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Handcuffed by Despair

The kids are right. We don't remember the intensity of our younger years. The crackling and sparking of every emotion and mood, the searing pains that comes with adolescence, and the inability to catch an emotional breath. It is so hard to remember the sense of suffocation from the unexpected truths and the complexities of the newly uncovered lies of life, the occasional instances of envy, love and hatred that we experience, of wanting to know who you are and the soul-searching that follows. The futility of not being able to learn. The brutality of learning we, and our friends and loved ones, are not immortal. The natural breaking away from those we love. This is a tough journey. Children and adolescents need a helping hand. Some get it at home, some at school or through worship, and some don't get it at all.

Mom and Dad have the same struggle. And the kids don't get it. They have setbacks at work or in their relationships. Their promise to provide can't be kept. They perceive shame, humiliation and anger following the loss of a job. Hopelessness and a belief they have failed. They have health problems that affect their lives and the lives of their families. Emotions that are real enough to block love and understanding from family or friends. They wear the dark shroud of depression. Often this despair is the fuse for violence toward self or others, substance abuse, or depression. The newspapers chronicle the results of this futility.

You can no longer be blind to the necessity of professional, confidential, non-judgmental counseling. If not for you, certainly you know someone in your family who can benefit. There is no stigma to counseling, especially in a time of crisis. Especially when it is local and at a very reduced fee.

To speak with someone who is trained and knowledgeable, and someone who can offer hope and guidance. As good a parent or friend as you are, you are not that person. A counselor is that person. A counselor is an independent ear. Your health plan may pay for counseling for you and your family, but many in our community, especially those who have lost a job or who don't have insurance, do not have that luxury. This is where the

on-campus, and clinic-based, reduced expense counseling services of the Almaden Valley Counseling Service come into play. You may need this help, and if so please call. And you can also help make counseling affordable to those who may need it the most, but can afford it the least.

“Cause suicide is painless, it brings on many changes, and I can take or leave it if I please.” Nothing more than a theme song? Perhaps, until you know it was written by Mike Altman, the son of Robert Altman the director of ‘MASH.’ At the time he wrote the lyrics to this song Mike was 14 years old. The intensity and emotions captured in those lyrics came from an eighth grader. Remember when you were a teenager and your struggles seemed so intense and you knew that no one understood you? Well, if you are an adult the same emotions may have returned.

Many years ago the suicide of two teenagers in Almaden gave rise to the Almaden Valley Counseling Service. Since then the AVCS has provided counseling to thousands of people who live throughout Santa Clara County.

Confidential and immediate help is offered to those of any age who struggle with depression, mood disorders, contemplate suicide, are involved in unsuccessful or abusive relationships, experience educational difficulties or who are dealing with the hopelessness of the economy. The AVCS offers assistance through school counseling or individual counseling at the center on Crown Blvd.

If not to alert you to the services the AVCS provides, this article asks you to remember it only exists because of your financial support. This is a request for a donation. A donation that will not result in a monument, your picture in the paper, no tangible article such as a t-shirt, a crutch or new gym, nothing with your name on it. If it is successful you will probably never know the value of this donation. If it helps you, a friend, or a family member, your donation is priceless.

Wasn't it the Beatles who sang, “I can get by with a little help from my friends.”? The Almaden Valley Counseling Service is that friend, for some the only friend. For some a lifesaver.

If you need help, then call. If you can help please do.

The AVCS needs you to continue to provide its services. Please send your check to the Almaden Valley Counseling Service at 6529 Crown Blvd, Suite D. San Jose CA 95120. Or call to make a donation on your credit card. The telephone number is 408-234-9383 and we can be found on the web at www.avcounseling.org. All contributions are tax deductible and very much appreciated. The AVCS is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization.