

How to Become Emotionally Healthy

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Are you frequently overwhelmed by all you have to do? Do you often experience feelings of stress, guilt, fatigue, frustration, and anger because of the burdens you face in life?

If so, you're not living the abundant life that God intends for you to live. God wants you to be emotionally healthy – able to live with peace and joy, no matter what circumstances you may go through.

You can enjoy that kind of life if you quit doing things that damage your soul and sabotage your ability to enjoy good emotional health. Here's how you can change your life to be emotionally healthy:

Quit being afraid of what others think. Release yourself from the pressure of trying to please other people and focus solely on pleasing God. God's opinion of you is the only one that ultimately matters. You have inherent worth because God has made you in His image, and you don't need to try to earn God's approval if you place your trust in Jesus, because Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for your sins is enough for you to be set right with God. Take a few days to pay attention to how you may be trying to use words and actions to gain approval from other people. Then pray about what you notice, asking God to empower you to change those unhealthy habits and give you the confidence to simply be yourself when interacting with people. Read Bible verses that describe God's love for you, and reflect on them often. Choose to base your identity on God's love for you rather than on what others think of you.

Quit lying. Even if you don't deliberately lie, you may be lying to God, yourself, or other people without realizing it if you're not careful to live with complete emotional honesty. For example, do you find yourself avoiding commenting on something when telling the truth would be awkward or painful? God wants you to feel free to always speak the truth in love – and the degree to which you speak the truth is the degree to which you are free. Ask God to give you the strength to live with emotional integrity in every situation from now on. Expect conflict to occur in your relationships after you change the dynamics of them by being honest about your views. But trust that God will help you through it well if you proceed respectfully and in the right timing while avoiding blame and taking responsibility for your own thoughts and feelings.

Quit dying to the wrong things. While God does want you to die to sinful things that harm your soul, He doesn't want you to deprive yourself of gifts He makes available to you to nurture your soul. So don't deny yourself healthy pleasures, such as taking walks outdoors, getting together with friends for a meal or concert, or pursuing a hobby you enjoy. Keep in mind that you must care well for yourself before you can care well for other people God wants you to serve (such as your spouse and children). Accept the reality that you have emotional, mental, and physical limits to what you can do without becoming overly stressed – and realize that those limits are gifts from God, meant to help you make wise, healthy choices. Discover yourself by getting to know your heart (your thoughts, feelings, and values), your story (how your past has influenced

the way you think and behave now), and your personality. Once you learn more about yourself, use that information to care for yourself well from now on.

Quit denying anger, sadness, and fear. Embrace the full range of your emotions – including difficult feelings like anger, sadness, and fear – so that you can learn what God wants you to learn from them. Instead of denying or suppressing your emotions, decide to feel them fully, so you can explore them. Consider recording your feelings in a journal to help you identify your emotions and reflect on them. Ask God to help you discern the specific reasons why you’re feeling the way you are. Then take appropriate action, responding to the information your feelings give you however God leads you to do so.

Quit blaming. Shift your focus away from blaming others for the problems in your life and toward taking personal responsibility. Realize that you’re not a victim; you can choose to solve some problems and trust God in situations you can’t control. Practice these skills to start changing your life for the better: setting boundaries, speaking up, saying “yes” or “no” honestly, paying attention to your feelings, taking care of yourself, confronting yourself to deal with sin in your life, remaining hopeful in every situation, thinking carefully about your decisions, and acting courageously to follow where God leads you.

Quit over-functioning. Decide to stop doing for other people anything that they can and should do for themselves. Ask God to give you the courage to change the rules of your relationships so that you’re no longer taking responsibility for others in unhealthy ways. Clearly and calmly explain the changes you’re making to the people who will be affected by your new, healthier choices. Prepare for chaos at first, as they figure out how to adjust to the changes. Stand firm and move forward with your plans, regardless of how they react to them, trusting the Holy Spirit to help you every step of the way.

Quit faulty thinking. Break the habit of thinking in faulty ways, such as all-or-nothing thinking, taking things personally, and thinking that things will never change. Read and reflect on the Bible often and pray for the Holy Spirit to renew your mind every day, so your mind will be filled with truth. Ask God to give you the wisdom to know when not to follow your feelings. Stop making assumptions about other people without verifying the facts. Whenever you catch yourself falling into faulty thinking in a particular situation, ask yourself what new way you can respond that, though unfamiliar, may be more likely to succeed. Also, consider what you’ll regret years from now if you don’t do something to change your situation, and let that motivate you to change.

Quit living someone else’s life. Don’t hand control of your life over to other people. Instead, do your best to discover and fulfill God’s unique purposes for you. Listen to your inner rhythms to figure out the best times and ways for you to arrange your activities without becoming overwhelmed. Set boundaries with everyone with whom you have relationships to keep them emotionally healthy. Let go of any ways you may be trying to control other people’s lives; give them the freedom to make their own choices in life, and enjoy the freedom that you now have to do the same.