

WALKING OUT OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION RESOURCE

Greetings! I am Jovanna Jarvis, I am a Savannah native. I am a masters level Associate Professional Counselor. I am excited to help provide a resource list to help you navigate anxiety, fear, and worry. My hope is that this gives you hope and encourages you that you can “take your thoughts captive to make it obedient to Christ” (2 corinthians 10:5).



Hi, I'm David Allgire, a Seattle native, but I've lived in Savannah the last 24 years. I have a couple Master degrees and along with Bible teaching and preaching I occasionally teach University courses in Biblical Studies, and I counsel a lot of people, helping them walk out of anxiety and/or depression. My hope is that as you go through this resource you will immediately realize God is with you right now and is going to walk you through this and into a joyful and transformed life.

We're going to give you some immediate help and relief if you do your part by trying these tools and sticking with them. If you are experiencing anxiety or depression or both, your goal right now is to:

1. Get empowered with information.
2. Get direction from an expert in order to create an immediate strategy for daily practices and to begin to discover the source of your depression and/or anxiety so it can be brought into the light and healed.
3. Start doing daily disciplines that will heal your brain and transform your life.

START HERE

Before continuing with this resource we highly recommend that you watch these two videos. Both videos show you how to walk out of both anxiety and depression but one video leans toward anxiety and the other depression:

1. For **anxiety** start here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbhXx7mbfTo>
2. For **depression** start here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIBf1qNgLfg&t=6s>

WALKING OUT OF DEPRESSION

Let's begin the discussion about depression by defining it. Depression is a mood disorder in which individuals experience abnormally low moods and sadness. During these periods of lows, the individual is unable to raise their mood. Depression is not the same as sadness or grief. Depression is more persistent and marked difficulty in elevating mood. Grief is a response to a death or loss. The death or loss can be of a loved one, pet, unexpected endings, marriage, ending of a dream. Although sadness and grief can lead to depression, it is important to be self aware and seek professional assessment before self diagnosing. The symptoms of depression are physical and mental. The symptoms include loss of interest, depressed mood, lack of appetite, weight loss, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, difficulty with sleep, sleeping too much, feelings of worthlessness and recurring thoughts of death. When depression goes unmonitored it will result in a depression cycle. The cycle consists of the depression feeding off of itself an example being the lack of motivation leads to isolation which leads to more feelings of worthlessness. It is critical to be aware that depression is present and engage in tools to begin to exit the depression cycle. The tools for depression will feel counterintuitive. The tool you need to engage in will seem like the last thing that you want to do. The importance when engaging with tools for depression is reminding yourself of taking one step at time. The Lord is with you in the valley. He is guiding you step by step out of the cycle.



COMPASSION
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Important note. It is possible you will start to feel different immediately. But often you won't feel immediate relief from your pain. However, the process IS WORKING if you do it daily whether you feel it immediately or not. So, this is where faith comes in: have faith by continuing to do these disciplines and you will heal.

A STRATEGY FOR WALKING OUT OF DEPRESSION

Without meeting yet with a counselor, here is a general strategy to walk you out of your depression and/or anxiety:

1. **MEET WITH A GUIDE:** Meet immediately with someone who has expertise. A counselor, pastor, or a person who has walked out of anxiety or depression. They can help you come up with a strategic plan, pray for you, and help launch you into your plan and a season of prayer.
2. **MEET WITH THE LORD:** Meet the Lord every day in prayer. Use the book of Psalms to guide your prayers as often, when we are hurting, our minds are not able to generate prayer very well, but the Psalms guide us generate the words for us.
3. **IMMERSE YOURSELF INTO COMMUNITY:** You will not feel like doing this but you must! Immediately find a place of community. It is essential to be in relationships in the season. The church will help connect you to a small group.
4. **DO NOT ISOLATE YOURSELF:** Do not spend excessive time alone but instead go outside often. Perhaps go outside to pray or if you are working go to a coffee shop instead of staying at home.
5. **GET YOUR HEART RATE UP EVERY DAY:** Exercise 10 to 20 minutes, at least four times a week, and the goal is to just get your heart rate up high not to do long exercise at a low heart rate
6. **DON'T EAT SLUGGISH FOOD.** Remove unhealthy eating right now, in this season, from your diet. Eat more basic healthy foods.

7. CUT DOWN ON CAFFEINE: Remove most of the caffeine from your diet and drink more water in this season.
8. CUT OUT DEPRESSANTS: If there is any alcohol in your week remove that immediately as it is a depressant.
9. GRATITUDE LOG: Engage in writing down 2-3 things you are grateful for each day.
10. BREATHING: Take some time each day to engage in breath prayer or grounding. These tools help you connect with the present moment.
11. SEE A PHYSICIAN: You may be very chemically depleted in your mind and so if your anxiety or depression is severe go see a doctor for possible medication.

WALKING OUT OF ANXIETY

Before jumping into tools let's set a definition for anxiety and worry: “**Anxiety** is a mental and physical reaction to perceived threats. **Worry** is mental distress resulting from concern (usually something impending or anticipated).”

The definitions outline a clear difference between anxiety and worry. Anxiety is a reaction to perceived threats whereas worry is thinking of things that are impending. In other words, worry is a response to things that we know are coming and anxiety is a response to perceived threats. Anxiety and worry are both helpful within the correct context and when used correctly. Anxiety prepares us to fight, fly, freeze or faint. Anxiety is a part of God's good and thoughtful design for our bodies. It aids us to protect ourselves from threats (enemies, dangerous situations). It equips us through sending signals to our body. Worry is also helpful when it directs us to productive action such as planning, seeking counsel, and problem solving. When worry becomes excessive it turns into unhelpful anxiety. Anxiety that is unhelpful consists of excessive worry, excessive nervousness, inability to stop worrying, upset stomach, racing heart, shakiness, headaches, poor concentration, sleep issues and avoidance behaviors. When anxiety is unhelpful, it builds stories rooted in uncertainty and fear. When we are in this heightened

state, it is difficult to interact with the present moment. We are unable to engage with what God has placed in front of us. We are unable to access the mana that God has placed before us. I explain these things so that you are aware that anxiety is happening in your mind and your body. We need to be able to name and label what is occurring in order to step fully into moving forward. We cannot cast out what we will not name and bring into the light.

TOOLS

Tools are what we do after we have named and labeled what is growing in the dark. The tools that will be listed here are breath prayers, grounding, meditation, journaling and thought reframing. The tools listed will have a brief explanation and walk through.

1. Breath prayers

Breath prayers are a helpful tool to redirect your thoughts and rest your body. When anxiety is present the body sets off the alarm to start the fight, flight, freeze, faint response. This tool is helpful during moments of anxiety. It is most helpful to add this tool as a daily rhythm. The key to setting a daily rhythm is to set a practical, measurable goal. Choose to do this practice alongside your devotion time, morning routine, car ride, and/or bedtime routine.

Directions:

Select a truth/ mantra: this can be a biblical truth, verse or saying

Set a timer when engaging in your routine (start at 2 min and move up gradually to 5 min, 10 min, etc.)

Take a deep breath in and out on a count of 4: in through your nose and out through your mouth. This can be modified to being in through the nose and out through your mouth if in public.

Examples:

Inhale: I will be still

Exhale: And know

Inhale: That you

Exhale: Are God

(Psalm 46:10)

Inhale: I will trust in the Lord

Exhale: With all my heart

Inhale: I will not rely

Exhale: on my understanding

(Proverbs 3:5)

Inhale: The Lord is near

Exhale: I will not fear

2. Grounding

Grounding connects us to the present moment through breathing and attending to the present moment. The way we engage with the present moment is through our 5 senses and focusing on what is in front of us. This is a helpful way to disengage from the images and thoughts that arise in anxiety. Anxiety paints a picture that we respond to as if it is reality. Grounding helps us reengage with the moment and what God has in front of us.

During grounding, you can choose to focus on one of your senses or all of your senses. The goal is to really engage with the present moment. This can be done during a walk, car, at work, in your home. This can be a daily practice where you create moments to engage with what is in front of you. When moments of anxiety arise you can redirect yourself away from the anxiety images by engaging in this practice. As soon as you catch yourself believing anxiety start this practice.

Directions:

Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth for a count of 4

As you are breathing, focus on your feet on the ground. Pay attention to the way your feet feel pressed to the floor or the way your feet feel as you are walking. Now shift your attention to what you can see. What is in front of you? What does it look like? Color? Shape? As you are breathing, focus on what you can hear. Is it loud? Quiet? Next focus on what you can smell. Is there no smell? Is it sweet? Lastly, focus on what you taste. You can take a sip of a drink, put a mint in your mouth. Really attend to the taste and flavors.

Take a minute on each of your senses. You can also choose to engage with one of your senses.

Stay engaged until the time selected ends. If using for anxiety stay grounded until anxiety images leave

3. Meditation

Mediation helps us engage in breathing to slow down our physical response to anxiety. It also helps us redirect our thoughts through imagery. Imagery is a powerful tool to help our brain rest in truth. This tool is best used when you have a moment to fully engage. When starting the meditation process, its best to start with guided meditations. A great place to start is Abide. This is a christian based meditation tool. It can be accessed online via youtube, the Bible app and their own app called Abide. I will list below some links to get you started

<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/47790.pdf>

<https://abide.co/>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/AbideChristianMeditation>

4. Journaling

Journaling is a helpful way to engage with both sides of your brain. Journaling allows the intellectual and the emotional side of your brain to communicate. It is a helpful way to process thoughts and feelings. This tool is helpful when you are deescalated from the physical symptoms of anxiety. It is best to do some breathing, grounding or breath prayers before engaging in journaling. When journaling you have options of how to engage.

When journaling you can free-write, use bullet points, doodle, write pros and cons, and respond to prompts. The prompts can be a question to yourself such as what is hurting? What am I feeling? How was today?. Another helpful journaling prompt is letter writing. This is a letter you are not going to send. It can be a letter to an individual that caused pain, yourself, and/ or God. Letter writing can help process thoughts and feelings. It is also a helpful way to organize thoughts if you need to have a conversation with a child, spouse, partner, friend, coworker, etc.

The main goal of journaling is to process after deescalation from physical symptoms of anxiety. Pick a strategy that works with your personality and needs.

5. Thought reframing

Thought reframing is another tool that is helpful after deescalation. It is a way to name the thoughts we are having and replace the thought with truth. There are several ways to engage in this tool. The one I will share is the rejection of a lie and acceptance of truth. This tool is most helpful when you are aware of the lie that anxiety is telling you. Before engaging in this practice take time to consider the lie, it can be helpful to write down the lie. Sometimes it is a long statement that's okay. Try to get to the essence of the lie. If there is more than one lie then name all the lies in the rejection statement. After you have named the lie, select a truth. If there's a verse that comes to mind then use that verse. If you need help finding the truth, reach out to a trusted friend or pastor. Once you have identified the lie and selected a truth, take time to begin the practice. If it is a common lie then commit to adding rejection and acceptance into your daily rhythm. It is okay if you do not end the practice believing the truth. The purpose to engage in building healthier thoughts rooted in truth.

Directions:

Ensure that you are physically deescalated

Name the lie (example for this sample I am unlovable)

Select a biblical truth (example I am a beloved son or daughter of God)

I reject the lie that my thoughts are telling me that I am unlovable

I accept and proclaim the truth that I am beloved by God

Engage in rejecting and accepting for a couple of minutes

BOOKS

You are free by Rebehak Lyons

Get out of your head by Jennie Allen

The anxious Christian: Can God use your anxiety for Good by Rhett Smith

Switch on your brain by Dr. Caroline Leaf

Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest by Edward T. Welch

Why Am I Feeling Like This?: A Teen's Guide to Freedom from Anxiety and Depression by David Murray

Elijah Teen Girls Bible Study by Priscilla Shirer

Hope Prevails: Insights from a Doctor's Personal Journey Through Depression by Dr. Michelle Bengtson

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do: Discouragement and Depression by Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend

No More Faking Fine: Ending the Pretending by Esther Fleece

Grace for the Children: Finding Hope in the Midst of Child and Adolescent Mental Illness by Matthew S. Stanford

PICTURE BOOKS FOR KIDS

It will be okay by Lysa TerKeurst

Quinn's Promise Rock by Christie Thomas

God's Protection Covers Me by Amy Houts

Little Mole Finds Hope by Glenys Nellis

Firebird by Brent McCorkle

FINAL THOUGHTS

Any journey to healing takes time. I encourage you to extend grace to yourself as you engage in any of the tools listed. God promises to walk with you. He promises to fully engage with you in this process. There is not a deadline or end to this process. Be patient. Be kind to yourself. Seek accountability. Seek counseling. This is a marathon not a sprint. There are blessings along the way.

With love,

Jovanna Jarvis and David Allgire