

Impact of 9/11 on Counseling Practices

September 11, 2001 lives in infamy as our country continues to remember the attack on our freedoms and against our lives. Before September 11 it seems our country felt invincible to any infiltration of terror within our borders. We were like Babylon, with its walls so high and wide, feeling impregnable and untouchable. Yet, this illusion faded for us on that September morn as it did for Babylon when Persia succeeded digging a tunnel underneath the Euphrates River and their wall of protection.

We hear people saying today that our country has changed since 9/11. We now have more security in our airports, more security on our military bases and more checking of identification all around. When we take the reading glasses we have and see beyond the sentence structure to the very essence of the words of our lives, we read how you and I are changed. We are different today and that difference is causing us to look at ourselves and our world in relation to justice, personal freedoms, and the eternal meaning and hope we have for tomorrow. We are asking “meaning” questions now, “what does it really mean to be alive”, “why do we have to die”, and “what hope do I have for myself and my children?”

I have no research data before me, but I suppose that counseling centers are busier today than they were before September 11. I know FAP, social work services, and I am very busy seeing clients and helping them with the questions above. People have questions about their hurt, sadness, anger and their fear. People are asking what their lives mean in relation to that day and about every day more now than in the years before 9/11. Furthermore, I think men and women are taking a more focused look at meaning in their relationships. As I recall, a few months after 9/11, one of the morning shows had a segment on research about how more women were pregnant and expecting babies in May and early June of 2002 than in the past decade. The psychologist or sociologist on the show stated it was much like following World War II. There was a baby boom following that war with an increase of population that today we know as the “baby boomers.” The world crisis caused men and women to focus on what is important in life – love, relationships, children and a desire to share these things with that significant other.

I believe that counselors will be more in demand in these next few years because of September 11, 2001. Men and women want to be loved, interpret life in hope, and understand who they are today. This stems from wanting our lives to have meaning and live life today within the context of love and hope.

I also believe that we are an angry country right now. The rat race is killing us, we need to slow down, we feel vulnerable as individuals and as a Nation, and we just want to understand why we hurt so much. Instead of

allowing ourselves to be in touch with our pain, we instead live in anger. I am not too sure we even are aware that anger is our strongest feeling. For healing to take place properly in our being, we need to become aware that we are hurt and angry, that we believe our life has meaning, and we are making a positive difference in our family, our community, our nation, and our world.

The impact of all the above is that people need someone to talk to, but Grandma and Grandpa, Dad and Mom are not around anymore. We cannot talk with our spouses, because we are too afraid to let them know we are either afraid or just hurt and angry. We ask, "What if my fear makes them anxious around me and not want to be with me?" So, who can we talk to about our fears, and dreams, about our hurts and anger, about our hope that we can be loved and feel safe in saying so? The counseling centers like the Family Life Center, FAP, mental health and the Chapels are some of those safe places where fears, hurt, anger and sadness is listened to with God's love and empathy. Therefore, the impact of 9/11 on the church, counseling centers, mental health facilities is that counseling will continue to grow and we will continue to need someone safe to share our story, because we know our story is all we really have control over.