

Normal development /Hagar - Lost & Alone

Carolyn: 'Looking at my little girl, her hands in the air and chubby toddler legs twirling around to the music, I can't help but laugh and join in. The pure joy expressed in that moment fills me up from the inside. It's a moment I try to cling to as I sob with exhaustion in the middle of the night ...she's awake *again* and just wants her mum.'

Tammy: That was Carolyn - do you remember that she talked to us some time back about being mother to a toddler? Do you think Carolyn enjoys her little toddler? ...Oh yes – even though there are times when she sometimes finds herself crying with exhaustion in the middle of the night when her little girl wants her – again!

Welcome to *Women of Hope today*...and you may already know by my voice that I'm Tammy! And here's Carol...

Carol: Hello

Tammy: Carol, do you remember feeling like this when your children were small?

Carol: Oh yes – what a pleasure they were – and at the same time how exhausting! A toddler takes so much of your energy and time don't they? Do you remember hearing Carolyn say this too?...

Carolyn: 'Often at the end of the day I think, "What have I done today?" A trip to the playground...reading another book...pretending to change a baby doll's nappy...singing silly songs together... It doesn't feel like much. Then one day I hand her a drink, and she says, "Ank-too" (thank you) without me reminding her. What a triumph! What a celebration! I have the most special girl in the whole world! In that moment, all the times I had to say, "What do you say?" were worthwhile.'

‘That’s what it’s like for me being a mum a lot of constant, patient work, but with so many times of amazing joy watching my precious child learn, grow and love.’

Tammy: Today Ros has come back again as she said she would, to tell us more about what to expect as ‘normal’ development of a toddler – a young child from about 1 to about 3 years. Welcome Ros.

Ros: Thanks Tammy...Hi Carol...I wonder if you have a toddler in your house? Maybe your own child, maybe a grandchild, or maybe you’re caring for someone else’s child. If you do you’ll know how busy a toddler can be...learning all about his world...and learning to relate to those around him! My youngest grandchild is a toddler of a little over a year old now...she keeps me absolutely charmed! I could sit and watch all the cute things she does all day – but I would find it hard to keep up with her if I was caring for her all the time. I don’t have the same energy that I used to with my own children.

Now last time we talked mostly about the physical development of a baby – from birth to about 1 year old...how their muscles develop so that they can reach for things...roll over...hold their head up... How they learn to sit up...pull themselves up and stand...and to finally walk.

But we also talked about making a connection with your baby. How they listen, and copy some of the sounds you make...how you can have a ‘conversation’ with your little baby – even though they’re not yet saying real words. Have you noticed that a baby soon learns about taking turns in a conversation? You talk to them...they respond and make gurgling sounds back to you...so you talk again – and they listen. As soon as you stop, they will take their turn again. Isn’t it fascinating how quickly a baby will learn to do this?

They’re not only learning the very beginning of a language but they’re learning social skills...making eye contact, taking turns...enjoying a conversation. And they’re developing their emotions. You will know when they’re happy and

content – with their smiling, cooing and giggling. But you will also know when they're frustrated or upset as they cry and scream. They will soon learn that you'll respond to their expressions of emotion. You will smile and coo back, or you'll pick them up and cuddle and comfort them when they're upset.

So here you are with a beautiful toddler – exploring his world and developing his feelings and his own ideas. His language is now developing at an amazing rate – he seems to be learning new words every day.

He's now able to let you know very quickly what he wants...and what he *doesn't* want! 'No' is a word that he will learn to use very quickly. He will begin to test you when *you* say 'No'...or 'Don't touch.' Sometimes with a cheeky smile he will deliberately do what you've just told him not to do. That's normal for a toddler...and tough for a parent! One of my strongest memories of my first child was that he would run to the electric power points as soon as I sat down to feed his baby sister. He knew it was something he was not allowed to do – so I guess it was his way of telling me that he didn't like the baby taking all my attention.

Carol: So what did you do Ros?

Ros: I found that the best thing to do was give him some special attention as I fed his little sister. I would sit him on the arm of the chair next to me and as I fed her I'd put my free arm around him and read him a story or talk to him. He enjoyed that.

Carol: So tell us Ros, when should we be concerned about our toddler's language development...and their ability to communicate with us?

Ros: Well, by 15 months, most children will be saying, "Mama" and "Dada" plus at least three other words, usually nouns, such as "cookie," "ball," and "dog." "More," and of course the all-time toddler favorite "No!" A typical 15-month-old can also follow simple commands, such as "Bring me your shoes," or "Put the book down." He also understands the meanings of phrases such

as "No," "Come here," "Show me," and "Look."

So if by this age your toddler does not seem to understand these simple commands, and is not developing a few words to express himself, it's time to talk to your child health worker about it. If he's not making eye contact with you and enjoying your company and a cuddle and seems to want to be on his own most of the time you need to talk to someone who can help you.

Tammy: Ros is talking with us today about normal development in a young toddler's language and ability to relate to you – his parent or carer.

Ros: Your toddler understands much more than she can speak. You may discover this accidentally one day when you're asking the family dog where you could possibly have put your purse...and your toddler runs to the table to get it for you. Or you may be having your usual conversation as you do things together – you say, "Let's go and get your shoes," and you watch in amazement as he trots down the hall and comes back with them. You're not imagining it — he really *does* know what you're saying.

Tammy: I love watching young children pretending. Remember Carolyn...pretending with her toddler to change a baby doll's nappy?

Ros: Yes – that's definitely something that we expect a toddler to start doing. As soon as children begin to use language - that is, they understand words and start to use them - they also have the ability to pretend.

Most of your 15-month-old's imaginative play will revolve around her every day activities. She'll pick up a spoon and pretend to eat from it...or 'feed' her dolly with it. Or she'll put her head on your lap and pretend to be asleep. And as she develops more she'll start to pretend to *be* something else – like her favourite animal. And before long she'll pretend to be the mummy and do the cooking, and talk to her dollies. When you hear her scolding her dollies, you may notice her saying just the same things you've said to her! This can be very interesting! (laugh)

Tammy: Yes...I heard myself many times as my children were going through this stage! So when should we be concerned if we don't see these things happening?

Ros: If by the time she's 20 months she's not pointing out things of interest to her...and is not doing some pretending, then yes, you need to be concerned. You need to talk to your health professional about it. A mother's instinct is a very real thing – and if you feel that there might be something wrong – then talk to someone who can help you. They will do some tests and find out if your child does need some extra help.

Tammy: Thanks for coming to talk with us today Ros. It's always helpful to know when we need to get help from someone who may know more than we do isn't it! Let's listen to this song and then we have another guest to visit with us today.

Carol: Katherine is a great friend of *Women of Hope*. She's come to see us today, and I hope she has a story for us. Welcome, Katherine.

Katherine: Thanks Carol. Hello, my friend. Actually I have two stories, and both of them are true. The first story took place in recent years, the other one happened thousands of years ago, but they have a lot in common.

Carol: Great! Then let's get ourselves comfortable to listen to Katherine...

Katherine: Juanita sat in the tiny apartment, her three small children huddled around her knees. She had only a few pieces of furniture. There was a mattress for her and her youngest, Annie, and two cots for the twins, who would soon be four. A table and two chairs were surrounded by boxes.

Juanita was awakened by her drunken husband coming into their house and yelling at her to get his breakfast. It was the end of his busy night of work at the factory. The girls woke up crying, as usual, and he began slapping them, as he'd done many times before.

Later, when he was finally asleep, she gathered up the children and ran to a neighbor's house. Her neighbour knew of someone who had an empty apartment, and helped her quickly pack clothes and dishes, toys and bedclothes. By the time Tom woke up and began yelling for his supper, she and the children were safely in their new home, with a legal order saying he could not come to see them.

Now, the little family ate a few donuts her friend had left for them and went to bed.

With the children asleep, Juanita lay awake thinking, "Does anyone care about us? Will I ever know what love is? What will happen to the children and me?"

She thought of her mother, in a far away state. When she'd left home with Tom, already pregnant with the twins, many harsh words were said, and she had not heard from her mother in four years now. Even before the twins were born, Juanita knew that Tom was going to bars, spending the night often with other women, and in danger of losing his job at the factory.

Carol: Have you ever felt the way Juanita did that day? Many women have.

Katherine: And my dear friend, do you know something wonderful? God knows all about it, he cares for Juanita, and he cares for you too. In his Word, the Bible, there's a story about a young girl named Hagar. She probably felt just like Juanita. I'd like to tell you *her* story...in my own words.

Hagar was a slave in a very wealthy home. The wife in the home couldn't have children, so she gave her slave girl to her husband as a secondary wife, which was the accepted custom at that time. Soon Hagar knew she was pregnant. At first she was proud and excited - in fact she began to look down on her mistress and that caused some trouble in the family. When her time came she had a baby boy called Ishmael.

But after a few years, something unexpected happened. The first wife, Sarah, became pregnant and had a son, Isaac. This son had been promised many

years before by God. Sarah didn't like seeing Ishmael playing with Isaac, because she wanted her son to get all the family property when he grew up. So Sarah ordered that Hagar and her son be sent away from the home. Her husband Abraham wasn't at all happy about sending them away, but his wife insisted. But God promised Abraham that he would look after Hagar and Ishmael.

Now they lived in wild, dry country, and so Abraham gave Hagar food and water, and sent them away. After a few days of wandering, she ran out of water and Ishmael was getting weak. Hagar left her son lying under a scrubby bush and went and sat a little way off. She said to herself, 'I can't bear to watch my child die.' She began to cry, because she was all alone and had no one to help her. She could hear her boy crying too.

And do you know what happened? It was the most wonderful thing. The angel of God spoke to that sad, lonely woman. I don't know if she saw anyone, but she did hear a voice, that said: 'Don't be afraid, God has heard the boy crying. Go and comfort him. I plan to make a great nation out of his descendants.' She looked up and there was a well of water! They were saved!

Hagar had her own special name for God. She called him, "The God who sees me."

The Bible says they lived in that desert country until the boy was grown, and God took care of them.

That's the end of the story from God's word.

My friend, if you're feeling like Hagar—all alone and full of despair because someone has hurt you badly—you can cry out to God. He hears the heart cries of his people. He wants to take care of you. You too, can call on "the God who sees me."

Carol: That's a lovely name for God - it reminds us that whatever is happening in our lives, God sees and understands.

Tammy: So Katherine, can you tell us what happened to Juanita?

Katherine: Oh yes. God saw Juanita crying too. She remembered that her mother used to pray with her. So she prayed to God and he heard her. I don't know if he spoke to her like he did to Hagar, but he did help her. He gave her the courage to call her mother, who came and stayed with the children while Juanita looked for a job.

Her old neighbors took her and the children to church, where other people who loved God gave them food and toys. Some gave Juanita money to help her feed and clothe her children. In a few months, she had a good job, a nice home, and began sharing God's love with other women who felt alone just like she had on that awful day.

Carol: Stories like that make me feel sad, but also very encouraged. God *can* give you courage and help you see the way through, even when things seem hopeless. Remember how much he loves and values you, whatever other people may do. Call out to him today. There *is* hope!

Carol: Before we finish today we have our regular guest, Mornette to tell us something more about prayer. Thank you Mornette...

Mornette: I wonder how strong and powerful you feel? I often feel very weak, and not powerful at all. Do you know that God has made an amazing promise to us that can totally change the way we live! He has promised for those who believe in Jesus, that his power can fill our lives.

But first he asks us to do something important. He says, (James 5:16 New International Reader's Version) 'So admit to one another that you have sinned.'

He asks us to share our lives with other people who believe. To talk together and tell each other about the wrong things we've done. Then he says: 'Pray for one another so that you might be healed.' How can we pray for one another if we don't talk to each other about these things?

So first, talk with a trusted friend who also believes in Jesus. Tell them about what is happening in your life. Talk to each other about the wrong things you've done. Then pray for each other, and ask God to forgive you. That's real friendship...and God surely will forgive you.

And when you have done that, what does God say in his word? 'The prayer of a godly person is powerful. It makes things happen.'

Through prayer all the power of God is available to his children.

(Developed from *Prayer: talking with God* Stonecroft Ministries, 2006)

Carol: Thank you Mornette...and remember you can contact us at...

Good bye until next time.

Tammy: Bye

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