

 RESTORING YOUR HEART

# PROCESSING PAIN

– A Safe Small Group Experience –

**Restoring Your Heart® Workbook: *Processing Pain***  
**14 Lesson Edition – February 2021**

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NOTE: Worldwide Discipleship Association follows Scripture in joyfully recognizing that God created man and woman in His image as equal recipients of His grace and mercy.

In the interest of editorial brevity and simplicity and to address the issue of gender inclusiveness regarding pronouns, we have chosen to use inclusive plural pronouns in this document (“they” rather than “he,” “she,” “he or she” or other constructions).

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# Restoring Your Heart

## *Processing Pain*

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# Introduction To RYH

## *Processing Pain Workbook*

The work of **Restoring Your Heart** is a life-long process and an important part of discipleship. This RYH *Processing Pain* workbook may be your first step in restoring your heart or one of many steps along the way. The goals of **processing your pain** are to help you understand your past and the effect it has on your present life, to help you become more self-aware, to help you become more God aware, to provide a pathway to forgiveness and, ultimately, to bring you into a closer relationship with God.

**This workbook is designed for use by a group that is working together on emotional and relational healing issues.** We all need a safe community in which to heal and the RYH group setting provides that opportunity. The suggested method is for the group to cover one lesson per week. During the week before the meeting, each group member will read the lesson and complete the answers to the questions. At the group meetings, there will be opportunities to share answers to many of the questions and, as the group progresses, to bond with the other group members.

There are several benefits to you in using the group method. **A group will provide needed validation for your feelings.** This is a necessary component of processing your pain. **Another advantage is that by sharing your story with others you learn that your struggles are more common than they are unique.** You may have felt alone and thought that no one else had gone through what you had experienced (or are experiencing). Your healing is helped when you find out that others share similar struggles.

**Restoring Your Heart groups are also helpful because when you hear other people's stories, you learn more about yourself.** Quite often as you listen to someone else you recognize that similar things have happened to you. Or you see more clearly the varied ways the past affects the present and how your present struggles are connected to the past. **Also, in a RYH group you will learn healthier ways to interact in relationships by experiencing healthy interactions.** You may even learn how to handle conflict or uncomfortable situations involving other people. Everything becomes clearer with the help of the group and the facilitator. The RYH group creates a community that is necessary for your healing and growth.

**Processing Pain – what does that mean?** The first step in processing your pain is to spend time discovering how your past has affected your present. This is called awareness or discovery. The next step is to actually feel the pain from your past that you have avoided feeling. This is called grieving. While you are feeling your pain, you need to have other people who will validate it and sit with you in it (your fellow group members). Then you can start to make meaning out of your painful experiences and learn from them. Finally, you will be able to forgive those who have hurt you. Processing your pain is part of the maturity process.

In I Corinthians 10:13 Paul writes, “No temptation has overtaken you except that what is common to mankind.” So our struggles and pain are common. This verse goes on to say, “And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” These are encouraging words that indicate that our struggles and pain are not hopeless. With God’s help and the means that He provides, like a Restoring Your Heart group, we can overcome the struggles in our lives and learn from them.

In summary, the steps involved in “processing your pain” are:

- Become aware of what caused your pain
- Feel your pain (grieve)
- Express your pain (by talking to God and others)
- Make meaning out of your pain (find purpose in it)
- Forgive those who have caused your pain

It is very difficult to process your pain alone. You need God and you need safe people. Participating in this group will give you opportunities to engage with both. It’s a slow process, but it’s vital for maturity.

**It is our prayer that God will use this restorative process to bring healing to your life and give you hope for the future.**

We strongly recommend that you read the booklet *How Emotional Problems Develop*. You can purchase a printed version or download a free PDF at the WDA store: [www.disciplebuilding.org/store](http://www.disciplebuilding.org/store). This booklet will give you more insight into how the past impacts your present struggles.



**RYH Group Leaders:**

Before beginning your group:

- **Register** your group details at [www.restoringyourheart.com](http://www.restoringyourheart.com).
- **Read** the Leader’s Instructions section starting on page 189.



# Welcome To Your RYH *Processing Pain* Group

## 1. Welcome from your group leader and introduce yourself –

- Your RYH group leader will share a little information about themselves and also the benefits they received when they participated in a RYH *Processing Pain* group.
- Each group member: Tell the group a little bit about yourself, e.g., marital status, family members, type of job, where you grew up or any other general bit of personal information you'd like the group to know.
- Each group member: Share with the group what you hope to gain by being a participant in this group.

## 2. Introduction To Workbook –

Read the introduction aloud together with each group member reading a paragraph (pages 1 and 2).

## 3. *RYH Group Covenant and Guidelines – Addendum C (page 173)*

- Your group will read together each item in the *RYH Group Covenant* to be sure everyone understands the importance of the commitment you are making to each other. The *RYH Group Covenant* establishes the “rules” for how the group will function.
- You will sign the *RYH Group Covenant* together with your leader and other group members. Sign both copies. Tear out the Leader's Copy and give to your group leader. Keep your signed copy in your workbook.

## 4. *Connecting With God – Addendum I (page 187)*

- Your group will read together and discuss the instructions and purpose for *Connecting With God*.
- You will have an opportunity after each lesson in the workbook to interact with God.

- This will allow you to connect with God throughout the course of this workbook and intentionally bring Him into your healing process by regularly expressing your feelings, thoughts and concerns to Him.

#### 5. *Feelings Wheel* – Addendum D (page 177)

- A tool that will be referred to and used frequently throughout this workbook experience.
- Will help you learn how to identify what you are feeling as you are feeling it.
- Will help you develop or improve your “emotional vocabulary.”
- The general layout of the *Feelings Wheel* is negative feelings are on the top and positive feelings are on the bottom.

#### 6. Other helpful tools-

- Each lesson will contain either a “Processing Tip” or a “Listening Skill.” These are designed to help you have a more interactive group experience and to become a better listener.
- ***Leader’s Notes*** for each lesson are after every lesson. For additional insights and scripture references, you may read the ***Leader’s Notes***. They aren’t reserved solely for your group leader.
- ***The Restorative Process (Addendum B)*** visually depicts the restorative process (found on page 169 and introduced in Lesson 1).
- ***Development Of Emotionally-Based Problems (Three Column Chart) (Addendum A)*** – This three column chart explains how emotional problems develop and the order of healing (found on page 167 and introduced in Lesson 2).
- ***Safe Support System (Addendum E)*** explains how to recognize “safe” people and how to become a “safe” person (found on page 179 and introduced in Lesson 2).
- ***Needs Square (Addendum F)*** helps us identify our emotional needs (found on page 181 and introduced in Lesson 3).

**7. Miscellaneous –**

- Group time for each session is two hours.
- Typically one lesson is covered each week.
- You should prepare each lesson in advance of the meeting time. A typical amount of preparation time each week is 1 - 2 hours.
- You will get more out of the lesson if you spread out your preparation time over the course of the week, i.e., on day 1, read the lesson; on day 2, answer a few questions; on day 3, answer a few more questions, etc., and then review your lesson the day before your group meets.
- The more time you invest in preparation, the greater your benefit.

**8. Questions or comments?**

# ATTENTION LEADER



Before you start:

**HAVE YOU REGISTERED YOUR GROUP?**

If not, please go to



<http://bit.ly/RYHgroupregister>.

If you need assistance from the RYH Team, email [ryh@disciplebuilding.org](mailto:ryh@disciplebuilding.org).



# Repeating The Past

## Lesson One

# 1

*“They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.”*  
*(Isaiah 61:4)*

**Our past has an incredible impact on our lives.** While it is true that we are not determined by our past, in many ways we are products of our past. Unless we consciously choose otherwise, our natural tendency is to repeat patterns from the past again and again.

**The greatest contributing influence from our past is our parents, or primary caregivers, during childhood (see NOTE at the end of this lesson).** Since a dramatic amount of brain development occurs between birth and age six, it makes sense that the people who take care of us during this time would have a large impact. Through the field of neuroscience, we are continually learning more about the complex process of brain development in early childhood. During this time of life, our patterns of thinking and feeling are determined, for good and for bad, by how our parents or caregivers interact with us. Our brains wire (grow and develop) in response to things that are mostly outside of our control and even more outside of our awareness. Things like social interaction, stress in the home, diet, sensory stimulation and many more factors affect the information and patterns stored in our brains and the ways we will view the world and ourselves. Because of how our brains are designed, **many of the decisions we make in the present that seem like intentional choices are based more on childhood influences than we realize.** Frequently, they are based on information stored in our brains that we have no awareness of. **The past dramatically affects the present.**

[Although our brains wire in certain patterns early on in childhood, God has designed our brains to be “plastic,” that is, able to change. Unhealthy interactions in childhood, which cause unhealthy patterns in our brains, can be corrected later in life by healthy interactions with God and other people. This is good news! Creating new healthy patterns is one of the goals of this workbook.]



**Why do we tend to repeat the past?** There are several reasons. **The most obvious is that it is all we know.** We do what we know or what we are familiar with. For example, often a couple, after they are married and especially after they have a child, disagree about how to handle Christmas celebrations. Each person usually wants to celebrate Christmas “just like my family did when I was growing up,” especially if it is filled with positive memories.

**Another reason for repeating the past is our internal need to reconstruct the past, even if it is destructive and painful.** We are drawn to what feels familiar. A common example of this is the person who had an abusive childhood and then becomes involved with a succession of abusive adult relationships.

*Robert grew up in an abusive home. Whenever someone in his family messed up in some way, a family member would say, “I pulled a Robert.” As an adult, Robert worked a number of jobs where other people took advantage of him. For a long time it seemed as though there must be a lot of abusive bosses and co-workers in the work force and that Robert seemed to find all of them. Then it became clear that Robert was the cause of his own problems. When asked if everyone at work was being treated the way he was, he answered, “No.” When asked, “Why not?”, his answer was, “Because they wouldn’t take it.” At that point it became clear to Robert that he was the person who had the problem. He acted in a way that invited people to take advantage of him, thus re-creating his family of origin.*

**One example of repeating the past is that people sometimes tend to marry someone like their parents.** Most often it is someone like the parent of the opposite sex. While their spouse may not be exactly like the parent, there are usually some powerful similarities. For instance, if a woman has an emotionally distant father, she will often marry an emotionally distant man. If a man has a mother who did everything for him, he will often marry a woman who does everything for him.

**Another powerful motive for recreating the past is to “fix it this time” or “make it right.”** A person thinks, either consciously or unconsciously, “If I just had it to do over again, I would do it differently and it would come out right.” This doesn’t usually work and probably won’t lead to healthy relationships.

*Samantha was perpetually angry at her husband. She was overly sensitive in certain areas and reacted to those areas out of proportion to reality. Without realizing it, she was projecting things that her father had done to her onto her husband. Her husband was actually not like her father at all, but she would recall scenarios in her mind from the*

*past, and then read them into situations with her husband. For instance, her father had affairs and eventually abandoned the family for another woman. Every time her husband had an opportunity to be around another woman, her mind would imagine him having an affair with that woman. She accused him of things that had no basis in reality. She was trying to work out her feelings towards her father by expressing them towards her husband and his imagined activities. She was unknowingly trying to “fix” her past.*

Determining ways we were influenced by our families, being able to discern if those ways were healthy or unhealthy and noticing how these things are affecting us today is important. We tend to take what has been handed down to us from our grandparents and parents and, in turn, hand it down to our children and grandchildren. The Scriptures say that the sins of the parents are handed down to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5). Now, we have the opportunity to help shape future generations for good and for bad. **It is important that the unhealthy behaviors in our families end in this generation and that they are no longer passed along.** This takes work, but it is time well spent. This workbook will help us begin this process.

3. List significant relationships (friends, family and romantic relationships) you have had. Begin with childhood relationships and end with relationships you have currently. This is called a “relationship inventory.”

4. Briefly describe some of the relational patterns in those relationships. Some examples of these are:
  - A person is abused as a child and continues to have abusive relationships as an adult
  - Most relationships are with one sex
  - Most relationships end in a similar way
  - A person always feels less than others
  - A person can't say no to others
  
5. Note and discuss similarities between the relationships you had in your family of origin and any of your other relationships (current and/or past) from the list above.



### Takeaway from Lesson 1:

Our childhood has had a profound impact on how we think, feel and act in the present. Sometimes we aren't even aware of the impact. It is important to understand our past so that we will make good decisions and have good relationships in the present. Make sure you read the Processing Tip for this lesson to get an overview of the healing process.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.  
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be  
burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

(Galatians 5:1)



## Connecting with God

Refer to *Connecting With God* (Addendum I) on page 187. Begin your time of sharing with God and listening for His response.



### Note:

This workbook is focused in large part on our childhood experiences. The people who took care of us and had authority over us when we were children have had significant impact on how we perceive ourselves and the world. These people are typically our parents. We recognize, however, that many people have been raised by their grandparents or other relatives and some have been brought up in foster care. Rather than continuously using the phrase “parents (or primary caregivers),” which begins to sound cumbersome, we’ll use the word “parents” with the understanding that this word refers to anyone who regularly cared for you as a child.



### Processing Tip:

When beginning a RYH healing group, the expectation is that you will quickly start to feel better. During the first several weeks of a RYH group, you may actually start to feel worse. The reason is that when you begin to process old pain from the past, you are going to feel that pain that you have been stuffing or avoiding.

To process pain, you have to feel it.

**Don’t give up.** You will eventually start to feel better as you continue through the group.

Look at *The Restorative Process* (Addendum B) on page 169 and notice the visual path of healing from Point A on the left side of the diagram to Point B on the right side. Point A is where you are right now. You are about to enter Stage 1, personal discovery. The dip in the line indicates your path as you discover the impact of your childhood and begin to grieve what you have lost. Before you can start the upward path, you will need to grieve, or “go down into” your pain. It’s important to realize that feeling worse is part of the journey. The takeaway from this diagram, for where you are now, is that you will likely feel worse before you feel better.

For a more detailed explanation of *The Restorative Process*, read the three pages following the diagram.



## Repeating The Past - Lesson One

The goals of this lesson are:

1. to help people identify one or two connections between the past and the present
2. to be introduced to *The Restorative Process* (Addendum B) on page 169

*The Restorative Process* diagram is designed to help us understand the restorative or healing process and can be a helpful visual overview. The one thing people need to understand about *The Restorative Process* from this lesson is that they will likely feel worse before they feel better. There is a written explanation of *The Restorative Process* that is part of Addendum B. This is included so that you or any group member can have a more detailed explanation. *The Restorative Process* is introduced in the **Processing Tip** for this lesson. **Be sure to discuss this Processing Tip with your group.**

Ways this lesson may be difficult for people:

- Becoming overwhelmed by the number of connections they are making with the past
- Being in denial about their family and their past
- Remembering painful things that have long been buried or forgotten

Ways you can reassure people or help them understand better:

- Let them know they do not have to deal with everything at once
- If a person is in denial, gently ask them, as they continue through the workbook, to be open to the possibility that their family and their past could have an influence
- Talk about *The Restorative Process* and offer hope that the process **will** help them feel better with time

For some people, this lesson will be eye opening. They may come to understand that the past has had a tremendous impact on the present.

There will be some people who don't believe they are repeating the past or are affected by the past because they are doing the opposite of what happened to them. In reality, they may be overcompensating for the past. In this case, going to the opposite extreme may not be healthy either. For example, if a person grew up with a parent that was over-controlling and they are now a parent who does not exert enough control over their children, their connection with the past is unhealthy.

If there are time limitations for the group, concentrate on Questions 1, 2 and 5 in the lesson, and be sure everyone has an opportunity to share.

Reminder: Give some of your group members an opportunity to share about their time of ***Connecting With God***.

**Optional Scripture references: Exodus 16:2-3 and Galatians 5:1**

*In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." (Exodus 16:2-3)*

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)*

In Exodus the Israelites have been delivered from bondage in Egypt, but when their faith is tested, they want to go back to their bondage in Egypt because it is familiar and not based on faith. Galatians tells us to go forward in our new freedom in Christ and to not return to the slavery of our sin.



# How To Process Pain

## Lesson Two

# 2

*“Blessed are those who mourn, for they  
will be comforted.”*

*(Matthew 5:4)*

**The purpose of this lesson is to think about ways you have learned to handle emotional pain, and if those ways are unhealthy, to develop new, healthier strategies.** Many of us, when growing up, were not given instructions on how to process our negative emotions. Our parents (or caregivers) sometimes didn't model it well, if at all. Since the goal of this workbook is to feel and process pain from our past, it will be important to have some information and a few tools before starting the journey.

1. Turn to the *Development Of Emotionally-Based Problems (Three Column Chart)* (Addendum A) on page 167 and write down any of the items listed in the first two columns that apply in your life.

The things you listed in Question 1 are either causes or symptoms of emotional pain. Some are things that have been done to you and some are things done by you. Everyone has at least one of these that apply but most of us have quite a few. The purpose of Question 1 is not to discourage or overwhelm you, but to give you a starting point for beginning this journey of processing your pain. Awareness of what your emotional issues are and learning how to process your pain are the first steps to healing.

2. When painful emotions arise in you, how do you respond? Do you talk to someone about them? Are you able to sit quietly and feel them? If not, what do you do?

There are many unhealthy defense mechanisms that we develop throughout the course of our life to keep us from feeling emotional pain. We'll discuss two of the most common ones in this lesson.

**They are:**

- **Engaging in addictive behaviors**
- **Suppressing negative emotions or "stuffing"**

(Sometimes, we stuff our emotions while we are engaging in addictive behaviors.)

**An addictive behavior can be defined as an activity or focus on something "outside" of ourselves that keeps us from dealing with what is going on "inside" of us.**

Addictive behaviors will mood-alter, numb or distract us from our painful feelings. A person can use various agents to do this as long as they accomplish one of those purposes. Many people use more than one addictive behavior or agent depending on what is available or convenient at the time.

We typically think of drugs and alcohol when we think about addictions. However, there are many other things we can use to alter our mood or numb our pain. Some common ones are:

- food
- sex
- work
- gambling
- video games
- social media
- browsing the internet
- spending
- shopping
- exercise
- non-prescription drugs
- risk taking
- health foods
- co-dependent relationships
- unhealthy caregiving
- pornography
- watching TV

Some of these behaviors, e.g., work and exercise, are activities for which we may receive praise. People applaud us for doing them even though they are hurtful to us and to people close to us. When carried to an extreme, any behavior can become out of control or compulsive and be the dominant, hurtful force in our life. If you aren't sure if something is an addictive behavior for you, one test for determining if it is a problem is 1) do you stretch the truth or lie about it and/or 2) do you do it in hiding.

3. From the list above, check any that apply to you. If you have others not listed above, what are they?

**Before we can move toward full heart restoration, we must overcome and stop our addictive behaviors. However, they cannot be totally overcome unless we deal with the deeper issues underlying them.** [Some addictive agents, such as food, cannot be given up altogether, but instead must be controlled or brought into balance.] In most cases, addictive behaviors result from pain that wasn't dealt with when it was experienced and has been buried inside for a long time. When the addictive behavior is stopped, that pain will surface. If we don't have healthy strategies in place to help us process the pain, we will reach for another "painkiller." We may go back to our original addictive behavior or move on to a new one. This lesson will help us develop healthy strategies to replace them.

[When we don't learn healthy ways to deal with our unprocessed childhood pain, our addictive behaviors can become worse. We may need increasingly stronger methods, such as drugs and alcohol, so as to not feel our pain. Addictions to drugs and alcohol are serious and can be life threatening. Research has shown that if these addictions are engaged in for long periods of time they can cause irreversible changes in our brain. Serious drug and alcohol addictions require a holistic treatment approach that includes residential inpatient treatment, group and individual therapy, a 12-step program, and possibly medication. A person recovering from the brain disease of drug or alcohol addiction will need to address the root problems that caused the addiction and will also need the support of a healthy community. The church is uniquely positioned to be a healthy community that helps people who are healing from serious addictions. A person will need specialized help with a drug or alcohol addiction before they can begin to process their pain.]

**Stuffing (hiding) or suppressing (choosing not to acknowledge) negative emotions was a common occurrence in many of our families when we were children.**

If our parents were detached from their own emotions, they likely didn't validate ours or teach us an emotional vocabulary. In other words, if our parents hid, denied or avoided their own emotions, it would have been difficult for them to encourage our expression of emotions. As a result, we didn't feel safe enough, or even know how, to express our emotions. We may have even been punished when we tried to express our emotions, especially negative ones.

When we have suppressed our negative emotions for most of our life, we might believe that we'll be totally out of control if we allow ourselves to feel them. The fear of this can be paralyzing and cause us to shut down further.

4. Do you tend to suppress (or stuff) your emotions?

Can you explain the reason that you do or don't?

Name some fears you have about feeling your emotions.

**In order to heal, we have to feel our pain by choosing to stay in it, express it to others and have it validated by them. We then need to be able to make meaning out of it. This is what is meant by “processing our pain.” It is sometimes a slow process, but it is necessary for healthy maturity.**

[Making meaning is not necessarily about making sense out of our pain. There are some things we will just never understand. Making meaning out of our pain is about creating the space and capacity to now be able to pursue things that really matter to us. Those things will in turn put meaning and purpose back into our lives.]

**Processing pain is not a solitary activity; it is difficult to heal alone.** To have our pain validated and make meaning out of it, we need God and we need safe people. God designed us that way.

**Three healthy ways of learning to tolerate pain and thereby process it are:**

- **Taking our pain to God**
- **Talking to safe people**
- **Learning and practicing self-calming behaviors**

(Note: These are not three separate options. We'll learn how to use all three together in this workbook.)

**It is important to bring God into your pain and ask Him for help in healing it.** God cares about your pain and His desire is for you to be restored. When we pray and ask God for help, He is pleased to be part of our emotional healing process.

**Note:** There is a reminder at the end of every lesson to reference *Connecting With God* (Addendum I). Using this exercise is a good place to start the practice of bringing your pain to God and beginning to receive His healing.

*Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request. (1 Chronicles 4:10)*

**It is also important to develop a support system of safe people.** This actually involves God too, because He brings safe people into our lives to help us. We need to learn how to recognize safe people and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Refer to *Safe Support System* (Addendum E) on page 179, and carefully read through it. **Spend a few minutes completing the exercise at the end of the addendum.**

5. From the exercise you just completed, list the safe, supportive people in your life with whom you could share your pain. (If you don't have any safe people in your life, it will be important to seek some. Often the people in your RYH group become your safe people.)

6. What thoughts do you have about being vulnerable (sharing your pain) with other people?

**Learning self-calming behaviors (or relaxation techniques) is a helpful tool as you heal from emotional pain.** Because we can only handle staying in any strong emotion for a limited period of time, it is important for us to learn how to shift. We need to feel our pain for a while and then calm ourselves down. Typically, self-calming behavior will involve engaging one or more of our senses, i.e., touch, smell, sound, sight or taste. Babies and young children sometimes use their blankets or stuffed animals to calm themselves, engaging their sense of touch.

Some examples of self-calming activities for adults are going for a walk or a run, landscaping, woodworking, reading a Psalm, admiring the beauty and peacefulness of nature, taking a nap, watching a movie or reading a book, taking a warm bath or a hot shower, listening to music, playing with your pet or just being outside.

**While addictive behaviors or agents numb our pain, self-calming strategies are used to calm us after we have actually felt our pain.**

7. List any self-calming strategies you already have. If you don't have any, what are some you could implement in your life?

**In order to heal emotionally, a person needs to be willing to do whatever it takes to get better.** To deal with emotional pain, we need to work through it step by step and the first step is to acknowledge it. For many of us, this is either something we never learned how to do, or it is scary to do. We may feel as if our whole life will spin out of control if we let our feelings of pain surface.

8. List some of the feelings you have as you begin this journey of processing the pain in your life. Look at the *Feelings Wheel* (Addendum D) on page 177.

No one can take responsibility for your life but you. However, God's strength and grace are available to help and wise people who act as guides can also play a significant role. Your RYH group has committed to each other to walk through the process together.



### Takeaway from Lesson 2:

If we don't feel our negative emotions (pain), they will continue to cause us problems. This lesson has given us some tools to begin the process of feeling them. They are 1) taking our pain to God, 2) talking to safe people and 3) calming ourselves.

*“He will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
There will be no more death or mourning or  
crying or pain, for the old order of things has  
passed away.”*

*(Revelation 21:4)*



## Connecting with God

Refer to *Connecting With God* (Addendum I) on page 187. Begin your time of sharing with God and listening for His response.



## Listening Skill:

Approximately two-thirds of all communication is non-verbal. Non-verbal language includes body movements, facial expressions and tone of voice. It may be conscious or you might not be aware of it. Train yourself to “listen” with your eyes as well as your ears to understand what the other person is saying.

Notes:



## How To Process Pain - Lesson Two

The goals of this lesson are:

1. to help people recognize unhealthy ways they might currently be dealing with pain
2. to give them some strategies to process pain in a healthy way
3. to introduce them to two helpful tools, *Development Of Emotionally-Based Problems (Three Column Chart)* (Addendum A) and *Safe Support System* (Addendum E)

Since a major portion of the workbook will be spent discovering past pain and grieving it, it will be important for people to have information and tools to help them begin to process their pain.

In this lesson we discuss two common unhealthy defense mechanisms (ways that people handle their pain), **addictive behaviors and suppression of negative emotions**. There are many other unhealthy defense mechanisms, but a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this lesson. There is an entire lesson in the RYH *Understanding Emotions* workbook devoted to "Understanding Our Defenses."

Addictions are common in our culture, and yet, many people are in denial about their addictive behaviors. They often don't realize they are relying on addictive behaviors to avoid pain. Even if people recognize their addictive behavior patterns, talking about them can be embarrassing. No one wants to admit they have addictions. Some addictions are particularly difficult to talk about, such as a sexual/pornography addiction (which is widespread, due in part, to the Internet). It is helpful if you, as the leader, can share briefly about your struggles, if you have them, in the area of addictive behaviors. (Most of us will have some unhealthy outside focus, even if it is not a full-blown or destructive addiction.)

It's important that people in the group understand how to deal with painful emotions in healthy ways, so we discuss three strategies in this lesson. They are 1) sharing our pain with God, 2) sharing our pain with safe people and 3) calming ourselves. These strategies work together; they are not stand-alone strategies.

In Question 5, it will be important to help people in your group think through the *Safe Support System* tool and how it applies to their life.

Reminders:

- Give some of your group members an opportunity to share about their time of ***Connecting With God***.
- Read aloud or discuss together the Processing Tip or Listening Skill for this lesson.

**Optional Scripture references: Isaiah 61:1-3 and Psalm 13:1-6**

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (Isaiah 61:1-3a)*

*How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise for he has been good to me. (Psalm 13:1-6)*



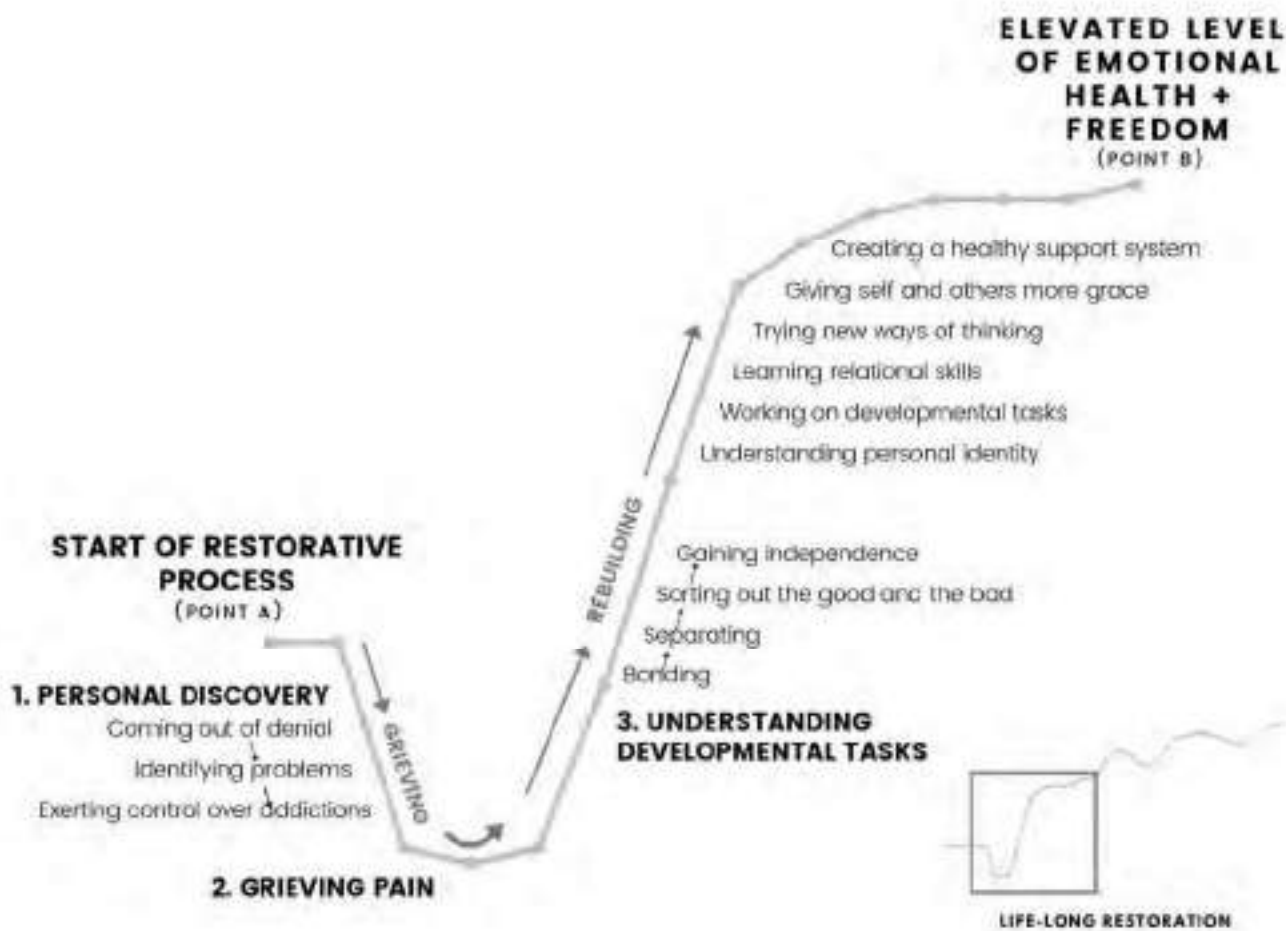
# DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONALLY-BASED PROBLEMS (Three Column Chart)

CHILDHOOD	ADULTHOOD	ADULTHOOD
<p><b>SOME CAUSES OF CHILDHOOD PAIN</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active abuse</li> <li>Neglect (unmet needs)</li> <li>Child's poor choices and sinful responses</li> <li>Personality of the child</li> <li>Role in the family</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p><b>RESULTS OF NOT BEING ABLE TO PROCESS PAIN</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adaptation to survive               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addictive behaviors</li> <li>Defense mechanisms</li> </ol> </li> <li>Suppression of negative emotions</li> <li>Development of false belief systems</li> <li>Development of a shame-based identity</li> </ol>	<p><b>EXAMPLES OF ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN ADULTHOOD</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mounting on top of the unprocessed childhood pain, making the pain worse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relational problems</li> <li>Poor decision-making</li> <li>Full-blown addictions</li> <li>Needs still not met</li> <li>Abusive relationships</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Numb or primarily negative feelings</li> <li>Poor relationship with God</li> <li>Feeling out of control</li> </ol>	<p><b>ASPECTS OF THE RESTORATIVE PROCESS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End abusive relationships</li> <li>Control addictions</li> <li>Learn to properly view and express emotions</li> <li>Grieve pain and losses</li> <li>Understand needs and meet them appropriately</li> <li>Learn to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy thinking and behavior</li> <li>Develop a healthy view of self, the world and God</li> <li>Foster healthy relationships and a healthy support system</li> <li>Learn to grow spiritually</li> </ol>



# THE RESTORATIVE PROCESS

*The healing process might initially feel worse before it feels better. This is normal. But keep going! There is freedom and life on the other side.*



# UNDERSTANDING THE RESTORATIVE PROCESS

## Explanation of *The Restorative Process* diagram

No one is restored in exactly the same way, because no one has exactly the same issues in life. However, there is a general process that most people's restoration follows, and it occurs in three stages.

### **Stage 1: Personal Discovery** - (left side of *The Restorative Process* diagram)

A person beginning the restorative process encounters a steep learning curve. Many people do not understand how their present struggles are affected by their past and therefore don't see the importance of dealing with their past. However, since we are a product of our past, we must deal with it in order to remove its negative effect on the present. The initial personal discovery stage of restoration allows people to assess their childhoods and their past relationships, and how they have been affected by them.

For some people, **denial** will be a stumbling block for restoration. People in denial do not want to acknowledge their struggles or their dysfunctional and sinful manner of living. Their families may have been unhealthy, but they do not want to admit this or dishonor the family by telling family secrets. Yet, the Bible tells us that the truth will set us free. It is imperative that people learn to admit to themselves and a few safe people the truth about their lives and about their families. People who cannot tell themselves the truth are in denial, and restoration does not begin until they start to break out of it.

For other people, **suppression of emotions** will be a stumbling block. They may feel mildly depressed, numb, or have difficulty even knowing what they are feeling. As they begin to explore their life history and its effect, especially if it was a negative effect, they may begin to feel sad about what has happened. Feeling sad is normal and won't last forever.

In Stage 1 of restoration, people need to experience several things:

- They need to learn the general ways the past can affect the present.
- They need to begin to understand family systems and the ways that dysfunctional families affect children.
- They need to begin to discover some of the specific ways their past, especially their family of origin, is affecting their present.
- They need to begin to identify some of the unhealthy thinking and behavior patterns in their lives and how these are affecting them.

- They need to start the grieving process as they begin to realize what they have lost.

## **Stage 2: Grieving Pain** - (lowest point of *The Restorative Process* diagram)

In the second stage of the restorative process, people learn how to deal with their emotions in the present, release their buried emotions (grieving), and learn from their past. For most people, emotional problems begin because they do not know how to deal with their negative emotions. If people don't learn how to deal with emotions in a godly manner, they will continue to get worse and damage others, especially their children.

Frequently, there is confusion in the church about emotions. Many churches teach incorrect views of negative emotions and compound this by fostering a culture that encourages everyone to always be on their best behavior and keep their struggles private. People need to learn how to get in touch with their full range of emotions and to learn the scriptural truths about emotions and their proper expression. This information will allow a person to move towards emotional and spiritual health. The RYH workbook *Understanding Emotions* helps people gain a better understanding of their emotions and learn healthy ways to express them.

In the restorative process, people learn the importance of grieving the losses experienced in their lives. This grieving process usually begins in Stage 1 as people begin to identify their losses. In Stage 2, people will learn information about the grieving process and be given time to grieve. The most important goal of Stage 2 is for people to work through at least one unresolved loss from their past. Once that is accomplished, they have the tools to continue processing other losses and to learn from those losses. The RYH workbook *Processing Pain* takes individuals through Stage 1 and helps them begin the work of Stage 2.

As individuals progress through the grieving process, they may experience greater sadness in Stage 2 than they did in Stage 1. It is important for people to understand that this is a normal part of the restorative process.

Although most people have several significant losses in their lives, they can really only process one loss at a time. It will take different people varying amounts of time to complete the second stage, depending on the number and degree of unresolved losses. No one will ever complete this process perfectly or fully, but everyone needs to make significant progress in this area before moving on to Stage 3.

### Stage 3: Completing Developmental Tasks - (right side of *The Restorative Process* diagram)

Both Christian and secular psychologists recognize that there are certain psychosocial tasks (developmental tasks) that should be completed in childhood and young adulthood. However, in this fallen world, almost no one completes them perfectly. In the third stage of restoration, people will benefit from help as they complete any of the tasks they have not fully realized.

The four developmental tasks are:

- **Bonding** - Bonding refers to connecting with people emotionally, learning to trust trustworthy people, and getting needs met.
- **Separating** - Separating involves developing one's own identity and learning proper boundaries.
- **Sorting out good and bad** - Sorting out good and bad involves gaining a proper biblical view of man that includes our dual nature: capable of sinning and of doing good.
- **Gaining independence** - Gaining independence occurs when people recognize that they have become an adult, are equal to other adults, and have the capacity to manage their own life.

At the beginning of this third stage, people are still grieving their losses. And as they continue in this third stage, they may even discover new losses to grieve that are the result of not completing these tasks. Later in Stage 3, most people come out of their grieving and start to feel better. These people report that they feel a new joy about life, because they have a new appreciation of how God made them as unique individuals.

**Note:** It is important to recognize that the restorative process is not a one-time event that ends in complete healing. This process will occur repeatedly in a person's life.

## RESTORING YOUR HEART GROUP COVENANT AND GUIDELINES

- ✓ I agree to make attendance at all group sessions a top priority. I agree to be on time for each session. I agree to complete assignments between group sessions. I agree to call or text ahead if I will be late to, or absent from, a group session.
- ✓ I agree that all information shared in the group is confidential. Nothing leaves this room. (The only time confidentiality may be broken is if someone threatens suicide or says they are going to harm someone else.) I understand that if I break my commitment to confidentiality, I may be asked to leave the group.
- ✓ I agree to participate in this group. This means talking openly about my thoughts and feelings, honestly reporting my behaviors and exchanging helpful feedback with other group members when appropriate.
- ✓ I agree to listen attentively while others in the group share. I agree to monitor the length of my own sharing time so all group members have opportunity to share. I understand that cell phones are for emergency use only and need to be silenced during group time.
- ✓ I agree to take responsibility for my own feelings and circumstances by using “I.” I will avoid making judgmental statements to group members or offering unsolicited advice.
- ✓ I agree to inform my group leader of any physical and/or emotional problems that may affect my participation, since some group sessions may be emotionally intense.
- ✓ I understand that Restoring Your Heart group leaders are trained facilitators, not mental health professionals. Group activities and processes are not intended to imitate or replace methods used by licensed mental health professionals.
- ✓ I understand that Restoring Your Heart group leaders may occasionally consult with other Restoring Your Heart group leaders or trainers regarding group interactions. This allows the freedom to gain other perspectives and ideas concerning how best to help the group function in a healthy manner. No identifying information is shared in such consultations. All Restoring Your Heart group leaders and trainers are committed to protecting confidentiality.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Copy

## **ADDITIONAL RYH GROUP COVENANT GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE/VIDEO/PHONE RYH GROUPS**

Online groups sometimes require a different approach to maintaining group confidentiality and privacy. Therefore, additional guidelines are required.

### **RYH Group leaders agree to:**

- Utilize encrypted technology platforms to promote the privacy and confidentiality of all group members
- Configure the settings of the webinar platform to **prohibit** all recordings for RYH sessions

### **RYH Group leaders and RYH Group participants agree to:**

- Remember that you are on camera, and try to interact as though you were meeting in person (i.e., maintain eye contact, stay engaged, avoid looking at phones, refrain from snacking/eating/chewing gum, etc.)
- Use a headset or maintain a location with closed doors where conversations cannot be overheard
- Maintain a location with no interruptions or distractions
- Not record RYH online group sessions for any reason
- Not photograph or screen shot their RYH online group session(s) without the expressed permission of all group members

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Copy

Additional on-line tip: Arrange your location so the lighting is in front of you and not behind you.

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Leader's Copy

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## SAFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

### What is a support system?

1. A network of people that help you make it through difficult and bewildering changes involved in healing (restoration).
2. People who give you practical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual support.
  - a. Practical: Do things for you when you can't.
  - b. Intellectual: Give you information you should have received as a child.
  - c. Emotional: Comfort and support you when you are hurting and validate your feelings.
  - d. Spiritual: Give you hope, remind you of God's love and good purpose toward you, and encourage you to trust Him.
3. Additional ways a support system helps:
  - a. Helps you see that you are not alone or the only one struggling.
  - b. Offers love and respect in spite of your struggles.
  - c. Challenges your distorted thinking and inspires you to grow.
  - d. Believes that you were abused and acknowledges the subsequent pain.
  - e. Causes you to feel reassurance, cared for and listened to.

### Biblical ideas about support systems

1. God created two primary support systems.
  - a. The family – not always safe and supportive.
  - b. The church – not everyone is safe and supportive.
2. Jesus' use of small groups for support and discipleship models a safe support system.
3. Genesis 2:18-25 indicates that all people need other people.
4. The New Testament contains many "one another" passages which also indicate our need for other people. (Romans 12:10; Colossians 3:13-16)
5. Galatians 6:1-5 shows the balance between needing the support of others and taking responsibility for ourselves.

# SAFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

(Cont'd)

## Become a safe person

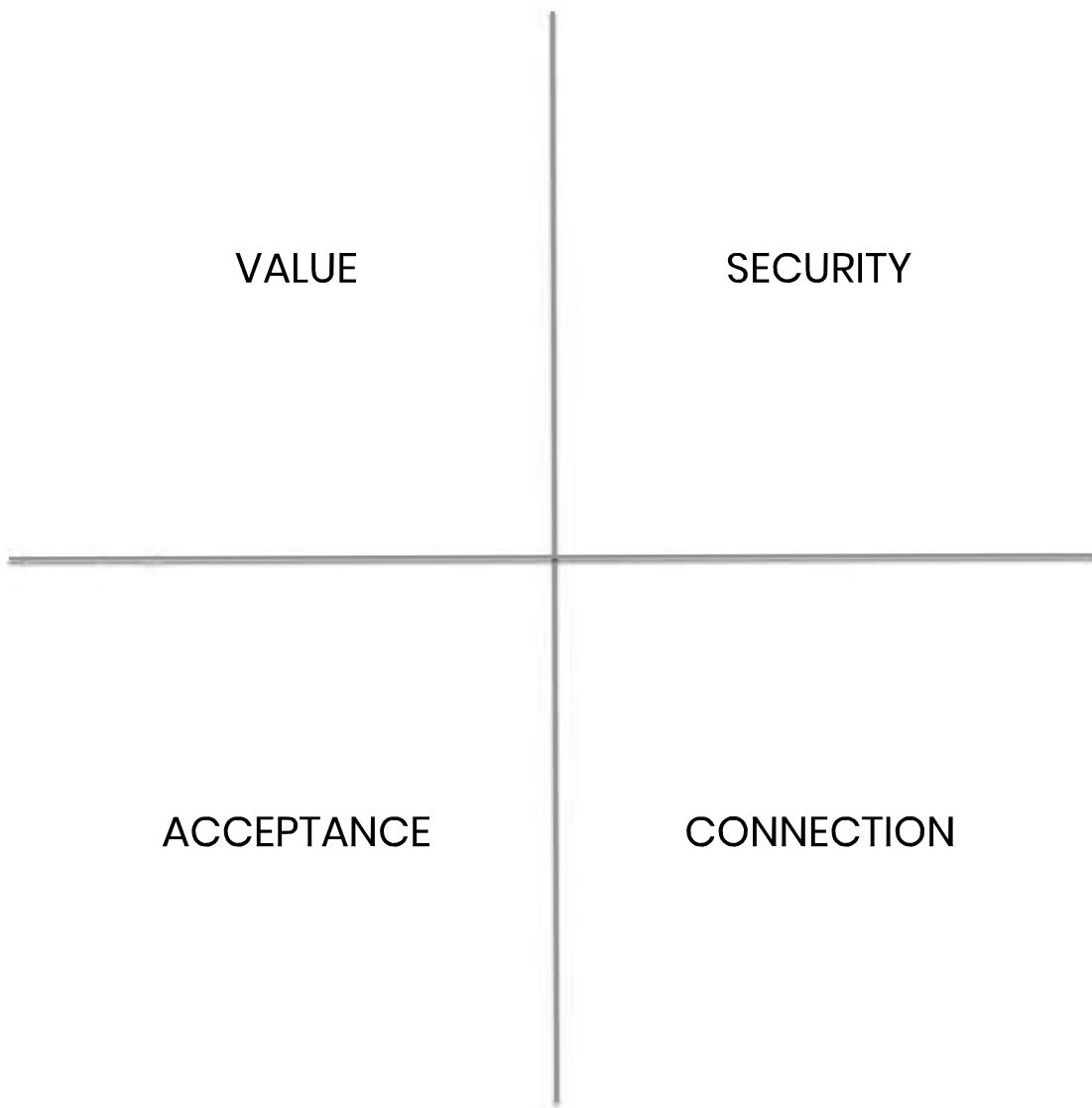
1. Maintain confidentiality. (*Remember to tell people when you want something kept confidential.*)
2. Validate people's feelings and needs.
3. Safe people:
  - a. Listen.
  - b. Validate feelings.
  - c. Only give advice when asked.
  - d. Communicate understanding when able.
  - e. Encourage the person sharing to be honest and open.
  - f. Don't judge or reject.
  - g. Make eye contact.
  - h. Are empathetic.
4. A way to identify safe people is by using the "share, check, share" system. Share a little of what happened to you, or your feelings, and check their response. If they handle your information based on the criteria above, then share a little bit more, etc.

## Exercise

1. List 5-10 people with whom you have regular contact and feel close to.
2. Put a check mark next to the names of supportive people.
3. Circle the names of people who know the things you struggle with.
4. Put a star next to those who directly support your healing.
5. Cross out the names of any who are unsupportive.
6. Put a question mark next to those you are not sure about.
7. Go back to those not crossed out. What qualities do they have that make them seem safe and supportive people?



# NEEDS SQUARE





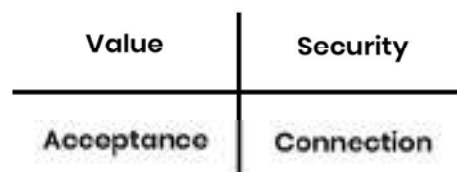
## NEEDS OF THE HEART

*“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man that cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus.”*

Blaise Pascal, French mathematician, philosopher and physicist, 1623-1662

God created us with 4 basic emotional needs.

As He meets these needs, He is able to reveal His love and character to us.



### UNFORTUNATELY:

- We are all born spiritually dead – we do not know how to experience God’s love.
- We have parents or caregivers that are imperfect reflections of God’s love.
- We grow up wounded.

### WE ARE BORN ON A SPIRITUAL BATTLEFIELD:

- God’s enemy wants to destroy what God loves – PEOPLE.
- Specific wounds can target each emotional need.
  - **Abuse** (physical, emotional, sexual or spiritual) – cannot feel **valuable**.
  - **Rejection** – cannot feel **accepted**.
  - **Neglect** – cannot feel **secure**.
  - **Abandonment** (physical or emotional) – cannot feel **complete**.

### SATAN HAS A VERY POWERFUL WEAPON – the LIE:

- He will use half-truths if they are more believable.
- He uses these weapons with great skill; HOWEVER, they are powerless if we recognize them.
- Two of his lies about needs are:
  - God is not enough for you. (He isn’t able to meet your needs.)
  - You are not important to God. (He doesn’t care to meet your needs.)

## NEEDS OF THE HEART

(Cont'd)

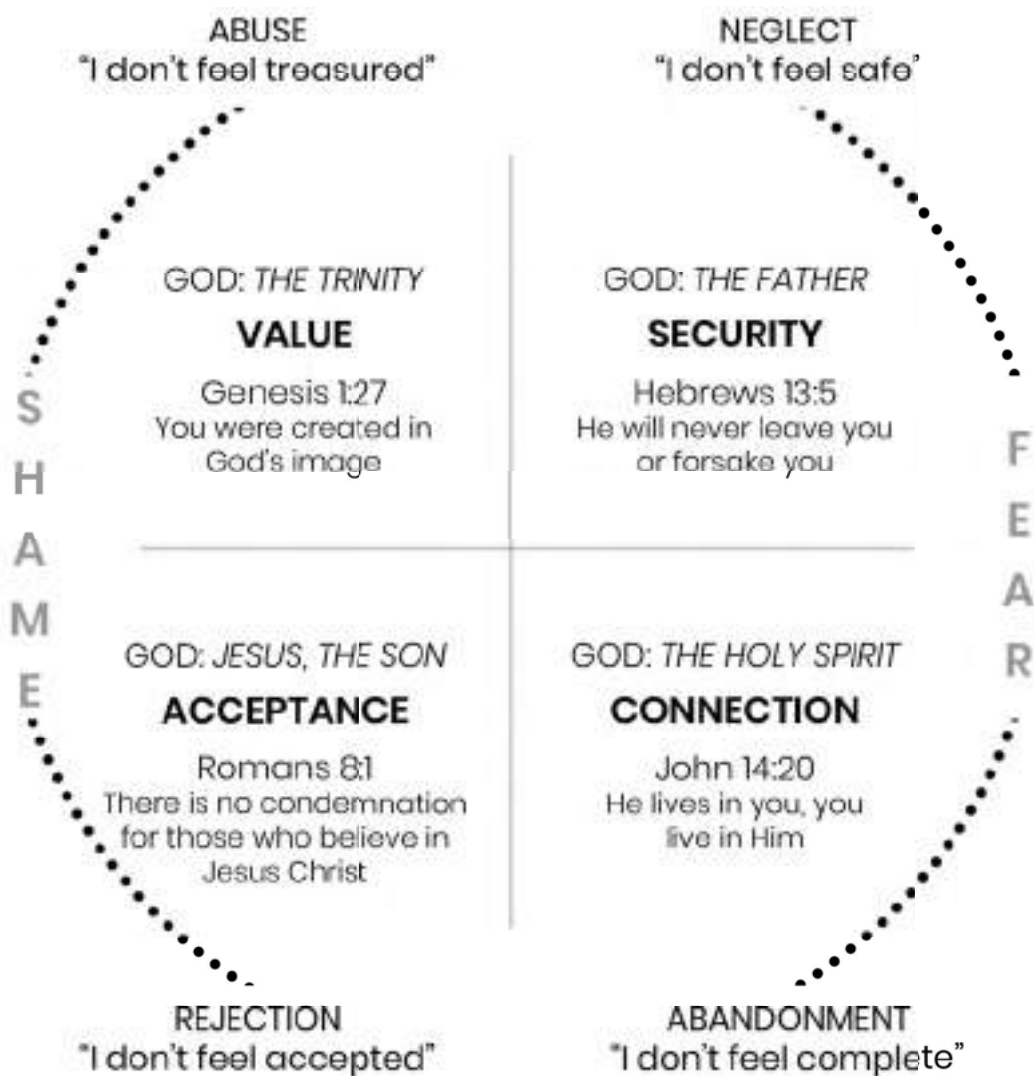
- Those 2 lies create 2 types of messages.
  - SHAME messages – these are usually present if we struggle with needs related to **value** or **acceptance** – (God doesn't care.)
  - FEAR messages – these are usually present if we struggle with needs related to **security** or **connection** – (God isn't sufficient.)

### *WE COME INTO THE WORLD WITH A GOD-SHAPED VACUUM THAT MUST BE FILLED:*

- At an early age we begin to figure out how to get these emotional needs met the best way we can. Frequently, that's on our own.
- Our strategies to meet our needs are based on messages we receive.
- Attempts to meet our own needs often cause us to develop a faulty belief system:
  - About God
  - About ourselves
  - About our situations



## EXPANDED NEEDS SQUARE







## CONNECTING WITH GOD

Because God is our Ultimate Healer, each lesson will end with an opportunity to intentionally interact with Him. This is a way to bring God into your healing process. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit desire to be with you and to help you. They delight in spending time with you.

If you don't have a relationship with God or if He seems distant or disinterested, this could be a way to begin a connection with Him. If you feel uncomfortable sharing with God, try sharing with Him as you would share with a friend you trust.

We encourage you to be honest with God. If you feel angry with Him, or frustrated and confused for the way your life has gone, let Him know. If you are depressed or lonely, share that with Him. If you feel joy and gratefulness, tell Him about that. God wants to hear from you, whether you're sharing the good or the bad.

One way to begin is to close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and think about what you'd like to share with God. There are many ways to begin, and there's no one right way to start communicating with God. (You may address God the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.)

Write down your thoughts to God. Then listen quietly. You may hear a clear response from God, a not-so-clear response or even no response. It is not likely to be an audible voice you hear, you will receive it more like a thought. If you do hear from God, write down what you heard. If you don't hear from Him, try not to become discouraged. His silence doesn't mean He's not listening.

Some suggestions to share with Him are:

- Feelings you experienced during this lesson, both good and bad
- Any personal insight you had
- An experience from your past that you remembered during this lesson
- Your experience of connecting or not connecting with God through the process of completing this lesson

By interacting with God in this way, we hope you will experience Him as a participant in your healing process and thereby strengthen or maybe even begin your relationship with Him.



## **CONNECTING WITH GOD** (Cont'd)

At times, your leader may ask if anyone wishes to share their God connection experience with the group. Sharing of this is voluntary. If you have an especially significant time with God and wish to share, it could be an encouragement to your fellow group members. If you are having trouble connecting with God, it could be an opportunity for your group members to encourage you.

[You may complete this exercise before or after the group discussion of the lesson. You may write out your response at the end of each lesson or keep all your responses for all the lessons together as a journal. This is your connection time to engage with in your way.]