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# The impact of traumatic life events: Reactions and resilience – Part II

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## The Impact of Traumatic Life Events: Reactions and Resilience – Part II

### The Importance of Resilience

A factor that seems to contribute to the reporting of fewer PTSD symptoms is resilience (Bonanno, 2004). Generally, resilience is the ability to learn, grow, adapt and rebound from adversity and angst, while maintaining healthy levels of functioning across time that result in positive feelings and encounters (Bonanno, 2004; Burnett & Wahl, 2015; Everly, Welzant, & Jacobson, 2008; Wagnild & Young, 1993). Furthermore, there are multiple factors or characteristics that comprise resilience (i.e., hardiness, positive emotion, laughter, honesty, tenacity, self-control, and optimism) which is the resultant of various pathways (Bonanno, 2004, 2005; Mancini & Bonanno, 2009; Everly, 2012). For instance, Southwick and Charney (2012) suggested at least 10 resilience coping mechanisms that are effective in managing trauma stress (i.e., realistic optimism, moral compass, religion and spirituality, social support, and physical fitness). Burnett and Wahl (2015) found that resilience may function as a protective buffer between an acute distress state and the chronic state of burnout. Other factors such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level, level of trauma exposure, income change, fewer chronic diseases, absence of depression and substance use, and recent and past life stressors were found to be predictors of resilience (Bonanno, Galea, Buccarelli, & Vlahov, 2007; Myers & Wee, 2005).

### Resilience in Action – Positive Ways to Reduce the Impact of Traumatic Life Events

While sitting on the Mount of Olives with his disciples, Jesus warned them that traumatic life events will continue to occur and intensify prior to his return: “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains” (Gen 24:6-8). In other words, we will continue to experience the “flood-gates of woe” as mentioned earlier in this article. Therefore, exposure to such traumatizing events will continue to have an impact on people of all ages that can manifest in a range

of posttraumatic stress reactions. Although this may seem bleak and pessimistic, the reality is that God has blessed us with the ability to resile in the face of adversity: “I can do all this through Him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:13).

As mention previously, resilience is about being able to adapt to change in the face of adversity. More importantly, resilience is also a choice, which may come more easily to some than to others. Likewise, the majority of people are able to recovery despite encountering a traumatic life event. Regardless, there are several strategies that you can implement to help prevent or reduce the impact of the event, along with building a resilient mindset (*see Table 3*).

Table 3

Positive Ways to Reduce the Impact of Traumatic Life Events

Area	Resilience Behavior
Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain/engage in faith practices</li> <li>• Daily prayer and meditation</li> <li>• Reading and studying religious literature</li> <li>• Finding meaning and purpose</li> </ul>
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept the things you cannot change and focus on the things you can change</li> <li>• Maintain a balanced life (including living one day at a time and enjoying one moment at a time)</li> <li>• Being self-aware (including knowing your limits and accepting that there will be days you are not at 100%)</li> <li>• Daily relaxation and activities that help reduce stress</li> <li>• Regular contact with nature</li> <li>• Engaging in creative expression</li> <li>• Maintaining adequate boundaries (including saying “no” when necessary)</li> </ul>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular exercise</li> <li>• Maintaining a nutritious diet (including no use of alcohol, tobacco or other substances)</li> <li>• Getting adequate sleep</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building social support networks</li> <li>• Helping and caring for others</li> <li>• Seeking help</li> <li>• Civic and service engagement</li> </ul>
Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a sense of humor</li> <li>• Structuring time</li> <li>• Caring for pets</li> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• Talking to others</li> </ul>

In closing, traumatic life events are a reality for now, but not forever. Always remember and take comfort in these two Bible promises: “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer 29:11) and “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:8-9).

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## Resources

### Journey to Wholeness:



A series that can be used in support groups or small groups as a resource to facilitate recovery

of breaking away from harmful practices and strengthening an intimate relationship with God in the Journey to an abundant life. Facilitator guides and participant guides can be purchased in our online store at [www.AdventistRecovery.org](http://www.AdventistRecovery.org)

### Journey to Life Newsletter:



This bi-monthly newsletter is available in English, Spanish, and soon in French as well. Print a free

pdf copy, download, or register to subscribe and receive it via email at [www.AdventistRecovery.org](http://www.AdventistRecovery.org)

### Choose Full Life Resources:



These are posters, calendars/bookmarks, booklets that can be used to share with others 10

Ways to Choose a

Full Life embarking on a Journey to Recovery. For more information and to place an order please go to [www.NADHealthMinistry.org](http://www.NADHealthMinistry.org) and check out the online store. The Choose Full Life theme song is also available for download.

### Unhooked:



This is a 28 part series produced by ARMin and Hope Channel,

highlighting different type of addictive behaviors, real stories, and experts comments on effective treatment. The ultimate goal is to bring hope for recovery in Christ. You can watch the series weekly Hope Channel or direct TV channel 368. The complete DVD with all episodes will be available for purchase in October. For previous episodes and more information go to: [www.hopetv.org/unhooked](http://www.hopetv.org/unhooked) or [www.adventistrecovery.org](http://www.adventistrecovery.org)

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[Editor's note: This is the second part of Dr. Burnett's article. The first part of his article appeared in the September-October issue of the Journey to Life]

## NEWS

On November 17, the US Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy published a landmark report on addictions in America. It reviews the science of substance use, misuse, and disorders. Access the report online at <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov>.

Adventist Recovery Ministries Awareness Day was held at the Cambridge Seventh-day Adventist Church on October 15, 2016. Eddy and Cindy Travis, who lead a Journey to Wholeness group at their church in Concord, NH, shared their testimony of how Christ's power in their own journey of recovery has led them to minister to the needs of others. The Cambridge Church has now started a group that meets every other week, laying the groundwork to begin their own Journey to Wholeness program under the leadership of Marilyn St. Fleur, Curtis Luke, and Leroy Smith.



Vibrant Life has produced an update to their issue on stop smoking for the New Year. Special promotional discount price is available through February 28, 2017. Contact Pacific Press to order, or call 1-877-212-6732.



**One in five deaths in the United States is caused by smoking.**

It's a fact, cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. It's no surprise, then, that 79 percent of smokers want to quit. Fortunately, it is possible to kick the habit—and this special issue of *vibrant life* can help! In these pages, a team of doctors, dietitians, and health educators share their best tips, advice, and encouragement to help people successfully stop smoking.

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## Director's Message



This is without doubt my favorite time of year. The holidays have always been special to my family. I remember the Christmas tree we had one year when I was a young child in India. Decorating, cooking special meals, and spending time with family are all a part of fond memories and on-going traditions. Although we are thankful to God for His blessings all year round, there is something about Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year that deepens my gratitude and enlivens my praise.

But in the midst of my joy, I can't help but remember that the holidays are not so happy to many individuals living right around us. Maybe someone who is reading this newsletter is dreading this time of year. It could just be the seemingly endless list of things to do in preparation, or crowded malls and traffic lanes, or over-commercialization. Or perhaps someone does not have happy childhood memories they can hang onto. Perhaps the loneliness they experience seems more marked this time of year. Some still feel caught in abusive or hurtful lifestyles or relationships, and the holidays don't give any hope of freedom.

And it is for that very reason why I believe the holidays are so important. When the angel came to comfort and instruct Joseph about Mary's expected Child, he says "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And that is the message that we should continue to compassionately share with everyone.

Regardless of anyone's personal faith or convictions, they are being bombarded with sights and sounds of the holidays. Why not also share with them the message of hope of deliverance from captivity to addictions? Because the Deliverer has come, and is coming again.

I pray that you and I will have an opportunity this Season to share the song of Zion:

When the Lord restored the captives of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with singing.  
Then they said among the nations,  
"The Lord has done great things for them."  
The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are glad.  
Restore our captives, O Lord...

*Psalm 126:1-4*



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