



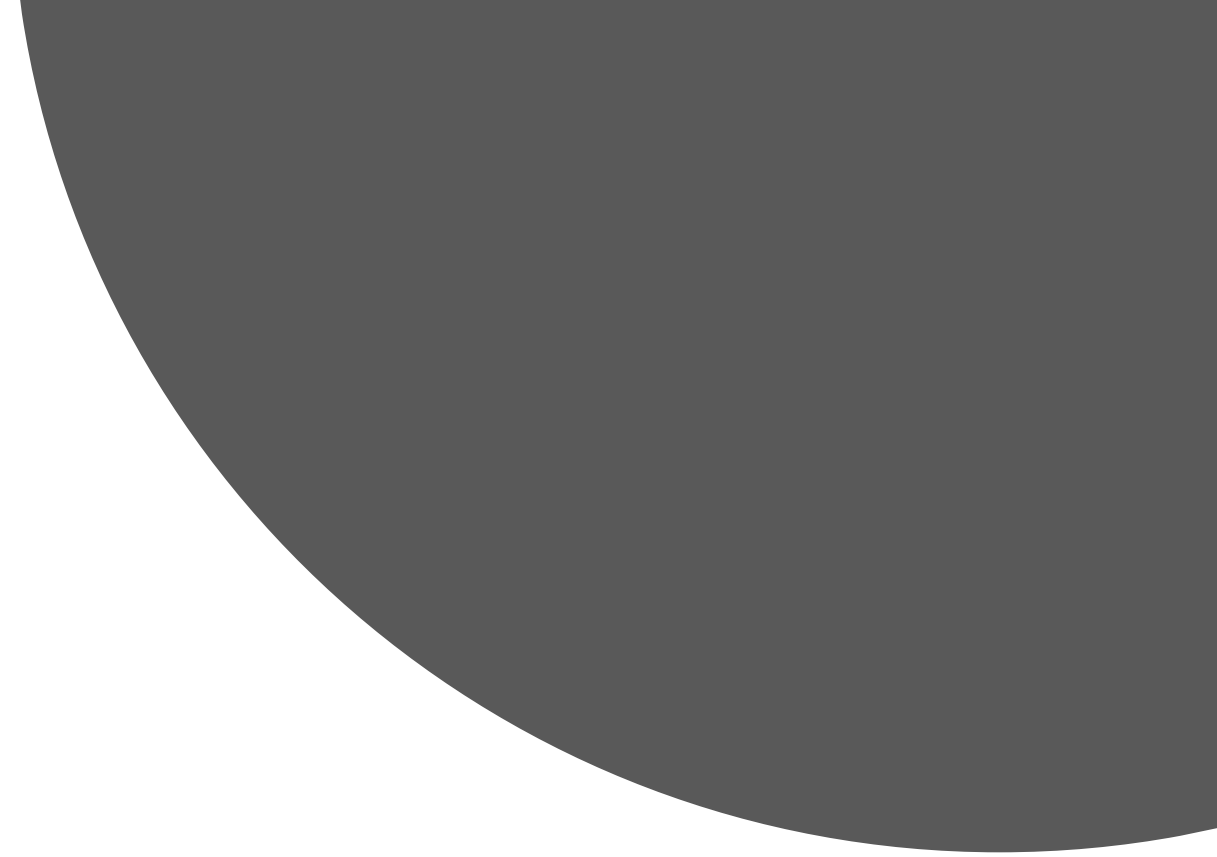
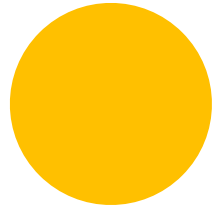
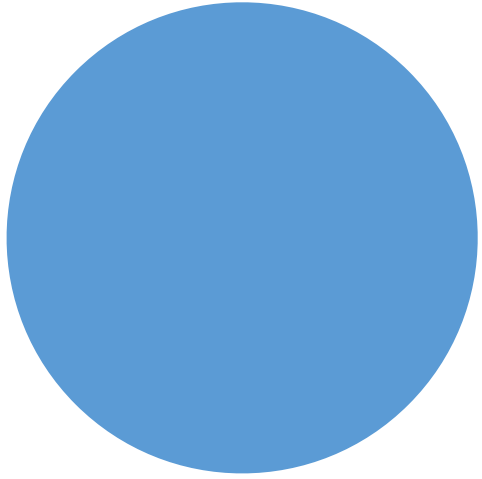
Social Anxiety: Offering Help and Hope to the Fainthearted

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Case Study

Sarah

- 27
- 1 child (8)
- No longer goes to grocery store due to anxiety
- Does not feel safe around strangers



What is Social
Anxiety?

What is Social Anxiety?

DSM-5

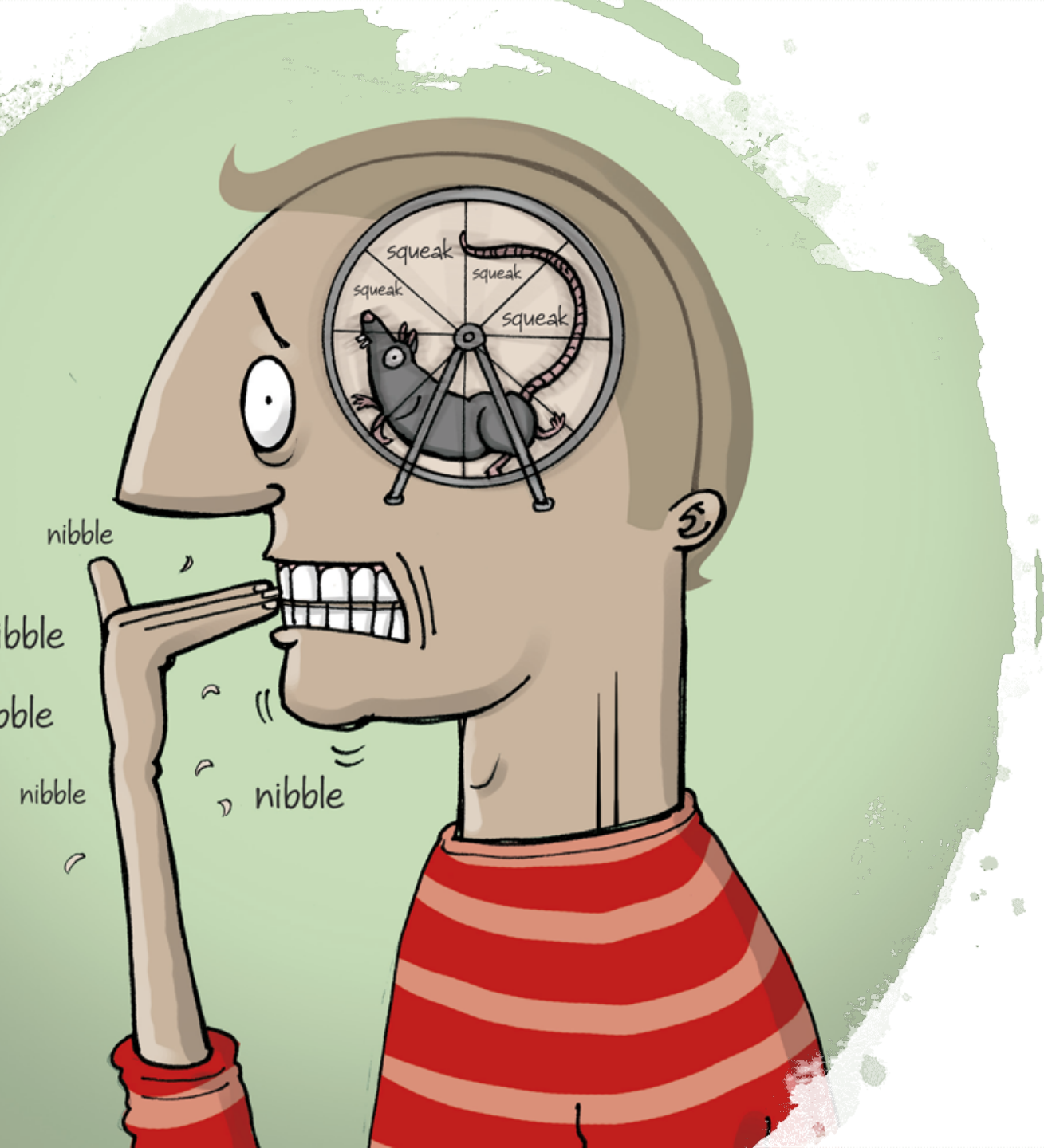
- A. A persistent fear of one or more social or performance situations in which the person is exposed to unfamiliar people or to possible scrutiny by others. The individual fears that he or she will act in a way (or show anxiety symptoms) that will be embarrassing and humiliating.
- B. Exposure to the feared situation almost invariably provokes anxiety, which may take the form of a situationally bound or situationally pre-disposed Panic Attack.
- C. The person recognizes that this fear is unreasonable or excessive.
- D. The feared situations are avoided or else are endured with intense anxiety and distress.
- E. The avoidance, anxious anticipation, or distress in the feared social or performance situation(s) interferes significantly with the person's normal routine, occupational (academic) functioning, or social activities or relationships, or there is marked distress about having the phobia.

Biblical

- A. Suffering
 - Our nature is derivative of God's nature, and God's nature is relational. He has fellowship *within* Himself (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). When we are alone, it is noted as state of incompleteness/not good (Gen 2:18).
- B. Faintheartedness
 - Essential to Social Anxiety is a fear of being rejected. That rejection is expected as a matter of course. There is a feeling of incompetence, and expectation of displeasure or rejection from others.
- C. Fear of Man
 - Holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by a person/people, putting your trust in people, needing people, worshiping people, being afraid of someone and what they may do to you/say about you/think about you.

I Corinthians 12:22-26

- ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.



Manifestations of Social Anxiety

Development and Course



Adolescence is common life-stage for social anxiety to begin



Usually after a stressful or humiliating experience



May develop slowly over time

Contributing Factors

Biological

Behavioural

Past
Experiences

View of
others

View of self

View of God

Childhood
Maltreatment

Safety of
Environment

Social Skills

Social
Standing

Often Found Alongside...



Depression, often
due to social
isolation



Substance use



Other anxiety
problems



Social deficits due to
high-functioning
autism



Offering Help and Hope



The shortest distance
between two points
is a straight line.

-

Archimedes



The shortest distance
between two points
is a straight line.

-

Archimedes

Case Study

Ben

- 17
- Shared faith at school and then mocked
- Few friends (2 from church, none at school)
- Father left family

Straight-Line Application

You're anxious around people because you care what they think



You should care more about what God thinks



Care more about what God thinks about you



Helping Those Suffering from Social Anxiety



Incarnational ministry



Listen to their story *carefully*



Differentiate skill deficits, traumas,
and heart issues



Incremental Steps of Faith and
Courage



Pitfalls to Avoid

- Treating the fear as volitional
- Assuming you know *why* because you know *what*
- Assuming God sounds good to the person or that you can convince them quickly and easily otherwise
- Assuming shared word definitions

A Dangerous Assumption



If we posit that social anxiety is a sign that something is wrong with someone at a heart level, we may inadvertently communicate that not fearing others therefore means they are 'healthy.'



What then is our aim?



Approaches for Helping

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

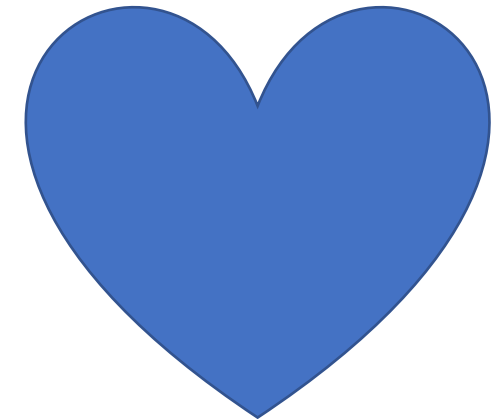
Gold Standard Secular Approach

- Explicit, systematic examination of underlying beliefs
- Helps people to analyze faulty assumptions

Thoughts → Emotions

Thoughts ← Emotions

Thoughts ↔ Emotions



CBT

Common Grace Insights

- Our beliefs about others, ourselves and the world can be wrong (noetic effect of sin).
- These beliefs are powerful and can cause us great distress.

Insufficiencies

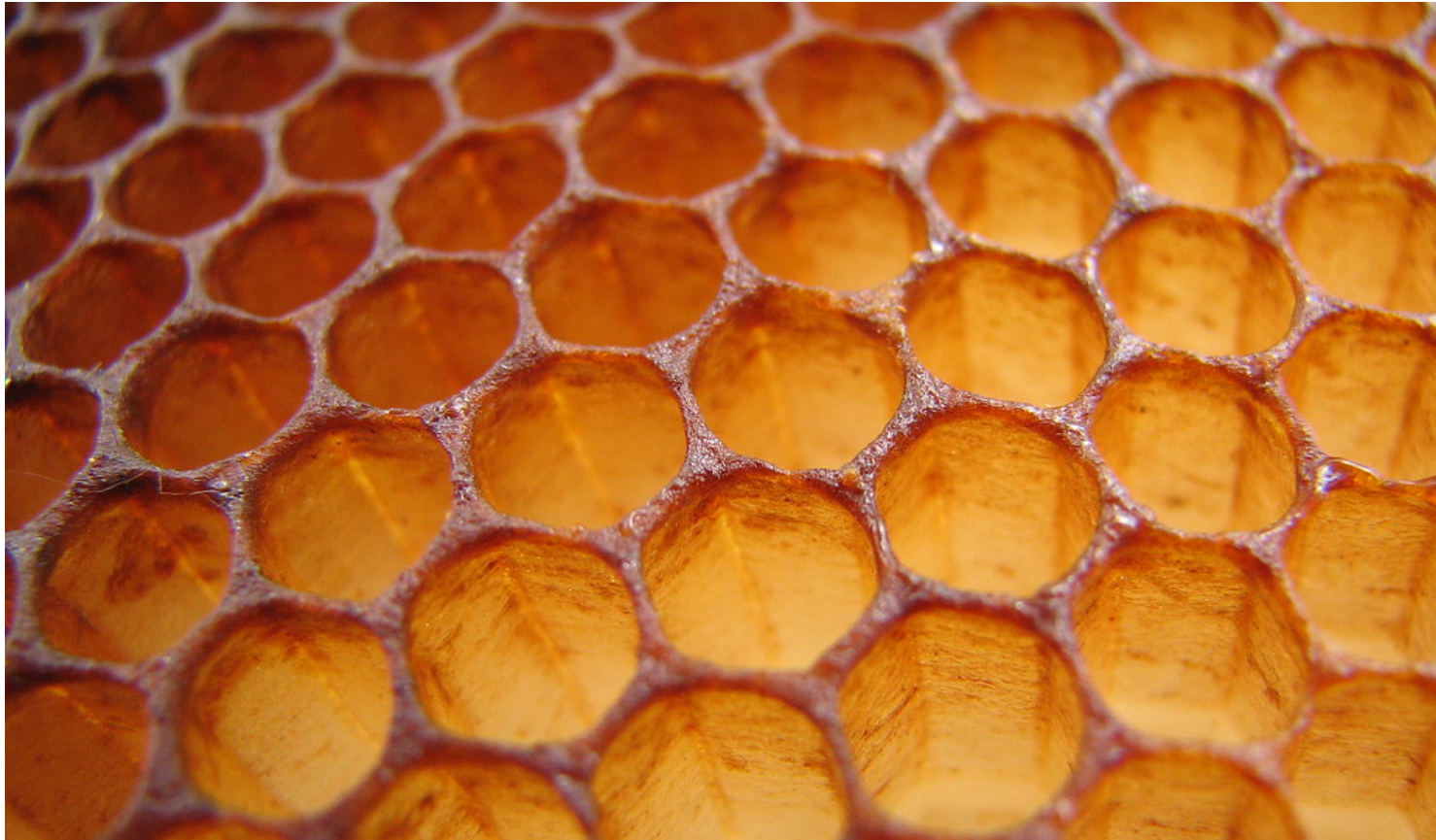
- No examination of the fundamental purpose of our interactions with others.
- We are ultimately encouraged to trust our own perceptions.

Spiritualized Approaches

- Minimize the Person's Story
- Highlight God's Displeasure
- Tend to Focus on Real or Alleged Selfishness

Practical Biblical Agenda

- Develop Courage and Faith
 - Orient the Mind and Heart
 - Practice Courage and Faith
 - Provide encouragement, support and feedback
- Provide Practical Help
 - Develop skills



A Metaphor

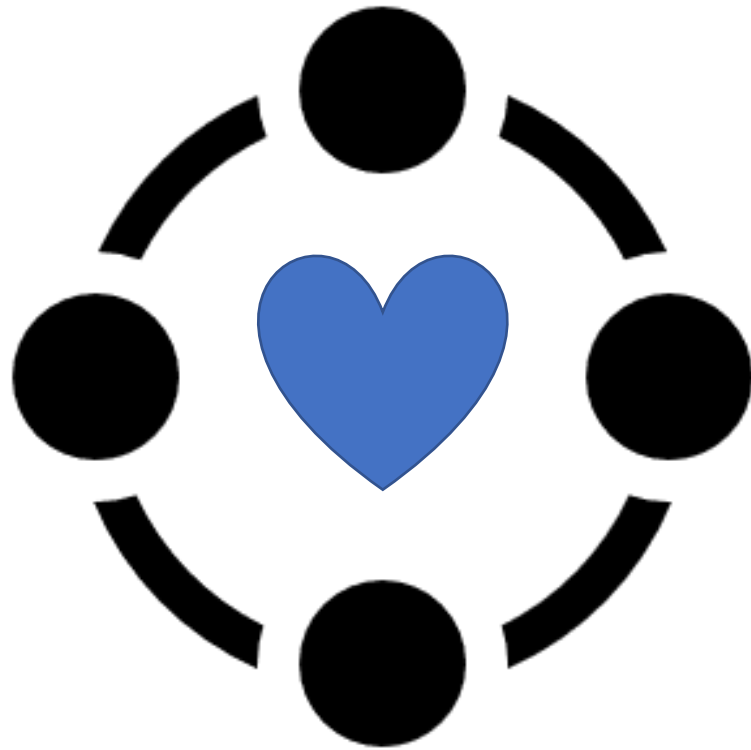
Order emerges from smaller scale interactions. Initially it may look disordered, but together, the smaller interactions produce large scale order that is mutual reinforcing and organizing.

A Self-Organizing System

-
- A self-organizing system is not just the component parts and their relationships. It is a system organized *around* something.
 - As Christians we are looking to do more than simply reduce the individuals anxiety/fear of others; we are looking for hearts to be organized around Christ and his kingdom purposes.



A Center to Organize Around



- Understand Social Anxiety as a complex system with many factors that reinforce one another in a dynamic way.
- It is not enough to shift key aspects of the system, but to ensure there is a center
- What do they center on? Can you help them identify how that might look?

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,
encourage the fainthearted, help the weak,
be patient with them all.

- We are aiming to strengthen those experiencing social anxiety
- Literally: to hearten



Developing Courage



Encouragemen t

- We are encouraged by who God is...
- We are encouraged by what God has done...
- We are encouraged by who God says we are...
- We are encouraged by the confidence and trust of others...

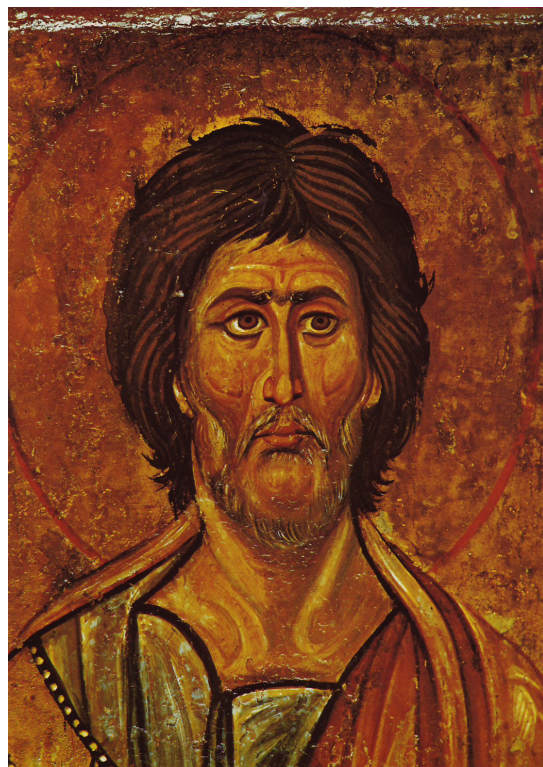


Encouragemen t

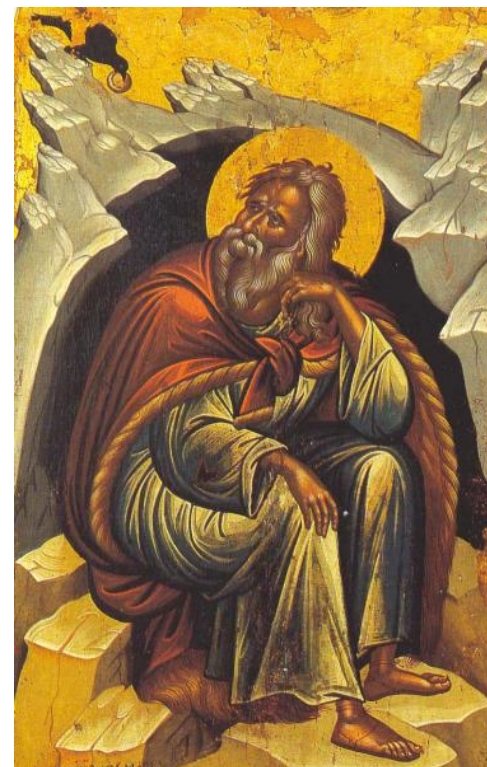
- We grow in courage when we know that we won't be rejected for failure
- We grow in courage when we feel agency/competence
- We grow in courage when we fear losing something more valuable if avoid what we need to face
- We grow in courage when we know we are not alone...



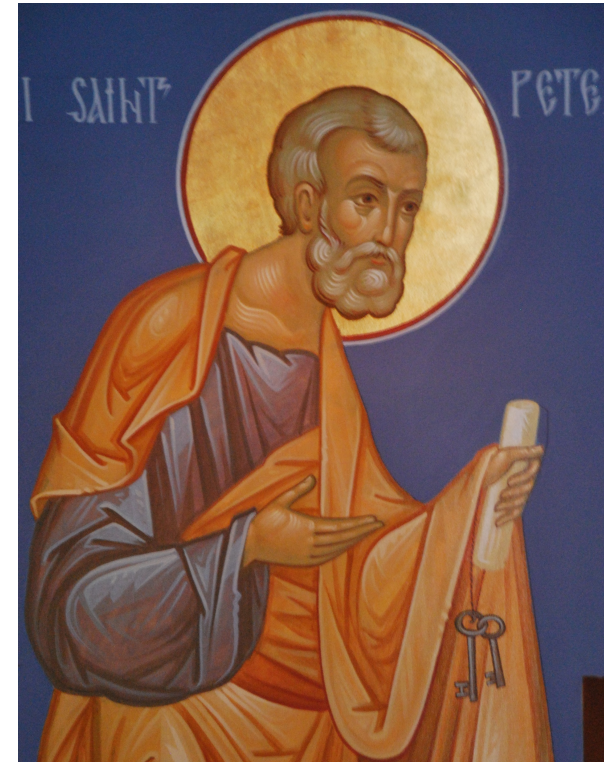
Abraham



Moses



Elijah



Peter

Fear of Others



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They aren't alone. They are united to Christ.



Offer your own courage as a
Fellow Brother or Sister



What story are they telling?

Make their assumptions explicit and help them evaluate

- What's left out?
- What's minimized?
- What's magnified?
- Who is God?
- Who are they?
- Contrary evidence?
- Past successes?

A Story they Can Live In

- Participation in God's Kingdom
- Love God and Love Neighbor
- Building Skills where they Lack

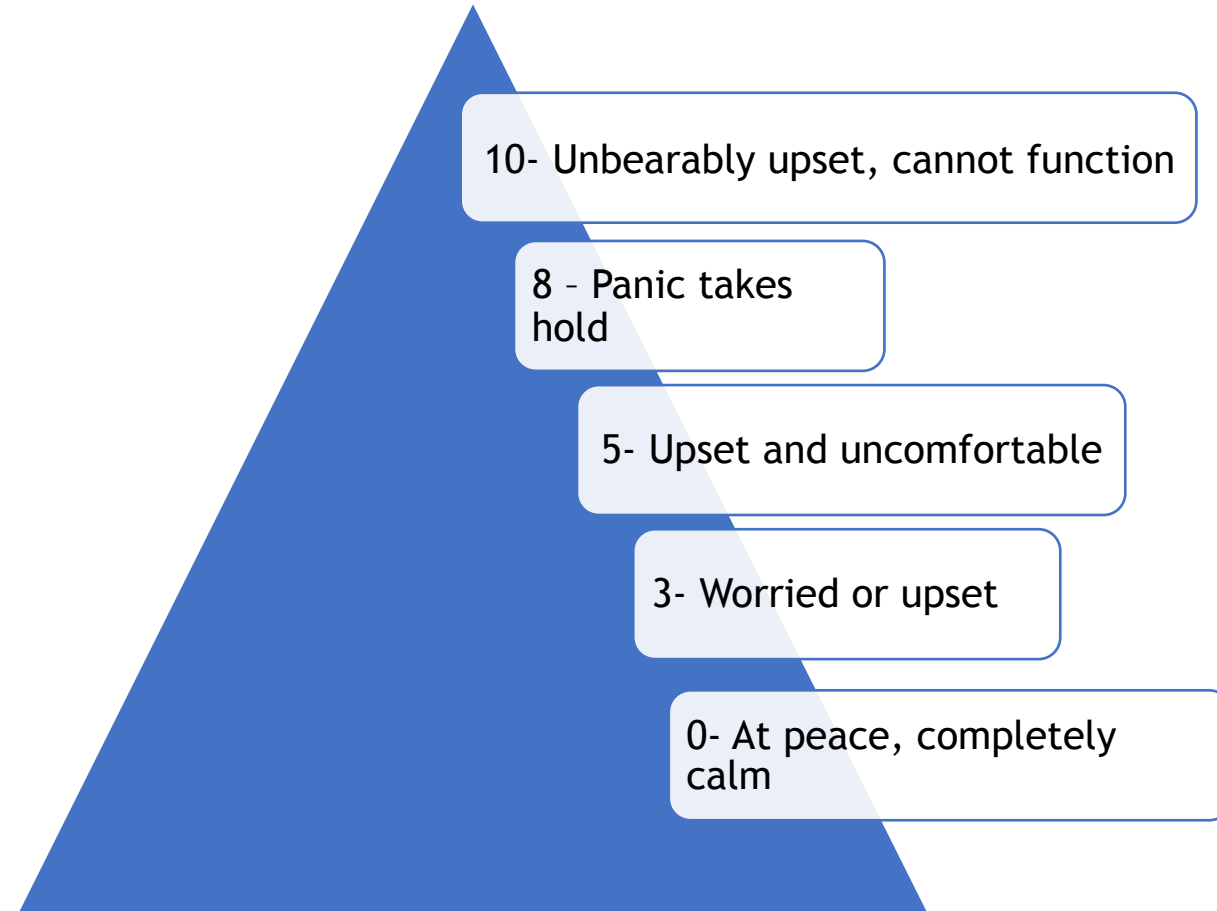




Practicing Courage

Subjective Units of Distress

- giving language to fear



Fear Hierarchy

Situation or Place

- 1.) Talking to an attractive woman
- 2.) Talking to a stranger
- 3.) Giving a presentation at work
- 4.) Meeting neighbors
- 5.) Going to the mall
- 6.) Calling the phone company
- 7.) Visiting relatives
- 8.) Reading a book

Level of Anxiety Suds from 0-10

- 1.) 10
- 2.) 9-10
- 3.) 8-9
- 4.) 7-8
- 5.) 5-6
- 6.) 5-6
- 7.) 5
- 8.) 0

A dark blue, irregular ink blot or splash shape is centered on a white background. The blot has a textured, slightly grainy appearance with some lighter blue and white speckles around its edges. The words "Practical Help" are written in a clean, white, sans-serif font across the center of the blot.

Practical Help



- Identify Skill Deficits
- Slowly introduce skills one at a time
- Model the behavior
- Practice the behavior
- Break down complex interactions into building blocks
- Regular Encouragement

SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

CALM THE BODY

- Deep Breathing
- Grounding Techniques

CALM THE MIND AND SPIRIT

- Prayer
- Rehearsing God's story
- Remembering Identity