

# FALL 2016

## WHY EMOTIONS MATTER



**Child to Parent Relationships:** When life has thrown us a few curve balls and our family or societal culture taught us to “just keep going, be strong, you can handle it, or just get over it” we fail to recognize the importance of our emotions. This inability to acknowledge and process our own emotions leads to the lack of being able to recognize and respond appropriately to the emotions of others, including our children and spouses.

**Futility and Adaptation: “Finding our tears”:** Developmental psychologist Dr. Gordon Neufeld talks about the “Adaptation process” which refers to the child’s development and ability to adjust when things don’t go their way. It is important that a child is able to acknowledge such futility or disappointment within the context of a safe and warm relationship. Tears are often a symbol of a child’s coming to terms with such disappointment. The process of experiencing futility is important for a child to be able to build resilience. The tears actually help to release stress hormones and toxins from the body.

There are different types of tears; tears of futility and sadness, anger or frustration and upset. Parents and caregivers need to provide a safe place for the child where they can express the tears, instead of encouraging them to “just get over it”. Inviting them to express what didn’t work (such as they lost a game, friends mocked them, feeling embarrassed etc.) and responding in a warm manner can help to keep their hearts from being hardened. If the relationship between child and parent is a sound attachment then whatever you think of them will be more important than what their peers think of them.

**Adaptation & Building resilience:** A child shows healthy adaptation when they have overcome and worked through situations that brought futility. When a child does not learn to process emotions effectively they will become stuck, their heart may be hardened, and the relationship between parent and child will be affected. When this type of “stuckness” continues over time, the child will develop a lack of adaptation and resilience in their next developmental phase, which may continue into adulthood.

Many adults are still stuck, as they have not been able to find healthy ways to acknowledge, express and process emotions and futilities as a result of things not having gone the way they thought.

**Aggression:** When a child experiences frustration, the brain has two options; to emotionally express the frustration and sadness of not having obtained what was desired, or if the futility is not experienced it will build up as attacking energy. In order for a child to go from frustration to adaptation, the emotions of futility need to be fully felt, if not aggression will build. Gordon Neufeld says: “aggression is the outcome of the failure to adapt”.

**Mixed feelings:** Key to human development and maturity according to Neufeld is the ability to hold mixed feelings simultaneously. This is an awareness that develops as part of the maturation process and parental coaching. Mixed feelings help you think twice before you make a decision, have empathy, and consideration for others. An example might be “when I hit my annoying sister it makes me feel better, but I know that she will get hurt and I don’t like that”. We can help children develop mixed feelings by role modelling how to think or feel about two opposites in a particular situation. Use words to explain to the child that they feel one thing and at the same time feel something different about the same situation. This will help the maturation and developmental process of the child.

**Counselling:** Many parents observe behaviours in their children they find undesirable or even harmful. Typically parents may consider counselling for the child in order for their behaviour to change. The problem with this approach is that typically behavioral issues are of a relational nature that often includes unresolved emotions or emotions not appropriately responded to. It is very important for the parents to be part of the child’s counselling to ensure healthy attachments are being built.

**Monique Hoving-Smeets**  
Contract Counsellor, CCCA

\*Article is based on information from Neufeld Institute  
found at: <http://neufeldinstitute.org/>

## **Matthew 11:28-30 The Message**

28-30 “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

I love the heart and compassion in these famous words said by Jesus to the crowd, including his disciples. It reveals that he knows and understands the stresses and strains that we carry, wounds and weights that we are not intended to carry in isolation in our heads. His solution as the best therapist there ever was, was to simply offer the relational invitation to come closer, talk to me, don’t go back into your head and try to solve and be responsible for all this by yourself.

Humble yourself by coming closer and admitting that private individual self-assessing and problem solving won’t cure this fatigue. It reminds me of Albert Einstein’s quote “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” I also love the assumed safety implied in the invitation to come near, come close. The same words he told to his disciples in Matthew 19:14 “Let the little children come to me”, words full of safety, care and affirmation, instead of judgment and fear. If we are going to let go of our worries and preoccupations that we are so attached to, if we are going to explore changing and growing, finding a relational place of safety is always the first step. Just like recovering from any deep trauma, safety is the first needed step. Like the oxygen rich chamber you need when you have been down too deep and tried to come up to quick. Here Jesus is offering this safe space to breathe deeply, to share and to learn of more gentle and sustainable practice of life.

I came across this prayer last week (I need to Breathe Deeply - By Ted Loder) which carries the feel of this safe coming close, and unburdening oneself and I gave myself permission to add a few of my own words to the prayer. I hope you enjoy it and find yourself using it as you take Jesus up on his invitation to come close.

**Brent Unrau**  
**Contract Counsellor, CCCA**

Prior to coming to Canada two years ago, Monique worked as a therapist and teacher in the mental health field in Melbourne, Australia. With a deep compassion for people to reach their full potential, Monique works toward creating an integrative counselling approach that fits the particularities of each individual. Monique specializes in working with couples and individuals and any of their presenting concerns including trauma and abuse. She chose Canada to further enhance her therapeutic skills and recently completed her Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy at TWU. Her genuine approach with clients offers a safe and caring space where life distressing concerns are explored. Monique’s training provided her with solid training regarding the integration of theology (faith) and psychology and brings keen awareness of these aspects in people’s lives. Her approach will only include a faith perspective as directed by her clients. As part of her personal time she loves spending time with her husband and three dogs in the outdoors of Canada. As a result of living in several countries, she has a sound understanding of migration issues as well as cultural diversity.



## **I need to Breathe Deeply - by Ted Loder**

Eternal Friend,

grant me ( Brent’s words - a softening, a trust, a conviction of safety, a letting down my guard, a letting go of too much weight and responsibility, a gentle gracious forgiveness I can own and hold, a sense that it’s ok, that I’m ok )

an ease to breathe deeply of this moment,  
this light, this miracle of now.

Beneath the din and fury of great movements  
and harsh news

and urgent crisis,

make me attentive still to good news, to small occasions,  
and the grace of what is possible for me to be,  
to do, to give, to receive,

that I may miss neither my neighbour’s gift  
nor my enemy’s need.