



VALLEY CHRISTIAN
COUNSELING CENTER INC.

The Freedom of **Grace & Healing**

April 2015

A Secret That Needs To Be Shared

What our culture sees as a harmless secret almost destroyed one man's life. Sharing his secret helped him find freedom.

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**Mental Health
Awareness Month**
May, 2015

**Golfing For Grace
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September 11, 2015

I have a secret.

Most people see me as likeable, caring, and friendly. I'm an honest, hardworking businessman. I've volunteered with the less fortunate, led Bible studies in my church, and donated to charity. I don't smoke, drink, or run with folks who do.

Overall I've got a pretty good reputation. I'm your basic all-around nice

I was exposed to pornography at an early age, and what started as an innocent curiosity soon turned into an exciting obsession. Exhilarating and yet embarrassing.

I knew it wasn't right, but I couldn't stop. And like alcohol or drugs, I gradually built up a tolerance. Soon just looking at images wasn't enough. In college I began looking into women's

"I wanted more and I was gradually moving closer to doing something very dangerous."

guy. You'd never know it, **but I also have an addiction to pornography.**

I lead a double life. **I'm not proud of it. But I'm also not alone. A growing number of men are getting ensnared in the same trap.**

Sexual images are everywhere, and now with the internet your wildest sexual fantasies are only a mouse click away. The multibillion dollar pornography industry makes more money per year than McDonald's and Coca-Cola combined. This is a big problem. It may even be your problem.

dorm windows, but even that didn't satisfy. **I wanted more and I was gradually moving closer to doing something very dangerous.**

It's not that I didn't want to stop. **I couldn't stop.** I knew it was wrong and I hated myself for what I had become. I tried everything I could think of, but I couldn't break the cycle of temptation leading to indulgence, followed by guilt and shame, followed by hopeless despair followed by more temptation, followed by more indulgence . . .

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Three Tips For Avoiding Mental Exhaustion

When your mental gas tank is running on empty remember these three tips to help you refuel.

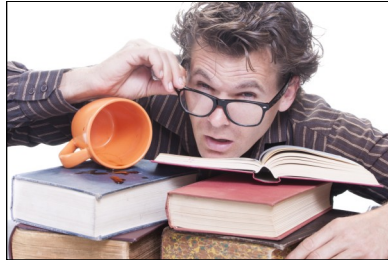
We have all experienced those days where your mind has reached its limit and focusing becomes exhausting. Here are three tips to help you avoid the mental exhaustion that so easily creeps into our lives.

Take Some Alone Time.

Alone time is good for all of us; even if you are an extrovert who loves being around people. Having some time by yourself can help your

brain relax. Use this time to enjoy a fun activity. You can read, do a Sudoku, or have devotions.

Enjoy a Rest. God was on to something when He gave us a day of rest. He knows that our bodies and brains need a break. Once a week you should enjoy a day of relaxing and recharging. Any



activities that you plan should be ones that you enjoy. It may be hard to put work aside for a day, but you can do it. You might even find that you can get more done during your working days when you are fully recharged!

Exercise. After you have your day to relax then make sure you get up and get moving! Exercising will help keep your brain and your body healthy. It does not have to be

an intense workout. You can go for a walk, a bike ride, or play with the kids. Physical activity will help you feel energized and rejuvenated.

Find time to relax, enjoy life and move around a little. It is easier said than done, I know, but you can do it!

A Secret That Needs To Be Shared (*Continued*)

Finally, by the grace of God, I came to my senses. **I realized I had a serious problem and that I had to get help. A friend suggested counseling.** I considered most counselors to be phonies and quacks, but I was also desperate. I swallowed hard and made a call to Valley Christian Counseling Center.

I've now been attending a men's sexual addiction group for over two years, and through lots of education and honest discussion **I've found a freedom and a sense of hope I never thought possible.**

Two years may sound like a long time, but addictions take a long time to develop, so it makes sense that they will not be conquered overnight. I've had to learn and unlearn a great deal. I still haven't achieved total victory, but I've come a very long way. The temptations themselves have weakened, and I feel like I

am finally getting some real control over my life.

My private life is beginning to line up with my public reputation, and that feels very, very good.

Maybe you dabble in pornography, but your problem isn't as bad as mine. Or maybe it's worse. But deep down, you know it is wrong and you feel ashamed.

If you can stop, do it now before you get ensnared. Don't kid yourself. You're playing with fire. If you can't stop, get some help. **No soldier ever won a military battle on his own, and the same is true of our private battles.**

Besides, this is one secret that's too dangerous to keep to yourself.

- *An Anonymous Testimony*

Suicide

Moodiness in young adults can be more than just a “teen thing.” One out of ten youth in North Dakota reported attempting suicide in the past year.



The risk of being a counselor is knowing that one day suicide may claim the life of someone you have been trying to help. **It is hard to talk about despair, hurt, and depression. It is especially hard to talk about youth dying by suicide, but we have to talk about it.** Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15 – 24 year olds in North Dakota.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. It is becoming easier to talk about mental health as the stigmas have started to fall away. However, the emotional and spiritual battles that people face will always be hard to talk about.

Mental Health America released a study in 2015 called “The State of Mental Health In America.” In this study they compare the states on a variety of levels concerning mental health and the access to care. North Dakota and Minnesota do very well in most categories. Both states were ranked with low mental health concerns and high rates of access to mental health care.

However, if you notice the map, **North Dakota is one of the top five states with the highest rates of youth attempted suicide.** (Minnesota had no data available for this survey.) North Dakota had 11.45% of youth reporting that they attempted suicide within the last year.

Many hurting kids, teens, and adults have found a safe place at Valley where they can talk about their

depression and suicidal thoughts. **Our mission is to have our counselors come alongside these hurts and speak life and wisdom into these lives.** Your support and prayers help us to continue bringing God’s light into life’s dark times.

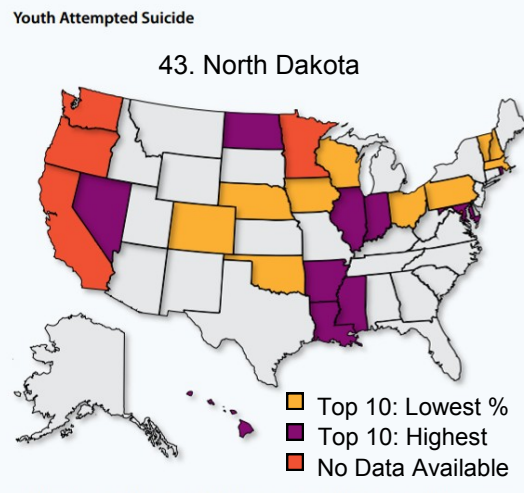
The mental and emotional battles that our youth face every day are very real. Receiving help early, rather than after a suicide attempt, is one of the best ways to help a teen, or an adult, start to create positive thoughts and fight depression.

You can help encourage a young adult to find help. Below are some of the signs of depression in teens.

- Sadness or hopelessness
- Irritability, anger, or hostility
- Tearfulness or frequent crying
- Withdrawal
- Loss of interest in activities
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Excessive, repetitive behaviors
- Poor performance in school

Depression can look different from person to person. Look for red flags and talk to your teen if you are concerned.

- Kristin Fraser





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Easter Is For Second Chances

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." - Mark 16:6-7

Do you need a second chance today? On the first Easter morning, Peter needed one. He had insisted that he would never deny Christ. But just as Jesus had predicted, Peter not only denied the Lord, but he denied Him three times. The last glimpse Peter had of Jesus before His crucifixion was in the glow of the fire in the high priest's courtyard, where he actually made eye contact with Jesus.

What kind of look do you think Jesus gave Peter when their eyes met? Do you think it was one of those I-told-you-so-looks? I don't think it was. I think it was a look of love. And I believe that is why Peter went away and wept bitterly. He had failed the Lord so miserably. He probably thought there was no hope for him.

But then a message went out from the empty tomb

that Jesus had risen, followed by these instructions, "Go, tell His disciples—and Peter. . . ." It was not, "Go tell the disciples, including Peter, James, and John. . . ." It was just Peter, because Peter needed a special word of encouragement.

Do you need encouragement today? Maybe you have fallen short. And like Peter, maybe you ended up with the wrong people in the wrong place at the wrong time, ultimately doing the wrong thing.

God gave Peter a second chance. And He will give you one, too — because Easter is for the person who needs a second chance.

- A Devotional From Greg Laurie Daily

