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Q&A Forum - Review

Adonis Syndrome, 2006-07

Fellow Q&Aers,

Greetings! I hope you all had a Happy Halloween and are looking forward to the upcoming holidays. A special thank you today to Mike, Allison and Patty who contributed our bonuses.

Some one recently asked if I make up the questions. No. Each of the questions is sent in by someone from the website or, usually, from someone on the Q&A list. They are all legitimate.

I do appreciate the feedback I get on the Q&As that I send out. They are also pretty quickly posted on our website. Please help us out by: a) continuing to provide me with feedback on the Q&As, our services or ; b) telling your friends about our free service and encouraging them to sign up for it; and c) by sending in a question or two once in a while. After today's Q&A, I only have one more question in the hopper so would welcome a few more in the next couple of weeks. Now... onto our question and answer.

Q: Hi John, Can you tell me if there is such a disorder known as Adonis Syndrome? A friend told me he has it and I didn't really think it was an actual condition. I thought he was being funny. Now I feel bad because I didn't know it's real. Could you explain the condition to me? Thanks.

A: Yes, it is an actual condition, although it often goes by other names like "bigorexia," "reverse anorexia," male anorexia, "when the mirror lies," or, more clinically, as a type of "Body Dysmorphic Disorder." The disorder includes abnormal perceptions and preoccupation with the body and, Adonis Syndrome usually applies to men and their perception of their appearance, particularly muscular development.

The syndrome was named after Adonis, the Greek god who was born in "complete beauty." Both Aphrodite and Persephone, his caretaker, were struck by his beauty and wanted him for themselves. One version of the myth has it that Zeus resolved the conflict by ordering him to spend 1/3 of the year with Aphrodite, 1/3 of the year with Persephone and 1/3 of the year at a place of Adonis' choosing..... Enough about mythology.

Adonis Syndrome usually occurs in males who are overly fascinated (some might say, fixated) on their appearance. No matter how much muscle they build or how good they look, they see a very different image when they look in the mirror. They may see themselves as ugly, puny, weak, or underdeveloped. This is the reverse distortion that females suffering from anorexia often see when they look at themselves in the mirror; they often see themselves as much larger/heavier than they are. In both instances, the distortion is believed and future behavior is based on the distortion.

The disorder/syndrome can range in severity from mild to severe and is characterized by preoccupying obsessions with certain imagined defects in their appearance. The disorder causes distress to the individual and frequently interferes with their work, social, personal and/or sexual functioning. It may be accompanied by depression, anxiety, guilt, fear, compulsive behaviors or other symptoms of mental illness. The disorder frequently responds well to the combination of medication and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

I hope this has helped your understanding of the disorder. Peace, John

Quote: Yogi Berra once said, "When you get to a fork in the road, take it."

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We all need the little "birdies"

On July 22nd I was enroute to Washington, DC for a business trip. It was all so very ordinary, until we landed in Denver for a plane change. As I collected my belongings from the overhead bin, an announcement was made for Mr. Lloyd Glenn to see the United Customer Service Representative immediately.

I thought nothing of it until I reached the door to leave the plane, and I heard a gentleman asking every male if they were Mr. Glenn. At this point I knew something was wrong and my heart sunk. When I got off the plane a solemn-faced young man came toward me and said, "Mr. Glenn, there is an emergency at your home. I do not know what the emergency is, or who is involved, but I will take you to the phone so you can call the hospital."

My heart was now pounding, but the will to be calm took over. Woodenly, I followed this stranger to the distant telephone where I called the number he gave me for the Mission Hospital. My call was put through to the trauma center where I learned that my three-year-old son had been trapped underneath the automatic garage door for several minutes, and that when my wife had found him he was dead. CPR had been performed by a neighbor, who is a doctor, and the paramedics had continued the treatment as Brian was transported to the hospital.

By the time of my call, Brian was revived and they believed he would live, but they did not know how much damage had been done to his brain, nor to his heart. They explained that the door had completely closed on his little sternum right over his heart. He had been severely crushed. After speaking with the medical staff, my wife sounded worried but not hysterical, and I took comfort in her calmness. The return flight seemed to last forever, but finally I arrived at the hospital six hours after the garage door had come down.

When I walked into the intensive care unit, nothing could have prepared me to see my little son laying so still on a great big bed with tubes and monitors everywhere. He was on a respirator. I glanced at my wife who stood and tried to give me a reassuring smile.

It all seemed like a terrible dream. I was filled-in with the details and given a guarded prognosis. Brian was going to live, and the preliminary tests indicated that his heart was OK, two miracles in one, and of themselves. But only time would tell if his brain received any damage.

Throughout the seemingly endless hours, my wife was calm. She felt that Brian would eventually be all right. I hung on to her words and faith like a lifeline. All that night and the next day Brian remained unconscious. It seemed like forever since I had left for my business trip the day before. Finally at two o'clock that afternoon, our son regained consciousness and sat up uttering the most beautiful words I have ever heard spoken. He said, "Daddy hold me" and he reached for me with his little arms.

By the next day he was pronounced as having no neurological or physical deficits, and the story of his miraculous survival spread throughout the hospital. You cannot imagine how we felt as we took Brian home. We felt a unique reverence for the life and love of our Heavenly Father that comes to those who brush death so closely.

In the days that followed there was a special spirit about our home. Our two older children were much closer to their little brother. My wife and I were much closer to each other, and all of us were very close as a whole family. Life took on a less stressful pace. Perspective seemed to be more focused, and balance much easier to gain and maintain. We felt deeply blessed. Our gratitude was truly profound.

The story is not over (smile)!

Almost a month later to the day of the accident, Brian awoke from his afternoon nap and said, "Sit down Mommy. I have something to tell you." At this time in his life, Brian usually spoke in small phrases, so to say a large sentence surprised my wife. She sat down with him on his bed, and he began his sacred and remarkable story.

"Do you remember when I got stuck under the garage door? Well, it was so heavy and it hurt really bad. I called to you, but you couldn't hear me. I started to cry, but then it hurt too bad. And then the 'birdies' came."

"The birdies?" my wife asked puzzled.

"Yes," he replied. "The birdies made a whooshing sound and flew into the garage. They took care of me."

"They did?"

"Yes," he said. "one of the birdies came and got you. She came to tell you I got stuck under the door."

A sweet reverent feeling filled the room. The spirit was so strong and yet lighter than air. My wife realized that a three-year-old had no concept of death and spirits, so he was referring to the beings who came to him from beyond as "birdies" because they were up in the air like birds that fly.

"What did the birdies look like?" she asked.

Brian answered, "They were so beautiful. They were dressed in white, all white. Some of them had green and white. But some of them had on just white."

"Did they say anything?"

"Yes," he answered. "They told me the baby would be all right."

"The baby?" my wife asked confused.

Brian answered. "The baby laying on the garage floor." He went on, "You came out and opened the garage door and ran to the baby. You told the baby to stay and not leave."

My wife nearly collapsed upon hearing this, for she had indeed gone and knelt beside Brian's body and seeing his crushed chest whispered, "Don't leave us Brian, please stay if you can."

As she listened to Brian telling her the words she had spoken, she realized that the spirit had left his body and was looking down from above on this little lifeless form.

"Then what happened?" she asked.

"We went on a trip," he said, "Far, far away." He grew agitated trying to say the things he didn't seem to have the words for. My wife tried to calm and comfort him, and let him know it would be okay. He struggled with wanting to tell something that obviously was very important to him, but finding the words was difficult.

"We flew so fast up in the air. They're so pretty Mommy," he added. "And there are lots and lots of birdies."

My wife was stunned. Into her mind the sweet comforting spirit enveloped her more soundly, but with an urgency she had never before known. Brian went on to tell her that the "birdies" had told him that he had to come back and tell everyone about the "birdies."

He said they brought him back to the house and that a big fire truck, and an ambulance were there. A man was bringing the baby out on a white bed and he tried to tell the man that the baby would be okay, but the man couldn't hear him. He said the birdies told him he had to go with the ambulance, but they would be near him. He said they were so pretty and so peaceful, and he didn't want to come back.

Then the bright light came. He said that the light was so bright and so warm, and he loved the bright light so much. Someone was in the bright light and put their arms around him, and told him, "I love you but you have to go back. You have to play baseball, and tell everyone about the birdies." Then the person in the bright light kissed him and waved bye-bye. Then whoosh, the big sound came and they went into the clouds.

The story went on for an hour. He taught us that "birdies" were always with us, but we don't see them because we look with our eyes and we don't hear them because we listen with our ears. But they are always there, you can only see them in here (he put his hand over his heart). They whisper the things to help us to do what is right because they love us so much.

Brian continued, stating, "I have a plan, Mommy. You have a plan. Daddy has a plan. Everyone has a plan. We must all live our plan and keep our promises. The birdies help us to do that cause they love us so much."

In the weeks that followed, he often came to us and told all, or part of it, again and again. Always the story remained the same. The details were never changed or out of order. A few times he added further bits of information and clarified the message he had already delivered. It never ceased to amaze us how he could tell such detail and speak beyond his ability when he talked about his birdies.

Everywhere he went, he told strangers about the "birdies."

Surprisingly, no one ever looked at him strangely when he did this. Rather, they always got a softened look on their face and smiled. Needless to say, we have not been the same ever since that day, and I pray we never will be.

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Most Beautiful Heart

One day a young man was standing in the middle of the town proclaiming that he had the most beautiful heart in the whole valley. A large crowd gathered and they all admired his heart for it was perfect. There was not a mark or a flaw in it. Yes, they all agreed it truly was the most beautiful heart they had ever seen. The young man was very proud and boasted more loudly about his beautiful heart.

Suddenly, an old man appeared at the front of the crowd and said, "Why your heart is not nearly as beautiful as mine." The crowd and the young man looked at the old man's heart. It was beating strongly, but full of scars, it had places where pieces had been removed and other pieces put in, but they didn't fit quite right and there were several jagged edges. In fact, in some places there were deep gouges where whole pieces were missing. The people stared -- how can he say his heart is more beautiful, they thought?

The young man looked at the old man's heart and saw its state and laughed. "You must be joking," he said. "Compare your heart with mine; mine is perfect and yours is a mess of scars and tears."

"Yes," said the old man, "yours is perfect looking but I would never trade with you. You see, every scar represents a person to whom I have given my love - I tear out a piece of my heart and give it to them, and often they give me a piece of their heart which fits into the empty place in my heart, but because the pieces aren't exact, I have some rough edges, which I cherish, because they remind me of the love we shared. Sometimes I have given pieces of my heart away, and the other person hasn't returned a piece of his heart to me. These are the empty gouges -- giving love is taking a chance. Although these gouges are painful, they stay open, reminding me of the love I have for these people too, and I hope someday they may return and fill the space I have waiting. So now do you see what true beauty is?"

The young man stood silently with tears running down his cheeks. He walked up to the old man, reached into his perfect young and beautiful heart, and ripped a piece out. He offered it to the old man with trembling hands. The old man took his offering, placed it in his heart and then took a piece from his old scarred heart and placed it in the wound in the young man's heart. It fit, but not perfectly, as there were some jagged edges.

The young man looked at his heart, not perfect anymore but more beautiful than ever, since love from the old man's heart flowed into his. They embraced and walked away side by side. - author unknown

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The Best Day of My Life

Today, when I awoke, I suddenly realized that this is the best day of my life, ever! There were times when I wondered if I would make it to today; but I did! And because I did I'm going to celebrate!

Today, I'm going to celebrate what an unbelievable life I have had so far: the accomplishments, the many blessings, and, yes, even the hardships because they have served to make me stronger. I will go through this day with my head held high, and a happy heart. I will marvel at God's seemingly simple gifts: the morning dew, the sun, the clouds, the trees, the flowers, the birds. Today, none of these miraculous creations will escape my notice.

Today, I will share my excitement for life with other people. I'll make someone smile. I'll go out of my way to perform an un-expected act of kindness for someone I don't even know.

Today, I'll give a sincere compliment to someone who seems down. I'll tell a child how special he is, and I'll tell someone I love just how deeply I care for her and how much she means to me.

Today is the day I quit worrying about what I don't have and start being grateful for all the wonderful things God has already given me. I'll remember that to worry is just a waste of time because my faith in God and his Divine Plan ensures everything will be just fine.

And tonight, before I go to bed, I'll go outside and raise my eyes to the heavens. I will stand in awe at the beauty of the stars and the moon, and I will praise God for these magnificent treasures.

As the day ends and I lay my head down on my pillow, I will thank the Almighty for the best day of my life. And I will sleep the sleep of a contented child, excited with expectation because I know tomorrow is going to be the best day of my life, ever!

by Gregory M. Lousig-Nont, Ph.D., from Chicken Soup for the Surviving Soul, Copyright 1996 by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Patty Aubery & Nancy Mitchell, R.N.

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