



## Self-Care

### *Keeping Up Your Strength*

You can't remember your last nutritious, home-cooked meal because cooking is too much effort. The chores are piling up, but you find yourself staring at the TV or pouring glass after glass of wine to distract yourself from the pain. Or maybe you're so busy taking care of others that you're not taking time for yourself.

This week you'll learn ways to take care of yourself while you're grieving and start to rebuild your energy and health. You'll discover:

- **Healthy lifestyle practices while grieving.**
- **Numbing with unhealthy behaviors hinders progress.**
- **How to build a relationship with the God of comfort & strength.**



# Video outline

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you may have while viewing the video.

## **Physical refreshment (the “DEER” rule)**

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D = drinking water

E = eating properly

E = exercising

R = resting/sleeping

## **Emotional refreshment**

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Proceeding wisely

Journaling

Taking occasional breaks

Accepting help from others

## **Spiritual refreshment**

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# Step by Step

Daily comfort & encouragement

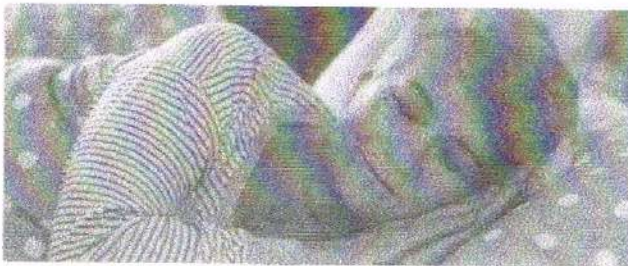


## Eric's story

"It was a year and a half after Sarah [my daughter] passed away, and I started to experience flu-like symptoms. I felt physically sick, and I went to see my doctor. He ran me through the typical tests. After that, he started asking me questions like, 'When did Sarah pass away?' That's when I realized that all of the [emotions] that I had stuffed down were coming out through the illness that I felt."

*Like Eric shares, grief emotions that have been ignored or unprocessed will eventually come out in emotional and physical ways. This week's exercises will show you how to take healthy physical and emotional steps, and why these are important for moving forward in your healing.*

## 1 10 tips for better rest



If you're struggling with grief and depression, restless nights and lack of sleep might be the norm for you. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get 7–9 hours of sleep per night. Try these suggestions to help you sleep better:\*

1. **Be consistent:** Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Get up at the same time every day, even on weekends or during vacations.
2. **Don't fight it:** If you don't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed.
3. **Develop a routine:** Establish a relaxing bedtime routine (e.g., play soothing or comforting music).
4. **Unplug:** Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
5. **Create a device-free zone:** Avoid using your phone, tablet, computer, or TV after lying down for the night.
6. **Set the stage:** Make your bedroom ideal for sleep. Keep it quiet and relaxing, and keep the room at a comfortable, cool temperature.

7. **Eat early:** Don't eat a large meal before bedtime. If you're hungry at night, eat a light, healthy snack.
8. **Stay fit:** Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet.
9. **Cut off caffeine:** Avoid consuming caffeine in the late afternoon or evening.
10. **Reduce restroom runs:** Drink fewer fluids before bedtime.

\* American Academy of Sleep Medicine, "Healthy Sleep Habits," February 9, 2017, <http://sleepeducation.org/essentials-in-sleep/healthy-sleep-habits>.

## 2 Feeling run-down? Try changing your menu



**G**rief takes a toll on your mind and body. And right now you might not be thinking about what your body needs in order to stay strong. But if you neglect these things, your body won't be able to overcome the stress it's under.

This chart shows the foods your body, especially your brain, needs to function well. Diets that promote good heart and digestive health also help you combat anxiety and depression over time. To maintain good health, try making these adjustments:

Eat MORE of this	Eat LESS of this
Colorful fruits and vegetables (dark green, red, orange, yellow), 2–3 cups a day	Refined sugar (as in ice cream, baked goods, candy)
Whole grains (including brown rice), 3 or more ounces a day	Refined flour (as in baked goods, pastas), white rice
Lean sources of protein: fish, seafood, yogurt, skinless chicken, 5–6 ounces a day	Beef, pork, processed meats
Canola, safflower, sunflower, or olive oil, up to 2 tablespoons a day	Highly saturated fats (animal fats, butter, coconut oil, palm kernel oil)
Seeds and nuts, about an ounce a day	Potatoes
Skim or low-fat (1%) dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese), about 3 cups a day	Whole-dairy products

# 3

## Being real with God

Sometimes the pain is so bad you're tempted to engage in unhealthy behaviors to avoid thinking about or dealing with it. Giving in to these temptations can create even more problems for you. As you seek to take care of yourself in your grief, consider this: God has given us a way to resist temptation and care for ourselves at the same time.

### God's message to you

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."' (Matthew 4:1-4)

1. **I have been tempted to: (Check all that apply.)**

- Stay in my bed and never get out
- Work too much
- Lose myself on the internet
- Take drugs or alcohol
- Engage in sex outside of marriage
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Rather than give in to temptation, Jesus responded by applying a relevant principle from God's Word (the Bible) to His situation. What changes would you need to make in your life to respond to temptation as Jesus did?**

### Remember

- ☛ Choosing unhealthy behaviors won't make things any better.
- ☛ Nourishing yourself with God's Word (reading the Bible regularly) prepares you to make good choices in the face of temptation.



## God will give you the strength

You may feel too weak or weary to make healthy efforts to care for yourself. But God is always right there, willing to help you.

### God's message to you

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"Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always." (1 Chronicles 16:11)

"Anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Hebrews 11:6b)

1. **Who or what are you turning to in your grief? How has this helped or hurt you?**
2. **Are you seeking God's help? What are some ways you could do this?**
3. **Charlotte watches TV or browses the internet to avoid her grief. What might happen if she doesn't reach out to God to help her break this cycle?**

### Remember

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- God offers comfort, strength, and hope—even in the toughest times—to those who seek Him.
- One way to turn to God is through prayer; He is available 24/7. If you're not sure how to pray, ask your GriefShare leader.

# 5

## Healing through *Writing*

### Taking care of yourself

Journaling is another way to care for yourself as you grieve. As you write, you'll begin to discover areas where you might need help—and new ways to cope. Here are prompts to guide you:

- Describe any temptations you've had this week to numb your pain. What types of things help you avoid those temptations?
- Plan a visit to a park, take a walk or hike, or just go outside and get some fresh air. Afterward, describe in your journal something you appreciated about the experience. Write a prayer of gratitude to God for this blessing.

**Dealing with emotions** is a sign of healing

*pp. ix & 19*





## Chart your progress

Place a check in the boxes to identify how you are feeling this week: emotionally, physically, etc.  
Or, even better, insert a word to describe how you are doing.

	BAD	OKAY	GOOD	GREAT
<b>Emotionally</b>				
<b>Physically</b>				
<b>Spiritually</b>				
<b>Relationally</b>				
<b>How your life is in general</b>				

## My Healing

### Eric's story

"I realize I should've done a better job of taking care of myself. I should have done some crying back when Sarah was sick and back when my dad was sick and when they passed away. I tried too hard to be too strong for everybody else and I didn't take care of myself, and I suffered for it. I cry very easily now. I'll cry over silly things or tender moments in a movie, and I'm okay with that."

#### Next session

Face the unknown without feeling overwhelmed.

## How to Ask For and Accept Help

You weren't wired to do this by yourself," says Dr. Paul David Tripp. God uses other people in our lives as His instruments. That's why Dr. Tripp says it's good to ask yourself, "Who are those good instruments God has put in my life?" So, if you want to avoid becoming overwhelmed and start having some relief, then you need the Lord and the people He's provided to help you. Consider these reminders:

**Most people don't know what you need:** Often people *want* to help and *are able* to help, if only they knew what you needed. They may bring food—when what you really need is a driver or babysitter. Or they may think you don't need help, when actually you do. Let your needs be known. And if people want to help, don't deny them the opportunity.

**Think ahead about what you need:** If people ask what they can do to help, you might not be able to think of anything on the spot. That's why thinking ahead is valuable. On a separate sheet of paper, create two lists: (1) Areas I need help; (2) People who might help. Then, share these lists with people who are willing to help. For example:

Areas I need help	People who might help
Household/yard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen next door – Mow lawn for a while</li> <li>• Church friend – Watch kids while I run errands</li> <li>• Neighbors – Recommend a good plumber</li> <li>• Sibling – Teach me a household repair or cooking skill</li> </ul>
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church – Meet a financial need</li> <li>• Cousin – Teach me budgeting</li> <li>• Church deacons or elders – Counsel on financial decisions</li> <li>• Son-in-law – Help with a job search</li> </ul>

Asking for and accepting help is an important part of living in a community and being in relationship with others. Ask God who to approach for help, then reach out and let someone help you. Or ask someone to reach out on your behalf. You'll be glad you did!