

UNHEALTHY CYCLES

People often find themselves reliving painful experiences that repeat in negative ways. This is especially true in situations in which the affected person has not yet resolved the underlying issues of those experiences. This constitutes an *unhealthy life cycle*.

This section will attempt to address four specific cycles that people often experience. Repeating these familiar, unhealthy events keeps us in bondage emotionally, relationally and spiritually.

An unhealthy cycle originates from family values and life experiences that have been passed down from parents to children. If the values and experiences were positive, they built us up; however, if they were negative, they tore us down, damaging our identity in the process.

We are going to look at four types of unhealthy cycles that people tend to repeat throughout life, especially when trauma or painful experiences have occurred. These four cycles include: *survival, rejection, victim mentality and shame*. Each cycle is very powerful and can have lasting effects on a person's life. When one or more of these cycles are repeating, the effects become even more devastating. These cycles will eventually need to be broken in order to experience a life of victory and freedom both relationally and spiritually.

- **Survival:** A defense mechanism that enables a person to cope in order to get through difficult situations or experiences that could not otherwise be accomplished, such as in cases of abuse. This becomes an issue when it lasts longer than is needed to get through a difficult situation. When there is ongoing abuse, the instinct to survive becomes stronger and self-protective measures become part of the survival cycle.
- **Rejection:** A cycle that tends to repeat and is connected to how we view ourselves in relationship to others. It has its root in past experiences that damage our identity and distort our way of thinking about ourselves and others. Damages our identity—how we perceive ourselves. Rejection makes us feel like we have nothing to give to others and that others do not desire what we have to offer.
- **Victim Mentality:** A stronghold of the mind that is rooted in our personal belief system and keeps us in bondage, as well as subjected to unhealthy relationships and situations. Involves a way of thinking. It includes a belief system that conveys that we are powerless to make our own decisions without the approval or permission of others.

- **Shame:** A stronghold of the mind that is rooted in our personal belief system and keeps us in bondage, as well as subjected to, unhealthy relationships and situations. Takes root when someone, usually a loved one, violates us through a spoken word, action, and/or behavior. Once shame emerges, a belief system takes root that links us back to bad experiences and the people involved. Shame is broken when those experiences are shared with trusted people and the lies associated with them are exposed.

Unhealthy cycles repeat themselves because we:

- May not be fully aware we are in a repeating pattern.
- May know we are in an unhealthy pattern, but not yet willing to make changes
- Are insecure and afraid of the unknown and choose to stay in familiar situations even though they are harmful to us.
- Try to be stronger than we really are by handling our problems on our own.

We can change even when we do not think we can. Our circumstances can turn around even if they look hopeless. Proverbs 13:12 tells us, *Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.* Proverbs 23:18 provides us with this encouragement: *There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

There is always an answer and a way of escape for any circumstance in which we find ourselves. The greater bondage comes through our *thinking*, not through our circumstances. If we believe there is no way of escape, then that type of thinking will keep us in bondage to the very thing we want to be free from.

Jesus is the answer. It is not our own wisdom or strength that moves our individual mountains, but rather, the power of God working through us and our circumstances to bring change.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

I Corinthians 10:13

Dee Johnston

Healing Hearts Ministry