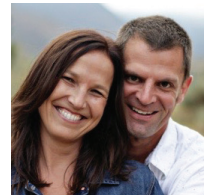


We can grow in awareness and capacity to love God and others well.

## is your ministry deadly?

by Leigh Ann & Mark Looyenga  
Pastoral Counselor at The Navigators



“Christian spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly—to yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you.”

Deadly? That’s a strong word.

But the tone of this quote from Peter Scazzero’s *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (EHS) matches the rest of the book. For Scazzero, emotional health is neither a trivial topic nor an optional add-on for the follower of Jesus. As a basic definition, emotional health is your ability to be self-aware and to love well. Without it, your relational “vibe” can be toxic to the very people and ministry you most want to see come alive.

We experienced this in our marriage, as the isolation and intensity of full-time ministry nearly ruined our life together. Night after night, we fought in the darkness of our bed, back to back, skin crawling, and insides rending apart. Our ability to quote Scripture, lead ministry teams, and sacrifice ourselves for the mission God had called us to were no match for the old, underlying wounds we now experienced afresh. Heartbroken and exhausted, we wondered with the psalmist, “Where is God? What’s he doing?”

Over time, with counselors walking alongside us, we pressed into our past wounding, sinful motivations, and emotional immaturity. We came to acknowledge, as Scazzero did of his own life, that “huge areas . . . remained untouched by Jesus Christ.” Only then were we ready to let God change that.

Here are three specific ways to allow emotionally healthy spirituality (EHS) to grow you more fully into Christ’s likeness.

**1. A deeper knowing of our adoption into God’s family.** Throughout scripture, we see a predominant theme of family. Some families are healthier than others, but all have frailties and failures that shape their members. The good news: before the foundations of the earth, God planned to adopt us, in the midst of our sin and brokenness, into his family as his beloved children. Maturing as a follower of Jesus is a series of the Holy Spirit speaking to our spirit, affirming that we’re his sons and daughters. He is our ultimate Father. Our truest identity is known as we receive His love and join the culture of his family. This gives us power to leave behind sinful attitudes and patterns of the past as we’re formed into Christ’s image and adopt the loving way of life in God’s family.

**2. Leaning into the journey, especially into life’s “Wall” experiences.** Our ability to be self-aware and to love well grows as we mature emotionally and spiritually in our likeness of Jesus (Eph 4:13). This process winds through our entire journey of faith (1 Cor. 13:10-12). As with physical and cognitive develop-

**deadly?** (continued on back)



# emotional and spiritual care

by Cynthia Hagen  
Pastoral Care Director and *UpFront*  
Editor in Chief

I'd been a believer just a few years when a pastor at my church divorced. Later, another leader was let go due to infidelity. Several missionary women I respected walked away from the faith into alternative lifestyles. Each time, I was stunned. All these people had influenced and encouraged me in my faith.




Sadly, 35 years into the Christian life and ministry, such things no longer surprise me.

I now recognize that lack of attention to the emotional and spiritual life help lead us into destructive paths. Our “gateway drug” isn't alcohol or sex. Instead, it's ministry and the exhilarating high of seeing fruit, being affirmed, and feeling important. We need more. We work harder and longer. We skip times with the Lord and ignore friends who warn us we're acting driven.

Eventually, we feel tired, lonely, and empty. Something has to change.

Hopefully, that change involves repentance and seeking relationship with God. But sometimes the choice leads down one of the destructive paths—a click on that pop-up ad, seeking out the new believer in the ministry who thinks I'm great, or a few drinks to help relax. No one plans to get here, but too many do.

This *UpFront* tells about avoiding those broken cisterns to live emotionally and spiritually healthy lives. Only then can we also be healthy leaders. 

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ment, we have to walk through specific steps, each grounded upon those we've taken up to that point.

This journey has six basic stages. It begins with coming to a life-changing awareness of God. This is followed by a quickened desire for discipleship, then by actively serving Jesus with our lives as we move outward to others. But the fourth stage slams us straight into a wall: divorce, cancer, shattered dream, dry relationship with God. At that point, the journey shifts and turns inward.

Both Scazzero and St. John of the Cross (in his classic work, *Dark Night of the Soul*) describe this painful time as a gift from God. At the Wall, writes Scazzero, “our great temptation is to quit or go backward, but if we remain still, listening for his voice, God will insert something of himself into our character that will mark the rest of our journey with him.” The pain invites us to move with God into a deeper emotional and spiritual intimacy.

Only after we pass through the Wall—which might take days, or years—can we truly move outward again. The stages just before and just after passing through the Wall may look similar, but deep change has taken place. This leads to the final stage, where we continue to be transformed as God completes the work he began in us.

**3. Slowing down to be with God in the midst of daily life.** In a culture of fast-paced busyness that can feel like a swirling blizzard, contemplative spirituality is a deliberate slowing down to be with God. This opens space to be honest with God, to accept our limits and surrender life to him in trust. It illumines our self-awareness, showing us the need for God's transformation in the depths of our desires, motivations, and values. As contemplative spirituality works together with emotionally healthy spirituality, we can grow in awareness and capacity to love God and others well.


## top ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality

1. Using God to run from God
2. Ignoring anger, sadness and fear
3. Dying to the wrong things
4. Denying the impact of the past on the present
5. Dividing life into “secular” and “sacred” compartments
6. Doing for God instead of being with God
7. Spiritualizing away conflict
8. Covering over brokenness, weakness and failure
9. Living without limits
10. Judging other people's spiritual journey

*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, by Peter Scazzero

Maturity never happens instantly. Realizing we need to love more and better is just the beginning. That's why daily spiritual practices that slow us down and give time to listen to God are so important. They make a way for us to stay connected with God even when we can't see him in the blizzard. As we let the Spirit empower us to live as *who we're becoming in Christ*, we experience our new identity as God's children and our place in his family. The result is a Spirit-led revolution in our lives.

Are your life and ministry deadly? Scazzero's “Top Ten Symptoms of Emotionally *Unhealthy* Spirituality” in the box above provide a guideline for that. Ask the Spirit to show you.

If you want to know how to get started with Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, or have other questions, feel free to email either one of us (Leigh Ann, llooyenga@yahoo.com; Mark, mark.looyenga@navigators.org). 





## Journey toward greater emotional health

by Roy & Margaret Fitzwater,  
Co-Directors for Navigator Church Ministry

“There’s really no need to overthink my growing up years . . . what matters is life as it is now!”

Both of us used to say this. That changed, though, as we moved into our early thirties, had children, and left the corporate world to go into vocational ministry. God usually doesn’t let us lead others too much further than we’ve gone ourselves!

My (Margaret’s) deeper journey into emotional health accelerated when I became pregnant. I was in my dream job, leading a major area in a Fortune 100 company, and working more than 60 hours a week. In addition, Roy and I spent every bit of our margin leading an evangelism ministry and the ministry to pastors we’d helped found. With God’s help through His Word (Deuteronomy 6:4-7) and a friend, I realized for the first time in my life that I had *limits*. I could not do it all! What a heart discovery! I left the workplace and became a stay-at-home mom.

That sounds easy, but it was a complex decision that took months to make. Roy and I had agreed not to have children when we married, and I’d never imagined stepping out of my career. Obviously, God had another plan, and we moved into it. But letting go was painful. For several years, I couldn’t answer the question, “So, what do you do?” without wanting to add, “But I used to . . .”

Two years later, our new calling of vocational ministry took us even deeper. This was a time of joy and excitement, but moving from Dallas to Colorado Springs meant leaving family, friends, and a lifestyle we’d learned to enjoy. Watching our two sons struggle with their loss and grief magnified the emotional impact.

We tried denial. “We’ll love Colorado! The boys will make new friends.” But that only took us so far. Finally, through counselor friends and our ministry, we realized we were trying to use head knowledge to replace what our hearts had lost. As we acknowledged our losses and let ourselves grieve, healing and wholeness advanced. Leaning into our new life, we began experiencing its benefits. I (Margaret) realized that for the first time, I didn’t feel a need to tell people what a high-powered executive I used to be.

Soon after this, we attended an Intimate Life Ministries weekend for those in ministry. God revealed to me (Roy) some hard things about my childhood—deep soul wounds. Opening myself to God in the pain, I was able to experience Him and give hurts from the past over to Him. I found greater freedom than ever before and saw the truth of His Word, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3, NIV).

We also learned and began teaching how negative interactions that spark emotional responses fill an “internal emotional cup.” This eventually spills over into unhealthy reactions: bursts of anger, words we later regret, physical health issues. It’s like the meniscus on a full cup of water. It only takes the tiniest drop to have it all come flowing out!

We learned to talk often and openly, dig deep, and keep short accounts. To be honest, we’re still working on this. Issues that stay below the surface are dangerous to our health.



*journey (continued on back)*

*Negative interactions that spark emotional responses fill an "internal emotional cup."*



### 2018 PRT SEMINARS IN COLORADO SPRINGS

#### Personal Contribution Assessment

January 30 – February 1, 2018  
April 17 – 19, 2018  
July 10 – 12, 2018  
October 16 – 18, 2018

#### Sabbatical Orientation Workshop

February 5 – 8, 2018  
July 23 – 26, 2018

#### Becoming One Retreat

February 9 – 11, 2018  
August 17 – 19, 2018

*For more information call  
(719) 594-2555*



**journey** (continued from page 3)

Emotions buried and not dealt with don't die but are buried alive—and they *will* rise again!

This also helps our relationships with others. Covering up is a natural response in the “fishbowl” life of ministry, but it takes a great deal of energy. Trying to project the image of the perfect family, we demanded too much of our sons and wore masks on some ministry visits. The faster and better we could drop those masks, the more energy we had for other people. As well, it became normal to extend to these relationships the same openness we were learning with each other.

Our ministry to pastors and missionaries brought us around many who were on the edge of burnout. Their experience mirrored ours. Wearing a mask, trying to be someone they weren't, wasn't working for them. We saw more and more clearly that emotional health is intimately tied to spiritual, relational, and physical health. The desire to minister to the whole person still drives our hearts today.

About this time, Pete and Geri Scazzero's story came out—how as the pastor of a growing church, Pete learned the hard way about the dangers of emotional immaturity. His first book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, became a game changer for many pastors and missionaries.

It also took us further. I (Margaret) have a naturally high need to control every aspect of life. By processing Pete's book and workbook, and with the help of friends, I've grown in my ability to trust God to control. I'm still on my journey away from being “consultant to God” (Roy's words), but I do less “consulting” to Him these days. I've seen that His ways are better!

We joined The Navigators in 2005. We loved the mission, vision, and everything the Navs did, but we were especially excited that the PRT used Scazzero's concepts. We immediately signed up for their weekend Listening/Healing Prayer workshop. Though we'd already dealt with our own issues, we wanted to equip ourselves to help others. So when we got to the “practicing” part and didn't want to waste time, I (Roy) chose to go to a room with plenty of windows so I could relax and enjoy the beauty of nature (I'm an ENFP). I (Margaret, ESTJ) went to the library, where I could have plenty to read and not get bored.

How naïve we can be with God and ourselves! Within the first five minutes of settling in for our listening time with God, He showed each of us areas where we still hadn't embraced the pain from our past. We needed His touch further into our souls to free us up even more to live and minister from strength.

We're deeply grateful for this learning and growth that leads us closer to Christ together. “Living a life worthy of the calling” (Ephesians 4:1-3) has begun to be something to strive for and not merely the impossible dream.

We recognize we'll never totally arrive on the healing journey until we're home with Him. But in the meantime, He's brought us far. We're currently going through *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (again!) and are committed to this lifetime journey toward greater emotional health.

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