

Lessons from an Elephant

There is a riddle that goes like this: How do you eat an elephant? Answer: One bite at a time. This concept is so simple yet so profound. I am constantly sharing this little cute concept as I counsel. Many times it is easy to get overwhelmed as we look at the unsurmountable, nearly paralyzing big picture. It is then that we must embrace the recovery motto of “one Day at a Time.”

It is easy someone to appear “lazy and unmotivated”, but often behind the apparent lack of motivation is a whole menu of challenges. These challenges sometimes cannot even be identified by the individual struggling to conquer a task or to overcome a great challenge. Things which are easy for us may be a confusing maze for them.

As parents we must be aware of the needs of those under our supervision. Often we need to simplify instructions. It can be overwhelming for some children-especially younger children and those with ADHD to hear “Go clean your room.” Instead we need to give specific instructions....”Put your dirty clothes in the laundry.” Upon completion we can give the next instruction of “Throw away any wrappers or scrap papers.” Clear direction is important. This simplicity is also required for some adults too.

Routine is also a valuable resource. Many I have spoken with appreciate the home management resources found at www.FlyLady.net. When there is a routine there is less to think about and actions can become nearly automatic.

Unfortunately, routines are one of the things interrupted during a crisis or life change. Sometimes in the midst of change it is hard to even know what to do next. You find yourself simply sitting frozen not knowing where to begin. In contrast others will begin doing for the sake of staying busy and without real long range thought into what they are doing. They will begin throwing out memories, making purchases, and signing contracts while being uninformed. Friends, counselors, clergy, and other support people can be a big help during this confused state.

Often during difficult times we become like the old stories of the blind men touching an elephant. One describes the elephant like a wall, another like a rope, another like a snake, another as a solid pipe, and yet another as a fan. Yes they were each correct, but they had no true concept of the big picture. Sometimes those outside of a situation can help us focus. In the midst of a crisis it is easy to lose perspective. Our vision becomes blurred by this crisis and our previous trauma and pain. It is easy to forget that God’s promise found in Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV) ***Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.***”

It is common to feel that life is not worth living when there is a change such as: divorce, bankruptcy, job loss, family problem, or major health issue. Counseling and support groups can help to accurately assess the big picture and then find small action steps to manage or accept the challenge. It can be difficult to locate resources, but they are usually out there. It may just take a bit of persistence to find them. Feel free to visit our community resources page at www.footstepschristiancounseling.org for assistance. The local county Family Resource Networks, Information Helpline of the Upper Ohio Valley and the Altnheim Resource and Referral Center all have excellent resources as well.