

Handling Family Trauma

What is trauma?

Traumas are frightening, often life-threatening, or violent events that can happen to any or all members of the family. Traumas can cause traumatic stress responses in family members with consequences that ripple through family relationships and impede optimal family functioning. Families living in unsafe or traumatic circumstances often experience multiple traumas and have fewer resources needed for stability and recovery.

In 2 Samuel 13, we read of the beginning of extensive trauma in the family. The manipulation and abuse we've learned about over the last few weeks in this, Welcome Home Family teaching series, is displayed in the lives of King David and his children. The Trauma read about here is not uncommon in today's society. This coupled with the stressors of the current pandemic and the uncertainty it brings, could seem too much to bear. Thank God for Jesus! He came that we might have life and life more abundantly (John 10:10.) So together let's study the effects of trauma on the family of King David and better ways we can handle trauma.

How did trauma impact this family?

The epicenter and first victim is Tamar. In the story of Tamar the pebble that hits the water is Amnon's uncontrolled lust. This lust led to the manipulation and rape of Tamar.

Like ripples in a pond each element effects the next. Absalom becomes the first ripple. Angered by the treatment of his sister unforgiveness, resentment, and rage begin to set into his heart.

The next ripple would be the perceived inactivity of his father the King. Absalom expected his father to avenge his sister's honor and when this doesn't take place His disappointment in his father begins. By the end of this story it becomes full blown hatred.

How can we handle family trauma better?

Romans 8:35, 38-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[b] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. Take time for prayer by yourself, with family and friends.

Pay proper attention to the spiritual implications of your sufferings. Don't be afraid to ask the hard questions, like "How could a loving God allow this to happen?" or "What sense does this make in the larger scheme of things?" Express your feelings honestly to God. Share them with

those who are wrestling with these issues alongside you. Don't get discouraged if you don't get the answers you're seeking. The Lord hasn't guaranteed that all of our doubts will be resolved. But He *does* promise to stand beside us through thick and thin (Hebrews 13:5). Remember the words of the apostle Paul:

1 Peter 3:10, 12

10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

2. Express honest emotion by journaling or talking with someone you can trust.

Whether in a group setting or a one-on-one relationship, you need to communicate your feelings. If you are a Christian, it's particularly important to maintain connections with friends who share your faith. Be open about your emotions but don't obsess over them. In some cases too much talk can revive unwanted memories and retrigger the trauma. Feel the freedom to back off for a time if you need to.

Psalms 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

3. Get in touch with your feelings and make a conscious decision to acknowledge your pain.

Up to this point you've probably been focusing on survival. In many ways it would be easier to remain in that "task-oriented" frame of mind. Moving forward means facing the implications of your loss. But you need to resist the temptation to get stuck in that mode. Give yourself permission to grieve. This is particularly important if you have a spouse and children who are looking to you for guidance and support. You won't be able to help them until you've begun to experience the healing process for yourself.

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

4. Give yourself time for God to heal you.

Prepare the family members to go through a period of stress and cut back on unnecessary demands to conserve everyone's energy. Don't just focus on the problems. Make free time to be together and relax, or else the stress will not subside.

Keep communicating. Make sure each family member lets the others know what is going on for them and how to help them. Keep track of your family's progress in recovery and what has been achieved. Don't just keep thinking about what is still to be done. Stay positive and encouraging, even if at times, everyone needs to talk about their fears and worries. Remind yourself that families get through the hard times and are often stronger.

"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind." ~ [Psalms 107:19-21](#)