

Ideas for Helping Hurting Women

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What are some ideas for helping hurting women? Do you recommend support groups?

Most of us, as women's leaders are not trained counselors. Often when faced with the crises women experience in life, we often feel so inadequate to help. I want to suggest some helpful resources and ideas to help you prepare to minister to women in your sphere of influence.

1. **Share and document women's stories.** Often you will hear women share one on one or in small groups, specific experiences they have had and how they have navigated through them. Often they share how God led and equipped them to face issues they never thought they would have to face. Encourage these women to share their stories often (always with prayer and discretion) as the Holy Spirit leads. Then ask if they would be willing to help women who are facing similar crises and who just need someone to walk with them through it. I believe mostly women just need to know there is another woman who understands her situation and who is a picture of hope because she has made it (or is making it) through the crisis. Then, as you come across women in need, you have a listening ear and someone who will pray for them as they walk together. Encourage women to share testimonies in corporate gatherings from time to time, so women who are hurting alone and in silence will know someone else in your church has experienced something similar to the one they are facing.

2. **Don't assume the role of a professional counselor.** Know when to refer to professional help and when to set healthy boundaries. A couple of resources I recommend are: *A Trusted Friend...When it Matters Most*, by Tim Clinton, a Bible study women can go through together to become more equipped to help hurting friends. For your leaders, use *Women Reaching Women in Crisis* (comes in download and print versions and you can make copies of either version to have 3 sets to use with your team). This resource equips you in general on referrals, boundaries, etc. as well as specific issues such as post abortion trauma, chemical addictions, sexual addictions (for her or her spouse), depression, prodigal children, domestic violence, and?????. Bev Hislop has also written a great book called *Shepherding Women in Pain*.

3. **Yes, support groups are healthy when led in a healthy way.** To talk over issues in common is so helpful, but it must be more than just a "this is so hard" discussion. It must move from "this hurts" to how do we make it through and even thrive in Christ in the meantime. *Breaking Free* by Beth Moore is a great study to help women struggling with all types of strongholds. *Recovering from the Losses of Life* by H. Norman Wright is helpful to anyone dealing with any type of loss. This one in particular helped me deal with a relationship that had temporarily ended and I had to get past it to move on in the Lord. We must redirect women to the Bible to find the real help they need no matter what the crisis.

I can't tell you how much my friend was to my own journey as she shared her life and experience of a painful struggle with a daughter. I watched this wonderful godly mom navigate her crisis for several years before I ever realized one day I would walk in her shoes and would desperately need what she had taught me. And I needed her as I walked my journey to just walk with and pray for me as I'd prayed for her all those years without really understanding what she was going through.

Each story the Lord allows into any of His daughters' lives is one He can use to minister to someone else. What do you do to help hurting women?

Note: Resources mentioned in this article can be purchased at www.lifeway.org