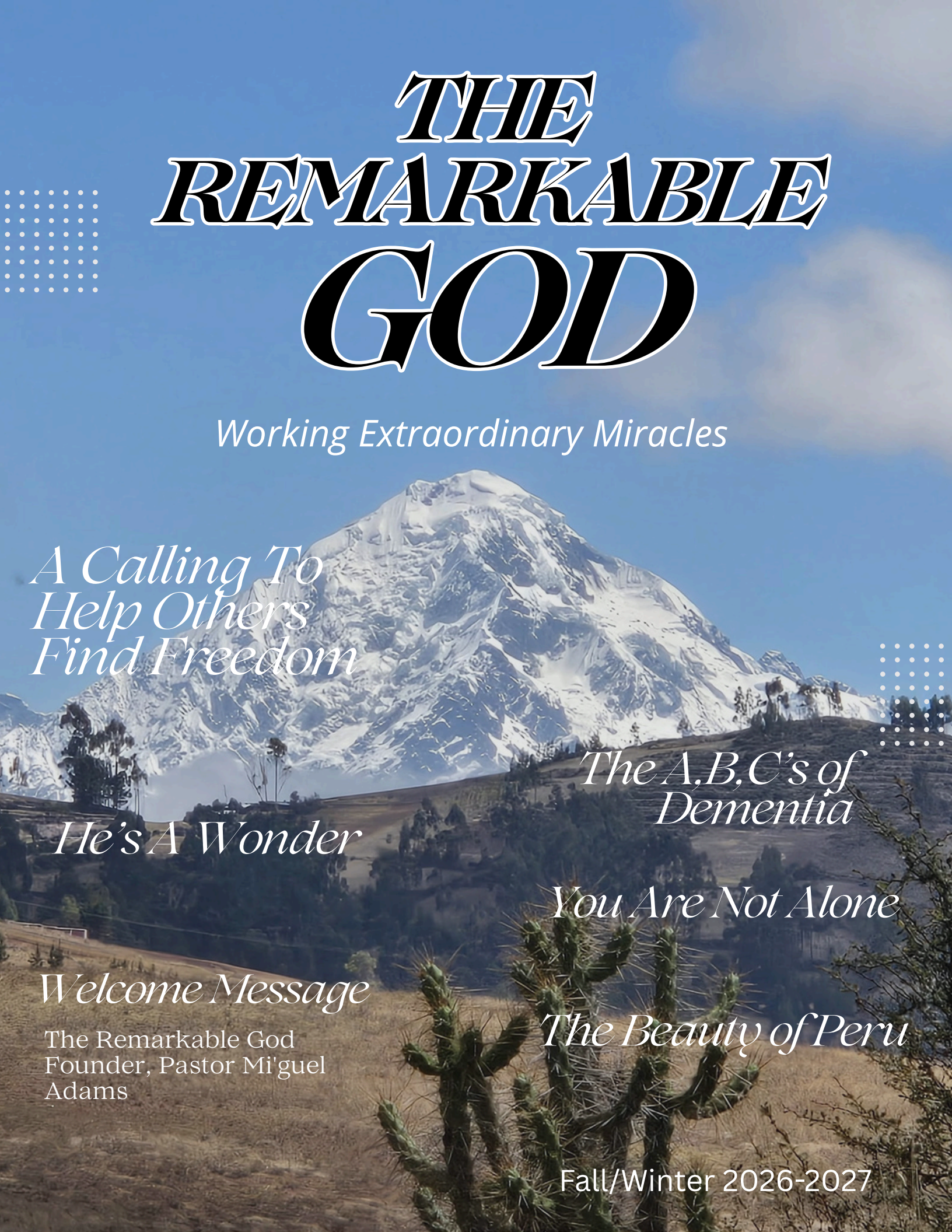




THE REMARKABLE GOD

Working Extraordinary Miracles

*A Calling To
Help Others
Find Freedom*

*The A,B,C's of
Dementia*

He's A Wonder

You Are Not Alone

Welcome Message

The Remarkable God
Founder, Pastor Mi'guel
Adams

The Beauty of Peru

Fall/Winter 2026-2027



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W E L C O M E

Greetings and salutations in the mighty name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Welcome to the ninth edition of The Remarkable God magazine. We are thankful and blessed to present nine powerful articles filled with spiritual substance to strengthen your faith and deepen your commitment to God.

My company, In His Presence, invited several professional Christian writers—spiritually grounded and knowledgeable in their respective fields—to contribute articles that will enlighten, educate, and inspire our readers. In this edition, we challenge every reader to help advance the Kingdom of God on earth and spread the good news of the Gospel.

We pray that these articles will strengthen your faith and deepen your love for God and His people. We are living in uncertain days and unprecedented times, and the world desperately needs to experience the goodness and grace of God.

This edition features an article about the anointed deliverance ministry of Pastor Miguel Bustillos, who conducts deliverance and exorcism ministry. His powerful work is a must-read for believers in Jesus Christ and will encourage you to seek a deeper relationship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You will also read the remarkable testimony of Pastor Ramona Moore and her encounters with God after she died in a car accident. Her story will have you rejoicing in the miraculous power of our God. Both articles will leave you longing for a closer relationship with this remarkable God. Additional articles featured in this edition include:

- *The ABCs of Dementia*
- *Mental Health in the Church*
- *Caregiver Stress*
- *Stepping Out of Fear*
- *Helping Women Navigate Transition*
- *Marginalized Students Can Succeed in Community College*
- *My Journey with Type 1 Diabetes*

We hope you will become a faithful reader of our magazine and share it with others. Most importantly, we pray that you will tell others about this remarkable God who still works miracles for His people.

We proudly present the ninth edition of The Remarkable God magazine. Enjoy!

Blessings and Shalom!

Mi'guel Adams

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THE OBITUARY

I am writing my own obituary for all people to read, and hope what I have learned might plant a godly seed,

I would first like to share words of wisdom with a young man, who is living life precariously without a vision or a plan,

Also, I desire to instruct young ladies not to live by the wisdom of the street, but to embrace the life of holiness, walk in understanding and be discreet.

Please inform the youth that they have only one life, so live it in peace and harmony not in discord or strife.

I was born many years ago without a famous name, although my parent's had some riches even a level of fame.

We had a fleet of cars, several homes, money and material things; I wore expensive clothing and even possessed several diamond rings.

I attended the finest the schools and earned my college degree, I lived life with pride and regret I pleased only me.

I experienced many sinful pleasures that I thought would give me peace of mind, but they deceived me greatly because tranquility and rest I could not buy nor find.

I thought that I would retire with my money and live life to the fullest every day, but the voice of God spoke to me and said, my son in this world you cannot stay.

Thoughts about eternity rippled through my spirit and soul, I never experienced the grace of God that makes sinful men whole.

I did not attend worship service in the house of God, only for weddings, funerals and community meetings in which I found very odd.

I heard the Gospel of Jesus preached so many times before, but I never thought that I needed the Savior yet He was standing at my door.

Now, I am sorry that I did not choose Him to become my Savior and my guide, because I died last night and I am eternally lost without Jesus on my side.

Written by: Mi'guel Adams



Animation Film Coming Soon!

Heaven's Soul Food Restaurant



I was returning home from a church service on a summer Sunday night, as I drove by a road sign that read Heaven's Soul Food Restaurant is half a mile on the right. My mind reflected on what kind of restaurant could this be, because I am very, very hungry I guess I have to see.

I drove into the parking lot and pondered in my car, when a very nice man approached me and asked "do you know where you are"? I answered, what is the name of this place, he smiled and said this is Heaven's Soul Food Restaurant that was created by God's mercy and grace.

Come, and allow me to show you around, you can order spiritual food while you hear worship songs with a melodious sound. The restaurant's exterior was made of crystal with diamonds embedded in the doors, I saw the color of jasper on the walls and beautiful golden floors.

When I entered into this place there were angels clothed in white, as they sang songs and served meals the view was delightful in my sight. As angels asked would you like to be seated at a table, and order from heaven's menu that is called God is truly able?

We serve a heavenly drink and delicious soul food; you can order what you will it all depends on your mood. I was escorted to a table made of emeralds and pure gold, all the food was without cost and not one dish was sold.

The menu had Bible verses on the front and on the back, inside of the menu these words were written trust in God and you will never experience any lack. You could choose food from the appetizer section, divine Hors d'oeuvres that read "Trust in Christ Death and His Resurrection".

Another favorite dish was written "Do All in Jesus Name", I tasted of this dish and my appetite was never the same. The angel pointed to this entrée that read "Go to God's Prayer Tower", and the description was written in bold letters "This is Where You Will Receive Holy Ghost Power".

I was enjoying the atmosphere and my spiritual meal, when the angel said order one of our favorite desserts it's called "The Mystery of The Seventh Seal". I was so satisfied and could not eat anymore, when the angel said please continue God has so much in-store. He served the last dish that was called "Heaven's Soul Food Best", after tasting of this food my soul experienced joy and everlasting rest.

They only served one flavor of drink that was called "God's Goodness Mixed with Faith and Grace", after drinking this tasty beverage, I was prepared to finish my Christian race. It was time to leave and I walked to my car, that's when the angel said remember that Jesus Christ is the bright and morning star. We hope that you were fed divinely well, and the testimony of this restaurant with others please share and tell.

We are open twenty-four hours and seven days a week, stop in anytime if God you desire to seek.

Written by: Mi'guel Adams



HE'S A WONDER

Pastor Ramona Moore's Lifetime of Encounters With a Remarkable God



**“If I could paint it, I would...
I’ll never forget it.”**

PASTOR RAMONA MOORE

A lifetime shaped by visions, faith, loss, preservation and wonder.

For Pastor Ramona Moore, the supernatural isn’t something she discovered after entering ministry. It has been woven into the fabric of her life since childhood.

Long before she could fully understand what she was seeing—or find the words to explain it—she says God was already allowing her glimpses into a spiritual world that would eventually become inseparable from her calling.

Raised in a strict Pentecostal home in West Virginia, Moore was the oldest of seven children. Her mother was deeply devoted to God, and faith was foundational in their household. But even within that environment, some of what young Moore experienced seemed unusual.

She remembers being about 11 years old when she had one of her earliest encounters. Lying in bed, she looked up and saw what appeared to be her mother surrounded by three angels of different heights. Then she heard words she has never forgotten: “You don’t have to worry. He will not be able to get her.”

She understood the “he” to mean Satan. The experience was so vivid that decades later she can still picture it.

“If I could paint it, I would,” she says. “Because it’s so clear. I’ll never forget it.”

A Gift She Couldn’t Explain

The encounters continued. Moore recalls dreams and visions, sometimes seeing places long before she physically traveled to them. Years later, she would arrive somewhere to preach for the first time and experience the uncanny realization that she already knew the surroundings.

“I couldn’t explain it,” she recalls. “But I knew.”

As she approached adulthood, God also began placing spiritual mentors in her path. Near the end of high school, Moore attended a service with her mother and heard Bishop John Stewart. That encounter, she says, “changed the whole trajectory of my life.”

Mother Gertrude Boyd, a woman Moore remembers as always dressed in white and looking “like an angel,” also played an unexpected role. When Moore was preparing for college and discovered the dormitories were full, her mother contacted Mother Boyd. That connection ultimately placed Moore in an environment where her understanding of the prophetic could develop.

Under Bishop Stewart's teaching, she says, she began to understand more of what she had experienced since childhood. Later, under Bishop Wilson, those gifts continued to emerge. There were times, Moore recalls, when he would call upon her to complete a message because of what she believed God was allowing her to see.

The experiences were so frequent that some people jokingly told her, "We can't be around you because you see stuff." But the supernatural experiences did not mean Moore's life was untouched by pain.

WHEN FAITH HAS TO SURVIVE THE HURT

Some wounds cut deeply. Her father built a new home for her mother, but only six months later he died of a massive heart attack related to his exposure to coal dust.

For Moore, the loss was devastating. She and her father had shared an especially close bond. Her mother would tease her, saying, "Your daddy loves you more than he loves me." As the oldest of seven children, Moore knew how much her father loved his entire family. Yet losing him shook her profoundly.

Still, she says, God sustained her. That pattern—pain followed by preservation—would repeat throughout her life. And perhaps nowhere was it more dramatic than on an ordinary drive along St. Barnabas Road.

THE DAY EVERYTHING CHANGED

Before leaving home that day to accompany one of her godchildren to buy shoes, Moore did something that even her daughter questioned. She anointed herself with oil.

"What are you doing that for?" her daughter asked. "Well, it can't hurt," Moore replied, laughing it off.

She had no idea what was waiting ahead. As they traveled along St. Barnabas Road, another driver ran a traffic light and slammed head-on into their vehicle, sending it into a churchyard.

Before the crash, Moore had been singing a song by The Clark Sisters: "He Shall Hide Me in His Tabernacle."

Then came the impact. What happened next remains one of the defining experiences of Moore's life. She says she died.

"THE MOST PEACE I EVER FELT"

Moore remembers finding herself surrounded by what looked like beautiful green leaves, almost like a tapestry. There was no chaos. No fear. Only peace.

"It was the most peace I ever felt in my life," she recalls.

Then, she says, a beautiful angel appeared and began singing the very song Moore had been singing before the accident: "He shall hide me in His tabernacle."

The sound grew louder. The light grew brighter. And suddenly, Moore was back inside the wrecked vehicle. The scene surrounding her was anything but peaceful.

Blood and broken glass were everywhere. Gas was leaking from the vehicle. Smoke was rising. Firefighters were trying to determine how to cut the passengers free without creating a spark that could cause an explosion. One firefighter repeatedly asked Moore whether she knew her name.

She did. But she couldn't say it. Her mind was clear enough to understand what the rescuers were saying, yet when she tried to speak, only disconnected syllables emerged.

And in that frightening moment, another battle began—this one inside her mind. She heard the words: "You'll never speak again, nor preach or do anything."

Moore's internal response was immediate. "Lies."

Eventually, words began to come. Firefighters covered the occupants with a tarp as electric saws cut through the mangled vehicle. Moore could hear everything. When she later saw what remained of the car, one conclusion

overwhelmed her: There was no logical reason they should have survived. "God is faithful."

A Path Already Being Cleared

Years before the crash, Moore had carried another unusual dream. She was walking along a road high on a mountain. Ahead were three extremely tall figures. At first, it appeared they were cutting timber and moving fallen trees out of her way. But as she drew closer, she realized they weren't trees. They were enormous snakes. The figures were killing them and moving them aside, clearing a pathway so she could continue forward.

When Moore later shared the vision with a friend, the friend offered an interpretation that stayed with her: "Angels have always been there for you, clearing your path, doing their job. Even now." Looking back across her life, Moore sees that image as remarkably fitting. There have been obstacles.

There has been grief. There have been moments of danger and experiences she says are simply too difficult to explain to everyone. But the path kept opening.

Some Things Have to Remain Between You and God

Today, after more than 20 years with The Tabernacle Temple of Praise and a lifetime of ministry and spiritual experiences, Pastor Moore no longer feels compelled to make everyone understand everything she has seen.

She has learned that some encounters are sacred. Some testimonies require discernment before they are shared. And some things may never fit neatly within human explanation. "I've seen things and experienced things in God that I cannot share with everyone because they won't understand," she says.

Perhaps that is why, when asked to explain a lifetime filled with visions, prophetic insight, spiritual encounters, devastating loss, miraculous preservation and an accident she believes carried her momentarily into heaven, Moore ultimately comes back to something beautifully simple:

"The Lord works in mysterious ways."

And after all these years, all the things she has seen, all the dangers she has survived and all the moments when God seemed to make a way before she even knew she would need one, Pastor Moore has an even simpler declaration.

**Three words that could serve as the testimony of her entire life:
HE IS A WONDER!**

A CALLING TO HELP OTHERS FIND FREEDOM

Pastor Miguel Bustillos

For more than fifteen years, I have devoted my life to helping people seeking spiritual freedom, healing, and renewed hope. My work in deliverance and exorcism ministry began with a clear calling from God and a conviction that no one should have to face spiritual bondage alone.

I am Rev. Miguel Bustillos, founder and senior pastor of The Children's Bread Deliverance Ministry Church. What began as a personal calling has developed into an international ministry serving individuals and families throughout the United States and around the world.

Our ministry office is located at 313 E. Church Street, Frederick, Maryland 21701. From this office, my team and I conduct consultations, schedule deliverance and exorcism appointments, provide spiritual guidance, train ministers, and oversee the daily operations of the ministry.

At the center of my calling is a commitment to people. Many who come to us feel burdened, discouraged, misunderstood, or uncertain about where to turn. My responsibility is not only to pray with them, but also to listen, teach, encourage, and remind them that their lives still have meaning and purpose.

MORE THAN 5,000 CASES

Over the course of my ministry, I have personally served thousands of people facing spiritual, emotional, and personal struggles. The Children's Bread Deliverance Ministry has documented more than 5,000 deliverance and exorcism cases.

These cases have included private sessions, complex exorcisms, family cases, home blessings, public deliverance services, consultations, international missions, and follow-up care.

I have never viewed these cases as statistics. Each one represents a person, a family, and a story. Some individuals come in crisis; others arrive after years of searching for answers. In every situation, they deserve compassion, dignity, and careful attention.



Contact Information

To learn more about our deliverance and exorcism services, public services, ministry training, or opportunities to bring our School of Deliverance Ministry to your church, please contact us using the information below.

Church Location

The Children's Bread Deliverance
Ministry Church
11341 Robinwood Drive
Hagerstown, Maryland 21742

Ministry Office

313 E. Church Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Website

www.deliverancexorcisms.com

The ministry office is used for consultations, scheduled appointments, training, and administrative work. Church services and public ministry events are held at the church location unless otherwise announced.

PROFILE

A CALLING TO HELP OTHERS FIND FREEDOM

Because of how exorcism is often portrayed in popular culture, the word exorcist can bring to mind dramatic and inaccurate images. In reality, this work requires patience, prayer, biblical knowledge, discernment, and emotional steadiness.

Exorcism should never be treated as entertainment, and suffering should never be turned into a spectacle. The focus must remain on Jesus Christ, the dignity of the person, and the hope of lasting restoration.

I also believe that not every emotional, behavioral, or physical struggle is caused by demonic influence. Some people need medical care, licensed mental health services, trauma counseling, addiction recovery, or other forms of professional support.

Discernment is essential. A responsible minister must know when spiritual ministry is appropriate, when referral is necessary, and when spiritual and professional care should work together. Recognizing the limits of pastoral ministry is not a weakness; it is part of serving people responsibly.

PREPARING FOR THE WORK

I have spent many years pursuing biblical education and specialized training in deliverance, exorcism, spiritual warfare, Christian counseling, and pastoral ministry.

I completed advanced studies in biblical studies and theology through Life Christian University, where I was also ordained. My additional training includes the International School of Exorcism and the Advanced Academy of Deliverance.

I also completed the course on exorcism and the prayer of liberation offered through the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome, Italy. That course examined exorcism from multiple perspectives and brought together clergy, theologians, medical professionals, mental health specialists, and law enforcement representatives.

My time in Rome reinforced the importance of discernment, humility, and cooperation with qualified professionals when appropriate. Difficult cases require preparation, wisdom, and a full understanding of the person being served.

I have also studied biblical demonology and received mentorship and practical training from internationally known Christian exorcist Rev. Bob Larson. I served first as a regional director and later as an associate minister within his organization, where I gained additional experience working with complex spiritual and emotional cases.

These years of education, mentorship, and ministry have shaped my understanding that people are not simply cases to be assessed. They are individuals who deserve compassion, confidentiality, patience, prayer, and respect.

TRAINING OTHERS

A significant part of my calling is equipping others for responsible service in deliverance ministry. Through our School of Deliverance Ministry, we train individuals, ministry teams, pastors, and churches seeking a stronger biblical understanding of deliverance, exorcism, spiritual warfare, and aftercare.

Our training is both biblical and practical. We teach students how to assess cases carefully, recognize common spiritual issues, prepare for ministry, conduct sessions responsibly, maintain confidentiality, establish healthy boundaries, and provide follow-up care.



We also emphasize discernment. Those serving in deliverance ministry must understand that not every struggle is spiritual and that some individuals need medical, psychological, or other professional support. A responsible minister must know when to pray, when to refer, and when both spiritual and professional care are needed.

Our school serves those beginning their ministry journey as well as experienced pastors and leaders seeking to strengthen deliverance work already taking place in their churches. We help churches develop trained teams, establish ministry procedures, create intake and follow-up systems, and prepare leaders to respond wisely to difficult situations.

This training is not limited to our office. My team and I also travel to churches and ministries that invite us to train their leaders and congregations. We provide instruction, demonstrations, hands-on ministry, and guidance tailored to each setting.

When we train a congregation, our goal is not simply to conduct an event and leave. We want to equip the local church with the knowledge, structure, and confidence needed to continue helping people long after we are gone. Deliverance ministry should be rooted in the local church, supported by prayer and discipleship, and led by mature believers who understand both spiritual authority and pastoral responsibility.

I believe training is essential because the need is greater than any one minister or ministry can meet. By equipping individuals and churches, we help multiply responsible Christian ministers who can serve hurting people with compassion, wisdom, and integrity.

STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

Some of the most meaningful outcomes I have witnessed have not been dramatic, but gradual. They have been seen in the steady rebuilding of faith, family life, emotional stability, and purpose. The names and identifying details in the following stories have been changed to protect privacy. In one case, a young man came to our ministry with his father. He had been struggling spiritually, emotionally, and socially, and his family was deeply concerned about his future.

PROFILE

A CALLING TO HELP OTHERS FIND FREEDOM

During our time together, we addressed more than spiritual warfare. We discussed trauma, sobriety, the responsible use of prescribed medication, mental health care, employment, exercise, healthy relationships, and reconnecting with a Christian community.

His session marked the beginning of a broader restoration process. His progress reminded me that lasting freedom rarely comes through one prayer alone.

Deliverance can be an important part of healing, but people often also need structure, accountability, counseling, discipleship, and support from those around them. In his case, progress was reflected not only in prayer, but in the healthier choices he began making afterward.

In another case, an individual came to us carrying years of rejection, emotional pain, and unresolved childhood wounds. Fear and bitterness affected nearly every area of life.

Rather than rushing the process, I focused on building trust, identifying the roots of the pain, and helping the person recognize the harmful beliefs that had developed over time.

Through prayer, biblical teaching, forgiveness, inner healing, and continued support, the individual began to understand that past abuse and rejection did not have to define the future.

That transformation was reflected in renewed hope, healthier boundaries, restored faith, and the ability to move forward without being controlled by the past.

I have also worked with families who felt exhausted and helpless while watching a loved one struggle. In many of those situations, the family needed guidance as well.

They had to learn the difference between compassion and enabling, and between offering support and trying to control another person's recovery.

Sometimes the greatest victory is not immediate change, but a family learning to communicate, pray together, establish healthy boundaries, and encourage loved ones to receive appropriate help. Other victories come when a person begins praying again, returns to church, seeks counseling, maintains sobriety, repairs a relationship, finds employment, or begins to believe that life can improve.

These steps may seem small to others, but to someone who once felt hopeless, they can represent a new beginning.

SERVING THOSE IN NEED

One of our ministry responsibilities is helping those who cannot afford private services. In one month alone, offerings to our ministry helped sponsor sixteen individuals who otherwise may not have received care.

Each person was given the opportunity to be heard, receive prayer, and be guided toward appropriate spiritual and practical support.

I believe compassion and effectiveness must always remain connected. Ministry must be spiritually sound, but it must also be caring. People should never be exploited, embarrassed, manipulated, or treated as entertainment.

They should leave knowing they were treated with dignity and that their story mattered.

MINISTRY BEYOND THE OFFICE

My calling has taken me into churches, homes, conferences, classrooms, counseling sessions, and communities throughout the United States and internationally.

I have trained and advised ministers who want to establish responsible deliverance ministries, and I have helped oversee teams serving people in different parts of the world.

During mission work in the Philippines, my team and I provided meals, clothing, school supplies, prayer, ministry training, and encouragement to children and families. We served children in an orphanage, distributed supplies, fed children in the community, and prayed for those in need. That experience strengthened my belief that ministry must address the whole person.

Ministry is not limited to what happens behind a pulpit or during a deliverance session. It is also seen in food given to a hungry child, time spent listening to someone who is hurting, practical support offered to a struggling family, and the willingness to go where help is needed.

Deliverance and exorcism are only part of our broader mission. People also need discipleship, biblical teaching, compassionate guidance, and a healthy Christian community. Freedom must be followed by growth. People need to develop their relationship with God, take responsibility for their lives, and continue moving forward in faith.

THE WORK CONTINUES

After more than fifteen years in deliverance and exorcism ministry, I remain convinced that this calling is about people. It is about the person who feels forgotten, the family searching for answers, the church that wants to help but does not know where to begin, and the minister who needs proper preparation before stepping into difficult situations.

The more than 5,000 documented cases handled by our ministry are not simply records in a file. Each one represents a life, a struggle, a prayer, and a hope for something better. Some stories have involved dramatic breakthroughs; others have unfolded gradually through discipleship, counseling, accountability, medical care, restored relationships, and renewed faith. Every step toward healing matters.

That is why our work does not stop with one prayer session. Through The Children's Bread Deliverance Ministry and our School of Deliverance Ministry, we continue to serve individuals, train ministers, equip churches, and travel where invited to help establish responsible, compassionate, biblically grounded deliverance ministry.

I know one ministry cannot meet every need. But when people are trained, churches are equipped, and believers serve with humility and wisdom, the impact can reach far beyond one office, one congregation, or one generation.

My prayer is that everyone who encounters our ministry leaves with more than a story about a session. I want them to leave with hope, direction, a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ, and the assurance that their past does not define their future.

This calling has never been about drawing attention to darkness. It has always been about revealing the light of Christ in places where people have felt trapped, afraid, or forgotten.

As long as there are people seeking freedom, families needing support, and churches asking to be equipped, I will continue answering that call — one person, one family, and one community at a time.

Intensive, Structured Treatment

At the Day Center, we promote mental, physical, spiritual and emotional healing through a holistic, integrated and evidence-based treatment approach.

We provide trauma interventions, mindfulness and extensive therapy to help improve outcomes in the clients we serve. Patients can achieve a lasting recovery with support from peers and a highly trained staff.



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Our Assessment Center offers 24-hour-a-day consultations and evaluations



Providing the tools for a healthy recovery

Our PHP and IOP programs offer a structured daily schedule consisting of group therapy and expressive activities.

We help adults experiencing mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder, return to a healthy daily routine that incorporates self-care and social interaction.



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Intensive Outpatient and Partial Hospitalization Programs

PIW

Psychiatric Institute
of Washington

THE DAY CENTER at PIW



Mindfulness

Mindfulness has become widely used to support mental and emotional health and awareness. Techniques like meditation, breathing and yoga can help people become more aware of themselves so they are better able to regulate emotions.

This integrative, mind-body approach promotes attention to the present moment, helps people manage their thoughts and feelings and can boost attention.

Trauma-informed Care

Our group-based intervention approach is designed to facilitate recovery among women with histories of sexual, emotional or physical abuse.

Drawing on cognitive restructuring, psychoeducation and skills-training techniques, the model emphasizes social support and the development of coping skills. It addresses short-term and long-term consequences of violent victimization and neglect, including mental health symptoms such as post-traumatic stress and depression.

The Partial Hospitalization Program

Provides an intensive, structured treatment setting for individuals who can benefit from daily therapeutic interventions. The program can also provide support for those who would otherwise require inpatient care.

The program runs five days a week for five hours each day, from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm and includes a 30-minute lunch break. Patients generally attend four groups a day.

Each day:

- Begins with a community meeting group to review the daily schedule
- Welcomes new individuals
- Reviews progress on treatment goals
- Addresses any concerns or challenges

The Intensive Outpatient Program

Allows clients to attend sessions from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm three days a week for psychiatric services and group therapy. Patients attend three groups a day and receive individualized care provided by licensed clinicians and a psychiatrist according to the client's treatment plan.

Our staff members work with clients to develop an individualized treatment plan based on strengths, diagnoses and opportunities for growth and skill building.

Who is eligible for the Day Center?

Our clinicians perform a thorough assessment to determine the level of care needed.

Our programs can be appropriate for those who have:

- An acute psychiatric disorder but are not at imminent risk for suicide or harm to others
- A capacity to fully participate in treatment
- The willingness and ability to commit to the program and the therapeutic work involved
- A reasonable expectation of improvement
- A history of trauma
- A history of significant life challenges

Interested in learning more about The Day Center at PIW?



Call **202-790-0786** today to find out how we can help you or a loved one make changes for a better tomorrow.

PART 4

A CALL TO ACTION



Faith Without Action Leaves People Suffering in Silence.

Throughout this series, we have explored the important role of the Black Church within our communities. We have discussed the strengths of pastoral counseling and the value of professional mental health counseling. We have examined how churches can better meet the needs of individuals and families living with mental health challenges.

Now the question becomes... What will we do with what we know?

Knowledge without application changes nothing. The Black Church has always been more than a place of worship. It has been a refuge during times of crisis, a center for education, a voice for justice, and a source of hope during some of the most challenging periods in our nation's history. From the Civil Rights Movement to neighborhood outreach, the Church has consistently responded to the needs of the community with compassion and conviction. Today, mental health is one of the greatest needs facing our families, our neighborhoods, and our communities. It is the next mission field.

Research further supports the vital role of the Church in addressing mental health concerns. Studies have found that many African Americans seek help first from their pastor or another trusted faith leader before reaching out to a mental health professional (Hankerson & Weissman, 2012). In fact, clergy are often viewed as trusted confidants because they provide spiritual guidance, cultural understanding, and emotional support within a familiar environment. This places the Black Church in a unique position, not to replace mental health professionals, but to serve as a compassionate first responder by recognizing emotional distress, offering hope, reducing stigma, and connecting individuals and families to appropriate professional care when needed (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2025).

Imagine the impact if every church became equipped not only to pray with those who are hurting, but also to recognize the signs of depression, anxiety, trauma, grief, substance use disorders, and suicidal thoughts. Imagine the lives that could be transformed if churches intentionally partnered with licensed mental health professionals to provide holistic care that nurtures both spiritual and emotional well-being. Research published in the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* suggests that churches can serve as trusted partners in reducing stigma and increasing access to mental health services, particularly among underserved populations (Payne, Ellison, Flannelly, & Pargament, 2007).

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), nearly one in five adults in the United States experiences a mental illness each year. Yet many delay seeking treatment because of stigma, fear of judgment, lack of access, financial barriers, or misconceptions about mental illness. Within many African American communities, these barriers are often intensified by historical mistrust of healthcare systems, cultural beliefs, and the expectation to remain "strong" despite emotional pain.

OUR COMMUNITIES NEED US.

Faith + care

Mental illness is not a character flaw. It is not a lack of faith.

This is why the Church matters. When churches become places where mental health is discussed with the same compassion as physical health, barriers begin to fall. Shame begins to lose its power. Conversations become opportunities for healing. Families find hope. Individuals discover they are not alone. As the Body of Christ, we are uniquely called to meet people where they are, with grace, truth, compassion, and wisdom. We can pray fervently while also encouraging professional support. We can trust God's healing power while embracing the resources He has provided through trained mental health professionals.

Faith and professional mental health care are not opposing forces. They are partners in the work of healing. As Proverbs 11:14 reminds us, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." (ESV). Moving forward, may our churches become places where no one has to suffer in silence, where seeking help is viewed as an act of courage rather than weakness, and where every person knows they are seen, valued, loved, and supported.

Our Communities Need Us.

Our communities are hurting. The children are struggling and teenagers are overwhelmed. Many young adults are battling anxiety. While married couples are under pressure and wanting an "out". The senior communities, those that are overlooked and/or forgotten, are experiencing more isolation, loneliness and depression. Leaving the pastors and ministry leaders extremely exhausted.

A New Perspective.

Mental illness is not a character flaw. It is not a lack of faith. It is not always caused by sin. It is not always something that prayer alone will resolve. Yes, prayer is powerful. God still heals and miracles still happen, but God also works through physicians, therapists, psychiatrists, counselors, psychologists, social workers, wellness coaches, life coaches, peer support specialists, and community resources.

The integration of faith and evidence-based mental health care has been increasingly recognized as an effective approach to improving emotional well-being. Numerous studies have found that individuals often experience better outcomes when their spiritual beliefs are respected while receiving professional mental health treatment (American Psychological Association, 2003; American Psychiatric Association, 2003).

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), only about one in three African Americans who need mental health care receive it. This treatment gap is influenced by stigma, limited access to culturally responsive care, financial barriers, and a long history of mistrust within healthcare systems. Because many individuals already have an established relationship with their church, the Black Church has an extraordinary opportunity to help bridge that gap by encouraging early conversations, reducing stigma, and supporting individuals in accessing professional care.

DO TODAY?

What Can Churches Do Today?

Build Partnerships

Develop relationships with licensed counselors, therapists, psychiatrists, hospitals, crisis agencies, and community organizations. The Church does not have to do everything alone. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration encourages faith communities to collaborate with behavioral health providers to improve access to care, strengthen crisis response, and support long-term recovery.

Train Ministry Leaders

Equip pastors, deacons, elders, ushers, youth leaders, women's ministries, and men's ministries to recognize warning signs and respond appropriately. Listening can save lives. Knowing when to refer someone for professional help can save lives as well. Programs such as Mental Health First Aid have trained millions of people worldwide to identify signs of mental health challenges, respond appropriately, and connect individuals to professional resources. Churches that invest in this type of training strengthen their ability to care for their congregations before crises escalate.

Breaking the Silence

The National Institute of Mental Health reports that stigma remains one of the greatest barriers preventing individuals from seeking treatment. Reducing stigma through education, compassion, and open conversations increases the likelihood that people will seek help earlier, leading to better mental health outcomes.

Our Collective Responsibility

Mental health is not solely the responsibility of pastors. It is not solely the responsibility of counselors or healthcare providers. The responsibility belongs to all of us. Research consistently shows that strong social support, including support from faith communities, is associated with lower rates of depression, improved resilience, and greater overall well-being. When churches intentionally foster connection and belonging, they become protective factors against emotional isolation and hopelessness.

As I completed this four-part series, entitled Mental Health and the Black Church, it was hard to not reflect on my own upbringing in the black church. Just like the black households, the black churches held secrets that were and still not discussed. The shame and stigmas of any issue that may be associated with mental health was the culprit that held many people captive in their minds. To publicly discuss such issues often led to ridicule, isolation, and sometimes

confinement to mental institutions. We have come a long way from being isolated or confined to mental hospitals, but there is still more work to do in terms of awareness and exposure to mental health resources in the black communities. Churches, my prayer is that we can come together to assist God's people in becoming mentally free. For, when one is mentally free, he or she can live out the promises of God.

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

How Can We Work Together?

You can join me in discussions about real-life issues that plague the communities. I can assist you and your congregants with addressing mental health in your church, establishing service connections, and by providing resources for your church. Let's connect. For more information on establishing safe spaces within your church and/or to join The Mental Health Wellness Movement, contact me at 770-276-9241 (b) or 251-721-6613 (p) or email me at: drlpadgettthughes@motmlc.com

Until next time, Nurture Your Mental Health and Free Your Mind!

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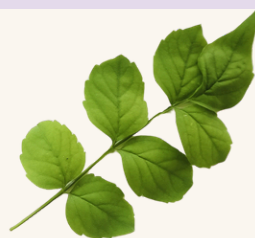
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–Dr. Lisa (LisaTonia) Padgett-Hughes (HonD), M.Ed. Counseling/Psychology, MSMFT (pending), CLC, Mental Health Wellness Coach (student), Author, Mental Health Contributing Writer, CEO/Founder of Go Forth an Sustain, Inc, Owner of Matters OF The Mind Life Coaching Services, LLC

If you are feeling vulnerable or suicidal or concerned about someone, call 988 or your local police department. 988 is the national number for all mental health, substance use, and suicide crises! Disclaimer: I am not a medical professional, psychiatrist, or psychologist. This piece of work and all of the others published in The Remarkable Giod magazine are for informational purposes only. If you have a mental health concern, please seek your primary care physician or licensed mental health professional for further evaluation.

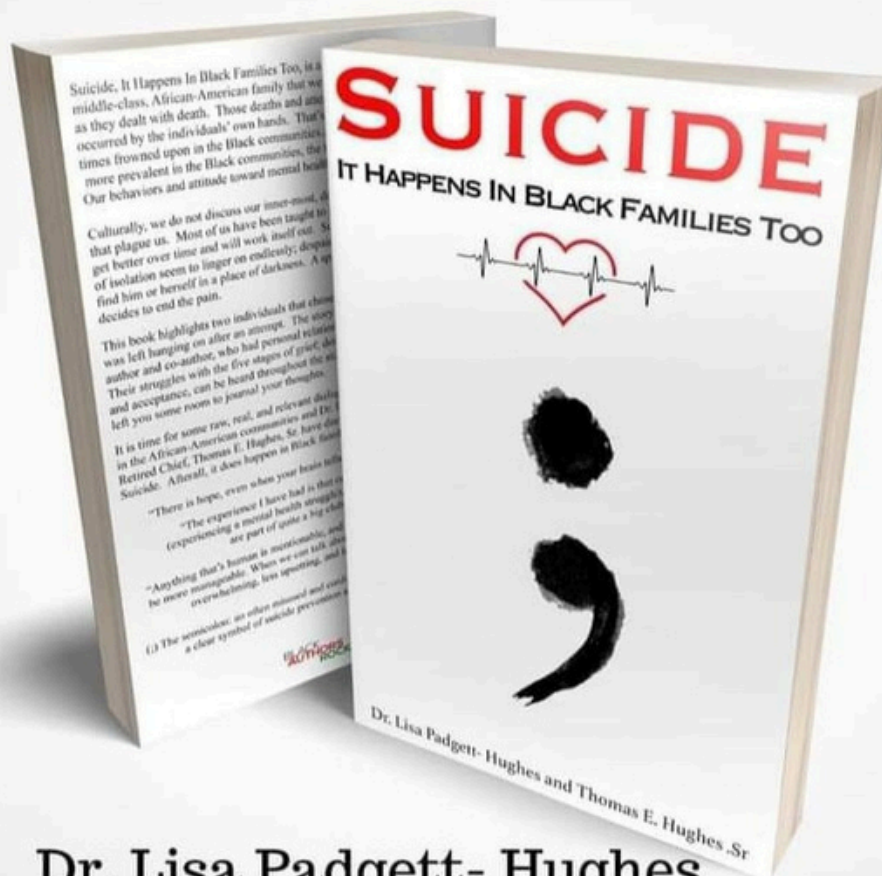
M E N T A L



H E A L T H

Do you have your copy?

http://Bit.ly /SuicideBook1



Suicide, It Happens In Black Families Too, is a middle-class, African-American family that we as they dealt with death. Those deaths and are occurred by the individuals' own hands. That's times frowned upon in the Black communities, the more prevalent in the Black communities, the Our behaviors and attitude toward mental health.

Culturally, we do not discuss our inner-most, that plague us. Most of us have been taught to get better over time and will work itself out. So of isolation seem to linger on endlessly; despite find him or herself in a place of darkness. A person decides to end the pain.

This book highlights two individuals that chose was left hanging on after an attempt. The story author and co-author, who had personal relation Their struggles with the five stages of grief, do and acceptance, can be heard throughout the book left you some room to journal your thoughts.

It is time for some raw, real, and relevant dialogue in the African-American communities and Dr. Retired Chief, Thomas E. Hughes, Sr. have done Suicide. After all, it does happen in Black families.

"There is hope, even when your heart tells
"The experience I have had is that it
(experiencing a mental health struggle
are part of quite a big club

"Anything that's human is malleable, and
be more manageable. When we can tell stories
overwhelming, less spurring, and I

(i) The semicolon, an often misused and overused
a clear symbol of suicide prevention.

Dr. Lisa Padgett-Hughes and Thomas E. Hughes, Sr.



Dr. Lisa Padgett- Hughes
bit.ly/SuicideBook1

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

What marginalized students need to know to navigate community college and thrive

Students are often expected to understand a system that was never clearly explained to them.



DEMETRA WILLIAMS, Ed.D.

Every day, marginalized students walk into community colleges with the same goal as anyone else, to succeed and build a better future. They are capable, motivated, and determined, yet many find themselves struggling not because they lack ability, but because they are navigating a system that was never clearly explained to them.

But what do I mean by “marginalized students”? A marginalized student may be the first in their family to attend college and have no one at home who understands how the system works. It may be a student balancing school with full-time work or caring for family responsibilities. It may also include students from underrepresented racial or cultural backgrounds, LGBTQ+ students, or anyone who has not always felt seen, supported, or included in educational spaces. These students bring strength and resilience, yet they are often expected to succeed without being given the same level of guidance as others.

The truth is simple. Marginalized students can absolutely succeed in community college, but success often depends on learning what is rarely taught. Students enter college for many reasons, including wanting to make their families proud, being high achievers, or working toward long-term career goals. However, for underrepresented students, the journey often looks very different. Their responsibilities, experiences, and access to information are not always the same as their peers.

This is where the hidden curriculum comes in. The hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten rules of community college, the expectations, behaviors, and systems that students are expected to understand even though no one formally teaches them. Many students enter community college unsure of what to expect and without a clear understanding of their next steps. For many, it feels like the most realistic option, especially financially, but they arrive without a roadmap. In many cases, students were not given clear or realistic guidance in high school about what comes next, which leads to confusion, imposter syndrome, and a lack of awareness about the resources available to them on campus.

One of the most important steps toward success is understanding that asking for help is not a weakness. Many students believe they must figure everything out on their own, but successful students actively seek support and use the resources available to them. Tutoring centers, advising offices, and campus services exist for a reason, and using them is part of being a successful student, not a failing one.

Another key step is building relationships. Professors are not only there to teach but also to support student growth. Going to office hours, introducing yourself, and asking questions can open doors that lead to mentorship, guidance, and opportunities students may not have known existed.

UNWRITTEN RULES

1

ASK FOR HELP

2

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

3

NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM

4

SELF-ADVOCATE

A third step is learning how to navigate the system. Community colleges have structured processes for financial aid, course registration, academic planning, and transfer pathways. Understanding how these systems work helps students stay on track and avoid unnecessary setbacks. Many marginalized students hesitate to ask questions because they feel they are supposed to already know these things, which can lead to feelings of not belonging. The reality is that they do belong, and asking questions is part of learning the system.

A fourth step is self-advocacy. Students must learn to speak up, ask for what they need, and take ownership of their educational journey. This includes asking questions when something is unclear, following up on important matters, and making informed decisions about their path. This can be a challenge for many that have not had the opportunity to do so or even know how to speak up for themselves. Taking advantage of leadership opportunities on campus is a great way to combat this.

None of these steps are about intelligence. They are about access to information. Having access to the right information and resources can significantly impact a student's success. There is no such thing as a "stupid question," and students must understand that seeking clarity is part of growth, not a sign of weakness.

When marginalized students are given access to these unwritten rules, everything changes. Confidence grows, performance improves, opportunities expand, and success becomes not just possible, but expected. This is why I wrote *The Hidden Curriculum: Navigating Community College as a Marginalized Student*. The goal is simple: to provide students with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate community college with confidence and clarity. Marginalized students must know that they belong in these spaces just as much as anyone else.

The issue has never been whether marginalized students are capable. The issue has been whether they were given the information, support, and environment needed to succeed. When we choose to be intentional about access, when we make systems clearer, and when we create truly inclusive spaces, we do more than support students. We change outcomes.

When marginalized students are given both opportunity and information, they do not just survive community college. They flourish, they lead, and they redefine what success looks like for the next generation.

AUTHOR BIO **DEMETRA WILLIAMS, Ed.D.**

Demetra Williams, Ed.D., is an educator, student affairs professional, and author with five degrees in education. She is committed to advancing equity and supporting success for marginalized students across educational spaces and life pathways. Her work focuses on helping students (particularly first-generation, underrepresented, and historically excluded populations) navigate systems, build self-advocacy skills, and access opportunities for growth and success. She is the author of *The Hidden Curriculum: Navigating Community College as a Marginalized Student*, a practical guide designed to help students understand the unwritten rules of community college and confidently move toward their academic and personal goals.




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THE A,B,C's OF DEMENTIA

By Miko Masterson, LCSW-C, CDP



The mention of dementia often sets fear in the hearts of many aging individuals. The fear of losing control of our mental abilities or a loss of independence is central in many people's minds as they age. Today I offer you a bit of straight talk about dementia – what it is and what it isn't – with the goal of dispelling myths and shining a light into this dark corner that so many would rather avoid.

What is Dementia? A Primer

Alzheimer's Association defines dementia as, "an umbrella term for loss of memory and other thinking abilities severe enough to interfere with daily life." Dementia is not a disease in itself, but is caused by a number of different diseases. Alzheimer's Disease is the leading cause of dementia worldwide.

To understand dementia, it might help to understand how the brain works. Our brains are self-cleansing, and when we sleep, they produce a fluid which washes over our brain tissue, cleansing away neural waste and creating a healthy environment for regeneration. According to Tam Cummings in *The Itty Bitty Dementia Book*, this process, called glymphatic clearance, is precisely why we wake up feeling refreshed after a good night's sleep. This is an important process, as it are these waste products which become a risk factor for developing dementia. In recent articles published by NIH and PubMed Central, if this process becomes impaired, for example due to age or injury, toxins can build up in the brain, causing damage to our cells. According to the Alzheimer's Association website, when a person has dementia, the brain's cells become

damaged, atrophied, and die off, and are not regenerated at a rate that allows the brain to maintain its normal functions. This creates shrinkage in the brain (known as neurodegeneration). To illustrate this, consider this fact – if we were to look at a picture of a healthy brain compared to the brain of a person with dementia, we would see that the healthy brain is fuller and that the spaces between the cells (called synapses) are narrower. The brain of a person with dementia is lighter in weight and the spaces, or synapses, are wider. As noted in *The Itty Bitty Dementia Book*, this makes it more difficult for the electrical impulses in the brain to bridge the gap and transport information properly. The brain with severe-stage dementia weighs approximately 2 pounds less than the healthy brain.

Alzheimer's Association educates that the brain is a complex organ and functions as the motherboard for our entire body. There are many different discrete parts of the brain, each one responsible for controlling different functions of the body. A person with dementia may exhibit different symptoms, such as difficulty with language or word finding, personality change, disinhibition (i.e. disrobing or inappropriate sexual behavior) or even hallucinations and delusions, depending on the underlying cause of the dementia and which part of the brain is affected. There are different types of dementia, each with a slightly different constellation of symptoms.

Similarly, dementia is usually referred to as having 3 different stages. These stages are early-middle-late, or are sometimes referred to

HOW IS DEMENTIA DIAGNOSED?

Start with what can be ruled out.

1

NOTICE
CHANGES

2

SEE YOUR
PCP

3

RULE OUT
ACUTE CAUSES

4

FOLLOW UP
WITH
SPECIALISTS

as mild-moderate-severe. A similar condition which is often a precursor to dementia, is Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). According to the book, *Brain Health as You Age*, as one might expect, it encompasses mild impairments to memory, language or logical thinking, where symptoms have not risen to the level of a diagnosis of dementia. Often when a person has MCI, they are able to function rather independently, perhaps with some minor supports in place, and are often able to compensate for their cognitive limitations. Friends and family may recognize that something seems “off,” but it may not be immediately obvious to the casual observer.

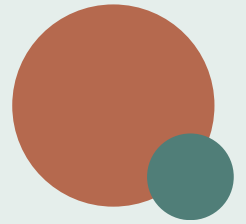
In most cases, however, the condition progresses, and the person has symptoms that would classify as dementia. At this point, the symptoms begin to get in the way of normal daily tasks, which are called instrumental activities of daily living (IADL’s). For example, *Brain Health as You Age* states that a person may lose the ability to balance a checkbook, forget important appointments or leave the stove on when cooking. Many times, during this stage, one might see personality shifts, as the person with dementia may intuitively notice changes, and work hard to compensate or “cover-up” their challenges. For example, a person who has always been outgoing and confident may become more reserved and quiet, as they begin to feel that they are having difficulty keeping up with conversations and fast-moving social interactions.

How is Dementia Diagnosed

What should one do if they notice that they or someone they love seems forgetful, or is struggling with cognitive tasks? First, it is important to note that there are potentially many different illnesses and conditions that can cause a change in mental status. Stress, UTI, dehydration, stroke and medication changes, to name a few, can all be causes of mental change. It is very important to rule out an acute medical condition before entertaining a diagnosis of dementia. For this reason, I always recommend that a visit to your PCP is the appropriate first step. He or she can run a number of blood, urine, and other tests to rule out an acute medical condition.

If, however, a visit to your PCP and a complete workup do not reveal a somatic cause for your cognitive symptoms, then I recommend the next step would be to schedule an appointment with a neurologist, who is best equipped to run thorough tests and assessments to get to the root cause of your symptoms. A clinical social worker (LCSW-C), psychologist, psychiatrist, or licensed professional counselor are also qualified to perform cognitive assessments which can give important preliminary understanding of a person’s cognitive condition.

In the next article, we will discuss what to do if you or someone you love has recently received a new diagnosis of dementia, and how to manage life at home as the disease progresses.



IS POWER.

Recognizing early warning signs can help families put support in place sooner.

Conclusion

These are not easy topics to discuss, but there is hope. Knowledge is power, and by recognizing early warning signs of dementia, families can put supports in place that can greatly improve the outcomes for the future.

A AWARENESS

Notice changes in memory, language, behavior, and daily functioning.

B BASICS

Dementia is an umbrella term, not a single disease.

C CHECK

Seek medical evaluation before assuming cognitive changes are dementia.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

What to do after a new dementia diagnosis — and how to manage life at home as the disease progresses.

Straight talk. Clear information. More hope.

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

CONTINUES WITH

STEPPING OUT OF FEAR

Rev. Sheila Holmes, M.A., LGPC, NCC

Recognizing your fears is the first step in overcoming them.

Recognizing your fears is the first step in overcoming them. Ask yourself what specifically holds you back from making changes or trying new things.

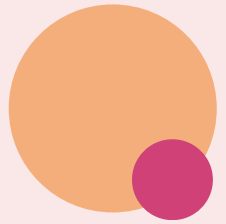
Fear is one of the most powerful weapons the enemy uses to paralyze us and to keep God's children from moving forward. There have been many times in my life when I have encountered fear. My first memory goes back to childhood, a time of innocence, magical thinking, and curiosity. It was when I discovered I had an intense fear of the dark and of being alone. These early years created a pattern of being needy coupled with attachment wounds that followed me into adulthood. My source of comfort was always my mother. Being her shadow was my favorite part of growing up. When she died unexpectedly from a brain aneurysm at the age of 54, my world shattered. Norman Cousins wrote: Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.

TISSUES AND TEARS

We know that nothing catches God by surprise. This is a true statement; nothing ever will, yet for so many of us, the death of a loved one can bring out overwhelming emotions, leaving us numb and unprepared for the struggle to heal our broken hearts. We enter a season of tissues and tears.



FOR ASHES



Tears of sorrow, tears of sadness, perhaps tears of what was and how things will never be the same again. The thing about tissues is they are really good for wiping our tears. They don't judge you, and they don't tell you to get yourself together; they just let you take all the time you need, and when one tissue is exhausted, there is always another one waiting in the box.

The Word of God tells us that tears are a natural, healthy way to process sorrow and encounter God's comfort. Our tears are sacred. They are not the mark of weakness but of power, and they express more than ten thousand tongues could speak. They are messengers of overwhelming grief and unspeakable love. Never leave home without your tissues. You and I have earned every tear we shed in memory of our loved ones, even as we celebrate them.

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

Isaiah 61:3: To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion. To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning. The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

When I think about Beauty for Ashes, I think about overcoming challenges; I think about pushing through the worst of times. I think about my own personal struggles with fear and the death of my mom. My heart grieves for the countless individuals who suffer from the devastating effects of living a life of fear. It creates an atmosphere of rejection, leaving a trail of emotional trauma and scars. I spent years masking my pain, asking myself what I was doing wrong and how this nightmare began. I recall crying out to God one evening in the shower, tears streaming down my face, wishing and praying I could just disappear. Then I heard a soft, gentle whisper within my spirit say, "I hear you calling me, I see your tears, you're not alone." And again I heard; I hear you calling me, I see your tears, you're not alone."

I knew without a doubt He would give me Beauty for Ashes.

I don't know what feelings or emotions stir up in you when you hear the term "Beauty for Ashes". But I am sure we can agree that it is a magnificent exchange. The prophet Isaiah penned a message of hope; he painted a picture of what Christ can do for any of us who are mourning loss and seeking comfort as we battle life's hardships.

STEPPING OUT OF FEAR

Leaving the comfort of denial can be challenging, and giving up the lies we tell ourselves can be hard. To throw away the cognitive distortions of negative thinking; to create new patterns of starting each day with Faith begins the journey of "Stepping out of Fear."

Every situation is different from the moment you tell yourself this is it to the reality of bridging that gap; the journey is filled with the unknown. But what if we approach this new life, our new identity, with curiosity rather than anxiety? The real work of finding ourselves begins. God never intended for me or you to stay stuck in our pain and sorrow. He reminds us that in Him we have great purpose and hope. We have victory in Jesus.

Every day, every moment, we have a choice to make. We can continue to live in Ashes covered with fear, rejection, injustice, battling daily thoughts and feelings of abandonment, grief, anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness, or we can allow God to transform us. Make room for the Holy Spirit to rise up in us in spite of the ache we feel. The phrase "If you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl is attributed to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., meaning that even when we are faced with challenges, we should always keep moving forward, even if it means taking tiny steps.

As for me, it took a whole lot of tiny steps. There was a point in my life when I became physically ill from all the stress and anxiety. And I recall a dream one night that felt so real and intense I didn't even realize I was dreaming until I woke up.

I saw myself standing in a cemetery, and as I looked around, I saw a yellow school bus. On the bus were people waving for me to join them. As I looked more closely, I noticed they were the shadows of people leaning out the windows, yelling for me to come.

I heard a voice say, "Choose your path." I said I am not getting on that bus. Then I heard the sound of water flowing, and I walked in that direction only to discover it led to a huge drop-off with a waterfall. Well, that wasn't going to work for me either because I wasn't about to jump off a cliff into a river.

When I turned, I noticed a third path; it was an overgrown forest filled with tangled tree branches and thick vegetation. I recall getting all scratched up as I fought to get through the path, only to come to a dead end. Not just any dead end, but I stood facing the side of a mountain. My mind was racing – ride the bus, jump off the cliff, or climb this mountain.

Out of nowhere, I could hear the voices of people encouraging me: "You can do it, you can do it." So, with my tears and fears, I started going up the side of this mountain. One foot, one hand pulling myself up. But then just when I was almost to the top, there were no more footholds; there was nothing for me to grab. I was stuck on the side of the mountain, with no way of escape.

But God, all of a sudden, again out of nowhere, someone reached down and grabbed my hand and pulled me over the top. The scenery was beautiful; a meadow covered in decorative flowers, and the sky was an amazing shade of blue I had never seen before. The person who pulled me up stood there and told me. Someone helped me over the mountain; now you reach back and help someone.

GOD CAN TURN OUR TRAGEDIES OF DEFEAT INTO PURPOSE.

I am here today because I will never stop telling my story of how God saved my life. I am here today because I am determined and committed to pour into the lives of wounded men and women who struggle to unmask their pain to discover their beauty because God will step in and give us.

The oil of joy for mourning – Joy is a gift from God. Joy is a sense of well-being. It is not based on what happened in our past. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Refuse to focus on the negativity; speak positive self-talk. Just don't quit. Because God has a Garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness – the spirit of heaviness is a feeling of mental and emotional weight that can make a person feel dull, depressed, anxious, and unable to focus. It keeps you struggling with issues of past failures and unbelief. But God – Don't you just love it when we can say to the world, But my God gave me a garment of praise!

How precious we are to God cannot be explained in mere words; it is expressed by his perfect love, grace and mercy. May we allow God to rebuild us, raise us up, and repair us as we hold on to his promise...of restoration: Beauty for Ashes.

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"We enjoyed every part of the retreat. As first-time attendees, everything from the Tatem's testimony to the presentation of personality types helped us understand each other better, be more attentive to one another's needs, and remember our commitment before God."

"The date night experience was great. I appreciated being able to share both the challenges and the experiences that have shaped my marriage."

YOU ARE NOT LOST

YOU ARE IN TRANSITION

**“In an instant,
my life changed.”**

My day began like so many others: medication, breakfast, and preparing for what I assumed would be a routine day. What I did not know was that it would be my husband's last day on earth.

Shortly after breakfast, he began experiencing chest pain. Within a few hours, he was with Jesus.

In an instant, my life changed.

For twenty-seven years, I had been his wife. For ten of those years, I also served as his caregiver. Our life was structured around routines, nothing extraordinary, yet consistent and comfortable. And then, suddenly, that life was gone.

I felt disoriented and overwhelmed. Though I understood intellectually that I was not the first widow, nor would I be the last, the experience felt profoundly isolating. I was left asking a question many encounter in moments of significant loss: What does my life look like now?

What I eventually came to understand is this: I was not lost—I was in transition.

Transition is the process of moving from one state of being to another. It is often uncomfortable, disorienting, and uninvited. In my case, I was transitioning from being a wife and caregiver to becoming a widow and learning how to live independently. Initially, my focus was anchored in what I had lost, rather than in what remained.



DR. EVELYN JOHNSON-TAYLOR

The shift from wife to widow is not merely a change in marital status; it is a profound, involuntary transformation that reshapes identity, daily rhythms, financial security, and social engagement. It is the movement from a shared life of “we” to an individual existence of “me,” whether one feels prepared for that shift or not.

However, widowhood is just one example of a life transition. Identity disruption can occur through divorce, children leaving home, career changes, relocation, retirement, or any experience that alters how we perceive ourselves. These moments often force us to confront a deeper question: Who am I now?

This raises an even more critical consideration: How do we avoid anchoring our identity in inherently temporary seasons? All of life's seasons are temporary. Nothing lasts forever, good or bad.

Life is active. Roles evolve. Relationships change. Seasons begin and end. When identity is rooted in what is temporary, instability becomes inevitable.

This is why a Christ-centered identity is essential.

After my husband's passing, I experienced a lack of confidence. It felt, emotionally, as though my sense of stability and assurance had left with him. While I knew this was not theologically accurate, the feeling was nonetheless real.

My restoration required intentional realignment.

IDENTITY RESET

WHAT REMAINS
WHEN A ROLE
CHANGES?

**“But your
identity
remains
intact.”**

After my husband's passing, I experienced a lack of confidence. It felt, emotionally, as though my sense of stability and assurance had left with him. While I knew this was not theologically accurate, the feeling was nonetheless real.

My restoration required intentional realignment.

I had to return to what I knew to be true, not what I felt, but what God had declared about me. This was not an instantaneous process, but a deliberate and consistent decision to anchor my identity in truth rather than in circumstance.

For anyone navigating an identity crisis, whether due to loss or life transition, it is not uncommon to feel disconnected from oneself. You may find yourself in a space where your reflection feels unfamiliar. However, this is not the end of your story; rather, it is the beginning of rebuilding.

Scripture provides a foundational truth in Ephesians 2:10 NKJV: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

What Apostle Paul writes here reminds you that you are not accidental. Your life is intentional, and your purpose was established before your circumstances ever shifted. Your identity precedes your disruption.

Life may change. Roles may evolve. People may no longer be present. But your identity remains intact.

Before I could embrace what I now call an “identity reset,” I first had to reaffirm this truth: I am God's creation. designed with intention, created with purpose, and equipped for a life that was divinely planned.

Grief is an inevitable part of the human experience; it is, in many ways, the cost of deep love. However, loss does not signify the end of purpose. Whether you are navigating widowhood, an empty nest, or another life transition, your assignment on this earth remains active as long as you have breath.

God was not surprised by your current season. He was aware of the grief, the pain, the disappointment, and the uncertainty, and yet, He did not alter your purpose. This suggests that within every transition lies the potential for growth, impact, and continued contribution.

Your experiences do not negate God's plan; they often refine it.

If you are seeking to reset your identity, the first step is a decision: Who will you believe?



BECOMING?

I chose to believe what God said about me. I reminded myself of God's promises, the prophetic word, and the truth that affirmed my identity in Him. In doing so, I was reassured that God was not finished with me—and neither was my purpose.

I invite you to consider this question:

Who have you been trying to be, and who is God calling you to become in this season?

Give yourself permission to release former roles and step fully into the identity already established for you.

Life may have shifted. You may have lost people, roles, or even a version of yourself you once recognized. But one truth remains unshaken: You are still His workmanship.

This is your invitation to reset, to rediscover, and to reclaim your identity in Him. Because your identity was never lost—it has simply been waiting to be reaffirmed.

WHO HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO BE, AND WHO IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BECOME?

Your identity was never lost—it has simply been waiting to be reaffirmed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. EVELYN JOHNSON-TAYLOR

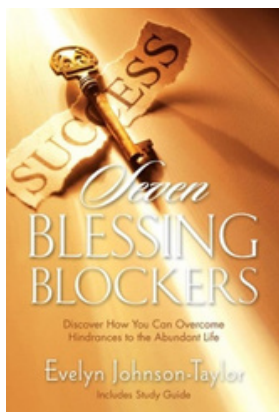
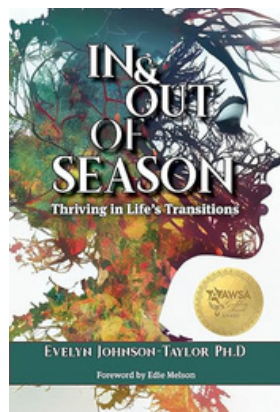
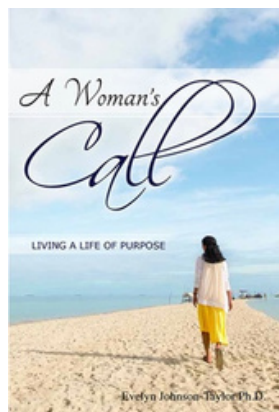
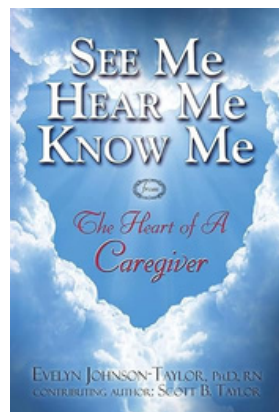
Dr. Evelyn Johnson-Taylor is a Bible teacher, keynote speaker, author, and theology professor dedicated to guiding women through life's most challenging transitions. She and her late husband, Scott, served the Church together for many years, including planting churches and leading congregations. Following the death of her husband after years of caregiving, she brings a deeply personal understanding of grief, resilience, and the journey of rebuilding life and identity. Today, she equips women to move forward with strength, clarity, and confidence grounded in faith.

She holds an Associate Degree in Nursing, a Bachelor's degree in Women's Studies, a Master's degree, and a PhD in Ministry.

Her teaching is rooted in lived experience: what she teaches, she has walked; what she guides others through, she has navigated herself—prayerfully, honestly, and firmly anchored in Scripture.

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BOOKS BY DR. EVELYN JOHNSON-TAYLOR



Books available on Amazon or on her website.

A life in transition can still be a life of purpose.



My Journey

with

Type One Diabetes

Megan Kawahara

Shortly after my 19th birthday, I could tell something was wrong. I was in my freshmen year of college, and I was still adjusting to so many life changes that I wanted to ignore whatever was wrong. But slowly, that became harder and harder. I was so unbelievably thirsty, and no amount of water could quench that thirst. I would wake up in the middle of the night feeling like I was dying of thirst. With what goes in, must come out. I was using the bathroom hourly, or so it felt. When I would wake up at night to drink, I would also be making a dash to the bathroom. Instead of gaining the “freshmen fifteen” as it was called, I lost fifteen pounds.

During one of my health classes, they very briefly mentioned these symptoms when reviewing various diseases: “diabetes” seemed to fit the bill.

During my spring break a month later, I went to my family doctor and got some tests done. I told the doctor my suspicions. I also told my family who I could tell was skeptical. How in the world could I, a 19 year old otherwise very healthy person, have such a thing and diagnose herself. Nobody outright said this, but I could sense that they were thinking, “she’s probably imagining things” or, “she’s exaggerating”. As I was running errands, my doctor called me in a panic telling me to go to the emergency room right away. My bloodwork came back and my blood sugar was 671. To a normal person, the normal range of your blood sugar is 70–99. At the hospital I was diagnosed with type one diabetes. I was right.

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“I was right.”

671

blood sugar
at diagnosis

What came next was a whirlwind of information. What a normal blood sugar range was, carb counting, insulin management and how to use needles (why couldn’t I have been diagnosed with a disease that could be managed with oral medication?), sliding scale insulin to carb ratio, etc. Too much insulin, my blood sugar drops to dangerous levels and I could become comatose and die. Too little insulin, and my blood becomes toxic and potentially damages every organ in my body potentially leading to death. And not to mention so many different factors that can change how much insulin I need, such as illness, hormone changes, exercise, etc. To this day, 14 years later, I’m still learning new things about my disease and its management.

Type 1 diabetes (T1D) is known as an invisible illness. Most people never even know the things I’m going through on a day to day basis. I use an insulin pump and a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) which are the only indicators to others that there is something different about me, but those can also be hidden under clothes. No one would ever know I had a near death experience with a severe low in the morning and show up to work an hour later like

nothing happened (despite the deep exhaustion I might feel following a low). It can be easy to hide, but some days are harder than others. Some days my body just does not want to cooperate and my blood sugar absolutely does not want to stay in range despite my best attempts. I have to fight to keep myself alive on a 24/7 basis, and the mental load can take a toll.

A Journey of Strength

Using the word “journey” to describe my life with diabetes is intentional. Despite all of the bad, it is something that has made me so much stronger than I think I ever could have been without it. It’s something that I am able to admire about myself and am grateful for the strength that I gained. And my journey will continue until the day I die, even if a cure has been found - because I can never go back to who I was before my diagnosis.

“I have to fight to keep myself alive on a 24/7 basis, and the mental load can take a toll.”





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STRESS MANAGEMENT

FOR THE CAREGIVER

By Wanda Richardson-Waddy, MSN, MA, RN

Some people have been caregivers all of their lives. Caregiving has been a part of their everyday existence or culture from a young age. Many have learned how to be a caregiver by watching someone else take care of a sick child, parent or aging grandparent. The likelihood of each of us becoming a caregiver in the future is great in light of the fact that people are living much longer than they did in years past.

According to the United States Census Bureau, in the next four years, the Baby Boomers will be over the age of 65 years of age. These aging seniors may require caregiving services without warning or planning. One of the challenges with this population is the senior's desire to age in place—stay home until they die! Unfortunately, aging in place is not always a feasible option due to their frailty and or in-home medical limitations.

Although children and grandchildren find themselves desperately wanting to accommodate the senior in their life, it could be a daunting task. Relocating the senior to your home or moving in with them presents many challenges. One of which is an attempt to run two households. Another would be trying to incorporate the senior's lifestyle into their routine.

Although providing care to others is a ministry, the experience can be physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting. Taking care of these core components is vital for a caregiver's well-being. Whether you are becoming a caregiver for the first time or even if you are experienced, maintaining a positive outlook can also be beneficial to both you and the person for whom you are providing care. A positive attitude and outlook minimizes the potential for stressful interactions.

“Providing care to others is a ministry, but the experience can be physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting.”

Maintaining a healthy relationship is important. Keeping the lines of communications and expectations present can alleviate bad feelings and again minimize stressful moments. Sometimes when providing care, the caregiver does not recognize stress exists until it hits a critical mass. So, how do you know if you are feeling stressed? Here are some questions to consider. Do you have trouble sleeping? Are you irritable or short tempered with the person you are caring for and or with others around you? Are you skipping meals? Do you have headaches or body aches? Although in isolation or in combination, the answers to these questions may or may not resonate with you. In that case, you may be managing your stress level well as a caregiver. In the event that you are unsure if you are experiencing stress or managing your stress level effectively, here are few strategies you can employ:

RECOGNIZING YOU NEED CARE

Take the time to analyze where you are on this journey. Ask yourself personal questions. Explore if you are giving yourself the care you need to sustain your role in the journey. If you need assistance, ask for it. Do not be afraid to collaborate with others.

EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS FOR YOUR LOVED ONE

Reach out to the Department of Aging and other senior resources in your community. Some communities have grants for In-Home care or Day Care. Ask for Respite care locations where you can place your loved one for a few days to give you some down time. Contact a Home Care Agency for private caregiver availability. There is normally an hourly rate and a minimum rate for services. Conduct on-line research for grants in your jurisdiction for elderly durable medical equipment when needed such as a wheelchair, stair glide or adaptation to your porch, for example.

CAREGIVER NEEDS CARE

PLACING YOUR SELF-CARE ON A CALENDAR

Schedule check-in dates and time that you will set aside for yourself each day or week to review your progress. Make a note of what is working for you and what you may need to modify to meet your needs. Do not over commit yourself. You may have to eliminate activities that are not in-line with your new life style. Schedule your doctor appointments and make a commitment to honor your visits.

SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

Read your bible for strength. Eat a balanced diet. Exercise while sitting down watching television. Take warm baths and daily walks. Journal your challenges and accomplishments. Take naps as appropriate. Invite friends over for a visit instead of leaving your house. Join a in-person or virtual support group.

FOLLOWING UP IF YOUR STRATEGIES ARE NOT EFFECTIVE

Review your status in 30 days. If you notice that your interventions are not successful, seek professional help. You may benefit from counseling services outside of your support groups.



Self-care is not separate from caregiving. It helps sustain it.

As a caregiver, it should not matter if others do not see the value in your work or want to share in the responsibility. When God gives you an assignment it is yours. He will give you the strength to see the assignment until the end. Read the scriptures as a source of strength. Particularly, reading scriptures in line with the role:

COMPASSION Caregivers have compassion for others as Christ has compassion for us (Colossians 3:12).

ACTION Caregivers take action by caring for their families (1 Timothy 5:8).

REST Caregivers do not worry about tomorrow, they take one day at a time (Matthew 6:34).

ENCOURAGED Caregivers have endurance and courage (Romans 15:5).

GRATEFUL Caregivers are happy to be of service to others (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Inhabits-Caregivers give praise to God in all things while God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3).

VIRTUE Caregivers focus on good things (Philippians 4:8).

EVERLASTING Caregivers serve a God who does not faint or grow weary, His power is unending (Isiah 40:28).

REWARD Caregivers have faith that God recognizes their work and will reward their efforts (Hebrew 6:10).

In conclusion, remember when things seem bleak, go to God for guidance. Be intentional in your prayers. God sees all, hears all and is ever present. Be obedient to your assignment. Keep the faith as God honors faith and faith honors God!

This article is not intended to be medical advice, but a guide to assist the person who is a caregiver to recognize when and if they are experiencing stress and interventions for stress management.

The Beauty of Peru



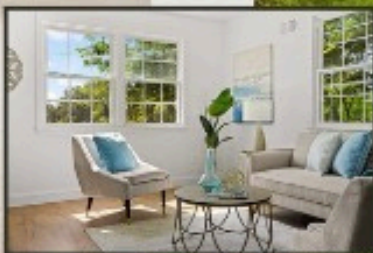








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