

Careletter

Encouragement for HopeQuest Wives | WEEK 8

Verse of the Week

But as for me, I will sing about Your power. Each morning I will sing with joy about Your unfailing love. For You have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress.

Psalm 59:16 NLT

A Note from Your Care Team

What helps you feel safe emotionally?

Most of us don't usually think about the answer to this question from a positive point of view. We know what makes us feel unsafe emotionally, but it might be hard to put into words what would help us feel secure in our relationships.

Obviously, faithfulness is necessary for emotional safety in a marriage. So are things like consistency, dependability, responsibility, acceptance, empathy, responsiveness, respect, validation, honesty, and managing emotional intensity. Both you and your husband need these things to feel emotionally safe in your marriage.

One of the most challenging things about recovery is that your husband's choices have made the marriage unsafe for you, which causes you to react in ways that make it unsafe for him. Because people who struggle with addiction have low distress tolerance, meaning that they have a very low threshold for painful emotions, your husband cannot hold space for your pain. This creates a crazy cycle in the marriage that looks something like this: your husband is overwhelmed by his distressing emotions and acts out in some way; you feel hurt and scared and tell him about it; he feels worse and reacts in self-protective ways; you feel worse-unheard, unimportant, unloved, and hopeless; he acts out in some way to escape from his overwhelming feelings of shame and despair. And the cycle starts all over again.

Changing this crazy dance in your marriage is not easy. Even when your husband stops acting out in his addiction, he may still struggle with emotional reactivity or shutting down when he is distressed. Having a good marriage therapist who is trained in EFT (Emotionally Focused Therapy) can help the two of you learn to connect and communicate in ways that keep you both safe emotionally. If you would like to know more about EFT or get help in finding a marriage therapist in your area, reach out to us at **melissa.haas@hopequestgroup.org** or **leah.hedrick@hopequestgroup.org**.

Praying for His provision in your life, Melissa & Leah

HOPEQUEST

HopeQuest Residential Program Information



One of the things we value at HopeQuest is community. We work as a team to support our clients and give them the best care possible. The clinical team (made up of all the therapists, case managers, recovery techs, and our campus pastor) meets twice a week to discuss how clients are progressing and to brainstorm together about how we can address any challenges or obstacles clients may be experiencing. Each man in the program is assigned a primary therapist who he will typically see twice a week for individual therapy. Your husband's therapist will be working with him on unresolved trauma, distorted thinking patterns, and self-protective strategies that hinder emotionally healthy relationships with himself and others.

Each client is also assigned a case manager to help him with practical and logistical aspects of his recovery. Usually, men meet weekly with their case manager doing things like identifying triggers, establishing boundaries for recovery, building a recovery plan, and finding support groups and therapists where they live. Any necessary tasks related to jobs, finances, insurance, etc., are worked on in case management. Also, all use of technology is supervised by your husband's case manager to maintain his safety and limit his access to anything that might be harmful to him or his marriage. Case managers often help clients clear their phones and delete apps that are unsafe for their recovery. They also educate clients about recovery resources available for their specific addiction.

Help For Healing

One of the consequences of addictive behavior is an overwhelming lack of emotional (and sometimes physical) safety. Trust has been shattered, and feeling safe in the marriage seems impossible. One way to begin developing a sense of safety in the marriage is to write out some safety requests for your husband to consider as he works to rebuild trust with you. It is important that you make a request, instead of a demand, so that you have an opportunity to see the heart of your husband. (If you make a demand, he may comply out of fear, but his heart may be full of resentment and resistance at feeling controlled and parented.)

A safety request includes the behavior you are asking him to do and the reason why it will help your heart heal. An example might be: **Your phone has become a huge trigger for me. Every time I see it, I am reminded of all of the times you were acting out instead of spending time with me and the kids, and that brings up all kinds of painful emotions for me. It would help my heart heal if you would put your phone in the basket by the door when you get home from work and spend the evening present with us.**

Here's another one: **When I see a water bottle in your hand, a surge of anxiety hits me in the gut. I am so afraid you are deceiving me again-that you are drinking vodka and not water. It would help me feel less anxious if you didn't drink from water bottles or carry water bottles around with you.**

Requests like these give your husband the opportunity to love you well, to choose to help your heart heal by not doing behaviors that are triggering for you. If he refuses your request, it tells you a great deal about his heart. If writing safety requests feels overwhelming, ask your therapist to help you identify some of your triggers and start with safety requests around those. You don't have to make a comprehensive list right now. Just start with the ones that are most important to you.



Self-Care Strategies

I hope that practicing self-care is becoming a habit. Here are some suggestions to try this week.

- **Start your day with music.** Choose music that matches your needs. If you wake up anxious and worried, listen to something soft and soothing. If you are feeling apathetic and unmotivated, choose something upbeat and inspiring.
- **Pause midday to check in with yourself and God.** Notice how you are feeling and express those feelings to God. Ask for what you need from Him. Nurture your body well.
- **End your day with a reflective meditation.** I love the evening meditations on the **Lectio 365** App. They are very soothing and remind me of God's love and presence in my life.
- **Add beauty to your life.** Wear an outfit you love. Arrange flowers in a vase. Walk through a garden or watch the sunset. Appreciate beauty around you.
- **Encourage a friend.** Take time to express gratitude for qualities you admire and ways her life has blessed you.
- **Love your feet today.** They take you everywhere, so appreciate them with a pampering foot soak and moisturizing lotion. Or splurge on a pedicure.
- **Hug a friend or relative.** Touch is nurturing, so give and receive a hug from a safe person in your life.

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