

*CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL ASSISTANTS, SFO - OCEANIA*

c/- Star of the Sea Friary  
45 Victoria St, Waverley NSW  
Australia 2024

Phone:(61-2) 9369 9361  
Fax: (61-2) 9389 4067  
E-mail:cschafer@franciscans.org.au

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***Monthly Spiritual Message***

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**OUR EMOTIONAL LIFE**

Every time that we are disturbed emotionally, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are out of order, too.

Peace of mind is the natural result of successfully adjusting to reality. A healthy mind has its own means of keeping order and of quickly restoring order if order is lost. It has its own built-in ways of coping.

How do we cope habitually, and in times of emotional stress? Which tranquillizers do we use?

**1. Trust in God:**

The best tranquillizer is the thought and awareness of the presence and power of God who loves us. There are extreme situations in life which even the most healthy and courageous of people have to acknowledge as being beyond their human abilities to cope with. But it is not only in times of severe stress that God is our mainstay. The more mature we are, the more do we realize habitually that God, his presence and loving Providence, is the continuous source of our life and happiness. Daily prayer and reflection ensure our awareness of God's loving care of us.

**2. Our Personal Resources:**

God is the source of our personal resources, too, since every good gift comes from God. Our Creator has built into our human nature a way of coping with emotional stress, namely, five habits of maturity: love, understanding, acceptance, confidence and control.

The mature person doesn't possess these powers as self-centred attitudes or as the results of his own performance. We are not intended to rely solely or mainly on ourselves. These habits of mind are always recognized as gifts of God, and are kept open to God at their inmost depth, and are constantly renewed by our personal life of prayer. We ask God to give them to us as gifts. We express our gratitude for a moderate endowment of them.

Maturity is the stability and resourcefulness of one whose personal growth measures up to the demands of his or her life and to living in an imperfect world. Life is complex, but we are endowed with reason to find meaning and to cope with life's ups and downs. So we need to develop our understanding, and to enlighten it by God's gift of faith. Faith-understanding is natural understanding enlightened by supernatural faith.

Life involves the needs and feelings of those about us, and we are gifted with the capacity to love, to spend ourselves for the good of others. So we need to develop our ability to love and allow God to love in us.

An objective understanding of life needs love, to enable us to appreciate people and to have compassion on them. Both understanding and love are realized in practice through acceptance, confidence and self-control.

Acceptance is the strength to accept gratefully our God-given share of natural gifts and circumstantial blessings, and the strength to endure calmly the evils of life that we cannot change, as well as our personal limitations and circumstantial burdens.

Confidence is the strength to accentuate what is good in ourselves and in others, and to live above evils and not to be disheartened by them, and the strength to change things for the better where we can, and to work for the victory of life, love, and happiness, and all things positive.

Control is the strength to discipline our feelings so as to keep order in our sphere of influence, which is that part of life entrusted to us, and not to be led to betray love by self-centred desire or fear.

### **3. Help of Friends**

A crucial element in mental health is the degree of openness and communion that we have with our fellow men and women. This determines whether we as persons will prosper or perish. We were made for fellowship. When we violate our human connectedness, we die. Neither theology nor psychoanalysis will save us. It is only as the alienated, lonely sinful individual becomes reconciled and reintegrated with other persons that he finds his own soul and experiences a sense of peace as he looks out into the universe and into eternity.

If we are ever to feel emotionally secure, we must put our lives on a give-and-take basis. We have to develop the sense of being in partnership or brotherhood with all those around us. We need to give constantly of ourselves without demanding repayment. When we persistently do this, we gradually find that people are attracted to us as never before, and even if they fail us, we can be understanding and not too seriously affected.

### **4. Professional help**

When a person's trust in God, personal resources and the help of friends prove inadequate to cope with emotional stress, he or she may need to have recourse to an expert or a specialist in a particular field.

We expect a priest to be an expert in the spiritual life and to be able to counsel a person whose conscience is stressed. But the priest may have to refer the person to a medical doctor or to a psychiatrist, depending on the nature of the stress and its consequences and the appropriate way to cope with them.

It may be enough for the doctor to prescribe physical exercise, sufficient sleep, or time out of work. Or he may have to prescribe chemical means. In the extreme, a psychiatrist may have to prescribe compulsory restraint on the part of a civil authority.

It is to be hoped that by taking ordinary means to cope with stress, we will be spared any serious consequences. The essence of all growth is a willingness to change for the better and then an unremitting willingness to shoulder whatever responsibility this entails.

Carl Schafer OFM

National Assistant SFO – Oceania

**Regional Assistants are requested to distribute this Monthly Message to all local Assistants of our Order in the Regional Fraternity.**