

How to Move Ahead after Personal Pain

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When people face things that seem unfixable there is a huge temptation to despair. The stories people tell themselves about their situation can lead them to hope or failure.

There is an old joke about two children who wanted a pony. The first was led to a room full of horse manure. He said, "I knew it, there will be no pony for me, just the smelly leftovers." The second child was led to the same room. He immediately started digging in the stuff. The adult with him said "what on earth are you doing?" The boy replied, "With all of this horse manure, there has to be a pony in here somewhere!"

This story is about pessimism and optimism, yet also about the story the child has in mind before he takes action.

As we work with folks facing every kind of emotional pain, we realize that there are many ways to look at a situation. There are ways of framing things in one's mind that are more helpful than others. It is important to honestly acknowledge the "stuff in the room" yet to move forward with a plan. Are there times when shocking reality needs to be exposed? Yes. Still a plan needs to follow with seeds of hope.

At the Center for Family Healing we try to help people strike a healthy balance between being honest about the reality of their situation and at the same time, being open to good possibilities that may result. Plans to move forward from personal pain include deciding then developing, sometimes in little bits, what it takes to move toward their goals. Checks and balances follow as this is worked out.

Whether or not the person faces keeping the marriage off from the rocks, surviving the push/pull of the consequences of addiction, or working with a wayward adolescent, we are encouraged to hold on by a merciful and powerful God. The end of something precious is not the end of the story.

At first the process of learning to tell oneself positive possibilities about difficult situations seems odd. Questioning whether this skill is a false way of dealing with life is understandable. Allowing for God's influence in our concerns is not always easy, yet the journey through difficult times has a path. We have God ordained breadcrumbs along the way if we will look for them. He leaves this sustenance as we dare hope in Him. Sometimes there is a shovel at the end of the path of following possibilities... and sometimes...there is a pony.

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