

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day 2012

Resource Packet

“Moved with Compassion”

Written by
Sharon Platt-McDonald

**Prepared by the General Conference
Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day Committee**

Table of Contents

Letter from Heather-Dawn Small.....	3
About the Author.....	4
Suggested Order of Service.....	5
Children’s Story: “God Can’t Be a Loving Father, Can He?.....	7
Activities for Children in Church.....	10
Suggested Ongoing Activities for Children	12
Litany	13
Sermon: “Moved with Compassion”.....	14
Sermon Appeal and Prayer.....	20
Seminar Notes: “Mental Wellness Strategy”	21
Handout Sheet for enditnow	26



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

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Dear Sisters:

Joyful greetings to you in the name of Jesus our Savior and Friend. I don't think there is a day that passes by that I do not read or hear of some horrific story of a woman or girl who is abused or who has died as the result of abuse. This is the world in which we live. Sin, pain, sorrow, sickness, and tears are all parts of the life we live each day. The stories we share are either of ourselves, some dear friend or family member, or a sister across the sea. Whatever the situation the memory of these stories never goes away.

With time many people have become immune to the pain of abuse in the lives of the victim and the victim's family. I pray that is never the case with us, daughters of God. No matter who the woman or child may be, their pain, their suffering, is my concern. Our Abuse Prevention Emphasis (APED) packet for this year is titled *Moved with Compassion*. The cries of those who suffer must be heard, their stories need to be told and retold, and women of God around the globe must continue to pray for the suffering that is so evident. Never must it be said that we have become immune to pain and suffering. The one ray of hope for those who are abused is that someone, somewhere, is praying for them, is advocating for them, is speaking out for them.

Do we know each woman in pain? No. But because we are part of a global sisterhood we keep sending our petitions to our Father above. Sharon Platt-McDonald has allowed God to speak through her for years now on the issues that women face. We are pleased that she has written the message for this year's APED packet. May each word be a blessing for the hearers and spur us on to good works in Christ Jesus.

Joyfully,


Heather-Dawn Small, Director

About the Author

Sharon Platt-McDonald, is director of Women's Ministries, Health Ministries, and Disabilities Awareness of the British Union Conference. She's also coordinator of the Mental Wellness Strategy of the British Union Conference. She's the author of several books, including

Body Beautiful

Body Clock

Brain Health: How to Handle Your Head

Embracing the Challenges of Life and Loving It: the A-Z of Inspirational Living

God's Word as Therapy

Healing Hearts, Restoring Minds: The A-Z of Emotional Wellbeing

Stressed? How to Handle the Pressure

The Little Book of Health for Children and Teens

The Little Book of Health for Men

The Little Book of Health for Women

The Little Book of Health for Seniors

The Little Book of Intimacy

SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day - *August, 2012*

Call to Worship

A Psalm of David

*1 Bless the Lord, O my soul;
And all that is within me, [bless] His holy name!
2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good [things],
[So that] your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The Lord executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made know His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.
22 Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul!*

(Psalm 103:1-7, 22, NKJV)

Invocation

Hymn of Praise: "I Must Tell Jesus"
(Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal #485)

Scripture reading

"But when He saw the multitudes,
He was moved with compassion for them,
because they were weary and scattered,
like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, NJKV).

Offering

Children's Story

"God Can't Be a Loving Father, Can He?"

Special Presentation

Recognition or Award to a local organization or individual who has been outstanding in supporting and advocating for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse

Litany

Prayer

(Prayer is offered for those in our communities who are suffering because of domestic violence or losses as a result of abuse and for those who help and support them)

Special Music

Sermon

"Moved with Compassion"
With Appeal and Prayer

Closing Hymn: *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"*
(Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal #499)

Benediction

Children's Story

"God Can't Be a Loving Father, Can He?"

By Linda Koh, director, General Conference Children's Ministries

THEME: God in Heaven is a loving Father.

SCRIPTURE: *"He that does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8, NKJV).*

The footsteps grew louder and louder! Fear gripped nine-year-old Lee Lian's heart as she tried to hide under her bed, hoping that her father would not find her in the dark. She couldn't take it anymore. It was just too painful!

"Ah Lian, where are you? Bring me my slippers, lazy pig! The door flung open and a rough looking, half-drunk man shouted loudly. "You think you can hide from me? No chance, girl!"

"You're just like your mother. Good for nothing except crying. Just so useless! Get out here soon or I'll break your bone!" bellowed Lee Lian's father.

This happened so often and sometimes night after night that Lee Lian wished she could die and leave this world. How did she get born into such a family? Other parents loved their children. But definitely not her father!

Mother couldn't stand such cruelty any longer that she left the family when she was seven years old. This angered Father and he spent more and more time drinking and getting drunk as well as losing job after job. He would hit Lee Lian so badly that her arm was broken several times. At times, he would burn her arm, legs, and even her body with cigarette buds. At night when she was finally on her bed, she would cry herself to sleep, always asking the same question, "How long would it be before someone rescues me? If there is really a god up in the sky, please save me!" she pleaded.

Help did finally come when Lee Lian's grandmother plucked up enough courage to report her father to the police and the Social Welfare department. Her father was arrested and Lee Lian was allowed to stay with her maternal grandmother the rest of her life. Yes, no more beating, no more fear, no more tears!

Lee Lian spent the rest of her childhood and early adulthood in a loving and happy home of her grandmother. She began to study hard and did very well in school. She was well accepted by her friends and classmates. But she often lacked confidence and had very low self-esteem. She would never trust any adult easily, especially men!

Lee Lian grew up to be a beautiful young woman. Providence brought her to a Seventh-day Adventist college where she was introduced to the wonderful gospel of love.

She became keenly interested in the Bible and within a year she had made a decision to be baptized. Her Bible professor gave her Bible studies twice a week together with two other college mates. Lee Lian studied the topics with great enthusiasm and even asked many thought provoking questions. But she stopped at the third lesson when she came upon the concept of God being a loving Father who loved us and sent His Son to die for us on the cross. How could that be?

“Impossible! A loving Father?” Lee Lian exclaimed unbelievably.

“Fathers hurt their children! They hit them when they get angry! They don’t love their children,” she shook his head rigorously.

“If God is a loving father, then why didn’t he save me from all the beatings I got from my father?”

Lee Lian struggled with this concept for weeks and months. This was her biggest mental block. Her teachers and college mates prayed earnestly for her, interceding for her that God will open her mind to see the glorious and magnificent love of God and Jesus Christ. She finally finished all the topics of the Bible study series.

“Well, Lee Lian, are you ready for baptism next month at our college Bible camp?” asked Professor Lim with a twinkle in his eye.

“Uh, uh, I think I’ll wait, Dr.,” replied Lee Lian hesitantly.

“Why wait? God loves you and He wants you to be His child!” Professor Lim exclaimed enthusiastically.

“Let Him into your heart and your life and try Him; and I know you will never be the same,” Professor Lim continued. “Remember, Lee Lian, God is not like your earthly father who hurt you and abused you.”

“I will be praying for you that God’s love will just simply fill you and drench you that you will respond to Him. When that happens, He can help you to forgive even your earthly father for all the hurts he had inflicted on you,”

God’s Holy Spirit was at work in this young lady’s heart. After three weeks of wrestling with her inmost soul, Lee Lian surrendered her life to God and was baptized at the College Bible Camp.

Oh, what joy filled Lee Lian’s heart as she exclaimed, “Let us sing to the Lord. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord is the great God and the great King above all gods” (Psalm 95:1-3).

Yes, Lee Lian’s childhood of abuse and hurt left such an indelible mark on her entire emotionality that on human terms, it was impossible to love and accept love again! What a

tragedy sinful human beings can impact a life! But Matthew 19:26 assures us that, "With men this is impossible, but with God *all* things are possible."

The following pages contain activities for children:

Coloring Page: Jesus and the Children

Word Search Page: God's Adopted Children

Ongoing Activities for Children



Jesus and the Children

From Thru-the-Bible Coloring Pages for Ages 4-8. © 1986,1988 Standard Publishing.
Used by permission. Reproducible Coloring Books may be purchased from
Standard Publishing, www.standardpub.com, 1-800-543-1301.

Sermons4Kids.com

God's Adopted Children

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)

Based on Ephesians 1:3-14 (NIV)



Z Y Q M S P I R I T U A L G A
 J C E B E L I E V E Z D N T P
 H Y A U W A W G D P E O I S L
 F G H G V N I U U S L A P E E
 Q P J F V Z S D I E S D R C A
 U M U Z M Z D M B S O O A R S
 A F V R R M O P E J U P I E U
 B K R B C R M N L J N T S T R
 L C R E P H D W F K Q X E W E
 E O H Y E N A H E A V E N L Y
 S W P O I D Q S E E M Y K T Y
 S V G K S W O H E P V I S S L
 E N D R A E Q M R D T U L F A
 D G U A R A N T E E R T C Y O
 Z X O I N H E R I T A N C E P

FAMILY	BELONG	PROMISED	INHERITANCE	PURCHASED
KINDNESS	TRUST	GUARANTEE	ADOPT	BELIEVE
CHOSE	PRAISE	WISDOM	HEAVENLY	SECRET
PLAN	FREEDOM	PLEASURE	SPIRITUAL	BLESSED

Ongoing Activities for Children

1. Posters/Pictures (grades K-2)

Encourage children to make posters or draw pictures of their interpretation of violence prevention. Posters can be exhibited throughout the church. Each child that participates should be given a small gift.

2. Poems/short stories (grades 3-5)

Ask children to write poems or stories that deal with abuse prevention

3. Essays (grades 6-8)

Children can write a one or two page essay outlining ways in which domestic violence can be prevented or how churches and communities can work together to help victims and their children

4. Community Projects (Grades 9-12)

- Collect clothing, toys, games, etc. for local shelters
- Do fundraising events to raise funds to help victims and their children
- Learn how to become a big brother or sister to an abused child
- Prepare and perform skits, plays about abuse prevention
- Hold forums on abuse prevention
- Model non-abusive behaviors
- Encourage peers to create and maintain healthy relationships
- Talk with church leaders and help them address the issue in schools and churches
- Participate in group sessions and create other ideas to help prevent abuse and domestic violence

Litany

Leader:

Creator God, who made us in Your own image, thank You for the beauty of the earth and the privilege of caring for it and each other. We confess that at times we have failed to live up to Your high calling and have not allowed justice to roll down like a river of peace to surpass our understanding. Help us to find the means and muster the courage to live up to the summons for justice for our sisters everywhere.

Congregation:

Lord, we acknowledge that the time is ripe for us to pray, but we must also speak up for believers who stand against injustice, prejudice and other biases that beset humanity. Bless us with discomfort at cheap thrills, half-truths, superficial relationships and exploitation of the least of these our brothers and sisters.

Leader:

We entreat you, dear God, as we embrace and celebrate our diversity in people, knowledge and accomplishments, that You will continue to pour out Your Spirit upon us. Bless us with greater wisdom to believe we can change the world by undertaking what others claim cannot be done for the renewal of faith and righteousness among humanity.

Congregation:

Forgive us, Lord, for we have fallen short of Your ideal to love one another in the same way Christ loves us. Bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from hunger, homelessness, rejection, and abuse so that we may stretch out our hands to comfort them and open our hearts with compassion to turn their pain to joy.

Together:

Lord, restore our abused sisters and all the people groups who have suffered injustice, oppression, and exploitation. As we stand together to embrace and celebrate our God-ordained diversity, cause Your face to shine upon us and our children. Let us see visions of a righteous future and dream dreams of what will come about when we attain these goals in and through Your strength and power. Empower us to practice what we preach, to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with You, our God. Amen.

Sermon

“Moved with Compassion” By Sharon Platt-McDonald©

Scripture Passage

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, NJKV).

I. INTRODUCTION

It should be written upon the conscience as with a pen of iron upon a rock, that he who disregards mercy, compassion, and righteousness, he who neglects the poor, who ignores the needs of suffering humanity, who is not kind and courteous, is so conducting himself that God cannot co-operate with him in the development of character. The culture of the mind and heart is more easily accomplished when we feel such tender sympathy for others that we bestow our benefits and privileges to relieve their necessities, (*Counsel for the Church*, 283.4).

Compassion is defined as a “*Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it*” (*Free Online Dictionary*).

This morning we will look at the compassion of Jesus and the way He dealt with people who are hurting. We, too, can reach out to others with compassion that heals broken hearts and restores troubled minds.

Our world today is filled with violence and contempt for one another. Society has birthed a culture of disrespect where the defenseless are exposed and weak cries for help are often disregarded. A lack of compassion for the hurting is evident in the indifferent response to their expressed needs. Abuse of vulnerable people exists in our world, and sadly, it has impacted our churches. Sometimes because of ignorance or fear we do not always respond effectively. However, if we are trained to see the wounded through eyes of compassion, we can act justly. Therefore, we seek to prevent abuse by raising awareness to its negative impact and to provide resources for our churches to equip members accordingly. We strive to make our churches a safe environment for worship, free from any threat of abuse. When abuse occurs, we respond with efficacy and compassion to seek justice and healing.

As we promote the value and honor of each individual, we maintain boundaries in relationships. As we deal honestly and openly with each other, we reflect the love of Christ. This creates a positive environment for discipleship and spiritual growth. This is the healthy context in which hearts can be healed and minds restored.

II. COMPASSION IS NOT ALWAYS COMFORTABLE

Being compassionate will take us out of our comfort zones, especially when it is difficult to evaluate how to act. Is the cry for help genuine or not? Is it possible to be compassionate and yet stay safe? We may be apprehensive due to fear or past negative experiences; however, it is our Christian duty to help suffering souls.

Listen to this story from Sharon Platt-McDonald, author of the 2012 Abuse Emphasis Day packet.

Personal story:

Late one evening while driving to pick up my husband at work, I saw a woman in great distress standing by the side of the road. She waved for me to stop and I pulled to the side of the road while she came toward the passenger side of the car. In that moment I suddenly realized that I was alone, in the dark, with no one else around, and someone was purposefully detaining me. My senses were on high alert trying to determine if danger were approaching or otherwise lurking around me.

Wary of speaking to strangers, I whispered a prayer for safety and God's intervention before rolling down the window ever so slightly.

The woman—I'll call her Maria—had been crying. She asked for help by telling her story. Maria had finally found the courage that morning to leave a long-term abusive situation because she realized she must not put the life of her unborn child in danger. She lived a long distance away and the journey expensive. A social worker had suggested she go to a shelter in a neighboring town, and now Maria begged me to take her to the address.

My mind raced through all the possible risks picking up a stranger might involve, including getting robbed as my husband had been once before when he helped a stranger. What is my Christian duty when faced with an expressed need?

I decided to tell her to meet me a few blocks away where my husband worked and I would talk to him. I felt guilty as I pulled away and watched Maria hobbling along the sidewalk. She walked in considerable pain because her husband smashed her foot with a hammer that morning, but her desperation compelled her to meet us. Maria had obvious needs, so we took her to the shelter, prayed with her, and even gave her some money.

Maybe you would have shown more compassion, especially at the beginning when the storyteller cautiously hesitated. Maybe you would have been so overwhelmed with your own issues that you couldn't take on an extra challenge. All too often we are hindered by our own fear and trouble or by doubt about genuine need. Sometimes it seems too much trouble to step out of our comfort zones to show compassion, so we need to ask, "What would Jesus do?"

III. WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

What benevolence, what compassion, what tender sympathy, Jesus has manifested toward suffering humanity! The heart that beats in unison with His great heart of infinite love will give sympathy to every needy soul, and will make it manifest that he has the mind of Christ. . . . Every suffering soul has a claim upon the sympathy of others, and those who are imbued with the love of Christ, filled with His pity, tenderness, and compassion, will respond to every appeal to their sympathy. . . . (Review and Herald, Oct. 16, 1894).

Turn to our scripture passage for today, Matthew 9:36.

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them...,” (Matthew 9:36, NKJV).

The key words in this scripture verse are *saw*, *moved*, and *compassion*. People in need catch the attention of Jesus and “He *saw*.” This is not simply noticing a crowd. What He sees *moves* Him. The need resonates deeply with Jesus, and He is not satisfied until He supplies the need.

The entire gospel is filled with accounts of Jesus’ compassion being demonstrated by healing the physical, mental, and spiritual conditions of the people. Matthew documents another example.

“And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick,” (Matthew 14:14, NKJV).

The term Christian means Christ-follower. To be Christ-like means to act as Christ would act, to do what He would do. As Christ was compassionate, so we also should be compassionate.

What issue pricks your conscience? Is it enough to stir you to action? When you look at others what do you see? God brings needs that should be addressed to your attention. Your response requires specific action, but action wrapped with compassion.

IV. WHAT IS COMPASSION? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

1. The compassionate mind is alert to the needs of others.
2. The compassionate mind seeks to safeguard the welfare of others.
3. The compassionate mind takes action.
4. The compassionate mind is a healthy mind.

1. The compassionate mind is alert to the needs of others.

Matthew gives further evidence of Jesus being alert to the needs around Him. Let’s read the rest of the scripture passage in Matthew 9:36.

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd,” (Matthew 9:36).

The key words, *weary, scattered, and having no shepherd*, give context to Jesus' compassionate action.

Jesus looks on the multitude and sees *weary* people with life's traumas etched on their foreheads, pain evident in their faces, and the complexities of life burdening their shoulders, sagging toward the ground. The despairing heart looks downward, as if to shield it from the gaze of others or protect from further pain. Weariness is a subconscious posture adopted by battle-fatigued people to protect the little strength they think they have left. Jesus sees through our vulnerability and interprets our weariness as our need for Him.

The imagery of *scattered* sheep, perhaps wandering about haphazardly and without firm footing, shows a lack of purpose. It also paints the picture of the lack of support and network connections from which to seek help. Individuals experiencing abuse feel this same lack of purpose and support. All too often those violated or harmed by trusted individuals who should have protected them are unable to trust again. Mistrust prohibits them from seeking help.

When life experiences scatter our emotions and inhibit us from developing deep roots to stabilize our lives, Jesus gives us the help we need, even though we may not be able to ask for help. Many times in the Old Testament God's people are depicted as *sheep without a shepherd*. Two examples are:

"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd," (Numbers 27:16, 17, NKJV).

Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace,'" (2 Chronicles 18:16, NIV).

Sheep are completely helpless without a human shepherd, and this passage implies that spiritual leaders have failed in their duty to lead, feed, nurture, and protect their congregations of sheep. But the neglected sheep are given hope. These references are always followed by the Lord seeking ways to minister to His people, to heal their wounds, to feed them, and to guide them back from their aimless wanderings.

Have you ever battled a challenging situation that left you feeling drained? Life's traumas drain our energy and leave us weary. The trials of life can crush the human spirit. The negative impact is evident in the speech of the hurting, the demeanor of the abused, and the bitter attitude of those who have been wounded at the hands of their fellow man.

People suffering from significant trauma because of abuse often mention lack of support—to the extent they feel abandoned by others and by God. Often church leaders (to whom traumatized people first turn for help and guidance) notice the need, but don't know what to do to address the issue adequately.

What a relief to know that Jesus' look of compassion is able to address the varied needs of hurting people, and He is able to respond accordingly. We can trust Him to deliver for He has our best interest at heart. Amid the adversities of life, the Lord promises to be with us. The apostle Peter encourages us to take the step of giving our burdens to the Lord.

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you,” (1 Peter 5:7, NIV).

If you need a good example of how to be compassionate, look to God who gave His only Son to save a world that turned its back on Him. If you want to know how to be compassionate, look to Jesus who demonstrated selfless service and sacrifice.

When we did not care for Jesus, He cared for us. When the world forgets, He remembers. When we hide our eyes from the pain of others, God sheds a tear. When we cast others aside, Jesus draws them in. When we act in fear instead of faith, the Holy Spirit gives us power, love, and a sound mind to minister effectively to those who need help.

2. The compassionate mind seeks to safeguard the welfare of others.

Health care professionals and social workers are trained to respond to and safeguard those who are at high risk for further abuse. They are taught to recognize types of people who are more likely to abuse. They learn how to confront an abuser and encourage the therapy and rehabilitation necessary to stop abuse. The compassionate mind pursues positive intervention, thus making a difference for the abused. Our compassionate Father wants to restore all of His children and desires to save mankind, no matter how vile the condition.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is also tackling the abuse prevention agenda. The world churches have embraced the **enditnow** campaign (Adventists Say No To Violence Against Women) with positive response. This is compassion in action.

Do you see someone who needs help? Ask God for the wisdom to know how to respond. You may not always know what to do, but if you seek to safeguard the welfare of others, you will attempt to find a source for help.

The General Conference Women Ministries Department has accessible sources for the lay person. You should also find information from local community, library, or health and medical care organizations. That you are aware of the issue and know where to get help encourages the hurting individual. Seeing that you value him or her enough to equip yourself with information to benefit them provides a foundation for building trust.

3. The compassionate mind takes action.

Those who seek healing will reach for something to soothe their troubled souls. They usually find it, because someone with a compassionate heart has already considered their need and made provision for it. Maybe it is a self-help book, a prayer meeting, a retreat, counseling therapy, or

some other therapeutic intervention that ministers to the need. Something can always be done to effect positive outcome.

The compassionate mind becomes the voice of an advocate speaking for those who are voiceless, touching those whom society is reluctant to reach, and emulating the Christ who says he died for all, so that all may live the abundant life.

When injustice prevails, compassion considers what can be done to redress the wrong. When evil appears to triumph and victims are ostracized, compassion knows how to bring consolation and comfort to the oppressed. When abuse strikes, compassion protects the prey of perpetrators and looks for ways to bring healing.

4. The compassionate mind is a healthy mind.

Research demonstrates that women who look out for the needs of others enhance their own wellbeing with measurable, positive outcomes for their health; including lower blood pressure and cortisol levels. These women are also more receptive to social support, which allows them to more easily handle stress. The research also found that selflessness helps individuals better maintain wellbeing. A compassionate attitude actually benefits the self!

V. CONCLUSION

I offer you the God of all comfort. See Him as the compassionate Father gently embracing you in His arms of love. Feel the assurance that His comforting presence brings. Hear Him saying to you the beautiful words from the Psalmist,

“Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10, NKJV).

God bids us to be still, to be quiet in His presence, to be confident in His power, to be assured in His love, so that we can truly know who He is—Healer, Restorer, and Deliverer. He is everything we ever need. When we give God our restless minds, troubled hearts, and hurting souls, He will give us rest, tranquility, and healing.

If you have suffered from tragic life circumstances, hurts, disappointments, abuse in any of its ugly forms, Jesus has the remedy. Your compassionate Saviour is waiting to apply the prescription that you need. Isaiah tells us God anointed Jesus ...

“...to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness...,” (Isaiah 61:3, NKJV).

Whatever ashes life has heaped on you; whatever has caused you to mourn; whatever heavy garments may have been your attire, God promises a Divine Make Over for you! Accept the beauty He offers in place of the ugliness of life; embrace the comfort He offers for your broken-heartedness. He promises to restore you.

“For I will restore health to you, and heal you of your wounds, says the LORD...,” (Jeremiah 30:17, NKJV).

What God promises us is far more than we could ever ask for ourselves. Paul reminds us,

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end,” (Ephesians 3:20, 21, NKJV).

What does this promise look like for those who have encountered severe life challenges? Jesus is able to turn your battles to breakthroughs, your hurts to healing, your mess to a message, your obstacles to opportunities, your pain to praise, your problems to possibilities, your test to a testimony, your trials to triumphs, and your wounds to wellness. He will change you from a victim to a victor! Hallelujah!

Know that whatever has transpired in your past experiences, whatever your present circumstance, and whatever your future holds, God gives healing for yesterday, help for today, and hope for tomorrow. Embrace the Healer of hearts and Restorer of minds—our Lord Himself—and move forward with confidence to face all your tomorrows, for God is already there! Amen.

Sermon Appeal

Appeal:

As the sun warms the earth, so the love of God and Christ blesses our lives. May it be that we will have the same compassion for those about us, and by reflecting this divine love, be a blessing to all those among whom we live and work.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to remember that others don't always see the way we do, hear what we hear, feel what we feel, or understand things the way we've come to understand them. You give each of us gifts that are uniquely ours but so often we fail to value the gift in another, judging other gifts as wrong or somehow less important than our own. Give us the compassion you want us to have, O Father, and teach us to embrace each other with compassionate arms, no matter what our age, color, creed, history, or belief. Help us to remember that you are Life Itself, and that you are using every one of our unique gifts to bring us together with you once again.

Sabbath Afternoon Program or Friday Evening Vespers Seminar with PowerPoint Slides

“Mental Wellness Strategy”

By Sharon Platt-McDonald©

All notes are copyrighted and are the authors own reflection or taken from the Mental Wellness Manual compiled by the author.

As the subject of mental well being can be a sensitive one, it would be helpful to provide payer support and have counselors present who may be on hand to assist individuals for whom the presentation may evoke painful memories.

These PowerPoint presentation notes are taken from the notes section of each slide.

Slide 1:

Recognizing the need to address the issue of Mental Health; the Seventh-day Adventist church in the UK has taken decisive action in order to raise awareness among the membership. The British Union Conference Health Ministries department (under the leadership of Sharon Platt-McDonald) launched a Mental Wellness Strategy in March 2009. This was followed by a series of training events to brief ministerial staff, departmental leaders, and health professionals on how to minister to members experiencing mental health challenges.

Slide 2:

Ellen G. White made some insightful statements on the power of the mind and its impact on our wellbeing. Here is one of her key quotes.

Slide 3:

A key part of the British Union Conference Mental Wellness Strategy is the production of a handbook which is currently being printed for each church in the British Isles titled:

‘Mental Wellness Handbook – Supporting Churches in Raising Mental Health Awareness and Encouraging Emotional Healing and Wellbeing’.

This comprehensive manual aims to deliver the following:

- Provide insight into how improved mental health awareness can enhance greater understanding and support for individuals with mental health challenges.
- Assist churches to better embrace individuals with mental health challenges and assimilate them into the church family.
- Highlight some key aspects of mental wellbeing and the factors that impact it.
- Provide a foundation on which to undertake future workshops to enable learning about the mind/body/spirit connection and how it relates to general wellbeing.

- Encourage the church to be more sensitive in its outreach and provision of services that are accessible to all.

Author Platt-McDonald states: *“Because the area of mental health is not readily discussed and adequately addressed in our churches, I felt that we needed to open the dialogue with a range of products to assist in raising the awareness of mental health issues and attempt to break down barriers which exist in this area. The manual will seek to do this. Additionally, it aims to equip members with some basic skills in reaching out to individuals in a caring and sensitive way in order to meet their needs.”*

Slide 4:

The Mental Wellness Handbook is compiled in three sections:

PART ONE – Addressing Mental Health and Mental Illness: highlights some statistics, major mental health issues, and prevalent mental illnesses that exist.

PART TWO – Encouraging Emotional Healing: identifies some major emotional issues individuals face and coping strategies to help them. Key professionals share from their work, cases of intervention, in these areas and offer expertise on counseling individuals facing such challenges. Useful quotes are cited from the compiled books, “Mind, Character and Personality,” by Ellen G White.

PART THREE - Fostering Emotional Wellbeing: offers practical advice for maintaining emotional health and identifying interventions which enable emotional growth and wellbeing. Also included is information on C.A.R.E., the British Union Conference emotional wellbeing website. A ‘Word from the Lord’ in relevant bible texts finishes this section.

APPENDIX – The Glossary gives a brief explanation of technical terms. Useful Resources identifies publications addressing the issues discussed in the handbook. Used with the handbook, the appendix will bring greater clarity to a specific subject or encourage further reading and training in this area.

Slide 5:

Realizing the emotional, mental, spiritual, and social repercussions that can arise from trauma or challenging-life situations, we must educate our members to respond appropriately to the people who are hurting.

If we are to help heal hearts and restore minds, we need to deal with the stigma of mental illness. When a church member has a physical illness, we fill the hospital wards to visit and give them support on Sabbath. However, in comparison, the number of church members taking time on Sabbath to visit a mental health institution to offer support to a member who has succumbed to mental illness are very low.

The Aims and Objectives for developing a Mental Wellness Strategy are as follows:
(read slide)

Slide 6:

The British Union Conference Health Ministries Department compiled a leaflet titled, “Brain in Crisis,” to assist and train members in offering support to someone in a mental health crisis or whom they suspect is close to having a mental breakdown. It also promotes the Mental Health First Aid course which teaches participants to care for someone in an emergency situation (mental health crisis). Copies of this leaflet can be acquired through the Health Ministries Department of the British Union Conference.

Slide 7:

Take a few moments to discuss and answer the following 4 questions in relation to your congregation and community. Grade yourself and your church on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) in terms of how you respond.

Slide 8:

C.A.R.E is an acronym for: **C**ompassionate **A**ction for the **R**estoration and **E**ncouragement of individuals. Recognising the need to address emotional wellbeing as a key aspect of our journey through life, **CARE** exists both as a supportive outlet for challenging times and a tool for encouragement. It is a network ministry which seeks to harness the support, understanding, and skills of individuals and other agencies to assist those who are facing crisis and life challenges.

As part of the Mental Wellness Strategy recently launched by the British Union Conference Health Ministries department, Sharon Platt-McDonald, union director, developed the **C.A.R.E** network as a practical tool to aid individuals in offering a range of options and resources to enhance emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

C.A.R.E can be accessed via the BUC Health Ministries page of the BUC website or via C-A-R-E-adventist.org.uk.

Three key aspects to **C.A.R.E** :

- prayer ministry (including prayer requests and testimonies to answered prayer)
- support ministry (including resources, and details of relevant referral agencies)
- affirmation cards (a range of inspirational cards to encourage and affirm individuals)

Slide 9:

1st Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) states: ***“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.”***

In attempting to assist church members and community individuals in addressing life challenges which impact emotional wellbeing, we need to be both sensitive and supportive in our approach demonstrating genuine care and concern.

The Affirmation Cards were created to do just that. Sometimes hurting individuals don’t want to be ‘talked at’ and would rather receive an encouraging word through a card, book, or thoughtful present. By choosing one of the relevant affirmation cards, you have opportunity to minister to an individual’s emotional and spiritual needs.

Slide 10:

The following slides deal with data on Mental Health issues from the Mental Health Foundation.

Slide 11:

Take a moment to reflect on the scope of Mental Health challenges and how prevalent it is.

Slide 12:

What do you think is the reason for the gender differences expressed in this slide?

Slide 13:

There are gender differences in the emotional expression of men and women. This slide gives a biological perspective from the deep limbic system of why the brain is different in size and function, depending on whether you are male or female.

Slide 14:

A biological gender difference exists in the incidence and expression of depression. Women are at greater risk.

Slide 15:

Here are some key lifestyle practices that enable the brain to function at its optimum and to prevent it from degenerating.

Slide 16:

Here are some additional lifestyle factors that enhance brain function.

Slide 17:

Books at the top of the slide give guidance related to mental wellbeing of children and youth, men, women, and seniors.

Books at the bottom of the slide are used to coach individuals facing emotional wellbeing challenges.

These books are available from the British Union Conference Health Ministries Department. In some countries, they are available at local Adventist Book Centers.

Slide 18:

Comment on the following quote by Ellen G White, "A person whose mind is quiet and satisfied in God is in the pathway to health."

Slide 19:

We are all susceptible to mental health challenges. However, science has found that Christians suffering from mental illness have a more positive outcome than those without a faith. This is encouraging!

Slide 20:

The picture is similar for faith individuals suffering from depression. We should never underestimate the power of our faith to heal.

Slide 21:

Take a few moments to quickly answer the following two questions.

Slide 22:

The word PEACE is used as an acronym to highlight various lifestyle factors that enhance emotional wellbeing.

Slide 23:

Here are some tips to help you pause for renewal of body, mind, and spirit.

Slide 24:

Try these environmental tips to enhance your environment to make it more conducive for relaxation.

Slide 25:

Attitude is key to emotional wellness. Here is some advice that you may find useful.

Slide 26:

Ensuring that we enjoy calm moments in our day is vital for emotional wellbeing and is integral to healing hearts bruised by life trauma and restoring minds that have been broken.

Slide 27:

Much evidence exists to demonstrate the healing benefits for exercise for both brain and body. When we exercise we release endorphins (also known as happy hormones) which are healing.

Slide 28:

Forgiveness is not just a biblical spiritual directive. Science has demonstrated the healing benefits of forgiveness for our emotional, physical, and social wellbeing.

Slide 29:

God's word is always the best prescription. Recognizing that we will encounter challenges in life and may experience trauma, Jesus offers us the true peace that comes only from Him. John 14:27, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let it be afraid."*

Slide 30:

Jesus, the Divine healer who mends both heart and mind, asks us to come to Him for rest and renewal. Only He can fully restore us.

End the PowerPoint presentation with a prayer for healing for those who are experiencing emotional or mental health challenges and for sensitivity of our members to minister to them effectively.

enditnow®

Adventists Say No to Violence Against Women

In this page you will find ideas that can be used in the afternoon program or during the preparation for the Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day. We know that we cannot do it alone. It needs partners with specific skills and knowledge. Partnering with the other departments is essential for the success of this day. It is helpful for the Women's Ministries Leader to build a good working relationship with the leaders of the other church departments and services, finding ways to cooperate and promote **enditnow** in the church and in the community.

WHAT ONE PERSON CAN DO

1. **Pray:** Pray for those working in partnership to **enditnow**. Pray for victims of abuse, gender-based violence, and exploitation. Pray for a change in the hearts of their abusers.
2. **Learn:** Read about this issues and how you can make a difference in one life.
3. **Connect:** Educate children, women and men and your church on how they can help.
4. **Speak:** "Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8).
5. **Give:** Contribute with your time, resources and talents.

WHAT THE CHURCH CAN DO

- Ensure that Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day is a yearly date on your church calendar.
- One small but vital principle the church must apply is that of **confidentiality**. It is imperative that any victim of gender-based violence may speak with an appropriate church leader in total confidence. If a situation ever occurs in which the church leader is required to report to law enforcement or other appropriate authorities, s/he will disclose this to the person seeking counsel or assistance, and will treat the matter with utmost care and discretion. The victim's safety is of supreme importance.
- Compile complete, up-to-date information about all resources in your community available to victims of any type of gender-based violence. Make sure the information is easily available to members and others. Get acquainted with shelters and referral sources to learn what services they offer and when they are open.
- Reach out to school children through special lessons and workshops.
- Volunteer with a local women's organization or supporting women's shelters.

- Collect funds and provide your church leaders with educational materials on gender violence.
- Create a church lending library of materials on gender-based violence issues relevant to your community so members and leaders may become educated on this vital topic.
- Organize a group to assess the needs in the local community. What is one need our group can address that may help reduce gender-based violence?
- Create one or more “safe houses” where abuse victims can find emergency shelter.
- Present sermons and workshops to the congregation and the community on issues of gender-based violence relevant to your community. Offer to present age-appropriate information in local schools.
- Examine church policies and practices to be sure none foster or encourage hurtful or discriminatory attitudes towards women.
- Provide ongoing support to a local women’s shelter or other organization benefitting victims of gender-based violence.
- Care for hurting people in your church. Be non-judgmental. Develop support groups.
- Help raise awareness. Share materials about gender-based violence with your community.
- Volunteer my time and talents to the **enditnow** campaign.
- Host an **enditnow** event.
- Partner with your local domestic violence program.
- Have an action plan in place to respond to victims and abusers.
- Have literature available – www.adventsource.org (USA)
- Recognize that gender-based violence is a tremendous evil, that it is never acceptable and cannot be condoned.