

# New way to help



Liz Rohde/The Daily Item

From left, Dominic Herbst, president and founder of Bethesda Family Services Foundation; Max Harrison, executive director; and Joseph Herbst, a national trainer, conduct a weekly webcast to help families and individuals heal relationships.

## Lewisburg firm introduces counseling on Web

By Diane Petryk  
The Daily Item

**LEWISBURG** — The sins of the fathers should never be visited upon their children, but fathers' deeds, or lack of them, often lead to festering emotional rage. Children, even into adulthood, suffer from those deeds or omissions, and sometimes the rage bursts forth, and others suffer too.

First may come depression, including self-destructive behavior. By the time anger and violence are manifest, its true

origins may be obscure.

Lewisburg psychologist Dominic Herbst said the pattern is almost always going to be rooted in an unresolved betrayal, that it's an infection that needs to be cleansed before healing can take place.

The approach may be similar to those practiced by many mental health professionals, but Herbst has entered a brave new world by using the Internet to counsel people who might otherwise never get the help they need.

Herbst is putting his services

online through live interactive webcasts, or webinars, at nominal, or even waived, fees.

His special twist: forgiveness.

"By forgiving, the victim surrenders the rage that has taken control of his life, and he is free for the first time," Herbst said. "It's not confronting him. She can heal it without him even being part of it."

Online, participants don't just listen to a spiel. They let go of painful memories of past offenses using a 62-page workbook that takes them from as-

sessing their relationships and their related wounds, to understanding relational betrayal and its fruit, to reconciliation and healing.

For teens, Herbst has summarized the conflict cycle: When I am offended, first I hurt, then I hate, then I harm. He aims to convert the process to: First I grieve, then I forgive, and then I heal.

And if he weren't certain of that from a professional

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practice that has spanned more than 25 years, he knows it from personal experience. His son, Joseph, 29, who now works with him in the practice, harbored a bitter resentment over his frequent work-related absences and neglect.

"I got it," he said. "I apologized."

Their relationship improved almost instantly. Joseph, in turn, is ever-vigilant in his relationships with his children. After a long day at work, encountering a pouting daughter, he encourages her to vent her feelings and pledges make-up time.

"The people we love the most are the people who have the capability of hurting us the worst," Joseph Herbst said, "and ... we are condemned to repeat the area of emotion we do not heal."

The Herbsts, from the Bethesda Family Services Founda-

tion in Lewisburg, which the elder founded in 1983, conduct the webinars together now, and interest in them is growing exponentially.

Twenty to 25 computers are logged on for the current six-session set. About a third more join each set, with unsolicited postings about them cropping up around the Internet. A few high-profile personalities have taken part and are speaking about it.

"This is going to go worldwide," Dominic Herbst said.

Part of the attraction is the message, which is universal, he said.

Then there's the confidentiality provided by not having to come into a public place to hear it. And the cost. It's \$79 for all six sessions, and financial assistance is available.

A Williamsport woman, who counsels young, unwed mothers, logged on to see if the program could help her clients. She came away having plunged into her per-

sonal father-related, infected wounds.

"The hurt, the hate, the harm, it was all there," she said. "My parents were divorced. My mother was physically abusive and an alcoholic, but she was at least there. She was at least trying."

"My dad chose to go on with his life, remarried, had another

family. I felt he could have rescued me. ..."

That betrayal affected her future relationships with me because she was always looking for someone to rescue her not always the best foundation for a happy relationship.

"If it's not about relationships, it's not about anything," Herbst said.

Watch for the


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