

know them," we invite you to follow the progress your members make.

### How can you find out more about *Heart t' Heart*?

1. You can visit the *Heart t' Heart* website at <http://www.heart-t-heart.org>.
2. You can obtain *Heart t' Heart* literature, either from our website or by calling order fulfillment at 888-790-7040 (toll-free).
3. You can subscribe to the *Heart t' Heart* monthly newsletter, *Heartbeats*, and read articles written to encourage members in their recovery (also available through order fulfillment and our website).

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# Speaking *Heart t' Heart* to Our Priesthood Leaders

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## Dear Brethren,

In recent years our Church members have been afflicted more and more with habits and behaviors that keep them from enjoying the full blessings available to them as members of the Church. For example, much has been said recently by our General Authorities about the epidemic of pornography. It is rampant in the world around us and has also trapped many members of the Church. Addiction to tobacco, alcohol, drugs or caffeine is also taking its toll. Gambling has become an addiction for some members. Habitual indulgence in fits of anger has allowed domination and abuse to enter many homes. Members may also have other behaviors which, while perhaps less likely to damage their standing in the Church, nevertheless keep them from full enjoyment of their lives and full spiritual development. Such behaviors include overspending, overeating, overworking and perfectionism.

We are sure, that as a priesthood leader, you are well acquainted with the detrimental effect these problems have on the spirituality and activity of your ward and stake members. You know better than anyone else how much of your time and concern are invested in trying to counsel and support those who struggle with these compulsive/addictive behaviors. May we assure you that recovery from these problems is possible, even though it takes time and effort. We hope to offer you and those you counsel some tangible support by introducing a support group designed specifically for the Latter-day Saint community—*Heart t' Heart*.

### What is *Heart t' Heart*?

*Heart t' Heart* is a non-profit community resource created in 1991 specifically to help Latter-day Saints overcome compulsive and addictive behaviors. *Heart t' Heart* uses a version of the powerful Twelve Step recovery program originally used in Alcoholics Anonymous. Because the Twelve Steps are based on universally true spiritual principles, they coordinate perfectly with the teachings of the gospel. The version of the Twelve Steps used in *Heart t' Heart* is based solidly in the concepts and language of the *Book of Mormon* and teaches recovery principles from a distinctly Latter-day Saint perspective.

In order to more fully study these principles, participants in *Heart t' Heart* are

encouraged to actively use the workbook, *He Did Deliver Me From Bondage*. This workbook guides a person through study of selected verses from the *Book of Mormon* that focus their recovery efforts on coming closer to Heavenly Father and to the Savior Jesus Christ.

Since 1996, LDS Family Services has used this same study guide in their "pilot program" for recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. The success of that program in the Salt Lake and Utah Valley areas paved the way for it to be extended to other locations, and they now have agency sponsored recovery groups throughout the Church. (See the article in the *Church News*, March 23, 2002. A link to this article is found on the *Heart t' Heart* website, at <http://www.heart-t-heart.org>.)

## What are *Heart t' Heart* meetings like?

*Heart t' Heart* meetings follow a structured format which keeps the meeting focused on our goal of finding recovery from our problems through our relationship with the Savior. We begin with prayer, introduce ourselves briefly, and read the Twelve Steps. We discuss tools that help us recover, such as reading the scriptures, prayer, journal writing and service. In each meeting we also stress the importance of confidentiality (anonymity) to create an environment free from gossip.

The next part of the meeting may be dedicated to the study of approved literature such as *He Did Deliver Me From Bondage*, which focuses our attention on gospel principles that relate to becoming humble and coming unto Christ for His healing power. Meetings conclude with members voluntarily sharing about the blessings, challenges and growth they are experiencing as they learn to apply these principles to their own struggles. Listening to this kind of sharing may be a new experience to those who have never attended support groups before. However, the opportunity to admit our need for God as well as express our gratitude for the changes happening in our lives as we turn to Him engenders an atmosphere of hope and faith.

## At a *Heart t' Heart* meeting there is:

*No fee for attending.* Small voluntary donations are common, but not required. This money is used to buy *Heart t' Heart* literature or to pay for the facility used.

*No encouragement of embarrassing disclosures.* Members are encouraged to avoid detailed disclosures in the meetings concerning their problem behaviors. If a person mentions why

they are attending the meeting, such mention is very brief and general in nature. Our meetings are designed to focus on the Christ-centered solution, not on our individual problems.

*No inappropriate touching.* We are not an “encounter group.” We do not use methods of enforced intimacy characteristic of groups that members of the Church have been warned against. Behavior at *Heart t' Heart* meetings would be appropriate at any Church meeting.

*No doctrine taught that conflicts with Church teachings.* We use only scriptures and *Heart t' Heart's* approved literature. We support the doctrines and teachings of the Church. As a group, we follow a written policy which states that “*Heart t' Heart* has no official opinion on any outside issue. Neither is its intent to promote any doctrine or policy contrary to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

## Individuals find encouragement to:

*Uphold Church standards.* Individuals who find themselves in need of a Twelve Step recovery program have sometimes been through experiences of abuse or other mistreatment, and may have strong feelings, which in other Twelve Step organizations sometimes find expression in strong language. While we recognize the need to deal with these feelings, members attending *Heart t' Heart* meetings find an environment that conforms to Church standards of language and behavior.

*Develop genuine humility.* We come to understand that we, of ourselves, lack sufficient power to overcome addiction. The strength to recover comes from God—only He can change our hearts, which in turn leads to a change in our behavior.

*Develop faith in Jesus Christ.* Many who develop destructive behavior habits have suffered abuse or had other experiences that have made it difficult to trust others, even God. As a result, these persons may turn to substances or behaviors which at first seem to offer temporary comfort or distraction, but eventually place them in bondage.

The Twelve Step principles help a person regain trust in God and begin to understand and access the blessings of the atonement of Jesus Christ. We believe, with King Benjamin, that “*There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent*” (Mos. 3:17). We find that as we turn to Christ for healing, we experience relief from destructive addictive behavior. We discover that because of the atonement of Jesus Christ, our Heavenly Father can and will bless us with His grace, the enabling power of God to help us maintain righteous behavior we could not maintain on our own. (See “grace” in the Bible Dictionary.)

*Turn their lives over to God.* We have learned that surrender of our will to God is crucial to overcoming addiction. This means learning to be obedient to the promptings of the Spirit, not only in relation to our addictive behaviors, but in all things.

*Seek heart-deep repentance.* We know what it is to repent of the same sins over and over again. The Twelve Steps help us through a detailed and deeper repentance process, step by step. We learn to forsake, to appropriately confess, to make restitution, and to walk with God, finding in Him the power to “retain a remission of our sins.”

*Seek support through regular Church activity.* As members experience healing, they also experience a renewal of the Spirit in their lives and an overwhelming sense of gratitude to the Lord. This results in an increased desire to serve others in building the Kingdom of God through participation in their wards and branches.

## What is *Heart t' Heart's* relationship to the Church?

*Heart t' Heart* is not a Church program. It is one of several community resources available to members of the Church. Its strength is that it is designed to provide specifically for the needs of Latter-day Saint people. Since it is a community resource, organizing a *Heart t' Heart* group is a voluntary effort and is not done through a priesthood calling. New groups are asked to register with our *Heart t' Heart* General Service Office and are subsequently supported and encouraged in their work. Priesthood leaders may wish to refer members to *Heart t' Heart* meetings, and of course, we invite them to do so.

## How can a priesthood leader support a member who is attending *Heart t' Heart*?

We appreciate the interest of priesthood leaders in the vitally important recovery process. As your ward or stake members attend *Heart t' Heart* meetings, we suggest that you check with them at intervals to see how the program is helping them. Recovery from problems that have taken years to develop does not usually happen overnight, but we believe you will be able to see noticeable progress. Since we believe in the principle taught by the Savior, “By their fruits ye shall