

# 7 Tips for Relief When You're Drowning in Parenting Pain

Summer is here. I live in Florida, an hour from the beach. There's danger in the waters, and it's not always from a sea creature. We hear tragic reports of drownings from a different kind of danger: rip currents. As I thought about this, I realized something: parents of troubled teens or adults (due to alcohol or drugs, jail, mental illness, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, homosexual desires and so on) feel like they're caught in a rip current.

I've been there. I know. We feel as though we're drowning—emotionally, mentally and spiritually. We need the help of a special kind of lifeguard—a heavenly one!

I did a little research and discovered that rip currents are strong channels of water that flow out to sea from near the shore at a dangerous rate of speed. The average rip travels one to two feet per second and up to eight feet per second. In a moment, they can drag an unsuspecting swimmer away from the safety of shallow waters.

People who get caught in rips tend to panic and drown from exhaustion because they fight against the fast-moving current. Even in waist deep water, they can be dragged out where they can't stand. Weak swimmers without a flotation device, or who don't know what to do, are in danger of losing their lives.

Like rip currents, our children's troubles can sneak up and yank our feet out from under us. If we aren't strong enough or don't know what to do, we'll be dragged out where we're in over our heads. We'll find ourselves drowning in fear, guilt, resentment, enabling and more.

## **We Were Ripped**

My husband and I did our best to raise our kids the right way; to give them a godly foundation and a healthy home life. We thought we were in safe waters. But we found ourselves caught in a situation we couldn't get out of. We had no idea how to make our way back to safety. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't get there. Emotional, physical and spiritual exhaustion set in. We were *ripped*.

*How can you escape from a rip current?* Not by doing what feels right in the panic of the moment—trying to swim back to shore against the rip. Swimmers don't get pulled under in these currents, they get carried out to deep waters where there's no foothold. The key to survival is to know what to do and be able to do it: First, always swim where there's a lifeguard on duty. This could save your life! Stay calm and swim parallel to the shore until you're outside the current. Then you can make your way toward shallow water. Hopefully, a lifeguard will notice you're in distress and come save you.

## **7 Ways to Find Relief**

Are you caught in a parenting rip current with your child? Have you lost your footing? Are you in a depleted and exhausted condition? I found relief when I did these seven things:

1. I quit fighting against what was happening.
2. I got past the shock and denial of the situation.
3. I faced my fears.
4. I accepted there was a problem I couldn't handle.
5. I stopped trying to rescue my daughter or force her to change.
6. I surrendered my daughter back to God.
7. I let go and let God work.

I needed the help of a heavenly lifeguard. With Him, I could do these things and survive. I regained my foothold and found

peace. My hopeless-looking situation no longer had control over me.

*By His power, I came out of the grip of the rip.*

## **The Help We Need**

This wasn't easy. I had to learn to trust God more with my child until I could lean back in His strong arms, like a heavenly lifeguard. This was where I found freedom from the effects of the rip current. This was how I made my way back to shore, with His wisdom and strength, not mine.

Have you learned to lean back in the Father's arms and trust Him to hold you up in deep waters? Have you stopped fighting against what's happening, come out of denial and faced your fears? Have you accepted there's a problem you can't solve? Have you let go and surrendered your child back to God?

**If you're in need of rescue**, He's always on duty, ready to dive in and help you in your time of need. He'll come to your aid on the wings of the wind. You're never beyond His reach. He knows your need, and when you call on His name, He'll rescue you. Remember, rescue may not look like you expected, but I promise you, He *will* come.

This Bible verse has encouraged me many times: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath you are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27).

Thank you, God. Thank you that you promise to come to my rescue.

Find comfort as you listen to the song, Rescue. {eo}

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*This article originally appeared at .*