

## EMOTIONAL PAIN

### PAIN, SUFFERING AND HURT

**LOSS OF RELATIONSHIP** is one of the greatest causes of **EMOTIONAL PAIN**.

Loss of relationship with God.

Loss of relationship with yourself.

Loss of relationship with others.

Most of what I am about to write about comes from reading and completing an assignment on the book *Where is God when it Hurts* by Phillip Yancey. I would really recommend that book to anyone who is in pain, is suffering, is grieving, is angry with God or anyone who feels that their life is unfair. Hopefully, this article will not become a morbid one, what I would like you to get out of this is that life can often take some unexpected turns for the worst. We do not always understand why and there are some questions that just have no answers and that is awfully hard to accept.

When I tell people that pain is a necessary part of their lives, they look at me as if I have crawled out from under a rock. Mostly, people do not like to feel any kind of pain, whether it is physical or emotional, the feeling is unpleasant to say the least. Most do not know how to handle the pain that they have.

I read a very thought-provoking statement by Dr Henry Cloud who said, "If it is true that time heals all wounds, we should ask a broken tooth". Emotional pain and suffering can be caused by a number of factors, it could be a consequence for things that we have brought on ourselves, it could be someone else that is causing us pain and suffering or it could be mental illness or emotional instability, whatever the cause is we **MUST** take the responsibility upon ourselves to fix what is broken (the broken tooth is not going to fix itself, even though we are scared to go to the dentist and even though we know there will be some pain involved, the tooth needs to be fixed)

We must make the appointment to go and see the dentist, we must make sure we get there on time and with a little more added pain to fix the broken tooth and some numbness afterwards, our tooth will no longer be sore. If we do not want to have sore teeth again, then we must maintain what we started ..... Do you understand what I am getting at? If we choose not to do anything about this tooth, the pain is going to stay there and eventually it will rot and become infected – the broken tooth is going to remain broken.

### WHY DO WE EXPERIENCE PAIN?

## **WE EXPERIENCE PAIN BECAUSE THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG**

**Pain in the body is an alert system – a warning. Pain alerts the body to danger. Wherever the pain may be, we need to attend to it.**

**We need pain to realise and recognise what our body is telling us.**

Pain is not an afterthought; it reveals a marvellous design that serves our bodies well. Pain is as essential to normal life as eyesight. Without pain, our lives would be fraught with danger and devoid of many basic pleasures.

Why must pain hurt? If we look at people with diabetes or leprosy (not common today; I know); their illness does not hurt them, but at the same time they are in danger of losing fingers and toes and entire limbs just because **their warning system of pain** has been silenced.

We should listen to our pain. We should not try to shut off our pain network by taking a pill for any little thing. By overriding our pain system, we could cause more damage. **We cause much more damage by blocking it out completely.** Pain should be viewed as a communication network that keeps us from injury. **Some pain is uncontrollable and overwhelming and does need medication,** (such as the pain cancer patient's experience) but most pain experienced is short term and there are correctable solutions.

As human beings when we feel physical pain, we usually go to the doctor to see what is wrong and what the cause may be of the pain we are suffering. But on the other hand, we generally tend to **ignore emotional pain**, we do not give it the same attention that what we do physical pain. Perhaps it is because emotional pain cannot be seen, so we put on our masks, and we carry on.

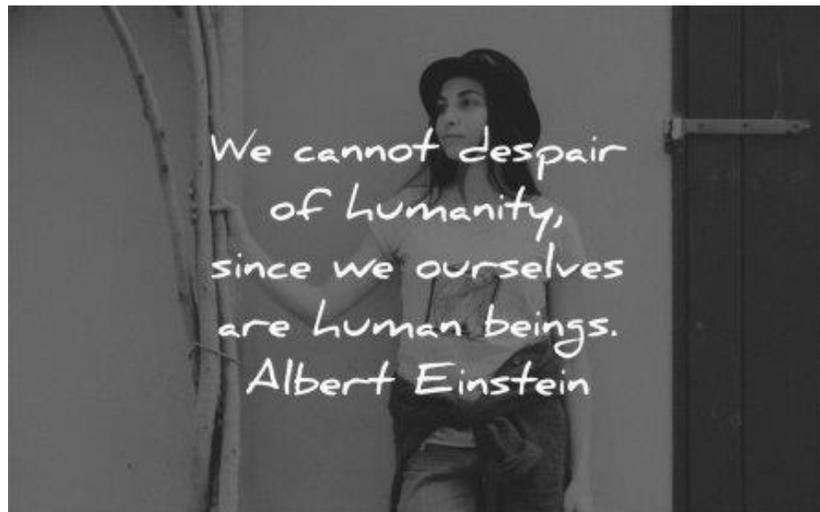
Why do we rarely seek help for emotional pain?

There are various reasons: We think we will be judged for what we are going through, we are afraid of rejection, we have trust issues, we worry about what others will think, we have trust issues, we are in denial and think we don't have a problem, we are prideful thinking we can do this ourselves, we have deep feelings of shame, some of us have built walls so high and so rigid that we would not dare not let anyone in for fear of being exposed or hurt again. The list of reasons can be endless.

Many people do not want to experience suffering as a part of their life plan. A lot of people do not realize that life; in and of itself; is actually; quite hard, and it does not always go as smoothly as

we expected it to go, and we take our failures personally. The sooner we realise is that suffering is part of the human condition, and it **does not mean** that because you are suffering or in pain that there is something directly wrong with you.

***COMMON HUMANITY IS UNDERSTANDING THAT YOUR SUFFERING DOES NOT REVEAL WHAT IT UNIQUELY WRONG WITH YOU AND/OR YOUR LIFE, BUT PART OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.***



We as humans are always doing what we can to eliminate and remove any suffering out of our lives without realising that at times it is a necessary thing to experience. Without suffering we would never experience any joy. The more we try to block out pain and suffering the worse it will become. When we start turning to substances to numb our feelings and an addiction develops; the pain that you will be heading for will be much greater than the pain you are experiencing right now.

Pain is often described as God's greatest mistake, but it is not. God designed us perfectly – He thought of everything. Pain is necessary, if we did not have pain, we would not respond to it and we would continue to hurt ourselves without even knowing it. Pain is necessary and it is there for a reason. Pain alerts us to something being wrong. Pain should be seen as a gift from God to protect us.

**SOME THINGS TO NOTE**

Pain will depend on what we expect it to be, so in other words the same experience can have two separate outcomes – pleasure or pain, it just depends on what you are **expecting** to feel at the time.

Pain and pleasure come hand in hand. You would not be able to experience pleasure without experiencing pain. The pleasure that we get to experience after pain is often strong enough to make us forget about our painful experience (childbirth would be a good example) Pain is not our enemy, it should be understood, harnessed, and used to work for us and not against us. Pain heightens our senses to experience greater joy.

Pain encourages growth in ourselves (e.g., the pain of loneliness, guilt, and fear) this type of pain alerts us to a problem that needs to be attended to and once dealt with, we can grow as a person. In my own life I felt the pain of being betrayed and hurt deeply during my first marriage. I was isolated and afraid all the time, my experience of divorce was extremely tough, and I also carried the burden of guilt for the hurt and pain it caused my children. Although this experience was emotionally devastating, I have grown tremendously through it. Without this painful experience in my life, I would not have been able to properly appreciate the joy and the peace that my second husband brings into my life.

Unhealed memories from childhood can cause a person to carry around the pain from the past for many years if these issues are not dealt with and spoken about.

A background of abuse can cause great pain in a person's life because it is undeserved. It can cause a lot of emotional pain and a lot of emotional baggage that a person can carry around for a long time.

### **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF SUFFERING?**

Suffering can “bring us down to earth” it gives us a reality check

We come to realise that we cannot do this on our own, that we need God, we need help, and we need other (healthy and stable) people.

Our security is often based on what we have or what we have achieved. When we are left with nothing other than those who want to help us, we can be humbled enough to realise that it is not the material things in life that count.

Those who suffer have no exaggerated sense of their own importance, and no exaggerated need of privacy. Suffering humbles the proud. There is no reliance on oneself, and you realise that you need other people. Through suffering you realise that you are not the most important person and by humbling yourself you open yourself up to God and help from others, no longer closing yourself off.

Through suffering we learn to cooperate with others by not trying to do better ourselves; but accepting assistance without trying to do better than everyone else.

Suffering helps us to distinguish between the necessities and the luxuries. We realise what is most important to us. What we really need. We appreciate what we have.

Suffering teaches patience, often a kind of determined patience resulting from acknowledged dependence. We change through suffering. As we realise that we are dependent on others we become more patient with others and determined to keep those people in our lives.

Suffering teaches the difference between valid fears and exaggerated fears. Suffering changes a person – what previously seemed like a valid fear to you would seem quite insignificant to you now because your perspective has changed.

### **HOW DO WE RECOVER?**

In the book *Where is God when it Hurts*, Phillip Yancey gives four frontiers for recovery and they are as follows: Fear, Helplessness, Meaning and Hope.

**Fear** is defined as an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm.

**Helplessness** is defined as a person who is unable to help him/herself, feeling powerless and incompetent, weak and dependent on others.

**Meaning** is defined as psychological or moral sense, purpose, or significance. It is what something means and what somebody wants to express either in words or actions.

**Hope** is defined as a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.

For myself, hope is best presented to a person through a smile and a positive attitude, letting the someone know that you care. Hope is something we must have to believe that we are going to come out okay at the end of a very dark tunnel. We must have hope that our lives are going to improve. Hope means not giving up. Hope is a quality of our spirit, and it is a matter of choice. It

is holding on to the feeling that something good is about to happen, without going into denial or wishful thinking. Hope is honest. Hope gives strength to go on even after the worst has happened. Hope is something to grasp onto. Hope is a lifeline. Hope is one of the most powerful forces in the universe. With hope, we can endure almost anything, and certainly more than if we lose it or do not have it to begin with.

Hope is always about holding on when it looks bad and **being able** to hold on sometimes for **a long time**. The time dimension is a key factor, because if it did not require time, we would have no use for hope. We would already have everything we want, right now, today. But many times, we do not have what we want right now and must hold on to hope for quite some time, and then as we persevere, we succeed.

### **BE CAREFUL OF FALSE HOPE**

False Hope buys us more time to spend on something that is not going to work and keeps us from seeing the reality that is simultaneously our biggest problem and our greatest opportunity. It is our biggest problem because not seeing the reality that needs to be dealt with is what is in between us and what we desire.

If we can manage to see and understand what reality is standing in the way of what we want, and we can see the problem that needs to be overcome and dealt with we can find a real way to work things out, one rooted in things as they really are, to get what we want or desire.

Sometimes we need to get things in order; for real hope to return.

I have learnt that pain is a necessary thing to experience and that if it was not for some of my own painful life experiences I would not be where I am today and I am sure that it is not just me who feels this way because pain is something we all experience. Pain alerts us to the fact that there is something in our body that needs attention, and this can be either physical or emotional. I have learnt that there is no quick fix for anything, life is an endurance race, it is not a sprint. If we look at the Bible, Jesus suffered and reacted in the same way that we do to pain and, He is with us in all of this. I have learnt that pain can be harnessed and used for good; pain can help us relate to and help others in need. Pain can change a person for the better, getting rid of pride and self-sufficiency. Pain can bring about a change of attitude; our attitude towards pain is a choice that we make. Pain is necessary. Suffering often results from a person's own will or the will of others, accidents happen, and people do make mistakes, God is not to blame. We are not being punished

when we suffer. Jesus suffered and He did not sin. Suffering has no distinction between good and evil. Both suffer. God is with us always. God is a loving God who grieves with us.



**Remember that bad things happen, sometimes you just must pick yourself up and dust yourself off and carry on – the objective is to keep moving.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9GWhSndmf0>

copy and paste to your browser to watch

**NEVER GIVE UP**

