



Sensory Overload: Finding Peace and Joy in an Overwhelming World

Understanding Sensory Overload in Modern Life

Many people today feel constantly **overstimulated** – bombarded by noise, lights, crowds, and information. This state of **sensory overload** occurs when our senses take in more input than our nervous system can handle, triggering a stress response. Medical experts explain that sensory overload “happens when input from any of your senses...feel overwhelming and trigger a physiological response” as your body's *fight-or-flight* system kicks in [[Cleveland Clinic – How to Manage Sensory Overload, 2023](#)]. In practical terms, an overload of sights, sounds, touch, or even smells can send your **sympathetic nervous system** into overdrive – heart pounding, muscles tensing, mind racing with anxiety.

Anyone can experience sensory overload in the right circumstances. Picture walking through Times Square: blaring horns and chatter (sound), jostling crowds (touch), flashing billboards (sight), street-food smells (smell) – all at once. It's no surprise if you feel overwhelmed and panicky in such a moment. Common symptoms include feelings of intense stress, confusion or “brain freeze,” irritability, inability to focus, and an urge to escape the chaos [[Tworek, Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials, 2023](#)]. Physically, you might start sweating, trembling, get dizzy, or feel your chest tighten as adrenaline floods your system. If unchecked, sensory overload can even lead to a **panic attack** in some cases.

Certain individuals are more prone to sensory overload. For example, people with **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** often have heightened sensory sensitivities – a loud sound or bright light that others tolerate might be deeply upsetting for them. Similarly, those with **ADHD** can struggle to filter out extraneous stimuli, and **anxiety disorders** or **PTSD** can make someone's “alarm system” overreact to sensory triggers [[Cleveland Clinic – Sensory Overload Triggers, 2023](#)]. Children are also susceptible because they haven't yet learned coping skills, which is why a noisy, busy environment can lead to toddler meltdowns more easily than an adult. However, you **don't** need a clinical diagnosis for your senses to go into overload – **anyone** living in today's fast-paced, noisy world can reach a breaking point.

The Digital Age and Constant Stimulation

Modern life itself often pushes us toward overload. Consider how we use technology: research shows that our **attention spans** have dramatically shortened in the smartphone era. In fact, people now spend on average only about **47 seconds** on one screen or task before shifting their focus [[Gloria Mark, Attention Span, 2023](#)]. We juggle dozens of app notifications, messages, and media feeds in an hour. This constant multi-tasking bombardment keeps our brains in a heightened state of alert. Over time, it can erode our ability to deeply concentrate and adds to mental fatigue and stress. Psychologists have noted that rapid-fire media (with ever-faster scene cuts and endless scrolling) trains our brains to expect constant stimulation, making quiet or slower-paced activities feel “boring” or even uncomfortable. It's no wonder that many of us feel antsy or anxious in stillness – we've become conditioned to **sensory overload as a baseline**.



Moreover, social media and 24/7 news flood our minds with information (much of it negative or urgent in tone). This **information overload** can trigger emotional overwhelm akin to sensory overload. Studies have linked heavy social media use to higher anxiety and stress levels in some individuals, likely because our minds never get a rest from comparison, bad news, or the pressure to respond [[HHS Advisory on Social Media and Mental Health, 2023](#)]. If you've ever felt edgy after hours of scrolling or had trouble quieting your thoughts at bedtime due to the day's input, you have experienced a form of overload.

Additionally, our **environmental noise** levels contribute to overload. The hum of traffic, blaring TVs, loud workplaces or crowded restaurants – noise pollution is more than an annoyance; it causes physiological stress. The U.S. CDC notes that noise above about **85 decibels** (roughly the volume of heavy city traffic) not only damages hearing with prolonged exposure but also produces physical stress responses in the body [[NIOSH/CDC – Workplace Noise: More than “All Ears”, 2018](#)]. People exposed to chronic loud noise have been found to have higher blood pressure and stress hormone levels. In everyday terms, having to shout over noise or endure constant background commotion can leave you feeling drained and irritable without realizing it. It's not “just in your head” – our bodies are wired to react to sustained sensory stressors.

For Christians, all this matters because an overwhelmed nervous system can directly impact our spiritual life. It's hard to **feel joy** or **focus on prayer** when your mind is frazzled and your body is in fight-or-flight mode. Many believers describe how difficult it is to sense God's peace when they are anxious, overstimulated, and unable to sit still. The Bible tells us that God speaks in a “still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12) – yet our world is anything but still or small. If you are struggling to cultivate a deep relationship with Jesus while juggling constant noise and activity, you are certainly not alone. The good news is that both **Scripture and science** offer wisdom on how we can find *rest for our souls* amid the clamor of life.

Biblical Wisdom on Rest and Stillness

Far from being a modern problem, the challenge of overload and the need for rest are addressed throughout the Bible. Scripture affirms that as humans we **need quiet and stillness** to experience God's presence and restoration. Psalm 46:10 gently commands, *“Be still, and know that I am God.”* In other words, ceasing activity and calming our senses is a prerequisite to recognizing God's voice and sovereignty. When we are continually distracted or overstimulated, we miss the divine whisper of guidance and comfort. The Psalmist compares a calmed soul to a **weaned child resting with its mother**: *“I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content”* (Psalm 131:2, NIV). What a beautiful picture of inner tranquility – a state of trustful rest that God wants for us, instead of constant anxious agitation.

Jesus himself modeled the importance of withdrawing from sensory overload. The Gospels recount that amidst the busyness of ministry – the crowds pressing in with their noise and needs – Jesus frequently **“went away to a quiet place to pray.”** *“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed,”* notes Luke 5:16. He even invited his disciples to step away from the clamoring crowds, saying *“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest”* (Mark 6:31, NIV). This happened after a period when “so many people were coming and going” that the disciples had no chance to even eat. In essence, Jesus built into the rhythm of life a pattern of **detachment and sensory respite**: stepping out of the bustle to recalibrate in silence with the Father. If the Son of God needed regular quiet retreats to recharge, how much more do we?

Another instructive biblical story is the contrast between **Martha and Mary** (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was *“distracted by much serving,”* frantically bustling (one might say experiencing a form of mental overload)

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while Mary sat quietly at Jesus' feet, listening. Jesus gently told anxious Martha that *"only one thing is necessary"* and Mary had chosen the better part. This isn't to disparage serving, but it highlights that **constant activity and sensory busyness** can cause us to miss the main point: being with Jesus. When we find ourselves "anxious and troubled about many things" like Martha (Luke 10:41), it may be a sign that we need to pause, breathe, and refocus on **the presence of Christ** right in front of us.

Importantly, the Bible does **not** teach that feeling overwhelmed is a sin or sign of weak faith. Jesus extended compassion to the weary: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28, NIV). Notice, He doesn't scold the worn-out for lacking stamina – He invites them to find rest in Him. God knows our human frame and limitations: *"for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust"* (Psalm 103:14). Throughout Scripture, God provides for physical needs in tandem with spiritual care. For example, when the prophet **Elijah** was exhausted and depressed after an intense, overwhelming experience, God first gave him food and sleep (1 Kings 19:5-8) before speaking to him in a gentle whisper on the mountain. Elijah's story shows that sometimes we must **recover physically and sensorily** before we're able to hear God's voice again.

In fact, caring for our bodies and minds is part of spiritual wisdom. **Sabbath rest** is built into the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-10) – a weekly practice of stepping back from work and the usual stimuli to refresh in God's presence. This principle of regular disconnection from busyness is remarkably relevant today. Intentionally **unplugging** from devices and noise for a time each week can be viewed as a modern Sabbath application, allowing space to pray, reflect, and simply *be* without constant input. Jesus said, *"The Sabbath was made for man"* (Mark 2:27) – in other words, God designed rhythms of rest for **our benefit**, because He knows we need it to thrive.

The **apostle Paul** also encourages a kind of mental filtering that relates to sensory overload: *"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure...if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8). This implies we should be intentional about what we *allow* our minds to dwell on. While we often can't avoid all the stimuli around us, we **can** set healthy boundaries on our media consumption, and we can refocus our thoughts on edifying truths. Paul's next verse promises, *"And the God of peace will be with you"* (Phil 4:9). A peaceful mind and joyful heart flourish when we consistently **redirect attention** to God's presence and promises, instead of the overload of worldly noise.

Honoring the Body-Mind Connection (It's Not "Just Spiritual")

While biblical teaching urges us toward spiritual peace, it also recognizes the **unity of body and soul**. We are embodied creatures – our physical state affects our emotional and spiritual well-being. A key insight for Christians struggling with sensory overload is this: feeling overwhelmed or anxious is not automatically a moral or faith failure; often it has a significant **physiological component**. In other words, you might feel on edge not solely because you aren't praying enough or trusting God, but because your nervous system is genuinely overtaxed. Recognizing this is important to avoid unnecessary guilt and to seek appropriate solutions.

Historic Christian voices have acknowledged the body-mind interplay. The great 19th-century preacher **Charles Spurgeon** suffered from bouts of depression and severe anxiety (what we might today partly attribute to sensory and nervous overload). Spurgeon wisely counseled his congregation, *"Do not think it unspiritual to remember that you have a body... The physician is often as needful as the minister"* [[Spurgeon's Library – 11 Reasons Spurgeon Was Depressed, 2017](#)]. In his era, this was a radical statement: he defended

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using **medical help** for mental distress at a time when some Christians only saw such problems as spiritual weakness. Spurgeon himself consulted doctors and took practical measures for his maladies. He recognized that the brain is an organ that can get “sick” just as the stomach or lungs can, and thus sometimes needs rest or medicine rather than rebuke. He even remarked that many fears or emotional struggles “are the symptom of disease and not sin.”

This perspective is crucial for Christians: **honoring our bodies** as God’s creation means we should address physical or psychological conditions with wisdom and without stigma. If you find that sensory overload or anxiety is a constant battle, seeking professional help (such as a therapist, psychiatrist, or physician) can be a step of good stewardship for your health. Utilizing modern medicine or counseling **does not indicate a lack of faith**. On the contrary, it aligns with a biblical understanding that we are holistic beings. The apostle Paul calls our bodies the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19), implying we should care for them. If your body’s stress chemistry is imbalanced or you have a neurological condition that heightens sensory issues, **addressing those needs is part of caring for the temple**. Prayer and Scripture are vital, but they are not meant to replace medical intervention any more than they would for a broken bone or diabetes. We can embrace both prayer *and* prescriptions when appropriate, with gratitude that God can work through medicine. As one Christian psychiatrist put it, “It is not unspiritual to take a Tylenol for a headache – likewise, it’s not unspiritual to use anxiety medication or therapy for an overwhelmed mind.”

Indeed, sometimes **physical adjustments or accommodations** can greatly help us engage more fully in spiritual life. Consider the example of a 14-year-old boy with autism named Percy, who loved God but found attending church agonizing due to the sensory overload of a typical worship service. For years, he simply could not sit through Mass with his family – the echoing sounds, bright lights, and close proximity of people were too overwhelming, triggering meltdowns and panic. Recently, however, Percy’s church created a “*Still Waters*” sensory room: *a calm, dim space with soothing colors and tools like noise-canceling headphones, soft seating, and fidget objects*. This first-of-its-kind church sensory room became a **refuge** for Percy. Now, whenever the main service overwhelms him, he can step into the Still Waters room to regroup. As a result, Percy’s family has been able to attend worship together for the first time in years, and *he actually looks forward to church* [[NCR – Sensory room welcomes neurodivergent parishioners, 2025](#)]. What changed was not a sudden miraculous desensitization, but the **practical provision** of a quieter environment – a tangible example of how attending to physical sensory needs opens the door for spiritual participation and joy. This story encourages churches and Christian communities to be mindful of those who are **highly sensitive or neurodivergent**. Simple accommodations (like offering a quiet room, providing earplugs, or allowing freedom to step out) fulfill the biblical principle of bearing one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2) and ensuring everyone can worship without undue hindrance.

Likewise, if you personally are “wired differently” – perhaps you identify as a **Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)** or suspect you have ADHD or are on the autism spectrum – know that you are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” by God (Psalm 139:14). Your sensitivity may come with challenges, but it is also a gift. People with sensitive nervous systems often notice details of God’s creation and beauty that others miss; you may have deep empathy or creativity flowing from the way God made your brain. The Christian writer Sarah Geringer, an HSP herself, shared how she once felt ashamed of being overwhelmed by a bumpy speedboat ride that everyone else found fun. She had to retreat to a quiet shore to calm down, feeling “embarrassed and frustrated” by her own panic. Yet in that solitary spot, God met her with the sight of gentle blue butterflies and reminded her through Psalm 139:14 that *even her high sensitivity was part of His wonderful design*. She realized that butterflies don’t try to “fit in” with louder creatures; they simply display the unique beauty God gave them. In the same way, our unique sensitivities have purpose in God’s eyes [[Geringer, Highly Sensitive](#)].



[and Wonderfully Made, 2022](#)]. Embracing this truth can transform our frustration into gratitude. Instead of viewing yourself as broken for being overwhelmed, you can begin to see that **God accepts you fully, sensitive nervous system and all**. He can use your trait for good – perhaps to be more compassionate to others who struggle, or to appreciate the “still small voice” moments in profound ways.

Of course, accepting our physical limits also means we shouldn’t hesitate to use **tools and treatments** to help manage those limits. For someone prone to sensory overload, such tools might include wearing sunglasses or ear defenders in overstimulating settings, taking breaks in a quiet room (just as Percy does), or using apps that guide calming breathing exercises. If anxiety is a persistent companion, it could mean taking an as-needed anti-anxiety medication or a daily antidepressant as prescribed, to biologically reduce the constant “fight-or-flight” signals. This is no more contradictory to trusting God than a diabetic using insulin. In fact, using these means can **enhance your ability to engage with God** by quieting the bodily storm. One believer testified that after beginning therapy and a low-dose medication for her panic disorder, she was finally able to sit through a church service long enough to hear the sermon – something she had avoided due to panic attacks. With the edge of her physical anxiety dulled, she could absorb Scripture and fellowship again, which in turn strengthened her faith and joy. This holistic healing loop (physical relief enabling spiritual growth, which further supports mental health) is a beautiful picture of how God works through **both physical and spiritual means in tandem**.

Practical Strategies to Manage Sensory Overload

While understanding the theology and science behind overload is helpful, we also need **practical tools** for day-to-day coping. Living in a fallen world, we may not eliminate all overwhelming stimuli, but we can learn to manage our responses and create a more peaceful daily rhythm. Here are several strategies – a blend of **common-sense practices, therapeutic techniques, and spiritual disciplines** – that can help you regain a sense of calm and joy when sensory overload strikes:

Immediate Coping Techniques (Grounding and Calming)

When you feel a wave of sensory overload coming on – that sudden surge of anxiety, irritability, or confusion – it’s important to **ground yourself** and engage the body’s calming mechanisms. One of the simplest and most effective tools is **deep breathing**. Slow, controlled breathing directly activates the parasympathetic nervous system (the “rest and digest” side that opposes fight-or-flight). A useful exercise recommended by psychologists is the “3-3-3 breathing” technique, a form of rhythmic breathing similar to classic box breathing [[Cleveland Clinic – 3-3-3 Breathing, 2023](#)]. Here’s how to do it:

1. **Breathe in** slowly through your nose for a count of three.
2. **Hold** the breath for three counts.
3. **Exhale** through your mouth for three counts.
4. Repeat this cycle several times until you feel your heart rate slowing and your mind starting to refocus.

As you do this, you might also silently pray a simple phrase in rhythm with your breathing – a practice sometimes called a “breath prayer.” For example, inhale thinking “*Lord, calm me*” and exhale “*You are with me.*” This marries the physical benefit of breathing with the spiritual comfort of prayer. In fact, **prayer itself has proven physiological benefits**: studies show that sincere prayer (or meditative prayer) can directly reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, relax muscles, and even shift brain activity toward a calmer state



[[Froese & Jones, *The Sociology of Prayer*, 2021](#)]. In one review, researchers noted that prayer and related meditation practices increase parasympathetic nervous activity – the opposite of the stress response – consistently producing feelings of peace and relaxation. So, taking a moment to pray during overload is not only spiritually grounding but also physically soothing.

Other grounding techniques to try in the moment of overload include engaging your senses in a controlled way to re-center. For instance, **5-4-3-2-1 grounding** is a classic anxiety coping tool: identify 5 things you see, 4 things you can touch, 3 sounds you hear, 2 scents you smell, and 1 taste you can sense. This can help interrupt racing thoughts by forcing you to focus on the present environment in a neutral way. Some people also carry a small “grounding object” – maybe a smooth stone or a cross pendant – to rub between their fingers when overwhelmed, using touch to regain a sense of stability. Drinking a glass of cold water or splashing water on your face is another simple trick; the cool sensation can jolt your system out of panic and into the here-and-now.

If possible, **remove or reduce the stimuli** causing the overload. Step outside from a noisy room, dim the lights, turn off music – whatever element is controllable. Don’t worry about being polite; it’s okay to excuse yourself for a “breather.” Even Jesus stepped away from pressing crowds when needed, validating your choice to take a break. If you’re in a situation you can’t fully leave (say, a crowded train or a busy office), improvise a mini respite: close your eyes for a minute (to reduce visual input), or put on noise-canceling headphones/earbuds if you have them. There are even discreet **earplugs** designed for sensory sensitivity that lower noise volume without blocking all sound – these can be lifesavers in loud public places or church worship services (many churches won’t mind if you wear earplugs during the music; some even provide them). By attenuating the input, you give your nervous system a chance to catch up and re-regulate.

Preventative Measures and Lifestyle Adjustments

Beyond handling overload in the moment, it’s wise to make **long-term adjustments** that reduce how often you get overwhelmed. Think of it like installing preventive “software updates” for your mental operating system. Dr. Grace Tworek, a health psychologist, advises identifying your **personal triggers** and planning around them [[Cleveland Clinic – Preventing Sensory Overload, 2023](#)]. Start to pay attention to patterns: Do you consistently feel frazzled in big crowds? Does a certain type of lighting (like fluorescents in grocery stores) give you a headache? Maybe too many tasks piled together (sensory overload can be cognitive too) leaves you irritable. By pinpointing triggers, you can then strategize solutions. For example, if **loud noise** is a trigger, carry earplugs to concerts or choose quieter seating at restaurants. If **visual chaos** in big-box stores overwhelms you, try shopping at off-peak hours when it’s calmer, or use services like grocery pickup to avoid the sensory gauntlet altogether. If **multitasking** on screens is a culprit, practice unitasking – set specific times to check email or social media rather than constant toggling, and consider using apps that limit notifications.

It’s also helpful to **create a daily rhythm that includes sensory downtime**. Our brains need breaks from constant input. One practical tip is to schedule small “sensory sabbaths” in your day. This could be a 10-minute walk outside with your phone left behind, or simply sitting on your porch in silence in the morning, or a rule like no electronics for the first hour after dinner. Research shows that spending even **20–30 minutes in nature** significantly lowers stress hormones and anxiety – the sights and sounds of natural environments have a calming effect on the brain [[Harvard Health – Nature break relieves stress, 2019](#)]. If you can stroll in a park or sit under a tree regularly, you’re not just taking a physical break but also giving your senses gentle stimuli that actually **restore** you instead of depleting you. Many believers find that taking



their prayer time outdoors, even in a backyard, multiplies the peace they feel, as creation itself declares God's glory (Psalm 19:1) in a way that soothes our frazzled nerves.

Another key preventative strategy is **practicing coping skills before you're in a crisis**. Think of it like training for a marathon – you build resilience over time. If you know deep breathing helps, make it a habit to do a few rounds each day when you're *not* overloaded, so that it becomes second nature. The more you practice relaxing your body through breathing, stretching, or gentle yoga, the quicker your body can deploy those responses under stress. Some therapists teach **progressive muscle relaxation** (tensing and then releasing muscle groups one by one) as a way to train the body's relaxation response. Others recommend regular mindfulness or prayer meditation sessions to increase your baseline of calm. From a spiritual angle, having a daily **devotional time** – where you read Scripture, pray, or journal in quiet – can act like a daily reset for your soul, analogous to “rebooting” your mental computer so it doesn't overheat. Many Christians testify that early morning quiet time with God fortifies them against the day's chaos, and late evening prayer helps discharge all the sensory and emotional build-up before sleep.

Speaking of sleep: **adequate rest** and a healthy lifestyle are foundational. A tired, sleep-deprived brain is much more vulnerable to overload (ever notice how sounds seem unbearably loud or lights too bright when you've had a bad night's sleep?). Prioritize consistent, sufficient sleep and consider sleep-friendly practices like a dark, cool bedroom and no screen use an hour before bed. Regular exercise also helps by literally *burning off* stress hormones and nervous energy; even a brisk 20-minute walk can reset your mood and sensory equilibrium. In fact, exercise in nature – combining movement with a calming environment – is double-helpful for reducing overload. What you eat and drink matters too: excess caffeine, for example, can mimic anxiety and make you more jumpy with sensory input, so moderate your intake if you're prone to jitters.

Support, Therapy, and When to Seek Help

Despite our best efforts, there may be seasons where sensory overload or anxiety become too difficult to handle alone. **Seeking professional help** is a wise and godly step when needed. Proverbs 15:22 says, *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”* Applied here, it means don't isolate yourself with the struggle; reach out to those trained to help. A **Christian counselor or therapist** can provide practical behavioral strategies tailored to you, while also understanding your faith context. They can help you reframe anxious thoughts in light of truth, practice exposure to triggers in a safe way, or work through any deeper traumas contributing to your overload. For instance, someone with PTSD might work with a therapist on gradual exposure to triggering sounds (like fireworks that remind a combat veteran of gunfire) coupled with coping skills, so that the brain learns those stimuli are safe now. Similarly, parents of children with sensory processing issues can benefit from occupational therapy guidance – learning “sensory diets” (structured activities that help kids acclimate and self-soothe) and creating supportive routines.

Sometimes **medication** is considered. There is no specific “sensory overload pill,” but medications targeting underlying issues (anxiety, ADHD, etc.) can indirectly reduce overload frequency. If constant anxiety sensitizes your system, an SSRI antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication might lower your baseline arousal so you're not so easily triggered. If ADHD-related overwhelm is the issue, stimulant medication or non-stimulants for ADHD can improve focus and filtering of distractions. Always consult with a medical professional you trust; ideally one who respects your values and can integrate care with your spiritual life. Many find that a combination of medication *plus* therapy and spiritual support works best – the medicine



addresses neurochemical imbalances, while therapy and faith address thought patterns, lifestyle, and meaning.

It's worth noting there should be **no shame** in taking these steps. As Christians, we believe God can heal supernaturally, but we also acknowledge He often works through providential means like skilled doctors and the insights of psychology (which, when used ethically, are exploring the mind that God designed). In church history, Luke was a physician in the Apostle Paul's ministry team – a reminder that God values the medical profession. By seeking help, you are investing in the gifts and wisdom God has made available for your well-being. You are also putting yourself in a position to be **more available to God's call**. It's hard to serve joyfully or concentrate on ministry if you're constantly overwhelmed; getting relief can free you up to love others and God more wholeheartedly, just as Percy's sensory room freed him to participate in worship, or as Spurgeon's use of health remedies enabled him to continue preaching.

In some cases, your church or community might already have support systems – don't hesitate to use them. Some congregations now have mental health or pastoral counselors on staff or support groups for anxiety/depression. If bright stage lights or loud music at church are an issue, talk to the worship leader; many churches are willing to accommodate by dimming lights in a section or providing earplugs if they know it's affecting congregants. If fellowship hour is too noisy, suggest having a small "quiet corner" for those who need it. By speaking up kindly, you also educate the church on the diversity of needs within the Body of Christ, helping them become more accessible. Remember, 1 Corinthians 12 likens the church to a body with many parts – some parts are sensitive and need special honor and care, but all are essential. **You are not a burden** for having this challenge; you are a valuable part of the community whose needs, when met, will allow your gifts to shine.

Cultivating Joy and Deepening Your Relationship with Christ

At the end of the day, the goal of managing sensory overload isn't just to avoid discomfort – it's to **remove hindrances to the joyful, abundant life** that Jesus promised. John 15:11 records Jesus saying, *"I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete."* If constant overwhelm is stealing that joy, then addressing it is part of Christian growth. As you implement strategies to find physical and mental calm, make sure to fill that new margin with **life-giving connection to God**. It's like when Jesus cast out an oppressive spirit and warned to fill the house with something good lest seven worse rush in (Matthew 12:43-45) – in our context, if we clear some chaos from our life, we should invite the Holy Spirit to fill those spaces with His peace.

One powerful practice is to turn moments of sensory relief into moments of **worship or gratitude**. For example, when you step outside in silence, take a second to thank God for the beauty of the sky or the quiet whisper of the wind. When you finish a breathing exercise and feel calmer, perhaps say, *"Thank you, Lord, for the breath of life and Your calming presence."* By doing this, you consciously link the sensation of calm with awareness of God, training yourself that **peace comes from Him** ultimately. Over time, you may find that places or activities that used to trigger overload can become cues to pray. One believer shared that every time he walks into a hectic supermarket (which used to trigger anxiety), he now prays, *"Jesus, walk with me through these aisles."* It centers him spiritually and keeps his mind from spinning out. Another person with panic disorder made it a habit to recite the **23rd Psalm** under her breath when stuck in an overwhelming crowd, picturing the Lord as her shepherd guiding her through the valley. Scripture memorization can supply you with such "instant prayers" in stressful moments. Verses like *"When my heart is overwhelmed, lead*



me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2) or *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7) are excellent to carry in your heart.

Also, don't underestimate the joy that can come from engaging your **God-given senses in positive ways**. Sensory overload is about *too much* of the wrong input, but God did create our senses as gateways to enjoy His world. You can reclaim your senses for joy by deliberately savoring wholesome sensory experiences. For instance, listening to worship music or calming instrumental music can be a soothing auditory input that elevates your spirit (just keep the volume gentle). Aromatherapy with a favorite scent (lavender, cinnamon, etc.) during prayer or relaxation time might help "redeem" your sense of smell from the onslaught of unpleasant odors out in the world. Tasting a good meal slowly and gratefully can be an act of worship (1 Timothy 4:4-5 says food is to be received with thanksgiving). Taking in the **visual beauty** of nature or art can inspire awe of the Creator. By proactively feeding your senses with **God-honoring delights**, you strengthen your capacity to handle negative overload and remind yourself that your senses are ultimately a gift, not a curse.

Finally, remember that our journey toward peace and resilience is a **gradual sanctification process**. Don't be discouraged if you still have bad days or setbacks. Even the apostle Paul, who wrote "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4), had times of deep stress and said *"We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself"* (2 Corinthians 1:8). The Christian life is not about never feeling overwhelmed – it's about learning where to turn when we are. Paul learned to rely not on himself but on God through those trials, and he later heard the Lord tell him, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Sensory overload and anxiety might be a thorn of weakness for you, but take heart that **God's grace is sufficient**. He can demonstrate His power in your life as you depend on Him each step.

Every time you practice a coping skill, every time you choose prayer over panic, every time you ask for help or take a restorative rest, you are walking in humility and faith. You are effectively saying, *"Lord, I am weak, but You are strong. I need Your help."* And His promise is that *"when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10) – strong with the Lord's strength. Over time, you may find a deeper intimacy with Jesus precisely because of this struggle. It forces you to cling to Him and trust Him to lead you beside **still waters** (Psalm 23:2) for the sake of your soul. How fitting that the sensory room at Percy's church was named "Still Waters," invoking Psalm 23. Our Good Shepherd knows how to calm us and rejuvenate us.

One day, in eternity, all sources of overwhelming distress will be removed. The Bible assures us of a coming world where *"Nothing will harm or destroy"* (Isaiah 11:9), and *"there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"* (Revelation 21:4). Our **resurrection bodies** and minds will function perfectly, and we'll experience the glory of God with unhindered joy – perhaps even a *positive* "sensory overload" of all the best kind (as the Apostle John did when he saw the wonders of heaven, Revelation 1:17). Until then, we live in the tension of **already/not yet**. But even now, Christ offers us His peace: *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives"* (John 14:27). The world may give us overload, but Jesus gives overcoming peace. By taking practical steps and leaning on Jesus daily, you can begin to **live more joyfully** despite the noisy world, and cultivate that deep relationship with Him that your heart longs for.

As you move forward, take it one day at a time. Celebrate small victories – like making it through a stressful day with one less meltdown, or finding comfort in a verse instead of reaching for your phone. Be patient with yourself as God is patient with you. Surround yourself with supportive people who understand your journey. And keep your eyes on Jesus, who remained peaceful in the fiercest of storms and who can, with a



word, speak *"Peace, be still"* to the storms in **your** life (Mark 4:39). In Him, that elusive true rest for your soul is possible: *"In quietness and trust is your strength"* (Isaiah 30:15). May the Lord bless you with His calming presence as you seek Him, and may you find increasing measures of **peace and joy** even in a sensory-overloaded world.

References:

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