

Embracing Our Belovedness as a Path to Well-Being

KARLA KEPPEL, MA, MISSION PROJECT COORDINATOR, CHA

INTRODUCTION

In the face of academic, social and other stressors, young people can be especially burdened by the pressure to succeed. Add to these the pervasive demands of busyness, and well-being becomes an even more difficult topic to take seriously.

Leaders in Catholic health care are uniquely situated to lead younger generations by example. Ideally, through incorporating daily practices of well-being, personal connection with the Divine, and engagement in ministry formation they thoughtfully find meaning and purpose in their work. Through these everyday rituals, ministry leaders allow not only for their own flourishing, but for the flourishing of those they mentor.

Dr. Stuart Slavin, vice president for well-being at the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, suggests that when we think of our well-being as a continuum, taking small steps where we can, we are better situated and empowered to more intentionally integrate it into our routines. In doing so, we invite others into similar awareness.

The awareness that we have been named by God as beloved and worthy of love means that acting, even in small ways, toward our own flourishing becomes an important way to offer gratitude and praise back to the One who created us.

In his teachings around well-being, Slavin highlights a few key tools necessary for taking steps toward better well-being.¹ One of these, metacognition, refers to the way we

“think about our thoughts.” That is, to notice distorted thinking, name it as such, and consider what other ways of thinking are possible. For example, is one grade (out of many) indicative of being a failure? What response would a loved one have to a declaration of failure? As one of God’s “Beloved,” what would a kinder response look like?

While many of us are likely familiar with these types of thought patterns, and perhaps even well-practiced in reframing them, Slavin suggests that these are practices that must be cultivated in younger generations if they are to experience well-being and fully flourish in their vocations.

Thus, while the practice of prayer and reframing may not be new, consider who in your life might benefit from being reminded of their own “belovedness.” As stated by the late spiritual writer Henri Nouwen, “Becoming the Beloved means letting the truth of our Belovedness become enfolded in everything we think, say or do.”²

INVITE THE DIVINE

Starting from a place of love, we use our lived experiences as a path to the Divine. As you notice an invitation to reframe comes to the surface, can you pause, pray and consider other ways of thinking?

Take a deep breath. Then, another. As you settle into shifting your thinking, focus on the experience of it. What other perspectives can you take?

Incorporate into your breathing a simple two-part phrase that highlights your belovedness, your

God-given dignity, or a sense of belonging and being loved. A few examples:

Inhale: I am beloved.

Exhale: I belong.

Inhale: I am Your beloved.

Exhale: And so I am loved and love others as You do.

What do you notice? Does your thinking shift when you start from a place of belovedness, as one created in God’s image and likeness, to be infinitely loved by God for all eternity? How can you bring this reframing into your life daily whenever tensions or conflicting feelings arise?

CLOSING PRAYER

Boundless Love:

You embrace us with Your grace, know us deeply and love us unconditionally. Grant us the strength to love ourselves as You do and to share that love with others. In moments of doubt, may Your love be a steadfast anchor. May we find solace in the knowledge that we are cherished as Yours.

Let us always be aware that we are never alone. Your love surrounds us, supports us and leads us home. Amen.

NOTES

1. “AWARE and Wellbeing Workshop,” Learn at ACGME, <https://dl.acgme.org/learn/course/aware-well-being-video-workshop/aware-and-wellbeing-workshop/introduction>.
2. Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 45.