

BETTER LIVING FOR TODAY

October 2005
Vol. 4—No. 4

Resource Library

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Oct. 14 — Dr. Meier will be the guest on “At Home Live” on the Family Network.

Oct. 20 — Dr. Meier will be speaking in Sacramento, CA, on his new book, *Blue Genes*. For more information, call 800-799-7312.



Log on to www.family.org and read Dr. Paul Meier’s monthly contribution to Focus on the Family’s Men/Women—Focus Over Fifty.



Paul Meier, M.D.

Restoring Relationships with Adult Siblings

My brother, my two sisters and I enjoyed growing up together, watching TV together, playing many board games together, and going to church together. We looked forward to family vacations together, often visiting relatives in other states. Now, I still love all my sibs very much, and my younger sister is one of my closest friends as well as my business partner in running Meier Clinics from coast-to-coast. It feels great to have the love and support of my siblings.

I have lots of psychiatric patients who wish they had this kind of relationship with their brothers and sisters. In spite of their heroic efforts to build healthy relationships with their siblings and lots of prayer, it often simply does not happen! What can they do next?

The Bible tells us quite clearly in many places that it is not always possible to be at peace with everyone. It tells us that we should make an effort to do our part, but that it still may not work. Christians often have a hard time accepting the fact that God does not make robots out of us. He gives all humans the right to choose whether or not to seek God’s will for their lives. God would love for your siblings to not hold grudges and to build healthy friendships with you, but God will never force anyone to obey Him.

In fact, if your sibs are emotionally, physically, or sexually abusive, I would urge you to keep your distance and have no more than a superficial relationship with them or maybe even no relationship at all in some cases. God NEVER wants you to put up with abuse—unless you are a Christian and someone is “slapping you in the face” for being a believer, in which case you should turn your cheek. If anyone else abuses you, you should use self-defense, boundaries, and even call

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the police if necessary. God says in Psalm 68 that when someone abuses one of God’s children, God will take that abuser and smash his head against



the rocks. He also promises in Romans 12 to get vengeance on our foes, warning us not

to take vengeance into our own hands.

My advice as a Christian psychiatrist is to seek the council of your close friends and the sibs you are close to in order to evaluate whether there is any merit at all in trying to make peace with the siblings with whom you are distanced. If they hurt you or take advantage of you every time you try to get close to them, then give up and stay away from them; turn them over to God. If your sibs are relatively decent people, but there are some hard feelings because of disagreements from the past, then making peace is a valuable effort.

When doing so, NEVER tell your sibs what they should or should not do. Do not preach to them or at them. Instead, tell them simply that you miss having a close relationship with them and ask if there is anything you can do to help the relationship. King Solomon told us in the book of Proverbs that a brother offended is harder to win over in friendship than defeating a strong city. So even if your sibling is at fault and caused the breakdown in the relationship, still ask (without implying guilt if there is none) if there is anything

YOU can do to restore the relationship.

If several sibs are on the same page with you emotionally, then asking for a family meeting is often helpful to persuade the errant sib to come back to the family fold. If part of the problem was your fault, be sure to apologize for your part in the alienation, but don’t apologize if you are innocent. God wants us to speak the truth in love, which means we not only need to speak to our sibs in loving ways, but we are also supposed to be honest with them, even if the truth hurts and may result in a permanent alienation. An adult-to-adult message to your alienated peer would be, “I feel (whatever emotion) about what happened to alienate us from each other. (Sad? Angry? Whatever the truth is!)

If your sib refuses to reconcile, then leave the door open for the future by saying that you will always love him/her, no matter what, and that you hope some day he/she will change his/her mind and become your friend again.



Paul Meier, M.D., is the co-founder of Meier Clinics and is a nationally recognized psychiatrist. In addition to an active practice at the Richardson clinic and a daily radio program, Dr. Meier enjoys speaking to groups across the country and writing books. A few of the books he has authored and/or co-authored are *Happiness is a Choice*, *Love is a Choice*, *Unbreakable Bonds: Practicing the Art of Loving and Being Loved*, and *Don’t Let Jerks Get the Best of You: Advice for Dealing with Difficult People*. For a list of all of Dr. Meier’s books, log on to www.meierclinics.org and select his biography under Richardson, Texas.

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“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

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SAD?

Just saying the word “winter” can bring on thoughts of cloudy days, barren landscapes, cold hands and feet, short days and long nights, harsh winds, and just a generalized discontent with everything. The “dead of winter” doldrums are powerful enough to affect people physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Do you find yourself dreading winter because you know you’ll get depressed? Around October or November, do you begin feeling lethargic and craving carbohydrates? Then, as you gain weight and become less active, do you withdraw from people and stay indoors as much as possible?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, you may be one of thousands who experience SAD — Seasonal Affective Disorder.

What is SAD?

SAD differs from general depression in several

ways. First, it is directly related to the season of winter months. A person who feels fine throughout other seasons of the year will begin to feel down and depressed as winter approaches and the daylight hours shorten. Once the season changes into spring and days are longer again, the feelings of depression begin to lift and may not return until the next winter.

The seasonal depression must also happen for several years in a row to be correctly diagnosed as SAD. Just having one case of the “winter blahs” doesn’t mean that SAD is the culprit.

But, before we label all depressive feelings during winter with the SAD tag, let’s look at other possibilities.

Can these feelings of despair be related to a loss of other painful memories associated with the winter season? Since we all use some degree of denial to protect ourselves from emotional pain, denying the anniversary of a winter loss wouldn’t be unusual. Sometimes, these emotional wounds must be opened up so unresolved guilt, bitterness, and grudges can

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Mission Statement

Meier Clinics is committed to providing excellent mental health care services that address the whole person—physically, emotionally & spiritually.

Dear Dr. Meier,

. . . I can go places and not experience devastating emotions. I no longer hear the “bad thoughts” about myself. I feel like a normal person. . . I am truly loved by God, constantly. . . The first place I came to really understand salvation and the fullness and joy of being cleansed before God was there at the day program. . . I appreciate and am grateful that you and your co-workers devote your time, skills and ministry in this area. . . I will also continue to pray for you and all the people working there and for the new patients that arrive every day. I am truly grateful for your ministry and the impact you have had on my life.

Thank you! Pamela

People, like Pamela, are enjoying transformed lives daily through the one-on-one counseling and care being provided at Meier Clinics. But there are many more who need help who do not have the financial resources needed. Would you like to make a true difference in someone’s life this holiday season? Please prayerfully consider adding Meier Clinics Foundation to your Christmas list and giving a gift that will last a life time. Meier Clinics is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization and all gifts are tax deductible. Our prayer is that you and yours will truly know and experience the love of the Savior whose birthday we soon celebrate.
In His Love, the Meier Clinics Staff

I would like to be a MCF Partner by committing to a monthly gift of:

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I would like to include MCF in my estate plans. Please call me.

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be drained off. Then forgiveness occurs and healing begins.

Boredom also probably plays a role in SAD. Late winter is typically cold, gray, and bare. Possibly the lack of stimulation during winter months reminds us of other boring times in our lives and contributes to depression. That, plus the fact that bills from Christmas and IRS-related material come rolling in about that time, may explain why February is the least favorite month for most Americans.

Happiness and Light

SAD differs from general depression in relationship to light and darkness. Most people prefer sunny days over cloudy ones. There is a psychological reason for this preference.

The small pineal gland in the middle of the brain produces a hormone called melatonin. This is a very depressive secretion, and its production is regulated by the degree of natural light. The more darkness a person is exposed to, the more melatonin is produced and the more depressed one feels.

Melatonin is a close cousin to the “feel good” hormone, serotonin. Serotonin is also present in the pineal gland, but it can be converted to the depressive melatonin. The farther away one lives from the equator, the more common SAD is because the hours of sunlight dramatically decrease.

Light, specifically the color distribution of light, is the key to SAD. To the pineal gland, fluorescent light is somewhat adequate, but natural light is ideal.

Helping Yourself Through SAD

If you believe you suffer from SAD, first check with a medical professional to rule out any organic causes for your depression. Is there a medical

condition that could be a factor, such as anemia, thyroid dysfunction, or a side effect of medication?

Be sure, also, to examine other emotional possibilities. Is winter the anniversary of a loss? Does it remind you of other down times in life? Are your financial concerns greater at this time?

Once these possibilities are eliminated, the best advice is to get as much natural sunlight as possible. Early morning hours are probably the best. (Light therapy—lamps made with specific light spectrums—may also be a possible treatment for those diagnosed with SAD.) Get out—do what you can—maintain active involvement with people.

Most of all, be aware of it. Don't use depression and fatigue as an excuse not to try. We are valuable persons who are granted, by God, to do certain things in life. Often He asks His servants to walk through those responsibilities even when depressed.

Always remember that behind those thick, gray clouds is a personal, caring God. You're never alone or overlooked. Take it by faith that He is always here. Sad times come. They also pass.

This winter season will soon end. You can be wiser, deeper, stronger, if when you're feeling down, you look up.



Excerpts from *Happy Holidays* by Minirth, Hawkins and Meier, Baker Book House, 1990.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Phil. 4:13



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