



PSYCHOLOGY FOR
Living

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God Wants You to Have A New Beginning!

Drs. Clyde and Bruce Narramore

How often we hear people say, "If only I could begin all over again, have a fresh new start! They are voicing a desire that's deep in the heart of all of us, the longing for a new clean slate. God implanted that desire. He is the God of new things. A new heart. A new spirit. A new name. A new covenant. A new song. And His mercies are new every morning!

Most of us recognize there are things about us that need to change. The Bible says that we are all sinful and even people who make no claim to faith cannot get away from what their own hearts tell them. They need to be different, so they make resolutions.

Making New Year resolutions can be a very good thing since we all need to periodically take stock of our lives and resolve to grow where we need it. But simply resolving to do better is not the answer, even though that's where we must begin. Until we determine how we are going to work at it, nothing will happen. We need a plan. Otherwise we'll be left with a bundle of resolutions that are broken almost before they are formulated. As a wise man once said, "If you don't plan to succeed, you are planning to fail." Here are six steps that will help you succeed in fulfilling this year's resolutions.

Select a realistic goal that you believe is God's will. Don't shoot for total transformation. Don't aim to lose 100 pounds. Start with 10, 20 or 30. And don't set a goal of becoming famous or wealthy. God's goal for us is to become more like Christ. He wants us to develop fruits of His Spirit living in us like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (*Galatians 5:22, 23* English Standard version). If we develop these traits, other things will fall in place.

Write down your goal so that you have a visual reminder and share it with an accountability partner. New habits are easier to develop when we aren't alone. A partner makes it more enjoyable and we can keep each other motivated on days when one of us "just doesn't feel like it."

Consider the sources of the problem you wish to overcome. If you are a procrastinator, figure out why. Do you put off things as a delayed passive rebellion against a pressuring, perfectionistic parent? Do you overeat to console yourself when you feel unloved or depressed? Do you lose your temper because you are

selfish and expect everyone to bend to your desires? Do you avoid close relationships because you were wounded as a child and don't want to be hurt again? You are much more likely to fulfill your goal if you know what dynamics are behind your problem.

Take one small step at a time. Force yourself to count to one hundred before you say anything when you are angry. Start walking 20 or 30 minutes several days a week rather than trying to jog for an hour your first time out. Write down your daily food intake so you can see how many calories you are consuming. Baby steps are good!

Keep a record of your progress. Write it down each day or week or put it on your iPad or iPhone where you will have a regular reminder of your progress. A written record gives us a concrete picture of how we are doing.

Make your goal a matter of commitment to your own good, to your accountability partner, and to the Lord. Don't try to motivate yourself with fear, guilt or shame. The grace of God teaches us "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." (*Titus 2:12*) God wants you to succeed, but He knows that we all change best when we know we are loved and accepted even in our worst moments. Experiencing God's gracious love and forgiveness of us, and seeing that reflected in our friends, helps us move forward out of gratitude and hope, rather than fear, guilt and pressure. Growing can be enjoyable and rewarding. Although it takes some discipline, it doesn't have to be a pressured process.

The Apostle Paul's claim that he could "do all things through Christ who strengthens me," applies to you and me as much as it did to Paul. It may be that we will have to do some repenting and confessing. But remember that God has given you a clean slate for the rest of your life because Christ has already paid for every sin you will ever commit!

So go ahead and take stock of your life as it is now. Then make your New Year resolution and ask God to help you keep it. Don't stop there, however. Get into the Word of God; read and study it every day, hide it in your hearts, spend time alone with God, talk to Him, and thank Him for making each day new and fresh and clean. And thank Him for others in your life that encourage and help you. This is the formula for a meaningful new beginning and for the resources that will empower you to keep your New Year resolution this year. †

Myths About the Impact of Divorce on Children

By Robert Whitcomb, Psy.D.

Coping with divorce is difficult for every member of a family but some parents have serious misunderstandings about the effects of divorce on children. Jim and Barbara are a good example. My first encounter with their 7-year-old son Billy almost didn't happen. Entering my waiting room I found only his mom Barbara, sitting there. No Billy. Sheepishly she told me her son had refused to come into the waiting room and had run off from my office. Since the area around my waiting room was safe I wasn't concerned. I assumed Billy was afraid, so I started searching and soon discovered him a couple of doors away. Crouching down to his level to allay his fears, I chatted with Billy in that awkward position until he finally decided to join me in my office.

Initially I used play therapy to help Billy express his feelings about his parent's divorce. I pulled out a board game called *The Talking, Feeling, Doing Game™* which is useful for children who need a little structure as they risk entering a new and awkward relationship. The game gives each player, including the counselor, the option of **talking** about something, expressing a **feeling**, or **doing** something. I noticed Billy was more comfortable "doing" so I followed his lead until it seemed the right time to model some more verbal responses. Billy also asked if we could play *Slapjack™*, another game on my office shelf. This fast paced game



requires each player to try and beat his opponent at slapping the next Jack that is laid down. It causes physical contact when the Jack is slapped by both players. As our games became more raucous Billy and I often found ourselves on the carpet laughing hysterically. These times became important ways of building our relationship and establishing trust. Our verbal sparring over who slapped the Jack first led to increasing verbalization between us. As Billy began using his words, he became increasingly comfortable expressing the hurt, anger and feelings of betrayal he had as a result of his parents' divorce. Sometimes he just cried. It was painful to be so mad at the two people he loved the most in the world!

In light of Billy's intense feelings, I realized it would be necessary to help his parents become more aware of the impact the divorce was having on their son. Both parents loved Billy and wanted the best for him. But since their marriage ended they were caught up in their issues and had lost awareness of how Billy was hurting too.

After a couple of months of therapy, Barbara told me she thought Billy was doing much better. "He is more compliant and accepts his sleepovers with his father much better. It's been about six

months since our divorce and I think he may be over the worst of his adjustments now."

Barbara thought divorce was a temporary crisis for children that was most difficult at the time of the breakup. But the unfortunate facts are that divorce usually has a much longer lasting impact. Many children spend the rest of their lives trying to cope with issues they would never have had to address in an intact family. In one session, for example, Billy was excitedly telling me about his new room at his dad's house. He paused suddenly, as if he caught himself being carried away and said, "I miss my mom when I'm at my dad's and I miss my dad when I'm at my mom's. I wonder if they are okay when I am not with them." Tears began to flow as Billy felt the pain of no longer having both parents under the same roof. He was worried about them and missing being with his mom and dad together. He especially missed wrestling with his dad and knowing his mom would be there to provide first aid because "I nearly always got hurt." he remembered longingly.

In addition to my work with Billy and his mom I occasionally met with his dad as well. During one of those sessions Jim revealed another very common

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myth about divorce. "Billy is growing up to be a man and he will be able to handle this problem. After all, nearly half the kids in his class come from divorced homes. He isn't alone in this."

When I shared how Billy missed him, Jim protested, "Divorce is just something most people have to deal with. Billy will be fine." I pondered how to proceed, since I could see how hard it was for Jim to consider the pain his son was experiencing. He was too wrapped up in his own struggles and only wanted to talk about how terrible his marriage had been and how much he suffered before the divorce. He repeatedly reminded me that it wasn't good for Billy to see his parents fighting and unhappy. He simply didn't want to look at the negative impact of his divorce on Billy.

I agreed that it wasn't good for Billy to grow up in a home with parents who were constantly fighting. But the way he minimized Billy's pain, it was obvious that Jim was trying to avoid more pain of his own. Finally I said, "Jim, I see how much you love Billy. He's a great kid. He actually sounds a lot like you described yourself when your parents divorced. You've told me about your dad's expectations when he and your mom divorced. You felt under incredible pressure to keep him happy and you had to walk on eggshells to keep out of the middle of their problems. I wonder if Billy struggles a little like you did when you were a child?"

Jim became very quiet and choked up for a couple of minutes. Finally he said, "I can't believe I'm doing the same thing to Billy that my dad did to me. I want so much more for Billy." As he continued sharing his own childhood struggles, Jim realized that divorce wasn't simply a little bump in his son's life. It was a sizeable mountain and it wouldn't suddenly go away.

It was natural for Billy's dad to believe his son was resilient and wouldn't suffer any severe consequences of his divorce. But once Jim understood that wasn't true, he was able to become much more sensitive and helpful to Billy.

Research studies have consistently shown that children of divorce typically struggle for a long time. Children from divorced families are more aggressive

towards their parents and teachers, suffer from more depression, and are more likely to have learning and peer problems than children from intact families. Children from divorced families are also likely to engage in sexual behavior at earlier ages, have more children out of wedlock, get more divorces (or stay single more), and generally have more psychological problems than children from intact homes.

Children from divorced families often live with sadness, loneliness and/or anger. They have less say on how they will spend their time compared with children in intact homes. They may have to visit one parent on weekends when they might prefer other activities. They are often told where they will spend holidays, birthdays and summer vacations. When children are older they wonder if their parents will help with college tuition or if their new step-parent will treat them well or even stay long term. They may also wonder if there is any hope for them to eventually marry and have a lasting, happy marriage. And it can also be more difficult for divorced parents to teach their children about God's faithfulness in their families. Children of divorce can easily wonder why God let their family down.

In describing many of the ill effects of divorce, I want to be clear that sometimes divorce is inevitable and sometimes children are better off after a divorce. But even then, parents need to be aware that their children will continue struggling both with the issues that precipitated the divorce and the lack of an intact, two-parent family. It took Billy the best part of a year of counseling, for example, to really learn to trust me. During that time Billy gradually opened up and became quite a talkative little guy. Because of his parents' divorce, however, it took courage to let an adult like me into his life. He expected adults to fail him. One day I said that to Billy and he smiled knowingly. I asked him if he understood what I meant and he said, "Yeah, if I like you too much, you might make me sad too." Talking about his fears and learning to trust me helped Billy feel less afraid. But it was a long process that will probably continue to be a concern for Billy for some time. And if he doesn't continue working through his fear, he could have

some serious problems trusting others, including a spouse, throughout his life.

The ebb and flow of adjustments in Billy's broken family revealed one other common myth about divorce - that divorce will end the intense love/hate relationship between the spouses. Jim and Barbara had a volatile and mutually hurtful relationship through most of their marriage and hoped divorce would put an end to that. Unfortunately, their hotly contested child custody battle should have been a hint that separate living arrangements and a legal document would not resolve years of fighting and misunderstandings. Battles over child custody, visitation rights, finances, holidays and vacations all presented new opportunities to continue their conflicts. They both fought fiercely, as though they were losing a part of themselves. And in a sense they were. They both suffered when they had weekends without Billy. They found their time alone empty without him. And they both missed the good times they had earlier in their marriage. Jim and Barbara's continuing fights were more about their needs and issues than Billy's, but Billy was still caught in the middle. Unless divorced parents do a huge amount of growing, children like Billy will continue to be victims of collateral damage in their parents' wars.

Over a long course of treatment Billy gained the ability to express his feelings more directly and his parents made some progress in finding more amicable solutions. Billy was able to grieve the loss of his family as it once was, and found ways to stay out of his parents' fights. As he learned to express his needs, fears and wishes, he started feeling less like a victim. But even during our last few sessions Billy kept wondering what his life could have been like if his parents had been able to work out their problems and keep his family together. He realized he would never know.

Many divorces are inevitable and some are necessary, but divorcing parents need to do everything they can to help their children survive their family losses and adapt as well as possible to their new life. God can redeem those difficult situations but He typically uses the parents to help their children's healing. †

NCF's 9th Annual Member Care and Counseling Seminar in Thailand



Marriage Enrichment Group Participants at Chiang Mai Member Care Seminar.

Thirty-four missionaries from around the world recently gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand for NCF's 9th Annual Member Care and Counseling Seminar. These missionaries all have unique responsibilities. They don't plant churches, teach at MK schools, or work at other missionary institutions. They dedicate their lives to help other missionaries function at their best and remain on their fields of service.

Since they are serving in predominantly unreached regions of the world, many missionaries live under extremely dangerous conditions. They often face traumatic events like robbery, automobile accidents, and occasionally rape, kidnapping, or loss of a loved one or teammate through murder. They live with incredibly high stress levels and need someone to come alongside and provide support and encouragement in their difficult moments.

The member care missionaries attending NCF's Counseling Seminar came to deepen their people helping skills and learn how to better come alongside their agencies' missionaries. They represented 16 different agencies. This unique seminar focuses on both the member care missionary's own needs for growth and renewal and on developing the skills they need to help others. The member care workers at this year's seminar have responsibil-

ity for the care and support of more than 500 missionaries serving in nine different countries!

All participants spend at least 1-1 ½ hours daily in a small personal or marital enrichment group where they can discuss their own struggles and needs at the same time they're learning to help others. As one of this year's participants put it "The past three years have been very difficult due to personal and organizational difficulties. The seminar has been life saving for me." Another commented "I have gained more confidence as a counselor, but the impact on my own heart was the most helpful to me. Tears finally came and

honest feelings of grief and sadness started to come, and in a place where they were welcomed."

Please pray for these wonderful missionaries as they spend their lives serving God's other missionary servants. They are fulfilling a strategic role in the cause of Christ. ✚

Third Group of Doctoral Students in Counseling Set to Begin Study

This spring the third group of students from the Philippines will gather for the first course in their doctoral program in Christian Counseling. Dr. Bill Kirwan and his wife Midge have committed to spending six months each year in the Philippines to coordinate this program and provide individual and small group teaching, supervision, and mentoring. Please pray for wisdom for the admission committee as they make their final choices of students. Please also pray for the students who tend to have extremely busy schedules, often holding two jobs or ministry positions in addition to their studies. These students have incredible opportunities before them as they study to serve individuals and families throughout their country. ✚



Doctoral students from the Philippines in seminar with Dr. Bill Kirwan.

Understanding & Preventing Suicide (Part I)

by Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

Think of a small city of approximately 35,000 people disappearing every year. That will give you some idea of how many people in the United States take their lives in a twelve month period. And for every person who tragically ends their life an estimated 11 others make unsuccessful suicide attempts.¹

Who are these hurting people who choose death instead of life? Contrary to popular opinion, research does not show that any one strata of society or profession is any more likely to commit suicide than any other at a statistically significant level. People of all ages, including the elderly, children and teenagers end their own lives. So do white collar professionals, blue collar workers and the unemployed. Two of the few exceptions are American Indians and native Alaskans, who consistently have slightly higher rates of suicide. So do males and the elderly (65 and over). Christians too, are not immune from suicidal feelings and attempts. Within the last year I am aware of a Christian businessman, an educator, a wife and mother, an unemployed person, a pastor, and a son of missionaries who all ended their lives. I have talked with several others struggling with suicidal thoughts.

What Causes Suicide?

The causes of suicide are many, but most involve a loss of hope, overwhelming sadness, and extreme pessimism about one's future. People who commit suicide have lost hope that their lives will ever be worth living again. They don't believe they have anything to look forward to. And they have often suffered painful losses like divorce, death of a loved one, a job or their physical health and capabilities.

Christine², a third year college student, had dated Dave for two years. When he broke off their relationship



just before Christmas Christine felt her life was ruined. She was certain she would never find someone who would love her again and her loneliness was intense. Although Dave ended their relationship, Christine blamed herself for his decision. She assumed she just wasn't worthy of having a relationship with a good man like Dave and became depressed and suicidal. Fortunately she sought counseling at her university counseling center and didn't carry through with her tentative plan to end her life.

One thing that helped Christine's healing was realizing how angry she was at Dave for ending their relationship. Because she had long been a people pleaser she had been afraid to be aware of her anger at Dave and took the blame herself. Instead of thinking "Dave, I hate you." (which she couldn't allow herself to feel for

fear of alienating Dave even more) she thought "I hate myself." Psychologists who work with suicidal people often describe this key dynamic of depression as "hostility turned against the self." Instead of risking rejection if they express or are even aware of their anger, depressed persons tend to invert their hostility toward themselves. In an odd kind of way, they decide (unconsciously) that it is better to hate themselves and be depressed than be angry at someone else and risk even more rejection! When seen from that perspective, suicide is viewed as the catastrophic result of turning one's anger on oneself. Or as some put it, "Suicide is homicide turned inward." It would be inaccurate to assume this dynamic is behind all suicides but I have seen enough of this in suicidal people to know it is frequently one part of the

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problem.

Pete was a victim of child abuse. His father punished him cruelly, and his parents were members of a controlling religious cult that stressed unthinking obedience and conformity rather than loving relationships. As a child and teenager, Pete suffered a great deal of guilt, felt like he never fit into his family, and was haunted by feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy. He suffered from depression for several years, had a nervous breakdown at age 21, only held a few jobs for a short time, and finally took his life by hanging himself before he turned 30. Like Christine, he felt unloved, hopeless about his future, and angry.

Rachel was an intelligent young adult with great promise who returned to the United States after spending most of her life living in Southeast Asia. Back in the U.S. she was far from her family and friends and everything she loved in her adopted homeland. She felt like a fish out of water. People in the U.S. weren't interested in her life overseas and she thought most young adults she met here were "superficial and boring". They seemed focused on themselves and their material possessions and having a good time, but they didn't have a clue about the rest of the world, including the hundreds of millions of needy people living in hardship and poverty. Rachel couldn't find anyone who shared her world and considered moving back to Asia.

When Rachel visited her adopted homeland during a school break she hoped she would feel like she belonged again. But her friends had moved on and were spread around the world. Nothing was quite like it used to be and she felt out of place there as well. So she returned to the U.S. struggling with loneliness and depression until she gave up and ended her life a year later.

Nearly all people in the U.S. who commit suicide suffer in some similar ways to Christine, Pete and Rachel: pessimism and a loss of hope for the future; lost or broken relationships; feeling disconnected, "missed" or mistreated at home or school; and angry

feelings that they often can't express so they keep them in, hating and blaming themselves.

Some young adults also struggle with suicidal feelings after leaving home for college and encountering diverse religious beliefs and philosophical and existential questions. They start questioning their childhood faith in God and asking questions like "Is there any ultimate meaning and purpose in life?" "Is there a God, and if so how can a good God allow all the suffering in the world?" or "What about those who have never heard of Christ? Isn't it unfair or unloving to doom them to hell?" Those struggles can be disturbing in themselves.

But if young adults end up in choosing a different direction or set of beliefs than their parents, they sometimes feel estranged and fear they are losing their past close connections with their family. Their spiritual quest has alienated them from those they love the most. Most young adults struggle with at least a little of this young adult identity crisis, but some deep thinkers and questioners are tormented by it to the point of wondering if suicide might be the only way out of their pain.

Guilt feelings, which are largely made up of anger turned on oneself, and low self esteem are other frequent causes of suicidal feelings. As one single young mother told me, "I'm no good. I'm no good. I'm no good." Drug and alcohol abuse are other common contributing factors to despair and suicide.

Triggers and Warning Signs

In addition to emotional, spiritual and relational dynamics that can predispose a person to suicidal struggles, nearly all suicides have one or two triggering events that serve as the last straw or tipping point in the life of a depressed person. Those events can be any type of recent failure experience, a relational conflict or rejection, loss of a job, prolonged and serious illness, or even suicides by well known people or peers. While resilient people are able to handle these difficult experiences, people who are already struggling with

depression, guilt or other issues find these triggering events too much to bear.

Suicidal individuals also nearly always give some clues to the extent of their despair. Common signals include any major shifts in a person's performance. Skipping school or work or suddenly getting poor grades or work reviews shouldn't be ignored. Neither should withdrawing from friends and other activities, significant weight gain or loss or self mutilation, or even an apparently offhand comment like "I wish I were dead." Giving away some of one's prized possessions or writing notes, letters, or school papers discussing suicide can all be other telltale warning signs.

Understanding the internal struggles and pain of potentially suicidal people and paying attention to warning signals are the foundation for being able to help. In the next issue of LIVING we will look at other specific steps friends and family members can take to help people struggling with thoughts of ending their lives. Those thoughts and feelings can be overcome and moved beyond, and joy and peace can be recovered with the help of others. ☩

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Facts & Fiction about Suicide

Fiction: Suicide happens without warning.

Fact: Suicidal individuals nearly always give clues about their suicidal intentions and/or their depression.

Fiction: People considering or attempting suicide are just looking for attention.

Fact: People considering or attempting suicide are crying out for help and understanding but their major goal is to eliminate their pain, not to gain attention.

Fiction: The month of December has the highest rate of suicide.

Fact: December has the lowest rate of suicide. April and May have the highest rates.

Fiction: Suicidal individuals are mentally ill.

Fact: Although suicidal people are temporarily extremely unhappy, they are not necessarily mentally ill.

Fiction: People who have attempted suicide but did not succeed have learned their lesson and won't try again.

Fact: People who have attempted suicide before are more likely to try again.

Fiction: The elderly (over 65) are the least likely age group to commit suicide.

Fact: The rate of suicide actually increases as people grow older. This seems to be particularly true for men and less true for women.

¹National Institute of Mental Health, 2007. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/suicide-in-the-us-statistics-and-prevention/index.shtml>

²All illustrations are composites of various people in order to protect their privacy.

Teach me your way, Lord; Lead me in a straight path.

→ Psalm 27:11

Ever wish you had a spiritual GPS?

The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years!!

Sometimes I feel that I too am simply wandering.

I just want to get from point A to point B
so I can cross the task off my "to do" list.

God often has a different plan.

He wants me actively participating in the journey,
not just searching the horizon for the destination.

He has lessons for me to learn,
gifts he longs to bestow,
and treasures to share.

If I will let him,

He teaches me to trust,

He allows me to rest in His abundant provision,

He strengthens me and builds my endurance,

He shows me the beauty of His work,
and fills my heart with compassion.

Sometimes the JOURNEY is the GOAL.

I encourage you to set aside your "to do" list.

Stop for a moment and consider;

Where is the Lord of your life leading you today?

→ Roree Van Duyne

TRIBUTE GIFTS

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Eileen Beisell

Eileen Beisell

Grace Funk

Joanne Harvey

Cristal Moll

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Mary Manthorne

Mary Manthorne

Rilla Springstead

Achmed Henry

Gifts In Honor Of:

Ava May Lin Young

Presented by:

Eric, Vicky & Tiffany Young

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Smartphones, Are They Really a Smart Idea?



Smartphones. That's what they call them. With them you can connect to Mapquest, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google Plus, CNN, ESPN, etc. The list is growing by the minute. A survey from the Pew Internet & American Life project indicates that 45% of adults now own one.¹ How did we ever survive without them?

Smartphones are having a profound effect upon our culture. Whether you are standing in line at Starbucks for an Oreo Frappuccino with double chocolate chip frappe and white mocha syrup or buying some groceries at Albertsons, many people are ignoring their surroundings, bending their heads downward, and checking their smartphones. Most of the time there are no friendly hellos or polite conversation. According to Pew Internet and American Life, 42% are using their phones because they are bored!

Many are concerned about the impact of this new technology. Christopher Lynn, an anthropology professor at the University of Alabama, compares tapping at smartphones to smoking a cigarette.² He believes our use of smartphones is a basic human need to cure boredom by any means necessary. Researchers at Oxford, England's Social Issues

Research Centre, believe we are missing out on "the creative and potentially rewarding ways we've dealt with boredom in days past."³ Even avid users are beginning to acknowledge the cost as they realize they are missing out on quiet time when they used to let their minds wonder and think creatively with new thoughts.

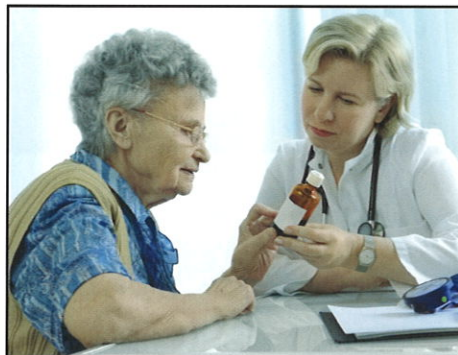
David wrote in *Psalm 46:10*, "Be still, and know that I am God..." *NIV*. That's difficult to do without quiet times to clear our minds and focus on our relationship with God, our gratitude to Him, and His desire for our lives.

¹CNN *Have smartphones killed boredom (and is that good)?* September 26, 2012. http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/25/tech/mobile/oms-smartphones-boredom/index.html?hpt=hp_bn5

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Side Effects of Psychotropic Medications for the Elderly



As more and more drugs have been created to treat mental and emotional problems, the use of these medications among those over 65 years of age has increased tremendously. Although these medications can be extremely helpful, they also pose potential problems. The elderly do not necessarily respond to medications the same way younger people do.

For example, older people don't always absorb medications or eliminate them from their system as quickly as younger people. When a person doesn't absorb the medication as quickly, it can build up in the system until it reaches a dangerous toxic

level. If too light a dosage is prescribed in order to avoid a toxic dose, the medication may not have the desired therapeutic effect. Because of this, it is important that the elderly and their caregivers and family be sure their physician is regularly monitoring the effectiveness of their medications.

Pot Smoking Linked to Drop in IQ



Researchers¹ who followed a group of 1037 New Zealanders born in 1972 and 1973 found that participants who were "persistent, dependent" marijuana users before the age of 18 suffered a decline of eight points in their IQ scores. About five percent of the people in the study fit that category. They were defined as those using marijuana more than once a week before they were 18.

Friends and family members of the users also viewed the "persistent, dependent" users as having more attention and memory problems including an inability to remain focused and forgetting to do tasks. Unfortunately, quitting did not reverse the negative effects of marijuana usage. People who started smoking marijuana as adults did not have similar declines in their IQ scores. Apparently the adolescent brain is more vulnerable to the impact of marijuana than the brain of adults.

¹Meier, M.H. et al. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, August 2012. Online edition. <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2012/08/22/1206820109.abstract?sid=d5fa7409-54da-4489-8c95-3999a8feb1d>



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