



ENHANCING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND IMPROVING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Personal Workbook

INTRODUCTION

We all have struggles and trials in our lives. Sometimes they lead to stress, depression, numbing our feelings, and harmful thought patterns. Life can be tough at times, but the good news is there are steps we can take to feel and live better.

If life is hard now and you're struggling, I know how you feel. Because I've been there. I have struggled personally, and I've suffered along with other members of my family who were hurting. Life is much better now, and it can be for you too.

There are easy-to-use principles that will help, and they've worked for millions of others. As you take small steps forward, you'll find more happiness, peace, and purpose. You don't have to do it all at once, just get started and enjoy the journey.





WHEN LIFE IS NOT PERFECT

ADDING MORE PEACE AND JOY INTO OUR DAILY LIFE BY CHANGING OUR POINT OF VIEW.

Life seems hard sometimes, and we are all affected by worry, sadness, negative thought patterns, and other issues. But there are things we can do to live life better. This material will help you do just that. Because you can improve your contentment and happiness—one step at a time.

Would you like to get better at keeping a positive point of view and letting things go? And learn to relieve stress and deal with depression? And be encouraged against negative thinking and see how you can take steps to improve your life each day? You can learn about all those things and more as you contemplate “Enhancing Emotional Well-Being.”

To start, wouldn't it be great if you could be content and happy even when life is not perfect? This is something we all need, including me. My issues with perfectionism, control, over-thinking, and identity drag me down at times.

But here at the beginning, I've got some bad news and good news for you. The bad news is our life will never be perfect. As much as we may long for it and no matter how we try to control everything, our life will not be just like we want it to be. The good news is we can be happy and content even when life is not perfect.

We can learn to think differently and build joy into our daily existence. We do that by changing our point of view:

- **Alter our expectations** – In this world, we will have troubles. Since life is not perfect, we should stop expecting it to be, and quit worrying when it's not. It's easier to be content when we stop assuming everything is supposed to go our way.
- **Adjust our perspective** – If we fixate on ourselves, we tend to obsess on what we don't have rather than appreciate what we do have. Our view changes when we look around. Compared to the impoverished, the homeless, or those enduring wars or disease, we've got it pretty good. And when you come down to it, life's not all about us.
- **Adapt our approach** – If we change our approach and look out for others more than we normally do, it changes everything. Visit a home for the elderly, serve in a community soup kitchen, take meals to the homeless, or comfort a friend who is struggling. Slowly, our point of view will change for the better.
- **Count our blessings** – We've all heard the expression, “Count your blessings,” but few of us actually do it. Why not give it a try? Create a list of all of things you have to be thankful for: life, friends, family, comfort, entertainment, freedom, country, God, and on and on. Keep going until you are totally out of ideas.



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- **Take eternity into account** – Do you remember the last day of fourth grade? Even with school things left to do, the excitement of the summer overshadowed everything. Shouldn't life be like that since our short time here on earth is but a brief prelude to what is to come when there will be no more tough times to deal with?

It's clear to all of us that life is not perfect. But it can still be a wonderful journey that we enjoy one step at a time.

Answer these three discussion questions to help you take the next right steps even when life is not perfect:

1. Do you accept that your outlook and feelings about life can improve simply by adjusting your point of view?
2. If you list the five ways to change your point of view in order of importance, how can you work on the top one?
3. What are some small steps you can take each day to develop a positive perspective even when times are tough?



LET IT GO

SETTING ASIDE OUR OBSESSION WITH CONTROL AND FINDING MORE CONTENTMENT

Would you like to have fewer regrets, more contentment, and less anxiety? You can by utilizing this enduring and important life lesson: “Let it go.” When something bothers you that you can’t control—such as circumstances, people, and outcomes—choose to chase it out of your mind. And then do that over and over. Keep praying for God’s peace, surrender the concern to him, and keep letting it go.

Think what your life would be like if you chose to let go of those things that worry and sometimes obsess you. Really, think deeply about it. See it in your mind. Envision a “you” with less anxiety. Feel the calmness and peace and taste the freedom such a life would bring. Wouldn’t that be wonderful?

At times, we all feel haunted by the past, disappointed in the present, or worried about the future. We yearn for fewer regrets, more contentment, and less anxiety. “Let it go” does not mean give up, or stop working, or do less than your best. But it does mean deciding to not be obsessed with controlling the outcome, or worrying about the past, or needing to change someone else, or wishing your circumstances were different.

“Let it go” seems simple to do but it can be hard to maintain. That’s why you have to do it over and over, and why you need to pray for God’s help every step of the way. For example ...

When you are worried about something that may happen in the future: Let it go.

“There’s a victory in letting go of your expectations.” (Mike White)

When you are obsessed about an event that took place in the past: Let it go.

“Some of us think holding on makes us strong; but sometimes it is letting go.” (Hermann Hesse)

When you are anxious about what somebody will or will not do: Let it go.

*“Sometimes letting things go is an act of far greater power than defending or hanging on.”
(Eckhart Tolle)*

When you are too concerned about a situation you are in: Let it go.

“There’s an important difference between giving up and letting go.” (Jessica Hatchigan)

When the worry you are carrying keeps you from getting anything done: Let it go.

“Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don’t.” (Steve Maraboli)



LET IT GO

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When we let go, God does his best work. And that should be all we need to know.

Answer these three discussion questions to help you take the next right steps to “let it go” and enjoy life more:

1. Do you accept that many things you worry about are not really in your control and life will improve if you let them go?
2. If you think about the five examples above of when it helps to let things go, which of them is most relevant to you?
3. What are small steps you can take each day to take notice of negative thoughts you are having and let them go?



5 OF THE BEST WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS

INCREASING OUR RESILIENCE TO MANAGE, COPE WITH, AND RECOVER FROM WORRY

If feeling less stress would improve your life, it's worth learning how to do it. And you're not alone, it's almost all of us. About 4 of 5 Americans are affected by stress, and more than half say they experience it during much of the day.

What causes stress for many of us? Work, school, money, responsibilities, unmet expectations, relationships, change, uncertainty, insecurity, social media, health, trauma, fear of the future, and more. Do any of those feel familiar?

What helps is building resilience to manage and recover from stressful situations. This means dealing with life with contentment even when circumstances are not going well. It includes setting aside things that bother us and living effectively when we feel anxious. And recovering more quickly from tough times and finding peace more readily.

The good news is we can learn how to relieve stress. It starts with a decision to be more intentional about developing greater resilience in your life. Then, decide which of these ways to relieve stress fit your needs best, and get started. There are no magic answers, and you shouldn't expect perfection. But you can get better, one step at a time.

These tools are simple, yet powerful and have been proven to work. They are 5 of the best ways to relieve stress:

1. **Reframe how we think about stress** – The secret is to think of stress not as an evil to be avoided but as a normal part of everyday living. We can train ourselves to treat each stressful situation as a trigger to take useful action, and therefore position stress as a catalyst for positive outcomes rather than being overwhelmed by it.
2. **Let go of the stress of control** – Our life improves when we stop trying to control everything. This includes people when we let go of our insatiable appetite for fixing others. It means outcomes as we let go of perfectionism and performance. And circumstances when we accept that it's okay not to be okay.
3. **Utilize the positive coping cycle** – We can be intentional as we react to stress with the positive coping cycle. We pause and notice our early warning signs of stress. We evaluate the situation calmly versus reacting. Then we choose a coping mechanism such as breathing, prayer, meditation, taking a walk, or music.
4. **Let other people help us** – When most people feel stress, they keep it to themselves. Instead, one of the best things we can do is to talk to somebody about it. Just saying out loud what we are worried about can help. Rather than isolating, being vulnerable with someone about what we are facing can make a huge difference.



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5. **Turn to God for help** – God is our lifeline for dealing with stress. He is always there for us. This doesn't mean he will swoop in and fix everything. But he hears us when we cry out, he comforts us in our pain, and he helps us get through.

Answer these three discussion questions to help you take the next right steps to relieve stress in your life:

1. Do you agree that even when circumstances create stress, there are things you can do lessen its impact on you?
2. Which of the five ways to relieve stress above do you agree can be helpful to you when you feel anxiety coming?
3. What are some small steps you can take each day to relieve stress you're feeling and develop greater resilience?



DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

TAKING POSITIVE STEPS TO FEEL LESS OVERWHELMED AND START FEELING BETTER

If life seems intolerable and the future hopeless, is there anything we can do? Yes—we can take a step. We don't have to change our life all at once, and just one small step can make a difference. Life may still seem hard, but when we take a positive step, we will likely feel a little better and see that progress is possible. Then we work to take one more step.

But if you have never experienced depression, you may not realize small steps can be a challenge. Because being depressed is more than “feeling down” or “being sad for a while.” If you never felt it yourself, you may not understand.

When we struggle with depression, we may dwell in hopelessness, be self-absorbed, or isolate. We might remain paralyzed or doubt God. All of which make things worse. Unfortunately, there is no magic antidote for depression and no self-help tips that will automatically fix everything. Clinical depression may even call for medical treatment.

But depression has emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and personal elements. And in all of those areas, there are things we can do that will help, and we can feel better. Especially if we take it one step at a time.

Think about these 5 ways for how people deal with depression and choose 1 area in which you can take small steps:

- 1. You dwell in hopelessness – Instead, choose to rebuild a positive point of view.**
 - Adjust your perspective to see the bigger picture: life, truly, is not all bad.
 - Thought by thought, work to develop a more hopeful vision of the future.
- 2. You become self-absorbed – Instead, choose to work on healthy self-awareness.**
 - Fight the lies of negative self-talk haunting you and replace them with positive thoughts.
 - Don't play the victim. The world is not out to get you. Do what you can to feel a little better.
- 3. You isolate yourself – Instead, choose to reach out to other people.**
 - Get help. See a counselor, just as you would visit a doctor if you had the flu.
 - Get around positive people, those who will support you with no judgment.
- 4. You remain paralyzed – Instead, choose to stay active and face your problems.**
 - Get out of bed and get into motion, knowing that the first step is the hardest.
 - Take steps to address 1 problem; negative situations get worse if you avoid them.
- 5. You begin to doubt God – Instead, find your purpose and hold onto your faith.**
 - When you hit bottom, it's often a good time to re-surrender to God, so go all the way.
 - Spend time building a positive plan for the future, starting with the truth in the Bible.





DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

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Answer these three discussion questions to help you take the next right steps to deal with depression:

1. Do you agree that when you feel depressed that taking one step, even a very small one, can help you feel better?
2. Which of the five ways of reacting to depression is familiar to you, and how might the suggested approach help?
3. What are some small steps you can take each day to start making positive progress in dealing with depression?





IS IT OKAY TO DRINK?

LEARNING WHEN ALCOHOL IS FINE AND WHEN IT'S BECOMING PART OF THE PROBLEM

Have you asked yourself the same question over and over: "Is it okay to drink?" Would you like to know the answer to that question (some parts will surprise you)? Because it IS okay to drink. At least, for some people, just not for everybody. The most important thing is to make sure you know the difference.

I didn't know that difference for about 30 years. Drinking for fun in high school became a habit in college. Once working, I drank to relax and turn my brain off and merged into a life as a high-functioning alcoholic.

But God performs miracles in ways we don't expect. Eventually I felt I needed to quit drinking, but I wasn't looking forward to it. Until later, when I saw life had become more content, meaningful, and enjoyable than ever before.

No matter what our habits are, it's helpful to understand the factors involved. To take a thoughtful look at our choices so we can live in a way that brings us—and those close to us—the most peace, joy, and purpose along our journey.

It is okay for some people – Many people have a drink or two on occasion but never abuse alcohol, and drinking is not a compulsion, obsession, or crutch for them. For some people, the answer seems to be, "Yes, it is okay to drink."

It is not okay for others – But for many people, alcoholism can be cunning, baffling, and powerful. Once alcoholism strikes, it can destroy individuals and rip apart families. Alcoholism can appear as a delightful but deceptive house guest, and it can keep someone pleasantly engaged on many things other than what God wants them to do.

Check for warning signs – Have you tried to stop but have not been able to? Do you drink alone or need to drink to relieve stress, sadness, or insecurity? Do you lack control of how much you drink, sometimes drinking more than you should? If any of these signs apply to you, you have enough of a problem that you should do something about it.

Ask how much it matters – As another test, ask yourself, "Do I care if I stop drinking?" If it doesn't matter to you, and quitting is no big deal, drinking might not be a problem. But you might have an issue if you start thinking about all the reasons it's okay for you to continue drinking. Psychologically, that's called rationalization. In recovery, it's called denial.

Take a long-term view – Finally, ask yourself what positive and negative results will come from your drinking. In your heart, do you feel you are living the way you should? When you think about getting older and looking back on your life, will you be glad you drank? Are you being honest with yourself—and God—on the role alcohol plays in your life?



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Because nothing will change until you decide it will change. But know that if you have a problem, there is an assurance of a more positive future. Life can be a wonderful journey again, not without trials, but more meaningful and real. You will feel good knowing you are moving in the right direction. So, be honest with yourself: "Is it okay for you to drink?"

Answer these discussion questions to help you take the next right steps if you're wondering if it's okay to drink:

1. Do you accept that you will find more peace, joy, and purpose if you take a long-term view to the drinking question?
2. Do you notice any warning signs of drinking in your life and, if so, are you willing to move from denial into awareness?
3. What are small steps you can take to get through just one day without drinking so you feel good about your progress?



TRUST TAKES TRAINING

ENHANCING OUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING BY CHOOSING TRUST—OVER AND OVER

What part of your life do you worry about? That brings sadness? Or makes you feel frustrated, lonely, or hopeless? Which of your habits makes life worse rather than better? What negative thoughts haunt you at night?

Because we've all got issues that bring us pain. At times, we desperately wonder: "What can I do to feel better?" There are many steps we can take to have greater well-being and fewer problems. But there is only one supernatural way for our lives to be transformed. Yes, just one. A lot of us don't know what it is. And many of us know but rarely use it.

Such transformation comes only from our all-powerful God. He can help us feel better any time, but it often seems to be when we choose to surrender. Which is when we let go, trust God, and accept his will—unconditionally.

You would think we would try that more often. Because we all have issues like anxiety, depression, or something else. God will always be there for us if we place our trust in him. But sometimes it takes practice to train ourselves how.

I've suffered from obsessions with perfectionism and performance for a while. At times it feels like I'm making progress trusting God with those issues, but then something happens, and the shame comes sneaking back into my mind.

It seems that trust takes training, and we can get better at the act of surrender. If we work at it, we learn to trust God more. We admit we can't manage our issues on our own and turn them over to God. And do that again and again ...

Accept that God uses our weaknesses to train us to stay close to him

God uses our issues to help us practice returning our attention to him. Our weakness becomes the vehicle he uses to teach us to depend on his strength.

Identify an area we need to surrender and admit we can't manage it on our own

We tend to rely on our strength rather than the strength of our Creator, but the first step to improving our lives is accepting we can't do it on our own.

Tell God we are giving the issue to him and will trust him no matter what

Faith is a decision: "Do we believe in God or ourselves?" Trust is a choice: "Are we willing to live according to our faith?" Our job is to choose to trust God.

Keep practicing surrender over and over even if we don't see the results

God often works on something more important than our circumstances: "Us!" Life does not always go our way, but we can find peace and joy even then.



TRUST TAKES TRAINING

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Faith is a decision. Trust is a choice. Our well-being and peace are not at the mercy of our circumstances, and we can feel better when we choose to surrender our concerns. But trust takes training.

Learning to surrender to God is one of the most important life skills we can develop, so the practice is worth it. As we keep placing our trust in God over and over, we find new levels of peace and joy along the way.

Answer these three discussion questions to help you take the next right steps to train yourself to trust God more:

1. Do you accept there is a God who created the earth and you and that you will find more peace by trusting him?
2. Will you commit to pick one area in your life and use the steps shown above to practice trusting God for 30 days?
3. What are small steps you can take each day to practice trusting God on the circumstances and choices you face?



WHAT EVERY GROWN UP NEEDS TO HEAR

ACCEPTING THE LIFE-ENHANCING TRUTHS WE YEARN FOR AND FINDING WHOLENESS

Do you know how many people suffer from anxiety, depression, or addictions? Insecurity, loneliness, fear, control, or other issues? After years of research, I know exactly how many people struggle in some way: everyone!

But we each tend to think we're the only one who is hurting. We keep our issues to ourselves where they fester into deeper pain and shame. It doesn't have to be that way, and there are some important messages we all need to hear.

These messages will help you become a more "whole" person. This is when you intentionally use your heart, soul, mind, and strength to find peace with the past, joy in the present, and purpose and hope for the future.

The words that follow are for you personally, so use these timeless truths to help you find wholeness in your life ...

Your heart: Knowing it's okay not to be okay, and you're not broken or alone.

- It's okay not to be okay – If something is bothering you, it's okay, because we all have issues at times.
- You can always talk to God – God wants you to talk to him about what's going on, and he is a good listener.
- It helps to talk to other people – If you are feeling down, worried, or tempted, it helps to talk to someone about it.

Your soul: Hearing the words you yearn for and understanding your identity.

- You are loved – God loves you, he wants to bless you, and there is nothing you can do to separate you from his love.
- You have great value – You are special, and you have unique talents that set you apart from everyone on earth.
- You have a good future – God has good plans and a purpose for you, and he is cheering your progress.

Your mind: Finding freedom in being responsible and making good choices.

- God has boundaries to observe – When you follow God's instructions, you will have more peace and joy in your life.
- You are responsible for your choices – There are consequences of bad choices, and God may use them for you to learn.
- God will always forgive you – If you make a mistake, confess it so you get it behind you, and God will still love you.



WHAT EVERY GROWN UP NEEDS TO HEAR

ACCEPTING THE LIFE-ENHANCING TRUTHS WE YEARN FOR AND FINDING WHOLENESS

Your strength: Living well even when life is not going the way you want it to.

- Life will have many disappointments – You will have troubles, that's normal, but there will also be blessings each day.
- You may not always be comfortable – When we learn that life is not all about us, we find much more contentment.
- Life hides great purpose in our trials – Our deepest trials lead to our greatest blessings if we treat them that way.

As you become a more whole person, you will find more peace, joy, and purpose, no matter what circumstances are swirling around you. It starts by hearing—believing—what every grown up needs to hear. Enjoy the journey!

Answer these three discussion questions to help you hear and believe life-affirming messages you yearn for:

1. When you are honest with yourself, do you accept there are recurring thoughts or feelings that make you feel bad?
2. Which messages in the areas above were most meaningful to you, and will you use them as affirmations every day?
3. What are small steps you can take each day to fill your mind with positive messages as long as it takes to feel better?



LEARNING NEW LIFE IMPROVEMENT STEPS

TAKING THE FIVE STEPS THAT CAN CHANGE OUR LIVES EVEN DURING THE TOUGH TIMES

It has been said, “The mass of men (women) lead lives of quiet desperation.” Is that true for you? Is your life marked by stress, sadness, negative thinking, addictions, or hopelessness? If so, there are steps you can take to get better.

But too often we look for help in the wrong places. Many ideas commonly accepted in today's world are wrong, and what people think “feels right” is also often wrong. Very wrong. And when we allow false thinking in our lives, we falter.

Our tendency is to be self-centered, and many people live their entire lives that way. That way of living does not lead to happiness, only anxiety and frustration. It doesn't have to be that way. There are proven life improvement steps that can help, and we learn about them from an unexpected source: the world of recovery.

My life totally shifted once I made that discovery. My family experiences in recovery—for myself and as a husband and father of someone struggling—led me to three epiphanies that changed the course of my life:

- The world's worst problems such as addiction and mental health issues are often treatable and even preventable.
- The way to prevent issues in our lives is to live more effectively, and there are practical principles that can help.
- Those principles have been proven in recovery, wellness, and science but, more importantly, they are Biblical.

Your life can change as well when you adopt these timeless and universal truths. This wisdom has been captured in five steps you can take to improve your life, grow closer to God, and prevent harmful problems. Here are those steps:

Surrender: Surrender your will to God and make choices based on faith and courage – God is in control, and your life revolves around your choice to do everything on your own or yield to his will, which you do by taking a step of faith.

Transformation: Humbly admit your mistakes and make positive changes in your life – You're not perfect, and that's okay. Self-awareness is a good start, and if you know your issues and decide to change, your life will transform.

Empathy: Seek forgiveness and invest in good relationships – Kindness, love, and forgiveness begin with empathy, which you develop by focusing on others and trying to understand and feel what is going on in their world.

Progress: Spend time every day in prayer and meditation – You can improve your life one step at a time. By adopting the right daily habits, remaining aware, and using prayer to maintain God as your guide, you will make progress.





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Service: Serve as an example and add value to the lives of others – Your life will change when you stop thinking about yourself and begin to serve others. Being of service is your calling in life, and it will help you find significance.

If you're hurting, you can take advantage of the world's most successful life improvement program which offers proven steps you can take one at a time. Amazingly, you can thank the world of recovery for these awesome lessons.

Answer these three discussion questions to help you move forward in taking life improvement steps each day:

1. Do you have frustration, stress, sadness, or negative thoughts and could taking positive steps help you feel better?
2. The five principles above work together and individually, so which one will you pick to work on for the next 30 days?
3. What are small steps you can take each day to make progress in the area that you chose to start improving your life?

Odds are high you or someone very close to you is hurting.

This workbook is part of the STEPS Online Toolkit for “Enhancing Emotional Well-Being and Improving Your Mental Health” which will help you in dealing effectively with the tough times in your life. You can reach that toolkit at the link shown below.

A potentially life-changing thing you can do is to share this workbook and the Online Toolkit with people you know. Send them to someone who is hurting or share them with all your friends. Many of them are struggling, but they’re just not talking about it.

Even if life seems dark now, you can get through to discover a more positive future. And you can do it one step at a time.



LifImprovementSteps.com/EmotionalWellBeing