

Tired of Being Tired by Jess Connolly

Read Chapter 9: Mental Exhaustion - "My Brain is Fried"

Meditate on Isaiah 26:3

What word or phrase stands out to you in this passage?

Symptoms of Mental Exhaustion In Our Lives:

- Stress headaches
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling confused or behind
- Numbing out
- Poor memory or cognitive function
- Feeling panicked or anxious

Do you feel like you are struggling with any of these? Can you think of specific examples?

Quotes from Chapter 9 to reflect on:

All of our brains are overstimulated. The default setting for women in our current culture is overwhelmed, but that doesn't have to continue to be our reality. We don't have to keep consenting to live distracted, confused, and mentally exhausted. It will take time for the dust and dirt to settle, and it might even feel uncomfortable and overwhelming in our minds as we embrace biblical rest. Put another way, it might all feel worse before it starts to get better. But eventually, the soil settles and we can see clearly again.

Much of your mental exhaustion has nothing to do with your capacity, strength, toughness, or even your life choices. Our culture has largely robbed us of quiet, undistracted, boring, and unprovoked moments. This doesn't mean we don't have hope. It does mean we'll have to go back to basics and reclaim some margin for our minds.

To fight multitasking in a kingdom-minded way, we don't have to sit in a room and think solely about Jesus all day. But we will have to work to clarify our purposes on a macro and micro level so we don't live with a divided and exhausted mind.

It is entirely possible to care for people without assuming that every one of their burdens is ours to carry. And that applies to the mental load we accept and believe to be ours for the taking.

Our brains are tired because they're overstimulated, forced to multitask when they weren't made for it, holding more problems and tensions than they were created for, and constantly facing distraction from what matters. We didn't start this fight, and we didn't cause these problems, but we don't have to continually consent to them.

Reflection Questions for Chapter 9:

- Metaphorically speaking, how's the dirt in your jar? Swirling or starting to settle?
- What factors lead you to feel overstimulated?
- How often do you multitask, and is it serving you?
- Have you experienced the difference between caring and carrying?

Read Chapter 10: Mental Exhaustion - "Peace is My Birthright"

Meditate on 2 Timothy 1:7

What word or phrase stands out to you in this passage?

Quotes from Chapter 10 to reflect on:

Our brains were made good by a Father who loves us and wants wholeness for us. Our minds have been given the capacity to interact with the Spirit that brought love back to life. And our Friend and Savior said this to His friends just before His death ushered in our resurrection:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

This is our inheritance. Peace is our birthright in the family of God. We weren't made for discombobulated, scrambled, and constantly confused living.

Embracing practices of quiet—when we’re in a place to do so healthily—will not only help us fight mental fatigue, it’ll help us uncover the wonder and mystery of God in ways we never anticipated. It’s OK to be scared, but it’s not OK to keep turning up the noise in your life and turning down the sacred invitation to the presence of God. So, while silence and solitude look like subtraction, I honestly believe they are an addition: making space for the power and presence of God.

One thing that keeps us from going all in on our passion and purpose is the cultural expectation that we, as women, should not be too much—you know, we should be pretty chill and easygoing, tempering our excitement and enthusiasm. But what if that zeal and devotion are a gift from God to help us be fully present and awake to the mental task in front of us?

Bottom line: Don’t turn down the passion to turn up the focus in your life. We’ll find so much mental health and rest when we go fully forward in singular focus in the areas where we can, when we’re able.

Flip the Script on Mental Exhaustion:

Jess talks about the two thoughts around mental health and expresses that we need a third way. The first is “spiritual denial”, the idea that mental issues are just spiritual and Jesus gives us victory over that, so we just need to trust in God. This leads us to feel shame and defeat when we struggle thinking we don’t have enough faith. The second is “earthly agreement”, the idea that we just accept this is who we are and take it on as our identity.

This third way... We need compassion for how our brains and bodies are exposed to brokenness here on earth because our Savior is undoubtedly coming toward us with mercy and kindness. And we also need a firm understanding of our intact spiritual identity amid mental exhaustion. Peace is our birthright, but I don’t believe our Father would have promised us peace that passes all understanding if He pretended that our struggle wasn’t real.

- Have you believed either the “spiritual denial” or the “earthly agreement” in your own life?
- How can we benefit from seeing our mental health in this third way?

Here’s some things we might tell ourselves about our mental exhaustion:

I’m a wreck, what is wrong with me?

I’m so dumb, no one else has struggles like this.

My brain is messed up. My memory is terrible.

This is just who I am, I can’t change it.

I can’t be alone with my thoughts, I need noise.

Do any of these resonate with you? Spend some time flipping the script.

How can you reframe these lies into life-giving truths?

Read Isaiah 26:3 and process what the Lord might be saying to you.

Tips for Mental Low Power Mode

- Utilize brain dumps (one minute of writing down everything on your mind) to clarify what is clogging your energy.
- Set timers to focus on or finish tasks, and play around with rewards to create brain satisfaction when you're done.
- Assign days or times to tasks, concerns, or responsibilities so that you don't live like you must do everything all at once.
- Take social media and/or news media breaks when needed. Block sites or apps that you find distracting so you can break the innate urge to open or visit those pages.
- Normalize taking longer to make decisions.

Do any of these resonate with you or can you think of your own? Make a plan to practice this in the coming week.

Prayer for Mental Exhaustion

God of Restoration, We confess that sometimes we try to live as though our brains are robots with no need for reprieve. We try to remember everything, solve everything, understand everything. Help us to embrace our finite minds, which we can do only by trusting in Your infinite nature. Help us remember that peace is our birthright. We long to be kept in perfect peace with our minds stayed on You. May we return to You for our every need, again and again. Amen

Read Chapter 11: Emotional Exhaustion - "I can't even"

Meditate on Psalm 28:7

What word or phrase stands out to you in this passage?

Quotes from Chapter 11 to reflect on:

Ignoring our emotions does not give us energy; it actually makes us feel much heavier. We'll repeat what we don't repair. We'll carry what we don't confront. Any attempt to shove down our feelings will ultimately backfire; we'll feel them more intensely when we ignore them up front.

Emotions are messengers, and what is the cliché we know and love? You don't shoot the messenger. You don't blame the emotions for being there. Our options as they pertain to our feelings are to process them, ignore them, or obey them.

Emotions in and of themselves don't have an innate moral weight, but how we steward them can either bless or burden our lives.

Healthily processing your emotions will often look like experiencing them, noticing where they've come from, and then allowing truth to help you move through the feelings.

Unprocessed emotion will take a toll on our flesh. Our feelings and the way we ignore them leave us exhausted. We were taught and shown how to hide our emotions and praised for doing so. But it is not working, and it is leaving us more tired.

We often can't help our emotions. But we can help whether or not we choose to obey them. But we do have the option to process these emotions and then choose either a worshipful response or an unhealthy one.

We can't help how we feel. We do not choose the emotions that rise in our brains and bodies. But we do have a choice about how we speak into the beliefs that produced those emotions, and we do have a choice about how we respond to them after they're felt. We have a choice. Let's choose the narrow way that leads to life.

Reflection Questions for Chapter 11:

- What is your typical response to emotions: process, ignore, or obey?
- How do unprocessed emotions show up in your life?
- Do you have any fear in regard to experiencing your emotions?
- What messages have you received overtly or subtly about how to handle your feelings?

Symptoms of Emotional Exhaustion In Our Lives:

- Irritability
- Apathy
- Unprovoked tears or anger
- Physical fatigue or soreness
- Depression Sense of dread or hopelessness

Do you feel like you are struggling with any of these? How can you combat these?

Read Chapter 12: Emotional Exhaustion - "I am loved and cared for."

Meditate on Psalm 142

What word or phrase from the passage stands out to you?

Use this to process emotions with the Lord:

- Notice what you feel as the emotion hits. How does the anger, excitement, fear, disappointment, or other feeling appear in your body?
- Notice it with God, involve Him in the process, and ask Holy Spirit to help you discern where this emotion might be coming from and what's making it so strong, or track when you often find yourself experiencing this feeling.
- Name the emotion as best you can. Don't fear using nonfeeling words, metaphors, or other adjectives to get as specific as possible.
- Finally, take time to discern the wisest way to move forward concerning this emotion. Does it need confession because it came from an unhealthy or unholy root belief? Do you need to sit with God and allow Him to comfort you? Is there something you can or should do to take a step to resolve a conflict or issue that's causing the emotion? Do you need to let it go or talk it out with someone else? What is God saying to you about this feeling?

Tips for Emotional Low Power Mode

- Create a journaling habit. This is a great way to notice, process, and make space for your emotions. Pay attention to patterns in emotions. Ask God if He has anything He wants to share with you about that emotion. Listen for His voice, search His Word, and look for Him to give you insight.
- Dance it out. Put on some life-giving music and see if those emotions don't start to come to the surface. If you're feeling grief but have stuffed down your emotions so long you can't access them, try watching a sad movie to connect your sad emotions. Likewise, I suggest watching something hilarious if you have difficulty tapping into your joyful emotions.
- Send three emojis via text to trusted friends: tell each other how you're doing. No need for explanation, just an unapologetic emotional check-in.
- Utilize a period-tracker app to anticipate and accommodate hormonal shifts.
- Consider shifting the main lifestyle factors that impact emotional health: exercise, nutrition, and alcohol consumption. While making initial changes may take effort, the energy that will be saved in the long haul will surely make this a low-power move.

Do any of these resonate with you or can you think of your own? Make a plan to practice this in the coming week.

Flip the Script on Emotional Exhaustion:

Whether we tend to stuff our emotions, excuse them away, or shout them out, chances are we all have a less than healthy inner language about our feelings. Let's take some time to describe the ways we talk to ourselves about our emotions... do any of these resonate with you?

I'm fine, everything is fine.

Why am I crying? It's so dumb.

No one wants to hear all my junk... it will just bring everyone down.

I shouldn't feel this way/I have every right to feel this way. (both extremes are dangerous)

It could be worse.

No one understands.

I'm numb, I don't feel anything.

Try these instead:

Feelings are indicators that I need to notice, they don't make me weak.

It's ok to feel this, now I can process it and move through it in a healthier way.

This emotion is real, but it doesn't define who I am.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18

Quotes from Chapter 12 to reflect on:

"That's why I'm suggesting a container for your emotions—a space, maybe even a physical place or a strategic time, where you can feel with God. Of course, eventually, the goal would be accessing your honest feelings more frequently, but this would be a great start. And the most important thing is that if you don't make a container for your feelings, they will leak out everywhere and impact everything, maybe in ways you don't like."

We are so worn down and drained from life that we cannot process or contain our basic everyday feelings. This may present itself in our being overly emotional, lacking control over how we express our emotions, or—on the other end of the spectrum—being so emotionally exhausted that we cannot access our feelings easily.

As we're looking for a healthy way to approach our emotions, we don't need to look further than our kind and caring Father, who makes space for us and our feelings. Even if emotions overwhelm us, there is no feeling we experience that is too much for God. So, if you've assumed that walking with God is about emotionless and stoic faith, now is the time to rewrite that story. Or if you've been taught, subtly or overtly, that God finds your feelings insignificant or distracting—I'm excited for the renewal we're all about to experience.

If God is continually compassionate and merciful toward your emotions, never dismissive or frustrated that you're still a feeling human, might it be time to choose the same compassion for yourself? And can we take it one step further?

The Nagoskis' scientific premise is that our bodies need to complete the stress cycle. As a result, they need an outlet to process emotions. They suggest a host of ideas: breathing, running, laughing, crying, or utilizing a creative outlet. Whatever your particular release of choice is for today's specific emotion—your body needs a release. Likewise, your feelings need to take up space in your physical life in a way that will help you complete the emotional stress cycle.

Sometimes we just need to talk it out. We can take full advantage of the presence and power of God that is alive and active in the humans around us. I love to talk it out with my people, so I hate to give caveats about this form of processing our emotions. But while I love being a good-news girl who talks more about the solution than the problem, we need to address a few of the processing pitfalls that feed our emotional exhaustion instead of aiding in our peace. Verbally processing our emotions becomes unhealthy or potentially harmful when we share with people who are not safe or who should not be trusted. This can be a painful game of trial and error, or we can be wise and slow to speak before we see the fruit of wisdom and trust in someone else's life.

You and I are spiritual beings who live in a physical world, where certain behaviors, lifestyle factors, and stimuli have a genuine impact on our emotions. Emotionally awake people don't try to pretend environmental factors don't exist, but instead they pay attention to the factors that impact them and adjust accordingly.

We get to go with God, listen to Holy Spirit and our bodies, and make the decisions that help us love and live in emotional health. Your feelings are not only welcome here in this life, they're essential. Knowing what you feel and being able to make space for your God-given emotions is not a departure from being a spiritually mature woman of God. On the contrary, feeling your feelings with your body and your voice and directing them with compassion and truth is one of the most powerful ways you can use the authority you've been given by our Father to bring light into this world.

Reflection Questions for Chapter 12:

- How did your family of origin talk about or display emotions? How does that affect how you display them?
- How do unprocessed emotions show up in your life?
- How does the thought of inviting God into your emotion make you feel?

Prayer for Emotional Exhaustion

God of Rejuvenation, We confess that our hearts are tired. Our emotions overwhelm us at times, tempting us to obey them or ignore them. Help us to be people who remember that you created emotions and that you intend for them to be one part of a vibrant, abundant lives. Teach us to honor our emotions and to bring them to You. Give us the courage to ask for help when we need it. Help us to identify the unprocessed emotions that need our attention and empower us to address them in light of Your love and truth. Amen