

WELLNESS & WHOLENESS

*Each person's spiritual journey is a highly individual journey.
When we begin an inward journey of self-discovery, we find that we are led back into
the community and to caring for others.*

I began to understand my bleakest times as times of fertile darkness.

*When a person begins to live into that darkness, embrace it and even befriend it, God's
presence is often revealed. And when persons with a mental illness are able to use their
faith and spirituality as a source of healing and support, they discover a renewed sense
of vision, hope, and possibilities for the future."*

—Susan Gregg-Schroeder¹

KEY POINT:

The mental health healing-recovery process requires a holistic approach, integrating physical, mental, spiritual, and relational aspects for renewed strength and hope (see Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20).

DEFINITIONS:

- **Holistic** health understands well-being to be the result of interconnected parts, focusing on the person as a whole rather than just individual components — summed up by, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”
 - Car Analogy
 - A car's value comes from integrating its separate components; only when assembled do the parts work together to form a functional vehicle.
- **Health** is the state of being free from disease.
- **Wellness** refers to the proactive and continual life-journey pursuit of equilibrium across physical, mental, spiritual, and relational dimensions of health. (“It is well with my soul.”)
- **Wholeness** refers to being in harmony with yourself, with others, with the world, and with God.
 - It does not mean being flawless; rather, it is a state of “shalom” (peace) that arises from God's love, acceptance, forgiveness, and grace.²
 - Wholeness involves ongoing spiritual development, which Christians believe is enabled by Christ and the Holy Spirit.
 - Through the Holy Spirit, God's wholeness is within us, and by this same Spirit, we are united with Christ and therefore with God (see 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:10).

OUTWARD WASTING VS. INNER DAILY RENEWAL

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

—2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV

REFLECTIVE PAUSE PROJECTS

FOR REFLECTION — FACT ONE FOR SURVIVING OVERCOMERS:

PHYSICAL – Caring for the physical needs associated with our mental health difficulties and disorders includes actions such as medication management, healthy sleep routines, a balanced diet, frequent exercise, and rest.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

Describe how you currently care for your physical well-being and what, if any, noticeable benefits have resulted.

FOR REFLECTION — FACT ONE FOR SUPPORT PARTNERS

COMPASSION FATIGUE – Supporting loved ones with mental health challenges can lead to stress and compassion fatigue. This is common and signals that we may be overextending ourselves. Taking care of our own well-being — physically, mentally, spiritually, and relationally — helps us better support others.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

Describe how you have experienced “compassion fatigue” while supporting your loved one.

REFLECTION NOTES:

FOR REFLECTION — FACT TWO FOR SURVIVING OVERCOMERS:

MENTAL – Mental health issues often involve persistent negative thoughts and emotions. Therapy and daily brain exercises like puzzles and games are important for healing-recovery. Upcoming chapter sessions will include more relevant coping strategies.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

What are the specific tools that you are using right now that help you manage negative thoughts and/or the tough times in your life?

FOR REFLECTION — FACT TWO FOR SUPPORT PARTNERS:

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH – Caring for loved ones can impact both physical and mental health, leading to lower energy, stress-related pain, and sleep issues. Mental fatigue may affect mood and increase irritability. Maintaining healthy routines and seeking support are important for resilience. More communication strategies and coping skills will be covered in future chapter sessions.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

How do you currently care for your physical and mental well-being, and how does it help you support your loved one?

REFLECTION NOTES:

FOR REFLECTION — FACT THREE FOR SURVIVING OVERCOMERS:

SPIRITUAL – God remains with us during hardships and does not abandon us. According to Isaiah 57:15 and Psalm 34:17-20, God supports those who are struggling or low in spirit. Mental health challenges do not deter God; even when we feel isolated, God is present and cares about us throughout our healing-recovery journey.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

If you are feeling alone or abandoned by God, what are different ways that you remind yourself that God is for you and with you?

FOR REFLECTION — FACT THREE FOR SUPPORT PARTNERS:

SPIRITUAL – God does not neglect us or abandon us because of our loved one's difficulties. While God dwells in glory, He also dwells with those who are lowly or crushed in spirit, "in order to revive them" (Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 34:17-20). The mental health difficulties and disorders that our loved one's face do not intimidate God. Even when we feel alone in supporting them, He is present and cares for us during every step of the mental health recovery process.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

If you are feeling alone or abandoned by God, what are different ways that you remind yourself that God is for you and with you?

REFLECTION NOTES:

FOR REFLECTION — FACT FOUR FOR SURVIVING OVERCOMERS:

RELATIONAL – Comfort, encouragement, and support from family, friends, and the individuals in our faith communities are vitally important for our health and well-being during the mental health healing-recovery process.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

Who are the key people who make a difference in your life, and how do they best support you?

FOR REFLECTION — FACT FOUR FOR SUPPORT PARTNERS:

RELATIONAL – Comfort, encouragement, and support from family, friends, and the individuals in our faith communities are vitally important for our health and well-being as we continue to support our loved ones through the ongoing mental health healing-recovery process.

TIMEOUT FOR REFLECTION:

Who are the key people who make a difference in your life, and how do they best support you?

REFLECTION NOTES:

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

(Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:31)

- **Self-pity** is a self-absorbed, passive state of feeling victimized by one's circumstances, often leading to isolation and helplessness.
- **Self-compassion** is an internal attitude that should guide self-care. It is a proactive response to our suffering that involves (1) treating ourselves with kindness, (2) recognizing shared human suffering, and (3) taking balanced action to improve the situation.
- **Self-care** involves responsibly and accountably engaging in activities that support one's physical and mental health, separate from how one responds to suffering.
 - Self-care is the "doing" extension of "being" compassionate with ourselves.

SUGGESTED SELF-CARE PROJECTS FOR SURVIVING OVERCOMERS:

- **SPIRITUAL**
 - Write out identity statements (3 examples below)
 - I am a son or daughter of a loving heavenly Father (Romans 8:15).
 - I am made completely new and am not defined by my old self (2 Corinthians 5:17).
 - I am not alone; Christ is always present with me (Colossians 1:27).
 - Spend time journaling.
 - Brainstorm creative ways to discover your purpose.
 - Read a devotional.
 - Attend a small group.
- **MENTAL**
 - Practice word/puzzle brain exercises.
 - Learn a new stress management activity/hobby.
 - Attend therapy.
 - Create a new structure/routine.
 - Download helpful apps.

- **PHYSICAL**
 - Create a healthy sleep schedule.
 - Try a new recipe.
 - Attend an exercise class.
 - Take medication & supplements that doctor approves.
 - Complete a relaxation exercise.
- **RELATIONAL**
 - Reconnect with an old friend.
 - Introduce yourself to a neighbor.
 - Invite a friend in your church to coffee (decaf).
 - Find a new way to serve.

SUGGESTED SELF-CARE PROJECTS FOR SUPPORT PARTNERS:

- **SPIRITUAL**
 - Spend time journaling.
 - Brainstorm creative ways to discover your purpose.
 - Read a devotional.
 - Attend a small group.
- **MENTAL**
 - Practice word/puzzle brain exercises.
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- **PHYSICAL**
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- RELATIONAL
 - Reconnect with an old friend.
 - Introduce yourself to a neighbor.
 - Invite a friend in your church to coffee.
 - Find a new way to serve.

ENDNOTES

1. *In the Shadow of God's Wings: Grace in the Midst of Depression* by Susan Gregg-Schroeder, Publisher: Upper Room, 1997 (Available on Amazon)

2. *Shalom* is a Hebrew word for “peace” that also means wholeness, completeness, and well-being. It describes overall wellness — physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and relational — reflecting a harmonious, healthy state in all aspects of life.

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information about Grace Alliance can be found by internet searching for “Mental Health Grace Alliance Resources.”