



# Careletter

## Encouragement for TREK Wives | WEEK 4

### Verse of the Week

**When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.**

Isaiah 43:2 NLT

### A Note from Melissa

One of the greatest graces and challenges I faced in the early days of my recovery was having young children while my husband was in treatment. On the one hand, it was a grace because the needs of my children forced me to stay present with them and focus on loving and nurturing them. On the other hand, it was a challenge because I was exhausted with being the only parent, irritable at times because I was hurting, and overwhelmed by my fears for them and the impact my husband's addiction would have on their future.

If you have children in the home of any age, you are likely to struggle with greater anxiety and anger because not only are you handling your emotions, but you are helping them manage theirs as well. And there is nothing that gets our mama bear heart more activated than seeing our kids afraid or in pain. So, if you are navigating this challenge, make sure you are getting adequate support from others and your kids are getting the support they need. Talk with your husband's therapist about ways the children can stay connected to him during treatment (if it feels safe to you for them), look into therapy or support for your kids (many Celebrate Recovery groups offer a kids' program), and arrange playdates with other families so that your kids can get some daddy needs met with safe men. Also, don't neglect yourself. Have people you trust watch the kids so that you can have some time to process and rest.

Even if your kids are grown, you are likely to face many fears about your family. Some adult children are very angry with their dad and don't want to talk or interact in any way with him. Other adult children may be angry with you for setting a boundary and blame you for their distress. Sometimes adult children may pressure you to end the marriage when you still want to see if it can be repaired. None of these situations are easy to deal with and complicate your recovery process.

Whatever situation you are facing with your children (or your dream of future children), know that you are not alone. And this is a place where support groups can be very valuable in helping you stay sane amid so many swirling emotions and fears. Reach out to safe friends for the support that you need.

Prayerful for you, Melissa

## TREK Program Information

Most men struggling with addiction struggle to set boundaries with themselves, adhere to a helpful structure, and submit to authority. So, part of the TREK program structure is a level system that gives men the opportunity to earn privileges and more autonomy as they submit to a process of recovery work. To “level up,” clients must apply to be considered and submit themselves to an evaluation by their peers and the staff. “Evals,” as the clients call them, happen every two weeks. As they move through the levels, men must demonstrate to their peers and the therapists that they are adhering to the program structure, following group norms, developing insight about themselves, making progress in communicating effectively, managing their emotions, taking ownership of their recovery, and demonstrating leadership in the community.

All clients begin on **Green** level and can advance to **Bronze, Silver, Gold,** and **Platinum.** With each level achieved, the client earns more privileges such as-receiving mail, having pictures of family, having free time in the gym, walking the trail with two people, sending mail, Saturday calls, walking the trail with one person, having a lunchtime nap, and walking the trail alone. Every client who stays for the full 12 weeks of the program “completes” the program, but only clients who level up to gold “achieve” the program. Achieving the TREK program means that both the client’s peers and the staff have seen the client develop and demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively, manage his emotions, and take full ownership of his recovery. Very few clients make it to Platinum, but those that do demonstrate leadership skills within the community, using what they have learned to help and encourage other clients.



## Help For Healing

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions we feel and one of the hardest to channel for good instead of evil. While anger in itself is not sinful-Jesus himself got angry!--it is easy to cross a line and say or do very unloving things when we are angry. Spouses often tell me, “Melissa, I am so angry I could punch him in the face right now.” This is a completely valid and understandable statement, given the level of hurt spouses experience when addiction has been running their husband’s life. Anger is a protective emotion, meaning it is meant to help us move or act in a way to defend ourselves or someone we love against a perceived threat or danger. The tricky thing about relational injuries is that they continue to hurt and threaten our emotional well-being for a long time, so anger naturally stays up and running because the threat doesn’t feel resolved.

Since the way your body activates when you are angry involves hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, it is very important for your physical health to move in some way to expend that energy. Otherwise, you will make yourself vulnerable to depression, headaches, GI issues, and autoimmune disorders. Going for a brisk walk, running, riding a bike, playing tennis, hitting softballs, vacuuming, chopping wood, sweeping, kickboxing, etc. are all ways to expel that

angry energy safely. One wife I know joined a martial arts class to give her a healthy outlet for her anger. Another did a home renovation project that gave her the opportunity to demolish lots of things with a sledgehammer. I personally love getting on an elliptical machine, cranking up the resistance, and running to the driving beat of a powerful song. You can be creative in expending angry energy, but make sure whatever you do passes this three-question safety test: **1) Will this hurt me? 2) Will this hurt someone else? 3) Will this create more stress in my life?** If you can answer no to all three questions, then you are safe. Invite Jesus to join you and work through that anger!



## Self-Care Strategies

Try one of these self-care activities each day this week.

- **Start a gratitude list.** When you find yourself overwhelmed or anxious, remind yourself of God's presence and provision by focusing on what you are grateful for. Write your gratitudes in a journal or on sticky notes placed where you can see them.
- **Do an activity that requires all your focus.** Work puzzles; color or paint something that requires you to stay in the lines; sew, crochet, knit, or cross-stitch; go mountain-biking or kayaking; do a group fitness class. The goal is to have your mind and body thinking about something other than your current challenges.
- **Say no to a request.** Set limits around your time, service, and ministry opportunities so that you have time to take care of yourself.
- **Breathe.** Do a mindfulness meditation or use an app like Abide to slow your breathing and center your heart in God's peace.
- **Play with puppies, kittens, or your own pet.** Watching videos of puppies or kittens is fun too.
- **Do something fun with someone you love.** Have a camp out in the living room with your kids. Go shopping with a friend or relative. Be creative and don't overthink it.
- **Take communion.** If your church doesn't offer communion every week, have a private communion time with Jesus, using food you have at home to represent the bread and the wine. Jesus understands suffering caused by the sin of others. Remind yourself that you are not alone as you are sharing this meal with Him.