

# Healthy Rhythms Workbook

**A Tool to Help You  
During COVID-19  
and Beyond**

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*This workbook is uncopyrighted. Please feel free to share it with others.*

## Introduction

In this unprecedented period of global uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, we felt it was important to put together this workbook to provide Cornwall Church and our community some much needed support.

There are some universal experiences in the midst of any crises, including the one we find ourselves in now. Crises tends to affect some of the basic foundations of our human experience. Some of those areas that have been affected include:

- **Connection** - our normal ways we interact and connect with others
- **Structure** - routines, order, how we spend our time, for many where we work and go to school
- **Control** - we tend to like self control and making our own choices
- **Contribution** - ways we contribute to the lives of others has been affected

Yes, this virus has affected some of the important foundations of how we live. All of us have been affected by this: from inconvenience for some, to economic hardship, to suffering, loss and grief for others. There have also been some real heroes throughout, especially those on the front line of the medical field and first responders.

However, there is the most important foundation in life that has **not** been affected. In fact, nothing can affect this Foundation! Not only is God over this, He is victorious over this, working redemptively throughout this, is working to transform us with His love and presence in the midst of this, and inviting us to trust in Him like never before! And He makes all the difference as we walk through this together!

May you be blessed as you read and apply some of the resources in this booklet. There are ideas for people of all ages, for individuals and families. Our prayer is that this will help you in the journey, and that you would begin to incorporate some healthy rhythms and perspectives not only during this season, but beyond. We realize this is a bit lengthy, but we encourage you to go back to these practical skills as needed to develop new patterns and rhythms in many areas of your life.

**And don't miss the last page, which includes some resources that can encourage you in the journey.**

When asked: "When do we get back to normal?"

We love the response: "We think we can do better than that!"

How may God be transforming us in the midst of this season? As he walks with us, and we place our trust in Him, may He continue to reveal that to us a step at a time. And may this resource help us in that process of drawing closer to Him.

***Pastors Randy and Bill***

*We are indebted to Overlake Hospital in the Seattle area for some of this material.*

## A Pastoral Perspective

In a new, a forebodingly new normal, you may not know exactly what to do. Sometimes knowing what not to do is as important as knowing what to do.

In the Upper Room Jesus prepared his men for a new normal. He was leaving. They were stupefied. He promised to be with them through the change by sending them the Holy Spirit, whom he called the Comforter. (For the story of what to do and not to do in a new normal, read John 13-17.) There, Jesus tells us that-

Entering a new normal will feel like the ground under your feet is shaking. When you feel those quakes don't lose your poise. Keep your faith in the Father and Him as the Way Maker. You may not be able to see what's coming but the Great Shepherd of your life does. As a matter of fact it's never been your job to have your own life all figured out. That's the Shepherd's job. Your job when the familiar is crumbling, is to stay close, to abide with/in Christ. What's more...

Now is not the time to believe that because things are not what they used to be, you're forgotten, overlooked, or you've been lost in the shuffle. Jesus is your home. Live with Him. Keeping His commands especially the one to love others is the best way to stay healthy. The Holy Spirit knows where you live. He often will come with comfort and lift your spirits.

Now is not the time to get out of the fight. Paul tells the Ephesians there will be times like this. "Stand firm in the evil day". Put on divine armor. Pray like you've never prayed before. Pray for all the saints. Pray that sealed doors will open for sharing the good news: that people who have never had the chance to hear, will. Finally never take your eye off the proverbial ball. A new normal can bring greater opportunities for greater work. (See Ephesians 6, John 14:12.)

## What about all these emotions?

The reality is that for all of us it's completely normal to be experiencing a wide range of emotions, especially in a time of a crises. Accepting your feelings is an important first step to building resilience. The simple act of naming your emotions has been found to benefit wellbeing. So, take a moment now to tune into your body and notice how you're feeling. Circle the emotions that you identify with:

- Anxious
- Stressed
- Worried
- Fearful
- Low
- Lonely
- Overwhelmed
- Helpless
- Frustrated
- Guilty
- Angry

Remember: It's understandable and normal to feel these feelings. There are many places in scripture, especially in the Psalms, who cry out to God in their pain in the midst of troubles. The goal is to find healthy ways to process and express them,

## What is Stress and Anxiety?

The terms stress and anxiety are often used interchangeably. To develop a deeper understanding of mental wellbeing, it's helpful to understand how they differ.

### Stress

Many of us are now in positions where things that matter to us feel more uncertain, which understandably gives rise to our stress response.

Stress is best understood as manifesting in the body. It's the racing heart, sweaty palms and funny tummy we're all familiar with. Central to the experience of stress is the amygdala, the area of your brain responsible for generating your body's stress response.

Experts agree that a core component of stress is the perception of threat and danger. You've probably heard of the 'fight-or-flight' stress response as a reaction to perceived danger. In fact, we have various stress responses. For example, there is one response which encourages us to reach out for social support, named the 'tend and befriend' response.

Dr John Arden, author of several books integrating neuroscience and psychotherapy, recently put forward the term *autostress* for describing what happens when our body's stress response goes on for a long time. He explains:

*"Like autoimmune disorders that hijack the immune system, attacking the body instead of protecting it, autostress [transforms] the stress response system into something that attacks the self rather than protecting it."*

If your body is in autostress mode, you'll experience a wide range of physical stress symptoms on an ongoing basis, regardless of your situation. That's why people often reporting feeling anxious for no apparent reason.

Signs of autostress include:

- Chest tightness and feeling like you can't breathe
- Muscle tension, aches and pains
- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Restlessness and an inability to relax
- Heart palpitations
- Digestive issues

## Anxiety

Anxiety is commonly described as having both mental and physical symptoms. The distinction between mental and physical anxiety is important because different tools are required for addressing physical symptoms (what we label autostress) and mental symptoms (what we label anxiety).

Anxiety is best described as the unhelpful thinking patterns we experience when our mind fixates on threat, uncertainty and negativity.

Anxiety can occur on its own, as a response to stress, or it can trigger stress. When it occurs as a response to stress, it can intensify the stress, and, in worst cases, lead to panic attacks.

It's important to understand that you cannot control anxiety from occurring – this is your brain's automatic survival mechanism. What matters is learning how to respond to anxiety helpfully, so that you don't get carried away by it.

Here are five examples of what to look out for:

<b>Threat Scanning</b>	When your mind searches the environment for what you fear (consciously or subconsciously). Threat scanning is often associated with your mind assigning meaning to harmless events.  <b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Frequently checking your body for coronavirus symptoms.</i></li><li>• <i>Obsessively checking the news for coronavirus updates.</i></li></ul>
<b>Catastraphising</b>	When your mind jumps to worst case scenarios, i.e., 'making a mountain out of a molehill'.  <b>Examples</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>You feel chest tightness and your mind tells you that you have coronavirus and that your life is in danger.</i></li><li>• <i>Your mind gives you the mental image of losing all the people you love.</i></li></ul>

<p><b>Hypothetical Worry</b></p>	<p>It's important to note that worry is completely normal. It only becomes unhelpful when you focus excessively on <i>hypothetical worries</i> instead of <i>practical worries</i>.</p> <p>Hypothetical worries include 'what if' thoughts and are typically about things you don't have much control over.</p> <p>Practical worries concern things you do have control over, and they can help you be more proactive.</p> <p>If you're very uncomfortable with uncertainty, you're likely prone to hypothetical worry and spend a lot of time focused on the future instead of the present.</p> <p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I know I'm following all the guidelines, but what if I spread the virus?"</li> <li>• "What if someone gets too close to me at the supermarket and I catch it?"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional Reasoning</b></p>	<p>When your mind tells you that your emotions reflect reality. While emotions can act as helpful messengers, they often aren't reliable.</p> <p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I feel scared, so I must be in danger."</li> <li>• "I feel guilty, so I must've done something wrong."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fortune Telling</b></p>	<p>When your mind interprets predictions as facts.</p> <p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I'm going to be stuck inside for months on end."</li> <li>• "My mental health will keep deteriorating and I'll have to go back on meds."</li> </ul>

**My Unhelpful Thinking Patterns :**

*Learning how to recognize and reduce anxiety and autostress are extremely helpful life skills.*

# PART ONE

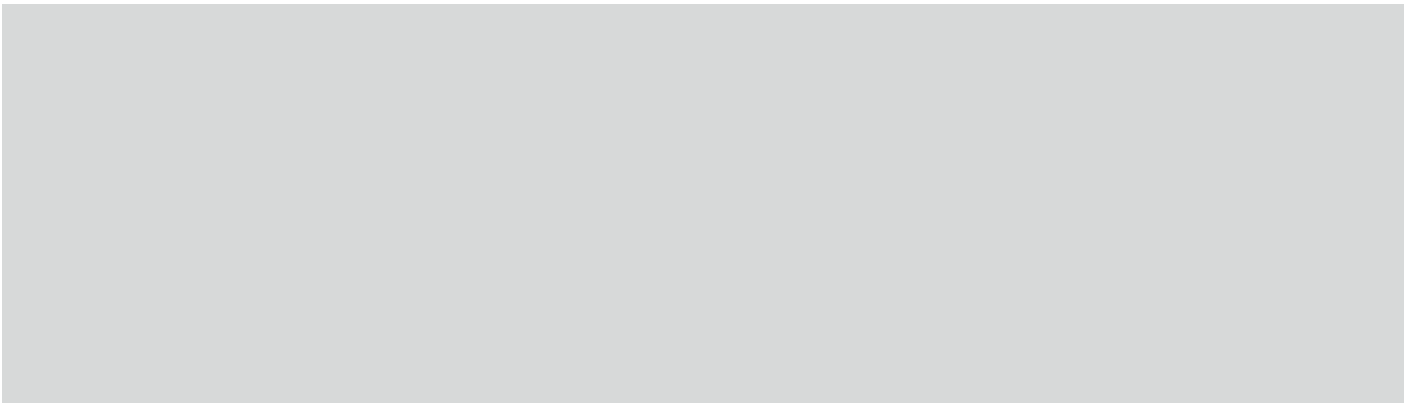
*Tools to Help You  
Manage Anxiety*

## Planning Your Information Diet

The media is fully aware that our brains are built to fixate on threat, uncertainty and negativity – and they capitalize on it. Anxiety is easily fueled by consuming this kind of information. To reduce anxiety, it's important to be aware of and take control over your information diet.

To reduce anxiety, we recommend checking your trusted news source once per day. We also recommend balancing our your information diet with uplifting new sources.

Which information sources are you feeding your mind and how often?



## What is in my control?

Research shows that when we shift our focus to what we can control, we see meaningful and lasting differences in our wellbeing, health, and performance. So, write down what you have control over inside the circle below. Then, note the things you cannot control outside of the circle, using the table below as inspiration.

Within My Control	Outside My Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building resilience</li><li>• Following the latest information and advice</li><li>• Focusing on what's important to me</li><li>• My information diet</li><li>• My routine</li><li>• Relaxation</li><li>• Cultivating connection</li><li>• Eating well</li><li>• Exercising</li><li>• Seeking and offering support</li><li>• Serving others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other people's decisions</li><li>• Other people's health</li><li>• The news</li><li>• The government's actions</li><li>• Schools opening or closing</li><li>• The state of the healthcare system</li><li>• Flights and holidays being cancelled</li><li>• Traffic</li><li>• Public transport</li><li>• Aging</li><li>• The weather</li></ul>

*\* Overall, remind yourself regularly Who is in control over all.*





## Reducing Anxiety With Thought Challenging

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2*

As mentioned, anxiety is best described as the unhelpful thinking patterns you experience when your mind fixates on threat, uncertainty and negativity. Thought challenging helps by broadening your focus to include the bigger picture.

Below is a thought challenging technique you can experiment with. Keep practicing and discover what works best for you.

### The ABCDE Technique

**Attention** – When you feel distressed, stop what you're doing and pay attention to your inner dialogue. What is your mind telling you?

**Believe** – Is there an opposing view to what you are believing right now?

**Challenge** – Defuse anxiety by broadening your focus. What's the bigger picture?

**Discount** – Acknowledge that anxiety has been feeding your thinking. Hand the anxiety over to God.

**Explore options** – What would be helpful to focus on right now?

## Thought Challenging Tips

- Writing or typing your thought challenging process is more powerful than trying to do it in your head.
- If you're not used to paying this much attention to your inner dialogue, thought challenging might feel unnatural at first. That's okay. Over time, it'll start to feel easier.
- This isn't the most appropriate tool if you're feeling very distressed, as it can be hard to think rationally when your emotional brain has taken over. Try defusing your emotions with a distraction activity and returning to thought challenging once you're feeling calmer.

## Reducing Anxiety Through Distraction Activities

Healthy activities are constructive ways of using energy, redirecting our thoughts, are energizing and are physiologically beneficial. They also can be new patterns not only during this time, but for the future.

Low activity and social disconnection are the two most fundamental factors of low mood, motivation, and energy.

To feel better move to increase your activity levels and your social connections. Here are some possible healthy activities.

Tick the ones you like the sound of:

- Begin Journaling
- Learn furniture building or upcycling
- Browse new healthy recipes
- Plan your meals
- Search Pinterest
- Search local groups with volunteering opportunities
- Arrange to catch up with someone
- Plan some thoughtful birthday or Christmas gifts
- Get active with a workout video
- Brainstorm ways to save more money
- Learn calligraphy or hand-lettering
- Learn how to play a musical instrument
- Start a side project to earn extra money
- Read a biography about someone who inspires you
- Listen to uplifting music
- Write a poem or short story
- Watch a live stream theatre show from The National Theatre
- Make a list of things you're looking forward to when the pandemic is over
- Take a relaxing bath
- Listen to an audio book
- Watch uplifting and educational TED Talks
- Join an online book club
- Start learning a new language

- Do a jigsaw puzzle
- Make a list of goals for the year
- Find a new Podcast to listen to
- Declutter
- Do a home improvement project
- Make a list of books you want to read this year
- Do some gardening
- Make a list of topics you're curious about and research them online
- Search Pinterest for family bonding ideas
- Search Pinterest for indoor kids activities
- Learn knitting, cross-stitch or embroidery
- Find a new board game to play
- Do YouTube exercise song videos with your kids
- Watch a live opera stream from The Metropolitan Opera
- Do some baking
- Feel more connected by finding a pen pal
- Journal on: "Now that I have more free time, I get to..."
- Explore ideas for camping in your backyard

**MOTIVATION  
FOLLOWS  
ACTION.**

# PART TWO

## *Developing Healthy Rhythms*

## Starting a Planning Practice

Maintaining structure can work wonders for your mental wellbeing. Routines help you increase your sense of control and defuse feelings of being overwhelmed.

### Planning Tips Essentials

- **Daily scripture reading.** Schedule time daily to read and reflect on scripture. Look especially for aspects of God's character (His faithfulness, His love) that you can be reminded of and carry with you throughout the day.
- **Prayer.** Take time to pray, focusing your attention on God, inviting Him to meet you where you are. And know that you can talk with him throughout the day.
- **Soul Care.** Create some extended times each week, or preferably a longer time each month, just to be with God.

### Practical Planning Tips

- **Schedule regular breaks.** Take time to reflect and pray. Also, to breathe in and out slowly.
- **Write a weekly goals list.** Identify what you need to do to achieve your weekly goals. Break tasks down into smaller steps and cross them off as you go to maintain a sense of progress throughout the day.
- **Identify 1-3 "Most Important Tasks".** Creating a daily MIT list helps you prioritize your most important and urgent tasks.
- **Review your crossed off items at the end of the day.** Taking stock of your achievements can help boost mental wellbeing.
- **Tidy your workspace at the end of the day.** Research finds that cluttered environments interfere with your ability to focus.
- **Allow yourself space.** Between your scheduled work day, plan breaks, lunch, and expect interruptions.
- **Create an end of work day ritual.** To enforce work-life boundaries, you might find it helpful to create an end of day ritual such as changing into comfier clothes, switching off work email notifications and putting on some music.
- **Decide on a regular sleep schedule.** When it comes to improving sleep, research suggests that maintaining a regular sleep schedule is of high importance.
- **Create weekly family traditions.** Strengthen family routines through traditions such as "Board Game Fridays" and "Movie Night Mondays".
- **Be kind to yourself.** You likely have a lot more on your plate. Don't expect efficiency. You won't be able to get as much accomplished as you are used to, especially if you have little ones in your house. Be mindful of your inner critic, and remind yourself that you can only do the best you can.

## Starting a Daily Gratitude Practice

Research shows that cultivating gratitude has a plethora of benefits, including:

- Reducing stress and anxiety
- Gaining perspective
- Boosting mood
- Strengthening your immune system
- Improving sleep

A simple way to cultivate gratitude is to keep a gratitude log. Each day at a set time in your daily routine, write down one thing you're grateful for.

The image shows a circular gratitude log template. At the top left, the words "GRATITUDE LOG" are written in a teal, sans-serif font, curving along the outer edge of the circle. In the center of the circle is a smaller, solid teal circle containing the text "I'm grateful for..." in white, sans-serif font. Radiating from the center are 24 thin teal lines that divide the outer circle into 24 equal, empty segments, providing space for writing down things one is grateful for.

## Starting a Daily Breathing Practice

Breathing difficulties are associated with autostress. When you have problems with your breathing, you lower the amount of carbon dioxide that's normally in your blood. This leads to a wide range of symptoms, including:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness
- Tingling or numbness in the arms, fingers, toes, or around the mouth
- Feeling dizzy and light-headed
- Weakness
- Heart pounding and racing
- Heart palpitations
- Sweating or hot flushes
- Headaches
- Feeling sick
- Fatigue

These symptoms can appear out of the blue and can also lead to panic attacks. Your breathing difficulties may be related to:

- *Shallow breathing* (breathing in too quickly)
- *Over-breathing* (breathing in more air as you feel like you're not getting enough, for example through yawning or sighing frequently)

Some people experience both. So, let's take a moment to test your breathing:

1. Put one hand on your chest, and one on your belly.
2. Breathe for a few seconds. Which hand rises?
3. If it's your chest, you might have developed a habit of shallow breathing.

Although the effects of shallow breathing can be very unpleasant, it won't harm you, and you can reverse the habit with a daily breathing practice. The next time you feel anxious, take a moment to notice your breathing. Focus on breathing through your stomach so that your belly rises when you inhale and drops when you exhale.

Here's a belly breathing exercise you can practice for 5-10 minutes a day:

- Inhale gently, lightly and slowly count to four, expanding your belly as you do so
- Hold that breath for a count of two
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of six
- Introduce "breath prayers" (i.e. Inhale Jesus, Exhale anxiety and stress)

This is referred to as 'belly breathing'. Research shows that practicing regular belly breathing can help people feel calmer within a matter of weeks.

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## Improving the Quality of Your Social Connections

How to cultivate connection in a period of isolation?

Here are some ideas. Tick the ones you're interested in adding to your *Healthy Rhythms Action Plan*:

- Connect with friends from church on a regular, weekly basis
- Keep your small group or quad meetings going online
- Find a small group by contacting Pastor Bill: [billg@cornwallchurch.com](mailto:billg@cornwallchurch.com)
- Reach out to a family member or friend
- Connect in healthy ways with your neighbors
- Ask your work associates how they are doing?
- Schedule video chat catch ups with friends you haven't spoken to in a while
- Organize a weekly lunch date with a friend or family member over video chat.
- Use the Netflix Party extension to watch Netflix with your friends online.

What else could you do? Reflect below.



## Developing a Regular Exercise Routine

*"Walking is man's best medicine." - Hippocrates*

Exercise reduces the overall activation of your amygdala and sympathetic nervous system – the parts of your brain and body that generate your stress response.

Research suggests that aerobic exercise (such as walking, cycling, and jogging) provides the same benefits as non-aerobic exercise (such as yoga and pilates).

Studies also suggest you need around **21 minutes three times a week** to experience the benefits. So, you don't have to spend hours doing it – it's something most of us can fit in to our lives when it becomes a priority.

It's important to find something that you enjoy when it comes to building an exercise habit. Now more people than ever are interested in fitness, you have endless options. These include 'bedroom fitness' resources and tools that make it easy to keep moving indoors.

Here are some ideas. Tick the ones you may be interested in adding to your *Healthy Rhythms Action Plan*:

- Schedule a daily walk.
- Find a local trail, not only for walking and running, but enjoying God's creation
- Look for YouTube video workouts
- Set yourself a challenge to run a 5k
- Invest in some indoor exercise equipment.
- Browse Pinterest for indoor workouts
- Do an affordable at home cardio workout with a jump rope.
- Invest in a FitBit to track your progress.

**Don't forget: Motivation follows action!**

## Creating Your Healthy Rhythms Action Plan

Review your workbook and make a note of the actions you've considered.

Then, select up to five actions that feel the most appealing to you to add to your *Healthy Rhythms Action Plan* on the following page.



## Helpful Resources

### Books

- Surrender to Love - David Benner
- Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation - Ruth Haley Barton
- You Are The Beloved - Henri J M Nouwen
- Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety - Henri J M Nouwen
- Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging - Brennan Manning
- A Small Book for the Anxious Heart - Meditations on Fear, Worry and Trust - Edward T. Welch

### Exposed

By: Sarah Bourne

*We've all been exposed.  
Not necessarily to the virus (maybe...who even knows).*

*We've all been exposed BY the virus.*

*Corona is exposing us.  
Exposing our weak sides.  
Exposing our dark sides.  
Exposing what normally lays far beneath the surface of our souls,  
hidden by the invisible masks we wear.*

*Now exposed by the paper masks we can't hide far enough behind.  
Corona is exposing our addiction to comfort.  
Our obsession with control.  
Our compulsion to hoard.  
Our protection of self.  
Corona is peeling back our layers. Tearing down our walls. Revealing our illusions.*

*Leveling our best-laid plans.  
Corona is exposing the gods we worship: Our health. Our hurry. Our sense of security. Our favorite lies.  
Our secret lusts. Our misplaced trust.*

*Corona is calling everything into question: What is the church without a building? What is my worth without an income? How do we plan without certainty? How do we love despite risk?*

*Corona is exposing me.  
My mindless numbing.  
My endless scrolling.  
My careless words.  
My fragile nerves.*

*We've all been exposed. Our junk laid bare. Our fears made known. The band-aid torn. The masquerade done. So what now? What's left?*

*Clean hands. Clear eyes. Tender hearts.*

*What Corona reveals, God can heal.*

*Come Lord Jesus. Have mercy on us.*