

How to Manage Your Emotions God's Way

Our feelings can affect our physical health, often more than we realize. Here's how to manage your emotions the way God intended.

We all know health isn't just a physical thing. God created us as holistic beings with a spirit, body and soul. But how many of us truly connect the dots on a daily basis and realize the direct impact our emotions have on our physical health? When we aren't feeling well, often our instinct is to relate the problem to a physical illness, what we've been eating and drinking, or whether we've been exercising and getting enough rest. But sometimes the deeper part of the problem—the root of it all—stems from negative emotions that we permit into our life.

So while you're reading this article, I'm going to ask you to be honest with yourself about the kinds of thoughts and feelings you permit into your life. God wants you to feel strong and healthy. He also wants you around for the long haul. And for many of us, taking better care of ourselves emotionally needs to be just as important as how we care for our physical needs.

Seeing the Symptoms But Not the Problem

Years ago I became really sick. I was dealing with shortness of breath and just felt horrible. I couldn't relax. Every muscle in my body felt like it was tied in knots, so I went through various rounds of medical tests. Eventually, the doctors found a tumor on one of my adrenal glands and I thought, *Aha! That's it!* But then they said, "Actually, Joyce, this has probably been there all your life, and it's not really doing you any harm."

Even though it was good news, I was disappointed to find out there wasn't anything physically wrong with me that I could blame for how badly I felt. It all came down to one thing: I was a workaholic, living as if I had no limitations.

We like to think we can handle everything. And sure, we can quote Philippians 4:13 all we want: We *can* do all things through Christ who strengthens us. But God won't strengthen us to do something that's not His will for us to do.

When I learned how my emotions were affecting my overall health, I was forced to take an honest look at the problem. I knew if I didn't learn to control my emotions, they'd continue to control me. And I couldn't go on living that way.

Where to Start With Managing Your Emotions

The Bible is filled with Scriptures that warn us to guard our hearts against emotions such as fear, worry, anxiety, anger, unforgiveness, jealousy, grief and guilt. Yet most of us could name at least one or two that we're struggling with right now. Maybe you've even been holding on to one of these for a long time. Well, *now* is the time to do something about it!

In John 8:31-32, Jesus says: " If you abide in My word ... you are truly My disciples. And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free" (AMP).

It's easy to face the truth for or about someone else. For example, it's easy for me to spot my husband Dave's problems or my children's problems. It's more difficult for me to see my own problems, which means I have to seek the truth about *me*. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, each of us can face the truth, obey God's Word and make positive changes for our own emotional well-being.

Some people pay big money for professional help but never find the answers they want to hear. I'm convinced this is because many of these people don't really want to be helped; instead,

they want someone to excuse them from the problem: "It's not you. It's other people in your life who are causing you problems and making you upset."

I'm not saying that people don't do things to us they shouldn't do. People hurt us and it's not right. But the bottom line is this: You cannot control what everybody else does, but you can control your reaction to it.

It's time to stop letting someone else's bad behavior steal your joy.

It's Hard to Admit That It's Us!

I remember when my kids were young. I could spend the whole day at home, listening to music and singing praise and worship songs. But as soon as my kids came home from school, somebody would drop their books and somebody else would want something to eat, and then maybe they'd get in the refrigerator and spill something—and I became a totally different person.

I will never forget the time I was under the dining room table cleaning up spilled milk when the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "You know, Joyce, no matter how big of a fit you have, this milk is not going to run back up the table legs and into the glass, so you might as well learn how to go with the flow."

At that moment I realized how my emotions and behavior were playing right into the devil's hands. I decided it would stop right there.

Since then, I've spent years studying the topic of emotions in depth, and I can share with you some good, sound advice to help you overcome negative emotions. Let's take a look at three of the biggest: anger, guilt and grief.

Anger: Is It Ever OK to Be Angry?

When people mistreat you, it's not wrong for you to *feel*

anger. What's wrong is to not manage the anger. In fact, the Bible tells us to do this quickly. Ephesians 4:26 says, "When angry, do not sin; do not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down."

The longer you hold on to anger, the more it eats away at can try to pretend everything is OK for a while, but if you're really not letting go, anger will slowly destroy you.

When you're upset with someone else, I encourage you to ask God to show you how much mercy He gives you every day. At times, you'll need to do that over and over again, because even when you've prayed all the right prayers and said all the right things, you can still feel as if there's something missing: *What's wrong with me? I'm trying to forgive and I can't!*

We need to understand that forgiveness is not a feeling, it's a decision.

When you make the decision to forgive, pray for your enemies and treat them with kindness because that's what God's Word tells us to do. Eventually, God will cause your feelings to catch up with your decision to forgive.

Guilt: Getting Back Up After It Gets You Down

Isaiah 53:4-6 says that Jesus not only bore our sins, He also washed away our guilt. It's vital for us to understand this, because over time unresolved guilt will affect our mental health.

Not long ago I went to a mental institution in St. Louis to minister to the patients. I saw a woman there whom I'll never forget. She was shuffling along down the hall with a big cross around her neck, and she kept muttering under her breath, "It's all my fault. It's all my fault."

Jesus washed away our guilt because we were not created to carry that kind of burden. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, [there is] now no condemnation (no adjudging guilty of wrong) for those who are in Christ Jesus."

If you're truly sorry in your heart, there is no reason for you to shuffle your way through life feeling guilty or ashamed. Jesus made a way for you to live free from condemnation. So if you are struggling in this area and frequently battle feelings of guilt, I encourage you to let this Scripture sink in until you receive true revelation about who you are in Christ.

Grief: What Keeps You From Getting on With Life

Grief is another powerful emotion that God wants us to learn to release. To be clear, there isn't anything inherently wrong with grieving something or someone. The problem becomes when we cling to this emotion and allow it to control us and prevent us from moving into what God has planned for us. The key to victory is understanding the difference between a normal, balanced grieving process and a *spirit of grief* that will try to attach itself to us. One helps us get better with the passing of time; the other causes us to sink deeper and deeper into the pit of despair.

In Deuteronomy 34, when Moses died, the people were allowed to mourn his death for 30 days. Then the instruction came for them to move on. God does give us a period of time to work through our mourning, but if something or someone is gone and you can't get them back, then you have to go on with your life. We need to give God a chance to mend our hearts.

Revelation 21:4 says, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain any more, for the old conditions and the former order of things have passed away." This Scripture may be referring to our time in heaven,

but I believe it also applies to today—because as we walk in the Spirit, we can experience heaven here on earth. That includes allowing the Holy Spirit to comfort us in our time of grief, and then heal us so we can move on.

Your Emotions and Your Health

One of the most frequently quoted verses in the Bible instructs us to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your way acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6, NKJV). What many people overlook, however, are the following verses connected to this passages: “Be not wise in your own eyes; reverently fear and worship the Lord and turn [entirely] away from evil. *It shall be health to your nerves and sinews, and marrow and moistening to your bones*” (7-8, AMP, emphasis mine).

God connects our physical health to how we trust, acknowledge, revere and worship Him. Think about it: Each of those things is intrinsically tied to our emotional well-being, and by deciding to do each of them—regardless of if we *feel* like it—we supply God-given health to our physical bodies.

The reverse is true, then: When we allow emotions such as anger, guilt and grief to dominate our lives, our physical bodies are affected. With God’s help, however, you can learn to manage these and every other negative emotion that comes your way. This will take a measure of self-control on your part to succeed, because I can assure you there will always be things that try your emotions. But in Christ Jesus, you have the power to change your response.

You can rise above your emotions. After all, you are not what you feel.

And remember that in good times and in bad, it is God’s will for you to be emotionally healthy and constantly at peace.

Joyce Meyer is one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. A New York Times best-selling author, her books have helped millions of people find hope and restoration through Jesus Christ. Through Joyce Meyer Ministries, she teaches on many topics, with a particular focus on the mind, mouth, moods and attitudes. Joyce has authored nearly 100 books, including her latest, *Trusting God Day by Day* (FaithWords). For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.com.