

reImagine

A Holistic Approach to Mental
Wellness and Recovery





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What is reImagine?

reImagine is a curriculum driven program developed to aid people who are struggling with extreme life circumstance and mental and behavioral health difficulties. Through each session, you will be given tools and skills to practice weekly that will help in managing stress and improving your overall health. The aim of the program is to provide holistic guidance to individuals who are looking to improve the quality of their life.

The reImagine program is based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), an evidence-based psychotherapeutic approach aimed at eliminating negative beliefs and behaviors and replacing them with positive ones. CBT has been shown to be helpful for people with low self-esteem, negative beliefs about themselves, and/or those struggling with chronic mental health conditions.

reImagine contains four main sections: *Physical Wellness*, *Mental Wellness*, *Spiritual Wellness*, and *Relational Wellness*. The first section, *Physical Wellness*, focuses on implementing routine and adjusting areas of your life to positively influence your physical health. The *Mental Wellness* section helps to bring awareness to areas of emotional and psychological distress that may be negatively affecting your life. The third main section, *Spiritual Wellness*, guides you in understanding, fostering, and deepening your relationship with God. In the last section, *Relational Wellness*, techniques for developing healthy and functional relationships with family and friends are addressed.

How to Use the reImagine Workbook

Before jumping into the main sections, you will need to complete the *Identifying Your Goals* section. You will then work through each of the four main sections, one session per week. At the beginning of each main section, there is a goals check-in. The *Goals Check-In* can be completed either as its own independent weekly session, or combined with the first session in the section.

There is no need to rush through the curriculum. Rather, take time each week to reflect on the session and practice using the suggested tools and skills. The reImagine program will take roughly six to seven months to complete if you are consistent in working on one session a week.

What is a Holistic Approach to Mental Health Wellness and Recovery?

We are “fearfully and wonderfully made”; created in the very image of God (Genesis 1:26). Humans are complex beings, unlike any other living creature: the union of a physical body with an immaterial (nonphysical) mind and spirit. The four facets of the self are clearly outlined in Luke 2:52. Describing the development of the young Christ, Luke writes “*and Jesus kept increasing in wisdom (mental) and stature (physical), and in favor with God (spiritual), and men (relational).*” So you and I, like the incarnate Christ, are a unity of physical, mental, spiritual, and relational facets with each aspect affecting and being affected by all the others.

Physical

We exist in a physical **BODY**, so we can interact with the material world around us. Our bodies have been specifically designed by God to take in information from the environment and relay it to our brains. We see, hear, taste, smell, and touch the world around us. The processing of sensory information by our brains produces thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which then result in an outward behavioral display.

Mental

There is also an immaterial, non-physical aspect to our being; what some would call our **MIND**. Our thoughts, feelings, and emotions are more than simple neurochemical changes and electrical discharges in our brain. While the functioning of our brain is integral to the existence of our mind, that alone is not sufficient to explain it. Similarly, to imagine our mind as completely separate and unrelated to the physical is not correct either. Mind and body are intimately connected and each affects the other.

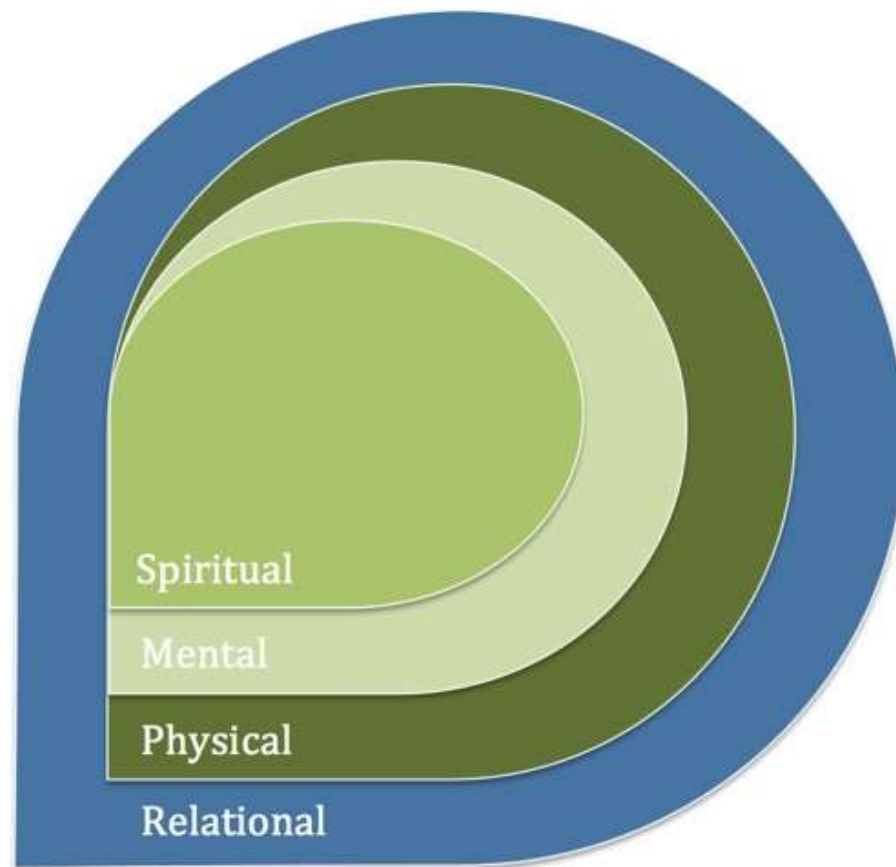
Spiritual

The scriptures teach us that we also have a third and even more amazing level of being, a **SPIRIT**. God created us as a three part being, much like Himself. In our inmost being, we are spirit, the very breath of God placed into a shell of dust. As a being with a spirit, it is possible for us to be in an intimate, spiritual union with our Creator who is also a spirit.

Relational

We were created to be in **RELATIONSHIPS**. God Himself said that it is not good for us to be alone (Genesis 2:18). While our first and greatest relational need is to know God, we should never underestimate the importance of being in fellowship with other believers. The topic of relationship is common throughout the Scriptures. The Bible offers us guidance on a variety of relationships including marriage, parenting, siblings, friendships, and with those who are not so friendly. Relationships are one of the reasons why Jesus gave us the Church; so we might be together and never be alone.

The figure below shows the physical, mental, spiritual, and relational facets of the self in relation to one another, each separate but intertwined and interacting with one another.



The brain, via the body's sensory systems, is in contact with the earthly environment and relationships (outside) and the mind within. The middle circle listed "mental" is the mind, which is connected to the body through the functions of the brain and nervous system but is also in contact with our immaterial spirit (the inner most circle). The body senses and reacts to the external environment and the mind uses that information to perceive, understand, and interpret our surroundings. The mind also forms our thoughts and plans our actions. The spirit, when connected to God, works to transform the mind into the very image of Christ, which results in an ever increasing display of godly behaviors through the body.

When an individual is struggling with a mental health difficulty or disorder, they are affected at every level of their being: physical, mental, spiritual, and relational. Since we are by nature holistic in our make-up, we require a holistic approach to mental health recovery in times of distress. A holistic approach to recovery takes into account how we have been created; relieving physical and psychological suffering while revealing the unconditional love and limitless grace that is only available through a personal relationship with Jesus.

Identifying Your Goals

Purpose

Through this workbook you will learn how physical, mental, spiritual, and relational health affects your life. Before beginning, it is important to think about what goals you are working towards or would like to work towards. Every lesson in this book will likely play an important part of helping you reach those goals. The purpose of this session is to help you identify areas of potential change and growth you would like to see in your life.

Goals

- Learn what a goal is and how it can be helpful.
- Understand the role that obstacles and finding solutions play in reaching goals.
- Identify what goals are important to your life.

Facts to Consider

- A goal is a desired result in one or more area of your life. Goals can be actions or activities you want to add to your life, movement or change in current responsibilities, or increasing awareness to who you are and how you manage your current life.
- Each person has their own unique goals. Often times, goals are related to mental and physical health, financial and life stability, relationships, work or school, or spiritual growth.
- Goals must be things that you can change and have some control over. A goal cannot be to change how someone else acts, because we do not have control of other people. Instead, a goal can be analyzing and adjusting how we react and engage with that person.
- At each stage of your life, your goals are likely to change and adapt to what is important and needed at that point in time. Some goals will not be accomplished as you begin to realize your values and what you place importance on has changed.
- Short term goals are things that you want to and are able to accomplish soon. That could be within the day, week, month, or year. An example of a short term goal is to find a new job.
- Long term goals typically extend past a year, possibly taking up to several years to accomplish. An example of a long term goal is to graduate from college.
- Every goal has steps, or smaller objectives, that must be accomplished to reach the desired end result (goal). Often times, small obstacles arise that make completing a step harder and can push the desired goal further away.
- With almost every obstacle, there is a solution. Sometimes the solution may not be ideal but is sufficient. Family and friends can be great in helping find solutions if you are feeling stuck.
- Writing down goals on a piece of paper increases your likelihood of taking the necessary steps towards achieving that goal. Accomplishing goals provides a sense of achievement and can increase self-esteem.

Understanding Yourself

I. *What are examples of goals you have accomplished in your past?*

II. *What goals you are you currently working towards?*

III. *The following factors must be taken into account when deciding on your goal(s).*

- a. Be specific.
- b. Know how you will measure success.
- c. The goal must be attainable; something you can achieve.
- d. Pick a goal that is important to YOU.
- e. Have a realistic timeline of when you would like to accomplish the goal, taking into account each step in the goal.

Specifying Your Goals

Here you will begin the process of identifying what some of your short term goals are as you work through this book. Identifying goals can be challenging. Below are some questions to keep in mind as you begin to think about what your goals might be.

1. Where would I like to see myself in 2-3 years?
2. What do I value in life?
3. What is important to me?
4. What would my friends and family like to see me doing?
5. Are there things I used to do that I would like to start again?

Goal #1

a. What exactly do you want to accomplish (be specific)?

Identify steps necessary to reach this goal.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

b. How will you measure success? What are some noticeable and measurable ways you can track your progress towards this goal?

c. *When is it reasonable for you to expect to reach this goal? Be sure to give yourself more time than you originally think. Oftentimes unexpected life events slow down our process.*

Goal #2

a. *What exactly do you want to accomplish (be specific)?*

Identify steps necessary to reach this goal.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

b. *How will you measure success? What are some noticeable and measurable ways you can track your progress towards this goal?*

c. *When is it reasonable for you to expect to reach this goal? Be sure to give yourself more time than you originally think. Oftentimes unexpected life events slow down our process.*

Goal #3

a. *What exactly do you want to accomplish (be specific)?*

Identify steps necessary to reach this goal.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

b. *How will you measure success? What are some noticeable and measurable ways you can track your progress towards this goal?*

c. *When is it reasonable for you to expect to reach this goal? Be sure to give yourself more time than you originally think. Oftentimes unexpected life events slow down our process.*

Physical Wellness

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Sleeping Well

Purpose

The quality of your sleep directly affects the quality of your waking life, including your attention, motivation, emotions/moods, problem-solving skills, and ability to cope with stress. The purpose of this session is to help you identify ways in which you might improve the quality of your sleep.

Goals

- Remove negative influences on sleep from your daily life.
- Establish a healthy sleep schedule and bedtime routine.
- Improve the overall quality of your sleep.

Facts to Consider

- Sleep is essential for the normal, healthy functioning of the human body and mind. While you sleep, your brain stays active, overseeing a wide variety of biological maintenance tasks that keep your body functioning in top condition.
- A normal night's sleep consists of a series of recurring cycles made up of five stages: stages 1, 2, 3, 4, and rapid eye movement sleep (REM). A single sleep cycle progresses from stage 1 (light sleep) to REM sleep, lasting approximately 90 minutes.
- A healthy adult needs between 7.5 to 9 hours of sleep per night to function at their best. A nightly, restful sleep should be seen as a necessity, not a luxury.
- Chronic sleep problems affect 50-80% of individuals living with mental health difficulties compared to 10-18% of the general population.
- While excessive sleep (hypersomnia) can be a problem for those living with mental health difficulties, the two most common complaints are not being able to fall asleep (onset insomnia) and waking up early and not being able to go back to sleep (late insomnia).
- Sleep deprivation has been shown to trigger symptoms such as suicidal thoughts, paranoia, agitation, and hyperactivity.
- The three major classes of antidepressant drugs (monoamine oxidase inhibitors, tricyclic antidepressants, and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) all profoundly suppress REM sleep. Talk to your doctor if you feel your medicine is disturbing your sleep.
- Regular exercise reduces stress and will help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly. Try and finish exercising at least three hours before bedtime, or if possible work out early in the day.
- Heavy smokers often sleep very lightly and have reduced amounts of REM sleep due to the effects of nicotine. They also tend to wake up after 3 or 4 hours of sleep due to nicotine withdrawal.
- Alcohol's sedative effect induces sleep for the first half of the night, and as the alcohol wears off it begins to negatively affect the second half. These negative effects include a loss of REM stage sleep, shallow sleeping with frequent waking, an increase or worsening of sleep apnea, and a decrease in the overall quality of sleep.
- Stimulating activities close to bedtime make it more difficult to fall asleep. These include television, use of the computer/smart phone, phone calls, or intense conversations with a spouse, family member, or friend and should be avoided in the hour or so before bedtime.
- Digestion can interfere with falling asleep. Make sure you do not eat anything within an hour of going to bed.

Understanding Yourself

I. Read the following statements about your sleep pattern over the last 30 days and answer YES or NO.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I find it hard to go to sleep. | YES | NO |
| 2. I do not sleep through the night. | YES | NO |
| 3. If I wake up during the night it is difficult to go back to sleep. | YES | NO |
| 4. I do not feel refreshed after a night of sleep. | YES | NO |
| 5. I feel sleepy or catch myself dosing off during the day. | YES | NO |

Answering YES to any of these statements suggests the quality of your sleep could be improved.

II. What do you normally do during the hour before you go to sleep each night? List out all your usual activities.

III. If you are not able to sleep, what do you normally do during those hours at night?

Assessing the Quality of Your Sleep

To promote stability, it is important that you fully assess the amount and quality of your sleep so that changes can be made if necessary. A one week sleep diary is provided with this session. Consider using this as a master sheet and make multiple copies to use as a sleep diary on an ongoing basis. Do not worry about completing this throughout the night. Rather, fill it out each morning after you are awake for the day.

- a. Write the date next to the associated day.
- b. Place an 'X' in each box to indicate the hours you slept that night, or use a highlighter or colored pencil to shade in the hours you slept.
- c. Circle the times you woke up and what time you went back to sleep during the night.
- d. On the fatigue scale, circle the item that best describes how tired you felt that day.
- e. On the back make personal notes about any factors that contributed to sleep disturbances (e.g., personal stressors, caffeine intake, exercise, medications, mood, computer/smart phone use, daytime napping).

NOTE: If you are having trouble sleeping, the diary may be helpful to show to your psychiatrist, therapist, and/or mental health coach at your next visit.

Sleep Diary

DAY 1: _____

PM						AM						PM											
6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

DAY 2: _____

6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	----	----	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	------	---	---	---	---	---

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

DAY 3: _____

6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	----	----	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	------	---	---	---	---	---

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

DAY 4: _____

6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	----	----	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	------	---	---	---	---	---

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

DAY 5: _____

6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	----	----	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	------	---	---	---	---	---

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

DAY 6: _____

6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	----	----	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	------	---	---	---	---	---

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

DAY 7: _____

6	7	8	9	10	11	Midnight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Noon	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	----	----	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	------	---	---	---	---	---

Level of fatigue during the day (circle one):

None (rested) A Little (slightly tired) Tired (sleepy) Exhausted (as if I haven't slept)

Improving the Quality of Your Sleep

- I. Establish a set schedule for your sleep (i.e., a daily bedtime and wake time). This will help train your body to sleep better. If you find it difficult to get up in the morning, try setting a wake time that's a multiple of 90 minutes, the length of the average sleep cycle. For example, if you go to bed at 10:30 pm, set your alarm for 6 am instead of 6:30 am or 7 am. You may feel more refreshed when you wake up because you are getting up at the end of a sleep cycle when your body and brain are already close to wakefulness.

Bedtime	Best Wake Times
9:00 pm	4:30 am / 6:00 am / 7:30 am
9:30 pm	5:00 am / 6:30 am / 8:00 am
10:00 pm	5:30 am / 7:00 am / 8:30 am
10:30 pm	6:00 am / 7:30 am / 9:00 am
11:00 pm	6:30 am / 8:00 am / 9:30 am

- II. Remove anything from your daily life that may be hindering your sleep such as smoking, caffeine, or alcohol (see the **Facts to Consider** section above for several suggestions).

What negative influences on sleep can you remove from your daily life?

Improving the Quality of Your Sleep

- II. Create a soothing pre-sleep routine 30-45 minutes before your preferred bedtime. This routine or ritual will prepare your brain and body for sleep. This will ease the transition from wake to sleep with a period of relaxing structured activities an hour or so before bed.

Pre-Sleep Routine Ideas:

- Read a relaxing book
- Take a hot bath
- Use relaxation techniques (breathing, muscle relaxation, or light stretches)
- Listen to soothing music

Ideas for Creating a Relaxing Bedroom Environment:

- Dim lighting
- Change into comfortable clothing
- Adjust room temperature
- Remove stressful reminders from the room – bills, mail, or mess

Outline a pre-sleep routine for yourself:

Beginning Time: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Evaluating Your Medication

Purpose

Mental illnesses are brain disorders that often require the use of psychiatric medication during the recovery process. Whether or not you have been diagnosed with a mental illness, medication is often used to address negative symptoms that cause difficulty in life. The purpose of this session is to determine if your present medication(s) is effectively managing your symptoms or if medication could help manage your symptoms, so you and your physician can make informed decisions concerning your care.

Goals

- Educate yourself about the mechanisms of psychiatric medication.
- Assess the effectiveness of your present medication in managing your symptoms.
- Determine if talking to your doctor about a new medication could be beneficial.

Facts to Consider

- Mental illness can be defined as a disorder of the brain resulting in the disruption of a person's thoughts, feelings, actions, and ability to relate to others; a disruption that is severe enough to require treatment for the affected individual to function normally.
- A mental disorder does not result from a character issue, bad parenting, or sin – it is a physiological problem and may require a biological remedy as part of the healing process.
- The primary function of psychiatric medications is to alter the way the nerve cells (neurons) in the brain function. This is done by changing the amount of chemical messenger (called neurotransmitter) the cell releases or by changing the electrical properties of the cell's membrane.
- Despite their name, psychiatric medications are most often prescribed by a primary care physician. However, the best and most effective treatment for a mental health concern is from a psychiatrist.
- Every person responds to medications differently, and it is common to try many different medications until you find the one that works best for you.
- Psychiatric medications treat the symptoms of mental health difficulties; they do not cure or fix everything. They minimize symptoms, allowing you to function more normally.
- Perhaps the most important step towards change is educating yourself about your illness. To learn about your particular diagnosis try the following websites: National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.org), National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org), or WebMD (www.webmd.com).
- You should also educate yourself on how your medication works in the context of your diagnosis and its potential side effects. Sources of information about medication include your psychiatrist, pharmacist, pharmaceutical company websites, and websites such as the Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov) and the PsychCentral Medication Library (www.psychcentral.com/drugs/).

Understanding Yourself

I. How do you honestly feel about taking psychiatric medication?

II. In what ways do you think your current medications are effective in controlling your symptoms? In what ways do you think they are not effective?

III. How is your current relationship with your psychiatrist? Do you think they are open to your questions, listen to your concerns, and spend enough time with you during appointments?

Assessing the Effectiveness of Your Medication

Classes of Psychiatric Medications Checklist

- a. Circle all the medications you are presently taking.
- b. Underline the medications you have taken in the past.
- c. Put an "X" by the medications that had negative side effect(s) or were not effective.
- d. If your medication is not listed, look it up online or talk to a pharmacist to find out what category it falls under.

Identifying Symptoms

- a. Put an "X" in the boxes next to the symptoms and problems that you are currently struggling with.
- b. If you are not on medication and are thinking about talking with your doctor, take the completed form with you to your next appointment.

Symptom Checklist

- a. List out the three most troubling problems or symptoms you have experienced in relation to your mental health problems (e.g., depressed mood).
- b. On the scale below each symptom, rate the severity of the symptom both before and after you started taking your present medication(s). Mark N/A if not currently taking medication.

Side Effects Checklist

- a. Identify any negative side effects you are having as a result of taking your medication(s).
- b. Answer the items based on the side effects you have experienced over the last two weeks.
- c. Does it appear that your present medications are working? Do you feel that the benefits of your medication(s) outweigh the negative side effects?

Classes of Psychiatric Medication

Antipsychotics

Typical

Haldol, Loxitane, Mellaril, Moban, Navane, Orap, Prolixin, Stelazine, Thorazine, Trilafon

Atypical

Abilify, Clozaril, Fanapt, Geodon, Invega, Latuda, Risperdal, Saphris, Seroquel, Vraylar, Zyprexa

Antidepressants

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)

Celexa, Prozac, Lexapro, Luvox, Paxil, Zoloft

Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRI)

Cymbalta, Effexor, Fetzima, Pristiq, Savella

Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCA)

Adapin, Anafranil, Asendin, Elavil, Norpramin, Pamelor, Sinequan, Surmontil, Tofranil, Vivactil

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOI)

Emsam, Marplan, Nardil, Parnate

Atypical Antidepressants

Brintellix, BuSpar, Desyrel, Remeron, Serzone, Viibryd, Wellbutrin

Mood Stabilizers

Tegretol, Depakene, Depakote, Neurontin, Lamictal, Lithium, Trileptal, Topomax

Benzodiazepines

Ativan, Klonopin, Librium, Serax, Valium, Versed, Xanax

ADHD Medications

Stimulants

Adderall, Concerta, Cylert, Dexedrine, Evekeo, Focalin, Mydayis, Ritalin, Vyvanse

Non-Stimulants

Intuniv, Kapvay, Strattera

Identifying Symptoms

Check the boxes that apply to you to help identify the problems and symptoms with which you are presently struggling. If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms, talk with your doctor about whether medication could be helpful.

Mental and Emotional

- Overwhelmed by stimulation** - Crowds, bright lights, noise, or smells.
- Agitation, irritability**
- Anger**
- Euphoria** – Excessive talking, overactive mind, and a constant feeling of happiness.
- Depressed mood**
- Loss of motivation**
- Cognitive impairment** – Slow thinking, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, or slowed speech.
- Negative thinking / self-judgment**
- Racing or intrusive thoughts**
- Paranoia / fear**
- Constant worry / anxiousness**
- Psychotic features** (Unexplainable experiences):
 - Sights
 - Sounds
 - Physical sensations
 - Thoughts and ideas no one else understands

Physical and Behavioral

- Isolation or fear of going out**
- Fidgeting / pacing and excessive energy**
- Sleep problems (insomnia / over sleeping)**
- Nightmares**
- Eating problems (no appetite / too much)**
- Physically impaired** - slowed speech and difficulty moving or feels physically frozen.

Somatic issues:

- Body pains (e.g., chest, back, neck)
- Headaches
- Stomach aches / nausea
- Fatigue

Uncontrolled or destructive behaviors:

- Rage and temper outbursts
- Substance abuse or excessive drinking
- Hyper-sexuality
- Self-harm (e.g., cutting, burning, hitting)
- Excessive spending
- Stealing, shoplifting, or vandalism
- Relationships with negative influences
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts

Symptom Checklist

List out the three most troubling symptoms (problems) you have experienced in relation to your mental illness. On the scales below each symptom, rate the severity of the symptom both before and after you started taking your present medication(s) or mark N/A if you are not presently taking medication. Use this checklist for future appointments with your doctor.

1. _____

Severity **before** present medication(s):

(not a problem) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (significant problem)

Severity **since starting** present medication(s): [N/A]

(not a problem) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (significant problem)

2. _____

Severity **before** present medication(s):

(not a problem) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (significant problem)

Severity **since starting** present medication(s): [N/A]

(not a problem) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (significant problem)

3. _____

Severity **before** present medication(s):

(not a problem) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (significant problem)

Severity **since starting** present medication(s): [N/A]

(not a problem) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (significant problem)

Side Effects Checklist

If you are currently taking medication answer the following items based on the side effects you have experienced over the past 2 weeks.

Daytime sedation / drowsiness

Other problem side effects:

Impaired concentration

Memory problems

Dry mouth

Nausea

Diarrhea

Constipation

Sexual problems

Insomnia / trouble sleeping

Fatigue

Dizziness

Headache

Nervousness / irritability

Blurred vision

Weight gain

Weight loss

Sweating

Learning to Relax

Purpose

Stress triggers symptoms and slows recovery. Reducing stress helps maintain stability and brings peace. Relaxation techniques help you cope with overwhelming anxiety and stress by slowing your heart rate, reducing your blood pressure, controlling your breathing, and reducing your muscle tension. The purpose of this session is to help you develop skills and techniques to take control of anxiety and stress in your daily life.

Goals

- Learn relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation and paced breathing.
- Train your body to produce a relaxation response when prompted.
- Make changes in your daily life to reduce anxiety and stress.

Facts to Consider

- The physical symptoms of stress and anxiety (e.g., heart racing, sweating, shortness of breath, nausea) can be so overwhelming they cause an individual to go to the emergency room thinking they are experiencing a heart attack.
- Relaxation techniques such as paced breathing can be helpful during these episodes of panic. The brain requires 20% of the oxygen you breathe. During panic and highstress/ anxiety, shallow breathing occurs; decreasing the amount of oxygen to the brain. Breathing techniques help to maintain oxygenation within the brain and body which in turn can restore calm and balance. *These techniques, when done on a daily basis, help to bring down your general level of stress.*
- As you learn relaxation techniques, you'll become more aware of muscle tension and other physical sensations of stress. Once you know what your stress response feels like, you can make a conscious effort to practice a relaxation technique the moment you start to feel an increase in tension. This can prevent stress from spiraling out of control.
- It is important to find techniques that you like and practice them when you are NOT overly stressed or during episodes of panic. This increases communication between your brain and your body. The brain and body then remind each other to be calm and relaxed when practicing the skill, similar to muscle memory. Once you have the skill practiced, using it during times of high stress or panic will help bring your brain and body down to a calmer, more relaxed level.
- Relaxation techniques are skills and as with any skill, your ability to relax improves with practice. Be patient with yourself — don't let your effort to practice relaxation techniques become yet another stressor. If one relaxation technique doesn't work for you, try another. Everybody is different.

Understanding Yourself

I. What are some things that keep you from being able to relax?

II. How do you typically deal with anxiety and stress?

III. Do you notice any physical symptoms associated with your anxiety (e.g., nausea, increased breathing rate, tense muscles)?

Lifestyle Changes

A number of lifestyle changes can help you minimize stress and anxiety in your daily life. These include:

- ***Taking Control of Your Environment*** – Setting up a daily structure and routine for yourself that includes exercise, meals, sleep, work, and enjoyable activities will prevent stress from becoming a long-term problem.
- ***Looking at the Big Picture*** – Ask yourself how important this stressful event or situation will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere and allow yourself to rest / relax.
- ***Adjusting Your Standards*** – Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Learn to set achievable goals and avoid expectations of perfection, as these will only lead to disappointment and failure. Allow reasonable and adjustable standards for yourself and others. Learn to be okay with “good enough.”
- ***Focusing on the Positive*** – When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.
- ***Connecting with Others*** – Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- ***Do Something You Enjoy Every Day*** – Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, gardening, or listening to music. Be sure to mark the time on your calendar!

Relaxation Techniques

Familiarize yourself with the relaxation techniques and the relaxation response on the associated pages. Once familiar and comfortable with the techniques, they can be used during times of heightened stress or anxiety to calm your body and mind. In addition, learn to practice these techniques 1-3 times daily for overall relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Take a seat, get comfortable, and take a few deep breaths.
2. **Face and Forehead** – Begin by tensing the muscles in your face then relax ... now tense the muscles in your forehead and scalp by wrinkling your forehead and frowning ... now relax and let your forehead be “smooth.”
3. **Eyes** – Tense the muscles around your eyes by shutting your eyes tightly together ... now relax and let your eyelids be smooth and let your eyes “float” in their sockets.
4. **Cheeks and Jaws** – Tense the muscles in your cheeks and jaw by gritting your teeth together firmly ... now relax, let your lips part slightly and let your jaw “hang loose.”
5. **Neck** – Moving to the muscles in your neck, tense the muscles by pressing the back of your head against the chair as if you are looking up at the ceiling ... now relax and let your chin come down to your chest and rotate your head from side to side before returning your head to a comfortable position.
6. **Shoulders** – Tense the muscles in your shoulders by shrugging your shoulders upward towards your ears ... now relax and let the weight of your arms bring your shoulders down into a slumped and relaxed position.
7. **Hands and Forearms** – Tense the muscles in your hands and forearms by clenching your hands into fists ... now relax.
8. **Upper Arms** – Now tense the muscles in your upper arms by bending your arms at the elbow and “making a muscle” ... now relax.
9. **Back** – Tense the muscles in your upper, middle, and lower back by arching your back away from the chair ... now relax.
10. **Chest** – Tense the muscles in your chest by taking a deep breath and holding it for about 5 seconds ... now slowly exhale ... another deep breath ... breath out more air than you breathed in ... another deep breath ... slowly exhale and then continue breathing normally.
11. **Abdomen** – Next, tense the muscles in your abdomen either by pulling your stomach in or pushing it out ... now relax.
12. **Hips and Thighs** – Moving to the lower half of your body, tense the muscles in your hips and thighs by pressing the heels of your feet against the chair ... now relax.
13. **Lower Legs** – Finally, tense the muscles in your calves, ankles, feet, and toes by pointing your toes away from your body ... then relax.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Answer the following questions after you have completed a session of progressive muscle relaxation.

- a. How does your body feel? What physical sensations do you notice?

- b. What emotions are you experiencing?

- c. How is your overall mental state?

Breathing

Try each of the breathing techniques below to determine which is most helpful for you.

1. **Paced Breathing** – Breathe in to the count of 3 and out to the count of 10 for 3-5 breaths, making sure that you slowly and fully exhale.
2. **Abdominal Breathing** – When you breathe take in more oxygen by breathing down in your abdomen instead of out through your chest wall.
3. **Mental Breathing** – Take a breath and trace the oxygen through your body stream until your whole body is breathing, not just your lungs.
4. **Four Square Breathing** – Breathe in to 4, hold to 4, out for 4, pause for 4, and then repeat.

Answer the following questions after you complete a breathing session.

- a. How does your body feel? What physical sensations do you notice?

- b. What emotions are you experiencing?

- c. How is your overall mental state?

Relaxation Response

Mindfulness techniques are mental exercises that focus one's full attention on an activity, subject, or image in order to calm the mind. Try and use the various mindfulness techniques on the associated sheet.

Biblical mindfulness is associated with the Old and New Testament concepts of "meditate" (Psalm 1:2) or "set your mind" (Colossians 3:2). Mindfulness is being aware of your experience in the moment and God's presence with you (i.e., abiding in the Lord). This tool is used to train your body to produce a relaxation response when prompted. The relaxation response is a technique designed to elicit a state of deep relaxation in which breathing, pulse rate, blood pressure, and metabolism are decreased.

The two essential steps in eliciting the relaxation response are:

- The repetition of a word, sound, phrase, or prayer.
- Not becoming attached to everyday thoughts that come to mind during the process, but instead noticing thoughts without judgment followed by a return to the repetition.

To elicit the relaxation response:

1. Choose a focus word or phrase for repetition. You can use a word such as "one" or "peace," or a word/phrase (e.g., Psalm 23:1-3) with special meaning to you.
2. Sit in a comfortable position in a quiet place free of distractions. Close your eyes and relax your muscles, progressing from your feet to your calves, thighs, abdomen, shoulders, head, and neck.
3. Breathe slowly and naturally and as you do say your focus word, sound, phrase, or prayer silently to yourself while you exhale.
4. Intruding worries or thoughts should be dismissed to the best of your ability by focusing on the repetition.
5. Continue for 5-10 minutes. It's okay to open your eyes to look at a clock while you are practicing, but do not set an alarm.
6. When you have finished, remain seated, first with your eyes closed and then with your eyes open, and gradually allow your thoughts to return to everyday reality.

Variations of the Relaxation Response

Mindfulness

1. Sit comfortably and bring your attention to one thing in that moment, whether it be a sound, a smell (candle, lotion, etc.), a thought or word, a picture, or object, without trying to do anything about it. In your mind, or out loud, list out facts or truths that you notice. Is there a rhythm to the sound? What is the smell made up of? Can you identify all of the colors and textures in that picture or object? Use your senses to notice whatever it is you are being mindful of. Continue like this a little while, allowing yourself to settle down.
2. Now bring your attention to your breathing. Simply notice the breath as it moves in and out as the body inhales and exhales. Notice how the breath moves in and out automatically, effortlessly. Don't try to manipulate it in any way. Notice all the details of the experience ; the feeling of the air moving in and out of the nose, your lungs expanding and collapsing, the way the body moves as it breathes, etc.
3. Your thoughts may wander away from the breath. That's fine, it doesn't matter. That's part of the exercise. When you notice that you are no longer focused on the breath, bring your attention back to it.

Reflecting on Scripture

1. Read to yourself or aloud a comforting scripture (focus on only one, not several) in a slow and thoughtful manner. Do not rush through the reading.
2. Begin to think about the definitions of certain words within the scripture. Are there certain comforting images, stories, or movies that come to mind? You can think about how a gentle parent would act this out with a loving child. Are there certain ideas, concepts or other comforting scriptures that come to mind? Write down in a notebook or journal all of the interesting or comforting points.

Variations of the Relaxation Response

Visual Imagery

1. Using a comforting scripture (e.g. Psalm 23:1-3), visualize a peaceful scene of that particular scripture. Or you can imagine yourself like Mary at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42).
2. Try to visualize yourself in peaceful detail what it would be like in these settings. Focus on different elements that are refreshing.
3. You can do this activity looking at artwork or listening to the lyrics of a comforting worship song.

Active Imagery

1. Paint/draw a picture based on the theme of a comforting scripture; or a song, poem, or other activity (i.e., watering the grass or flowers - visualize how the water is nourishing the ground, how it will make the plants green, and how God provides for you much like you are providing for the plants).
2. Focus on the comfort this brings.

Perform one or two of the relaxation response options and then answer the questions below. When you practice the relaxation response ongoing, try to be aware of these questions.

a. How does your body feel? What physical sensations do you notice?

b. What emotions are you experiencing?

c. How is your overall mental state?

d. How do you physically feel after doing the exercise?

Eating Healthier

Purpose

A balanced and nutritious diet promotes brain health and stabilizes moods. In addition, a healthy diet combats increased appetite and weight gain, which are common side effects of psychiatric medication. The purpose of this session is to assess your present diet and help you develop a plan for eating healthier.

Goals

- Assess the health of your present diet.
- Make simple brain-focused food changes to your present diet.
- Develop a weekly meal plan that incorporates healthier choices.

Facts to Consider

- Our bodies need 13 essential vitamins to maintain health and wellness. These vitamins include A, B, C, D, E, K, B12, and the 7 B-complex vitamins. We obtain most of these vitamins through the foods we eat, if we consume a healthy diet.
- A healthy diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products and should include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- A healthy diet replenishes electrolytes and amino acids. This in turns affects neurotransmitters in the brain and can enhance the effects of psychiatric medication.
- Water has just as much of an effect on electrolytes as sports drinks. Your brain is 75% water and brain cells require a healthy balance of water and other elements for proper function. Dehydration contributes to fatigue as well as stress, anxiety, and mood. Basic rule – always have a bottle of water with you which you can refill throughout the day.
- Healthy foods take longer to digest and suppress hunger; this type of diet also helps address weight gain which is a common side effect of many psychiatric medications.
- In some cases, nutritional supplements such as essential fatty acids may be helpful. These supplements should be used in addition to, but not in place of, medication. Always check with your doctor before taking a nutritional supplement.

Understanding Yourself

I. Do you believe you presently eat healthy? If not, what is keeping you from eating healthy?

II. Do you have difficulty skipping meals or eating too much, why or why not?

III. How do you think eating healthy will affect the overall quality of your life ... mental health?

Quick Start

As a start to a healthier lifestyle immediately make the following quick and easy changes to your daily diet.

1. **Avoid Fast Food and Sodas** – While convenient, these foods are high in trans-fats, calories, and sugar, they lead to obesity and an increased risk for cardiovascular problems and stroke. Research has shown that even diet sodas increase craving for more diet sodas and lead to weight gain. In addition, sodas often contain caffeine that adversely affects sleep and can increase stress and anxiety.
2. **Take a Daily Multivitamin** – Taking a daily multivitamin will assure that you receive the essential vitamins your body needs to maintain proper health. Daily multivitamin intake has been associated with the prevention of, or reduces the risk of, certain diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease. Make sure your multivitamin contains B12 and the 7 B-complex vitamins. These are particularly important for individuals living with mental illness.
3. **Increase your Intake of Omega-3 Fatty Acids** – The two main omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) have important biological functions in the central nervous system. Omega-3 fatty acids are known to decrease the effects of systemic inflammation and it is thought that this effect is what is beneficial for several mental disorders. For maximum effectiveness approximately 2,400 mg should be taken per day.
4. **Drink More Water** – The daily intake of water for men should be about 3 liters (approximately 13 cups) while the daily intake for women should be around 2.2 liters (approximately 9 cups).

Stress Reducing Foods

Alter your weekly diet to incorporate the following foods to increase your intake of important stress-reducing nutrients.

1. **Whole Grain Cereals, Breads, Pastas, and Oatmeal** – Contain complex carbohydrates which boost serotonin levels in the brain and help stabilize blood sugar. Complex carbohydrates are a much better dietary choice than simple carbohydrates (sweets, refined foods, white rice/bread/sugar) that cause spikes in both blood sugar and serotonin levels, which then abruptly drop to induce anxiety. Additionally, simple carbohydrates have no nutritional value, which means the person ends up more fatigued and/or tired than before they ate. To offset this feeling, individuals tend to depend on excessive coffee drinking, sodas, and energy drinks.
2. **Citrus Fruits** – Contain vitamin C, which has been shown to be helpful in lowering stress hormones (cortisol) in the body and boosting the immune system.
3. **Spinach, Salmon, and Soybeans** – Contain magnesium which helps to regulate stress hormone levels in the body. People with low levels of magnesium tend to be prone to headaches and fatigue.
4. **Avocados and Bananas** – Are high in potassium which lowers blood pressure. Because half of an avocado has on average more potassium than a medium-sized banana, guacamole is a great nutritional alternative when you are craving a high-fat treat. In addition, Bananas contain tryptophan, the amino acid your body uses to make serotonin.
5. **Pistachios** - Decreases the impact of stress hormones on the body. Eating a handful of pistachios daily has been shown to lower the set-point of blood pressure so that it doesn't spike as high when an adrenaline rush occurs.
6. **Almonds** - Are full of vitamin E (to boost immunity) as well as a range of B vitamins (which assists with physiological resistance to stress in the body). You can get these benefits with eating ¼ cup of almonds daily.

Developing a Single Day Healthy Meal Plan

Start simple; create a list of healthy food options for a single day this week.

Breakfast

Mid-Morning Snack

Lunch

Afternoon Snack

Dinner

Simple Menu Suggestions

These are ideas for menu items, not full recipes. You can find various recipes online using the healthy ingredients listed.

Breakfast

- Decaffeinated coffee – 1 cup using raw sugar and creamer
- Low caffeine Black or Green Tea
- Banana (or other fresh fruit)
- Wholegrain / wheat toast – use low fat butter
- Oatmeal / Cream of Wheat
- Kashi or wholegrain/fiber rich cereal (sprinkle/mix frozen strawberries or raspberries)
- Milk or sugar free fruit juice

Mid-Morning Snack

- Banana, orange, or granola type bar (read label to avoid high sugar content and preservatives, as they can affect mood and weight).

Lunch

- Salad – Iceberg lettuce or romaine mixed with baby spinach (or use spring salad mix), almonds, low fat/wholegrain croutons (sometimes also add raisins or mushrooms), use low fat/carb dressing and cheese.
- Sandwich – Wholegrain bread or pita bread and veggies. Use low fat spreads (i.e. mayo with olive oil, etc.), lunchmeats (with low sugar), use any variety of cheese slices, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers. Chips – Sun Harvest, Tostitos Black Bean, or similar health conscience types. Keep it simple and low fat/carb (read labels to avoid high sugar and preservatives)..

Simple Menu Suggestions

Afternoon Snack

- Popcorn made with air popper, light butter/salt. Avoid microwave popcorn as it contains lots of chemicals.
- Smoothies from frozen fruits and almond milk
- Mixed fruits or veggies
- ¼ cup of nuts or mixed nuts (low or no salt)
- Healthy granola bar

Dinner

- Balsamic Chicken – Chicken cooked with balsamic served with brown rice, wild rice, black rice, couscous, quinoa, or bulgur and veggies (green beans or salad).
- Grilled Pork or Salmon – Served with wild rice (brown rice, wild rice, black rice, couscous, quinoa, or bulgur) and veggies (salad, fried or grilled red/yellow bell peppers with onions or cut/fry red potatoes, green onions, tomatoes, garlic/herb spice).
- Spaghetti and Meat Sauce – Use lean beef or ground turkey in low fat/healthy spaghetti sauce, grate up zucchini and add these into the sauce for added nutrients. Use multigrain omega 3 noodles or whole wheat.
- Salad – Iceberg lettuce or romaine mixed with baby spinach (or use spring salad mix), almonds, low fat/wholegrain croutons (sometimes also add raisins or mushrooms), use low fat/carb dressing and cheese. Add lean chicken or healthy fish.
- Italian Zesty Pasta w/Chicken or shrimp – Chicken cooked with garlic/herb spice, multigrain omega 3 penne or fettuccine, mixed with a sauce made from olive oil, red pepper flakes, and parsley. Add zucchini, squash, mushroom or red bell peppers for added nutrients.
- Italian Chicken – Marinate chicken in low-fat Italian dressing and grill. Serve with wild rice. Side of cooked green beans with toasted garlic (fry garlic in olive oil until golden brown and green beans until warm).
- Chicken Tacos – Cook chicken in taco spices (taco packet or various recipes) with green peppers and onions grilled on skewers (or fried in small amount of olive oil) and a serving of brown rice. Add beans for additional nutrients. Whole-wheat tortillas.
- Simple Stir-Fry – Brown rice or multigrain noodles with lean beef strips and spinach.

Developing a Plan for Eating Healthier

Develop a weekly menu using the suggestions above and the associated Simple Menu Suggestions sheet. As discussed above, a healthy diet is helpful both for those who are trying to deal with weight gain from psychiatric medications and/or to fortify the brain and body for general health.

There are many different healthy food plans. You need to find the one that works best for you. If you have a certain food sensitivity or allergy, such as gluten or dairy, make adaptations as needed. Sugar should always be avoided if possible. For more options search the internet for “healthy food options”.

Weekly Menu Planner

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Being More Active

Purpose

Regular exercise reduces anxiety and improves mood. An effective strategy for exercise should not be difficult, but simple, achievable, and manageable. The purpose of the present session is to assess your present level of activity and help you develop a practical plan for becoming more active.

Goals

- Assess your daily level of activity.
- Learn simple ways to increase your daily level of activity.
- Develop a plan for regular exercise.

Facts to Consider

- Activity and exercise are great ways to combat factors that contribute to heart disease: stress, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, weight gain, and diabetes -- all problems commonly found among people living with mental health difficulties and disorders.
- Regular exercise elevates your mood (decreasing symptoms of anxiety and depression) and helps regulate sleep patterns.
- Exercise increases concentrations of norepinephrine, a neurochemical that moderates the brain's response to stress. Exercise also causes the increased release of endorphins in the brain, which produce feelings of happiness and well-being.
- Exercise offsets troublesome medication side effects such as constipation, drowsiness, weight gain, fatigue, and irritability that are common among individuals living with mental illness.
- The brain releases dopamine, the “reward chemical” in response to any form of pleasure, be that exercise or alcohol and drugs. Exercise can help in addiction recovery by stimulating this brain response in the absence of the addicting substance.
- Thirty minutes of moderate intensity exercise, such as brisk walking 3 days a week, is sufficient to benefit your health. Moreover, these 30 minutes need not to be continuous; three 10 minute walks are believed to be as equally useful as one 30 minute walk.

Understanding Yourself

- I. *How physically active are you on a daily basis? If you are not physically active, what factors are currently keeping you from being more active?*

- II. *Do you have any health problems that would keep you from exercising or limit your daily activity?*

- III. *What physical activities do you enjoy doing (e.g., gardening, walking, biking, swimming)?*

Quick Start

As a start to a more active lifestyle, make the following quick and easy changes to your daily routine:

1. **Take the Stairs** – This seems obvious, but how often do we take the elevator instead? Five minutes climbing stairs burns up to 150 calories!
2. **Use a Basket Instead of a Shopping Cart** – If you only have a few things to pick up at the store after work, use a basket instead of a cart. It's an automatic weightlifting session.
3. **Park Further Away** – Build in extra walking by parking further away from your destination. You'll not only burn calories but save a lot of time not looking for a closer spot.
4. **Play With Your Pets** – Owning a dog automatically means frequent walks and play time. For cats tie a ribbon/string around your wrist and let it dangle to the floor. Most cats will enjoy chasing you around the house.
5. **Pace/Clean While on the Phone** – Phone calls with family and friends can be long and are usually done sitting or lying down. For a change, vigorously pace around your home or yard while you chat.

Developing an Exercise Plan

Important facts to keep in mind when developing an exercise plan:

1. **Do Something** – Any exercise is better than none, but a moderate level of exercise seems to work best.
2. **Start Slow** – Don't do too much too quickly; build physical activity into your life gradually, in small steps.
3. **Simply Be More Active** – Exercise can be about playing a sport or doing hardcore workouts. For other people, it is just about being more physically active and sitting around less. It doesn't have to be hard, but try to do something every day. Take advantage of daily opportunities such as household chores, yard work, or walking the dog. You don't need special equipment for an aerobic workout. It can be as easy as taking a brisk walk every day through a path in your neighborhood or laps in a local mall.
4. **Exercise is Therapeutic** – There will be days when you just don't feel like exercising. You may feel tired, anxious, or be too busy. If you keep to your routine, and exercise during times like this, you will almost certainly feel better.

Use the associated Sample Exercise Plan to develop a routine that is tailored to your lifestyle. Remember, keep it simple. The goal is daily activity, stress reduction, and health.

Sample Exercise Plan

Intensity Level

The easiest way to determine your exercise intensity level is the talk test. As a rule of thumb, if you can talk easily, you aren't at the high end of your exertion. If your goal is to exercise at a moderate intensity, you should be able to talk, but not sing, while performing your activity. If your goal is to be exercising at a vigorous intensity, you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing to take a breath.

Warm-Up

The warm-up will slowly increase your breathing, heart rate, and body temperature. Your warm-up should last between five to ten minutes.

Strength Training

This part of an exercise program can be done in many different ways and will help protect your body from osteoporosis, help burn calories, and increase lean muscle mass. Good examples: push-ups, crunches, pull-ups, squats, lunges, and dips. Strength training should be done twice a week when you are first starting out. As you progress, try building up to three or four times per week.

Aerobic Exercise

This part of an exercise program includes activity that raises your heart rate. This is the type of exercise best associated with reductions in depression and anxiety. Basic aerobic exercises include (but aren't limited to) jogging, swift walking, swimming, step or stair climbing, and cycling. Start with just 20 minutes a day, and eventually try working up to a few hours of aerobic exercise every week.

Sample Exercise Plan

Flexibility Exercises

This portion of an exercise program, also known as stretching, can be done anywhere, anytime. Stretching can increase your flexibility, your range of motion, and the blood flow to your muscles. Stretching also relieves stress, improves balance, and helps relax tense muscles. Here are some important tips:

- Be sure to stretch major muscle groups including calves, thighs, hips, back and shoulders.
- Do not bounce as you stretch because this can cause slight tears in the muscles, making them tighter no matter how consistently you stretch.
- Stretching should not be painful, but expect to feel some tension. If you feel pain, you have stretched too far. Ease up and hold the stretch lightly.

Cool Down

Gradually decrease the intensity of the exercise over a five to ten minute period until your heart rate and breathing are near normal.

Developing a Plan for Becoming More Active

a. *What are some things you could start doing regularly to be more active?*

b. *What types of exercises or activities could you incorporate into your routine this week?*

c. *When and for how long will you do these activities throughout the week? (Be specific)*

d. *Use the activity log on the following page to track you progress this week.*

Activity Log

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>	<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>	<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>	<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>
Friday	Saturday	Sunday	NOTES
<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>	<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>	<p>Were you active today?</p> <p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, what did you do?</p>	<p><i>Use this space to record any notes about your activity this week.</i></p>

Mental Wellness

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Goals Check-In

I. Briefly list out the goals you specified at the beginning of the workbook.

Goal 1. _____

Goal 2. _____

Goal 3. _____

II. What progress, if any, have you made towards reaching these goals?

Goal 1. _____

Goal 2. _____

Goal 3. _____

III. List out any barriers you have encountered in the pursuit of these goals?

Barriers:

Possible solutions:

Who can help overcome?

Managing Stressors

Purpose

Coping strategies are ways we deal with problems and stress. Some strategies are positive and healing, while others negatively affect the person trying to recover. The purpose of this lesson is to help you identify and adopt positive coping strategies during times of stress.

Goals

- Evaluate the ways in which you presently cope with problems and stress.
- Learn healthy strategies for coping.
- Develop a plan for how you will positively cope with future difficulties.

Facts to Consider

- Coping strategies are learned patterns of behavior used to deal with life. We learn from others as well as from our own experiences how to deal with stress.
- Positive coping behaviors, when practiced regularly, diminish stress and enhance the quality of one's life.
- One can actively confront a problem by gathering information, developing skills, or changing their behavior in order to adapt to a situation. A more passive coping strategy is to regulate one's emotional response to a challenge by suppressing negative thinking, distracting one's thoughts, or learning to accept a negative situation.
- When individuals struggling with mental health difficulties take direct positive action to cope, they put themselves in a position of power. Active positive coping is empowering and takes away feelings of helplessness.
- Negative coping choices will reduce your feelings of stress at the time you are experiencing the stressful event(s). However, with time, they usually create their own problems and are best avoided.

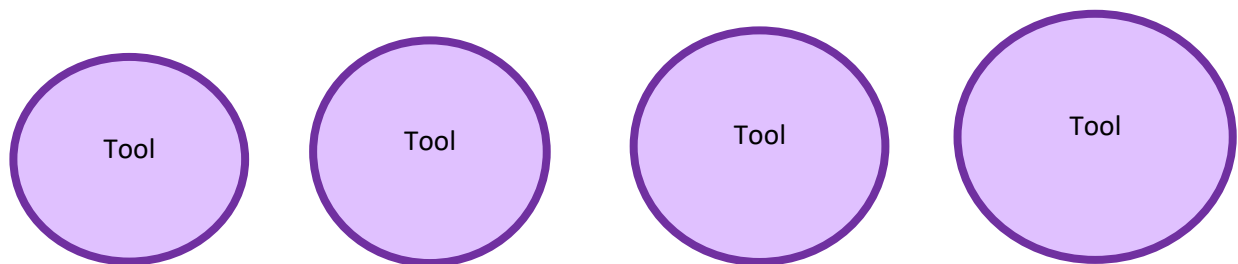
Recognizing Thoughts and Feelings Based on “Untruths”

Untruths are core beliefs that *feel* true to you, but are not *actually* true. Untruths are negative and unhealthy things you believe about yourself. They can also be negative or unhealthy things you feel that others believe about you. Untruths are often developed at a young age and are often established through traumatic experiences, unhealthy/unsafe home life, low self-esteem, bullying, and through what parents exemplify and teach.

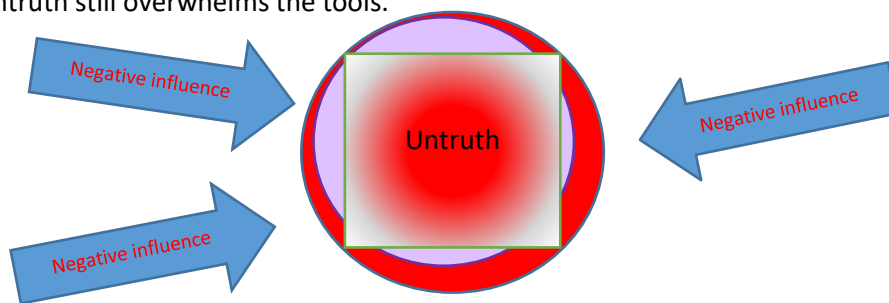
Common untruths:

- “I am not worthy of love”
- “I am a bad and evil person”
- “I am stupid”
- “I am ugly and fat”
- “No one cares about me”

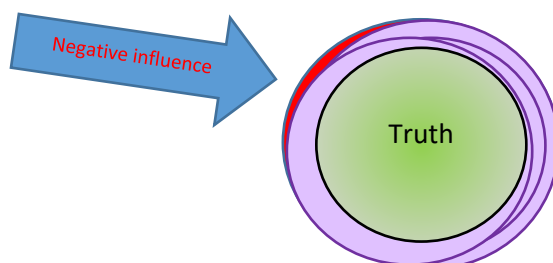
There are a variety of tools that can be used to combat the untruths and work towards developing a healthy sense of self. You will learn these tools through this workbook.



When our deep, core thoughts about ourselves are built from untruths, it leaves a lot of space for negative, outside influences to affect our identity. It's like putting a square peg in a round hole. It may seem to fit, but there is something missing and it is not quite right. We may try to use tools to combat, but the untruth still overwhelms the tools.



Once we learn the truth about ourselves and our worth, tools become a protective barrier to outside influence. They work to strengthen our truth and add to the healthy self-esteem we have established. Negative influences don't affect us as much.



Understanding Yourself

- I. *Have you ever done something to make yourself feel better that actually made your problems worse? Give an example.*

- II. *When you notice that you are having negative, unhealthy thinking what do you do to stay in control? What works or doesn't work for you?*

- III. *What is more important to you: fixing a problem or feeling better? How are they related?*

Developing Healthy Strategies for Coping with Stress

1. To develop effective coping skills it is first necessary to identify the most common stressors in your life that cause you problems. List below your three most common stressors.

2. Look at the *Common Coping Strategies* sheet on the next page. Circle the strategies you have used in the past to deal with problems and stress. Are your coping strategies mostly positive or negative? Are they mostly active or passive?

Common Coping Strategies

Positive Strategies

Active

- Ask a loved one to help you brainstorm and problem-solve ways to relieve stress.
- Set flexible and reasonable goals.
- Routine relaxation techniques.
- Make a list or journal about things you are thankful for and blessings in your life.
- Develop a schedule and routine.
- Regular exercise.
- Pray.

Passive

- Spend time with friends.
- Get a massage.
- Enjoy fresh air and being outdoors.
- Watch a funny / light-hearted TV show or movie.
- Take a shower or bath.
- Play a game, puzzle.
- Knitting, sewing.
- Art, photography, music, reading, writing.
- Do a small, simple project (e.g., cleaning, gardening, or painting).

Negative Strategies

Active

- Cutting / Self-harm
- Substance Abuse
- Physical / Verbal Aggression
- Sexual Promiscuity
- Over Spending
- Overeating

Passive

- Isolation
- Not Eating
- Sleeping
- Avoidance
- Self-blame
- Denial

How Do You Cope?

From the previous page, *Common Coping Strategies*, identify the coping strategy you used during your last stressful life event (family or friend troubles, work issues, etc.). If the strategy was negative and/or passive, try and think of an active positive strategy that you could try to use next time.

I. *Stressful event or problem:*

II. *Coping strategy used during the event or problem:* _____

Positive or Negative (Circle one)

Active or Passive (Circle one)

III. *What was the outcome?*

IV. *What is a healthy alternative coping strategy you could use instead?*

Try repeating this exercise to address other stressors you are dealing with in your life. Use your journal or extra sheets of paper to write them down.

Personal Coping Strategies

Be prepared with different options for times of distress. Fill in this sheet or use the *Common Coping Strategies* sheet to brainstorm other ideas that you can refer to in difficult times.

a. People who provide comfort:

b. Specific interests (e.g., sports, enjoyable reading, podcasts):

c. Creative outlets (e.g., art – painting, photography, music, dance, writing):

d. Humor / Joy (e.g., movies, videos):

e. Hobbies:

f. Games (e.g., Sudoku, puzzles, word games):

g. Physical (e.g., hot bath, relaxation techniques, exercise, walk):

h. Outdoors (e.g., park, walk with a dog or a friend, drive):

i. Small projects (e.g., cleaning, gardening):

Managing Distressing Thoughts and Memories

Next time you are dealing with distressing thoughts or memories follow the 5-step process below.

***Note:** Take your time and do not rush this process. If this becomes uncomfortable, put this aside and find a healthy distraction. You can skip this section and return to it when you personally have more emotional energy. If you are working with a mental health coach or therapist, they can help you with this exercise.*

Step 1 – Validate

If a situation or memory is causing negative emotions, begin by acknowledging and validating the situation or memory and the emotion it triggers by identifying the emotion, not suppressing (e.g., fear, pain, hurt, sorrow). Remind yourself it is okay to have these emotions and that they will pass.

Step 2 – Affirmation

Tell yourself that these are just thoughts / memories and not a reflection of any weakness. Affirm you are safe, God can provide strength for you, and these thoughts or memories have no control over you. Think of positive things about yourself or life.

Step 3 – Unwind

Work towards relaxation by changing your physical and emotional states. First, change your scenery by going outside or into another setting, drink a glass of ice water, or even wash your face with very cold water. Second, use a breathing technique or some muscle relaxation exercises to calm yourself down. Refer back to the *Learning to Relax* section for tips on breathing and muscle relaxation techniques.

Step 4 – Release the Distress

After some time has passed, present your difficult emotion(s) to God and allow Him to care for you (Psalm 55:22). Imagine the situation or memory as being a piece of paper that you are handing over to God. Receive His peace and comfort.

Step 5 – Rest and Engage Healthy Coping

Try not to dwell on it any longer and engage in one of the coping strategies you listed above.

Identifying Emotions

Purpose

Our emotions (feelings) are directly related to how we think (thoughts) and how we behave (actions). Identifying our emotions can help us better control them. The purpose of this session is to help you to identify what you are feeling and why.

Goals

- Develop an understanding of emotions/feelings.
- Establish vocabulary to help identify emotions/feelings.
- Increase your emotional awareness.

Facts to Consider

- Feelings and emotions are the same thing. You will often hear the terms ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’ used interchangeably. Feelings/emotions are usually just one word, not a sentence.
- Emotions are yours, and yours alone. No other person controls them or makes you feel a certain way. Though often people say, for example, “you made me mad,” it is important to remember that another person does not create that emotion in you. Other people are not puppeteers with strings connected to our brain controlling our emotions.
- Emotions come and go like a wave. You can experience many different emotions through a single day. When our emotion lingers, it becomes a mood.
- When you experience an *emotion*, your *thoughts* can change to match, which affects how we *behave* or react to that experience.
- Emotional awareness is your ability to identify the emotion you have and why you have it. Increasing emotional awareness can ensure that your thoughts and behaviors are not hurtful to you or others.
- Emotions are not good or bad, they just are. God gave you emotions to help identify what you need to do to take care of yourself. Both positive and negative emotions are normal.
- All emotions can tell you something about a situation. Instead of judging yourself or believing that you shouldn’t feel that way, it’s better to notice how you feel and try to understand why you feel that way.
- Reacting too quickly to a situation is a sign that you might have struggled to identify what you were feeling and why you were feeling that way.
- On the other hand, avoiding or ignoring how we feel is not healthy either. Our feelings don’t fade if we ignore them. They build up and will explode later on down the road.
- Once you learn to identify what you are feeling, addressing it becomes much easier and often leads to a resolution!

Understanding Yourself

- I. *Have you ever struggled to control your feelings and reacted too quickly to a situation? Was the outcome positive or negative?*

- II. *Do you feel like you are good at sharing your emotions with other people, or do you hold them inside, almost like a secret? Give an example.*

- III. *List out two or three emotions that you feel most often throughout a week. Use the Emotions Chart if you need help.*

Recognize, Respect, and Reflect

*In order to live a healthy and thriving life, everyone needs to be able to **recognize, respect, and reflect** on emotions throughout the day. These things help us to build our emotional awareness and address our needs. Below are two options that can help you to become more in touch with yourself*

Option A: Taking time to notice and not judge or avoid your emotions is the first step in taking care of your emotional self. Follow the steps below to track and reflect on your emotions throughout each day.

- a. Recognize when you are having an emotional response to something. Try tuning in to your body and sensations that you might be experiencing. For example, you might feel sparks through your entire body when you experience happiness, or you might feel heat in your face and check with anger.
- b. Respect each emotion that you experience, good or bad. You might feel excited if a friend calls or you might experience some stress at work. The excitement keeps you connected to others, while the stress pushes you to get your work completed fully. Both emotions serve their own purpose.
- c. Reflect on each emotion. Take about 5 minutes each night to journal about how you felt throughout the day.
- d. Build your emotional vocabulary. If sadness was the emotion you picked, ask yourself if there is a more detailed word to describe the emotion. Were you lonely, grieving, or feeling depression?
- e. Reflect on whether this emotion is telling you something. Share your feelings with a trusted and close loved one or therapist. Saying the emotion out loud and discussing it can help find a resolution or move past the emotion.

For example: try journaling about WHY you felt those emotions listed above. If you are not sure, do your best to guess why you might have those feelings.

Option B: If working to recognize all of your emotions seems like too huge of a task, try narrowing your focus to work on identifying one emotion a day.

- a. Pick one of the emotion headings on the *Emotions Chart* to track throughout each day of the week.

- b. Journal. Take about 5 minutes each night to review that emotion and if you experienced it throughout the day. Starting with a positive emotion is often easier.
- c. Build your emotional vocabulary. If sadness was the emotion you picked, ask yourself if there is a more detailed word to describe the emotion. Were you lonely, grieving, or feeling guilt?
- d. Reflect on whether this emotion is telling you something. Share your feelings with a trusted and close loved one or therapist. Saying the emotion out loud and discussing it can help find a resolution or move past the emotion.

For example: try journaling about WHY you felt those emotions listed above. If you are not sure, do your best to guess why you might have those feelings

<u>Happy</u>	<u>Sad</u>	<u>Hurt</u>	<u>Helped</u>	<u>Insecure</u>	<u>Confident</u>	<u>Unwell</u>	<u>Healthy</u>
Accepted	Depressed	Horror	Uplifted	Unprepared	Trusting	Tired	Energized
Vibrant	Mournful	Fear	Cherished	Surprised	Admiration	Bored	Creative
Grateful	Hopeless	Panic	Loved	Anxious	Strong	Sick	Inspired
Content	Empathetic	Pained	Blessed	Rejected	Brave	Drained	Alert
Joyful	Discouraged	Destroyed	Saved	Mistreated	Successful	Weary	Hopeful
Thrilled	Lonely	Abused	Reassured	Weak	Secure	Powerless	Rejuvenated
Loving	Downcast	Ignored	Empowered	Unworthy	Beautiful	Exhausted	Calm
Caring	Miserable	Forgotten	Appreciated	Unwanted	Assured	Shattered	Satisfied
Overjoyed	Bitter	Judged	Understood	Unwelcome	Proud	Uninterested	Refreshed
Celebratory	Upset	Cursed	Validated	Victimized	Powerful	Confusion	Invigored
Optimistic	Despairing	Hated	Strengthened	Doubtful	Giving	Guilt	Interested
Exhilarated	Gloomy	Neglected	Refreshed	Envious	Great	Shame	Resilient
Inspired	Dejected	Resentful	Renewed	Timid	Contentment	Cynicism	Spirited
Elated	Frustrated	Angry	Protected	Apprehensive	Curiosity	Disgrace	Lively
Euphoric	Unhappy	Irritated	Valued	Nervous	Graceful	Beaten down	Vigorous

What are some other emotions/feelings that you have experienced? List them below.

Renewing Your Mind

Purpose

Unhealthy or negative thinking can cause us to become emotionally disconnected and overly critical towards others and ourselves. Learning healthy thinking skills can bring peace and help stabilize your moods. The purpose of this session is to help you learn skills and techniques to take control of your thoughts and minimize negative thinking.

Goals

- Assess your present level of unhealthy or negative thinking.
- Determine the common thinking traps you fall into.
- Develop skills for renewing your thoughts and minimizing negative thinking.

Facts to Consider

- Our emotions and behaviors are the result of what we think or believe about ourselves, other people, and the world. These thoughts shape how we interpret and evaluate what happens to us, influence how we feel about it, and provide a guide for how we should respond.
- Healthy thinking does NOT mean positive thinking! No one can look at things positively all the time. Sometimes bad things happen, like getting fired from a job, having an argument with a friend, or losing someone you love. It's normal and healthy to feel upset and have negative thoughts when these things happen.
- Healthy thinking means looking at the entire situation, the positive and the negative, and then coming to a conclusion. In other words, healthy thinking means looking at life and the world in a balanced way, not through rose-colored glasses or only in a positive way.
- Unfortunately, sometimes our interpretations, evaluations, underlying beliefs, and thoughts contain distortions, errors, and biases. The more a person's thinking is characterized by these distortions, the more likely they are to experience negative emotions and engage in maladaptive behaviors.
- Unhealthy thinking often develops in childhood as the result of unfortunate and difficult life experiences (e.g., trauma) and/or being taught maladaptive thinking by parents and friends.
- We are more prone to unhealthy thinking when we are under stress because when we are under pressure, we are more likely to take thinking "shortcuts", which result in less accurate and more extreme interpretations and reactions.
- Everyone has negative thoughts and unhealthy thinking from time to time, even people who may not seem like it. In reality, those people who do not seem to struggle with it have developed tools to combat unpleasant thoughts. Those tools help them to control and shut down the unhealthy thinking.

Understanding Yourself

I. *How do you think your thoughts affect your feelings and emotions?*

II. *What negative thoughts do you have about yourself? About others?*

III. *How do you manage negative thoughts when you have them?*

Thinking Traps

While unhealthy thinking patterns are often deeply ingrained, they are changeable. On the *Common Thinking Traps* page, there is a list of unhealthy thought patterns (sometimes called “thinking traps”). Everyone falls into these thinking traps at some point. Look over the list and identify the thinking traps you commonly find yourself falling into. These are the patterns of thinking that you want to be aware of and focus on changing.

1. Which three “thinking traps” do you tend to fall into the most?

2. Can you think of a reason why these are the traps you fall into the most?

Common Thinking Traps

All or None Thinking

Looking at things in absolute, black-and-white categories, instead of on a continuum. People who think in black-and-white terms see a small mistake as a total failure.

“I really thought I would feel better by now. This medication isn’t working! I might as well stop taking it.”

Overgeneralization

Thinking that a negative situation is part of an ongoing cycle of bad things that happen. People who over-generalize often use words like “always” or “never.”

A co-worker made a joking but rude comment to you in front of other employees. As a result, you conclude that all people are mean, superficial, and no one likes you

Mental Filter

Focusing only on the negative part(s) of a situation and ignoring anything positive or good.

Edmond was angry and doubted his work because he noticed that one student got up and left during his talk.

Fortune Telling

Predicting that things will turn out badly without any supporting evidence.

“I’ve been studying hard, but I know that I’m going to fail my test tomorrow.”

Emotional Reasoning

Assuming that one’s negative feelings reflect the way things really are.

Rachel’s apartment is untidy and she is overwhelmed by the prospect of cleaning. She feels that it’s hopeless to even try and clean.

Should Statements

Telling yourself that you or others “should” or “must” act in a certain way.

“I should be able to handle this without help from others!

Labeling (Name-Calling)

Saying or thinking only negative things about yourself or others.

Janine just cheated on her diet. She thinks to herself, “I’m a fat, lazy pig!”

Mind Reading

Concluding what others are thinking without evidence or making any effort to check it out.

John’s friend Cindy did not say hello to him when she passed him in the hall. He decides that she doesn’t like him anymore.

Personalization and Blaming

Believing that everything others do or say is your fault or a direct, personal reaction to you in some way.

Ralph’s son is doing poorly in school. He feels that he must be a bad father. “It’s all my fault that he isn’t studying.”

Renewing Your Thoughts

Restructuring unhealthy thoughts is a process that takes time, so be patient. The *Renewing Your Thoughts* worksheet outlines the process that you will follow each time you are having negative or upsetting thoughts.

Take your time and do not rush this process. If this becomes uncomfortable, put it aside and do something relaxing to distract you. It will take time to learn each of these steps. When you first try to use this skill, you may only be able to do step one. That is progress! The more you practice, the better you will be at implementing it when a troubling or difficult situation occurs. A description of the five steps are listed below.

1. Recognize

Try to notice when you feel upset or when unhealthy thinking is happening. Write down a brief description of the situation or problem that is bothering you.

2. Review

List out the thoughts (e.g. "I'm no good. No one really likes me."), the feelings that those thoughts cause (e.g., sadness, anger), the physical symptoms (e.g., rapid heartbeat, sweating), and behaviors (e.g., crying, yelling, isolating) that you have because of the situation or problem.

3. Realize

Looking over the *Common Thinking Traps* list, identify which traps your thoughts are falling into in relation to the situation or problem.

4. Renew

When you recognize the unhealthy thinking traps you are falling into, challenge them in the following way:

- a. Examine the evidence – Check the facts! What solid evidence do you have that your thoughts are true? Try to find solid, hard evidence against your thoughts. Remember, how you feel and what you think about the situation are not facts.
- b. Double standard – If your thoughts are self-critical, ask yourself, "Would I say this to a close friend who has a similar problem? Am I being harder on myself than I am on other people?"
- c. What does God say? – What do you think God would say to you in relation to your thoughts? Are your thoughts true from His perspective?
- d. What would you say to a child? – If a child came to you with the same situation or problem what would you say to them about the way they are thinking/feeling? How would you comfort and encourage them?

5. Rethink

Now that you have identified your thinking traps and challenged your initial wrong thoughts, write down your new desired healthy thoughts, feelings, physical symptoms, and behaviors related to the situation or problem. You may not feel these thoughts are true initially, but the more you replay them in your mind, the truer they become.

Tip: Picture an old cassette tape. Imagine you are taping over your old, unhealthy tapes (thoughts), with new, healthy recordings.

Renewing Your Thoughts

Step 1

RECOGNIZE: What happened? What was the trigger?

Step 2

REVIEW: Thoughts, feelings, physical symptoms, and behaviors.

1. Thoughts (What am I thinking?)
2. Feelings (How do I feel?)
3. Physical (What am I experiencing?)
4. Behaviors (How did I react?)

Step 3

REALIZE: Identify thinking traps.

Step 4

RENEW: Challenge your thinking.

1. Examine the evidence.
2. Double standard.
3. What does God say?
4. What would you say to a child?

Step 5

RETHINK: New thoughts, feelings, physical symptoms, and behaviors.

1. New Thoughts (What am I thinking now?)
2. New Feelings (How do I feel now?)
3. New Physical (What am I experiencing now?)
4. New Behaviors (What is my reaction now?)

Renewing Your Thoughts Practice

Step 1

RECOGNIZE: What happened? What was the trigger?

Step 2

REVIEW:

- a. What thoughts do you have about yourself or the situation?

- b. What feelings/emotions do you have? (e.g., fear, anger, worry, sadness)

- c. What physical sensations do you have? (e.g., sweating, heart racing, tense)

- d. How did you react? What are your behaviors?

Renewing Your Thoughts Practice

Step 3

REALIZE: What are the three main thinking traps you are struggling with?

Step 4

RENEW: Challenge your thinking.

- a. What hard evidence do you have that your thoughts are true (facts only)?

- b. Would you judge or think the same about someone else according to your thoughts?
Why?

- c. What do you think God would say to comfort you in regards to your negative thoughts?

- d. What would you say to a child that was struggling with the same negative thoughts?

Renewing Your Thoughts Practice

Step 5

RETHINK:

- a. What new thoughts do you have about yourself or the situation OR what would be the most ideal, healthy thought to have?

- b. What new emotions do you have or would you have if you believed the above new, healthy thought (e.g., happiness, peace, joy)?

- c. What new physical sensations do you have or do you think you would have (e.g., less tense)?

- d. How would you react to the situation with these new thoughts and feelings? What are your new behaviors?

Distractions

In addition to the *Renewing Your Thoughts* tool, below are some simple distractions to break a cycle of negative thinking.

1. **Supportive, positive friends** – When you're stuck in a negative spiral of thoughts, a group of supportive, positive friends can help you put things into perspective and won't feed your negative thinking.
2. **Choose to serve others** – This can help take the focus away from you and quiet negative thinking.
3. **Make a list** – Making lists of all the things you are grateful for (e.g., family, friends, things you've achieved so far) and the things you like about yourself (e.g., looks, personality) will help break a focus on negative thinking.

Recognizing Cycles and Triggers

Purpose

Difficult cycles and triggers are not the sign of a weak person but are common to all mental health problems. The good news is that difficult cycles and triggers can be predicted and managed. The purpose of the present session is to help you determine your own personal cycles and triggers so that you can better predict and respond to difficulties that may arise.

Goals

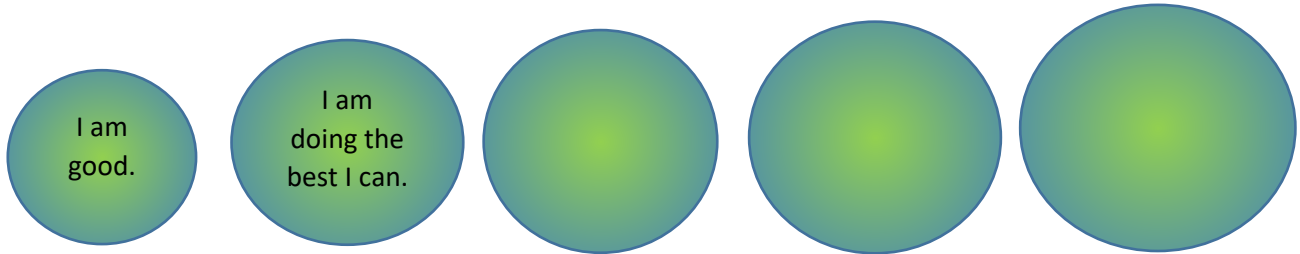
- Understand the cycles and triggers associated with your mental health difficulties.
- Track your monthly moods, sleep, and medication use.
- Develop a plan to handle difficult cycles and triggers when they appear.

Facts to Consider

- We all have **good days and bad days**, and it is no different for individuals living with mental health difficulties or disorders. A recovery-orientated lifestyle requires understanding and being educated about the predictable cycles and triggers for better life management.
- During times of stability, our emotions are usually managed well, our relationships are stable, and we are engaged in activities and things that bring us happiness. Noticing when we are doing well is important to help us notice when we are not doing well.
- **Common signs** often appear that reveal a more difficult cycle (episode) is coming. For example, losing sleep or over sleeping, increasing irritability, not eating or over-eating, racing thoughts or slower cognitive processing, increasing anxiety or nervousness.
- **Negative cycles** triggered by seasonal changes, events, or transitional times (e.g., holidays, end of school semester) can be predicted and minimized. It is important to have a plan or process to help minimize stress during these times, otherwise life will be driven more by disruptive symptoms affecting your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
- Your cycles and triggers are **related to your mental health difficulties**; you are not a failure in your faith or as a person because of them. Taking a preventative, proactive approach when these signs appear will assist you in maintaining greater stability and health.

Identifying Truths

While working to identify some of your personal Untruths and adding tools to your toolbox, also focus on identifying truths! What are the positive statements or truths (round peg) that you can say to yourself each day? We've listed some, but fill in the rest yourself. Family and friends can be helpful in identifying these.



Understanding Yourself

I. *Are there times of the year that are worse for you than others? If so, explain.*

II. *Have you ever noticed signs that suggested a bad period or episode was coming? It could be a feeling, situation, or something else. If so, explain.*

III. *Are there any specific stressors that seem to negatively trigger you?*

Learning to Recognize Your Cycles and Triggers

Educate yourself about the predictable symptoms and possible cycles related to your disorder. During times of stability, it is important prepare for difficulties to come. Understand what specific symptoms mean for you, your schedule, your life, and your family/friends. The following are common symptoms that might signal the beginning of a negative cycle:

1. **Sleep Patterns** – Getting too much or too little sleep.
2. **Eating/Diet** – Not eating, eating too much, or eating foods not normal to your diet
3. **Crying** – Crying for no reason, or because of sadness without a recognizable reason.
4. **Fidgeting and Restlessness** – Not being able to sit still, pacing.
5. **Uncontrolled Thoughts** – Being overly talkative, having racing thoughts and ideas, having irrational thoughts based on true circumstance.
6. **Thinking Process** – Slower in formulating ideas or making decisions, more forgetful and off schedule from the norm.
7. **Irritability and Anger** – Having trouble maintaining your peace and easily angered.
8. **Substance Abuse** – Abusing alcohol or drugs, even if sober for a substantial time.

Other signs or symptoms:

Managing Reactive Emotions

Use the outline below to work through a situation in which you were triggered by a stressor and reacted rather than calmly responded.

Recognizing the Trigger

- a. *What happened to cause you to lose control of your emotions? Can you specifically identify what was so offensive about the trigger that made you react?*

- b. *Vulnerability factors are things that happened (usually the same day) that might leave you emotionally vulnerable and less likely to respond well to the triggering situation. Examples can range from simple things, like waking up late, to more intense things, like losing your job. What were your vulnerability factors for this day/situation?*

Recognizing Thoughts, Emotions, and Behaviors

a. *What was your reaction (behavior)?*

b. *What were your emotions and feelings? Refer to emotions chart in the “Identifying Emotions” chapter.*

c. *What were your thoughts?*

d. *What did you need emotionally in order to be restored? (e.g., respect, kindness, validation, affection, encouragement). Are these realistic expectations to ask from someone?*

Restoring Emotions and Mood

a. *If you could do it all over, how could you have responded differently (rather than reacted)?*

b. *What can you do now to restore your peace? Use your coping strategies; renewing your mind tool. Would these tools have helped immediately after the situation?*

Managing Your Mood

On the associated Mood Chart, track your mood cycles throughout the next month.

1. Write the dates in each box (month / day).
2. At the end of each day, place a **check mark** in the box to rate your mood for that day.
3. Indicate with “+” next to your check mark if you took your medication that day

NOTE: This chart is good to use in conjunction with the sleep diary.

Mood Tracker Week 1-2

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Elevate +2							
Elevate +1							
Normal							
Depressed +1							
Depressed +2							

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Elevate +2							
Elevate +1							
Normal							
Depressed +1							
Depressed +2							

Mood Tracker Week 3-4

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Elevate +2							
Elevate +1							
Normal							
Depressed +1							
Depressed +2							

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Elevate +2							
Elevate +1							
Normal							
Depressed +1							
Depressed +2							

Living Balanced

Purpose

The ups and downs of mental health difficulties can be very chaotic. A daily structure and routine helps one gain stability and thrive. The purpose of the present session is to help you develop a daily structure and routine that will give you purpose and control.

Goals

- Evaluate your present daily activities and responsibilities.
- Develop a purposeful daily structure and routine.
- Implement structure and routine into your daily life.

Facts to Consider

- The goal of a routine and schedule is to establish habits that allow you greater control over what you're doing and greater freedom to focus on what's important in your life.
- Routines and schedules reduce stress and anxiety in our lives. They help us to live more relaxed. We don't have to be constantly making decisions nor guessing about the future.
- Developing a routine or schedule will not bring boredom or monotony. Rather, routines bring peace and a sense of safety.
- When starting to implement a routine or schedule, do not overburden yourself with too much to begin with. Start off slow. During the first month or so of developing a schedule, just do what's absolutely necessary.

Reframing

Try to have a balanced and healthy view of yourself and the situation. Leaning too far to the positive or too far to the negative can blur our view. Reframing a situation that did not go well can help us to respond in a more appropriate manner to triggers.

Example Situation:

A friend answers the phone and quickly says they have to call you back, then hangs up. By the next day, they still haven't called you back.

Your Thought

Reframe Options

How rude!
Did I do something to upset them?
How could they just not call me back?

1. They meant to call back, but simply forgot.
2. They were not meaning to be rude, they usually aren't rude to me.
3. They are not mad at me and I did not do anything wrong.

Situation:

Your Thought

Reframe Options

--	--

Situation:

Your Thought

Reframe Options

--	--

Understanding Yourself

I. *Describe a usual day from the time you get up until you go to bed.*

II. *Are there any tasks or activities that you have to complete every day? List them.*

III. *What is the most enjoyable part of your day? Least enjoyable part?*

Developing a Daily Structure and Routine

Develop a schedule for one day this week (from waking-up till you go to bed). Be sure to include the tasks you listed above and at least one enjoyable activity. As you work out a schedule, adjust the schedule to what helps you and what builds your confidence. Keep it simple. Take your time.

To begin, list out 5 activities you want to include in your daily and weekly routine. Then, add them into your planner.

Daily Activity Ideas

- Sleep
- Meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)
- Shower / Bath
- Exercise
- Hobbies
- Responsibilities / Work / School
- Enjoyable activities
- Social events
- Church

Developing a Daily Structure and Routine

List out several potential daily activities for yourself. Do not worry about the length of time it takes to complete each (5-10 min is okay). Use information from the preceding pages of this session to help.

Morning

- a. What is one personally uplifting thing you can do? _____
- b. What is one productive thing you can do? _____
- c. Who can help you with these activities if needed? _____

Afternoon

- a. What is one personally uplifting thing you can do? _____
- b. What is one productive thing you can do? _____
- c. Who can help you with these activities if needed? _____

Evening

- a. What is one personally uplifting thing you can do? _____
- b. What is one productive thing you can do? _____
- c. Who can help you with these activities if needed? _____

Developing a Weekly Structure and Routine

Taking what you have learned from the single day routine, develop a schedule for the week on the following page. Involve supportive friends and loved ones in developing the schedule. Follow the schedule and evaluate the experience of having a highly structured week. As you recover and gain more stability, you will be able to do more and will move beyond a highly structured routine or schedule. Adjust accordingly as you become more independent and successful at navigating daily life.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
Noon							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							
10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							
Midnight							

Spiritual Wellness

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Goals Check-In

I. Briefly list out the goals you specified at the beginning of the workbook.

Goal 1. _____

Goal 2. _____

Goal 3. _____

II. What progress, if any, have you made towards reaching these goals?

Goal 1. _____

Goal 2. _____

Goal 3. _____

III. List out any barriers you have encountered in the pursuit of these goals?

Barriers:

Possible solutions:

Who can help overcome?

Knowing a Good God

Purpose

God desires you to know Him in such a way that blesses you and brings you rest. Trials and difficulties do not intimidate God; they can be opportunities to gain wisdom and grow closer to Him. The purpose of this session is to help you understand that spiritual growth is not about working for God but resting in all you have been given in Christ.

Goals

- To recognize that your mental health difficulties do not change how God sees you.
- To spend time each day meditating on God's love for you.
- To gain a better understanding of God's character.

Facts to Consider

- Every time we struggle with illness or weakness, it is an opportunity for “the works of God to be displayed” in our lives (John 9:1–3). Mental illness is not a punishment; it is an opportunity for you to experience God’s grace and know Him more intimately.
- The scriptures call us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Grace is unmerited love and favor that is freely given. You don't have to be perfect to receive God's grace, only willing. Receiving God’s grace is the first step in the process of spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18).
- Prayer is powerful and transforming because we have a God who hears and responds. Those living with a mental illness often feel separated and unable to connect with God. Praying with others can be a great support. Being unable to pray is not a failure because the Spirit understands and prays for you (Romans 8:26).
- For those living with mental health difficulties, brief daily encouragements from Scripture are often better than in-depth Bible study. The focus of your study should be on God’s character and your identity and approval in Christ, not references that imply what you must do spiritually to get better.
- Meditating on a single verse of scripture is better than a long, detailed Bible study or devotional. Studying scripture is a time for you to be loved by God, not a time for you to fight your illness and feel inadequate.
- God inhabits the praises of His people, “Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22:3). Worship is a time to realize God’s presence in a very physical sense. It should not be a time of mental condemnation and overwhelming physical stimulation.
- Mental health struggles can often leave us feeling as though God is distant and not present in our lives. This is common symptom of mental health struggles and it is important to remember that it is not the truth.

Changing Unhealthy Thoughts

As you learned earlier in this book, so many of us struggle with falling into thinking traps. This is especially true when we are having a bad day or are feeling upset. On the chart below, list out some of the unhealthy thoughts you might have had this week about yourself and God. Identify the thinking trap associated with your thought (refer to *Common Thinking Traps*). Take some time to think of a new, healthy thought to replace the unhealthy one.

Reminder: Make the new, healthy thought reasonable! In the example below, it would not be reasonable for anyone to say that they are a perfect person who never sins. That is simply not true; we all make mistakes (sin), yet God love us!

Unhealthy, irrational thought	Thinking trap	Healthy, rational thought replacement
I am a sinner (bad person); God could not possibly love me.	Labeling	I make mistakes (sin) but God loves me so much He sent His Son for me (John 3:16).

Understanding Yourself

I. *How do you think your mental health difficulties have affected your relationship with God?*

II. *What do you think God wants you to know about Him?*

III. *What's one thing you could do to increase your intimacy with God?*

The Character of God

Take time to read through and meditate on the verses below (look them up in the Bible for a full reading of the scripture).

The purpose of this exercise is not about memorizing these verses, but to better understand the true character of God. As you grow in your understanding of who God really is, you will become more secure in your faith and empowered to persevere during difficult times.

God is ...

The Creator of all things	Genesis 1:1
Full of mercy, grace, love, and endless patience	Exodus 34:6
Sovereign (above or over) of all things	Psalms 24:1-2
Good	Psalms 34:8
Righteous, just, and unfailing in His love for you	Psalms 36:5-10
Omniscient (knows everything)	Psalms 139:1-6
All powerful, nothing is too difficult for Him	Jeremiah 32:27
Faithful	Lamentations 3:22-23
Your hope	Colossians 1:27
Unchanging	Hebrews 13:8
The provider of all good things	James 1:17
Pure light; there is no darkness in Him	1 John 1:5
Love	1 John 4:8

Meditating on Scripture

On the previous page, place a mark next to 2 or 3 scriptures you would like to review and reflect on over the coming week. Here are some questions to help you reflect and discover the true character of God. Use the lines below or a personal journal to write down your thoughts.

- 1. Is there anything specific that comes to mind or that sticks out to you about the verse?
- 2. What does the passage reveal about God? What does the passage reveal about you?
- 3. Is there anything difficult for you to believe in this verse?
- 4. Does the truth of this verse change your perspective? How so?

Discovering Hope

Purpose

Hope is knowing that better things will come despite challenges. It is not simply “wishing” that something bad or negative would somehow change. Hope is the engine that drives mental health recovery. The purpose of this session is to help you understand that true hope is grounded in the promises of God and the person of Jesus.

Goals

- Learn to use hope as a theme to create practical goals.
- Developing a new strength-based perspective.
- Establishing a renewed life and lifestyle.

Facts to Consider

- Hope means to trust in a secure strength that provides foundation, structure, and security. Hope also means to anticipate with joy the arrival of something new and better. When we have hope, it energizes and gives us strength to endure in a way that nothing else does (i.e., “faith and patience”). This will cause us to grow by recognizing our positive strengths and abilities, self-worth, and a resiliency to overcome (see Romans 5:3-5).
- As a Christian, hope is not wishful thinking, because hope arises from our life in Christ, and Christ in us is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). This hope fuels our faith in confidently knowing that we have received His grace to see better days realized (see Hebrews 11:1). Hope is knowing better things will come despite challenges.
- Hope brings about a new process of change and it takes time. It is not a quick-fix of our problems, rather a new sense of confidence with a faith and patience that life will improve.
- Hope is a firm assurance and confidence about things that are unclear and unknown.
- Hope energizes people and gives them strength to endure challenges in a way that nothing else does. People without hope become defeated, broken, and unable to cope with adversity. Hopeless people give up.
- Faith and hope are overlapping realities: hope is faith in the future tense. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”
- We must be careful to not allow circumstances to build up or break down our hope. Circumstances change, God does not. Christian hope comes from the promises of God rooted in the work and the person of Jesus Christ.

Learning to be Content

Finding hope in difficult situations can be hard. Often, learning to be content in unpleasant situations, or accepting reality, can be the first step towards realizing hope.

In what situation would you like to find hope?	What makes this situation seem impossible?	What solutions have you thought of or have others offered?	If those suggestions will work, have you tried them?	If those suggestions won't work, what would it be like if you were to accept the unpleasant reality?

Reminder: Acceptance is not agreeing that the current situation is fair or should be happening. Acceptance only allows us to move forward in addressing and managing our situation.

Understanding Yourself

I. *Is it hard for you to find hope in your life?*

II. *How has your mental health condition or disorder affected your hope?*

III. *What do you feel is the biggest challenge(s) preventing you from having long-lasting hope?*

Building a Foundation of Hope

We often think of hope as a feeling, however, for the Christian, hope is so much more. Feelings are fleeting and often changed based on our circumstances. The Bible tells us that hope and faith are intimately connected (Hebrews 11:1). More specifically, true hope is grounded in the person and promises of Jesus. As Paul writes in Colossians (1:27), *“to them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

Hope is the fuel that drives the engine of recovery. The following exercise is a way for you to begin to building a foundation of hope that can withstand changes in symptoms and circumstances. Each day this week, review the following statements and verses about the hope we have in Jesus.

I have **HOPE** because Jesus ...

- Calls me friend John 15:15
- Has overcome the problems of this world John 16:33
- Loves me Romans 5:8
- Has forgiven me Colossians 3:13
- Is in control of all things Matthew 28:18
- Is present with me in my struggles Galatians 2:20
- Keeps His promises Philippians 1:6
- Is unchanging Hebrews 13:8
- Has prepared an eternal paradise for me John 14:3
- Understands my suffering
 - Poverty Matthew 8:20
 - Rejection John 6:66
 - Sorrow Matthew 26:38
 - Loneliness Matthew 27:46
 - Frustration John 2:15-16
 - Ridicule Mark 15:19
 - Disappointment Luke 13:34

Gratitude Exercise

Mental health difficulties can bring challenging circumstances. These negative experiences and associated feelings often overshadow the positive aspects of life, causing a person to lose hope. The purpose of this exercise is to think back on the past day, few days, or week, and remember 3-5 things you are especially grateful for. In this way, you are completely focusing on all the good things that happened to you rather than being overwhelmed by negative thoughts and feelings. Try doing this exercise every other day for the next week or two.

Your True Identity

Purpose

Your identity is not your diagnosis or mental health difficulty. Your true identity, who you really are, is based on what you mean to God. The purpose of this session is to help you understand who you truly are in the eyes of God.

Goals

- Compare how you see yourself, how others see you, and how God sees you.
- Grow in your understanding of your identity in Christ.
- Break the myth that you are defined by your mental health disorder.

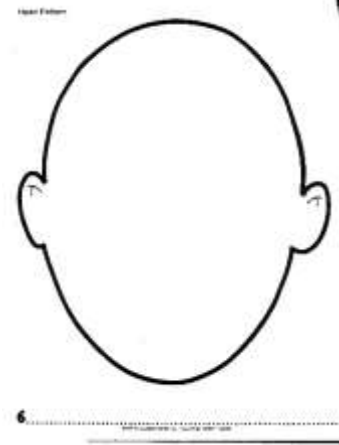
Facts to Consider

- The scriptures teach us that we have been fearfully and wonderfully made in the very image and likeness of God. Circumstances and struggles do not define who we are, God does.
- Paul describes the believer in Ephesians 1 as having every spiritual blessing. As a believer in Jesus Christ you were chosen before the foundation of the world; predestined for adoption as a son/daughter of the living God; purchased out of slavery to sin and death; forgiven of all your sins— past, present, and future; given spiritual wisdom and revelation; and marked as such until the day that you stand before Him holy and blameless.
- One of the common difficulties for people living with mental illness is a disconnection or loss of control of their emotions. It is very common to feel that you are unable to connect emotionally in important relationships or even with God.
- Because your faith is not as tangible (like bodily sensations), you may feel condemnation and/or that your faith is not “strong enough.” You may begin to think that God does not care for you or is distant and silent. You may even question your salvation! This is simply not true – it is a symptom of your mental health difficulty.
- Your illness does not limit your relationship with Christ. By faith, the Spirit of Christ has taken up residence in you and you are now in a spiritual union with the very Creator of the universe. Mental health difficulties are affecting your physical condition, not your true identity. For example a person living with bipolar disorder might say, “I am not bipolar, I have bipolar.” Your identity is in God, not an illness.
- Feeling disconnected from God can be frustrating and common, but it is not a reflection of your access to God. As His child, God has given you access to Him through prayer in all circumstances, both good and bad. He wants you to share your feelings, your thankfulness, and your requests for what you need. The Bible says, "He longs to be gracious to you" (Isaiah 30:18).

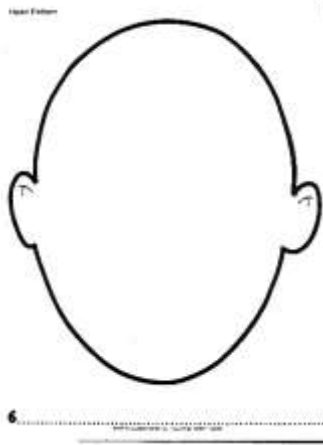
Who Am I?

Though we play different roles with different people, having a strong sense of self is important! Take a few minutes to draw out how you believe each person below sees you.

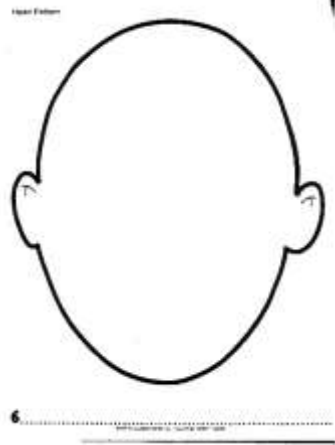
How others see you:



How God sees you:



How you see yourself:



a. What do you notice? Which face portrays your most positive traits?

b. Which face do you wish had more positive traits and how can you make that a reality?

c. If there are no positive traits and you are struggling to find any, try asking a friend, family member, or someone at your church for suggestions.

Understanding Yourself

I. *How do you think your mental health difficulty affects others' opinion of you?*

II. *How has it affected your opinion of yourself?*

III. *How do you think God sees you? What do you think He bases His opinion of you on?*

Meditating on Scripture

If you are like most Christians, there are times you find it hard to believe that God actually cares about what is going on in your life. Is my little life important enough that God would care to take notice of me? Meditate on the following verse (it may be more impactful if you have a handful of sand as you recite it).

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me! (Psalm 139:17-18)

a. What do you find interesting about this verse?

b. Why is this hard to believe? How can you make it easier to accept?

My True Identity

The following qualities and characteristics are true about you because you are in Christ. Circumstances, others' misguided beliefs, struggles, and your disorder do not define who we are, God does. Below are the truths that all believers in Christ must continually be reminded of so that we might live out of our true identity. Each day this week take time to read out loud and meditate on the truths outlined below.

- I was known and chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:14
- I am God's workmanship, His unique masterpiece. Ephesians 2:10
- I am a free son / daughter with a loving Heavenly Father. Romans 8:15
- I am a brand new person, the old sinful broken me is dead. 2 Corinthians 5:17
- I am holy and dearly loved by God, this is my new clothing. Colossians 3:12
- I have been redeemed and forgiven by God's grace. Ephesians 1:7
- I am a temple, where God's life and love dwell. 1 Corinthians 6:19
- Christ Himself lives in me (He is always present with me). Colossians 1:27
- I have been given the mind of Christ to know His loving thoughts. 1 Corinthians 2:16
- I am never separated from Him because I have direct access to Him. Ephesians 2:18
- God never has and will not condemn me. Romans 8:1
- I have been given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him. Ephesians 1:17
- I am a member and significant part of Christ's Body. 1 Corinthians 12:27
- I am called a "friend" by Jesus. John 15:15
- I have been made complete in Christ. Colossians 2:10

Living in Community

Purpose

Community is more about being connected to life-giving relationships than trying to attend events with people you don't really know. The opposite of community is isolation which causes frustration, fatigue, and discouragement. The purpose of the present study is to help you evaluate your present level of support and develop a healing community of care around you.

Goals

- To build a supportive network of believers around you.
- To assess how supportive the faith communities in your area or the one you attend is towards those with mental health difficulties.
- To find a few trusted friends that can support and strengthen you.

Facts to Consider

- An active and supportive community of believers strengthens you, while isolation brings frustration and fatigue.
- We are a community and a body. The same Spirit that connects us to God also connects us to one another, so we should all be eager to offer assistance. Sharing the burden lightens the load for everyone.
- A strong faith community offers comfort and support, gains wisdom as they learn from one another, shares and upholds common values, strengthens each other, takes risks together, and always looks to encourage one another.
- Many times, because of certain cycles or difficult symptoms, staying consistent with community can be difficult. Others may not understand this inconsistency and back away. The key is to stay connected to special people who you trust and can support you, not trying to keep up with the gathering or community events that are wearing you down.
- When coming into a new faith community, it is normal to think “I’m different and I don’t want everyone knowing about me ... and I don’t want to disappoint or lose their friendship if I have a hard time.” Having one to three people to connect with will give you confidence and break stigma. With trusted friends who honor you, you can then focus on being yourself in other settings (i.e., not always being the “sick” one).

Finding Connection

In the spaces below list out one or two people who you hold dear in your heart. They can be family, friends, pastors, teachers, etc. They can be either alive or dead. Then, answer the associated questions.

First person: _____

- a. Why is this person important to you?

- b. What did this person teach you?

- c. How do you feel they support you still to this day?

Second person: _____

- a. Why is this person important to you?

b. What did this person teach you?

c. How do you feel they support you still to this day?

Understanding Yourself

I. *Are you presently part of a church or faith-community? If not, why?*

II. *Is it difficult for you to make friends, why or why not?*

III. *What do you think about this statement, "You are a part of the Church whether you are presently attending one or not?"*

Faith Community Mental Health Evaluation

If you are presently part of a faith community, evaluate how supportive they are of you and others with mental health difficulties. Faith communities that are supportive of those with mental health difficulties have the following characteristics:

- They acknowledge the reality of mental health difficulties, including mental illness and know it is a common human condition even within the church.
- They give those with mental health difficulties and illness a voice within the community.
- They work to create a trusting, accepting community where congregants are as comfortable sharing about their mental illness as they are about their heart condition or diabetes.
- They offer mental health related support groups such as AA, NAMI Peer to Peer, DBSA, Fresh Hope, or Celebrate Recovery.

Just because your present faith community may not seem to be supportive of those with mental health difficulties does not mean they don't care. It is common for churches and leaders to need time to become educated and understand the reality of mental health difficulties. You can be a part of helping them understand, rather than pressuring them to accept this topic.

Building a Network of Support

Use this sheet to discover where you can begin to build a network of support and find a caring faith community.

- a. Develop a few close friendships with believers that will honor you and that you can trust. Take time to enjoy and build these friendships into your life. As you feel more confident, your friendships will broaden and you can share more about yourself to them.
- b. Begin to look for a mental health support group and a church or fellowship that can encourage and build you up spiritually.

Individual Relationships

List the names of two people that you believe would be or are supportive of you during your recovery from mental illness.

1. _____
2. _____

Support Groups

List two potential support groups that you could join to help you develop skills for managing your mental health difficulties.

1. _____
2. _____

Faith Communities

List two potential local faith communities that you believe would offer you supportive and spiritually encouraging fellowship.

1. _____
2. _____

Finding Purpose

Purpose

God's purpose for us is to have a life-giving relationship with Him. In addition, He has created each of us with unique skills, gifts, and talents for the works He has laid out before us. God's purpose and plan for our lives transcends our circumstances. The purpose of this session is to understand how God has wired you so that you might live out His purpose and plan for your life.

Goals

- To recognize that God has a divine purpose and plan for your life.
- To understand that God's purpose for your life is not hindered by mental health problems.
- To determine how God has wired you to live out His plan for your life.

Facts to Consider

- The Father's greatest desire is for you to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. It is only after you have received the free gift of salvation that you can begin to fulfill the rest of God's purpose and plan for your life.
- God's purpose and plan for all believers includes knowing Him more fully through His Word, following His truths and learning to see His light reflect through you to others, wherever God has placed you.
- Since God is good, His purposes and plans for us are also good. Likewise, since He is the one who sets our paths, no one's purpose is more or less important than another's; they are all part of God's greater plan.
- God has given each of us different talents and gifts so that we might be equipped to fulfill the specific purpose and plan He has ordained for our life (1 Peter 4:10-11).
- To help us recognize our purpose and fulfill His plan for our lives, God has bound all believers together in His church and sent us the Holy Spirit to guide us.
- Your circumstances and mental health difficulties do not hinder God's purposes nor do they in anyway affect God's plan for your life. We can learn and recognize that a mental health difficulty can be an opportunity for the works of God to be manifested in our lives.
- Do not let stigma and shame limit you; regardless of what mental health difficulty you might be struggling with, you can be a great family member, friend, spouse, employee, boss, artist, musician, or whatever your particular path holds.

My Strengths

As you work to find purpose in your life, it is important to look at yourself from a healthy and positive view. Take a few minutes to fill out the blanks below, reflecting on your strengths.

Who Am I?

- I have a natural talent for _____.
- People often compliment me about _____.
- My favorite thing to do is _____.
- I feel good/peaceful when I _____.
- The thing I like most about myself is _____.
- The accomplishment I'm most proud of is _____.

Understanding Yourself

I. *When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Why?*

II. *What types of skills and talents do you have?*

III. *What causes are you passionate about?*

Mental Health Difficulties and Faith

On the associated sheet are descriptions of godly men and women who suffered from significant depression and/or anxiety, yet God used them powerfully for His glory. Read the short stories and answer the following questions.

- a. In what ways can you identify with these stories and statements?

- b. How does it make you feel that these famous “saints” suffered with mental health problems?

Take sometime this week to research one or more of these heroes of the faith. Use the internet or go to the library and find a book about their life. Be inspired by their kingdom accomplishments and continually remind yourself that He never stops blessing or loving you because of your mental health difficulties. You are not alone and know ... *“the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful”* towards you (Psalm 145:8)!

Mental Health Difficulties and Faith

In 1529, the reformer who penned "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) wrote: "For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost." According to Luther's famous biographer, Roland Bainton, Luther found himself "subject to recurrent periods of exaltation and depression of spirit." Luther himself had written that "the content of the depressions was always the same, the loss of faith that God is good and that he is good to me."

The Catholic mystic **St. Teresa of Avila** (1515-1582) suffered throughout her life from debilitating headaches, seizures and depression, and what appeared to be panic attacks. As a young nun, she was diagnosed with "shrunk nerves." Describing her panic-like symptoms, she wrote, "sometimes I felt as if sharp teeth had hold of me, and so severe was the pain they caused that I was feared I was going mad." In her classic work, *Inner Castle*, she states, "the depression which can afflict the soul ... is comparable only with the tortures of hell."

The famous preacher, **Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892), who lit the fires of the nineteenth-century revival movement, struggled so severely with depression that he was forced to be absent from his pulpit for two to three months a year. In 1866 he told his congregation of his struggle: "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go [through]." He explained that during these depressions, "Every mental and spiritual labor...had to be carried on under protest of spirit. My spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for."

A. B. Simpson (1843-1919), the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, suffered with a serious anxiety disorder. In relation to his nervous breakdown, Simpson's physician informed him that he was in "the greatest danger." Simpson writes, "I was possessed with the idea that at a certain hour I was to die; and every day as that hour drew near, I became prostrated with dreadful nervousness, watching in agonized suspense till the hour passed, and wondering that I was still alive."

Mother Teresa (1910-1997) founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India in 1915. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her work with the sick, orphaned, and dying. At the time of her death, the Missionaries of Charity had 610 missions in 123 countries. In 2007, the publication of her letters and writing revealed that she struggled with significant depression throughout her life. For example, in a letter to the Archbishop of Calcutta, Ferdinand P erier, she wrote, "There is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started the work."

How Has God Wired Me?

This sheet can be used as a starting point to help you determine how God has equipped you to live out His purposes here on the Earth. Spend 10 minutes each day doing something from this list. When you're involved in activities associated with your purpose, you'll feel exhilarated, excited, and alive. If you're not feeling these things, go back to your lists, and see if there's anything you forgot to write down, or do the one you've been avoiding because it's so scary.

Passions: *List things you do for fun or that you really enjoy.*

Talents/Skills: *List talents/skills that you have.*

Actions: *List things that you do naturally without thinking about it (e.g., being optimistic, having an eye for details).*

Role Models: *List the names of three people you admire and state why.*

Relational Wellness

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Goals Check-In

I. Briefly list out the goals you specified at the beginning of the workbook.

Goal 1. _____

Goal 2. _____

Goal 3. _____

II. What progress, if any, have you made towards reaching these goals?

Goal 1. _____

Goal 2. _____

Goal 3. _____

III. List out any barriers you have encountered in the pursuit of these goals?

Barriers:

Possible solutions:

Who can help overcome?

Boundaries

Purpose

Setting boundaries can be a difficult process, yet by setting them, you can create strong, supportive relationships that keep you safe and happy. The purpose of this session is to introduce you to what a boundary is, how you can set them, and how boundaries help us and others maintain healthy relationships.

Goals

- To understand what boundaries are and how they can help you.
- To recognize when your boundaries are not being respected.
- To learn how to set boundaries in new and current relationships.

Facts to Consider

- A boundary in a relationship is a guideline we create to ensure reasonable and safe interactions with others. You can think of them as a “barrier” that others should not cross.
- You may feel violated, angry, annoyed, scared, drained of emotion, or fearful when someone has crossed a boundary with you. Likewise, others might become upset with you when you cross one of their boundaries.
- Boundaries are what we expect from others in our relationships and what our family and friends expect from us in our relationships.
- Examples of healthy boundaries are saying no to requests you do not want to do, not letting others yell or ridicule you, carving out time for what you enjoy doing, requesting others respect your decisions, and deciding what to share or not to share with others.
- The first step in identifying your own boundaries is to know your opinions and identify your emotions. Pay attention to the emotions you feel in your relationships. These can offer important insight about boundaries you need to set.
- Boundaries can vary from one relationship to another and look completely different from one relationship to the next. We all have different needs. Do not feel like you need to conform to the wants or desires of others.
- Without healthy boundaries we will be overrun by the demands of others at the cost of our well-being. In a safe and healthy relationship, boundaries can be respected and discussed with one another. Sometimes a compromise can be made and other times one party may dislike or not understand a boundary.
- Remember your opinion is just as valid as someone who disagrees with you. You can be respectful of another’s point of view while also setting a boundary. You can feel good about yourself even if they are upset with you.
- Others may feel hurt or angry when you set a boundary with them. This does not mean you have to make them feel better. Remember, a boundary is meant to keep you safe.

Understanding Yourself

I. *What do you think will be the hardest part of setting a boundary?*

II. *What boundaries do you have set in your closest relationship presently? What would you like to change or add?*

III. *What do you want or need from your current relationships that you do not feel is present?*

Assertive Versus Aggressive Communication

Assertive communication is communicating your thoughts and emotions in a confident, polite and direct manner. Aggressive communication is making commands or having too high of expectations. Assertive people try to consider all views, while aggressive people attempt to fight fire with fire. Your tone and body language are just as important as the words. When utilizing assertive communication, you are able to express your needs without infringing on the rights of others. You can be respectful of someone else's beliefs while disagreeing with them. Assertive communication is vital to communicating boundaries that you want to set.

Below is a script to use to help communicate your boundaries. Refer to the *Emotions Chart* on for additional help.

I feel (name your emotions) when you (describe the behavior you dislike).
I would prefer if you (set your boundary, say what you want to see change).

If you continue to (restate problem behavior), then I will (set your boundary, what you will or will not do).

Example:

I feel frustrated and unloved when you do not return my phone calls in a timely manner.
I would prefer if you let me know you are busy and that you will call me back when you get a chance. Then I know you are not ignoring me.

If you continue to not call me back or let me know you are too busy to talk, I will stop trying to reach out to you as a friend.

Try writing out your own:

I feel _____ when you _____
_____.

I would prefer if you _____
_____.

If you continue to _____, then I will (or will not) _____.

Steps in Setting and Assessing Boundaries

1. Identify which boundaries you would like to see in your relationships. Are they firm boundaries or flexible?
2. Communicate your boundaries to others by utilizing assertive communication (described on the previous page).
3. If the individual does not agree to follow that boundary, decide whether you are willing to be flexible on the topic. If you are open to discussion, see if there is a compromise. Remember, if someone is upset by the boundary you are not responsible for making him or her feel better. Setting a boundary is helpful for both parties by keeping the relationship safe and healthy.

Note: It is also important to respect other people's boundaries. If you do not respect their boundaries, they will not likely respect yours.

4. If the boundary continues to be crossed, then it is up to you to decide if leaving the relationship is needed. Remember leaving or changing the interaction with an individual who is not respecting your boundary does not mean it will be like this forever. As people change, boundaries can change and relationships can be revisited.

Developing Healthy Relationships

It is important to create relationships with health boundaries, especially if you feel that you are in a difficult relationship with a significant other, family, or friends. Use this exercise to help you understand what boundaries you need and can start working on.

I. List 1-3 relationships that you feel are unhealthy.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

II. Then, briefly, list the qualities or difficulties that are making it unhealthy.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

III. Identify what boundaries can be set to help improve the relationship.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Resolving Conflict

Purpose

Every healthy relationship will have some conflict. What is important is that we learn and grow from them. The purpose of the present session is to help you develop a healthy approach to resolving conflict with others that will strengthen and benefit your relationships.

Goals

- Understand how you respond to conflict.
- Learn healthy ways to resolve relational conflict.
- Apply these new methods of resolving conflict to your present relationships.

Facts to Consider

- When you find yourself in conflict with another person, remember that everyone has conflict and everyone makes mistakes. Most conflicts are minor and easily resolved, although, in the heat of the moment they may appear major and unresolvable.
- Use active listening. This means you are focused more on what they are saying rather than what your response will be. If you are actively listening, you should be able to repeat back to the other individual what they are saying and accurately verbalize how they are feeling.
- Genuinely consider the other person's point of view. Imagine yourself in their shoes. Never say "you're wrong." Try hard to look for areas of agreement and build on them.
- If the other person becomes angry and raises their voice, remain calm. Be still and say nothing. Let the storm run its course. Often times, the angry person wants to provoke you. Raising your voice is ineffective because it raises barriers.
- People will not always agree with you, and that is okay. When someone doesn't agree with what you say or believe, it can be very frustrating. Remind yourself that it is not your responsibility to make them see things from your perspective. Ask yourself if your disorder may be clouding your judgment of the situation. If so, allow yourself to take a break and return later to follow-up with a more balanced perspective and emotions.
- It is impossible to assess the emotional tone or full intent of emails, social media, or texting. Whether in person or over the phone, you need to be in a situation in which you can listen for voice tone or watch body language.

Understanding Yourself

I. *How do you react when conflict arises? Do you hold in your anger or let it out?*

II. *Is it easy for you to compromise with others? Why or why not?*

III. *Who is the person with whom you have the most relational conflict and why?*

Common Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Think about the last relational conflict you were involved in. Which of the methods listed below did you use to resolve the conflict?

1. **Power / Authority (FIGHT)**

Basis: One's power, position, or strength settles conflict.

Appropriate When: Power or authority come with position and this method has been mutually agreed upon.

Illustration: I'm OK, you're not OK.

2. **Collaboration**

Basis: Mutual respect and agreement to work together and resolve conflict.

Appropriate When: Time is available and parties are committed to work together as we versus the problem, not we – they.

Illustration: I'm OK, you're OK.

3. **Compromise or Negotiation**

Basis: Each party gives up something in order to meet midway.

Appropriate When: Both parties are better off with a compromise than attempting a win-lose stance.

Illustration: We're both sort of OK.

4. **Denial / Avoidance (FLIGHT)**

Basis: Both parties avoid the conflict by denying that it exists.

Appropriate When: Timing for a resolution is wrong or a cooling off period is needed.

Illustration: I'm not OK, you're not OK.

5. **Accommodation / Smoothing Over (FREEZE)**

Basis: Differences are down-played and a surface harmony is maintained.

Appropriate When: Preservation of the relationship is more important at the moment than resolution.

Illustration: I'm not OK, you're OK.

Healthy Conflict Resolution

To resolve a relational conflict in a healthy way, the following “rules of engagement” must always be followed:

1. **Stay Calm** – Do not raise your voice or posture in an aggressive manner.
2. **Evaluate Yourself** – Are you presently experiencing more symptoms than usual, did you take your medication today, are you hungry, are you stressed out, are you tired, how is your mood? Any of these can lead to impaired judgment and should be a signal for you to end the conversation and resolve the conflict at a later time.
3. **Take Responsibility** – If you are wrong, admit it; even if you’re not wrong, at least give them the benefit of the doubt. You can agree to disagree with full respect.
4. **Step Away** – If you are losing control of your anger or the situation becomes verbally abusive on either side, separate yourself from the other person. You might say, “I’m going to excuse myself now. We can talk again later after we both calm down.”

Calming a Relational Conflict

Use an active listening approach to defuse tension. It takes time to learn to not react with offense, but rather, respond with grace in the face of accusation or presumption. The **VAR** (Validate-Affirm-Reconcile) method is an effective approach to calming a conflict situation.

Validate

Really listen to what the person is saying and identify the associated emotions. Do not focus on your “defense” or opinion, just listen. Look past the specific issue and validate the individual’s feelings behind the situation or struggle (e.g., anger, fear). Verbalize to them the emotions that you see them expressing. As you validate their feelings try to keep emotional words simple. Choose less intense emotional descriptions as some words imply greater intensity (e.g., upsetting instead of devastated or sad instead of depressed).

“I can see how that situation would make you feel sad, angry, discouraged, etc.”

“I am so sorry that was hurtful; I can see why you are upset ... that would upset me, too.”

Affirm

See the person behind the distressing words they are saying – helping them to reframe the situation. Looking past the situation to see their strengths and value. Affirmation will help you form a connection with the person and move them in a more positive direction.

“I’m amazed how in this challenge you rely on God, how you’ve endured, it says so much about you.”

“I know this has been so challenging and I can see how you are being courageous despite the situation.”

Reconcile

Reconcile means “to restore harmony or peace.” You do not have to have the solution for the conflict, rather simply be a reassuring presence that is open and actively seeking reconciliation.

“I know we don’t have all the answers right now, but I will walk through this with you and we can find the answers together.”

“I know we need some space right now, but I am committed to you and whatever is needed to resolve this issue.”

VAR Practice

1. Describe a recent situation where you experience a conflict in a relationship. Which of the common conflict resolution methods did you use? Was it effective?

2. What could you have said to **validate** the other person's feelings?

3. What could you have said to **affirm** the other person?

4. What could you have said to create a pathway for **reconciliation**?

Practicing Conflict Resolution

Use what you have learned in this session to practice resolving an actual conflict. On the following pages break down a recent personal relational conflict. Seeing the conflict laid out in detail often exposes opportunities for a resolution.

1. *Conflict Positions*

Yours:

Theirs:

2. *Motivation (Why?)*

Yours:

Theirs:

3. *How and why are these positions different?*

Yours:

Theirs:

4. *Is there common ground? If yes, what is it?*

5. *Is there a potential “win-win” solution? If yes, what is it?*

Letter Writing Exercise

Write a personal letter to a friend or family member that you have not had contact with recently or to a current family or friend with which you have had a conflict related to your mental health difficulties. **You do not have to send the letter. Use this exercise to help you explore what you would like to express to those closest to you.**

In the correspondence, simply express your affection for them and attempt to open a more consistent and ongoing dialogue. You might tell them about recent struggles you have overcome, what goals you are working towards, and the positive aspects of your life at the present time.

You may discover a tendency to try to defend yourself. This is very natural when you are feeling rejected or misunderstood.

Review your letter with your mental health coach, a supportive relative, or friend and edit out parts of the letter that detract from the purpose of the letter.

List the names of two or three people to whom you would like to address this letter:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Forgiveness

Purpose

Forgiveness is an act of receiving for yourself and giving to others the same mercy. Forgiveness does not mean you are okay with the pain of the offense, nor that you fully trust the offending person. You can simply forgive and set-up appropriate boundaries for your own emotional well-being. The purpose of the present section is to help you understand that the freedom experienced in forgiveness is more for the forgiver than the one forgiven.

Goals

- To gain a better understanding of forgiveness.
- To receive personal forgiveness for wrongs you have committed in the past.
- To forgive those who have wronged you so that you might continue to recover.

Facts to Consider

- The wrongful act that hurt or offended you might always remain a part of your life, but forgiveness will lessen its grip on you and help you focus on other, positive areas of your life.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean that you deny the other person's responsibility for hurting you, and it doesn't minimize or justify the wrong. You can forgive a person without excusing their wrongful acts.
- When someone you love and trust hurts you, you become angry, sad, and confused. If you dwell on the hurtful events or situations, resentment, vengeance, and hostility will take root in your heart. If you allow these negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you will find yourself swallowed up by bitterness and a sense of injustice.
- Just as we have received forgiveness from God, He has called us to forgive those who hurt us. That does not mean we are required or even able to forget the offense. We are to forgive the person who has wronged us and trust God for justice, leaving the events in His hands.
- Forgiveness is a choice we make through a decision of our will (not a feeling), motivated by obedience to God and His command to forgive. Just deciding to forgive will not strip away all of the pain of the incident. You need to give yourself time. Forgiveness is the beginning of a healing process.

Understanding Yourself

I. *What do you feel is the most difficult part of forgiving someone?*

II. *What are your thoughts about forgiving those who don't ask to be forgiven? Do you believe they deserve to be forgiven?*

III. *Do you find it hard to believe that God has forgiven you? Why or why not?*

Receiving Forgiveness

Receiving forgiveness can be an emotional process that starts with a dialog between you and God. Personalizing forgiveness into an act of receiving helps to confirm God's promise and defuse spiritual condemnation. Once you understand that God has forgiven you, you can truly understand what it means to forgive yourself. Complete the following exercise to help you learn how to receive forgiveness.

Offense you caused and the outcome:

Prayer of Forgiveness:

"God, I'm sorry that I (offense) and that it caused (outcome). I know it was wrong and hurtful. I ask You to forgive me for this/these offense(s) and the pain it caused. I now receive Your forgiveness and grace for me. Thank You for being faithful and righteous to forgive my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Because of Your love and forgiveness, You have removed my sins, as far as the east is from the west, and You will never treat me, repay me, or condemn me for them. Lord, thank You for Your grace, mercy, and forgiveness ... I humbly receive all these from You." Amen

Note: Some may find this difficult and it is not necessary to force yourself, rather take this step by step. It is also not important if you do not experience emotions, this is simply one tool for receiving God's forgiveness.

Giving Forgiveness

- I. To begin the process of forgiving others, write down the names of one to three people (even if they are no longer living) who have hurt or offended you in some way. There may be many memories or people, but only focus on one to three.

If there are many names, but one or two that are most hurtful, only focus on those and leave the others for another time. Go through this process one person at a time and stay comfortable, not overwhelmed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- II. As you feel comfortable perform one or both of the following forgiveness exercises.

- a) **Visualize Forgiveness** – Asking God for grace, look at the first name on your list, close your eyes and then hold the image of each person in your mind and tell him or her the following statement.

"Just as God has forgiven me, I forgive you and I release you. I hold no un-forgiveness back. My forgiveness for you is total. I am free and you are free."

- b) **Praying Forgiveness** – Asking God for grace, look at the first name on your list, talk to God about the person and offense and simply tell God you forgive them.

"Father, (offender) hurt me very badly and left me with a lot of pain. However, just as you have forgiven me, I forgive and release (offender) and I hold no un-forgiveness back and my forgiveness is total. I am free and they are free."

- c) **Draw Forgiveness** – Imagine what it would be like to see God’s forgiveness. In the space below, draw a scene, an image, or someone more abstract that matches how you feel about receiving God’s forgiveness.

Beyond What Others Think

Purpose

Stigma is not truth, it is misperception based on fear, false beliefs, and misinformation. The purpose of the present session is to equip you to break stigma in your community by educating yourself and others about mental health difficulties and to live beyond what others think.

Goals

- Identify stigmatizing ideas and thoughts associated with mental health difficulties.
- Learn to break stigma with education and truth.
- Consider the potential benefits and drawbacks to telling more people about your illness.

Facts to Consider

- Stigma is always born out of fear and misinformation and can only be overcome by truth and education.
- The purpose of stigma is to minimize, disgrace, or dehumanize someone so that inaction and a lack of compassion can be justified. It causes feelings of shame and rejection.
- Others' wrongly held views and beliefs (stigma) are hurtful and not your fault. Don't own them!
- Mental health difficulties are physiological conditions affecting your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that require treatment and recovery like any other health issue.
- Mental health difficulties are not the result of your sin or having a weak faith. All believers struggle with sin and weakness of faith at times but God still chooses to love us.
- God has a purpose and plan for your life, no matter what weaknesses or struggles you have.

Understanding Yourself

- I. *What fears or misinformation about mental health difficulties have you felt or heard from others?*

- II. *What fears or misinformation about mental health difficulties have you believed yourself (self-stigma / shame)?*

- III. *What do you think motivates stigma?*

Breaking Stigma

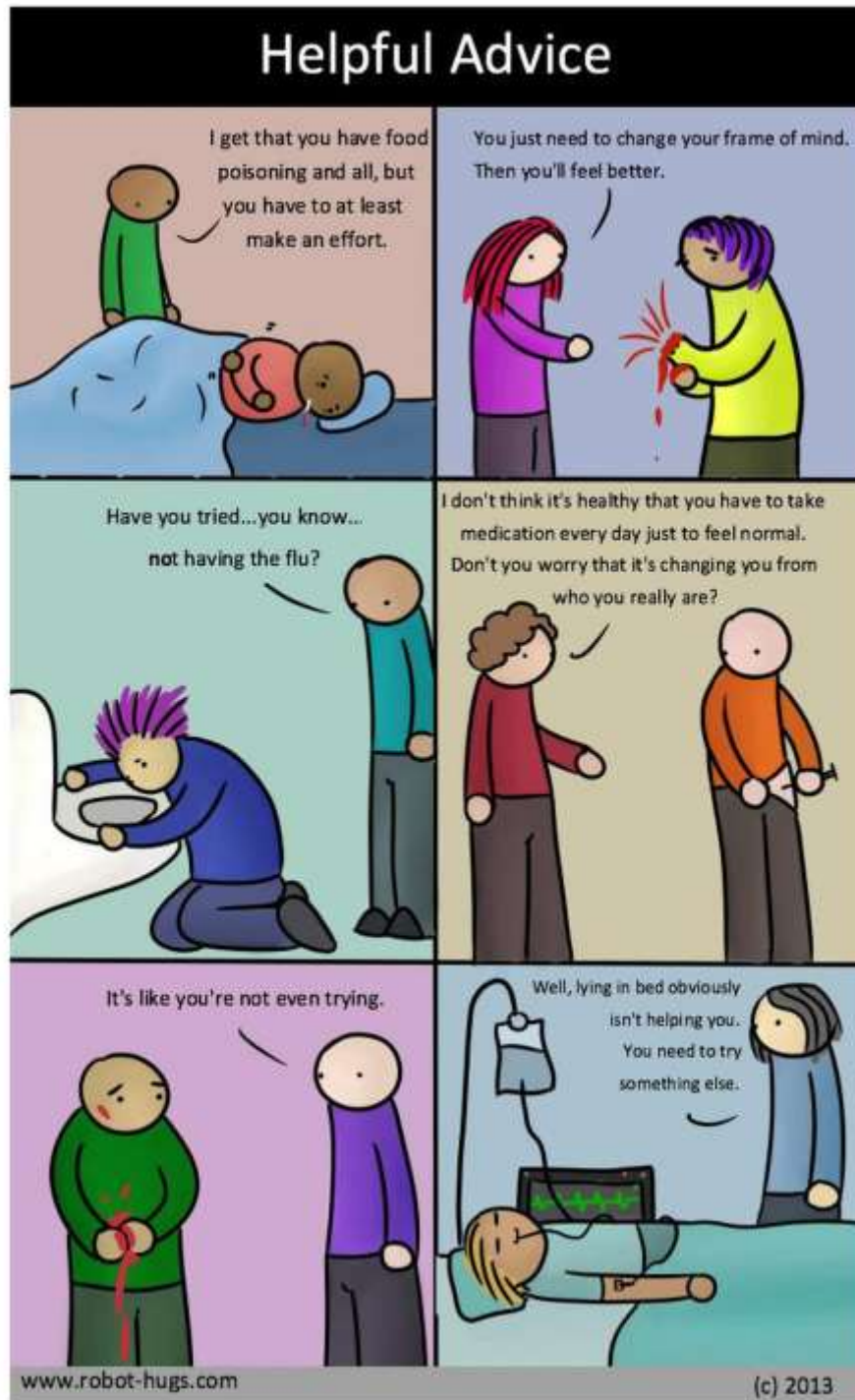
Influential pastor Tommy Nelson, who suffered with depression, openly talks about his struggles and how the church doesn't fully understand what that looks like. This week, take some time to watch his video and learn from his story.

<http://www.dts.edu/media/play/a-christian-looks-at-depression-tom-nelson/>

What are your thoughts about Pastor Nelson's story and how does it help you in your mental health journey?

Educating Others

What would it look like if we treated physical illness the same way many people treat mental illness? (Image Credit: Robot Hugs / www.robot-hugs.com)



Opening Up to Others

Stigma is only overcome by truth and information. However, it is up to you who to tell about your mental health difficulties and what you tell them. Your decisions may change over time about who you tell and likely depend on the specific relationship.

1. Who would you like to tell about your mental health difficulties? Who have you told?

2. What information do you feel comfortable disclosing? (e.g., challenges, strengths)

3. What are the potential benefits of disclosing with these individuals?

4. What are the potential drawbacks of disclosing with these individuals?

Changing the Way You Think

Often we link our mental illness with who we are as a person. This is not true. Identifying ways you can empower yourself and view who you are in a new light will help perpetuate that message to your family and friends.

1. What are some thoughts you have about yourself that you might want to reframe to be more positive?

2. If you changed your negative self-statements to more positive or neutral statements, how do you think you would feel?

3. Below, identify some positive or neutral statements to replace the negative statements.

Serving Others

Purpose

Service to others glorifies God, builds confidence, and affirms your value and worth. The purpose of this session is to help you identify opportunities to serve others in your life.

Goal

- Discover how serving others can bring you purpose.
- Understand that God has called us to service others out of service to Him.
- Identify unique and specific ways you can serve others.

Facts to Consider

- The motivation for serving others is for the love of God and the love of others. Without the proper motivation, we end up serving for the wrong reasons: trying to earn the approval of others, trying to run away from pain, trying to remedy guilt, or trying to impress God. Service motivated by these illegitimate reasons is bound to leave you burned out and bitter in the end.
- God is far more interested in why you serve others than in how well you serve them. He's always looking at your heart, wanting you to serve willingly and eagerly out of love for Jesus and gratitude for all He's done for you.
- When we serve others, we are actually serving God, "Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me — you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:40)
- The Bible tells us that God has already prepared the good works that we are to be involved in. He calls each of us to join Him in the work He is doing, the good works He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).
- You are most like Jesus when you're serving others. After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus said, "I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you." (John 13:14-15)
- Serving does not have to involve doing things you do not enjoy. Use your natural talents and skills to serve others. When you utilize your gifts, this can be an enjoyable part of your life.

Understanding Yourself

- I. *When was a time your mental health difficulty made you feel useless to others? How did you overcome that belief?*

- II. *How do you feel when people do something nice for you?*

- III. *How does doing something nice for someone else make you feel?*

Finding Opportunities to Serve

Identify service opportunities in which you can be consistent and successful. Remember to keep it very simple; do not take on overwhelming projects.

1. What are some simple ways to serve your family/friends?

2. What are some simple ways to serve at your faith community?

3. What are some simple ways to serve your neighbors?

4. What are some simple ways to serve your local community?

Looking Forward

Purpose

Through this workbook you have learn to address all areas of your health: mental, physical, spiritual, and relational. Living a life where you are happy and functioning takes work beyond just this workbook. The purpose of this session is to help you identify areas you have grown and some areas in which you would like to see more growth.

Goals

- Identify how setting goals has helped you personally.
- Learn how to continue to set and reach goals through your life.
- Understand that identifying obstacles is what gets you to the next step in your plan.

Facts to Consider

- A goal is a desired result in one or more area of your life. Goals can be actions or activities you want to add to your life, movement or change in current responsibilities, or increasing awareness to who you are and how you manage your current life.
- Each person has their own unique goals. Often times, goals are related to mental and physical health, financial and life stability, relationships, work or school, or spiritual growth.
- Goals must be things that you can change and have some control over. A goal cannot be to change how someone else acts because we do not have control of other people. Instead, a goal can be analyzing and adjusting how we react and engage with that person.
- At each stage of your life, your goals are likely to change and adapt to what is important and needed at that point in time. Some goals will not be accomplished as you begin to realize your values and what you place importance on has changed.
- Short-term goals are things that you want to and are able to accomplish soon. That could be within the day, week, month, or year. An example of a short-term goal is to find a new job.
- Long-term goals typically extend past a year, possibly taking up to several years to accomplish. An example of a long-term goal is to graduate from college.
- Every goal has steps, or mini goals, that must be accomplished to reach the end, desired result (goal). Often times, small obstacles arise that make completing a step harder and can push the desired goal further away.
- With almost every obstacle, there is a solution. Sometimes the solution may not be ideal but is sufficient. Family and friends can be great in helping find solutions if you are feeling stuck.
- Writing down goals on a piece of paper increases your likelihood of taking the necessary steps towards achieving that goal. Accomplishing goals provides a sense of self-achievement and can increase self-esteem.

Looking Back

As you finish this workbook, it is important to remember where you were when you started. Flip back to the beginning of this workbook and reread your original goals.

I. Were you able to meet or make progress on any of your goals? If no, why not?

II. What tools have you learned that were helpful to you in life? What areas of your life do you see personal growth?

III. Moving forward, would you like to continue on those goals or work towards reaching other goals?

Looking Forward

A key to being successful is to always have at least one goal you are working towards. Here you will begin the process of identifying what some of your long term goals will be as you put the tools you have learned to work! Identifying goals can be challenging, but now you have done it once before. Keeping this book as a tool to refer back to can help as you work towards developing the life you want to live. Below are some questions to help as you begin to think about what your long-term goals might be.

1. Where would I like to see myself in 5-10 years?
2. What do I place value on in life?
3. What is important to me?
4. What would make me happy?
5. Who is important enough in my life to be involved in my goals?

Goal #1

a. What exactly do you want to accomplish (be specific)?

Identify steps necessary to reach this goal.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

b. *How will you measure success? What are some noticeable and measurable ways you can track your progress towards this goal?*

c. *When is it reasonable to expect to reach this goal? Be sure to give yourself more time than you originally think. Oftentimes unexpected life events slow down our process.*

Goal #2

a. *What exactly do you want to accomplish (be specific)?*

Identify steps necessary to reach this goal.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

b. *How will you measure success? What are some noticeable and measurable ways you can track your progress towards this goal?*

c. *When is it reasonable to expect to reach this goal? Be sure to give yourself more time than you originally think. Oftentimes unexpected life events slow down our process.*

Goal #3

a. *What exactly do you want to accomplish (be specific)?*

Identify steps necessary to reach this goal.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

b. How will you measure success? What are some noticeable and measurable ways you can track your progress towards this goal?

c. When is it reasonable to expect to reach this goal? Be sure to give yourself more time than you originally think. Oftentimes unexpected life events slow down our process.

Additional Resources

Educational videos, online training, links to mental health care providers, and downloadable materials can be found on the Mental Health Gateway website (www.mentalhealthgateway.org).

Books by Dr. Stanford

Grace for the Children: Finding Hope in the Midst of Child and Adolescent Mental Illness, Intersivity Press (2019).

Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness, Revised and Expanded, Intersivity Press (2017).

The Biology of Sin: Grace, Hope and Healing for Those Who Feel Trapped, Intersivity Press (2011).