



# *Fearful* & **Overwhelmed**

## *Facing the Unknown*

Loss has taken your life down an unexpected path, and now it feels like you're lost in the wilderness without a map to get back. *How will I get through this day? What will my future look like? What if I never feel like myself again?* Fear, worry, and anxiety are natural responses in times of uncertainty, but those feelings can lessen in intensity and frequency.

By watching the video and completing the exercises, you'll find a road map out of worry. You'll discover:

- **Worry is a fear of what *might* happen, not what will happen.**
- **Having a plan can prevent "grief overload."**
- **Fear reminds you to depend on a trustworthy God.**



# Video outline

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

## The temptation to worry

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## Responding to fear & worry

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By understanding fear's role

By regular prayers

By changing your thoughts

By grateful reflection

By careful planning

By reflecting on God's promises

## Feeling overwhelmed

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## Seeing God at work

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Providing people

Providing opportunities

# Step by Step

Daily comfort & encouragement



## Nan's story

"I come from a family of worriers. [After Connor's death] the anxiety for me was, *How do I carry this? How am I going to handle this? How am I going to make it through? How are my other kids going to make it through? Why is this happening?* ... I was so bound up in the fear and anxiety that I hit rock bottom."

*Worries can feel like a swarm of bees constantly buzzing around your head, following you wherever you go. This can quickly become overwhelming and lead to grief overload. This week's exercises will help you put a plan in place to overcome worry, and you'll discover why trusting in God is the ultimate remedy to fear.*

## 1 Finding peace

The Bible says you can experience peace and security, even when your circumstances don't feel stable. Now, that doesn't mean your worry or fears will go away, but as you trust God more and more, your anxiety will become manageable.

Dave and Sue Branon, whose teenage daughter died, found this to be true over time. Dave shares, "We're not waiting for the other shoe to drop or [another tragedy] to happen. We feel our job now is to do the next step, and that is to cling to God—with a tragedy in our background, but confidence that God knows what He's doing."

### God's message to you

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6–7)

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

1. **When you feel anxious about something, how do you typically try to relieve your anxiety?**

2. Using Philippians 4:6–7 as a guide, what can you do now to alleviate your anxiety?

## Remember

- Every time worry arises, you can ask God to help you develop a practice of turning to Him first.
- Sometimes you need to deepen your understanding of who God is in order to trust Him more. "After Melissa died," shares Dave, "I dug deeper into Scripture [the Bible] to find out what God says, what He's like—and as a sovereign God, can I trust the kind of person He is?"

## 2 How to deal with grief overload

Listed below are practical things you can do to calm and quiet yourself when you're feeling overwhelmed. Mark one or two to try out this week. Underneath, write how you plan to implement those ideas.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Each day, make a to-do list with only three items, and concentrate on one at a time. | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with others about ways to alleviate your stress. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate on what God says in the Bible.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthy food.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pray.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't look too far into the future. Focus on today.                                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write in your journal.   |  |

Remember, God has already provided you with the resources you need to adjust to the changes you're facing.

**Plans I will put into action:**

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## What are you focusing on?

When you move your focus away from the negative refrain in your mind, and fix your focus on who God is, you'll begin to understand the peace that God supplies.

"We need to replace the negative thoughts, and the falsehoods we pronounce upon our life and future, with the truth of God's Word. That's one reason I suggest that people mobilize connections with healthy people who can empathize and accept that this is how you feel, but then lovingly challenge [potential untruths]," says Dr. Ramon Presson, family therapist.

### God's message to you

"You [God] will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (Isaiah 26:3 NLT)

1. **What negative thoughts and fears tend to keep spinning in your mind?**
2. **What are some ways to keep your thoughts fixed on God's promises and truths in the Bible (God's Word)?**
3. **What would you say to a friend who shares how she struggles with negative thoughts?**

### Remember

- 👁️ What you're focusing on is what will guide your thoughts, emotions, and experiences.
- 👁️ Reading God's Word and spending time with people who will pray with you and gently encourage you to turn to Him are pathways to peace.

**TIP!** Use the Care Cards in the back of this book to help you keep your mind fixed on who God is.

# 4

## Alleviating worry

When you face hard decisions and new responsibilities, it's easy to become weary with worry. *How am I going to function now? ... I've never had to do that before ... What if ... ?* You may wonder how you're going to handle it all. But there's another way to face each day.

### God's message to you

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. ... Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ... So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today." (Matthew 6:25a-26, 34 NLT)

1. **In the chart:\***

- List your top three or four worries.
- Is this concern your direct responsibility? Answer Y/N.
- How much control do you have over it? Rate 1-10 (1 = no control, 10 = full control).

Top worries this week	Responsible for this?	Level of control

2. **What resources do you have to address those concerns? Where could you get the resources you don't have yet?**

\* Download a free "Alleviating worry" chart at [griefshare.org/my](http://griefshare.org/my).

3. **What's the relationship between your level of worry and the level of control you have over a situation, or your responsibility for it?**
4. **According to today's verses, why does Jesus say you shouldn't worry about tomorrow?**

## Remember

- It's hard to deal with each day when you're anxious about what the next day will bring. So when worry hits, focus on how God is providing today.
- God values you. He is committed to providing everything you need to accomplish what He wants you to do.

## 5 Healing through Writing

### Releasing fear and anxiety

Fear and anxiety can build and take over your days. If you're burdened with these emotions, unload them into your journal. These questions will help you think through your concerns and lessen your anxiety.

- **Write down the "what if" questions (worries) you've had since your loved one's death. What makes each of these "what ifs" so haunting?**
- **If you were to build a habit of replacing negative thoughts with the truth of God's Word (as described in this session), how do you think that would change your mental state? Describe what it would look like for you to put this into practice.**
- **Have you felt overwhelmed by the changes you've had to face? Describe your thoughts and feelings. Who could you talk to about feeling overwhelmed?**



## 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

### Nan's story

"At first Scripture seemed to just bounce off me: 'Cast your cares on the Lord'—that's not working for me. I could hear it, but I wasn't taking it to heart. I wasn't using it as a tool. ... Now I see Scripture as the way to get to God. [He says], 'Here I am. Cast it to Me. I can carry this for you.' Now I know how to cry out to God and pray to Him. I know He is a God of all comfort. I know that if you give Him your fears and anxieties, you can trust Him with that."

#### Next session

Learn how to deal with anger.

## *Breathing Exercise to Manage Anxiety*

**D**id you know that there is a clear connection between your breathing and your ability to deal with the physical effects of anxiety?

### **Monitor your breathing**

Here's how it works. When you get excited, your breathing rate naturally increases. However, if your breathing gets too rapid or too shallow, your lungs aren't able to function effectively. As a result, you might experience shortness of breath, light-headedness, an increased heart rate, nausea, or even a full-blown panic attack. This makes monitoring your breathing (and sometimes adjusting it) a very important part of managing anxiety. You want to make sure you're breathing in a slow, deep manner so your lungs can do their job.

### **Try this breathing exercise**

This breathing exercise is called "diaphragmatic breathing," because it involves intentionally using the sheet of muscle under your lungs called the diaphragm. The more you use your diaphragm for breathing, the more effective your lungs can be.

Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lie down. Start by taking a normal breath. Then take a deep breath: Breathe in slowly through your nose, allowing your chest and lower belly to expand as you fill your lungs. Let your abdomen expand fully. Exhale slowly.

1. As you breathe in, silently count to 4.
2. Hold your breath, and silently count to 7.
3. Breathe out completely as you silently count to 8.
4. Repeat 3 to 7 times, or until you feel calm.

Or you could breathe in for a count of 4, hold for 4, and breathe out for 4. The exact timing matters less than the overall process of keeping your breathing slow and deep.

Some experts recommend setting aside 10 to 20 minutes a day to practice this. If that sounds daunting, think about how you could incorporate it into your existing schedule. Do this exercise at your desk during your lunch break or on the bus during a morning commute. It might not feel easy or natural at first, but with practice you can make it a habit. And it's worth it, since breathing well is fundamental to living well!