



# MENTOR CONNECTIONS

A BENEFIT OF YOUR MENTOR MEMBERSHIP

WINTER 2023



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## DEAR MENTOR:

Life is messy. We want it all Instagram perfect and Pinterest pretty, but it rarely is. As we mentor young moms, we begin to realize that serving, nurturing and discipling are all messy; because if we're doing it right, we're living life in the trenches right along with the ones we mentor.

As we talk with mentors at MOMcon, chat with many more throughout the year, and mentor in our own groups, we hear about the difficult situations women are facing every day. We hear the stories of the mentors coming alongside them, showing up and standing with them, encouraging, praying, and guiding.

This issue covers a few scenarios we know mentors face. We have asked some mentors to share what they learned and the tips that work for them as they support moms. We can't cover every scenario you will face as a mentor, but we can give you tips that have helped in these specific situations and others like them. The last pages of this issue include links to other helpful resources as well as a crisis planning worksheet to help you gather and store information you may need in a crisis situation. Gather the information now so you will not have to search for it when the need arises.

As you support others, we want to support you. If you have a situation you are working through and you need some help or just someone to pray along with you, reach out to us at [leaders@mops.org](mailto:leaders@mops.org) or share on the MOPS Mentors Facebook page.

We are in a unique position to offer support to women around us, and as we do, we get to help them see the good things in front of them - even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Your perspective and support may be the turning point in a mom's life.

We are cheering you on,



**KELLI JORDAN**

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# MENTORING THROUGH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS



Helping women navigate their day-to-day schedules and relationships can be challenging. It's not easy dealing with depression, facing down addiction, or working through significant loss. It's stressful, painful and sometimes debilitating, but it doesn't have to be lonely. Mentors are in the unique position to support moms in every situation.

## GALATIANS 6:2 (NLT)

*Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

Sharing other's burdens, trying to help those who are suffering, and bringing perspective to a situation is tough. We care and we want to help, but we are concerned about saying or doing something that will make their circumstances worse. Let's think through some scenarios and see how we can best be prepared to share another's burden.

Here are a few tips that apply in the mentoring relationship, regardless of the situation you are facing:

**LISTEN ACTIVELY AND WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.** It's not our place to fix the problem, nor is it our job to try and "guilt" someone into what we see as healthier decisions. Listen first, validate what she is feeling, and share what you know or how you feel last.

**PROTECT HER PRIVACY.** Not only may her safety depend upon it, but building a sense of trust in the group means women know they can come to you without you sharing their concerns with others. Respect the woman's story by allowing her to tell it in the way and time she chooses.

**GO WITH HER.** Women may feel alone, afraid or insecure in certain circumstances. Protect your boundaries and share the responsibility, but offer to literally walk with her through some of the difficult appointments, conversations or moments in her journey.

**DON'T MAKE PROMISES.** We can't promise we'll fix something or promise a particular outcome to a crisis. We can promise to pray, show up and support each other.

**RECOGNIZE YOUR LIMITATIONS.** We cannot "rescue" women, but we can support them as they get the help they need and take steps towards healing or change.

**BE PREPARED.** Gather and store information you may need in a crisis situation. Gather the information now so you will not have to search for it when the need arises.



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## MENTORING BOUNDARIES

The most common way we hear mentors describe themselves is by saying they show up and support moms. This desire is what makes us good mentors, but it also provides challenges for us. We can easily step in too deeply, too quickly or assume responsibilities that are not ours to carry. We must know our boundaries. As a mentor, we should ask ourselves:

*Can I help in this situation?*

*Is this a situation in which I need to bring in other support (other mentors, a pastor, counselors, etc)?*

*Will helping with this situation put me or my family in a dangerous or precarious situation?*



*Clarifying our boundaries makes us better and helps us all recognize what we can and can't carry.*



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIFFERING OPINIONS

**KELLI JORDAN, Leadership Development Manager and Mentor / [kellijordan.blog](http://kellijordan.blog)**

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On any given day, we can scroll through social media and find something that offends us. What do we do when someone in our group or on our leadership team posts something questionable? Start by answering this question: *Why does this post bother me?* Is it concerning because it indicates some harm to the woman or her family – domestic violence, abuse, mental health issues? If it is a health or well-being concern, then we should act in some way – either by reaching out as a support person or to connect them with other resources. OR is it because it is an opinion we disagree with?

If it is an unpopular opinion or even one that we feel is theologically unsound, we have to dig deeper in our answer to the question, *“Why does this bother me?”* For example, if it is a different political idea or parenting choice, we may have to walk away and not engage in it. Oftentimes, engaging will destroy whatever trust or relationship exists.

But then there are those posts that go a step further and you feel that they are theologically inaccurate and potentially misleading or dangerous to others. I don't have an answer for every situation, but I do believe this – conversations about posts like these don't belong on social media. You will never change someone's mind through a Facebook post, but you can begin a conversation offline. Call or text and ask them to join you for coffee or lunch and chat about it there. Ask why they believe what they believe and are they open to hearing what you believe. Questions like these open doors, whereas a post on Facebook or quoting scripture there draws a line in the sand.

I had a young woman who came to me and told me she was making a lifestyle choice that I disagreed with. She didn't ask me what I thought about it – she already knew. She wanted to see how I'd respond. Would I walk away or call her crazy or quote scripture? I asked questions about why she felt the way she did and why she was making the choice she was making. Her answers showed me she was so disappointed and discouraged by her life, and she was looking for a drastic change. It gave us a lot of opportunities to talk about what change she might like to see happen and less drastic ways to get there. If I had commented on her social posts and told her how wrong this was or quoted scripture when she came to talk to me, that would have ended the conversation right there.

God works in people's lives in different ways at different times, so, I shouldn't try and force you to change something in your life because I don't like it. I need to open the door to conversation and let God use me to accomplish whatever he wants in someone else's life. I think the most important piece of anything like this is to show how much you value the person. Their opinions are secondary to that.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LEADERSHIP TEAM:**

As leaders, we can't police what moms in our group are saying or doing online. We also can't insist that MOPS leadership team members refrain from posting on certain topics. Their personal social media pages are just that - personal. But we can lead team training and discussion about the impact of our words, likes and shares. Lead an honest conversation about how our engagement on social media can either draw lines in the sand or open doors. It is a great place to start when it comes to guiding women towards having a thoughtful social media presence.

# NEGATIVE CONVERSATION

**ANDREA FORTENBERRY**, *Executive Leadership Coach and Mentor* / [andreafortenberry.com](http://andreafortenberry.com)

When I was newly married, we ate lunch with family at my parents' house. My husband squeezed ketchup on his plate and sat the bottle on the table. It was the bottle designed for the cap to be on the bottom, so the ketchup comes out easily. I immediately noticed that he sat it down with the cap facing up.

I couldn't let this slide, so I made sure to tell him that he was doing it wrong—in front of a table full of people.

After the meal, my mom pulled me aside. She reminded me that it's important to praise in public and criticize in private. She also pointed out that it was quite a silly thing to correct my husband about. While it was uncomfortable in the moment, I'm grateful she kindly called me out.

As mentors, sometimes we will also need to gently redirect the moms at our table. Husband and mother-in-law bashing can become common fodder for conversation and can turn into moms one-upping each other with relationship grievances.

Here are five strategies to use when the conversation turns this direction:

**1. RESPECT:** Explain that while the table is a safe place and we want to share honestly, we also want to respect our spouse, his mother, or whoever is the topic of conversation.

**2. REFOCUS:** There's more to the person we're talking about than just their negative qualities. If we're constantly focused on the bad, we'll never see the good. Ask, "What do you love about your spouse or in-laws?"

**3. REDIRECT:** Take a moment to pray. This realigns hearts and turns conversation back to the topic at hand. You can also say, "Thank you for sharing. Now, let's turn back to the next item on the agenda."

**4. REMEMBER:** Behind every behavior is a person with a heart. Remind moms that their spouse and in-laws have a story that affects why they do what they do. When we remember this, it can help us learn to love and receive love from them better.

**5. RELATE:** Follow up personally and privately with a mom who is struggling in a relationship. Let her know you care about her.

So many good things happen around the MOPS table, but occasionally we need to guide our moms away from negativity and gossip. It may not be comfortable in the moment, but it can make a lasting impact.

## SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER

*Ephesians 4:29*

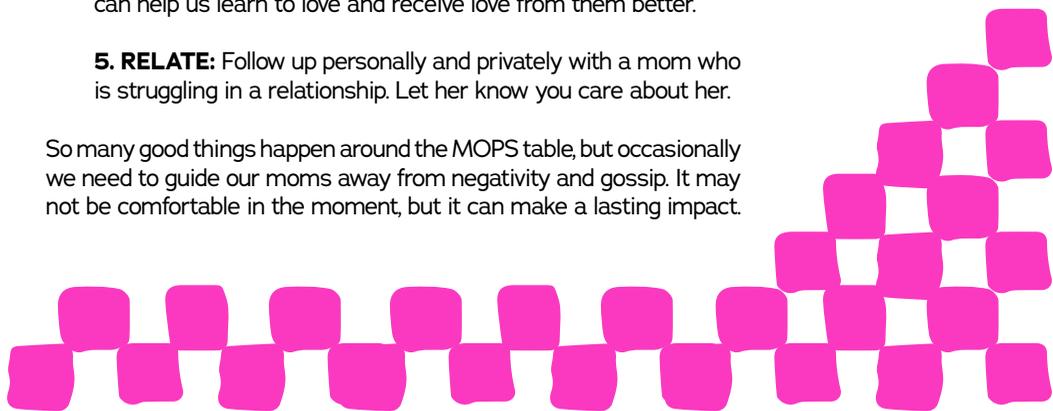
*Exodus 23:1*

*Proverbs 10:19*

*Proverbs 11:9*

*Proverbs 11:13*

*Psalms 141:3*



# ENCOURAGEMENT



**JENNIFER IVERSON**, *Leadership Content Strategist* / [jenniferiverson.com](http://jenniferiverson.com)

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Recently, I received a diagnosis that will change my day-to-day lifestyle drastically. When the doctor delivered this news, he casually said, “Let’s follow up in six months,” and walked out of the room. Six months! How was I going to survive tomorrow?

The moms we mentor experience similar scenarios upon giving birth or adopting a child. Each day they are learning something new in an overwhelming way. The day-to-day of life can feel like survival. Children, home, work – every moment seems to be allocated to something other than themselves.

As mentors, one of our roles is to encourage moms. Being on the other side of parenting very young children, we can see the dangers of a mom not caring for herself. It may be tempting to say things like, “take time for yourself” or “rest when the baby rests.” Suggestions to eat healthy foods, exercise, read the Bible or self-help books may come from the heart, but they will add to those overwhelming feelings. Moms receive heaps of unwelcome advice, and it may not be received as loving words.

When the urge to offer advice rises, but you haven’t been asked for advice, take a moment to look for the beautiful things God has created in these women. Point out those good things, and then, moms will ask for more specific advice once they know you can be trusted.

This statement went viral last year and garnered very strong feelings, “A woman is expected to work as if she doesn’t have a family and mother as if she doesn’t have a job.” That is the kind of pressure moms are feeling.

We do have the wisdom to know how important it is for moms to not lose who they are in the midst of mothering. Our role of encourager allows us to call out the good things we see in moms - the very things they forget or don’t notice in their hectic lives. The way they lead, their kindness, their creativity, their joy, their skills, their patience – their beloved creator knit these into their very being. Encouragement is a very powerful tool. We can remind them of these things and encourage them to keep exercising and growing them.

## **SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER**

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

*Hebrews 3:13*

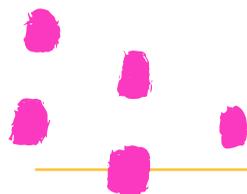
*Hebrews 10:24-25*

These moms are the leaders in our groups, churches, and communities, but many of them don’t understand that yet. Encourage them to step into those leadership roles. Your MOPS group is a great place for them to learn how to lead well in a safe, encouraging environment.

We can also gently help them understand the need to not neglect their health physically, emotionally or spiritually during this time of their life. Lead by example. Share your stories. The medical diagnosis I mentioned at the beginning is an ailment that I have just lived with for at least 30 years. Partially from not knowing it wasn’t normal and partially because, as moms, we put ourselves last when it comes to taking care of ourselves.

Mentors encourage, offer perspective, remind, and lead by example.

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# ADDICTION

**MELODI LEIH**, *Executive Leadership Coach and Mentor*

I met Haley through a friend. She had experienced significant trauma early in her life, which led her to escape through addiction. The more time I spent with her the more I realized she needed someone to care and support her as she took steps toward recovery. I quickly found myself learning what I could about her and about addiction so I could support her in both practical and personal ways.

Supporting someone through addiction can be scary and uncomfortable. You will be undoubtedly concerned for their well-being while not knowing exactly how to help. That's ok. It's important to remember our job as mentors is not to "fix" them. Instead, we can show compassion and love and point them to resources that can help.

A few things to consider:

**1. GET INVOLVED.** You don't need to experience addiction to show up for someone else who is. Be consistent with follow up and prayer support. You can still be involved and have healthy boundaries. Communication is key for both of you.

**2. EDUCATE YOURSELF.** Learn about addiction. What is it? How does it happen? Be ready to point them to resources for treatment and recovery as well as therapists in the area. The more you know about what is available near you, the more helpful you will be.

**3. HAVE COMPASSION.** Addiction is a disease, not a character flaw. We don't know what someone has been through that led them here. Share encouraging scripture, quotes and books. Pray with them often.

**4. EXPECT STRUGGLES.** They may not be ready for help. Shame can often keep them from believing and taking steps toward recovery.

**5. EXPECT RELAPSE.** The journey to recovery is long and difficult. Relapse is part of the journey. It is normal to feel upset and disappointed when it happens. Remember change has to come from within them. Stay positive. Try not to get angry when it happens and know their relapse is not a result of anything you did or did not do. If trust has been damaged, refocus and reestablish healthy boundaries. Your consistent presence is critical as they pick up and start again. Every day is an opportunity to start again and you can help them choose to keep moving forward by showing up, loving well and praying often.

**6. LISTEN.** Listen to understand, not respond. What they need is someone to hear what they've been through and encourage them through it. Be positive. Protect their privacy. Trust is crucial.

Recovery is a long process. There will be good days and hard days, but when you see God move them toward healing and wholeness, you will be blessed. Be part of their story and healing by loving well, praying often, and being a consistent encourager in their life.

## SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER

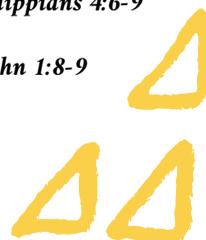
*Romans 6:11-14*

*Romans 12:2*

*1 Corinthians 10:13*

*Philippians 4:6-9*

*1 John 1:8-9*



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**JULIE WESLEY, Mentor and Life Coach / [juliewesleycoaching.com](http://juliewesleycoaching.com)**

In a Facebook/Instagram filtered world, it can be easy to want to believe that what our MOPS mamas post is the true reality of their lives. As MOPS mentors, it is important for us to recognize that isn't always true. The National Domestic Violence Hotline reports that one in three women have experienced some sort of physical violence by an intimate partner. This is an issue we not only need to be aware of, but have given thought to how we will respond if one of our MOPS moms needs help.

While we pray you will never encounter this in your group, the only thing more heartbreaking than it happening, is if the woman experiencing it feels she has to walk through it alone. If a mom has the courage to reveal this truth, or if you suspect or discover it, it is best for your mentor team to already have a plan in place. Here are a few tips to help you get started.

- **Decide ahead of time on an emergency plan if there is an immediate need for a mom and her children to be removed from a dangerous situation.** Familiarize your leadership team with local shelters, their admission processes, and their contact info. (Use the Crisis Planning Worksheet from MOPS to help gather and store important information, so when you need it, you can get to it quickly.)
- **Support the mom, but set wise boundaries.** While opening your home may be an option on a short-term basis, make very careful and wise decisions based on what you know of the risks involved in that decision, both for your family and the woman you are helping.
- **Normalize conversation in your MOPS group around asking for help, not hiding hard secrets, and not letting shame keep us from reaching out in struggles.** Give each other permission to reach out for emergency help, no matter what time it is. This should be an ongoing emphasis from your mentor team, reminding moms that you are a safe place to come, and if they reach out, they will be met with love and compassion.
- **Be aware of the signs** - an extremely controlling husband, mentions of violent outbursts, obvious fear of angering partner, and visible injuries. We don't want to assume there is violence in every situation, but we also don't want to be silent for fear of overstepping. Pray for discernment. Be attentive.
- **Make safety the priority.** There will be time later to address the need for counseling, the future of the marriage, etc. The immediate focus is walking alongside the mama to ensure she and her children are safe.

## SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER

*Deuteronomy 31:8*

*Psalms 27:1*

*Psalms 31:19-20*

*Psalms 57:1*

It is our privilege as mentors to share both the joys and the hurts of the mamas God has entrusted to us. Celebrate the beautiful moments, and show up with courage in the difficult and scary ones. Both matter in more ways than you will ever know.

# SUICIDAL THOUGHTS



**JULIE WESLEY, Mentor and Life Coach / [juliewesleycoaching.com](http://juliewesleycoaching.com)**

As MOPS mentors we get to share in the excitement of pregnancy announcements, adorable new babies, and exhausted but elated new mamas. Most meetings we also hear stories of diaper blowouts, rough days, or a mom's shame over losing it with her kids. But what do you do if what you're hearing from a mom seems to go deeper than "normal" struggles? What if she seems deeply depressed or even suicidal?

In the MOPS setting, one of the most likely causes for suicidal thoughts is post-partum depression (PPD). It most commonly occurs within 6 weeks after childbirth, and some studies report that approximately one in seven new moms experience it. Educating yourself on the signs of PPD and the resources available in your community can better equip you to be tuned into the moms in your group who may be struggling.

Since most of us are not professionally trained for situations like this, our focus should be connecting the hurting mom to the right people. Our job is not to make decisions for her but to help get her to family or medical personnel who can decide on appropriate care. Here are some tips and words that can help you guide her in the right direction.

Listen to what is being said and what is not being said. Take it seriously if a mom says things like, "I think my kids would be better off without me." Don't ignore the comment - pray and then respond calmly. If a mom is dealing with diagnosable PPD or serious suicidal thoughts, it won't be helpful to try to convince her that what she said isn't true. In that moment, reason, rationale, and even the most applicable Bible verses are unlikely to penetrate through a mind that is overwhelmed with deep depression. A good response to help you gauge her state of mind can be, "Tell me more about why you feel that way."



## OTHER WORDS YOU CAN USE ARE:

*"You are saying some things that are concerning to me, and it's important that we help you work through what you're feeling. I don't think I know the best way to do that, but I'm going to be right here with you while we find the right people that can help you"*

*"Thank you for being honest with me about where you are. That took a lot of courage. You are not alone in this now."*

*"I want to walk with you through this, and I know there are other people (husband, mom, friend) who really love you and would want to help you. Who should we call first?"*

## SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER

*Psalm 25:15-21*

*Isaiah 40:27-31*

*Matthew 10:29-31*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

*Romans 8:35-39*

*1 Peter 5:6-7*



## TWO FINAL THOUGHTS:

1. If you become aware that a mom in your group has attempted suicide, please handle that information with great discretion. This is not the time to send out an emergency prayer request. You want to do all you can to make your group a safe place for her to return to when she is ready. This story is hers to tell and she gets to decide if, when, and with whom it is told.
2. That being said, this is a big burden for you to carry alone. Share your fears and struggles with another mentor, your pastor, or someone who can help you process your own feelings.

*Breathe deep, pray, and then trust that the God who has called you will equip you to walk in courage as you help to bring hope and healing to a mama in need.*

Sometimes despite everyone's prayers and all the "right" interventions, the worst happens. If someone in your group succumbs to suicide:

- Don't blame yourself. You may question the things you did and start doubting your responses. You may feel like you should have done more. Don't let guilt stop you from supporting the women in your group, and don't let it stop you from finding someone (friend, pastor or counselor) who can support you through your grieving process as well.
- Grieve with your group. Each person manages grief and works through grief in her own way. Meet together to talk, cry and reminisce.
- Reach out individually to group members to check in - even the ones who seem like they are dealing with it well.
- Offer practical help to the family.

# MENTOR RESOURCES

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- 1. Share some MOPS stats with your church leadership.** When church leadership understands the impact MOPS can have on their community, the more supportive they will be. Find some global impact stats and a brochure for your church leadership on the leader site.
- 2. Are all your moms and mentors registered for membership?** Their MOPS Membership provides encouragement and connection for them in between your meetings. It is what connects them to sisters around the globe!
- 3. It is easy to miss opportunities for relationships when we are consumed by tasks.** The “Expect Good Things” leader curriculum video reminds us, leader-to-leader, that in order to truly expect good things, we have to look up. Watch this seven minute video.
- 4. Here at MOPS, we exist to share the message of Jesus.** Because of that, we provide resources for you as a mentor and leader to learn how to share that message with the moms in your group. Start with our Share Jesus study.
- 5. Part of your Mentor Membership includes practical online workshops curated for legacy-minded women like you.** Check out the library of past webinars and watch your email for future offerings.



## STAFF PICKS

To grow your MOPS Mentor skills: “*Asking Better Questions and Becoming a Better Listener*” with guest Chris Moss

For you as a mom: “*What Now? What Next?*” with guest Elisa Morgan



# MORE RESOURCES TO HELP IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

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## **CRISIS PLANNING**

Crisis is a scary word and comes in many forms. Perhaps one of the most difficult parts of being a leader is helping women navigate crisis situations well. We can't predict crisis, but we can create a plan.

[training.mops.org/lessons/support-moms-crisis-planning](https://training.mops.org/lessons/support-moms-crisis-planning)

## **MANAGING CONFLICT COURSE**

We can expect conflict in relationships, but it's how we handle that conflict that will determine whether the relationships we have will grow deeper or fall apart. Let's consider how we can intentionally and kindly navigate differing opinions, hard feelings and difficult conversations.

[training.mops.org/courses/managing-conflict](https://training.mops.org/courses/managing-conflict)

## **WOMEN AND DEPRESSION**

What are signs, types and tailored treatments for women dealing with depression?

[training.mops.org/lessons/women-and-depression](https://training.mops.org/lessons/women-and-depression)

## **HOW TO OFFER THE HELP SOMEONE REALLY NEEDS**

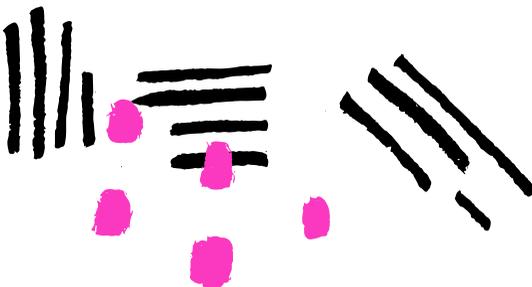
Use these 6 simple steps to provide help to a family facing a difficult situation. Find ways that are helpful for the family and really do-able for you.

[training.mops.org/lessons/6-simple-steps](https://training.mops.org/lessons/6-simple-steps)

## **SUPPORTING WOMEN THROUGH LOSS**

This includes resources and articles to support those around you. Some contain helpful info for you as the support person, others are ready to share with women struggling now.

[training.mops.org/lessons/support-moms-resources-on-loss](https://training.mops.org/lessons/support-moms-resources-on-loss)



OUR MOPS GROUP

# CRISIS RESOURCES

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WE CAN'T PREDICT CRISIS, BUT WE CAN CREATE A PLAN. MOPS INTERNATIONAL WANTS YOU TO BE PREPARED AS MINISTRY LEADERS TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY WHEN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS ARISE.

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Name of a local counselor:

Name of church contacts:

Name of a local food pantry:

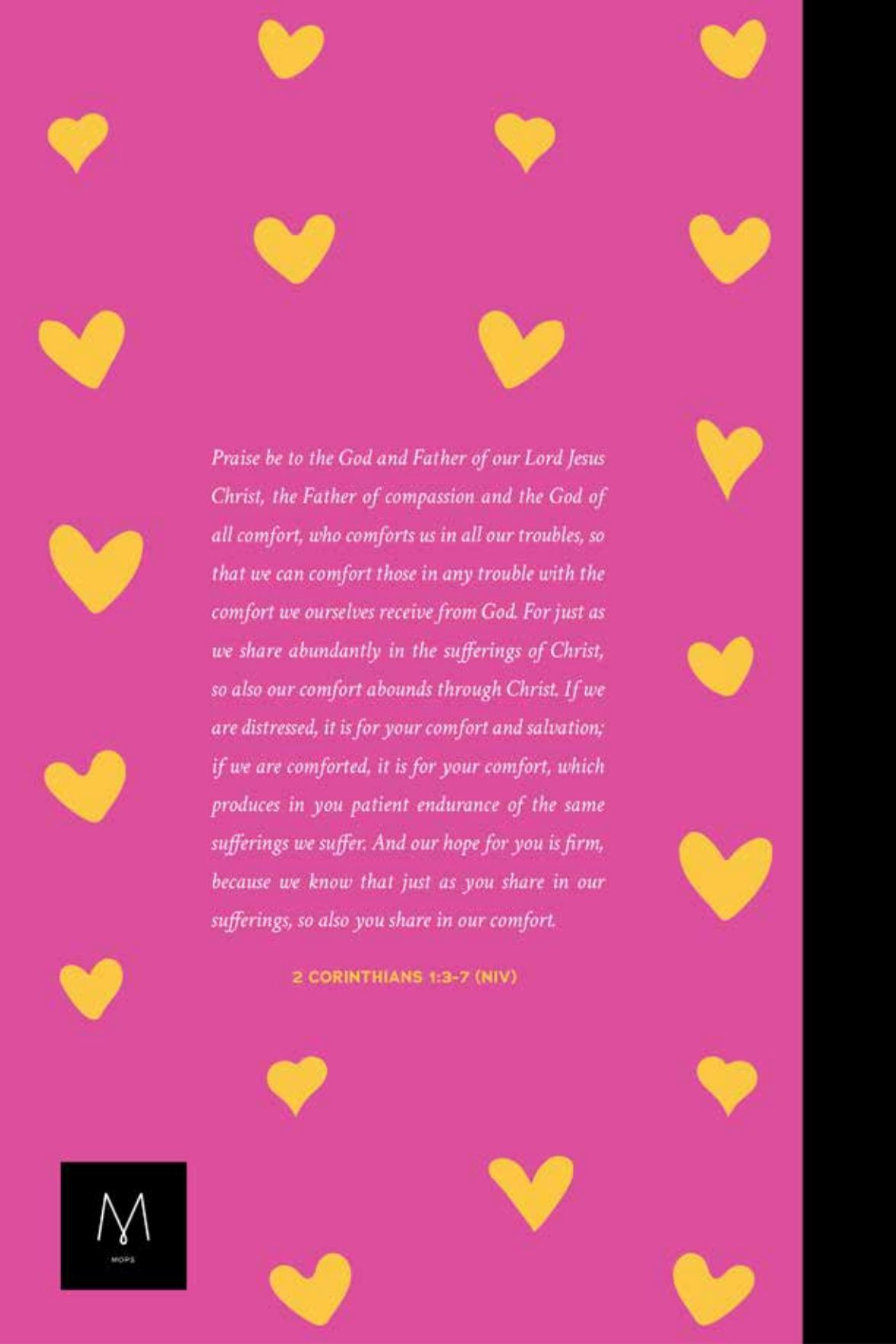
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\*  
SUICIDE PREVENTION  
HOTLINE  
988

\*  
DOMESTIC ABUSE  
HOTLINE  
800-799-7233

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*\*Permission to make copies for MOPS use. Find digital version at [training.mops.org/lessons/support-moms-crisis-planning](http://training.mops.org/lessons/support-moms-crisis-planning).*



*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

**2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7 (NIV)**

