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# Seven Suggestions for Healing & Renewal in the Midst of Stress & Anxiety



by  
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**G**OD LONGS TO HEAL US AND RENEW US IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES. THE GREATER OUR RESPONSIBILITIES, THE DEEPER IS OUR NEED FOR SUSTENANCE.

Jesus filled the nets of his disciples, built a fire on the beach and warmed them, cooked and served them breakfast before he sent them out to feed the hungry of the world (John 21).

Here are some suggested ways by which we can be fed by God at a deep level. We each respond to God's love in unique ways, so we may find some of these suggestions more helpful than others.

**1** It is vitally important to be aware of, and to honor our feelings, and to let God's love enfold us as we feel them: whether anxiety, anger, grieving, loneliness. Jesus felt all these things and trusted God enough to share them.

**2** It is deeply healing also to share what we feel with a trusted friend or small group, especially those who know how to pray with us and for us, who know how to listen without interruption and instant spiritual prescriptions.

**3** It is both healing and strengthening when in the midst of conflict and anxiety producing situations to pay attention to our breathing, and to notice where our bodies feel especially stressed, tight, uncomfortable. It helps then to think of the living Christ beside us, enfolding us in God's healing light (or some other image or thought) especially around the tight, stressed bodily areas. Then let the breathing become slow, deep, and gentle.

**4** In the midst of painful or intense encounter with others, whether in person, over the telephone, by letter or e-mail, we can think of Christ's light enfolding the other person as well as ourselves, sheltering, guiding, and renewing both of us, so that neither is drained or absorbs the toxicity.

The same can be done in difficult committee sessions. The Bible is full of helpful images of God's sheltering love: God's hands, arms, enfolding wings, strong rocks, high mountains, healing rivers and pools of living water, green fields, empowering light.

For some of us, an inwardly spoken word is more helpful: *release, peace, love, Risen Christ, Healing Spirit*, and so on.

**5** Each day let us encourage one another to take some intentional time, even if for only a few minutes, just to rest in God's closeness, without any intense agenda. This fills our inner reservoirs of body and spirit. Some prefer to sit or lie down in silence, or hearing special music. Some prefer to walk and notice what God wants to show them. Some like to dance, stretch, paint, garden. Others may wish to hold a special picture that reminds them of God's love, or a special cloth, a flower, a rock, or some other object. The important thing is just to soak in God's healing nearness without agendas. This can be done either in various moments throughout the day, or at a special time, whatever works best for us.

**6** Before an appointment, committee meeting, a personal encounter, or a challenging piece of work, we can think of Jesus' promise to go ahead of us to prepare the place for us (John 14:3). We can picture or just think of the Healer already in that future place, office, room, filling that space with empowering, healing, guiding light: the doorway, windows, chairs, desk, etc. When we and others arrive at that future place and experience, we will feel the warmth and strength welcoming us.

**7** At the end of a full, demanding day, as we prepare for sleep, it is deeply cleansing and releasing to take a few slow, deep, gentle breaths, and then to release the events and the persons we met during the day into God's hands or into God's heart.