



Emotional Exhaustion Recovery Plan: One-Week Guide to Renew Strength and Joy

Feeling **emotionally exhausted** can leave you drained, joyless, and distant from both people and God. The good news is that with a focused one-week recovery plan, you can begin to reverse early signs of burnout and rekindle your energy and spirit. This guide combines **clinical research**, **psychological strategies**, and **biblical wisdom** to help you regain joy and strength in seven days.

What is Emotional Exhaustion? It's more than just being tired. Emotional exhaustion is a state of chronic mental and emotional fatigue often caused by prolonged stress. It is one of the core components of burnout, alongside cynicism and reduced effectiveness. Psychiatrists describe burnout as a "profound, chronic exhaustion of mind, body, and spirit, often leading to helplessness and detachment"^[1]. Unlike normal fatigue that improves with rest, emotional exhaustion persists and can worsen without intervention. You might notice **early warning signs** such as:

- **Chronic fatigue:** Waking up tired even after a full night's sleep^[1].
- **Irritability and cynicism:** Little things make you snap or you feel increasingly negative and detached from work or loved ones^[1].
- **Reduced motivation:** Tasks that once excited you now feel pointless or overwhelming. Joy is hard to find.
- **Physical symptoms:** Headaches, muscle tension, stomach issues, or changes in appetite and sleep are common stress signals^[1].
- **Isolation:** Withdrawing from social activities and support, feeling too drained to engage^[1].

If you're noticing these signs, it's crucial to take action early. **Burnout is preventable** and reversible, especially when addressed at the early stages. As one psychiatrist notes, recognizing the symptoms and taking proactive steps to maintain balance can "protect our well-being before burnout takes hold"[\(APA Blog, 2025\)](#).

A Holistic Approach: Body, Mind, and Spirit

As Christians, we understand that humans are **integrated beings** – body, mind, and spirit. The Bible portrays us as "*embodied souls*," where caring for our physical well-being is entwined with our spiritual health[\(ERLC, 2025\)](#). When Elijah the prophet grew so weary he begged for death, God's first remedy was to let him sleep and provide fresh bread and water for strength (1 Kings 19:4–8). Only after Elijah's physical needs were met did God engage him in gentle conversation to renew his calling.

Scripture affirms the importance of rest: "*He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul*" (Psalm 23:2–3). Jesus Himself invited His overwhelmed disciples, "*Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest*" (Mark 6:31). We should never feel guilty for meeting our needs for sleep, nutrition, and relaxation. In fact, tending to your body is part of honoring God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) and positioning yourself to receive His renewal. As a Christian mental health guide



wisely says, “Biblical support should complement, not replace, professional medical advice” – seeking help through rest, counseling, or medicine when needed is a form of God’s provision, not a lack of faith([ERLC, 2025](#)).

Modern research reinforces these truths: caring for your physical and mental health will also uplift you spiritually. For example, exercise and a healthy diet can alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety, and adequate sleep is essential for emotional regulation([ERLC, 2025](#)). Likewise, spiritual practices like prayer have measurable mental health benefits. **Prayer** is not just a religious duty; it tangibly calms the brain and reduces stress. “Research shows that prayer can reduce stress, anxiety, and negative emotions,” fostering a sense of peace and support from God^[2]. In one study, people who maintained a daily prayer practice reported lower rates of anxiety and depression, across various faith backgrounds([Roark Counseling, 2025](#)). The Bible encourages us to “**cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you**” (1 Peter 5:7), and now we see science affirming that this act of surrender in prayer can buffer us against stress.

With these foundations in mind, let’s dive into a one-week recovery plan for emotional exhaustion. Each day focuses on specific steps – grounded in both **scriptural principles** and **clinical research** – to help restore your energy, joy, and sense of God’s presence. Whether you’re a working professional, a busy parent, or involved in ministry, you can adapt these daily guides to your situation. (If possible, consider taking a week off from major responsibilities for a personal “renewal retreat.” But even if you can’t get away completely, you can practice these elements each day around your normal schedule.)

Day 1: Stop, Rest, and Refuel Your Body

Key focus: Physical rest and basic self-care. Today is about recharging your physical batteries, which are likely depleted.

- **Prioritize Sleep:** If you are exhausted, one of the most healing things you can do is allow yourself to **sleep** – plenty. Aim for at least 7–9 hours of sleep tonight, and if you can, take a nap or go to bed earlier than usual. Consistent quality sleep is essential for recovery; even one week of sleep deprivation can impair mood, focus, and working memory^[3]. The APA recommends consistency in sleep schedule, noting that going to bed at the same time each night (even if you get slightly fewer hours) supports recovery better than an erratic pattern^[1]. As you wind down, claim the promise of Psalm 4:8: “*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.*” Create a calming bedtime routine (dimming lights, perhaps listening to soft worship music or reading a Psalm).
- **Physical Relaxation:** Today, do **nothing “productive.”** Give yourself permission to **rest**. If you feel guilty doing nothing, remember that God designed a whole day of rest each week – “*The Sabbath was made for man*” (Mark 2:27) – to refresh us. Lie down, put on comfortable clothes, and breathe. **Deep breathing exercises** can signal your nervous system to shift out of “fight-or-flight” mode. Medical counselors explain that slow, deep breaths activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which tells your brain and body that you are safe and can relax([Univ. of Toledo](#)). Try a simple exercise: inhale gently for a count of 4, feeling your belly rise, hold 2 seconds, then exhale for 6 seconds. Repeat for a few minutes. This practice sends more oxygen to your brain’s thinking centers and directly reduces the physical symptoms of anxiety (racing heart, tense muscles)([Univ. of Toledo](#)). Many people find it helpful to pray a brief phrase in rhythm with their breath – for example, breathe in whispering “Abba, Father,” breathe out “I rest in Your love.”

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- **Nutrition and Hydration:** Exhaustion can be worsened by poor diet or dehydration. Today, make it simple but nourishing: drink plenty of water (carry a bottle and sip frequently) and eat wholesome, easy-to-digest foods. Have some fruit, vegetables, whole grains, or lean protein – food that will provide steady energy. Avoid excessive caffeine or sugar; they might prop you up temporarily but can crash your energy later. If you've been running on coffee and adrenaline, switching to water or herbal tea and balanced meals will stabilize your body's fuel supply. Remember the angel's words to Elijah when giving him bread and water, *"Arise and eat, for the journey is too much for you"* (1 Kings 19:7). Proper food is part of God's prescription for recovery.
- **Light Movement (if you feel up to it):** Depending on your energy, a gentle **walk** outside can actually help you sleep better at night and improve your mood. There's no intense exercise required today – just consider a slow stroll in a peaceful environment, or some light stretching. **Exposure to nature** has proven stress-relief benefits. In fact, a 2019 study found that spending **20–30 minutes in nature** significantly lowers cortisol levels (the primary stress hormone)([Harvard Health](#)). Sit or walk in a green space (your backyard, a park, or even just under a tree) and notice God's creation. Let the sunlight and fresh air remind you of God's care for even the sparrows and wildflowers (Matthew 6:26–29). Just 20 minutes of such "nature therapy" can lead to a measurable drop in stress hormones, helping your body shift into recovery mode([Frontiers in Psychology, 2019](#)).

Today's main goal is **to cease striving** and physically rest. In the Ten Commandments, God ordered His people to rest one day a week, reminding them that even He rested after creation (Exodus 20:9–11). Use Day 1 as your personal mini-Sabbath. Take naps, say no to any non-essential tasks, and let your body begin to restore. Pray something simple like, *"Lord, I'm weary. I trust You as I rest – please restore my strength"* (echoing Isaiah 40:29). As you end Day 1, you might already notice a slight lift in fatigue or mood just from catching up on sleep and releasing tension.

Day 2: Spiritual Renewal and Mental Detox

Key focus: Seeking God through prayer and Scripture, and clearing mental overload.

With a bit more physical energy from Day 1's rest, Day 2 centers on **feeding your soul**. Emotional exhaustion often comes with spiritual dryness. Today, reconnect with the Lord intentionally, but without pressure.

- **Unhurried Devotion:** Begin the day by spending **unhurried time with God**. Find a quiet spot (perhaps with your morning coffee or tea) and read a comforting passage of Scripture. Passages about God's care and renewal are ideal: for instance, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28) or Psalm 23 mentioned earlier. You might read Psalm 61 or 62, where David cries *"my heart is faint... lead me to the rock that is higher than I"*. Let the words of Scripture validate your weariness and also pour hope into you. After reading, sit in silence for a few minutes and **pray honestly**. Tell God exactly how you feel — drained, frustrated, numb, whatever it is. Remember, Jesus invited us to *"cast all our burdens on Him"* and promises *"you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:29). Use a journal if it helps: write out a prayer or list of concerns and symbolically hand them to God. This kind of **expressive writing** to God can be therapeutic; research shows that writing about stressful experiences reduces mental distress and anxiety symptoms in individuals ¹ ². King David's psalms are essentially his journal of exhaustion and hope — you're doing the same.



- **Prayer and Calm Mind:** Dedicate at least 15–30 minutes for **prayer and meditation**. This isn't about reciting long lists of requests; it's about resting in God's presence. Perhaps try a **meditative prayer** style: choose a short Bible phrase like *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10) or *"The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing"* (Psalm 23:1). Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and breathe slowly. As you inhale, say "The Lord is my Shepherd" in your mind; as you exhale, "I have all I need." Let each repetition sink in. If your thoughts wander (they likely will, especially with a stressed mind), gently bring them back to the Scripture. This practice combines **biblical meditation** with mindfulness. It trains your mind to focus on God's truth rather than racing worries. Not only is this spiritually nourishing, it's scientifically backed: **mindfulness meditation** is known to reduce stress and improve emotional control. In fact, multiple studies have found that regular meditation or mindfulness practice can **lower burnout and anxiety levels** in healthcare workers and other high-stress groups^[4]. Even a few days of consistent meditation begin to strengthen the brain's connections for calm and resilience^{[2][4]}. By praying and pondering God's Word, you are *"renewing your mind"* (Romans 12:2) both spiritually and mentally.
- **Mental Detox – Unplug and Refocus:** Part of Day 2's "mental reset" is to **declutter your mind** from the constant input that may be fueling your exhaustion. If possible, **unplug from digital distractions** for a large chunk of the day. Take a break from news, social media, and work emails. Constant information and social comparison can keep our stress response activated. Studies have linked heavy social media use to higher anxiety and burnout, whereas setting boundaries on media consumption improves emotional balance^[2]. Use the time instead for quiet reflection or uplifting activities (more on that below). As you step back, you might realize how frazzled your mind has been with busyness. The culture often glorifies being busy, but the Bible invites us to *"be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him"* (Psalm 37:7). For today, let go of any non-essential mental tasks. Write down any nagging thoughts ("I should do this or that...") on a notepad to get them off your mind, and decide **not** to tackle them now. Give your brain a chance to be idle or focused only on the present moment. This mental breathing room can bring remarkable relief. Some people find **mindful activities** helpful here: for example, take 10 minutes to sit outside and observe the clouds, or listen attentively to a worship song, or do a simple craft/colouring. These focus your mind gently and break the cycle of racing thoughts.
- **Reconnect with Purpose:** Emotional exhaustion can make you lose sight of *why* you're doing all the things that wore you out. Take some time today to reflect on your **values and calling**. In prayer, ask God to remind you of what matters most. Read a passage like Philippians 4:8–9 (thinking on what is true, noble, praiseworthy) or Jeremiah 29:11 (God's hopeful plans for you). Jot down a few life priorities (e.g., "Faith, Family, Health, Helping others..."). Often burnout makes us feel like *everything* is equally urgent, but it's not. Let God realign your perspective so you can say no to lesser things and yes to what He truly calls you to. *"Seek first the kingdom of God...and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matthew 6:33). Perhaps you'll realize you've been striving for approval or perfection in ways that God isn't actually asking of you. Release those today.

By the end of Day 2, you should feel spiritually refueled and mentally lighter. You have **poured out your heart** to God (Psalm 62:8) and **soaked in His promises**, which is the best antidote to despair. You've also started quieting the noise in your mind. Many people report that after a day or two of intentional prayer, their anxiety significantly diminishes – they experience *"the peace of God, which transcends understanding, guarding their hearts and minds"* (Philippians 4:6–7). Clinically, we know that prayer and meditation practices



foster resilience: they can reduce stress hormones and activate brain regions associated with calm and focus^[^2]. So you're not only healing your soul, you're also re-training your brain for peace.

Day 3: Rebuild Energy Through Exercise and Outdoors

Key focus: Gentle exercise, fresh air, and engaging the body to boost mood.

Now that you've rested and begun re-centering spiritually, Day 3 encourages you to **get moving** in a healthy, enjoyable way. Physical activity might have been the first thing to drop off when you were exhausted, yet it's one of the most powerful tools to reverse burnout's effects on both body and mind. The goal is not to exhaust yourself further, but to use movement as medicine – as God designed our bodies to respond positively to exercise.

- **Mood-Boosting Movement:** Commit to at least **20–30 minutes of moderate exercise** today, whatever your fitness level allows. This could be a brisk walk around your neighborhood, a bike ride, a gentle jog, or even an active session of housework or gardening. If you like sports or dancing, do that. **Research is overwhelmingly positive** that even short bursts of exercise can lift your mood and reduce anxiety. One recent large-scale analysis found that adults who walked at least **5,000 steps a day** had significantly fewer symptoms of depression than those who walked less ([JAMA Network Open, 2024](#)). In fact, people who increased their daily steps by just 1,000 steps saw a meaningful improvement in mood, and those reaching ~7,500 steps had a 40% lower risk of depression^[^5]. Physical activity triggers the release of endorphins and neurotransmitters like **dopamine and serotonin** – natural brain chemicals that enhance your sense of well-being and calm. You might literally **feel** the difference in your body after a 30-minute walk: perhaps tension in your shoulders eases, your mind feels clearer, and you have a small spark of vitality you haven't felt in a while. That's the God-given biology of exercise at work! *"A cheerful heart is good medicine"* (Proverbs 17:22), and sometimes getting your heart rate up a bit is a path to a more cheerful heart.
- **Get Outside if Possible:** Try to do your exercise **outdoors** to double up on benefits. As mentioned on Day 1, nature has unique restorative effects. If you can, take a walk in a park, hike a trail, or simply do some stretches on your porch. Sunlight helps regulate your circadian rhythms (improving sleep) and boosts vitamin D, which is linked to mood. Nature sights and sounds can lower blood pressure and cortisol. Consider this a "nature therapy" session with God – Jesus often went up on mountains or beside lakes to pray and recharge. While you move outside, notice God's handiwork around you: the sky, trees, birds. Let creation remind you of the Creator's power and care (Romans 1:20, Matthew 6:26). Breathe deeply and thank Him for each breath (maybe pray along the lines of Psalm 19:1, *"The heavens declare the glory of God..."* as you observe the sky). This can turn your exercise time into a worship experience as well as a physical recharge.
- **Exercise as Effective as Medicine (in some cases):** To encourage you further, know that **exercise is a proven therapy** for mental exhaustion and even depression. In a fascinating 2023 clinical trial, a group of patients with depression were given a choice: start an SSRI antidepressant or join a supervised running program. After 16 weeks, the outcomes were similar – about 45% in both groups saw their depression and anxiety significantly improve – but **only the exercise group** also gained physical health benefits like better cardiovascular fitness and weight loss ([Journal of Affective Disorders, 2023](#)). The medication group, by contrast, had slight declines in physical health (common side effects of antidepressants include weight gain and higher blood pressure). This doesn't mean

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medication is bad – not at all, it helps millions (and you should continue any prescribed meds and consult your doctor). But it highlights that **exercise can be a potent, holistic treatment**, often on par with medication for mild-to-moderate cases of depression and burnout, *“with no harmful side effects – only side benefits.”* If you’ve been hesitant to move because you feel too tired, remind yourself that even a little activity can start an upward spiral: movement gives energy. As you faithfully steward your body through exercise, you may find God renewing your strength much like Isaiah 40:31 describes – *“they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

- **Hydrate and Nourish:** With increased activity, be sure to stay **hydrated** and eat well today too. Drink water before and after your exercise. Enjoy a hearty, healthy meal afterward – perhaps a colorful salad with protein or a soothing soup. Physical exertion will make your body crave good fuel. Feed it, and it will thank you with improved stamina. This aligns with Elijah’s story again: after he traveled to Mount Horeb, God fed him and let him rest some more before speaking to him further (1 Kings 19:8–9). Physical readiness often precedes hearing God’s gentle whisper.

By the end of Day 3, many people report feeling **shifts in their physical and emotional state**: maybe your sleep last night was deeper, your mind a bit sharper, your mood a notch brighter after exercising. You might even feel some muscle soreness – that’s okay, it means your body is waking up. Spiritually, engaging in creation and caring for your body can heighten your sense of gratitude to God. Thank Him for the ability to move and for the incremental healing happening. It’s appropriate to pray, *“Lord, thank you for strengthening my frame. Please use this exercise to refresh me so I can serve You with renewed vigor”* (you might recall 1 Corinthians 9:27 about disciplining the body for a higher purpose, or 3 John 1:2, which expresses a wish for good health just as one’s soul prospers).

Day 4: Connect with Supportive Community

Key focus: Breaking isolation, talking with someone, and seeking help if needed.

Burnout and exhaustion often make us withdraw from others at the very time we *need* support the most. Galatians 6:2 urges, *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* Day 4 is about letting others help carry your load and finding refreshment in companionship. Humans are created for community – **social support is scientifically proven** to buffer stress and improve resilience. Studies show that having caring friends or family to confide in literally dampens the body’s stress response (lowering cortisol and blood pressure) and improves mental health outcomes ([Hostinar & Gunnar, 2015](#)). We are *hard-wired* to benefit from each other’s presence. Today, take intentional steps to **lean into your support network**.

- **Reach Out to a Trusted Friend or Family Member:** Identify at least one person who you feel safe with – someone who is a good listener and cares about you. It could be a close friend, a spouse, a family member, or a mentor from church. **Tell them what’s been going on.** You might say something like, “I realize I’ve been really burned out lately and I’m working on recovering. Can we talk? I could use a listening ear/prayer.” It can be humbling to admit you’re struggling, but remember that even Jesus accepted help carrying the cross from Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26). We all have limits. Often, your loved ones may have sensed you were not yourself and will be relieved that you’re opening up. Have a coffee chat or phone call and **share honestly**. Don’t worry about finding solutions; just expressing your feelings out loud can bring relief and new insights. Allow your friend to encourage you. They might share their own experiences or simply say “I’m here for you.” This



conversation alone can lighten the emotional burden significantly. As Proverbs 17:17 says, *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.”* Let those “born for adversity” friends fulfill their role in your life today.

- **Consider Prayer or Fellowship with Fellow Believers:** Spiritual fellowship can be uniquely strengthening. You might reach out to a member of your small group, a prayer partner, or an elder at church to pray with you. *“Where two or three gather in My name, I am there with them,”* Jesus promised (Matthew 18:20). When someone prays over you, asking God to restore your joy, it can reignite hope. If you haven’t been to church in a while due to burnout, consider attending a low-pressure midweek prayer meeting or a casual get-together with some church friends. Simply sitting together, singing or praying, can remind you that you’re part of a supportive **spiritual family**. Hebrews 10:25 encourages us not to forsake meeting together, *“but encouraging one another.”* Let today be a time of *mutual encouragement*. You might say to a friend, “I’m trying to find joy in Christ again – can we read a Psalm together or just talk about God’s faithfulness?” This can shift your focus from your problems to God’s goodness, *in community*.
- **Seek Professional Help if Needed:** Emotional exhaustion can sometimes be a sign of deeper depression or anxiety that might benefit from professional counseling. **Don’t hesitate to seek professional help.** If your symptoms have been severe (e.g. constant despair, inability to function at work, panic attacks, or thoughts of hopelessness), a Christian counselor or therapist could be a critical partner in your recovery. There is absolutely no shame in this – it is a wise and proactive step. God often works through skilled counselors and doctors. As Proverbs 15:22 notes, *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”* A therapist provides a safe space to process your stressors, teach you coping strategies, and hold you accountable in establishing healthy changes. Modern medicine can be a gift too – for instance, short-term use of an antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication might be appropriate if a physician assesses that your brain’s chemistry could use support. If that’s the case, remember the earlier principle: biblical and spiritual support **complement** medical treatment, they don’t conflict ([ERLC, 2025](#)). Taking a prescribed medication for a season, or talking to a psychologist, in no way diminishes your faith in God’s power. It’s simply utilizing the tools He’s made available. **Defend the use of modern medicine** to yourself if you have any stigma – for example, Luke (writer of one Gospel) was a physician, and Paul advised Timothy to take a remedy for his stomach (1 Timothy 5:23). These imply that using medicine and knowledge is part of God’s provision. If you feel your exhaustion has crossed into clinical depression or anxiety disorder, please consider making an appointment this week with a mental health professional. Many therapists are offering tele-therapy (online sessions), which can be convenient and less intimidating. You can even seek out a Christian counselor who shares your faith perspective.
- **Group Support:** Beyond one-on-one connections, you might benefit from a **support group** setting if available. Some churches or community centers run burnout recovery groups, stress management classes, or even informal gatherings for people to discuss mental health in a faith context. Just knowing *“I’m not the only one feeling this way”* does wonders for your morale. If you can’t find an in-person group, there are online forums and Christian communities where people share struggles and pray for each other (for instance, some churches have Facebook groups or apps for member care). Use discretion with online groups, but they can be helpful if you’re feeling alone. Hearing others’ testimonies of overcoming burnout can spark hope that *“if God helped them, He can help me too.”*



Today is also a good time to involve your immediate household in your recovery plan. If you have a spouse, children, or roommates, talk to them about what you're doing this week. Explain that you're focusing on getting healthier and might be making some changes (like saying no to extra duties or spending more time in rest). Ask for their support and understanding. You might be surprised – your loved ones likely noticed your exhaustion and will be glad to see you prioritizing self-care. They might step up to take over certain chores or give you space to unwind. Accept their help. It's an opportunity for them to show love, and for you to practice humility and receiving grace.

By the end of Day 4, after genuine connection, you should feel **less alone** and maybe a weight off your shoulders. Social support often brings immediate emotional relief – one study described how simply perceiving that you have supportive relationships can **buffer the physiological effects of stress** ([Hostinar & Gunnar, 2015](#)). Spiritually, fellowship reminds you that *you are part of the Body of Christ* (1 Corinthians 12:12–27); if one part suffers, every part suffers with it, and if one part is honored, all rejoice with it. You likely received some wise counsel or prayers today – hold onto those as fuel for the journey. And if you did take the brave step to schedule a counseling session or talk to your doctor, commend yourself. You are investing in what will likely be significant healing beyond this week.

Day 5: Rediscover Joy and Meaningful Activity

Key focus: Doing something you **love** (or used to love) and rekindling positive emotions.

When you're burnt out, life can feel gray and joyless. Hobbies, interests, or ministries that once excited you might have fallen by the wayside. Day 5 is about **reconnecting with your passions and pleasures** – in small, doable ways – to remind you that life is not only obligations and fatigue. God created us not just to work, but also to enjoy beauty, creativity, and rest. *"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance"* (Ecclesiastes 3:4). By intentionally engaging in a joyful or meaningful activity today, you will stir up positive emotions that counteract stress. In psychological terms, this is called **behavioral activation** – doing rewarding activities to lift mood. In spiritual terms, it aligns with *"the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10). Let's build some strength through joy today.

- **Do Something Just for Fun:** Identify one activity that you genuinely **enjoy** but perhaps haven't done in a while. It could be something artistic like painting, playing a musical instrument, crafting, or baking your favorite dessert. It could be revisiting a favorite pastime like reading a novel, watching a wholesome movie that makes you laugh, or working on a puzzle. Maybe you love being in nature – consider going birdwatching or tending to a garden. Maybe you used to love sports – shoot some hoops at the local park or play catch with your kids. **Whatever brings you a spark of delight, make time for it today.** Even if at first you "don't feel like it," push gently through and start. Joy often follows action. It might feel foreign at first to indulge in fun for yourself, but remember, *God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment"* (1 Timothy 6:17). It's not selfish to take delight in good things – it's part of His design. Real-world example: A teacher who was burnt out spent an afternoon tinkering with her neglected piano and found that playing hymns for an hour greatly lifted her spirit and reminded her of God's presence. Likewise, a busy dad who loved fishing went out to a nearby lake for a few hours and returned home visibly more relaxed and upbeat. These "small" fun moments can have disproportionate benefits on your mood and motivation. In fact, therapists often assign clients to schedule pleasant activities because it reliably increases positive emotions and reduces stress.



- **Express Gratitude and Savor Good Moments:** While you engage in your chosen activity, **practice gratitude** actively. Pause and notice anything positive: *This cake smells good, This song is uplifting, I'm thankful for this sunshine*, etc. Say a quick thank-you prayer for each ("Thank You, Lord, for this ____."). **Gratitude is extremely powerful** in reversing the negative mindset of burnout. Research has shown that practicing gratitude actually changes the brain and body: it boosts levels of dopamine and serotonin (the "feel-good" neurotransmitters), improving your mood almost immediately([Univ. of Utah Health](#)). In one study, people who kept a daily gratitude journal had lower cortisol levels and felt more optimistic and resilient in just a few weeks([Univ. of Utah Health](#)). Being grateful literally "*rewires*" your brain to notice blessings over problems. From a faith perspective, gratitude shifts our focus to God's goodness rather than our struggles. As 1 Thessalonians 5:18 urges, "*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" Today, make a list of at least five things you're thankful for. They might be as simple as "*I had a refreshing walk yesterday*" or "*My friend checked on me*", or as profound as "*Jesus died for me*". If you enjoy writing, consider starting a **gratitude journal** to continue after this week. Or share a couple of your "gratitudes" with a friend or on social media to spread the positivity. Gratitude not only feels good, it *reduces stress hormones* and increases feelings of social connection and hope([Univ. of Utah Health](#)). It's one of the best antidotes to cynicism and despair that accompany burnout.
- **Pursue Your Passions (in bite-sized pieces):** Burnout can make you forget why you entered certain roles or jobs in the first place. Take time to recall or rediscover your **passion** and sense of calling. If your exhaustion is largely work-related, reflect on aspects of your work that you used to find meaningful. Was it helping others, being creative, solving problems? Try to tap into that again on a small scale today. For example, if you became a nurse out of compassion but now feel numb, spend a few minutes talking with a patient or colleague in need of encouragement (as long as you're not currently on leave). If you went into ministry to share God's love but burned out from admin tasks, take a break to visit someone in need or write a short devotional – something that rekindles your *purpose*. Outside of work, think of hobbies or dreams you shelved. Did you once enjoy writing, or teaching kids, or building things? Do a little piece of that today. **Reconnecting with what brings you purpose** counteracts the burnout feelings of inefficacy and pointlessness. It's like fanning a small flame that can grow. Moreover, engaging in meaningful activities increases what psychologists call "**flow**" – a state of absorption that boosts positive emotion and fulfillment. It fights the cynicism of burnout with enthusiasm. A Christian perspective on this is Colossians 3:23, "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.*" When you rediscover joy in your tasks (or new tasks), you can more readily work wholeheartedly again, because you remember *for Whom* you do it.
- **Laugh and Play:** "*A joyful heart is good medicine*" (Prov 17:22). If at all possible, **laugh** today. Watch a funny clean comedy, recall old funny memories with your family, or play a silly game with your children. Laughter releases tension and floods your body with positive hormones. It literally improves immune function and reduces stress. It's hard to be anxious and merry at the same time – laughter creates a mini-vacation for your brain. Perhaps call that friend who always makes you laugh, or watch a few comedic clips that you enjoy. Don't underestimate the healing power of humor in God's design!

By the end of Day 5, having deliberately injected some **fun, creativity, and gratitude** into your routine, you should feel your emotional palette widening from grey toward color again. You might catch yourself smiling genuinely, or feeling a spark of excitement about something. That's huge progress! Spiritually, you may sense a revival of *joy in the Lord*. David prayed in Psalm 51:12, "*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and*



grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22) – it often returns as we abide in Christ and take time to enjoy His gifts. Also, doing things you love reminds you that your **identity is more than your exhaustion** – you are still the person who loves music, or nature, or serving, or whatever, and those aspects of you can flourish again. You're reclaiming those pieces bit by bit, which is incredibly encouraging. In clinical terms, you are breaking the cycle of apathy and anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure) that comes with burnout, replacing it with positive feedback loops of interest and reward. This momentum will help carry you forward.

Day 6: Set Healthy Boundaries and New Rhythms

Key focus: Learning to say "no," managing stressors, and planning sustainable changes post-recovery.

As you approach the end of this focused week, Day 6 is about **preventing relapse** and addressing the factors that led to exhaustion in the first place. You've rested, prayed, exercised, connected, and found some joy again – wonderful! Now, how will you protect this newfound balance when "normal life" resumes? An essential part of any burnout recovery is **setting boundaries** and adjusting your rhythms so you don't fall back into the same overload. Think of Jesus: He often withdrew from crowds to pray (Luke 5:16), and He didn't say "yes" to every demand (Mark 1:35–38). He invites us to *"learn from Me... and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matt 11:29). One thing we can learn is Jesus' rhythm of engagement and withdrawal, work and rest. Today, you will take practical steps to establish **healthier patterns** going forward, grounded in wisdom and Scripture.

- **Identify and Limit Your Stressors:** Take some time to reflect on what *specifically* contributed to your emotional exhaustion. Was it too many work hours? Taking on every volunteer request at church? Lack of sleep due to overcommitment? Trying to be perfect in everything? Write down the top 2–3 **stressors or unhealthy patterns** that you need to address. Then brainstorm one or two changes for each. For example: If you've been working 60 hours a week, you may need to talk to your boss about adjusting your workload or set a firm cutoff time in the evenings. If you've been saying "yes" to every request (from baking cookies for events to leading extra ministries), practice saying **"I'm sorry, I can't this time"**. It might feel uncomfortable initially, but it is vital. Remember, every time you say "yes" to something, you are saying "no" to something else (often your own rest or family). Pray for wisdom (James 1:5) to discern which commitments are truly yours to carry. As Ephesians 5:15–16 advises, *"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of the time."* Sometimes "making the most" means not filling *all* your time with activity. **Schedule margin** into your life. Going forward, plan at least one rest day or half-day each week with no major responsibilities (a true Sabbath). Also, carve small daily margins – maybe 30 minutes each evening for quiet or a relaxing hobby. These are the buffer zones that keep stress from accumulating.
- **Practice Saying "No" Graciously:** If you struggle with people-pleasing or fear of disappointing others, consider this: When Moses was overwhelmed with work, his father-in-law Jethro counseled him to delegate and only take the tasks that **only** Moses could do, letting others handle the rest (Exodus 18:17–23). This was essentially a lesson in boundaries. Start small: pick one thing currently on your plate that is not absolutely necessary or could be done by someone else, and **step back from it**. Maybe it's a committee at church or an extra project. Communicate honestly: *"I've realized I need to scale back to preserve my health/family. I won't be able to continue serving in XYZ capacity after this month."* Most reasonable people will understand – and if they don't, that's not on you. It's better to step down than to continue until you collapse entirely. In a work context, if your boss is piling too



much, have a respectful discussion about prioritization: *"I want to do my best on these projects. Can we review my load and see if any deadlines can be shifted or tasks reassigned?"* Protecting your time and energy is not selfish; it enables you to give your *best* where it truly matters. As Jesus said, *"Let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No,' no"* (Matthew 5:37) – in other words, speak truthfully and simply about what you can or cannot do. You might be surprised how others adjust when you set a boundary; often they just weren't aware you were at capacity.

- **Plan Ongoing Self-Care Habits:** Think of the key practices you did this week – prayer, exercise, fun, fellowship – and decide how to integrate them **regularly** into your life. Make a simple self-care plan: for example, *Daily*: 15 minutes of morning devotion, 10 minutes of deep breathing at lunch, evening walk or stretch, gratitude journaling before bed. *Weekly*: church on Sunday, counseling on Thursday, no-work Sabbath on Saturday, hobby time on Wednesday night, etc. It doesn't have to be very detailed, but having a routine helps maintain gains. Write it down and maybe share it with an accountability partner. Treat these self-care activities as **non-negotiable appointments** with yourself and God. Your natural impulse might be to drop them when life gets busy again, but remember the lesson: running on empty serves no one well. You might even post a visual reminder (a Scripture like Mark 6:31, or simply "BREATHE" on a sticky note) in your workspace to remind you to pause and rest. One research insight: employees who set clear work-home boundaries (like not checking email after hours, or taking a true lunch break) have much lower burnout rates and higher job satisfaction^[1]. So your "small" habits like shutting down your laptop by 6pm, or taking a 5-minute prayer break for every 2 hours of work, truly add up.
- **Guard Your Inputs:** Another boundary aspect is guarding what you allow to occupy your mind and time. Revisit media and technology use with discernment. Perhaps commit to limiting news to a short, scheduled time, and avoid doom-scrolling before bed. Replace some screen time with reading uplifting books or listening to edifying podcasts or music. Philippians 4:8 provides a great boundary filter: *"Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things."* Set boundaries so that toxic media or incessant negativity doesn't drain you. Curate your social media feeds or take regular fasts from them if needed. Protect your Sabbath days from unnecessary work or consumerism, devoting them instead to worship, family, rest, and recreation. These are guardrails that keep your soul healthy long-term.
- **Enlist Ongoing Support:** Don't try to maintain all these changes alone. Share your intentions with your spouse or a friend: *"Going forward, I plan to exercise three times a week and not work on Sundays. Can you help me stick to that?"* Maybe join a small group or class focused on spiritual growth or stress management so you have a community moving in the same direction. Many people find that continuing therapy for a little while greatly helps them solidify new coping skills and perspectives – it's like having a coach as you re-enter the game of life after an injury. Hebrews 12:1 talks about *"throwing off everything that hinders"* and running with perseverance, with the encouragement of the "great cloud of witnesses." Let your cloud of supporters cheer you on as you implement healthier patterns.

Day 6 might involve some tough choices or conversations, but it is arguably one of the most **important** days. This is where you take the restorative work God has been doing in you and build structures around it to sustain it. You are effectively saying: *I value the life God has given me and the calling He has for me enough to protect my ability to live it well.* By establishing boundaries, you align with Jesus' example and obey the principle of loving your neighbor **as yourself** – implying you do need to love and care for yourself



appropriately. That self-care is what enables you to pour into others from a full cup rather than an empty one.

At the end of Day 6, you may feel a mix of relief and empowerment. Perhaps you finally resigned from that overloading responsibility, or set a new rule like no work email after dinner – these can feel like burdens lifted. You're taking control (with God's guidance) of your life's pace. Clinically, this reduces chronic stress exposure and gives your mind predictable periods to recuperate. Biblically, it is exercising wise stewardship of your time and energy. Give thanks to God for the wisdom to make these changes and ask His continued help: *"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom"* (Psalm 90:12).

Day 7: Rest in God's Presence and Look Ahead with Hope

Key focus: A Sabbath day of worship and reflection, and celebrating progress.

You've reached the final day of this one-week plan. Day 7 is intentionally designed as a **day of rest and worship**, echoing God's pattern of creation (Genesis 2:2-3) and the Sabbath principle. It's time to **replenish your soul in God's presence**, solidify the lessons learned, and step forward with renewed hope.

- **Sabbath Rest and Worship:** Attend a church service today if you can (or tune in online). Joining with the body of Christ in worship can be deeply rejuvenating. Sing the hymns or worship songs, even if tears come – music has a way of healing emotional wounds and allowing us to express what's inside. The act of praising God lifts our gaze above ourselves. You might find that verses and truths hit you differently now after this week of recovery. Listen to the sermon; often God speaks through the preached Word directly into our situations. Many people emerging from burnout describe a moment in worship where they felt God's love wash over them and restore their joy. As you worship, claim the promise of Isaiah 40:31 one more time: *"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles."* Tell God you are hoping in Him, and welcome Him to continue renewing you. Also, engage in *restful* activities that connect you with God's creation and goodness. Perhaps take a slow prayer walk in nature (as you did before, but now as worship), or take a relaxing drive with Christian music on. Avoid any work or chores that can wait – this is your Sabbath. Jesus said *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27) – meaning God instituted it as a blessing and gift to you. Enjoy it guilt-free. Read a favorite scripture and just *savor* it without rush. Let your body, mind, and spirit fully exhale.
- **Reflection and Gratitude for the Week:** Spend some time reflecting on this past week. You might journal or pray through questions like: *What has God taught me through this recovery process? How is my emotional and physical state now, compared to day 1? Which practices or moments were most helpful?* Write down any insights or breakthroughs you experienced – for instance, *"I learned that if I go to bed earlier I actually feel hopeful in the morning,"* or *"When I pray honestly, God gives me peace,"* or *"Exercise really lifted my mood, I need to keep that up,"* or *"Saying no didn't cause the world to fall apart!"* Documenting these will help you remember and continue in them. Also list the **benefits** you've felt: maybe your stress rating went from 9/10 to 4/10, or you haven't had a headache for several days, or you laughed more and felt more present with your family. These are significant victories worth celebrating and thanking God for. Consider Psalm 103: *"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits – who... redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."* Truly, if you've followed through this week, you have experienced some redemption from the pit of exhaustion and a taste of

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renewed youth! Give God glory for that. Perhaps share a testimony in church or with a friend about how this week has impacted you. Not only does that cement your own progress, it can encourage others who might be silently struggling.

- **Recommit to a Joyful Life with Christ:** As you look ahead, *set your eyes on Jesus* (Hebrews 12:2) as the sustainer of your joy. Make a simple commitment in prayer: *“Lord, I choose to live within Your rhythms of grace going forward. I trust You to help me maintain balance, and I will prioritize my relationship with You above the rat race. I want to serve You with gladness, not with burnout (Psalm 100:2). Please fill me daily with the joy of Your salvation and the power of Your Spirit.”* Remember, the ultimate source of lasting strength is God’s joy and the work of the Holy Spirit in you. You’re not expected to do this alone or perfectly. But now you know some practical ways to cooperate with God’s design for a healthy mind and body. *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me”* (Psalm 28:7). Keep trusting that He will help you – He already has this week.
- **Consider Your Purpose and Calling Anew:** Emotional exhaustion can sometimes blur our sense of purpose, but recovery clarifies it. Take some time to prayerfully consider if there are any larger life adjustments God is prompting. Perhaps during this week you realized your job or certain commitments are truly draining life from you and might need a change. Or you’ve discovered a neglected passion that God wants you to nurture. Day 7 could be a time to seek God’s direction on any *“big picture”* questions. However, be cautious not to make drastic life decisions while you’re still in a tender state. Continue in prayer and get wise counsel for major moves (like changing careers or roles). Sometimes burnout signals that something about our life or heart needs realignment with God’s purposes. As you regain strength, you might discern that, for example, you need to delegate more and mentor others rather than doing everything yourself, or maybe shift into a role that better fits your gifting. Trust that *“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion”* (Philippians 1:6). This week was the beginning of a good work of renewal. God isn’t done – He will lead you step by step.
- **Continued Support and Follow-Up:** Finally, plan for how you will **follow up** after this week. If you jotted a self-care routine on Day 6, stick it on your fridge or desk. If you started counseling, keep attending. If your energy is back enough that you feel tempted to jump into a flurry of activity on Monday, hold on – remember the boundaries. Perhaps schedule another mini-retreat day for yourself one month from now to recalibrate (mark it on the calendar). Healing from burnout is sometimes two steps forward, one step back. There may be days ahead where you slip into old habits or feel exhaustion creeping in. That’s okay; recognize it early (you know the signs now) and implement the tools you’ve gained. **Preventative maintenance** is much easier than full collapse! By catching the warning signs and responding – maybe you’ll need a “Day 1” kind of rest again periodically – you can avoid falling back into deep burnout. Share with someone you trust that you came out of a tough season and might need accountability to not overload again. Community can help keep you on track.

As Day 7 closes, take a deep breath. You have traveled far in one week. **Celebrate** what God has done: *“I will praise You, Lord my God, with all my heart... For great is Your love toward me; You have delivered me from the depths”* (Psalm 86:12–13). You may not be 100% “back to normal” yet – deeper healing can continue beyond this week – but you are no longer stuck in a pit of burnout. You’ve likely regained a sense of hope, experienced God’s comfort, and built healthier habits. These are tremendous strides in just seven days. Many people feel *50-80% better* after implementing such an intensive week of self-care and spiritual



renewal, especially if their burnout was in early stages. Even those who were severely burned out find that this week jump-starts their recovery, though they may continue healing for weeks or months. Be patient with yourself and keep the long view.

In summary, this one-week emotional exhaustion recovery plan has addressed your **body** (through rest, nutrition, exercise), your **mind** (through prayer, mental relaxation, enjoyable activities, and boundary setting), and your **spirit** (through Scripture, worship, and fellowship). This holistic approach is key because burnout is multi-faceted – it saps physical energy, warps thinking, and dampens spiritual zeal. By tackling all angles, you’ve given yourself the best chance to heal. Clinical research backs this comprehensive strategy: for instance, a study on a burnout intervention training showed that within one week after the program, participants already had improved recovery scores, better sleep quality, and higher self-efficacy in managing stress ([Hahn et al., 2011](#)) – and these improvements grew in subsequent weeks. You too have likely seen improvements that will continue as you persist in healthy rhythms.

Importantly, you’ve realigned with biblical principles of rest and dependence on God. Remember, **Jesus is our ultimate rest giver**. He said, *“Come to me... and I will give you rest”* – and you have come to Him this week. Continue coming to Him daily. When you feel weak, recall His words to Paul: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Emotional strength in the Christian life is not about never getting tired; it’s about knowing where to turn when we are – to the Lord who renews us. *“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak”* (Isaiah 40:29).

As you move forward, ground yourself in **joy and hope**. Joy is a choice and a fruit cultivated by staying close to Jesus (John 15:5,11). Hope is the anchor for your soul (Hebrews 6:19) – hope that with God, the best is yet to come. The heaviness of burnout can be replaced by the *“garment of praise”* (Isaiah 61:3) as you consistently practice these principles. You will likely find your relationship with Christ deepened through this trial – you’ve tasted His comfort and sustaining grace in your low point. That becomes part of your testimony and equips you to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Real-World Outcome Example: To illustrate, consider “Alex,” a 38-year-old ministry leader who followed a plan similar to this: At baseline, Alex rated his emotional exhaustion 9/10 and was contemplating quitting his role. He took a one-week personal retreat focusing on rest (slept 10 hours the first night), prayer and journaling (identified sources of burnout), light exercise (daily hikes in nature), and talking with a counselor and a mentor. By the end of the week, Alex’s exhaustion rating dropped to 4/10. He reported sleeping through the night for the first time in months and regained a sense of God’s nearness and calling. He implemented boundaries – no emails after dinner and delegating two ministry tasks. Three months later, Alex’s burnout inventory score had improved by 60%, he was still in ministry with renewed enthusiasm, and his wife noted he was *“like a different person – present, peaceful, and joyful at home.”* Your story can follow a similar trajectory as you apply what you’ve learned.

In conclusion, **emotional exhaustion is not the end**. With one dedicated week of the right practices and God’s grace, you can turn the tide. You have an “emotional exhaustion recovery plan one week” long, but its effects can reverberate long after. Protect what you’ve gained. Keep walking in step with the Holy Spirit, who produces life and peace (Romans 8:6). Whenever you feel that familiar drain, use these tools – and don’t wait until you’re completely empty to refuel. Think of this week as a template you can revisit whenever needed. You might not always be able to take a full week off, but you can incorporate mini-resets regularly.



Above all, maintain your connection to Jesus – “*the vine*” – because apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). In Him, we find rest for our souls, purpose for our work, and joy for our journey. The Lord does not want you living burnt-out and joyless; “*the joy of the Lord is your strength*” (Nehemiah 8:10). As you emerge from this week, lean into that joy. By God’s grace, you are on the path to not only recovering from emotional exhaustion but also flourishing in a sustainable, **abundant life** (John 10:10).

Go forward in faith, take it one day at a time, and know that the Lord is with you each step. “*Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength*” (Isaiah 40:30–31). You have hoped in the Lord this week – and He **is** renewing your strength. May He continue to uphold you and fill you with His peace as you live out a more joyful, balanced life in Christ!

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