

TAKING — — CHARGE

OF YOUR LIFE

FEELINGS — PART TWO



WHAT TO EXPECT

This booklet looks at Anger, Guilt, and Conflict Management.

Both anger and guilt are legitimate emotions that can fulfil an important and positive function in our lives. They can be equally destructive.

Anger and guilt can sabotage our happiness, our emotional wellbeing, our relationships and our potential. So they are an important focus in the Taking Charge of Your Life program.

The critical factor is how we accept and manage these powerful emotions.

Conflict is likewise a legitimate and potentially positive part of the human experience. It is negative and destructive only when not owned and properly managed.

**“Anger is the first emotion
human beings experience
and the last one we learn to
manage effectively.”**

L. HUXELY


YOU ARE NOT THE TARGET



ANGER

Anger is a natural emotion we experience. It is multifaceted and complex. It can be found in any personality type—shy or extroverted, perfectionistic or laid back.

We find it difficult to “own” or take responsibility for our anger. Note, in the quote, the four negative and damaging strategies many people adopt in response to their anger:

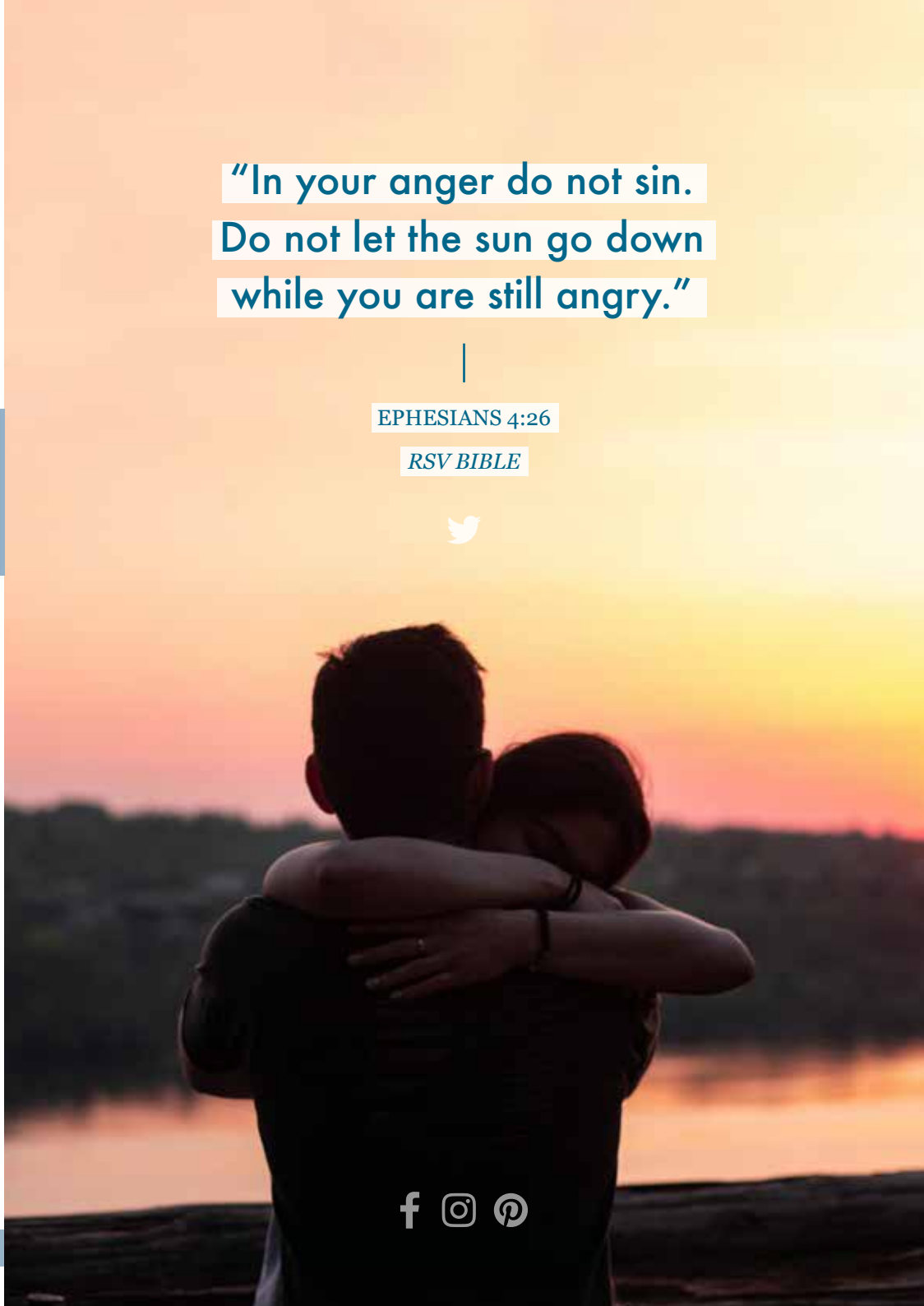
 “As early as four months of age, the human infants vague feelings of distress differentiate into recognizable anger; for many of us, a lifetime is spent in denying or suppressing, displacing or avoiding this emotional experience.”
L. Huxely, *You are not the Target*

“for many of us, a lifetime is spent in or suppressing, displacing or this emotional experience.”

The emotion of anger is expressed in a variety of feelings and behaviours:

- frustration
- disappointment
- irritability
- annoyance
- blowing off steam
- fretting
- emotional hurt

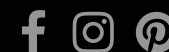
Can you think of ways in which anger can fulfil a positive and constructive role?



“In your anger do not sin.
Do not let the sun go down
while you are still angry.”

EPHESIANS 4:26

RSV BIBLE



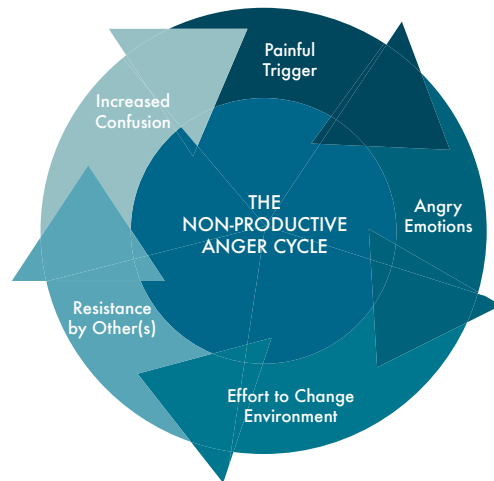
MANAGING ANGER

Constructive anger is marked by:

1. Rational response to an appropriate issue.
2. Communication in a caring and rational manner.

Destructive anger is marked by:

1. Emotional rather than a reasoned response.
2. Closed attitude - communication block.



The trigger for anger occurs when:

- we feel devalued;
- our worth as a person has been insulted;
- a personal need has been ignored or unmet;
- contempt or disregard has been expressed for values or convictions we feel are important.

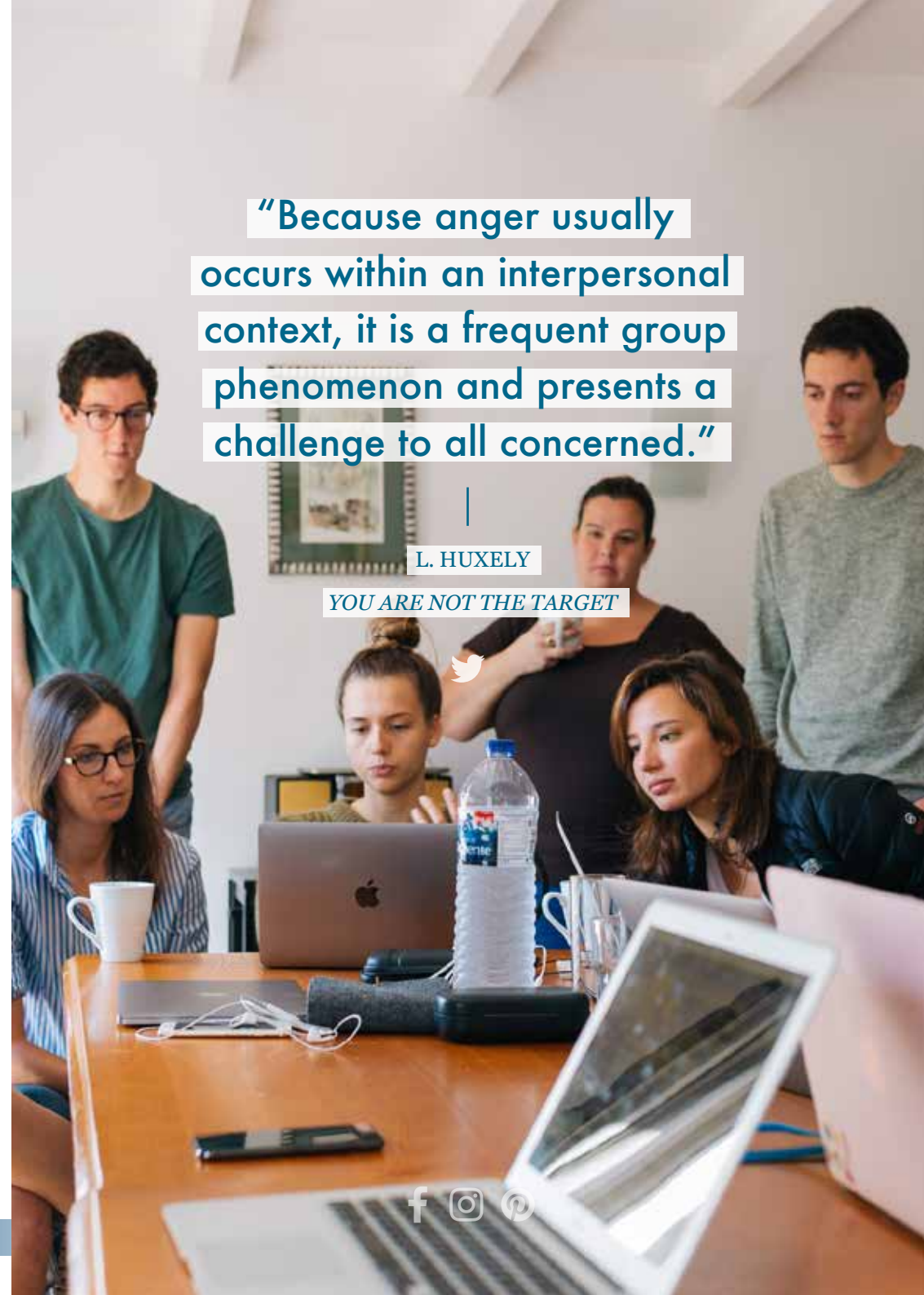
The anger cycle escalates the hurt. Unless broken it is not only nonproductive but potentially destructive.

Identifying and understanding our anger is essential in personal emotional development. Our choices are the key to anger management, maturity and happiness.

“Because anger usually occurs within an interpersonal context, it is a frequent group phenomenon and presents a challenge to all concerned.”

L. HUXELY

YOU ARE NOT THE TARGET



ANGER AWARENESS

It is important to understand the operation of anger in our lives. This is an opportunity for personal reflection.

- When was the last time you were really angry?
- What was the trigger?
- Was it constructive or destructive anger?
- How did you feel after you cooled down?
- Are there recurring anger themes in your life?
- Do you find yourself nurturing critical thoughts?
- Do you find yourself blaming others for your problems, even when you know it is your fault?
- Do you jump easily into conflict?
- Do you sometimes struggle with moods of discouragement?

If you are becoming more aware of your feelings, you are well positioned to use the management skills outlined in this booklet. So don't allow your awareness of anger to discourage you.

Everyone has anger issues. It is important for you to confront and deal with your anger. Anger can find expression in the form of guilt, bitterness and resentment.

CHOICES



"Angry emotions include everything from being mildly irritated to being angry, resentful, furious, or even enraged."

Anthony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within*

There are five choices when experiencing anger. Choices 4 and 5 lead to the healthy management of anger. The first 3 choices will do the opposite.

1. SUPPRESSION:

Suppressed negative emotions can result in:

- altered and often unreasonable perceptions
- being out of touch with reality
- depression
- illogical and antisocial reactions
- dysfunctional relationships

2. OPEN AGGRESSION:

This is the emotional, confrontational approach to anger. It is just about guaranteed to trigger a nonproductive anger cycle. To continue using this mode means a pattern of offending and hurting people. We damage others, damage our relationships, and damage ourselves.

3. PASSIVE AGGRESSION:

This is the use of silence to "win" the power struggle. Thus it is evasive and unhelpful—an inappropriate strategy.

4. ASSERTIVE ANGER:

This is a constructive strategy. It claims the right to express anger. It gives the other person the right to speak. Assertive anger listens. It operates at the level of the mind and manages the anger in a positive way.

5-. DROPPING ANGER:

This is a healthy choice if it's either not constructive or impossible to express our anger. It differs from Suppression, in that the anger is acknowledged. A conscious choice is made to forgive and put the matter behind us. Our emotions may take time, in some cases years, to catch up with our choices.

A CASE HISTORY

It is important to confront the ways you handle anger in your life. What usually happens? Are you aware of which of the five options you choose? Do you feel the need for change? Observing and studying how others manage their anger can be very helpful.

Ancient history offers the story of Nehemiah, a great Jewish leader whose experience with anger is worth noting.



"I was very angry when I heard their outcry and their complaints. After thinking it over, I brought charges against the nobles and the officials; I said to them, "You are all taking interest from your own people. And I called a great assembly to deal with them . . . "What you are doing is not right."

Nehemiah 5:6-9, RSV Bible

The Jewish people had returned from exile to rebuild Jerusalem. It was unprotected - the walls had to be rebuilt. That was his passion for 12 years. His anger was triggered, however, when some of the people began exploiting the poor. He cried "foul."

Reading the Bible quotation, can you decide the option Nehemiah chose to deal with his anger:

- suppression
- open aggression
- passive aggression
- assertive anger
- dropping anger

In the story, Nehemiah was angry but he "thought it over." The constructive management of anger takes place in the mind—not the emotions. Nehemiah's anger motivated him to address the issue of justice and fairness. He was assertive and his anger thus fulfilled a positive purpose.

MANAGING CONFLICT



"Because no two individuals are exactly alike, interpersonal conflict is a fact of life. The potential for conflict exists in almost every human situation that involves more than one person."

J. William Pfeifer, "Theories & Models" in Applied Behavioural Science Vol 3.

ATTITUDE

1. Recognise the inevitability of conflict.
2. Understand the potential and positive role of conflict in a relationship. It can enhance creative planning and decision making. Properly managed conflict is an important factor in the growth of a relationship.
3. Realise the potential and escalating damage of unresolved conflict (see second quote below).
4. Be aware of the "differences" and "similarities" between you and your partner—much conflict mismanagement is the result of misunderstanding.
5. Set out to find a solution, rather than win a victory.
6. Accept the possibility of being "wrong." Our perceptions often misinterpret information and situations, even when we are convinced it could never happen to us.



"Avoided conflict situations often result in doubts and fear about meeting similar situations in the future and about such valued traits as courage or persistence."

J. A. Strepsis, "Conflict Resolution Strategies", The 1974 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators

A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. **Make an appointment to discuss the divisive issue.**
2. **Try to relax.**
The natural build-up of tension in an environment of conflict can block objectivity.
3. **Clarify the problem.**
Identify tangible issues and each person's opinion. Establish the right of each person to be assertive and express his or her point of view.
4. **Listen to the other person.**
Apply active listening skills—let the other person know you understand their point of view by paraphrasing back to them your understanding of what they are saying (note quote on the next page).
5. **List possible solutions and evaluate them.**
It is beneficial to write all suggestions down so they can be looked at together.
6. **Evaluate each solution.**
Identify what you think could be the result of each suggestion together with possible side effects.
7. **Make a decision based on a solution—not a victory.**
8. **Always remember the powerful two words, “I’m sorry.”**
9. **Agree to differ in situations where a solution cannot be found.**

“How we handle controversy and difficult situations has much to do with the levels of trust we engender...”



Trusting other people encourages them to trust us; distrusting... makes them lose confidence in us.”

James Kouzes & Barry Posner, *Credibility*

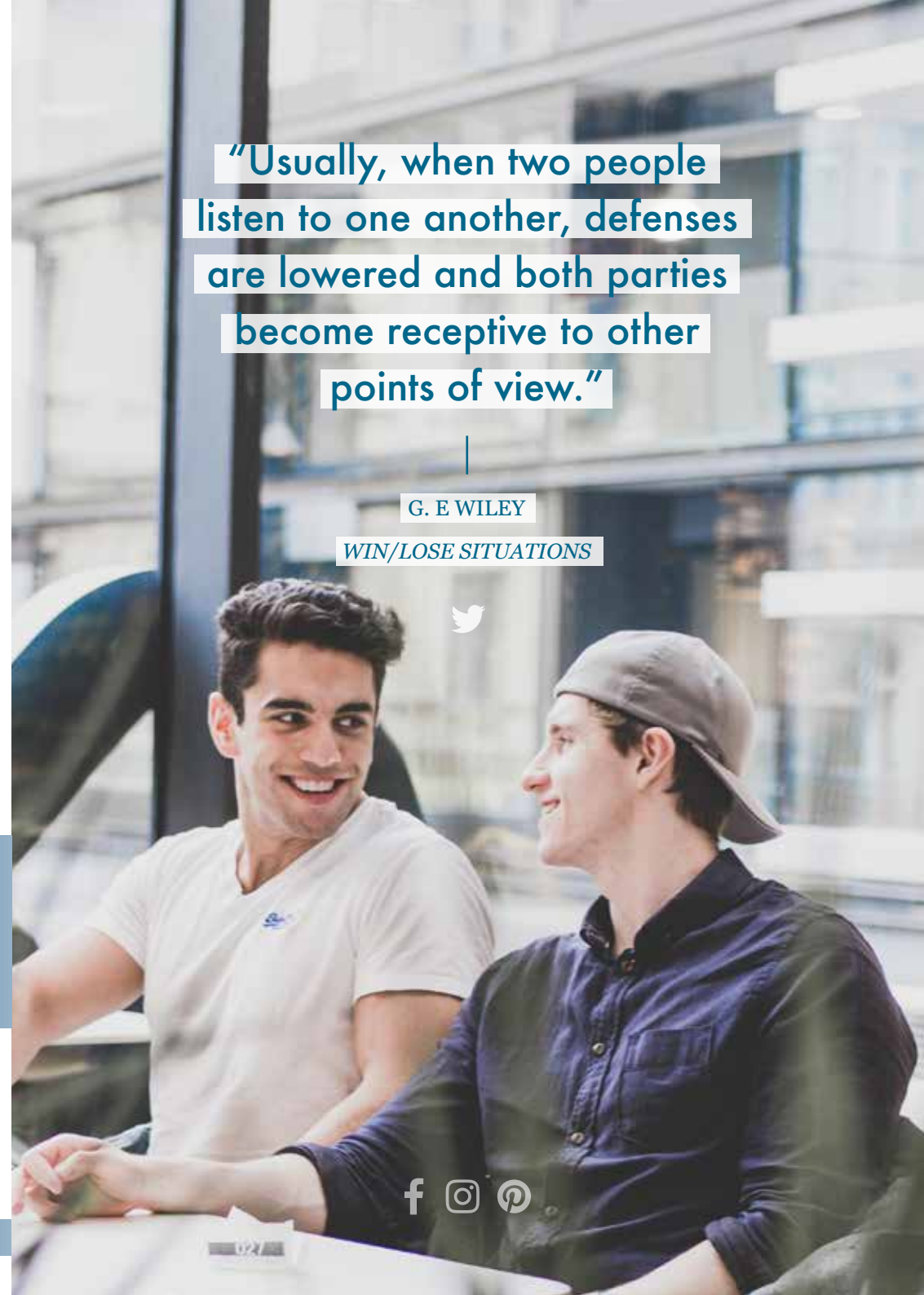
Note the quote above and fill in the all-important word for conflict resolution:

“tr.....”

“Usually, when two people listen to one another, defenses are lowered and both parties become receptive to other points of view.”

G. E WILEY

WIN/LOSE SITUATIONS



UNDERSTANDING YOUR GUILT



“The emotions of guilt, regret and remorse are . . . painful emotions... but they serve a valuable function.”

Anthony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within*

Guilt is another strong feeling. It is experienced when our behaviour runs contrary to our value system. It fulfils a positive and important need in our lives. It is very important to deal with it constructively. Unresolved guilt can be a major factor in emotional ill health.

It can be positive and constructive. On the other hand, chronic guilt can damage our relationships. It can also be a blockage in fulfilling our potential in terms of personal growth, fulfillment and career.

Read, in the quote on the next page, how the Psalmist describes guilt “like a too heavy to bear.”

Guilt differs from remorse. Remorse is targeted on behaviour and guilt is targeted on self. One leads to the other.

The following common assumptions lead to depression, shame, or anxiety:

1. Because of my “bad behaviour” I am inferior (this interpretation leads to depression).
2. If others found out what I did, they would look down on me (this interpretation leads to shame).
3. I’m in danger of retaliation (this interpretation leads to anxiety).



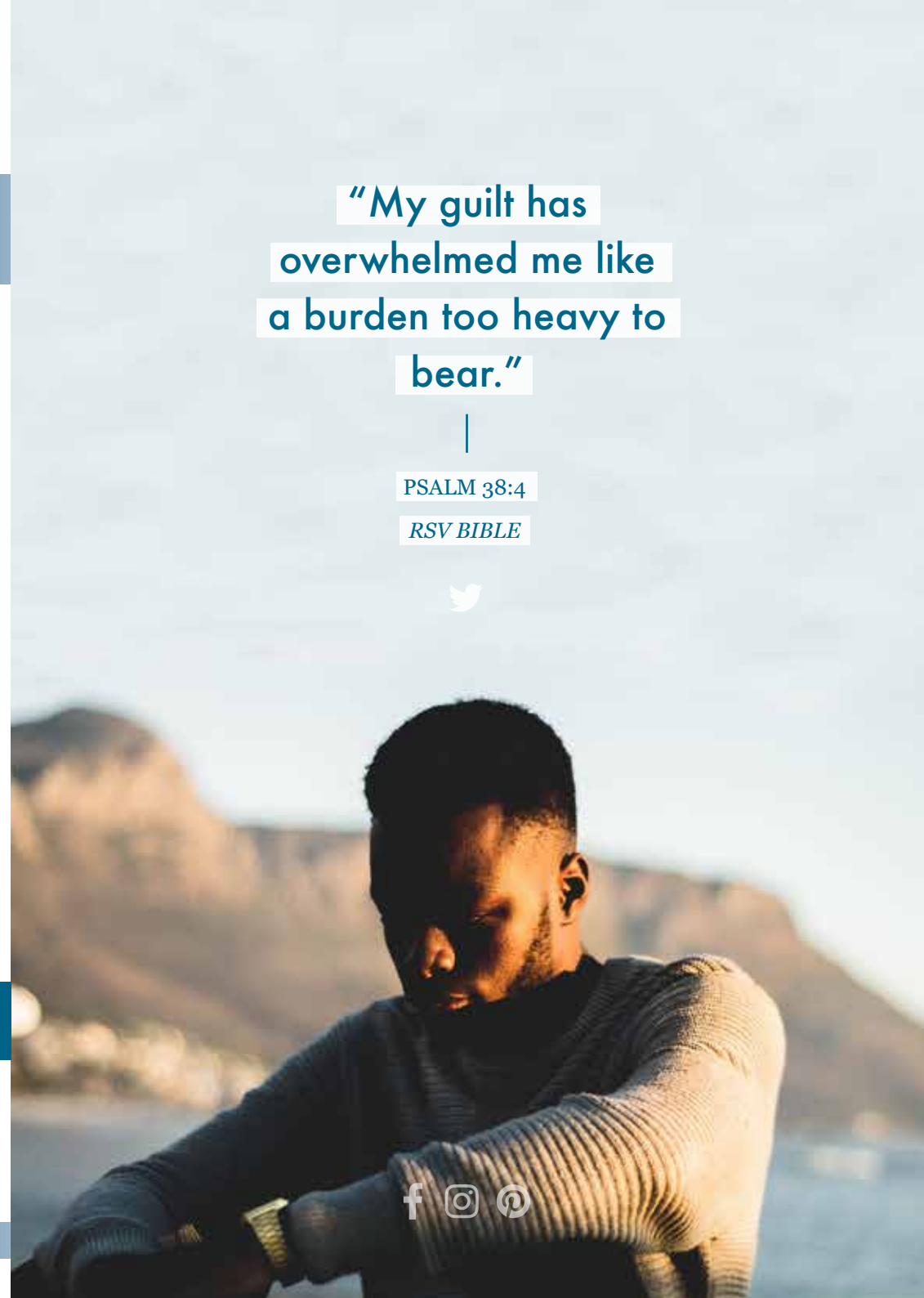
“Anxiety weighs down the human heart.”

Proverbs 12:25, *RSV Bible*

“My guilt has
overwhelmed me like
a burden too heavy to
bear.”

PSALM 38:4

RSV BIBLE



CONFRONTING YOUR GUILT

Many suppress guilt instead of confronting and dealing with it. Suppressed guilt does not go away. It can turn inward to cause depression. It can explode to the surface in the form of anger—often inappropriately.

It is important to come to grips with our deeper feelings—to know the anger and guilt issues that linger beneath the surface. Respond to the following:

- I worry about things, plans and the future all the time.
- I am always concerned about how other people perceive me.
- I don't know how to respond to a compliment.
- I don't know how to say "no" and find myself easily manipulated.
- I am a workaholic.
- I am a perfectionist.
- I need to control the people in my life.
- I have compulsive behavioural patterns.
- I use alcohol or drugs to escape from my gloomy feelings.
- I don't deserve to be happy.
- I feel inferior to the other people in my life.

Each of the statements can be expressive of deep-seated issues of guilt. If you ticked three, or more, the following strategy will be especially important to you.



"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 JOHN 1:9

RSV BIBLE



DEALING WITH GUILT



“Some people try to deal with their guilt by denying and suppressing it . . . Guilt does not go away; it comes back stronger . . .”

Anthony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within*

1. Confront Your Mistakes and Faults.

Guilt can fulfil a positive role in our lives. It can facilitate spiritual sensitivity, values, morality, fairness and common human decency. It becomes negative and destructive if we ignore or suppress it. The Christian practice of accountability and confession has been adapted as Step 5 of the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Admitting our faults/mistakes/sins to ourselves and at least one other trusted human being and to your God, is therapeutic. It enables us to better understand ourselves and our weaknesses, avoid repression and facilitate emotional and spiritual growth.

2. Make Amends to Those we Hurt.

The two powerful words, “I’m sorry,” send out help in three directions: The person we hurt; ourselves and our relationship.

3. Embrace a New Lifestyle that Avoids Guilt.

Patterns of behaviour and attitude that trigger guilt must be changed to maintain emotional health.

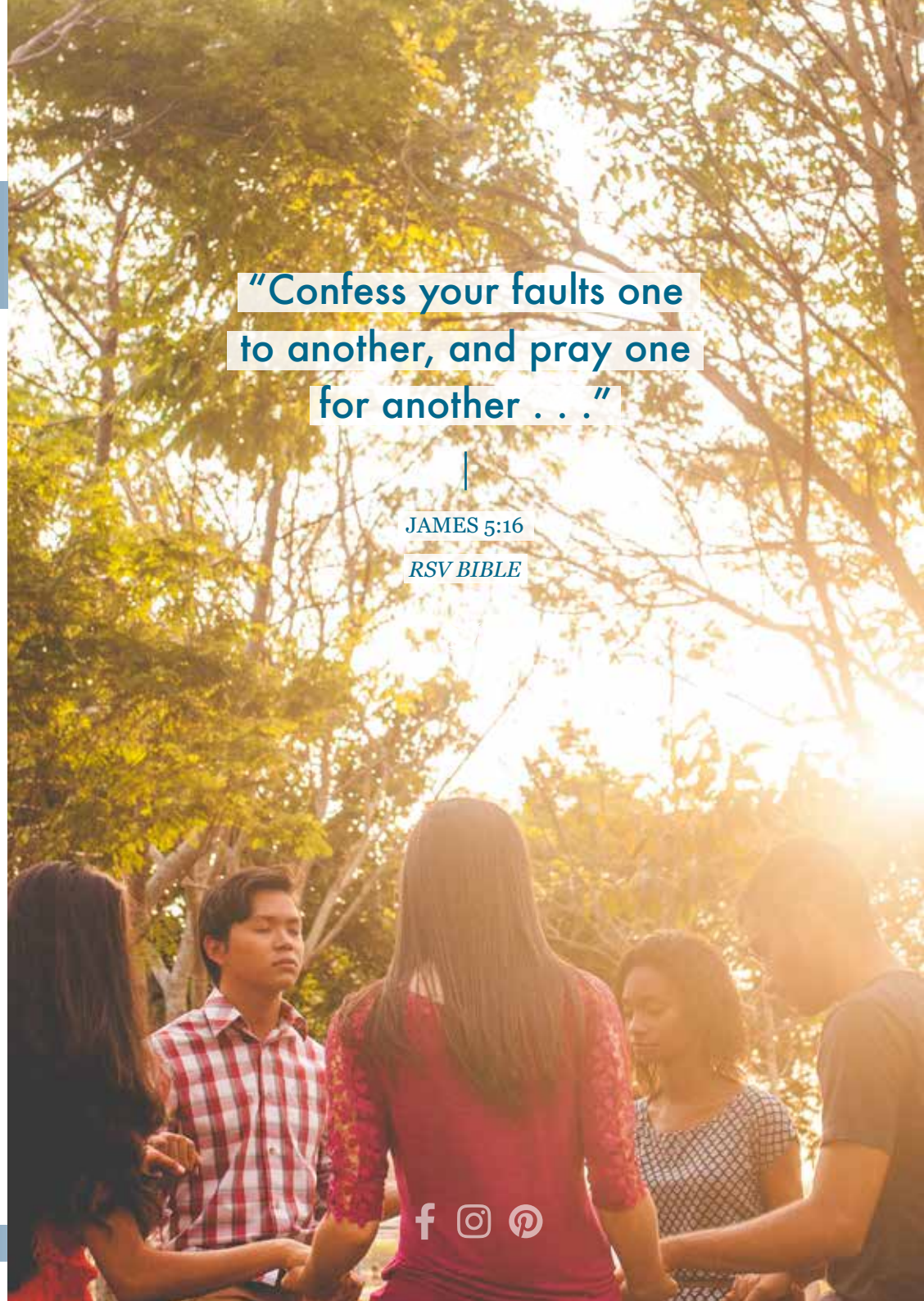
4. Continue Growing.

It is important to move on from our mistakes. Having dealt with them, we now need to put them behind us.

Don't be discouraged if you stumble and make mistakes. Recognise that we all have weaknesses. Old negative habit patterns can reassert themselves. We must reassert our growth decisions and patterns.

OVERCOMING OUR WEAKNESSES

The next booklet takes us further in our growth experience to deal with the addictions. The issues of workaholism, perfectionism, codependency, substance abuse, and other negative behavioural patterns are addressed—dealing with the reasons and the way to meet the challenges.



“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another . . .”

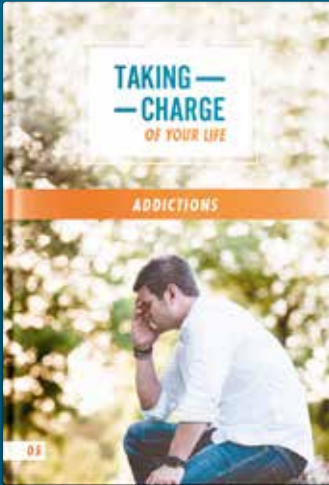
JAMES 5:16

RSV BIBLE



CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

ADDICTIONS



The next booklet takes us further in our growth experience to deal with the addictions. The issues of workaholism, perfectionism, codependency, substance abuse, and other negative behavioural patterns are addressed—dealing with the reasons and the way to meet the challenges. Email or call HopeChannel to receive your copy and continue in your journey.



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