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# THE REST INITIATIVE

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## *Wellness Guide*



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*\*Note:* this is a self-care guide,  
not a therapeutic tool.



## INTRODUCTION /

The Lord will guide you continually giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength.

*Isaiah 58:11 NLT*

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

*Exodus 20:8 NIV*

By design, in the fourth commandment, the Creator gave us limits and created us to pause and rest regularly. He knew we had a limit to our capacity; He knew we needed the Sabbath. The Designer found it best that his creation have seasons of rest, rejuvenation and reflection.

It is easy for many of us to stay driven and busy—to stay focused on the task needing attention or the results we so desperately want. But there is a cost. A cost to running so hard, striving with the best intentions and forgetting to tend to ourselves.

What is the cost? When we neglect ourselves, what will the results be? It can often lead to exhaustion, loneliness, burnout, a hard heart, and disconnection from the Creator.

Many of us are picking up this guide in an effort to prevent what will happen if we continue at such a fast pace. Some are already at the end of what they have to offer others. And some might just be curious what a life of intentional self-care might look like. Our hope is that in these few pages, you might find a guide that leads you in that direction and that you will discover a fuller picture of rest and wellness.



## WELLNESS GUIDE /

This guide is designed to both invite you into a space where you can care for yourself, as well as challenge you to create opportunities where you are cared for well by others. It will prompt you to examine your daily routines and evaluate where you are on life's journey. It will cast a vision for what self-care could look like as you continue to serve others.

This guide will focus on three primary sections that are core to caring for ourselves well. First, we will create an opportunity to look at your physical well-being; next, your emotional well-being; and lastly, your spiritual well-being. You will find brief descriptions of each along with prompts to help you focus and examine. It is important that you know there is no right or wrong way to engage with this guide. Our desire is that you find plenty of space for Holy Spirit to lead you as you consider vital areas of your being that need care.

## WHAT IS WELLNESS? /

Wellness is a difficult term to describe with a single definition. Some describe it as a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit. The National Wellness Institute defines wellness as “an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a more successful existence.”<sup>1</sup>

Another way to think about wellness, a more complete way, is to see wellness as “wholeness.” As author and seminary professor Chuck DeGroat writes, “Wholeness can also be described as soulfulness, a life that’s centered, passionately engaged, open, creative, connected, and propelled by a sense of mission.”<sup>2</sup> This is a beautiful vision of someone who is well. This person is free, at rest and connected to self and to others. But as author, educator and activist Parker Palmer states, “Wholeness does not mean perfection: it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life.”<sup>3</sup> So, to be well is to be whole. To be whole is to acknowledge our brokenness and move towards experiencing a life that is undivided.

## WHAT IS THE DIVIDED LIFE? /

When we are not well, we are fragmented within. We are pulled in a million different directions to please others or prove ourselves. For some, this means we forget ourselves in the pursuit to be worthy or impactful. We use the same techniques Adam and Eve used in the garden of Eden, where they hid and covered themselves. And they hid because they felt shame. They realized something was not okay with who they were. It is this same shame that drives us to live a divided life. It is this divided reality that robs us of wholeness and peace. This perspective acknowledges that all of us are divided, fragmented people who “work tirelessly to perfect ourselves but only end up exhausting ourselves.”<sup>4</sup>

DeGroat goes on to say, “I’ve come to believe that much of what ails us today comes from the soul’s deep fragmentation. One glaring symptom of the divided heart is exhaustion.”<sup>5</sup> And what is the solution for our exhaustion? He quotes the Benedictine monk, Father David Steindl-Rast who said, “The antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest. The antidote to exhaustion is wholeheartedness.”<sup>6</sup> It is in the freedom of wholeness that we experience life, creativity, love and true rest. This guide is written to lead us to wholeness, to rest and ultimately to wellness.



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE /

The pages that follow allow you to explore physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Each section is outlined, followed by space to journal your thoughts. You are encouraged to use the 3A's tool in each section.

This tool is designed to encourage thoughtfulness and healthy behaviors. You are encouraged to choose from one of the five highlighted areas. The five areas are core to the section and designed to guide your processing. Be careful to not limit your time or thoughts as you engage with this guide. Lastly, it would be wise to be gracious with yourself and see yourself in light of the Father's love for you. And as DeGroat kindly points out, "Wholeness is invited. Invited and envisioned, it grows and ripens, and its fruits begin to spill over in ways that demonstrate the presence of the kingdom."<sup>7</sup>

## JOURNEY WELL /

Caring well for yourself is necessary, intentional, and quite a long journey. We pray this guide serves you well during this season. It is important to remember that not only did Jesus often care well for himself, but he also set up parameters for us to do the same. Remember: you are a child of the King—the Beloved. Care for yourself as such.



# WELLNESS TOOL: THE 3 A'S

Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.

*Proverbs 19:2 ESV*

When we think of our “inner life”, we want to take into account the condition of our hearts, our spiritual lives, our behaviors and our relationships. We often find ourselves on autopilot in our busy and active lives, going from one thing to the next with good intentions. It becomes common for us to become numb to our own needs and desires by avoiding them. Similar to an iceberg where we only see 10% of the actual mountain of ice and 90% of the iceberg is underneath the surface of the water; we can too easily find ourselves staying above the water line.

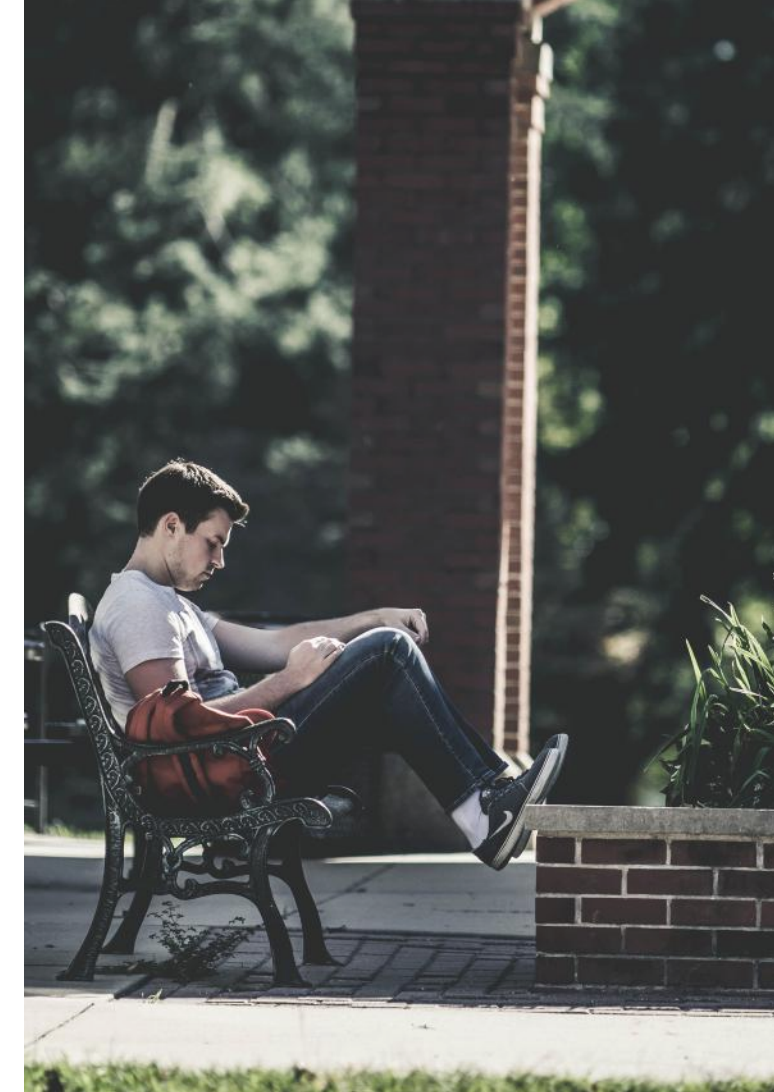
By taking time to check in with ourselves, we can begin a healthy practice of mindfulness. This helps us tend to areas of our life that are out of balance or need our care. Scott E. Spradlin describes mindfulness as “...a practice of being awake, of participating in your life, of learning to inhabit your life. It is also the practice of becoming more intentional with your actions.”<sup>8</sup> You are invited to be awake and more intentional in your own life when using this journal.

Originally used by Al Anon to help family members dealing with addiction, Awareness, Acceptance and Action (known as the 3 A's) is a helpful tool we will use throughout this guide to mindfully reflect on our own emotional and relational health.

Awareness is the first “A” and helps us move out of denial, toward reflection and increases our self-awareness. The practice of awareness helps us acknowledge what is going on in our minds, hearts, bodies, and spiritual life. Awareness is the first step to building healthy relationships with yourself and others. We can't heal what we don't acknowledge. Awareness allows us to create space for growth and pay attention to our emotional/mental health, physical health and spiritual health. By being aware of our inner world we ask questions like: “How am I feeling physically? Where in my body am I feeling the stress or grief? Am I caring for my body? What am I feeling? Are there any thoughts, judgments or self-talk that I am aware of? Do I feel connected with God?”

Acceptance is the second “A” and is an important part of emotional, spiritual and physical health. The skill of acceptance is ultimately to validate our experiences. Acceptance removes judgment of ourselves and helps us accept wherever we are in the process of growth. We often believe we should feel, think, or act a certain way. We have a hard time admitting we are sad, hurt or scared. We may have a hard time accepting our limits physically (i.e. pushing through illness when we need to rest). Acceptance helps us admit that what we are experiencing is real and valid. We admit where we are (emotionally, physically, spiritually), even if it's not where we want to be.

We may not like what is going on inside of us or in our relationships, but we can acknowledge that what is happening is impacting us and matters to us. With acceptance, we replace judgment of ourselves and others with compassion and curiosity. It is here we begin to accept and make statements like, “It makes sense that I feel this way”, or “My feelings are real.”



We are careful to not use “should” statements and shaming statements. We replace judgment of ourselves with curiosity and self-compassion.

Action is the third “A” that increases our emotional and relational health. Action helps us move from internal focus to external, healthy behaviors. While awareness helps us to pay attention to what is going on and acceptance helps us acknowledge what is going on with a non-judgmental posture, action leads to caring for ourselves and our relationships. By taking action, we engage in behaviors that lead toward refreshment, healing and growth. This step in the process of self-care is vital to live an intentional life. We can take action by deciding to do what is difficult. We take steps to care for ourselves and others. We ask: “What do I need? How can I honor my feelings? Do I need to reach out to others?”

# PHYSICAL HEALTH

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.

*Isaiah 40:31 NIV*

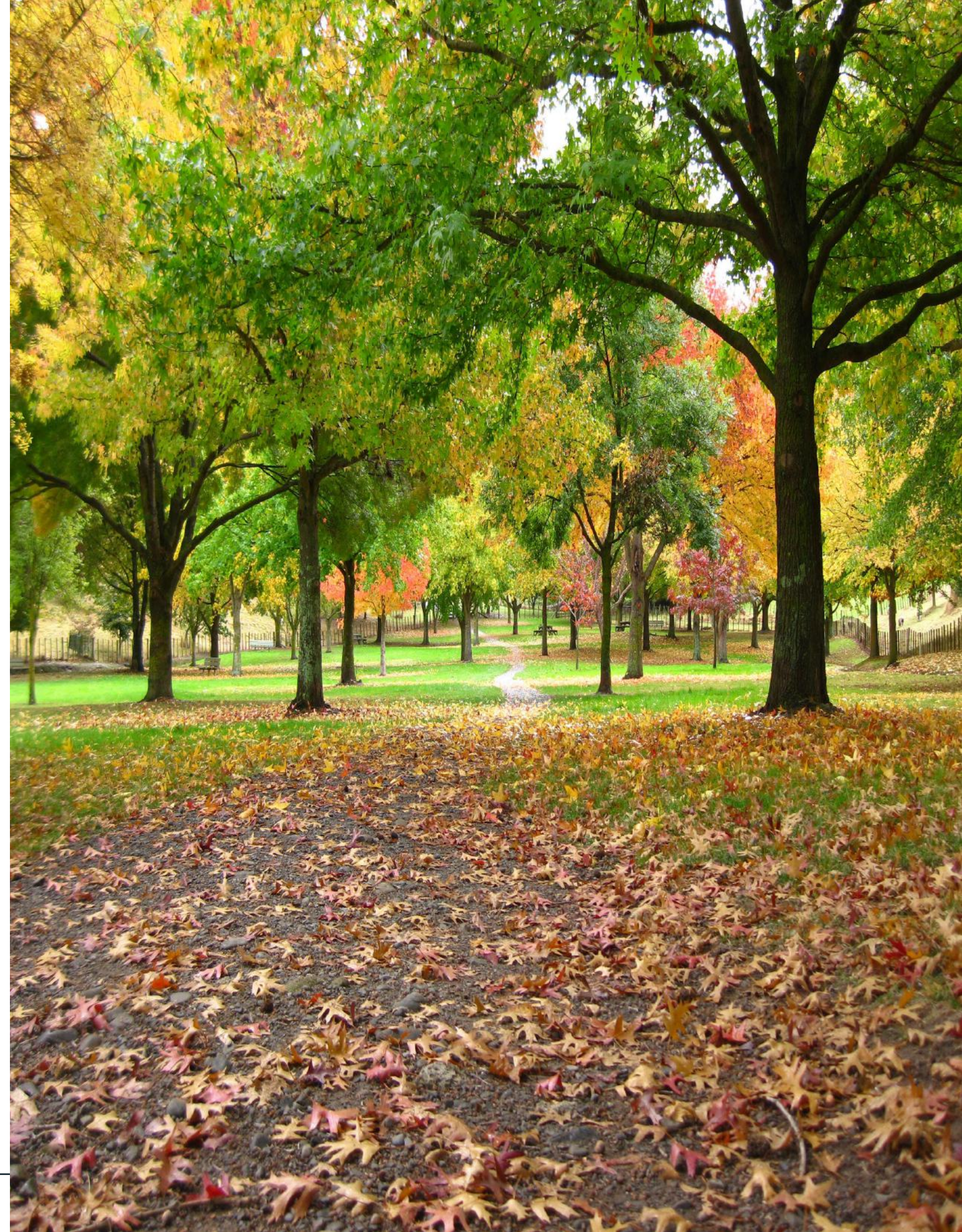
You are made in the image of God. You reflect the beauty, abilities, personalities, passions and desires of the triune God. This means that even your physical body expresses that same image in your height, skin color, gender and other unique attributes you possess. This also means that together in our global diversity we represent a more complete picture of the Divine image than any one of us can alone.

This is one of the reasons the Apostle Paul reminds us that our bodies are a “temple of the Holy Spirit.”

We also know that your body’s well-being has an incredible impact on every other part of who you are. Our moods, energy levels, relationships, our view of self and our work output are just a few of the areas impacted by your physical health. If our bodies are not well cared for, it will be hard for us to experience wellness. Take time to examine and care for the following five areas having to do with the health of your body.

## SLEEP /

One of the most important elements to physical health is getting sufficient sleep. Sleep plays an important role in the healing and repair of your body. It increases your ability to retain information and strengthens your body’s ability to regulate mood. The medical community is in agreement that one of the single most important steps you can do for your overall well-being is to get adequate sleep.







## MOVEMENT /

When your body is moving, your heart rate increases, pumping blood and oxygen throughout your body. Blood flow to your brain increases brain functioning, making you feel more alert and awake. Your lungs are expanding, renewing the much needed oxygen in your body. The capillaries in your face dilate along with the blood vessels throughout your body. Movement restores, renews and reminds us we are made to live.

## FOOD /

When you eat a balanced meal, your body obtains the fuel and nutrients it needs to function and perform regular tasks. Eating well provides energy for activity, growth, service and impact. Food is often a representation of how well you care for yourself. And sometimes (as when you are eating too much, too little or in otherwise unhealthy ways) food can be an indicator that you are punishing yourself. Being aware of what goes into your body is crucial to long-term resilience and present rest.

## TOUCH /

Touch is essential for humans. And while different cultures have different norms regarding the appropriateness of physical touch, all cultures have forms of healthy touch. Healthy touch plays an important role in how we feel and how we connect. Your ability to receive and offer healthy affection plays a key part in building successful relationships. Healthy touch often reminds us we are not alone, and our value does not come from what we do or how we perform. Knowing what you need and desire from others in this area is important. Healthy touch contributes to how well you feel about yourself and those you love.

## BREATH /

Mindful breathing is an important skill to help cope with stress, anxiety and other difficult emotions. Breathing can easily be forgotten, as it is a duty your body performs automatically. But tending to your breathing will impact your mind, body and spirit. Learning to experience the rhythm of our breathing is an important exercise to grounding ourselves especially amidst the storms of life. For example, before you proceed, take a deep breath- fill your lungs entirely, then exhale slowly. Do that five or six times. What do you notice?



# PHYSICAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Use the following questions to reflect on your physical wellness.

## AWARENESS /

Spend some time reflecting on each of the questions below in an effort to become more aware.

- +Take a few minutes to settle your body into a comfortable position. Take a few deep breaths. Then, gently notice how you are feeling physically.
- +Where in your body are you feeling things like stress and grief?
- +Over the last three months, how much sleep have you been getting per night, on average? How much would you like to be getting?
- +How have your eating habits contributed to the care of your body over the last year?
- +How have you incorporated movement in caring for your body over the last year?
- +How are you feeling about the above reflections? Are there any thoughts, judgements or self-talk that you are aware of?

## ACCEPTANCE /

There is nothing new you have learned in this reflection that your loving Father does not already know. Spend a few minutes working to see yourself from God's perspective--full of love and grace, then reflect on and complete the following statements:

- It makes sense that I feel this way because...*
- It makes sense that I feel tired because...*
- It is valid to feel \_\_\_\_\_ because...*

## ACTION /

As you make this reflection, what do you discover regarding actions you desire to take?

- +What do you desire from God this week?
- +What do you desire from others this week?
- +How might you honor the feelings that surfaced in this reflection?
- +What would it look like to honor the discoveries you made in this reflection?
- +What is one specific step you can take this week?



## EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.  
Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

*Ephesians 3:17 NLT*

People who are emotionally healthy have authority over their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They are able to cope with life's challenges and are able to bounce back from difficulty. While many of us enjoy paying attention to positive emotions, it is just as important to pay attention to negative emotions. Learning to be aware of what we feel and to express those feelings will contribute to an overall stable state of wellness.

Those who are emotionally healthy are shown to be resilient, relationally-satisfied and more capable of thriving. Acknowledging and honoring our feelings is also a way of connecting to what is actively going on around us and in us. The following sections will touch on five primary emotional areas that make up the core of our emotional foundation. Take some time to examine the following five things that affect our emotional health:

### CELEBRATION /

Slowing down to celebrate both the large and small joys of our lives benefits our overall well-being. By celebrating everything from cultural holidays, to birthdays, to lifetime milestones, to joys of particular friendships, we nurture a posture of gratitude and thanksgiving. Celebrating well can also contribute to our physical and spiritual health.

### GRIEF /

Learning to grieve what we have lost can often be a freeing and necessary experience. Whether we are grieving the loss of a person, a relationship or a dream, acknowledging what is lost is the first step in moving through a season of grief. Grief involves many different emotions besides sadness. If you are grieving you may also experience feelings of anger, disappointment, loss, emptiness, and even relief. *Healthy grieving happens both privately and with others.*

### TRANSITION /

Whether we like change or not, the reality of transition is that it will cause disruption and loss. Prioritizing space and time to care for yourself during this season is important for long term sustainability. There are many emotions present during a season of transition. Acknowledging them will allow for less stress before, during and after a transition.

### CONNECTION /

We are not designed to be alone. We are made for connection, to be bonded and united first with Christ then with others. Intimacy in our friendships and family relationships can be the source of great joy and love. But it is also true that our intimate friendships and family relationships are often the source of great pain.

### REST /

Resting is one of the ways we most actively express our trust for God. It is in not working that we display our trust that God is ultimately responsible for managing the things we care most deeply about such as our family and our work. But pausing or slowing down, as necessary as it is, is often challenging.



# EMOTIONAL WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

Use the following questions to reflect on your emotional wellness.

## AWARENESS /

Spend some time reflecting on each of the questions below in an effort to become more aware.

+Take a few minutes to settle your body into a comfortable position. Take a few deep breaths. Then, gently notice how you are feeling emotionally. In what way is this the same or different from how you usually feel?

+What has happened in your life recently (over the last month, or week, or day) that is worth celebrating?

+Are you grieving anything in particular right now? What has that process been like?

+Are you experiencing any significant transitions right now? How are you feeling in the midst of them?

+How are you feeling in terms of connectedness? How would you evaluate your close friendships and family relationships? Do they bring you life and joy? In what ways?

+Explore your need for connection and relational intimacy. How do you experience others and how do others experience you? How do you feel about being vulnerable with others?

## ACCEPTANCE /

There is nothing new you have learned in this reflection that your loving Father does not already know. Spend a few minutes working to see yourself from God's perspective-full of love and grace, then reflect on and complete the following statements:

+What negative emotions did you become aware of in your reflection? What would it look like to simply acknowledge and accept them?

+What transitions do you find yourself in right now? What would it look like to acknowledge and accept them?

## ACTION /

As you make this reflection, what do you discover regarding actions you desire to take?

+What do you desire from God this week?

+What do you desire from others this week?

+How might you honor the feelings that surfaced in this reflection?

+What would it look like to honor the discoveries you made in this reflection?

+What is one specific step you can take this week?

# SPIRITUAL HEALTH

May he keep us centered and devoted to him, following the life path he has cleared, watching the signposts, walking at the pace and rhythms he laid down for our ancestors.

*1 Kings 8:58 MSG*

The Creator of the universe designed us as spiritual beings with a need to worship Him only. When we worship anything other than God—whether it is work, a relationship, our children, or anything else—we will find ourselves increasingly empty in our spirit. This emptiness will then spill over into other areas of our lives, perhaps making us lethargic, depressed, or overwhelmed. For this reason, we need to take regular pauses in which we reflect on our spiritual health.

A spiritually healthy person produces the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. They engage in the spiritual disciplines of baptism, prayer, communion, confession, and fellowship with the family of God. They accept that by the work of Jesus alone, we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God.

Five areas that will encourage spiritual healthiness are confession, community, connection, forgiveness, and silence.

Proverbs 4:20-22 says, “My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.”

## GRIEF /

In confession we acknowledge what is true of God and true of us. Knowing God invites confession and that is the means through which we are brought healing and freedom. We are encouraged to desire to live a life with regular rhythms of confession.

## COMMUNITY /

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another,” Hebrews 10:24-25. The necessity of and desire to be with those we love, and who love us well, is necessary to our spiritual health.



## CONNECTION /

As we mentioned in previous sections, we are not designed to be alone. We are made for connection, to be bonded and united first with Christ and then with others. Intimacy in our friendships and family relationships can be the source of great joy and love. It is often in our most intimate friendships and family relationships where we find the most helpful partners in our journey of faith.

## FORGIVENESS /

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness,” 1 John 1:9. The God that has brought us near by means of forgiveness also taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us,” Luke 11:4. Forgiving others, and even forgiving ourselves is often challenging. But working toward forgiveness brings freedom, release and joy as part of the regular rhythms of worship.

## SILENCE /

“For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength,” Isaiah 30:15. Our strength comes not through working and noise but by cultivating quietness and trust. Contemplation and meditation are places where we can hear and see God.



# SPIRITUAL WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

Use the following questions to reflect on your spiritual wellness.

## AWARENESS /

Spend some time reflecting on each of the questions below in an effort to become more aware.

- +Take a few minutes to settle your body into a comfortable position. Take a few deep breaths. Then, gently notice how you are feeling spiritually. In what way is this the same or different from how you usually feel?*
- +Do you feel connected to God? In what way?*
- +In what ways has God seemed present and/or absent this week?*

- +How have you experienced God in the scripture you have read and heard this week?*
- +Where are you still longing for God to show up?*

## ACCEPTANCE /

There is nothing new you have learned in this reflection that your loving Father does not already know. Spend a few minutes working to see yourself from God's perspective-full of love and grace, then reflect on and complete the following statements:

- +Regardless of how you would assess your relationship with God right now, how might you simply sit and accept that God loves you deeply - that God cherishes you?*
- +In what situations in your life are you still working towards forgiveness? How might you simply sit and accept that you are in the middle of that difficult and important process?*

## ACTION /

As you make this reflection, what do you discover regarding actions you desire to take?

- +What truths do you need to rest on for the rest of this week?*
- +What spiritual disciplines might be most helpful to engage in this week?*
- +What help might your community be able to offer you this week?*
- +How might you consider serving others this week?*

# TOP 10 WELLNESS PROMPTS /

- +Have you sat and been still?*
- +Are you aware of how you feel after a conversation or a meal?*
- +What have you done to play?*
- +Where does your mind wander?*
- +Have you engaged in some form of creativity?*
- +Is there space to let your mind wander?*
- +Have you spent intentional time with friends or family?*
- +Has your body experienced movement?*
- +Have you experienced God's nearness?*
- +Is there anything you are avoiding?*

# STRESS CHECKLIST /

- +Do you need to pause?*
- +Headaches, tight muscles or neck/shoulder pain*
- +Insomnia or difficulty sleeping*
- +Mood swings*
- +Irrational fears*
- +Anxiety/depression*
- +Relationship problems*
- +Digestive upset*
- +Illness*
- +Weight change*
- +Sexual problems*
- +Temper flare-ups*
- +Loneliness*
- +Hyperactivity*
- +Fatigue/lack of energy*
- +Skin conditions*

# HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS /

- +Avoid screen time at least 30 minutes before bedtime*
- +Get plenty of exercise*
- +Maintain a consistent bedtime*
- +Have a consistent bedtime routine*
- +Avoid working in bed*
- +Avoid excessive alcohol use*
- +Avoid caffeine*
- +Keep your bedroom comfortably cool*
- +Avoid heavy meals before bed*
- +Make your bed comfortable*





## APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A

## *Areas of Special Focus*

- Relationships
- Anxiety
- Sexuality
- Depression
- Rest

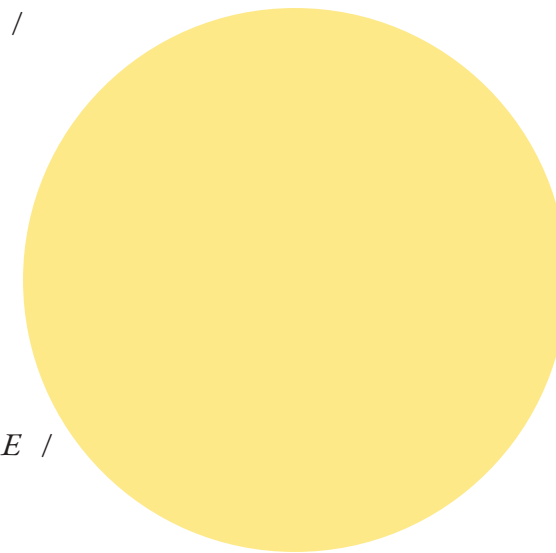
*\*Because these topics by nature have the potential for triggering emotional discomfort, it is strongly encouraged that you journal through these topics with caution, wisdom and a healthy support network.*



# RELATIONSHIPS

Connecting with others to feel known and loved is core to who you are as an image bearer. Our desire to be relationally intimate is a desire to be loved. We are loved well when we are known and accepted. Knowing what we need from others and what we have to offer others is important to self-care. You are encouraged to consider your relationships. Examine hurts, joys, needs, wants, boundaries and love. You are the beloved. The Father desires to be intimately in your presence.

- AWARENESS /



- ACCEPTANCE /

- ACTION /



# *ANXIETY*

Anxiousness is one of our body's engine lights. When these feelings of anxiousness arise, it is important to explore further and ask what might be happening under the hood. We must listen to what our soul is trying to convey to us during anxiousness and not foolishly drive ourselves to the point of collapse.

The stressors that initiate anxiety vary among individuals and can be actuated by social situations, finances, romantic relationships, or the mystery of the unknown. The consequences of anxiety, however, are similar and include feelings of being stuck, fears of failure, loneliness, physical discomfort, panic and feeling out of control.

*- AWARENESS /*

*- ACCEPTANCE /*

*- ACTION /*





## *SEXUALITY*

Core to our identity as image bearers is our sexuality. We reflect God as man or woman. And how we express our gender involves our personalities, temperaments, gifts, desires and other character traits. Our sexuality also drives how we connect with others and how we view ourselves.

When we experience sexual abuse, either physically or emotionally the deepest part of who we are is wounded. Being exposed to abuse firsthand or caring for others who have experienced this type of abuse we most often feel intense shame. Shame can be seen in anger towards others, contempt for ourselves or often in numbness.

One of the most difficult actions to take for someone who has experienced firsthand or secondhand abuse is to begin the process of healing. You are encouraged to explore your own sexuality, the beliefs that surround it and the wounds that affect it. It is important to do this in the context of a supportive, healthy and safe support network.

*- AWARENESS /*

*- ACCEPTANCE /*

*- ACTION /*



## *DEPRESSION*

Often on a spectrum, some people will experience a lower mood that will inhibit routine behaviors. Sometimes we can experience acute, situational depression due to an event or experience. An example might be the passing of a friend or hearing a story that was emotionally heavy. Chronic depression is when someone can struggle for a longer period of time such as weeks or months. It is important to evaluate your mood, as depression can often get worse when untreated. Those with lower moods often describe life as gray or dark. They tend to be lethargic, lacking energy. And often they experience loneliness and feeling disconnected from others.

Recognizing your emotional dips is crucial to maintaining a healthy mood. It is often very difficult to navigate depression alone. Seeking professional care is often necessary and encouraged.

*- AWARENESS /*

*- ACCEPTANCE /*

*- ACTION /*

## *REST*

Our design to create and rule (based on Genesis 1:28) is connected to our need to rest. Rest offers us the ability to rejuvenate, re-orientate and remember. It is in biblical resting that we reenergize and refocus our minds on Jesus. We also are able to look back and remember the work and presence of God.

When we rest well we are reminded to work from our rest rather just resting from our work. Luke tells us that Jesus often withdrew from the crowds to be with his father in heaven. He also tells us how Jesus understood the Sabbath as a time to pause. Resting well will be what often sustains us through the storms of life.

*- AWARENESS /*

*- ACCEPTANCE /*

*- ACTION /*



## APPENDIX B

### *Further Thoughts*

- Transition
- Emotions
- Secondary Trauma
- Anger
- “Should”
- Nutrition

## TRANSITION

If you look up the most stressful life events according to medical and mental health professionals, most lists will include the following: death of a loved one, divorce, moving, major illness or injury, and job loss. While each of these events comes with its own difficulties, they all have one thing in common: they involve transition.

Transition is the process or time period of changing from one state of being or condition to another. We all experience transitions throughout our lifetimes, but each transition is unique to each person and circumstance.

All transitions have their challenges. What may be difficult for one person may not be difficult for someone else. One person might find a transition easy and inspiring filling them with energy whereas others might be totally thrown off balance by the change in their structured life.

Facing any life transition in a healthy way involves awareness, acceptance, and action. We must be aware that a transition is taking place, accept the impact of the transition, and take action to care for ourselves in the process. When we work through transition and understand how it shapes and impacts, we see what role transition plays in each of our stories.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “Mere change is not growth.” Transition without purpose would almost seem cruel, but God never lets us stay in the same place too long. He cares about us too much. How have transitions affected you in the past? How do you navigate life-changing transitions?



# EMOTIONS

Emotions provide valuable information that we all need. They are signals that help prepare us to take action, help us communicate and help live a meaningful life. Think of emotions like the dashboard gauges in a car. The dashboard has gauges to give you important information like a check engine light, gas light, tire pressure light, etc. When a gauge lights up, it is signaling that something is going on and you may need to take action.

Similarly, emotions are also signals that help give us information about ourselves and our relationships. There are seven primary emotions we all experience. Below is a list of the seven primary emotions and how these emotions can be helpful:

*Love:* loving feelings help us want to take care of other people, animals or even ourselves. Love helps us create deep connections with others and calms us.

*\*Other love words:* adoration, affection, arousal, attraction, caring, charmed, compassion, desire, fondness, kindness, longing, tenderness, warmth

*Joy:* joyful feelings help signal that we are happy and may lead us to be more open to being playful, adventurous or connected in relationships. When we are joyful we have more energy and creativity.

*\*Other joy words:* bliss, delight, enjoyment, excitement, hope, pride, optimism, enthusiasm

*Interest:* feelings of interest help signal us to be curious about ourselves, others, and our environment. Interest helps us learn, grow and focus on things that are important to us.

*\*Other interest words:* absorbed, attraction, curiosity, engaged, fascination, probing

*Anger:* anger is an emotion that signals displeasure. Anger is a signal that something important to us is being threatened. It can signal us to protect ourselves from harm or fight for something we believe is important.

*\*Other anger words:* aggravation, agitation, annoyance, bitterness, contempt, disgust, envy, hate, irritation

*Sadness:* sadness is a signal that we are weary, unhappy or “have had enough.” It signals that we feel disconnected in relationships or that we have lost something important to us.

*\*Other sad words:* alienation, anguish, crushed, defeat, despair, disappointment, dismay, gloom, grief, hopeless, hurt, insecure, loneliness, suffering

*Fear:* The feeling of fear signals danger and helps give us the energy to respond. Our body responds to the fear signal by either freezing in place, confronting the threat, or getting away as quickly as possible.

*\*Other fear words:* anxiety, distress, dread, nervousness, panic, shock, tenseness, uneasiness, worry, terror

*Shame/guilt:* Healthy guilt signals to us that we have done something wrong and need to make a repair. Shame can also signal to us that we have done something wrong, but often it signals a form of unworthiness. Guilt helps us take responsibility for our mistakes and failures. Guilt signals, “I’ve *done* something wrong.” and shame signals, “I *am* something wrong.”

*\*Other shame/guilt words:* contrition, embarrassment, humiliation, insulted, invalidation, regret, remorse

[ Emotion list adapted from Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder by Marsha Linehan (1993). ]



## SECONDARY TRAUMA

Secondary trauma or vicarious trauma can occur when someone is exposed to disturbing descriptions of traumatic events. Exposure can be transmitted via survivors, individuals who have been traumatized, or others who have caused trauma to another. Emergency workers, medical health professionals, first responders, mental health professionals, social workers, ministry workers, and caregivers are at high risk for secondary trauma.

Those suffering from secondary trauma are often misdiagnosed because they did not experience trauma first hand. Unfortunately the symptoms are identical to those who have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

They include intrusive thoughts, chronic fatigue, sadness, anger, poor concentration, second guessing, detachment, emotional exhaustion, shame and/or physical illness. It is important for those caring for trauma victims to evaluate themselves for signs of secondary trauma. If left untreated, those suffering from secondary trauma face chronic symptoms that will affect their relationships as well as their work.

Treatment for secondary PTSD can include talk therapy, group therapy or traditional trauma therapy. Physical exercise is also a major contributor to the recovery and long-term sustainability of those working with trauma victims. Finding ways to offer proactive care has the best long-term results for overall wellness.

## ANGER

Anger is an emotion that we typically think of as negative or unacceptable. Whether we notice anger within ourselves or in others, we usually don't like it and don't know what to do with it. When left unchecked, anger can be harmful and destructive. But, can anger be helpful as well?

All emotions, including anger, are signals that give us information about ourselves and our relationships. When we pay attention to these signals, we can use this information to help us. For example, sadness is a signal that we have lost something important to us or we feel disconnected from people we love. Paying attention to sadness can help us grieve or turn toward a loved one for comfort.

Anger is a signal to help protect us from being harmed or hurt. It allows us to defend ourselves from a threat to our well-being or to fight for something that is important to us. Anger tells us that something is "off" in a situation or relationship-that we don't like how we are being treated, a boundary has been crossed, or something we value is threatened. Anger can help us clarify a situation and even strengthen us to fight for justice. When we are curious about our anger, we can examine if we need to make changes in our relationships or engage in healthy boundaries. It can also help us clarify if a relationship is unhealthy or harming us. Anger is important because it is the signal that "something isn't right" and we may need to make a change.

It's important to not judge your anger as right or wrong, good or bad, but become curious about why you are angry. What is your anger telling you about yourself or your relationships? You may need to clarify boundaries, or you may need to reach out to repair a relationship. You may need to acknowledge how your anger has hurt others, repent, and ask for forgiveness. You may also need to recognize that your anger is a sign you need to consider forgiving someone that has harmed you. Allow anger to give you information and then move toward healthy behaviors to resolve the anger.





## “SHOULD”

“Should” is a tricky word. There are healthy “shoulds”. If you find yourself going about your day and thinking, “I should brush my teeth” or “I really should stop at that stoplight”, then you are paying attention to those healthy “shoulds”. Healthy “shoulds” motivate us to do something that is usually safe, good for our health, or responsible whether we really feel like doing that thing or not.

There are also unhealthy, or shame-based, “shoulds”. These are usually the “shoulds” we tell ourselves when we don’t want to feel or do something that seems messy or difficult in the moment. If someone hurts or offends you and you find yourself thinking, “Pull it together. I shouldn’t be upset about this”, that is a shame-based “should”. It indicates that you are telling your brain and body not to feel what it is actually feeling.

The problem with these shame-based “shoulds” is that they tend to add up over time and become a wall that stands between us and our relationship with God, ourselves, and others. They teach us to not feel what we are feeling, which robs us of being present both in the moment and in our relationships.

It is helpful to see that what we need is to give ourselves permission to feel, regardless of how messy or difficult that feeling may be. Oftentimes we give others endless permission and grace to feel and do what they need, but we don’t extend the same kindness to ourselves.

*+What are your shame-based “shoulds”?*

*+What would it look like for you to give yourself permission today?*

*+If someone else was feeling the way you are, what would you say to them?*



# NUTRITION

A healthy diet is a balanced diet. A balanced diet includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. Lean proteins can come from a variety of sources including chicken breast, turkey breast, beef (look for words “round”, “loin” or “lean” ground beef), seafood, eggs, nuts, and legumes, also known as beans.

## *What about portion control?*

How much you eat is just as important as what you are eating. It’s important to make sure you are getting the proper amounts of healthy foods in your diet to ensure your body is getting all of the nutrients it needs.

## *How often should I be eating?*

This is a tricky one. The most ideal diet would include 4 or 5 small meals throughout the day. However, this is sometimes unrealistic due to long, busy days. The goal is to listen to your body. Try to at least eat 3 balanced meals a day with a snack in between. A snack can be as simple as a piece of fruit and nuts. Always have something on hand, such as a granola bar or piece of fruit in your bag to help hold you over until your next meal. Try to go no more than 3 or 4 hours without something to eat. This will help prevent overeating.

## *What should I eat when I’m under a lot of stress?*

The best thing to do when stressed is to stick to a balanced diet. Eating foods that are packed with a variety of nutrients will help fuel your brain and body with the energy you need to combat stress. Eat light and small portions so that you are not bogged down with food weight, which will make you feel heavy. Make a conscious effort to eat, even when you don’t feel like it. Take a deep breath and grab a snack when you feel the need to recharge. Look for foods that are easily accessible such as fruit or prepackaged snacks. Just make sure to look at the nutrition label to watch out for added sugar and saturated fats. Load up on fiber to feel fuller longer by eating fruits or vegetables with the skin on, or foods that contain whole grains or legumes. Most importantly, stay hydrated! Carry a water bottle with you to help remind yourself to drink water throughout the day.

Avoid foods that contain added sugar and saturated fats. Our body often craves unhealthy foods when we are stressed, but it is important to steer clear of these types of foods. Candy and other foods that have a lot of added sugar will give your body a spike of energy, followed by a hard crash, since your body cannot maintain these sugar spikes over a long period of time. It is important to keep our bodies healthy first, in order to be able to deal with stressful situations appropriately.

Remind yourself to eat balanced meals with snacks in between to fuel your body with energy for those long, stressful days. How much and when you eat is just as important as what you are eating. Be prepared by always having a snack on hand to help when you don’t have time for a full meal or feel too rushed to find something to eat. Use these tips and information to help guide you towards a healthier diet and lifestyle.





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The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

*- Psalm 23*



**rest:** /rest/ v. to cease work or movement in order to relax, refresh oneself, or recover strength. to be placed or supported so as to stay in a specified position. to be free from anxiety or disturbance. to remain confident. to cause to be firmly fixed. n. an instance or period of relaxing or ceasing to engage in strenuous or stressful activity. peace of mind or spirit.

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