

MAKING SPACE FOR GRATITUDE IN GRIEF

Exercising Grief

Devotional Guide

Grieving in Glory by Shatoya P. Aylor
Virtuously Unevield®



Exercising Grief

Inspired by the blog entry "Making Space for Gratitude in Grief," this devotional journal is designed to create a space to exercise your grief. Embracing gratitude amid grief does not diminish the pain; rather, it allows both emotions to coexist. It invites us to acknowledge what we still hold dear—whether it's the cherished memories of our loved ones, the support from those around us, or the strength we find in our faith.

Through thoughtfully crafted devotional questions, this journal encourages you to explore your feelings and experiences, helping you create a personalized plan to exercise your grief. By focusing on the gifts that arise during our journey of loss—such as character growth, deepened relationships, and the ways God sustains us—we cultivate a profound sense of peace and resilience.

Check out the blog entry at https://virtuouslyunveiled.com/2024/09/25/making-space-for-gratitude-in-grief/

How to Exercise Grief

"Exercise grief" refers to actively engaging in practices and reflections that help individuals process their grief in a healthy and constructive way. It involves:

1. Acknowledge Your Emotions

Exercising grief starts with acknowledging the emotions that come with loss. Whether they are sadness, anger, confusion, guilt, numbness, or even relief. Instead of pushing these feelings aside, you face them honestly. This might involve crying, talking about your grief, or writing about your feelings. I did all three and this made space for the emotions I was suppressing to surface. I was able to process each emotion and eventually release them.

2. Create Space for Your Grief

Just as you set aside time for your physical health, exercising grief means giving yourself time to sit with and explore your grief. I do this through reflection, journaling, prayer, and walks. I try to be intentional about giving myself permission to grieve, rather than rushing through the process. I made a promise not to run away from grief but to face it, even when it appears in the ordinary moments of my day.

3. Engage in Healing Practices

Exercising grief involves engaging in activities that support healing:

- **Spiritual Disciplines:** I've dedicated time for prayer, meditation, scripture study, and grounding myself in God's promises and comfort.
- **Counseling/Support Groups:** I advocate for counseling! As a biblical counselor, I prioritize my mental and spiritual health. I have joined and completed two grief support groups, where I could express my feelings and receive support from others. I am currently in individual grief therapy and learning new ways to reframe my thoughts around grief.
- **Journaling:** I journal to help process my thoughts and emotions. I practice two-way journaling, asking God questions and writing what surfaces in my heart. I also write out the scriptures I'm led to read and the prayers I've prayed during each entry.
- **Physical Activity:** I engage in physical activity to release built-up tension and stress, whether through walking, running, or stretching. If you can't engage in a physical activity, then do some deep breathing exercises.

4. Find Meaning and Purpose

Exercising grief also means finding meaning in your loss, which can help you move forward with a sense of purpose. I reflect on how much my mom meant to me and how I can continue her legacy. In honor of our mother, my brother and I have created a nonprofit organization, the “Coach Cornelia A. Jackson Foundation.” Our mother was a revered educator, mentor, and advocate for youth empowerment. The foundation aims to provide scholarships, mentorship programs, and resources to empower students to achieve their academic potential, pursue their passions, and become compassionate leaders in their communities. Through our commitment to equity, access, and inclusivity, we strive to create pathways to success for students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to thrive and make a positive impact in the world.

For you, this may involve reflecting on what the person meant to you and how their legacy can continue in your life. It could be participating in causes or actions that honor the person you lost, giving you a constructive outlet for your grief.

5. Allow Grief to Transform You

Exercising grief involves recognizing that grief is not something you simply "get over." Rather, it’s something that, when fully processed, transforms you. This process is known as Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), the positive psychological change that an individual experiences after a life crisis or traumatic event. Over time, the intense pain will soften, and you will find new strength, deeper empathy for others, and a clearer understanding of what matters most in your life.

It’s crucial to acknowledge how you are evolving after the loss of your loved one. One statement that I hold dear is my mother’s words: “Baby girl, you will miss me when I am gone, but you need to live your life!”

Psalm 139

A psalm of David

1 O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. 2 You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. 3 You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. 4 You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. 5 You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! 7 I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! 8 If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave,[a] you are there. 9 If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, 10 even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. 11 I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night– 12 but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. 13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous–how well I know it. 15 You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. 16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. 17 How precious are your thoughts about me,[b] O God. They cannot be numbered! 18 I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me! 19 O God, if only you would destroy the wicked! Get out of my life, you murderers! 20 They blaspheme you; your enemies misuse your name. 21 O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate you? Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you? 22 Yes, I hate them with total hatred, for your enemies are my enemies. 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

New Living Translation

Psalm 139

DEVOTIONAL

God's Presence: Psalm 139 reminds us that God is always with us, no matter where we go. How does recognizing God's constant presence in your life provide comfort during your grieving process?

Known by God: The psalm emphasizes that God knows us intimately. In what ways can you find solace in knowing that God understands your pain and grief, even when you struggle to express it?

Darkness and Light: Verse 12 states that even darkness is not dark to God. How can this truth encourage you to bring your darkest feelings of grief before God, trusting that He sees and understands?

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Reflect on verse 14, which speaks of being fearfully and wonderfully made. How can embracing your unique identity and experiences help you navigate your grief?

Search Me, O God: In verse 23, the psalmist invites God to search their heart. What emotions or thoughts related to your grief are you hesitant to confront? How can you invite God into those areas for healing?

Grief and Hope: How does Psalm 139's message of God's intimate knowledge of you provide hope that healing and peace are possible in your journey of grief?

Reflecting on Life's Journey: Considering the psalmist's acknowledgment of God's guidance throughout life, how can you look back on your loved one's life and your shared memories to find moments of gratitude in your grief?

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Making Space for Gratitude in Grief

DEVOTIONAL

Practical Strategies for Exercising Grief:
Take time to write out specific strategies for exercising your grief. What practical steps can you take to honor your emotions and express your grief in a healthy way?

Seasons of Grief:
How do you resonate with the idea that "there is a time for everything"? In what season of grief are you currently, and how does it feel to acknowledge that season?

Understanding Mourning:
Reflect on Ecclesiastes 3:1-4. What does it mean to you that there is a "time to mourn"? How can you honor your feelings of sadness while also trusting in God's plan for healing?

God's Comfort:
In what ways have you experienced God's closeness during your times of grief? Can you recall a moment when you felt particularly supported by Him?

Leaning on God:
Psalm 34:18 tells us that the Lord is close to the brokenhearted. How can you intentionally lean on God for strength during your grieving process? What specific prayers or scriptures can you focus on for comfort?

Active Grieving:
Consider your approach to grief. How can you make the grieving process more active and intentional? What healthy expressions of grief can you incorporate into your daily routine?

Transformation Through Grief:
Reflect on how grief has shaped you or changed your perspective. What lessons have you learned through your pain that you might not have discovered otherwise?

Hope and Healing:
What does the promise of healing and joy look like in your life as you navigate grief? How can you remind yourself of this hope daily?

Community Support:
How can you seek support from others during your grieving process? Are there individuals or groups in your life that you can reach out to for understanding and companionship?



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Hey! I'm "Shatoya"

I want to express how much staying connected with others means to me. It's during challenging times that the support and understanding of a community become invaluable. Sharing our experiences allows us to find comfort and encouragement in one another. I believe that together, we can navigate the complexities of life and grow in our journeys of healing and faith. Each connection enriches my life and reminds me that I'm not alone. Connect with me on social media and follow www.virtuouslyunevield.com



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