

10 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



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Holly Labbe Photography



You're not alone.

If there is one thing I could plant in your heart and pray you believe, it's this: You're Not Alone. Walking through panic disorder seven years ago, I learned bravery is moving scared. I shared my story, you shared yours too. Many of you said "yes" to healing. You get out of bed each day, put one foot in front of the other, and lean on hope when days are hard.

There's a solidarity in our confession when our pain becomes purposeful. We share what it means to feel tightness in our chest, have ugly shower cries, question if things will change. But our load lightens when we see each other press on, freedom becomes contagious, freedom frees us to set others free.

No matter the reason you chose to download, you're not the only one in this club. You're not the exception to who Jesus sees. His love hunts you down till you land on your knees. It knows no bounds; it cannot stop, in spite of all our kicking and screaming. It lifts your head and cradles your heart. It reminds you who you were before all the running. Jesus' love will bring you back to life.

In the following pages, I've listed practical tools that help on my most anxious days. These tips keep me going, little by little, step by step, with faith in God and dear friends close by. I pray they strengthen your heart as well.

With you and for you,

Rebekah

1

Quit Something | *Make Room for Rest*

I start with rest because it can be the baseline for your entire life. Rest does not mean sitting on your hands or staring at the floor, rest means working from a posture of rest. Rest no longer has to be siloed to a sabbatical or vacation two weeks a year. It's a perspective that shifts where we work from rest, not work so we can earn rest.

Rest orders our days, postures our hearts with release, so we can live openhanded to a life full of meaning, instead of bootstrapping for our worth. Rest does not negate a work ethic, but instead empowers it, gives it wind in the sails. Rest offers a willingness to yield when our bodies say, "no more." It takes the extreme control out of our lives and allows doors to close, trusting something new will open around the bend.

Know Your Identity | *Reflect + Pray + Read*

Reflect / Brew coffee, light a candle, put pen to paper. This daily practice of journaling is my ongoing conversation with God. These pages are where I lay down burdens from the day prior and give thanks for new mercies of a new day.

Pray / I shift my prayers from a list of requests to asking God what He wants for my life. I ask for my desires to become His and submit to His will in each area of my life. This frees me each day to confess any sin, receive forgiveness with confidence, and step out in abundance.

Read / If there are lies or doubts I was giving into, I read scripture that reaffirms who God says He is as a Father, and who I am, as a daughter. In scripture, God confirms He is our comfort, help, healer, rescuer, redeemer, and friend.

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Tech Detox | *Silence the Noise*

This summer I took a break from Instagram because I found I was losing my voice. Sure I was still posting, but I was editing myself, sharing what I felt people wanted to hear, instead of what God prompted in my ear to share. I had no problem being bold offline, but online felt different. Exposed, open to scrutiny, without the ability to know or be known. The time away freed me and emboldened my identity in the secret place. I came back with the conviction to be more honest.

When the message to work harder, perform, hustle for worth gets loud, stay true from a posture of rest and peace. Comparison robs our joy, size doesn't equal significance, and all gifts are beautiful.

4

Lead with Vulnerability | *Take Off the Make-up*

Lead with vulnerability. It may seem intimidating, but often we mistake transparency with vulnerability. Transparency is sharing where you've been. Vulnerability is sharing where you are. Many times when I've spoken up and exposed where I am, I've discovered myself and friends giving language to something a lot of people are feeling, but don't have words for.

When you're alone and you're vulnerable, you're afraid. When you're together and vulnerable, you become brave. I think that's what we all want, after all, we want our vulnerability to turn to bravery. We have to start by sharing first.

Take Time to Play | *The Lost Art of Fun*

Many months ago, I walked a Florida beach at sunset, Gabe and the kids had already gone inside. I lingered on the shore like a rebellious teen, watching the last sliver of crimson slip under the waves, far out on the horizon. And there, on the beach, I danced. I remember, too, elementary evenings when my parents called me in at dusk. I lingered even then, pumping the pedals of my bike in an even cadence as I rode alone with God in the secret place.

There's something playful that comes alive when we're alone with God in creation. This routine of childlike wonder preserves something true and necessary.

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Eat Smart | *Brain Food*

I began to take diet seriously two years ago, when my energy levels began to plummet, and I always had a headache. At this point, it wasn't motivated by a number on the scale, or how I looked in the mirror. What mattered most was to be mentally and physically strong. An alarm went off in my brain, it doesn't matter how you look on the outside if the inside is starved of strength.

Our family did whole 30 last July. It was the first time I went without half and half and sugar in my coffee for 25 years and I haven't gone back. There are many elimination diets to consider, and every need is different. In general, we've stuck to whole fruits and vegetables, limited grains and dairy, plenty of healthy fats and small amounts of sugar or caffeine.

7

Take a Walk | *Use the Yoga Pants*

When we moved to NYC every outing meant I had to take a walk. I found each time, even in the dead of winter, those walks lifted my spirits. Creative thoughts emerged. I started to schedule margin to jot down unexpected ideas on my phone. I learned something profound. Walking improved my mental health.

Since then, the habit of walking has changed my life. I don't mean walking from my bed to the fridge. I mean walking like it's my job. I started walking trails at Lake Radnor with girlfriends, walking the dogs while Cade rode his bike, taking the stairs whenever there was an option. I schedule walking between writing projects, deadlines, even when I feel groggy mid-afternoon. .

Count Sheep | *Routines for Deep Sleep*

Over time, when you don't sleep, everything feels overwhelming. Even the simplest tasks of loading the dishwasher or sorting laundry. My sleepless season left a tailwind of dirty clothes and dishes piled high. As the mound of responsibility grew, the more helpless I became. I picked up *Sleep Revolution* by Arianna Huffington and learned simple ways to set up your evening for better sleep.

Turn down the lights, calm the bedroom prior to getting in bed. Remove devices (their blue lights are a stimulant) and keep your bedroom temperature below seventy degrees. I took baths, lit candles, even wrote down outstanding tasks before drifting off so I wouldn't wake with a mental list of clutter hours later.

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Be the Friend You Want to Have | *Initiate Relationship*

I'll never forget the day in high school I learned a valuable lesson on friendship. I was feeling insecure among my group of girlfriends. I don't remember the details of the incident, I just remember feeling alone. My mother told me to write a note to each of my friends individually, telling them what I saw in them, what I loved about them, why I was grateful for them. So I did. I wrote out 6 notes to my closest friends and when my focus shifted from me to them, my insecurity dissipated. .

This became my mantra for life. Expect nothing, offer everything. Hold friends loosely. Don't try to control. Let them be who they are, come as they are. Give friends the freedom to come and go.

What if we let God be in charge of our friendships? I used to try to hang on to everyone, to please them, to become what they wanted me to be for them, but I'd rather obey God. Give everything you can. Give with your whole heart. And if that's not enough for them, let them walk away.



10

Potluck vs. Perfect | *Open Door Policy*

Creating a fancy meal stresses me out, and I prefer to keep that for special occasions. Instead, to make it easy to host consistently I've started throwing together a charcuterie board—making a Costco run and getting an assortment of meats, cheeses, nuts, and dried fruits. The goal isn't to impress with our cooking skills or spotless house, it's to create a space of togetherness and belonging.

The more we come together, the more we find we're not alone.

