

Volume 2, Issue 7

# MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

**Love Beyond  
Human Limits**

**Welcome to Parkville**  
Where all your needs are met

**Parenting from the Heart**  
Helping your child deal with fear

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The power of love

Some time ago, I watched a documentary about a village ravaged by artillery, land-, and air-fired missile attacks before bulldozers razed it. The village had a name, of course, but it could have been any of a great many villages in any number of countries, because the type of destruction depicted in this film occurs routinely in many war-torn areas around the world. One scene that I could not shake for days was not of the killing or overall destruction, but of a young child sitting atop a heap of rubble, staring vacantly into the distance—a heartbreaking sight that moved me to tears.

A few months later, a friend sent me photos of that same village. The heaps of rubble were still clearly visible in the background, but in the foreground of those photos was a group of visiting clowns, performing for and dancing with some of the village children who survived. The children's upturned faces radiated happiness and reflected hope. Tears came to my eyes again, but this time they were tears of joy.

People of all ages are traumatized by war, violence, natural disasters, sudden loss of loved ones, or other devastating circumstances. So many, especially the children, are in need of comfort, understanding, and love during such times.

We believe the articles that follow will be an inspiration and provide some ideas of how we can reach out to those near us who are in need. A simple act of love and kindness can make a world of difference and rekindle hope, even when all seems lost.

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# Love

## Beyond Human Limits

*By Maria Fontaine*


CONSISTENTLY thinking of others and trying to help meet their needs, especially when that involves personal sacrifice, is a tall order. It's human nature to be self-preserving, self-seeking, and self-satisfying, and to put our own needs and survival above others. But by putting forth a genuine effort, we can develop new habits and reactions, which, with time, will help us become more loving, caring, sacrificial individuals.

Today, the need to see loving concern in action is greater than ever before.—And the effect of seeing love in action is also much greater. When people see love manifested in truly extraordinary ways, they take notice. The world is dying for this kind of genuine, unselfish love.

All it takes to put love in action is a willing mind and heart, and following through with many small deeds of unselfish love. As we begin to do our part, we will find that we think more of others, feel their needs more readily, and have more genuine concern for their happiness and well-being.

More wonderful still, we will find ourselves gladly giving up some of our own plans or things we once held dear for the sake of others.

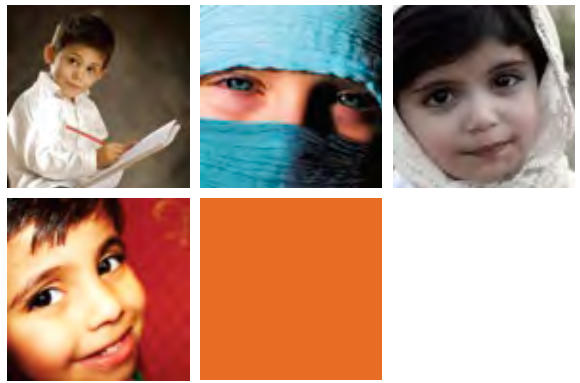
When we give of ourselves, when we go out of our way to be a friend, when we take time to talk to someone who's lonely or comfort someone who's sick, when we sympathize and help someone with their problems, when we make someone feel needed, we will find that these actions bring a special kind of satisfaction and reward of spirit. Through performing these little acts of love and unselfishness we will be blessed personally with happiness that can't be gotten any other way—the happiness of knowing that we have been a blessing to someone in need.

So let's let the power of love shine through us. Let's love others more. Let's let love be manifested in more forgiveness, understanding, communication, sharing, support, sympathy, and practical, loving, caring action. Let's give of our time, be a listening ear, and open our hearts and lives to others. Let's be a strong shoulder for others to lean on or cry on. Let's not jump to conclusions or judge unfairly, but instead give others the benefit of the doubt. Let's try with all our hearts to give unconditional love. Let's bear each other's burdens, and so fulfill the supreme law: Love. 

# Parkville

Where all your needs are met

by Curtis Peter van Gorder



I attended an art workshop where Emily Nash, one of the facilitators, shared a remarkable experience she had while working with traumatized children and adolescents at a residential treatment center in Connecticut, USA, as an art and drama therapist.

The boys who attended her class were often very aggressive, prone to destructive and self-destructive behavior, unable to trust each other or the adults around them. Almost all had histories of severe abuse and emotional neglect.

They would often come into the classroom with negative attitudes, reflected in their foul speech and rough mannerisms.

Some of them voiced their anger, “We hate this group!”

As they reluctantly sat in a circle, Emily became very interested in their hostile communication and invited them to tell the leaders just what they hated so much about the group. “It’s fine that you hate this class, I am just very interested in knowing all the reasons why.”

As she put the question to them, one by one they each gave their answers,

“There’s no respect here!”

“These jerks laugh at me!”

“Nobody listens to me!”

“Too many fights!”

After listening to all of them, Emily replied, “What I am hearing is not that you hate this class so much, but that you hate that you live in a community where people don’t respect each other, trust one another, and make fun of people they don’t like, or fight.”

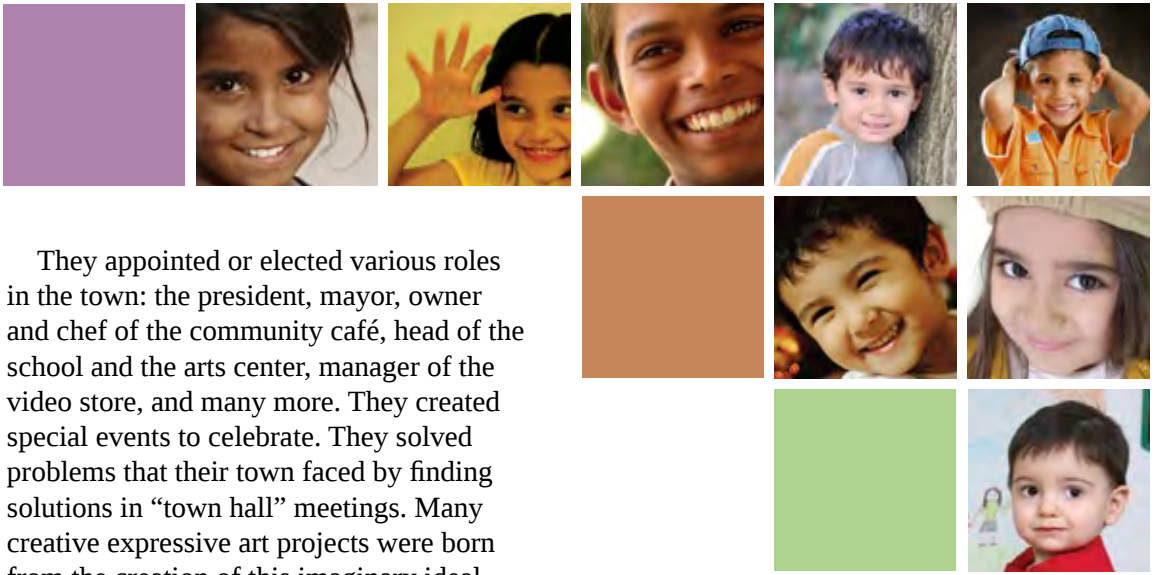
They nodded in agreement as if to say, “At last, someone is listening.”

Then, an inspiration was born, “What if,” Emily asked, “we were to create a community where you did feel respected—a community in which your needs were met, in which you could feel safe? What would that community be like? Let’s create it together.”

Now their imagination began to shift into gear and they took up the challenge of exploring this new possibility.

“Let’s call it Parkville!” someone called out, to which everyone agreed.

Parkville was born and developed into a six-month project. The class made a banner that said, “Welcome to Parkville where all your needs are met!” They made a map, which marked significant places of interest, and roads that reflected what they needed in their community.



They appointed or elected various roles in the town: the president, mayor, owner and chef of the community café, head of the school and the arts center, manager of the video store, and many more. They created special events to celebrate. They solved problems that their town faced by finding solutions in “town hall” meetings. Many creative expressive art projects were born from the creation of this imaginary ideal community. Parkville became a community that they would love to live in.

One lesson that can be gleaned from this project is that it is good to ask young people questions and to listen to their answers, even if they are sometimes negative. The next step is to challenge them to make a difference by channeling their energy into constructive projects that interest them.

Emily adds, “I found that one of the most powerful results of this project is that it offers young people the experience of living in a well-functioning community—often for the first time. Their ‘community’ becomes one where there is support, where they can express their needs, and where others will listen and respond—a community of care, respect, and possibility.

“In role play they find that they can be effective citizens and have something to contribute. Through metaphor, self-imposed limitations are stretched and new strengths and capacities are accessed. An adolescent who was engaged in destructive behavior is transformed into a leader, a caring father, a resource to the community.

“I have done several of these fictitious communities, and each time I’ve noticed a distinct shift that occurs—group members

enter the room differently, their interactions with one another begin to change, they become more open to new experiences and possibilities.”

There are many methods used today to reach youth through their own interests such as expressive art therapy, sports programs, and community art projects like creating wall murals. In these community arts and development projects, youth can acquire lifelong skills, and a positive sense of self.

The constructive role that we can play is to help youth identify goals and find ways for them to overcome obstacles. When we provide access to legitimate channels for meeting their needs, we help them to realize their creative potential. By listening to them, we can then begin to guide them into realizing their goals and help them to become a positive force in the community. 🦋

\*Emily Nash is a LCAT (Licensed Creative Arts Therapist) Drama Therapist with The ArtReach Foundation, which is an organization that trains teachers, located in regions of war and natural disaster, in the use of the creative expressive arts for the classroom.



# Children and Trauma

CRISIS EVENTS SUCH AS NATURAL DISASTERS, VIOLENT ACTS, AND SERIOUS ACCIDENTS ARE FRIGHTENING TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS. It is important for parents, teachers, and other caretakers of children to know how a crisis can affect children and how to help them deal with the trauma. Children who experience an initial traumatic event before they are eleven years old are three times more likely to develop psychological symptoms than those who experience their first trauma as a teenager or later. Children's ability to deal with a traumatic event is primarily dependent on the reaction of the parent or those who are in a caretaking role.


As adults, we need to acknowledge our concerns to children in appropriate ways, but balance this with clear explanations of the ways we together can cope with the situation successfully. It is not helpful to falsely minimize the danger, or fail to sufficiently answer a child's questions regarding what happened. It is important to invite them to process what they are hearing, seeing, and feeling by listening supportively without judging or correcting their feelings.

They may need to tell their story repeatedly. Writing, drawing, and play are effective mediums for children to process trauma. Allow them many ways to tell their story. Just as for adults, children often need to process the event numerous times before they can move beyond it effectively.

If after a few days the child's symptoms continue to substantially interfere with his daily functioning to the point the child is not eating, sleeping, or able to perform typical daily tasks, professional consultation is warranted. This does not mean the behaviors, fears, or anxieties have to be gone, but you can see continued gradual improvement. Four to six weeks after the event there should be definite signs of improvement in the child's ability to deal with fears or anxieties related to the trauma.

The longer negative behavior continues without any improvement, the more difficult it will be to resolve. Getting help in a timely manner prevents more severe problems from developing. Seek help from personnel who have specialized training in treating children's trauma, from medical staff, or professional counselors. ■

## SOME RESPONSES TO HELP CHILDREN DEAL WITH A CRISIS

- ▶ **After a crisis, let children tell their story.** After listening supportively, adults can help reframe the crisis for children without implying judgment.
- ▶ **Help children learn to use words that express their feelings, such as sad, scared, angry, or happy.** Remember, you as a parent or caregiver may also have been affected by this event, so be sure the words fit the children's feelings and not yours.
- ▶ **Reestablish a sense of order and routine.** One way may be to try to keep to the daily structure as much as possible. A regular schedule helps recreate a sense of security for children.
- ▶ **Plan and carry out activities that will calm the children.** Encourage young children to use art (drawing, painting, clay modeling, and collage) to express their emotions. Older children can be offered opportunities to draw, write poems, or journal their feelings. Display the children's work, or have them describe or read it to others.
- ▶ **Reassure children that the event is being dealt with appropriately.—** People are getting medical attention, buildings are being cleaned up or repaired, and support is offered to those affected.
- ▶ **Organize playtime to allow children to be children in order to overcome the emphasis the trauma has had on their lives.** Develop play therapy activities using puppets, art, music, or drama to facilitate the expression of feelings the trauma generated and to develop effective coping strategies. After a crisis, just the freedom to play and be children is important.
- ▶ **Read stories about crisis situations and how people helped those involved.** Stories that illustrate divine care for those involved and how other people cared for them after the disaster are especially effective.
- ▶ **Help children get involved in caring for those affected by the crisis.** This can be done through writing letters, sending pictures, preparing food, or otherwise helping in a way that fits with their abilities. Actively doing something to help others refocuses children's thoughts or emotions in healthy ways without minimizing them. Discuss together with the children about ways to contribute to the needs of others and include them in the planning.
- ▶ **Consider an increase in transition time between activities.** For example, lengthening story telling or cuddling at bedtime may be necessary the first few nights after a trauma. In the classroom, teachers can help students transition by allowing extra time to prepare for or take a test since trauma decreases one's ability to think clearly and effectively.
- ▶ **Remind children that they have support of people throughout the world.** Share letters or newspaper articles from others who are empathizing with them and praying for them. This will reassure them that others care about them, making them feel less alone and vulnerable.
- ▶ **Establish positive anniversary activities to recognize the event.** Commemorate those who died, or the losses that were experienced. Encourage them to recognize their own progress in overcoming the effects of the event and the care received in the midst of it. It is important to acknowledge and accept that there is still pain and sadness, but also to celebrate survival. 

# HELPING YOUR CHILD DEAL WITH FEAR

PARENTING  
FROM THE HEART








A certain amount of fear is healthy and understandable. It keeps us and our children out of harm's way. We teach our children to fear running into a busy street, accepting candy from strangers, swallowing unidentified substances from the medicine cabinet, etc. We are, in essence, teaching them caution, which is quite different from dealing with a youngster who is responding to an imaginary rather than a real danger. Here are some common childhood fears, and ways to go about handling them.



## **Fear of the dark**


Generally, fear of the dark occurs when the parents insist that the child stay in a totally darkened room at bedtime or when the child wakes up in the middle of the night. Some children are so terrified by the dark that their heartbeats actually increase. Parents need to recognize that the room looks totally different to the child when the lights are out, and should take steps to reassure the youngster even if the fear seems completely irrational to the parents.


-  *Use a nightlight, but experiment with its placement to be sure that it does not create all sorts of frightening shadows.*
-  *After the light has been turned out, stay in the room for a few minutes and talk about how different things look. A curtain blowing in the breeze looks very different at night than it does during the daytime.*
-  *Leave the door to the child's room slightly open and tell them that you will not be far away.*
-  *If the child awakens in the middle of the night, they should not be invited into your bed or you risk starting a habit that is difficult to break. Instead, comfort them and tell them that you are proud of them for being grown up enough to sleep in a bed by themselves.*
-  *Remain consistent in your approach to their behavior.*


## **Fear of the dentist.**


Clearly, for adults, this is often an unresolved fear from childhood, since so many adults are fearful of going to the dentist. It is usually provoked in children because they feel they have no control over the situation. It's a fact of life that children do need to go to the dentist at regular intervals, so their fear must be dealt with and overcome.




 Choose the dentist carefully. If possible, seek out a practitioner who specializes in pediatric dentistry.

 Start early so the child will get used to visiting the dentist's office for simple checkups when just a cursory examination is required.

 Teach the child good dental hygiene so that trips to the dentist will be minimal.


 Try not to transmit your own fears of the dentist to your child.

 Act out the visit to the dentist with your child, helping them to become familiar with what will happen ahead of time, e.g. the dentist chair, opening their mouth wide, the dental tools that will be used, such as the little mirror, etc.

Perhaps the kindest thing parents can do when dealing with a child's fears is to admit their own childhood fears, especially if the parents had similar fears when they were children. The parents can indicate that they understand just how devastating such fears can be and that they stand ready to reassure and comfort whenever the child feels a need.

### **FEAR-BUSTING STRATEGIES**

Regardless of the child's age, basic strategies for helping children cope with fears and phobias are similar:

- ▶ Determine the accuracy of the fear. It is important to teach a child to evaluate reality. This is especially important for three- and four-year-olds, who don't know what is dangerous and what isn't. Give your child your message briefly and with confidence and authority. Discussion and questions can come later. "Some dogs are mean and scary, but this one won't hurt you." "Sometimes bad things hide in the dark—but they are not allowed in our house."
  - ▶ Remove the object of the child's fear. When it is reasonable and practical, take away or avoid those things that make your child feel afraid. If your child is scared by vacuum-cleaner noise, try to vacuum when she is in another room. However, if your child is afraid of taking a bath, give her the bath firmly and quickly, while reassuring her with a calm and loving voice.
  - ▶ Anticipate your child's fears. You should not tell your child that you are going to visit Grandma and then show up at the dentist's office. However, four days of preparation before going to the dentist will only worsen your child's anxiety.
- Practice sessions with dolls or toys may be helpful, but this should be done only a few hours or one day before the visit.
- ▶ Get your child's attention. This is so basic that it is sometimes forgotten. Getting your child to focus on you, instead of on the source of his fear, is important for making him feel better. Depending on the circumstances, you might simply say, "Jamal, listen to me very carefully. I have something important to tell you." Or if he is very young or very frightened, you might choose to use a more physical strategy like hugging, rocking, or stroking while calmly telling him, "Everything is okay."
  - ▶ Use distractions. Distraction is an especially useful technique for younger children and infants, who have such a short attention span that they will forget what made them afraid. "Look at this light (or pencil or button). Don't look at anything else. Let's see what we can do with it."
  - ▶ Be reassuring. Children are very aware of their parents' anxieties. The concern that a parent feels for her child might easily be misinterpreted as meaning that the parent is afraid, too. Your facial expression and your words should convey the impression that everything is under control and that everything will be okay. 



# Anatomy of a Clown

By Curtis Peter van Gorder

I was recently involved with a volunteer training program for the medical staff of a leading university in the Middle East. As the attendees were all young people, we tried to keep the sessions lively by spicing things up with some humorous skits. "Dr. von Spoof" was our guest speaker, a crazy doctor speaking with a thick, German accent dressed in a wild, white wig, funny glasses, lab coat, stethoscope, and blue polka dot tie.

The doctor illustrated the importance of listening when a patient entered asking for help. Problem was, the patient had an acute stutter as he tried to explain what ailed him.

"D...d...d...doctor...It's my...t...t...t..."

"Ah, just as I thought!" the doctor hastily surmised. Before the patient could get another word out, the doctor gave the patient the usual anesthetic (large foam hammer) and proceeded to extract the patient's teeth. On awakening him, he found that it was not his 't'eeeth but his 't'oe that was bothering him! — Oops! Should have listened!

The facilitators of this seminar were not sure how this approach was going over with the participants, so we took some time to listen to their reactions. Here is one:

"As medical students we related to the skits. I like the idea of therapeutic laughter and would love to see it implemented in our hospitals." — *Hadeel*

At the last session, Dr. von Spoof returned for an encore performance, this time to cite

## Clown Therapy

*From WebMD, 2005*

According to an article of *WebMD*, studies have shown that children who have a clown present prior to surgery, along with their parents and medical staff, had less anxiety than children who just had their parents and medical staff present. High levels of anxiety prior to surgery lead to a higher risk of complications following surgeries in children. According to researchers, about 60% of children suffer from anxiety before surgery. The study involved 40 children ages 5 to 12 who were about to have minor surgery. Half had a clown present in addition to their parents and medical staff, the other half only had their parents and medical staff present. The results of the study showed that the children who had a clown present had significantly less pre-surgery anxiety.

some of the medical benefits of laughter, using a cauliflower as a model brain, which he pointed to often. Minus the bogus German accent, it went something like this:

“What happens in the brain when we laugh? The neuroendocrine hormones associated with stress response are diminished. The ventromedial prefrontal cortex, which produces endorphins, is activated.

“When we laugh neural paths arise in close association with the telencephalic and diencephalic centers concerned with respiration and our oxygen levels are increased.”

“Hey, we already know this,” one of the students said.

What to me was pure gibberish was just common medical jargon to them. I guess that’s why I’m an animator and not a medical student.

The first time I acted out Dr. von Spoof was at the opening of the local children’s museum. I was asked to be a “mad scientist” to perform science experiments. It seems that kids like to learn more from a crazy scientist than from a stuffy lab technician, so I mixed a bit of humor in with the science.

During my experience as a clown, I have been surprised at the response and demand for animators. I have sometimes performed close to 300 clown shows a year! It seems that people who can encourage fun, enjoy life, and reduce stress in others are in great demand everywhere in the world.

My colleagues and I also found that clown therapy is very effective when we use it to help children overcome their fears brought on by war or other traumatic circumstances.


Bill Cosby, the famous comedian and TV personality, who suffered some tragic losses in his own life said, “You can turn painful situations

around through laughter. If you can find humor in anything, even poverty, you can survive it.”

Throughout the years, we have worked together with many institutions to bring joy to others through “clown therapy.” We often visit hospitals to cheer up young cancer patients by entertaining them and involving them in fun games and songs. We have cooperated with “Operation Smile,” which holds free medical clinics for the needy. Our job was to entertain the patients as they waited to be treated.

Our clown team also accompanied the “Bedouin Health Awareness Project” to help children learn about personal hygiene. We traveled several hours to remote Bedouin rural schools with a medical expert to impart this health message to the children. Portraying the message with puppets, humor, and vivid props such as a giant toothbrush was very effective. It seems most people realize that when we laugh—we listen.

Perhaps Mark Twain, the great humorist summed it up well when he said, “Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. The human race has only one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.”

Let’s defeat our woes today by having a good laugh!—It will do us all good! 

## A Little One’s Scribble

My name is Lubna, and I am just a young girl from Palestine. Sometimes clowns don’t know how much they’re helping us children. Clowns came to my school a few months ago, and sang and danced for us. They made us all so happy, when everything else around us made us sad. After their show, I thought about the happy clowns, and I thought that maybe they were angels—because they were happy and funny, and cheered up my friends and me so, so much.

I was a bit too shy to go up and talk to them, but I looked at them and smiled at one of them. The pretty girl clown smiled at me, and it was like Heaven smiling back at me. I don’t know how a clown smiling could be like Heaven smiling, but I kept thinking about that smile and how much it encouraged and helped me.



# The Power of Love

We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace.

– William Gladstone (1809-1898)

Love is the doorway through which the human soul passes from selfishness to service, and from solitude to kinship with all mankind.

– Author Unknown

You will find, as you look back upon your life that the moments that stand out, the moments when you have really lived, are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.

– Henry Drummond

Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them, and they bless you, the giver.

– Barbara de Angelis

Never underestimate the amazing power of love to change hearts and mindsets. Love can even give fresh inspiration to tackle what seems to be impossible.

– Author unknown

What does love look like? It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. It has hands to help others. It has feet to hasten to help the poor and needy. That is what love looks like.

– Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)

People everywhere are looking around for some little ray of hope, some bright spot somewhere, a little love, a little mercy, and some place where they can find some relief. Even the little things we do can mean a lot. The light of our smile, the kindness of our face, the influence of our life can shed light on many and have an amazing effect. It can change their whole outlook on life and give them a new start.

– David Fontaine

There is no need to go searching for a remedy for the evils of the time. The remedy already exists—it is the gift of one's self to those who have fallen so low that even hope fails them. Open wide your heart.

– Rene Bazin

Love one another and you will be happy. It is as simple, and as difficult, as that.

– Michael Leunig