

## Debt - National Crisis Looming

On Friday 19th December 2003, Nationwide - the UK's largest mutual Building Society, reported record withdrawals of cash from its 2,206 cash machine network across the UK. During the lunch period that day, on average £1000 was being withdrawn per second!

Twenty years ago, a financial institution reporting withdrawals of £108 million over a weekend would have sounded alarm bells about the viability of that organisation. Today, however, this is business as usual, although still setting new records.

Maybe you are reading this and remembering the pre-Christmas spending spree, the anxiety to ensure you have all the gifts purchased that you need, the turkey ordered and the larder well stocked with food for a fortnight (let alone two days)! But what about now? Are you one of the millions in this country who dreads receiving the credit card bills and bank statements and lives in fear of a possible interest rate hike with the inevitable increased mortgage payments?

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## Depression

Depression is an illness. Everyone has days when they "feel depressed" by the weather, or the state of the house, or by something else more serious – but it is usually possible to "snap out of it". In depression, this is not the case.



### The symptoms of the illness include:

- low mood – "feeling down"
- low self esteem – "It's all my fault" or "I don't deserve help"
- poor concentration
- poor sleep – usually waking early in the morning
- altered appetite – "off" food, or comfort eating
- poor memory
- crying a lot of the time
- altered libido

Depression often comes on gradually and may be noticed by those around them before the person is aware of it themselves. People can feel worthless, and to blame for how they feel. This makes it harder to recognise the need for help.

Depression may apparently come out of the blue, or may be triggered by stress, illness, bereavement or pain. When it happens after childbirth it is called post-natal depression. It may also be linked to the onset of dementia.

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## The Pain of Emotional Dependency

Why do friendships go wrong? How can we find ourselves overpowered by the ferocity of a relationship that threatens to engulf our very being? How do we learn to relate again after such a strenuous experience?

Healthy, strong and loving friendships are at the heart of Christianity. It is no wonder then, that true friendships face attack. Our friendships are indicators of emotional health. If you feel that you are needy or need to be needed, or have a friendship so overwhelmingly important that it dominates every area of your life, then maybe you need to discover how you can be free from emotional dependency.

Emotional Dependency is about trying to find security in another human being, usually someone who seems to have life sorted out.

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## Debt - National Crisis Looming

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The media reports almost daily the blight of debt within this country which impacts relationships, creates stress and can lead to complete and utter despair in individuals and family units. Christians, of course, are immune to this problem through closely following the teaching in the Bible about money and principles of borrowing and lending. If only this statement were true! Debt is something akin to a disease that seems to affect all people regardless of background.

**Willows initiated a "Debt Advisory Service" some six years ago. This was on a very small scale due to the limited number of available counsellors and because successful debt counselling is very time consuming. However, many successes were seen with people "being set free from the chains that bind them".**

Unfortunately, for various reasons, the service Willows offered had to be curtailed but a new initiative is being investigated with a view to re-starting the service. If reading any of the above has struck a chord with you and you would like to be

involved with this service we would love to hear from you! We are looking for a variety of skills to set the service up, ranging from administrative skills, to possible counselling situations. If you are interested please contact us on 01973 706646.

Providing debt advice is not just about teaching someone to budget properly. It is about encouraging lifestyle and behavioural changes and working with clients to help them to make that change. Sometimes, it is negotiating with loan companies and with creditors to achieve a realistic and satisfactory outcome. In most cases, this is a long process and inevitably involves sacrifice and pain along the way. But the impact on both the counsellor and the counsellee, when they start to see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, makes the effort well worthwhile.

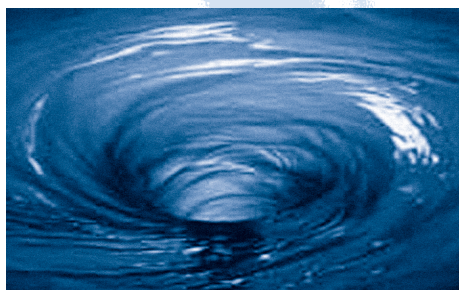
If you are experiencing debt problems we would strongly recommend you contact freephone number 0800 1381111 or look at The Consumer Credit Counselling Service website [www.cccs.co.uk](http://www.cccs.co.uk). Also of interest is Credit Action website [www.creditaction.org.uk](http://www.creditaction.org.uk). For publications and services Tel: 01522 699777.

**Steve Natt**

## Depression

(Cont'd from page 1)

The good news is that depression will usually get better. However, this may take some months and for some people, it recurs. Sometimes a depressed person may feel so low and desperate that there seems to be no other way out than suicide.



### So what can be done to aid recovery?

Many things help, and sometimes more than one at a time. Anti-depressant medication perhaps raises most concerns. Firstly, let's be clear that it is designed to help the condition improve, not just calm symptoms of sleepless nights, as sleeping tablets do, or relieve symptoms of anxiety, as tranquillisers do.

Depression, on a chemical basis, means that there are too many of the "negative" transmitters in the brain, and not enough "positive" ones. There are two main groups of anti-depressants. Some block the effects of the negative transmitters and others boost the effects of the positive. For this reason, they don't work instantly – often taking at

least 7-10 days to start to help. Most have some side effects but these should be mild and short-lived. If not, the tablets may need to be changed. The aim is to help the depression improve without making other things worse. Obviously some tablets are dangerous if an overdose is taken, so they need to be avoided if someone is at risk of causing themselves harm.

Anti-depressants need to be continued, often for four to six months, until the balance of the transmitters is restored. They can usually then just be stopped, although with some types it may be better to reduce slowly.

Other types of therapy may include counselling. This is often useful if it is felt that there is an underlying trigger, whether current or in the past. It is more than just listening, so requires skill and training to help the client see the issues more clearly and, hence, be able to take action.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is a skill which enables a person to react differently to things, thereby altering the effect on them of those things. It does require a reasonable level of learning, input and motivation.

**There may be things which are triggering depression which can be changed, such as altering work patterns or achieving better pain control. Discussion of the situation with family, doctor, minister,**

**or work colleagues may also be helpful.**

**The main points to remember are:**

- depression is an illness – it is not your fault
- it needs help and treatment as much as a broken leg
- it is more common than a broken leg
- it is not a sign of madness
- seek and accept help
- have phone numbers handy for the difficult times – doctor, minister, Samaritans
- it will get better



**Lynn Brading**

Lynn Brading has been a GP at Crossroads Surgery since 1990. She is a member of Gorse Hill Baptist Church, is married and enjoys walking and dog training (more a way of life).



## The Pain of Emotional Dependency

(cont'd from page 1)

It involves some mutual gratification – such relationships give us the sense that we have at least one person we can rely on, and that we belong to someone. Such dependency can be camouflaged to resemble selfless and noble commitment; after all, Jesus commanded that we love one another – and that we do so extravagantly. Surely this means that within our relationships we are called to put others first. In truth, an emotionally dependent relationship does not involve true sacrifice, as it is ultimately self-preserving and selfish – each participant playing a role and seeking to provide for their own needs.

Christ's relationships were never self-serving, he did not need others to make him complete, but instead received validation through his heavenly Father. If this were not so, then his sacrifice on the cross would be an act of gross manipulation rather than the beautiful and powerful liberator that it is.

**In 1990, I was a second year Drama student and feeling lonely.**

Many of my co-students had formed exclusive relationships while others were 'playing the field'; neither group seemed to have much time for commitment to friends. This played into my insecurities and it was during this time that I felt most like an outsider – until I was introduced to David. David and I had the same tastes in music, fashion and film and quickly considered ourselves best friends – In truth, we were using one another to fill emotional deficit in our respective lives.

I quickly found myself preoccupied with what David was doing – jealous of his friendships and activities, which did not include me. This friendship was enough for me and I could not see why he should need anything more. David had a need to be needed and I was happy to fill that role. I became increasingly manipulative; turning up at places I knew he would be at, demanding attention often with over-exaggerated (or sometimes completely fabricated) crises that I needed him to help me with. I even took up smoking so that we would have something else in common!

I tried to keep the relationship exclusive by proving myself indispensable. I was cooking for him; cleaning his flat; buying compact discs with him; giving gifts for no real reason; listening to his problems; borrowing his clothes and spending time and energy ensuring that I became the most important relationship he had.

All these things were done in the guise of friendship when, in truth, I was terrified of being left alone again.

When David finally met someone special, my life fell apart. His joy was apparent and he could see no reason why it was not infectious. I felt as if I had been punched and began behaving in increasingly irrational ways of trying to claw my way back into the centre of his life's stage. It became obvious that our friendship could not continue and the sense of bereavement with which I was left was overwhelming.

With hindsight, and after a period of counselling, I recognised that the patterns of this relationship had been played out before in my life, but never to such an extreme. I have since learned

that all people are susceptible to emotionally dependent relationships, particularly during times of turbulence or anxiety, and that most people just do not see it coming until they are overwhelmed by the intensity of such a relationship.

The path out of emotional dependency includes making a commitment to being honest with

oneself, with God and with others. This forces the breakdown of deceptive and manipulative patterns. In choosing another person to open up to, the emotionally dependent person finds accountability. When coupled with sensitive prayer this gives opportunity to talk through painful emotions and discover their root causes – Often this leads to pain as the deeper issues are explored but this is at least true healing, rather than the masking of pain through inappropriate relating.

**This process can be a long haul – but the freedom of relating to others aright is worth the cost. We need to remember that dependency is a highly convincing sham when compared to the fertile and rewarding relationships that we are capable of entering into, and that this area of our lives is contested, precisely because it is so essential to our physical, mental and spiritual health.**

Dean Fudge



# Ministering to Gay People

We asked Bishop Michael his view on ministering to Gay people. His reply encourages us to explore these issues more fully and to "Seek the Truth in Love" for those to whom we minister.

None of our churches have a very glorious history in ministering to gay people. Today all of our churches are at various stages of discussion or dispute about homosexuality. The one thing, on which we seem to agree, is the relatively recent distinction between sexual orientation and sexual behaviour. It is not something which St Paul would have recognised. It is still not accepted by many African Christians: "gays are worse than

dogs" according to one Church Leader. But most Western churches have adopted the distinction, and this leads them either to welcome people of every sexual orientation, or at least to work with them in the hope they may be 'healed'. What you think of such healing ministries will depend on how far you see it as a negative condition. In practice, many counsellors and support groups wonder whether such reorientation works, except for people who are actually bisexual.

The real problem comes when we ask whether gay and lesbian people should be free to express who they are. Counselling is about enabling a person to become more fully alive, to increase in self-awareness, self-confidence and self-control, and to make more responsible decisions about relationships including physical intimacy. If we no longer see gay or lesbian orientation as a sin, how should these people see themselves before God? Is it just a different and equally valid way of being human in this world where all of us, and all our relationships, bear the marks of holiness and the marks of sin?

It is interesting that in a society where many have been happy to follow the culture, often against Scripture, in matters of economics and war, and even over divorce, the Church's rejection of same-sex relationships is now a minority position. Counselling and ministering to gay and lesbian people cannot but make us reflect, not only on what we believe as Christians, but also on our own personal sexuality.

**Rt Revd Michael Doe, who was Bishop of Swindon until April this year, is now the General Secretary of the world mission agency USPG. His book, "Seeking the Truth in Love" (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000) explores these issues in more depth.**

**Bishop Michael**



## Development Plan Endorsements

### A Vision for the Future

The Willows would like to develop and extend its work by acquiring larger premises that will include:

- A separate Waiting Room for clients
- Further Counselling Rooms
- Meeting Rooms
- More Office Space
- A library for Students in Training
- A Counsellors' Rest Room

This will also enable us to provide:

- A Debt Counselling Service
- Counselling to Children and Young People
- Stress Therapy and Relaxation
- Art Therapy and Sand Tray Therapy
- Extend and Develop Trauma Based
- Work with Specific Facilities

Nine endorsements had been received from prominent public figures, including Doctors, Church Leaders and M.P's, giving their approval to the Willows Development Plan. Some of these are listed below.



"I am delighted to be able publicly to endorse the excellent work done by this much needed service. I am honoured to have been asked to be a Patron of their Development Fund, which will enable them to achieve their aims of operating from premises, which are both large enough, and

appropriately equipped. The need for a larger building is, in itself, testament to the huge demand for the range of services on offer to those who have experienced trauma and abuse."

I have worked with Mike Fisher for many years and have the greatest possible confidence, both in the quality of the services on offer, and in the ability of all those involved in The Willows, to deliver these services compassionately and effectively."

**Baroness Pitkeathley**  
House of Lords

"The Willows provides help when people are at their most vulnerable, offering families and individuals counselling and therapy, as well as providing debt counselling, training and support for churches. Any efforts to extend such much needed services are welcome."

**Michael Wills**  
MP for North Swindon



# Myers Briggs – A Tool to Understanding Ourselves and Others

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a psychometric tool that can help us appreciate important differences between people and understand how people work together in a complementary way. It has been well researched and took over 50 years to develop, so it is now in a very user-friendly and accessible format.

The MBTI involves completing a questionnaire; the purpose of this is to help a person explore their preferences for 'taking-in' information and making decisions. It will also help us look at the way we prefer to focus our attention and how we prefer to live our life, and indicate our preferred style of working and interacting with others.

The strength of the MBTI is expressed in its ability to recognise preferences, not abilities, skills or intelligence. It can give profound insight into how we can capitalise on our innate abilities, and how these can be channelled, when developing our competencies and giftedness.

The combination of our preferred functions and expressions of lifestyle is indicated by the questionnaire which provides the opportunity for each person to indicate their own individual 'type'. Once this has been learned, imbibed and understood, it can be applied to almost every aspect of a person's relationships with others in almost any context.

It can be used for individual self-development, or by churches and organisations, for example in:

- Developing effective teams
- Improving communication and resolving conflict
- Identifying leadership style
- Enhancing personal development
- Exploring problem-solving and learning styles
- Understanding reactions to change and stress
- Career development.

Additionally, the MBTI is a valuable tool for those wishing to understand the different aspects of spirituality and churchmanship; for example, is a person happier in a contemplative, reflective environment or in a liturgical, action-orientated team, seeking and demonstrating the power of God in the world? It is also profoundly useful in the counselling room, both for the client and counsellor, and helps us to understand and value the many different approaches to life issues that people employ.

## Linsi Simmons

If you would like any more information, please do contact Linsi Simmons BA (Hons) Theol, Cert Counselling, MBTI Practitioner.

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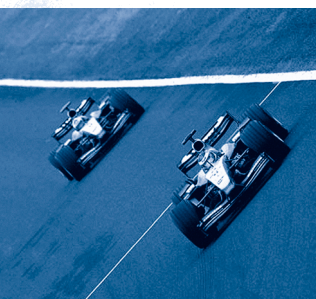
Linsi is a freelance researcher and consultant who works with Church leaders and lectures in contemporary spirituality. She also enjoys delivering Myers Briggs workshops.



**Myers Briggs Day**  
Sat 20th Nov '04  
With Linsi Simmons  
To book contact Willows

## Our Driven World... I Want To Get Off!

"I feel that the pressure upon me is resulting in a degree of stress which threatens to exceed my ability to continue to function."



In this personal take on a complex subject I'm using the word "pressure" to describe external demands and responsibilities, and "stress" to denote the effect of that pressure on the individual.

Some pressure (and therefore stress) is unavoidable in life, and probably desirable, as it gets us out of bed! Too much pressure though, or "the wrong kind of pressure", sooner or later results in impaired function or even breakdown. "Rust-out" or "burn-out" are opposite ends of the stress spectrum.

Stress-related illness has reached unprecedented levels in the 21st century, and Britain has an unenviable record.

Questions that might be asked include:

- **Is this a "square peg in a round hole" situation?**

Just as the "wrong kind of leaves" can stall a train, so "the wrong kind of pressure" can stall a person. Some GPs, for example, coped happily for years with the intrinsic pressures of medical practice, but were not able to come to terms with the entirely different pressures of accountancy and management responsibilities.

- **Is some pressure avoidable?**

Certain pressures today are arguably unnecessary, apparently concerned more with appearance than reality;

Do the benefits of targets and league tables justify the effects on those responsible for delivering them?

Do we really need a pizza delivered in 20 minutes, or would 25 minutes do?

Other pressures may be self-imposed, perhaps arising from a high sense of duty.

Periodic review of responsibilities is a good idea – even Jesus didn't respond to every demand made upon him.

- **Are there strategies to aid the handling of pressure?**

Time management, or an exercise regime, for example? (This type of measure though

falls into the category of secondary prevention and, ideally, would only follow if attention had been given to the previous two levels.)

- **Are there "red lights on the dashboard?"**

There comes a point when increasing stress levels paradoxically begin to decrease performance, which in turn can presage sudden breakdown and possible permanent harm. In automotive terms, we need to allow the engine to cool, top up the radiator and then investigate the cause of the overheating, or the engine will seize. Sadly our current culture often discourages us from taking such sensible action.

**Another question then arises; should we as Christians be able to absorb all the pressures we encounter because we are able to "cast all our cares on Him"? Doesn't Philippians 4:13 say that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us? If Christians suffer stress-related illness, is it because we've taken on burdens which God never asked us to bear, or have we, in some way, failed to tap into His power and grace? Or is it part of the frailty of being human in a broken world? These are very real issues for us to consider! Answers on a postcard, please...**

**Dr Stephen Walker**

## Willow's Fundraising

Willows have now launched the proposed Development Plan to acquire new premises to further develop its services, and have now contracted to work with 'Charity Connections' a fundraising agency, to raise £500 000 from National Trusts. The first £50,000 needs to be raised locally before a public appeal can begin.

Can you, or your Church, help Willows at this vital time to achieve this goal and enable Willows to help others?



### Fundraising Event

Noel Adams, pictured here, will be cycling from Lands End to John O'Groats to raise money towards the Development Plan. His 1000 mile journey begins on 18th April. Please pray for his safety and if you would like to sponsor Noel, contact Willows office.

## Training

In April sixteen students completed our third Introduction to Pastoral Counselling Course. Here are some of the comments:

"The teaching is friendly and professional and there is a good balance between the theory and practical application."

"I found the course very constructive and discovered how difficult it can be to listen to someone."

"I enjoyed the course and found it very stimulating."

"I would recommend the course to anyone who wants to do counselling."

"The listening skills are beneficial for my church pastoral work."

"I made some good friends."

"It has motivated me to go on and do the Certificate Course."

"Believe it – learning to listen can be fun!"

Would you like to learn how to listen more effectively to family friends, and colleagues, find out more about yourself and have some fun as well? If so, why not join us on the next course, which will take place on Thursday evenings, for twelve weeks, commencing 9th September 2004, plus one Saturday 11th September. This is a Level 1 Course in Christian Counselling (CTi/NOCN Introduction to Counselling Units) and is recognised by ACC, recognition number T153-L1. The cost of this course is £160.

**If you have completed a Level 1 Willows Course, or similar training, we can offer you a one year Certificate Course in Integrative Christian Counselling, (CTi/NOCN Advanced Certificate in Counselling Skills) which will take place during the day on Wednesdays commencing 8th September. This is a Level 2 - ACC recognised course, number T135-L2 and the programme will include:**

- Developing Advanced Counselling Skills
- Skills Practice and Gilmore Groups
- Developing a working knowledge of Egan's 3 Stage Model
- Exploring the Counselling Relationship
- Increasing Self Awareness
- The Interface between Christian Counselling and Secular Psychology
- Mental Health Issues
- Life Stages and Transitions
- Loss and Bereavement Issues
- Sexual Abuse Awareness
- Working with "Difference"
- Integrating Faith and Practice
- Ethical Issues and "Good Practice"

**Anyone who has successfully completed a Level 2 training course and undertaken a minimum of 50 hours supervised counselling would be eligible to enrol for the Willows two year Diploma Course in Integrative Christian Counselling which is ACC Level 3 (CTi/NOCN Advanced Diploma in Counselling). This will take place during the day on Thursdays commencing April 2005.**

**Willows also organises Saturday Topic Workshops, in conjunction with The Harnhill Centre of Christian Healing, near Cirencester, Gloucester, which are open to everyone. On 12th June, Dr Richard Cole will run a day on "Working with Survivors of Childhood Abuse".**

The 2004/05 programme will include the subjects:

- Spiritual and Emotional Abuse
- Key considerations in Couples Work
- Depression
- Sexuality
- Introduction to Enneagrams
- Issues for partners and families of abuse survivors
- Emotional Dependency and Co-Dependency

**If you would like further details of these training courses, please contact Avril Fray, Training Manager by telephone or e-mail: [training@willowscounselling.org.uk](mailto:training@willowscounselling.org.uk)**

The Willows  
COUNSELLING SERVICE



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