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Tutorial

When Fight-or-Flight is Not an Option: The Trauma of Fear

Leonardo DaVinci once said that “just as courage imperils life, fear protects it” (Missine 259). All mammals, including humans, share an instinct; that is, we either fight or flee when we are faced with fear. Walter Cannon, one of America’s leading psychologists of the 20th century, pioneered the phrase “the fight-or-flight response” to describe our natural inclination to flee the bear in the forest or defend our family when attacked (Cannon 377-378; Allan 29). Whenever the “brain/mind detects a threat, [it] activates the sympathetic nervous system, and [we are] prepared to fight or flee” due to the rush of adrenalin, which “intensifies emotional experience” and exerts “anti-fatigue and energizing effects” (Allen 29; Goldstein). But what if fight or flight is not always an option and we must dwell in a state of continual fear? What if an employer controls his employees to the point that they are fatigued and depressed because they are too disempowered? How should the bullied behave when she can neither avoid nor confront the bully? What about a child who is trapped in an abusive home? What about a political captive who is seized and manipulated by the captor? Each of these four scenarios is an example of abusive power and relational fear.

There have been numerous studies about the various psychological effects of fear and trauma. Some have said that coercive power results in “psychological captivity,” “traumatic binding,” or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Herman 74; Allen 154). Pulling this research together into a cohesive whole, I will argue that the abuse of power combined with instances of unhealthy relational fear may cause psychological trauma through disempowerment, demoralization, and disconnection.

Fear is “a normal reaction to a real or imagined threat” (Gullone 429). Relational fear is the fear directed towards another human being through a personal relationship. This paper will focus on the dynamics and role of relational fear between an authority and a dependent.¹ How is relational fear different from other types of fear? Because mankind is the only species that is rational, conscious, and able to do moral good or bad, men—often subconsciously—might take advantage of others by imposing fear. Relational fear can cause a different danger than other fears do.² For example, a spider may hurt or even kill with its poison, but a human can manipulate, traumatize, and harm physically as well as emotionally. This is the nature of relational fear—we fear whenever we sense that someone has the power and ability to harm what we safeguard the most; it is the fear of another human causing us to lose an object or reputation that is highly valued.³

Relational fear can be healthy as well as unhealthy for the dependent. Healthy fear, such as the fear of punishment, protects the dependent through implementing a reasonable law for the common good. A child might obey her parents in order to avoid punishment and come to understand whatever is good and evil. There are two conditions under which fear of punishment can be deemed healthy: the law must be just and the punishment deserved, both in measure and method. The law must be a “dictate of reason,” attaining to three different human acts—it commands the generically good, forbids the generically bad, and permits which is neither (ST

¹In order to distinguish, I will adopt the masculine pronoun to refer to the leader and the feminine one to the dependent without ascribing either role to a particular gender, except when discussing real-life victims.

²Anxiety is the feeling and anticipation of some perceived danger, whereas “fear is the response to a specific danger” (Allen 52). Relational fear is accompanied by anxiety, because from time to time, there is the dreadful anticipation that the authority will act harshly. To be anxious, one has to previously feel fear, for only after a danger can we experience a justified feeling of another such danger—that is anxiety (Allen 29). Through imposing specific dangers, fear is invoked, and anxiety comes as a side effect.

³People have different fears. For example, some dread humiliation more strongly than physical pain. The key point here is that abusive fear is that the authority has the power to put the valued matter in danger.

II.I Q 92, A 2).⁴ Whatever is good and bad must appear reasonable and acceptable to the dependent.⁵ Moreover, the law is only morally obligatory if it is just—“ordained for the human good” (ST II.I Q 96, A 4). Therefore, the law is made out of love, envisioning the true good for and seeking union with the dependent (ST II.I Q 28, A 1, 5). Healthy relational fear employs the fear of punishment “in order to ensure obedience: in which respect punishment is an effect of law” (ST II.I Q 92, A 2). Moreover, this kind of fear ideally results in personal improvement, a respectful attitude toward the authority, and the creation of trust between the authority and dependent.⁶

However, when the law is unjust the authority exercises an abuse of power and invokes abusive fear, which is the unhealthy form of relational fear. The law is an act of violence when the law is for the “lawgiver’s cupidity or vainglory,” when the law is “beyond [his] power,” or when it is imposed unequally (ST II.I Q 96, A 4). If the law is unjust, its effect will not be punishment but abusive power, and so the dependent fears not the punishment but the authority himself, as she is undeserving of an irrational punishment. Therefore, unhealthy relational fear is caused by abuse of power.

⁴Thomas Aquinas was discussing laws in respect to government and politics. However, ruling a nation is similar to maintaining order within a business or household. Therefore, to a great extent these statements about the law are applicable for any leader.

⁵Note that the reasonableness of a law depends on the subjective perception of the dependent. The law may be morally correct, but if the dependent does not understand its moral implications, it will be irrational to her. If this is the case, the dependent will have difficulty following the law, but legally she will be wrong to do otherwise. A good way to make a law reasonable is by explaining to the dependent the reason behind it. As soon as she can identify with the authority then there is the opportunity for a union between them and peaceful interrelations.

⁶Fear of punishment is a healthy form of fear because “from becoming accustomed to avoid evil and fulfill what is good, through [such fear], one is sometimes led on to do so likewise, with delight and of one’s accord. Accordingly, law, even by punishing, leads men on to being good” (ST II.I Q 92, A2). With just laws and deserved punishment, a child, for example, can undergo a healthy psychological development or a citizen may be able to trust the government.

Abuse of power is the “psychological reality of a sharp role, status, and power discontinuity between leaders and followers” that changes their relationship from cooperation to competition, characterized by a lack of trust (Hogg and Reid 174).⁷ The leader fears the loss of his authority, and uses his power excessively and corruptly in order to execute his will and interests over those of the dependent by means of coercion, exploitation, and self-interest. An abusive leader can either rule “by crises which induce fear of the total group’s destruction or by fear of personal disaster for the violation of the directives, orders, commands from the top” (Berrien 201). Machiavelli, a political advisor, famously urges the leader to use abusive power by invoking fear and utilizing cruelty to establish and safeguard his power and to impose his will on the people. He promotes the interest of the leader, but entirely dismisses the significance of the mental, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of the people (Machiavelli 65-68).⁸

Whenever the law is unjust, and thus unhealthy relational fear is at play, the victim may undergo three different, though not entirely distinct, states. Firstly, the victim experiences disempowerment; that is, “the victim is rendered helpless by [the] overwhelming force” of an atrocious leader (Herman 33; 77). The dependent fears the ruler because he is threatening something that is personally valuable to her. The danger inflicts “helplessness and terror,” because the dependent is disempowered, unable to fight or flee against the danger (34).

Secondly, disempowerment may lead to demoralization. As defined in 1975, demoralization is characterized by a combination of distress and incompetence; it is the inability “to perform the tasks and express the feelings which are considered appropriate in a stressful

⁷The term “leader” refers to any human who has authority over another in daily life: e.g. an employer, political ruler, parent, teacher, etc.

⁸Abusive power refers to the authority’s act of exploiting his power, while abusive fear appertains to the feeling that the dependent undergoes when abusive power imposes undeserved punishments.

situation” (de Figueiredo 154). Demoralization coerces a victim to act contrary to what she knows is right. Moreover, the absence of freedom to make moral decisions and act according to them is the defining marker of demoralization. The word demoralization, henceforth, refers to the feeling of unfreedom, helplessness, hopelessness, and departure from the accepted standards; when the victim is in an ongoing state of demoralization, distress outweighs her moral standards, and thus she acts contrary to what she knows to be right.

Lastly, the abuse of power may cause a certain disconnection, which refers primarily to the detachment from one’s self and others due to a traumatic experience. Demoralization may result in disconnection, where the dependent is unable to act in a way she would consider appropriate and is thus disconnected from her own feelings. When the danger presented by the perpetrator is unavoidable, the victim is forced to fulfill the standards of the leader. In some cases, the dependent has to detach herself not only from her morals but also from her will and desires, a state known as dissociation, which is the most severe type of disconnection (Janet 457; Allen 81; Herman 33-34). When physical escape is impossible, mental escape is chosen, which is the deliberate manipulation of “attention and consciousness to escape pain” (Allen 81). Dissociation is the detachment from our emotional reality to cope in traumatic experiences at the expense of sound judgement and consciousness (Janet 457; Allen 81). When neither fight nor flight is an option, there is often also a certain unavoidable disconnection from the community, either because they are physically distant, morally dismissive, unable to intervene, or completely ignorant of what is happening. It follows that the victim under coercion disconnects from her surroundings and from herself as a means to escape the internal pain.

There are degrees of abusive fear. In most cases, the fear of being harmed is less demoralizing than the fear of being killed because we fear death greater than injury. It stands to

reason that the more the threat is unjust, abusive, and undeserved, the more fear it imposes and the more it harms the psyche. Additionally, the closer the relationship with the leader, the more influence he has over the victim, the more morally coercive he can be (imposing his standards), and the more demoralizing the effect. Therefore, abusive fear is not always the same and may not always result in all three states, but only in one or two.

When the abusive fear is so great that it disempowers, demoralizes, and disconnects inwardly and socially, then it has fundamentally caused a psychological trauma, defined as "an experience of overwhelming danger" and "extreme stress" that hinders the victim from functioning properly (Herman 47; Allen 4).⁹ There are different types and ranks of rulers in everyday life—the employer, a bully, parents, and political rulers, among others. We will discuss these four examples in order of the fear's significance. In each case, we will analyze the relational fear based on three questions: Is there abusive fear? Is the dependent unable to flee or fight against the present danger? And does the fear disempower, demoralize, and disconnect? If the scenario affirms all three questions, then the relational fear is unhealthy and abusive power has thus caused a psychological damage.

Our first example of unhealthy relational fear is found in the work place. Employers may believe that the use of fear and threats will effectively encourage workers to be more productive, help the organization to be more successful, and enable themselves to preserve their positions of authority. Yet this control by fear is not as effective as it may seem. Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology at the University of London, established that employees with more autonomy over their work were less likely to become depressed than those with less control, even if

⁹It must be noted that "it is the subjective experience of the objective events that constitute the trauma" (Allen 14). This objective event is then personally interpreted. There are undeniably some examples where an individual may be traumatized even though they only experience one of the three states.

“working at the same pay level, with the same status, in the same office” (Hari 68). Employees, who do not have the power to present their vision and act according to their skill, may experience weariness, fatigue, depression, etc. (Hinkle 31).¹⁰ The worker is powerless and miserable at work. Certainly, a set of rules is essential for preserving order and maintaining productivity within the work environment; however, in some cases, the rules are simply counter-productive. “Marjorie,” for example, observed that she and other coworkers had to sit in a room silently for hours typing documents. The problem was, Marmot said, that “she ha[d] no discretion to decide anything at all” (Hari 68). The employer used abusive power because he exploited the labor of his employees for the sake of executing his own interests. Yet, the abusive fear is minimal; the dependent is not utterly disempowered, because she can escape her employer at the end of each day and there is the possibility of securing a new job in the future. An autocratic employer may disempower the employee to some degree, but he does not typically regulate her personal life. Therefore, she does not undergo demoralization, for there is not a close enough relationship that the employer should impose moral standards on her as the dependent. Nor is disconnection an issue, for the worker is still able to feel connected to herself and to her own ambitious desires. In some instances, an employer may be a “control-freak,” abusing his power, but still there is a rather small probability that the worker should be traumatically impacted by abusive fear.¹¹

¹⁰These symptoms can occur whenever employees are unhappy with their work, the work environment, or their employer. But they do not always indicate an abusive fear.

¹¹There are surely examples of employers who abused their power to such an extent that they regulated the personal lives of their workers, or examples of workers who could not escape the employer or their job due to necessity of money. However, this essay deals with the fact that most employers are indifferent to the workers’ personal lives; oftentimes they merely care about their productivity and success within the workplace.

Bullying is another example of using fear to exercise power over another.¹² It is hard to rate the probability of a traumatic experience in cases of bullying, since there are various ways to bully and different subjective reactions. However, there is a higher probability that the bullied victim would undergo a traumatic experience than the depressed worker for three reasons—the bully has no natural authority over the bullied but by “overwhelming force” disempowers the victim; his focus lies primarily on hurting the victim; and the bully often causes social isolation and disconnection (Herman 33). Bullying clearly involves abusive fear, and the victimization is unjust. Often such “direct attacks” or exclusion will render the bullied helpless and unmotivated (Olweus 98). The victim luckily, however, is still able “to perform the tasks and express the feelings which are considered appropriate in a stressful situation” (de Figueiredo 154). Therefore, abusive fear in bullying oftentimes will not demoralize or entirely disconnect by dissociation, but rather simply cause discomfort, disempowerment, and social exclusion (Olweus 98).

In contrast, abusive fear encountered within the domestic scene, particularly in the case of parental abuse of a child, is extremely harmful to the victim because the parents have a rather personal, close, and binding relationship with the dependent.¹³ Homes ought to provide safety and rest, but repeatedly throughout history they have been turned into psychological prisons; the

¹²I am solely referring to bullying at a social physical gathering (not cyberbullying), either at school or the workplace. A person is bullied “when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons” (Olweus 98). These negative actions include aggressive behavior such as imposing discomfort or pain through physical or verbal violence, or even facial disrespect (Olweus 98). Also, the fact that it is repeated shows that the victim is unable to easily avoid the bullying.

¹³Within the domestic scene there may be abuse of power from the parents toward the children, husband to wife, or wife to husband. In this paper, I will only discuss the abusive power of parents toward their child/children. However, the effects of abusive parents should be similar to the effects of an abusive husband or wife. Therefore, they are very close related and do not require separate discussion. Moreover, it must be noted that I will heavily focus on abusive fear, but I will not discuss sexual abuse within the home; this is a perversion that is most damaging because there is an unbalance of power and a fundamental misunderstanding of parenthood and the rule of passions.

barriers are invisible, but nonetheless fear imparts a sense of captivity on the victim (Herman 74). The perpetrator instills terror, causing feelings of helplessness and loneliness, which demoralizes the victim. The abuse of power in parenting traumatizes the child who can neither fight nor flee the threat experienced, and in so doing, hinders the healthy psychological, emotional, and moral development of the child.¹⁴ In contrast, healthy relational fear would help the child mature and develop, for it would teach and impose reasonable moral behavior.

We shall examine how the use of unhealthy fear within parenting affects the child's psychological development. Judith Lewis Herman, an American psychiatrist, researcher, teacher and author, interviewed a dozen children, one of whom said the following:

There weren't any rules; the rules just kind of dissolved after awhile. I used to dread going home. I never knew what was going to happen. The threat of a beating was terrifying because we saw what my father did to my mother [...] He would do it to her and she would do it to us. One time she hit me with a poker. After awhile I got used to it. I would roll up in a ball. (99)

This child, Archibald, experienced ongoing unhealthy relational fear, as the rulers who at that moment were his parents did not establish rules and used fear as a tool for parenting. They did not impose fear with the hope of improving and protecting their child, but rather for self-interest, inflicting punishment and physical abuse whenever they deemed necessary. This family, in which the father was beating the mother and the mother beating the children, can be described as ruled by relational fear on every level. Archibald recounts that there were no rewards, but merely punishment; no rules, but merely fear. Reasonable and just rewards and punishments are an indicator of visible love and evidence of healthy relational fear because they are for the good of

¹⁴Traumatized children may have depression, the problem of "doublethink" or "double self," low confidence, or the feeling of complete isolation from the community (Herman 101;103). They are often influenced by this trauma for the entirety of their lives. Children in abusive homes have two options: either to admit to themselves that they are powerless and incompetent, or to take the fault upon themselves (Hari 114). The latter grow up with the feeling of guilt and low-esteem, but the former experience disempowerment and vulnerability.

the people (Heb 12:6). In this case, however, Archibald was afraid of going to a home where no justice could be found, only irrational violence.

Archibald was disempowered because he could not flee from this danger. He did not want to go home, dreading the violence, yet he had no choice; he was dependent upon his parents financially, socially, and legally. Also, there were no rules that he could potentially follow, and so he was entirely helpless to avoid the beatings at home. Because he could not flee from this ongoing terror and danger, Archibald “got used to it,” which is the visible turning point at which Archibald entered the state of demoralization. Here, he accepted that he was in distress and entirely incompetent; he therefore decided to submit to his parents, “roll[ing] up in a ball,” the ultimate position of disempowerment. Additionally, Archibald experienced the highest form of disconnection because what ought to be an “ordinary caretaking relationship” was actually terrifying and abusive, resulting in “a shutting down of feelings, thoughts, initiative, and judgement” (Herman 98; 84). He developed an “attitude of passivity,” which removed his actual desire for self-preservation due to his weariness, fatigue, and eventual submissive acceptance (Herman 85). Sadly, Archibald lived in a “familial climate of pervasive terror,” in which he experienced disempowerment, demoralization, and disconnection, as a result of his traumatic childhood (Herman 98).

Some might say that imposing rules is simply good parenting, and that fear or respect for one’s parent is appropriate and protective; parents have lived longer and so they know better. As long as the rules are just, reasonable, and made for the good of the children, then surely this fear is healthy. After all, it is written that children ought to “obey [their] parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph 6:1). The child’s fear is healthy when there is a balance between what is allowed and what is forbidden, and a balance between fear and love. Consequently, the excess of rules is

as destructive as the absence of them.¹⁵ Even though most abused children describe a “chaotic and unpredictable enforcement of rules,” others emphasize “a highly organized pattern of punishment and coercion” (Herman 99). Meadow, another of Judith Lewis Herman’s interviewees, is one such survivor. Unlike Archibald, Meadow’s parents established an intense set of rules which, she recounts, were “too strict, too nitpicking. Some of them were pretty bizarre. You could be punished for smirking, for disrespect, for the expression on your face” (99). Meadow lived in a climate of “constant danger” and in “a state of constant alertness” (99). But even so, the rules were almost impossible to obey and caused this young girl to live in fear. She never thought the rules to be “fair or unfair, [she] just tried to follow them,” which shows disempowerment, demoralization and an “attitude of passivity” (100;85).¹⁶ Meadow and Archibald are just two examples of the many abused children who experience unhealthy relational fear, unjust law, and traumatic childhoods.

Shifting from the domestic scene to the political realm, some might say that because few political rulers use fear to rule over their subjects, the citizens are utterly disempowered, demoralized, and disconnected from their own true desires and from each other because their actions, both private and public, are restricted. However, fear of punishment typically has no harmful results as long as the law is for the common and individual good; the legislator creates just laws that the community/city/country might flourish economically and socially. If the laws are a dictate of reason, promulgated publicly, and justly executed by a ruler, then it should be obvious to the citizens that this law is for the common good (ST II.I Q 92, A 1). Political rulers

¹⁵As stated above, for a law to be just it has to forbid the generically evil, permit the generically good and permit that is neither (ST II.I Q 92, A2). But if nothing is permitted, then the child experiences mere punishment and no freedom.

¹⁶It is not certain that Meadow experienced disconnection. Herman does not specify this in her interview. But, even so, it is probable that she suffered disconnection because she acquired an “attitude of passivity” to mentally escape the pain of her abusive home (Herman 85).

normally do not cause traumatic experience because they have no personal relationship with their citizens so as to personally cause disempowerment, demoralization, and disconnection.

Moreover, often there is a sense of security; we can “fight” against the government by electing a different representative, or we can attempt to “flee” it altogether through emigration.

Sadly, however, certain rulers have imposed insane laws, controlling their subjects by fear and imposing illogical moral standards upon them. Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin are two such examples. It was not a reasonable and just law to isolate, imprison, and even plan to kill an entire race, as Hitler did in the Holocaust, nor was it just that Stalin would send three million to the gulag, a system of labor camps in Siberia. Hitler and Stalin imposed their perverted morals on the people, and the punishment for transgressing the law was severe.

These rulers represent the epitome of abusive power as they literally locked some of their citizens in physical captivity. The prisoners’ survival entirely depended on the captors; neither fight nor flight was an option due to physical barriers. Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, experienced isolation and undeserved punishment when he was put into the Nazi extermination camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. He remained nearly a year in the camp, before he was liberated. After his captivity, he wrote thirty books. He was such an important political activist for human rights that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. In his book, *Night*, he recounts the traumatic events during his political captivity. Here, he depicts his great attachment and loyalty towards his father throughout those terrible months. They both were willing to undergo great danger just so they could stay together. They considered fighting courageously and selflessly for each other as morally obligatory. Wiesel, however, remembers the time when the fear of his own death exceeded his courage to fight for his father. He chronicles this traumatic event:

[The guard] began to beat him with an iron bar. At first my father crouched under his blows, then he broke in two, like a dry tree struck by lightning, and

collapsed. I had watched the whole scene without moving. I kept quiet. In fact I was thinking of how to get farther away so that I would not be hit myself. What is more, any anger I felt at that moment was directed, not at the [guard], but against my father. I was angry with him, for not knowing how to avoid Idek's outbreak. That is what concentration camp had made of me. (Wiesel 6)

Wiesel was under the burden of abusive fear because the law was unjust and applied unequally among the people, and the punishment was undeserved. There was no escape for Wiesel nor any opportunity to fight for freedom. Furthermore, he failed to intercede for his father because he was disempowered by his fear of the life-threatening danger. He was "forced to violate [his] own moral principles and to betray [his] basic human attachments" due to the fear caused by his captor's abuse of power (Herman 83). Therefore, Wiesel was demoralized, unable to think and express what he considered to be appropriate; fear of physical abuse overcame his morality and he could not act to protect his father. To justify what he thought to be immoral behavior and avoid the feeling of guilt, he unjustly blamed his father instead of feeling appropriate anger toward the captor. His will "ha[d] been bent to the will of his enemies and turned against the person he loved" (Herman 84). He became detached from his own real feelings, true moral standards, judgement, consciousness, and even from his father. Therefore, abusive fear imparted a trauma, because he experienced disempowerment, demoralization, and disconnection.

Someone might argue that the fear of God is the most traumatic form of fear because an individual must submit, give up his control and his will, and disconnect from his *true* human desires. However, the fear of God is not unhealthy; it is healthy for us to fear a perfect, omnipotent, and omnipresent Being for He is a real superior and the only One who could potentially put us in real danger. Even so, God does not abuse His power because He does all out of love and for our good (1 John 4:8). Because He loves us, He caused our existence, which is

good in itself (ST I Q 6, A 4). But God also creates laws so that we might follow Him and seek the ultimate good, Himself. We should fear God's judgement not only because He is all powerful but also because He is supremely good. It logically proceeds that when we do not follow the laws, there is the utmost danger that we will not gain happiness, but rather eternal death. At the same time, if we trust Him and obey His commandments, we know He has loving mercy. Therefore, we are comforted as we fear His infinite power and knowledge. The laws exist so that we may obey and reach eternal union and happiness with God. This is healthy relational fear.

Fearing God and His punishment humbles us in front of an Almighty Being and leads to our edification and satisfaction. The fear leads us to follow Him and observe the laws given in the Bible. A true believer would not want to fight against or flee from the fear of God because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 110:10). The fear of God is the knowledge that He is superior, complete goodness, holiness, and perfection. It implies service and love. It implies hatred of evil, and the striving for righteousness and peace. This fear is a trust in God that "overcomes all [other fears] and is a protection in time of danger" ("Fear of God"). The fear of God does not merely involve punishment, but rather reverence.

The fear of God does not cause disempowerment, demoralization, or disconnection, but rather the opposite. The fear of God is the knowledge of God; God is "the truth" and gaining a knowledge of this ultimate truth is empowering as well as moralizing for it informs us what moral behavior is good and empowers us to act in these ways (John 14:6). Additionally, disconnection as discussed above may be the separation from one's true self and society. However, through our fear of God, we gain understanding about our true self as God's image-bearers who have sinned against Him. Through this fear, we are reunited with our Creator and

therefore the broken connection is restored to its natural state. The fear of God cannot be in any way considered traumatic.

In summary, it is the experience of abusive power and unhealthy relational fear that may traumatize the individual. The closer the relationship with the perpetrator, the more dependent the victim, the more power the perpetrator is able to abuse. The greater the abuse of power, the greater the fear; and as fear increases, so do its traumatic consequences. Obviously, if leaders would balance their power with justice and love, then we could reduce trauma in the future and my tutorial would be irrelevant. However, because that is not always possible in a fallen world, we should ask ourselves how we can help victims of such trauma. First and foremost, if any of us should become aware of any kind of abuse, we should make it known to the appropriate authority. For example, if a child is bullied, then a classmate should notify the teacher or principal; if a child is mistreated, then a neighbor or teacher should inform someone with greater authority. Nevertheless, this is quite impossible in many cases. Therefore, our focus is often not on preventing the trauma itself but on helping the victim survive and heal after such an experience. The traumatic wound has happened in the relationship, and thus the recovery most likely will occur within relationship with “the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections” (Herman 133; Bryant-Davis 6). Individuals close to the situation should help the victim through fostering a friendship with them or at least by advising counseling. But the one thing that we all can do as a community is to pray for the victim, that she may be empowered, moralized, and connected by the fear of God, the healthiest fear possible.

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