



Turning Point Therapy

Bringing you closer to positive life

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SEED *of* UNFORGIVENESS



You're Good
Enough!

Life Transforming
Story

Freedom Through
Forgiveness

Therapy Magazine

Turning Point

Have you been traumatized in the past?

... Raised by abusive or
substance abuse parents
Are you in a dysfunctional
family setting and looking for
a way out?

Will you like your story to be
published to positively encourage
and motivate others who are
currently in trauma?

ARE YOU A MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER OR WRITER,
POET WITH WORDS OF WISDOM AND
ENCOURAGEMENT?

Send your story to:

TURNING POINT THERAPY MAGAZINE

fvinefoundation@gmail.com

or omololagbeye@yahoo.com

Helping at-risk children, youth, and single parents in Canada and Africa.



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TRAUMA AND
ADDICTION

Editorial Thought



TITILAYO AKINTADE

It was around the mid-90s when I first had a passion for helping at-risk children and youth. I heard a pathetic story of a boy from the News in Nigeria, where I originated. This

Never be sentimental when choosing a life partner; identify what you want in your partner, and stay by your decision with God on your side.

boy was a 9-year-old bus conductor at the time. A 9-year-old starting out as a bus conductor raised many eyebrows and caused people to question the whereabouts of his parents. The boy stated in the interview as follows:

“My father was drunkard, and whenever he came home, he would beat my mom, scatter the house and make my mom and I stay in a corner until the following day.

One day my mom decided to leave my father, and she got married to another man, but neither my father’s new wife nor my stepfather wanted me to stay with them.”

Ultimately, the boy resorted to sleeping under the bridge across the highway. A bus driver who saw him sleeping under the bridge interviewed and employed him as a bus conductor.

This story had lingered in my head since I heard the news, and I promised never to leave my children behind in case of any eventuality in the future. Also, after the news, my heart had always longed for abandoned or abused children. Looking back now, I see the reason God revealed this organization's dream and vision to me, which you will read in the following pages to me.

Another girl narrated, “We were all happy and lived in a comfortable home and safe environment before my father stopped coming home. My father did not tell us why he stopped coming home, but the divorce paper was served to my mother. We were displaced from our comfortable homes, and everything became like a dream. Things were never the same again. After the divorce, both of them remarried. I became rebellious and disoriented, losing my identity as a child.”

Both parents might find happiness in their new homes, but what happens to the child? No wonder an adage says that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.

This warning is to young adults and those with

What do you expect from a partner who does not take no for an answer, does not value your opinions, cannot control their temper, or has attempted to beat you up or beaten you during courtship?

a second chance to remarry.

Never be sentimental when choosing a life partner; identify what you want in your partner, and stay by your decision with God on your side. If you love to be pampered and appreciated, find a partner that will appreciate and love you. Couples would have avoided many homes if they had made solid foundations. What do you expect from a partner who does not take no for an answer, does not value your opinions, cannot control their temper, or has attempted to beat you up or beaten you during courtship?

It would be best to get your priorities in order now before signing in. Don't manage your courtship.

Some believe that soldiers go, soldiers come. If their marriage fails, they will simply pursue another one. They lie to themselves believing it won't cost them anything. Yet, they fail to consider the traumatic effect it will have on their children.

As a single mom of three wonderful children, I know how stressful it is to raise children, but I never regret my suffering and the challenges that follow single parenthood.

I thank God for the strength and my children for making me a proud single mom. If you stay by your children, you have saved the next generation from shame.

This publication is titled, "Seed of Unforgiveness". What we experience from people might make us vow to revenge or subject us to everlasting self-torment. Is it worth it to abuse others because of your past? Is engaging in deadly atrocities worth it because your parents were not there for you when you needed them the most? Is it worth bullying your contemporaries because you do not get what you want?

I leave you with this word.

"I always say that when you lose, don't lose the lesson. Never give up, chase those dreams and make it happen" - Robin C Nagele.

The Dream

On December 5th, 2010, the last night of the two weeks camping at Mount Zion Ministry International for Drama Ministers I had a dream. In my dream, I was walking on a pathway amid the wilderness. Suddenly, I saw a boy jump over the school wall. I walked toward the boy and asked why he had to jump over the wall instead of passing through the gate. He replied, "It is none of your business."

I warned him to go back to school. The boy declined my bid and walked away. This time I was firm in my bidding and told him that if he failed to return to school, I would call the police. The boy quickly turned back to school while I followed behind.

Getting to the school compound, I saw that the students were scattered all over the premises without supervision. I started searching through the classes for the teachers but found a

teacher in her classroom who did not pay attention to other students in the surrounding rooms.

I rushed up to the balcony for a better view of the school; behold, all the students were playing around. I was infuriated! I looked down and noticed my feet were bare. When had my shoes fallen off?

I started making jokes and funny things to call the students' attention.

I saw that the children, one by one, came and settled around me. After they had settled, I asked "Why are you playing around instead of attending your classes?"

The students told me they wanted to study but had no one to teach them.

At this point, I woke up and picked up my Bible. The place I opened was Joel chapter 1, and my eyes fixed straight on verse 11.

The Dream. . .

The Mandate

God is groaning day and night over His perished land, which He expected to produce good fruits. Joel 1:11-12 says,

Weep, you farmers! Yes, weep! You who grow vines cry! Be sad about the seeds that have not become food. Be sad because the fields are dry. And the plants have died. The vine has dried up, and the fig tree is dead. The apple trees and the other fruit trees have dried up. All the trees have dried up. Men have no more joy. It has all gone.

The term farmer refers to someone who works on the land to plant seeds. In other words, a farmer here can be referred to as a parent who is in a position to nurture and prune their children.

A vinedresser is someone who prunes, trains and cultivates the land. The Vinedresser symbolizes anyone in a position of authority who have direct contact and influence over the child. Parents, teachers, pastors, and coaches fit this category. They all nurture, correct, rain and discipline children. This was the interpretation I was given after reading the Bible passage. I was in a room with two sisters, one from Kaduna and another from Ghana. When they saw the way, I was praying after reading this Bible passage they agreed to support the vision.

I started the script for the first edition of Turning Point Therapy Magazine the same day I had the dream, and the two sisters featured in the magazine.

On this premises, Fruitful Vine Foundation Inc. was founded in 2015 after I migrated to Canada.



The VISION

The vision of Fruitful Vine Foundation Inc. is to promote the well-being of vulnerable children and youth in the community who are susceptible to or have experienced parental neglect, sexual abuse, and drug abuse.

We will set up a vocational center and organize reality talent shows for the children on the street and in schools to provide a constructive avenue for discovering talents and positive, productive activities that would engage them.

We will run a foster home for at-risk children in which a Godly environment will be promoted and will also support single parents' children who aim to continue their education.

Fruitful Vine Foundation Inc. will also use the Turning Point Therapy Magazine publications, seminars, and lectures to educate children about positive lifestyle choices.



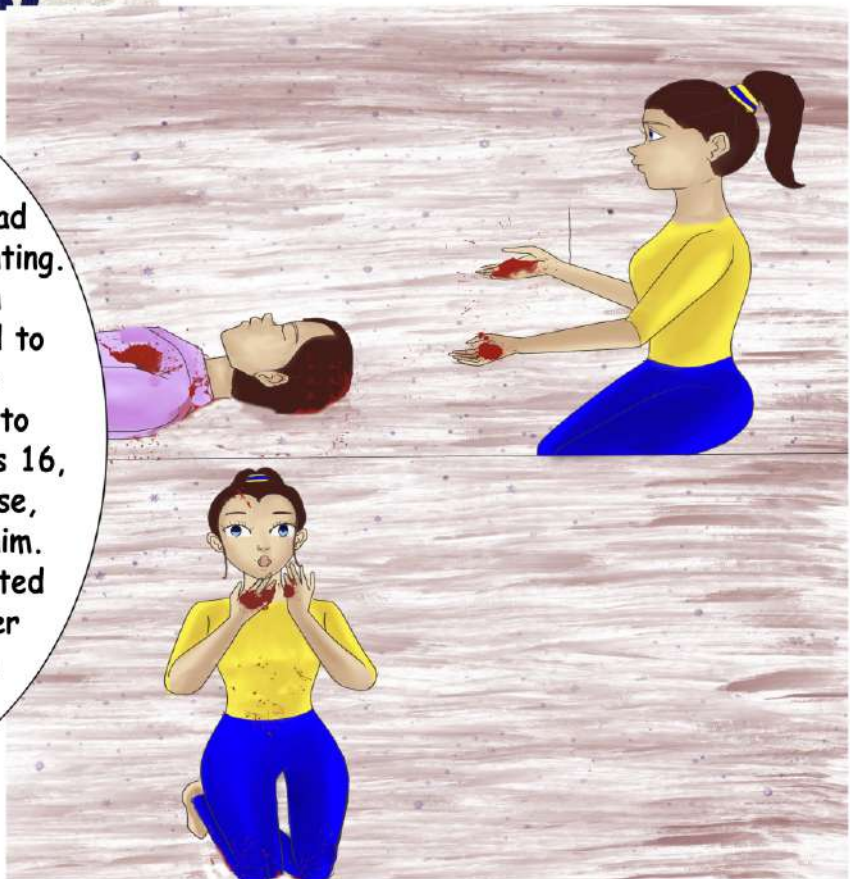
Seed of Unforgiveness

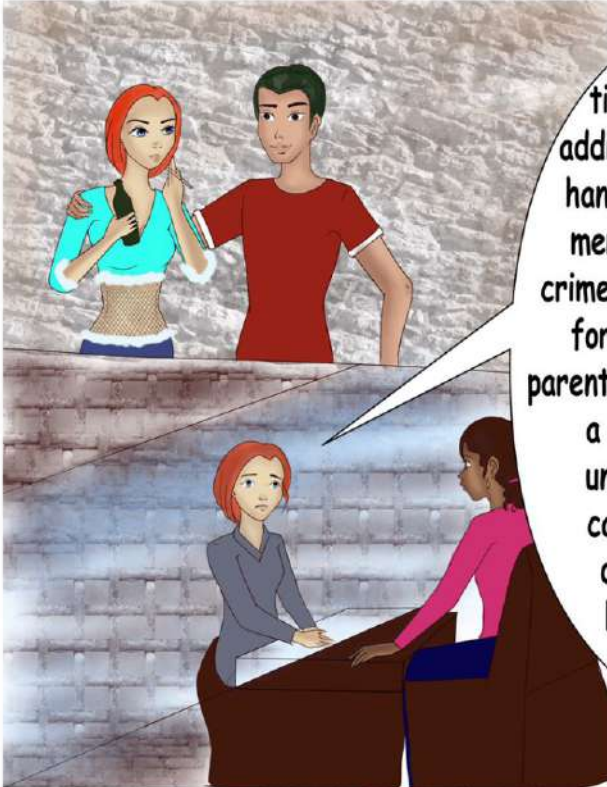
Jessica Nwosu



My name is Clara. I am an orphan. My parents abandoned me. I was found wrapped in a blanket in front of Hope's Orphanage. Although, I was adopted, my foster parents didn't really care about me. When I was 4, they got divorced and mom left. Once again, I was abandoned!

I grew up with my foster dad who knew nothing about parenting. His divorce took a toll on him and he became addicted to drinking alcohol. Soon, he became violent and started to abuse me. One day when I was 16, in my attempt of self-defense, I unintentionally murdered him. I was discharged and acquitted on a verdict of manslaughter after spending 2 years in juvenile detention. But...





After I came out of jail the first time, I couldn't take it anymore. I became addicted to smoking, doing drugs, drinking, and hanging out with the wrong people. In fact my mental health deteriorated. I committed many crimes and I ended up in prison again. I could not forgive my birth parents. I hated my foster parents. I could not forgive myself. My life became a total wreck. I feel so hurt. This seed of unforgiveness has grown deeper roots and is causing me severe pain and heartache. Why do people abandon me? Why does God not love me? I thought if I could change my appearance everything would change...
But, I was totally wrong!!!

Clara, I know very well how you feel because I was once like you, but Jesus has saved me. God has forgiven you, and He can make it easy for you to forgive those people who have hurt you. You don't have to carry this burden of unforgiveness anymore. Just release all your pain to Jesus Christ. He will set you free. All you have to do is invite Him into your life. Say after me... Dear Lord Jesus, I repent from all my sins. I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that You are my Lord and Saviour. Come and live in my heart forever! This I pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ.
Amen!!

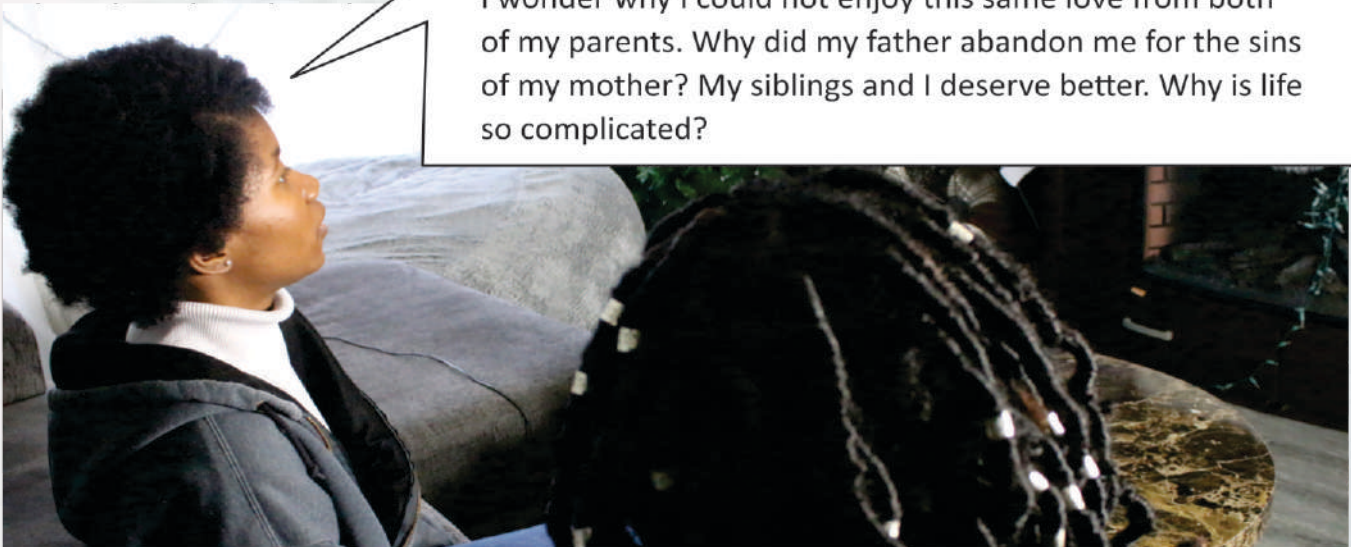


SEED OF UNFORGIVENESS

Bola is passionately watching Ava's Valentine's gifts from dad on YouTube.



I wonder why I could not enjoy this same love from both of my parents. Why did my father abandon me for the sins of my mother? My siblings and I deserve better. Why is life so complicated?



Look at all we are missing out without a dad.

Life depends on how you embrace it.









And some kids out there desire to have a mother like yours.



In all things, give thanks to God. Let me read this to you.

Had it been my father stayed with us, I know we would have been living in a more comfortable and better house, eating good food, wearing suitable dresses and. . . .



A note sent by a girl to her single mother.



What?

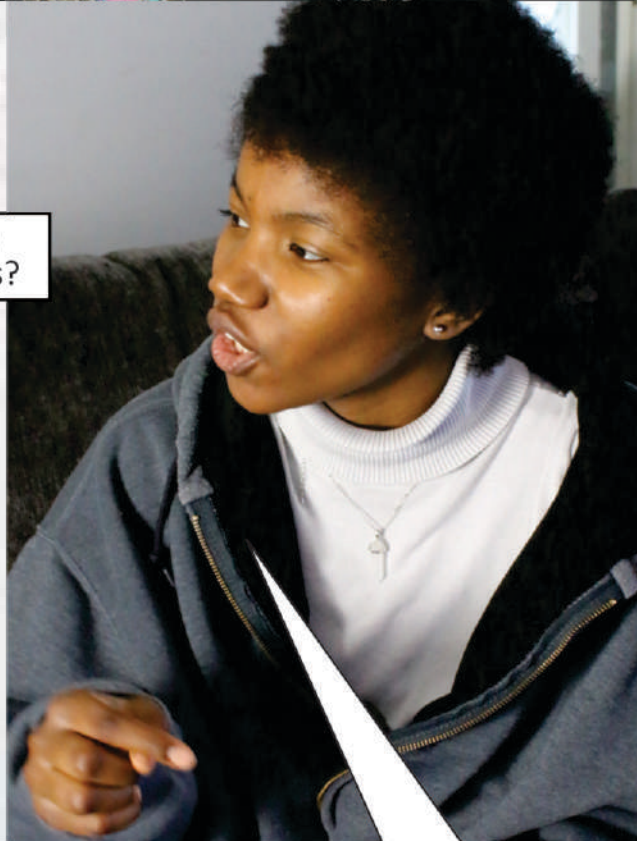


"I am on a mission to find my dad. You won't see me anymore. I will die if I don't complete my mission. Thank you for feeding me all these years, but this is goodbye."

Good for her.



What? Can you do something like this?



No, not anymore. I almost lost my mind and was ready to harm myself because I wondered why he had to abandon us, but I couldn't continue to waste my energy on a father that did not love me just because my mother had offended him; why take it out on us? I can never forgive him.





To be continued

Vicente Testimony

Life Transforming Story

My name is Vicente Salgado. I am from Mississauga, Ontario. My parents immigrated to Toronto from Chile in the mid-80s. I grew up with four younger siblings and a lot of cousins. My parents both came from a party lifestyle with drugs and alcohol, but God changed their lives when I was still a baby. They were hard workers and did their best as young parents and new immigrants. I was always close to my mom. However, my relationship with my dad took work. Looking back now, I can see that my dad was on his healing journey due to his upbringing.

Growing up, I always had a hard time concentrating in school. I spent a lot of time looking up at the people I would listen to on my headphones and the older kids and adults I liked to hang around. I was fascinated with the lifestyle that came with rap music.

It was when I was 12 that I started hanging with the wrong crowd. Eager to get recognized, I would drink, smoke, and start fights. When I was 13, I breached my probation and got shipped to a juvenile detention center. Around this time, my grandmother, who helped raise me, passed away from cancer. To cope with my loss, I drank and did drugs excessively.

IMPLICATIONS OF MY CHOICES

Later in my teen years, my poor choices started to catch up with me. I got kicked out of high school and was in and out of the emergency room because my body was shutting down. I



got to the point where I couldn't control my addictions, and I didn't want to live anymore. Shame and regret haunted me.

I remember crying on my mom's lap some nights, saying things like, "I want to stop, but I can't." She would pray and cry with me until I

I remember crying on my mom's lap some nights, saying things like, "I want to stop, but I can't." She would pray and cry with me until I fell asleep.

fell asleep. Out of desperation, my parents began looking for help, and soon after, they got connected with a pastor who told me about Teen Challenge—a one year faith-based residential

rehabilitation center.

In the summer of 2011, I entered the program and gave my life to Jesus, my Lord and Saviour. John 10:10 says that the enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy, but Jesus came to give life and life to its fullest. I got my life back. I have been sober from alcohol and drugs for eight years, and God has restored my true identity and

... Continue on page 20

You're GOOD ENOUGH!

Someone who drowns in 7 feet of water is just as dead as someone who drowns in 20 feet. Stop comparing traumas, and stop belittling your or anyone else's trauma because it wasn't "as bad" as someone else. This isn't a competition. We all deserve support and recovery.

-Andy Shaw, Mastering Law of Attraction

You're not good enough!

You'll fall!

These were some of the voices I heard in my head constantly early in life. I had dad and mom issues. My father was 85 when I was born. My parents divorced when I was a toddler. I didn't have what kids of my age had because we were poor. I was sexually abused. I can go on and on. My background affected my confidence as a young girl.

Effects of childhood trauma may be similar among children across the globe, but every child is unique in their own right. There were nights I wanted the end to come so badly. There were nights I cried myself to sleep. There were times I questioned God's existence. There were times I would reassure myself that after the rain comes sunshine. For period of time my hope became ambivalent. In short, my emotions were all over the place, and the roller coaster expression wasn't enough to describe my feelings.

Yet, a season of light came, so much that the negative voices in my head began to fade until they ceased – never to come back again.

Over the years, I have understood that I have the power of choice. I could allow the voices

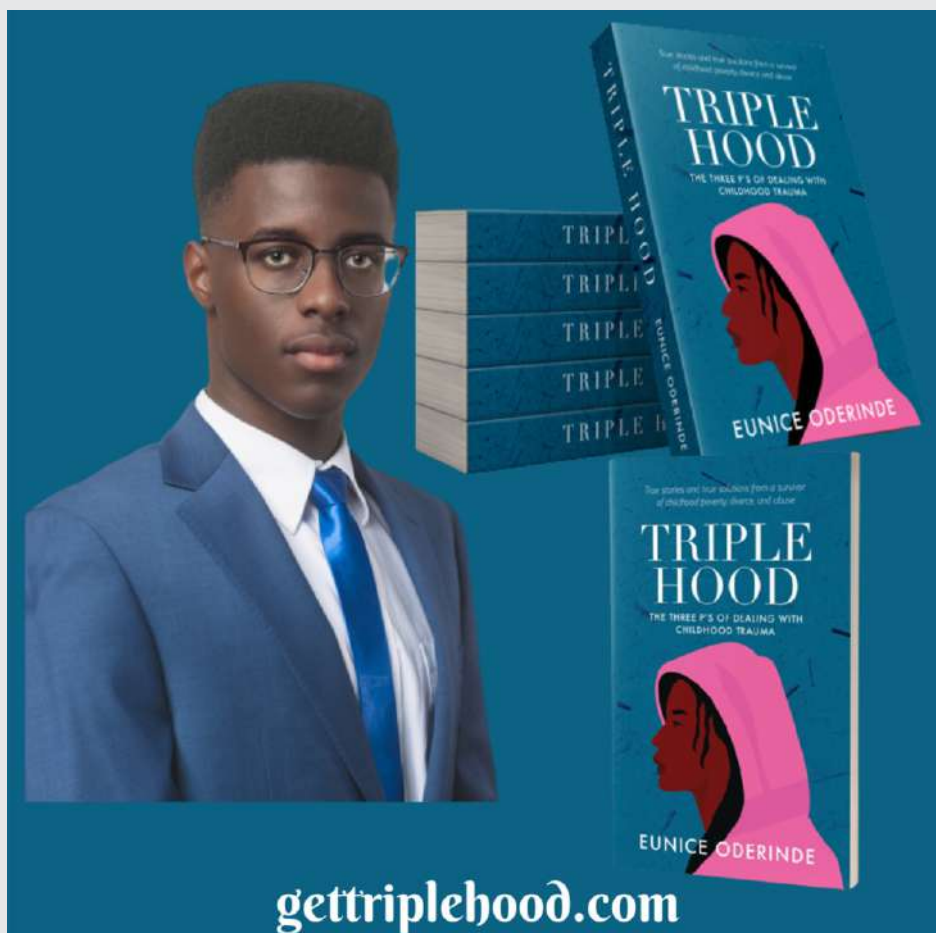


telling me, "You're not good enough," to have the final say or render them null and void. I chose the latter. I would look at myself in the mirror and say, "I'm beautiful; made in the image of God; God says I'm good, so I'm good enough." I chose to speak positive words into my life. As time went by, I began to see the result. Another choice I had was not to allow my past to determine my future. There is a way our families of origin and home environments shape us and influence what and whom we become. I made up my mind that I would not allow history to repeat itself.

Albeit, support is vital in every stage of healing. The more I wanted to break myself loose from unforgiveness, the more I realized how difficult it was to do it solo. My hubby played a significant role in my journey. He worked tirelessly with me, and with time, I could forgive my parents and those who took advantage of my innocence and vulnerability in my childhood. Other people believed in me and were good to me. Despite the challenges, hostility, or storms one may experience in life, there is always one person or a group of people

who can make a lasting positive impact in one's life if we let them in. Resources are available now that were not accessible during my childhood. Some employers have an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which provides professional services, including counseling/therapy, to employees and their families free of charge. Do not underestimate the power of individual and community support!

Today, my childhood experiences are mine. The trauma I had as a child is my experiential property, so I decided to write a book about it – Triple Hood. Triple Hood describes the three P's of dealing with childhood trauma. Those were the strategies I used to overcome the pain of my childhood trauma. You're good enough! With determination and the right approach, you can overcome your struggle.



Traumatic life experiences can be devastating. Nonetheless, there's a way out - this is the premise of Triple Hood. You deserve to heal from your trauma! Triple Hood: the 3 P's of dealing with childhood trauma - offers healthy coping strategies. E-book and paperback available on Amazon.

**For autographed copies,
email Eunice @triplehood03@gmail.com**

Eunice Oderinde

Survivor of Childhood Trauma

Email: triplehood03@gmail.com

Triple Hood is available on

Amazon, Kobo, and Kennedy's Parable in Saskatoon.

Growing up, I saw life in our household as normal. It was all I had never known, so I thought it must be true. Parents are never wrong. What they say about me is true. What they do to me, I deserve. Right?

Unbeknownst to me, I was surviving as a victim, having endured many emotional injuries from multiple ongoing negative experiences throughout my childhood and youth. I left home at age 16.

During my high school years, I gained new perception of how healthy families should function and began to realize how toxic and dysfunctional my own family's system operated.

I grew up paralyzed by an insistent fear. I suffered from apprehension over every decision. Was it the right or "wrong" decision? I struggled with insecurity, ruthless worry, low self-efficacy and the dread of failure. I also thought everyone saw me as disgusting. I was shocked from disbelief when I discovered that trustworthy people I cared about at school, church, and work never judged me that way. I received unconditional positive regard always.

Though it was confusing, it caused me to become curious as to why I doubted their opinions and affirmative observations of me. At first, I thought I was an imposter, playing a role, lying to all - that there was no possible way anybody else could be right. I had harboured so many negative words I "heard" said to me and images I remembered that controlled my thoughts, creating self-condemning and false inner perceptions of myself, entrusting my



FREEDOM THROUGH FORGIVENESS

Rev. Jodi Bryant

I gained new perceptions of how healthy families should function and began to realize how toxic and dysfunctional my own family's system operated.

parents' recorded scripts in my mind as reality. I remember denying, justifying, and minimizing what was happening in our home. I truly loved my family and thought they would never intend to wound or abuse me. Therefore, I must have deserved all that happened to me.

Sometimes our perceptions are tainted by distorted filters, false beliefs, and foundational lies, and sometimes they are true. Both were true in my case.

Changing that wounded mindset was very challenging. I met many Christians in our public school and found a safe, healthy church to attend as a youth. I also had terrific Christian teachers and mentors from early childhood to graduation. These friends and teachers taught me what behaviours were NOT okay in my family, WHOSE I indeed was, and how God loves me unconditionally and did NOT see me as I perceived I was. It was a long journey of recovery from shame, rejection, underlying anger, bitterness, grief, anxiety, a false sense of identity, emotional immaturity, and traumatic soul wounds.

I used obsessive, over-achievement and excessive busyness in life as my pain avoidance from the shame and fear strongholds that held me captive within. I later learned that I was hyper-vigilant in meeting the irrational expectations of my soul to feel approved. I hungered to be pleasing to all and struggled with co-dependency, perfectionism, performance, and self-reliance. I would wane internally between the strong, bold, confident overcomer I had become back to the broken, crushed, intensely insecure, wounded “ugly duckling” child I perceived I was. I had a shattered identity.

I was confused about who I indeed was. Any criticism or feedback from any authority devastated me to the core. What I believed about myself was irrationally magnified in my vulnerable positions when I made a mistake or felt unacceptable. Recovery from the childhood/youth trauma meant there needed

Sometimes our perceptions are tainted by distorted filters, false beliefs, and foundational lies, and sometimes they are true. Both were true in my case.

to be a change in my core identity from seeing myself as ugly and dirty, not worthy of love, imperfect, flawed, a fraud, not loveable, a failure, and never good enough. I am genuinely grateful for being steered towards a healing journey through the intervention of Jesus Christ's power while immersing myself in knowledge to assist my body, soul, and spirit toward a life of victorious abundant living. When I reflect on my life, I see God's hand and direction.

Vicente Testimony

purpose as one of His sons. He has restored my health and brought healing to my relationships with those I love. I still haven't finished high school, but God made me attend Bible College.

I graduated in the spring of 2020, and now I'm working at a church in inner-city Saskatoon, where I serve as one of the men's ministry assistants and youth leaders. During the week, we serve meals and help our visitors with practical things like getting on social assistance and finding housing, but more importantly, I get to pray with people every day and tell them about the hope in Jesus Christ. As a youth leader, I pray that the youth will have a life-changing encounter with Jesus and realize that everything this world has to offer is temporary. Still, a relationship with God through Jesus is forever.



UNFORGIVENESS AS A WEAPON

As I journeyed through young adulthood, I thought I had forgiven my parents. I did love them; unfortunately, they continued living in their toxic system and were blind to the enduring wounds they inflicted spiritually, psychologically, and physically on me and many others. I often wondered if they would ever choose to change and grow and one day genuinely apologized to me for all that had transpired.

Little did I know, deep seeds of unforgiveness grew within my soul from the bitter judgements I held against my parents and their abuse. Thus, harvesting rotten fruit affects my mental health and well-being. Once I knew that it was my responsibility to act and look at my victim mindset, freedom from the control of my wounds within my soul was within reach, and I could learn how and become victorious from that bondage. It can feel humanly impossible to forgive. I didn't want to hold on to bitterness and unforgiveness or

continue judging them. I didn't want to reap a life like theirs nor hurt others as I was. We need God's grace and mercy and a genuine desire to choose to forgive.

I forgave them, even though what they did was wrong and traumatic, and allowed the Holy Spirit to bring His justice towards them His way, knowing they may never have genuine

Once I knew that it was my responsibility to act and look at my victim mindset, freedom from the control of my wounds within my soul was within reach,

remorse. I had to recognize and get to death on the Cross by confessing and repenting of my sinful responses towards them so that I could be free from the control they had on me. They were wrong in what they did to me. But, I had to examine my judgements and ungodly responses and actions towards them to be free. I had

pride in being a victim, bitterness at the injustice and betrayal of what kind of family I should have had, anger at God for allowing what happened, and began a lifelong habit of praying for them. I had to own the permission within to surrender all my shame: my fear of

rejection, neglect, abandonment, being vulnerable, halting intimacy, feeling incompetent or useless, being seen as unacceptable, being under or in authority, living fully with love and joy, making mistakes, or being out of control. I had to learn about my emotions and become comfortable expressing both positive and negative ones, being real rather than hiding behind my smile, saying no to unhealthy people, and creating healthy boundaries for my mental well-being. I had to learn to feel worthy, overcome depression, accept whether I succeed or perform well, trust those who are trustworthy, receive and get compliments with joy, make mistakes, receive correction or reprimand without being shattered inside, and submit in short accounts all thoughts, habits, hurts, and hang-ups that occur in my daily life.

Toxic shame is a deceptive tool of Satan. It binds us to trauma and sin. It is an enemy of true repentance, Godly humility, and grace. Shame is a lie where we believe in rejection from receiving love and forgiveness based on our filter of unworthiness. It's different from guilt. Actual guilt is knowing you've made a mistake. Shame says you ARE a mistake. We all need to be loved unconditionally, welcomed, and wanted, accepted for who we are, not for what we have done or not done, nurtured, appropriately touched, played with, trained and disciplined in love, known, heard, and understood, kept safe and secure, protected, known, heard, and understood, valued, and given a sense of purpose.

Many of us have yet to experience these basic needs. What we don't receive can be traumatic too. Most of us will need to examine our hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to show us where we



have buried our pain and injustices towards us.

Forgiveness can be difficult. It is not just a choice, though we may start with that action. We may not see it as fair. You may think forgiving means we must: excuse the offense, forget the offense, deny our hurt or anger, or trust the offender and let them hurt us again. We do need to give up our resentments as insisting others owe us, but that keeps us in bondage to reaping bitter roots and buries the feelings from the wounds. We need to trust God to bring justice rather than our human ways of revenge. Accomplishing forgiveness is a work of God's grace. I continued to surrender and entrust my sorrow and loss to my Heavenly Father, asking Him to exchange love and grace for my lack of control and hope for reconciling these relationships. I had to learn to trust Him to change them in His timing under His control. That gives me supernatural peace.

.Forgiveness is not:

1. Approval of what was done
2. Excusing what was done
3. Ignoring/denying what was done
4. Justifying what they did
5. Pardoning what they did
6. Reconciliation (A hopeful outcome that may or may not occur)
7. Trusting the offender

8. Denying what they did
9. Blindness to what they did or what happened
10. Forgetting
11. Refusing to take the wrong seriously
12. Pretending we are not hurt
13. We need the Holy Spirit to exchange our unforgiveness for forgiveness by asking Him to. It is a supernatural encounter/experience to walk in True forgiveness. As followers of Christ, Children of God, we have the benefit and Kingdom gift because of Christ's resurrection to receive the power to forgive and the freedom to walk in it.

Forgiveness:

1. It is not earned; it is a grace gift given.
2. Is free for the forgiven but costly for the forgiver.
3. It is being merciful.
4. Is graciousness.
5. Is an inner condition.
6. Is non-negotiable.
7. It does not depend on fairness, whether a person feels like it or not, or who was in the wrong. God tells us repeatedly that we MUST forgive. He permits no "ifs," "ands" "buts," or "special situations." No matter what the offense, He says, "FORGIVE."
 1. Sets the stage for freedom and healing
 2. Sets the other person free so that you can be free
 3. Releases both parties
 4. Changes lives
 5. Brings healing to our physical body, inner soul, and spirit man
 6. Chooses to keep no record of wrongs; bitterness evaporates
 7. Refuses to punish
 8. Is being merciful
 9. Is graciousness
 10. Is an inner condition

Forgiveness paces the way to good health and peace of mind. It improved cordial and healthier relationships, less anxiety, stress, hostility, and improved mental health problems, lower blood pressure, fewer symptoms of depression, a more robust immune system, improved heart health, and improved self-esteem. At the same time, unforgiveness does the opposite of the above. It robs us of God's forgiveness, robs us of freedom, robs us of eternal rewards, allows a root of bitterness to grow, hinders our prayers, blocks deliverance, and grieves the Holy Spirit. See below for prayer samples of accomplishing forgiveness.

Forgiving Prayer

Lord Jesus, I forgive (name them)
 I let You take the judgment, grudge, and bitterness
 out of my heart.
 I reject all this in my life.
 Lord, heal me where I have been wounded.
 Forgive where I have sinned.
 I choose not to blame or hold the actions of _____ against them.
 At this moment, I surrender my right to be paid back for my loss by the one who has sinned or hurt me, and in so doing, I declare my trust in God alone as the Righteous Judge.
 Father God, bless them in every way,
 In Jesus' name,
 Amen.

Charles Finck

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Healing & Support programs for those journeying through the hardships of divorce, grief, addictions, and parenting/kinship issues.



Reconciliation Resources

Offers the church opportunities to minister the gospel message of reconciliation to the broken and marginalized. We develop and coordinate volunteer ministry teams to serve Saskatoon and area.

www.reconciliationresources.ca



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Please pray for upcoming programs:

**Affair Recovery
Families of Missing or Murdered**

FAITH-BASED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Recovery and Support Groups:

Grief, Divorce for parents & children

Parenting, Singles, GrandFamilies

Addictions & Dependency

INTENTIONAL EVANGELISTIC TEAM INITIATIVES

Recovery and Support

Prison Ministry

Street Ministry

Community Interests

Message of Reconciliation



Crown:

God is King over all. He is the One True God.



Rays:

It is the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit who is the Voice of God; our Communicator.



Cross:

Jesus Christ died on the cross for us, rose again, and reconciled man to God – the Salvation Story.



Eagle:

It symbolizes the promise of protection, strength, guidance, inspiration, and freedom. It's a sign of glorifying God in my worship life of speaking, teaching, dancing, singing, and song writing.



Dove:

It symbolizes the Holy Spirit as communicator and messenger. It's a sign of peace and hope.



Hands:

They symbolize God's hands holding all of what is – offering reconciliation. He lifts us up and carries our burdens for us. He brings unity and hope. They symbolize the praise and prayers of God's people that bring change.



Broken Heart:

God's heart is broken because of the lack of obedience, knowledge, and choice to repent by His people. He longs for His people to come HOME to Him. It represents all the division in the world; all of what isn't reconciled. It symbolizes our brokenness and need for healing.



Water:

It represents cleansing, healing and refreshing. It symbolizes the Holy Spirit on the move, like a river extending its arms to all. It signifies how wide, long, high and deep God's love is; like an ocean body.



We are God's body of believers throughout the nations of our world using our many gifts to do the call of God. We are chosen with a purpose and have a choice to respond to His call and work together with God to advance His Kingdom and bring RECONCILIATION to every person in every nation.

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And, He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. – 2 Corinthians 5:19

If you sense the Holy Spirit leading you to become involved, come join us!

If you'd like more information or would like LifeChange and Reconciliation Resources to present, preach, teach, or worship with your small group, church, or event – CALL US!

We'd love to have you join our financial donor team as we are volunteer operated! All donations are tax deductible under The Great Commission Foundation Charity: Payable to Reconciliation Resources #859928483RR0001

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Lord, may we eternally impact those journeying through life's hardships by the power of Jesus Christ. AMEN!



Darryl & Jodi Bryant
Founders, Directors, Pastors

UNFORGETTABLE NIGHTMARE TRAUMA

Please introduce yourself.

My name is (withheld). I am the firstborn of three children in my family. I am from Nigeria. I am now married with a child and living in Canada.

Could you briefly tell us your childhood background?

I would say my childhood background wasn't fun based on the experience I had with my parents' marriage, which still puts me on edge and hurts me sometimes. I am kind of still healing from the damage that my parents did.

Tell us a little bit about your relationship with your parents and their lifestyles

The relationship between my parents and I is very distant. My daddy used to party and used to drink a lot at once. He was abusive. I would say he is a narcissist as compared to my mum. She is the opposite of him and wouldn't know she did things better; they both played the role of parenting my siblings and I, but it wasn't too pleasant.

Can we say you are connected more to your mum, then?

I wouldn't say I was close to my parents, she

was in a place of abuse, and she did more transferring aggression to us growing up, so it kept our distance.

You mentioned that your dad is abusive. Abusive in what form?

He was aggressive, and he beat my mum at any slight opportunity; so, being a child, you grow up watching what happened again and again, and your mom sounded as if she doesn't have a choice but to stay in the marriage which she claimed she is doing for us. Still I don't see the impact nor know the alignment here. I don't see why she should remain in that marriage.

At what age did your parents' relationship start affecting you?

I would say I started expressing it at age 4. I remember the first time I watched my dad beat up my mom. It was early in the morning on that day. They had an argument previously, and she was about to take bath water to give my brother and me a bath, and then she hissed; he pounced on her and hit her with different stuff (such as a plugged boiling ring). He almost choked her to death on that day if not for the interference of our neighbours. It was an awful thing to remember or watch.

Did you call the neighbour or any of the siblings?

It was usual; they just came when they heard the noise.

Okay, I have heard about a situation where some children will just run out of the house because of a problem like this or hide somewhere. In your case, what would you guys be doing at that time?

Nothing, because my dad would most of the time lock the door. There is no way to go out and no place to hide since we lived in a small house. So, we have to stand there and watch. He would usually force us to watch him physically and sexually abuse her.

Sexually? In your presence?

Yes, sometimes he would beat her and had sex with her in our presence. It isn't comforting for children to go through such experiences. That is why I promised to move her out of the house, but she declined. Many people have talked with her, but she insisted on staying at her husband's home because of her prestige. She is concerned about what people will say.

Is there any inner vow and bitter root against your parents? For instance, some children will vow never to have anything to do with their parents again or have grudges against their parents.

As a child, at about age 10, I would pick up a knife and try to kill him; I wished he could be dead. So, I had that inner vow thing, but I realized I could not do that; murdering somebody is not an easy thing to do. I remember telling myself I would never get married or have anything to do with a man. But I later realized that it was not his fault for things happening; they both played a role in the sense that I started seeing my mom's friends advising her to run, that her life was much more critical. She would say no, she is not going to leave because my dad is going to marry another wife, and she does not want another woman to come and take her place. There was a situation where her friend advised her to get an education that the state government would sponsor at a time, and they were benefiting from it. She bluntly declined

and said, "whatever education I have not acquired, my children will acquire it." At age 8 for me, it was disgusting to hear that because those are the things she could get for free. She could get the empowerment that people are offering for free, but she was not going to do it. So, it made me take other inner vows that if I ever grow up, I will be independent; I will never stand or take one minute of insult from the opposite gender. I am going to make sure I am empowered as well, these are the inner vows I resonated with, and they are positive and negative.

Yeah, I believe those optimistic inner vows were the ones that kept you going because some children would dwell on the negative inner vows such as "I am not going to get married," "I am going to take revenge on my parents," some might even take the revenge to their matrimonial homes, thereby affect their relationship with their spouses. The good thing is that you made your parent's weakness your strength. Do you think things would have been different if your mom had been independent?

Oh, he was majorly abusive because she was not independent. He took advantage of that a lot. With time she got disconnected, and she got a job later when we were older; she had a point to want to look after her children when we were younger closely, but I expected more, but when she got a job, there was a little bit of respect for her.

Is your dad more influential, educated, or older than your mom, which you think might be part of why he was dominant?

He is eight years older than my mum, and to me, I think they are still within the age bracket; they can still relate like a friend rather than him behaving as if he is older than her. He is not more affluent than her, or more influential than her and or more educated than her. The only thing that he had that she did not have was a source of income, and she did not. That was the principal thing.

What are your childhood expectations that you know you lack?

I lacked the autonomy to speak up; no parental love, even motherly love, because she was busy taking care of her inner mind and did not even have time to listen to her children's inner minds.

Definitely, she was nursing her emotional and physical torment instead of paying attention to the children. Was there any time she was depressed?

Yea, she was always depressed and took that on her children rather than giving them love in return; she was transferring aggression which made it look like she was providing hatred to the children, like the children were the cause of her problem, making her stay in the marriage. At one point, what upset me the most was when it started reflecting on me that no, my dad cannot just take the blame; they shared the fault was the moment; we were two initially, and she was trying to get pregnant for our last born whom I was eight years older than despite that my daddy was a serious cheater. She was always avoiding him for inflicting her with diseases. As little as I was, they had a difficult situation whereby she tricked him when he was drunk so she could be pregnant with our lastborn.

When dad knew she was pregnant, he would mercilessly beat her and step on the pregnancy to forcefully abort the baby in her. And when people ask her that "You have female and male children for this man, why are you trying to get pregnant again with the man tormenting and abusing you?" Her reply is always that she has told her destiny that she wants to give birth to all her children to one man. She is just too adamant about people's advice and opinion. She cannot take care of two children she had already. She already had been wounded physically and mentally. Yet, she planned to have another one, not considering the mental distress that she was personally going through.

The man did not want the pregnancy. We could all feel his bitterness. He would come home drunk and beat her with nails, a belt, or any object to the point of bleeding. Though she did not carry the child to term, the child survived. I had a brother.

It is clear to me that she also had a problem. Her plan was to give birth to four children, but he told her when he beats her during the third pregnancy that if she conceived again, he would kill her. That threat prevented her from being pregnant with the fourth child.

Did she try to report to anyone in higher authority?

In those days, as long as the man can go to the police station and talk to a male police officer that he disciplined his wife for what she did wrong, the police officer will say, that is okay, I do the same at home. Women are goats that is how they should be treated. My country was like that then. That was the picture I got. Moreso, I did not see any possibility that my mom would want to do that because many people have offered her helping hands to take her away from her abusive and toxic relationship, and she declined. The only people that can solicit for you are the elderly ones like your father and mother. Unfortunately, I learned that my father's parent relationship was also toxic; his dad used to beat his three wives, so he also went through the same trauma with his parents; likewise, my mom's father used to beat his wife. So, whenever my dad hit my mom, her mom would tell her, "It is okay. It is normal, and that's what men do. You just have to do whatever your husband asked you to do. Your suffering is because of her children."

You have answered my next question because I wanted to ask about your parents' family background. You can see that foundation is very paramount in every relationship. Children can inherit characteristics from their parents, negatively and positively impacting their marital relationships or social connection to people and society.

I want to get back to my earlier question on inner vows. What is the difference between the inner vows you made then and the decision to act contrary to the unhealthy lifestyles you saw in your parents?

First of all, I see it as intentionality. We should be intentional about the inner vow we make and how we handle our perception in the new daylight, especially since we should be able to

recognize the source of the problem. As little as I was then like age 8 to 10 when I saw my mother's friend telling her to empower herself, and she was refusing to do the right thing was when I now realized that it was enough now; I should stop blaming men for who they are. It is time to start apportioning blame to her.

I was intentionally deducing that there was a problem and that this problem would continue if I did not intend to make a change for myself. So, right now, being a parent, from my culture, you are supposed to honour your parents regardless if they are beasts or monsters, so I try to award them or accord them the honor I should. However, I still need to be intentional so that I don't allow whatever they have done to affect my mental health. I still get trauma from what they've done to me. Now that I am a parent, being a friend or sister, I try to be cautious about not repeating their pattern, and I don't want to repeat their mistakes. A great example, I am not ashamed to share their stories. My mother is embarrassed to share her story. I remember when I was getting married; there was an issue. My mom was a big dreamer about her children doing the things she couldn't achieve or do. She wanted us to go to school, do a white wedding, and have flashing things. I was deliberate about telling her; you can't live your life through me right now. You have made your own decision and mistakes. I am going to make mine now. So, for my wedding I am going to break your wishes and do it in my way because to me I see it as a curse if you have been dreaming since I was 10, about who is going to be the caterer, wedding clothes etc. I determined to disappoint her and not allow her live her life through me.

She said she would curse me if I get pregnant before my wedding; I told her it is not about getting pregnant before wedlock. I will have her blessing, the pastor's blessing, in the living room. She was not happy with that decision.

I had to explain to my husband all the trauma I had gone through with them. We opted for a court wedding instead, and I disappeared from

their lives. A year after the wedding, my mom tried to make things right and asked if I had told my husband about my childhood experience. I asked her to be specific, She said all that happened between her and my father. I asked her if she knew what we had gone through and the mother in her did not deem it fit to apologize to us for the damages she had done. She realized that my attitude resulted from what they had done to us, but she was defensive that I should not think like that; she just wanted to know if my husband was aware of my childhood trauma. So, I told her not just him but everybody around me. That is why I don't keep friends, but if I ever have one and they are going through an abusive relationship, I would not spare telling anybody your story to learn from it.

Consequently, the effect of their lives on me has been intentional, and I don't allow it to affect me. I don't share my personal life with her because she didn't live her life better for me to seek counsel from her.

TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT EDITION OF TURNING POINT THERAPY MAGAZINE

Issues in the dark for the next edition

Are your parents still together?

What is the mental state of your mother now?

Now that you are married, is there any time you see yourself in your mom's character?

Tell us about your younger siblings. Is there anyone of them that acted as your father since they are male?

What is the state of mind of those relatives that stayed with your parents?

Is there anyone who made an inner vow, and how does it affect them?

We will address all the issues narrated in this edition on our social media platforms

Follow us on our pages:

**Facebook: #The home we built,
#Fruitful Vine Foundation**

YouTube: #Fruitful Vine Foundation

THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER

I am Kelvin. I'm Nigerian, 19 years old, and study at one of my country's universities.

I grew up in a typical Nigerian household, and at the age of 6, my parents parted ways, not on the best terms, leaving my younger sister, age 3, in the custody of my dad and I.

My relationship with my parents could have been stronger. I had no natural bond with either of them; I was closer to whoever paid my bills and gave me less stress at that time, unlike my younger sister, who was closer to my dad.

Neither of them were the best role model, but I can't lie; I learned a few things from them, which I still use today.

At the early stage of my life, I became closer to my dad, but I feel that was only due to my mum's absence. That bond broke after my dad lost his job, and we moved in with our mum.

My relationship with my parents has always affected me, especially during the early stages of my life. My only memories of them were fighting, yelling at each other, my dad getting drunk, or not coming back home at night. They were nothing kids at that age should be experiencing. I do not have any bitter roots against my parents; instead, I choose to learn from their mistakes, and that's the only way I can make them proud.

The responsibilities of parents who got separated should be the same as if they were still together, which includes providing the child with food, clothing, and a place to live. Parents should also support their children financially and feed them safely, with supervision and control. Medical care is also essential, and lastly, an excellent educational system.

My parents' separation and unavailability have played quite several challenges for me.

I remember one experience when the gang asked to join, and my reply was what benefits would I get? ... If they could sort out my accommodation, pay for my food, and support me financially, I would be willing to join.

An inner vow is a decision we make that contains the words "always" or "never" or similar wording. Therefore, an inner vow is rigid and locks us into specific behaviours often forgotten by our conscious mind or were never verbalized or consciously made.

There are a few inner vows I've made unconsciously over the years due to the experience with my parents, like I made up my mind never to taste the alcohol, never to lay my hand on a woman, in other words, to be the opposite of my parents or the best version of them.

There is no significant difference between an inner vow and a decision to act contrary to negative behaviour; they are the same thing.

My inner vows don't affect my physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being that much

... Continue on page 56



FRUITFUL VINE *Multicultural* TALENT HUNT 2015 AND 2016



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)


The abuse and multiple traumas I witnessed and experienced are commonly known as “adverse childhood experiences” called “ACEs.” Over 30% of us have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES); as cited on kidsdata.org.

Adverse Childhood Experiences are associated with negative health and life outcomes such as injury (traumatic brain injury, fractures, burns); mental health (depression, anxiety, suicide); maternal health (unintended pregnancy, pregnancy complications, fetal death); infectious disease (HIV, STDs); chronic disease (cancer, diabetes); risk behaviors (alcohol and drug use, unsafe sex, opioid misuse); opportunity (education, occupation, income). Poverty, maltreatment, experiences of racism, exposure to violence, and other traumatic events also affect our health and well-being. Psychology Today defines “adverse childhood experience” as:

“a range of negative situations a child may face or witness while growing up. These experiences include emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; emotional or physical neglect; parental separation or divorce; or living in a household where domestic violence occurs. Other difficult situations include living with an alcoholic or substance abuser, with family members who suffer mental disorders, or in a household with an incarcerated family member.”

Psychology Today.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/adverse-childhood-experiences>



Exposure to frequent and prolonged adversity during the building block years of life (newborn to 17) causes toxic stress. It negatively affects adult relationships, health, behaviours, and future outcomes of the child. When childhood is exposed to these enduring injuries, the painful, unprocessed emotions when the wound or violation initially occurred can become “trapped” within, avoided, or repressed, and the neurological ability to connect and resolve it may be unavailable. So, the child may deal with the pain negatively, actively or passively, hurting others, themselves, or both.

Children who experience ACEs and toxic stress may:

- Have difficulty forming close relationships with others.
- Have trouble keeping a job.
- Have difficulty with finances.
- Experience depression.
- Be more likely to be involved in violence.
- Experience early, unwanted pregnancies.
- Be more likely to be incarcerated.
- Experience higher levels of unemployment.
- Be more likely also to expose their children to ACEs.
- Have a higher risk of alcohol or substance

abuse.

- Have a higher risk of suicide attempts.
- Have a higher risk of health issues such as heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and liver disease.

Many risk factors contribute to the increase of ACEs in a child, as the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) noted. ACEs don't have a single cause and can take several different forms. Many factors contribute to ACEs, including personality traits and experiences, parents, family environment, and community.

It's essential to address the following factors to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences and protect children from neglect, abuse, and violence.

Below is an excerpt from the CDC.

Individual and Family Risk Factors that Increase the Likelihood of ACEs:

- Families experiencing caregiving challenges related to children with special needs (for example, disabilities, mental health issues, chronic physical illnesses).
- Children and youth who don't feel close to their parents/caregivers and feel like they can't talk to them about their feelings.
- Youth who start dating early or engaging in sexual activity early.
- Children and youth with few or no friends or with friends who engage in aggressive or delinquent behavior.
- Families with caregivers who have a limited understanding of children's needs or development.
- Families with caregivers who were abused or neglected as children.
- Families with young caregivers or single parents.
- Families with low income.
- Families with adults with low levels of

education.

- Families experiencing high levels of parenting stress or economic stress.
- Families with caregivers who use spanking and other forms of corporal punishment for discipline.
- Families with inconsistent discipline and low levels of parental monitoring and supervision.
- Families that are isolated from and not connected to other people (extended family, friends, neighbours).
- Families with high conflict and negative communication styles.
- Families with attitudes accepting of or justifying violence or aggression.

Community Risk Factors:

- Regions with high rates of violence and crime.
- Regions with high rates of poverty and limited educational and economic opportunities.
- Regions with high unemployment rates
- Regions with easy access to drugs and alcohol.
- Regions where neighbours don't know or look out for each other, and there is low community involvement among residents.
- Regions with few community activities for young people.
- Regions with unstable housing and where residents move frequently.
- Regions where families frequently experience food insecurity.
- Regions with high levels of social and environmental disorder.

Risk and Protective Factors - Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html>

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

QUESTION:

I lost a friend of 35 years who was addicted to alcohol last year, 2022. He was all the children have; he was diagnosed with kidney and liver problems. On the day he died, he drank excessive alcohol and started vomiting blood. I spoke with one of his children; she is still traumatized by her father's behaviour and death. Can she have PTSD?

RESPONSE

PTSD and addiction may impact lives due to exposure to traumatic events such as violence, conflict, and loss. Symptoms of PTSD can include flashbacks, avoidance behaviours, and difficulty regulating emotions. Addiction can manifest as a coping mechanism for dealing with the aftermath of trauma.

In different parts of the world, exposure to war, political violence and human rights violations, natural disasters, and poverty are familiar sources of traumatic experiences that can contribute to addiction. Additionally, cultural and societal factors can play a role in the development of addiction, such as the lack of access to mental health resources and support, the cultural stigma surrounding addiction and mental health issues, and limited awareness about the causes and consequences of addiction.

The root causes of addiction can be complex and multifaceted, and a combination of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors can influence this. Trauma is often considered a significant risk factor for the development of

addiction. Trauma can include experiences such as abuse, neglect, violence, and exposure to war or conflict, as well as more subtle forms of emotional or psychological harm. Trauma can cause changes in the brain that make an individual more susceptible to addiction and contribute to the development of co-occurring mental health conditions such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Families can become trauma-informed to support young adults by learning about the effects of trauma, understanding the behaviours and symptoms associated with PTSD and addiction, and creating a safe and supportive environment for their loved ones. They may include setting boundaries, learning practical communication skills, and seeking professional help, such as counseling and therapy. Additionally, families need to educate themselves about the cultural context of trauma and addictions and their community's available resources and support systems.

Trauma can include experiences such as abuse, neglect, violence, and exposure to war or conflict, as well as more subtle forms of emotional or psychological harm

Adijat Bunmi Adekunle (she/her)
RSW. MSW. BSW. B.A.
Clinical Director and Co-Founder
Heartfire Medicine



ALCOHOLIC HUSBAND

I got married three years ago, my husband and I attended the same school, and we both graduated the same year. He has been an alcoholic and promiscuous during our school days. I could attest that he had changed from his old way of life until I recently perceived alcohol from his breath whenever he came back from work. I confronted him three times, but he would always dodge the questions. Just two days ago, I caught him drinking beer in a cup; this time around, he could not deny it. He explained that he had been going through alcohol withdrawal symptoms like anxiety and nervousness, and his doctor advised him to take a beer bottle whenever he was nervous because he could not withdraw. What can I do to help him? I do not want an alcoholic for a husband.

RESPONSE:

There is a big decision for you to make here, Sister. I do not know what you saw before you married this man that made you think you could "attest to the fact that he had changed from his old way of life". Did you talk about his lifestyle back then and ask what steps he had taken to ensure he indeed turned a new leaf? Could it be that he pretended to woo you into a relationship and eventually marriage, and now that he has gotten you, he can revert to his 'true self'? I do not think this man changed in the first place, and hiding his lifestyle from you is a big red flag. As much as I would not burst your bubble, I feel

the truth is that you are married to an alcoholic who deceptively played you into marrying him.

Your question is, "What can I do to help him?" Unfortunately, you can not help him. He is an adult who can only help himself if he truly wants help. That choice is his and his alone. The more important question is, "Will you accept the reality that is unfolding before your face, and what do you intend to do about it?" Just as he has a choice whether he wants to walk the rehabilitation journey and deal with his past. You can decide how to handle the situation.

MY DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

No day passes by without my parents shouting at and fighting each other. I have endeavoured to prevail between them severally to no avail. My mother is always the troublemaker, and my dad is highly temperamental. I always feel like walking out of this family one day because I am tired and fed up. What can I do? Will my marriage end up like this one day?

RESPONSE:

First, I would like to empathize with the dysfunction going on in your family. It is unfortunate but not uncommon; it is more common than society will want to admit. No child should have to deal with a situation like what you described because the socio-emotional and psychological impact of rollercoaster living is never healthy for anyone, especially children. Children did not have the privilege of choosing which family they would be born into. Therefore, children tend to pay the most consequences when dysfunctional families are dysfunctional. The shame of being the child whose parents are always fighting, the unhealthy role reversal that takes place where the child is now

taking on the adult role of trying to resolve conflicts between two full-grown adults, the anxiety and emotional pains that children have to hide from such unstable parents, etc. definitely will have dire consequences on the child even into adulthood, unless they seek therapy.

I would like you to know that your parent's behaviours are unhealthy, which is never how healthy couples live in a marriage situation. Regardless of who is the troublemaker or the temperamental one, neither uses a healthy approach to deal with the issues in their marriage. Your parents need help if they care about living long and well. The decision to change and do right is never easy, but you cannot decide for them.

They are not your responsibility; you are their responsibility! However, if they are too dysfunctional to think about how their choices in the family are negatively impacting you and possibly your siblings, you will have to make choices to protect your well-being. If they have chosen to live a life such as this, they have a serious decision to make. Your question, "What can I do?" calls for another question, as it seems incomplete. Are you referring to what you can do to stop your parents from fighting or what you can do to protect yourself? I am sorry if it concerns your parents; I do not think you can do anything. They (together or individually) will have to make the decision and do the work for true and lasting change; nobody can do that for them.

It would be best to recognize the toxicity in your family dynamic; understand that there were profound implications when a child witnessed abuse of any sort; it is called childhood trauma- a genuine phenomenon. The childhood trauma may

have affected you, and the wounds often go deep than we can imagine; many of these traumatic experiences are in the subconscious and will show up as unexplainable anger, rage, hatred, anxiety, and low self-esteem, amongst many others. Traumatic symptoms can sometimes come from "good traits" such as hard work, selflessness, forgiveness, and more. You will need to seek help from a professional therapist or counsellor. In case you do not have access to a therapist or counsellor who will be able to help you work through your traumatic exposure, I would suggest that you make the best use of social media handles for free videos/podcasts/write-ups, etc., on topics relating to how to heal from abuse or childhood trauma are being addressed.

Acknowledging and taking enough time to heal from your exposure to abuse in your family of origin will help you maintain healthy boundaries in your future marriage/relationships. At best, use your pains in your family of origin as lessons for your future- be determined to learn what you will not want to see in your marriage as a result of what you have seen in your parent's marriage, and take time to invest in your own life and surround yourself with positive role models and mentors that can count for you. Invest in books or listen to podcasts that empower you to be whole and of yourself. I try not to be spiritual here, but definitely, the Bible has a lot to say about who you are, and please, always remember that you are priceless and unconditionally loved by God. Commit your life to His hands, and He will guide you into all truth.

In summary, you will unfortunately not be able to help your parents other than pray for them, but you can support and protect yourself such that the toxicity going on will have little to no effect on you. Have healthy and positive outlets where you can feel free to be yourself and live well.

Titilayo Adebajo
B.A. (Honours) Psychology

Parenting in Diaspora

Parents all over the world have been tasked with the responsibility of raising children to become positive and valuable parts of society. Official and unofficial laws govern how we raise our children, which poses a challenge when we migrate from one continent to another.

For those that migrated to the western world, we find ourselves struggling to unlearn what we have practiced for years and to imbibe the new parenting culture of our unique environment.

How do I raise a child without spanking them as I used to?

It takes a village to raise a child; where is my village?

How do I get help with babysitting, chores, adult education, and finding balance with raising my children?

Who do I go to when my children's school has complaints about my child?

How do I handle racism against my child?

Parenting is a lifetime journey full of ups and downs. To raise our children well in the diaspora, we need to figure out what to unlearn and relearn so we can stay on top of the parenting road.

If you are in the diaspora, please take a step back and study the laws governing raising children in your location and do your best to abide by them, so you do not run into problems with the law.

Here are some helpful steps to keep in mind:

Have an open line of communication with your child in which you listen more than you talk; also, there should be no taboo topics. If your child is not asking you about it, they are likely asking someone else or something else (i.e., the internet.)



Build a positive village of like-minded people around your family and ensure you evaluate the relationship often to know if they are still relevant for your parental goals.

Spend quality time with your children doing things that foster positive bonding, so they have good memories for the future, and when the road gets rough, they can fall back on those memories for them to be reminded that they are loved.

I have lived in the diaspora for nearly two decades, raising my three children, and I have had my share of unlearning and relearning on this journey. I support other parents via my website (www.olawumioyetuga.com) and social media platforms (Parenting with Christ in My Thoughts).

My mantra is, "God has graced me to raise my child well, irrespective of my geographical location."

Olawumi Oyetuga.

Certified Positive Discipline Parent Educator.

Early Childhood Educator.



PARENTING WITH CHRIST IN MY THOUGHTS

THE GOAL

Our geographical location may affect how we raise our children but it should not diminish the quality of our parenting skill; the grace and wisdom to raise our children well is and should not be limited by our location.

Raise your child to be fully equipped and to be a productive member of their community.



OLAWUMI OYETUGA

*Certified Positive Discipline Parent Educator
Early Childhood Educator*

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TRUE LIFE STORY OF A SINGLE PARENT

Please introduce yourself

Response: My name is Titilayo Adebajo. I am a mother of three children (22, 18, and 12 years of age). I am originally from Nigeria, migrated to Canada in 1999, and have lived in a province called Saskatchewan in Canada since then. I hold a degree in Psychology, Professional Counselling, and Early Childhood Education (In View) and am the owner and Director of Treasured Jewels Daycare Inc. I am a child of God, and this reflects in my actions and permeates through my belief system and personhood.

Could you, in clear terms, summarize what category of single parenting you fall under? Are you widowed or separated from your spouse?

Response: I am also happily divorced.

Was there any major incidental cause of separation between your spouse?

Response: I believe people always have reasons why they choose to walk out of any relationship, be it an intimate relationship, church, work, or any other relationship. Some reason (s) may be considered legitimate by others, while others are deemed insufficient, inconsequential, or petty. However, as long as one or both parties feel they have reasons to end the relationship with me, what others think is irrelevant.

In my case, I chose to leave my marriage after 18 years of domestic abuse. Why did I stay for so long? I believe I will be able to touch on this during this interview.

As a single parent, do you think any woman set out to be a single parent?



Response: If this question had been posed to me a few years back, I would have responded with a capital "No!" However, I have come to realize that more and more women are choosing to be single parents for several reasons, including the fact that they do not want to go through the heartbreak of separation or divorce. This situation can adversely impact their children and themselves. Thus, I am aware that there are women who choose the path of having sperm donors and are 100% responsible for the child, with no father or husband in the picture; this is, however, considered atypical and counter-cultural, but it is happening in our 21st-century society.

In a marriage relationship, I believe that no healthy woman decides to join herself with a man to separate or divorce him later. Instead, most African women see marriage as their identity and the epic of all achievements. Therefore, they would rather die in an unhealthy marriage than give up through separation or divorce. Culture and religion

tend to celebrate women who "suffer long" in marriage, even if they only count years of anniversaries without any sense of fulfillment or actual happiness. In summary, my answer is both "Yes" and "No," depending on the context.

Could you please describe how the first few months and years affected your mental health?

Response: This refers to the first few months and years after my separation. If so, it already impacted my mental, physical, psychological, spiritual, and social life several years before I decided to separate and, eventually, my divorce. Abuse in all its forms is likened to inhaling toxins such as carbon monoxide. The impact is not often evident. It is gradual, but it will undoubtedly destroy in the end. I had lost my self of identity over the years of abuse, and I now live as a shadow of my ex. My self-esteem and self-confidence were long gone, and although those around me would not know, my family had a front of the "perfect" family in our community. I had lost a sense of who I was and was more or less a living corpse, just going with the motion, whatever that looked like and dictated by my ex.

I was already isolated from every other meaningful relationship; it was just a perfect disaster waiting to happen. So, mentally, I was already disadvantaged. I accredited my saving grace to God, which is that I had started my program the previous two years, just beginning the second semester of my second year into my degree. Also, my strong faith in God kept me going, although my spiritual life was also adversely impacted as a result of my control by my ex.

Several months into my separation was the most horrific time of my life, but I can assuredly say that they were also the period I enjoyed the most fantastic time with God. I had no option but to lean wholly on Him. Everything I trusted

had failed; reality hit, and I realized all I thought I was building with my ex was a bunch of lies and deceptions. I now have to face a society that would impose a label on my children and I as I join the statistics of "women who failed in marriage; children from a broken home" Please note, I never and will never believe this uneducated/naive belief but I am just painting the way society, especially African culture views women whose marriage ends as well as their children. I understand marriage is a status, and there are respects that I accorded to those married, a situation I once had, but life has now ripped me off.

I was definitely in shock, depressed, and suicidal as I faced the humongous decisions I would be making on this journey, including how to put a roof over my children and clothe and feed them. I was in my second year of school pursuing my degree in Psychology. I had nothing to show for my being in Canada for 16 years. My entire life had been in and around my ex as he controlled what I could and could not do. He did not allow me to work outside of the "family business," nor did he provide a sustainable and enabling environment for me to pursue my dream of becoming a Psychologist- a dream I have had since 1997, before coming to Canada.

I felt shame, ridicule, judgement, anger, rage, and hopelessness, amongst many other emotions anyone grieving would face. The exciting thing was that although I had all these feelings, I also felt more confident, raising my shoulders high and moving forward; this was because I used the school as an escape, had a couple of people that stood as solid pillars, and had access to therapy via the university I was attending. In short, every day was different, but I was falling forward overall. It got better as days turned into months and months into years. I can now say I have healed and healed well,

with no bitterness nor regrets.

Do you think situations like this would better manage if they do not happen as a shock?

Response: I am not sure about better management if the situation did not happen as a shock because I don't think it is ever a shock. We may be ignorant, but there are apparent differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships; however, we believe our situation is peculiar to us and will improve with time. There is always a red flag; we can choose to do something about it or turn the other way. Whichever choice we make, the truth remains that abuse is abuse; it is a universal concept. Self-denial or patching things up does not change the apparent fact. Thus, I do not know which part of separation or divorce is/should be shocking. Those in abusive relationships know something is missing though they might not be able to put a name or their finger to it, and that is where the quest for knowledge comes in.

Do you think culture plays a role in your separation?

Response: Absolutely. However, it is not only culture; I believe the marriage of culture and religion plays a critical role in many abusive marriages. Culture and religion had so much hold on me for a long time- "God hates divorce," "Marriage is a school you never graduate from or get a certificate," "A wise woman builds her home," "Be submissive," "The man is the head of the home..." and many more. While many of these hegemonic beliefs are not wrong in and of themselves, they are used as a weapon of mass destruction by men who are already insecure and only looking for women to subjugate and

Those in abusive relationships know something is missing though they might not be able to put a name or their finger to it, and that is where the quest for knowledge comes in.

ultimately destroy, especially when these women are religious and God-fearing. I experienced much backlash from cultural and religious perspectives whenever I tried standing up to my abusive husband and free myself and my children from this toxicity. Religious and cultural voices kept me screaming in my ears, telling me I do not have what it takes to be free because? I am a woman, a second-class citizen both in culture and religion!

How can you describe your relationship with your spouse and briefly describe the event that led to separation?

Response: Just like I had mentioned earlier, my relationship with my ex was an unhealthy one. I married my ex when I was 24 years old; my ex was 27, then based on "God said." He was everything I did not want, but I also wanted to please God and be in His will for my life. I was not desperate for a relationship, nor was I even looking. I was going to pursue my dream of becoming a Psychologist after graduating from Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. However, I couldn't do so as I joined him here in Canada after marriage in 1999. Courtship was rough; I was very jealous and intimidating, but as I alluded to earlier, I knew something wasn't right. I couldn't put my hands on it; I was never in an intimate relationship before. I always feared him and tended to try hard to please him. He became verbally abusive immediately after our wedding, which continued and escalated throughout the

marriage. Physical, emotional, financial, sexual, spiritual, and psychological abuse soon followed until this became a regular pattern in our home. However, we were the enviable family of the larger community.

My children steadily saw abuse in our home and so much confusion as we went through the cycle of abuse- never knowing what would trigger the next episode. I tried very hard to make the marriage work, and I stopped dreaming of anything good for myself and just wanted nothing but success for my ex, thinking that way he would change and stop inflicting pain and heartache on me. It never happened.

Do you think your migration to Canada aids your confidence to know your right as a woman from your abuser? If you were still in Nigeria, do you think you would have been confident to make such a decision?

Response: This is a very big "No." I do not think my marriage would have lasted a couple of years if we were in Nigeria knowing who I am. Migration has its downsides, especially for women. Tons of immigrant women are going through horrendous abuse in their homes, in the hands of the person they lay and wake up with, but they will not seek help. Statistics back this up.

First and foremost, when we migrate, we are still trying to figure out what is what-where is the place in this strange land. If the abuse was already in the picture, it is an additional layer to the associated stress of moving from one culture to an entirely different one. Who wants their home broken when you are still trying to figure out what "home" looks like in your country of migration? So often, the woman is financially dependent on the man, at least initially, as he is usually the primary sponsor in the migration process- all sorts of threats, uncertainties, and fear that often make the woman allow herself to be subjugated. Added to this already messy-

looking scenario is another layer of struggle should there be children in the picture.

Furthermore, it takes time to become aware of available resources for victims of domestic abuse, and many fear the consequences of ever leaving their marriage. There are many layers when it comes to the challenges of being in a foreign land with an abusive partner. Many women do not have the guts to involve authorities in matters relating to their homes, afraid of losing their immigration status or even having their children taken away from them by the government. I said all this so we don't assume that being in Canada is a free ride for victims of intimate partner abuse. It is not as straightforward as that. If I were in Nigeria, my family would not allow me to suffer as I did



here. And, I would have called it quit long ago. I do not care much about what people or society thinks and expects; my peace means a lot to me.

Could you describe the effect of your status on your children?

Response: My status as a single parent does not necessarily have much effect on my children, most especially my second and last borns. My first was impacted due to the violence and confusion she saw when I was with their dad. She saw the fights and was a scapegoat as her dad came for her when I decided to stand up to him. So, I believe the effect was more when we were together with my ex than after. I tried to

establish a new and healthy way of living, being intentional in my role as a mother, and I made it clear to them that I would never occupy the place of their dad and that I was not in competition with him. Of course, they miss having a male figure in the house, but as they grow up, they understand that having one healthy parent is better than having two living like arch-enemies.

Suppose I am to summarize the effect of my decision to leave an abusive marriage and divorce my dad. In that case, they will see a version of me that they would otherwise not see- a tenacious, strong, courageous, assertive, and confident mother who will go any mile to ensure they are safe and well-taken care of. They see a mother who knows how she should be treated and not settle for less.

Moving away from abuse sends a strong message to them that I will not stop at anything to live the life God meant for me to live.

Describe the roles you stepped in to close the gap of being both parents to children?

Response: Like I just mentioned, I cannot be both parents. I am a mother, not a father. I will never be able to fill that gap as a father relates to children differently than a mother does. Trying to be both is frustrating and futile, and I will not engage in such. I intentionally exposed them to healthy male figures such as my friend's husband, my brother, and many times, YouTube videos and books to fill the gap left by their dad.. I do my best to maintain a healthy and safe home environment and provide for them as much as possible. Also, I was not the

sole provider when I was in the marriage, a role I have had to take on as he is not paying child support or any other cost associated with the children, but God has been very faithful.

In what ways do you think your children would have been affected if those roles were not well managed?

Response: I believe that it is essential that my children have a good and healthy balance of what a well-rounded and godly marriage looks like. They needed to know that they were unconditionally loved and that my separation from their dad was not their fault but a choice I had to make for the good of us all. Being trustworthy, open, and authentic with them about what I can or cannot do helps them feel safe and secure with me. Going the extra

mile of driving them out of province for vacation, allowing them to see my shortcomings, and being respectful of their personhood helped provide stability for them. I believe doing all these things made the journey easier for them and me; otherwise, they could be going through mental torture that they might not even be telling me.

Again, my older daughter is most impacted and is still on her journey towards healing from childhood trauma.

Was there any part of your children's lives that are being affected because of your decision?

Response: To the best of my knowledge, my decision to leave my marriage with an abusive ex only made life better for my children. Removing children from abusive

Removing my children from abuse and giving them a stable and safe environment gave them a healthy sense of how a family should be.

homes is never a disservice to them. On the contrary, although there will be momentary confusion, commotion, a sense of loss and grief, and a whole terrain of emotions, the long-term positive effects on the children cannot be underestimated. The longer the children are exposed to domestic abuse in their homes, the more detrimental and dysfunctional they become in all areas of their development, especially their mental health. Removing my children from abuse and giving them a stable and safe environment gave them a healthy sense of how a family should be. They know I will always respect and honour them; together, we laid down healthy and acceptable behaviors, and God is the center of our home. The only area I may feel something is missing is puberty changes with my son. I do not understand that part, but I am again intentional in looking for ways to support him through googling or asking the "uncles" in his life.

What is the defense mechanism you used to support yourself?

Response: Defence mechanisms are various strategies people use to cope and reduce internal stress and conflicts- Anna Freud. They are often done unconsciously, and they act as shields and protection. Using these defense mechanisms, we minimize the conflict between the superego and the id. Some defense mechanisms are healthy, while others will not. Some defense mechanisms I used in my marriage include compartmentalization, rationalization, suppression, compensation, sublimation, etc. I cannot explain these terms on this medium, but many of these coping mechanisms helped me manage my situation while I was in the marriage.

Do you think there is enough support and understanding from our immediate community/society?

Response: No. There is no support from the African community or society not to talk about if it is "enough," especially for separated or divorced single mothers. The community will likely show some support for those whose husbands died and who became single parents as a result, but if single as a result of divorce or separation, you are a castaway! The woman is relegated and considered a rebel. She is criticized and segregated, and her children are labeled and often considered a nuisance. The African culture certainly has a long way to go.

Based on your experience, would you say that the community treats male and female-separated single parents alike?

Response: It is evident that the African community does not treat men and women, male and female gender the same way. Society is toxically patriarchal, and men benefit in no small way. It does not matter whether you are married or a single parent; the experience is the same. The single father will more likely be treated with empathy, compassion, pity, and support. In contrast, the single mother (especially if she was the one who left her marriage) is a rebel and should not be associated with.

Having spent a substantial number of years in Nigeria and Canada, do you think this discriminatory treatment toward a single female parent is peculiar to the black community or is the same as what is obtainable in Canada?

Response: I do not think it is peculiar to the black community alone. Being in Canada, I believe this behaviour towards single mothers occurs among other immigrant communities that are highly patriarchal. Canadian society consists of diverse immigrants from all walks of life. So often, Canadian immigrants often want to stay within their community circle. Still,

when a marital breakdown occurs, and the woman chooses to walk out, she is displaced and left to struggle alone. The attitude, especially from other married women, is sometimes derogatory, and she is considered a failure for giving up on her marriage. It is almost as if the community needs to re-victimize/punish the victim who leaves her marriage by stigmatizing and shaming her. Maybe as a lesson to other women who may be thinking of following the 'unconventional/counter-cultural route. Please note that I am not saying this is my personal experience; this is only a general observation. I am not really in the community, a choice I made on my own and with intentionality.

What has been your experience concerning the stigma society and our immediate communities associate with single parenthood?

Response: I believe the stigma is real. I cannot even overemphasize that, particularly towards single mothers. While I am not in the larger Nigerian community, I have a social support system that is a pillar as I journeyed into wholeness after my separation and divorce. They supported me and continued to believe in me even when I did not believe in myself. They have helped me to regain myself, and it is a blessing to see how far we have come.

What are the challenges concerning raising the children by yourself?

Response: Raising children, either as married or single, is challenging. The single parenting experience is only unconventional. In my situation, I felt like I was already a single parent before I became one. Although my ex was

present, he was not present. I carried on most of the responsibilities of child care and the house's running, including maintenance of our family vehicle. I was already taking the children for their activities and other things. My separation and, ultimately, divorce allowed me to parent my children the way I had dreamed of, without answering to anyone or being afraid of the consequences of parenting my children as such. For example, I can go on summer trips with my children, even when it is my first time driving long distances.

I believe single parenthood is on the rise, and the numbers show that it has peaked in the last few years. Do you agree?



Response: A quick search does suggest a decline in divorce (2020), majorly due to Covid-19 and accessing the judicial

system. I am not overly concerned about the numbers as I am concerned about the abuse behind closed doors, even if the marriage did not support public divorce. Many couples are already divorced in their homes and cannot face the community to announce their ordeal. I believe that a 'patching and enduring' marriage in which abuse is a daily or constant occurrence is nothing but arrant stupidity. Everybody is losing, most especially the children. I am not anti-marriage, but I am strongly anti-abuse! Marriage is not a passport to heaven; no man/woman/child should be subjected to hell in their own home. How can you fulfill your purpose when you are constantly abused in a place that is supposed to be your safest haven? Whom are we deceiving?

How have you navigated through your ordeal all these years?

Response: My journey after separation and divorce has been quite interesting. It has now been over seven years since I moved out of my marriage and five years since that divorce certificate was issued. During this time, I have gone from confusion and commotion to a place of true peace and fulfillment. It has not been smooth at all, but it has been progressive. I am intentional about whom I allow in my space as I work through my healing journey. I invest in myself a lot, developing myself and ensuring that I love myself. I am big on self-care. I take that seriously because I must be okay to help anyone, including my children. I surround myself with positive energy through inspirational/motivational videos or audios, Christian worship, etc. My faith in God means everything to me. Thus, my relationship with God is paramount. I have also chosen to forgive my abuser- he did not ask me, but I decided to do so for myself and my children. Forgiving does not mean reconciliation, nor does it tell me I am in a relationship with him; that would be foolish, and I will not expose myself to such treatment. I am pursuing my dreams in my singleness and enjoying the best of me. That which the enemy meant for evil is always turned around for our good if we allow God to take over.

Do you sustain any illness due to abuse, such as anxiety, depression, fear, and rest?

Response: I did not sustain any notable illness due to my abuse, although I did experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic symptom disorder (PTSD) in the early days of my separation but nothing clinical. I believe the Lord shielded me as I engrossed myself in things that brought me joy and fulfillment during this period. And I could access therapy while in school, which helped me.

What can you say to children going through a dysfunctional family setting and the parents?

Response: Dear children, I want you to know that regardless of the dysfunctionality going on in your family, it is not, and it can never be, your fault. Two adults are making decisions that negatively impact you, and I feel strongly for you. I feel your pain as a mother and a child who was a victim of family dysfunction. I know it is never the best situation; home never feels like home as you frequently do not see what you will go home to meet. The rollercoaster of emotions that you experience on a day-to-day basis is familiar and not uncommon. The shame you may be having as a result of the dysfunctions in your family is very relatable, and you are not crazy or making things up; this is, unfortunately, the reality of your situation. I affirm you, and I empathize with you. Regardless of how you tried to manage this super-stressful situation, you did not bargain, and I want you to know that you will make it through. Acknowledge and accept that your family is dysfunctional; there is no need to patch things up; it is what it is.

Self-denial is our worst enemy, but things unfold before our eyes when we accept our reality. Secondly, I want you to know that it does not have to be like this. The dysfunctionality you see in your family is very toxic and unhealthy, and not all families live like this. There are apparent differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships; take the time to find them out and do whatever you can to have a strong image of healthy relationships in your head. Google, read, and look out for healthy families that can help you; YouTube and several other social media handles have tons of resources you can learn from this to help you both in the now and future. You cannot change your parents or toxic siblings, but you can choose to make good of a bad situation for yourself and your future family. If therapy is not an easy option, social

media is full of therapists who freely share their knowledge to help victims of toxic relationships. Invest significantly in yourself, outside of your family, and begin to live. Spend your time with relationships that empower and help you be the best version of yourself, and create a “No Negativity Zone” for yourself. Above all, know that the Lord God is an expert in bringing beauty out of ashes; he will give you more than you can ever imagine. If He could do it for me, He will certainly do it for you. I love you, wherever and whomever you are!

Do you have any additional thoughts to share with people like single parents and society at large?

Response: My first advice will be on African society and religious space. The culture of marriage by fire, by thunder, needs to stop and stop now! The damage culture and religion are causing to too many lives cannot be fully comprehended. Some marriages should not have happened in the first place. Still, the pressure and lack of knowledge from a cultural and religious point of view forced people into such unions, and we are causing innocent children so much pain and heartache.

We wonder why our society is the way it is. The family unit is the smallest yet most powerful unit of socialization. When the family is sick, the nation at large is sick. We keep tolerating and sometimes celebrating abusers while re-victimizing the victim and innocent children. The institution of marriage has become more important than the individuals that make up the institution. We use religion to keep victims under, knocking scriptures on the already downtrodden? Is that what God said? When you ask an abused woman to keep praying for her abuser and to submit some more, what do you think you are doing? When you ask her to stay in a danger zone because of her children, do you know the implications of staying in

toxicity on the children and adults? What outcome are we expecting when we continue celebrating lies, calling evil good? Please educate ourselves and know that some marriages are “dead upon arrival” and should give a befitting burial! Children are suffering! We are losing victims of domestic violence not only to death but also to mental disorders, health issues, dead dreams and visions, and much more. Stop encouraging victims to stay in a toxic marriage because of the children; the children are slowly dying from exposure to toxins in their homes, where they ought to feel the safest! Let us support victims of abuse, help them dream again, help their children, and support them instead of shaming them. The shame should instead go to the abuser, not the abused. Victims leave because of your children!

What is your long-term goal and hopes for single parents who do not have similar opportunities as you have had in Canada?

Response: My long-term goal is to be a voice for the voiceless in this arena. To raise awareness and advocate for victims of domestic abuse, to support children in such situations, and to ensure that they never have to worry about leaving their abuser because of a lack of financial support. I also want to establish a not-for-profit to raise awareness among teenagers and young adults about healthy relationships, build healthy boundaries, and recognize red flags, so they do not go into intimate relationships with potential abusers. I am passionate about my experience as a survivor of domestic abuse and my journey to wholeness. I believe that victims and survivors can benefit from my story regardless of where they are or where they reside.

Thank you for giving me this platform to share my lived experience and knowledge.

ARE YOU, REHOBAM?

Cecilia Peluola

Rehoboam is one of the names answered in Israel and was the name given to the first son of the wealthiest and wisest man that once ruled in Israel. The encyclopedia meaning of Rehoboam is “he who enlarges people.” It is a pleasant name of affluence that conveys wealth, honour, and dignity and bespeaks the family it represents. Rehoboam was the heir son of king Solomon and the next in line to the throne as the king of the nation Israel.

Rehoboam got this privilege and opportunity on a platter of gold because he did not need to work or do anything special to merit it. He stood in a vantage position to inherit millions of dollars (if put in the present world currency) as the king of Israel. These in addition to a good chance of becoming the king of the nation of Israel with its opportunities and spheres of influence. Following his father's death, it was his turn to be crowned the next king of Israel and settle for his fantastic wealth and splendour. He was asked a simple request that was going to determine his future and that of his generation to come. He had the opportunity to contact the wise counselors with his father during his reign or his playmates. Both groups advised him, but he decided to go by his mates.

The consequence was terrible, he almost lost the whole nation of Israel, and during his time, the kingdom was divided, leaving him with two tribes out of 12 (17%) 1 King 12 & 14.

That is almost a total failure and a generational loss to his lineage. If he had considered the negative side of his answer, he would have listened to his father's advisers and not to his playmates. What was responsible for Rehoboam's failure? Desire to please and act like his friends. The popular word for it today is peer pressure (PP). This is not to say we should not have friends and play with our mates. A famous saying is “birds of the same feather flock together,” and another says, “show me your friend, and I will know the type of person you are.”



Parents and teachers dealing with teenagers and youth are familiar with peer pressure (PP). We quickly think of PP as a bad influence among age groups. However, peer pressure is not always on the opposing side. There are positive and negative peer pressures. These are exhibited in our daily activities. Our response to peer pressure helps define who we are and help to classify us positively or negatively.

For example, a health practitioner describes peer pressure as essential to a child's development, encouraging a sense of independence and detachment from their parents. – Bruce A. Epstein, M.D. It is a pity; Rehoboam was negatively influenced and almost lost everything. What are common vices

of peer pressure today?

1. Infamous attitude
2. Bad gangs
3. Negative popularity
4. Drug use
5. Smoking / Vaping
6. Bullying
7. Premarital sex
8. Premature sex
9. Wrong sexual attraction
10. Jezebel
11. In-ordinate affection
12. Armed robbery
13. Youthful exuberance / Youth mindset of Immortality - daring evil acts like killing others, gang raping
14. Juvenile delinquency
15. Rebellious acts/disobedience
16. Sodomy

Teenagers and youth are easy prey to these vices. The good thing is that there is a way out. Proverb 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding" (KJV). When you are faced with challenges in life, and you need to make a decision, how do you handle it? Whose advice will you follow? Are you Rehoboam? Does peer pressure define who we are- a leader or a follower?

It is difficult or practically impossible to commit your way to someone you have not trusted. For example, in parenting, a child who does not trust his parents' wisdom will likely behave like Rehoboam. To commit your way unto God will be easier and rewarding only if you believe that God (Jesus) is the saviour and you learn to follow him. John 1:12 says, "to them that receive him he gave the power to become sons of God." Even if you do not trust your parents, trust God. When you are a child of God, you are qualified to ask God for direction in a simple prayer, and you can be sure to succeed.



Parents are expected to show love, encourage, and rebuke their children where applicable. Be involved in every aspect of your children and learn to call a spade a spade. Put fear aside and address vices arising from peer pressure. Emphasize it over and over; parents and children should set expectations for their future early enough.

Remember, this is an offer, as you could be positively influenced. Many celebrities of our time died very young or went into depression and other sicknesses due to negative peer pressure. This is most common among singers and live performers who use hard drugs to overcome stage fright and possibly to stay awake for long-hour performances. The good news is you can still be great, famous, and wealthy, but you must stay away from friends that negatively influence you. Your peers can determine the difference between an achiever and a failure. Act wisely.

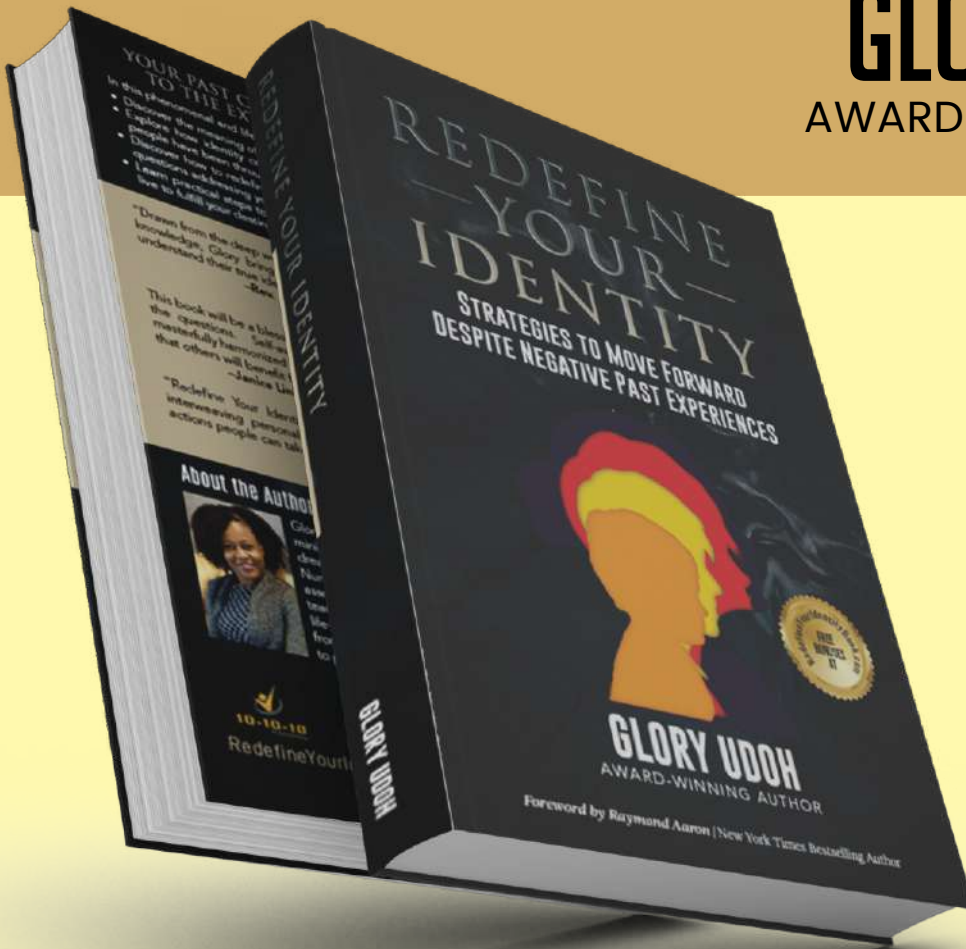
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Difference between negative and positive peer pressure- Yahoo online; parentingteens.com.

Bruce A. Epstein, M.D. The Importance of Peer Pressure

What was responsible for Rehoboam's failure? Desire to please and act like his friends. The popular word for it today is peer pressure (PP).

GLORY UDOH
AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR



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Redefine Your Identity book is available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle editions and from the book website www.redefineyouridentitybook.com

Rita Idowu



Shatter, Hard Shell, Shatter!

Head lifted on the outside.
Yet the unsettled mind sways from side to side
There exists within a secret tide
Needless to say, every attempt is a slide
Shatter, hard shell, shatter!

Putting this to flight
A lingering raging plight
By and large, a fight
Gripping me so tight
Shatter, hard shell, shatter!
What are these shadows of dimension?
Gravitating me towards depression?
Drawing me into the ditch of isolation
The ultimate plan is desolation
Shatter, hard shell, shatter!

Oh no, who would rescue me from this
childhood, and teenagehood shadows?

Blurring the lines, even when the sun
shines brightly through the windows
Someone's unthoughtful actions constantly
piercing me like arrows
These flashbacks of torment and torture my
mind outrightly disallow
Shatter, hard shell, shatter!

Suddenly, I realized they were
retrospections of accumulated blows
The ones crafted into my mind and soul as
billows
Away with these blasts from the past
creeping onto my soft yet melodramatic
pillows!
I arise; I am done with these negative
companions; I have come to my willows!
Shatter, hard shell, shatter, a new dawn is
here!

BUTTERCUP

PEACE AKINTADE

Buttercup had two dogs.
She named them after renaissance painters.
"Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," I said
She told me,
My mind can not discern between
Reality and counting sheep.

My first friend taught me how to draw on the sand
With my pinkie facing eastward.
He told me,
To cry with my eyes open,
and maybe the world will forgive me.

If Buttercup is sand, then my first friend is the road.

One taught me never to trust my foundation.
One taught me to look both ways before opening my
heart.

Honeybun tied his hands across his chest whenever he
saw me.
His eyes twinkled with sweet confessions and
unspoken secrets.
He ruined coffee for me.
Coffee tastes like his tears.
He cried, always with his eyes closed,
And I prayed for the world to forgive him.

If Buttercup is the sand and my first friend the road.
Then Honeybun is the oldest building by the road.
A warm cafe with hanging plants and lattes.
A cafe cracking at the seams but always visited.

Bo liked to laugh with his head tilted back.
He smiled into my hands,
Whispered underneath toe touches.
My art seemed foreign to his mechanical mind
Yet, he always leaned forward.
To him, I had all the wonders of the world.
He was the loud to my quiet,
Hardworking to my insomnia
In his laughter came mockery.

He taught me that a woman's modesty was her respect.
I taught him that friendship means more than deep-
throated kisses.

If Buttercup is the sand, my first friend the road,
Honeybun a beloved café,
Then Bo is wild mushrooms growing at the edge.



Delicious to the mouth, smooth to the throat, deadly to
the stomach.

Sugar walked barefoot on stones.
Stood between the line of flame twin and soulmate.
The difference between a mountain and a river.
She started with a compliment and continued with a
poem.

A wonder of golden stardust and 11 pm sunset.
The definition of affection among friends,
And 5 pm hikes around Broadway.
Colored hair and transcribed songs on
Kayaks to the moon.

Mimi holds a candle near my ear.
Yells for me to wake up.
Ugly laughter surrounds our car discussions.
On our way to blowing up the art community.
In our hands is resilience,
And hushed, "forgive me."
Books that end in cliffhangers are mimi.
Mimi is starlight mixed with an expiry date.
Forced cries that love skateboard tricks.
Experimental is mimi,
And mimi is the reflection of the river during sunrise.
Old in memories, young in foundation with me.

If Sugar is well full of fresh water and lime fruit vines,
then Mimi is the town hall.
Filled with art, community service, and good-natured
people.

I watch my town grow.
Explored by misguided friendships.
Landscapes remind me of love.
I pass each destination with satisfaction.
Knowing they shape my journey.

PEACE AKINTADE

WHAT IS IN YOUR LIFE'S BLUEPRINT?

By **MARTIN LUTHER JR.**

Don't allow anybody to pull you so low to make you hate them.

I want to ask you a question and that is
WHAT IS IN YOUR LIFE'S BLUEPRINT?

Number 1 in your life's blueprint should be:

DON'T ALLOW ANYBODY TO MAKE YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE NOBODY.

Always feel that you count.

Always feel that you have worth and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.

Don't be ashamed of your colour.

Don't be ashamed of your biological features.

Somehow you must be able to say in your own life and really believe it.

I am Black but beautiful and believe it in your heart.

Secondly, in your life's blueprint...

YOU MUST HAVE THE DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE.

In your various fields of endeavour. When you discover what you're going to be in life. Set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it.

If you're going to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures. Sweep streets like Beethoven composed music. Sweep streets like Leontyne Price sing before the Metropolitan Opera. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry.

From an old slave cabin of Virginia's hills.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Booker T. Washington rose up to be one of America's great leaders. He lit a torch in Alabama and darkness filled in that setting.

From a poverty-stricken and of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

MARIAN ANDERSON rose up to be the world's greatest singer so that a Toscanini could say that a voice like his comes only once in a century and Sibelius of Finland could say my roof is too low for such a voice.

From crippling circumstances, there came a **GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER** to carve for himself an imperishable niche in the annals of science.

Then came **JOE LEWIS** and **MUHAMMAD ALI** with an educated fist. All of them came to tell us that we can be somebody.

Skin may differ but affection dwells in black and White the same and if I was so tall as to reach the pole or to grasp the ocean at a span, I must be measured by my soul. The mind is a standard of man.

And finally your life's blueprint must....

HAVE A COMMITMENT TO THE ETERNAL PRINCIPLES OF BEAUTY LOVE AND JUSTICE.

Don't allow anybody to pull you so low as to make you hate them.

I close by quote once more with the man that the young lady quoted.

LANGSTON HUGHES

One day, he wrote a poem called "Mother to Son."

"Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it
And boards torn up, and places with no carpet on the floor, Bare.

But all the time I've been a-climbin' on, And

reachin' landin's, And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark where there ain't been no light.

So boy, don't you stop now.

Don't you set down on the steps

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard

For I've still goin', boy, I've still climbing,

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

If you can't run, walk.

If you can't walk, crawl, but by all means, keep moving.

Information About Us

Our vision is to freely give out TURNING POINT THERAPY to every interested youth and adult. This will be available if contacted by email to fvinefoundation@gmail.com.

It will also be available on our Website www.fvinefoundation.com (IN VIEW), and at www.amazon.com

You can support this vision by:

DONATION OR ADVERTISE YOUR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IN THE TURNING POINT THERAPY MAGAZINE

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SHARE YOUR STORY

The challenges, traumas, and bitter experiences you have passed through and overcome may be what other need to read to give them courage to take their first step to freedom. Many are still swimming in theirs and looking for a way of escape. Share your stories with others today, who knows their solution might lie in your story.

Would you like to be part of Fruitful Vine Foundation activities?

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THE JUDAS THAT WE ALL NEED

We all need a Judas; as funny as it sounds, we all need Judas in our lives. Judas is a name that is generally associated with dishonesty, betrayal, and utter disloyalty. No one wants to be associated with Judas based on what the Bible tells us. This man literally gave our saviour Jesus Christ up to the enemy by blatantly betraying Him with a kiss on the cheek. So why did Jesus make him the treasurer when He knew he was a thief? Why did Jesus allow Judas to remain amongst his disciples, knowing that he would betray Him? Why did Jesus share uncountable numbers of suppers and other mealtimes with him? Why did Jesus allow Judas to tag along as He (Jesus) went about performing miracles and doing good to all men? Yet, Jesus had the power to stop Judas at his track and destroy him just before he could selfishly betray Him, but He did none of these.

I reckon that Jesus needed a vehicle to his glorious destination, and Judas was the means to Jesus' unfathomable, unshakeable, and heaven-approved greatness. Do we then agree that we all need a Judas to propel us to the point of achieving our set goals? Do we also consent that we need someone to nudge us toward life-changing adversity?

Most times, comfort zones are overrated, and human beings tend to assume that they could not have it any better if they were moved from their "space of comfort." Someone once told me the story of a blind woman who permanently



stood at a specific spot begging for alms. One day, her alms pouch fell to the ground as she called out to people who could help her find the purse. A young man who challenged the blind woman to pick up her pouch ignored her altogether. No one wanted to help her after calling out for help to several people, "These people are unkind." She retorted to herself. She was left with no choice but to pick her pouch up all by herself, but little did she know that the wall she leans her back on every day had just collapsed when she stood up to find her pouch. People yelled in a congratulatory tone as she was oblivious to what had just happened. Of course, she could not have seen the collapsed wall as she was blind. The collapsed wall could have led to her demise if she had not been denied help and challenged to reach for her pouch despite her disability to see. No wonder the Bible says, "Every disappointment is a blessing." There are students whose lecturers have maltreated, professionals whose

supervisors have disenfranchised for one reason or another, and marriages where the wife has made the home a living hell for their spouse and vice versa. Colleagues at work who had made their contemporaries lose their job because of jealousy and unfair justice.

The question is, do we see these disappointments as a blessing or a curse? How you deal with your Judas situation determines how far you will go. Think about how unfathomable it is to know that Jesus still called Judas friend and how Jesus temper remained unflared. I believe that he did this because he knew that He needed Judas.

We must also understand that there are vessels unto honour and dishonour.

Judas committed suicide after realizing the extent of havoc he had wreaked, and it appeared to be very clear that he must have been possessed by a demon, prompting him to cause such harm to our savior. He was a vessel unto dishonour, and I pray that we would never be a vessel unto dishonour in Jesus' name.

So, who is that Judas in your life making your life miserable? What has he come to steal and destroy?

When you identify your Judas, you will know how to deal with him and jealously protect what you have. If there is one thing you need to do to deal with your Judas, never allow him to kill you. Protect and guide your life. The mission of your Judas is not far from Satan's mission in John 10:10. The mission to steal, kill and destroy. God Almighty will give us victory over our Judas in Jesus name.

THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER

because they are things I'm comfortable with not doing, e.g., drinking alcohol; instead, they help to boost my physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

On several occasions, various "GANGS" in my school invited me to join them, which I would prefer not to discuss. Still, I remember one experience when the gang asked to join, and my reply was what benefits would I get?... If they could sort out my accommodation, pay for my food, and support me financially, I would be willing to join.

My parents' responsibilities are the requisition I made to join the so-called gangs. If they had been providing these things, I would have never had second thoughts on joining or not, so parents who separated for any reason, please ensure you come together and attend to the needs of your children; they did not come to this world by choice and are still your responsibility regardless.

"I hope our youth learn from the mistakes of their parents and work on becoming better individuals for themselves and future generations."

. . . parents who separated for any reason, please ensure you come together and attend to the needs of your children; they did not come to this world by choice and are still your responsibility regardless.



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CARE
CARE
PEACE
CURE
YOKE

MANNER
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PRECIOUS
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FORGIVE
VOW
LOVE
GIFT
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- Substance abuse, youth addiction (alcohol, internet, porn)

Dolapo is a Registered Social Worker and a Master of Social Work candidate from Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario.

She enjoys working with people, *especially Black Indigenous Persons of Colour (BIPOC)*, on the topic of mental health/illness and its intersection with gender, race, sexuality, age, disability, immigration/socio-economic status & oppression.

She cares deeply about social issues, systemic injustice & the impact they have on children, families, immigrants/refugees, women, BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, those living in poverty, incarcerated and/or homeless.

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