



Building Resilience In An Age Of Anxiety

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PJ Lewis M.Ed., RCC, CCC.

Agenda

- Begin with the beginning in mind:
 - The Catholic view of the human person
- Mental Health
 - An integral part of the whole person
- Stress and Anxiety
 - What are we up against?
- What can we do to build resilience?



A Human Person: a Catholic perspective

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Human nature is:

- Rational (intellectual)
- Volitional (free)
- Relational (interpersonal)
- Sensory-perceptual
- Emotional
- Unified (body-soul)

See: Titus, Vitz, & Nordling (2016), Brugger (2009).

The Person is called to:

- Flourishing
- Moral Responsibility
- Virtue
 - Through his or her:
 - Vocational state
 - Life work
 - Service

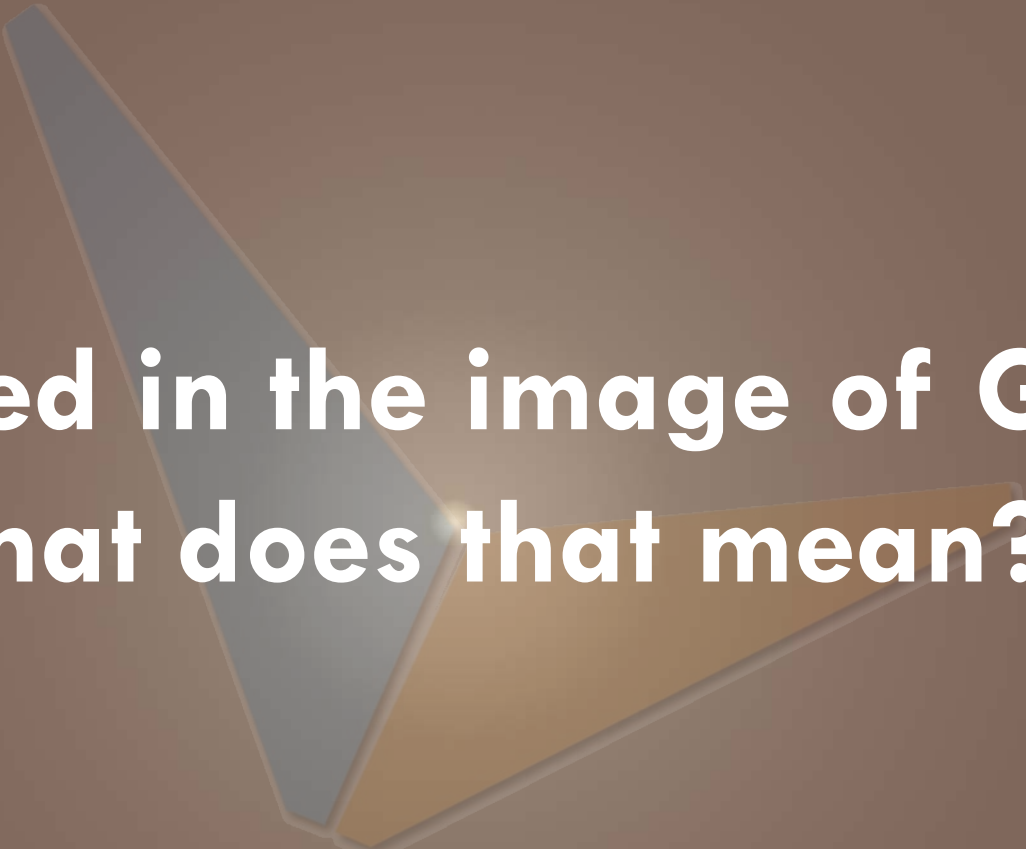
See: Titus, Vitz, & Nordling (2016), Brugger (2009).

The Theological Landscape:

Human Persons are:

- Created in the image of God
- Fallen
 - Suffering the effects of original, personal and social sin
- Invited to redemption, sanctification, and beatitude

See: Titus, Vitz, & Nordling (2016), Brugger (2009).



**Created in the image of God:
what does that mean?**

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Created in the image of God:

- Goodness
- Dignity
- Made for and to love
- Built for relationship

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Brains and how they are built

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Early Experiences



**BRAIN
BUILDERS**



www.albertafamilywellness.org

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Brains Journey to Resilience



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The Role of ACEs



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The Fall: Enter Dis-Order

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Our nature became wounded:

- With sin came death, disease, mental illness, and trial
- Sin separates us from God
- Though fallen, still good at the foundation
- Ongoing struggle...

Stress

- Is normal
- Can be felt in the body
- Affects us emotionally
- Shifts our thinking
- Impacts us spiritually
- Can be harmful if we do nothing about it
 - Unresolved stress leaves us vulnerable to future stress
 - We're not built to endure "perma-stress"

The Mental Health Dimension:

- 1 in 5 Canadians experience concerns with mental health and/or substance use
- 70% of those case experience onset in childhood or adolescence

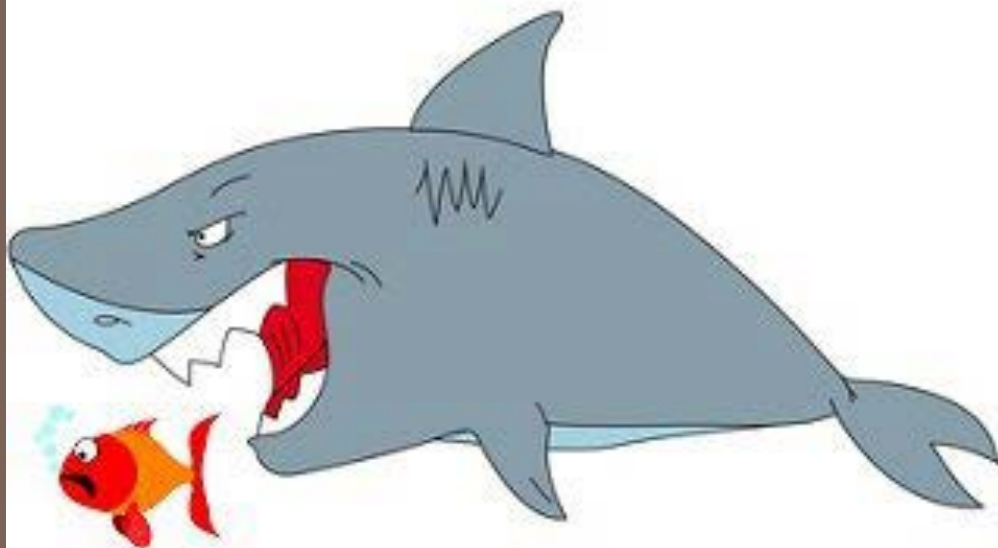
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Anxiety:

*Anxiety is now the #1
most diagnoses
condition world wide*

~ WHO
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FEAR



**Stress Response from
Immediate Danger!**

ANXIETY



**Stress Response just
from your Thoughts!**

www.gostrengths.com

FIGHT



Stand your ground, defend
your position, attack, dig in,
persevere!

or

Flight



Give way, retreat, discard,
remove yourself, give up,
move on.

Anxiety is a problem when it...

- Prevents one from enjoying normal life experiences
- Prevents acquiring new experiences
- Interferes with the child's and family's life
- Causes significant distress
- Lasts for an excessive period of time

IMPACT OF ANXIETY

- Current statistics indicate that 1 in 4 Canadian children and youth suffer from anxiety.
- In fact, many mental health agencies warn childhood anxiety/stress is on the rise. If **untreated**, can lead to mood or health difficulties later.

“A major reason for childhood anxiety – apart from the increasing stress on parents is the relative loss of close connections of children to nurturing adults,”

Dr. Gabor Maté

<http://tvoparents.tvo.org/article/combating-anxiety-equipping-todays-kids-coping-skills>

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**Redeemed:
Jesus makes healing and
wholeness possible**

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For God so loved the world:

- Caring for the whole person
- Healing comes through relationship
 - The role of a caring adult
- Faith, Hope, & Love
 - Our duty to impart

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Protective Factors

- Attachment
- Cognitive Style
- Family
- Friendships
- Good physical health



The role of relationship



***YOU are exactly who your
child needs most***

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How to increase parent-child connections

- Best if the parent takes the lead
 - Let's not make our kids work for our love and attention
- Shared activities in which we can be (or practice being more):
 - Available
 - Attentive
 - Attuned
 - Appropriately Responsive

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Relationship Enriching Activities

1. Connection

- Delight in their presence
- Connect before redirect

2. Meals

- Rituals and Traditions matter

3. Play

- Quantity or Quality time?

4. Prayer

- We were made to be in relationship

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How to strengthen relationship and deescalate stress with Validation

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Validation deescalates and leads to self regulation



Validate through Emotion Coaching

1. Validate

- Convey understanding of the other person's emotional experience and prove that you get it
 - “It makes sense you would feel _____ , because(x3)”

2. Support

- Emotional need:
 - Offer comfort, reassurance, or space
- Practical need:
 - Redirect, help problem solve, set limits

See: Emotion Focused Family Therapy (EFFT), Dr. Adele Lafrance
www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca.

Don't underestimate the basics to stay...

Sleep

Take medications your doctor prescribes

Resist using drugs and alcohol

Once a day build Mastery

Nutrition

Get Exercise

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What else can we do?

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Ora et Labora

“While interpersonal encounters disclose something significant about one’s personhood or identity, each person remains a mystery revealed fully only in the eyes of God”

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Titus, Vitz, & Nordling (2016)

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Enrich Mental Health Supports

1. In our schools directly

- Trained, qualified counsellors on staff
- Early intervention and prevention programs
- Mental Health literacy for all staff

2. In partnership

- With the families of our students
- With your district
- In the community

3. Societal shift

- Talk about it, reduce stigma

Self Care for Parents

1. It's critical – make it a priority
2. Know yourself and how you cope
 - Attend to the basics
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Sleep
 - Prayer
 - Physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual health
 - Work/Life balance
3. Be intentional
 - Schedule positive activities
 - Be fully present to them
4. Try not to over schedule
 - For you or your children
5. Therapy helps



What did you find helpful?

**What kinds of questions do you
still have?**

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