



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Hugs  
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### FOUR HUGS A DAY

*But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Luke 8:46*

Dr. Harold Voth, who served as senior psychiatrist at the Menninger Clinic for many years, was one of the leading voices in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for health care and mental illness. Dr. Voth used to say, "Hugging is an excellent tonic." He contended that it has been scientifically demonstrated that people who are mentally run-down and depressed are far more prone to sickness than those who are not. Hugging, he says, can lift depression, enabling a body's immune system to become toned up. He says that hugging breathes new life into your tired body and makes you feel younger and more vibrant.

Dr. David Bressler, founder of the UCLA Pain Control Unit says, "The type of hugging I recommend is the bear hug." He says, "Use both arms, face your partner and perform a full embrace. I often tell my patients to use hugging as part of their treatment for pain. To be held is enormously therapeutic."

To his words add the testimony of Dr. Robert Rynearson, founder of the psychiatry department at Scott and White Clinic in Temple, Texas. He says, "A hug can have an astonishing therapeutic effect by providing a sense of companionship and happiness."

Dagmar O'Connor is a psychiatrist and therapist. In an article entitled, "All About the Fine Art of Touching," she says, "It's a source of continuous wonder to me--even after all these years as a sex therapist--that simply touching and being touched can solve so many of our problems."

Dr. Bressler, the doctor who heads the Pain Clinic, says, "Sometimes I just take out my prescription pad and then I write out a prescription for 'four-hugs-a-day: one at breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime.'" But does it work? That's the part you will have to determine for yourself.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus often reached out and touched people? Quite often He touched people who were considered outcasts of society such as a blind beggar, a woman of questionable moral character, a leper or a person with a loathsome disease. Christ gave them healing even beyond the miracle of physical healing.

Today in many areas of the world, we are "hand-shakers." We're more comfortable without getting quite so close to people, and I for one have to say that a lot of love can be expressed with a firm handshake, looking someone straight in the eye with sincerity and meaning. Nonetheless, a score of medical authorities are saying, "Hold it! An embrace, a touch, a hug or a kiss goes far beyond a handshake in communicating on a deep personal level."

Paul also recognized the importance of communicating love through physical contact. He wrote, "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Romans 16:16), something still done in many places throughout the world.

But going back to that question: Why did Jesus touch people? Why does the New Testament tell us to greet each other with a holy kiss or a warm embrace? Good psychiatry? It's that, but it's more than that. There is healing in the touch of a hand, in a warm embrace, and God wants us to major in restoration and healing.

But if this is all true, and I doubt that I have to convince you, why don't we get with it? Perhaps we need to overcome our reluctance to reach out to each other. We need to overcome our fear of getting too close. We also need to realize that a hug isn't sexual unless you make it that way.

There is a great deal of healing in a touch. Perhaps Dr. Bressler's prescription for four hugs a day is a pretty good one after all.

Resource reading: Luke 8:40-56