

Those Little Things and Our Mental Health

“It is those little things which make a difference!” This seems to have been a recurrent theme these last few weeks at the practice. This message seems so simple, but there are those who somehow just don’t get it! Sadly, they have no clue how much pain simple little things can inflict or how much joy appreciation of little things can bring.

Recently as I counseled with some mothers, the topic of Mother’s Day came up. This topic was very painful to a few of them who shared that they didn’t even receive a card or a call. In contrast, another commented about how she appreciated the loving notes and texts she received. One was blessed to come home to the gift of a tidy house. Once again, it was the little things which made the difference.

Sometimes we have no clue how much our little efforts are appreciated or missed. My mom can attest to this. She so appreciated the cards and visits she received after surgery this spring. Sadly many aren’t so fortunate and they feel nobody cares about their day to day loneliness in nursing homes, prisons, or even within their own homes. Even some of our military soldiers receive little at mail call unless they have been adopted by a pen pal.

“Little things” mean a whole lot to our children too! As parents we must be particularly attuned to what is important to them. I remember my son years ago bringing me a note before he headed off to bed. Sadly, as he had gotten just a little older I had somehow found myself using his bedtime as a time to return calls for my business and to friends. I did not realize how much he appreciated our special time of prayer and good night hugs.

Last week during a Suicide Prevention workshop we were again reminded to pay attention to little things. When teen suicides were attempted it was often after a break up. It can be easy for adults to mistakenly dismiss this pain and simply call it “puppy love.”

Forgotten little things are the common element in nearly all of my marriage counseling. This neglect is often unintentional. Small talk and special couple’s time has been crowded out by Facebook, work, household responsibilities, and sports. The marriage is taken for granted. Common courtesies begin to be neglected and yelling and unkind conversation and put-downs become commonplace. Sadly neglect breeds neglect and in time the marriage vow’s meaning withers and the once loving couple become mere roommates often

contemplating divorce.

Seemingly little things must become a big deal for those in recovery from addiction. One little slip can be devastating. Just one beer, one small bet, or a single pill can put an addict back in the throw of their addiction. Fortunately one support group meeting, call, or kind supporting word can help them make it through the day without a relapse.

In the workplace it is those little things that make a difference. Seemingly little things can destroy a career and a reputation. It is noticed if we are frequently tardy or calling off. Employers see wrinkled clothing, dirty finger nails and hair in disarray. Negative attitudes and huffs and puffs are seen and our desk drawer slams are heard. Surprisingly we can even say all the right things but our tone can convey a whole different story. Many fail to realize that just a little extra effort with a smile can push you to the top.

“Little things matter to God too! Scripture is full of references to little things....a mustard seed of faith, a glass of water in His name, and even little foxes spoiling the vine. I challenge you to not let the neglect of the “seemingly little things” continue to rob you and your loved ones.