

FOCUS

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Welcome to Focus Mentoring! The Focus Mentoring experience is a one-on-one program designed to help you take steps forward during challenging circumstances. The intention is that through the mentoring process, you will be able to assess your needs and be guided into healthy physical, emotional, and spiritual practices.

The session content is intentionally brief, and it is meant to spark self-reflection that will lead to helpful conversations. The hope is that the mentor's compassionate and thoughtful interactions will grow your trust in your heavenly Father and improve your ability to cope with your current situations. A personal faith story is not a requirement for Focus Mentoring, but if you are open to faith conversations and willing to explore what God might have to say about what you're facing, this will be encouraging and beneficial.

OVERVIEW

Week One: Where Am I?

Participant Goals: Evaluate current situation and take “emotional inventory” of losses.

Skill Building: Healthy habits for physical and emotional health and trust with mentor (leading to trusting God).

Week Two: Where Is God?

Participant Goals: Rely on God through prayer.

Skill Goals: Turning to God in the midst of hardships through the discipline of prayer.

Week Three: What Now?

Participant Goals: Evaluate what they can control and take charge of those areas.

Skill Goals: Connecting with your community.

Week Four: What's Next?

Participant Goals: Move forward in wisdom.

Skill Goals: Continuing physical, spiritual, emotional/relational healthy steps and move into a new ministry environment.

As you think through your circumstances, often what causes the most pain is thinking of what you have lost because of these circumstances. Grief doesn't just impact people who have lost a loved one. You can experience grief because of lost dreams, lost relationships, even a loss of expectations for a way of life that is now changed. **Take a few minutes to assess what you've lost below. It might be helpful to either list or describe in more detail the things you've lost and the emotions that come with that loss.**

LOSSES:

EMOTIONS:

Now that you've taken stock of your situation and your emotions, what are some healthy ways you have tried to cope? Are there strategies you have tried that are unhealthy? As you begin to look back, what are some things you'd change if you could? Are there coping mechanisms that have been helpful that you can explore further?

Knowing where you are right now, both your circumstances and your emotions, can help you be ready for the next step. If there are healthy steps you've taken that either benefit your situation directly or simply help you cope day to day with a more positive mindset, challenge yourself to continue taking those healthy steps this week. Talk it over with your mentor to come up with suggestions about other ways you could cope in a positive, productive way.

You're Not Alone

Find resources at [NPMCare.org/Focus](https://www.npmcare.org/focus)

WEEK TWO



Where Is God?

It's tempting to assume that when troubles come into our lives, we must have done something to deserve God's judgment. We can also be tempted to believe that this circumstance proves that God doesn't love us, isn't interested in us, or can't be real.

There are many examples we see from Scripture of God being close to those facing hardships. David wrote about this from his own perspective in Psalm 34:18 : "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." David was described in Scripture as "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) and yet he faced circumstances that we would describe as incredibly harsh. Some of the hardships David faced were a result of his own poor choices. Some of those hardships were simply circumstances in his life. Yet over and over again, written in many of the Psalms, we see David's prayers and praises to God in the midst of his circumstances. We see the full range of his negative emotions represented, and yet he is comforted in God's loving presence.

In Psalm 13, David writes:

¹How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

³Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

⁴and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

⁵But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
⁶I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me.

How do we see David respond in the face of personal tragedy? Have you ever found yourself crying out to God in this same way? What do you notice about David's perspective change in verse 6?

It might seem like God is nowhere to be found when we face our darkest hours. But David found a way to trust in God's protection and provision even when he faced hardships. What would it look like to try to see your situation differently, to look for the ways God has come near and to "trust in his unfailing love" as you process what you're going through? Maybe for you it's a simple prayer asking God to show you where he's at work in this circumstance. Maybe asking God, "What good can come from this situation?" is a question he longs to answer. Perhaps he wants to show you that he's near to you, that he hears your cries, and that he wants to lift the burden from you.

One helpful (though sometimes painful) question to ask when we face hardships is “**What is this circumstance revealing in me?**” Hard times show us aspects of ourselves that we would not otherwise see, and this knowledge equips us for the future. **As you reflect, can you see either answers to these questions or knowledge that has come through this season?**

Building on last week’s progress, what healthy habits will you pursue this week? Is there anything you’d like to add to the list or to continue doing from last week? If this isn’t a habit for you already, consider adding a prayer practice to your healthy habits. Try prayerfully asking yourself these questions throughout your week. This could be through journaling, speaking to God aloud, or just thinking through what you’re experiencing in the moment and asking God to meet you there.

- When have I felt true joy today?
- What has troubled me today?
- What has challenged me today?
- Where and when did I pause today to breathe and reflect?
- Have I noticed God’s presence in any part of my day?

God Is Near: Reminders of God's Presence As You Work Through Your Circumstances

Find resources at NPMCare.org/Focus

WEEK THREE



What Now?

When we're looking at a heartbreaking reality, one thing we often want to do is grasp for control. We want to engineer our lives to get the results we want, and we can go to great lengths to do so. Sometimes those efforts backfire simply because there are things that will always be outside of our control. Taking stock of what we can and can't control can be a helpful exercise in recognizing a healthy way through the situations we're in. **Take some time to list below the things you can control about your situation and the things you can't control.**

WITHIN MY CONTROL

OUTSIDE MY CONTROL

Looking at these lists, do you notice anything you maybe haven't seen before? Is one of these lists longer than the other? Does that surprise you at all? Check out the list of things within your control. Do these things seem like overwhelming tasks or monumental things to accomplish at this point in your life? Are there ways you can seek help from another person to accomplish those tasks? Describe how you might get help from others below:

From the early days of the Christian church, believers have leaned on their communities to deal with seasons of loss and difficult circumstances. Their communities were described in Acts 2 this way:

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Those early Christians knew that depending on others and helping meet the needs of others were key components of support and encouragement. Building a network of friends who can support us through tough seasons takes time and patience, but it can make a huge difference in setting us up for success in the future.

Taking steps to seek wisdom outside yourself is certainly one of the habits you're forming right now as you participate in this mentorship experience. Sharing your story with someone who can listen, possibly pray with and for you, and offer helpful next steps is a great way to feel unstuck. You've already started choosing healthy habits for your physical well-being, and you've taken some steps forward in your spiritual health through prayer. This upcoming week, consider what you might do to reach out for wisdom in your situation to someone else in addition to your mentor. Can you think of one or two people that you would trust to listen to your story and to offer support and encouragement? Reach out to them this week and ask for their help in this process. Give one specific means of support they could offer you and see what happens.

Seek Support

Find resources at NPMCare.org/Focus

WEEK FOUR



What's Next?

You may not have realized it, but you've spent several weeks now developing some healthy habits to impact your physical health, your emotional health, your spiritual health, and your relational health. For most of us, the consistent incremental changes that are diligently pursued over time have the most potential to effect change on those things we can control. At this point, you've hopefully been able to see some changes in the situation you're in, and you can see little slivers of light getting into the dark places you're walking through. Sometimes those healthy steps release just enough weight from our shoulders that we can then turn our attention to the things we're still missing. **What are some of the things you are currently doing that have helped you so far?**

PHYSICAL HEALTH PRACTICES

EMOTIONAL HEALTH PRACTICES

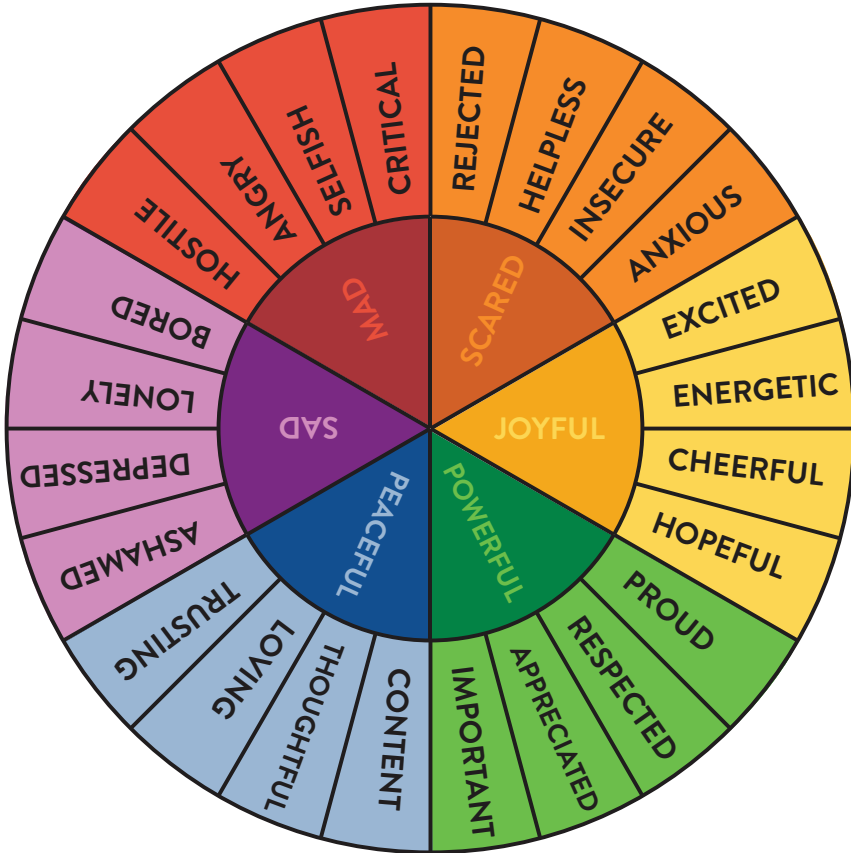
SPIRITUAL HEALTH PRACTICES

RELATIONAL HEALTH PRACTICES

Take some time to look over this list and evaluate your progress. Are there things you could change? Things to keep doing or stop doing? Ways you could invest in friendships that might lead you to greater healthy practices? Other steps you can take? Write that self-evaluation below:

So now, what do we do with that other list of things we can't control? These are the obstacles that are still left between you and the life you desire. Perhaps you've already been able to feel that when you take charge of those things you can control in a way that is healthy and life-giving, drawing on the strength and wisdom of wise and caring people, the things that you can't control are no longer looking quite so overwhelming. If that's not the case, talk to your mentor about looking at what steps you could take to move toward that future you want. If peace, freedom, or even just relief are not words you'd use to describe what you're experiencing right now, could you begin to trust that that relief, freedom, or peace is clearly the result of the path you're currently on? Sometimes relying on the faith of those around us when we can't quite see the road can make all the difference in the meantime. **How would you describe your faith in God at this moment?**

Additional Resources



Sometimes specific emotions can be difficult to identify. If that's the case, use this chart to help you name what you're feeling.

HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

PHYSICAL

- Take a walk or go for a drive
- Clean or organize your environment
- Evaluate your sleep habits and evening routines

EMOTIONAL

- Write a list of goals
- Choose a hobby or creative outlet
- Reward or pamper yourself
- Enjoy nature

SPIRITUAL

- Make a gratitude list
- Listen to uplifting music or messages
- Evaluate your entertainment for negative input
- Volunteer for a cause you believe in

RELATIONAL

- Talk to someone you trust
- Set a date for a social outing
- Encourage or serve another person
- Ask for specific help or support

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255

Find a Counselor: [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)

Addiction Resources: 800-662-HELP, [samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov),
[aa.org](https://www.aa.org)

Domestic Violence Resources: [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org),
800-799-SAFE

Food and Shelter: [endhomelessness.org](https://www.endhomelessness.org), [hud.org](https://www.hud.org),
[salvationarmyusa.org](https://www.salvationarmyusa.org)

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