

WoH 418

Headaches / Suffering

Ros: I could see lights flashing in the corner of my eye. I thought something was reflecting in my glasses so I took them off, but it was still the same. After a while I realized that I couldn't quite see things properly either. This was the first time I experienced a mild migraine...the opposite side of my head felt slightly painful for the next day or two.

Carol: Welcome to *Women of Hope*. I wonder if you suffer from headaches? Almost all of us have suffered from a headache at some time in our life. Headaches and migraines are perhaps the most common health complaint and can last for as little as an hour...or up to several days. People of any age can be affected. What about you Carol?

Carol: Tammy has been doing some research on headaches haven't you? I hope you didn't get a headache doing all that research!!

Tammy: (laughing) No...I took my time and was not under any pressure. But you know lots of study and pressure to get a job done *can* cause headaches.

Carol: So Tammy, tell us what you've found out.

Tammy: Well...millions of people suffer from headaches...from mild pain to very severe migraine headaches. Most of us have experienced them...and we know that they can be quite painful...but they're usually harmless.

Carol: That's good to know.

Tammy: Occasionally though, a headache can point to a serious disease...such as a brain tumour, or stroke. So it's very important to see your doctor if you have headaches very often, or headaches that are very painful.

Carol: First let's relax and enjoy this lovely song...

Carol: You're with us today on *Women of Hope* and we're talking about the

common problem of headaches and what we can do about them. Tammy, are there different kinds of headaches?

Tammy: There certainly are...and there are many different causes as well.

There are three main kinds of headaches that we're going to talk about today: *tension headaches* – that are very common; *migraine headaches* – that many people suffer from, and one you may not have heard of – *cluster headaches*.

Carol: So...tell us first what you found out about *tension headaches*.

Tammy: OK – these are the most common, with two out of every three people experiencing them in their lifetime. Tension headaches usually create a feeling of tight pressure around the head.

Carol: So what causes them?

Tammy: Very often they're caused by physical or emotional stress...so they're best treated by making lifestyle changes (for example exercise, diet, posture changes and managing the level of stress in your life).

Carol: So if you have a lot of headaches, maybe you need to check whether you're sitting in a nice straight position if you work at a desk a lot. And if you do a job that requires a lot of the same movements, take regular small breaks and stretch, or change your position.

Tammy: If you're working in a noisy environment, you could ask your employer about ear protection that you might be able to wear.

If you've injured your neck at any time, this may be causing your headaches, so see your health care worker and talk about possible treatments.

Even problems with your teeth or your jaw can cause headaches. So if your headaches don't go away after you've changed some of these things, see your doctor or health care worker for help.

Carol: Tammy you mentioned diet. Do you mean that certain foods can cause headaches?

Tammy: Yes they can...especially when it comes to the next kind of headache – migraines.

Migraine headaches feel like a throbbing or pulsing pain. At the same time, or before it comes on, you may see odd things like lights, or patches where you can't see things properly...as Ros described. You may have numbness in your face, hands and feet, or nausea and vomiting. You may be very sensitive to light.

Migraines can be triggered, or caused, by many things including certain food... stress...heat and cold...strong smells...fatigue and hormonal changes.

Three times more women than men suffer from migraines, so they think hormonal changes may definitely be one of the major causes. Most people who suffer from migraines need medical help. So if you have severe headaches like these, see your doctor or health care worker. They will help you to find out what's causing them, and how you can treat them.

Carol: On *Women of Hope* today we're talking about headaches. We've talked about common tension headaches, and a little bit about migraines. Tammy you mentioned another kind earlier – was it cluster headaches?

Tammy: Yes

Carol: So what are they?

Tammy: Well, what I found out about cluster headaches is that these are not nearly as common as tension headaches or migraine...and more men suffer from them than women.

Carol: Well that sounds fair – as more women have migraines! (chuckle)

Tammy: I guess so – but they're not very nice! They usually cause severe pain in one eye...and they may include other symptoms like swelling and watering of the eye. The cause of these headaches is not well known – but they think that both cigarettes and alcohol may trigger them. Most people who suffer from cluster headaches need medication.

Carol: So, if we have a lot of headaches – or very painful headaches not very

often, what should we do?

Tammy: You should definitely see your doctor or health care worker.

He or she will want to know some important things like:

Where is the pain? Is it over the top of your head, around one eye, in the front or the back of your head? ...How strong is the pain? ...How long does it last for? ...How often do you get it? ...What else comes with the pain? ...like do you see lights...do you also have a sore neck? ...What kinds of things bring on the headache or make it worse? ...like certain foods? ...What makes the headache feel better? ...lying down in a dark room, or massage?

Carol: So can headaches usually be treated?

Tammy: Treating a headache really depends on its cause but some of the more common treatments include:

- painkillers from a pharmacy, such as aspirin or paracetamol
- relaxation techniques, such as massage
- changes to your diet
- other kinds of therapies, like acupuncture or chiropractic treatment
- trying to reduce stress
- and medication that a doctor will prescribe.

Carol: So if you suffer from regular headaches is there anything *you* can do to help or do you just have to wait for your headache to come and *then* try to do something about it?

Tammy: There are actually many things you can do to avoid headaches, or to prevent you from getting them so often.

- *Keep a headache diary* if you can, to try to find a pattern – like what you do, eat or drink / your hormonal cycle / medications or other changes in your environment. Take this to your doctor to help him or her to diagnose the cause of your headaches.
- *Try to avoid triggers* that may bring on a headache (like drinking alcohol, or

eating certain foods)

- *Make changes in your lifestyle* that may help reduce your headaches. Eat well, get enough sleep, do some regular exercise and try to reduce stress.
- Finally, *plan ahead*. Look out for warning signs of a headache and make sure you have medication on hand wherever you go. And if you feel a headache coming on stop what you're doing and do whatever you need to do to ease it. Take some medication if necessary to stop it getting worse; stretch your head and neck; give your neck or head a massage; go for a walk in the fresh air.

Carol: It sounds like there's no set way to deal with an attack. But I'm sure you can learn what's right for *you*. Thanks Tammy...

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. All of us have suffered in one way or another haven't we? People can suffer physical problems, emotional problems or spiritual problems. Our friend Stevie has suffered a lot so she wrote something that she wanted to share with us. Carol's going to share what Stevie wrote.

Thanks Carol...

Carol: 'Have you ever wondered why God allows so much suffering, when he says that he loves us so much and is in complete control? I have. I'm sure that people who've suffered a lot have asked this question. I think most of us have asked this question at some time. They may have a loved one who's suffered a lot. Or they may be discouraged about sad or awful stories they've heard, about what's happened to others. / feel like that sometimes. From around the world I hear stories of abuse...oppression...poverty...wars...injuries...illnesses...neglect and natural disasters.

I've suffered myself too. I was born with a disability called cerebral palsy. My mind works fine for thinking, but my body is slow and wobbly. My mind can, and wants to, do so much more than my body is able to. This causes me grief and frustration.

And what about the pain of losing a loved one to death? We've all felt *that* pain. Why does God allow these painful things to happen? Let me go back to the beginning...

When God created the world it was perfect...free from suffering. People could enjoy a loving relationship with God, each other, and the world. But, people chose to rebel against God. We still do things that displease God...his word tells us that this is called 'sin'. Do you do things that displease God? I sure do ... I sometimes make bad decisions.

Rebellion against God has brought rejection, guilt and shame into the world. And so the world is broken. There is brokenness between us and God...within ourselves, our relationships, and the world. Have you experienced brokenness in your life?

I have suffered the consequences of bad decisions that I've made in my life. I've experienced guilt and shame and lost opportunities. Do *you* suffer the consequences of bad decisions that *you've* made? Humanity suffers consequences for bad choices we've made together. We haven't taken good care of the earth, and so it's damaged and isn't functioning as well as it was created to. So bad things can happen like natural disasters and people getting sick from pollution.

We suffer some health problems because we don't take good care of our bodies, or we eat unhealthy food.'

Tammy: Let's listen to this music while we think about some of the things Stevie has just said about suffering.,,

Tammy: Here on *Women of Hope*, Carol is sharing something that our friend Stevie wrote about suffering. Let's keep listening...

Carol: 'So many people in this world suffer from other people acting cruelly towards them. I wonder why God doesn't stop this?

God treats every person with dignity, giving them the freedom to think and make choices for themselves. Imagine if God took away our freedom to choose between good and evil. We would lose even our ability to think for ourselves, because we often have greedy and hateful thoughts! We would only think and do

whatever God *made* us think and do. Like your radio...it only turns on and off when *you* turn the knobs. *Love* would lose its *meaning*, because the joy of being loved is that someone has *chosen* to love you...not been *forced* to love you.

On top of having a disability, I have had poor health for the last four years. I keep on asking God to heal me...others have asked God to heal me too. I don't know why he hasn't done so. But as I think about what to do with the little energy I have, I learn about what matters most in life...

I've become more patient and tolerant. Through suffering I've learned some important things about life. I'm more able to identify with those who suffer...show them compassion and comfort them. God has brought so much good out of my suffering, just as he has promised to in his Word the Bible, which says "... God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love (him)..., '(Romans 8:28 NIV)."'

Carol: Have *you* ever been hurting because you missed someone so much...or because someone hasn't understood you...or they've treated you badly?

Tammy: Maybe they said something nasty to you...or ignored you. Maybe they abandoned or rejected you.

Carol will tell us more of what Stevie said...

Carol: 'When I'm hurt I get *some* idea of how God feels when people hurt him. Since God loves every single person infinitely, we cannot imagine the pain that he feels over us. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, he suffered everything that people have ever suffered. When he died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins, he suffered physical, emotional and spiritual agony.

God promises that those who love him, and believe that Jesus died to save them from their punishment, will one day be with him in heaven. He promises that those people will never suffer in heaven, and that they will have joy far greater than their suffering on earth. God's Word the Bible says: "[God] will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever (Revelation 21:4 NLT)".

I don't fully understand why God allows suffering. But I know that he *loves* me. I've felt him comfort and strengthen me when I'm in pain. He promises to comfort, strengthen and encourage *anyone* who asks him. He is a compassionate God who knows, understands and feels our pain, because he himself suffers too. In his Word, the Bible, God promises: "I will never leave you nor forsake you (Joshua 1:5 NIV)."

Because I have experienced God's comfort and compassion, I trust his promise that he *is* good and only does good things. I *trust* him even when I don't know why he's allowing me, and others, to suffer. God's love and his promises give me comfort and joy...and hope...for myself...and the world.'

Tammy: Thank you Carol for sharing Stevie's thoughts about suffering. She's so right – God *cares* about our suffering. He *does* love us and will *never* leave us alone...he offers each one of us *comfort* and *strength* when we suffer or are in pain. He is a compassionate God.

Tammy: It's been a while since we've heard from (Guest). She's here today to tell us more about what happens when we pray. Thank you Guest...

(Guest) Sometimes when we pray and ask God for something his answer is *wait...or not just now*.

A young married couple wanted to have a family, so they prayed that God would give them a child. Soon they were expecting a baby and were very happy. But before long, they lost their baby. Their dreams of a family were shattered.

The doctors told them that they were not very likely to have another child, so in their pain, they gave their situation to God. They trusted that he was going to do what was best for them. They decided to adopt a baby. They had to wait a long time...eight years, until they finally received their new adopted baby girl.

A few months later, the wife became pregnant with her own baby. Because she had lost her first baby she was afraid. But they decided to trust God's plan for

their family. Just over one year after receiving their little girl, their little son was born.

God had answered their prayers for a family - but not as they had expected. They had waited a long time. Waiting on God is not always easy. His silence does not mean he has forgotten you. In these times he wants to teach us to *trust* him. He wants us to learn that his plans for us are the *best* they could be – and they are *always* for *our* good.

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Tammy: It’s time for us to go now, but we’d like to pray for you before we go...thanks Carol...

Carol: *Father, God we want to thank you that through our suffering you teach us many things. You teach us to understand the pain of others, and you teach us to trust you. Thank you for sending Jesus to suffer for us...to die on the cross to take the punishment of our sin. Thank you for your compassion and love. We pray in the name of your son Jesus. Amen*

Tammy: We’d love to hear from you. You can contact us at...please let us know how we can pray for you. Goodbye and God bless you.

Carol: Goodbye.