


the
STRUGGLE
BUS 

Struggle Bus (noun): A bus you never meant to get on, but here you are. The ride is marked by feeling overwhelmed, emotional chaos, and saying “I’m good” while absolutely not being good.

BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ANYONE ON THE STRUGGLE BUS

Thanks for checking out this resource. It's designed to be something you can use personally or share with a friend who might need it.

Life has a way of getting us stuck. Situations happen. We make decisions. Others make decisions. And sometimes brokenness follows. If you find yourself on the struggle bus, we hope this resource offers encouragement and biblical guidance as you take a step forward.

This isn't an exhaustive list or a guaranteed fix for every struggle. Instead, think of it as a starting point, a first step, a nudge in the right direction. Wherever you are, we hope you'll invite someone into your struggle and trust that the Lord meets us right in the middle of it.

Our prayer is that as you read, you'll find hope, feel less alone, and sense God's gentle invitation to step off the struggle bus, one step at a time.

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FINDING PEACE WHEN RELATIONSHIPS ARE BROKEN

When a relationship breaks, it can affect everything, including your mood, confidence, and sense of safety. Jesus sees that pain and cares deeply about it. While not every relationship will be restored, God can still bring healing and peace to your heart. These steps are here to help you move forward in a healthy way.



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Pray Before You Act

Ask God to calm your heart and guide your words. Sometimes peace starts in prayer before any conversation does.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God... will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. — Philipians 4:6–7

2. Take Responsibility for Your Part

Even if the other person was wrong, be honest about where you could've done better. Owning your part opens the door to healing.

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. — Proverbs 28:13

3. Forgive Even if They Don't Apologize

Forgiveness doesn't mean what they did was okay. It means freeing your heart from bitterness and letting God carry the weight.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. — Ephesians 4:31–32

4. Reach Out with Kindness

A text, note, or conversation that starts with grace can rebuild bridges faster than anger ever could.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. — Romans 12:18

5. Listen to Understand, Not to Win

Ask God to help you hear their heart, not just their words. Understanding comes before real peace.

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. — James 1:19



6. Set Healthy Boundaries

You can forgive someone and still protect yourself. Boundaries help you stay safe and maintain your peace while the relationship heals.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. — Proverbs 4:23

7. Get Wise Advice

Talk to a trusted adult such as a parent, leader, or pastor. Another perspective can help you see the situation more clearly and guide your steps.

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. — Proverbs 15:22

8. Practice Humility and Courage

Healing often starts with humility and being willing to say “I was wrong” or “I’m sorry.” Pair that with courage to keep loving, even when it’s hard.

God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5–6

9. Give Time a Chance

Some wounds need time to heal. Keep praying, trusting, and letting God work in both hearts.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.
— Ecclesiastes 3:1

10. Keep Loving Like Jesus

Even if the relationship doesn’t fully repair, you can still love with the grace Jesus shows you every day. Your love can reflect His truth and hope.

THE HOPE AHEAD

Peace doesn’t always mean everything goes back to how it was. It means trusting God to heal what’s broken and guide your heart forward. Lean on His love as you forgive, heal, and keep moving toward healthy relationships.



FINDING PEACE WHEN YOUR PARENTS ARE GETTING DIVORCED

When your parents separate or divorce, it can shake your whole world. You might feel hurt, confused, angry, or even guilty, like somehow you caused it or should've stopped it. But here's the truth: their choices are not your fault. And even in the middle of the chaos, God sees you, loves you, and is close to you. He's not going anywhere.



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Be Honest with God

You don't have to pretend you're okay. Tell Him everything — your sadness, anger, fear, and confusion. God can handle your real emotions, and He meets you right where you are.

Pour out your heart before Him. — Psalm 62:8

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. — 1 Peter 5:7

2. Talk to a Trusted Adult

You don't have to figure this out alone. Talking with a pastor, mentor, leader, or trusted friend can help you stay grounded, comforted, and prayed for when everything feels overwhelming.

Two are better than one... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

3. Don't Take Sides

You are not the referee, the judge, or the fixer. Release the pressure to choose between parents. You can love both without carrying the weight of their conflict.

4. Remember It's Not Your Fault

Keep reminding yourself of this truth: you did not cause this. Divorce happens because of adult choices and struggles, not anything you did or didn't do. Let go of any guilt that was never yours to carry.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. — Matthew 11:28

5. Stay Anchored in God's Love

When everything around you feels unstable, God gives you a love that doesn't shift, fade, or disappear. His love is the anchor your heart can hold onto.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. — Hebrews 13:8

Nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God. — Romans 8:39



6. Let Yourself Grieve

It's okay to be sad about how things used to be. Cry if you need to. Grieving doesn't mean you're weak; it means you're honest, and honesty is where healing begins.

7. Pray for Both Parents

Even when it feels hard, praying for each parent helps keep your heart tender and open to God's healing. Prayer makes space for God to work in their lives and in yours.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. — Philippians 4:6

8. Find Strength in Community

You don't have to carry this alone. Letting others in gives them a chance to support you, remind you of what's true, and walk with you. God often brings strength and comfort through the people around you.

Encourage one another and build each other up. — 1 Thessalonians 5:11

9. Focus on What You Can Control

You can't control your parents' choices, but you *can* control your own responses — choosing peace, kindness, honesty, and forgiveness in your heart.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. — Psalm 34:14

10. Keep Hope Alive

This season won't last forever. God never wastes pain. He can rebuild what feels broken, restore what feels lost, and make your heart new again.

"He makes all things new." — Revelation 21:5

Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning. — Psalm 30:5

The HOPE AHEAD

Even when your family changes, God doesn't. He remains your Father, your protector, and your safe place. He promises to walk with you, hold you, comfort you, and heal you. Lean into His love. He's with you in every moment, and He will carry you through this season into something whole and hopeful again.



FINDING HOPE WHEN YOU'RE GRIEVING

Losing someone you love can feel heavy, confusing, and overwhelming. Some days you might feel sad, other days angry, lonely, or numb. Grief is not a sign of weakness. It is evidence of love that mattered. What you're feeling is real, and it makes sense that it hurts. God understands your heart and stays close to you in the sadness and the questions. Even Jesus wept and knows what it's like to lose someone you love.

[Jesus was] a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. — Isaiah 53:3



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Be Real with God

Tell Him everything: your sadness, confusion, or anger. God is not scared of your feelings.

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. — 1 Peter 5:7

2. Don't Rush the Grief

Healing takes time. Some days you will cry, some days you will laugh. Both are part of the process.

There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. — Ecclesiastes 3:4

3. Talk to a Trusted Adult

Find someone safe, like a parent, mentor, pastor, or youth leader, and share what is in your heart. Talking to someone helps you process your grief and reminds you that you are not alone.

4. Hold Onto Hope

Grief is hard, and some days it will still feel heavy. But it will get easier, and it is okay to feel joy again without guilt. You do not “move on.” You move forward, and God walks with you every step of the way.

Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. — Psalm 30:5



6. Do Something to Remember Them

Write a letter, make a playlist, plant a flower, or serve others in their honor. Remembering keeps love alive and honors the impact they had on your life.

4. Let Community Carry You

Grief isn't meant to be carried alone. Allow friends and family to sit with you, listen without fixing, and support you in practical ways. Letting others walk with you doesn't erase the pain, but it can make it feel less heavy.

Two are better than one. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

7. Take Care of Yourself

Grief affects your body, mind, and heart. Rest, eat, breathe, move, and do things that bring you comfort. Taking care of yourself is not selfish. It is part of healing.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. — Isaiah 40:29

8. Honoring Your Loved One on Holidays and Birthdays

Special days can be especially hard. Plan ahead, talk to someone you trust, or create a way to remember your loved one. These days do not have to be perfect. They can be a chance to care for your heart and honor the person you lost.

9. Look for God in the Small Things

A song, a sunset, a Scripture verse, or even a kind word from someone else can remind you that God is near. Paying attention to these small moments can bring comfort, hope, and peace when your heart feels heavy.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted. — Psalm 34:18

10. Believe That Healing Is Possible

Your heart may feel heavy now, and life may not feel back to normal. Over time, with God's help, you can find a new kind of peace shaped by love, hope, and the memories that matter most. Grief is proof that you loved deeply, and you do not have to face it alone.

Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. — Psalm 30:5

THE HOPE AHEAD

Grief is evidence of love, and God meets you in it. He is present in every tear, every memory, and even the quiet moments that feel heavy. With Him, healing can begin, hope can slowly rise, and joy can return in new ways. You are not walking this path alone. Jesus is with you, and He will not leave you.



FINDING BELONGING WHEN YOU FEEL EXCLUDED

Feeling excluded can make you question your worth and where you belong. You might feel lonely, anxious, or invisible. But you were created for connection. God sees you, knows you, and places you in communities where your presence truly matters.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. — Ephesians 2:10



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Remember Who You Are in God

Your value doesn't depend on whether others include you. You are God's creation, loved and chosen. Let that truth anchor you.

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. — Jeremiah 31:3

2. Notice Your Gifts

God has given you unique talents, personality, and strengths. Celebrate them. They can help you connect with others in meaningful ways.

3. Step Into Small Connections

Belonging often begins with small moments — a smile, a conversation, or sitting with someone new. Start small and notice the opportunities around you.

4. Encourage Someone Else

Sometimes the best way to belong is to show kindness first. Reaching out to someone else who feels excluded can open doors for both of you.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. — Luke 6:31

5. Share Your Story

Let trusted friends or adults hear about what you're feeling. Speaking your truth helps others understand you and strengthens your sense of connection.

6. Ask God Where He's Inviting You Next

Instead of asking, "Why don't I fit here?" try asking God, "Where are You leading me?" He may be preparing a space where you can fully belong.



7. Practice Patience

Sometimes finding your place takes time. Being consistent, showing up, and offering kindness can help relationships grow naturally.

8. Look for Mentors

Adults, older students, or leaders can guide you in navigating friendships, help you feel included, and show you that you are valued.

9. Take One Brave Step Toward Connection

Belonging doesn't always come from waiting to be invited. Sometimes it starts when you ask someone to sit with you, join a group or club, or start a conversation. One small step can open the door to connection.

10. Trust God's Bigger Plan

Even when you feel excluded, God is working behind the scenes. He can place you where you truly belong, in relationships and communities that reflect His love.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. — Romans 8:28

THE HOPE AHEAD

Belonging isn't about being like everyone else. It's about being known, loved, and accepted for who you are. God sees you, values you, and wants you to experience connection. Keep seeking, sharing, and stepping into community. Your place of belonging is out there. Trust that God is guiding you toward it.



FINDING FREEDOM FROM PORNOGRAPHY & MEDIA TEMPTATIONS

Pornography shows up in many places—social media, YouTube, explicit websites, and even books—and it isn't harmless. It affects your brain, your body, and both your current and future relationships.

Even though pornography often feels like a private or hidden struggle, God invites you into something better: sexual integrity. Sexual integrity means trusting God with every part of your sexuality and allowing Him to shape your thoughts, desires, and relationships so your longing for connection and intimacy is expressed in life-giving ways that reflect His good design.



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Bring It Into the Light

Freedom starts with honesty. Confess what you're struggling with to God and to a trusted mentor, parent, or pastor. The quicker you bring it into the light, the quicker healing can begin.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. — 1 John 1:9

2. Understand Pornography's Impact

Pornography and sexualized media are destructive to your mind, body, and relationships and contribute to brokenness in the world, including abuse and sex trafficking. They reinforce unhealthy ideas about love and sex, often promoting a violent, abusive, and selfish view of sex that is far from God's design. Ask God to help you see pornography the way He does.

3. Set Boundaries with Purpose

Filters, app limits, and avoiding triggering content are important tools to protect your heart. But boundaries are most powerful when paired with allowing God to transform your heart and change your desires.

4. Repent — Change Your Thinking

Repentance isn't just feeling sorry; it's changing your mind about what you value, desire, and believe about relationships and intimacy. Transformation starts in your thoughts.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. — Romans 12:2

5. Steward Your Desire for Connection

Your desire for intimacy and closeness is good. God designed it for loving relationships that honor Him. He knows you better than anyone and can help you channel those desires in healthy ways.



6. Replace Temptation with Purpose

Fill your time and attention with things that honor God — hobbies, friendships, service, or creative work. What you feed your mind shapes your heart.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. — Galatians 5:16

7. Build Accountability

You don't have to handle this alone. Share your struggles with a mentor, youth leader, or same-gender accountability partner. Confession and guidance bring healing and hope.

8. Flee Quickly from Temptation

Don't negotiate with sin. Leave the room, block the content, and turn to God. Protecting your mind allows your heart to grow in freedom.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. — 1 Corinthians 6:18

9. Heal Underlying Wounds

Pornography often masks loneliness, hurt, or past pain. Invite God and trusted mentors to help you process these deeper wounds so your heart can seek intimacy in life-giving ways.

10. Keep Returning to God

You may stumble, but God's mercy is stronger than any failure. Each step back toward Him is a step toward freedom. Sex as God designed it is good, and your heart can be reshaped to experience it in healthy, God-honoring ways.

THE HOPE AHEAD

Sexual integrity is about more than avoiding sin; it's about a heart transformed by God. When you bring your struggles into the light, rely on accountability, and lean into His guidance, freedom and joy are possible. God sees your heart, knows your desires, and is walking with you toward life, love, and hope.



FINDING JOY IN GOD'S DESIGN FOR DATING AND BOUNDARIES

Attraction, emotion, and desire are part of how God created us, and He is not against relationships. He wants them to honor Him and for you to walk in sexual integrity. Sexual integrity means trusting God with every part of your sexuality and allowing Him to shape your thoughts, desires, and relationships so your longing for connection and intimacy is expressed in life-giving ways that reflect His good design. When you walk in sexual integrity, it guides how you approach dating, attraction, and physical boundaries with wisdom and care.



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Know Who You Are in Christ

Your worth comes from God, not a boyfriend, girlfriend, or relationship. A strong identity lays the foundation for healthy dating.

For we are God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works... — Ephesians 2:10

2. Set Physical, Emotional, and Digital Boundaries

Boundaries are tools to protect your heart and guide your choices. They help you steward your desires while God transforms your thoughts and teaches self-control.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. — Proverbs 4:23

3. Steward Your Desire for Intimacy

Your longing for closeness and connection is good. God designed it for loving relationships that honor Him. He knows you more intimately than anyone and can teach you to channel those desires in life-giving ways.

4. Keep God at the Center

Make your personal relationship with God the priority. Go to church, engage in Christian community, and grow in prayer and Scripture on your own. Let God shape your heart before, during, and between relationships.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. — Matthew 6:33

5. Choose Relationships Wisely

Date someone who shares your values and faith. Attraction alone is not enough. Relationships need a strong foundation to honor God and protect your heart.



6. Communicate Honestly

Talk about expectations, boundaries, and feelings. Healthy communication prevents misunderstandings and builds trust.

7. Use Community as a Guide

Friends, mentors, and youth leaders can provide perspective, accountability, and support. You're not meant to navigate relationships alone.

In an abundance of counselors there is safety. — Proverbs 11:14

8. Recognize Red Flags

Pressure, disrespect, dishonesty, or manipulation are signs to pause or step away. Protect your heart and honor God with your choices.

You will recognize them by their fruits. — Matthew 7:16

9. Confess Quickly

If boundaries are crossed or relationships end, confess to God and to a trusted adult quickly. Learn from the experience, allow God to heal your heart, and grow in wisdom.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. — James 5:16

10. Look Forward with Hope

Dating with sexual integrity isn't about avoiding relationships or desire. It's about stewarding your heart and body in ways that honor God and prepare you for meaningful, life-giving relationships.

THE HOPE AHEAD

Relationships and desire are gifts from God. Sexual integrity means leaning on Him, walking in accountability, and trusting Him to guide your heart. With His help, you can experience love, connection, and joy in ways that last.



FINDING PEACE WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE SAME-SEX ATTRACTION

Experiencing same-sex attraction can feel confusing, isolating, or heavy—especially when you're trying to follow Jesus. But here's the truth: your feelings do not disqualify you from God's love, His family, or His purpose. Jesus sees you and understands every part of your story, and He walks with you, not away from you.

Walking in sexual integrity doesn't mean ignoring your feelings or pretending they don't exist. It means trusting Jesus with your desires and choosing to live in obedience to His design, even when it's hard. Sexual integrity is about allowing God to shape your thoughts, actions, and identity as you follow Him with honesty and faith.



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Remember That You Are Deeply Loved by God

Your attractions don't change your identity. God calls you His child — fully seen and fully loved.

Nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God. — Romans 8:39

2. Understand That Attraction Is Not Sin

Feeling same-sex attraction is not the same as sin. It's a temptation; something every follower of Jesus faces in different forms. Sin enters when we choose to act on temptation. You can experience same-sex attraction and still pursue a life of obedience, integrity, and closeness with Jesus.

3. Bring Your Story Into the Light (Safely)

Find one or two trusted adults — a parent, pastor, or mentor who can listen, pray, and walk with you. Hiding brings shame. Being known brings healing.

4. Let Jesus Shape Your View of Sexuality

Following Jesus means letting Him be Lord over every part of our lives, including our sexuality. His design for sex is good, beautiful, and meant for covenant marriage between a man and a woman. But your story, your longings, and your questions matter deeply to Him.

5. Root Your Identity in Christ

Your sexuality is part of your story, but it is not the foundation of who you are. Jesus defines your identity first. From that place of being known and loved, He invites you to live with sexual integrity that reflects His heart and design.



6. Be Honest About Your Longings

Your desire for connection is good. God wired you for intimacy, friendship, relationships, and love. Having these desires doesn't make you broken; it makes you human. Jesus can help you steward your longings in ways that lead to life, not sin and shame.

7. Invest in Strong, Christ-Centered Friendships

Real friendship is a powerful gift. You need people who listen, support you, challenge you, and remind you of God's love. These relationships can bring strength, joy, and stability as you walk with Jesus.

8. Renew Your Mind with Truth and Grace

Let God reshape how you see yourself, your story, and your desires. Repentance means "changing how you think," learning to see your sexuality through Jesus's eyes, not culture's or shame's.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. — Romans 12:2

9. Set Healthy Boundaries with Honesty and Wisdom

Knowing your tendencies helps you set boundaries that keep your heart aligned with Christ. They aren't about legalism; they're about forming habits that protect your emotional and physical integrity.

10. Stay Connected to Jesus and His People

Keep worshiping, praying, reading Scripture, and showing up in community. You don't need to navigate this alone — not emotionally, relationally, or spiritually. The church is your family. Jesus is your strength. And you belong.

THE HOPE AHEAD

Your life matters. Your questions matter. Your heart matters. Jesus isn't asking you to hide, pretend, or carry your burdens alone. He's inviting you to walk with Him toward wholeness, freedom, and identity rooted in His love.

He is faithful. He is gentle. And He loves you so much.



FINDING FREEDOM FROM VAPING, SMOKING, AND SUBSTANCE USE

Maybe you started vaping, smoking, or using something to calm anxiety, fit in, or escape for a moment. Now it feels bigger than you expected — like you want to stop but can't imagine how. Here's the good news: God doesn't shame you. He invites you into freedom.

You weren't made to be ruled by a habit. You were made to live with peace, strength, and a clear mind.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. — Galatians 5:1



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Be Honest About Why You Reach for It

What are you trying to soothe, avoid, or quiet? God can meet that need far more deeply than any substance ever could.

2. Talk to Someone You Trust

Freedom grows in the light. A parent, leader, pastor, or counselor can walk with you so you don't carry this alone.

3. Make a Real Plan — Not Just a Hope-To Plan

Pick a quit date. Set up accountability. Remove triggers. Transformation grows through intentional steps.

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans. — Proverbs 16:3

4. Replace the Habit with Something Life-Giving

Your mind and body need new rhythms: prayer walks, journaling, worship, workouts, or intentional rest.

5. Recognize the Real Battle

You're not just fighting nicotine, THC, or pills, you're fighting lies. And the Spirit in you is stronger than anything against you.

Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. — 1 John 4:4

6. Strengthen Yourself with Scripture

Fill your mind with truth about freedom, peace, and self-control. Speak Scripture when temptation hits — it strengthens your resolve.



7. Lean on Your People

God made you for community. Let your small group, friends, or leaders know you're trying to quit. Real support brings real change.

8. Guard Your Triggers

Pay attention to what pulls you toward the habit — stress, boredom, loneliness, pressure — and turn to Jesus instead of the quick escape.

9. Remember Who You Are

Your struggle doesn't define you. Jesus does.

If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation — 2 Corinthians 5:17

10. Celebrate Every Step

Freedom is often a journey, not an instant change. Every time you choose integrity, you grow stronger and more aligned with who God is shaping you to become.

THE HOPE AHEAD

You don't need a substance to find peace. You need a Savior who gives peace freely. With God, freedom isn't about perfection. It's about progress, strength, and walking with Him one step at a time.

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. —Philippians 4:13



FINDING FREEDOM WHEN YOU FEEL PULLED TO DRINK

If you've ever felt pressure to drink or used alcohol to escape, you're not alone. Many teens feel that same pull—to fit in, numb pain, or feel something different. But here's the truth: God created you for freedom, not to be controlled by anything else. Alcohol may promise fun, confidence, or relief, but it can't give your heart what it truly needs. Jesus can. He offers strength, courage, and a new way to live. One marked by purpose, clarity, and real freedom.



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Admit the Pull and Be Honest with God

Freedom begins when you stop hiding and start being honest with God about what you're facing. He already knows, and He's ready to help you walk through it.

2. Replace the Pressure with God's Purpose

When you know who you are and what you're living for, you don't have to chase what everyone else is doing. God has something better for you right now than trying to fit in.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
— Romans 12:2

3. Choose Friends Who Help You Grow

If the people around you pressure you to drink, it's okay to begin creating healthier circles. Real friends don't lead you toward regret. They help you become who God created you to be.

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm. — Proverbs 13:20

4. Find Healthy Ways to Handle Stress

When life feels heavy, reach for something that brings life instead of escape—prayer, music, movement, journaling, or talking with someone who cares.

5. Remember That Your Body Matters to God

Your body isn't something to escape or numb. It's a place where God chooses to dwell. He created you with intention and purpose, and He cares deeply about all of who you are, including your body. Honoring your body means choosing rhythms and habits that make space for life, clarity, and freedom.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit... Therefore honor God with your bodies. — 1 Corinthians 6:19–20



6. Fill Your Mind with What Builds You Up

What you focus on grows stronger. Feed your mind with things that build faith, joy, and clarity. Things such as scripture, worship, laughter, serving, and healthy community.

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely. —
Philippians 4:8

7. Talk to Someone You Trust

You were never meant to fight temptation alone. A parent, mentor, or youth leader can pray with you, support you, and help you stay grounded.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.
— James 5:16

8. Let God Rewrite Your Story

Even if you've already made choices you regret, your story isn't over. God brings beauty from broken places—and He can use your story to bring hope to others.

If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new is here!
— 2 Corinthians 5:17

9. Stay Alert and Stand Firm

God invites you to stay aware, not afraid, as you keep choosing freedom. Temptation doesn't disappear overnight, but you can keep standing firm, one decision at a time.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. — 1 Peter 5:8

10. Remember Who You Belong To

You don't need alcohol to feel confident, accepted, or enough. You belong to Jesus and His love defines your worth.

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. — 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

THE HOPE AHEAD

If you're struggling with alcohol or feeling pressure to drink, talk to someone today—a parent, pastor, mentor, or leader who cares about you. You don't have to hide or face this alone.

God's freedom is real. One choice at a time. One step at a time. He will lead you into a life that's clear, strong, and free.



FINDING HOPE WHEN YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH SELF-HARM

If you're reading this, it probably means you've been carrying a lot of hurt, pain, or maybe even feeling numb. Maybe it feels overwhelming. Maybe it's confusing. Maybe it's hard to explain to anyone else. Sometimes the pain inside gets so heavy that you don't know how else to cope with it.

Please hear this: you are not alone, and you are not a lost cause. God sees you right where you are. He hasn't turned away. He cares deeply about you, and He wants to help you find a way through the pain—one that leads toward healing, not more harm.



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. You Are Loved More Than You Realize

You might not *feel* loved right now, but God's love isn't based on how you're doing or what you've been through. It doesn't disappear when things get messy. His love for you is steady and real, even on your hardest days.

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
— Jeremiah 31:3

2. The Pain Is Loud, But It Isn't Telling the Truth

When you're hurting, your thoughts can turn against you. You might hear things like *you don't matter* or *this won't ever get better*. Those thoughts feel real, but they aren't the truth. God says your life has value, and you are not beyond help.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
— John 8:32

3. You Can Be Honest—Even About the Hard Stuff

You don't have to hide how bad it feels or pretend you're okay with God. You can tell Him exactly what's going on: your sadness, anger, fear, or confusion. He isn't scared off by your honesty. He stays.

Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.
— Psalm 62:8

4. Talk to a Trusted Adult

You were never meant to handle this on your own. If you're feeling overwhelmed or don't know what to do, talk to a trusted adult—a parent, teacher, counselor, pastor, youth leader, or another adult who cares about you. Let someone listen and help you take the next step.



6. Make a Plan for What Brings You Life

When the urge to hurt yourself feels strong, pause if you can and reach for something that helps your body and heart settle, such as writing, music, art, movement, breathing, prayer, or being around someone safe. Having a few of these ready ahead of time can help you get through hard moments. They may not fix everything right away, but they can help you stay grounded and choose life in the moment.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. — Romans 12:21

7. Your Body Is Not the Enemy

Your body isn't something to fight against or punish. It's part of who God created you to be. You were made with care and intention, and your life—including your body—matters deeply to Him.

I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. — Psalm 139:14

8. Jesus Gets What It's Like to Hurt

Jesus knows pain. He knows what it's like to suffer, to feel crushed, and to be wounded. When you're hurting, He meets you with compassion, not judgment, and stays close to you in it.

By His wounds we are healed. — Isaiah 53:5

9. Healing Is a Process, Not a Switch

Healing usually doesn't happen all at once. Some days will feel better, and some will feel heavy again. That doesn't mean you're failing. Every small step toward honesty, safety, and help matters more than you think.

Do not despise these small beginnings. — Zechariah 4:10

10. This Is Not the End of Your Story

No matter how dark things feel right now, darkness doesn't get the final word. God is still working, even when you can't see it yet. Hope is real and healing is possible for you.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. — John 1:5

THE HOPE AHEAD

If you ever feel like you might hurt yourself, **please tell someone right away**—a parent, teacher, counselor, pastor, youth leader, or another trusted adult. You can also call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, anytime for free and confidential support.

You are not forgotten.

You are seen and known.

And your life matters.



FINDING HOPE WHEN YOU'RE HAVING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Sometimes life feels too heavy to carry. You might be exhausted from pretending you're okay. You might feel stuck, hopeless, or convinced that things will never change. At times, it can feel like you don't matter or like everyone else would be better off without you. Those thoughts can feel loud and convincing, especially when you're worn down or hurting deeply. But they are not telling you the truth.

Here's what is true: you matter more than you realize. You are here on purpose. Your life has meaning, even on the days it feels empty or overwhelming. God's love for you didn't start when things were going well, and it doesn't disappear when things fall apart. He has always seen you, and He is still holding your story.

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
— Jeremiah 31:3



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Tell Someone Right Now

If you're thinking about ending your life, you need support right now. **Please tell a trusted adult immediately**—a parent, student pastor, teacher, counselor, or another adult who cares about you. If you feel unsafe, don't wait or try to handle this on your own. You deserve help, protection, and people who will take you seriously and stay with you through this.

2. You Can Be Completely Honest with God

You don't have to use the right words. You can cry, sit in silence, or say "I don't want to be here anymore." God is not shocked by your pain. He stays close to you in it.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. — Psalm 34:18

3. Come Back to the Present Moment

When everything feels like too much, slow your thoughts and return to right now. Notice your breathing. Notice where you are. What can you see, hear, or feel? You are here, and God is with you in this moment.

4. Feelings Are Powerful — But They Aren't Permanent

What feels unbearable right now will not last forever. Pain has a way of convincing us that this moment is the whole story, but it's not. Light can return, even if you can't imagine how yet.



5. Getting Help Is the Strong and Courageous Choice

This isn't something you have to "push through" on your own. Emotional pain affects your mind, body, and spirit, and sometimes healing means getting help that supports all three. Counseling, medical care, and pastoral support aren't signs that something is wrong with you; they're tools God uses to bring healing.

6. Not Every Thought Deserves Your Trust

When you're overwhelmed, your mind can tell you things that feel true but aren't. Thoughts like "I don't matter" or "this will never change" are symptoms of pain, not facts. You can notice those thoughts without believing them. When you notice them, invite God into the moment to speak to you about how he sees you.

7. This Moment Does Not Define You

This season, even this pain, does not get to decide who you are or where your life is headed. God still has more for you than what you're feeling right now.

For I know the plans I have for you... plans to give you a future and a hope.

— Jeremiah 29:11

8. Speak Life, Even If It Feels Hard

You don't have to believe it yet. Just say it.

God loves me.

My life matters.

I can get through today.

Sometimes truth has to be spoken before it's felt.

9. Do One Small Thing to Keep Going

Drink some water. Take a shower. Sit near someone. Text a friend. Pray one honest sentence and trust that God is with you in that moment.

10. Choose Hope, Even in the Dark

Hope doesn't always feel bright. Sometimes hope is simply deciding to sit in the moment and believe that God is still here with you.

Even the darkness will not be dark to You. — Psalm 139:12

THE HOPE AHEAD

You are not forgotten.

You are not alone in this.

And your life matters deeply.

If you feel like you might act on these thoughts, please tell someone right away. You can also call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, anytime for free and confidential support.



FINDING LIGHT WHEN YOU FEEL DEPRESSED

Sometimes it feels like the light has gone out inside you. You might wake up tired, feel numb, or want to pull away from everyone. You might even wonder if life will ever feel okay again. If that's you, you're not broken, and you're not alone. Many people who love God have wrestled with deep sadness. God isn't disappointed in you. He's close to you, even here.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

— Psalm 34:18



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Be Honest — Don't Hide It

Talk to God and to someone safe about how you're really feeling. You don't have to have the right words or explain everything perfectly. Keeping it inside can make the sadness feel heavier, but letting it out creates space for light and support.

2. Tell a Trusted Adult or Leader

You weren't meant to fight this alone. Reaching out to a parent, counselor, pastor, or trusted adult is not a weakness; it's wisdom. Asking for help is a strong step toward healing, even if it feels scary at first.

3. Let Yourself Rest

Depression can drain your energy in ways others can't see. It's okay to slow down, take breaks, and give yourself permission to rest. Rest isn't giving up. It's caring for yourself when things feel heavy.

4. Stay Connected

When you feel like pulling away, that's often when you need people the most. Being around friends, family, or your youth group can help remind you that you're not alone, even if you don't feel like talking much.

Two are better than one... If either of them falls, one can help the other up.

— Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

5. Feed Your Mind with What's True

Depression can twist your thoughts and make everything feel hopeless. Gently remind yourself of what God says about you, even if you don't fully believe it yet. Truth has a way of sinking in over time.

You are chosen, loved, and never forgotten.

— 1 Peter 2:9



6. Do One Small Thing Each Day

You don't have to fix everything at once. One small step—getting outside, journaling, taking a short walk, drinking water, or doing something creative—can help your mind and body begin to heal.

7. Worship Even When You Don't Feel Like It

You don't have to feel joyful or strong to worship. Sometimes worship looks like listening to a song, sitting quietly, or whispering one honest prayer. God meets you where you are, not where you think you should be.

8. Remember Feelings Aren't Forever

What you're feeling right now can feel permanent, but feelings move and change. God can bring light back in ways you can't see yet, even when it feels impossible.

Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes in the morning.

— Psalm 30:5

9. Ask for Prayer and Accountability

Let others pray for you and walk with you. You don't have to be strong every day. Community helps carry the weight when you're tired and reminds you of hope when yours feels low.

10. Cling to Hope — Even a Little

Hope doesn't mean pretending everything is okay. Sometimes hope is just choosing to keep going, take one more breath, or trust that God is still here, even in the darkness.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

— John 1:5

THE HOPE AHEAD

Depression can make it feel like you're walking in the dark by yourself. But you're not unseen, and you're not abandoned. God sees you clearly, and His light is still with you, even here. He often brings that light through people who care and want to walk with you.

If your sadness ever turns into thoughts of hurting yourself or ending your life, please reach out right away to a trusted adult or by calling or texting 988. Help is close, and you don't have to face this alone.



FINDING PEACE WHEN YOUR STRUGGLING WITH FEAR AND ANXIETY

Anxiety can feel like your mind never slows down. Thoughts keep racing. Worries stack up. You might feel it in your body too: a tight chest, a fast heartbeat, trouble sleeping, or feeling on edge for no clear reason.

If that's you, you are not alone. God sees what's happening inside you, and He cares about your thoughts, your fears, and your feelings. He offers peace that doesn't depend on everything being fixed or perfect. His peace meets you right where you are.



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Take Time to Breathe

When anxiety starts to rise, pause for a moment. Take a slow breath in, then gently breathe out. God designed your body so that steady breathing helps calm your nervous system and signal safety to your brain. Even a few intentional breaths can help your body settle and remind you that you're not in danger right now and that God is with you in this moment.

2. Talk to God Honestly

You don't need the right words. Tell God exactly what you're worried about. He isn't overwhelmed by your fears. He cares about them.

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

— 1 Peter 5:7

3. Focus Your Thoughts on What's True

Anxiety loves to pull your mind into endless *what ifs*. Our brains are wired to look for closure, so when something feels uncertain, your thoughts can start racing, trying to solve everything at once. When this happens, gently bring your focus back to what is true in this moment—where you are, what's real, and who God is.

4. Take One Step at a Time

You don't have to solve everything at once. Anxiety shrinks when you focus on the next right step, not the whole picture.

5. Pay Attention to What Feeds Your Fear

Too much social media, news, or pressure can make anxiety louder. It's okay to take breaks and create space for quiet, rest, and things that bring peace.



6. Talk to a Trusted Adult

Anxiety feels heavier when you're alone with it. Talk to someone you trust. A parent, friend, leader, or pastor can help you feel seen and supported.

7. Move Your Body

God designed your body so that movement helps calm anxiety. When you move (walking, running, stretching, or even gentle movement) your brain releases endorphins and serotonin that boost mood and calm your nervous system while also lowering cortisol, the stress hormone that keeps your body in fight-or-flight.

8. Keep a Few Peace Reminders Nearby

When anxiety hits, it helps to have simple reminders ready, such as verses, phrases, or prayers that bring calm and truth.

Be still, and know that I am God.

— Psalm 46:10

Perfect love drives out fear.

— 1 John 4:18

9. Invite God Into It

When stress or anxiety shows up, invite God into the situation that's causing it. Talk to Him about what's overwhelming you and ask for His presence, peace, and help. God's Kingdom brings light, truth, and calm into places that feel heavy and He meets you right where you are.

10. Help Someone Else

Anxiety pulls your focus inward. Helping someone else shifts it outward. A simple act of kindness—encouraging a friend, helping at home, or praying for someone—can calm your body and mind. God designed us for connection, and sometimes peace grows when we choose to care for someone else.

THE HOPE AHEAD

Anxiety can make you feel isolated or misunderstood, like you're carrying everything on your own. But you're not alone. God is with you, and there are people who care deeply about you and want to walk alongside you. Feeling anxious doesn't mean you're weak; it means you're human. And God's peace isn't something you have to earn or force; it's a gift He offers, even in the middle of uncertainty.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

— John 14:27



FINDING FREEDOM WHEN YOU STRUGGLE WITH FOOD & BODY INSECURITY

Struggles with food and body image can take up more mental space than you realize. Thoughts about appearance, weight, eating, or control can quietly shape your mood, confidence, and choices. You might feel pressure to look a certain way, eat perfectly, or compare yourself to others, especially online. Over time, these thoughts can steal peace and make it feel like something is always “off” about you.

But this struggle isn't about trying harder or being more disciplined. It's about where your worth comes from. God created you with intention and called His creation good. Freedom begins when we let God speak louder than shame.



10 ENCOURAGEMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Start with God's Definition of Good

Before culture, social media, or your own thoughts get the loudest voice, start with God's. When God created the world, He looked at everything He had made, including you, and called it *very good*. Let His truth, not comparison or pressure, shape how you see yourself.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. — Genesis 1:31

2. Pay Attention to What's Driving the Thoughts

Food and body struggles are often about more than food or appearance. Stress, fear, control, or comparison may be underneath. Ask God to help you notice what's really going on in your heart.

Search me, God, and know my heart. — Psalm 139:23

3. Interrupt Shame with Truth

Shame grows when it goes unchallenged. When harsh thoughts show up, pause and replace them with what God says about your worth, identity, and value.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. — Romans 8:1

4. Invite God Into Everyday Moments

God cares about the daily, ordinary parts of your life—including eating, movement, and rest. Talk to Him about what feels hard instead of handling it alone.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. — 1 Peter 5:7



5. Practice Gratitude

Instead of viewing your body as a problem to manage, ask God to help you see it as a gift to care for. Notice the ways it lets you learn, move, create, connect, and serve. Gratitude and presence can slowly replace criticism and control.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. — Proverbs 3:5

6. Care for Your Body with Kindness

Rest, nourishment, and movement are part of how God designed you to live. Choosing to care for your body with kindness is a small but meaningful way to move toward healing and freedom.

7. Limit Inputs That Fuel Insecurity

What you take in has a powerful effect on how you see yourself. If certain social media, conversations, or comparisons stir up shame or pressure, it's okay to step back. Creating space from those voices can help you make room for truth and peace instead.

Above all else, guard your heart. — Proverbs 4:23

8. Practice Talking to Yourself with Grace

The way you talk to yourself matters. If you wouldn't say it to a friend, it doesn't deserve space in your head. Practice replacing harsh thoughts with truthful, grace-filled ones.

9. Talk to a Trusted Adult

Struggles lose power when they're shared safely. God often uses trusted adults, leaders, counselors, and friends to bring clarity and healing.

Two are better than one... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.
— Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

10. Give God the Final Word

Your worth is not decided by food, mirrors, numbers, or opinions. God's voice is the truest and kindest voice over your life, and it never changes.

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.
—Isaiah 43:1

THE HOPE AHEAD

God is not waiting for you to “fix” yourself before He draws close. He is already with you, present in the struggle, gentle in the process, and committed to your healing. Freedom from food and body insecurity rarely happens all at once. It's often slow, uneven, and built through small, faithful steps. Some days will feel lighter. Other days may feel hard again. That doesn't mean you're failing; it means you're human and healing. Through it all, remember that your worth is not something to earn, and this struggle does not get the final word.



FINDING HEALING AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

If someone hurt you, touched you, or crossed a line you did not agree to, that is not your fault. What happened to you was wrong. You did not cause it. You did not invite it. And you do not have to carry the shame of someone else's sin. Even if you feel confused about what happened, even if you didn't say anything in the moment, even if your feelings are complicated, it still was not your fault.

You may feel broken, dirty, angry, afraid, confused, or numb. You may feel all of those at once, or none of them at all. God sees every part of what you're carrying, and He is not disgusted with you or disappointed in you. He is heartbroken for you. He is near, and He cares deeply about your healing and safety.

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



10 ENCOURAGMENTS TO HELP YOU GET OFF THE STRUGGLE BUS

1. Tell a Trusted Adult as Soon as You Can

You should not face this alone. Tell a parent, student pastor, trusted leader, or another safe adult as soon as possible. You deserve protection, care, and support, and they can help you take the next steps safely.

2. Know It Was Not Your Fault

What someone did to you was their sin, not your responsibility. No matter what the circumstances were, you did nothing to deserve this. You are not guilty of someone else's choices.

3. Let Yourself Feel What You Feel

There is no "right" way to respond to trauma. Fear, anger, sadness, shame, confusion, or numbness are all normal responses. God is patient with your emotions and not overwhelmed by them.

Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. — Psalm 62:8

4. Don't Carry This Alone

Keeping this to yourself can increase pain and shame. Sharing your story with safe people begins the healing process.

Carry each other's burdens. — Galatians 6:2



5. Let God Hold the Broken Pieces

You do not have to fix yourself or rush healing. God meets you gently in the places that feel shattered and begins restoring what was broken.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. — Psalm 147:3

6. Seek Counseling and Support

Healing takes time, and professional support can help. Talking with a counselor, pastor, or trained mentor is not weakness; it's wisdom. God often brings healing through people.

7. Refuse the Voice of Shame

Shame says you are ruined or dirty. That voice is not from God. In His eyes, you are still His child, valuable, and worthy of love and care.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. — Romans 8:1

8. Give Your Mind and Body Time to Feel Safe

Trauma can leave your body on high alert, even after the danger has passed. Freezing, avoiding, shutting down, or feeling numb are common trauma responses, not signs of weakness. Healing often includes helping your body relearn safety through rest, gentle movement, deep breathing, and calming rhythms.

9. Let God Define You

What happened to you does not define who you are. Your identity is rooted in Jesus—loved, chosen, and made new.

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

10. Keep Choosing Healing

Some days will feel harder than others. Healing is not instant, but it is real. God is faithful to restore hope, joy, and peace over time.

THE HOPE AHEAD

Healing after sexual assault is not quick or linear. It often comes in small steps, with seasons of progress and moments where the pain feels close again. That does not mean healing isn't happening. It means your body, mind, and heart are learning how to feel safe and whole again.

God is not asking you to hurry your healing or be “over it.” He is patient with the process and tender with your wounds. He stays with you in flashbacks, questions, grief, and fear, and He does not turn away from the parts of your story that feel hardest to face. What was done to you did not change your worth, your purity, or God's love for you.

