



# **CULTURE SHOCK**

**DEALING WITH STRESS  
IN CROSS-CULTURAL LIVING**

**BY MYRON LOSS**

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## **DEDICATION**

**While making arrangements for the possible publication of this work, I received a letter containing the following:**

**Our daughter returned from a foreign country where she had been teaching missionary children. She suffered from the very symptoms you describe. Reading your work was the first we had ever heard of it. Along with her emotional problems, we believe that she was also suffering from hypoglycemia and chemical imbalance. However, before we were able to piece everything together she took her own life last month. Our daughter went out a little over a year ago without any preparation for what you write about. Thank you for writing your book. Maybe it will help others.**

**To this Christian soldier and others of our fallen comrades this book is reverently dedicated.**

## **PREFACE**

The research and writing of this book have taken place with the first-term missionary in mind. However, many of the principles stated here apply to all who work in foreign cultures, and should also be of some benefit to many Christians at home.

I offer this book to the reader as part of my contribution to the spread of the Good News of salvation to the world.

Reading any book except the Bible is similar to eating fish. Herein you may find a few isolated bones. My hope is that if you do they will not lodge in your throat and prevent you from being nourished by the meat.

Sincerely,  
Myron Loss

All scripture quotations are  
taken from the New American  
Standard Bible except where  
indicated otherwise

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## INTRODUCTION

For several years, I have been aware of some of the struggles which missionaries face in adjusting to living in a new culture. Numerous workers with excellent potential drop out of cross-cultural ministry, and some of these develop severe emotional problems which plague them for years to come. Of those who remain to minister in the foreign culture, many seem to function very ineffectively. As a result of poor cultural adjustment, many missionaries often have a hard time getting along with their fellow workers. In fact, next to poor health, difficulty with interpersonal relationships is the reason most commonly given for people leaving the missionary profession.<sup>1</sup> Dedicated, highly motivated and reasonably spiritual Christians become competitive, hostile and irrational toward fellow believers. This is a serious, disheartening problem, which cries out for solution. Mission boards cannot be content to recruit young people to serve Christ overseas knowing that many of them will unnecessarily come home battered and scarred emotionally and spiritually. Furthermore, they dare not ignore the fact that many of those who stay and minister never reach their full potential as Christian workers nor attain a real sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in their work.<sup>2</sup>

Studies done within the last three decades indicate that the percentage of missionaries leaving their intended life work before beginning their second term of service is between fifteen and twenty-five percent. Dr. J. Herbert Kane, Professor of Missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, cites studies pointing to the lower figure:

... two significant studies have been made of missionary dropouts. One of these was done by Dr. Clyde Taylor, Executive Secretary of the Evangelical Missions Association, and the other by the Missionary Research Library of New York. The

findings of both studies were remarkably close. Both set the dropout rate at about fifteen percent at the end of six years of service. In other words, fifteen percent of the missionaries failed to return to the field for a second term of service.<sup>3</sup>

However, another source, written from a U.S. Government perspective, points to the higher figure:

Available statistics combined from various sources show that about twenty-five percent of missionaries either do not complete their tour of duty or do not return to the field after their first furlough.<sup>4</sup>

The difference may be due to varying methods of measurement or of skewed samples.

Additional workers withdraw from missionary service during subsequent years. The Missionary Research Library study cited above by Dr. Kane found that during a ten year period under examination by the researchers, twenty-eight percent withdrew from the missionary profession.<sup>5</sup> This indicates a probable withdrawal rate of twenty-eight percent of all workers before completing ten years of service. It should be noted that retirements, deaths, short-term missionaries completing contracts, and career missionaries with twenty or more years of experience were classified as normally anticipated withdrawal and are therefore not included in these percentages.

A number of other significant studies have been done on dropout statistics. Several of these are capably compared and analyzed in an unpublished research paper written by James W. Jones at the Assemblies of God Graduate School in Springfield, Missouri.<sup>6</sup> Persons seeking further statistical analysis would benefit by availing themselves of his extensive research.

It is not possible to determine with precision the exact percentage of withdrawal, nor is it necessary for this study.

However, two crucial questions do need to be asked: first, is the withdrawal of approximately twenty-eight percent of missionaries before ten years service acceptable?; second, if this withdrawal rate is not acceptable, what can be done to lower it? An additional fact must also be considered. The withdrawal rate is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Lurking beneath the surface is the reality that many missionary workers who do not withdraw are serving at very reduced effectiveness due to many of the same problems which led to the departure of their colleagues. Some are not even on speaking terms with fellow workers. Others have chronic fatigue and debilitating illnesses which allow them to work at only a fraction of their normal capacity. Based upon personal experience, numerous contacts with missionaries representing many missions and many fields, and extensive reading of relevant literature, I estimate that only about one out of four missionaries function at a level near to that which was normal in their home culture. The same factors which drive about one out of four to terminate before finishing ten years of service, also cause an additional two out of four to limp along at reduced efficiency. If this is true, then only the remaining twenty-five percent manage to function at a level which would be their norm at home.

If the degree of adjustment to the new situation can be increased, then the dropout rate should decrease, the effectiveness of missionaries should increase, and the extension of God's Kingdom should progress more quickly. How can this be done? What lies at the heart of the adjustment problem, and what can be done to alter the situation?<sup>7</sup>

To answer the above questions, I posed a hypothesis: the struggle to maintain one's self-esteem lies at the heart of poor cross-cultural adjustment. To evaluate the validity of this, I conducted a survey to determine if there were a relationship between low self-esteem and cross-cultural

adjustment difficulties. I intended to survey a minimum of 300 missionary workers. The names and addresses were obtained by asking more than twenty mission home offices to provide a list of missionaries who fit into one of four categories:

(1) those presently in a first term; (2) those who began a first term, but did not complete it; (3) those who completed a first term but were not returning; (4) those who were on furlough and were returning to a second or third term.

Mission boards were not asked to categorize the names sent to me. I felt that such categorization might in some way skew the results by making the respondents less objective. Due to lower than anticipated response by mission boards, questionnaires were sent to only 212 workers. An additional 15 missionaries were surveyed while attending classes during a Short Quarter session at Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions. These 227 participants were asked to respond to 19 written questions designed to determine the causes for difficulty in adjustment. A total of 152 responses were returned for analysis and compilation in this thesis. This represents a fine return rate of 67 percent. The respondents worked with 22 mission boards and in 42 countries. A sample survey and a full report of the findings are included in Appendix I.

The results of the survey led to the conclusion that the main causes for maladjustment were not external. Little evidence was found for serious discontent with housing conditions, financial support or language learning. These had some influence, of course, but did not seem to be a major factor in dropout or ineffectiveness. Instead, the struggles in adjustment came in such areas as relationships with peers and mission leaders, fulfillment in ministry and inability to live up to expectations.

Sixty-seven percent of all respondents indicated that

they experienced a struggle to maintain their self-esteem during the first two years of cross-cultural transition. Of the 152 responding, 39 had had ten or more years of cross-cultural exposure. Only 46 percent of these indicated having experienced struggles with their self-esteem in the first term. By comparison, the 113 respondents with less than ten years experience had 73 percent indicating self-esteem difficulties in those first few years. The lower percentage (46) by older workers could be due to any one of or a combination of three factors: (1) a different cultural environment or psychological makeup of these workers which enabled them to adjust more easily; (2) the possibility that many of those who experienced self-esteem struggles have dropped out, leaving those whose self-esteem was not so threatened; (3) difficulty in accurately remembering the emotional and psychological experience, due to the elapse of so much time since their cross-cultural entry.

Concentrating on the responses of the younger group of workers, gives a more precise measure since they are closer chronologically to the actual struggles of the first term. This sampling indicates that roughly three out of four new missionaries today, struggle to one degree or another to maintain their self-esteem.

Mr. Ronald Iwasko, Candidate Secretary of the Assemblies of God Foreign Missions Department, provides this further interesting observation:

In our psychological testing we employ the Tennessee self-concept Scale. Our candidates consistently test from about the 75th to 95th percentile compared to the population norm, placing them far above average in self-acceptance. I suggest that this is true of your candidates as well. Yet, we consistently find that the biggest-emotional problem of missionaries is that of a low self-image. If that is so, then it follows that somehow the very positive self-image is being destroyed after they become missionaries — and perhaps we ourselves as administrators are a contributing factor.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, we see that ample evidence points to lack of self-esteem as a very serious problem affecting most Christian workers living in foreign cultures.

If the new worker can maintain a healthy self-esteem in spite of the heavy stress laid on him, he will probably make a successful cross-cultural transition. If, however, his self-esteem becomes very low, he will most likely reject the culture and/or the missionary role. It is of extreme importance that the new worker be adequately prepared mentally, emotionally and spiritually for cross-cultural stress. It is also crucial that he be given sufficient encouragement during the first years of cross-cultural ministry.

This book will show that the cross-cultural situation is one of very high physical and psychological stress, and that this stress produces symptoms such as fatigue, high rates of disease and emotional instability which result in lower effectiveness of the worker. This lowered effectiveness coupled with the idealistic expectations which missionaries have for themselves leads to frustration and a questioning of one's self-worth.

It will also demonstrate that low self-esteem contributes to missionary dropout as well as many interpersonal relationship problems of missionary workers. It is my judgment that much competition, hostility, irrationality and other evidence of carnal living among missionaries is due to feelings of insecurity.

The motive for writing is to help those concerned with the world-wide missionary endeavor to understand the phenomenon commonly known as 'culture shock', to know the consequences which it produces within the cross-cultural worker, and to be able to more adequately deal with these consequences. I believe that this information will be especially useful to the new worker preparing to cross cultural boundaries, as well as those who have recently made that transition. Some of this material may initially

discourage prospective recruits. However, that may be good. A realistic appraisal of the situation is necessary to help the new worker to make adequate mental and spiritual preparation, and thus cope with the stress when it comes. Dr. Gary Collins, Professor of Psychology and Chairman of the Division of Pastoral Counseling and Psychology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, states:

A person can cope with stress better when he or she has worried a little about it beforehand. Too much worry, or none at all is harmful. But a little worry can be a healthy thing! Doctors and pastoral counselors have now come to see that talking to people before a stress arises — pointing out the dangers and giving realistic information — can make a big difference in helping people to cope when the stress finally comes.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, some anxiety is desirable since the struggle faced in cross-cultural ministry will be real and intense.

Since low self-esteem appears to be very closely associated with missionary drop out and limited effectiveness in ministry, something needs to be done to help new workers going through these severe spiritual and emotional battles during acculturation. One of the most important things that can be done is to help these new missionaries understand what is happening to them internally and provide suggestions on how to deal with it. To do this, they need to know something about "stress," "self-esteem" and "cross-cultural stress." Each of the first three chapters deals with basic issues relevant to those respective subjects. Next, chapter four examines the stress inherent in the missionary role, and chapter five evaluates the high level of stress present in the first term experience. Subsequent chapters are designed to help the worker minimize stress and increase his effectiveness.

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1. Cesar Vega, "The Cause and Cure of Missionary Attrition," Research Project, Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions, Columbia, SC, 1976.

The author analyzes eight separate studies covering seventy-five years and representing 53,000 missionaries. Interpersonal relationship problems accounted for about fifty percent of all avoidable causes for leaving missionary work.

2. Viewed from a Biblical perspective, the only genuine satisfaction and fulfillment in life comes from doing the will of God. This results in a sense of purpose and meaningfulness for life.

Scripture indicates that satisfaction and fulfillment are the desire of the Lord for His children (satisfaction: Psalm 81:16, 90:14, 107:9, Proverbs 12:14, 14:14/ fulfillment: Psalm 145:19).

A human being can only reach the full potential of his person as he is filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Christian who is walking according to the leading of the Spirit is fulfilled. Regardless of the external circumstances, he evidences the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23). Paul and Silas could sing and praise God at midnight in the dungeon (Acts 16:25), because they knew they were fulfilling God's will for them. Christian workers who fail to evidence this joy and gladness are not Spirit-controlled, but rather self-controlled.

3. Herbert J. Kane, *Winds of Change in the Christian Mission*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 56.

4. Harlan Cleveland, Gerald J. Mangone and John Clark Adams, *The Overseas American*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 265.

5. Helen N. Bailey and Herbert C. Jackson, *A Study of Missionary Motivation, Training and Withdrawal (1953-1962)*, (New York: Missionary Research Library, 1965.)

6. James W. Jones, "Some Factors Contributing to Missionary Withdrawal in the Assemblies of God and Including a Comparative Study with Other Missions," Directed Research, Assemblies of God Graduate School, Springfield, Mo. 1976.

7. I am not ignoring the spiritual factor inherent in the struggle. Satan's strategy is to make us doubt God's promises of love to us. To do this, he employs various destructive tactics. Like the Apostle Paul (II Corinthians 2:11), we should be aware of his schemes and know how to combat them.

I acknowledge the importance of academic and experiential preparation for cross-cultural ministry, and do not suggest that this is to be ignored. However, I appeal for reliance upon the only sufficient source of power



against Satan's evil intentions — the perfect, finished work of Jesus Christ. There is no other adequate basis on which one should attempt to minister, either at home or in another culture. Reliance upon one's own ability or goodness, training or experience is a dangerous tactic. To be sure, training, experience and ability can multiply one's ministry, but the most important ingredient is the knowledge that God is powerful, adequate and faithful to uphold and empower His servants in ministry. Any preparation for missionary service which does not foster the essential attitude, "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13) and "Without Him I can do nothing" (John 15:5) is woefully inadequate preparation. When our total dependence upon Christ is established, we have a more than adequate source of power to do spiritual battle.

8. Ronald Iwasko, "Final Report: Assemblies of God Missionary Attitude and Opinion Survey," Directed Research, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School: Deerfield, Ill., p. 19.

9. Gary Collins, *You Can Profit From Stress*, (Santa Ana, Ca: Vision House, 1977), p. 50.

## Chapter 1

### **Stress and Its Consequences**

Since living in a cross-cultural environment entails high stress, which in turn influences psychological well-being, it is important to examine the nature of stress and analyze how it affects human beings. This will later prove invaluable for understanding how stress and self-esteem relate to the cross-cultural adjustment of the missionary.

#### **What is Stress?**

Dr. Gary Collins points out that it is difficult to precisely define stress:

Stress is something which everybody experiences but nobody can quite define. Stress is a force which creates upset stomachs, gnawing fear, splitting headaches, intense grief, excess drinking and violent arguments. Stress dulls our memories, cripples our thinking, weakens our bodies, upsets our plans, stirs up our emotions and reduces our efficiency.<sup>1</sup>

In my judgment, the best definition is that "stress is a situation or circumstance which arouses anxiety within the individual."<sup>2</sup> The terms "stress" and "anxiety" are often used interchangeably, but they are really distinct. It is helpful to think of stress in terms of the external pressures exerted on an individual. These include the expectations held for him by family, employers, friends, society and religion. Anxiety is the internal tension which normally results from attempting to live up to these external pressures.

#### **The Inevitability of Stress**

As previously mentioned, stress is not an entirely undesirable force. We need it to survive and function in our



world. A person who did not experience any stress would not show concern about anything in life. He would let his food burn on the stove, would never show up on time for meetings, and would not get out of the way of a passing truck. Collins emphasizes that stress is both a blessing and a curse:

Stress comes from a variety of sources, and not all stress is bad . . . Stress can be either unpleasant or pleasant — the spice of life. One thing is certain: we cannot avoid stress completely, since any person who has no stress is dead! But we can do something to cope with unpleasant stress, and we can even benefit from those stresses which harm us and make life miserable.<sup>3</sup>

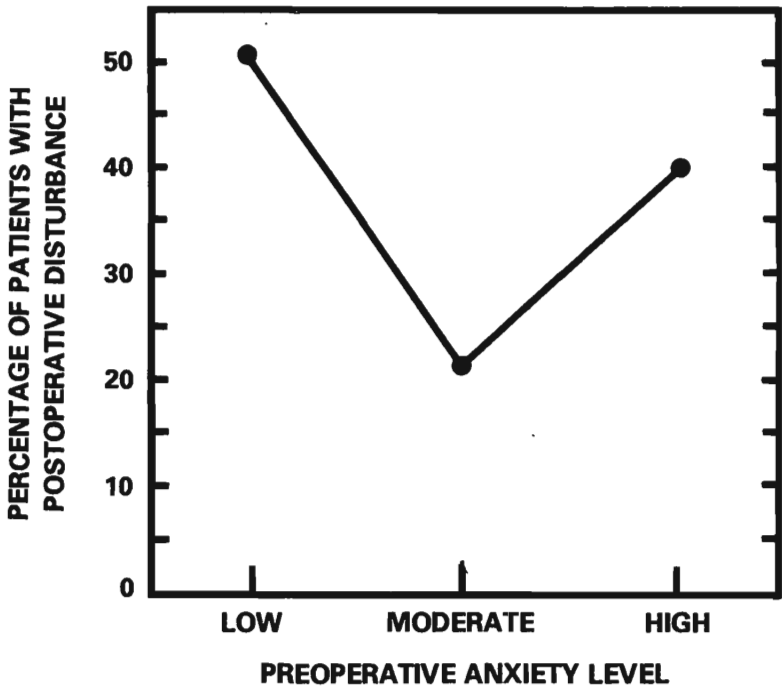
Interestingly, the Chinese have a word for crisis stress that is more expressive than anything in English. They use a combination of two characters, one representing danger, the other representing opportunity. The Chinese word recognizes a strange fact about crisis stress: while it can involve a brush with disaster or potential tragedy, it can also be a chance for gain.<sup>4</sup>

Doctors have analyzed the effect of anxiety as it relates to recovery after major surgery.<sup>5</sup> Their study showed that the degree of preoperative anxiety predicted the degree of postoperative emotional disturbance. Those patients who approached the operation with no evident anxiety and expected to breeze through it were the most susceptible to postoperative difficulties. Those patients who evidenced some anxiety and asked detailed questions about what the operation involved showed the best postoperative recovery, while those patients manifesting very high anxiety fell somewhere in between. These results are graphically depicted in Figure 1.

It is clear that some anxiety concerning a stressful situation is helpful in coping with it. Lack of anxiety or high anxiety were both unrealistic responses and so required greater adjustment once the main point of stress had passed.

When anxiety is low or non-existent, people are often poorly motivated. Life is dull, boring, inefficient and unsatisfying. Very much anxiety, however, is worse. It interferes with learning, adversely affects our memory (what happens in stage fright), hinders performance of skills, interferes with problem solving and blocks effective communication . . . Our efficiency is also low when we are highly anxious. There is also great dissatisfaction and frustration with life.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, anxiety is a vitally important survival factor without which civilization would cease to exist, but in excessive amounts it can destroy us or make life miserable.



**FIGURE 1.** Postoperative emotional disturbance as a function of preoperative anxiety level.<sup>5</sup>

### **How Excessive Stress Affects the Individual**

The human organism is capable of enduring only so much stress for so long before showing signs of deterioration. The body in some ways is like the internal combustion engine: if it runs at too high an r.p.m. for too long, it will overheat, lose its bearings, or blow a gasket. As a people, westerners have long passed the point of medium anxiety and are fast losing efficiency and satisfaction with life as their stress-produced level of anxiety continues to climb.

Some individuals can cope with stress more successfully than others. This capacity depends on many variables, including one's childhood experiences, one's level and stabil-

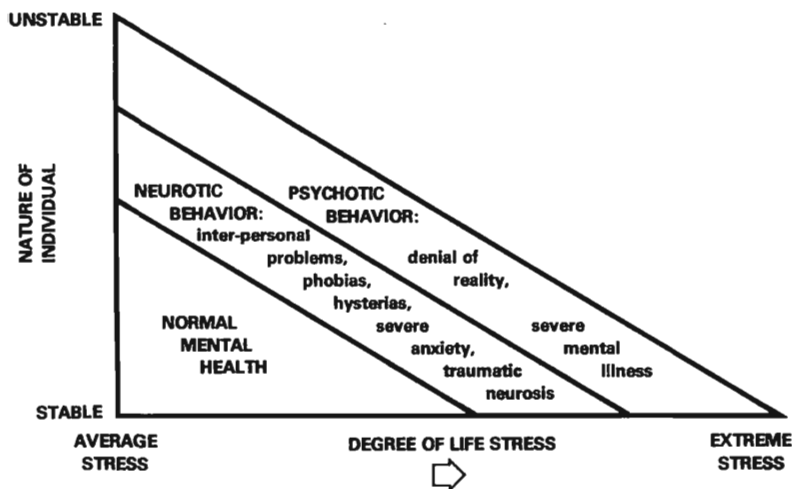
ity of self-esteem and one's physical health. If given enough stress, every individual will exceed his capacity and thus experience severe emotional and physical disturbances. The following figure (2), slightly revised from that by Lehner<sup>7</sup>, shows what happens when individuals are put under increasing levels of stress. As stress is increased, people deviate from normalcy toward more neurotic and psychotic tendencies.

For the unstable individual, even so-called average stress may produce psychotic behavior. For the stable individual, stress must be increased considerably in order to produce irregularities such as irrational behavior, nervous disorders or acute mental illness. However, every person has a level of tolerance which, though difficult to predetermine, can be exceeded.

What actually happens to creatures under stress is that external circumstances exert their influence on the inner being. When animals are frightened, they become very anxious. Usually they run or attack. This has been called the "flight or fight" reaction and occurs similarly in humans. When stress is great, human beings have a desire to get out of the way or fight off the pressures as best they can. Collins explains how this stress affects the human body:

Running or fighting puts an added strain on the body. Because of the effort involved, we must be mobilized physically for the extra action, and this is precisely what happens, automatically. Whenever stress comes along, more sugar flows into the blood to give us energy, our senses become more alert, our muscles get tense, we breathe faster, our hearts beat more rapidly, and our whole bodies get geared up. This can be useful when we are in real danger — on a freeway, for example, or facing a sudden crisis which demands all of our skill and alertness.

But what if the stress is more subtle? What if it comes from noisy kids or struggling with a tense home situation? At these



**FIGURE 2.** Stress and Stability<sup>7</sup>

times the body still gets aroused physically, but it is inappropriate for us to react by flight or fight. We must control our emotions and clamp down on our reactions. The body therefore begins to fight against itself. It is aroused for action, but the action is squelched. Naturally, our systems can't take this for long. As a result there may be inner tension, physical disease, or mental breakdown.<sup>8</sup>

This internalized stress often causes abnormalities in the function of the human body. Dr. Paul Tournier believes that the body and mind are very closely related:

Man is body, mind and spirit, and what affects one affects all. If there are inner conflicts and tensions, anxiety and guilt at some point in his life, the individual will tend to manifest this spiritual disease by some physical symptom<sup>9</sup>

Cecil Osborne, author of *The Art of Understanding Yourself*, explains how emotional stress in the mind produces physical stress within the body:

...stress creates a chemical imbalance resulting in malfunc-

tion of glands and other organs. The body then becomes unable to provide resistance to germs which are normally held in check. Since the mind tends to hand its pain, guilt, and grief over to the body by an unconscious process, we find it easier to incur physical illness than mental anguish. For one thing, we receive sympathy, which is a form of love, when we are physically ill; but the person suffering from mental anguish or depression is likely to be told to 'snap out of it' or to 'pull yourself together.'<sup>10</sup>

Anxiety and emotion do not normally invoke the sympathies of others, but physical illness is an acceptable reason for taking rest and thus escaping stress. In many ways, a stress-originated illness is more difficult to treat than an illness induced by physical or bacterial means.

Over the last twenty years, many studies have demonstrated the influence of stress in accentuating headaches, arthritis, backaches, high blood pressure and susceptibility to accidents. Stress can also create frigidity, impotence and other sexual irregularities such as missed menstruation. Many doctors believe that allergies are worsened, if not caused by stress. More and more researchers are turning attention to the influence that stress may have in producing cancer. Some of these illnesses will be examined more closely:

### *Headaches*

Ogden Tanner, in a popular Time-Life book entitled *Stress*, claims:

Bodily pain can come from muscles that are kept contracted over prolonged periods, and muscular contraction is a normal reaction to stress. As many as nine out of ten headaches, some specialists estimate, arise in prolonged contraction of the muscles of the neck and head, a readiness to spring into a physical action that never takes place. Such tension headaches can begin in long hours of alertness while driving in heavy traffic or



studying for a tough examination; they can begin, too, in a minor but persistent problem at home or on the job. In all of these situations some people seem to brace themselves to carry an unwelcome load, tightening the muscles of their shoulders as well as their neck and jaws. If these muscles stay contracted for long periods without release, they too may produce pain, sending it up the back of the head, down the neck and over the shoulder blades, to the lower back and even the legs and arms — indeed, to almost any part of the body where muscles can be held constantly and unconsciously taut.<sup>11</sup>

### *Ulcers*

In addition to headaches, ulcers are clearly linked with stress. Both stomach and duodenal ulcers seem to result from it. The research of Dr. Hans Selye, a medical researcher from Toronto and the world's foremost authority on stress, has clearly shown that when an individual is placed under extended stress, his digestive organs malfunction causing deterioration of the linings of the stomach and small intestine.<sup>12</sup> One of the biggest producers of ulcers is the kind of stress about which the person can do nothing.

### *Lower back pain*

Lower back pain is also a common indication of stress. According to a joint study by Columbia University and New York University of 5,000 consecutive patients with low-back complaints, eighty-one percent had no skeletal disorders — nothing wrong with either bones or discs. Instead, their pains were all traceable to muscles, ligaments or tendons, and were the outcome of strains, sprains, poor posture, or lack of exercise. Emotional factors, including tension, anxiety and depression have been implicated by some estimates in as many as eighty-percent of cases.<sup>13</sup>

## *High blood pressure*

High blood pressure is another ailment which Tanner sees as closely associated with stress.

Blood pressure changes are one of the normal, inevitable reactions to stress. To many threats, real or imagined, the body responds instantly to autonomic nerve signals by constricting the muscles of the arterial walls. Blood pressure rises, and an emergency oversupply of blood rushes through the body while the other mechanisms of the alarm reaction come into play. When the reaction passes, the blood pressure ordinarily drops — but not if the alarm state continues in the form of subconscious fear, hostility or anxiety.<sup>14</sup>



**Excessive stress accounts for a good deal of missionary illness.**

### *Heart attack*

There is also increasing evidence to suggest a relationship between stress and the heart. Heart attacks are normally related to high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, lack of exercise, obesity and cigarette smoking, but more and more it appears that the fundamental cause of heart attack is the stress of life.<sup>15</sup>

### *Fatigue*

One all-too-common physical problem affecting us today is fatigue. Though simple physical fatigue is a diminishing problem in our world, the more complex phenomenon of emotionally-caused fatigue is on the rise. Dr. Dwight Carlson, a medical doctor, relates the following account in his book, *Run and Not Be Weary*:

After all the appropriate tests were completed, I told her I could find no organic cause for her fatigue. She became very angry and resentful toward me because I had not found some organic illness and refused to entertain the possibility that the problem might be psychological. I am sure she would have been more receptive to a diagnosis of cancer or some other dreaded disease rather than the implication of an emotional maladjustment.

Psychiatric or spiritually induced fatigue as opposed to organic fatigue is generally worse in the morning and may actually improve as the hours pass. Very often it is activity related. The tiredness is worse when the individual is bored and improves when the individual becomes involved in interesting activities. Fatigue from emotional and spiritual causes is just as real and incapacitating to the person experiencing it as fatigue produced by a severe organic cause. It is not 'all in his head.' He feels it.<sup>16</sup>

Fatigue often serves as a defense mechanism in the person with emotional or spiritual conflicts, allowing him to avoid resolving inner tension. Instead of facing his prob-

lems and dealing with them, the individual retreats into a world of fatigue and excessive sleep.

Fatigue often accompanies other stress-produced problems including anxiety, depression, irrational behavior, hostility and psychosomatic illness. Excessive anxiety is often the first to develop, but any combination of the above is possible.

### *Mental inefficiency*

Excessive stress impairs our ability to concentrate. Even under normal stress, most people use half their psychological energy to keep repressed memories below the level of consciousness. If that energy could be freed for creative thinking, it would radically alter the productivity of the mind. It has been shown in recent laboratory tests with animals that:

Stress may also cause destruction of the brain. The psychologically stressed subjects had significantly higher blood pressure than the control animals. Stressed animals had significantly more brain degeneration than the same age control subjects.<sup>17</sup>

### *Accident proneness*

Not only does stress affect a person's physiological health, but it also has a bearing on susceptibility to accidents. It has been demonstrated that stress has an adverse effect on both physical health and accident proneness. This fact can be seen from the work of Dr. Thomas Holmes mentioned below.

### *Predicting the degree of stress*

Through extensive research covering many peoples from many countries, Dr. Thomas Holmes and his associates<sup>18</sup> have devised a table for determining the degree of stress caused by adjusting to change. Points are as-

signed to each life change, and these are called life change units, or LCUs. See table 1 below.

**TABLE 1**  
**THE STRESS OF ADJUSTING TO CHANGE**

Rank	Event	LCU Points
1	Death of spouse	100
2	Divorce	73
3	Marital separation	65
4	Jail term	63
5	Death of close family member	63
6	Personal injury or illness	53
7	Marriage	50
8	Fired at work	47
9	Marital reconciliation	45
10	Retirement	45
11	Change in health of family member	44
12	Pregnancy	40
13	Sex difficulties	39
14	Gain of new family member	39
15	Business readjustment	39
16	Change in financial state	38
17	Death of close friend	37
18	Change to different line of work	36
19	Change in number of arguments w/ spouse	35
20	Mortgage over \$10,000	31
21	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
22	Change in responsibilities at work	29
23	Son or daughter leaving home	29
24	Trouble with in-laws	29
25	Outstanding personal achievement	26
26	Wife begins or stops work	26
27	Begin or end school	26
28	Change in living conditions	25
29	Revision of personal habits	24
30	Trouble with boss	23
31	Change in work hours or conditions	20

32	Change in residence	20
33	Change in schools	20
34	Change in recreation	19
35	Change in church activities	19
36	Change in social activities	18
37	Mortgage or loan less than \$10,000	17
38	Change in sleeping habits	16
39	Change in number of family get-togethers	15
40	Change in eating habits	15
41	Vacation	13
42	Christmas	12
43	Minor violations of the law	11

An individual's rating is determined by adding the points of all of the life changes which have been experienced within the past year. According to Holmes' research, a score less than 150 indicated only one chance in three of having a serious change in health during the next two years. A score between 150 and 300 indicated chances of one in two. A score over 300 meant danger; there was an eighty percent chance for a major health change (disease, surgery, accident, or mental illness) in the next two years. In chapter five the LCU total for the average new missionary beginning his first term will be calculated.

### **Summary**

Stress can be either good or bad. When applied moderately to our beings, it forces us to be creative and work effectively. When applied excessively, it causes us to start disintegrating emotionally, psychologically and physically. Our psychological makeup usually determines what kind of stress and what level of stress we can tolerate. What we think about life and its stressful events greatly affects the result stress has upon us.

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  17. Jennings Neal Narrango, "Brain Degeneration Induced by Psychological Stress," *Dissertation Abstracts 39|09B* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1978), p. 4637.
  18. Thomas H. Holmes and M. Masusu, "Life Change and Illness Susceptibility," *Stressful Life Events: Their Nature and Effects*, Barbara Snell Dohrenwend and Bruce P. Dohrenwend, eds., (New York: Wiley, 1974), pp. 42-72.

## Chapter 2

### **The Importance of Self-love and Self-esteem**

This chapter, a study in very basic psychology, shows the necessity of self-love and self-esteem for normal functioning of the individual. Though much evangelical Christian teaching downplays the importance of self-love and self-esteem, it will be shown here to be both Biblical and crucial to victorious Christian living.

Rudyard Kipling's famous poem, "If", portrays a man who believes in himself.

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream — and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with triumph or disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools;

If you can make a heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;



If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone.  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on",

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings — nor lose the common touch;  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;  
If all men count with you, but none too much,

If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty second's worth of distance run —  
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,  
And — which is more — you'll be a man, my son!<sup>1</sup>

Every man would like to have that kind of stability and determination, but few ever attain it. What is the secret of such inner security?

### **Self-love and Self-esteem are Necessary for Proper Living**

It is important to begin by defining how self-love and self-esteem are used in the following discussion. *Self-love in its essence is a love for one's own soul: an appreciation for the worth of oneself as a person made in the image of God. Self-esteem is the evaluation which an individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.*

Just as food and water are necessary for the health of the body, so a good self-image is necessary for the health of the soul. Dr. Bruce Narramore, a Christian psychiatrist, sees self-esteem as a Biblically warranted principle:

The more I study the Bible, the more I see that every human being is entitled to an attitude of self-acceptance, self-love and self-esteem. The Bible clearly teaches that we should love ourselves. It says that we are created in the image of God. It says

that we are creatures of worth and value, and it says that we are so important that Christ sacrificed His life for us.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of such statements by many prominent Christians, there is often confusion about the validity of self-esteem and self-love.

Treatment in psychotherapy is often predicated upon the belief that people do not know how to love themselves. . . . The reason so many people do not love themselves is not because they do not know how, but because they have internalized the belief that to have self-esteem is wrong. The attempt to bolster or rebuild one's self-concept requires the learning of positive ways of looking at oneself, and the simultaneous freedom to explore one's strengths, assets, and positive qualities. Yet it is at this point that many people are caught in a double bind. Throughout their lives they have been taught that self-love is wrong, that it is an undesirable quality in people, and that it leads to conceit, vanity and pride.<sup>3</sup>

How can we reconcile self-love and humility — both of which seem necessary, yet appear to be mutually exclusive? The main problem lies in our understanding of what self-love and humility are. Self-love is not self-centeredness: quite the opposite is true. It is not an emotion directed inward, but rather a central starting point from which emotion can be directed outward. Humility is not thinking about oneself in low fashion, but rather not thinking about oneself at all. Only the person who loves his own being is able to turn his attention to the needs of others. Self-love is not the act of seeking self-fulfillment, self-aggrandizement or recognition by others. Self-love is not selfishness: in fact, the two are total opposites, poles apart.

Actually, a result of sin in man is an inability to truly love himself. Since God is personally secure, He is outward looking. Since man is personally insecure, he is inward looking. Only a change in his basic makeup (rebirth with

God's nature) can give him the potential for concern for others. Rebirth, however, does not guarantee that he will accept himself and thus become outward looking. If he doubts the fact of God's acceptance of him by His grace through the blood of Christ, then he remains primarily concerned about his own welfare, and foolishly tries to fabricate by his own efforts that which God has already accomplished through oneness with Christ. Ray Ashford, in an excellent book *Loving Ourselves*, explains the paradox of self-love:

It is precisely the self-loving person who seems not to love himself at all. For he is of his nature free from the attributes we decry as selfish, and his ability to love himself shows itself chiefly in the warmth, spontaneity and skill of his interest in persons and things outside of, and other than himself.<sup>4</sup>

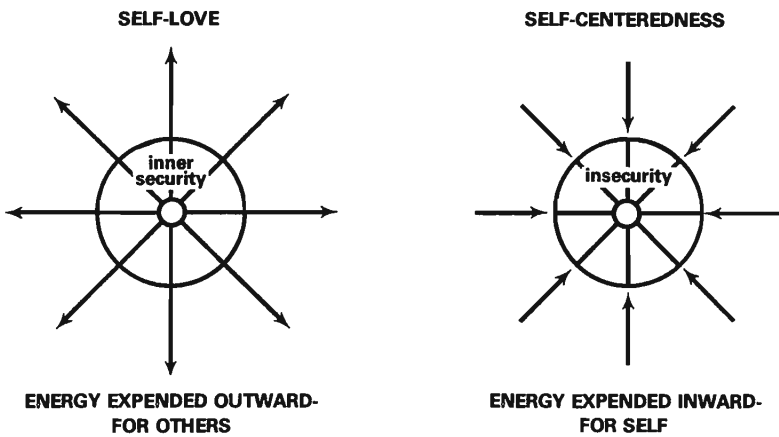
Still, many are afraid that self-love is synonymous with pride, and we know that pride is clearly condemned in the Bible. Ashford again responds:

From the Christian point of view, pride is not so much a matter of a superior attitude as it is of self-centeredness. Pride, says the Christian, is seen in the person who has put himself at the center of his own little universe and made **himself the object of all his interest and devotion** — the person who has in effect displaced God in favor of himself, setting himself up as his own god.<sup>5</sup>

That is the pride which the Bible condemns. A proud person is one who does not love himself very much and, in order to make himself feel better, acts so as to convince others and himself of his worthiness and superiority. **People who are truly self-loving have no need to be conceited.**

The following diagrams in Figure 3 will illustrate the difference between self-love and self-centeredness.

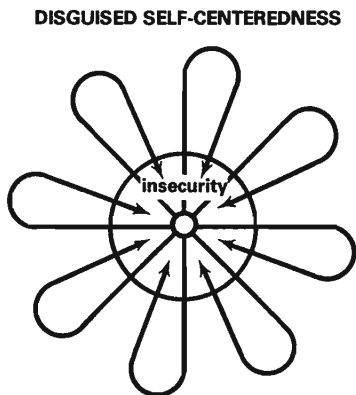
Many people outwardly expend energy serving others. However, this is no proof of inner security because it is



**FIGURE 3.<sup>6</sup>**

possible that the motive for the service is to win approval from others and thereby gain acceptance. This phenomenon is depicted by the Diagram in Figure 4.

The self-centered person is the primary recipient of the fruit of his labor. He works for social approval, personal



**FIGURE 4.<sup>6</sup>** ENERGY SEEMINGLY EXPENDED OUTWARD FOR OTHERS, BUT REALLY FOR SELF

comfort or some form of notoriety. He may attempt this through false humility in cultures where humility is viewed as a virtue.

The reason that some people's attention is devoted almost entirely to themselves is because they are extremely insecure people; so insecure that they need all the attention they can get not only from others, but also from themselves. On the other hand, the person who loves himself can afford to be gentle, understanding and generous in dealing with others and with himself.

Only the person whose home base is secure can afford to extend love and compassion to others. For most people, the greatest amount of energy is spent on self-defense, not for genuine compassionate outreach to others.

In this regard, Paul Tournier points out that many Christians are no different than non-Christians:

All are constantly motivated by the single aim of making themselves appear in the best possible light. They are all, and always, on the watch, anxious lest their weaknesses, their faults, their ignorance, their fads, or their failings be discovered; anxious to distinguish themselves, to be noticed, admired, or commiserated with. Some do it openly and naively, and are considered vain. Others hide it better, but are no less vain.<sup>7</sup>

### **Self-love is Biblical**

Many Christian authors have cited the second great commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), as evidence for the Biblical validity of self-love. "The way we love our self is the way we will love others" they conclude. Their arguments make good sense, but a few Christian leaders disagree with this interpretation. One such leader, Dr. Jay Adams of Westminster Seminary, is a noted Christian counselor who does not believe in the validity of self-love. It appears, however, that his disagreement lies



**“Jonathan loved David as his own soul.”**

primarily in differences of the definition of the term. When most other Christian psychologists speak of self-love, they understand it as defined above. When Dr. Adams speaks of it, he understands it to mean self-centeredness and pride.<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of other pertinent Scripture verses which should be noted. In 1 Samuel 18:1, it states that “Jonathan loved David as his own soul.” His love for David was measured by his love for himself. Because he loved his own being and was personally secure, he could graciously love David who he knew would take the throne which rightfully belonged to Jonathan.

Luke 6:31 of the Living Bible reads, “Just as you want

men to treat you, treat them in the same way". The Golden Rule assumes that there will be self-love. If one does not have respect and love for his own soul, then he cannot treat others with respect and kindness. The measure that one holds of his own worth as a person will determine his measure of the worth of others. If there is no self-love, there can be no treating others with compassion.

Some additional Scripture should be noted here. In Ephesians 5:28-33, self-love is mentioned three times. In verse 28, Paul says, "He who loves his own wife loves himself", and in verse 33, "Let each individual among you love his own wife even as himself." The implication is very clear; it is necessary to love oneself in order to love a wife. Self-love is both necessary and sanctioned. A loving attitude to others and a hating attitude to one's self cannot possibly be nurtured together. Self-love is fundamental to human well-being. Don Hillis, a thoroughly evangelical missionary author, draws attention to the fact that Jesus and John the Baptist loved themselves:

Jesus humbled Himself, but He never humiliated Himself. He laid aside His glory, but not His self-respect. He was willing to be cursed, but He never cursed Himself. He was despised and rejected by men, but He didn't despise or reject Himself. No word of self-condemnation ever escaped His lips. Jesus believed man was God's highest creation, and He exalted manhood.

John the Baptist was humble, but never self-repudiating. He rightfully believed that he was not worthy to stoop and loosen the Lord's sandals. . . . But John was no self-rejecting coward. He was a fearless lion. He looked men in the eye and called them hypocrites and serpents. He warned them of the wrath of God and called them to repentance. This is not to suggest that you or I will ever be a John the Baptist. Nor is that God's plan for us. It simply illustrates the truth that though there is no room for self-centeredness in true humility, there is room for self-respect.<sup>9</sup>

Before Adam sinned, he had peace and security. He was not alienated from God or from his wife. However, with the Fall, fear entered his heart and he could no longer trust God as before, and so hid himself. As a result, man began to cover himself both physically and psychologically. He began to seek in vain his lost happiness and security. Man was now disappointed in his wife and disappointed in himself. Disappointment became his lifelong portion.

Since Adam, the primary force that has throbbled at the heart of men is the fear of inadequacy, rejection and alienation. Sin is more perverse and deep-seated than is commonly believed. It is an element present not only in a man's actions and thoughts, but is ingrained in his psychological makeup. It results in a self-condemnation of the whole soul, making him unable to love himself or others. Self-love, which can only come as a result of forgiveness and acceptance by God, is necessary in order to be a healthy person.

### **Self-esteem is Dependent on Feelings of Security and Significance**

How does one go about re-establishing a right perspective toward self? Is it possible to regain the footing that was lost at Eden? Can the lost sense of significance and security be recovered? Is insecurity a problem of only a few neurotic individuals and not worthy of much attention, or does it affect all men? Much evidence indicates that deep feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and insecurity are widespread. Feelings of total worthlessness are not rare. "In an anonymous questionnaire taken of a basically healthy, upper-middle class group of people, fifty percent answered they 'often felt inadequate, inferior or worthless'."<sup>10</sup> Nathaniel Brandon, a respected professional psychologist, admits that low self-esteem is a basic problem with people:



Sixteen years ago when I began the practice of psychotherapy, I was struck by the fact that regardless of the particular problem for which a client or patient sought help, there was one common denominator: a deficiency in self-esteem. Always, at the base of the individual's symptoms, there was intellectual self-doubt, moral self-doubt, feelings of inadequacy, helplessness and guilt.

Fallen man cannot rightly esteem himself because he knows that he is sinful. From the eternal absolute perspective, man is inadequate: he can never measure up to what he **should** have been. Apart from Divine intervention, it is not possible for man to recover from his perverted existence.

Fortunately, there has been Divine intervention. God knew that man was helpless to redeem himself and so conceived a marvelous plan. He would send His own beloved Son to earth to live a life of perfection. In Him, there would be no cause for rejection as there had been in Adam. Then, the Son would offer a free exchange of His record of whole, perfect humanity to any and all perverted humans. This meant the necessity of His own temporary alienation from the Father due to the sin now associated with Him. Yet, it also meant that those who willingly received the exchange would be accepted and put into fellowship with God. There would no longer be any basis whatever for rejection.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

"So then, you are no longer strangers, and aliens, but you ... are of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19).

"You who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

If we judge the value of any object by the price that is paid for it, then it becomes evident that man is highly valued by God. Dr. Larry Crabb makes this clear:

My need for security demands that I be unconditionally loved, accepted and cared for, now and forever. God has seen me at my worst and still loved me to the point of giving His life for me. That kind of love I can never lose. I am completely acceptable to Him regardless of my behavior. I am under no pressure to earn or keep His love. My acceptability to God depends only on Jesus' acceptability to God and on the fact that Jesus death was counted as full payment for my sins. Now that I know this love I can relax, secure in the knowledge that the Eternal God of creation has pledged to use His infinite power and wisdom to insure my welfare. That's security.

True significance and security are available only to the Christian, one who is trusting in Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death as his sole basis of acceptability before a holy God.<sup>12</sup>

Though this is the essence of the Gospel, even Christians may have a hard time believing it if they have a small view of the goodness of God. Levi Keidel, an experienced missionary, sees that a proper view of God is necessary for awareness of our personal worth.

God is my Father in a very meaningful sense of the word. He is not my antagonist; He is my helper. He is not my demeaning judge; He is an understanding forgiver. He is not a scrimping slave master who drives me; He is a munificent benefactor who wants to free me. He does not cause me suffering; He hurts with me. He disciplines me only to mature me. He could never deceive me, because He loves me. He wants to use whatever gifts I have; He gave them to me. And He accepts all of me, just as I am. This gives me a sense of personal worth.<sup>13</sup>

Once a person is in Christ, nothing can ever separate him from the love of God (Romans 8:39). He is forever secure in His perfect love and need have no fear (I John 4:18). He need no longer be dependent on others for his primary source of self-esteem. Knowing that he is secure

and significant forever in his relationship with God releases him from the futile bondage of seeking to find security and significance by winning the praise and acceptance of God or of other men.

In spite of this, it is true that forgiven men are still defective. The redeemed sinner is far from perfect. Should he then pretend there is nothing wrong, and say, "I'm OK, you're OK"? No, because he is not OK. Nevertheless, God says, "Sure, you yourself are not acceptable, but I fully accept you on the merit of my perfect Son." When a person is in Christ, he is accepted even though his life reeks with imperfection and human weakness. Only when a Christian sees himself as God sees him can he have a dependable foundation for self-love and self-acceptance.

### **How the Level of Self-esteem Affects the Person**

Every person has a need to feel good about himself. When that need is unmet, tremendous amounts of psychic energy are spent trying to increase self-esteem. In his Doctoral Dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary, Samuel McDill, an experienced Christian counselor, includes this comment regarding the value of self-esteem:

High self-esteem is not a noisy conceit. It is a quiet sense of self-respect, a feeling of self-worth, when you have it deep inside you're glad you're you. Conceit is but whitewash to cover low self-esteem. With high self-esteem you don't waste time and energy impressing others; you already know you have value.<sup>14</sup>

Genuine self-esteem is directly related to real happiness and fulfillment in life. Without it, people cannot be satisfied with what life offers nor with their handling of resources. From both Christian and non-Christian literature, it is seen that self-esteem is the key to effective function as a person.

He who has a good self-concept can enjoy his accom-

plishments without being conceited. He can relax when relaxation is appropriate. He can view his shortcomings as problems to be overcome, rather than rate himself as a bad person because he is unable to meet his standard of perfection. He functions because he knows he is. He is not always trying to become.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to this, people with low self-esteem experience many debilitating problems such as discouragement, depression, mental inefficiency and emotional pain.

Published research indicates fairly decisively that low self-esteem persons are more likely to exhibit anxiety and neurotic behavior, to perform less effectively under stress and failure, and to be less socially effective overall.<sup>16</sup>

### *Discouragement and depression*

Low self-esteem is commonly recognized as the primary cause of depression. During depression, the person often has an intense conviction that he is inept, inadequate, and incompetent. If he becomes convinced of his "inferiorities," he easily gets discouraged.

### *Mental inefficiency*

The person with low self-esteem is less efficient in his mind and body than the person with healthy self-esteem:

The person with a good self-concept can occupy his mind with whatever is happening. His mind is not divided between trying to cope with his own anxieties and coping with the happening. . . . The person with an inadequate self-concept has anxiety and uncertainty that compel him to try to keep his island of inner security above water while he is at the same time trying to launch an attack upon the problem at hand.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. James Dobson indicates that the preservation of self-esteem is of tremendous concern to an individual. It is of primary importance and even more vital than the well-

being of the physical body:

The real heavyweight in shaping personality is **inferiority**. You see, damage to the ego (loss of perceived self-worth) actually equals or exceeds the pain of physical discomfort in intensity. In fact, I have seen people experiencing extreme physical pain, and I have witnessed others whose self-esteem had completely crumbled. I believe the latter is worse! It gnaws on the soul through the conscious mind by day and in the dreams by night. So painful is its effect that our entire emotional apparatus is designed to protect us from its oppression. In other words, a sizable proportion of all human activity is devoted to the task of shielding us from the inner pain of inferiority.<sup>18</sup>

When self-esteem is destroyed, individuals cease to function effectively and develop severe emotional and physical abnormalities.

### **Self-esteem is a Measure of How Well One is Living Up to His Expectations**

Individuals have low self-esteem when there is a great distance between what they want to be and what they are. Who they are is rarely who they want to be. As long as a person sees himself as someone he is not, nor ever can be, there can only be despair and disappointment. An astute seminary student, W. D. Moen, expressed it this way in an article in *Faith at Work*:

Unfortunately, there are people who permanently enshrine in their lives cherished images that are far too ambitious and unrealistically demanding. They strive nobly, with grit and determination, to become someone they cannot realistically hope to be. Driven by some internal force, these people push themselves to the brink of psychic disaster. . . .

The perceived distance between who we are and who we want to be makes all the difference in the world. The closer we think we are to what we want to be, the more self-accepting we will be. (And the more self-accepting, the more peaceful and,

pardon the word, happy.)

Consider this: a woman who is both wealthy and beautiful but who cherishes of herself an image that enshrines something she is not, say, a self-emptying Mother Teresa-type, is potentially far less happy than the simple-minded cleaning woman whose cherished image is that of a simple-minded cleaning woman. **It's the distance that does the damage.**<sup>19</sup>

If one continuously sees himself falling short of an acceptable standard, then there will of necessity be self-rejection. Some years ago there was a poster in a Christian bookstore which showed an intersection of two fences in a pasture. In each of the four corners created by the intersection was a cow, and every cow had its head under the fence and was eating grass in the next field. Like the cows, humans feel that the best is that which is beyond their reach.

Persons who are not content with what they are, strive to become greater and to possess still more. However, since true happiness is not getting what one wants, but rather wanting what one gets, their longed for happiness evades them. From childhood people are trained to do their best, to excel, to try for perfection in whatever they do. Most have been brought up to believe that regardless of how well they do a task, they could possibly do better if they tried again. Dr. Maurice Wagner illustrates this in his book *The Sensation of Being Somebody*:

Gerald was a good worker: prompt, reliable, and productive. His employer was happy to have him on the job. But Gerald felt he could be replaced at any time by anybody. He could not accept praise for his efforts.

"My Father was supercritical of me when I was a child," he recalled. "I could never please him, though I never ceased to try. If I ever did do anything he approved of, he'd only say, 'You can do better than that', or say nothing at all. When I was eight or ten, I begged Dad for just one compliment. He'd reply,

'I don't want you to get the big head. I don't care how well you do something, you can do it better next time. Now stop bothering me.'

"Now that I am older," Gerald continued, "I try to do better. I can't stop feeling like a failure and as if I am no good. Do you suppose it's because my dad always criticized me?"<sup>20</sup>

Unless men can accept themselves, they are driven to pretend to be something they are not because they are afraid that the real person inside will be unacceptable to others. They believe that the means of acceptance by others is to live up to their expectations. Moen again speaks of this:

Rather than setting ourselves free to be our fallible, foolish selves, we accept and lay on ourselves unreasonable demands: demands of society, of peer groups, of employers, of the state, of academic institutions, of the church, and worst of all, of ourselves. We try so hard, striving so nobly to become what we are not, whipping and driving ourselves onward and upward. When we "get there," when we have at last "arrived," then we will accept ourselves. But we never seem to make it.<sup>21</sup>

This causes people to continually work from deficit motivation. We have little energy left for genuine concern for others.

### **The Protection of Self-esteem: Defense Mechanisms**

When persons see that they cannot live up to expectations, their subconscious mind begins to activate certain defense mechanisms to keep their self-esteem afloat. These defense mechanisms are an attempt on the part of the individual to defend himself against the possibility of failure or the feelings failure produces. They are a means of denying reality by overlooking or ignoring it.

According to Lehner<sup>22</sup>, there are three basic categories

of defense mechanisms, all of which are calculated to avoid failure. These along with their respective patterns of behavior are:

Attack mechanisms	Increased effort Compensation Reinterpretation Compromise Flight into activity
Blame-assigning and Attention-diverting Mechanisms	Rationalization Attention-getting behavior Identification
Flight mechanisms	Daydreaming Withdrawal Repression Regression

Use of these mechanisms does not always mean maladjustment in an individual. In fact, all individuals use most of these defenses every now and then. Maladjustment is indicated when a person overuses them or makes them a way of life.

In the attack mechanisms, a person redoubles his attempts to succeed in order to avoid feelings of inadequacy, guilt and anxiety. One strategy is to increase his effort, another to attempt something in a different area to compensate for lack of success in the first. In "reinterpretation" and "compromise," there is a flexing of the original goals to put success within reach, or allowing more time to complete a project. "Flight-into-activity" is increased or persistent effort which becomes an end in itself and is neither productive nor rewarding.

Most humans find no difficulty identifying with "blame-assigning" or "attention-diverting" mechanisms. In "rationalization," the person justifies his failure to reach a



certain goal by saying that he really didn't want it anyway, or by saying that it must not have been God's will for him. He converts the unattainable into the undesirable; or he may acquit himself by blaming the tennis racquet for missing the ball or the car for causing an accident.

"Attention-getting" behavior tends to divert attention away from something one ought to be doing and in which he anticipates failure. This may include psychologically induced sickness or accidents.

"Identification" enables people to enhance their own self-esteem by linking themselves with someone who is successful and prominent. Hero worship is one means of sharing in success while neglecting one's own responsibilities. Membership in prestigious clubs and organizations often diverts a person's attention away from his own inadequacies.

"Flight mechanisms" are a more severe denial of reality. Occasional daydreaming is very common and normally not too destructive. When, however, the person begins to spend long periods in the unreal world, it can be very damaging. Watching television is a type of daydreaming for most people. It lets them escape pressures and failures of everyday life for a time while they live in a pretend world.

"Withdrawal" is a severe form of daydreaming which includes removing oneself physically from the disturbing situation, rather than dealing with it. Again, it is a common thing for most people on some occasions; all persons need to be alone sometimes. They need time to think about difficult problems before attempting to solve them: but if withdrawal becomes a pattern and an escape from nearly every problem, it is unhealthy and is a sign of very low self-esteem.

Some persons withdraw subconsciously into illness. They either become truly ill or become super-sensitive to minor disturbances which would go unnoticed by the well-

adjusted person.

“Repression” is an effort to deny or forget an undesirable experience. Men’s minds continually keep many emotions suppressed within their subconscious. When a mother avoids any remembrance of a deceased daughter and removes all objects that bring her to mind, she is repressing the experience.

“Regression” takes place when a person retreats to a previous stage of development such as childhood. Again, this is due to inadequate self-esteem. The individual feels that there is more chance for recognition and acceptance in the previous setting than there is in the real present. Regressive behavior may occur especially during periods of separation crisis when a person leaves home for a new and distant place. Children may revert to bed-wetting or sucking their thumb as an attempt to increase security.

In conclusion, it can be seen that within the subconscious mind, there are a number of defenses aimed at protecting self-esteem. These defense mechanisms, when abused can cause great friction in inter-personal relationships. If self-esteem is extremely threatened beyond the coping ability of these mechanisms, neurotic or psychotic illness will result.

### **Summary**

Inadequate self-esteem lies at the heart of much irrational behavior and many mental problems. The only sure source for genuine self-esteem lies in the love of God for every individual. Only as Christians continually remember that they are secure and significant because they are accepted in Christ can they live as whole human beings. Only when they do not fear destruction of their being can they risk being compassionate and sacrificing for others.

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1. John Beecroft, *Kipling: a Selection of His Stories and Poems*, (New York: Doubleday, 1892), pp. 432-3.

2. Bruce Narramore, *You're Someone Special*, (Grand Rapid: Zonder-van, 1978), p. 17.

3. John F. Crosby, "On the Origin of the Taboo Against Self-love," *The Humanist* 39 (November-December 1979):45.

4. Ray Ashford, *Loving Ourselves*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 19.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

6. These diagrams are original with the author.

7. Paul Tournier, "The Dynamics of Success", *Leadership* 11 (Winter 1981): p. 36.

8. Jay E. Adams, *Four Weeks with God and Your Neighbor*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978), p. 47.

Dr. Adams gives a concise presentation of his view of self-love:

When Christ commanded you to love your neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40), He intended to say exactly that and nothing else. Yet psychologizing Christians have tried to add a third and even more basic commandment: love yourself. Some go so far as to claim that unless a person first learns to love himself properly, he will never learn to love his neighbor. Don't believe it!

... When Christ said love your neighbor as yourself, He did not mean to do for him what you do for yourself. Instead, (as in Christ's "first" commandment) the stress in the "second" is upon the intensity of the love rather than upon the identity of the action: the second is like the first. The words, "as yourself," in the second parallel the phrase, "with all your heart," in the first. The emphasis is not upon the content of the love (that is found in the commandments themselves), but upon its fervency: "Love as enthusiastically as you love yourself." Beyond this, the fact that Christ distinguishes only "two commandments" (vs 40) itself is decisive.

... People who try to love themselves will find instead that they are spinning their wheels. Much time and energy can be wasted trying to strengthen egos. Not one word in the Scriptures encourages such activities. They are as futile as the pursuit of happiness. A good self-concept never arises from seeking it directly. Like happiness, it is the by-product of loving God and one's neighbor.

Dr. Adams sees self-love as an attempt to strengthen one's ego. For him, self-love is self-centeredness and self-aggrandizement, but for other

Christian counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists it means something entirely different. Adams is correct in saying that self-love and good self-concept do not arise by seeking them directly. If they did, then this effort would indeed be self-centeredness. No Christian author is advocating a cult of self-worship, self-centeredness or pride. What many are saying is that the only way to escape having one's attention fixed on one's self is to know that the self (soul) is secure and not in danger of extermination. This does not need to be sought by continuous effort, but is rather an established fact for those who are children of God. The problem is that most don't believe it.

In I John 5:1, John states that: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." John was not trying to make a case for self-love here, but love for self is a logical conclusion derived from his statement. If a man is born of God and loves the Father, then he must love himself because he is a child of God. God does not want His children to practice self-discrimination.

Perhaps the main objection by Adams would not arise if self-love were referred to as soul-love.

9. Don Hillis, *Live with Yourself and Like it*, (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1972), pp. 28-9.

10. Carlson, *Run and not be Weary*, p. 71.

11. Nathaniel Brandon, *The Psychology of Self-esteem*, (New York: Bantam, 1969), p. 1.

12. Lawrence J. Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1977), p. 70.

13. Levi Keidel, *Stop Treating me Like God*, (Carol Stream, Ill: Creation House, 1971), p. 215.

14. Samuel Rutherford McDill, "A Biblical Basis for Self-Esteem" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1975), p. 4.

15. Maurice Wagner, *The Sensation of Being Somebody*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p. 31.

16. Edward L. Wells and Gerald Marwell, *Self-esteem*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976), p. 72.

17. Wagner, *Sensation of Being Somebody*, p. 31.

18. Dobson, *Hide or Seek*, p. 140.

19. W. D. Moen, "How Realistic is Your Self-image?", *Faith at Work* 93 (March-April 1980), p. 13.

20. Wagner, *Sensation of Being Somebody*, p. 25.

21. Moen, "How Realistic is Your Self-image?", p. 13.

22. Lehner and Kube, *Dynamics of Personal Adjustment*, pp. 120-142.

## Chapter 3

### Cross-cultural Stress

Adjusting one's lifestyle and thought patterns to fit a new culture is a very stressful experience. It is a process of making oneself vulnerable to disorientation and damage from many emotional storms. It is difficult for many who have never experienced such exposure for an extended time to comprehend the high degree of stress involved. This chapter will briefly examine some of the factors which contribute to cross-cultural stress and show that this stress results in a significantly reduced level of performance by those under its influence. This reduced level of performance produces feelings of guilt and subsequent loss of self-esteem, and if unresolved, results in maladjusted behavior.

#### Culture

First, it is necessary to understand more clearly what culture is. Philip Bock and Edward Hall describe it:

Culture, in its broadest sense, is what makes you a stranger when you are away from home. It includes all those beliefs and expectations about how people act which have become a kind of second nature to you as a result of social learning. When you are with members of a group who share your culture, you do not have to think about it, for you are viewing the world in pretty much the same way and you all know, in general terms, what to expect of one another. However, direct exposure to an alien society usually produces a disturbing feeling of disorientation and helplessness that is called culture shock.<sup>1</sup>

"Culture determines the timing of interpersonal events, the places where it is appropriate to discuss particular topics, even the physical distance separating the speaker from the hearer, and the tone of voice that is appropriate."<sup>2</sup>



**Culture is what makes you a stranger when you are away from home.**

Culture determines what is accepted as being proper. In downtown Bangkok, culture says that it is proper to brush your teeth while bathing in a polluted river; in downtown New York, such behavior is totally unacceptable. Most people are not even aware that culture exists in their environment. If they have been exposed to only one culture, they believe that the only correct way to do things is the way that they have always done them.

### **Stress Factors in Cross-cultural Living**

Culture stress describes the destabilizing influence of the

radically new way of life in which the foreigner finds himself. The tourist in a foreign culture does not normally experience a great deal of culture stress. He may experience the shock aspect of the alien culture, but usually is insulated from extended struggle with it. He only enters the real world when he leaves his American-style hotel and goes shopping or sight-seeing. This can also be the case for summer and short-term missionaries. They know that their stay is not permanent, so do not abandon themselves to adopting the new culture.

Culture stress varies in intensity, and the more exotic or different the alien society and the deeper one's involvement in its social life, the greater the stress. Culture stress strikes the one hardest who is settling in to a community to make it his new home for possibly a lifetime. It is then that depression and disillusionment become real enemies.

### *Change in social roles*

The new cross-cultural worker is like a child again, and must start learning appropriate behavior almost from scratch. His whole value system is upset and must be reorganized. McElroy, in an article in *Latin American Evangelist*, describes the typical experience of the new missionary in a foreign culture:

Few candidates are prepared for the forces which will push, pull and mold them when they leave their familiar culture and language, when old props and supports are temporarily gone.

Just making a bank deposit can be a traumatic experience for the new missionary trying to understand unfamiliar procedures from tellers who speak no English. After similar experiences in the grocery store, on the bus, and at the church, he may develop gnawing feelings of disorientation and frustration.

His children, too, have problems adjusting to the new language and way of life, and need extra loving care and patience.

Sometimes this internal stress produces physical distress as

well — crying about insignificant things, hives, extreme fatigue, asthma, allergic sensitivity, stuttering or frequent colds.<sup>3</sup>

One friend who served as a summer worker in Japan recounted an incident on a city bus. After his ride, as he was about to exit, he put what he thought was the appropriate coin into the machine. The driver quickly handed him three smaller coins in return. Thinking that this was perhaps his change, the summer worker started to leave. The driver grasped his arm and indicated that the fare was not yet paid, whereupon the American held out his hand with all his coins and let the driver select what was correct. With hat in hand and embarrassed over his ignorance of something so simple as paying a bus fare, he left the crowded bus.

I remember some of my own frustration as a new missionary. In Cochabamba, Bolivia, almost all streets are one-way. Normally the direction of traffic alternates from street to street, but not always. It was extremely embarrassing to keep turning down one-way streets headed the wrong way. Bolivian drivers, by their looks and their righteous pronouncements of blame, told me that any fool could drive better than I!

Through the above examples, it can be seen that what is being threatened most by entry into an alien culture is one's self-esteem. McElroy also points out that part of the adjustment problem is due to a switch in social roles.

During the first week of language study the new missionary experiences "role shock." In North America he was a leader, successful and secure. Suddenly, he is a learner, with a high school graduate teaching him Spanish phonetics — and correcting, correcting, correcting him. If the missionary does not make the role switch, he feels insecure, self-conscious and threatened. The experience brings out the worst in some students: stubbornness, rudeness, withdrawal, and hypercriticalness.<sup>4</sup>



I can readily identify with this also. Before I went to South America as a missionary, I was a pilot in the U.S. Air Force. I had been looked up to, saluted, well-paid, admired and respected. Once in Bolivia, I was just one of several untrustworthy foreigners, and respect was a lot harder to find. Apparently, much of my sense of self-worth was based upon the respect and praise I received from others. There, in the new situation there was little of that, and I began to subconsciously question my worth and to try to prove that I was a good missionary.

### *Change in language*

One of the earliest struggles the new worker has is in the area of language learning. This is a highly visible element of culture stress. William Smalley, one of the earliest writers to address the phenomenon of culture shock, has described the relationship between language learning and psychological struggles:

Language shock is one of the basic ingredients of culture shock. Because language is the most important communication medium in any human society, it is the area where the largest number of the cues to interpersonal relationships lie. As the newcomer comes into a whole new world where he knows no language at all, he is stripped of his primary means of interacting with other people, he is subject to constant mistakes, he is placed on the level of a child again. Even after weeks of study he is unable to discuss much more than the price of a pound of potatoes. He is unable to display his education and intelligence, the symbols which gave him status and security back home. He meets intelligent and educated people but he responds to them like a child or an idiot because he is not capable of any better response.<sup>5</sup>

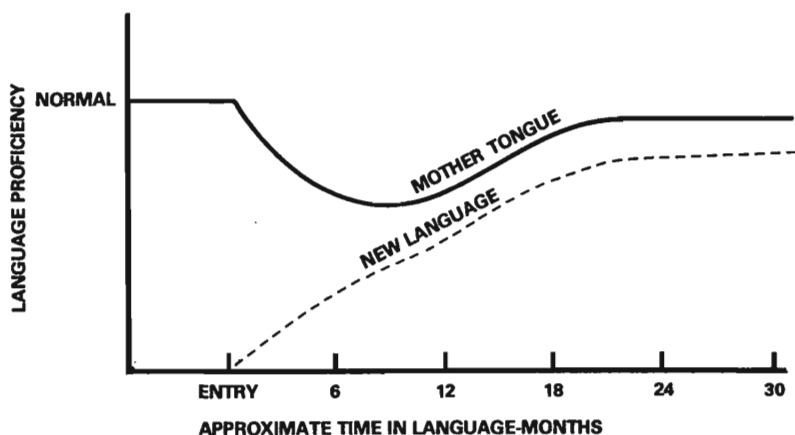
The language learner has the uneasy feeling that people are laughing behind his back — and they are. His study is tiring, boring, frustrating. Nothing seems to go logically or smoothly, because logic is identified with familiar ways of talking and

thinking. It is based on his language and academic tradition.

Many an overseas American who started out to learn a language has ended by rejecting it. The pattern of rejection sometimes means less and less study; the development of more and more English contacts. Sometimes it means illness, genuine physical illness.<sup>6</sup>

This difference in language puts a severe strain on the mental capacities. What were simple, subconscious mental procedures now require concentrated conscious participation. For example, when the new missionary first goes to church on Sunday, he finds the service picturesque and fascinating, but after several weeks, he finds that trying to gain spiritual nourishment from the sermon is extremely difficult. After ten minutes of intense concentration trying to understand one word in every five, his brain rebels and finds other things to do. Finally, after six months of strained mental concentration, he may get the gist of the message and be able to find Bible references easily, but worship is still a tiring and demanding experience.

As the new worker concentrates heavily on learning the new language, he begins to lose proficiency in his mother tongue. I remember this happening in my case; as I started learning Bible verses and trying to have devotions in the other language to speed up learning, I found that I could no longer remember some of the verses I had previously memorized in English. John 3:16 was a notable exception, but some of the lesser known verses seemed lost from memory. When writing letters home, I found it difficult to remember some of my vocabulary. The words seemed to be on the tip of my tongue, but managed to stay there. What happened was that proficiency in the old language temporarily diminished as my mind concentrated all its efforts on learning the new. After a sufficient time of study passed, proficiency in English returned to normal, but not



**FIGURE 5.** Language Proficiency versus Time<sup>7</sup>

without some self-doubt. Figure 5 illustrates this phenomenon:

When the new worker cannot remember his verses or Bible details, he begins to doubt his suitability for missionary work: "what kind of a missionary am I if I don't even know my Bible?" His self-esteem is under attack.

### *Change in routine*

Inadequacy due to culture stress is felt in the menial duties of the home. Before living long in the new culture, the wife learns that she no longer knows how to cook. In most developing countries, no frozen foods or instant mixes are available. The only canned goods are imported, and the price far out of reach. Vegetables and fruits are not sprayed nor carefully packaged to prevent contamination, and therefore must be treated to kill parasites. Everything must be cooked from scratch, and purchases must be made every two or three days. Elisabeth Elliot humorously relates one of the problems associated with food preparation:

Then there were the simple things which, for safety's sake, one ought not to overlook. They only take a minute. Like washing lettuce. "Avoid raw vegetables" is good advice for a tourist, but if you are going to live in a place (it was living we were aiming for, not mere tropical survival), you want raw vegetables sometimes. The book said to dip everything, lettuce included, in boiling water for a few seconds. This could be counted on usually to kill amoeba and always to kill one's zest for salad.<sup>8</sup>

It usually takes much longer to get anything done in a new culture. If one lives in the jungle, then eighty percent of his effort will go toward just plain survival — carrying and boiling water, trimming the banana trees, hunting for food, building and maintaining a house, washing by hand, cooking from scratch, making long trips to town for supplies, teaching the children, and bartering with the natives. If one is well organized, he may be able to devote half a day several days a week to Bible translation, health classes, or evangelism. Spending so much time just to sustain life can be very frustrating. Elizabeth Elliot confessed her struggle with it:

None of us felt sorry for ourselves with having to cope with inconvenience. Inconvenience belonged to missionary life. The proportion of time, however, which was consumed with these temporal matters bothered me. When I was fiddling with the stove, I felt that I ought to be working on the language, the real work I had come for.<sup>9</sup>

Inconvenience costs time, and when one's time is spent on what seem like unspiritual things, he feels wasteful and unsuccessful as a missionary. In the city, there is also a set of time-consuming activities to frustrate the newcomer. Just learning where to get off of a bus can take several circuits. In most under-developed countries, there are no supermarkets which sell everything under one roof: the

shopper must move from street to street instead of from aisle to aisle to accumulate the groceries for the family or the replacement parts for the car. Grocery shopping must be done much more often since most workers cannot afford the luxury of a freezer for keeping things on hand. Whether in the jungle or the city, these time-consuming ways of getting things done begin to convince the foreigner that he is incompetent and inefficient.

### *Changes in interpersonal relationship formation*

Cross-cultural stress is increased in proportion to one's involvement psychologically within the culture. Involvement includes social relationships in study, business, recreation or ministry. Because involvement with a foreign community increases stress, people instinctively avoid it. Involvement is necessary to produce beneficial change, but as stress intensifies, the person feels the need to withdraw from social contact in order to be able to function. Yet, involvement cannot be avoided without seriously limiting the effectiveness of the missionary worker. Though personal social relationships are stressful, they are necessary for reaching missionary goals.

It is more difficult to relate to friends from another culture. The fear of being misunderstood militates against letting down one's guard and being open. Forming friendships is much less natural for the new person in a different culture. It takes longer for people to understand each other and to build genuine trust.

These changes in social role, language, routine and interpersonal relationship formation are only a few of the factors contributing to turmoil within the cross-cultural worker.<sup>10</sup>

### **Guilt Feelings**

Culture stress affects every foreigner. Missionaries are

not immune, even though they go in the Name and with the blessing of Christ. They cannot avoid physical and spiritual stress. Unfortunately,

The missionary easily sees all this stress and turmoil as spiritual failure, rather than as a conflict between his personality and the alien culture. He may write home to his Christian friends for solace. But instead of comforting him they express their disappointment, and chide him for not being victorious over his problems. In time his relations with the nationals and with fellow missionaries become greatly strained, and his sense of isolation deepens. Things that once seemed romantic and exciting — the different language, different sounds and smells, different ways of responding and thinking — now seem only strange and threatening. Yet he dare not be frank in expressing any of this: missionaries aren't supposed to have such feelings, he thinks. He feels he is failing as a Christian example, and guilt compounds the problem.<sup>11</sup>

The preceding quotation from *Eternity* magazine lucidly expresses the sense of guilt felt by missionaries when they cannot live up to everyone's expectations. If absolute cultural adjustment is the goal, then the missionary will feel frustrated: for no matter how much he may desire otherwise, he will always be considered a foreigner by the people.

### **Emotional Maladjustment**

When the conflict over lowered self-esteem and false guilt goes unresolved, individuals employ psychological defense mechanisms to an increasing degree. This creates tension in inter-personal relationships in the form of hostility, insults, resentment, anger, dishonesty, competition, blame-assigning, withdrawal, misinterpretation, phobias and depression.<sup>12</sup> In the early stages, the individual is often unaware that this is taking place.

To this point, the term "culture shock" has purposely

been avoided in our discussion because it is a misnomer. Most emotional and psychological maladjustment resulting from culture stress is not similar to traumatic shock. However, within the wide scope of reactions to culture stress there is a shock-type experience which is suffered by a minority of people. It is a reaction to what is seen as repulsive within the alien culture. For example, it is the reaction of a middle-class westerner in a poor country to the sight of starving children, or to the sight of flies on all the food in the market, or the smell of excrement along the street (or the realization that the flies have been in both places). If a citizen of a poorer country comes to the West, it is his reaction to the excessive speed on the expressway, the height of skyscrapers, or the large mind-boggling supermarkets. This is indeed a result of cross-cultural stress, and it does resemble shock — a psychological jolt which makes the foreigner flee to the sanctuary of his hotel room. Nevertheless, the most devastating result of cross-cultural conflict is not a state of shock. Rather, it is a slowly advancing, nearly unnoticed psychological phenomenon which affects his whole way of thinking about himself and about others. The latter is usually more subtle, yet far more damaging. It often goes undetected, and the person thinks that he is functioning normally. For example, when a frog is tossed alive into a pot of boiling water, he will immediately jump out. However, if he is placed into a pot of water at room temperature, he will be content to stay there even though the water is heated gradually to a boil. Like the frog in the slowly heated water, the cross-cultural worker may not even notice that something is amiss until it is very difficult to do anything about it.

When most writers refer to culture shock, they are really referring to the latter reaction to cross-cultural stress. The definition given in *American Anthropologist* is: "The massive psychic reaction which takes place within the individual

plunged into a culture vastly different from his own." A more descriptive definition by Dr. Thomas Brewster is also helpful:

Culture shock is a somewhat psychotic state that people get into when they are in a cultural situation whose cues are misleading because they have learned either responses that are wrong for the cues, or no responses at all. It has been described as a "kind of vertigo such as one has never experienced before. One blames one's glasses. What is really changing are the glasses through which one's mind has looked at the world".<sup>13</sup>

For most people, the early experience within the new culture is one of fascination with the sights and sounds. Gradually this fascination gives way to dissatisfaction with the inconvenience caused by the culture, and eventually ends in one of four responses: (1) total rejection of the new culture, (2) total rejection of the old, (3) grudging coexistence, or (4) healthy integration of the new with the old. Only in the latter are behavioral irregularities minimized and wholesome adjustment possible.

### **Summary**

Cross-cultural living imposes intense stress on the psychological being of the individual. The degree of stress varies in accordance with the degree of cultural difference between the home and host cultures. Because of significantly decreased achievement, workers tend to feel guilty for not living up to expectations.



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1. Philip K. Bock, *Culture Shock: a Reader in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970), foreword.
  2. Edward T. Hall, Jr. and William Foote Whyte, "Intercultural Communication," *Conformity and Conflict*, Eds., James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), p. 217.
  3. Richard McElroy, "The New Missionary and Culture Shock," *Latin American Evangelist* 52 (May-June, 1972): inside cover.
  4. Ibid.
  5. William A. Smalley, "Culture Shock, Language Shock, and the Shock of Self-discovery," *Practical Anthropology* 1(1963): 54.
  6. Ibid., p. 55.
  7. This language learning diagram is constructed on the basis of the author's personal experience and with confirmation from other workers. It is intended as an approximation of the phenomenon and not as an exact representation. People coming to the United States from other cultures have also confirmed this occurrence of temporary lowering of proficiency in their native language.
  8. Elisabeth Elliot, *These Strange Ashes*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 41.
  9. Ibid., p. 44.
  10. For a more complete list of the external and internal factors in culture stress, see an article entitled "Likely Causes of Emotional Difficulties Among Missionaries" by Dr. James A. Stringham in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Volume 6 (Summer 1970), pages 193-203.
  11. Faith A. Pidcoke, "Can Missionaries Avoid Culture Shock," *Eternity* 24 (June 1973):15.
  12. For a more extensive analysis of missionary maladjustment, see "Decreasing Fatigue and Illness in Field Work," By Sally Folger Dye in *Missiology* 2 (January 1974), pages 79-109.
  13. Thomas E. Brewster and Elizabeth S. Brewster, "Involvement as a Means of Second Culture Learning." *Practical Anthropology* 19 (1972):39

## Chapter 4

### **Missionary Role Stress**

This chapter examines some of the stress which missionaries face as they try to live up to an unrealistic image. Many of the observations and comments contained here apply not only to those trying to fulfill the missionary role, but also to any Christian who is trying to measure up to an unrealistic standard of Christianity.

#### **The Problem of the Idealistic Missionary Image**

Not only do missionaries face tremendous stress due to the difficulty of the work they are trying to do but also because of the very high standards expected of them. Dr. David Hesselgrave of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School addresses this problem:

... there is the phenomenon of "rising expectations" which faces tomorrow's missionary. Recent descriptions of the kind of missionaries needed in the 1970s include the following: men of sterling quality, purposive men, dynamic men, men who are original thinkers, creative men, discerning men, flexible men, men who are resourceful, sensitive men, men who can produce, men who are well-informed, men who understand the times, prophetic men, men who make history, men who overcome all obstacles. If that is the requirement for the '70s, what will be required in the '80s and '90s in this rapidly changing and demanding world? In the judgment that these attributes are indeed desirable and, to a certain extent, necessary, I readily concur. But if we anticipate that some of the best men will answer the challenge, we can also anticipate that many good men will say "Who is sufficient for these things?"<sup>1</sup>

Another author, writing in the *Evangelical Missions Quar-*

terly, manages to intensify expectations even more with these words:

Language learning requires sustained hard work. Isolated posts demand extraordinary professional competence and self-reliance under pressure. The mission field is no place for lazy, undisciplined people. Or for those who have not done their professional homework. Educational and technical levels are rising all over the world, so that the one who aspires to be a missionary should have something to offer not available on the local market at much less cost and bother.<sup>2</sup>



**Most potential workers feel woefully inadequate to measure up to these requirements.**

Such writing gives the impression that mission boards are trying to recruit people who are without flaws; persons who are adequate for every problem; human beings who are invincible in the face of any foe. This is very unrealistic. In reality, the missionary does not need to worry about whether or not he is adequate for all of the trials that will be set before him. His adequacy is from God (II Corinthians 3:5). However, that adequacy does not mean perfection. Even the great Apostle Paul was not perfect, as can be seen by his admission that he was with the Corinthians in weakness and fear and much trembling (I Corinthians 2:3). He had conflicts without and fears within (II Corinthians 7:5). Today, a candidate secretary might say "Sorry Paul, you cannot join our mission board: you just do not fit the image. You can't pass the physical. Besides, you have a prison record and have been known to incite riots."

In spite of Biblical teaching about God's use of the weak and lowly, we see that the demands on missionaries continue to intensify. Are the expectations really too high, or are cross-cultural Christian workers able to live up to them without suffering serious damage? To answer this question, four quotes from two little publicized missionary books will be helpful. The first three are from the book, *Stop Treating Me Like God* by Levi Keidel, a missionary to Africa. The last one is from the book *When All the Bridges Are Down* by Ida Nelle Holloway, a missionary to Japan. Both of these writers were extremely productive workers who were very successful by most standards:

Obviously, in terms of what I had understood a missionary to be, I was unqualified.<sup>3</sup>

Legal compulsion seemingly forced me to continually overreach my resources until eventually I was driven into a valley of despondency.<sup>4</sup>

I began to stand my various manifestations of unchristlikeness up on a row to take a good look at them: bad temper,

chafing against unfavorable circumstances, enslaving myself to legalistic motivation, ill will toward those who impeded my program.

To these I added recurrent terminal exhaustion. My experience with psychosomatic illness was not the only manifestation of it. I remember the counsel of my pastor when we first left for Congo: "Now, Levi, you don't have to accomplish everything during your first term." Before I completed two years on the field I was taken to a hospital. Symptoms of insomnia and an itching swelling of my flesh were diagnosed as "emotional and physical exhaustion." Again, toward the end of our last term, I was as a bowl dipped empty and scraped raw by the ravenous appetite of demand.<sup>5</sup>

I was finding it harder and harder to communicate with God. I would lie on my bed through the long nights with my hands outstretched, crying, "take my hand, God, oh please, take my hand!"

In the daytime I was constantly asking, "Why can't I 'mount up with wings like the eagle'? Why can't I 'run and not be weary'?" Yet I was constantly, desperately tired.

It was as if the last bridge were crumbling. I could not even find the bridge to God. I felt lost in utter darkness. I felt condemned to total isolation. In times past when men had asked me my idea of hell I had often responded, "Isolation from God and love." I had arrived at that definition through mental gymnastics. Now I was proving it experientially. Surely this was hell.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, these are not rare, exceptional cases, though they may be examples of more severe problems than experienced by most. The problems are much more common than most Christians realize. They are often covered up to protect the individual, the mission board or the missionary image. When my wife suffered an emotional breakdown after our first term, I began to realize that her's was not a unique problem. I learned of a number of other

missionaries who had similar experiences. I found that Christian counselors offered discounts to missionaries and that missionary medical insurance commonly covered most expenses for psychiatric care. Dr. Larry Crabb, a prominent Christian psychologist, readily acknowledged in a personal conversation that not a few missionaries on furlough come to him for counsel.

### **The Common Response to the Image**

The typical response to the inflated image is to work harder to try to measure up to it. Somehow the new missionary must close the gap if he is to maintain any sense of self-esteem. As his effort is intensified, he develops emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual problems. When he sees that he cannot measure up, he concludes that he is faulty and no longer acceptable for serving God.

When people cannot live up to the cherished level, they put on a mask. They find ways of disguising their perceived failures. Human beings cannot be bedfellows with a worthless self-image.

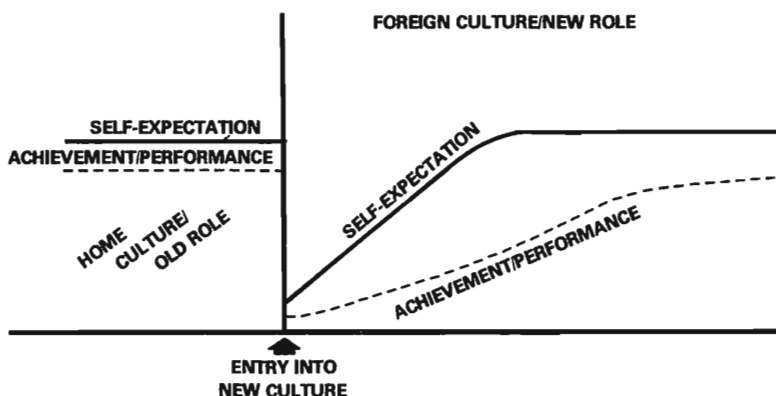
Like other unresolved conflicts, the mask requires a lot of energy and leads to a host of problems besides fear, such as irritability, worry, anxiety, fatigue, excusing ourselves, blaming others, and, not infrequently, frank lying and deceit. . . .

When we refuse to remove our masks, we not only create internal conflict and fatigue, but we also hinder our own growth and the growth of others. Individuals grow by relating to other genuine people and seeing how they deal with life's problems. Christian leaders must be willing to first remove their own masks before they can ever expect others to do likewise. Only as we Christians are willing to expose our feet of clay will others feel (and maybe only then) safe to expose themselves and their needs. . . .

If a Christian leader is living a life of pretense it is most likely (despite the seeming results he may proudly point to) his life is accomplishing very little of eternal value. It may even be

hindering God's work in the lives of people around him. God's plan and desire is that we honestly and openly recognize who and what we are — imperfect vessels of clay.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most prominent causes of stress for the missionary is trying to live up to these inflated expectations. The typical experience is illustrated by Figure 6.



**FIGURE 6.** Expectation versus Achievement<sup>8</sup>

Usually, for the well-adjusted individual, self expectation slightly exceeds performance. This is normal and drives men to high achievement. However, in the new missionary role, expectation quickly outpaces performance. New workers believe that once they have become choice servants of the Lord they will automatically achieve more. In reality, because of culture stress, achievement is drastically decreased. As seen in Chapter three, one cannot produce at the same level in a foreign situation. Here then is the real problem — there exists a great discrepancy between what one expects of oneself (and is expected by others) and what one can actually achieve. This creates tremendous

internal conflict. If this gap widens greatly, the mind begins to employ defense mechanisms to protect the sense of worth. The individual moves farther and farther from reality, usually denying his lack of achievement. Next, he begins to blame others or his circumstances for it. He increases his efforts to succeed only to find that he is physically exhausted. Perhaps physical illness develops, and this provides the needed excuse for lack of achievement. The illness may continue indefinitely as a defense mechanism against the impossible demands of the missionary image.

As a result of the expectation/performance discrepancy, hostile, critical, irrational, tired, sick and neurotic missionaries develop who are confused about their behavior and who sometimes conclude that they are worthless. It normally doesn't occur to them to lower their expectations, because they believe that God is not pleased with them unless they reach a certain level of achievement. Most effort by the individual and by the mission board is devoted to improving performance, rather than to bringing expectation down to realistic levels.

North Americans have come to equate intense work with spirituality. Therefore, the Christian who is frantically busy in the Lord's work is considered the most spiritual. Leisure is viewed as sin for the Christian. However, this concept of work and leisure is unique to western society. In Latin, the word for work was "non-leisure." Work was thus secondary, defined in terms related to leisure. In Greek, the word for work also meant the absence of leisure. Leisure was understood as a time for growth and development.<sup>9</sup>

The reversed concept exacts a high price from Christian workers. "Pastors are experiencing burn-out at an alarming rate. The average pastor is a man who works seven days a week, has no hobbies, no regular exercise, and little quality time with his family."<sup>10</sup> In work there is little time for worship, especially if one is working only to gain approval from his



fellow man. When work interferes with a man's relationship to God, then it must be interrupted. Work must not be allowed to become a substitute for spontaneous worship. A good abiding principle is suggested by Elisabeth Prentiss:

If you could once make up your mind in the fear of God never to take on more work of any sort than you can carry on calmly, quietly, without hurry or flurry, and the instant you feel yourself growing nervous, and like one out of breath, would stop and take breath, you would find this simple common-sense rule doing for you what no prayers or tears could ever accomplish.

### **Behind the Erroneous Image**

The present image of the missionary held by most Christians is unscriptural because the emphasis is put on *doing* rather than *being*. This is largely due to our North American society which places more value on performance than on character: here, it is performance which determines worth. For example, when a machine is no longer capable of meeting production levels, it is scrapped and replaced by one which can do the job. Likewise, when a person fails to perform at the level expected of him, he is no longer considered useful and is soon replaced. This attitude affects not only industry and business, but social structures as well. When a marriage partner no longer meets expectations, he or she is discarded for a more productive model. The west has become a disposable society and has transferred this performance-based standard over to its image of the acceptable missionary.

God is not against work or performance when it is a product of character, but for Him, work is always a secondary consideration. In Exodus 3:14, God said, "I am who I am." He did not say "I do what I do." His character determines His action and not vice-versa. In John 6:29 when the disciples asked what they could do to work the works of God, Jesus replied, "This is the work of God; that you be-

lieve on Him whom He has sent." Scripture clearly emphasizes heart character above performance as the thing that pleases God.

As mentioned earlier, the problem of an unrealistic image is not unique to the missionary. Pastors, other full-time Christian workers and even many Christian laymen are intimidated by it also. Even in other less stressful societies we see Christian workers attempting to win recognition by measuring up to a larger than life image. An example from an African brother William Nagenda illustrates this:

I remember years ago when I went to work as a missionary in Ruanda, that a dear man of God had died a few months before, a man who had done a great work. It was at a time when we thought the work was just beginning. He was full of zeal and full of the Holy Spirit. He died so quickly, and God called me to go and take his place. As I prepared to go my thoughts were full as I thought of what I was going to do. I was keen to go. I wanted to see souls saved, but deep down in me there was the feeling that I wanted to be a wonderful missionary. I wanted to do something greater than what that man had done. I was preparing myself with that spirit. "I'm going to become somebody; I'm going to be a great evangelist; people are going to talk about me." That was the spirit. You could say that it was ambition, but deep down in me was pride. I was looking for my own glory. There is such a thing as walking and tearing clothes every day, but really it is done so that we may become better known and more popular. There are times when we think we are suffering for the Lord, but really deep down we are trying to build up our own name and become a great man.<sup>11</sup>

So, though it is more prevalent in our society, it is present in all societies, because it is a manifestation of self-centeredness and sin. All men try to live up to an image because they believe that by so doing they will win the approval of God and men. Tim Hansel, in his book *When I Relax I feel Guilty*, refers to the North American version of the image as a myth:

This myth is humorously referred to as bionic Christianity. It describes the super Christian who is, at least in appearance, above reproach. He has been redeemed, even of his humanness, and he works hard daily to earn his righteousness. Each of his answers is quick and precise, and his time is managed with calculated economy. Above all else, no time should be wasted on such frivolous things as laughter and play when there is so much to be done in the world. Heavily laden with guilt and tension about each of the minutes he might be wasting — stiff, fussy, meticulous, and incurably religious — the Bionic Christian simply does not have time to be happy. Irony of ironies, his commitment to Jesus Christ has become a prison rather than a blessing. So blinded by religious observations and reservations, he fails to see the festivity that was so central in the life of Jesus. He forgets that Jesus, despite the sad world he inhabited, was the prime host and the prime guest of the party. Jesus let Himself be doused with perfume. He attended to wedding wine and wedding garments.<sup>12</sup>

### **Summary**

Stress in the missionary role is caused by a discrepancy between expected and actual performance. This leads to false guilt and low self-esteem. The high level of expected performance is caused by an erroneous image of the missionary worker which is based on unbiblical principles. It is very important for new cross-cultural workers to have a realistic standard toward which to aim, and a proper understanding of their limitations as human beings in a foreign environment.

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1. David J. Hesselgrave, "The Missionary of Tomorrow — Identity Crisis Extraordinary," *Missiology of* (April 1975): 228.
  2. Gerald Bates, "Who is Qualified to be a Missionary," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 13 (October 1977): 216.
  3. Keidel, *Stop Treating Me Like God*, p. 22.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
  6. Ida Nelle Holloway, *When All the Bridges are Down*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1975), p. 40.
  7. Carlson, *Run and Not be Weary*, p. 65.
  8. Diagram original with author.
  9. Tim Hansel, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, (Elgin, Ill: David C. Cook, 1979), p. 30.
  10. WMHK Radio, Columbia, South Carolina, From a program, "The Rest of the News," (August 27, 1981).
  11. William Nagenda, In Message given at Urbana, 1954, quoted in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 8 (Winter 1972): 97.
  12. Tim Hansel, *When I Relax*, p. 42.

## Chapter 5

### **The First Term: Life Change Stress**

Any honest missionary will tell you that the first term involves considerable stress; this stress comes from three different sources. The first is culture stress and the need to relearn acceptable behavior. The second is the stress imposed by the idealistic missionary image and the resultant pressure to achieve. The third is the stress of normal life change events taking place with the initiation of a missionary career. Among these life change events are changes in occupation, geography, language, and marriage or childbirth within a two year period before or after entry into the culture. This chapter explores some of these life changes commonly taking place which affect the new missionary.

#### **Typical Life Changes**

##### *Occupation*

Normally, when we change jobs here in our western society, it is somewhat of a traumatic experience. Several months to a year pass before we get the hang of things and feel competent and capable again. Our self-esteem is under pressure until we can convince ourselves and others that we can adequately perform in the new role.

##### *Geographical move*

Another trying experience is that of moving to a different geographical area. Even if the husband maintains the same type job with the same company, and the wife continues in a role as housewife and mother, it can take a long time to pack, move, unpack, organize, decorate, make new

friends, find out where to shop, where to go out to eat and where to go to church. Though they may not be aware of it a year later, they are still newcomers in many ways and are still settling-in. Thus, a geographical move to a new place usually brings much stress into people's lives:

Another specific depression is induced by moving to a different residence. Even rearranging furniture and redecorating can result in a feeling of loss; one feels uprooted and is acutely aware that one's home, the four walls one knew so well, are missing.<sup>1</sup>

### *Language*

When a person begins to work in another language, he is under great stress. Many people become very anxious and upset when their firms purchase electronic computers and they need to learn computer language. It takes six months to a year for normal adjustment even though the usage of the computer language is limited to the job and is not involved with basic life activities such as how to cook or repair the car. Though it directly affects only a portion of one's life, it very often causes emotional and psychological difficulties in the whole person. Even more traumatic is a change in language which affects nearly every area of one's life.

### *Financial status*

Of course, when one receives a raise or a cut in salary, it has a forceful effect on him. He needs to revamp his financial thinking and alter his lifestyle to compensate for the difference.

### *Childbirth*

Having a baby is a beautiful experience for a couple, but when a little one drops into a household, things never get back to normal. With a first baby, it seems like the need to

adjust and compensate begins and never ends. Dr. Collins states, "In one study, 83 percent of the couples interviewed reported that the first child's coming brought 'extensive' or 'severe' stress even though in almost all cases the pregnancy was planned and the child was wanted."<sup>2</sup>



### *Marriage*

In any culture, marriage is extremely stressful. Granted, it is usually a positive stress because it is chosen, but it nevertheless taxes one's ability to cope and adjust. To survive, the newlywed needs to learn new ways of squeezing the toothpaste, scrambling eggs and spending money.

### *Living conditions*

It is commonly believed that life on the mission field is much easier today than it was in the pioneering days, and therefore new workers should be able to adapt. Dr. J. Herbert Kane has ably pointed out the error of this belief:

We usually think of the missionary pioneers as making a great sacrifice when they went to Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century. This is not altogether true. When Hudson Taylor arrived in China he didn't find any indoor plumbing, central heating, electric light, or telephone service. So what? He didn't have them back in England either. Where then was the sacrifice? I dare say that the economic gap between England and China in 1853 was not as great as the gap between China and the United States today. There is a sense in which today's missionary candidates make greater material sacrifices than their predecessors a hundred years ago. This should be borne in mind when we are tempted to criticize the younger generation for their reluctance to forego the amenities of Western technological civilization. . . .

One should bear in mind that the wear and tear of life is far greater on the mission field than here at home. Plenty of people in the United States crack up every year, among them not a few Christians. In many countries personal hygiene is unknown and public sanitation is poor or nonexistent.<sup>3</sup>

### **Total Stress Level**

If it is realized that the new worker is experiencing many of these stressful life events simultaneously when he becomes a missionary, it does not take much imagination to see that there is severe strain placed on his psychological person. Stress could be the by-word for the missionary's first term. It can be minimized, but not eliminated, and the candidate must be prepared to tangle with it.

In chapter one, the table of life change units by Dr. Holmes was reproduced. It is enlightening to sum up the



points for the average first term missionary.

Change in financial state	38
Change to different line of work	36
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Change in work hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in recreation	19
Change in church activities	19
Change in social activities	18
Change in number of family get-togethers	15
Change in eating habits	15
Change in language used in daily activity (author's insertion)	50
	<hr/>
	299

Additional changes possible	
Marriage	50
Gain of new family member	39
Personal injury or illness	53
Change in health of family member	44
Wife begins or stops work	26
Begin or end school	26
Change in schools	20
Additional Points Possible	<hr/>
	258

Of the 258 additional points possible, the average first term missionary is probably involved in changes adding up to 100-150 points. Therefore, we can say that the normal first term missionary worker is running at or above 400 LCUs. Still, many of the stressful events involved in cross-cultural transition are not included in the table.<sup>4</sup> As was seen in chapter one, a score over 300 indicated an eighty percent chance of a major health change (disease, surgery, accident, or mental illness) in the next two years. The stress a new mission-

ary faces due to life change alone is very high. (Missionaries on furlough are also subjected to very high levels of stress. Compute from Holmes' table in chapter 1).

### **How Much Stress Should the First-term Worker Be Expected to Bear**

#### *The experience of Paul*

The Apostle Paul did not undergo nearly as dramatic social and cultural adjustments as most new missionaries today. He already knew the Greek language. He was a Roman citizen and grew up in Roman culture. Most of the cities to which he traveled were Roman colonies and had Jewish synagogues where he found some common ties with his Jewish past. When he went with Barnabas on the first missionary journey, they went first to Cyprus which was Barnabas' homeland, and then to the Galatian and Phrygian region which was just over the mountains from Tarsus, Paul's home city. Only when they went as far as Asia Minor, did they evidence the first symptoms of culture stress (II Corinthians 1:8). Later, in Macedonia where there was an even greater cultural difference, they experienced internal conflicts and depression (II Corinthians 7:5,6).

#### *The problem of selection*

Mission organizations realize that the first term is stressful and make some allowances for adjustment to it. Often, however, when the new workers act irrationally, seem insubordinate or develop emotional problems, field leaders blame the home office for improper candidate screening. "These flaws in the candidates should have been discovered by accurate psychological testing and better references," they may comment. Or, they may say that the individual should have had more training. "Send him back to seminary, or put him in a three year internship before you

send him out to us again." In reality, the problem seldom lies in selecting the wrong people. The following excerpt from *The Overseas American* makes this clear:

Virtually every major organization that maintains people overseas has joined in the search for the ideal pre-selection test to eliminate the misfits and assure a congenial and effective team in the field. The results so far have been far from impressive. The Civil Service Commission selective procedures, developed after studies costing several hundred thousand dollars, have not been widely used by the Federal agencies for which they were developed. The Creole Petroleum Corporation has had second thoughts about a whole battery of psychological tests on the ground that there did not seem to be any discernible connection between what the tests indicated and how the employees later performed in Venezuela. The mission boards have also been distressed by the prognostic uncertainties of social psychology. Everybody seems to feel that with all our modern scientific lore about man and society, it should be possible for a simple test to be devised that would separate the potentially successful from the potentially unsuccessful **before** their wives, children, and furniture are moved across the seas at great trouble and expense. But nobody has yet devised that formula.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, it seems like the recruits which the home office puts on the plane at this end are different from the ones who get off at the other. Mission boards want to recruit better candidates, but there are no better. These are the best, and the vast majority of them are capable of making it victoriously. What is needed is not a "higher pressure hose" which can handle the pressure. Rather, what is needed is to monitor and control the pressure so it stays within the limits of the "hose." Field leadership must not expect new candidates to be spiritually finished products who can handle any amount of stress. Missionaries are people in process, and it is necessary to exercise patience with them while the Lord continues their development.

### *Realistic first term expectations*

If new workers are not perfect, what should realistically be expected from them in the first term? The late Fred Renich, past director of Missionary Internship, has suggested the following as normal expectations:<sup>6</sup>

1. A good foundation in the language (Possibly proficiency, depending on the person and the language involved).
2. Satisfactory adjustment to the climate, customs, culture and people on his field.
3. A thorough working knowledge of the mission.
4. A realistic understanding of the field, its problems, demands and potential.
5. Some realistic awareness of his gifts and place in the work.
6. A deepening confirmation of his call as a result of a growing sense of "belonging" and a consciousness of being useful.

### **Disillusionment, Resignation and Dismissal**

"If there has been satisfactory progress in the areas discussed above, the end of the first term should see the missionary inwardly at peace regarding the whole basic direction of his Christian service."<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this is not occurring in many cases. Instead of being more committed to career missions, the first-termer actually loses a great deal of his enthusiasm. Ron Iwasko, cites the problem of decreased motivation of Assembly of God first-term workers:

But of concern is the sudden drop of those who strongly favor career commitment from 75 percent for candidates to 40.5 percent for first-terms. Furthermore, there is a constant shift toward a more pessimistic attitude with increasing terms on the field. This suggests the possibility of a rather severe shift in attitude — and thus internal turmoil — of first term missionaries.<sup>8</sup>

One of the reasons for this disillusionment is that the new worker sees that veteran missionaries do not measure

up to the cherished missionary image. Older workers don't sacrifice everything at every turn to save a dying world. Instead, once in a while, they allow themselves the luxury of a night out at a restaurant, a long vacation at the beach, a new vehicle, television set or diesel generator for electricity. The veterans don't seem as spiritual as the men portrayed in the biographies of C. T. Studd and Hudson Taylor.

Also, the new worker becomes disillusioned when he sees that he himself cannot live up to the image. Instead of being like his concept of the Apostle Paul, he finds that he is more like Jonah, who had limited motivation to sacrifice himself for the heathen Gentiles.

### *Resignation: a way of escape*

Too many first term workers resign and go away bitter toward their fellow-workers or mission boards. One interviewer made the following observations after interviews with twelve first term missionary couples who had recently resigned:

For all the emphasis upon external conditions, organizational changes, lack of leadership, theological variations and sending council deficiencies, very few missionaries with problems are looking within themselves for the cause or perceiving themselves to be potentially part of the problem.

Specifically, there is evident very little humility, especially as each seems to consider himself the final authority on what should or should not be done or as each seems to make little attempt to see his opponent's view in its best light or his own view in an objective light. Tensions are as great between missionaries as between missionaries and the church. Very little grace or trust is evident.

In some cases there was little or no evidence of an understanding of the Biblical principles of authority, submission, discipling, being responsible to another person and of working joyfully and selflessly with others, even those with less or different understanding of truth.

Resentment, guilt and anxiety are frequently evident, as well as rationalization and the covering of real unresolved spiritual issues. Self-concern is often more evident than total commitment to Christ. "How does it affect me?" seems to take precedence over "How does it affect what God is doing here?"<sup>9</sup>

Is it surprising that these negative traits are the same ones mentioned earlier as consequences of excessive stress and damaged self-esteem? The workers interviewed above are employing defense mechanisms to keep their island of self-esteem afloat. If it sinks, then for them, life has no meaning: no reason for continued existence. When the *raison d'être* of a person is threatened with extinction, a hostile reaction can be expected toward whatever is perceived to be the cause. The person believes that admitting that the cause lies within himself would mean that he has no worth whatsoever. That conclusion is wholly unacceptable if there is to be continued survival.

*Dismissal: disposal of the unsuccessful*

Most often, the blame is not exclusively that of the worker or of the organization. Withdrawal of missionary workers represents a failure for both the worker and the board. Several excerpts follow from some workers who quit missionary service after their first term. These are drawn from the survey by the Missionary Research Library:

The reason for our withdrawal — I felt at the time that to draw salary and do the little I was doing was just not good stewardship — also the fact that a new house had to be built for us. . . . just seemed out of place. . . . I see now that what we were doing was probably just what was needed at this time. I believe that one thing we could have used on the field would have been a pastor for the missionary. There was no one outside of a friend to whom you could speak. . . . It is a difficult role to play today — that of a missionary — and unless the missionary understands his calling and work, it is that much

more difficult. . . . I never did receive a letter in reply to my resignation from the secretary of our Board.

Our board asked us to resign. We had made some blunders during our first term but were aware of what these were and were looking forward to a second term in which we could correct these and improve the quality of our work. . . . I think more counseling should be done during a missionary's term rather than waiting until the end for a review of the work.

This way a missionary could be confronted with errors and correct them as he goes along. I think a rehabilitated missionary who knows his mistakes can be of a lot more value than a new missionary.

We were dismissed because no one really cared enough to see why we did not fit into the proper pattern of a missionary. I am greatly disappointed that our mission had so little provision to help those who had problems. . . . If a mature Christian had even once counseled with us, this missionary casualty would have been prevented. We were young, inexperienced and unhappy. We lived too close to other missionaries, eating, sleeping, etc., to be able to release the normal tensions even with a deluge of tears.

Forty-four percent of the missionaries felt that the Board or Mission could have done something that would have resulted in their continued service.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps nothing was done because these first-termers were no longer wanted. They were now disposable since they failed to serve as expected.

Fortunately, God doesn't work on a disposal basis. When people fail, He does not reject them. For example, Jonah was a dropout, but never a reject. The Lord could have gotten a new man, but instead He decided to re-educate the one He had. Even when His man finished the assigned task with a critical, ungrateful, hostile attitude, God did not harshly rebuke him. He did it with gentleness and tact.

## Summary

There is considerable stress inherent in the experience of the missionary first term, due to numerous life changes taking place at this time. This stress is in addition to the stress of the different culture and of trying to measure up to very high expectations. It should come as no surprise then that new workers experience spiritual, emotional, psychological and physical struggles as a result of this stress. Unfortunately, many mission supervisors do not understand how these stresses influence people, and so are not able to administer proper help.

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1. Trobisch, *Love Yourself*, p. 40.
  2. Collins, *You Can Profit from Stress*, p. 85.
  3. Kane, *Winds of Change in the Christian Mission*, pp. 41-2.
  4. For an extensive list of these stress factors, see: "Culture and Stress — a Quantitative Analysis," by Spradley and Phillips, *American Anthropologist* 74 (1972):522.
  5. Cleveland, Mangone, Adams, *Overseas American*, p. 171.
  6. Fred C. Renich, First-term objectives, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 4 (summer 1967):209
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
  8. Ronald Iwasko, "Final Report: Assemblies of God Missionary Attitude and Opinion Survey", (Directed research, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Deerfield, Ill.), p. 19.
  9. Author unknown, quoted anonymously in an unpublished paper by Dr. Ted Ward, (circulated by Missionary Internship, Farmington, MI.), p. 1.
  10. Bailey and Jackson, *Study of Missionary Motivation, Training and Withdrawal*, p. 22.



## Chapter 6

# Fifteen Tips for Survival to New Workers

### *Introduction*

The picture painted looks very bleak. If stress is so high and the consequences so damaging, should we continue to send missionaries to foreign cultures? If so, what can be done to keep stress under control and minimize dropout? This chapter, prepared to be an informal talk to missionary candidates, gives suggestions for reducing stress in the first term and thereby increasing the rate of survival and effectiveness of ministry.

The following suggestions if followed should minimize stress and make the first term enjoyable.

### **Set Reasonable Goals**

Your work is going to take longer than you think. More time must be allotted to various activities than they appear to require. Also, you will likely attempt to do too much too soon. Some people just drift with the tide and seem to have no goals or visible objectives, but most new missionaries don't have that problem. Few need a kick in the pants; instead, most need someone to slow them down and convince them to take it easy. Most of you first-termers will set very high goals for yourselves — so high that it may be impossible to achieve them. If you do, you will be chronically tense and miserable because you constantly fail. Many respondents to the survey in Appendix I indicated a need to limit their responsibilities in the first term. Some of their statements follow:

"I would have been more careful to set realistic-attainable

goals and also would have taken more time for rest and relaxation.”

“I wouldn’t have felt it necessary to succumb to the peer pressure of taking on more responsibilities than I could successfully fulfill.”

“Less expectation of my performance — I would set lower goals for myself.”

“Less hours of work at the hospital per week, regular days off each week, time for guidance and help in spiritual ministry, less responsibility at hospital so soon after arriving on field, living arrangements allowing me to have my own ‘home.’ ”

“My stress came in leaving my four small children each day to go to language school. I realize that learning the language is of vital importance. I don’t have the solution. We are in our second year now.”

Working at a frantic pace is no guarantee of high output; in fact, the opposite is true.

It has been shown more than once that when the working day is lengthened, hourly productivity goes down; conversely, when people are allowed to work a shorter day, they put more into each hour.

For example, during the Battle of Britain in World War II, when the British were under the continuing menace of German attack, factories went on a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week schedule. At first, patriotism produced a surge in production. After a few months, however, factory managers began to notice an increase in illness, absenteeism, and tardiness. Yet when Sunday was rescheduled as a day of rest, production did not fall off. In fact, one factory set a new weekly record.

Economic analysts concluded that beyond a certain maximum point, which varies with each industry, increased hours of work do not equal more production and may even mean less.<sup>1</sup>

“It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat

the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep" (Psalm 127:2). God wants you to relax and not be in a hurry.

### **Don't Take Your Job Description too Seriously**

It is wise to have a good specific job description before you sign on with a mission board, but once you have signed on, don't think of it as a legal document. Joseph Shenk in *Missiology* gives some good advice:

One of the biggest complaints of missionaries is that they are assigned tasks which they never expected to do. In his lighter moments the missionary will even chuckle when he remembers the job description the board secretary used to recruit him. The secretary's clear, straightforward job description somehow does not fit with the reality.

There are many reasons for altering the job assignment after the missionary is on the field. Sometimes the situation changes, always appendages will be added to the original core program, sometimes the church will use a job description suited to board priorities for recruitment purposes. Most missionaries find themselves assigned to tasks which they never expected to do.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, new workers often find that their ministries do not employ all of their previous education and experience. A survey respondent answered,

In the States I had a teaching career, and was also working towards my MA. On the field, my husband has a career, and I sit at home all of the time with a two year old and a five month old. I don't feel needed or important, or that I have anything to contribute. I graduated *Summa Cum Laude* from college and felt I was going to do something important, but I ended up having to fight constantly the 'housewife blues.' I am depressed quite a bit due to this lack of self-esteem.

In these frustrating times, remember that your signifi-

cance is not determined by your performance. You are primarily going to the new culture to be 'little messiahs'; to demonstrate His love and His nature to the people there. Emphasize relationships with people rather than job output. This will enable you to stay on should you find out that the job for which you were recruited is no longer open. You will see that the vital core of true missionary work is not task-oriented, but people-oriented.

### **Be Committed to Joy**

What then is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to *enjoy* Him forever.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, 1648

Joy is certainly not unbiblical, but in our day it is uncommon. All too frequently our devotion to religion has squelched our demonstration of joy. In spite of the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22), enjoyment of life has become a taboo for too many Christians. This shows our misunderstanding of the nature of Christian living. Joy is at the heart of the Gospel and flows abundantly from the heart of God. In the book, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, Tim Hansel declares that joyful people are nearly extinct:

Endangered species has become an oft-used term in recent years, usually referring to threatened animals. Yet one of the rarest species on the face of the earth may soon become extinct without anyone even recognizing its passing — namely, those few human beings who truly know how to enjoy life.

They glorify God not only with their words but even more with their lives. They enjoy God for who He is, not just for what He can do for them. To them, each day holds its own reward. They know that each twenty-four hours is a once-in-a-lifetime privilege and that happiness is a by-product of quality living. Their lives are lived according to their priorities, in spite of the consequences. They live life from the inside out.

. . . .Like the child, he sees everything for the first time. He is forever astonished and wonders why and wherefore. Everything seems miraculous . . . each morning when he opens his eyes he sees trees, seas, stones and birds, and is amazed. He has cracked through the thin crust we call civilization to find the supernatural substance upon which life rests.<sup>3</sup>

You don't need to apologize for being joyful; it is a characteristic of the Spirit-filled life, even though joyful people are rare individuals.

### **Maintain Good Emotional Health**

There are certain things you can do to maintain good emotional health in the new culture.

Drs. Charles Solley and Kenneth Mumden of the Menninger Foundation suggest the variety of activities a person must have to maintain his wholeness. They say that mentally healthy people consistently have five basic qualities: (1) They have a wide range of interests and friends from whom they draw personal satisfaction. (2) They are able to "roll with the punches"; their broad range of interests helps them to see alternative solutions to personal crises. (3) They recognize and accept their limitations and their assets; they enjoy what they are, and don't try to be something different. (4) They treat other people as persons; they have empathy for the needs and concerns of others. (5) They are active and productive, using their gifts to benefit themselves and others; they are in control of their activities, their activities are not in control of them.<sup>4</sup>

Develop these qualities in your life, and you will maintain emotional stability.

### **Remember that you are Human**

You live in an earthly tent which needs food, rest and exercise. Your glorified body will be delivered later: right

now it is on back-order, and you have to make do with what you've got. Many missionaries complain of being tired all of the time. Physical examinations often reveal that the problem is lack of exercise. Eugene Walker, in his book *Learn to Relax*, supports the practice of regular exercise with these words:

Whatever the basis for it, exercise does have an anxiety-and tension-reducing effect. Studies have shown that people on regular exercise programs tend to be more healthy, have better vital capacity, handle problems better, sleep better, and cope with life in a generally more satisfactory manner. Over a period of time, people on such programs generally feel better, are more optimistic, and have a better self-image. Thus, exercise immediately reduces anxiety somewhat and over the long run it tends to inoculate us against development of future anxieties.<sup>5</sup>

Women especially need to make the extra effort to take regular exercise because doing so is less common among women than among men, and they must go against greater social pressure. Regular physical checkups will not only detect abnormalities but will also give you the peace of mind of knowing that your body is OK.

Also, in addition to being a physical being, you are an emotional being. No man is an island, no matter how spiritual he may seem. We all need love and companionship. We're made as interdependent and not independent beings.

Then also, you are an intellectual being, and your mind needs refreshing and stimulation from others in order to function at its best. Try to read at least one book a month other than professional books on missions or the Bible. Occasionally read some lighter books like *Narnia*, *Hansi*, *C.T. Studd* or good westerns. A variety of good books will keep your brain tuned and in good condition.

You are also a spiritual being. You cannot live by bread alone. If done with right motives and attitudes, obtaining

spiritual nourishment is a marvelous past-time. If done due to guilt or only from necessity, devotions are as exciting as rutabaga stew. We are supposed to be in love with Jesus: If we really know the goodness of the "man" to whom we are betrothed, we will not find interaction with Him a grudging and difficult undertaking.

A suggested study for the first three months of your time in the new culture is to look up every reference in the Bible which reveals something of the nature of God. Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-33 is a good place to start. As you see more and more of His goodness and lovingkindness, your love for Him will grow.

### **Don't be Afraid of Being a Little Bit Eccentric**

You ought to be uniquely different from your fellow missionaries. You are you and not someone else. Being who you are is a good thing, so enjoy it; it is a privilege which no one else will ever have. Let Christ fill all of you to the most remote corner, and don't be ashamed if that corner is a little unique. Maybe your great thrilling hobby is hang-gliding, and other missionaries can't quite see the wisdom of it. If this is your hobby and you want to pursue it, proceed with care as always when popular opinion is against you, but don't be afraid to suffer a little reproach for being different.

Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in society has always been proportioned to the amount of genius, mental vigor and moral courage which it contained. That so few men now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of our time. (John Stuart Mill)

Allow your senior missionaries the privilege of being a little eccentric too. As a first term missionary in Africa, Levi Keidel made this observation:

During my early years on the mission field, I used to wonder how a senior missionary could spend part of every evening nursing his gladiolus or reading a bit of Mark Twain. He kept insisting that we come over every Friday night to play parlor games. I used to almost question his dedication. But he seemed to climb hills and skirt precipices with the steady plodding progress of a loaded diesel truck.<sup>6</sup>

Don't feel forced to conform in every way to the idealized image of Joe Missionary. If you do, you will squelch your creativeness and vigor of life.

### **Be Flexible**

We often think that the saints of old were cantankerous, unbending and very authoritarian, but they usually were not. They were flexible. They rolled with the punches. Though D. L. Moody did not cross great cultural boundaries in his work, his flexibility still serves as a good example for us.

D. L. Moody was flexible. He could not stand to be tied to a rigid program. In the midst of his message, if he felt that the audience was restless (it is difficult to imagine that any of his audiences could be restless), he would stop and ask Mr. Sankey to sing a song. It was the same way in his life. (This is not to say that every time something went wrong in his life he asked Mr. Sankey to sing a song.) But in reading six of his biographies I discovered that, though he had a single eye for God, when the various and sundry frustrations and interruptions and disappointments came along, he was absolutely flexible. He took what came with good humor and circumvented it, found another way, got the job done somehow; if it would not work this way it would work another way, and let's not stop and sulk or quibble about it.<sup>7</sup>

We need to be inflexible in some things: in the Gospel, in the Grace of God, in the authority of Scripture, in our



faith. D. L. Moody was inflexible in these things. He never swerved from his purpose, yet he was flexible in his dealings with people. Ethel Barret continues:

His son Willie tells us that he was most flexible in his human relationships, and always willing and ready to admit it when he was wrong. He would go to his child's bedroom at night and say, "Are you awake? I can't go to sleep till I talk to you. I'm sorry I lost my temper." Or, "I'm sorry I was so unreasonable. Will you forgive me? Christ would not have acted like that." And his hand on their foreheads was like the weight of a library dictionary, but all they felt was the weight of love. And Willie cried out in a passionate teen-age tribute: "Other kids tell me they cannot go to their dads and just talk and hope to be understood; they say they can't because their dads are 'always right' and they 'always wrong.' They can't talk to their dads the way I can talk to you. I could always talk to you. You always understood. There was nothing I could not tell you."

He was inflexible in his purpose for Christ, but flexible in his dealings with human beings. He backed down when he was wrong. He knew his human failings.<sup>8</sup>

### **Don't Take Yourself Too Seriously**

A good sense of humor is a balm for many wounds. If you can laugh at yourself, it is a likely sign of internal security. If you are afraid to laugh, it is a sign that your self-esteem is very shaky.

If practiced, the following letter written by an anonymous friar in a monastery in Nebraska could help the new missionary minimize the stress in the first term.

If I had my life to live over again, I'd try to make more mistakes next time.

I would relax, I would limber up, I would be sillier than I have been on this trip.

I know of very few things I would take seriously.

I would take more trips. I would be crazier.

I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers and watch more sunsets.

I would do more walking and looking.  
I would eat more ice cream and less beans.  
I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones.  
You see, I'm one of those people who lives life prophylactically  
and sensibly hour after hour, day after day.  
Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again I'd  
have more of them.  
In fact, I'd try to have nothing else, just moments, one after  
another, instead of living so many years ahead each day.  
I've been one of those people who never go anywhere without  
a thermometer, a hot-water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat, as-  
pirin, and a parachute.  
If I had to do it over again I would go places, do things, and  
travel lighter than I have.  
If I had my life to live over I would start barefooted earlier in  
the spring and stay that way later in the fall.  
I would play hookey more.  
I wouldn't make such good grades except by accident.  
I would ride on more merry-go-rounds.  
I'd pick more daisies.<sup>9</sup>

He sounds a little off his rocker from spending too much  
time in the monastery, but perhaps it is the rest of us who  
are really off.

Then too, there is this good piece of advice: when  
things are going awry for you, and you find yourself franti-  
cally trying to solve a dozen major problems, always re-  
member rule number four. "What is rule number four?",  
you ask. "Don't take yourself too seriously." "What are the  
other rules?" "There aren't any others." If you don't take  
yourself too seriously, you won't take problems too seri-  
ously. You will not ignore them, but neither will you let  
them get out of perspective.

Most of us have noticed how fears and imaginations some-  
times cause worry about things which never happen. Any one  
of us can get so worried about the country, the economy, the  
shortage of natural resources or — what is more likely — we

can get so concerned about our jobs, marriages and children that we can't move. Sometimes by worrying and doing little else we even bring about the things that worry us most.<sup>10</sup>

### **Reduce Your Stress Where Possible**

As seen in chapter one, some stress is necessary for effective achievement, but when there is an overload indicated by overuse of the defense mechanisms, it is time to get some relief. Where possible, learn a fair amount of the language while in your home culture. This will minimize your adjustment later. Try to avoid the compounding of numerous major stresses. Avoid childbirth anytime near cross-cultural transition. One survey respondent emphatically said, "to minimize stress, I wouldn't have a baby during my first year — during language study." When stress becomes too great, take a vacation, get away for a day, play some hard tennis, go out to a quiet restaurant or take a long hot bath. If you can't do these things, you can arrange for a shopping trip to town, or go hunting for the day or curl up beside a good book. It is amazing how what seem like urgent things now often turn out to be not so urgent the next day. Some of us grew up nurtured on the ethic "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today." This may not be bad advice sometimes, but it is hardly a Biblical principle. In fact, Jesus taught nearly the opposite. "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

Learn to say "no"; don't take on more projects than you can handle joyfully and lovingly. When the Lord's work begins to feel like a curse instead of a blessing, you had better cut down your activity. It is possible to do so if you have a healthy self-image which can afford to endure a little criticism.

## **Make Your Culture Change Gradual**

Be careful not to cut all of the ties to home before you have established stable ties in the new culture. Remember that you will always be a foreigner no matter how hard you try. You may be loved, accepted and praised by the people, but you will still be a "newcomer". Learn to accept this fact and appreciate it. Don't deny your background and cultural heritage: it makes you who you are.

You don't need to forget completely about life back in your native country. You should neither suppress nor enshrine those memories of home. The Scripture shows that even Jesus longed for His homeland in Heaven (John 17:5). It is not unspiritual to daydream about Big Macs and fries or other things you appreciated previously. Some workers feel that the way to avoid the consequences of culture stress is to forget everything from their home country and melt into the new nationality and culture. This is referred to as "going native." These people want quite simply to belong. They are willing to pay the price of forgetting their background. However, even if they manage to live at the village level physically and emotionally, they may find that they have little influence with the people. There is something decidedly abnormal about a foreigner who is unwilling to admit that he is a foreigner, and who has no respect for his cultural heritage. Hudson Taylor went "native" for a time in China, but later modified his lifestyle in order to be more effective. The Apostle Paul "became all things to all men," but only when by so doing he could win some more to Christ (I Corinthians 9:22). If becoming exactly like the people with whom you are going to work means greater fruitfulness, then do it. But, if living as the natives is just a show of your spirituality, then it has no merit and will not be effective.

In an excellent article in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, entitled "Finding a Sense of Belonging in Your New Place,"

## **Terri Gibbs gives some sound advice:**

1. You can take a little bit of home with you wherever you go. Grandma's picture, Aunt Salley's old lace doily. Just a few treasured belongings from the familiar place can quickly make the new environment seem your own. Pictures, paintings, books, bedspreads, tennis rackets. I know one couple who are so crazy about peanut butter that the first thing into the moving van is without fail their "super duper peanut-butter maker." My mother never closes her suitcase until her favorite little throw rug has been included. "So I can feel home beneath my toes first thing each morning."

2. Make yourself at home. Any nook, cranny, mud hut or bamboo bungalow. Paint the walls, arrange your favorite books on the table. Buy a bird. Plant a flower, or a tree. Add your personal touches and you will feel this new place is your own.

3. Take personal customs and traditions with you. The continued observance of these practices will make you feel less estranged. Edith Schaeffer suggests, "Choose one or two things to become a family tradition and whatever else is done, always do that special thing as well, year after year."

Traditions are important in binding families together. They give a sense of unity and continuity. Children love traditions and private family customs, on special holidays or any day of the week. For them especially, in the new environment, these customary observances can be a strong factor in feeling secure and welcome. Our children look forward to pancakes and peaches for Saturday breakfast. It's our lazy morning ritual. When we move I make it top priority to hunt down the necessary ingredients so that Saturday will still be our "lazy pancake day."

Whether a family or a single individual, you will have favorite habits, hobbies or activities that can be a big help in personalizing our new environment. Doing the things that you especially like to do is good therapy any time, any place, but particularly when you are feeling a stranger in a strange place.<sup>11</sup>

To make a slow start in a new situation is the best way to keep from being overwhelmed by newness.

In language learning, work hard and use it with nationals whenever you can, but you needn't speak it with your wife in the parlor, or with fellow missionaries when no nationals are present. Having your daily devotions in the new language will significantly decrease your spiritual nourishment, but not greatly increase your language ability. As time goes by and the language becomes more natural, you may really enjoy your quiet time done in the foreign language, but don't rush into it too soon. You can't pretend that your mother tongue is not your mother tongue; it will always be an integral part of you.

If you work at keeping the new language enjoyable, you will be motivated to learn to a high degree of proficiency. If, on the other hand, the language becomes a terrible burden, you will probably never accept it as a valid part of yourself, and never be proficient in using it.

### **Forgive Yourself: Forgive Others**

Please don't be too hard on your fellow missionaries. Sure, they don't fit the cherished image, but who does? You won't, so be prepared to forgive yourself when it dawns on you that you are decidedly human and in dire need of the love, grace and forgiveness of God. Whether you notice the faults of others or not, forgive them. Don't turn your artillery on your own ranks; keep it aimed at the devil and hold your grudge against him for getting you into this mess of sin. "Love doesn't take into account a wrong suffered" (1 Corinthians 13:5). The Living Bible says, "Love does not even notice when others do it wrong."

## **Establish Some Close Friendships with People From the Host Culture**

One of the important keys for integration into the new culture is seeing that it is made up of fellow human beings. This will be felt quickly through making close friendships with a few individuals. Adopting a host family is an excellent means to cultural appreciation and will make you feel that you are not totally isolated in a hostile environment. People the world over have the same basic needs, longings and worth. In that sense they are your brothers and sisters. They must not be viewed as impersonal souls to be saved, or heathen to be converted. Rather, they are *persons*, deeply loved by God.

### **Be Thankful**

If you find that you are no longer thankful to God nor appreciate the kindness of other people, you are out of the will of God (I Thessalonians 5:18). Get back in by giving extended time to meditation, Bible reading, prayer and other personal needs. When thanks ceases, it is because we have wrong goals; we are trying to achieve something in the flesh and not through dependence on the Lord. Reevaluate your goals, your relationships and your activity.

When the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control — Galatians 5:22-23) dries up on the vine, you are no longer serving God no matter how deeply you may be involved in the work of the church. You can only serve by the Spirit, and when the evidence of the Spirit departs, stop and do something about it.

### **Be an Encourager**

Don't only expect to receive encouragement and support from senior workers. Be an encourager yourself. Make it a

basic thrust of your life. Look for ways to build up other people. If you are secure internally, you are not threatened when another gets a promotion before you do or receives some acclaim for his work. You can rejoice with him rather than look for ways to even the score and knock him back down to your level. There is a real need for encouragement within your own family. Your spouse and children are struggling too and need extra understanding and support. One mother surveyed wrote, "I would be less harsh on my son as I realize now that he too was adjusting and needed reassurance of my love. I took it as disobedience and was concerned about what people thought of me as a mother."

If you make encouragement a daily practice, some veterans won't know how to respond at first. They may have gone a long, dry spell without receiving any. Give them time to adjust, and hopefully they will begin to send encouragement back your way before you give it up as a lost cause.

### **Take courage; Someone Understands**

Jesus knows all about cross-cultural adjustment, and He shares your struggles with you. Though He was born in Israel, He was always a little different from the locals there. Palestine was not His homeland, but rather His mission field, and He went thirty-three years without a furlough. He never forgot where He had come from nor cut off ties to His family back home. No one ever faced such an overwhelming cultural difference. Not only was Israel different from His homeland, but everything within the culture was perverted by sin. Though there was nothing really good in the human culture, He didn't despise the people. He didn't laugh at them or think they were not worthy of His time. Instead, He loved them and gave Himself for them. Yet, Jesus knew His limitations as a human and respected them.



He slept, He ate, He drank, He cared for His body and His soul so that He could care for others.

### Summary

Stress can be reduced by proper attitudes and activities. The first term worker must take steps to control his stress so that he will be able to maintain his sense of worth. If instead, he succumbs to all external pressure for conformity, he will eventually dry up spiritually and lose his enthusiasm for the Lord's work.

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1. Linda Pembroke, *How to Beat Fatigue*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), p. 14.

2. Joseph Shenk, "Missionary Identity and Servanthood," *Missiology* 7 (October 1973):511.

3. Hansel, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, p. 26.

4. Keidel, *Stop Treating Me Like God*, pp. 100-101.

5. Walker, *Learn to Relax*, p. 77.

6. Keidel, *Stop Treating Me Like God*, p. 99.

7. Ethel Barrett, *Don't Look Now*, (Glendale, Ca: Regal, 1968), p. 79.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

9. Hansel, *When I Relax*, pp. 44-5.

10. Gary Collins, "Handling the Future," *Christian Herald* 104 (July/August 1981):12.

11. Terri A. Gibbs, "Finding a Sense of Belonging in Your New Place," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 16 (July 1980):161-2.

## Chapter 7

### **Suggestions to Senior Missionaries for Helping New Recruits**

A very crucial element in the process of cross-cultural adjustment of new workers is their relationship to senior missionaries. Attitudes are often passed from generation to generation. The older worker therefore has a great influence on what direction the work of the future will take. This chapter gives some suggestions to experienced missionaries to help them minister to their new comrades.

We can well imagine seasoned missionaries thinking the following thoughts as they see new workers arriving on their fields: "Here come the new workers we have prayed out into the harvest. I hope the Lord hasn't sent us people from the bottom of the barrel again. Let's hope that those guys in the home office have finally gotten their act together. Did they tell the new recruits everything they need to know? Will they be reasonable people? Some writers, like Joseph Cannon, have dared to put such thoughts in writing:

I don't despise my fellow missionaries, but I've sure learned to duck. They come hot, zealous, and gunning for game. They are ready to shoot at anything that moves, and I've got the scars to prove it. Everything is different to them, and therefore something must be wrong. They are ready to reform the whole works, purge out the old leaven, and revolutionize all procedures. . . . Whenever I hear of a new missionary coming, I feel like running to the hills. What will he oppose? How many native brethren will he offend? Will he be an anti? How shall we meet the threat and challenge? Of course, sometimes the fears are for nothing and the man turns out to be fairly reasonable.<sup>1</sup>

One of the frequently asked questions is, "How long will

they last?" A great deal of the answer depends on the senior workers with whom they will live and minister. No pre-field orientation program or candidate school is good enough to insure against all misunderstandings, nor to prepare the candidate for all his coming problems. More important than what happens before arrival is what happens after arrival.

If you have read the chapters of this thesis, you are aware of the intense stress in the missionary role, particularly in the first term. You are also aware of the consequences of stress and the normal defense mechanisms the mind uses to justify continued existence. This understanding is very important for knowing how to help and understand your new fellow worker.

Some practical steps you can take to help are:

### **Give the New Worker Measurable and Attainable Goals**

Don't just release the new worker to be on his own. Talk to him about what he feels ready to do, and integrate that information into your plans for him. Remember that he will likely be overly ambitious at first because of a desire to fit the idealistic missionary image. Tactfully, slow him down and set a pace which he can maintain.

Frequently let him know how he is doing. It is easier to be told something we are doing wrong than to be told nothing at all. If all you can say to him about his work is "I don't see anything wrong with it," then please have him transferred before you ruin him. If genuine praise and criticism are mingled lovingly together, criticism does not have a bitter taste. In an excellent booklet called, *Practical Criticism; Giving It and Taking It*, Dr. John Alexander of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship affirms this:

We all need positive criticism. Evaluation from trustworthy critics in the form of commendation, appreciation and thanks satisfies a deep hunger in our souls. It is essential for healthy

self-images and for perseverance in good works. It is the prime ingredient in valid encouragement which helps us endure discouragement. A good parent, pastor, teacher, leader motivates people by words and attitudes skillfully chosen to build confidence and express appreciation for not only their finished products but also their effort and willingness to try.<sup>2</sup>

### **Don't Let Yourself Feel Threatened by the Coming of the New Worker**

If you see his arrival and assignment under you as a threat, then it is evident that you are still fighting for your own self-esteem. You may be afraid that he will find out that you are not what you "ought" to be. If so, you will inwardly desire to keep the new recruit at arms length and never become friends because you are afraid he won't respect you if he really knows you. You will become defensive and authoritarian in order to protect yourself. This tactic has often been excused by quoting the old adage, "familiarity breeds contempt", but it is only an excuse for avoiding feared intimacy.

The new recruit today will respond best to a leader who is a genuine friend, a person with sufficient inner security derived from the promises of God to allow himself to be transparent. Jesus was that kind of leader.

### **Don't Underestimate the Stress of Culture Change**

Remember that memory is biased and unreliable, so you will probably underestimate the struggles you had with culture change. Don't belittle those who have to fight hard for survival. They are not just soft. You may have trodden a similar path, but never in their moccasins.

It is also good to be aware that women, and wives in particular, usually have a harder struggle with culture stress. They may need a little more understanding and pa-

tience than their male counterparts. This does not mean that they are weaker psychologically, but different in makeup and needs. The cultural transition process is more threatening to them because their basic security is severely jeopardized.

### **Take a Vacation**

That's right! Take a vacation. If you take one, the new worker won't feel sub-spiritual for taking one. Find a hobby, read some good books, or go on a picnic and don't be afraid of others finding out about it. In fact, make sure they know. Set a good example that the new worker can follow and keep from burning himself out. You will be a better leader if you are properly handling your own stress.

### **Treat the New Worker as an Equal Person**

You may not be equal in rank, but you are equal in worth and being. If you are always giving to him and never receiving, you are dehumanizing him. In essence, you are saying that he has nothing of value to contribute to you. He wants to be a friend, but friendship is a two-way street. He needs you, but you also need him. Keidel makes this clear by the following quote:

Dr. John Janzen, Christian anthropologist who did doctoral studies in the Congo, says, "Wherever generosity of giving, teaching, and helping is of an unconditional character, the recipient must be able to return the gift or the equivalent in order to remain his own respectable self. Otherwise he will begin seeing himself as inferior to the giver; his personal sense of worth is downgraded, and instead of being grateful, he will be bitter. This set of forces is very much misunderstood in many missions programs today."

... When a recipient begins to recognize how one-way giving is affecting his personhood, he may resort to incredibly twisted logic in an effort to escape his sense of humiliation.<sup>3</sup>

We who are givers must create the climate in which the recipient feels free to return the gift in whatever form he chooses. And we must recognize the value and substance of whatever gift he offers.<sup>4</sup>

Friendship and partnership in the work must be based on mutuality. If you find it difficult to accept younger workers as your close friends and brothers, it is an indication that you probably feel threatened because of personal insecurity.

### **Believe in People**

Believe that the new worker is of high quality: work at developing that quality in him. Continue the process of growth by letting him know you and learn from you. When he comes to you with a problem or seeking advice, don't just give him an answer. He probably wants support and not just information. Tournier gives us many good ideas about how to help those who come to us for help:

The majority of those who consult us are not primarily seeking advice. They have already said to themselves, over and over again, all that can be said about their problem. They may even have an idea of how it can be solved, but they have not dared, or have not been able, to follow it out. The support they want is a support to counter their weakness. They need to express themselves, not to have an arbitration award pronounced against them. They need a place where they can be completely sincere, and feel themselves completely free.<sup>5</sup>

I think after all that the reason why people come to me for support is because I am weak, and not strong. A sort of instinct prompts them to look for someone who is like them, but who tries to follow his vocation in spite of his weakness, relying on God rather than on his efforts.<sup>6</sup>

What we are looking for is not someone who will cut through our dilemmas for us, but someone who will try to

understand them. Not someone who will impose his will upon us, but someone who will help us to use our own will. Someone who, instead of dictating to us what we must do, will listen to us with respect. Not someone who will reduce everything to an academic argument, but someone who will understand our personal motives, our feelings, and even our weakness and mistakes. Someone who will give us confidence in ourselves because he has unshakeable confidence in us, who will take an interest in our struggles without prejudging their outcome, who will not allow himself to be discouraged if we take a different road from the one he would have taken.

We want help in our struggle, but do not want our personal responsibility to be taken from us. A look, a smile, an intense emotion — these are the things that can help us to win our victories over ourselves.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding and love are especially valuable to those whose self-esteem is under attack as it usually is during cross-cultural transition. Several responses from the survey support this:

I would seek out some experienced missionary in whom to confide my frustrations and feelings of inadequacy.

I'd like to have more encouragement and guidance from someone — maybe an authority-father figure to turn to.

We must be willing to believe in people and see the good in them. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (I Corinthians 13:7-8a). Since "God is love" (I John 4:16), we know that He bears all things, believes all good things, and hopes all good things about His children. He never gives up on any one of us.

If we develop quality workers, they will do quality work. General Curtis Lemay, once commander of the Strategic Air Command, was quoted as saying, "You take care of the men, and the men will take care of the mission."<sup>8</sup> We

Christians need to return to an emphasis on quality relationships and put less emphasis on programs and ministries.

We have one outstanding example in Scripture of the relationships between a young worker and two senior missionaries. The young recruit was named Mark. The veterans were Barnabas and Paul. Mark became a dropout when he left the work at Pamphylia and headed for home (Acts 13:13). No reason is given here for his departure, but later Paul says that it was pure desertion (Acts 15:38). Paul wanted nothing to do with Mark after his selfish act. He thought that such a person was unfit for the Lord's work.





Barnabas, on the other hand, said that he would like to take him along and give him another chance. He still believed in Mark even after Paul had given up.

History proved that Barnabas was right. He was more Christ-like in his love than was Paul, because his love and acceptance did not quit. Paul had good reasons for not taking Mark, but he gave up on him too soon. Barnabas risked a great friendship on Mark's behalf. Mark knew that someone believed in him after Barnabas split with Paul and sailed with him to Cyprus. Later, Paul admitted that Mark was a worthy servant of the Lord; "Bring Mark with you, for he is valuable to me for service" (II Timothy 4:11).

Paul, like the rest of us humans, must have had a short memory. During the recorded argument with Barnabas, he had somehow forgotten how Barnabas had believed in him when none of the other Apostles would even associate with him. He had forgotten how Barnabas had risked his life and reputation to bring Paul to them and help win their acceptance. He had also forgotten that it was Barnabas who found him in Tarsus and took him to Antioch to begin his climb to prominence within the early church. He had forgotten that though Barnabas had originally been the leader of the missionary team (Acts 13:2), he seemingly raised little objection when he himself slipped into second place and Paul rose to first (Acts 13:13). Barnabas was a man who believed in others and was happy to see them ahead of himself. His nickname, Barnabas, meant "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36). Can we find such men today? Such men are not hard to follow because they believe in the value of those they lead. They have the gift of seeing in men what God sees and coaxing it to the surface.

If you are going to help the new worker, you must accept him, believe in him and try as much as possible to understand him. The first step in doing this is to acknowledge your own weakness. Israel's high priest could "deal

gently with the ignorant and misguided since he himself was also beset with weakness" (Hebrews 5:2). The following story illustrates how a person who is aware of his own weakness is able to give a lot of special understanding to others who are weak.

... a pet shop owner was out putting up a sign "puppies for sale" to advertise a new litter that had arrived to one of his fine dogs. While he was putting up the sign a small boy came along.

"May I see the puppies?" he asked.

"You surely may," the owner replied as he brought out five furry little balls.

The child was entranced. "How much are they?" he wanted to know.

"Well, these are pretty fine dogs," he warned. "We will have to sell them for thirty-five or fifty dollars apiece."

"I only have \$2.37 but I could pay you fifty cents a month until I get it paid for," the little boy offered.

"I'm sure we can work out some deal," the sympathetic man told him. "Just come on in and look them over."

The man brought them out one at a time and let them frisk across the floor to the little boy. The last one he brought out, however, was not frisky. He moved across the floor very slowly, dragging a lame leg.

"That's the one I want," the little boy said with firm decision.

"Surely not that one," the keeper reasoned. "That one was born with some defect in his hip joint. He will never be able to run through the meadows with you and follow you around. We will work out some deal so you can have one of the good ones."

"No, I want this one," he said quietly. As he spoke, he pulled up his trouser leg and revealed two metal braces on either side of his leg that met with a leather cap over his knee.

"You see, he's going to need a lot of special understanding, and I'm just the guy who can give it to him."<sup>9</sup>

## Summary

Veteran missionaries have a decisive influence on the future of new workers. They must set the pace by learning how to handle their own stress and serving Christ with gladness. Good or bad attitudes will usually be passed down to younger missionaries. Veterans must maintain a healthy self-esteem in order to be able to open their hearts and become close friends with their junior fellow-workers.

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1. Cannon, *For Missionaries Only*, (Ann Arbor: Baker, 1969), p. 19.
2. John W. Alexander, *Practical Criticism, Giving It and Taking It*, (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1975), p. 5.
3. Keidel, *Stop Treating Me like God*, p. 85.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
5. Paul Tournier, *A Place for You; Psychology and Religion*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 192.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.
8. Ronald Iwasko, "Making the First-term Missionary Effective," (Unpublished paper presented to the National Association of Evangelicals, 1978), p. 6.
9. Hollingsworth, *When All the Bridges Are Down*, pp. 56-7.

## CONCLUSION

Stress is an inevitable ingredient of life, but excessive stress on an individual results in abnormal behavior. Each person has a stress tolerance level, and when this level is exceeded, emotional and psychological malfunction is often the result.

In the human being, when demand for performance exceeds output, a deficit is created. This discrepancy results in guilt and subsequent loss of self-esteem. As self-esteem diminishes, the psyche attempts to compensate for the deficit through defense mechanisms. The overuse of these jeopardizes inter-personal relationships, good judgment and physical health. If these efforts to compensate do not adequately cope with the problem, severe emotional deviations (neuroses) develop. The final step in this process of self-preservation is a complete emotional break with reality (psychosis), or the ultimate withdrawal device, suicide.

Adjustment to cross-cultural living is very stressful. For the missionary, this cross-cultural stress is also compounded by the stress of many life changes and the stress of very high expectations due to the missionary role. It is no surprise that many individuals exhibit abnormal behavior when subjected to missionary work.

There are ways of reducing stress and thus minimizing the negative consequences of cross-cultural living. The most important step is to be aware of it and to face it honestly, recognizing that it is normal. It is not only spiritually weak people who experience stress and its negative effects.

To adequately cope with the cross-cultural stress, the missionary must (1) realize that Christ's finished work has made him eternally acceptable to God. (2) keep his objectives and purpose in view, (3) eliminate as much external pressure for idealistic performance as possible, (4) have a realistic appraisal of his capabilities and (5) help others, in-

cluding mission leaders and supporters, to have the same.

Other "common sense" steps can be taken to minimize stress. Attempts should be made to avoid childbirth occurring within a period of one year prior to two years after the date of cross-cultural entry. This will avoid compounding the stress of childbirth with that of acculturation. If that is not possible, then other attempts should be made to compensate for this additional high-stress event. Like childbirth, marriage would be wisely avoided during the same time period.

Adequate permanent housing should be arranged as soon as possible so that some semblance of stability is quickly assured. This will especially help the wife to settle-in and will keep her from unnecessary uncertainty while waiting for suitable housing to develop.

Every mission organization should have someone who is responsible for the welfare of new workers. Ideally, he will listen to and understand the struggles of the new recruit. Additionally, each new missionary should be assigned a veteran missionary or national Christian as a sponsor to help in the adjustment process. This must be someone who is not highly critical of the mission leadership or of the national culture. It is better to have no sponsor than to have one who will infect the new worker with a critical spirit. The sponsor should treat his protege' as a friend and brother and help him through the cultural adjustment.

It is wise for the new worker to have some experience in his intended ministry before attempting it in the new culture. School teachers should have taught a minimum of one year, preferably more. Aspiring church-planters should seek apprentice work in a church-planting ministry in their home country.

These are some of the steps which can be taken to keep stress to a minimum during the first term. We must do everything possible to help new cross-cultural Christian work-

ers become effective ambassadors for Christ who will serve the Lord with gladness all their lives. Ideally, none should leave the work disappointed in or bitter toward other Christians or the Lord. Some may be led to other ministries in their home culture, but no matter where they serve, they should be able to do it with gladness because they know that they are of immense worth and are objects of God's intense love. Knowing that all of their needs for security and significance are met in Christ will enable them to give themselves for others as Christ gave Himself for them.

## APPENDIX I

The following is a sample of a survey sent out in July, 1981, to 227 missionaries. The purpose of the survey was to determine whether problems of low self-esteem were very common during the early period of cross-cultural adjustment.

Responses came from workers serving in 42 foreign countries with 22 mission boards. A total of 152 surveys were returned for tabulation within a ten week period. This represents a response rate of 67 percent. One-hundred and two respondents indicated struggles with self-esteem during their first years of cross-cultural transition giving a 67 percent rate. Of the respondents, 39 had ten years or more experience within the new culture. Only 46 percent of these indicated self-esteem struggles in the early years. If we remove these 39 from the over-all tabulation, we have 113 with less than ten years experience, and of these, 84 indicated some type of self-esteem difficulty within the first term. This 74 percent rate indicates that maintaining self-esteem is a major problem faced by the great majority of new workers.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Do you have some unanswered questions about the feelings you went through as a result of entering and living in a strange culture? As I analyze my years in Bolivia, South America, I see many experiences which I am still trying to fully understand. One of the most crucial issues is the struggle with self-esteem which many missionary workers go through during cultural transition. I have chosen to write a Master's thesis on this subject both for my own enlightenment and in the hope that my findings will help others who struggle to understand the psychological effects of

cross-cultural stress. "The Missionary's First Term: Crisis in Self-esteem" is the proposed title.

To analyze this properly, I need your help. The following survey is being sent to approximately 300 people who have had cross-cultural experience as missionaries. Some of these are in their first term and are going through these experiences right now; others went for their first term, but because of one factor or another did not finish it; some served one term and then went into other vocations such as the pastorate; and others are now serving in their second or third term. Response from each group is necessary to get a complete picture of the effect of cross-cultural stress.

I am asking you to participate because I believe that you also are concerned about helping other people like yourself to survive and be productive in the stressful situation of a foreign culture.

If right now, or in the course of this day, you will take fifteen minutes to complete this form and send it back to me, it will be extremely helpful.

I will do everything possible to insure strict confidentiality of your survey responses. When I receive your completed form, I will remove the sheet with your name and will randomly file it apart from the survey questions. (If you desire, you may return the form to me without the page with name and address.) I will also be glad to send you a free copy of the results of the survey if you so indicate on the appropriate place on page 1.

As your brother in Christ, I assure you of my sincere thanks.

Love in Christ,  
Myron Loss



## **ENDORSEMENT**

As a veteran missionary and Bible College president involved in the training of those who minister for Christ cross-culturally, I realize that much remains to be done toward understanding the psychological effects of culture stress. It is my opinion that Myron Loss' thesis will make a significant contribution in this field, and will be both practical and applicable. I encourage you to give whatever help possible knowing that it will be treated in strict confidence and used only for constructive purposes.

J. Robertson McQuilkin  
President,  
Columbia Bible College and Colum-  
bia Graduate School of Bible and  
Missions

## **SURVEY — CONFIDENTIAL**

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**Name**

---

**Address**

---

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**Mission Organization**

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like a free copy of the results of this survey.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like information on how to obtain a copy of your completed thesis.

**Mail to: Myron Loss  
1817 Rolling Hills Rd  
Columbia, SC 29210**

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**Country in which you worked**

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**Year of entry to new culture**

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**Total years in cross-cultural environment**

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**Marital status at entry date**

How long did you expect to serve in a foreign culture?

\_\_\_\_\_ Two years or less

\_\_\_\_\_ More than two years

Please answer the following questions in relation to your early years (2-3) in the foreign culture. Some questions may require several responses. Circle all those which are appropriate. Be as honest and candid as possible. [The first column (left) of percentages represents total respondents. The middle column represents respondents with under ten years experience, and the third column (right) represents respondents with ten or more years of cross-cultural experience.] (Note: since respondents often circled two choices, or declined to answer certain questions, the total percentages for any question may not equal one hundred.)

1. How much difficulty did the language difference cause you?

- a. 9 6 18 no problem at all
- b. 16 14 21 not very difficult
- c. 66 70 54 caused me some struggle
- d. 8 8 8 almost over came me
- e. 2 3 0 made me give up

(Older group felt that they experienced significantly less difficulty)

2. How were your living conditions?

- a. 27 25 31 much better than expected
- b. 33 36 21 somewhat better than expected
- c. 28 26 31 as expected
- d. 13 12 13 somewhat worse than expected
- e. 3 3 5 much worse than expected

3. How would you compare the ministry you actually performed with the ministry you expected to perform?

(i.e. Were you planning to serve as a Bible teacher and ended up as a business manager, or vice-versa?)

- a. 24 30 8 a disappointment
- b. 63 59 74 as expected
- c. 14 13 15 an improvement

4. How was your physical health during this time?

- a. 1 0 3 much better than before
- b. 7 10 0 slightly better than before
- c. 53 49 64 same as before
- d. 32 35 26 slightly worse than before
- e. 8 9 8 much worse than before

(Younger workers indicated greater drop in health)

5. How was your financial support in relation to your need?

- a. 24 27 13 more than adequate
- b. 66 66 67 adequate
- c. 12 9 21 less than adequate

(Older workers felt need for more income)

6. How were your relationships with nationals?

- a. 56 53 62 felt loved by most
- b. 34 35 33 felt accepted by some/rejected by others
- c. 3 2 5 felt rejected by most
- d. 7 9 0 had little contact with nationals

7. How were your relationships with missionary co-workers?

- a. 38 37 41 felt loved and accepted by all
- b. 57 60 49 felt encouraged by some/criticized by others
- c. 3 4 0 felt that most were disappointed in me
- d. 5 4 5 felt unloved and unappreciated
- e. 2 1 5 had little contact with co-workers

(Younger workers were less sure of their acceptance by co-workers)

8. Was Mission Leadership sensitive to your needs as a person and as a co-worker?

- a. 18 17 21 yes, always seemed aware and caring
- b. 56 53 64 yes, most of the time
- c. 26 29 15 no, my needs seemed to be a low priority for them

(Younger workers were more skeptical of mission leaders' concern for them)

9. (For those who were married before entry into the foreign culture) How was your relationship with your spouse during your first term?

- a. 33 36 23 we felt closer than before
- b. 28 26 33 we felt no difference in our relationship
- c. 15 19 3 we felt less able to adequately relate to each other

note: Quite a number indicated both a. and c. representing increased struggle in the relationship. (Younger workers indicated greater extremes in their answers)

10. How did your quality of life and performance as a missionary compare with what you expected it to be?

- a. 4 4 3 far surpassed it
- b. 19 19 18 rose slightly above
- c. 34 26 56 as expected
- d. 33 37 21 fell slightly below
- e. 11 15 0 fell far below

(Younger workers showed greater disappointment in themselves as missionaries)

11. How would you evaluate your spiritual validity during this time?

- a. 37 42 21 I felt closer to the Lord
- b. 45 35 72 I did not notice any significant change
- c. 21 27 5 I felt dry and unspiritual much of the time

note: many circled both a. and c. indicating greater fluctuation in their spiritual life.

12. As a missionary, would you consider yourself:
- a. 9 5 21 very productive
  - b. 52 49 62 fairly productive
  - c. 31 37 13 not very productive yet, but feel good potential for future
  - d. 8 10 3 unproductive
  - e. 1 1 0 a failure
13. How often were your ideas and opinions considered by Mission Leadership?
- a. 11 9 18 always
  - b. 30 28 36 usually
  - c. 27 29 21 sometimes
  - d. 20 19 21 rarely
  - e. 4 4 3 never
- (Younger workers felt their input was less accepted)
14. Did you experience any difficulty with your self-esteem (feeling of self-worth, self-acceptance) during your first term?
- (Some who answered "no" to this question checked one or more items in question #18).
- No 34 27 54
- Yes 66 73 46 I experienced periods of feeling:
- Percentages by those responding "yes"
- a. 20 23 6 unloved
  - b. 45 46 39 unaccepted
  - c. 42 46 22 unneeded
  - d. 71 77 44 unable to perform as expected
  - e. 44 46 33 unappreciated
- (Percentage of younger workers experiencing struggles was significantly higher)

15. Do you experience any emotional struggles today which may be traced to a self-esteem crisis during your first term of missionary service?

Yes 24 28 13

No 72 66 87

(Higher percentage of positive responses by younger workers indicates continued struggle)

16. If you had children, how did they affect your cross-cultural transition?

a. 40 39 44 made it easier

b. 11 10 15 had little effect pro or con

c. 19 25 3 made it more difficult

note: many here checked both a. and c. and commented that the children helped in establishing personal relationships with nationals, but that they absorbed a great deal of time making language study and ministry more difficult. (Younger workers more frequently indicated "c")

17. Did your first term involve considerable stress for you?

Yes 67 72 54

No 31 27 41

(Younger workers clearly indicated more stress)

18. OPTIONAL — If you did struggle with self-esteem, to what factors do you attribute it? (Percentages of all respondents)

a. 30 35 15 the stress of culture change

b. 36 40 26 idealistic expectations of myself

c. 32 35 21 lack of understanding by other workers

d. 2 3 0 rejection by nationals

e. 13 12 2 poor health

f. 6 5 8 financial difficulties

g. 18 24 0 disappointment in type of ministry

- h. 11 12 10 marital stress
- i. 16 19 8 concerns for children
- j. 7 7 8 unsatisfactory living conditions
- k. 16 19 5 ineffective ministry
- l. 22 26 13 strained relationships with Mission Leadership
- m. 10 12 3 other \_\_\_\_\_

19. If you could relive those early years of your first term, what would you change?

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Please complete and return in the pre-addressed and stamped envelope to:

**Myron Loss**



## APPENDIX II

### RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY

For further individual or group study, the following books and articles are very helpful.

#### STRESS

Collins, Gary. *You Can Profit From Stress*. Santa Ana: Vision House, 1977.

#### SELF-ESTEEM

Wagner, Maurice. *Put it All Together; Developing Inner Security* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Sensation of Being Somebody*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.

#### CULTURAL STRESS

Anonymous, "Dear Pete and Carol; Shock Waves." *Moody Monthly* 80 (April 1980) :100-103.

Coots, D. L. "What to Do About Those New Missionary Frustrations." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 12 (October 1976) :205-9.

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#### DIFFICULT STRUGGLES OF MISSIONARIES

Holloway, Ida Nelle. *When All the Bridges Are Down*. Nashville: Broadman, 1975.

Keidel, Levi. *Stop Treating Me Like God*. Carol Stream: Creation House, 1971.

### **SELF-LOVE**

Ashford, Ray. *Loving Ourselves*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977

Trobisch, Walter. *Love Yourself*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1978.

### **FATIGUE AND IDEALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

Carlson, Dwight. *Run and Not Be Weary*. Old Tappan: Revell, 1974.

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### **BIBLICAL COUNSELING**

Crabb, Lawrence J. *Effective Biblical Counseling*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977.

### **PSYCHOLOGY OF ADJUSTMENT**

Lehner, George F. and Kube, Ella. *The Dynamics of Personal Adjustment*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1955.

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Seamands, David. *Healing for Damaged Emotions*. Wheaton: Victor, 1981.

## NOTES

## NOTES

**GLOSSARY**  
**DEFINITION OF TERMS**  
Intended meaning within this book.

**ACCULTURATION** — The learning of appropriate behavior of one's host culture.

**ANXIETY** — A state of being uneasy, apprehensive or worried about one's present or future circumstances.

**CAREER MISSIONARY.** — A missionary committed to serve for an indefinite time period, normally divided into periods of four or five years.

**CRISIS** — An emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life.

**CRISIS IN SELF-ESTEEM** — When after a period of time, the effect of the negative evaluations far outweighs the effect of the positive.

**CULTURE** — The total pattern of learned human behavior embodied in thought, speech and action. The body of customary beliefs, social forms and material traits constituting a distinct complex of tradition of a racial, religious or social group. That complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, morals, law, customs, opinions, religion, superstition and art.

**DEPRESSION** — A mild or intense experience of sadness, pessimism, self-condemnation and apathy often involving overwhelming feelings of unworthiness, frustration, hopelessness or despair.

**DROPOUT** — One who drops out before achieving his goal. One who does not finish the intended course.

**FATIGUE** — Weariness of body from physical, mental or emotional exertion.

**FIRST TERM** — The first two to five years of a missionary's ministry in the cross-cultural environment.

**NEUROTIC BEHAVIOR** — Response to life situations on the basis of an idealized concept of the self rather than in terms of the immediate reality.

**PSYCHOTIC BEHAVIOR** — Disorders of perception, thinking and action resulting from a person's inability to tolerate the demands of his environment because of the enormity of the imposed stress, or because of primary inadequacy of his organism.

**SELF-ESTEEM** — The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.

**SELF-LOVE** — Love for one's own soul: an appreciation for the worth of oneself as a person made in the image of God.

**SHORT-TERM MISSIONARY** — One committed to serve for a definite time period less than two years.

**STRESS** — A situation or circumstance which arouses anxiety in an individual.

\*\* These definitions have been drawn from the prominent literature in the respective fields, and from Webster's 3rd New International Dictionary.

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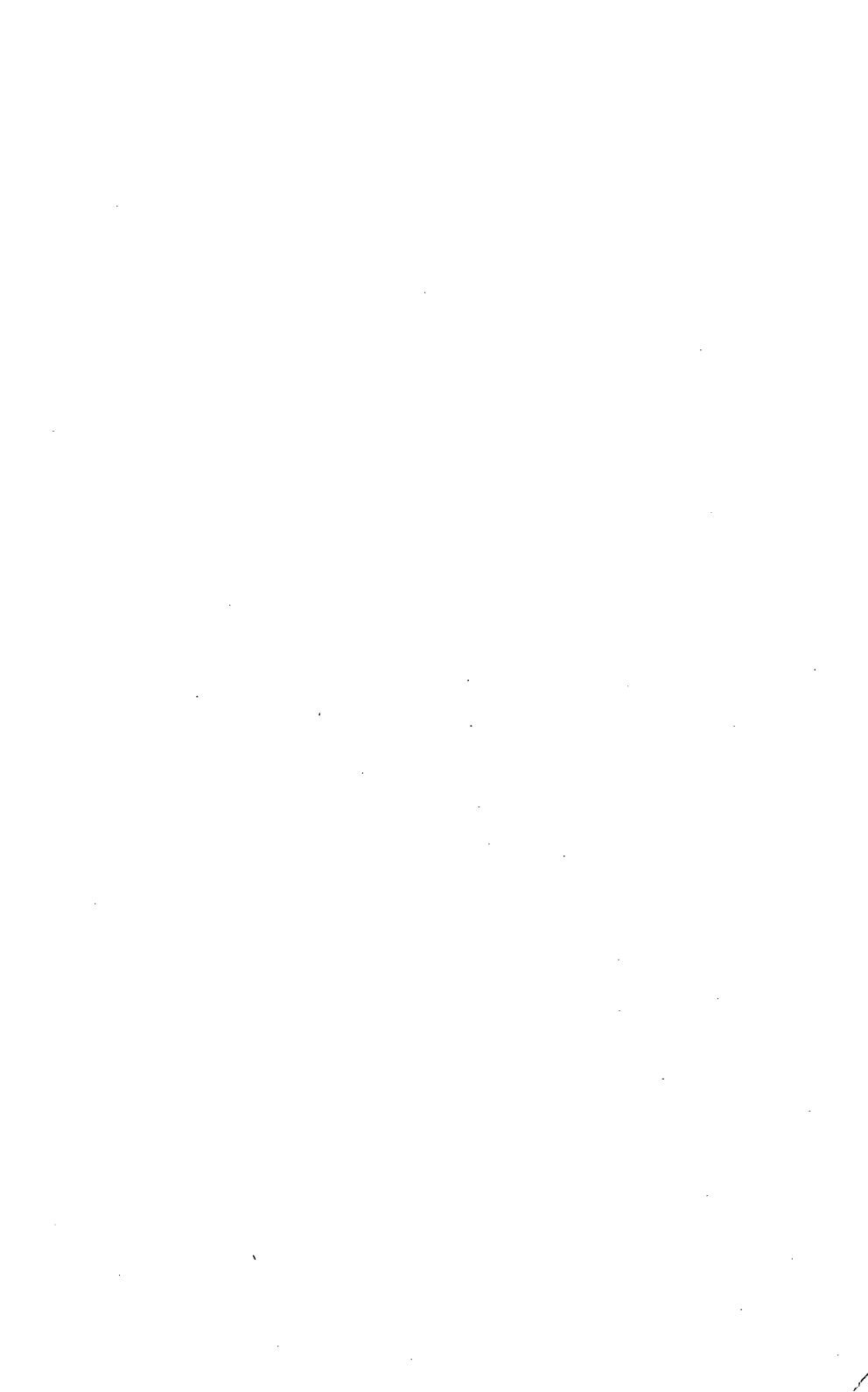
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The process of adjusting to life in a foreign culture is nearly always a stressful experience due to the cultural and psychological disorientation which results. Where this disorientation is severe and prolonged, physical or emotional withdrawal from the stressful situation will eventually result. In missionaries, it can lead to ineffectiveness in ministry, interpersonal relationship problems and drop-out. In light of this, suggestions are offered for minimizing stress and improving survivability and effectiveness of new workers.

***About the Author***

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