

## Newsletter article- Anxiety

Hi Grace Family! This month, the Mental Health Ministry has been focusing in on the topic of anxiety. I think if you are a living, breathing human, you have experienced anxiety in some form or fashion at some moment or season in your life. Many of us experience this alone and unequipped because we don't recognize what it is or are afraid to acknowledge what it is. My prayer for each of you is that if you are in a season of life where anxiety is overwhelming or impacting your quality of life, please reach out to one of us here at Grace and let us help support you and equip you. In the meantime, here are some practical steps that each of us can take when we come across any amount of anxiety in our lives.

### 1. Prayer and Meditation on Scripture

- **Prayer** is a powerful tool for addressing anxiety. Bringing your worries before God can provide comfort and peace (Philippians 4:6-7). Take time each day to pray about your concerns, asking God for peace and guidance.
- Meditate on **Scripture** that encourages peace and trust in God. Verses like **Matthew 6:25-34**, **Psalms 34:4**, and **Isaiah 41:10** are reminders of God's provision and faithfulness.

### 2. Practice Mindfulness and Breathing Techniques

- **Mindfulness** helps you stay present in the moment rather than being consumed by future worries. This can involve focusing on your breath, calming your thoughts, and not letting your anxiety spiral.
- **Breathing exercises**, such as deep breathing or the "Box Breathing" technique (inhale for 4-6 counts, hold for 4-6 counts, exhale 4-6 counts, hold 4-6 counts), can activate your parasympathetic nervous system and promote relaxation.

### 3. Engage in Physical Activity

- Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce anxiety by releasing endorphins, which are natural mood boosters. Activities like walking, jogging, or yoga can help improve your mood and overall well-being.
- Exercise is extra helpful if you can get outside in the sunshine (vitamin D) and provides an opportunity to focus on God's creation and appreciate the ability to move and care for your body.

### 4. Seeking Support from Others

- **Community support** is important. Being part of Grace on Sunday mornings or a small group at Grace can provide both spiritual and emotional support. Sharing your struggles with trusted friends or mentors can offer comfort and perspective.
- **Counseling** with a Christian therapist can also help. They can guide you in practical techniques for managing anxiety while integrating your faith.

### 5. Journaling and Reflection

- Writing down your thoughts can help you process and better understand your anxiety (this is scientifically proven!). Reflect on the things you are grateful for, as this can shift your focus from fear to thanksgiving.

- Keep a **gratitude journal**, noting at least three things you're thankful for each day. This practice encourages a mindset of gratitude rather than worry.

## 6. Set Boundaries and Limit Stressors

- **Limit exposure** to stressful situations when possible. Set boundaries on how much news or social media you consume. Constant exposure to distressing information can increase anxiety. Our brains are not wired to be able to know all the things about all things in this world and function in a streamline and healthy way.
- Create a daily routine to structure your day and give you a sense of control over your time.

## 7. Rest and Sabbath

- Taking time to rest is essential for managing anxiety. **God created rest** as a rhythm of life (Genesis 2:2-3). Consider taking a Sabbath or just setting aside regular time for rest and renewal.
- Ensure that you're getting enough **sleep** and allowing your mind and body to recharge. Aiming for 8 hours is a fabulous goal!

## 8. Focus on What You Can Control

- Anxiety often stems from fear of the unknown or things outside your control. Focus on what you **can** control: your thoughts, actions, and responses.
- **Trust in God's sovereignty** over what you cannot control. Acknowledge your limitations and surrender your anxieties to God, trusting that He is in control (Romans 8:28).

## 9. Practice Gratitude and Positivity

- Shift your mindset by focusing on positive aspects of your life, even when you're feeling anxious. This can be challenging, but it aligns with the biblical call to "**take every thought captive**" (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- Practice **thankfulness** as a form of spiritual warfare, reminding yourself that God's goodness prevails despite circumstances.

## 10. Trust in God's Promises

- Holding on to God's promises can bring comfort in anxious times. Remind yourself that God is with you (Psalm 23:4), that He hears your prayers (1 Peter 5:7), and that His peace surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:7).

I know we live in a world that is designed to make us fearful and anxious but we serve a God that desires far more for our lives than that. I have hope that if you practice even a few of these you will begin to feel relief in small ways. And of course, always remember you are not alone. You are seen. You are loved, and we at Grace want to walk alongside you during this journey called life!

In Him,

Kerry Underwood, MS, LPC, LMFT