

Why Childhood Trauma Doesn't Have to Cripple Even Christians Anymore

Through her practice, licensed Christian counselor Jody Mitchell LCPC (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor) says she encounters trauma daily in many forms in her patients. Anger, rage, oppression, relationship problems, anxiety—she's seen it all in her years of counseling.

And it's not just limited to non-believers. Trauma strikes Christians as well, who find it difficult to find peace and joy in their lives. But Mitchell says there is hope for those longing to escape the enemy's wrath and his plan to keep them in a constant state of fear, depression and anxiety. They need reassurance that they can be made whole and that's the premise of Mitchell's kingdom duty as a counselor at Crossroads Counseling and Care Center in Crest Hill, Illinois.

Trauma has always been an emotional issue for many people throughout their entire lives. And with what has taken place in America over the past few months and years—most specifically with COVID-19—it seems the word trauma has become a bigger part of our culture than ever before.

But there are solutions, especially if the victim turns his or her life to God for those answers.

"Wholeness is what people are seeking, and we establish goals up front with how they want to live their lives and what's good for them," Mitchell told me on a recent Strang Report podcast. "Unexpressed pain often has a way of controlling us. If we have unresolved issues or pain, we need to know that God gave us pain for a reason. It's like He gave us tears for a reason. It tells us that there is something wrong and we need to bring it forward and we need to deal with it."

“There are several kinds of therapies. I do mostly talk therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy, which is dealing with behaviors and thoughts. There is EMDR, which is more of a newer therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, which is working with the brain to help it un-stick those emotions that are controlling somebody so that they can experience that and release it, and then the brain is free to function,” she said.

“The beautiful part for me is that I have a box seat in an empty stadium because I can’t talk about it with anybody. I get to watch God do miracles in people’s lives as He restores them to wholeness through application of His truth, of His love, of His Word. It allows the fruit of the Spirit to do what it is supposed to do in our lives.”

Fortunately, psychologists have come up with research that helps trace what sometimes can be severe trauma back to the childhood of many. The study has helped many to overcome their severe emotional issues.

“There’s a study out that is pretty well known and it’s called Adverse Childhood Experiences,” Mitchell says. “It is a study that traced experiences of children through several years up through people in their 40s. What it is specifically tracking is things like yelling, screaming, hitting, fights—those kinds of things.”

Talking with Mitchell after the broadcast, she added important information about the ACE’s Study: ACE’s research includes the study of Abuse: physical, emotional and sexual; the study of Neglect: physical and emotional; the study of Household Challenges: divorce/separation, mental illness, incarceration, domestic violence, substance abuse.

These are things over which, as a child, we have no control.

Those are adverse childhood experiences that sometimes happen and we don’t even recognize that’s what’s going on. But that

creates in our brains a specific response and now we can measure it.

“I love the fact that we have certain brain research now because we can actually see what trauma does to the brain. It’s fascinating to me to see what happens to our brains. We actually can’t reason. We get upset and even the hair in our ears stands up. We can’t really hear and the decision-making part of our brains just shuts down. That has a lot of impact on our daily lives. Trauma is impacting us and it walks into my office in the form of anxiety, in the form of depression and in the form of marriage problems. Most relationship problems can be traced back to responses that we feel like we have no control over because of trauma we have accumulated in our lives.

“I think it’s important that we know God’s truth. Often what I love about brain science and about a lot of the research in cognitive behavioral therapy is found in Philippians 4—whatever things are good and true and lovely and excellent and noble and pure—think deeply on these things. Well, that’s about our thinking. So, God has given us the directions in His Word. We just don’t always realize that we’re letting our thoughts become weed patches. In those weed patches, we need to reestablish what is truth. I think you need both the truth of God’s Word, as it applies across the board, and counseling (implied). Whether you are a believer or not, when you apply truth, you get good results.”

If you are experiencing trauma due to COVID-19 or other cultural issues—or if you need help from an emotional issue stemming from childhood, please seek counseling somewhere. You can visit the American Association of Christian Counselors website or just use a search engine and type in Christian counselors. God put these people on this earth for a reason, and they will help you find the peace and wholeness you are seeking.

By the way, I can give Mitchell a personal endorsement because I've known her all my life. We are first cousins.

To find out more about how to deal with trauma, listen to the rest of this Strang Report podcast with Jody Mitchell and share it with friends. {eoa}

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