

Working Mothers: Women in Two Worlds

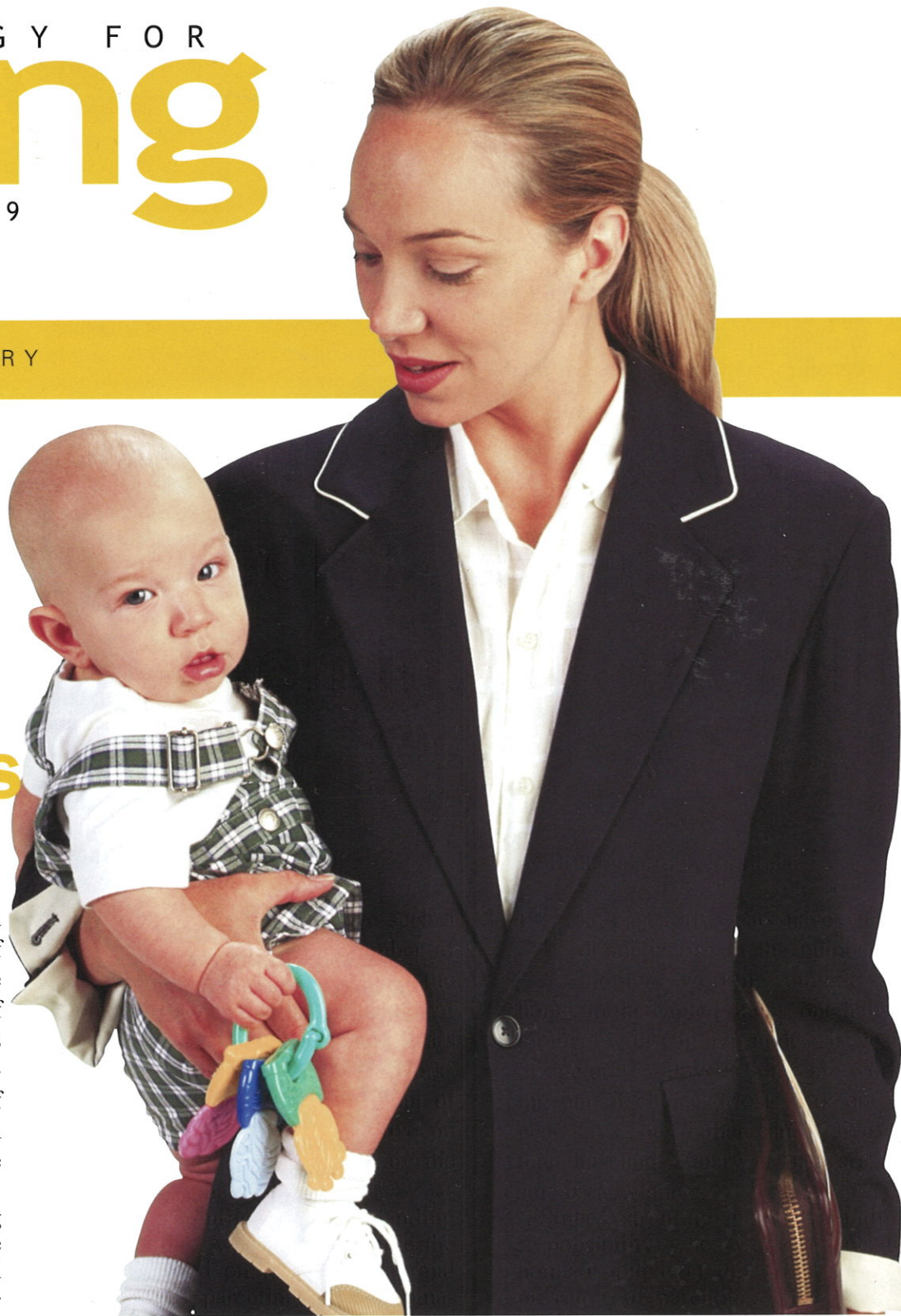
by Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

The past forty years have seen a dramatic rise in the number of mothers working outside the home. In the United States, one half of mothers with children under six years of age are employed. Some are working out of choice. Most work out of necessity. They either cannot live on their husbands' salary or they are the sole breadwinners.

Since parenting is a demanding responsibility, when work outside the home is piled on top of the normal pressures of parenting, the combination can be extremely taxing. If you have taken the plunge into the world of work, there are several things you can do to manage that double load of responsibilities.

Recognize Your Limits

Let's face it, you simply cannot hold down a full-time job, be a full-time mother, and have lots of time for yourself. There are only twenty-four hours in a day. Time is not the only issue. There is physical and emotional



fatigue. If you work days, you won't come home bursting with energy, excited over the prospect of tackling household chores, settling squabbles, soothing hurt feelings, and playing with your children.

Set Realistic Expectations

Unless you want to push yourself to the brink of insanity, you must set realistic expectations for yourself at home and work. Some mothers do this by

limiting themselves to part-time positions. Others work at home or rearrange their work hours to match the times they need to pick up children. Others get help from their spouses or simply agree to let some things go undone. Don't feel like you have to fix a four-course meal every night, have the house spotless, and spend lengthy, uninterrupted time with your children daily. It's just not humanly possible.

WORKING MOMS, continued from cover

God does not ask more of you than you can possibly handle.

Prioritize

“There are some concessions I have had to make,” commented Sandy, a working mother of three. “I have become ‘comfortably uncomfortable’ with a certain level of messiness around the house. I close all the bedroom doors when company comes and give my kids strict orders not to open them. Since I don’t have a dishwasher, we eat the things that I thaw or heat almost exclusively on paper plates to save time. If I entertain, it’s always informal and everyone brings something. Gone are the days of sit-down dinners.”

You must decide for yourself what is absolutely essential and let some other things go. This poem gives a nice perspective:

Cleaning and dusting can wait till
tomorrow,
For babies grow up, we’ve learned to
our sorrow.
So fly away cobwebs, and dust go to

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sleep.

I’m rocking my baby, and babies don’t keep.

Make a List and Look for Pockets of Time

Write down everything you need to do each day, plus your weekly responsibilities. Then look for pockets of time to work through several items on your list. You won’t get them all at once but even two or three ten- to twenty-minute windows can give you time to check several items off your list. Longer periods can be spent on bigger tasks and meaningful time with your children.

Multi-Task

Tackle a project together with a friend. Do some gardening or household chore with your spouse or children. Read together. Play together and work together. Don’t force togetherness if your children don’t want it but look for opportunities to enjoy each other while checking something off your list.

Think Smart

If you have a computer, pay your bills online. Once you get the hang of it you save time and money. No more stamps. No time driving or walking to the post office. And maybe even no more files for paper bills!

Make a budget and stick to it. You will learn a lot about yourself and where your money goes. And you may even be able to regularly set some aside for a rainy day or for something special.

Get Help

When I asked Patti, a single mother of three children, the one thing that helped her survive a demanding job and caring for her children, she immediately answered, “My live-in.” Patti found a young girl who needed work and a place to stay. Patti was able to hire her for slightly less money than she had been paying for a babysitter to take care of her infant son and day care for her two older children.

A live-in can be expensive, and it doesn’t make sense to pay most of your

salary to hire one. But in Patti’s situation, it was actually cheaper. And her live-in doesn’t just babysit. She helps with the housework and the cooking, and the kids love her. It wasn’t easy finding a good live-in. Patti tried three other young women who didn’t work out before she found a great one. But once she did, her life and the lives of her children improved by leaps and bounds.

You may also be fortunate enough to enlist the help of family members. If you are married, don’t let your husband get by thinking that you will work full-time and still handle all of the household chores. And don’t forget grandma and grandpa. Karen told me, “The saving grace for me has been my mother and my sister. Between the two of them I don’t think I’ve paid for a babysitter ten times. I don’t know what I would do without their help.”

Find Creative Solutions

Now that so many women are working, businesses are a lot more sensitive to the needs of working mothers. Job sharing, an almost unheard-of practice thirty or forty years ago, is increasingly common. Joan, one of our closest neighbors, was able to work out a job sharing arrangement in the public school district where she teaches. She and another mother each put in two and a half days a week and were even able to keep their fringe benefits when their children were young. Half-time jobs with reduced benefits are sometimes available. And don’t forget the possibility of working at home or telecommuting. With a computer and a modem, many men and women are carrying out a significant portion of their work from home.

In case you think flexible jobs are impossible to come by, read this encouraging story of Jean, a single mother of two:

I didn’t want to work while my kids were young, but I had to. My employer is sensitive to my needs and lets me have an hour and a half for lunch each day so I can take my kids to the park. He is also understanding about things like doctor’s visits. I go in early to make up the hours, but as long as I get my work done, he remains flexible.

Not all companies are this accommodating, but don't settle for a rigid eight-to-five job if you can find a more flexible one.

Make Time for Yourself

As important as your children are, they aren't the entire story. Don't neglect your own needs and, if you are married, your need for time with your husband. You need time for refreshing and renewing. Gloria, a single mom, runs three miles six days a week. She told me, "It gives me a half hour without anything else coming into my head. I need that quiet time to think and plan. Sometimes my kids get tired of my running, but it's an absolute necessity for me. Sometimes they go to the track with me."

Nancy told me, "My kids know that the first thirty minutes when I get home from work are mine. I have to take my shoes off, unwind, and go through the mail. I make it clear that it isn't about them. It's about me and my day. After I've done that, I'm ready to be a mom again. If I don't give myself that time, I'm a big grouch."

Gloria and Nancy weren't being selfish. Even Jesus needed time away from his disciples to be alone. You will be able to handle your other responsibilities with greater confidence and strength when you take some renewal time for yourself.

Put Exercise on Your Calendar

Determine how often you need to exercise. Most experts say a thirty-minute workout three-five times each week is plenty. Put it into your calendar and treat exercise as an appointment. By exercising regularly you will get the benefit of becoming healthier and trimming up, getting clarity of thought, and having the possibility of making a new friend or two. Ironically, when you invest your time into exercising you will probably find that you have more energy!

Choose an exercise that you enjoy, and change it if you start getting bored. You may prefer to start with walking, but if you are motivated by a group, consider joining a gym or exercise class. You may



even find a place that offers free or inexpensive child-minding services while you work out.

Especially for Solo Parents

It's hard enough to be a married working mother, but being a single working mom is a herculean task. Unless you have a roommate, you have no one to share the household chores, no adult to come home to talk to, no one to help with the finances, and no one to help with the children. So be sure you maintain a few good relationships. As one single mother put it, "When you don't have money to cover the utility bills, the baby won't shut up, and the toddler just spilled juice on the rug, you'd better have the phone number of at least one friend, for your sanity and your children's safety!"

Here's another thing I've learned from single mothers. Without exception, the single mothers I know who are coping well are all involved in some form of ministry or outreach beyond their own family! The first time a single mom told me she gave two evenings a month to work with abused children, I couldn't imagine how she found the time. With her frantic schedule, I assumed that she would grab every free minute for herself and her children. But Julie told me, "Oh, no. I need to give to someone else, and when I do, I get back even more." As I

talked with other single moms, I heard the same thing over and over. One mom told me, "My son and I spend Christmas Eve together, since he is with his father on Christmas Day. The past four years I have gone to the inner city to serve Christmas lunch to the homeless. This year my girlfriend went with me. She is an artist and went from table to table drawing caricatures. There were enough servers, so my son and I played with the kids, visited with people, and prayed silently. Then we delivered meals to several homebound people. By the time we got home and put our turkey in the oven it was 5:15 P.M. We watched a video and had a candlelight dinner at 9:00 that night. It tasted as good as any Christmas dinner ever did. I really had a great day."

I don't fully understand how single working mothers can do everything they do for their own families and still reach out to others. But for the single moms I know, giving seems to be as important for them as it is for those to whom they give. They tell me they always get back more than they give, and that they realize how blessed they are when they see others in even more serious circumstances. You may be able to volunteer an hour at your child's school, help out with a need at your church, or put the fixings in a bread-making machine and drop it off for a friend a couple hours later.

Building a Home that Lasts

The last thing that I would like to share with working parents—and all parents for that matter—is this:

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves," *Psalm 127:1-2*.

Isn't this a great truth? The Lord knows you rise early, stay up late, and toil for food. He knows you're working hard, and he reminds you that you are not alone. He is building your house with you. ☩



Dealing with Narcissistic Personalities

by Robert L. Whitcomb, Psy.D.

Christopher Lasch's 1979 book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, first popularized the notion of a narcissistic generation. Now a book by Dr. Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled – and More Miserable Than Ever Before*, has refueled the debate. Her thesis: the current generation is more narcissistic than ever!

Dr. Twenge's research for her book

was conducted primarily with college students. She used a tool called the Narcissistic Personality Inventory that is made up of 40 questions that are written in pairs like the following:

- a) I have a natural talent for influencing people,
- b) I am not good at influencing people;
- a) I can read people like a book,
- b) people are sometimes hard to understand;
- a) I am going to be a great person,
- b) I hope I am going to be successful.

Choosing the first statement in each

pair is scored towards narcissism.

By contrast, Kali H. Trzesniewski, an assistant professor at the University of Western Ontario, along with colleagues at the University of California, Davis and Michigan State University, disputes the conclusions of Dr. Twenge. They contend that over the last 30 years there have been very few changes in the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of youth.¹ They believe this generation is perceived as having increased narcissistic traits because of the biases of older adults, changing social norms, and the rise of social networking which encourages egocentricity. They also claim the Narcissistic Personality Inventory used by Dr. Twenge is not an adequate measure of narcissism.²

While the academic debate rages on, one thing is certain. Our world has a large number of self-centered, narcissistic individuals and many people struggle to live and work successfully with them. Many other people wonder what the difference is between pathological (severe) narcissism and a healthy self concept or biblical self image.

Recognizing Narcissism

Webster's Dictionary defines narcissism as "Excessive interest in one's own body or self." The key word is excessive. We could add to an excessive interest in one's body or self, an excessive need for attention, a sense of entitlement, a tendency to use others for his or her own purpose, difficulty being sensitive to other people's needs and feelings, beliefs that one is unique and special (i.e. better than others) and preoccupation with success, power or beauty. Notice that these characteristics go far beyond normal, healthy, positive feelings toward one's self. They all involve a certain immature or unhealthy way of relating to other individuals. Narcissistic people are unable to perceive themselves and others accurately; they feel they are entitled to special treatment and they often become demanding, angry or offended when others don't agree with their high opinion of them and their ideas.

Narcissists can be charming as long as things are going their way. Many are successful leaders because they exude apparent confidence and attract people

to help them fulfill their goals. In fact, some outwardly successful religious leaders are rather narcissistic, caring more about the success and growth of their ministries and the fulfillment of their visions than they do about the people they are called to serve. Church members and followers become the means for the narcissistic leaders to accomplish their own goals. Every once in a while we hear a newscast about some religious or political leader like that who acted in an obnoxious way or got upset on an airplane because someone didn't recognize them or give them the special treatment they believe they should have received.

Beneath the surface of these overtly confident people lies an entirely different story. Most narcissists actually have very weak or frail egos that require frequent reassurance and affirmation. They attempt to elicit admiration from others to compensate for their deeply held doubts about their self worth and value. And when they are criticized, challenged or corrected they react angrily, suffer depression or rise up with indignant self righteousness. Their relationships with others are unstable because they need an ever increasing social circle that supports their grandiose ideas about themselves.

By contrast, a normal or healthy attitude toward one's self includes a balanced view of both our strengths and weaknesses. Paul's admonishment in *Romans 12:3* provides a scriptural way to think about the difference between narcissism and healthy positive feelings toward ourselves. "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith," (NASB). Sound judgment requires a balanced appraisal of one's self. It realistically sees our strengths and weaknesses. It values, respects and loves others. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs," *I Corinthians 13:4-5* (NIV).

The Making of the Narcissist

Experts debate the causes of pathological narcissism. Some suspect that early in life narcissists had parents who were unable to emotionally connect with them in a sensitive, empathetic manner. Consequently the child had to turn to himself to convince himself he was a good, interesting and significant person. Other theorists suggest that narcissists had parents who needed their children to be talented, special or successful in order to make the parents feel good about themselves. In other words, narcissists may have had narcissistic parents! But whatever the causes in a given situation, most counselors agree that underneath their outwardly competent exteriors, all narcissists struggle with hidden shame. They are afraid of failing or having their weaknesses and feelings of inadequacy known.

Living and Working with Narcissistic Personalities

Unfortunately, narcissistic persons do not often seek treatment or stay in treatment if they do seek it. Since they usual-

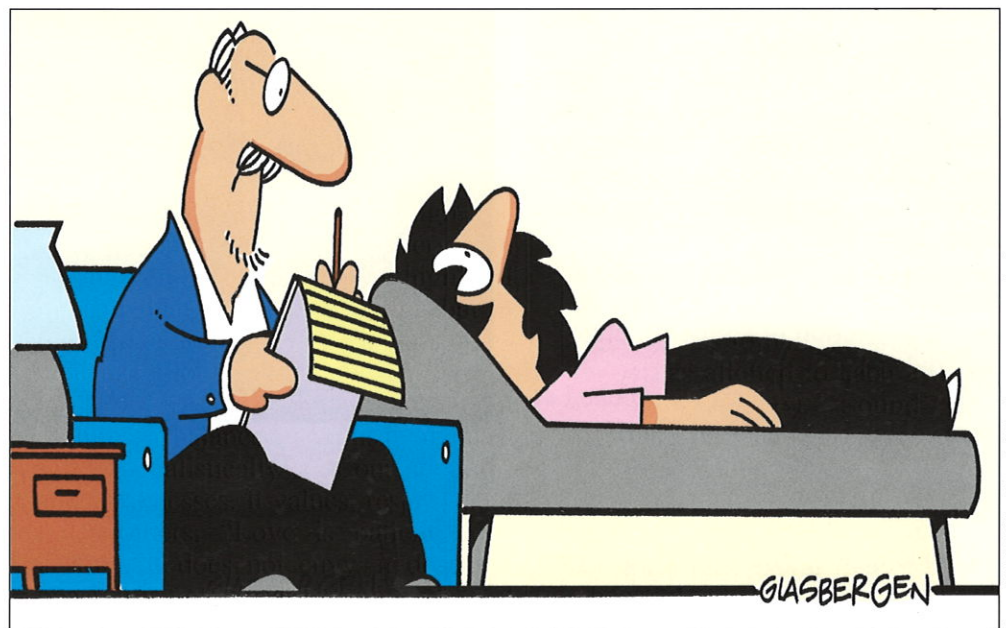
ly believe someone else is the problem it takes some major failure such as loss of a job or a failing marriage or a serious physical illness to drive them to counseling. It requires a highly skilled clinician to provide the delicate balance between listening to their grandiose self-expectations and sense of entitlement while at the same time hearing the narcissist's hidden and feared imperfect self or fragile and childlike self esteem.

Counselors who work successfully with narcissists typically find several things necessary to be of help. These elements are not only important to the professional treatment of narcissism, but also offer some insights into more helpful ways for family members and co-workers to interact with narcissistic individuals.

Being sensitive to the narcissist's inflated self-perception is the place to begin. When interacting with narcissistic personalities, one needs a capacity to accurately understand their emotional state and self appraisal. In the beginning of the relationship this will mean not

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LAST LAUGH



"I never realized how self-centered I am until ten online dating services matched me with myself!"

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Relationship Metaphors from Nature

by Bonnie Evans

No thinking adult would have entered the blooming Wisconsin lake but we never noticed the color or less-than-fresh smell. My sisters and I only saw a chance to rinse off the sticky June heat and waded quickly into the world of make believe.

We pulled lily pads and wore them on our heads like crowns. We built castles out of stones the winter ice had pushed onto our beach. We floated doll-sized birch canoes across our newly dug moats.

By the time the sultry sun slipped below the horizon, we were sunburned and hungry.

I carefully patted my baked body with a faded Minnie Mouse towel. As my wrinkled feet slipped into worn blue flip-flops, I noticed some strange brown clumps between my toes. I bent down and pushed one with a finger nail. They squirmed but didn't leave. They were . . . ALIVE!

My sisters squealed and assessed their own shriveled limbs to see if they had a moving collection of slimy somethings. They did not.

Mom was not the least bit shocked at the sight of my unwelcome guests.

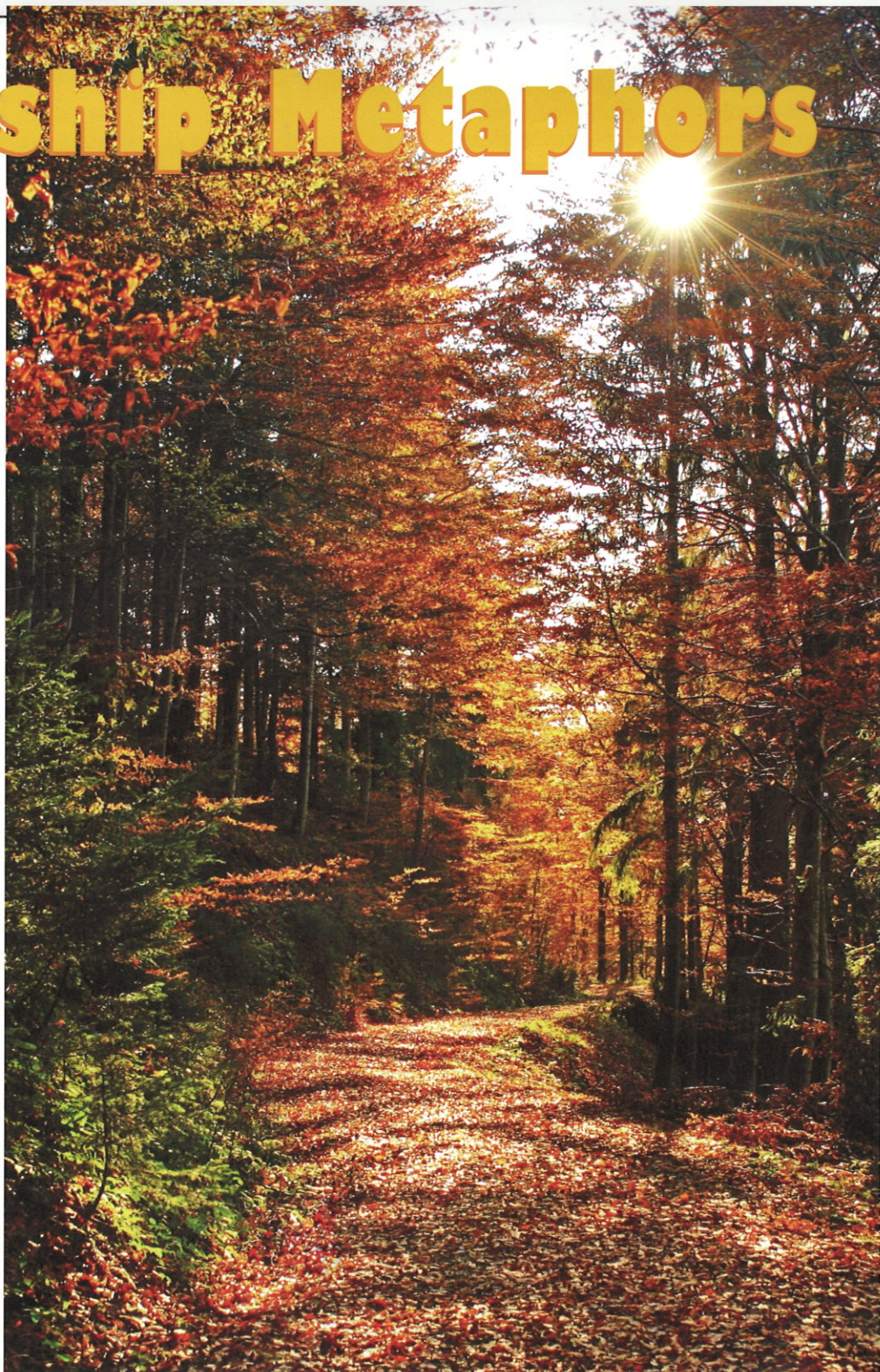
"They're leeches," she quipped.

"What're leeches?"

"They live in lake mud. If you stand still too long, they grab on and suck your blood. . ."

"Take 'em off! I don't want 'em on my feet! Take 'em off!"

Mom calmly reached for the salt shaker and shook a generous portion on my



sad little feet. The leeches curled and slid onto the hot sand without a struggle.

That's the last time I stood still too long in a spring lake, but it's not the last time I thought about the lessons learned. Whenever I find myself mired in the stagnant, muddied waters of an unhealthy relationship, I remember that every so often some people resemble

lake leeches even though they call themselves friends.

Figurative leeches are those who never learned the ebb and flow of a healthy friendship. In their world, there are Givers and Takers. The relationships aren't even. Takers try to take even when Givers aren't ready to give. Occasionally these lopsided interactions

are even encouraged under the false guise of Christian virtues (compassion, humility, support, or service). Takers miss the important admonition of Paul in *Galatians 6:2*, “Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ,” (NASB). Relationships, in other words, are to be mutual. We are to need each other and balance the giving and receiving.

I confess that I have found myself in these uncomfortable liaisons too often—which may say as much about me as it does my friends! They leave me feeling drained, used, manipulated, and eventually, even depressed.

Contending with Takers

My doctor was the first to point out the correlation between usurpers and their target’s sense of well-being. I went to see her because I’d been blue for months and thought the cause might be medical. When the tests returned normal, she suggested I start an emotional chart.

“Log each hour, what you did, who you were with, what you ate or drank, and then grade how you felt,” she instructed. “Did the activities affect your mood positively or negatively?”

Eager to avoid medication, I complied. Within two weeks, patterns emerged. After every phone call or one-on-one meeting with the Takers in my life, I saw my mood lines dip dramatically. I recognized that as I gave to the Takers in my life I left little for myself and in this depleted state I began to feel depressed. I also admitted to myself that I was resentful and angry. I had been denying those feelings because I could not reconcile them with my stunted view of Christian living.

Understanding the Dynamics

It was time to do a little circle-of-friends housecleaning. It was not an easy task, but one that bore hope. While it was obvious to me what to do, I found an alternating process in me. On one hand I felt a need to set some firmer limits. On the other I continued feeling an urge to help. After much soul searching and discussion with my pastor, I realized that I was giving to the Takers so I could feel useful, important, and have a sense of purpose. My pastor called this co-

dependency and explained that I was confusing what was my responsibility and what was someone else’s. He helped me realize that I needed to remember how God sees me and that my ultimate value was in Him.

It helped me to internalize this by taking some time to consider where these feelings of value originated. As I pondered my own family I found several examples of relationships where I was encouraged to give up my needs/wants to take care of others. I was rewarded for being a care taker of others.

Setting Healthy Boundaries

After Moses died, God spoke to Joshua and told him to possess the land. “Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go,” *Joshua 1:7* (NASB). It was time for me to use my “no” muscle and not give away my time, resources, and energy except where I was being led by the Lord. I needed to keep a close relationship with Him to hear His leading. The Lord blessed me with a relationship that has helped me practice these new truths.



A stone’s throw from those same Wisconsin lakes, nature displays another kind of union—this one mutually beneficial.

Deep beneath the rich black loam of the forest floor, a fungus, called Mycorrhizae, moves into the root systems of a conifer tree. At first glance, this appears to be another parasite/host association but it’s not. The fungus, isolated from streams of sunlight, cannot carry out the life giving process of photosynthesis so it takes the sugars it needs from the pine roots. In return, the fungus provides the tree with antibiotics against parasites and pathogens as well as supplying water, nutrients, and oxygen from the soil.

In nature, reciprocal relationships are fairly common; among humanity—less so.

Carol is from my limited edition of symbiotic friends and I’ve always been

Signs You Might Need to Ask God to Pass the Salt:

You have a friend who

- only calls when they need something
- never shares in mutual expenses
- likes sympathy and compassion but rarely gives it
- talks more than they listen
- doesn’t like it when you’re down
- doesn’t like it when your opinion differs from theirs
- consistently leaves you feeling guilty, used, down, depressed

Ways to Shake Salt on an Unbalanced Friendship:

- ask God to show you your part in the lopsided interaction
- humble yourself: the relationship didn’t get out of whack without your help
- ask God for a scripture that shows you how to pray for yourself
- ask God for a scripture that shows you how to pray for the other person
- ask God if you should tell them how you feel or if you should just sever the tie
- if you feel God wants you to share, take responsibility for your actions first
- invite them to share how they feel about the relationship
- pray with them and ask God to bless them

grateful God introduced us so many years ago.

In appearance, we're as different as the pine tree and fungi: She's almost 6' tall with long thin legs; I'm 5'4" and quite round ... she has dark hair, dark eyes, and olive skin; I'm blond, blue-eyed, and freckle when I'm in the sun too long. Our differences don't end on the surface either: our personalities and opinions are worlds apart.

Our friendship began when we became walking partners. We must have been quite a sight charging down the levee for our daily trek: Carol wearing two sets of ankle weights to slow her down; my short legs pumping wildly to maintain the gait of my hobbled victim. We walked, we talked, we laughed, we listened, we cried. We puffed and panted and sweated and strained. Conceived in an excuse to exercise, pregnant with a mutual yearning for fellowship, laboring from our differences—the miracle of closeness came.

I find verbal sparring with Carol exhilarating and stimulating. So far, we haven't resolved any of our arguments but the discussions continue to inspire reflection, prayer, and Bible study. And further it has provided emotional healing as we benefited from following James direction to "confess your sins to one another," *James 5:16a* (NASB).

Carol calls when she doesn't need anything; sometimes I'm compelled to send her an outrageous Shoebox greeting card for no apparent reason.

When we go somewhere, we take turns driving. If we stop for lunch, we split the bill.

It's refreshing to know I have a friend who can handle me on my down days. She doesn't demand composure by downplaying dilemmas. She listens, affirms, and accepts. I'm comfortable telling her how much I hate it when she's late (which is often). The comfort comes from knowing my flaws might just as easily earn comments.

God challenges me to grow in character and grace when I bond with either a peer or an especially needy person who only wants to take; however, I've learned to watch for those times when I'm mired in the muck more than I'm walking in the woods.

I've gotten quicker at spotting friendships that consistently bring more pain than pleasure—and quicker at taking action. When I realize that I cannot really help them and that I am only being drained in the process, I ask God to please liberally sprinkle some salt on my tired heart or at least show me where the shaker is so I can reach for it myself. ☩



Bonnie Evans and Mike (her husband of 38 years) live in Pine Grove, California. She tutors, volunteers in her community, and writes (published in *Decision*, *Celebrate Life*, *Live*, and others) Her passion is interviewing, recording, and typing the significant memories of terminally ill patients. So far she has self published 18 of these life reviews.

challenging their felt sense of self-importance. We need to understand they have weaknesses that compel them to hold these beliefs rather than directly challenge them. Trying to confront the narcissist's unrealistic views of him or herself and others too early will probably overwhelm the narcissist and trigger his defensiveness. At the same time, we should not reinforce the narcissist's grandiose sense of self or tendency to denigrate or use others. Paul nicely captures a helpful attitude in *1 Thessalonians 5:14*, "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all men," (NASB). We need to be especially careful to encourage and help before we admonish in the case of the narcissist.

Kindly Confront

Like most people, but even more so because of their fragile perceptions of themselves, narcissists can benefit from being lovingly, and not angrily confronted about their perceptions of themselves and others. In some cases, narcissists cannot take even the kindest confrontation. In fact, they may get worse before they get better. Sensitivity is required to fully grasp the limited ability these folks have to tolerate painful emotions of shame, embarrassment and inferiority when they are confronted. There will be tendencies to attack the loving confrontation as well as the confronter in order to stave off the nearly intolerable pain that reality brings to them. Even "...speaking the truth in love..." *Ephesians 4:15a* (NASB) can trigger great defensiveness and pain; much more than we might imagine.

Love Without Conditions

Writing in *Ephesians 2:8,9* Paul reminds us "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast," (NASB). This fundamental truth of the gospel is vital to our salvation but it directly clashes with the narcissist's belief that he should be able to perform so well that he earns his sought-after attention and admiration. Being robbed of the ability to boast about performance leaves him fearing that he is so broken no one could ever love him.

Hopefully, in relationship with caring people, the narcissist can begin to risk the chance that love is not earned and that

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God and others can love him as he is. The parable of the prodigal son makes this point. While the youngest son recklessly spends his inheritance, upon his return his father welcomes him back home without reckoning his sin against him. The younger son accepts the grace. *Luke 15:29* depicts the angry reaction of his older brother, "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends,'" (NASB). The older son counted on his performance to win admiration and attention of the father and in the end he failed to receive the grace that was always there for him. Narcissists too, fail to receive grace that could be theirs as they fearfully compensate for their sense of inferiority.

Maintain a solid sense of yourself. Working or living with narcissistic persons can be draining and provocative. They are so vigilant and keenly aware of others that any criticism or confrontation is painful. Consequently, they challenge our motivation for speaking to them about anything we believe they should change. They also have a great tendency to make other people feel to blame for their hurts and at a very deep level they have trouble feeling sympathetic to how others feel in response to their self-centeredness. So in order to stand up to a narcissist we need to be confident of our own feelings and perceptions and not easily intimidated or sent on a guilt trip. Even if the narcissist gets bent out of shape by our efforts to have him hear our own hurts, needs or differences of opinion we need to stay centered and confident.

Narcissists can be gifted people with much to offer but they need to undergo some very deep changes in order to feel satisfied with being normal and enter into loving peer relationships with others. †

For further reading on narcissism, you can request NCF's free booklet #129 "Understanding Narcissism". Just phone our office at (626) 821-8400 extension 2, or write us at: P.O. Box 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900.

Robert Whitcomb is a clinical psychologist practicing in Fullerton, CA. His work includes psychotherapy with adults and teenagers suffering from depression, anxiety and personality disorders. *New York Times*, Generation Me vs. You Revisited, January 17, 2008. Ibid.

The Eroding Institution of Marriage

The July 13, 2009 *Time* magazine graphically drew attention to the cover story: "Unfaithfully Yours: Infidelity is eroding our most sacred institution. How to make marriage matter again." Sadly, the story made no reference to God, who created and ordained marriage. But, it was encouraging to hear



even researchers with biases such as feminist, Maria Kefalas, a sociologist and author who studies marriage and family issues, conclude from her work that broken homes wreak havoc on the family and especially the children. She responded to the belief that children are harmed by not having a father at home by saying, "As a feminist, I didn't want to believe it."¹ However, she concluded from her research, "The mom may not need that man but her children still do."²

While the article argues vociferously for the stability of the

marriage union for the sake of the children, the author does hold the following convictions about the increasing failure of marriage in our culture: "A lasting covenant between a man and a woman can be a vehicle for the nurture and protection of each other, the one reliable shelter in an uncaring world—or it can be

a matchless tool for the infliction of suffering on the people you supposedly love above all others, most of all your children."³ With even more pointed rebuke, she states, "There is no other single force causing as much measurable hardship and human misery in this country as the collapse of marriage."⁴

Unfortunately the article offers no solutions, leaving our hope pinned to "the good among us, the ones who are willing to sacrifice the thrill of a love letter for the betterment of their children."⁵ Christians know the value of our own efforts will not be enough. As Isaiah wrote, "For all of

us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away," *Isaiah 64:6* (NASB). We need divine help to become the kind of parents and partners that make marriage the wonderful institution it was designed by God to be! †

1 *Time*, Vol. 174, No. 1, July 13, 2009, p. 47.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 46.

4 Ibid. p. 47.

5 Ibid. p. 49.

Missionary Member Care Workers Complete

People often ask, "What is a missionary member care worker?" He or she is a different type of missionary. Member care missionaries don't plant churches, evangelize or disciple new Christian believers. They don't translate the Bible for people groups that have no scripture in their language. They don't provide medical services. And they don't engage in economic developments to help nationals become self supporting.

What do they do? They help missionary church planters, evangelists, translators, Bible teachers, educators and medical and social service missionaries cope with the stresses and strains and spiritual, emotional and relational challenges of living in harsh and difficult environments. They help those missionaries stay in their fields of service and function effectively in their missionary roles.

In years past, most missionaries were largely left to scramble for themselves when they encountered difficulties. If they were burned out, they tried to keep putting one foot in front of the other. If they had unresolved conflicts with other missionaries, they tried to co-exist. If they suffered tragedies or traumas they had to cope alone. And if their children had emotional or educational problems they either overlooked them, did whatever they could to try to help the situation by themselves, or waited until they returned to the U.S., praying that the situation wouldn't worsen by then. Missionaries were

expected to sacrifice and suffer and little thought was given to how sending churches and mission agencies could help them cope with the hardships of mission life so that they could have thriving ministries and not ruin their personal and family lives in the process.

Unfortunately, that wasn't enough and many missionaries ended up leaving their ministries and returning to the United States feeling as if they had failed to carry out the challenge God had for them. The dropout rate for missionaries was high and the financial waste and personal costs for missionaries who didn't make it were huge. For every missionary who left the field, a new missionary or missionary family had to be recruited, trained, sent and given time to learn the language and adapt to a new culture. This took years and could cost into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Today that situation is changing. Many mission agencies are appointing member care missionaries with a pastoral heart to come alongside their other missionaries in times of need. Agencies are realizing that it is better to help their existing missionaries stay on the field than to be constantly recruiting and equipping replacements. If a newly arrived missionary mother is overwhelmed by the dirty and unsanitary living conditions in the city or village where she and her family have just

moved, the missionary member care worker is the person she can confide in and who provides a listening ear and words of encouragement and support. The member care worker will pray with and for her. And if the new missionary is quite depressed, the member care worker may see that she receives an evaluation for counseling or medication.

If the missionary is concerned about her children's education, the member care worker will help her and her husband think through the various options. Should the children be home schooled? Should they attend a local school where they will not be taught in English and will be one of the few non-nationals in the school? Should they attend a secular English speaking International School with children whose parents from all over the world work with international business firms, governmental agencies, the military and a variety of social service and other non-governmental agencies? Or should they leave their parents and go hundreds, or even thousands of miles to attend a boarding school for missionary children? Each option has pros and cons and the member care worker can help missionary parents think them through in light of their children's special needs.

And if there is an assault, robbery, car-jacking or serious accident with injuries, the member care worker comes alongside the victims and



Dr. Keith Edwards doing a live couple's counseling demonstration.



Staff and participants enjoying an evening meal together.



Kathy Narramore with member care missionary during an evening break.

Intensive Training In Counseling

their community.

Yet most member care workers have no formal training in counseling. That's why the Narramore Christian Foundation has developed an intensive two-week in-service training program for missionary member care workers.

Dr. Bruce Narramore and a team of eleven Christian psychologists, counselors and educators recently offered NCF's fourth bi-annual Southeast Asian member care and counselor training seminar in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Seven counselors from the United States joined with four counselors from the Cornerstone Counseling Center in Chiang Mai to offer this intensive training.

Each morning began with a time of worship and singing, followed by lectures and discussions on topics like "Understanding and Working with Depression," "Coping with Stress and Trauma," "Adjustment Issues of Missionary Children," and "Principles of Counseling." Dr. Narramore presented a series of lectures on the psychological implications of the doctrines of sanctification, grace, and forgiveness. After a two-hour break for lunch and relaxation, participants attended another lecture/discussion. Then all of the member care workers participated in an experiential elective workshop designed to deepen their counseling skills or help with their own personal growth. Participants chose between a "Couples Enrichment

Group," a "Personal Enrichment Group," or a "Basic Counseling and People Helping Skills" workshop.

Between sessions all of the Christian counselors and psychologists were available for individual consultation or counseling. Evenings were free or offered additional elective options on "Working with Couples in Conflict" and "Child Abuse Prevention and Response." One evening was set aside for relaxing entertainment and the last evening of the conference featured a lovely poolside barbecue and closing time of farewells and mutual sharing.

At the close of the conference one missionary member care worker said, "I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity to be here. My life will never be the same." Another said, "The seminar was life changing. This course will be the backdrop for my work and ministry from now on." And a third commented, "I felt like I was at an oasis—very thirsty and lapping up as much as possible before heading back to the desert."

The leadership of the Narramore Christian Foundation wants to express our appreciation to all of those who prayed for this seminar and helped financially to make it possible. And we ask you to continue praying for the wonderful men and women who attended as they have now spread throughout Southeast Asia serving dedicated missionaries and their families. ✚



Staff and participants of NCF's 2009 Member Care and Counseling Seminar.



Participants sharing between sessions.



Morning worship was followed by practical lectures on helping missionaries cope with a variety of personal and family challenges.



Couples enrichment group members discussing ways of strengthening their own marriages.



Interacting with fellow missionaries was one of the seminar highlights.



Nine faculty, alumnae and spouses from Biola University participated in the seminar.



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Encouraging Treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Scientists have discovered some basic facts about memory to which many of us can relate. Short-term memory is like the random access memory (RAM) on our computers. It is recorded in the present and is fragile and thus can easily be lost just like data held in RAM if the computer is turned off before it is saved. Short term memories become long term, however, when they are encoded in the brain, similarly to the data held in RAM being downloaded or saved to the hard drive. In the brain, when short term memories go through a molecular process called consolidation they become encoded in the brain and available for future access. Dr. James McGaugh, of the University of California, Irvine, discovered this process and further asserts “when events are super-critical or meaningful or scary—a first kiss, a baby’s birth, a bike accident—stress hormones alert the amygdala, the brain’s emotional control center, which then ramps up the memory-processing machinery, etching that particular event more deeply.”¹ While we generally desire to improve our memory-processing machinery, there are times when forgetting is advantageous, like people who suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



Research about a process called reconsolidation, first proposed in the late 1960s, has become a growing interest to scientists. With some 8 million Americans suffering from PTSD in any given year and the rather limited success of dealing with this disorder, an urgent need has arisen. “Overall, symptoms improve by only about 50 percent, and that drops to one third over the long run, says Dr. Roger

Pitman, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. When people see a ‘cue’—a reminder of the event—it can all come rushing back.”²

Promising research, called fear conditioning, has shown that it may be possible to modify the reconsolidation of a memory. Use of propranolol, a drug that reduces anxiety, has been tested to determine if long-term traumatic memories could be stopped from forming in the first place (consolidation) or if the reconsolidation of an old memory could be changed or weakened. That is, someone who has PTSD might be helped by retelling their story under the influence of propranolol. Propranolol blocks the action of adrenaline which has been shown to strengthen the encoding of emotionally significant events. New evidence does suggest that the process of reconsolidation can be interrupted so that when the trauma is recalled, it can be reconsolidated in a less toxic state. Data regarding the effects of propranolol preventing the consolidation of a traumatic event is less clear at this time. While there are some difficulties to overcome such as not everyone who suffers a traumatic event develop PTSD, there is new hope for those who do. Early data using propranolol to interrupt the reconsolidation of traumatic memories is compelling: “participants symptoms dropped by 50 percent, and 70 to 80 percent no longer meet the full criteria for PTSD.”³

¹Newsweek, Vol. CLIII, No. 17, April 27, 2009, p. 53
² Ibid. p. 53.
³ Ibid. p. 54.

FOUR FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR FINANCES



- If you are 55 or older, you can receive, depending on your age, annual returns between 5 to 11% for as long as you live, through an NCF Annuity and receive a tax deduction.
- If you haven’t updated your will for 5-8 years it could be seriously out of date.
- You can avoid paying capital gains tax on your appreciated property.
- Narramore Christian Foundation offers a variety of plans to meet your individual needs.

To learn more about how you can help yourself and others through your investments and/or gifts, write or phone for a free consultation.

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