



# Strive to Be

## A PATTERN FOR GROWTH AND MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

*The pattern of growth outlined in the Children and Youth program can help all of us as we strive to become more like the Savior.*

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**R**eal growth occurs when we strive to grow in a variety of areas. We learn that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). We know little about this period of the Master’s life, but from this verse we learn that He “increased”—He grew—intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. Many studies suggest that striving to grow in a variety of areas in our life supports healthy emotional and mental wellness.<sup>1</sup>

Growth and eternal potential are themes of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Our potential to become like Heavenly Father is central to the gospel and helps us feel love, hope, and gratitude.<sup>2</sup>

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”<sup>3</sup>

### **A Pattern for Growth**

Children and youth have been invited to follow the pattern of discovering what they need to work on, planning how they will do it,

acting on their plan in faith, and reflecting on what they have learned.<sup>4</sup> This pattern can help all of us as we strive to grow and become more like the Savior.

For example, Alma taught that “if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you” (Alma 32:27). As we nurture that desire, it grows into what Amulek called “faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:16). The desire of which Alma speaks and the faith of which Amulek testifies do not remain stagnant. Our desire and faith in Jesus Christ lead us to truly repent. And this repentance process leads us to grow continually.

President Russell M. Nelson explained: “Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind. When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Growth Requires Commitment**

Just as repentance requires continuous work and commitment, real growth occurs when we strive to offer our “whole souls” (Omni 1:26) in a variety of areas. We each have spiritual gifts that can be used to build the kingdom of God. In our pursuit of becoming “a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17), we are invited to serve the Lord with all our “heart, might, mind and strength” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2). As we strive to grow in a variety of areas, we build resilience and strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ, which will help us meet life’s challenges.

Children and youth—and all of us—who set simple, short-term goals to grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually can experience greater emotional and mental wellness. These principles are beyond self-help concepts; they are a healthy approach to striving to become disciples of Jesus Christ so that “when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

### **Growth Requires Patience and Diligence**

As we strive to grow and move forward, we should remember that “it is not requisite that [we] should run faster than [we have] strength” (Mosiah 4:27). We strive to be diligent, and when we fall, we strive to rise again (see Doctrine and Covenants 117:13). Personal growth requires patience. When Jesus healed a blind man, the blind man first saw “men as trees, walking.” Jesus “put his hands again upon his eyes, . . . and he was restored, and saw every man clearly” (Mark 8:24–25). Healing and growth—whether physical, emotional, or mental—can come in stages and may not happen quickly.

### **Growth Requires Us to Use All Resources Available to Us**

There is not a simple cure-all for emotional and mental wellness. We will experience stress and turmoil because we live in a fallen world with a fallen body. Additionally, many contributing factors may lead to a diagnosis of mental illness. Regardless of our mental and emotional well-being, focusing on growth is healthier than obsessing about our shortcomings. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The Church is not an automobile showroom—a place to put ourselves on display so that others can admire our spirituality, capacity, or prosperity. It is more like a service center, where vehicles in need of repair come for maintenance and rehabilitation.”<sup>6</sup>

Increasing our spirituality is an important part of mental and emotional well-being, but there is often more we can do, and the Lord expects us to use all of the tools He has put at our disposal. There has sometimes been a stigma attached to using additional resources as we work to improve our mental and emotional wellness, but Church leaders have taught that these resources can be vital.



Sister Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, taught: “Like any part of the body, the brain is subject to illnesses, trauma, and chemical imbalances. When our minds are suffering, it is appropriate to seek help from God, from those around us, and from medical and mental health professionals.”<sup>7</sup>

We have a responsibility to “do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed” (Doctrine and Covenants 123:17). We may not see His hand in the way we expect or desire, but those who trust in Him can see it.

### The Savior’s Example of Growth

The greatest example of growth is our Savior, Jesus Christ. The scriptures teach that “he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace;

“And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;

“And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–14).

As we strive to grow and progress, we too can receive “grace for grace.” When life becomes overwhelming, we may think that God has abandoned us. However, we can find peace and comfort in the truth that God the Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, are aware of us and know how to help us through our trials. Believing in Jesus Christ does not mean that mortal challenges will cease to exist, but we do believe that the Lord can give us strength to meet our challenges as we strive to be more like Him.<sup>8</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. See Dale E. Bredesen, “Reversal of Cognitive Decline: A Novel Therapeutic Program,” *Aging*, Sept. 2014, [aging-us.com](http://aging-us.com).
2. See Gospel Topics, “Becoming Like God,” [topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.
4. See *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook* (2019), 7.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “On Being Genuine,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 83.
7. Reyna I. Aburto, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 57; see also Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 41.
8. See “Receive the Savior’s Divine Empathy,” [mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### HOW CAN I STRIVE TO GROW?

The following ideas may be helpful as you strive to focus on growth in your life:

- Set goals that are simple, measurable, and focus on real growth. For example, instead of setting up an elaborate scripture study plan for the next six months, you might choose to begin by reading the scripture of the day on the Gospel Living app.
- Validate and highlight any movement you make toward growth. Even small steps are worth celebrating. The point is to keep moving and keep striving.
- Don’t dwell on mistakes or failures. You aren’t perfect, and you aren’t expected to be perfect yet. Acknowledge that you can do better, set another goal, and then work toward it.
- Exercise faith in Jesus Christ. He knows how to help you, and you will feel His love as you strive to become more like Him.

