

BLAME & RESPONSIBILITY

“Blame is simply the discharging of pain and discomfort. We blame when we’re uncomfortable and experience pain—when we’re vulnerable, angry, hurt, in shame, grieving. There’s nothing productive about blame, and it often involves shaming someone or just being mean.” †

— Brené Brown

(Courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy research professor.)

INSIGHT: Blame of others and blame of self is antagonistic to responsibility and accountability. Responsibility and accountability are courageous acts that lead to growth, while blame is corrosive to relationships and prevents empathy and understanding.

IN OTHER WORDS:

- Blame, whether directed at oneself or others, avoids responsibility and accountability and stops growth.
- Responsibility and accountability are courageous acts that foster personal development and healthier relationships by promoting ownership and a focus on solutions.

DEFINITIONS:

- Responsibility is the internal, self-driven duty to act.
- Accountability is to be answerable for actions.

QUOTE: *“Where there is no accountability, achieving the goal of being responsible is unlikely.”* —Tim Reside

THE FOUR BIG QUESTIONS: (1) “What’s your part?” (2) “For whom and what are you responsible?” (3) “For whom and what are you accountable?” (4) “To whom are you accountable?”

JOB'S STORY: (Job 2:9-13; James 5:11)

- Job, a blameless man devoted to God, suffered immense loss and illness.
- Though his friends and wife wrongly blamed sin for his misfortune, Job remained faithful, and God ultimately restored him.
- Mental health challenges are not our fault; like Job, we should stand firm, knowing God is with us and offers compassion and resilience (Isaiah 57:15).
- Both those facing mental health challenges and their supporters need safe and compassionate relationships that build resilience and should avoid unsafe connections.

FOR REFLECTION — FACT ONE:

Mental health disorders are conditions that impact thoughts, emotions, and daily functioning. Professional support and healing-recovery care are needed, just as with other health issues.

TIMEOUT QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

Describe why it is challenging to believe that mental health difficulties and disorders are physiological conditions that affect how we think, feel, and function in daily life.

FOR REFLECTION — FACT TWO:

Symptoms like hopelessness or negative thoughts can indeed be caused by mental health conditions—in such cases these are NOT the result of personal sin, weak faith, or other spiritual factors. God understands our struggles and continues to recognize our worth and security in Him.

TIMEOUT QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

Describe what helps you understand that mental health difficulties and disorders are not the result of sin, weak faith, or other spiritual factors, such as demonic oppression.

FOR REFLECTION — FACT THREE:

Experiencing mental health challenges can affect how we speak and act, but God continues to love us and gives our lives value and purpose. Even on difficult days, God does not see us as failures; instead, He reminds us of our true identity in Him, showing us that we are loved and supported to fulfill all that He has given us (Luke 12:32).

TIMEOUT QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

Describe how trusting God's constant love can make a difference in how the various challenges of the mental health healing-recovery process are experienced.

FOR REFLECTION — FACT FOUR:

God has a purpose and a plan for all of our lives, including for us with mental health challenges. No matter what weaknesses or struggles we experience, God is for us and not against us. Therefore, God desires to bless those on the mental health healing-recovery journey, as well as support givers, with meaningful lives.

TIMEOUT QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

How has your mental health difficulty or disorder impacted your purpose — or as a support giver how have your challenges impacted you? What are the ways you have found for recovering meaningful purpose again?

A WORD TO THE WISE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT

“Support giver, you have not been called to be the hero!”

QUESTION: *“What have I been called to be?”*

You are called to be a **healing presence**.

A healing presence results from consciously and compassionately supporting someone’s healing-recovery process and spiritual growth. It’s accomplished less by talking and more through listening, empathy, and yes, appropriate times of shared prayer.

You are called to be a **helping presence** (a “paraclete”—NOT a “parakeet”).

The Greek word *paráklētos* (παράκλητος), meaning “one who is called alongside,” is the source of “Paraclete” and is used to refer to the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John and First Epistle of John.

A paraclete is a helper or advocate who offers support, comfort, and defense. A paraclete is not a subordinate servant.

You are called to be a **“wounded healer.”**

To be a *healing presence* and a *helping presence*, support givers need also to be actively pursuing healing-recovery and maintaining well-being in all areas of their own lives.

This is an understanding that healing, as a holistic healing-recovery process, requires our personal growth and balance in order to effectively support others.

We are all wounded and/or broken in some way. As we humbly acknowledge our own healing needs, empathically we become more sensitive to those we've been called to help and support.

SELF-CARE NOTES FOR HELPERS

1. We can often feel the secondary impact of our loved ones' stressors.
 - Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can help us manage when we begin to feel overwhelmed.
2. Chronic stress lowers the brain's ability to make healthy decisions.
 - This may cause us to react by saying things we don't mean, turning to eating or drinking for comfort, or sometimes coping with other unhealthy outlets.
3. Taking time-out to discover and implement self-care strategies are as crucial for come-along-side support givers as for those needing to practice good self-care who live with chronic mental health challenges and episodic mental illness.
4. We all need to rest physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When we are not resting well, our bodies begin to show signs of depletion, including:
 - Physical depletion: difficulty sleeping, fatigue causing agitation and/or cognitive fog, changes in eating patterns, lack of energy for an active lifestyle.
 - Emotional depletion: loneliness and isolation, lack of interest or motivation for hobbies or special interests, and feelings of discouragement that last for weeks.
 - Spiritual depletion: discouragement and frustration with God, staying busy to avoid a connection with God, loved ones, or emotions within yourself.
5. As we continue to move through this eighteen-chapter program, I will be sharing more self-care strategies and coping skills for support givers — one who is called alongside.

Praise to the God of All Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 NIV

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

ENDNOTES

† Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, Publisher: Avery, September 11, 2012.

Brené Brown is a research professor and author known for her work on courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She is a research professor at the University of Houston and a Professor of Practice in Management at the University of Texas at Austin.

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REMINDER: MENTAL HEALTH VIRTUAL TOOLBOXES

Virtual toolboxes are digital resources using CBT techniques to support emotional and mental health. They include guided meditation(s), mood trackers, coping exercises, educational materials, and links to therapy or support groups.

CHECK OUT TOOLBOX APPS AT “GOOGLE PLAY STORE” OR “APPLE APP STORE” LIKE: Virtual Hope Box, MindShift CBT, Happify, Calm, Headspace, MoodTools, and What's Up?

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