General Authority Quotes on Depression and Emotional Wellness

**Ezra Taft Benson, “Do Not Despair”**


We live in an age when, as the Lord foretold, men’s hearts are failing them, not only physically but in spirit. (see D&C 45:26). Many are giving up heart for the battle of life. Suicide ranks as a major cause of death among college students. As the showdown between good and evil approaches, with its accompanying trials and desolations, Satan is increasingly striving to overcome the Saints with despair, despondency, discouragement, and depression.

Yet, of all people, we as Latter-day Saints should be the most optimistic and the least pessimistic. For while we know that “peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion,” we are also assured that “the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst.” (D&C 1:35-36)

There are times when you simply have to righteously hang on and outlast the devil until his depressive spirit leaves you... To press on in noble endeavours, even while surrounded by a cloud of depression, will eventually bring you out on top into the sunshine...

“Salvation,” said Joseph Smith, “is nothing more nor less than to triumph over all our enemies and put them under our feet.” (TPJS, p. 297) We can rise above the enemies of despair, depression, discouragement, and despondency by remembering that God provides righteous alternatives.

To lift our spirits and send us on our way rejoicing, the devil’s designs of despair, discouragement, depression, and despondency can be defeated in a dozen ways, namely repentance, prayer, service, work, health, reading, blessings, fasting, friends, music, endurance, and goals. [see the full talk for more insights on each of these strategies]

Food can affect the mind, and deficiencies in certain elements in the body can promote mental depression. In general, the more food we eat in its natural state and the less it is refined without additives, the healthier it will be for us.


(Called in 1880 as 1st Counselor in the 1st Presidency to John Taylor, with Joseph F. Smith as 2nd Counselor. Same counselors served during Wilford Woodruff’s presidency, 1889 until Bro. Cannon’s death in 1891, when Pres. Smith became 1st Counselor)

The Lord our God has sent us here to get experience...that we may know the good from the evil and be able to close our hearts against the evil... It is true that some have greater power of resistance than others, but everyone has the power to close his heart against doubt, against darkness, against unbelief, against depression, against anger, against hatred, against jealousy, against malice, against envy. God has given this power unto all of us, and we can gain still greater power by calling upon Him for that which we lack. If it were not so, how could we be condemned for giving way to wrong influences?
We live in a day when the adversary stresses on every hand the philosophy of instant gratification. We seem to demand instant everything, including instant solutions to our problems.

We are indoctrinated that somehow we should always be instantly emotionally comfortable. When that is not so, some become anxious, and all too frequently seek relief from counseling, from analysis, and even from medication.

It was meant that life would be a challenge. To suffer some anxiety, some depression, some disappointment, even some failure is normal.

Teach our members that if they have a good, miserable day once in a while, or several in a row, to stand steady and face them. Things will straighten out... There is a great purpose to our struggle in life.

We have succeeded fairly well in teaching Latter-day Saints that they should take care of their own material needs and then contribute to the welfare of those who cannot provide for themselves... The principle of self-reliance or personal independence is fundamental to a happy life. In too many places, in too many ways, we are getting away from it.

The substance of what I want to say is this: The same principle - self-reliance - has application to the spiritual and to the emotional. We have been taught to store a year’s supply of food, clothing, and, if possible, fuel - at home. There has been no attempt to set up storerooms in every chapel. We know that in a crunch our members may not be able to get to the chapel for supplies.

Can we not see that the same principle applies to inspiration and revelation, the solving of problems, to counsel, and to guidance? We need to have a source of it stored in every home, not just in the bishop’s office.

If we do not do that, we are quite as threatened spiritually as we should be were we to assume that the Church should supply all material needs. Unless we use care, we are on the verge of doing to ourselves emotionally (and therefore spiritually) what we have been working so hard for generations to avoid materially.

We seem to be developing an epidemic of counselitis which drains spiritual strength from the Church... It is very serious! ... We have become very anxious over the amount of counseling that we seem to need in the Church. Our members are becoming dependent. We must not set up a network of counseling services without at the same time emphasizing the principle of emotional self-reliance and individual independence.

There are some spiritually destructive techniques used in the field of counseling. [Bishops,] when you entrust your members to others, do not let them be subject to these things. Solve problems the Lord’s way.

Some counselors want to delve deeper than is emotionally or spiritually healthy. They sometimes want to draw out and analyze and take apart and dissect. While a certain amount of catharsis is healthy, overmuch of it can be degenerating. It is seldom as easy to put something back together as it is to take it apart. By probing too deeply, or talking endlessly about some problems, we can foolishly cause the very thing we are trying to prevent.
Rather than continually dole out counsel, it is easier to show them how to help themselves, and more than that, how to help others. That is the greatest therapy.

Spiritual independence and self-reliance is a sustaining power in the Church. If we rob members of that, how can they get revelation for themselves?

Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Precedes Revelation”  
(From Oct. 1991 General Conference - see Ensign, Nov. 1991)

No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it will soon become, without personal inspiration. [As we learn to become more reverent], the spiritual power in the lives of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems without all the counseling which we seem now to need.

Richard G. Scott, “Healing the Tragic Scars of Abuse”  
(From April 1992 General Conference - see Ensign, May 1992)

I caution you not to participate in two improper therapeutic practices that may cause more harm than good. They are:

1) Excessive probing into every minute detail of your past experiences, particularly when this involves penetrating dialogue in group discussion, and
2) Blaming the abuser for every difficulty in your life.

Richard G. Scott, “To Be Free of Heavy Burdens”  
(From Oct. 2002 General Conference - see Ensign, Nov. 2002, p. 86)

Many of you suffer needlessly from carrying heavy burdens because you do not open your hearts to the healing power of the Lord. To you who may have been scarred by the ugly sin of abuse: Mental, physical, or sexual abuse can cause serious, enduring consequences unless healed by the Lord. Yet you do not need to experience a lifetime of counseling. Complete healing will come through your faith in Jesus Christ and His power and capacity, through the Atonement, to heal the scars of that which is unjust and undeserved. I have witnessed how the Savior has healed aggravated cases of abuse in that way. Ponder the power of the Atonement. Pray to understand how it can heal you.

Richard G. Scott, “Finding Joy in Life”  
(From April 1996 General Conference - see Ensign, May 1996, p. 24)

A pebble held close to the eye appears to be a gigantic obstacle. Cast on the ground, it is seen in perspective. Likewise, problems or trials in our lives need to be viewed in the perspective of scriptural doctrine...No matter how difficult something you or a loved one faces, it should not take over your life and be the center of all your interest. Challenges are growth experiences, temporary scenes to be played out on the background of a pleasant life. Don’t become so absorbed in a single event that you can’t think of anything else or care for yourself or for those who depend upon you.

Some people are like rocks thrown into a sea of problems. They are drowned by them. Be a cork. When submerged in a problem, fight to be free to bob up to serve again with happiness.
You are here on earth for a divine purpose. It is not to be endlessly entertained or to be constantly in full pursuit of pleasure. You are here to be tried, to prove yourself so that you can receive the additional blessings God has for you.

Learn from inspiring individuals who have made peace with their challenges and live with joy amid adversity…

Children teach us how to find joy even under the most challenging circumstances. *Children haven’t yet learned to be depressed by concentrating on the things they don’t have. They find joy in what is available to them.*

Find the **compensatory blessings in** your life when, in the wisdom of the Lord, He deprives you of something you very much want.

I know that **every difficulty we face in life**, even those that come from our own negligence or even transgression, can be turned by the Lord into growth experiences, a virtual ladder upward.