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When Violence is in Our Homes

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When Violence is in Our Homes

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence (Gen 6:11 NIV).

Violence destroys families, harming each member in different ways. Today, domestic violence (DV) occurs in families inside and outside of the church at similar rates. In a study of over 1,000 Adventists, Dr. Drumm found that 33 percent of members reported experiencing physical violence, 44 percent experienced emotional abuse and 23 percent experienced sexual abuse. In my own study of over 100 female, Hispanic victims of DV, 44 percent experienced physical violence, 44 percent experienced emotional abuse and 23 percent experienced sexual abuse. In a study of over 1,000 Adventists, Dr. McBride, Duane; Hopkins, Gary; Thayer, Jerome; Popescu, Jonathan. Her research and advocacy revolve around the intersections of religion and domestic violence.

Older kids also may have problems learning in school and may experience a lot of headaches and stomachaches. Teenagers can display more behavioral problems, truancy, low self-esteem and risky behaviors including drug use, unprotected sex and depression. In their lifetime, children who witness violence growing up are also at greater risk of developing obesity, diabetes and heart disease (womenshealth.gov).

There is not a lot of research on how abuse harms the abuser, but we know they themselves get hurt in the process. Proverbs 3:31 says, Do not envy a man of violence, and do not choose any of his ways. Violence is not of God. Some abusers experienced violence growing up, which has already harmed them. Genetic differences were recently found in some people who commit violent crimes (goodtherapy.org). Science doesn’t know enough yet about all of the consequences of violence in aggressors, but we know that a God of love did not design us to hurt others or ourselves.

Abuse can be prevented, and those who have been hurt can get better. To raise awareness, teach church leaders and members how to prevent and intervene in cases of abuse, the NAD is hosting the free, live-streamed, 2019 summit on abuse on September 4 (September 5 in Spanish). Register at enditnow northamerica.org and encourage others to participate. Together, we can work to end the violence and restore peace in our families and homes as God intended.

Hope in Despair

As a therapist and a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, I believe all the parts of an individual are interconnected and dependent on every other part.

What I mean by this is the number of hours of sleep we get and how and what we eat and drink on a daily basis are connected to how we treat our partner. Each of these are integrally connected to the amount and the quality of time that we spend communing with our Creator. Our ability to exercise and whether or not we feel like exercising is quite likely directly connected to all of the above-mentioned parts of us.

The importance of each one of these things is not new to us, but perhaps the degree that they are connected and even dependent on each other might be a new way to conceptualize how we treat ourselves. Think of the curves of a Slinky. Each curve is its own wave, but each is interdependent on all the other waves. When one wave goes down, the rest follow. When one goes up... You get the idea.

How much sleep we get might determine the choices we make regarding food and drink consumption, getting up to get to work on time and whether we have energy enough to motivate ourselves to exercise.

If you feel you’re not performing in certain areas to the maximum of your potential, check the areas listed above to see if they are balanced and are being given adequate attention. It is important to remember that when one area is out of balance, it will pull the others out of balance. Take a moment to ask yourself which area is the most out of balance and choose one thing that might help you improve in that area. For example, if it has been a while since you’ve done physical activity, commit to going for a 10-minute walk two different days next week.

When I discuss this topic with my clients or students, they usually respond with, “I’m too busy. I don’t have time.” This excuse is an attempt by your brain to resist change. Change is hard and not always welcomed by our brain, which tends to crave what it knows and resist what it doesn’t know. My recommendation is to always choose a small change that is sustainable. Once you have that small change incorporated into your life, increase the frequency or duration by another small step and practice that.

Everyone is busy! It’s become a hallmark of our society. If we don’t focus on improving our quality of life, we will be spending more of our time with medical interventions.

It is important to note that this article is not intended to take the place of medical advice or to diminish the effects of mental or personality disorders.

Melissa Ponce-Rodas is an assistant professor of Psychology at Andrews University. She and her husband, Segundo, have twin boys, Samuel and Jonathan. Their research and advocacy revolve around the intersections of religion and domestic violence.

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When one goes up... You get the idea.