

INTRODUCTION

How to use this book:

Congratulations! You've already overcome the most difficult task in using this booklet—remembering you have it. Perhaps you pulled this out from your workout bag or purse because you are standing in a long line or waiting for the dentist to call your name. Rather than reaching for your phone to mindlessly scroll through photos, you pulled this booklet out and have decided to devote these few moments of your wondrous life to fostering peace, joy, and calm. Bravo!

The next two steps are incredibly easy:

Take a deep gentle breath. Breathe in through your nose, fill your lungs, notice your chest rise. Release

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it slowly, feeling the air rush out of your nose or mouth. Take another if it feels good.

Turn to a page, any page, and read at your own pace. There is no beginning, middle, or end to this book.

These two steps are intended to bring your mind to the present and to ground your thoughts in the now. Too often, our minds are racing around chasing grocery lists, bills, obligations, and anxieties; so much so, that we may have little to no ability to control our thoughts. Taking a deep, life-giving breath (yes, you might even make some noise as you inhale and exhale!) not only feeds our bodies the oxygen they need, it pulls our minds out of the future (or past) and into the here and now.

This book is meant to be read on your time. There is no order or magic formula for reading it. Rather, this book is intended to be a daily companion for you, carefully filled with gentle wisdom and kindness to carry with you and to share with others as you encounter both strangers and loved ones in your daily routine. Each page focuses on a character quality and gives you three exercises—presence, prayer, and practice—to direct your attention to that quality.

PRESENCE: A short physical exercise that brings your mind, body, and spirit to the now by pulling your focus and energy into the present moment.

PRAYER: A brief meditation that asks God to help you, walk with you, and guide you.

PRACTICE: An idea for you to take a small, measurable action.

Other tips for enjoying this book:

- Write in the margins; underline passages; make notes. Write your own meditations.
- Read your favorite sentences out loud either to people who are listening, or to yourself.
- Toss out your expectations. No one book, action, or opportunity is going to be the key to everlasting tranquility.

Take a moment to notice this book in your hand, the pages and paper. Consider the weight of the book and feel the texture of the paper.

Commitment

Dedicating ourselves to living our lives to the fullest, especially as we are called by God to use our gifts and talents, requires us to give our very best of ourselves every day. This is a considerable task, and there will be days when we falter. Commitment also means that we pick ourselves up again and renew ourselves in our dedication.

PRAYER → *Dear loving God, I know your love for me has never wavered, even when I have faltered.*

Help me to follow your example and commit myself to loving and caring for myself. When I do this, I know that I will be better able to love and care for others.

PRACTICE → *Reflect on someone in your life who has shown deep commitment to someone or something. How does his dedication enrich his life? What can you learn from her?*

If you are outside, take in your surroundings. Look to the sky and notice the color. If you are indoors, look for the nearest window and do the same. Allow your eyes to rest on the scene, noticing the colors, the clouds, the birds, or any other aspects, and stay in that moment until you are ready to read on.

Grace

There is something mysterious about grace, isn't there? It's hard to describe, yet you know when you have seen it or experienced it. It's a magical combination of wisdom, gratitude, peace, and joy. Best of all, it's contagious. When you encounter someone filled with grace, you feel the same. It's our task to strive to be a grace-filled person for others.

PRAYER → *Dear Lord, please open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my heart to feel your grace in my everyday life.*

PRACTICE → *Write a thank-you note to someone in your life for whom you feel great gratitude. Handwriting the note will help you focus and will ensure that person has a physical reminder of your gratitude.*

Wiggle your toes. Are you wearing shoes? How do your toes feel in your shoes? If you aren't wearing shoes, what are your toes touching at this moment?

Adventure

Most of us have been led to believe that to have adventure in our lives means we have to jump from an airplane, explore a foreign country, or eat strange food. But we don't need to go far to activate a playful spirit in our lives; all we need is curiosity and the willingness to play. Adventure is present when we stretch our minds, reach out to connect, and bring our attention to the richness that is already at work in our lives.

PRAYER → *Dear playful One, help me to grant myself permission to play, to say yes to the goodness you bring into my life, and to expand my adventures by including others.*

PRACTICE → *To play, you need to engage both your mind (imagination!) and your body. How will you play today?*

||| Look out before you and allow the world
to come to you.

Beauty

An old adage says, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” and though many probably assume this saying is about *who* we find attractive, it can also be about *what* we find beautiful. Think carefully about what you find beautiful and where you seek it. God’s creation and the life given you is a beautiful gift. Honor God’s gift by consciously seeking beauty and committing yourself to sharing it.

PRAYER → *Dear Lord, thank you for the beauty that surrounds me every day. I can see it everywhere, and when I do, I am reminded of your presence in my life.*

PRACTICE → *What does your eye behold as beautiful? Make a list of everything you experience today that you consider beautiful. Leave the list where you can find it, read it, and add to it.*