life at the moment? What is the effect on you, your work, your relationships?
7. What are some of your personal physical, spiritual, and personal needs? For instance, how many hours of sleep do you need to feel refreshed? Do you need time alone to rest or do you feel better spending time with people?
8. What are some ways you can tell when you are not meeting these needs? How are your mind, body, emotions, and perspective on life affected when you do not meet these needs?
9. What are some practical things that you can do to consistently meet these needs?
10. What are some strategies for coping with situations, conditions, and/or things that you cannot change right now?

## Lesson 2: What motivates us to work with children?

### Summary

- What is motivation and is it important to understand?
- What are unhealthy motivations that drain and distort ministry?
- What are healthy motivations that sustain effective ministry?

What leads you to work with children and young people in the first place? What drives you and keeps you going each day, especially when the work is difficult and you get weary? These questions help us to understand our motivation for the work we do. In reality there is probably a mixture of different factors that motivate each person, some may even be hidden. It is very important to examine and understand ourselves in this regard because certain motives for working with children are not healthy or can be unbalanced in ways that will drain our energy and our ability to be effective in your role. Other motives will sustain ministry in the long-term and provide a solid basis for effective, transformative work.

*“Over the years, we’ve seen several types of motivations that encourage or compel people to work with ‘children at risk’. They are centred either on the person himself; on the child who is suffering; or on God’s honour. While some motivations are not wrong in themselves, they are not strong enough to sustain the person working with children. In order to have the strength to persevere in this challenging work, the staff member must have a combination of motivations based upon a desire to honour God in all that he does.”<sup>4</sup>*

Motivations are closely tied to our expectations. One way we can begin to uncover hidden motivations is to examine our expectations. These can include the child’s salvation, healing, and gratitude. We also might expect that we can and should be able to solve a child’s problems and thus expect a feeling of reward and accomplishment. We may expect that a child will like us or have other ideas of what that relationship will look like. We are often unaware of our expectations of complete and permanent change or transformation. Clearly, if we have unexamined expectations, we will become discouraged and may not even know why.

### Motivations that focus on the person who is helping children

Sadly there are many people working with children in Christian circles who have unhealthy secondary, or even hidden, motivations. The desire to fulfill our own needs is a strong motivation.

- **Need to be the savior:** wanting to be the answer to all the children’s needs
- **Need to be needed** or appreciated by the children
- **Need to meet your own emotional needs:** for example, these could be related to having lost or never had children of your own, needing children’s love to make up for a lack of emotional warmth in other relationships
- **Need to heal your own sufferings:** many adults who desire to work with children themselves suffered as children – through poverty, abuse, abandonment or rejections; some are looking for healing from present suffering and failures
- **Need to make restitution:** people who have hurt others in the past may want to make amends
- **Pedophiles:** sadly some adults try to work with children in order to gratify their own sexual desires<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bartel (2003), 336

<sup>5</sup> Please see Workbook 6 on child protection for more on this topic

Although it may happen unconsciously, it isn't appropriate to try to have our own needs met by the children to whom we minister. It is vital to know yourself and your own story and allow God to meet your needs and heal your hurts, rather than looking to children or ministry to do that.<sup>6</sup> We will never find true fulfillment and we may further disorient and traumatize the children. If we are not clear about our motivation for engaging in our work, our preoccupation with our own needs and those of the child will distort our worthy intentions.

### **Motivations focused on the child who is suffering**

It is common and natural for people to respond to the suffering of children by wanting to help in some way. This may begin with pity or a deeper sense of compassion for the child, or perhaps a sense of injustice that must be put right. When it comes to our motivations, however, we will discover that if we are not motivated by something bigger than the child's needs that we can see, our work will quickly lose significance or direction. By seeking to immediately make things better for a child, we run the risk of being reactive and not thoughtfully considering long-term needs. We then may prematurely feel that our job is done or become discouraged when we realise the overwhelming extent of the need. One may also lose interest when a child does not express gratitude or ceases to have the needs we prefer them to have. When motivated solely by a child's unpredictable needs, our response will prove to be equally inconsistent.

It is clearly vital that in all we do, we properly understand the needs of the child and that these needs and their root causes are addressed in a holistic way.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, personal motivation that is primarily driven by the needs of the child leads to distorted ministry.

### **Motivations centered on God: His love, his will, his honor and his name**

So far we have seen that an unbalanced focus on the child's and/or our own needs can distort and stunt our work and cause new injury to the child. With these needs in proper perspective, however, and a motivation grounded in something bigger, we may begin to see greater healing. This will only be true when we are motivated by a desire to follow God and to seek His honor through a natural and loving expression of our God-given gifts and strengths. Not only are we motivated out of our love for and deep commitment to God, we can see beyond a child's most immediate needs and we become passionate about God-in-the-child—the image of God within. Furthermore, we become passionate about God-in-us as we discover new depths of self. Only when we learn to balance the equation with God as the center, are we capable of serving children from a place of authenticity and maturity. Unconditional love, compassion, and redemptive restoration will be the hallmark of a ministry powered by these motives.

*"Emphasizing God in all of our activities is the highest of all motivations. Protecting and restoring 'children at risk' honours God's name and gladdens his heart. God's honor is the noblest of reasons for a person to dedicate her life to children. When circumstances around us are difficult, when ungratefulness could discourage, when the children themselves do not show the progress we would expect – even when they fall back to the streets – if we are convinced that we have obeyed God, and thus honoured his holy name, we can keep going."<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> See lesson 4

<sup>7</sup> Obviously the way programmes and activities are designed must take into account the felt and deeper needs of the child. At the level of individual motivation, however, meeting the needs of the child is not enough.

<sup>8</sup> Bartel (2003), 338-39

## Case study

I could hardly recognise the voice on the other end of the phone line. It was a young lady who had been on our team in the past... but this time she was broken-hearted.

“I just can’t take it anymore! I don’t know what’s happening... but I just can’t stay!” she sobbed. I’m sorry... I’ve got six boys... street kids.... living in my apartment. And I hate to put them back out on the streets.” Her cries became almost a wail. “They’ve been with me for nine months.... they’re like my own sons. Please, please, can’t you take them? I’ve got to leave the country next week...”

I’d heard similar phone conversations several times before. My heart was broken for her. And we’d all been seeing it coming. But she just wouldn’t listen... back then...

I remembered back when she’d first come to Colombia. In the comfort of her home country, she’d heard about the plight of street kids, and had a tremendous “burden” for them. She’d also heard about our work, and wanted to be part of it. So she joined us, full of enthusiasm. Her “I’m going to save the world” attitude was just wonderful.

But two weeks later she was frustrated at how “slow” we worked. We prayed too much. We weren’t going out to the streets enough. The decision-making process to bring a child into our homes was too cumbersome and kids were dying “out there”... where she could make a difference. So she decided to strike out on her own. Alone. Nothing could dissuade her.

The first week she called me. She was so excited. She’d “gotten in” with a small gang of street kids in an area I instantly recognized as a tough part of downtown. One ten year old street boy had agreed he’d go live with her. She’d found an apartment on a fifth floor, and would move in that day... with him. And maybe, two others, very soon. I was happy for her... but already the red flags were waving in front of my eyes. She was headed for trouble.

Within a couple of weeks I received another call. Two other boys had moved in too. But why were the other people living in the apartment building so upset? They wouldn’t even greet her in the elevator! Another month went by. I called her, just to say we were thinking of her, and praying for her. But her excitement was gone. “Why are the kids so ungrateful? Here I’m doing everything for them, and they can’t even help out any. And they’re wanting to do their own thing, and they’re starting to disobey me...” A couple more months went by. Now there were six boys living with her. She didn’t have time to go out on the streets anymore. She didn’t have time for grocery shopping. She couldn’t trust them alone in the apartment. She had to take them everywhere she went. She locked herself up in her room at night. She “didn’t have a life.” Did I hear a tinge of resentment in her voice?

We tried to help, but our advice went unheeded. Less than a year after coming, she went back “home,” sad, defeated, resentful, and wishing she’d never come. When she left, she also deeply wounded six street boys who felt betrayed by a string of broken promises and expectations.

Why did she come? Why did she go? The kids? The conditions? Feeling unsupported? The reasons are deeper, and began long before she ever came to Colombia. The main reason was her motivation for ministering.

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Our \_\_\_\_\_ for the work we do is driven by a mixture of different factors. It is good to understand these because some motives can be \_\_\_\_\_ in ways that will drain your \_\_\_\_\_ and your ability to be effective in your role; other motives will \_\_\_\_\_ ministry in the long-term and provide a solid basis for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ work. Motivations are closely tied to our \_\_\_\_\_. Some motivations focus on the person who is helping children by trying to meet their own \_\_\_\_\_. Although it may happen unconsciously, it isn't appropriate to try to have our own needs met by the \_\_\_\_\_ to whom we minister. Some motivations focus on the \_\_\_\_\_ who is \_\_\_\_\_, however when motivated solely by a child's unpredictable needs, our response will prove to be equally inconsistent. \_\_\_\_\_ motivation focuses first on \_\_\_\_\_ love, his will, his honor and his name.

## Discussion questions

1. Our motivations are typically centered around one of three things – the child, the worker, or God. Would you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
2. A child's suffering can evoke in us a variety of emotional responses including pity and compassion. Think of an example of a situation or incident motivated by pity and then think of an example motivated by compassion. What differences do you note?
3. One way we can begin to uncover hidden motivations is to examine our expectations. What do you think are your expectations for working with children at risk personally, and as an organisation or team? What does this tell you about your motivations?

## Reflect

4. Why am I working with children at risk?
5. What do I personally get from helping children?
6. What do I expect as a result of my labour?
7. What fears do I have regarding working with children at risk?
8. What do I expect the work and my role to look like?
9. Think back to your childhood. What memories, good or bad, stick out to you? How did those experiences affect you? How do those experiences affect your work with children now?

## Lesson 3: Why do we need to know ourselves in order to care for others?

### Summary

- Recognizing and healing wounds from the past
- Emotional awareness
- Personal vulnerability

People come into the caring professions, and particularly into the mission field, for many reasons. As we considered in the last lesson, many are consciously or unconsciously motivated by their own needs; in particular, childhood needs that were not appropriately met as they grew up. They may personally identify with children in difficult circumstances. They may want to 'be there' and fight for children in a way that no one was or did for them as children. In order to serve children from good motives and to care for ourselves and our wellbeing as we do it, it is important to understand ourselves, our story and our reactions.

### Wounds from the past

In a fallen world, we all have wounds from experiences where we have been hurt and where we have hurt others. These are wounds of the spirit, emotions, and heart. They are not easily seen, and sometimes the wounded person himself or herself does not know they are there. They can be caused by things such as abuse, rejection, trauma, insecurity, etc., and can be revealed in outbursts of anger, loneliness, depression, co-dependency, addictions and many more. These wounds matter because they can motivate people to 'help' in ways that, ultimately, are not beneficial, either to the person or to the children as we saw last lesson. So, it is always necessary to become aware of your internal wounds.

*Pray and ask God to show you the root causes of these wounds, and also to help you begin to heal from them – this is the best for you and for the children with whom you work. God's healing brings much more effectiveness, joy and peace to you and to the children. In some cases, you may also need help from a mental health professional or counselor to help you deal with internal wounds. Remember also that God created for us to be in relationship with others who are trustworthy to walk through life with us. Seeking a trusted friend, pastor or mentor is vital to any journey of complete healing.*

If the wounds of the past have been healed and the person is open to the transforming power of being loved by God and others, then some aspects of this motivation can be wonderfully used by God. Internal wounds can often make people more caring and compassionate towards others who have suffered as they have, and God many times uses these people to help others in need, when these wounds have been healed. Workers who are transformed and healed in this way will not be afraid of the emotional and spiritual darkness of raw pain and will therefore be able to stay and journey with children and young people through it.<sup>9</sup>

### Emotional awareness

Emotional awareness requires that we understand how our own emotional world works, how emotions work in general, what our emotional needs are and how to manage our stress.

- We need to be able to see what factors lead us to react to current events with responses learned from the past.
- We also need to be aware of how we react to different kinds of events in the present and why.
- Emotional awareness requires us to recognize the impact of stress on our lives and how we can work with it effectively.
- It is important to know your trigger points too: situations that cause a particularly strong emotional reaction. For example, if you see a 4 year old child who you know has just been

<sup>9</sup> Wright (2003), 342

rescued from a brothel, how will you respond to that situation? What she does not need is an emotional reaction or your pity. Can you handle that reality? If not, then it is good to ask yourself why.

*“We need not to be handicapped by our pasts or paralysed by stresses in our present situations but free to achieve and confront our fears and develop our gifts.”<sup>10</sup>*

## Personal vulnerabilities

All Christians face temptation and give in to sin. Sadly, there are many cases where this impacts on ministry. If you know yourself, you can take care to know how to guard against temptation when it comes.

Personal vulnerability basically means areas in your life in which you struggle and are vulnerable to being attacked by the enemy. If you are a Christian, and especially if you are dedicated to seeing children healed, restored, and coming into the kingdom of God, Satan will do anything he can to stop you. As the Bible says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8).

How do you know where and what to guard? That is something you and God need to talk about. But chances are, you already have a pretty good idea of your weaknesses. If you don’t, here are some examples of things to look out for:

- **Addictions** – an addiction is an unhealthy way of coping with emotions, internal wounds or circumstances that seem to be too much for us. They can include drug use, cigarettes, pornography, eating disorders, watching too much television, relationship patterns and so on. Whatever is used to fill the void inside you can lead to an addiction. We all have addictions. It is good to critically assess our lives to see where and when we fall into addictive behaviors.
- **Power** – The caring professions have a built-in potential power imbalance because we offer care to vulnerable children in need of help. This creates the opportunity for abuse of power and trust within relationships. Desire for power and autonomy that has not been met elsewhere will need to be transformed into appropriate assertiveness, healthy interdependence and servant-inspired leadership.
- **Hidden sins** – these are areas of your life that aren’t as obvious as others, but they’re clearly seen if you care to look. They include things like pride, arrogance, jealousy, gossiping, criticizing, legalism, refusing to receive correction, bitterness, excessive anger and unforgiveness. The results of these sins can lead to division within your ministry team and eventually destruction of relationships and your work among children.
- **Sexual abuse** – if you have ever found yourself in a situation with a child where you have desired or acted out sexually with him or her, this is abuse. You must confess to the leadership and face the consequences which will be painful, but it is better that you do this before you are tempted to do it again. For the sake of the children you must not continue working with children.

Whenever we give into temptation, we have two choices: repent and be restored, or don’t repent and continue in sin. Repentance involves a heart attitude of not giving in to temptation again. Accountability to a mature Christian, avoiding situations where you expose your vulnerabilities and prayer can all help. Organisations and ministries should support staff and volunteers with clear policies and guidelines, including a child protection policy, opportunities for counseling where needed, and an open, supportive atmosphere where people can share their weaknesses in confidence without fear or embarrassment.

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<sup>10</sup> Wright (2003), 343



**Case study<sup>11</sup>**

Tall, with long, flowing black hair, and big brown eyes, Margarita was talented, beautiful, and intelligent. Following her call from God to work with children at risk, she led a pre-school where poor children could take the first steps towards getting an education. She also coordinated home visits to the children's families, becoming a trusted advisor and a member of the family to most of them. She skillfully led her ministry team, having a talent for bringing them together, smoothing over cultural differences and focusing on the big picture – what God wanted them to do and how they should do it. As time passed, she gained the trust of many churches, becoming a leader within her own denomination. No doubt about it, Margarita was being used by God.

However, being 38 and single, Margarita was also lonely. She had a natural and healthy desire for a family of her own, and a husband as dedicated to the work as she was. She even had promises from God that this was something He wanted for her, too. But, the promises hadn't been fulfilled yet. There was no special man in her life.

No one knows where she met him and she never chose to say, but soon Eduardo began to pursue her, announcing his intention of marrying her. Knowing his background of drug abuse and prison, and because he was not a Christian, Margarita always refused him. For two years, her answer was always the same – no.

Then, Margarita went on vacation with some friends to another city. Somehow, Eduardo found out and followed her there. Maybe it was the moonlight, or perhaps the warm breeze wafting from the ocean; maybe the fact that she was lonely and wanted to share a relationship with a man; maybe she was just tired of saying no all the time, but one night spent together resulted in a pregnancy.

Devastated and horrified, Margarita confessed to the leadership of the ministry. They rallied around her, offering support, but Margarita's mind was made up. Her choice had consequences. Her duty now was to marry Eduardo and give her baby a father. Quickly, she organized a wedding and married, to the astonishment and confusion of all her friends. But it was a stormy marriage.

Today, Margarita lives in another city with her daughter and husband. At times Eduardo returns briefly to a life of drug abuse and occasionally beats her. Her daughter is still growing up with an unpredictable father. And Margarita does not work with children at risk anymore.

Sadly, Margarita's story is not unusual. There are many people who find themselves leaving the area of working with children at risk because of situations like Margarita's.

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<sup>11</sup> From a personal interview with a ministry director; names have been changed

### Exercises:

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

We all have \_\_\_\_\_ from past experiences. These are wounds of the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. They can be caused by things such as \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, etc., and can be revealed in outbursts of \_\_\_\_\_, loneliness, \_\_\_\_\_, co-dependency, and \_\_\_\_\_. If the wounds of the past have been \_\_\_\_\_, some aspects of this motivation can be used by God. \_\_\_\_\_ awareness requires that we understand how our own emotional world works, how emotions work in general, what our emotional \_\_\_\_\_ are and how to manage our \_\_\_\_\_. Personal vulnerability means areas in your life in which you \_\_\_\_\_ and are \_\_\_\_\_ to being attacked by the enemy, for example \_\_\_\_\_, power, hidden sins and \_\_\_\_\_. Organizations and ministries should support staff and volunteers with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, including a \_\_\_\_\_ policy, opportunities for \_\_\_\_\_ where needed, and an open, supportive atmosphere where people can share their \_\_\_\_\_ in confidence without fear or embarrassment. If you \_\_\_\_\_ yourself, you can take care to know how to \_\_\_\_\_ against temptation when it comes.

### Discussion questions:

For groups:

1. How can past experiences affect motivations and attitudes of those who are working with children at risk today in positive and negative ways? Can you think of any examples from your own experience?
2. What do you understand by emotional awareness? Why is it important to be emotionally aware?
3. What does “personal vulnerability” mean in this lesson?
4. What are 3 strategies for guarding areas of personal vulnerability? Can you think of any more?
5. Name 3 examples of possible areas of personal vulnerability mentioned in this chapter. What other examples can you name? How could they affect work with vulnerable children?
6. What can organisations do to help staff members with their areas of personal vulnerability?

On your own:

7. Are you aware of any unhealed wounds in your own life? What effects are they having on you? Where could you go for help to start healing process?
8. Do you recognize any of your own trigger points or situations that cause you high levels of stress? How could you take steps to prepare yourself?
9. What are some areas of personal vulnerability for you?
10. Write down some strategies for dealing with these vulnerabilities.

## Lesson 4: What is burnout?

### Summary

- What is burnout?
- What are symptoms of burnout?
- How can I avoid burnout?

Working with children in especially difficult circumstances puts workers at higher risk of mental health problems related to stress and trauma.

*“As caring individuals, we want to help those who are in need. We desire to stop injustice and find a way to help a victim gain a sense of hope once again for their lives. We came to our profession with a strong sense of empathy and wanting to make a positive difference in the lives of those who have been harmed. With this however, comes the danger of becoming overwhelmed by the work.” Mindy Kalee*

We are deeply moved by the suffering of an innocent and vulnerable child. For the Christian worker, this can often have further implications. When we encounter horrific evil perpetrated against children, our view of the world, of safety, of families, and of law will be challenged. We will be forced to re-examine our understanding of God’s protection, presence, power, and will. This can be experienced as deeply unsettling.

Working with children at risk can also trigger painful emotions and memories from our own childhood and may bring back experiences of trauma from our own past. We may experience high indirect exposure to violence through the trauma of the child at risk.

In the next two lessons we will look at two of the more serious problems that those working with children at risk may face: burnout and vicarious trauma. We will look at what they are, some of the common symptoms and how we can get the help we may need to avoid or overcome these difficulties in order to find healing and continue in ministry.

### What is burnout?<sup>12</sup>

Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It happens when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest or motivation that led you to take on your role in the first place. Burnout reduces your productivity and saps your energy, leaving you feeling increasingly helpless, hopeless, cynical and resentful. Eventually you may feel like you have nothing more to give.

Of course most people have days when they feel bored, overloaded or unappreciated. If you feel like this most of the time, however, you may be at risk of burnout.

*According to a survey of workers with children at risk, the top five stressors, or burnout risks, are related to:*

- 1. Feeling Inadequate: Includes feeling: helpless, ineffective, that one can always do more, that one is not doing enough, and having no clear goals and unmet expectations.*
- 2. Physical Exhaustion: being overworked, busyness, mentally exhausted, lack of physical energy required.*
- 3. Emotional Exhaustion: compassion fatigue, depression, internalizing the child’s pain.*
- 4. Lost Hope: no progress, cannot establish or maintain relationships or rapport with children, loss of meaning.*
- 5. Boundaries: failure to protect personal time, family time, role conflict.*

<sup>12</sup> This lesson is based on [http://helpguide.org/mental/burnout\\_signs\\_symptoms.htm](http://helpguide.org/mental/burnout_signs_symptoms.htm)

Work-related causes of burnout	Lifestyle causes of burnout	Personality traits <i>can</i> contribute to burnout
Feeling like you have little or no control over your work	Working too much without enough time for relaxing and socializing	Perfectionist tendencies; nothing is ever good enough
Lack of recognition or rewards for good work	Being expected to be too many things to too many people	Pessimistic view of yourself and the world
Unclear or overly demanding job expectations	Taking on too many responsibilities, without enough help from others	The need to be in control; reluctance to delegate to others
Doing work that is monotonous or unchallenging	Not getting enough sleep	Having a high-achieving personality
Working in a chaotic or high-pressure environment	Lack of close, supportive relationships	

### Warning signs and symptoms of burnout

<b>Physical</b>	Feeling tired and drained most of the time	Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches
	Lowered immunity, feeling unwell a lot	Change in appetite or sleep habits
<b>Emotional</b>	Sense of failure and self-doubt	Loss of motivation
	Feeling helpless, trapped and defeated	Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
	Detachment, feeling alone in the world	Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment
<b>Behavior</b>	Withdrawing from responsibilities	Using food, drugs, alcohol or other addictions to cope
	Isolating yourself from others	Taking your frustrations out on others
	Putting things off, taking longer to get things done	Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early

If you recognize the warning signs of burnout in yourself, remember that it will only get worse if you ignore it. If you take steps to get your life back into balance, you can prevent burnout from becoming anything more serious, such as a full-blown breakdown.

### How to deal with burnout?

- **Recognise** – watch for the warning signs of burnout
- **Reverse** – undo the damage by managing stress and seeking support from a trained mental health professional as well as trusted friends
- **Resilience** – build your resilience to stress by taking care of your physical and emotional health

## Case study<sup>13</sup>

July 3, 1997, a co-worker ran into our home at 7:30AM. 'There are tanks coming into the city. It looks like they are coming to attack the government offices!' Thus began a military coup d'état in the capital city of Cambodia, Phnom Penh. And while I could not foresee it at the time, it also began a time of deep healing in my emotional and spiritual life.

Those of us who lived and worked in Cambodia prior to 1997 remember the chaos and extreme difficulty of ministry in a country still recovering from the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge time (1975-1979) and the Vietnamese occupation of the country (1980-1990). When I moved to Cambodia with my family in 1994, I was a seasoned missionary. We had worked with human trafficking and street children in Thailand and other parts of Asia. Before going overseas, I had worked with drug addicts and gang members in Los Angeles, California. But ministry and life in Cambodia was unlike anything we had experienced. I was serving as the country director of a large faith-based mission agency and my life was beyond busy. Our mission agency had built a number of primary schools, two children's homes, three health care clinics, and had established teaching programs. All this activity in a country where stress and chaos were assumed to be normal operational realities, my work schedule went from 50 hours a week to 60 to 70 and topped out at over 80 hours a week. I was working with at-risk children, building a new office, overseeing projects and supervising other missionaries.

I had come to Cambodia to fill the shoes of a dear friend who had helped establish our agency's ministry. My friend died of a brain disease during his fifth year in country; he was 40 years old. I don't know why I thought I would be immune to the stresses that probably contributed to his death but I neglected to take 'self-care' seriously. I worked non-stop. I don't remember taking time for relaxation or 'soul care'. As a result, my family life suffered and my relationships were badly strained. After three years I was approaching what is commonly referred to as 'burnout'. However, as is common when addicted to stress and frenetic activity in the name of God and His work, I was in complete denial of my situation. A psychologist was visiting our mission in early 1997. He told me I was going to break down if I did not change my lifestyle and get some help. My response was typical of those who are not willing to admit their need for help. I told him that if he lived in Cambodia he would understand that this level of stress was normal and just a factor of life.

The coup d'état in 1997 brought a screaming halt to my frantic pace of work. Five thousand people were evacuated out of Phnom Penh three days after the fighting began. I remained in Cambodia at the request of our international office and was under 'house arrest' for a number of days. Work and ministry suddenly ceased and I fell into the arms of God, experiencing the symptoms of burnout and depression. In the weeks that followed, I realized that I was in danger of losing my health, my family, and intimacy with God. I then began a long process of recovery and a commitment on my part to 'guarding my interior life'. I came to recognize that much of my addiction to work had to do with a faulty understanding of God and His love for me as a person. I had also believed the illusion that hard work and human agendas can actually change the world, which we so often experience as pain, puzzlement, and sorrow. Now, 13 years after the coup in Cambodia, I can speak more honestly and transparently about the inner struggles of my soul. I have learned the importance of intentional contemplation and reflection on the inner life and living in what I have come to call 'God's Country', that is, the place where we are cast fully on God and live with uncertainty, paradox, promise, pain as we embrace the life of the cross.

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<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Bill Prevette, Research Tutor, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Working with children in especially difficult circumstances puts workers at higher risk of mental health problems related to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ is a state of emotional, mental and physical \_\_\_\_\_ caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It happens when you feel \_\_\_\_\_ and unable to meet \_\_\_\_\_. Burnout reduces your \_\_\_\_\_ and saps your \_\_\_\_\_, leaving you feeling increasingly helpless, hopeless, cynical and resentful. Eventually you may feel like you have \_\_\_\_\_ to give. If you recognize the \_\_\_\_\_ of burnout in yourself, remember that it will only get \_\_\_\_\_ if you ignore it. Try to \_\_\_\_\_ the warning signs; \_\_\_\_\_ the damage by managing stress and seeking support; and build your \_\_\_\_\_ by taking care of your physical and emotional health.

## Discussion questions

1. Why are those who work with children at risk at increased risk of problems associated with stress and trauma? Is this something you recognize?
2. Define burnout using your own words.
3. What are signs and symptoms that a person might be at risk of burnout?
4. What factors can cause burnout? Can you relate to any of these from your own experience?
5. If you or a colleague is showing signs of burnout, what steps can you take to get help and avoid worse problems?
6. How would you respond to the following scenarios in a healthy way that honors God, self, others and acknowledges our limitations:
  - A doctor in a refugee camp simply could not care for all the sick and wounded. She cried out, "I'm NOT God to choose who should live or who should die."
  - From a worker in a Romanian orphanage: "You enter a room and there you see sixty pairs of three-to-five-year-old arms stretched out to you. Whom do you choose to love?"
7. What steps could your organisation, ministry or team take to protect against burnout?

## Lesson 5: What is vicarious trauma?

### Summary

- Definition of vicarious trauma
- What are symptoms of vicarious trauma?
- How can I get help?

There are certain situations in which the risks facing those who work with children in traumatic circumstances are particularly grave. It is only recently that attention has been drawn to the risks of mental health for individuals working specifically for or directly with victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. When consistently exposed to the stories, images, as well as the vast complexities that systematically contribute to the psychological and physical slavery of the victims, the risk of the “helper” suffering from vicarious trauma is considerable. Therefore, it is of vital importance for individuals working in this line of work to not only become familiar with these issues, but be offered adequate assistance, as well as actively seek appropriate means of processing their experience of working in this field. The risks are heightened for those who work in the area of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, but may be there in other traumatic situations too.

### What is vicarious trauma?

Vicarious or Secondary Trauma (VT) is a normal reaction to the emotional demands on individuals who are continually exposed to the terrifying, horrifying, and shocking images, strong chaotic emotions, and intrusive traumatic memories of trauma survivors. VT can have a huge impact on the helper’s sense of self, world view, spirituality, emotional tolerance, interpersonal relationships and so on. In addition, if someone (the helper) has a personal history of trauma themselves that has not been worked through, this may increase arousal or likelihood of vicarious traumatisation in highly stressful/traumatic working environment, such as working with victims of sexual exploitation.

*In a recent study of service providers for Commercially Sexually Exploited Individuals in Cambodia, it was found that both expat and national staff had an elevated Vicarious Trauma score. While this does not imply that each of these individuals have a traumatised past, it does shed light on the seriousness of the issue and working environment of the Cambodian context. Furthermore, while this number is elevated compared to Western contexts and comparative testing, it is important to take into consideration the location of the test subjects. Cambodia is a post war/genocide country which also raises the baseline of traumatic symptoms suffered by individuals.*

The symptoms of VT are the same as the symptoms of PTSD.<sup>14</sup> The difference however is that the event causing the symptoms is **secondary** to the individual, **instead** of primary. That means that the traumatic events do not happen directly to the sufferer.

### What are symptoms of PTSD/Vicarious Trauma

Re-experiencing the traumatic event	Symptoms of avoidance and emotional numbing	Symptoms of increased arousal
Intrusive, upsetting memories of the event	Avoiding activities, places, thoughts, or feelings that remind you of the trauma	Difficulty falling or staying asleep
Flashbacks (acting or feeling like the event is happening again)	Inability to remember important aspects of the trauma	Irritability or outbursts of anger
Nightmares (either of the event or of	Loss of interest in activities and life in	Difficulty concentrating

<sup>14</sup> See Workbook 3 for more on trauma and PTSD

other frightening things)	general	
Feelings of intense distress when reminded of the trauma	Feeling detached from others and emotionally numb	Hypervigilance (on constant “red alert”)
Intense physical reactions to reminders of the event (e.g. pounding heart, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle tension, sweating)	Sense of a limited future (you don’t expect to live a normal life span, get married, have a career)	Feeling jumpy and easily startled

### Other common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder

Anger and irritability; guilt, shame, or self-blame; substance abuse; depression and hopelessness; suicidal thoughts and feelings; feeling alienated and alone; feelings of mistrust and betrayal; headaches, stomach problems and chest pain.

### Caring for yourself

If you have chosen to work with children at risk, in whatever role or capacity, it is obvious that you are an empathetic person. Empathy is what motivates you to do your job (of course along with many other things!). But empathy is what also puts you at great risk and vulnerability to struggling with VT. The following are some basic questions to ask yourself, along with some tools for addressing symptoms in a timely manner.

- Know yourself: What is your own personal story? How did the way your parents raise you affect you? How did your first peer relationships affect you? Think about your own childhood from multiple angles – regardless of what you think, it has shaped who you are, how you see the world and interact with it today.
- In addition, think about your adult life: What stresses you? What causes you anxiety? It is important for you to know and understand your own limitations, and try to form a healthy understanding and acceptance of where your own limitations lie.
- If you do not know already, think about the various forms of activities that bring you joy and satisfaction: painting, gardening, a form of exercise, journaling, singing, etc... Find at least one (preferably several) activities that you enjoy and be proactive about engaging in them on a regular and consistent basis.

### How do I know when I should seek help?

If you believe you are experiencing even mild symptoms of PTSD and/or VT, there is no better time to help yourself than now! The longer we hold onto traumatic images and memories, the greater and deeper the effect will have upon our lives in the long run. In order to effectively deal with the impact and symptoms of PTSD and Vicarious Trauma, it is vitally important to be aware that first of all, your experience is normal. Our minds and bodies are only meant to handle so much information at one time. When that information carries with it stories and/or images of trauma, we naturally will go into overload. Secondly, it is crucial for you to know that you cannot do it alone. While it is one thing to recognize your need, it is another thing to be able to talk about it and work through it in a trusted and safe environment. You need the counsel and assistance of a trained mental health practitioner.

### What you can do:

- Talk to a trained mental health provider.
- Talk to your spouse or a trusted friend.
- Take time to rest, eat well, exercise.



## Case study<sup>15</sup>

Navy is a 26-year-old single female caregiver working in a shelter for rescued trafficked women. Navy was unable to finish high school due to her parents' finances, but eventually secured a job she really enjoyed at first. During her first year on the job she attended several training events aimed at teaching basic counseling skills. She enjoyed the actual learning she gained from these courses, but did not like the way she was left feeling after these short training events. She found herself dwelling on intrusive thoughts related to her own childhood sexual abuse; thoughts that had long lain hidden from memory.

Navy showed a lot of potential as a caregiver and was promoted to team leader after working at the shelter for a year. She was compassionate, caring, conscientious, and empathetic with the rescued women she worked for.

Navy is a Christian but was not working in a Christian organisation. She found the attitude of some of her co-workers offensive at times and she alone prayed for the traumatised population she worked with. Navy found that she was getting more and more involved in the stories of the women (over-identifying). She started to experience sexualised dreams where she was actually the trafficked person being abused and she felt very ashamed by these unwanted dreams. Eventually she found herself avoiding interacting with the other staff and she seemed to shut off when the women talked to her. She became irritable, avoided going to bed for fear of the intrusive dreams and immersed herself in administrative tasks whilst avoiding any reports about the traumatic experiences of the women. The day came when Navy dreaded going into work. She was confused as to why own her past trauma was haunting her. She stopped going to church because she was unable to pretend to be 'fine' anymore. To push down her feelings she began to eat calorific comfort foods and, embarrassingly, started to put on weight.

Navy's supervisor was concerned about her, and so were her colleagues who saw her losing control of her life. She would not socialise with them, saying she did not like their husbands. She never dated any men and appeared disparaging of them. When she was challenged by her supervisor, who was a foreigner, Navy broke down, started crying and did not stop for many hours; uncontrollable sobbing that quite frightened her, and her supervisor. Navy was told that she could not return to work until she was emotionally stable, had been psychologically assessed and, if necessary, had engaged in a counseling process with a trained mental health professional.

Navy went to see a trained counselor for an assessment and showed classic signs of vicarious traumatisation. Her own trauma had emerged and was feeding into her vicarious trauma. It was 3 months before Navy was able to return to work, by which time she had got her eating disorder under control, she had started to resolve her own childhood abuse, and gained a new perspective on her life and work. She had learned to monitor her own feelings and set boundaries around how much of others' trauma material she listened to or read about. She learned to debrief more with her supervisor and overall functioned more effectively at work.

Whilst Navy was and is always going to be susceptible to vicarious trauma, the severity of it could have been avoided. If the trainers of the trainings she attended had issued warnings regarding possible reactions to the training, or even offered individual time to trainees to check out how they were handling the training material, Navy's growing discomfort might have been picked up on, or if Navy's supervisor had challenged her sooner then the intervention could have been sooner.

The experience did teach her a lot about herself and what to look for in herself or in those she worked with. She became an advocate of training in self-care and understanding Vicarious Trauma and warns her co-workers about the possible 'side effects' of counseling-related training events.

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<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Jane Lopacka, a counsellor based in Cambodia

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Mental health risks are particularly grave for those who work for or directly with victims of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Exposure to stories and images puts helpers at risk of suffering from \_\_\_\_\_. Vicarious trauma is a \_\_\_\_\_ reaction to the \_\_\_\_\_ on individuals who are continually exposed to the terrifying, horrifying, and shocking images, strong chaotic emotions, and intrusive traumatic memories of trauma survivors. The risk is greater if the helper has a personal history of \_\_\_\_\_ themselves. The symptoms of vicarious trauma are the same as those of \_\_\_\_\_ but the difference is that the event causing the symptoms happened to someone else. Symptoms have to do with \_\_\_\_\_ the traumatic event; \_\_\_\_\_ and emotional \_\_\_\_\_; and increased \_\_\_\_\_. It is important to seek \_\_\_\_\_ if you think you are suffering from vicarious trauma. You could talk to a trained \_\_\_\_\_ provider, talk to a spouse or trusted friend and take time to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions

1. In what sorts of circumstances are the mental health risks for those working with children at risk particularly grave? Do you experience any circumstances like these in your work?
2. Explain the meaning of vicarious trauma in your own words.
3. What are possible symptoms of vicarious trauma?
4. What should you do if you or someone you know seems to be suffering from vicarious trauma?
5. What can you do to protect yourself from the effects of vicarious trauma? Make a list of strategies that can help you become more resilient.

## **Part 2: How can we care for ourselves?**

Now that we have a better understanding of why we should take good care of ourselves and of some of the risks of not doing so, we will begin to think about some of the practical ways in which we can look after our own needs and those of people we work with.

Lesson 6 provides a summary of some warning signs that you might have and actions to take to avoid them. Lesson 7 is about the important topic of rest. Lesson 8 focuses on the need for balance and boundaries in your life. Finally, Lesson 9 looks at how organisations can make sure that their staff and volunteers are able to take care of themselves.



## Lesson 6: What are some practical guidelines for self care?

### Summary

- Tool for identifying potential problem areas
- Suggestions for good self-care practices

This lesson provides an overview of some warning signs of potential problem areas: that is, areas of life where you may not currently be meeting your own needs. Together with the warning signs, you will find some practical suggestions of ways that you can begin to care for yourself better. The tool takes a holistic approach, looking at your physical and emotional wellbeing as well as your relationships and your work situation. It is just a starting point. Other lessons in this part will look at some selected key areas in more detail.

Physical		Emotional	
Warning signs	Self care practices	Warning signs	Self care practices
Difficulty falling asleep	<i>Regular exercise: aerobics at stadium, running,</i>	Anxiety Stress	<i>Focused breathing Take time to slow down: feelings, thoughts, body</i>
Difficulty staying asleep Nightmares Rapid heartbeat, breathing difficulties	<i>Learn deep breathing and relaxation techniques: listening to soft music, gentle stretching</i>	Continually thinking about the people you work with Loss of sense of responsibility/ obligation to one's family	<i>Find opportunities for debriefing with co-workers Seek continued counseling with a professional/trusted individual</i>
Lack of energy and feeling weak Headaches	<i>Eat healthy balanced meals: large portions of protein, vegetables and fruit Drink lots of water</i>	Depression Feelings of sadness Feelings of hopelessness	<i>Identify what you're feeling sad / hopeless about Seek counseling and debriefing opportunities</i>
Lack of appetite	<i>Don't skip meals</i>	Loss of interest in activities normally enjoyed	<i>Invite others to do activities with you Try new activities</i>
Stomach problems	<i>See a doctor for possible parasites or other medical issues</i>	Disruption of beliefs Loss of trust in God	<i>Develop personal spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer Seek support from others who have the same beliefs as you</i>
		Increased feelings of judgment /disgust towards yourself and/or those you work with Paranoid thoughts Fear of others' judgment of you	<i>Identify why you're feeling paranoid Seek continued counseling with a professional/trusted individual Read Scripture about who God says you are</i>

Social and family		Work environment	
Warning signs	Self care practices	Warning signs	Self care practices
Difficulty separating work stress from family stress	<i>Develop healthy emotional boundaries</i>  <i>Do things you enjoy outside of family and work</i>	Feeling extremely overwhelmed	<i>Take breaks together: go for a walk to the market, eat fruit together</i>  <i>Go to the riverside or stadium with friends</i>  <i>Create group collage/corporate art projects</i>
Feelings of isolation from family  Increased distrust of others  Lack of desire to maintain close relationships	<i>Identify why you feel isolated</i>  <i>Seek continued counseling with a professional/trusted individual</i>  <i>Invite others to do activities with you</i>  <i>Set aside time for personal reflection and time for talking with others</i>  <i>Let people know you're feeling isolated</i>	Inability to manage workload          Thinking about the people I work with even when I'm doing other things	<i>Ask for help</i>  <i>Talk to your supervisor/director</i>          <i>Seek continued counseling with a professional/trusted individual</i>  <i>Find ways to release feelings through exercise, relaxation, art, talking with co-workers</i>

Obviously, these are just some suggestions of the kinds of things you could do to take care of yourself. You will need to identify the kinds of things that would work for you. The important thing is to begin to put them into practice.

In the next three lessons, we will focus attention on just two important areas: rest, and creating boundaries in your work and personal life, including caring for your family. We will also think about how organisations can help promote self care among those who work for them.

## Case study

Katerine continues from lesson 1...

“It was hard for me to face the fact that I couldn’t do everything I wanted to do. But once I did, I had to ask God how He wanted me to work with children at risk. What was His plan? And what did I need to do in order to avoid burnout?

The answer involved getting to know myself better, my talents, strengths, weaknesses and needs. I did an exercise that involved looking back at my past successes and saw that my strengths lay **more** in creating, investigating, organising, and working with objects than it did working with people. I was really surprised. But then I realised that that explained why I felt more satisfied re-organising the administration office’s filing system than I did working in a classroom! It also helped me understand why I felt so exhausted working in the drop-in centre every other day – I was working with people all day. As an introvert, I realised that I needed regular times alone, without people, to re-energise my strength.

I took all this information and prayed about it. I asked God for a strategy as to how I could change my life. I knew there were some things I could not change, such as my living situation (I live in 24-hour care), but within the circumstances I had, what could I change and how?

When I felt that I had heard what I needed to do, I went to my leaders and talked with them. I explained to them what had been happening, and what I believed I needed. I asked them to change my schedule so I was working 2 days a week in administration and only 1 day a week at the drop in centre. With the leader of 24-hour care, we worked out a schedule so that I am “off duty” by 8:30 every night. This gives me time to be alone and also to get enough sleep every night. I still don’t have an official day off, but now that my leaders know my needs, they give me time off if I need it. Truthfully, just changing my schedule provided rest for me. I’m not working out of my weaknesses anymore so I’m not as exhausted or as stressed as I used to be. My leaders also respect my saying “no” if I can’t handle something or fulfill a responsibility.

Other things I do include deliberately making time for friends and making sure I communicate with those who are far away. I love to read, so now I make sure I carry a book in my backpack all the time for “mini-breaks” whenever I have a few minutes. When I have the finances, I sometimes treat myself to a coffee or pastry or some other treat that I don’t normally get.

And most of all, I make sure I’m spending time with the Lord. It took time and discipline to carve that time out of my schedule, and I had to let go of some other things that seemed important, but in the end, it really came down to my priorities. I had to make Him my priority. And yes, life is still stressful sometimes, but I don’t think of leaving the ministry anymore, and I enjoy my life!

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Watch out for \_\_\_\_\_ of potential problem areas. For example, physical signs include difficulty falling \_\_\_\_\_ or lack of \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ signs could be stress and feeling hopeless. Signs in the area of family and social life include feeling \_\_\_\_\_ from family and lacking the desire to maintain close \_\_\_\_\_. At work, warning signs could include feeling extremely \_\_\_\_\_ and unable to manage your \_\_\_\_\_. There are many ways you can start to take care of yourself and you should identify those that will \_\_\_\_\_.

### Discussion questions

1. How can you become more aware of warning signs that you need to take better care of yourself? Do you recognize any of the warning signs in yourself?
2. How can you help others in your team be more aware of the warning signs? Identify some strategies for sharing this tool with your organisation or ministry.
3. Look at the suggested self-care practices in the tool. Are there any that you could adopt or adapt?
4. What additional suggestions can you think of as good self-care strategies for your context?
5. How can your organisation or ministry help workers take care of themselves?
6. What would the benefits of better self-care be for the workers, the organisation and the children?



## Lesson 7: Why should we rest?

### Summary

- God's command to rest
- What is resting?
- What prevents us from resting?
- How can organisations help ensure that workers rest?

### Why is rest so important?

Besides the physical benefits, we must remember that God thought it was so important that He made it the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment (Exodus 20:8). He called it "Keeping the Sabbath," and He actually blessed the day, thus making it holy. He apparently considered it to be so important that He made it a sign between Himself and the people of Israel (see Exodus 31:12-13, 17). He seems to equate keeping the Sabbath with reverencing the Lord (Exodus 26:2, 35:2), promising blessings for following His commandments and destruction for those who do not follow them (Exodus 26:3-13, 14-46). In God's eyes even the land was to keep the Sabbath (Exodus 26:43) as a way of honouring the Lord. Could it be that God did this so that man would have time to seek Him, to spend time with Him? Maybe. How many times have people said, "I just didn't have *time* to pray today?"

*If God Himself tells humankind to rest from their labours, is your job more important than that? Would it really make a difference if you put God first before your job or your responsibilities?*

### What does rest mean?

There are many different ways to rest.

- **Physical rest** includes getting a proper amount of sleep, having a good diet and exercise. Other ways of resting can include developing hobbies, spending fun times with family and friends, taking a vacation, doing something spontaneous, learning something new, buying small luxuries when you can afford them – it depends on you.<sup>16</sup> Each person will rest in different ways, but even doing seemingly "secular" things can bring glory to God. Eric Liddell, the famous Scottish runner depicted in the movie *Chariots of Fire*, said that when he ran, he "felt God's pleasure." *What helps you relax and brings a smile to your face?*
- **Spiritual rest** involves spending time with God.<sup>17</sup> It can include times of fellowship with other Christians, prayer times (whether with others or alone), praise times, times for periodic reflection and listening to God, journaling, and other activities that draw you closer to Him. Some people have found it helpful to go away on spiritual retreats for a short time or even several days in order to get away from daily demands, focus their hearts on Him and hear Him more clearly. However you do it, spiritual rest is *essential* to your life as a Christian because it builds your relationship with Christ. And, as most people know, relationships don't go very far when the people involved don't spend time together.
- **Creating rhythms ...** Many people find the sound of gently falling rain, the beat of waves upon the shore, or just the sound of the human heart, very soothing. Why? Because these sounds have a rhythm to them that is steady and reassuring. Have you noticed that just about everything in nature has a rhythm or a pattern to it? The seasons come every year, the tides go in and out, the moon passes through certain phases, the sun rises and sets each day, humans are born, live, and die. For whatever reason, God decided that human beings needed rhythms and patterns to their lives.

<sup>16</sup> Bartel (2003), 340

<sup>17</sup> Bartel (2003), 340

Rest is no exception. The only trouble is, we tend to ignore it. But if God considers it so important that He created the night for sleeping and the day for working, then it is important to create a regular routine or rhythm to rest in your life. *Think about it. What changes can you start to make to create a pattern of rest?*

In case you are still tempted to think that resting is a waste of time, remember that Jesus, being God in human form, needed rest (Mark 4:38; Matthew 14:23). God himself rested (Genesis 2:2-3). And please note: God didn't rest after Creation because He had to. He rested to look at and enjoy the results of His creation. In the same way, don't rest because you "have to." Rest because it is a chance to enjoy your Creator, His creation and to look forward to your heavenly rest.<sup>18</sup>

### Myths that keep us from resting

Most people agree that rest is important in theory, but putting it into practice is much more difficult for them. Many times, people find themselves rushing to fulfill responsibilities because they believe different myths, such as

- *"I don't really need to rest; I'm fine."* This lie only works if you're not human. The human body is designed to require regular times of physical, emotional, and spiritual rest.
- *"God expects me to serve Him with everything I have. If that means sacrificing my time, energy, family, etc., then that is what is required of me in order to serve Him. My family will understand."* Your family might not understand, especially if it happens all the time. If you consistently place work above family, it most often breeds resentment, bitterness and hurt amongst your family members. Besides, God Himself created the idea of resting – in fact he commands it – so He will understand if you actually obey Him and rest.
- *"I can't let the ministry down. They need me."* Not that badly. No one is indispensable, and have you ever thought that your presence there at all times might be preventing other staff members from taking on responsibilities that they can and should do?
- *"The kids I work with won't understand why I'm not there. I couldn't let them suffer any more than they have already."* Again, no one is indispensable all the time. The children will need you, yes, but you will not be able to be there for each one all the time, especially after they are adults. There will come a time when you have to move away emotionally. In wisdom, you can begin to do that so that it becomes a positive step for both you and the children. Besides, if you do not begin to rest and maintain that rest, you will burn out and still have to leave the children anyway.

### How can organisations help workers to rest?

*Organisations have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of our staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with us. PIA Principle 7*

Organisations should encourage workers and volunteers to make time for rest by creating a culture where resting is normal and expected. Workers and volunteers should have regular days off and a contract that states their agreed working hours and annual (paid) leave entitlement. Managers and leaders should encourage workers not to work more than the agreed hours except in exceptional circumstances; and of course, managers and leaders should also set a good example by not working too many hours themselves! A good job description should set out the tasks required of each worker and these should be realistic for the time available.

It is good for organisations to arrange special away days for the team to relax together and do different activities.

Organisations can also establish rhythms for spiritual rest within the working week – like time for prayer and devotions; occasional spiritual retreats can also bring great refreshment.

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<sup>18</sup> Bartel (2003), 340

## Case study<sup>19</sup>

There was a time in my life as a ministry leader when I recognized that I was too tired and worn out to keep going in ministry the way I had been. Even though all was going well externally, there was something terribly wrong under the surface. I was frustrated with how difficult it was to clear time in my schedule for intimacy with God. Even when I found the time, I was too tired to give him much alert attention. During times of solitude I fought feelings of exhaustion by attempting to do something that felt “productive,” like reading my Bible, journaling or meditating on some very profound thought. Most often, I was giving more thought to my next message prep or book project rather than being available for true intimacy with the Lover of my soul. Basic elements of Christian living such as loving my husband and children were difficult to impossible depending on the day.

I was worn out and disillusioned and needed to acknowledge that all of my efforts to ignore my tiredness or fight my way through had not provided any lasting solutions. Yes, I could sometimes press on with spurts of energy motivated by a well-developed sense of “ought” and “should.” But the exhaustion and discouragement were always right under the surface, threatening to overwhelm me with the temptation to give up.

Since then, I have learned that there are two kinds of tired in this world. One is what I call “good tired” and it is the kind of tiredness that we experience after a job well done. This is a temporary condition and when it comes, we can be pretty sure that after an appropriate period of rest and recuperation we will soon be back in the swing of things.

But there is another kind of tired that is more ominous; it is what I call “dangerous tired.” This condition is deeper and more serious than the temporary exhaustion that follows times of periodic intensity in our schedules and workloads. Dangerous tired is a state of the soul that is volatile and signals the risk of great destruction. It is a chronic inner fatigue accumulating over months (and sometimes years) of time that doesn’t always manifest itself in physical exhaustion. In fact, it can appear to be quite the opposite because it can actually be masked by excessive activity and compulsive over-working.

When we are dangerously tired we feel out of control, compelled to constant activity by inner impulses that we may not even be aware of. For some reason that we can’t quite name, we’re not able to linger and relax over a cup of coffee. We can’t keep from checking voice-mail or e-mail “just one more time” before we leave the office or before we go to bed at night. Rather than reading anything for the sheer pleasure of it, our nightstand is piled high with books and professional journals that cram our heads full of more information that will keep us “at the top of our game.” The idea of taking a full day off once a week seems impossible both in theory and in practice. We rarely (if ever) take time for a real break or vacation, choosing instead to work through holidays and break times. Not surprisingly, we might find that even when it is time for well-deserved sleep or rest, we are unable to relax and receive this necessary gift.

While our way of life might seem heroic, there is a frenetic quality to our activity that is disturbing to those around us. When we do have discretionary time, we indulge in escapist behaviors such as compulsive eating, drinking, spending or television-watching because we are too tired to choose activities that are truly life-giving. When we have drifted into the realm of being dangerously tired, we might also be numb to the full range of human emotion. It might seem like a relief to be unhampered by the negative emotions that bog other people down, but when we are dangerously tired the positive emotions become elusive as well. We don’t feel much of anything—the good or the bad.

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<sup>19</sup> Adapted from Barton (2004) ‘Are You Dangerously Tired? Exploring the Symptoms and Sources of Spiritual Exhaustion in Ministry’ by Ruth Haley Barton © Copyright 2004 Ruth Haley Barton

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

God \_\_\_\_\_ us to rest. There are many different ways to rest. Physical rest includes getting a proper amount of \_\_\_\_\_, having a good \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ rest involves spending time with God. \_\_\_\_\_ are helpful for rest. \_\_\_\_\_ needed rest and God rested to look at and enjoy the results of \_\_\_\_\_. Rest allows us to \_\_\_\_\_ the creator, his creation and to look forward to our \_\_\_\_\_. There are many \_\_\_\_\_ that stop us resting. \_\_\_\_\_ should create a culture where rest is normal and expected, for example regular \_\_\_\_\_, agreed \_\_\_\_\_ and annual \_\_\_\_\_. Managers and leaders should set a good \_\_\_\_\_ by not working \_\_\_\_\_ hours. \_\_\_\_\_ allow teams to relax together. Time for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ can bring spiritual refreshment.

## Discussion questions:

1. Besides meeting your physical needs, why is rest so important?
2. What does God call a regular day of rest and why does He consider it to be important?
3. What are some lies that keep us from resting? Can you think of any other additional lies that you can add to this list?
4. Has there been a time in your life when you've believed lies like these? What were they, specifically? What can you counter these lies with?
5. Do you agree that people work and rest better when they create a regular pattern of rest? Why or why not?
6. What are some ways that you personally can get spiritual refreshment? How many of these things are you already doing?
7. Can you think of any other ways of rest that would suit you and your situation?
8. What does your organisation or ministry do to encourage workers to rest? What else could it do?

## Lesson 8: How can we develop boundaries and balance in our lives?

### Summary

- A balanced life
- Setting boundaries
- Balancing work and family

Learning to create and maintain balance between your ministry and your personal life is similar to learning how to ride a bicycle. If you lean too far on either side when the bike is moving, you fall over. Somehow, you have to learn how to keep your balance as you pedal the bike. This takes practice, determination, and time. But, if you persist in learning, eventually you will be able to ride.

Creating and maintaining balance between your personal life and your ministry is like that. If you want to be the most effective while avoiding burnout, you need to find ways to balance your time and energy between your ministry and your personal life. Like riding a bike, this will require patience, practice, determination, and time. If you “lean” too far towards your ministry or towards your personal life, your “bike” will not function properly. You will not be able to ride it effectively.

### What does a balanced life look like?

When life is busy, or all your energy is focused on a special project, it's all too easy to find yourself 'off balance', not paying enough attention to important areas of your life. While you need to have drive and focus if you're going to get things done, taking this too far can lead to frustration and intense stress. That's when it's time to take a 'helicopter view' of your life, so that you can bring things back into balance.

A tool such as the Wheel of Life can help. It helps you consider each area of your life in turn and assess what's off balance. And so, it helps you identify areas that need more attention.

### The Wheel Of Life

The Wheel of Life<sup>20</sup> is powerful because it gives you a vivid visual representation of the way your life is currently, compared with the way you'd ideally like it to be. It is called the 'Wheel of Life' because each area of your life is mapped on a circle, like the spoke of a wheel.

### Using the Tool

Use the following steps to create your Wheel of Life and assess your balance.

I. Start by brainstorming the 6 to 8 dimensions of your life that are important for you. Different approaches to this are:

- **The roles you play in life** for example: husband/wife, father/mother, director, manager, colleague, team member, sports player, community leader, church leader/member, or friend;
- **Areas of life that are important to you** for example: creativity, spirituality, career, education, family, friends, financial security, physical challenge, pleasure, or church activities; or

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE\\_93.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_93.htm)

- **Your own combination of these (or different) things**, reflecting the things that are your priorities in life.

2. Write down these dimensions down on the Wheel of Life diagram, one on each spoke of the life wheel.

3. This approach assumes that you will be happy and fulfilled if you can find the right balance of attention for each of these dimensions. And different areas of your life will need different levels of attention at different times. So the next step is to assess the amount of attention you're currently devoting to each area.

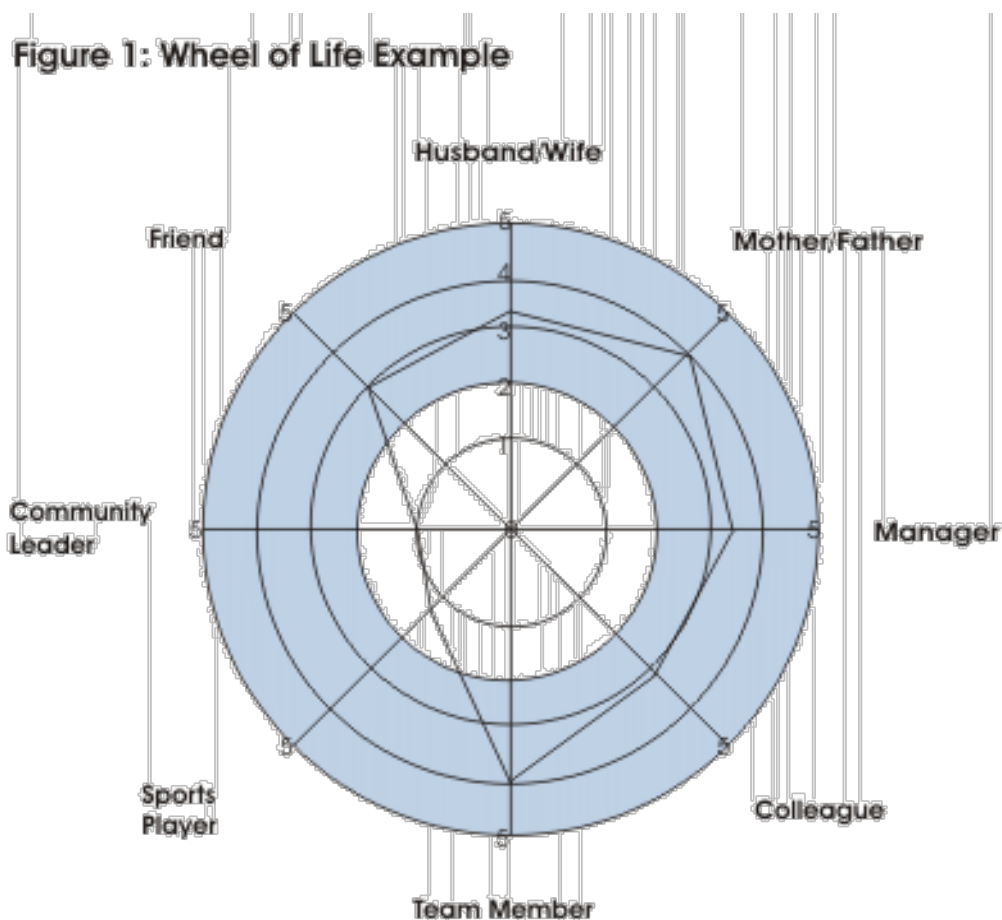
4. Consider each dimension in turn, and on a scale of 0 (low) to 5 (high), write down the amount of attention you're devoting to that area of your life. Mark each score on the appropriate spoke of your Life Wheel.

5. Now join up the marks around the circle. Does your life wheel look and feel balanced?

6. Next it's time to consider your ideal level in each area of your life. A balanced life does not mean getting 5 in each life area: some areas need more attention and focus than others at any time. And inevitably you will need to make choices and compromises, as your time and energy are not in unlimited supply!

So the question is, what would the ideal level of attention be for you each life area?

Plot the "ideal" scores around your life wheel too. Use a different colour to join up the marks around the circle.



*Here is an example of a completed wheel*

7. Now you have a visual representation of your current life balance and your ideal life balance. What are the gaps? These are the areas of your life that need attention.

And remember that gaps can go both ways. There are almost certainly areas that are not getting as much attention as you'd like. However there may also be areas where you're putting in more effort than you'd ideally like. These areas are sapping energy and enthusiasm that may better be directed elsewhere.

Once you have identified the areas that need attention, it's time to plan the actions needed to work on regaining balance. Starting with the neglected areas, what things do you need to start doing to regain balance? In the areas that currently sap your energy and time, what can you STOP doing or reprioritise or delegate to someone else? Make a commitment to these actions by writing them on your worksheet.

The Wheel of Life is a great tool to help you improve your life balance. It helps you quickly and graphically identify the areas in your life to which you want to devote more energy, and helps you understand where you might want to cut back.

In this lesson we will concentrate on just two aspects: Setting boundaries and caring for your family.

### **Setting your boundaries**

An important part of creating and maintaining balance is the ability to say “no” sometimes. Boundaries and the ability to say “no” are like fences in your life. They protect you against manipulation, irresponsibility and burnout.

Saying “no” is difficult, but necessary sometimes. Saying “no” might make you feel selfish or guilty. You might think it will hurt someone else's feelings, especially if the person involved is a family member or a child with whom you work. Sometimes you might feel that you can't say no because you believe God or another person wouldn't like it. The truth is, God allows us to say “no” sometimes – he understands our limitations and needs. Nehemiah said “no” with good reason (Nehemiah 6:1-14). Jesus said “no” sometimes. When His mother and brothers appeared one day to speak with Him, Jesus didn't go out to meet them the moment they asked (see Matthew 12:46-50). Some people you may need to say “no” to at times include supervisors, co-workers, church leaders, family members, and even the children with whom you are working. The ability to say “no” comes from a healthy awareness of our limitations because, as humans, we can't do everything or please everyone.

*It is good practice for organisations to provide each worker or volunteer with a job description that explains their specific areas of responsibility. This should be discussed and agreed between a line manager and the worker and reviewed at least annually. The job description should be realistic in what it expects of the worker. Part of the role of a manager is to ensure that workers have the right amount of work to do for the time available.*

### **Balancing family and work**

Many Christian workers put ministry before family. Others put family before ministry. Still others flip-flop between the two. However they do it, many Christians in ministry struggle with trying to balance the needs of their families with their responsibilities and commitments to their ministries. However, you can be in ministry and still create (with God's help) a healthy, strong, caring, Christ-centered family, dedicated to serving God, to growing in Him, and who will go on to minister in their own individual callings throughout their lives.

Most people would agree that family is important and they desire to meet their family's needs. But how do you know what they are? And how can you meet those needs before they become big issues within your family?

- *Listen to them.* Take time to talk with your family without the interruption of ministry. Recognise that what they are saying is valid and important, even if you don't agree with or understand their viewpoint. And once you know their concerns and/or needs, take steps to address or meet those needs. Let them know that you are taking their words into account and doing what you can to change the situation. Even if it doesn't work out exactly the way you wanted it to, most family members will appreciate the effort.
- *Involve them* Talk to your spouse and children according to their age and understanding, about your work, especially when making decisions that will affect them (for instance, a move to another city, fostering a child, a greater commitment of time to the ministry, etc.). Thank them for the sacrifice they make in sharing you with the children with whom you work. If possible, take your children with you sometimes as you work with children at risk (with your organisation's permission). Let them see where you go every day and what you do. This helps make your work concrete to your own kids so that they know who you're helping and why. It can also help sensitise them to children at risk, making them more willing to share with others who are in need.<sup>21</sup>

Remember that both your family and your calling are gifts from God and are extremely important. God gave you both. Therefore, there is a way to fulfill both. Notice, however, that we said calling, not ministry. Ministries might change, and God might ask you to serve in a variety of ways in different ministries. Your calling will not usually change, though there may be different ways of fulfilling it.

### **What else can help?**

- *Mentors*, whether spiritual or professional, also help you find and maintain balance between your personal life and your ministry.
- *Establish rhythms of rest and work.* Knowing when you can rest, be with family, and when you need to work can help you maximise your time, talent and energy. Your family will appreciate it, too, as they come to anticipate knowing when they can have time with you.

However you go about it, creating and maintaining balance in your personal life and ministry will involve commitment, sacrifice and wisdom, but it will ensure that you are able to keep going effectively without falling over.

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<sup>21</sup> However, be aware that many children at risk are sexualised beyond their chronological ages because of things they have seen or experienced in their pasts. Be careful since these children can sometimes act out sexualised experiences with other children, especially those who are not as aware of sexuality as they are. For these reasons, children should never be left alone without adult supervision, whether they are your own children or children at risk



## Case Study

“You never have time for me! You don’t *listen*!” Yazmin slammed the door in her mother’s face, and muffled sobs from behind the wood broke the sudden, awkward silence. Her mother turned to me, a visitor and a friend, in exasperation. “I don’t understand her,” she said. “She keeps asking me for time, but I just can’t give it to her. I never know when the phone will ring or a situation will develop. It’s not that I don’t love her, but she just doesn’t understand.”

I watched her turn and leave and I didn’t tell her that her other daughter had voiced the same thing to me that Yasmin had just screamed – mainly that her mother didn’t have time for them, that she felt their family came second to the ministry. I thought then of so many families I had seen, had known, and situations that pulled a person between family and ministry. I thought about . . .

. . .the college-age son who didn’t want to come home for Christmas because he said ministry always intruded and his parents didn’t have time to spend with family at Christmas, so why should he come? He could spend the time with his friends who at least had a more relaxing holiday. . . .

. . .the elementary age daughter who couldn’t understand why she didn’t see her daddy for days at a time, even though he wasn’t traveling. He got home after she was in bed and left again before she woke up . . .

. . . the wife who struggled with insecurities and allowing her husband to lead in a ministry. She had three small children, and felt so alone. Her husband had tried everything to help her understand that he loved her more than the ministry, and was thinking of resigning . . .

. . . the grandmother who normally looked after her two grandchildren three days a week so their mother could work. When her son and daughter-in-law took in an abandoned baby in a foster care situation, she refused to look after the child on the days that she cared for the other children. She said it was not her flesh and blood . . .

. . . the adult son in ministry who tried to hide his tears in our staff meeting as he told how he could not financially support his widowed mother as he had been doing. The finances had just dried up . . .

I thought about all these situations and many, many more. My heart ached with all the pain I saw in the faces of those in ministry and in their families. And I knew there were some situations that no one could change, except God. But I also knew that some situations, like Yasmin’s, had hope for change, but it would take time, forgiveness, courage, commitment, and creativity.

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

If you want to be \_\_\_\_\_ while avoiding \_\_\_\_\_, you need to find ways to balance your time and energy between your \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_ life. The \_\_\_\_\_ tool can help you consider each area of your life and assess what's \_\_\_\_\_ and to identify areas that need more attention. An important part of creating and maintaining balance is the ability to say "\_\_\_\_" sometimes. The ability to say "no" comes from a healthy awareness of our \_\_\_\_\_. Many Christians in ministry struggle with trying to balance the needs of their \_\_\_\_\_ with their responsibilities and commitments to their ministries. Ways to meet your family's needs include \_\_\_\_\_ to them without the \_\_\_\_\_ of the ministry; and \_\_\_\_\_ them in \_\_\_\_\_ that affect them and letting them see \_\_\_\_\_. Both your family and your calling are \_\_\_\_\_ from God and are extremely \_\_\_\_\_. It can be helpful to find \_\_\_\_\_ and to establish \_\_\_\_\_ of rest and work.

## Discussion questions

What does it mean to have a balanced life? Give some examples of unbalanced lives from your experience.

1. "It is possible to be involved in ministry and still meet the needs of your family." Do you agree with this statement? In your opinion, how realistic is this idea?
2. In what ways might a person have to say "no" in his or her involvement in ministry in order to meet the needs of his or her family?
3. How are boundaries and the ability to say "no" like having good fences? Do you agree with this idea? Why or why not?
4. How does your culture view the idea of saying "no"? What would happen if you said "no" more often?
5. Name 3 ways mentioned in this section that can help you establish and maintain balance in your life.
6. In your own life, who are some people to whom you might need to say "no" at times?
7. What are mentors and how can they help you? Can you think of anyone who could be a spiritual or professional mentor to you at this time? How can you go about finding a spiritual mentor/encourager if you don't already have one?

## Activity

Use the 'Wheel of life' worksheet to look at the balance of your life.

## Lesson 9: What can organisations and ministries do to care for and support their workers?

### Summary

- Why should organisations care for staff well-being?
- How can organisations care for staff well-being?
- How can teams help promote good self and staff care?

It is important for every team, ministry or organisation to be committed to the health and wellbeing of its workers, whether paid or volunteers. This means that as individuals we look out for each other's needs as well as encourage each other to practice good self care. It should be emphasised that good staff care is also something that must be promoted and supported by good management (see lesson 13) and by wise policies adopted by the organisation as a whole.

### What should organisations put in place?

People in Aid is an organisation that is dedicated to good practice in management of people who work in the areas of relief and development.<sup>22</sup> They highlight that “the works of relief and development agencies often place great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk.” This is equally true of many organisations and ministries that work with children and communities in vulnerable situations. Because of the special demands on workers, People in Aid stresses that organisations “have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of their staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with them.”

**People in Aid Guiding Principle: People are central to the achievement of our mission. Our approach to the people who work for us is fundamental to the achievement of our mission. We recognise that the people who work for us merit respect and proper management, and that the effectiveness and success of our operations depend on the contributions of all salaried and contract staff, and volunteers.**

Some practical suggestions from People in Aid include<sup>23</sup>:

- Written policies are available to staff on security, individual health, care and support, health and safety.
- Programme plans include an assessment of security, travel and health risks specific to the country or region, reviewed at appropriate intervals.
- Staff members and any family members who might be affected are made aware of all risks relevant to the role they will be undertaking, and organisations explain the measures they have put in place to minimise those risks.
- Where the situation is volatile, security plans, with evacuation procedures, are reviewed regularly.
- Records are maintained of work-related injuries, sickness, accidents and fatalities, and are monitored to help assess and reduce future risk to staff.
- Work plans do not require more hours work than are set out in individual contracts.
- Time off and leave periods, based on written policies, are mandatory.

<sup>22</sup> [www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org) On the website you will find resources and a Code of Practice for Human Resource Management

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from People in Aid 'Policy Guide and Template: Rest and Relaxation', revised 2008

- All staff have a debriefing or exit interview at the end of any contract or assignment. Personal counseling is made available where possible. Managers are trained to ensure these services are provided.

In the case of organisations that work directly with children, a child protection policy is also essential for ensuring that workers know what is expected of their behaviour toward children. It can also help to protect workers and the organisation from false accusations. (see Workbook 6).

Other important policy issues to think about relate to work load and empowerment. It is important for team leaders and managers to be sensitive to how much (or little) responsibility is given to team members. Both too much responsibility and too little can be significant causes of stress. It is also important that leaders never assign responsibility for a project without giving the necessary authority to make decisions. This is a quick recipe for burnout through disillusionment and apathy. Encouragement from team members and leaders is crucial. Wherever possible, leaders and managers should look out for opportunities to help team members develop their gifts and skills.

Both for individual workers and for the ministry as a whole, setting clear goals is critical. The ministry must have a clearly articulated target population, role, and clear, relevant, attainable, and measurable objectives.<sup>24</sup> With clear goals the organisation will not try to tackle those things that are not a priority. This helps to avoid stress and overwork.

### **Creating a team culture that promotes self care**

A very important aspect is that the team, as a whole, recognises its vulnerability to stress. We must recognise that we have limitations. This recognition will lay the foundation that will provide space and time to discuss risks of burnout, vicarious trauma, etc. Here are a few suggestions for team exercises and strategies:

- *Make a regular time and space* for debriefing of ongoing experience of secondary trauma.
- *Listen to each other* Team members ought to feel free and encouraged to express both the negative and positive aspects of their work. Your colleague's description of what it is that wears them down will give you a good guide to what they need. Listen for underlying issues of motivation, expectations, theological issues or other perceptions or patterns that may be troubling them. We also need to be able to express our anger without being shamed. We may experience anger towards suffering, God, our inability to protect a child, and against perpetrators. If we cannot express our anger, the resulting bitterness will cause burnout.
- *Practice healthy conflict resolution* Conflict is a major cause of burnout: conflict within the team, between practitioner and child, and from other internal and external sources. Provide a venue for and create a team culture that encourages healthy conflict resolution.
- *Reflect as a team* Taking note of feelings of consolation and desolation, freedom and shame, ask and reflect on the following pair of questions: What was the most life-giving moment of my day? What was the most life-draining moment of my day?
- *Bust ministry myths.* Uncover, verbalise and address myths that subtly sap our energy. Myths that shape us and drain us might include: I am God's only answer, I can never say no: every opportunity to help is God-ordained, I must now become this child's parent, following whole heartedly after God legitimately includes sacrificing my sanity/family to ministry, God is/we do, humility means self-denial and deprivation, and so on.

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<sup>24</sup> See workbook 7

## Case study

Here are two examples of small organisations that made important changes in order to care for staff better:

1. **Mukisa Foundation** is a centre for disabled children in central Kampala which serves 300 children and their families. It started in February 2006 with the aim of working with families of children with disabilities in order to empower them, and to help the children live their lives to their full potential. Looking back, they see, “We have the dream and the will to run Mukisa but we have no training to run an organisation...”

When they started to learn about staff care, the leaders of Mukisa made some small changes that had a big effect on the staff and volunteers as well as on the children they care for:

- Weekly staff meetings of all medical staff to review each child’s case and adjust care plans as needed
- Regular meetings with volunteers, who had previously been poorly focused and thus rather ineffective, has led to them getting fully engaged with practical work around the centre
- Showing appreciation to staff and volunteers by sharing donations of sugar, for example and saying thank you
- Giving responsibilities and training to members of staff and parents, for example for basic physiotherapy tasks, which has greatly increased their confidence and satisfaction

Subsequently the whole atmosphere at the centre is different. Attitudes of the staff have changed, which in turn has affected relationships with the children and their parents.

2. **House of the Heroes** is a residential care facility in the Philippines. It was established in 2009 to provide long term shelter to abandoned, neglected and orphaned children, ages 7 to 10 years old. House of the Heroes has 4 full time staff. They made the following changes in order to care for their staff better:

- Ensure that staff are familiar with the organisation’s vision, mission and goals and program
- Ensure that the organisation complied with government benefits for staff (e.g. social security payments)
- Write staff development plan for members of staff

After implementing these changes, a member of staff commented,

“There is improvement in how we manage and do things in the office. The weekly devotion and staff meeting provide a venue for us to encourage and lift one another, it is also the venue where our Executive Director talks about the vision, mission and goals of House of the Heroes.

Because of the training on SSS, Pag Ibig and other required benefits, our organisation enrolled us to those government insurance agencies. I feel the care and concern of my organisation by making sure that we have SSS and Pag Ibig benefits. As a result our staff are inspired and the children under our care are happy. I believe that if the staff feels the concern and care from their employer, they will also show the same love and concern to the children we are ministering to.”

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Every team, ministry or organization must be committed to the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of its workers, whether paid or volunteers. People in Aid stresses that organizations “have a \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of their staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with them.” It is important to have written policies, including a \_\_\_\_\_, risk assessments, \_\_\_\_\_ plans, records of \_\_\_\_\_, work plans that do not require more hours work than are set out in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ time off and leave periods, and \_\_\_\_\_. Team leaders and managers should be sensitive to how much (or little) \_\_\_\_\_ is given to team members. Wherever possible, leaders and managers should look out for opportunities to help team members develop their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Both for individual workers and for the ministry as a whole, setting clear \_\_\_\_\_ is critical. The team, as a whole, should recognize its vulnerability to \_\_\_\_\_.

### Discussion questions

1. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that workers take care of themselves?
2. What can organisations do to promote good self care?
3. Why is it important to ensure that work load is correct? What sorts of problems happen if the work load is not right for the worker?
4. Why is it important to have the authority to make decisions if you have responsibility for an area of work? Can you think of examples where this has not happened? What were the results?
5. How do clear goals help contribute to the well being of workers?
6. What sort of culture is there in your team or organisation? How does it promote or harm self care? How could it change?

### Questions for managers

7. How does your organisation care for the well-being of the people who work with you?
8. Look at the suggestions in the lesson. Which of these happen in your place of work? Which could be introduced? Which would need to be modified?
9. How is authority delegated in your organisation?
10. How can you help to build a culture that promotes self care and well-being of your workers?

## Part 3 Developing ourselves and our teams

In Part 3 our focus is on the organizations, ministries and teams that you work in and how you can grow and develop within them. While all of the lessons are useful for you whatever your position, some of them contain particular advice for managers. If you are not a manager, it might be good to share your learning with your managers in an appropriate way.

Lesson 10 takes a look at performance development and how you can set meaningful goals to help you develop and grow professionally. Lesson 11 thinks about how you could help other members of your team to develop more through mentoring and coaching. It is particularly useful for managers and team leaders, but anyone can use these methods to help others to grow.

In lessons 12, 13 and 14 we focus on your work team. Lesson 12 looks at factors that make teams more effective. Lesson 13 introduces the importance of good management for getting the most out of teams. Lesson 14 concentrates on conflict – what it is, how to handle it and how to avoid it.

Finally, in lesson 15 we look at a very important topic: how we can keep God at the centre of our work, our organization and all that we are doing with children.





## Lesson 10: How can we develop and grow in the way we work?

### Summary

- Using gifts and strengths
- What is performance development?
- How to set realistic goals for development
- What are good ways to learn?

The reality of any job is that it involves some tasks that match our current skill level or competence well and others that don't. Sometimes this is because we are doing the wrong kind of tasks for our personal gifting and skills. Learning more about our strengths can help us avoid burn out, be more effective and enjoy our life and work more. More often, the jobs we have to do will challenge us to develop some of our existing skills more or learn new ones.

Performance development is concerned with improving **our existing knowledge, skills and ways of working** or **helping us to acquire new ones** so that we can do all aspects of our job more effectively and achieve better results more often, on time and in the best way.

It's simple: if we want to improve our performance, then we will need to engage in deliberate, planned performance development. Learning is a natural part of life, but we often have associations (positive and negative) that are linked to specific past learning experiences that can have a strong influence on how open we are to new learning opportunities today. The changing nature of the work environment, new challenges that arise, the fact that no-one stops learning and improving their skills, God's ongoing work in our life... These are all important reasons for being committed to an attitude of constant, deliberate personal development that is both professional and spiritual.

### How can we set goals for performance development?

- **Key responsibilities**

Think about your job description and your current work goals and note them down

- **Core competencies**

Think about the most important skills that you need to excel in the tasks you have noted down

*It can be helpful to think of competencies in the following three categories:*

*Skills (e.g.: Delegation – something in which you can make mistakes)*

*Knowledge (e.g.: Child Protection Law – something you have to get right or you will mislead)*

*ABC Attitude, Behavior, Confidence (including your spiritual development)*

- **Rate yourself**

The next step is to consider your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the competencies you have identified. Think of the level at which you would like to be performing and how you are performing now. Be honest – this is about helping you to develop, not judging any weaknesses you feel. Decide if you are strong, need to improve or weak. Remember you don't have to be an expert at everything in order to be effective in your particular role!

*In identifying strong and weak areas, it is essential to ask for feedback from others on your work and your impact on them. Other people are able to see things about us that we cannot see so clearly. A manager should be committed to giving regular, constructive feedback to those she manages to help their growth and development.*

- **Set development priorities**

The next step in the process is to look at your brainstorm sheet of tasks, competencies and your personal ratings. Decide which competencies are most urgent to improve (probably the most important tasks and the biggest gaps between current and desired level). These will be your development priorities.

### **When should you review your development?**

It is sensible to review your performance and set goals for development at regular intervals – for example, every 6 -12 months. This helps you keep track of what you are learning and to make sure that your development goals stay up-to-date with any changes in your job requirements. In the future, you will be able to start the process by reviewing your progress with the development goals you set yourself.

It is also useful to take the opportunity to think about your goals for career development, if you have some. There may be learning and development goals that would help prepare you for future roles that you want to grow into.

### **Methods of learning**

Many organisations will feel they do not have enough resources to provide training and development opportunities for their workers. However, learning does not have to be expensive! Take a moment to think about the different ways in which you have learned or developed your skills over the past 12 months. Notice which were planned and which just happened. Being aware of your development priorities means that you can make the most of all sorts of opportunities to learn.

For most of us, on-the-job learning is often the most appropriate way to learn simply because it can be tailored to the job in hand or to new work that's on the horizon. Although it will often be planned, learning also involves making the most of the day-to-day opportunities that come your way, such as learning from:

- Partners and volunteers, and other NGOs
- A presentation, meeting or talk you attend
- A radio programme you listen to, a TV programme you watch, a book you read
- A mentor or coach

Some attitudes that promote learning and development are:

- Acknowledging that you will always need to learn
- Being responsible and pro-active about learning
- Realising that you need to engage in a wide range of learning activities both in the workplace and elsewhere (i.e. not just courses)
- Demonstrating and applying what we have learned in our day-to-day work (in other words, accepting that learning is not complete until we have put our newfound knowledge or acquired skills to use on the job)
- Sharing what we have learned with others through mentoring, explaining, demonstrating, etc.

## Case Study

During the 1950s, there were not many machines (lawn mowers) to cut the long grass in Lima, Peru. Grass was cut by hand, using a machete. It could be a back-breaking job, taking hours to accomplish, and had to be repeated every month.

One day, there was a knock on Enrique Leon's door. A man stood outside, machete in hand, offering to cut the grass in the garden. Enrique looked at him, considered, and gave his permission. Immediately, the man went to work. Enrique watched him from his study window where he was preparing his sermon for Sunday. All morning long he swung his machete through the grass, and finally finished in the afternoon, hot, sweaty and dirty. Enrique paid him and he went on his way.

The next month, a knock came again. This time a different man stood at the door, machete in hand, offering to cut the grass. Again, Enrique looked at him, considered, what he needed to do and went back to his study to work on his sermon. After an hour, he realized that he wasn't hearing any noise from the man working. He got up and went to the window. No one was in the garden.

Enrique couldn't understand why the man didn't appear to be doing his job so he went to find out. He found the man sitting on the doorstep, carefully sharpening his machete and testing its edge.

"What are you doing?" Enrique demanded. "I asked you to cut the grass!"

"I will," the man replied. "But first I always sharpen my machete. When it is dull, the job takes a long time. The grass is cut unevenly and it takes a lot of time and effort to make it look nice. When my machete is sharp, I can cut the grass quickly, with less effort, and it looks good. It grows better, too." And he calmly stood up, whistling, walked into the garden and began to cut the grass.

Enrique watched him from the window. Steadily, smoothly the grass fell, while the man whistled and moved without effort. Within an hour he was done and knocking on the door again. Enrique paid him, and looked at his garden. It had never looked so good. Closing the door, Enrique thought to himself, "I should have thanked him for more than just cutting the grass. I learned a lesson today. A little preparation, a little investment sure makes for an easier and more effective job."

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Any job involves some \_\_\_\_\_ that match our current skill level or \_\_\_\_\_ well and others that don't. Often, our jobs will \_\_\_\_\_ us to develop some of our existing \_\_\_\_\_ more or learn new ones. \_\_\_\_\_ development is concerned with improving our existing knowledge, skills and ways of working or helping us to acquire new ones so that we can do all aspects of our job more \_\_\_\_\_ and achieve \_\_\_\_\_ results more \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ and in the \_\_\_\_\_ way. We can set \_\_\_\_\_ for performance development by considering key \_\_\_\_\_ in our job description, identifying our core \_\_\_\_\_, rating our strengths and weaknesses, and setting \_\_\_\_\_. Learning does not have to be \_\_\_\_\_. Being aware of your development priorities means that you can make the most of all sorts of opportunities to learn. Your \_\_\_\_\_ can promote learning and development.

## Discussion questions

1. How important do you think it is to work out of your strengths?
2. Do you have an idea of what your particular strengths and weaknesses might be? List them. Who could you go to in your situation, both within and outside your organization, to find out more about your strengths or weaknesses?
3. What skills do you need to develop or improve to do your job?
4. Are there other areas where you would like to learn more or develop?
5. What is your attitude toward learning? How could it improve?
6. What opportunities do you have for learning as part of your job? How could you find new opportunities?
7. How could you share what you are learning with others?

## Lesson 11: How can we mentor others so they grow personally and professionally?

### Summary

- What is coaching and what is mentoring?
- What do I need to know about using mentoring to help others to grow?
- How can I identify opportunities to use mentoring at work to develop my team?

When we refer to a mentor we usually have in mind someone whose example we can follow. A mentor, therefore, will usually have travelled the path you are on and, because they are further along that path than you, they will be able to encourage, support and advise you. A mentor will often use coaching skills to help the mentee (person who is being mentored).

Coaching is a methodology and is a little different to the kind of sports coach some of us are familiar with – the sports coach who *tells* you (shouts!) what to do. In this lesson we will see how you can use coaching skills in order to mentor your team. The coaching methodology uses questions and is designed to empower those you mentor so that in due course they will be better able to think through their daily challenges and make decisions for themselves.

Have you ever noticed how often Jesus asks a question rather than giving advice or telling his disciples what to do?<sup>25</sup> There seems to be a great deal more learning to be gained by helping people to think for themselves rather than be dependent on someone else. Often it is a simple ‘open’ question (i.e. a question that cannot be answered by ‘yes’ or ‘no’) that will help your mentee to think ‘outside the box’ (i.e. in a way that is different to what is normal for them and, perhaps, a bit challenging as a result).

As a mentor you can use coaching questions in order to help your mentee (the person you are mentoring) consider their situation, and its options, in order to know what course of action (or inaction) might be most appropriate as well as *how* to express themselves and adapt their behaviors to bring about the result they are looking for. The case study demonstrates that this methodology can be used by a mentor for situations that are quite practical as well as those where a change of attitude might be what your team member needs to develop personally and/or professionally.

Some typical coaching questions to help the mentee/coachee think things through might be:

- What have you noticed about this situation?
- What would be the best outcome?
- What obstacles might you need to overcome?
- How will you overcome them?
- What kind of help do you think you might need?
- What else?
- Who might be able to help you?
- How are your feelings/attitude affected by this?
- What assumptions are you making?
- What has led you to making those assumptions?
- What will you do now? <sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For example, see Matthew 16:15

<sup>26</sup> A useful resource to introduce you to coaching is Whitmore (1992)

As a mentor you will have opportunity to use your experience to help your team members. Think of your own 'case studies'; what have you learned that you could share with a team member who is struggling in a similar area? Or perhaps you have an example from someone else you know. Mentors want the best for their mentees and are curious about what might be preventing them from becoming all that God intends, personally and professionally.

Perhaps the greatest attribute of a mentor is their ability to be a good listener. The mentor pays close attention so s/he can really understand their mentee and their situation. The very act of listening to our team members demonstrates to them a commitment to supporting their development. There are three levels of listening used in coaching:

- Level 1 (coachee): I listen to the question and to the thoughts that come into my head as a result
- Level 2 (coach): I listen to the coachee; if a thought comes into my head I chase it away and return to concentrating on what the coachee is saying
- Level 3 (coach): I listen intently to the coachee and also notice their body language and the 'atmosphere' in the room to help inform me about the coachee.

A mentor doesn't impose their opinion, they use coaching and example so that the mentee can take ownership of their actions and attitudes. A mentor *will* give advice when asked but their objective will be to empower the mentee to make the changes *they* recognize are necessary.

Begin to look for opportunities to be a mentor to your team members. Sometimes you can do this in the group situation but more often you will find there will be greater impact when you meet with them one to one. Where have you noticed a team member is not performing well or not getting the best out of relationships with other team members? Have they got a difficult decision to make? In all of these situations, and many, many more you will be able to help. When you get used to working like this you will find it much more satisfying to mentor than to direct because your team will perform better, get along better and feel a greater sense of satisfaction in their work!

## Case Study

Chris and Abraham were not getting on well. Both of them went to their team leader, Remi, to complain about the other. Chris thought Abraham was being a bully and Abraham thought Chris was lazy.

Remi met with each of them in turn and, before asking them details about the situation, she told them about a time when she had experienced a difficult working relationship and found that when she got to know the other person a bit better and asked the reasons for their method of working it all made better sense. Remi was able to explain things from her perspective and they worked out a compromise – each adapting their methods to ensure the other's needs were met. The whole team benefitted from the more efficient work practice *and* the improved working relationship.

In Remi's meeting with Chris she went on to ask the following questions:

- How are things between you and Abraham at the moment?
- What is it that Abraham says/does that makes you feel bullied?
- How could Abraham make his point without making you feel this way?
- What do you think causes Abraham to have these opinions about you?
- What do you think you could do to change the situation?
- What do you think would happen if you explained to Abraham how his words make you feel?
- How could you help Abraham to change?
- What will you do to improve your relationship with Abraham?
- A meeting sounds like a good idea – what do you think is important for you to say to Abraham and what do you want to know about him?

Remi then met with Abraham and asked the following questions:

- How are things between you and Chris at the moment?
- What makes you think Chris is lazy?
- As you know, Chris is unhappy about the way you express yourself to him; is there another way of bringing about the change you want to see?
- What do you think might help the situation?
- What part could you play?
- Is there any change that you could make that would contribute to improving your relationship with Chris?
- What would be the first steps to take?
- What will you do?
- A meeting outside of the workplace sounds a great place to start – what do you think will be important for Chris to know about you and what do you need to understand about him?

Abraham invited Chris out for a drink after work. He apologized for sometimes being a bit aggressive in the way he spoke and they each then explained the effect the other's behavior had on each of them. It transpired that Chris had been bullied at school and so when in the presence of someone aggressive he would take extra care not to make a mistake and this slowed him up. Abraham came from a family where they happily expressed their points of view without frills and he had no idea this way of communicating could have such a detrimental affect on someone. It took time to change habits but this was the beginning of a better understanding that eventually led to greatly improved team relationship which had a positive impact on their work output.

### Exercises:

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

As a mentor I can support my team to develop by using \_\_\_\_\_ skills. Helping team members to think through situations \_\_\_\_\_ them to make good decisions and change behaviors as necessary. When appropriate, usually when asked, I am free to give \_\_\_\_\_ although my preference is that they will work out the best course of action for themselves. When I am using coaching the most important thing I do is to \_\_\_\_\_ to my team member. I will make good use of open \_\_\_\_\_ to get the mentee to consider all the alternatives and to think '\_\_\_\_\_. I will use my \_\_\_\_\_ to demonstrate perspectives/methods/ outcomes I think would be useful to my mentee. \_\_\_\_\_ used questions when he was helping them to understand a point he was making.

### Discussion questions

1. How can listening to your team improve performance and working relationships?
2. How does Jesus' interaction with people encourage us to be good mentors?
3. In what kind of situations do you think it would be helpful to give advice?
4. When is it appropriate for a team leader to be directional rather than use coaching?
5. Think of the current members of your team; is there anyone who might benefit from you taking on the role of mentor?

### Activity

*Have a conversation with a friend and practice listening at level 2 (listening intently to your friend and not allowing yourself to think of your response to what they are saying). Instead of giving your opinion to what they say, ask them a question that will give you a deeper understanding of the situation. Keep asking questions (note – only decide on the question you want to ask them AFTER they have finished what they are saying as you need to concentrate on listening).*

*Now and again go to level 3 and notice their body language – are you convinced about what they are saying? How important to them is it? How does their body language change with their level of interest in the subject?*



## Lesson 12: What helps teams work well together?

### Summary

- What are team dynamics?
- How can we build better teams?

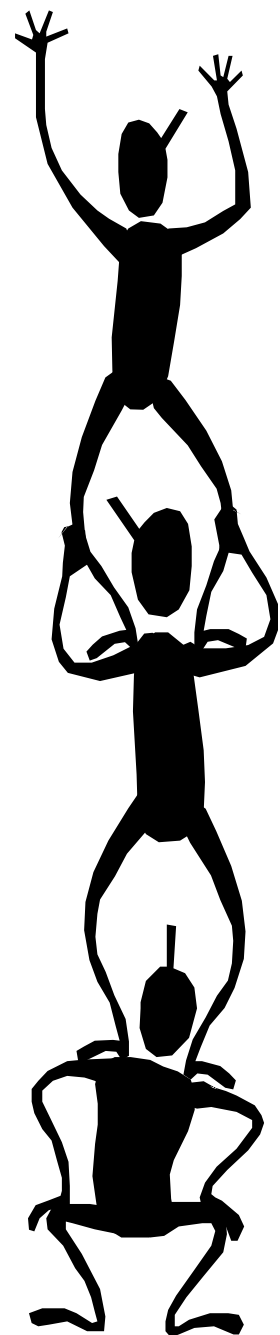
A good team is one that has the balance of skills and experience necessary to fulfill its objectives. It is also more than that – the individual ways of working of the team members (their competencies/behaviors) will often need to be chosen too. For instance, I might be great at writing reports on my work and collecting data from the rest of the team but if you asked me to stand up in front of everyone to give a verbal report I might run and catch the next bus home! We are so much more than what we can do and understand.

So how do team dynamics – the ways in which we work with one another - enhance or reduce the overall ability of the team to achieve its objectives? A useful tool in helping us to understand each other's preferred way of working was developed by Dr Meredith Belbin.<sup>27</sup> For now, let's take a look at a very simple description of the Belbin characters and think about our own teams; do you recognize characteristics of your team members here?

Figure 1: Belbin's Team Roles

<b>Action Oriented Roles</b>	Shaper	<i>Challenges the team to improve.</i>
	Implementer	<i>Puts ideas into action.</i>
	Completer Finisher	<i>Ensures thorough, timely completion.</i>
<b>People Oriented Roles</b>	Coordinator	<i>Acts as a chairperson/team leader.</i>
	Team Worker	<i>Encourages cooperation.</i>
	Resource Investigator	<i>Explores outside opportunities.</i>
<b>Thought Oriented Roles</b>	Plant	<i>Presents new ideas and approaches.</i>
	Monitor-Evaluator	<i>Analyzes the options.</i>
	Specialist	<i>Provides specialized skills.</i>

As we think about our team members and their natural way of working we can see if there are any roles that are absent which would increase the effectiveness of the team. Then, if possible, we can find that type and invite them to join us in our work.



<sup>27</sup> For an article explaining Belbin's ideas see [http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_83.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_83.htm). Belbin test reports (which show you the role(s) to which you most closely relate) can be purchased from <http://www.belbin.com/rte.asp?id=296>.

Helping the team to appreciate one another's talents is an important building block in developing the team. At the same time we need to keep in mind that sometimes the talents we demonstrate are affected by the makeup of the group. For example, someone might be a good monitor-evaluator and a great implementer; if there is another strong monitor-evaluator in the team they will possibly not demonstrate that talent and, instead, more strongly show their implementer abilities. We and our colleagues will usually have much more to offer than is immediately obvious which is one of the reasons it is good to get to know one another!

If I want to develop my team I will be looking for what is obvious and also for signs of other strengths that are not being exercised. The reason for this is that teams change and needs change, depending on the objectives and activities; for a team leader to be able to inspire the team to respond to these changes will encourage success and satisfaction to all that they are fulfilling their potential. So, sometimes the project we will be working on will need someone with a high attention to detail (completer finisher) and at other times this might not be very important. An ideas person (plant) may be necessary to work out ways to address a problem but at other times such a person might not be needed and find working in that team quite boring because their strongest talent is not being utilized.

Building understanding and appreciation of one another can increase the ability of the team to function well and there are two important ways this can be done:

**Team meetings:** Get into the habit of meeting with the whole team on a regular basis – this could be a monthly half day or, if the team is geographically dispersed, a whole day three or four times a year. Think carefully about what you would like to achieve at these meetings – none of us has time to spend in a meeting that doesn't accomplish anything! For instance:

- What is the 'business' purpose of the meeting – e.g. inform / train / develop team relationships / brainstorm together to find solutions to problems?
- What programme will you plan for the meeting in order to give variety and keep the interest of the group?
- Are there any exercises or games that would be fun and help the team absorb the day's theme

Plan the meeting well, do not overload the agenda, prepare in advance so you are calm on the day – and then be prepared for things to crop up that will need you to decide if they should be allowed to be prioritized over the agenda!

**Socials:** If a team spends time together socially they will get the chance to see a different side to one another which will usually be helpful. How about having a meal together? You could make a theme for the evening and the team could all contribute dishes and drinks that would be in keeping with it. Perhaps it would be possible occasionally to go to a restaurant together - and take turns to choose which one. What other socializing opportunities are there in the area you choose to meet – is the weather good for a BBQ or a picnic? How about hiring a boat or two for an hour on the river and then going for a coffee somewhere? Is someone taking part in a sporting competition – how about the team going to support them?

*Building a team that recognizes, appreciates and makes the most of the talents of one another is satisfying and highly effective. As Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6*

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.*

## Case Study

### Appreciation of one another

Pedro was full of ideas which were often exciting and sometimes impractical and the rate at which they flowed from him could be tiring! He had more than one to share at the next team meeting. What was always a bit difficult was that when the team didn't immediately tell Pedro what a wonderful idea it was and drop everything to put it into action, he would feel he wasn't understood or appreciated. As a result he would make those who questioned his ideas feel they were less intelligent than him, that they were being obstructive because they were jealous of his bright ideas or too lazy to take action.

The team leader, Chris, had a problem with another member of the team, Ana; she just couldn't make up her mind and Chris needed people who knew what they were doing and could focus. He saw how great she was at smoothing over trouble between colleagues and really appreciated this skill – but maybe she was just too nice.

Chris decided to get all the team to do Belbin Team Roles questionnaires which were then processed for them. When he had received the results he called a team meeting.

The group worked their way through each team member's results and discovered some interesting things about themselves and one another. Pedro was able to see that when Eva appeared to be always criticizing his ideas that she was fulfilling her role of monitor evaluator by analysing all the elements of the idea and that this skill was very important to prevent the team from enthusiastically taking on board an idea with significant flaws. He also saw that the implementers of the group were positively trying to work out ways of putting the idea into a workable format and that they were on his side rather than trying to slow him down. They were a team using their different skills.

Chris and Anna saw that the 'forgivable faults' of the Belbin team builder were to shy away from confrontation and to be a bit indecisive – perhaps because a decision one way or another could create friction with team members! The team as a whole talked about making their discussions a 'safe place' to openly air views in the hope that both Anna and Pedro would become less sensitive to the airing of differing views.

Another positive result of recognising each other's talents was that the team more proactively drew on one another's skills and aptitudes and worked a great deal better together as a result.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

A good team recognizes that, like the differing parts of the \_\_\_\_\_, team members all have varying \_\_\_\_\_ to contribute which ensure the team has the \_\_\_\_\_ required to achieve its objectives. Team working can be improved by \_\_\_\_\_ together regularly and having a well planned \_\_\_\_\_, some \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ time.

## Discussion questions

1. How balanced do you feel your current team is?
2. Are there any Belbin types missing from your team that would make it more effective?
3. If the answer to 2 is yes, how can you address that?
4. What could you do to get to know your team mates better?
5. What Belbin type do you think you are most like?
6. What will you do to address the 'forgivable faults'?

## Activity

*Think of a project or programme you have been involved in from the recent past. What was the composition of the team? Did you have the Belbin type characters that were necessary? If not, what was missing? What character(s) might have made it even more successful in its impact?*

## Lesson 13: Why is good management important?

### Summary

- What is good management?
- How can management help teams become more effective?

In this lesson we will look at just a small part of what makes 'good management' and this will be in respect of our overarching theme of developing ourselves and our team. It is important to have good management in order to maximize the combination of skills, experience and talent of the team. Remember, a good manager is reliable, trustworthy, honest and worthy of the respect of their team just as they respect their team members.

A team means more than one person and so perhaps the first thing to say is that a team manager will be more effective if they are able to make everyone in that team feel included. Our lesson on coaching and mentoring will be important to remember as we go through this one; in particular the development of our listening skills to help our team feel they are 'heard'.

An effective team manager will include the following in their relationship with their team members:

- Time to get to know the talents your team members bring to the group and the ways your team members most effectively learn
- Setting of targets/objectives/goals
- Supervision
- Guidance
- Feedback

### Getting to know your team

Getting to know your team members as individuals and how their personalities and ways of working impact the team when they work together is very important (see lesson 12). A good manager will also help other team members to appreciate each other's talents and ways of working and learning. It can help if the person who learns by 'doing' (having a go at it) understands that their colleague needs to be aware of the theory of why something is done a certain way and/or time to think it through. A good manager will help the team to appreciate the balance of differing approaches – the person who has ten ideas in an hour can be helped to value the person who is able to take that idea and shape it into something that can work; they in turn can enjoy being able to rely on another team member who will ensure that all smallest details are taken care of properly.

### Setting targets, objectives and goals

When we set out on a journey we all like to know our destination and have a map which gives directions and markers along the way so we know we are going in the right direction and taking the best route – sometimes that may be the one with the best scenery (quality) and sometimes it will need to be the one that is most direct (speed). Our good manager will set objectives (these can also be called targets or goals) for their team and individuals on the team. The team will have an overall objective which will fit into the strategy that has been agreed.

Here is an example of objectives for each team member that fit into an overall strategy for the team:

**Strategy:** To improve the nutrition of children living on the street

**Team objective:** To set up a soup kitchen three evenings per week on the southern edge of the city

**Individual 1 objective:** To visit churches to encourage members of the congregation to volunteer to help

**Individual 2 objective:** To find out whether local authority permission is needed and identify suitable premises

**Individual 3 objective:** To find out how many children are living on the street (and therefore to be prioritised for the food programme) as opposed to being there daily to beg and then return to their family at night

### Supervision and guidance

The good manager will need to know how the team are progressing; they will, therefore, have regular one to one (1:1) meetings with the individual team members (weekly or fortnightly) and a monthly team meeting to ensure everyone is updated on progress and can support each other in their common strategic goal.

The 1:1 meeting will offer the opportunity to practice coaching and mentoring skills. This will ensure the manager gets to know the individual increasingly well, what they are finding difficult and need support with and what their natural talents are. The manager will ask the team members how they are getting on with their objectives, what they are finding difficult, what they think might help, what support they think they would benefit from, what is going well, whether there are lessons to learn from what is going well to apply to areas that are not, and so on. This will give the team member ownership of their work and, most importantly, opportunity to say when they need support. Guidance can be given if the team member doesn't come up with good solutions as a result of the 'coaching' questions.

### Feedback

Feedback is essential to good management. However, it needs to be given calmly and thoughtfully at the appropriate time. This means that if a team member does something incorrect or of poor quality or foolish, the manager will *respond* rather than react. This means that there will not be an angry *reaction* but a suitable response in a meeting with that person out of earshot of others and where an opportunity is given to the team member to explain the reasons for their action/inaction which caused the problem.

Feedback needs to be honest and how direct or diplomatic you need to be will depend on the individual team member. Being kind does not mean avoiding 'saying it like it is'; it is not kind to do nothing in the face of poor performance; the greatest kindness is to respect the person enough to want them to be enabled to work to their best. Always start feedback with some positive things you have noticed since the last meeting or in their work in general. Hopefully when you ask them if they have had any problems or difficult challenges an opening will present itself for you to be able to give them feedback. An example of this is set out in the case study.

## Case Study

### Feedback

Kushna was an office manager and her line manager, Ann, had held that post before being promoted. Ann was very aware that Kushna needed to be given the freedom to do the role her way and so Ann encouraged her as much as possible. Things started well, Kushna was quick to learn and had some good ideas which Ann agreed she could implement. After 8 months in the job, however, Kushna became less enthusiastic, started cutting corners and her overall performance deteriorated.

Ann made a few comments which she thought might be encouraging but things continued to get worse. Ann wondered what she could do and recognized that she had not been reliable in her 1:1 meetings with Kushna and, because they sat next to each other, had not prioritised setting time aside for Kushna and, instead, had been managing her through informal conversations.

They had a meeting and Ann apologised for cancelling their 1:1s several times when she had been under work pressure and said that they were going to be a priority for her now. She then said that she had noticed that Kushna did not seem to be achieving as much as she had earlier in the year and wondered what the reasons might be. She learned that Kushna worked both faster and with greater quality when she was under pressure and after the first few months this pressure had lessened as she had achieved some objectives. Ann had the courage to go a little deeper and feedback to Kushna that not only had the quality of her work deteriorated – and she gave her some examples – but some things had been left undone. This demonstrated to Kushna that although Ann had not been meeting with her it did not mean that she had not noticed what was happening. They agreed some new objectives within a time framework and Ann was also able to delegate some other work to Kushna which proved helpful for both of them.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

To be a good manager I will \_\_\_\_\_ my team members so that I understand what their \_\_\_\_\_ are and the way they \_\_\_\_\_ most effectively. I will agree a number of clear \_\_\_\_\_ with them that will have a time framework. I will priorities having \_\_\_\_\_ time with them individually and to having regular \_\_\_\_\_ meetings so we can support one another and be aware of how we are all contributing to the strategy. In my 1:1 meetings I will give honest \_\_\_\_\_ of what they are doing well and what is not going so well. I will be available to them when they need \_\_\_\_\_ so they can learn from my experience when they request it.

## Discussion questions

1. What would be a good way to agree on objectives for individuals in a team?
2. How can you supervise and give feedback without becoming a micro-manager?
3. When is it helpful to use coaching questions and when is it appropriate to give guidance?
4. What is the difference between giving feedback to individuals and giving it to the team at a team meeting?
5. What is the most important quality of a good team manager?

## Activity

*Describe your ideal line manager – what kind of person are they? How do they make you feel? What do they say or do that you find helpful? How do they help you to learn from your mistakes? How do they encourage you?*



## Lesson 14: What happens when teams do not work well together?

### Summary

- How does conflict develop and how can it be resolved?
- How can conflict at work be avoided?

For many Christians, conflict is uncomfortable and something to be avoided at all costs. Some Christians also believe that conflict is unbiblical. But the truth is, conflict *will* happen because of our fallen natures; it's how conflict is handled that makes a difference. Handled correctly, conflict can build up your team, forging stronger bonds of trust and competence. Handled incorrectly, conflict can lead to hurt, bitterness, unforgiveness, and destruction.

### What kinds of conflicts are there?

First of all, be aware that there are stages to conflict. David Cormack talks about 3 stages in the development of conflict.<sup>28</sup> In the last stage, conflict is still resolvable, but destruction has already begun. If you are aware of these stages, you can help prevent conflict before it becomes deadly.

- **Stage 1: separation stage**

Stage 1 in Cormack's model is called the separation stage. It's when people first realise that they don't agree. If, at this stage, both people are willing to honestly talk about their difference and work constructively towards a solution, conflict can become a stepping stone towards something positive. With both people working on it, the solution could become something greater than either of them could have thought of alone. Also, working through the conflict in a positive way can build their relationship, making it stronger and thus easier to trust the other person who is involved.

If, however, the people choose not to communicate, then they begin to see the other person as the "opposition." They begin to distance themselves from the other person. At this point, by following Jesus' advice for handling conflict as found in Matthew 18:15-20, destructive conflict can still be avoided.

- **Stage 2: divergence stage**

If none of this works, then the second stage of conflict is called the divergence stage. The situation becomes more heated as the people involved become angrier and begin to act on that anger. They can cause further damage by their words and actions. In this situation, a mediator might be necessary to help resolve the differences.

- **Stage 3: destructive stage**

If no mediator is found, the conflict can escalate to the third level – the destructive stage. Here, the people involved see each other as "enemies" and do what they can to undermine or attack the other person. The situation can continue until the people move away from each other, someone else steps in, or they just become exhausted with the conflict. But, even when a seeming "peace" has been restored, this does not mean that the conflict is fully and finally resolved. All the hurt, bitterness, and anger can still be there.

<sup>28</sup> Cormack (1989) and Prior, Bennett and Bartel (2003)

## Role Conflict

Another type of conflict that arises is when a person has more than one role. For instance, when their role in a ministry demands more and more time and begins to intrude on their role and time as a parent or spouse. In these cases, it is important that the person is sure of what God is asking them to do. They will need to take action to reduce the conflict. This could include setting up firm boundaries on their time and protecting that; it could involve talking with supervisors and/or family members, or it could even involve changing jobs or responsibilities within the ministry.

## How can we avoid the kind of conflict that will hurt our team?

Here are some quick tips to helping avoid conflict *before* it starts:

- **Build *healthy relationships*** – encourage people to talk honestly with each other, especially when they have different opinions or preferences. Respect that other people *are* different; don't expect them to think or act the same way you do. Have fun times together – this lays a good foundation of trust and helps with communication when conflict eventually arises.
- **Prayer** – pray with your colleagues and the children with whom you work. This can give you insights in to how they think, what's in their hearts and how they respond. It forges bonds between you. Also, pray *for* these people. As you lift them before the Lord, He often gives you His heart for them and you become more dedicated to working through conflict with them when it arises.
- **Be clear about goals and expectations** – a lot of conflict can be avoided when other people understand what you would like and what everyone is working towards. Confusion most often leads to failure, anger, and bitterness.
- **Listen** to other people in your group. Don't take their criticism personally; focus on hearing their meaning. Be willing to change your behavior for the sake of the group.
- **Be aware** of the attacks of the enemy. While Satan is not responsible for every conflict, it is in his interests to promote division amongst Christians. Be aware of his influence and make sure *you* are walking close to the Lord.
- Learn to **live with each other's differences**: As 2 Corinthians 12 says, we are all different parts of the same body, and each person serves a different function. Celebrate that difference! Whether it is due to gender, circumstances, culture or age, look for the good things in people and leave the negative to one side.
- **Forgive** – when someone hurts you, forgive them quickly. If you don't, when conflict arises, it is much easier to be destructive when you have a long list of unresolved "grudges" against the other person.

## If conflict arises, how do we resolve it?

First of all, both sides need to admit that there actually is a problem and that they want to resolve it. This involves realising that each side has to take responsibility for some of the blame. At times a third person is needed to help people reach this point.

Secondly, the people involved need to actually talk about their differences, what has happened, and how they feel about it. They need to be able to feel that they can do this without the other side judging them, interrupting or condemning them. It's important that all of the negative emotions are expressed so that there are no more lingering beneath the surface after the conflict is resolved.

Thirdly, both people need to ask for and receive forgiveness for their part in the conflict. If the original reason for the conflict has not been resolved, then both people still need to work through that and find a solution. But without forgiveness, and working through the emotions of what has happened, it is too easy for those emotions to come up again and the conflict to be re-opened.

## Case Study

There were 4 people on the leadership team of a training school working with children at risk. Samuel was the current leader who had led the school for several years, and the other 3 were new recruits who were interested in becoming permanent school staff.

The problems started before the students even arrived. Samuel came from a background where he had always led and expected to lead. He thought that, since he would be training the other staff how to run the school so they could eventually take over, they would “watch” how he did it and obey whatever he said. The other staff, however, were under the impression that they were a team and that they would share in the responsibilities equally, with no one “leading” but everyone making decisions together.

Needless to say, it didn’t work out that way. Samuel’s version of “leading” included telling the others what to do and expecting them to do it his way. When they objected, he would not listen but insisted that, “This is the way we’re going to do it.” In addition, he required things from his team that sometimes he himself ignored. For instance, he wanted them to all be on time for meetings but he himself was often late. When his staff questioned his methods, he became defensive, raising his voice so that everyone around could hear.

The other staff began to feel that, instead of being members of the same team, they were Samuel’s “inferiors” and they resented his bossy ways. They began to passively “ignore” Samuel’s instructions by deliberately making appointments during team meetings, arriving late, talking behind his back, and so on. It got to the point that the members of the team couldn’t talk with Samuel anymore about anything, whether it concerned the school or not.

All this affected the training school’s students. They felt very uncomfortable because the very leaders they were supposed to emulate couldn’t get along. In addition, they couldn’t help but overhear the heated conversations and notice the strained relations amongst their leaders.

It also affected other members of the ministry team who didn’t have anything to do with the school. They couldn’t help but notice that something was wrong when the members of Samuel’s “team” refused to talk with him unless there was another person present, for “fear that he would misunderstand their words” and accuse them of rebellion. It was also hard to ignore the raised voices, the pointed silences, and the sharp words, even when the conversation had nothing to do with the school.

The other ministry leaders tried to bring this team together again, but each member believed that the other members were at fault, not them. Whenever they got together to talk it through, they ended up blaming and accusing each other, and nothing was resolved.

The school ended negatively and the team members still had not resolved their conflict. There remained some bitterness and resentment among them. The end of the school brought about an uneasy “peace” but the result was that no one on the team wanted to work together on anything ever again. With a broken and fractured team, the ministry leadership made the decision not to have a training school the following year.

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Conflict happens because of our \_\_\_\_\_. If it is handled correctly, conflict can \_\_\_\_\_ your team. If it is handled \_\_\_\_\_, conflict can lead to hurt, bitterness, unforgiveness, and destruction. According to David Cormack there are \_\_\_\_\_ stages to conflict: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ stages. Things that can help resolve conflict are \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ conflict arises when a person has more than \_\_\_\_\_ role. Steps to avoid conflict before it starts include: building healthy \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, clarity about \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to others, being aware of attacks of the \_\_\_\_\_, living with each other's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions

1. Why is conflict unavoidable?
2. What are the three stages of conflict as described by Cormack?
3. What are steps to avoid conflict?
4. What are ways to resolve conflict once it has arisen?
5. Think of a conflict situation in which you have been involved. Can you identify the three stages Cormack mentions?
6. Was there resolution to that conflict situation? If so, how was it resolved?
7. How can you contribute to preventing conflict in a group in which you are involved?
8. Do you currently have a role conflict, either in your home or in the ministry?
9. If you do, what steps might you need to take to resolve that?

## Lesson 15: How do we keep God central in our ministry?

### Summary

- How can we keep God central in our lives?
- How can we build a Christ-centered team at work?

*"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 13)*

### How does God measure success?

It's amazing how many times we get priorities mixed up. Maybe it is our human nature; maybe it is our thirst for recognition, power, or praise. Whatever the reason, it seems so much easier to define success by what we can see with our human eyes – substantial buildings, increased dollars for budgets, innovative programs, more media coverage, and more children being helped. And yet, that doesn't seem to be the way God defines success.

The Bible shows us that God values love, authenticity and humility. He values human beings and relationship over accomplishments. Even His own Son did not strive for a good reputation amongst the powerful people of His day. He spoke His message, claiming His authority from God, and it was the listener's decision whether or not to accept it. Most didn't.

### Relationship before activity

Almost everyone is familiar with the story of Martha and her sister Mary as found in Luke 10:38-42. Martha was busy getting dinner ready, making sure everything was perfect for her honored guests and who wouldn't? As the hostess, it was her job and responsibility and everyone expected that.

No doubt Martha loved Jesus, and was trying to show him the best way she knew how much she loved him. I think Jesus knew that, too. One problem was, Martha didn't ask Jesus how she could best show Him her love – she just assumed. She went by what made the most sense to her human mind, but that was incorrect. Jesus appreciated her efforts, but what He wanted most was a relationship with her. Mary understood that.

It seems like a lot of us miss this point. Most of us are like Martha, doing big things for God and wondering why He isn't as excited and impressed with what we've accomplished as we are. But as any parent knows, teaching obedience to a child is not successful unless the child actually does what the parent requested when he requests it. It is not the same if a child does something good, but it is not what the parent told him to do.

God is like that. He appreciates our honest efforts to show our love for Him, but is what we are doing in line with what He actually asked us to do the way He asked us to do it? Or are we just assuming that we know?

## **Listening to God**

These are questions that we need to ask ourselves regularly. And how do we find the answers? By asking God for them, regularly and honestly. He promises that if we ask, He will answer (Jeremiah 33:3). By asking these and similar questions, we keep Jesus at the centre of our lives and our ministries. And isn't that our primary goal?

## **Time with God**

We need God at the centre of our ministries and our lives – because there is no way we can reach his standard of love on our own. We need Him to change us to become more and more like Him. But how can we do that?

God meets us when we spend time with Him, when we worship Him, when we seek Him through prayer, fasting and intercession. There are a number of spiritual disciplines that can take you closer to the heart of God, but their effectiveness all seems to depend on one thing – your heart attitude: “You will seek Me and find Me. When you seek Me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord . . .” (Jeremiah 29:13-14a). This is a promise that God makes to those who earnestly seek Him. Those who just followed the forms or the rules, even though they followed them perfectly, He often called “whitewashed tombs” and “hypocrites” (Matt. 23:27-28). He honors those who truly want to know Him.

Jesus told His disciples that all men would know them by their love (John 13:35). The only way to continually demonstrate Christ's love is by becoming like Him, and the only way to do that is by seeking Him. As you go back to your work with children at risk, remember that, and seek Him with all your heart.

## **Building a Christ-centered team**

Seeing our work through God's eyes; building a close relationship with Him by listening to him through the Word and through prayer; making time for God: these are all important ways for us as Christians to keep Christ at the centre of what we do and who we are. For Christian organisations, it is also true that these disciplines can be built into the daily, weekly and annual rhythms of working life through devotions, prayer meetings, spiritual retreats and many other ways.

Take time together with your team to think through whether God is still at the centre of your ministry in its aims and goals. What about in the way of working you have developed? Think about the relationships among the team and with the children you serve and their community. It is good to take time to listen to God and see your organisation through his eyes.

## Case study<sup>29</sup>

Loren Cunningham, the founder of the international ministry Youth With a Mission (YWAM), tells a story about a lesson everyone in the mission learned towards the beginning of the mission's life. God had spoken to them about using ships to bring supplies and medical treatment, along with the gospel, to poor countries around the world. Their dream was a ship about 500 feet long, with large cargo holds for transporting supplies, able to house hundreds of young people, and it was to be used as a floating campus for a discipleship schools as well as to transport supplies and persons.

In April 1973, Loren thought he had finally found the right ship. She was called the *Maori*, and was located in New Zealand. It seemed perfect, with a restaurant, a lounge, an infirmary, a cargo hold that could store 120 tons of supplies and with beds for 920 people. Without hesitation, Loren and his team entered into negotiations with the company that owned the ship.

Because the *Maori* had once been a well-known ferry in New Zealand, the situation gained media attention, especially since some volunteers with YWAM confidently proclaimed that God was going to give them this ship. And it seemed as if He had. Not a single day passed without a donation being made or a volunteer coming aboard. Everything seemed great!

One day, as Loren was spending time with God, his Bible opened to Hebrews 12:26-27. God spoke to him about shaking the things that could be shaken so that those things that could not be shaken would remain. Loren had a feeling God meant the ship, and he didn't really like it. But, a few mornings later as he spent time with the Lord, Loren had a mental picture. He saw himself in front of a large group of people, shouting with exuberance, "God has given us the money for the *Maori*!" Everyone cheered and shouted. But then Loren noticed a figure standing nearby, unnoticed by anyone. The figure was Jesus and He was grieving. Suddenly, Loren realized what was wrong; they were all cheering for a ship and forgetting about Jesus! In all their excitement, their focus was and had been on their dream of a ship and not on Jesus.

Loren wept as he realised this. He repented and knew he was forgiven. But there were others in the organisation who also needed to hear what God had shown him. He told them at their next meeting. Yes, he said, God had told them to buy the ship. Yes, He had provided the volunteers and supplies. But their focus had shifted from the Giver of the gift to the gift itself. Their preoccupation was on the work and not on the One who had asked them to do it. Once they realised what had happened, all the leaders repented as well. But God spoke again. He said that he could still give them the *Maori*, but that greater glory would come to Him if their present dream of a ship ministry would die, allowing Him to resurrect it in His time. The leaders chose this last option. YWAM lost the *Maori*. Their reputation was in tatters. Volunteers and staff were hurt. Loren explained what had happened, but it didn't ease the pain, especially when the *Maori* was eventually sold for scrap metal and destroyed . . .

Lest you think that God is not faithful, He did resurrect the ship ministry in His time. And this time, YWAM was faithful to keep their focus squarely on Him. In 1978, God gave them the *Victoria*, later renamed the *Anastasis*. Her name was the Greek word for "resurrection." The *Anastasis* became the flagship of an international fleet that became Mercy Ships. In 2006 alone, Mercy Ships provided over \$50 million in medical services and treated over 52,000 patients. They operated the largest non-governmental hospital ship in the world at that time.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cunningham (1984), 101-102, 103-106

<sup>30</sup> Mercy Ships (2006) <http://www.mercyships.org/get-to-know-us/annual-reports>

## Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

It seems easier to define \_\_\_\_\_ by what we can see with our human eyes rather than in God's way. The Bible shows us that God values \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. He values human beings and \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_. If we want to avoid being too busy doing things for God rather than obeying what he wants us to do we need to \_\_\_\_\_ God, and spend \_\_\_\_\_ with God. Ways to build a \_\_\_\_\_-centered team at work include \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ meetings, and \_\_\_\_\_.

## Discussion questions

1. In the case study, what was the mistake YWAM made in regards to the *Maori*?
2. Do you agree with their decision to take the option they did? Why or why not?
3. How does your organisation or ministry make sure that God remains central to what you are doing?
4. How does God seem to define success (what does He value)? How does this compare to how you measure success in your work?
5. What was the mistake Martha made when Jesus came to her house? Can you relate this story to your own life? What lessons do you need to learn?
6. How can you make sure that you have time to listen to God and build your relationship with Him in your personal life and your organisation? What steps do you need to take?



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## Further resource

For a theological perspective on how to cope with the realities of the trauma and pain of human trafficking and abuse, see the paper:

Bill Prevette, 'Holism and Transformation: What do these concepts mean as we embrace uncertainty and unpredictable realities in the kingdom of God?'

This can be found in the resource file for this workbook.