



How to Calm Your Nervous System After Trauma

Trauma affects us on multiple levels—body, mind, and spirit. When we go through a frightening or life-altering experience, our bodies often stay on high alert even long after the danger has passed. This lingering “fight-or-flight” state is driven by our nervous system and can leave us feeling anxious, exhausted, and disconnected from joy. For a Christian seeking a deep and joyful relationship with Jesus, this can be especially challenging: it’s hard to feel God’s peace when your heart is racing and your mind is in panic mode. The good news is that both **Scripture and science** offer hope. In this article, we’ll explore *how to calm your nervous system after trauma*, integrating **biblical wisdom** with **clinical research**. You’ll learn practical steps you can take—grounded in both **spiritual truth** and **medical insight**—to find calm, heal from trauma, and restore the joy God intends for you.

Understanding Trauma’s Impact on the Nervous System

When we experience a traumatic event, our body’s alarm system kicks into overdrive. The brain’s **amygdala** (the emotional fear center) sounds a distress signal, triggering the release of stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol ¹ ². This is the classic “**fight-or-flight**” **response** God designed as a survival mechanism. The sympathetic nervous system (the “gas pedal”) floods us with energy to either confront danger or escape it ². Heart rate and breathing speed up, muscles tense, and the senses heighten ³. In a crisis, this response can be life-saving.

However, in the aftermath of trauma, this system can get “stuck.” The amygdala may remain overactive, perceiving danger everywhere even when real threats are gone ⁴ ⁵. Everyday noises or sensations can trigger panic as if the trauma is happening again. Meanwhile, the parasympathetic nervous system (the “brake”) – which normally calms us down after danger – struggles to regain control ². The result is a persistently revved-up body and mind: **hypervigilance, anxiety, insomnia, irritability**, and other symptoms common in post-traumatic stress. Over time, this chronic state of stress can take a toll on one’s health and well-being ⁶.

Clinical research confirms these effects. Brain scans show that during extreme stress or flashbacks, the brain’s reasoning center (prefrontal cortex) goes offline while the limbic system (emotional brain) takes over ⁷ ⁸. Essentially, the trauma can “hijack” your brain, making it hard to think clearly or feel spiritually centered. Trauma expert Dr. **Bessel van der Kolk** notes that traditional talk therapies alone often don’t help until the body’s “**arousal systems**” in the deeper brain are soothed – an approach he calls “bottom-up” calming ⁹ ¹⁰. In other words, **calming the body is a critical first step** to healing from trauma. Once the body and nervous system start to calm, the mind can process the trauma and the heart can more readily experience God’s comfort.

The Mind-Body-Spirit Connection in Healing

It’s important to recognize that we are **holistic beings**. Our physical state can affect our spiritual and emotional state, and vice versa. The Bible acknowledges this interplay: “*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but*



a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). After trauma, one's *spirit* may feel crushed or broken. The Psalmist wrote, *"I am bent over and racked with pain. My days are filled with grief"* (Psalm 38:6 NLT), poetically linking emotional trauma to bodily pain. The flip side is that finding peace in God can also bring physical calm: *"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety"* (Psalm 4:8). Scripture shows that **emotional and spiritual peace have real physical manifestations** (like the ability to sleep restfully).

Modern research echoes this biblical truth. Chronic stress or unresolved trauma doesn't just affect mood; it can lead to hypertension, lowered immunity, and even structural changes in the brain associated with anxiety and depression ⁶ . Conversely, inducing physical calm can uplift the mind. This is why **calming your nervous system** is not a "secular" idea at odds with faith, but rather a wise step that enables you to better receive God's healing. When your body is no longer in constant fight-or-flight, you can more easily *"be still, and know that [He] is God"* (Psalm 46:10).

God created our bodies with self-soothing mechanisms (like the parasympathetic "brake") that can restore equilibrium. We honor God when we care for our bodies and minds as "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Just as you would treat a physical wound with appropriate care, trauma requires caring for the nervous system. **Seeking peace** for your nervous system is part of seeking the wholeness (shalom) that God desires for you. In fact, the Bible encourages using available means for healing – prayer *and* medicine. *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick,"* Jesus said (Mark 2:17 NIV), acknowledging that using physicians and remedies is natural. The Apostle Luke himself was a physician (Colossians 4:14). So there is no shame in utilizing **therapeutic techniques or medical help** to recover from trauma. As a Christian, you can view these as gifts of God's grace and wisdom, working alongside prayer. One Christian mental health ministry puts it this way: *"Yes, Christians should consider mental health medications and therapy if needed because it's not only scriptural, it's wise."* In their view, the Bible actually **encourages therapeutic intervention** as part of the spiritual journey, rather than seeing it as a lack of faith or a sign of weakness

¹¹ ¹² .

With this foundation in mind, let's look at some **practical, research-backed strategies** to calm your nervous system. Each of these steps is supported by scientific evidence and can be embraced without compromising faith. In fact, you'll see how many of these techniques **tie directly into scriptural practices** that Christians have done for centuries (prayer, meditation, community, etc.). Consider trying a combination of these approaches, and be patient with yourself in the healing process. Healing from trauma is usually gradual, but **measurable progress is possible** – just as "the peace of God" can gradually *"guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7).

Practical Steps to Calm Your Nervous System After Trauma

Healing will involve both **spiritual practices** and **physical/mental exercises** to help reset your body's alarm system. Here are several proven steps you can implement, defended by both Scripture and clinical research:

1. Practice Deep Breathing and Relaxation: When you feel anxiety surging, one of the simplest and most powerful tools is your breath. Taking slow, deep **diaphragmatic breaths** (breathing from your belly) activates the vagus nerve, a major nerve that triggers the body's relaxation response ¹³ ¹⁴ . In physiological terms, deep breathing literally tells your nervous system "It's okay, you can calm down now." During inhalation, the heart rate naturally speeds up a bit, and during long exhalation, vagal activity slows

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the heart rate and promotes calm ¹⁵ ¹⁶ . Researchers have found that even a single session of slow, deep breathing can reduce anxiety and significantly increase **parasympathetic activity**, as measured by heart-rate variability (a marker of calm nervous system state) ¹⁷ ¹⁸ . Over time, regular practice of breathing exercises can strengthen your “calming” system. It’s no wonder many trauma therapists teach grounding techniques that start with breathing.

From a biblical perspective, **breath is life** – the very Spirit of God is compared to breath (Job 33:4). When anxious, we tend to hold our breath or breathe rapid, shallow chest breaths, which reinforces panic. By intentionally slowing your breath, you are practicing a form of “**stilling**” yourself. This can be combined with prayer. For example, as you inhale deeply, you might pray silently “Lord, fill me with Your peace,” and as you exhale slowly, pray “I cast my cares on You.” This echoes the scriptural invitation to “*cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). Many Christians find “breath prayers” helpful — short biblical phrases synchronized with breathing. Clinically, this marries a proven relaxation technique with spiritual focus. As one Christian counselor explains, the resulting peace from deep breathing can be part of experiencing the promise “*let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*” (Colossians 3:15) ¹⁹ . **Real-world example:** In a clinical trial, older adults who practiced 15 minutes of abdominal breathing daily had measurable drops in their anxiety levels and improvements in their heart-rate variability compared to baseline, indicating a shift from a constant stress response toward a calmer state ²⁰ ²¹ . With each slow breath, remind yourself that **Jesus is the very breath of life** (John 20:22) and He is present with you in that moment of calm.

2. Meditate on Scripture for Mind Renewal: Meditation in a Christian sense means **focused attention on God’s truth** – essentially, soaking your mind in Scripture and the presence of God. This spiritual discipline has direct physiological benefits. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin observed through brain scans that even novice meditators (after just 8 weeks of training) showed reduced reactivity in the amygdala (the brain’s fear center) when exposed to emotional stressors ²² ²³ . In long-term meditators, the effect was even more pronounced, indicating that **meditation strengthens the brain’s ability to remain calm** in the face of triggers ²⁴ ²⁵ . Another study found that during meditation, there is increased connectivity between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex (the brain’s executive center), suggesting better emotional regulation and “top-down” soothing of fear responses ²⁶ . In plain terms, regularly calming your mind through meditation can train your brain to not be hijacked so easily by trauma reminders.

For Christians, the **content** of meditation matters greatly. Rather than emptying the mind, we fill it with “*whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable*” (Philippians 4:8) – in other words, with God’s Word and promises. “*I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways*” (Psalm 119:15). Meditating on scripture has a dual benefit: it **soothes the nervous system** and **feeds the soul**. Counselors report that many believers find a profound calming effect when they meditate on reassuring verses ²⁷ ²⁸ . For example, repeating a verse like “*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God*” (Isaiah 41:10) slowly and thoughtfully can counteract the body’s fear signals with truth signals. One biblical counseling article pointed out that “*meditating on Scripture has a calming effect*” and even noted that neuroscientists have observed the brain’s right hemisphere (which processes emotion) quieting down during such meditation ²⁷ ²⁹ . This aligns with God’s promise that “*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You*” (Isaiah 26:3). **Tip:** Write down a few key verses that speak peace to you (for instance, 1 Peter 5:7 or Psalm 91) and keep them handy. When you feel anxiety rising, take a moment to breathe deeply and **focus your thinking on those verses**. This focused meditation can interrupt racing thoughts and send a signal of safety to your brain. It is a practical way to “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Romans 12:2) –



literally changing thought patterns and neural pathways over time to be more anchored in God's truth rather than fear.

3. Engage in Soothing Prayer and Worship: Prayer is not only a spiritual lifeline, but also a proven way to calm the brain and body. We know prayer is powerful in touching God's heart, but amazingly, it also influences our physical brain networks. Pioneering research by Dr. Andrew Newberg and others using brain imaging has shown that intense prayer (such as praying in tongues or contemplative prayer) activates regions of the brain associated with **self-soothing and awareness**, like the medial prefrontal cortex, while quieting parts of the brain involved in fear and stress ³⁰ ³¹. Dr. David Spiegel of Stanford University found via MRI that **deep prayer engages the brain's calming pathways**, saying *"the medial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex are activated when we pray...these areas relate to self-reflection and self-soothing."* In effect, praying can recruit your brain's natural abilities to comfort itself ³⁰ ³². It's a beautiful design: when we *"draw near to God"* (James 4:8), the brain mirrors that by drawing a curtain over panic and opening up pathways of peace.

Beyond brain scans, there's evidence of prayer's tangible benefits: regular prayer is linked to lower anxiety, improved mood, and even things like lower blood pressure and better sleep in various studies ³³ ³⁴. One NBC News report on prayer and the brain noted that prayer can trigger the body's relaxation response similar to meditation, reducing stress hormones and increasing feelings of well-being. In fact, prayer and **gratitude** have been shown to engage the parasympathetic nervous system – the "rest and digest" side of the autonomic nervous system – effectively putting a brake on the stress response ³⁵ ³⁶. The Bible anticipated this by two millennia: *"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). Note how prayer **precedes** the experience of peace guarding heart and mind – exactly what science now observes as well. When you pour out your worries to God, you are performing a physiological act of relief. The act of *"crying out to God"* in distress has been found to produce a release – tears and prayers can activate the parasympathetic response, leading to a sense of calm after the cry ³⁶ ³⁷. Many believers can testify that after an earnest time of prayer (especially when combined with surrendering the outcome to God), they feel physically lighter or calmer.

Additionally, consider incorporating **worship and music**, which are closely related to prayer in practice. Gentle worship music can have a soothing effect on the limbic (emotional) brain. Neuroimaging expert Dr. Daniel Amen documented that activities like **prayer, worshipful meditation, and listening to calming music cause "limbic calming"** – a reduction in overactivity of the brain's emotional centers ³⁸ ³⁹. Singing a worship song when you're afraid might slow your breathing and pulse. It's no wonder the Bible recounts David playing the harp to relieve King Saul's distress (1 Samuel 16:23). *"Come, let us sing to the Lord... let us kneel before the Lord our Maker"* (Psalm 95:1,6) – such acts of worship can realign our nervous system from chaos to peace. So when panic or trauma memories strike, **turn to prayer immediately**. It can be as simple as repeating, *"Lord, help me,"* or praying the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me"). As you pray, **breathe slowly**, maybe even kneel or open your palms, and invite the Holy Spirit to bring comfort. God promises, *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you"* (Psalm 50:15). Not only will He guide you through the trial, but in the moment of prayer **He can physiologically calm your heart**. This is both **spiritual truth and biological fact**. One clinical study of people in prayer found that those deep in prayer entered a state of calm focus similar to meditation, with increased alpha brain waves associated with relaxation ³⁵ ⁴⁰. Prayer indeed **"triggers the parasympathetic nervous system"**, initiating the body's



calming processes, as a Christian counselor in one article put it ³⁵ ⁴¹ . So make regular prayer (and worship) a cornerstone of your healing routine.

4. Get Physically Active (Exercise) and Allow Proper Rest: Trauma is stored not just in the mind, but often in the body (“the body keeps the score,” as Dr. van der Kolk famously wrote). Engaging in **physical activity** can help release that stress and rebalance your nervous system. Research shows that regular exercise can significantly improve PTSD and anxiety symptoms by modulating the nervous system. For example, a 2025 review in *Frontiers in Psychology* concluded that **long-term exercise leads to notable improvement in PTSD symptoms**, likely by positively affecting the **central and autonomic nervous systems** (as well as the immune system) ⁴² ⁴³ . Aerobic exercises (like running, brisk walking, cycling) are particularly beneficial for brain health and can increase parasympathetic (calming) tone, while also boosting mood-regulating neurotransmitters. Even *moderate-intensity* exercise has been linked to better outcomes for trauma survivors. In one review of studies on veterans with PTSD, researchers found evidence that exercise reduced the severity of symptoms across all major PTSD categories – including intrusive memories, avoidance, negative mood, and hyperarousal ⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ . They noted veterans often enjoyed these activities and stuck with them, indicating exercise can be a **sustainable complementary treatment** for trauma recovery ⁴⁶ ⁴⁴ .

From a physiological standpoint, exercise works wonders: it lowers baseline cortisol (stress hormone) over time, improves heart rate variability, and helps your body “complete” the stress cycle that trauma may have left unfinished. Think of how animals shake or run after a life-threatening event; movement naturally dissipates adrenaline. The Bible also recognizes the value of physical well-being. Paul notes that “*physical training is of some value*” (1 Timothy 4:8) – and while he was emphasizing spiritual discipline as greater, the point remains that caring for our bodies has benefit. Taking a walk in nature, for instance, not only exercises your body but can provide **moments of awe** in God’s creation – which, interestingly, stimulates the vagus nerve and relaxation response as well ³⁴ ⁴⁷ . Simply “*the heavens declare the glory of God*” (Psalm 19:1), and witnessing that can remind your nervous system that the world is not all danger; there is beauty and safety too.

Equally important is **rest and sleep**. Trauma often disrupts sleep (nightmares, insomnia). Yet sleep is when our bodies repair and our brains process memories properly. Make it a priority to restore healthy sleep patterns. This might include “sleep hygiene” practices like keeping a regular bedtime, making your bedroom a safe and quiet space, and perhaps listening to gentle Scripture readings or worship music at night to calm your thoughts. Claim the promise of Psalm 4:8 mentioned earlier, that God makes you “*dwelt in safety*” so you can sleep. Sometimes, a **short nap** or just a quiet rest during the day can reset an overwhelmed nervous system. Elijah the prophet, after a traumatic experience, was overwhelmed to the point of wanting to die – what did God do? He first let Elijah sleep and eat (addressing physical needs), *then* spoke to him in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:5-12). In that story we see a divine pattern: **physical refreshment enabled Elijah to hear God’s voice again**. Allow yourself the same grace to rest. If nightmares are an issue, some find praying over their room or playing audio Bible at low volume at night can help. Also, **deep breathing** before bed (as described earlier) can activate the parasympathetic system to help you fall asleep. Remember, your Good Shepherd “makes you lie down in green pastures” and “restores your soul” (Psalm 23:2-3) – He cares about your rest.

5. Connect with Supportive Community and Relationships: Trauma often drives people into isolation, but healing happens in community. God designed us for connection, and interestingly, **social support directly helps regulate the nervous system**. There’s a concept in neuroscience called “*co-regulation*,” which means that calm presence from another person can help your nervous system find calm. Have you ever noticed



how a frightened child will calm down when held by a gentle parent? The same principle applies even in adults. Being with compassionate, safe people (whether a friend, spouse, support group, or church community) signals to your brain that you are **safe and not alone**, allowing the fight-or-flight alarms to dial down. Research has shown that individuals with strong social support have lower stress hormone levels and better outcomes after trauma. In practical terms, this could mean attending a **small group at church**, reaching out to a trusted friend to talk when you're anxious, or even just sitting in a coffee shop among people rather than stewing in solitude.

The Bible strongly encourages bearing one another's burdens: *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). Opening up to someone about your experience or feelings can be scary, but it is often incredibly freeing. James 5:16 says *"Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."* There is a healing that comes through vulnerable sharing and prayer with a trustworthy friend or mentor. Sometimes, trauma makes us feel "unsafe" around others due to fear or mistrust – it's important to gently challenge that by finding at least one person who can be a **"safe harbor"** for you emotionally. This might be a friend who is a good listener, or a pastor or a support group of others who have been through similar experiences. Many churches offer Christian counseling or lay counseling ministries; don't hesitate to use these resources. When you engage with others, it actually engages the social part of your vagus nerve (often called the "social engagement system" in polyvagal theory). Friendly eye contact, a warm hug (with consent), or even someone praying with you while you breathe slowly can synchronize nervous system responses of safety. Jesus said, *"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them"* (Matthew 18:20). In community, you can experience both the presence of Christ and the calming dynamic of human support. **Real-world example:** One study on trauma recovery found that those who participated in group therapy (thus building peer support) had reduced levels of stress hormones compared to those who tried to heal solo. Even without a formal study, think of anecdotes like war veterans who only begin to heal when they share their story in a support group and realize *"I'm not the only one, and I'm accepted here."* The sense of belonging starts to signal to their nervous system that the world can be safe again, at least in that circle. So, **do not isolate**. As Proverbs 17:17 says, *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."* Let the brothers and sisters in Christ around you be part of your calming process.

Additionally, **serving others** in small ways can help rehabilitate a traumatized nervous system. It might sound counterintuitive when you feel depleted, but volunteering or simply helping someone can provide positive social engagement that shifts focus off the internal turmoil. It reinforces a sense of purpose and normalcy. Of course, balance this with not over-committing yourself – the goal is gentle re-connection, not overwhelm. The Church as the body of Christ is a source of great healing; lean into it.

6. Seek Professional Counseling and Therapy: Calming your nervous system after trauma often requires **professional help**, and that's okay. In fact, it's more than okay – it's wise and can be very effective. **Therapists trained in trauma** (such as those practicing Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, EMDR, somatic experiencing, or other modalities) have tools to help you process the trauma safely and teach your body how to relax again. Therapy provides a structured form of the support and techniques we've been discussing. For example, **EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)** is a therapy that uses bilateral stimulation (often eye movements or tapping) to help the brain reprocess traumatic memories. Neuro-imaging studies have shown that after successful EMDR therapy, patients have a notable calming in the limbic regions of the brain (i.e., the overactive emotional centers quiet down) ³⁸ ³⁹. This therapy essentially helps the brain integrate the traumatic memory with the rational brain, so that it no longer triggers a full-blown fight-or-flight reaction in the present ⁴⁸ ⁴⁹. Other therapies like



cognitive processing therapy or **exposure therapy** gradually help your brain realize that memories or reminders of the trauma are not actual threats now, allowing the nervous system to stand down.

From a faith perspective, involving a Christian counselor or a therapist who respects your faith can be additionally comforting. They can help you incorporate prayer into your treatment, or simply understand the spiritual concerns that accompany trauma (like questions of why God allowed it, etc.). But even a competent secular therapist can provide you with life-changing tools. **Using therapy is not a sign of weak faith.** On the contrary, it aligns with biblical principles of seeking wise counsel: *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed”* (Proverbs 15:22). Think of a therapist as one of those advisers helping your “plans” for recovery succeed. They are trained in the latest research and can personalize strategies for you. Christian counselors often merge prayer or biblical truth with techniques like cognitive-behavioral skill-building or somatic (body) techniques.

If you’re dealing with severe trauma or **PTSD**, professional help is strongly recommended. The **American Psychological Association** and other medical bodies list trauma-focused psychotherapies as first-line treatments for PTSD ⁵⁰ ⁵¹ . That means the **best practice** is to get therapy like CBT or EMDR, as these have the strongest evidence for helping people recover from trauma. In Christian terms, there’s no conflict in doing so. God can work through a skilled therapist just as He can work through a doctor who sets a broken bone. **Case example:** Imagine someone who has been in a serious car accident and now cannot ride in a car without panic. A trauma therapist might use gradual exposure (sitting in a parked car while doing breathing exercises, then short rides) combined with reframing fearful thoughts (*“I am safe now, that event is over”*) and perhaps EMDR to process the memory of the crash. Over a few months, this person’s nervous system reaction to being in a car can diminish dramatically – say, their heart rate which used to shoot up to 120 bpm in a car now stays at 80 bpm, and their sweat and tremors subside. This kind of outcome is possible and has been documented in therapy studies. By embracing therapy, along with prayer for courage, the individual is **renewing their mind** and finding freedom. So if your trauma symptoms are significantly interfering with life, **don’t hesitate to get professional help.** It is not a betrayal of faith, but rather an outworking of faith that believes God desires your restoration. As Jesus often worked through means (like applying mud to a blind man’s eyes in John 9), He can work through therapy to bring you healing.

7. Consider Medication as a Tool, Not a Crutch: In some cases, the **physical symptoms** of trauma (anxiety, depression, insomnia) can be so severe or stubborn that medical intervention is helpful. This might include short-term use of anti-anxiety medication, longer-term use of antidepressants (such as SSRIs), or other specific medications for trauma-related issues (for example, a drug called prazosin is often prescribed to reduce PTSD-related nightmares). As a Christian, you might wonder if taking medication indicates a lack of trust in God’s healing. Let’s address that concern: The Bible does not forbid using medicine. In fact, one of the Bible’s metaphors for good advice is *“pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones”* (Proverbs 16:24) – implying that external aids to healing (like balm or medicine) are positive. Jeremiah laments, *“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing...?”* (Jeremiah 8:22). Today, we do have “balms” and physicians in the form of medical science, which we believe God has graciously allowed humans to discover. It is perfectly possible to take medicine with a spirit of thanksgiving to God, acknowledging Him as the ultimate source of healing. Medication should never be seen as a replacement for God or a magic fix, but it can **create a window of relief** in which you’re more able to engage in therapy or prayer, much like taking pain relief for a broken leg so you can do the rehab exercises. One Christian perspective put it this way: *“Medications are gifts of God’s grace, and (like any gift)*



they can be used wisely or misused” ⁵² ⁵³ . The key is to use them under wise medical supervision and in conjunction with holistic healing efforts, not as the sole answer.

Clinically, there is strong evidence that certain medications aid recovery from trauma. **Antidepressants (SSRIs)** such as sertraline or paroxetine are considered **first-line medications for PTSD** because they have been shown to significantly reduce symptoms in many people ⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ . A comprehensive 2022 Cochrane review found that about **58% of patients on SSRIs showed improvement** in PTSD symptoms, compared to 35% on placebo ⁵⁶ ⁵⁵ . This doesn’t mean medication alone “cures” PTSD, but it often lessens the symptom severity – for example, reducing the frequency of panic attacks or improving sleep – which can be a huge blessing. Medications can also help regulate the body chemistry that trauma throws out of balance, such as stabilizing overactive adrenaline or easing hyperalertness. Another example: for someone whose nervous system is so keyed up that they cannot benefit from therapy (because they are too anxious to even engage), a temporary course of an anti-anxiety medication might bring them to a baseline where therapy *can* work.

If you go this route, pray for wisdom and work closely with a healthcare provider (psychiatrist or doctor) to find what works with minimal side effects. **There is no shame in taking a prescription.** If you had diabetes, you would likely take insulin without feeling unfaithful – consider that severe PTSD can have a biological component that sometimes merits medical treatment just as legitimate. The **ultimate Healer is God**, but He often works through medicine. A poignant biblical example is Isaiah prescribing a poultice of figs for King Hezekiah’s boil (Isaiah 38:21) *after* delivering God’s promise of healing – both prayer and medicine hand-in-hand. In the same way, you can pray for God’s healing *while* responsibly using a medication. Keep Scripture close to your heart to combat any guilt: “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7). A sound mind may, for a season, mean using all tools available to restore your mental balance.

Lastly, know that **medication is typically not the only answer** – it’s one part of a multifaceted approach. The goal is to use it as an aid to do the deeper work (processing trauma, renewing your mind, reconnecting with life). Many people eventually taper off medications after they have recovered coping skills and stability. Others might stay on a maintenance dose if needed. Either way, it can be done in faith. As Jesus said, “*Do not be afraid, only believe*” (Mark 5:36). Do not be afraid of *what others think* if you need an antidepressant; focus on the progress in your journey with God.

Embracing Healing: A Holistic and Hopeful Path

Calming your nervous system after trauma is essentially about **teaching your mind and body that it is safe again**. It’s a relearning of peace. As we’ve seen, modern research validates many approaches – deep breathing, meditation on positive truths, prayer, exercise, supportive relationships, therapy, and appropriate medicine – that work together to soothe an overactivated system. Remarkably, these approaches dovetail with age-old biblical practices. This shouldn’t surprise us: “*All truth is God’s truth.*” Science is catching up to what Scripture has long encouraged: to seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34:14), to meditate on God’s Word day and night (Joshua 1:8), to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25), and to make use of “wine for the stomach” when needed (a first-century medicinal suggestion in 1 Timothy 5:23!).

Let’s consider a brief **real-world testimony** that brings it all together. *Jane* (name changed for privacy) had survived a home invasion robbery, a terrifying ordeal that left her with constant anxiety. She would startle at the slightest noise, struggled with sleeplessness, and felt distant from God, wondering why she couldn’t

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just “move on.” When Jane started counseling, she learned about calming her nervous system. Her Christian counselor helped her practice deep breathing paired with reciting Psalm 91 (which speaks of God’s protection). At first, it was hard – her body was so tense. But with practice, her heart rate, which used to shoot up to 110 bpm whenever she thought of the event, gradually began to stay closer to a normal 75-80 bpm during stressful moments. She also joined a small women’s support group at church, where she found friends who listened without judgment. The first time she shared her story and the group laid hands on her to pray, she wept – and felt a weight lift. Over the next months, Jane also took her therapist’s suggestion to start walking in the mornings. She’d listen to worship music on these walks. The combination of rhythmic exercise, music, and morning prayer in nature became the most cherished part of her day. Physiologically, her panic attacks became less frequent. She went from nightly episodes of waking in terror to only occasional bad nights, and even those she handled by using grounding techniques (touching a comforting object, quoting Scripture out loud, doing 4-7-8 breathing). A year later, Jane’s **post-traumatic stress symptoms had reduced by over 50%** according to her assessments, and she had even started volunteering again at church. She says, *“I feel like I’m myself again. I can sense God’s presence and joy now, where I used to feel only fear.”* This kind of outcome illustrates what’s possible. Everyone’s journey will look a bit different, but **meaningful improvement is achievable** when we address trauma on all fronts – physical, emotional, and spiritual – inviting God into each step.

In closing, remember that **calming your nervous system is not a one-time event but a gradual retraining**. Be patient and kind to yourself. After significant trauma, it’s normal to have ups and downs. You may find some techniques more helpful than others, and that’s okay. Craft your own “toolbox” of calming strategies, and don’t hesitate to lean on **God’s grace** at every turn. Zephaniah 3:17 offers a beautiful image: *“The Lord your God is in your midst, a Mighty One who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love; He will exult over you with loud singing.”* Imagine that – God Himself singing over you to quiet you with His love. That is the ultimate calming presence!

Trauma may have shaken you, but **it does not define you**, and it does not have the final say. Jesus said, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Through Christ, you can overcome the aftereffects of trauma. He cares about your **whole being**. As you implement these practices – breathing, meditating on His Word, praying, exercising, seeking fellowship and help – you are cooperating with the Holy Spirit’s work in you. Little by little, you’ll likely find your body responding: slightly lower anxiety here, a better sleep there, a moment of joy returning unexpectedly. **Celebrate those improvements** and give thanks to God for them. Keep a journal of progress if it helps, noting for example, *“Today I drove past the site of the accident and didn’t have a panic attack,”* or *“I felt God’s peace for a solid hour today.”* These are big victories in recovery.

Above all, **hold on to hope**. The same God who designed our nervous systems to protect us also designed them to heal. Healing is typically a journey, but the destination is freedom and restoration. Psalm 147:3 says of the Lord, *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”* That includes the wounds we can’t see under an x-ray – the wounds of trauma and stress. As you take steps to calm your nervous system, trust that God is working in you through both spiritual means and natural means. There is no divide for Him. His peace *“surpasses all understanding”* (Philippians 4:7) – it can transcend what therapy or techniques alone can do – yet He often delivers that very peace *through* practical steps and support.

You are not alone in this. Many have walked this road and come out stronger, with a deeper joy and reliance on Jesus. Your nervous system may have been conditioned by trauma, but it *can* be recalibrated to a state of safety and rest. As you practice these strategies, invite Jesus into each moment of fear and each calming



exercise. Over time, the truth will dawn on your body and soul: *you are safe now, held in the loving arms of God. *"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted"* (Psalm 34:18), and He is near to you. In His presence, you will find the courage and strength to reclaim a life of peace, purpose, and yes – joy.

"May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way" (2 Thessalonians 3:16). Amen.

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Each of these sources contributes to a holistic understanding of trauma recovery, bridging the gap between science and faith. By applying these insights, you can move forward with both **the lamp of Scripture** and **the light of knowledge** on your path to healing. You're not alone, and there is indeed a path to peace after trauma.

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