



Winter/Spring 2018

## **Boundless Confidence**

by Sue Yockey, Elementary School Counselor

The theme of this counseling article came from a discussion the VCS counselors had on failure. In reflecting further on this topic I was drawn to the Prayer of Abandonment.

*Father,  
I abandon myself into your hands;  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you:  
I am ready for all, I accept all.*

*Let only your will be done in me,  
and in all your creatures -  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.*

*Into your hands I commend my soul:  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,  
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,  
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,  
and with boundless confidence,  
for you are my Father.*

*Charles de Foucauld*

In my reflection the phrase that struck me the most was boundless confidence. When a person is in fear there is no room for confidence when he or she tries to go through it alone. Instead, there is boundless fear and with that comes endless thoughts of failure and limitless stories with negative endings. What would happen if when in fear we turn to God for help? We abandon ourselves, our children, our families, our communities, and our world to God. To take it a step further what would happen if we start each day with this prayer regardless of how we are

feeling? I tried it at the beginning of this year and welcomed the peace that followed from not having to do it alone.

## **Striving for...Perfectionism?**

by Sr. Colleen Schmitt, Middle School Counselor

Recently Valley Catholic staff heard our SSMO Sisters talk about one of our core values: Striving for Excellence. The phrase has perplexed me since I came to this campus. For me, when I think of striving for excellence, I immediately think of striving for 'no error' or striving for 'superiority' or to 'win.' But I found that the SSMO interpretation of it is far different than my own narrow view. Excellence is about setting a goal and focusing on being the best that you possibly can be. It is about knowing yourself, the gifts that God gave you and sharing them with others in order to make the world a better place. That is a far cry from my original word association to excellence—which is perfection.

Perfectionism is incredibly stressful. Striving for “perfect” goals is impossible. It is easy to be overwhelmed, to be fearful of failing, to dwell on mistakes, and especially to avoid criticism and rejection. A perfectionist is constantly worried about what others think and ultimately will either give up or avoid a task to not appear like a fool. Think of how many times you did not take a risk because of fear you would fail or be mocked. It is a devastating feeling to feel rejected. How might perfectionism be affecting our students?

Here is a list of what perfectionism can look like in children (AnxietyBC):

- Tendency to become highly anxious, angry or upset about making mistakes
- Chronic procrastination and difficulty completing tasks
- Easily frustrated and gives up easily
- Chronic fear of embarrassment or humiliation
- Overly cautious and thorough in tasks
- Frequent catastrophic reactions when things don't go perfectly or as expected
- Refusal to try new things and risk making mistakes

Chronic perfectionism can lead to severe social anxiety and other anxieties as well as depression and could also lead to impairment in social, emotional and educational functioning. Here are just a few ways to help our kids get back to the 'Strive for Excellence' mentality instead of perfectionism (AnxietyBC).

- *Educate them about perfectionism.* Help them know that perfectionism makes us overly critical, unhappy and avoidant of new things.
- *Teach positive statements.* Since perfectionists commonly think “be perfect or be a failure” they are commonly self-critical. Help them learn positive statements like, “Nobody's perfect,” “All I can do is my best.”

- *Help the child to gain perspective.* Mistakes are seen as a catastrophe's for the perfectionist. One bad performance can make them seem like a failure. Help them realize that it is not as terrible as it seems. Did you know that Michael Jordan tried out but did not make his high school basketball team?
- *Praise the process.* Whether successful or not, praise the effort. Always.
- *Overcome procrastination.* Create realistic schedules and priorities. Create a balance between time spent on work and play. Otherwise perfectionists tend to have a narrow window of hobbies or activities because the inner pressure to be good at a lot of things.

When we help our kids accept failure, then we teach them to learn, thrive and move on. That is excellent living, not perfect living. We also teach them to not sweat the small stuff, be kind to themselves and value imperfection in life. Sounds like a great way to strive for excellence!

### Sources and Recommended Reading

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## **Finding True Belonging**

by Shelby Treick, High School Counselor

I was a city girl, California born, relocated to a small town in Wyoming. A happy ending would have been I learned to love my surroundings, made a ton of friends, embraced the cowboy ways, and rode a horse into the sunset. Unfortunately, I was afraid of horses, did not make too many friends, and did not fully embrace the beautiful place I was in. I spent most of my time trying to be something I wasn't, and before I knew it we were moving again and I left a town with no roots and a bitter taste in my mouth.

Today Wyoming is my reminder to live authentically because I didn't NEED to belong anywhere or to any group. I needed to belong to myself wholeheartedly. I blamed a town for my own insecurities and faults, I thought the problem was everyone else, when all along I needed to look inside. Instead of doing the work to love myself I searched for others to define me and make me feel like I belonged.

When we can love ourselves and be confident in our beliefs, flaws, and offerings the need for the acceptance of others dwindles. Today I carry Brene Brown's words, "**True belonging** is the spiritual practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True belonging doesn't require you to *change* who you are; it requires you to *be* who you are."

Our students face this challenge every day to live authentically. I find many struggling to fit in, find their niche, or feel like they belong anywhere. Our students are in the process of finding their own identity but perhaps are searching for it in others. As a community it is time we re-evaluate what true belonging means. Let us practice what it means to live wholeheartedly with confidence in who we are. Have pride in yourself and begin to tell yourself every day, "I am enough and I don't need anyone to define me." Be an example to our students that living authentically means you are putting time into getting to know yourself, your beliefs, and loving yourself unapologetically. Like Maya Angelou said, "You only are free when you realize you belong no place — you belong every place — no place at all. The price is high the reward is great."

We need to practice showing our students it is OK to be alone sometimes, if you love yourself wholeheartedly that is enough. You are enough.

### Reading Recommendations

[Braving the Wilderness](#)

[The Gifts of Imperfection](#)

[The Gift of Failure](#)

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