

Each day has enough trouble of its own

These words of Jesus follow a passage about worrying over the necessities of life (Matthew 6:34) and, more generally, worry seems to be running through our community especially amongst children and adolescents and we have labelled that worry - anxiety. But who at times isn't anxious? Lying awake at night turning over a problem, called at short notice to address a meeting, trying to reconcile differences with friends, feeling incompetent at work, concerned about the health of a family member can all result in anxiety. *Everyone experiences anxiety. It is a natural and important emotion, signalling through stirrings of worry, fearfulness and alarm that danger or a sudden threatening change is near.* (Anxiety Disorders resource Centre))

So, can a little bit of anxiety be normal, motivating and even helpful? What is the current reported wave of anxiety in children and adolescents about?

Anxiety disorders

While various amounts of anxiety are experienced by everyone in daily interactions and activity, anxiety disorders are *characterized by fear, worry or dread that greatly impairs the ability to function normally and is disproportionate to the circumstances at hand* (Elia 2021). Anxiety disorders include: separation, panic, agoraphobia, social anxiety and specific phobias. It may be a severe case of one or a combination of these. Recent USA research indicates that nearly one in three adolescents will experience an anxiety disorder. The signs of an anxiety disorder can be any excess of one or combination of:

- Recurring fears and worries about routine parts of everyday life
- Changes in behaviours, such as irritability
- Avoiding activities, school, or social interactions
- Falling grades or school avoidance
- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Substance use or other risky behaviours
- Chronic physical complaints, such as fatigue, headaches, or stomach-aches often linked with school-avoidance. (McCarthy 2021)

While aspects of these features might be seen in a child or adolescent, the disorder is identified if it *greatly impairs the ability to function normally and is disproportionate to the circumstances at hand*. In most cases these disorders will affect student learning and therefore are of concern to teachers. Awareness of these early signs is important, and teachers can help students keep perspective by engaging them in how they see the world, their expectation about school and work and about their social media participation. Concerns need to be shared with other school support staff and with parents.

What is causing the current wave of anxiety?

The literature identifies three broad areas causing anxiety in today's children and adolescents:

1. Genetics - a disposition towards timidity and nervousness is inborn and if one parent is naturally nervous then there is a good chance their child will have anxious tendencies.
2. Separation - often developed in childhood and carried over into adolescence as a fear of being separated from parents and loved ones.
3. High expectations and pressure to succeed - from examination-oriented education and parent expectations.
4. A threatening world view - where students are unable absorb family tragedy, war, displacement, bullying, natural disasters.
5. Social media - where students feel constantly connected but their self-esteem and worldview become connected to social media responses and posts.

Treatment

When an anxiety disorder is evident, teachers should refer the child to the school counsellor who will arrange for an assessment. If diagnosed, behavioural therapies will occur to help the student understand the challenges of anxious beliefs, increase their confidence to face fears and to cope with uncertainty by building up behaviours to face fear. Medical practitioners also have a range of drugs that can be prescribed to add to the behavioural therapy if needed.

In extreme cases and where therapy is slow to take effect, students may attempt to diminish or deny their fears by engaging in risky behaviours including drug experimentation, impulsive sexual behaviour and suicidal behaviour.

Christian response

Students experiencing anxiety and those with a diagnosed disorder need care and Christian teachers are well placed to support students. Philippians 4: 5b-7 *The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In this passage, Paul reminds us that the Lord is near (both being present and his soon expected coming) and that turning to him in prayer and asking him specifically for what is needed is a way forward. Focussing on him in thankfulness for all that he has done for us in Christ is to provide the worldview and perspective that can benefit everyone. Peace is needed firstly between God and humanity through Christ, and secondly peace in worldly matters for we trust in him and his purposes being worked out through history. Getting the big picture right is a key to dealing with life's problems and allaying anxiety.

The Christian teacher can share this perspective, pray for their student and, if appropriate, pray with their student. They can ask God for his peace to enter the student's life, arresting anxiety and giving them the cognitive and behavioural skills to address anxiety. These actions will support the anxious student and be in line with, and support, any behavioural therapy. But anxiety can often be very severe and partly hidden. Teachers should not accept sole responsibility for any advice but refer to student to the appropriate support staff and ensure that their concerns are taken up.

Addressing anxiety is important for children and adolescents because *each day has enough trouble of its own.*

References

Anxiety Disorders Resource Centre, *Your adolescent - Anxiety and avoidant disorders*.
https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Anxiety_Disorder_Resource_Center/Your_Adolescent_Anxiety_and_Avoidant_Disorders.aspx

Clare McCathy MD FAAP, *Anxiety in teens is rising: What's going on?*
<https://www.healthychildren.org/Anxiety-Disorders>

Josephine Ellia MD *Overview of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents* MSD Professional Version
<https://www.msmanuals.com/mental-health-disorders>

Report for Annual General Meeting, 28th May 2022.

2021 was another year greatly influenced by the COVID pandemic with TCF activities curtailed. The Illawarra Prayer and Share gathering (in March) was cancelled, Get Away (in July) was cancelled as Greater Sydney was in lockdown and the Webinar (in Sept) was postponed to 2022.

TCF News was the main form of communication with all members. John Gore continued to diligently editor and write articles for each issue, which are much appreciated. Robyn Thomas also contributed general prayer points for each edition.

Personal contact was made by phone, with some members, as the Committee rang them to have a chat and ask for prayer points.

Cathy McKay continues patiently and graciously to train Pam about the website and upload articles.

The office continues to operate from John and Elizabeth Gore's home. This is a great blessing to TCF.

There were five resignations from membership and one new membership. Total at the end of the year was 64.

There were 8 Committee meetings held (mostly) by Zoom in 2021. The following show the number that Committee members attended.

Harley Mills (President) to April	4	Pam Griffin (Secretary)	8
Ken Silvester (Vice President)	8	Lyn Searle	8
Dianne Young (Treasurer)	8		

The Committee is grateful for the on-going interest and support of members and especially to those who actively contribute to TCF. A growing concern is the great need for new and fresh members for the Committee and for younger teachers to join TCF.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you are interested to assist in any way.

Ken Silvester
(Acting) President.

Pam Griffin
Secretary.

Treasurer's Report 2021`

The accounts of the Fellowship have been audited. This is an abridged summary and the full accounts are available from the office on request.

Statement of Receipts and Payments for year ended 31 December 2021

RECEIPTS

Subscriptions	2685
Donations	2630
Conference fees	0
Getaway fees	0
Interest and other	<u>175</u>
	<u>5490</u>

PAYMENTS

Salaries	6491
Office costs	280
Stationery, printing and postage	425
Marketing and promotion	0
Insurance and fees	411
Conference meeting Costs	0
Getaway	0
Missionary Support	180
Function and meeting costs	0
Gifts	<u>200</u>
	<u>8357</u>
Deficit	<u>2867</u>
Net worth as at 31 December 2021	<u>36390</u>

Update from the AGM held 28 May 2022

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE: Nominations received were for:

President - nil

Vice President - nil

Secretary - Pam Griffin

Treasurer - Dianne Young

Committee members - Lyn Searle and Ken Silvester

With no further nominations, all were declared elected, noting that the positions of President and Vice President are vacant.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- Harley Mills asked what activities were planned for 2022.
- John Gore reported on his project (with the Committee's approval) of publishing a book with a compilation of updated TCF articles written over the years.
- A request was made for suggestions for future webinar topics and speakers as well as ideas for topics for TCF News articles. One suggestion for a TCF article was on the continuing disruption of teaching and learning due to the high rate of teacher and student absences because of COVID, flu etc.

Missionary Update

Suzanne Rowe (excerpts from her April 2022 newsletter)

When will life return to 'normal'? What IS 'normal'? Do we even want to go back to 'normal'? I wonder if you have asked questions like these. I certainly have. Here in Australia, it feels like the pandemic is somewhat fizzling out. I am even daring to think about the possibility of travel later this year. I am keen to visit family, friends and supporters in NSW mid-year and may go even further later in the year.

I won't be visiting China anytime soon though. Although I can't visit in person just now, I frequently chat or message with people there online. I am also still part of the leadership team for our community of workers focused on that part of the world.

Each week, it is my privilege to study a section of the Bible with some Chinese ladies. Most are living in Australia, though one joins by zoom from her home city in Asia. One or two of the group are Christians (one of the Christians only joins during school holidays). The others are not ... not yet, anyhow.

Here in Melbourne, the Tibetan community was able to celebrate together in March for the first time for a long time. They used to gather every few months for a community religious chant and a meal. This time, they had dancing, football, special New Year's celebrations and more. I went prayer walking around the edge of the complex where they celebrated, since the event was limited to Tibetans and their spouses only.

Every few months, I gather online with others with a heart for Tibetan people and am also part of a steering group that plans events and networks. My involvement there stems from another network of Tibetan- Buddhist focused work that I'm part of and also serve on its board. It's been good.

Colin and Cathy McKay (as at April 2022)

Colin continues to teach remotely and via Zoom during the classroom week. We anticipate the next attempt will be for Colin to have a visa to travel in early September to teach in our country of service in Indochina. Cathy will be staying in Dubbo to look after grandchildren due to the family issues. MSG has just finished the April module and only has one more module left in May and the school year will be finished.

Colin was encouraged to hear one of the students remark while investigating Astronomy, "We have a very big God". Also, one of the students has shown an interest in studying Chemistry at tertiary level in the future.

We have received news that there are now 3 teachers who are committed to coming to MSG. One of these has had experience in setting up a small Christian school.

Getaway: Tuesday 12th - Thursday 14th July 2022 **at The Retreat Cottage at 51 Bendena Gardens, Stanwell Tops.**

Come for a refreshing time away in a peaceful bushland setting overlooking Illawarra's northern coastline with magnificent views. Enjoy fun, relaxing, Bible input, fellowship, prayer and sightseeing with great coffee!

Full weekend: \$140 (includes meals) Day visitors: \$20 per day (includes lunch)

Registrations close on 28th June 2022.

For more details: 0456 203 548 or tcfofnsw@exemail.com.au

Prayer Points

Thank God that this school year, on the whole, hasn't been interrupted by COVID and pray that the rest of the year will run smoothly with little or no interruptions.

- Pray for those still being affected by floods, fire or COVID.
- Pray for a solution to staff shortages and proper recognition of those in education
- Pray for those whose education has been disrupted by war
- Give thanks that, no matter what happens, God is still in control (Romans 8:28).

Disclaimer: The views expressed in articles and letters published in *TCF News* are not necessarily those of TCFNSW.

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