

## Juvenile Depression / My Help Comes from God

**Carol:** ‘Sometimes he’s scared... Sometimes he becomes so anxious he shakes all over, uncontrollably... Sometimes he curls up in a ball and wants to die... Sometimes he looks at me with tears in his eyes and tells me he can’t do it any more.

And I am his mother and I can’t do anything to help him. I can’t say anything to comfort him. I can’t hold him because he doesn’t want to be touched. I can’t promise it will all be over soon. I can’t say, “Wait here, I think I’ve got something in the medicine cupboard that will make you feel better.”

**Carol:** Welcome to *Women of Hope*, I’m Carol. We’re so glad you’ve joined us today. I’m sure you’re wondering what’s wrong with the boy in this story.

**Tammy:** He’s a teenager and he’s suffering from *anxiety and depression*. As you can hear, his mother, Sarah is also suffering. When we asked her to tell us her story, she said, “But I don’t have any answers!”

**Tammy:** You may be struggling with the same problem and feel that you’re alone...and don’t have any answers either. Or you may know someone who is going through the same thing. Maybe just hearing her story today might make you feel that you are not alone. Carol will tell you Sarah’s story. This is what she said...

**Carol:** ‘Have you ever listened to the conversations of other moms – you know, the happy talk about their children - what else do moms talk about? ...their children’s achievements, their new interests, their goals, their successes.

These conversations make my stomach churn – I have to walk away – very fast. My eyes sting and my throat is too thick to swallow. I blink fast. I breathe quickly. And I pray hard. That’s because my son has no goals right now. His achievement this week may have been a walk to the end of the street. And his successes?... Well – I’m thrilled if I see him smile – but it doesn’t happen much.

You see, my beautiful, tall, clever 14-year-old boy, Joshua, is suffering from depression. He’s scared because he’s forgotten what happiness feels like. He’s forgotten what it’s like to look forward to something good. He’s lost in a black hole...and because he’s my son, I’m down that hole with him.

Sometimes he’s scared. Sometimes he becomes so anxious he shakes all over, uncontrollably. Sometimes he curls up in a ball and wants to die. Sometimes he looks at me with tears in his eyes and tells me he can’t do it any more.

And I am his mother and I can’t *do* anything to help him. I can’t *say* anything to comfort him. I can’t *hold* him because he doesn’t want to be touched. I can’t *promise* it will all be over soon. I can’t say, “Wait here, I think I’ve got something in the medicine cupboard that will make you feel better.”

And it’s so hard!

I am truly amazed at the way his illness has affected me so deeply. When our children hurt, we hurt too don't we? And when they suffer, we suffer with them.

And I'm grieving... I cry all the time... I can't sleep... Sometimes I'm angry... Apparently grief and anger are normal reactions for a parent dealing with mental illness. Well – I feel both!

Sometimes I have to leave the house and breathe the fresh air – the air inside weighs me down. It closes me in, and I need to get away.

Then there are the questions... And the fear...

Will he ever smile again?

Will I ever hear him laugh?

When will he be well enough to go back to school?

What about a job?

Or marriage?

How long can we hold out??

And the loss... I miss him dreadfully – more than I can say. I'm watching him die from the inside out. And I just want my boy back.

**Tammy:** I wonder if *you* identify with Sarah? She feels helpless. She simply doesn't know what to do to help her son. And she sometimes has to get away from the situation so that she can breathe the fresh air.

And she has many questions...how long can she go on like this? Where can she find help? We'll continue with her story after this lovely song...

Here on *Women of Hope*, Carol will continue to tell us the story of Sarah, whose son is suffering from anxiety and depression...

**Carol:** 'My role as a mother has changed...it's been given a new meaning. My teenage son is like a three year old again. I have to constantly change my expectations... I have to keep reminding myself – he can't take in more than one thought at a time. His brain is over-loaded already with the effort of living. It doesn't help when I pile more information on top.

I'm back to doing everything for him – after all these years of training him to clean up after himself!

Am I the mother of a 14 year old or a three year old? How much should I do for him and how much can I expect?

I don't think anyone really knows how I feel. He and I are both good at covering up our feelings. He tells me he's getting better at covering it up when he's with people. That scares me – I need to know how he's feeling.

If he were dying in hospital, at least people would know...

So... I've started talking to people... friends... people I meet at church... and a neighbor, too. Here and there I'm finding that depression in children is terribly, frighteningly, common.

Why haven't I heard about it? It's not something we talk about, is it? Maybe we need to know we can trust someone before we share our stories. But we need to talk to each other. Mums – we need to trust each other!

The most encouraging conversations I have had are with other mothers who have watched their children suffer depression – and together they have come through it.

Those are the mums whose eyes fill with tears as I speak...whose hugs are genuine...and who really understand, because they've been there too.

And their stories give me hope. They speak of recovery...of hearing laughter again. And children who are back at school...or working. Or now they are even grown up and married and coping with their illness.

And I see what it teaches us Mums... We learn compassion – especially for other mothers with sick children. We learn that a mother's smile can hide mountains of pain. And that conversations about our marvelous children and their brilliant successes dig deep into the heart – and we don't even realize what we're doing.

And I'm learning to pray.

Not to ask God why...

Not to beg Him to change things.

I'm learning to pray, "Please give us the strength *just* for today." And He *does* – because we get through.'

**Tammy:** Thank you Carol for telling us this mother's true story. It's very real and it's happening right now.

**Carol:** Do you remember what Sarah said about where she *is* getting help?

**Tammy:** It sounds like she's getting help from talking to other people – her friends...people at church...a neighbor.

**Carol:** And as she's prepared to break her silence and talk about it, she's finding that there are other people who are trying to cope with the same thing. And even better – she has found some people whose children have learnt to cope with their illness and achieve positive things in their lives. They have come through it...together. They seem to have *hope* now.

**Tammy:** That's right – so Sarah is holding onto that hope...

She takes her questions and her longings to God. Do you remember what she said? ...She said she prays for strength for her – and her son – to get through each day. And they do.

We've just heard from a mother whose teenage son is suffering from anxiety and depression. She told us that she takes her questions and her longings to God. Let's find out what Sarah means by this, and how she does it... Carol would you tell us what she said?

**Carol:** Sure... She said, 'When we are in the middle of a crisis, it's impossible to see things in a clear and healthy way. The crisis becomes our focus...our future...our life. Suffering takes over...it feels like it will go on forever. It makes me focus inwardly – on myself. All I can think about is my situation...and that leaves me in despair because there's *nothing* in me that can help.

When I feel like this, I say some words from God's word, the Bible. I say them out loud:  
*"My eyes look to the hills. Where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
Who made heaven and earth."*

It's from Psalm 121. It reminds me that God does not change... His perspective doesn't get twisted by circumstances, like mine does... He can see through what we're going through...and past it. He knows what is going to happen, and holds the future in His hand. He is still the almighty Creator. He made the whole world. He made me...and my son, and He loves us and wants the best for us. And He is the only one who can give me strength – I need to look to Him, not at me, or my circumstances.

And so I look to Him. I remember who He is, and *praise* Him – not for what is happening, but for *who He is*.

It probably won't change the circumstances, but it will take my eyes off sorry, sad, helpless me...and point me to Him – my Rock, my shelter, my Comforter, and my Father. And when that happens there's no room for self-pity, for despair, even for fear.'

**Tammy:** Thank you Carol for telling us what Sarah said about how she looks to God in this difficult, and sometimes impossible situation. Let's think about what she said...  
Did she say that God would fix everything for her?

**Carol:** She didn't say that did she! He might do that one day...but for now she has to hold onto him in the middle of her difficult circumstances. Do you remember, she said, 'I look to Him. I remember who He is and praise Him – not for what is happening, but for who He is.'

**Tammy:** What do *you* think she meant by this?  
...What do you think Carol?

**Tammy:** Well, I think she meant that God is in control of everything. He is *only good*...all powerful...and He hears our prayers. His timing is perfect... and He is faithful. So it doesn't help for her to look inside herself and keep looking at her own problems, and her son's problems. She can't fix them.

She has no control over his illness, so all she can do is look to God and know that he loves her. She prays to him and says thank you for his great power and his love. She holds onto God because she knows she can trust him.

**Tammy:** Here on *Women of Hope* today we have been listening to the heart of a mother whose son is suffering from anxiety and depression. Sarah wanted to share some more words with us from Psalm 121 in the Bible about our loving father, God. Here they are...

**Carol:** (*Psalm 121 Contemporary English Version*)

*I look to the hills! Where will I find help?*

*It will come from the LORD, who created the heavens  
and the earth.*

*The LORD is your protector, and he won't go to sleep  
or let you stumble.*

*(\*He) doesn't doze or ever get drowsy.*

*The LORD is your protector, there at your right side  
to shade you from the sun.*

*You won't be harmed by the sun during the day  
or by the moon at night.*

*The LORD will protect you and keep you safe  
from all dangers.*

*The LORD will protect you now and always  
wherever you go.*

**Tammy:** What wonderful promises there are in these words about God's creation and protection.

**Carol:** Yes...let's take a moment to see what the Lord, God promises for us.

First – our *help* comes from the Lord...who made the heavens and the earth. We only have to look to him and ask him to help us and he will.

The Lord will *protect* you...he doesn't sleep, he is always there to keep you from falling.

He is there right beside you and will protect you from the sun, in the day and from the moon at night.

**Tammy:** I wonder why we would need protection from the moon?

**Carol:** \*In ancient times – when these words were written, some people saw the harmful effects of the rays of the sun, and they thought that certain illnesses (especially mental disorders) were also caused by the rays of the moon. So they would be glad to hear of God's protection.

**Tammy:** That's interesting. Then these words say that God will protect us from *all* dangers.

**Carol:** And finally we learn that he will protect us *now*, and *always*, *wherever we go*. What wonderful promises. No wonder Sarah looks to our Father, God each day to help her and give her and her son, Joshua, protection no matter what is happening in their lives.

And she has one question for you...  
Who are you looking to today?

**Carol:** That's a good question. When we have very difficult circumstances in our lives, and they seem overwhelming, what can we do?

**Carol:** Sarah said it's no good looking to herself because she doesn't have the answer? Maybe you are struggling with something like Sarah is. Maybe you simply don't know who to turn to. You may have tried to work it out yourself, but it's not working. You may have turned to other people for help. That's good if they *can* help you. But when there is no-one you can turn to and no-one can help you, God has promised that he will.

**Tammy:** I would like to pray for you as we finish today, and ask our Father, God to help you. Remember, *he* is the one who made you, and loves you, and wants the best for you. Let's pray to him now...

*Father God, we look to you. We have no-one else to look to who understands and can help us. Thank you for creating us, and for loving us. I pray today that you will protect my sister, and show her your love. Show her that you want the best for her life. Help her to look to you each day for help and protection. \*We pray this in the name of your son, Jesus who gave his life for us, so that we might know you and have peace in our hearts. Amen.*

**Carol:** You may want to contact us and let us know what kind of struggle you are having. And we can pray for you that God will protect and help you too.

**Tammy:** It's time for us to go now. We would really enjoying hearing from you. Our email address is: [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org) You can also visit our website at [TWRWomenofHope.org](http://TWRWomenofHope.org). Or visit our Facebook page. Thank you for letting us be a part of your life and lets get together again next week.