

# Turning a New Leaf



Volume 5, Issue 4

- Promoting healthy relationships and personal growth from a Christian perspective -

Summer 2013

## Back to School Agony

by Leah Travis, MS, LMFT - Marriage & Family Therapist



The 'back-to-school' season has arrived! 'Tis the season of shopping for school supplies, discovering that last year's jeans are now too small, and coordinating the family schedule with a new school year's activities. Preparing for school is a stressful proposition for every family, but for some parents back-to-school anxieties run deeper than finding the time and money to buy everything their children need for classes.

What if you also have to brace yourself for difficult mornings, hours spent begging, bribing, or fighting with your child to complete their homework, or even go to school in the first place? What if your back-to-school season feels more like torture than anticipation?

Year after year, dealing with the same challenges, many parents begin to feel

helpless, blame themselves, and lose hope of things ever improving. Truthfully, there is no single approach, or magic pill that is going to work for every child or family, but just because you haven't found a system that works for your family yet doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. While there may not be a universal "cure" for this kind of resistance and rebellion, there are some nearly universal guidelines to keep in mind when responding to defiant kids.

First and foremost, remember that you are *the parent*. Being "the parent" means that it is your responsibility to respond calmly and firmly to your child's behavior. When children argue, resist, threaten, and lash out, *fighting* back is possibly the least effective thing you can do. Arguing with your child adds fuel to the conflict, and unintentionally sends a message that the child has an equal measure of authority.

Instead, be assertive about your instructions, and make clear what the consequences will be if the child does not comply. You do not need your child's permission to be the parent, and you do not need to convince them of the validity of your decisions. You may even be surprised by how quickly your child 'gives up' arguing once they get the message that it isn't

getting them anywhere. Possibly the biggest challenge to presenting this kind of confidence and firmness is that when children are defiant, it hurts. Hearing your child yell, insult you, or say they hate you cuts to the quick, and it's no wonder that many parents get overwhelmed and fight back when they are attacked. Whether it's a spouse, friend, a pastor, or even a counselor, you need the support of someone who understands your battle, and can help you manage your pain and doubts.

It is absolutely beneficial for your child to know that their words or actions were hurtful, but being *the parent* means that it's your responsibility to deal with your hurt outside of the conflict. In fact, being in control of yourself carries many benefits: it provides a model for your child of what to do when they're feeling strong emotions, and demonstrates to your child that you will continue to function as a parent regardless of what they do.

This brings me to my last point: children who have difficulty managing their behavior often need the structure of your consistency in order to feel safe. To a child who feels an emotional whirlwind inside, inconsistencies in your reactions, the

### Helpful Resources for Parents

If you are one of the many parents who have been blessed with the challenge of a difficult child, I encourage you to check out Howard Glasser's work.

He is the author of *Transforming the Difficult Child: The Nurtured Heart Approach* (1999), and you can find more about the approach he uses with 'intense' children at: [difficultchild.com](http://difficultchild.com).

level of emotion expressed when they rebel, or the type and severity of consequences that occur when they act out, can feel like a confirmation that the world around them is unpredictable, and may even convince them that trying to manage their own emotions or responses is hopeless. That said, creating consistency in a hectic life is no easy proposition. Consider creating plans for the problem behaviors that occur most frequently. Deter-

(Continued on page 3)

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**Our Mission**  
New Leaf Resources promotes healthy relationships and personal growth through counseling, education, and consultation from a Christian perspective.

**Megan's Mosaic**



by **Megan C. Fisher, MHS, CAADC**  
**Addiction Therapist**

Many people who have grappled with addiction are familiar with the comparison between recovery and a mosaic. Mosaics are larger pictures that are visible through the careful assembly of individual tessera, or tiles. So it is with recovery – we collect resources, supportive relationships, coping tools, and insight to create a bigger perspective of the management of our disease. In and of itself, each piece of the design is beautiful and useful,

but when each is joined with others, an image infinitely more inspiring emerges. In future editions of New Leaf Resources' newsletter, I will begin sharing some addiction recovery tessera with you, the reader, to add to your mosaic. I will borrow from my education and expertise as an addiction therapist, reliable sources of the latest research and findings, spiritual concepts, my personal journey, and hopefully you! Together, we can begin a dialogue of recovery,

and build enthusiasm for a new way of living.

Look for Megan's Mosaic in each newsletter moving forward. If you have an addiction/recovery topic you would like addressed, a tessera you have used and found beneficial, or a comment on previously shared information, please send me an e-mail to [megan@newleafresources.org](mailto:megan@newleafresources.org) at any time. I look forward to our collective creative process!

**Spirit Working Through "Social Networking"**

Both "like" and "share" the short articles that are posted on New Leaf's Facebook page. I mean that both literally and figuratively.

Literally because it is a way of expanding the numbers to what could become "Good News" to someone that needs to read it. If we would all do that, and continue building our network, more people will be offered help.

Figuratively, because life sometimes throws some nasty stuff at us. Perhaps it is the consequence of poor judgment on our part, or a bad decision by someone else that is now affecting our life or some life changing circumstance that we have no control over: a death, sickness,

finances, a broken promise or an unfulfilled hope or expectation.

I have yet to meet the person that was able to "wish their way out of a dilemma." It always takes effort, plus faith in another human with a loving heart to give counsel, time to sort things out which then can lead to again making healthy decisions. And of course underlying all these actions is continuing prayer and self-reflection.

The short posts on Facebook by themselves cannot solve a problem, but they can offer some hope and direction, and we never know from where our help comes. I personally have seen the Spirit work. I am a recovery,

ing alcoholic celebrating thirty-six years continuous sobriety. I say this not with pride in accomplishment but with all the gratitude one could imagine, and then some.

A few years ago, I received a call from a friend that I had not seen or heard from for several years. He said that he was calling to tell me that he had just celebrated seven years sober by the Grace of God and through a Fellowship of Men and Women that share their own strengths and hopes for a sober life. And he wanted to thank me because I had planted the seed many years ago. He overheard me speaking to another parishioner after church on how

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Finding Understanding and Peace Brings Healing

**A** client recently shared how her experience at New Leaf Resources has given her hope, help and healing.

*"It has been over a year since I started counseling and I am starting to gain the necessary skills to cope with my anxiety, depression and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). I have learned how to identify trigger areas, situa-*

*tions, and people that affect my (condition) and I am continuing to work on learning new skills to control these areas. It's been a life-changing difference. I am understanding the "whys" behind the anxiety/depression/OCD and how certain life events affected my symptoms. Just coming to a place of understanding is starting to bring me so much peace and knowledge. New*

*Leaf has changed my life. My counselor is a real person who can relate to me but also taught me practical skills to deal with my issues. She has helped me discover so much about myself and what triggers me in the areas of anxiety, depression and OCD. She has been such a blessing."*

**- a client, age 28,  
in therapy for anxiety,  
depression, OCD**



**" Just coming  
to a place of  
understanding  
is starting to  
bring me so  
much peace."**

**- a client**

## Back to School Agony

*(Continued from page 1)*  
mine what you will say, and choose realistic consequences for that behavior. Having a plan not only helps you create a stable environment for your child, it can also help you keep your cool, because you don't need to re-invent the wheel every time a negative behavior occurs.

Parenting can so often feel like an impossible assignment, especially when your child is defiant. Remember that it is not necessary for you to be perfect in order to help your child overcome challenging behavior patterns. In fact, providing a positive example by apologizing when it's needed and correcting the error or improving on the plan for next time, and not giving up, is one of the best lessons you can ever teach your child.

## What's "New" at New Leaf

**W**elcome Adult & Adolescent Therapist **John James Collins** to the counseling staff. John will be primarily working in the Lansing office, but will also be seeing clients in Crown Point.

With a Master's Degree in Social Work, John most recently worked for Gateway Foundation, a residential treatment facility in Chicago. His therapy focus includes issues surrounding substance addictions, anxiety disorders, depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders, marital conflict, among others.

In his spare time, John enjoys spending time with friends, reading or watching documentaries about religion, philosophy, psychology, science and history, and he loves "old" films.

Congratulations to New Leaf's Executive Director **Terry Top** who became a grandfather for the 11th time this summer. The proud grandpa of seven boys and four girls also announced that "number 12" is set to arrive early next year.

## Special Gifts

**Contributions to New Leaf Resources can be made in memory or in honor of a loved one or friend. Thank you to the following donors who made a gift:**

**In Honor of  
Thelma Venema's  
Birthday**

**Mary Herman  
Alexis Saed**

## Social Networking

*(Continued from page 2)*  
much my life had been changed since I had joined that same Fellowship. My friend continued, "it wasn't so much what you said but how genuinely grateful you appeared to be for this new life." He said that this was what he remembered and found hope in when he finally surrendered.

What I have learned from that experience is that we never know how or when the Spirit of Christ will be used through us. Be it through an "eaves-dropped" conversation or "liking and sharing" an article on Facebook. After all, aren't both a form of social networking?

**An Anonymous Friend**

## Save a tree

Would you prefer to get this publication via e-mail? Please let us know by sending us your e-mail address to [terri@newleafresources.org](mailto:terri@newleafresources.org).



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Page 4

Summer 2013

## Any Asset Can Become a Charitable Gift

Most gifts to Christian charities are in the form of cash, but this may not always be the most tax-efficient way to give. Consider gifts of stocks, real estate, life insurance, farm commodities or business interests.

Appreciated assets make great gifts. The federal tax law makes gifts of appreciated assets (assets that have grown in value) more advantageous than giving cash. It will actually cost you less to give a gift of appreciated assets to your favorite ministry. Since certain restrictions and requirements surround the giving of each type of asset, Barnabas Foundation assists its Christian member organizations like New Leaf in completing these gifts. They will help you gift the asset that works best for you. For more information call 1-888-448-3040.

## Save the Date

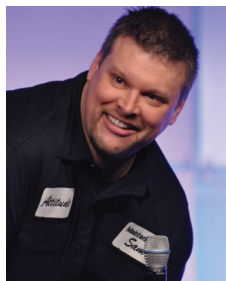
Thursday, April 24, 2014

### Annual Appreciation Dinner

The Center for Visual & Performing Arts  
in Munster, Indiana

.....

Featuring  
**Sam Glenn**  
"The Attitude Guy"



.....

Enjoy delicious food, fellowship with friends and celebrate the many success stories at New Leaf!

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hope. help. healing.

## New Leaf Resources is...

A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.