

Careletter

Encouragement for TREK Wives | WEEK 2

Verse of the Week

For the LORD your God is
living among you.

He is a mighty Savior.

He will take delight
in you with gladness.

With His love, He will
calm all your fears.

He will rejoice over you
with joyful songs.

Zephaniah 3:17 NLT

A Note from Melissa

One of the reasons that I love my job is because it gives me the opportunity to give back what was given to me on my own healing journey. I am the wife of a man in long-term recovery from sexual addiction, so I know what it is like to be married to someone who is coping in unhealthy and sinful ways. You will hear more of our story when you come to **Reclaiming Families Weekend**, but let me assure you that I understand the challenges you are facing. All of us come with different stories, but in all of them there is a common thread of emotional disconnection, broken trust, painful consequences, and shattered dreams.

Something that was life-changing for me was getting support and help for myself by seeing a therapist and joining a support group of wives facing similar challenges. Knowing that I was not alone—that I could be honest about my doubts, fears, anger, and pain with no judgment—was very healing for me. I hope that you will have an opportunity to find a therapist and plug into some kind of safe group while your husband is in treatment. If you need suggestions about resources in your area, I would be happy to make recommendations for you based on your needs. Just send me an email at melissa.haas@hopequestgroup.org and I will work on helping you find support.

Praying for you, Melissa

TREK Program Information

One of the questions I often get asked is what a typical day looks like for the men in the TREK program. Guys are responsible for waking up, getting ready for the day, doing their chores, and having breakfast by 8 a.m. Their first group of the day is Spiritual Life at 8:30, which is led by our campus pastor. Pastor B, as the guys call him, is very creative in finding ways to help the men understand God and relate to Him with authenticity. After Spiritual Life, the men have two other psycho-educational groups led by one of our therapists, case managers, or our nurse. Topics of these groups correspond with the program module. Lunch is at noon and is prepared for the men. After lunch, the men participate in a therapy group called Real Life, in which they process with each other relationship challenges that have arisen in the community and affirm each other for interactions that have been helpful or healing to them. This group is led by one of the primary therapists and is one of the strategic elements of the program that helps the men learn how to connect authentically with others, how their attitudes and behaviors impact others, and how to repair relationships when they hurt or offend someone. After Real Life, the men have two final hours of groups focused on experiential learning like art therapy, presenting moral inventories to peers, mindfulness/Christian meditation, and genograms (which is a picture of family relationships). At 4:30 p.m., clients head outside for physical exercise. They rotate between playing pickleball, volleyball, and basketball, and many clients use this time to walk on the wooded trails we have on campus or work out in the gym. The evening meal is served at 6:00 p.m. and is followed by chore time and homework time. Guys work on homework assignments, reading, and journaling and sometimes play board games with each other before bedtime. Lights out is at 10:30 p.m.

Three to four times a week, men will be pulled out of group to meet with their counselor, case manager, or campus pastor. These times are strategically chosen so that your husband is not missing material that is relevant to his recovery. Also, since the core six-week curriculum is repeated twice during the TREK program, all clients will have an opportunity to participate in all of the groups at least once.



Help For Healing

In the last careletter, we talked about the roller coaster of emotions you are probably experiencing because of your husband's addiction. One of the most uncomfortable feelings to experience on that roller coaster is anxiety. Anxiety is our body's emotional and physiological response to threat and danger, and there is no greater threat to the well-being of a marriage and family than addiction. When the stakes are high and we feel powerless to do anything to change the situation, sometimes our brains will panic. Many spouses of addicts report having at least one panic attack in the aftermath of betrayal. Panic attacks are characterized by a feeling of tightness or pressure on the chest, a sense of being unable to catch your breath, the thought that you are dying, trembling or shaking, and extreme distress. If you are struggling with anxiety, one of the best things you can do for yourself as soon as

you feel your chest tightening is to take a deep breath in through your nose—counting to five—and a slow release of your breath—again counting to five. Continue to breathe slowly and deeply while noticing what your senses are picking up around you. Name 5 green things in the room or say 5 things you hear around you. Notice the ground underneath your feet and how it feels. You are helping yourself get out of your head and grounded back into your body in the present moment. Sometimes it helps to say a simple phrase out loud such as, “Jesus, You are with me.”

If you are experiencing a lot of anxiety, I highly recommend finding a therapist who can help you manage the symptoms of your betrayal trauma (which is very similar to PTSD). Remember, all feelings pass, and your body will return to a more peaceful state. This kind of pain won't last forever. Most of all, remember that you are not alone. Other women have walked this path and made it. There is hope!



Self-Care Strategies

This week choose one of the following self-care activities to do each day. (You can do the same one more than once, or you can even use one from last week's list. The point is to practice self-care every day.)

- **Reach out for emotional support.** See a therapist, join a support group, and confide in safe friends.
- **Nurture your body.** Go get a manicure or a pedicure. Schedule a massage or facial. Get your hair done. Create a spa-like setting in your bathroom and have a long bath.
- **Do something that makes you laugh.** Watch your favorite comedy show or movie. Hang out with a friend who has a great sense of humor. Play with your kids or your family pet.
- **Spend time in God's creation.** Go hiking or biking. Watch a sunrise or sunset. Give yourself an opportunity to be filled with wonder and appreciation of the beauty around you.
- **Listen to music that encourages your soul.** Even better, sing along, letting your own voice join in with the promises of God.
- **Journal your prayers.** Pour out your heart to God in writing, inviting Him into all of your feelings.
- **Play.** You can color in an adult coloring book, work puzzles, play a game with someone, draw or paint, do a craft, try out a new recipe—anything that is fun for you and brings you joy.
- **Call or meet with a safe friend.** Talk about your challenges or talk about “normal” things—whatever you need for self care this week. It's okay to talk about your feelings, and it is also okay to take a break from the stress and pain of your current situation.