

Living Gratefully: Proactive Depression Management

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Active gratitude is a deterrent to despair, discouragement, and depression. It can move us from unbearable emotions to a new way of life. Thomas Merton said, “The more you try to avoid suffering, the more you suffer, because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you, in proportion to your fear of being hurt. The one who does most to avoid suffering is, in the end, the one who suffers most.” Rather than focusing on mental suffering, we can continually transform it with gratitude, constantly applying God’s Word. Instead of being controlled by ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts, per Dr. Daniel Amen), we can live in grateful joy!

Choose to Live Gratefully		Replace ANTs	Principles for Grateful Living
G	Gratitude Attitude	Overgeneralization	<i>Rejoice always and delight in your faith; be unceasing and persistent in prayer; in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful and continually give thanks to God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, AMP</i>
R	Respond with Wisdom	Jumping to Conclusions	<i>Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 1:19-20, ESV</i>
A	Actively Love	Catastrophizing	<i>A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34, NIV</i>
T	Think Forward	Should Thinking	<i>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:14, ESV</i>
E	Emotion Management	Control Myth	<i>Let Christ’s teaching live in your hearts, making you rich in the true wisdom. Teach and help one another along the right road with your psalms and hymns and Christian songs, singing God’s praises with joyful hearts. And whatever you may have to do, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16-17, Phillips</i>
F	Forgive	Blaming and Labeling	<i>bearing with one another...forgiving each other; as the LORD has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Colossians 3:13-14, NKJV</i>
U	Understand & Apply Truth	Mental Filtering	<i>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8, ESV</i>
L	Live in the Present	Overlooking the Positive	<i>Do not fear, for I am with you. Isaiah 43:5a, AMP</i>
L	Live by Faith	Emotional Reasoning	<i>for we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7, ESV</i>
Y	Yield to God’s Will	All or Nothing Thinking	<i>The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps. Proverbs 16:9, ESV</i> <i>I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me. John 10:14, NLT</i>

As followers of Christ, we are called to radical transformation. “Instead of being on the side of our prejudices, He is deliberately removing them from us. It is part of our moral education to see our prejudices put to death by His providence, and to watch how He does it. God pays no respect to anything we bring to Him. There is only one thing God wants of us, and that is our unconditional surrender” (Oswald Chambers, from *My Utmost for His Highest*, October 23).

Romans 12: 2 (Phillips) says, *with eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.* It's a moment-by-moment choice to trust in God rather than circumstances.

Rather than being led by ANTs—automatic negative thoughts—or controlled by distressing emotions, we can apply biblical principles to each of our concerns, confident in our Good Shepherd's promises to lead us in *green pastures...still waters...goodness and mercy* (see Psalm 23).

“When the whole world is running towards a cliff, he who is running in the opposite direction appears to have lost his mind” (C. S. Lewis). But we haven't lost our minds! Reread Romans 12:1-2 in another Bible translation, noticing God's promise to *renew* our minds. He alone can provide lasting purpose, a life uniquely created by Him (see Ephesians 2:10). Amid life's real challenges, Paul advises: *my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Corinthians 15:58, NKJV). We can rely on God for authentic peace and deep fulfilment.

A prayer of hope: *Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy* (Psalm 61:1-3, NKJV). Father God, thank You for being my Shepherd, my Friend. I trust in You. I'm grateful for Your unfailing love.



This handout is not a substitute for professional counseling. If you're experiencing unmanageable emotions, please know you're worth getting the help you need! Ask your pastor, priest, or rabbi to recommend professional counselors near you. In South Florida, look for counselors at sfacc.net; throughout the United States, at aacc.net, cccf.org, or focusonthefamily.com. For practical ideas, you can read or listen to *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdeljH>). You can also watch “Strengthening Your Core,” a 12-week video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW> or subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.