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### Sorrow, Suffering, and Evil—Is There Reason to Hope?: Implications for Applied Psychology

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ROBERT  
GLEAVE

*Sorrow,  
Suffering,  
and Evil—  
Is There  
Reason  
to Hope?*

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

*Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with a surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.*

—Ether 12:4

Sorrow, suffering, pain, and evil are a part of our daily experience. Any of us can relate a multitude of life events, small and large, to confirm the ubiquitous presence of difficulties. Some of our most difficult wrestles concerning the existence of God or the meaning of life include questions and uncertainties regarding the place of suffering in our lives. My intent is to highlight the prevailing misconceptions of suffering and to present a gospel-based reconception of sorrow and evil that can serve as a background or context from which we can revisit our view of psychotherapy. While discussing difficulty, pain, and sorrow, my parallel purpose is to build faith in Jesus Christ and his ability to support and lift us through and beyond the mortal condition.

### **Misconception of Suffering**

In his Brigham Young University forum address, David Paulsen (1999) presented what he called the problem of evil. As he reviewed the thinking of many scholars and theologians, questions surfaced regarding God's omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence. The thinking follows, roughly, these lines: Why is there misery in the world? If God is all-knowing, he must have been aware of an alternative that would have prevented misery. If he is omnipotent, he should have been able to prevent misery. Or perhaps he is not benevolent and did not care to avoid misery. In the end, many of the world's thinkers and theologians have difficulties finding a way to reconcile the presence of misery with the existence of God's omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence. The problem, it seems to me, boils down to the premise that pain, sorrow, suffering, difficulty, and misery are tragic, to be avoided at all costs, that they are definitely not part of a benevolent plan.

By accepting the premise that evil, sorrow, and difficulty are tragic, the scholars of the world are necessarily trapped and unable to extricate themselves from the contradictions that follow. If God is omniscient and omnipotent, then he must necessarily be causally implicated in the presence of the sorrow and difficulty that we experience as mortals. Given the starting premise, his causal involvement in misery cannot be seen as benevolent. One is left, then, with only two possible resolutions to the contradictions: the removal of

one of the three qualities (omniscience, omnipotence, or benevolence) from God's character or—the final solution—removal of God.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps by reexamining the beginning premise that misery is tragic and embracing the notion that it is possible for a benevolent Father in Heaven (with a divine purpose in mind) to be causally responsible for the presence of evil and sorrow in the world, we can arrive at a more satisfactory and satisfying resolution.

When we experience pain, we often cry out for a variety of validating responses from our environment or, more specifically, from God. We want our injury to matter, and we want a response that validates that we matter. We want to know that our suffering is understood and of consequence. Our search for validation includes a call for justice or a striking out against the cause of our injury (sometimes foolishly escalated to the desire for revenge). We call out for a repair of the damage and the recovery of our losses. We also seek measures and assurances that the event will be prevented in the future (with the assumption that it should have been prevented in the first place).

Since we experience our pain in the present tense, we cry out for a validation that also can be experienced in a temporally proximate (present) tense. Many times we feel that, if the validating response is not temporally proximate to the pain, the response has not been

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1. Just as many theologians want to maintain that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent yet find that they cannot, many psychotherapists get caught in a similar bind. Therapists often state their goals and intentions in terms of encouraging the client to enhance personal efficacy and self-generated, desire-driven choosing. They then find, however, that they cannot maintain this view while embracing the premise that sorrow, suffering, and evil are tragic. This view of the tragic nature of sorrow, suffering, and evil leads to counterproductive messages to clients such as that they are "broken" or that their lives or families are "broken" when they experience less than optimal (i.e., painful) outcomes. When we as therapists hold out options or make suggestions that would improve a client's life (i.e., remove pain), we are implying that (a) if the client is "good enough" at implementing our suggestions (following the rules), tragedy will be avoided; (b) if tragedy comes, it is because the client (person) did not "get it right"; (c) anyone who does not choose what is right (as we have defined it) is a fool and destined to live a tragic life; (d) one's own preferences and desires must give way to rules. Therapists are then left to react to tragedy and are limited to "fix it" interventions with the intent to eliminate the tragedy that (by implication) should not be.

presented. Perhaps it is not wise for us to limit God's validating response to only those responses that are temporally proximate (as we experience them in mortality). Perhaps there could be purposes and gifts to be bestowed upon us that might follow a temporal distance in the validating response offered by a loving and benevolent God. In fact, I suggest there are great, significant kindnesses bestowed by a loving God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent in the delay—at least as viewed from a mortal, temporal perspective—of a validating response to pain and sorrow.

### **Reconception of Suffering**

To the limited degree possible, let us try to expand our minds beyond the mortal constraints of temporality and consider the pre-earth existence from which we came. Information is sketchy regarding that time, perhaps purposely so, but let us imagine an existence wherein we lived with Heavenly Parents. I can imagine that the love of an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God filled our souls constantly. To have been in that condition, filled at every moment with overwhelming love and peace, would seem to have been a wonderful existence. I believe, however, that it would have been impossible in that environment to experience such feelings as loneliness, intense loss, worry, fear, and failure.

I can also imagine that we observed that our Father in Heaven had access to those emotions (loss, worry, etc.) and knew how to manage and work with things that were beyond our experience and comprehension. Perhaps we wanted to be like him. We may have shouted for joy as he presented a plan that would allow us to learn those things that he knew. His plan would allow us to have a period of time where a veil was over our minds and we would be able to have access to loneliness, sadness, failure, incompleteness, and sorrow.

If the accounts of near-death experiences, as reported in books like *Life after Life* (Moody, 1975) and *Return from Tomorrow* (Ritchie, 1978) are accurate, it may be that when we leave mortality we return very quickly to that feeling of being filled with Heavenly Father's love. It may be that this mortal existence is the only flash of eternity where we are allowed to have a veil over our minds and are allowed

to experience incompleteness, pain, and sorrow, which give us such richness of experience. From this view, then, perhaps feeling lonely would not be seen as a disease condition but rather as one of the very purposes for being alive.

Pain, sorrow, suffering, and evil, then, may not be deficits to be overcome, controlled, removed, or eradicated, but rather they may be gifts from a benevolent Father that can serve as instruments for developing a divine nature. We may perhaps go so far as to see the traditionally tragic elements of life as the very tools of the trade in the construction of heavenly mansions. Our response to difficulties may be different if, rather than run from and avoid trouble, we could turn and embrace it.

A kind and loving Heavenly Father, in my view, has not left us in a condition that is filled only with sorrow, evil, and suffering. He provides many moments that are delightful and pleasant and that even hold traces of our life before this one. We sometimes talk of the veil being thin when we can experience in some small measure a connection with that which is larger than this world. Many of us long for those feelings of connectedness to God and are frustrated when again they become absent. Perhaps too often we misinterpret that condition of constant peace as the “home” state, that state which should be the prevailing state in this life. However, we are not at home, and that condition is not intended to be our consistent condition while we are here in mortality.

As much as we wish for a constant state of bliss and restfulness, the granting of that wish would completely undermine the very purposes of our mortal existence. We may have existed for eons in that condition in premortality. We may exist for a continued eternity in that restful condition following this life, but “the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32). This small, brief moment in eternity is the time intended for us to have less-than-optimal experiences.

When sometimes we misinterpret the “wished-for” as a home state, we are led to complaining and kicking against those difficulties that so quickly follow the moments of respite. We sometimes misinterpret our partial success as failure and perhaps, in the process, miss the gentle tutoring that is intended to make us better.

In an article entitled “Bowels of Mercy,” John Durham Peters (1999) gave some central insights. I will include only a few:

Several [Latter-day Saint] commentators have honed in on what Elder Neal A. Maxwell terms the “stunning” Book of Mormon insight that Jesus suffered “in order that He might know how” to succor his people. In a striking articulation of this aspect of the Atonement, Lorin K. Hansen argues, “It is not Jesus’ suffering per se that redeems men and women. Suffering has an effect on him, and it is that effect (or change) that makes possible human redemption. The power of redemption comes through his expanded knowledge and sensitivity, which he then expresses through his role as mediator.”

. . . Elder Maxwell similarly explains that “the infinite intensiveness of Christ’s suffering” was necessary for him to become a “fully comprehending Atoner.” . . .

Obviously, there is a huge difference between abstract, theoretical knowledge and knowledge developed and tested in the crucible of experience. . . .

Embodiment holds all kinds of secrets unknowable to the spectator. A spirit who has never lived in embodied mortality may know all things except what it is like not to know all things. In mortality, a spirit can become acquainted with the night, privation, and ignorance. It can encounter lack, absence, desire, and negativity in their fullness (or rather, their partiality). It can learn about waiting, surprise, the uncertainty of all action—everything, in short, that derives from living in time. . . .

Perhaps the *locus classicus* of such a notion in LDS literature is Joseph Smith’s second letter from Liberty Jail: “Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God.” It is in the same letter that we read, “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith” (D&C 121:45; compare 88:6). This is a manifesto for a kind of knowledge, art, and life that is not afraid of the heights or the depths, a kind of inquiry that is as broad as God’s mercy and as deep as the lowest reaches of mortality. Taking condescension in this way has rich implications for our relation with God, each other, and our vision of our place in the cosmos. (pp. 34–35)

*Sorrow,  
Suffering,  
and  
Evil*

These comments illustrate that suffering has eternal advantages and is not something to be counted as a loss or as something to be avoided. The partiality inherent in mortal living, he notes, is a gift to

mankind for their understanding. It is not something that is to be seen as faulty or broken. Rather, it is something that we can see as a fascinating part of our tutoring. Furthermore, exploring evil and good deepens our understanding. Again, the “opposition in all things” is part of a learning experience. While we do not need to seek specifically for evil in order to contemplate its effects—we all experience sufficient amounts of evil due to our mortal condition—still the opportunity to explore or contemplate the effects of evil can be a significant part of deepening our understanding and can create a strong foundation for going into the eternities and accomplishing the tasks that lie there.

Perhaps, then, God is not intimidated by suffering. Perhaps he has no sense of crisis or tragedy when assigning or allowing us difficult experiences. He may view those experiences somewhat like a homework assignment or a household chore or exercises with weights—something that is intended to make us grow but that subsumes no crisis or tragedy. His ability to see no crisis or tragedy in these events of suffering may lie in his longer-term view and his knowledge that he has provided a response of justice and recovery for every hurt and loss. He may know that he will respond with great benevolence to every incident of suffering and that full validation and recovery will be granted in every instance.

Often an element of suffering is included as part of decision making. Many times holding to principles of righteousness requires an element of sacrifice. In fact, I believe that the road to high nobility always passes through suffering. We demonstrate our deep affection for family members and others for whom we care precisely by the degree to which we suffer for them. The Savior indicated that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). However, in order for suffering and sacrifice to be more than victimization, there must be hope of eventual recovery, which can then allow for a freely given gift of choosing to enter into and endure suffering in the present for a greater future purpose.

Hope for recovery and restitution must be greater than something that is simply wished for. We must look forward to that day with confidence, with an assured anticipation, and with full expectation of receiving the desired outcome. It is true that, given mortal



existence, that day is yet future, but if we can express deep faith in an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God, whose view contains past, present, and future at once, then we can act in the present with confidence—a “perfect brightness of hope” (2 Ne. 31:20)—that recompense and triumph will be the final outcome. With this kind of confidence, based on deep faith in the Savior, we can indeed “with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God” (Ether 12:4).

Hope that is a confident expectation requires strong faith that the mortal experience lies within manageable bounds. There are several scriptural references which clearly indicate that this mortal life is kept within the boundaries that the Lord has ordained to be part of mortal experience (D&C 122:9; Gen. 3:15; JS–H 1:16). No power of darkness, no influence from the evil one is allowed to cross boundaries the Lord has set. Every experience is within our capacity, and the Atonement provides a recovery for every loss (1 Cor. 10:13).

For hope to be deeply rooted in the sure expectation of future peace, it cannot be based solely upon a letter-of-the-law keeping of commandments. It must involve deeper soul-searching and personal wrestling with questions of mortal living. Moses 6:60 clarifies three distinct paradigms, each intended to bring us closer to God in its own way at different times in our lives: “For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified.” I believe that each of these paradigms is needed at one time or another by those who are seeking the kingdom of God.

**By the Water.** As individuals come from one of a multitude of other paradigms into the family of the Church or become distanced from the influence of the Divine and lose sensitivity to things of the Spirit, there is potential for much confusion and much uncertainty. It is important to learn about and embrace the principles of being baptized and keeping the commandments, principles that are basic and that can serve us when our hearts are hardest and we are most distant from heaven. These principles provide a structure that is both helpful and needed to mark the way back to heartfelt connection with God. Structure can provide rules and guidelines and help plant one’s feet firmly on the gospel path. The children of Israel

whose hearts were hardened by a life of slavery and idolatry needed to start with similar structure and laws.

**By the Spirit.** As one becomes familiar with the rules, laws, and structures of the Church and as the feelings of the Spirit start to swell in the heart, the first paradigm can be discovered to be incomplete. In our mortal condition, opposing commandments present themselves in ways that our mortal faculties cannot clearly prioritize. We find ourselves wanting to do neither or both of the mutually exclusive choices before us. At times, neither seems to be good or right; at other times, both seem important to choose. It is inevitable that a less-than-optimal (as we see it) choice will be forced upon us, as in the case of Nephi's quandary over Laban (1 Ne. 3, 4). Nephi was commanded to bring back the plates, but Laban was not willing to part with them. Nephi faced breaking one or the other of two commandments: either to disobey and not bring the plates or to disobey and commit a violent act against Laban.

In circumstances such as this, the commandment paradigm is inadequate to guide decision making, and another paradigm becomes important: "By the Spirit ye are justified." One who is sensitive to the workings of the Spirit can be guided, prompted, and directed in choosing which commandment to break. The Spirit can then justify the less-than-optimal choice thrust upon us. Notice that it is not the individual that is allowed to define what is right but rather Father in Heaven, who imparts guidance through inspiration. In Nephi's case, I am personally confident that it would have been easier or personally more comfortable for Nephi to leave Jerusalem without the plates, but the Spirit constrained him and asked him to make the terrible sacrifice of taking the life of a fellow human.

By his willingness to embrace personal sorrow as a part of life's experience, Nephi was able to offer a freely given gift and choose to follow a higher principle and to respond to tutoring from a loving Father. Consider another dilemma. We are commanded to give gifts with a glad heart and a feeling of benevolence. At times, however, our development and spiritual growth may be such that we are not prepared to give the gift benevolently. Should a person choose to give the gift anyway, knowing that giving the gift without the proper intent may not bring blessings? Or should that person choose to not give the gift for the wrong reasons, in which case the commandment

to give the gift goes unheeded. One can imagine that in varying circumstances it may be appropriate for a particular person in a particular time of life or personal development to be asked by a justifying Spirit to give the gift in spite of not having the attached appropriate feelings. One can also imagine that in another particular time and with another person and another set of circumstances one might be asked to withhold the gift, waiting instead for the feelings and proper attitudes to develop so the two commandments can then be fulfilled together. If one relies only upon the commandment paradigm, this particular dilemma seems unresolvable. But if one is able to act within the second paradigm and allow the Spirit to justify one incomplete answer or choice although it is less than optimal, one can respond to gentle tutoring by a loving Father and seek help and guidance beyond the first paradigm.

Perhaps we can begin to allow for and to understand the increased complexity that is available with the second paradigm. Life is no longer a true-false or multiple-choice test but becomes a laboratory that includes wrestling with complex and interactive ideas, behaviors, and feelings. The gospel and life are no longer constrained by only linear and dichotomous options. More nuanced, creative, and interactive possibilities can emerge.

It is a gross oversimplification to equate this view with situational ethics. While the decision making is complex and takes into account a multiplicity of contexts and conditions, interaction between a tutoring God and a struggling son or daughter encountering heartfelt dilemmas with mortal limitations is certainly more rich than can be captured in the concept of situational decision making. There continues to be a very rich and divinely appointed grounding upon which decisions are based. They are not, however, limited to linear processes, with only either-or, on-off possibilities.

***By the Blood.*** At some point, through sufficient wrestling with important issues, ideas, and decisions, it can be discovered that this second paradigm is also incomplete and that it is appropriate to move into yet another paradigm: “By the blood ye are sanctified.” While I do not as yet comprehend as much as I would like to regarding this paradigm, the metaphor of blood was clearly chosen purposefully. It is here that one can perhaps comprehend charity and the reason such words as *longsuffering* are included in its definition.

## Goals of Therapy

*Turning  
Freud  
Upside  
Down*

The ideas to this point are intended to serve as a ground or context against which we can consider some applications to psychology. Let us now turn to a figure or application of these ideas.

I will say little about the paradigm “By the water ye keep the commandment.” Much of psychology’s traditional interventions seem to fall into this category. The applications that I present are founded in the paradigm “By the Spirit ye are justified.” In this paradigm we can acknowledge, and be willing to wrestle with, multiple possibilities and embrace issues of the heart. This paradigm is full of dilemmas and mutually exclusive alternatives. Any decision made in mortality is complex, neither fully flawed nor fully without flaw, making decision making that much more difficult. Besides, providing premature closures or quick solutions to dilemmas might grossly oversimplify the circumstance and inhibit the growth opportunities that are so richly and benevolently presented by a loving Father.

I propose, therefore, that the treatment goals in this paradigm be, not the resolution of a problem, but rather the restoration of engagement with life events with full awareness of the complex issues involved. The goal in this paradigm could be to express preference through active choosing. Subgoals might include restoring perspective, dialogue, hope, and purpose to the struggle. To fully embrace this style of therapy, one must adopt a style of client interaction that puts the client in charge of the agenda and treatment process. It is important to eliminate to the degree possible the idea of being one-up or one-down. The therapist, as an expert, becomes counterproductive. The therapist might become a cotraveler or companion, someone who can “mourn with those that mourn” (Mosiah 18:9). From this view, the goal of therapy is to help people find a way to live more like they want to live and, in the process, leave behind many of their problems (but with few direct attempts to “solve problems”). It is important to encourage the client to take sufficient time being “in” the problem; therefore, there is no hurry to move someone “past” a problem.

Once one is able to accept the fact that there will be some degree of harm done with every mortal choice made, one can focus less

upon avoiding harm and more upon doing the will of the Father in the present. Motivations of love and kindness can become powerful reasons for looking at and changing the delivery of feelings and wishes in interpersonal and intimate interactions. Issues of shame, self-pity, and self-deprecation can fade into the background as one becomes less troubled with “getting it right” and more concerned with being helpful or making a valuable contribution.

Sorrow,  
Suffering,  
and  
Evil

## Interventions

Let us now turn to a sampling of specific interventions. As with any intervention, *the use of these techniques will need to be placed in a context, chosen with clinical judgment, and applied to individual circumstances as they may be clinically relevant.*

### 1. Encourage the client to spend more time in the problem.

Many clients have difficulty staying engaged with their problem and try to move very quickly to bring a closure or solution to the problem. This response often has the effect of the client choosing an incomplete or inadequate response. Taking additional time in the problem allows for additional patterns and complexity to emerge. As an example, consider the following fictional marital dialogue:

SHE: I need you to listen to me more.

HE: I need you to be more supportive of my schoolwork.

SHE: No, you don't understand how badly I need you to listen to me. I feel like I am all alone.

HE: I don't think you understand how much I need your support to get through my very difficult class schedule. I'm gone all day long, working hard every minute. I need your support.

SHE: Of course, I want to support you, but I can't when I am feeling so alone. I don't ever get any time with you.

HE: I would like to spend time with you as well, but I am so overwhelmed with my schoolwork. If you could just help me, I would probably have more time to be with you.

SHE: You don't understand. I can't support you more until I am feeling better about our relationship. Sometimes I get so mad at you for never being home that I don't want to do anything for you.

HE: Sometimes I get so frustrated with your hesitance to help me that it is hard for me to come home.

*Turning  
Freud  
Upside  
Down*

SHE: That really hurts me. I've felt that you have been avoiding me. That really makes me angry.

HE: When you get angry like this, it puts so much more burden on me. I've got so much that I am doing, I don't know how to make it better for you. If you could just help me, things would go so much better.

SHE: Don't you understand how badly I need you to take care of me and to listen to me? I thought being married would mean having a very good friend, but I have never been so lonely in my life.

HE: I thought getting married would be finding someone to help and support me. I've never felt I've had so much to do with so little help before in my life.

SHE: Can't you just take a moment or two and talk with me every day? It's really important to me.

HE: You don't understand; I simply can't take the time. I've got so much pressure. Why can't you help me more?

SHE: I simply don't have any relationship with you. You simply can't find it in you to be loving and kind, can you?

HE: You demand so much from me, and I am already so overwhelmed. Why can't you just back off—or even help me sometimes?

SHE: You know, you really are a jerk. We wouldn't be having most of these problems that we are having in our marriage if you would just stop and take some time and be with me.

HE: That was really mean. You know that the problems we have in our marriage really come from your inability to hold up your end of the family.

SHE: No, our marital problems exist because you won't listen to me.

HE: No, it is really your fault that we are having trouble because you don't support me.

SHE: No, it's your fault that we are having trouble—you won't listen to me.

HE: No, it's your fault.

SHE: No, it's your fault.

HE: No, it's your fault.

SHE: No, it's your fault.

HE: Okay, I'll agree there is fault on both sides.

SHE: That's fine, I can agree that there is fault on both sides. If you will just listen to me, I will work harder to support you.

HE: I'm willing to try to listen to you if you'll support me better.

SHE: I really do want to support you better, but I need you to listen to me first.

HE: I would enjoy talking with you and listening to you and interacting with you more, but I need support before I can do that.

SHE: But I just can't give you the support until I feel like we're connected.

HE: I don't know how to give time to being connected until I am able to take care of more things, which means I need your support before we can take time to talk and interact.

SHE: But I don't have energy for it. There doesn't seem to be any relationship here.

HE: Why can't you go first?

SHE: But I want you to go first.

HE: No, you go first.

SHE: I don't want to go first. You go first.

HE: I don't want to go first. You go first.

SHE: This is silly. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad for me to go first.

HE: Well, if you're willing to go first, maybe I could go first.

*Sorrow,  
Suffering,  
and  
Evil*

Notice that as this particular couple stayed engaged with what seemed to be interminable disagreement, the pattern of their interaction and the theme of their discussion were able to be clarified. The content was important, but only as it elucidated the pattern and theme that were foundational elements in the disagreement.

**2. Legitimize multiple positions and encourage judgment in choosing among the options.** Here the question of what to do becomes less simple. One must now ask, "What is the right thing for me to do now, with regard to this situation and this particular person?" In other words, personal judgment and agency are required to choose a response.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to mend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. (Eccl. 3:1–8)

**3. Use questions to increase awareness of issues.** Such questions would be nonjudgmental or nonprivileging of any side of a particular issue—they would simply be questions designed to help a client fully explore and experience the circumstance. Examples include the following:

What are you feeling?

What often happens next? (just before?)

How would you describe \_\_\_\_\_ in more detail?

When do you notice \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**4. Deal with a problem by enhancing the feeling of that problem.** For example, many clients avoid feelings of helplessness and try to gain more control of their lives out of a belief that they “can’t stand it.” When people are encouraged to stay in the feeling of helplessness for a significant time, they are able to understand that the helplessness does not overwhelm them. They learn they are not helpless in the face of helplessness. They are still free agents making choices and managing their feelings quite nicely, even without a validating or relieving response from the environment. Clients can become aware of their own ability to make decisions about what they will believe, how they will see their own lives, and what basis they will use to make choices. With regard to their own sense of self and confidence, they are helped, in the long run, to become impervious to changes in the environment.

**5. Explore the beneficial aspects of their presenting complaint.** With this intervention, clients are asked to find something positive in that which they are trying to overcome. Clients are encouraged to increase the complexity of their view of the problem. They are encouraged to stay engaged with the feelings involved in the problem while they examine various aspects of their behavior and circumstance. Parents who are worried about a teenage son who infrequently sneaks out of the house at night and takes the family car to visit his girlfriend might be pleased about his increasing autonomy. Someone who has suffered at the hand of another might be grateful for an increase of sensitivity to others.



**6. Challenge the sense of crisis or tragedy in their presenting complaint.** Important aspects of this intervention are captured in the poem “What of That?” (anonymous, 1901):

Tired? Well, what of that?  
Didst fancy life was spent on beds of ease,  
Fluttering the rose-leaves scattered by the breeze?  
Come, rouse thee! work while it is called day!  
Coward arise! go forth upon thy way.

Lonely? And what of that?  
Some must be lonely; 'tis not given to all  
To feel a heart responsive rise and fall,  
To blend another life into its own;  
Work may be done in loneliness. Work on!

Dark? Well, and what of that?  
Didst fondly dream the sun would never set?  
Dost fear to lose thy way? Take courage yet.  
Learn thou to walk by faith, and not by sight;  
Thy steps will guided be, and guided right.

Hard? Well, what of that?  
Didst fancy life one summer holiday,  
With lessons none to learn, and naught but play?  
Go, get thee to thy task! Conquer or die!  
It must be learned; learn it, then, patiently.

*Sorrow,  
Suffering,  
and  
Evil*

This intervention allows a sense of crisis and tragedy to be taken out of clients' circumstances. Clients can then move from a sense of being cheated to a restoration of intrinsic motivation to overcome difficulties rather than being overcome by them.

**7. Give generous praise and celebrate personal achievements without the need to add *but* or *next*.** Since there is no goal to resolve problems directly, there is no need to move out of the enjoyable moments that can accompany incremental successes. Allowing that there will be another day to make additional refinements, a person can fully allow an uncluttered celebration of the present moment. Additional motivation and a renewed confidence may follow.

A reconceptualization of suffering informed by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ allows us to embrace the problems of mortal living with optimism and hope. It also allows us to reformulate our

view of psychotherapy and to explore therapeutic goals and interventions that may be more patient with and respectful of God's children as they use their difficulties to construct future mansions.

Turning

Freud

Upside

Down

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