

PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



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When Finances Change

FOR THE WORSE

■ by Joy Bocanegra, MA, LCPC

Substantial tax increases and the imminent reduction of my husband's work hours brought panic to our door. If that wasn't enough, we unexpectedly had to replace a car. We bought used but still, we now have a car payment. What would we do? How would we pay our bills? We were already living paycheck to paycheck, so this was scary! And yet, I knew fear is not from God. He is bigger than this. He is my provider and friend and invites me to sit with Him and face this with him. "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they?" Matthew 6:25 & 26

So, how can we live in this place?

First, begin with prayer for clear thinking and wisdom. Then survey the whole situation. What expenses can be reduced or eliminated? This might include eating out less

or not at all for a while and refraining from buying items that are wants not needs. Even little changes can add up to a sizable difference like bringing a reusable water bottle or beverage from home when you're running errands instead of going through a drive through or picking up something at a gas station mini mart. Look for ways to stretch your dollars using sales, discounts and coupons. Search online for discounts and coupons even on services like oil changes. Shop around and compare prices for everything including haircuts, cell phone service, internet, car maintenance and medical services.

Dollar Stretching Tips

Look for free activities:

- Library - Borrow library books, audio books and DVD's. Check out library events and programs.
- Parks - Utilize playground equipment, walking paths and space to run. A bench or blanket under a tree provides a nice place to relax or read.
- Biking and hiking provide both exercise and opportunity to enjoy the outdoors which helps reduce anxiety.
- Enjoy summer movies and concerts in the park. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs, picnic supper or snack and you'll be all set.

Many movie theatres have a discount day when tickets are discounted. Daytime hours are usually cheaper than evening, so consider a matinee.

Senior Discounts

If you are 55 or older ask about senior discounts for goods and services. Many stores, theatres, restaurants, hotels, museums, auto centers and other businesses offer senior discounts. They don't tell you so you have to ask. Age eligibility varies from 55-65 and is determined by each company.

Village or Townships

Various villages or townships offer programs for discounted services. A township near me offers its residents the opportunity to get blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels checked the second and fourth Thursday of the month for \$30.

Park District

Many parks districts have classes, events and programs that are inexpensive.

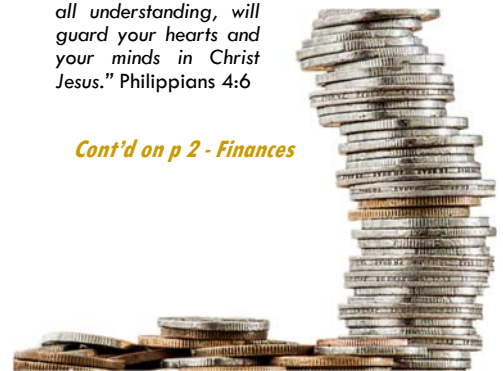
Medical Services

Shop around. Prices vary greatly on office visits, bloodwork, MRI's, x-rays, and so on. For example, Doctor visits and testing through a hospital are typically more expensive.

Give it to God

After exploring all that you can do to cut costs and stretch dollars, give it to God and rest in him. He loves us and will provide for us. "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6

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New Beginnings: Empty Nesters



■ by Kim Pronoitis, MA, LCPC

As parents we all know that there will be a time when our children leave the nest and we release them into the world. Whether our children are small or young adults, the idea of having no children at home can be impossible to imagine.

Unlike birds of a feather, empty nester parents sometimes feel lonely, disappointed, or even depressed. It is difficult, but letting our children go is something we eventually have to do to promote healthy emotional growth for them. It is our job to prepare our children for their next stage in life.

Whether our child is going off to college for the first time or getting married, the anticipation of change that an empty nest can bring to your life can be overwhelming. New empty nesters often ask, "Where do I start?"

As a therapist and fellow empty nester, I offer some thoughts on this new beginning.

Trust God's plan for your child

There comes a time when we have to rely on God and believe that the seeds we have planted in our children will take root. We ought to believe that we have done our very best at the time with the information we had.

Our children are gifts from God and it is natural to want our children to do well and be safe. As

we let go, it may help to remember that God has a plan for our children (Jeremiah 29:11), just as he lovingly planned we would be their parent. We need to let them explore and trust God's plan.

Give yourself grace to adjust to the loss

For many parents, so much identity is wrapped up in our children. It's natural to feel sad and disappointed as we truly are experiencing a loss. We were parents first and for many of us our lives revolved around our children.

Many women at this time wonder who they are and what they are going to do with the rest of their lives. Because I have two grown children who have left the nest, I have been witness to this on more than one occasion. I can honestly say that when my oldest went off to college there was an empty spot in my heart. I took a liking to the computer and television in his room - it became a standing joke when he was home on college break.

It is not uncommon for dads to feel an emptiness as well. Although stereotypical for moms, societal norms are changing and a "Mr. Mom" can experience this as well.

Embrace New Beginnings

Although we have closed one chapter it is healthy to move forward and start another.

- **Embrace the extra time.** You now have more free time. Even the house stays cleaner and more organized. Bring your time to God in prayer and see what he does with it. I also encourage parents at this stage to rekindle hobbies, explore interests and new ways of using or volunteering their talents.
- **Embrace the opportunity to grow.** Any growth period in life can be difficult. Sometimes we have to become vulnerable and that takes courage. We need to be open to new ideas whether it be starting a class in school, volunteering, or networking with those we know.
- **Embrace important relationships.** Whether you are single or married, it is a time when you can shift your focus and think about other people. For those who are married, sometimes we need to get to know our spouse again. Rekindle your marriage relationship. As so much of life often revolves around our children, we need to stay connected.

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Practice Good Self-Care

Practicing good self-care is imperative to good health. Stress can not only cause emotional unrest, but can take its toll on the body. It's all connected. Making space to rest, relax and nurture our souls enables us to cope better and live more joyfully. Take time to de-stress on a regular basis. We live busy lives, which means we need to be intentional to create space to do this or it won't happen. Below are some ways to practice good self-care:

- Exercise
- Pray
- Meditate on scripture
- Practice Mindfulness
- Take a Bubble bath
- Spend time in nature
- Be grateful. Keep a gratitude journal or mentally note 3 things you are thankful for each day. Looking for what's good in your life and choosing to be grateful can counter the negative thinking that stress may bring.

Life is full of situations out of our control. You can, however, choose your perspective which makes all the difference. What if we chose to look at financial need and uncertainty as an adventure - an opportunity to see how our loving Heavenly Father will take care of us? What if we took this opportunity to grow, to pray and to trust the amazing God of the universe, who knows the number of hairs on our heads? Hang on to Jesus. It's going to be alright! ■



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Anger

is a Secondary Emotion



■ by Kathy Krentkowski, MA, LCPC, LMHC

Anger is a secondary emotion. What does that mean, exactly? A secondary emotion is an emotion you feel in response to another emotion.

Anger is often misunderstood because it takes different forms. Anger that is loud and explosive draws more attention to itself. If anger is not the primary emotion, then this attention-drawing emotion leaves the 1st and primary emotion unnoticed, unnamed, and unattended to. This spells danger for you and those you are in relationship with.

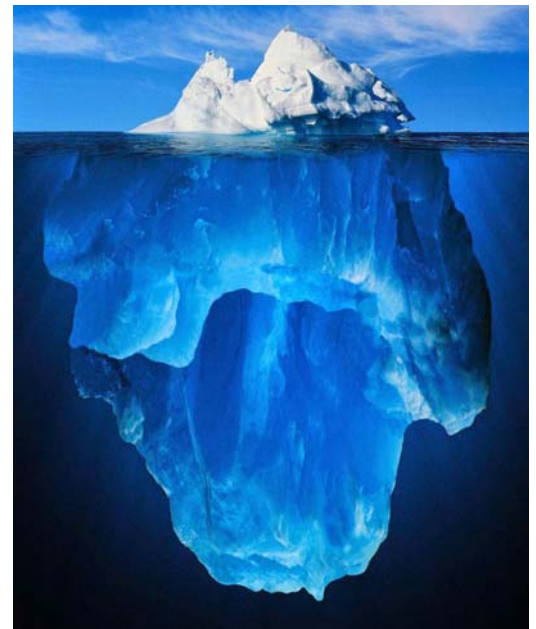
We cannot control feelings; when and how they manifest is quick and sudden. However, we can control what we do in response to them. What would happen if we choose to attend to the primary emotion instead of allowing anger to run the show?

When anger is primary

It is important to determine if the emotion of anger matches the situation. Anger is a passionate emotion that has many gifts. Anger can warn us when there has been a violation of a moral standard or when we have been treated in a way that we have previously said is not ok. Anger can give us the energy needed to make a change. When these things have occurred, then anger is most likely the primary feeling and we would do well to attend to it right away.

When anger is secondary

When anger is secondary, we need to dive deeper to see what lies beneath. Think of anger as an iceberg. Only a very small part of the iceberg is visible above the water. The majority of its body is hidden below the surface. The emotion and expression of anger is often that visible part that everyone sees. The expression of anger as the “tip of the iceberg” looks different on everyone and may include a loud voice, screaming, explosive words, throwing of objects, withdrawal, sulking, etc. Paul tells us to “be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...” (Ephesians 4:26, NIV). It’s as if Paul knew that there was a tendency to bury things and not address what’s really going on, and he was warning against this! We are more likely to sin when we react emotionally, rather than let the emotions offer data, to which we choose a response.



Discovering what lies beneath anger

For some people, the discovery at what lies beneath anger begins by completing this simple sentence:

I am feeling anger. I am also feeling _____, _____, _____ (use feeling words such as fear, hurt, shame, guilt, frustration, etc.).

Jonah expressed feeling anger and what might be frustration, self-pity, depression or despair when he said to God, “I am so angry, I wish I were dead!” (Jonah 4:9, NIV). We are multifaceted people with layers and levels of emotions.

Uncovering other emotions in addition to anger allows you to see more fully all that you are dealing with. You can only deal with what you know. We react in anger and out of anger because we are not aware of all the contributing factors, including other feelings.

Too often we see the anger as the beast that needs taming when it may be the flare calling for help. Perhaps addressing the hidden emotions will dissolve the anger. That would be wonderful. But even when the anger remains an active party, the other feelings need identification, validation and attention as well. Anger may call for an action such as a rebuke or re-establishing a limit or a boundary. Or, the other hidden emotions, like hurt, may call for grieving and comfort. There is a lot of work to be done here!

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Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling, consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

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- **Embrace the peace and quiet.** Although there was a time for all the hubbub of activity, you may actually get a better night's rest. After years of flushing toilets, showers, refrigerator and garage doors opening and closing, and the third ear that listens for the last child to come home safely – it is time to embrace peace, quiet, and a good night's sleep!
- **Embrace your child's adulthood.** Yes, they come back to visit. One of the greatest joys is when they come back as adults. It's exciting to see them walk through the door. We can now appreciate them as they evolve into adults with their own lives, ideas, opinions, and passions. Look at your empty nest as a place of many accomplishments and memories to reminisce.

Cherish and embrace this new beginning. Focus on God, entrusting everything to him and he will give you perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). This is a time of growth and a time to evolve as we watch our children make their way into the world. God is always working in our lives no matter what the season. ■



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The next time you notice the emotion of anger rising up in you, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what the anger is really in response to. Pray God will reveal what other emotions are coming up in addition to anger and invite Jesus to come and be with you as you feel ALL of the feelings.

Is there something you are not getting that you believe you really need, want or deserve? Go to the God who promises to supply all of your needs. Ask the God of justice how to respond or how he wants to respond.

Is there something that you are fearful of losing? Bring your fears to the Lord and ask him to settle your heart before you choose your next step.

Do not let the iceberg of anger wreak havoc on you as you travel through life. You are worth knowing and understanding, and you are worth the work it takes to grow, recover and change.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Today is the day to get to work. ■

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