



RESTORING YOUR HEART

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*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." – Galatians 5:1*

A decorative border of various floral and leaf patterns surrounds the central text box.

## PRAYER FLOW

Isaiah 61:1–3

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of joy  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the Lord  
for the display of his splendor.



"God-affirmers find  
themselves loved every  
time they turn around."

Psalm 32:10b (The Message)



# ISAIAH 61:1-3



# CONNECTING WITH GOD EXPERIENCE

This is an exercise to intentionally interact with God. If you don't have a relationship with God or if He seems distant or disinterested, this could be a way to begin a connection with Him. If you feel uncomfortable sharing with God, try sharing with Him as you would share with a friend you trust.

Be honest with God. He wants to hear from you whether you're sharing the good or the bad.

To begin, close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and think about what you'd like to share with God. (You may address God the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.)

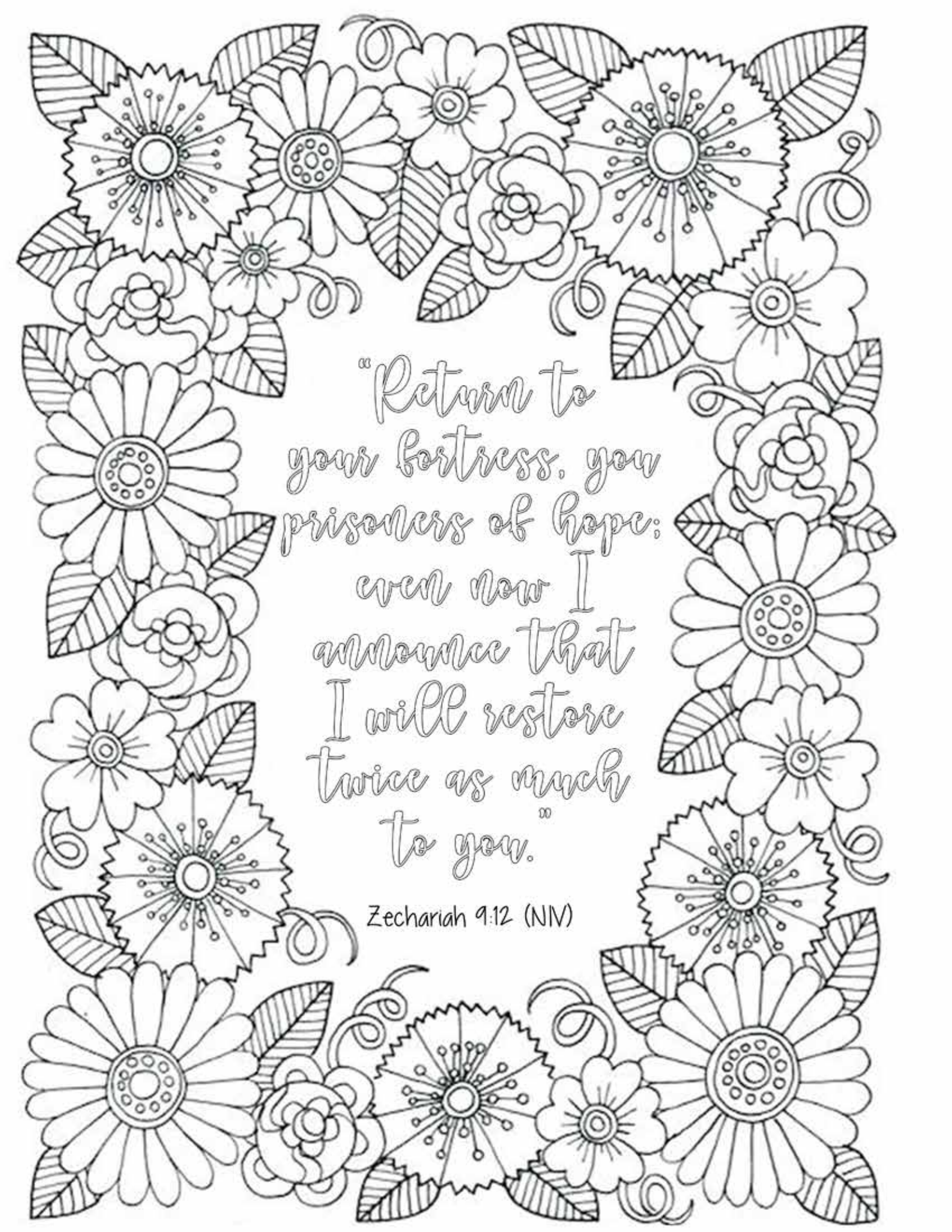
Some suggestions to share with Him are:

- Feelings you experienced during the day or this past week, good and bad
- Any personal insight you had
- An experience from your past that you remembered

Write down your thoughts to God. Then listen quietly. You may hear a clear response from God, a not-so-clear response or even no response. It is not likely to be an audible voice you hear, you will receive it more like a thought. If you do hear from God, write down what you heard. If you don't hear from Him, try not to become discouraged. His silence doesn't mean He's not listening.

By interacting with God in this way, we hope you will experience Him. He loves you. He delights in you. And He cares about the things you care about.

# CONNECTING WITH GOD EXPERIENCE



*"Return to  
your fortress, you  
prisoners of hope;  
even now I  
announce that  
I will restore  
twice as much  
to you."*

Zechariah 9:12 (NIV)





# How to Process Pain

## Lesson #2 from the Processing Pain workbook

The goals of this lesson are: 1) to help people recognize unhealthy ways they might currently be dealing with pain, 2) give them some strategies to process pain in a healthy way, and 3) introduce them to two helpful tools, the Development of Emotionally-Based Problems ("Three Column") Chart and Creating A Safe Support System.

Since the remainder of the workbook will be spent discovering past pain and grieving it, it will be important for people to have some information and a few tools to help them begin to process their pain.

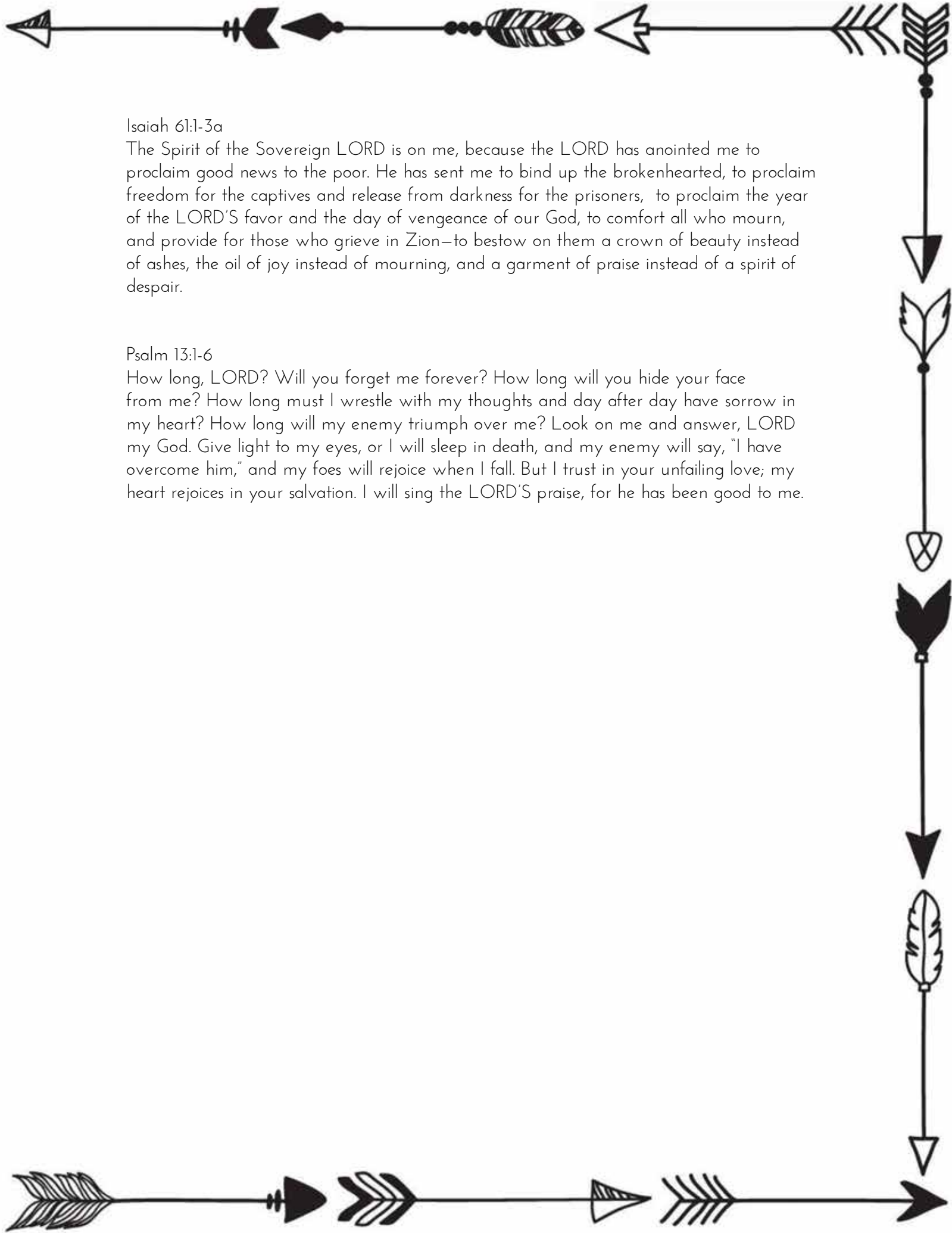
In this lesson we discuss two unhealthy defense mechanisms (ways that people handle their pain), addictions and suppression of negative emotions. There are many other unhealthy defense mechanisms, but a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this lesson. There is an entire lesson in the RYH Understanding Emotions workbook devoted to "Understanding Our Defenses."

Addictions are common in our culture, and yet, many people are in denial about their addictions. They often don't realize they are relying on addictions to avoid pain. Even if people acknowledge an addiction, talking about it can be embarrassing. No one wants to admit they have addictions. Some addictions are particularly difficult to talk about, such as a sexual/pornography addiction (which is widespread among men). It is helpful if you as the leader can share a little about your struggles, if you have them, in the area of addictions. (Most of us will have some unhealthy outside focus or addiction, even if it is not full-blown or destructive.)

It's important that people in the group understand how to deal with painful emotions in healthy ways, so we discuss three strategies in this lesson. They are: 1) sharing our pain with God, 2) sharing our pain with safe people, and 3) calming ourselves. These strategies work together, they are not stand alone-strategies.

Optional Scripture references: Isaiah 61:1-3 and Psalm 13:1-6



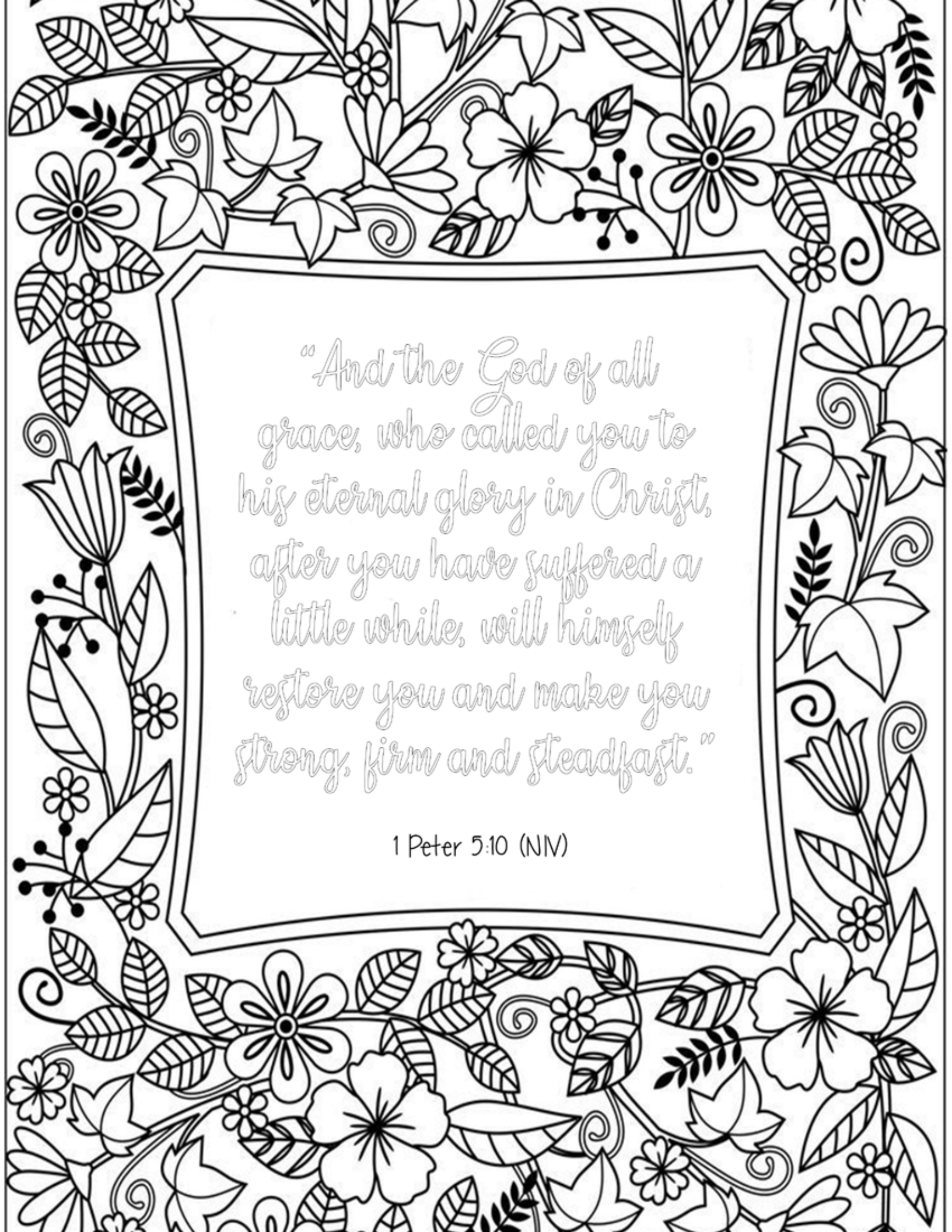
A decorative border composed of various arrow and feather motifs. At the top, a horizontal line features a small arrowhead, a solid black arrowhead, a feather, and a hollow arrowhead. On the right side, a vertical line features a hollow arrowhead, a solid black arrowhead, a feather, and a hollow arrowhead. At the bottom, a horizontal line features a feather, a solid black arrowhead, a hollow arrowhead, and a solid black arrowhead. The central text is framed by these decorative elements.

Isaiah 61:1-3a

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Psalms 13:1-6

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD'S praise, for he has been good to me.



*"And the God of all  
grace, who called you to  
his eternal glory in Christ,  
after you have suffered a  
little while, will himself  
restore you and make you  
strong, firm and steadfast."*

1 Peter 5:10 (NIV)



## How to Process Pain (cont.)

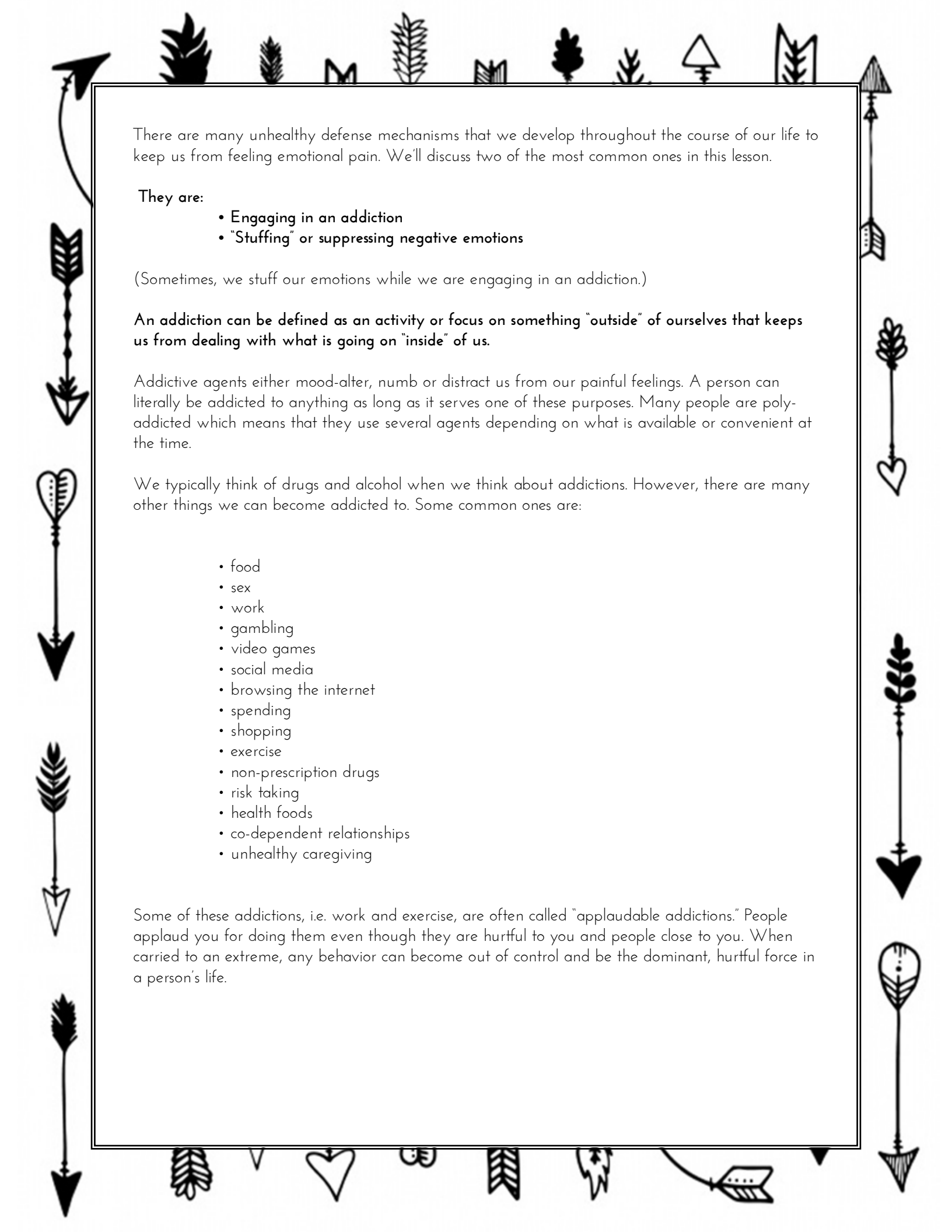
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

The purpose of this lesson is to think about ways you have learned to handle emotional pain, and if those ways are unhealthy, to develop new and healthier strategies. Many of us, when growing up, were not given instructions on how to process our negative emotions. Our parents (or caregivers) sometimes didn't model it well, if at all. Since the goal of this workbook is to feel and process pain from our past, it will be important to have both information and tools before starting the journey.

1. Turn to the Development of Emotionally-Based Problems "Three Column Chart" (Addendum A) and write down any of the items listed in the first two columns that apply in your life.

The things you listed in Question 1 are either causes or symptoms of emotional pain. Some are things that have been done to you and some are things done by you. Everyone has at least one of these that apply, but most of us have quite a few. The purpose of Question 1 is not to discourage or overwhelm you, but to give you a starting point for beginning this journey of processing pain. Awareness of what your emotional issues are and learning how to process your pain are the first steps to healing.

2. When painful emotions arise in you, how do you respond? Do you talk to someone about them? Are you able to sit quietly and feel them? If not, what do you do?



There are many unhealthy defense mechanisms that we develop throughout the course of our life to keep us from feeling emotional pain. We'll discuss two of the most common ones in this lesson.

They are:

- Engaging in an addiction
- "Stuffing" or suppressing negative emotions

(Sometimes, we stuff our emotions while we are engaging in an addiction.)

**An addiction can be defined as an activity or focus on something "outside" of ourselves that keeps us from dealing with what is going on "inside" of us.**


Addictive agents either mood-alter, numb or distract us from our painful feelings. A person can literally be addicted to anything as long as it serves one of these purposes. Many people are poly-addicted which means that they use several agents depending on what is available or convenient at the time.

We typically think of drugs and alcohol when we think about addictions. However, there are many other things we can become addicted to. Some common ones are:

- food
- sex
- work
- gambling
- video games
- social media
- browsing the internet
- spending
- shopping
- exercise
- non-prescription drugs
- risk taking
- health foods
- co-dependent relationships
- unhealthy caregiving

Some of these addictions, i.e. work and exercise, are often called "applaudable addictions." People applaud you for doing them even though they are hurtful to you and people close to you. When carried to an extreme, any behavior can become out of control and be the dominant, hurtful force in a person's life.



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3. From the list on the previous page, check any that apply to you. If you have others not listed above, what are they?

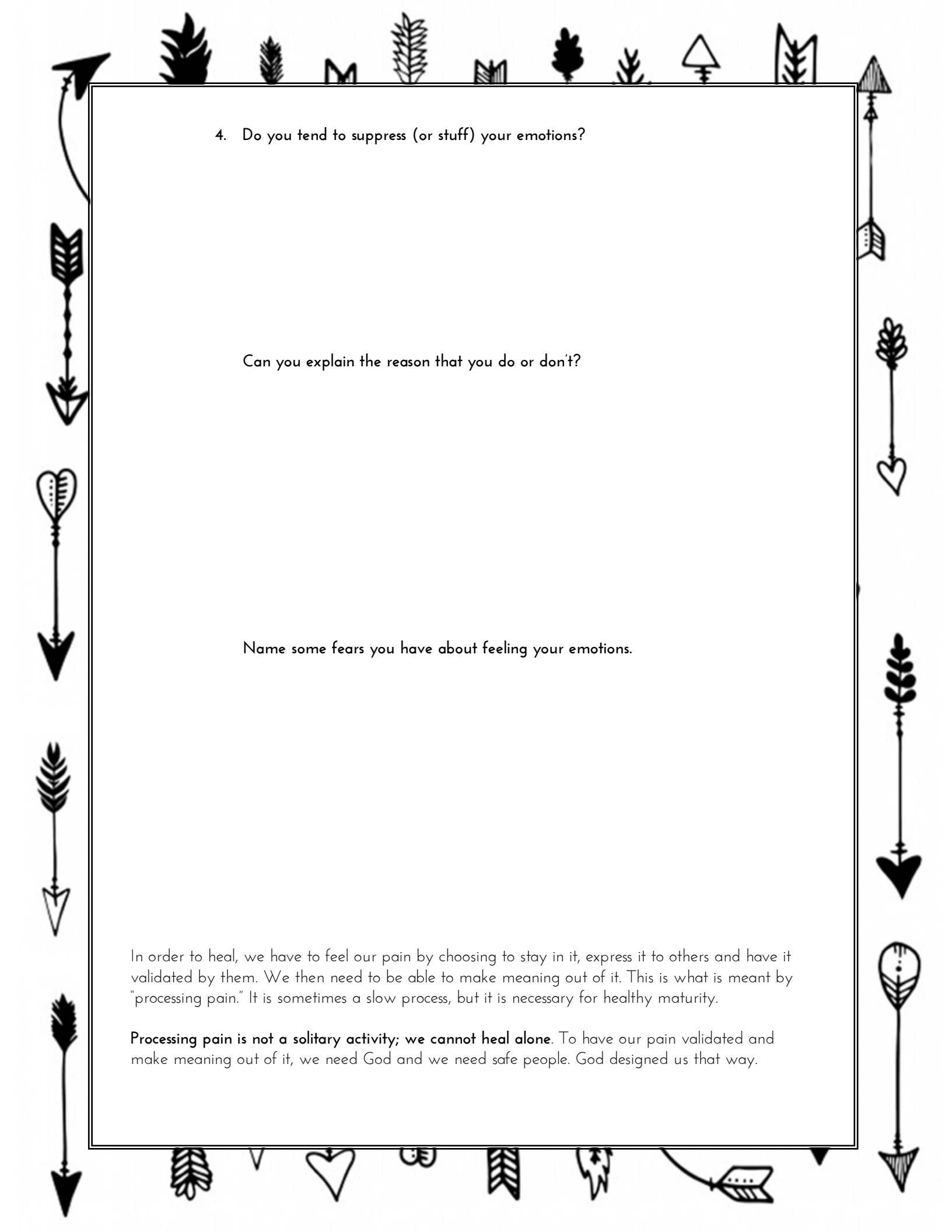
Before we can move toward full heart restoration, we must overcome and stop our addictive behaviors. However, addictions cannot be totally overcome unless we deal with the deeper issues underlying them. [Some addictions, such as food, cannot be given up altogether, but instead must be controlled or brought into balance.] In most cases, an addiction is caused by pain that wasn't dealt with when it was experienced and has been buried inside for a long time. When the addictive behavior is stopped, that pain will surface. If we don't have healthy strategies in place to help us process the pain, we will reach for another "painkiller". We may go back to our old addiction(s) or move on to a new one. This lesson will help us develop healthy strategies.

[Some addictions are so serious, life-threatening, or difficult that a person needs to join a 12-Step Group or be in an inpatient program in order to break the addiction. They will need specialized help with the addiction before they can begin to deal with their unprocessed pain.]

**Stuffing (hiding) or suppressing (choosing not to acknowledge) negative emotions was a common occurrence in many of our families when we were children.**

If our parents were detached from their own emotions, they likely didn't validate ours or teach us an emotional vocabulary. In other words, if our parents hid, denied or avoided their own emotions, it would have been difficult for them to encourage our expression of emotions. As a result, we didn't feel safe enough, or even know how to express our emotions. We may have been punished when we tried to express our emotions, especially negative ones.

When we have suppressed our negative emotions for most of our life, we might believe that we'll be totally out of control if we allow ourselves to feel them. The fear of this can be paralyzing and cause us to shut down further.



4. Do you tend to suppress (or stuff) your emotions?

Can you explain the reason that you do or don't?

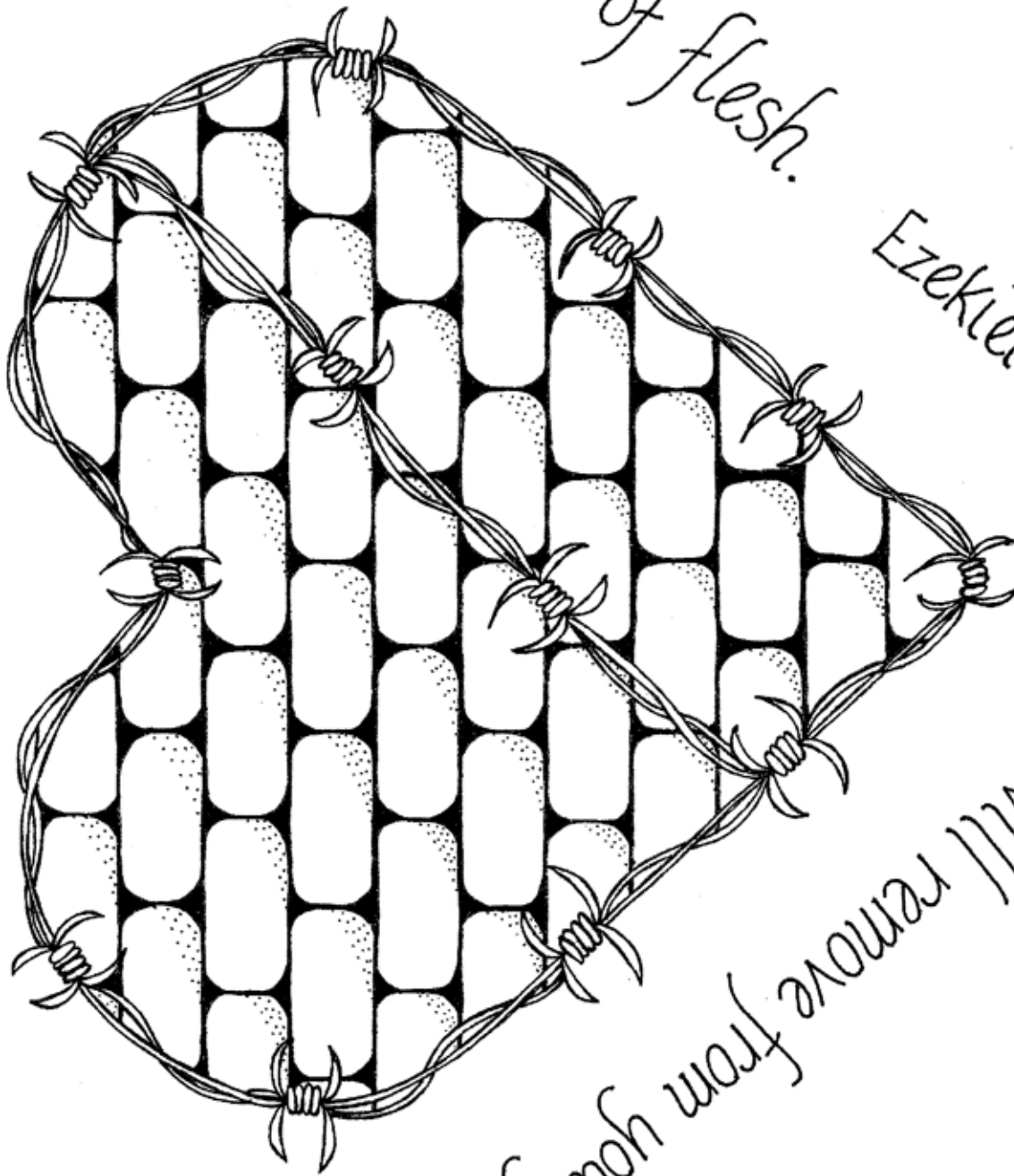
Name some fears you have about feeling your emotions.

In order to heal, we have to feel our pain by choosing to stay in it, express it to others and have it validated by them. We then need to be able to make meaning out of it. This is what is meant by "processing pain." It is sometimes a slow process, but it is necessary for healthy maturity.

**Processing pain is not a solitary activity; we cannot heal alone.** To have our pain validated and make meaning out of it, we need God and we need safe people. God designed us that way.

and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26



I will remove from you your heart of stone



Three healthy ways of learning to tolerate pain and thereby process it are:

- Taking our pain to God
- Talking to safe people
- Learning and practicing self-calming behaviors

(Note: These are not three separate options. We'll learn how to use all three together in this work-book.)

**It is important to bring God into our pain and ask Him for help in healing it.** God cares about our pain and His desire is for us to be restored. When we pray and ask God for help, He is pleased to be part of our emotional healing process.

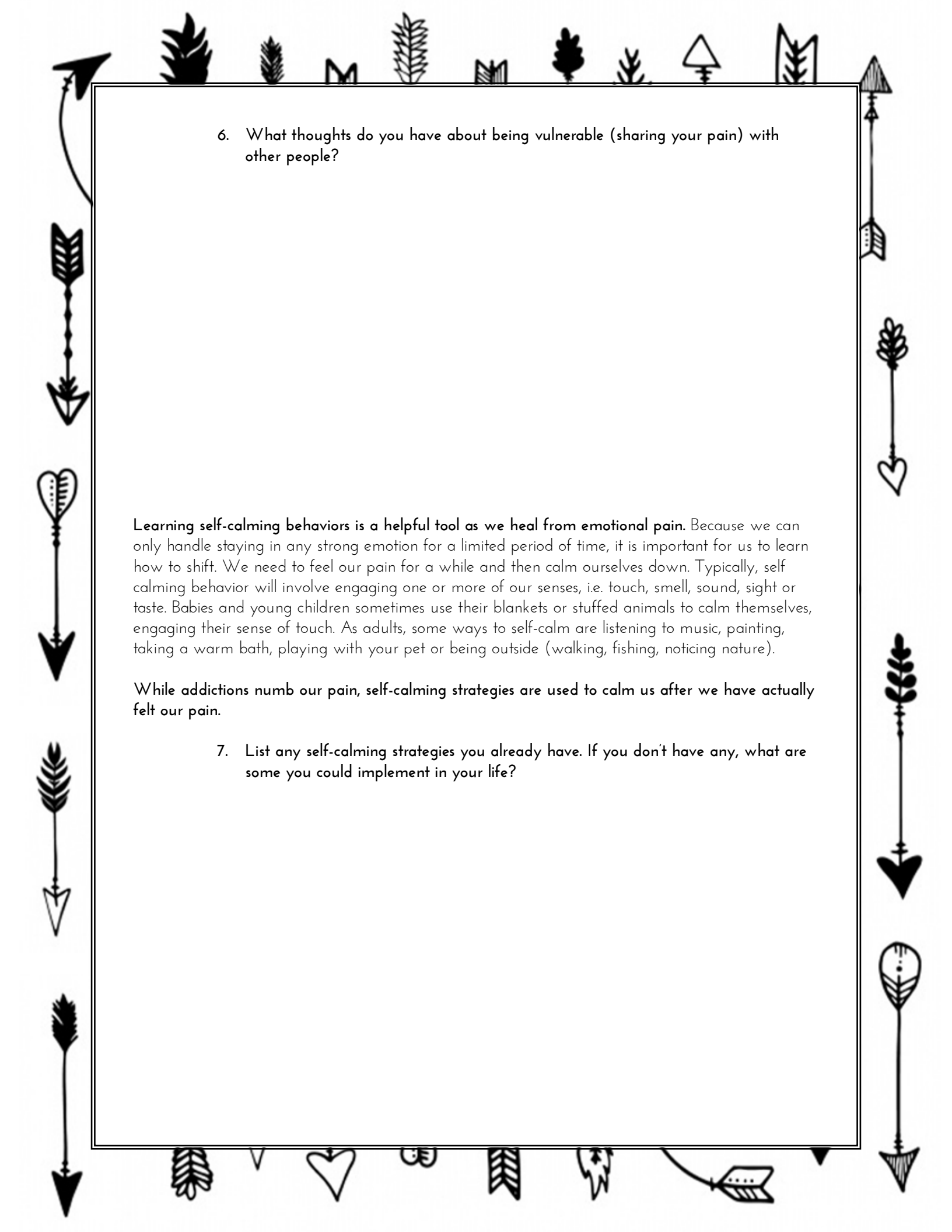
Note: The intentional Connecting with God exercise at the end of every lesson is a good place to start the experience of bringing your pain to God and beginning to receive His healing.

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request. (1 Chronicles 4:10)

**It is also important to develop a support system of safe people.** This actually involves God too, because He brings safe people into our lives to help us. We need to learn how to recognize safe people and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Refer to Addendum E entitled "Creating a Safe Support System" and carefully read through it. **Spend a few minutes completing the exercise at the end of the addendum.**

5. From the exercise you just completed, list the safe, supportive people in your life with whom you could share your pain. (If you don't have any safe people in your life, it will be important to seek some. Often the people in your RYH group become safe people.)

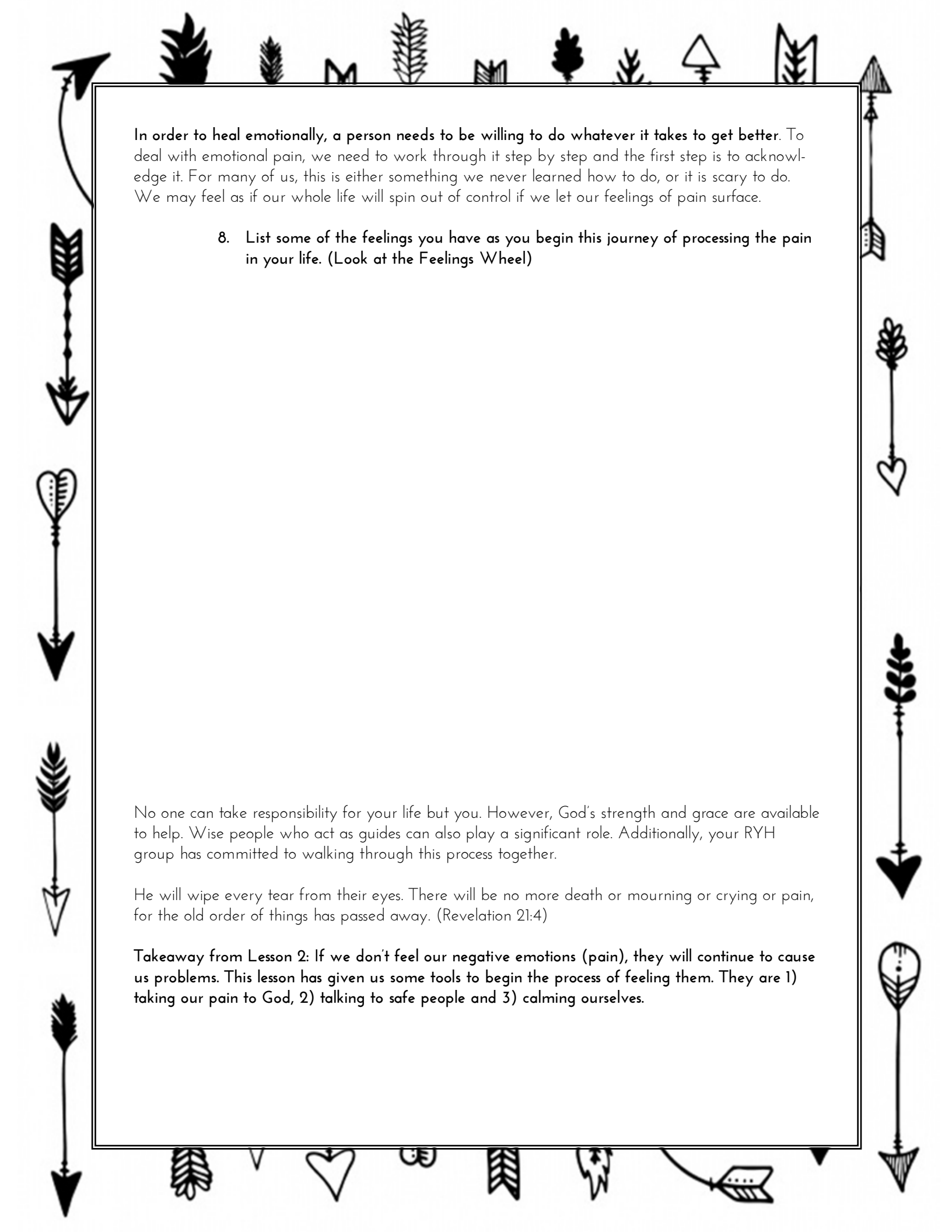


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6. What thoughts do you have about being vulnerable (sharing your pain) with other people?

**Learning self-calming behaviors is a helpful tool as we heal from emotional pain.** Because we can only handle staying in any strong emotion for a limited period of time, it is important for us to learn how to shift. We need to feel our pain for a while and then calm ourselves down. Typically, self-calming behavior will involve engaging one or more of our senses, i.e. touch, smell, sound, sight or taste. Babies and young children sometimes use their blankets or stuffed animals to calm themselves, engaging their sense of touch. As adults, some ways to self-calm are listening to music, painting, taking a warm bath, playing with your pet or being outside (walking, fishing, noticing nature).

While addictions numb our pain, self-calming strategies are used to calm us after we have actually felt our pain.

7. List any self-calming strategies you already have. If you don't have any, what are some you could implement in your life?



In order to heal emotionally, a person needs to be willing to do whatever it takes to get better. To deal with emotional pain, we need to work through it step by step and the first step is to acknowledge it. For many of us, this is either something we never learned how to do, or it is scary to do. We may feel as if our whole life will spin out of control if we let our feelings of pain surface.

8. List some of the feelings you have as you begin this journey of processing the pain in your life. (Look at the Feelings Wheel)

No one can take responsibility for your life but you. However, God's strength and grace are available to help. Wise people who act as guides can also play a significant role. Additionally, your RYH group has committed to walking through this process together.

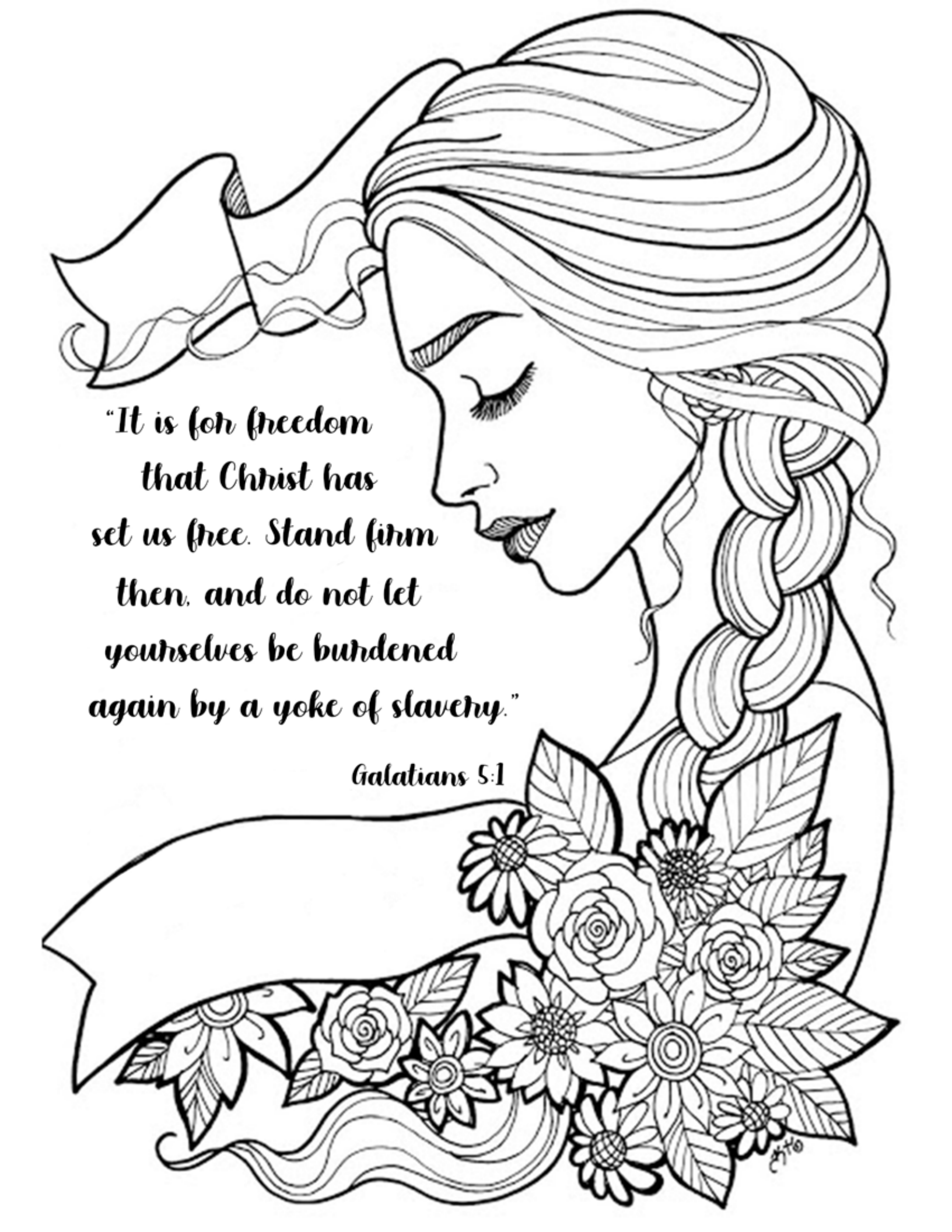
He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

**Takeaway from Lesson 2:** If we don't feel our negative emotions (pain), they will continue to cause us problems. This lesson has given us some tools to begin the process of feeling them. They are 1) taking our pain to God, 2) talking to safe people and 3) calming ourselves.

"Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered  
with shame."

Psalms 34:5 (NIV)





*"It is for freedom  
that Christ has  
set us free. Stand firm  
then, and do not let  
yourselves be burdened  
again by a yoke of slavery."*

*Galatians 5:1*





# DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONALLY-BASED PROBLEMS

(Three-Column Chart)

CHILDHOOD	→	ADULthood	→	ADULthood
<p>SOME CAUSES OF CHILDHOOD PAIN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Active abuse</li> <li>2. Neglect (unmet needs)</li> <li>3. Child's poor choices and sinful responses</li> <li>4. Personality of the child</li> <li>5. Role in the family</li> </ol> <p>↓</p> <p>RESULTS OF NOT BEING ABLE TO PROCESS PAIN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adaptation to survive               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Addictions</li> <li>b. Defense mechanisms</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Suppression of negative emotions</li> <li>3. Development of false belief systems</li> <li>4. Development of a shame-based identity</li> </ol>		<p>EXAMPLES OF ADDITIONAL PAIN EXPERIENCED IN ADULthood</p> <p>Mounting on top of the unprocessed childhood pain, making the pain worse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relational problems</li> <li>2. Poor decision-making</li> <li>3. Full-blown addictions</li> <li>4. Certain needs still not met</li> <li>5. Continuing in abusive relationships</li> <li>6. Depression</li> <li>7. Numb or primarily negative feelings</li> <li>8. Poor relationship with God</li> <li>9. Feeling out of control</li> </ol>		<p>ASPECTS OF THE RESTORATIVE PROCESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ending abusive relationships</li> <li>2. Controlling addictions</li> <li>3. Learning to properly view and express emotions</li> <li>4. Grieving pain and losses</li> <li>5. Understanding needs and meeting them appropriately</li> <li>6. Learning to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy thinking and behavior</li> <li>7. Developing a healthy view of self, the world and God</li> <li>8. Fostering healthy relationships and a healthy support system</li> <li>9. Learning to grow spiritually</li> </ol>

## ADDENDUM A

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# CREATING A SAFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

## What is a support system?

1. A network of people that help you make it through difficult and bewildering changes involved in healing (restoration).
2. People who give you practical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual support.
  - a. Practical: Do things for you when you can't.
  - b. Intellectual: Give you information you should have received as a child.
  - c. Emotional: Comfort and support you when you are hurting and validate your feelings.
  - d. Spiritual: Give you hope, remind you of God's love and good purpose toward you, encourage you to trust Him.
3. Additional ways a support system helps:
  - a. Helps you see that you are not alone or the only one struggling.
  - b. Offers love and respect in spite of your struggles.
  - c. Challenges your distorted thinking and inspires you to grow.
  - d. Believes that you were abused and acknowledges the subsequent pain.
  - e. Causes you to feel reassurance, cared for and listened to.

## Biblical ideas about support systems

1. God created two primary support systems.
  - a. The family —not always safe and supportive.
  - b. The church —not everyone is safe and supportive.
2. Jesus' use of small groups for support and discipleship models a safe support system.
3. Genesis 2:18-25 indicates that all people need other people.
4. The New Testament contains many "one another" passages which also indicate our need for other people. Rom. 12:10, Col. 3:13-16
5. Galatians 6:15 shows the balance between needing the support of others and taking responsibility for ourselves.

## ADDENDUM E, Page 1

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## **Become a safe person**

1. Maintain confidentiality. *(Remember to tell people when you want something kept confidential.)*
2. Validate people's feelings and needs.
3. Safe people:
  - a. Listen.
  - b. Validate feelings.
  - c. Only give advice when asked.
  - d. Communicate understanding when able.
  - e. Encourage the person sharing to be honest and open.
  - f. Don't judge or reject.
  - g. Make eye contact.
  - h. Are empathetic.
4. A way to identify safe people is by using the "share, check, share" system. Share a little of what happened to you, or your feelings, and check their response. If they handle your information based on the criteria above, then share a little bit more, etc.

## **Exercise**

1. List 5-10 people with whom you have regular contact and feel close to.
2. Put a check mark next to the names of supportive people.
3. Circle the names of people who know the things you struggle with.
4. Put a star next to those who directly support your healing.
5. Cross out the name of any who are unsupportive.
6. Put a question mark next to those you are not sure about.
7. Go back to those not crossed out. What qualities do they have that make them seem safe and supportive people?

## **ADDENDUM E, Page 2**

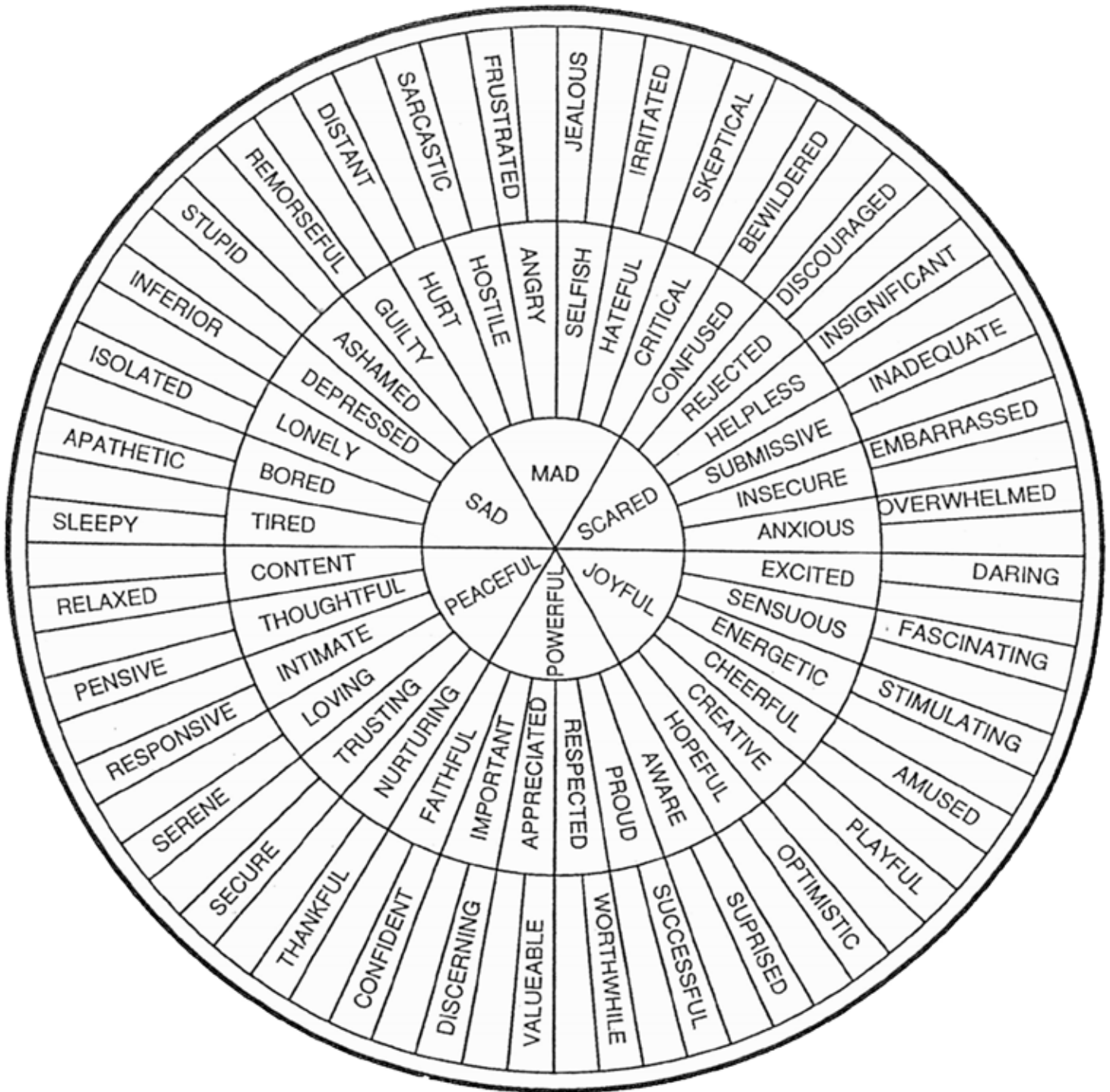
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## Exercise (cont.)

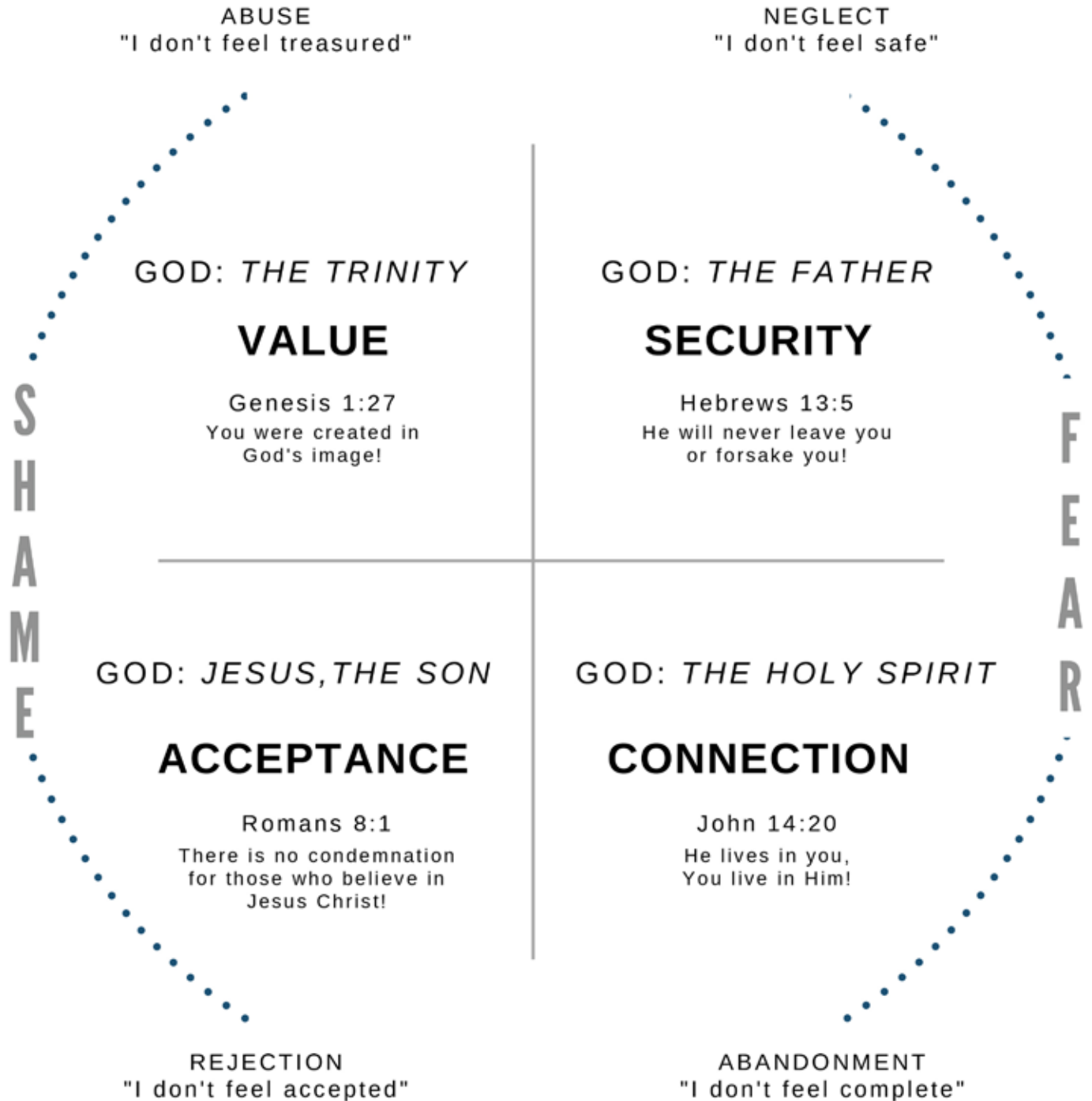
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# The Feelings Wheel



Courtesy of Gloria Wilcox

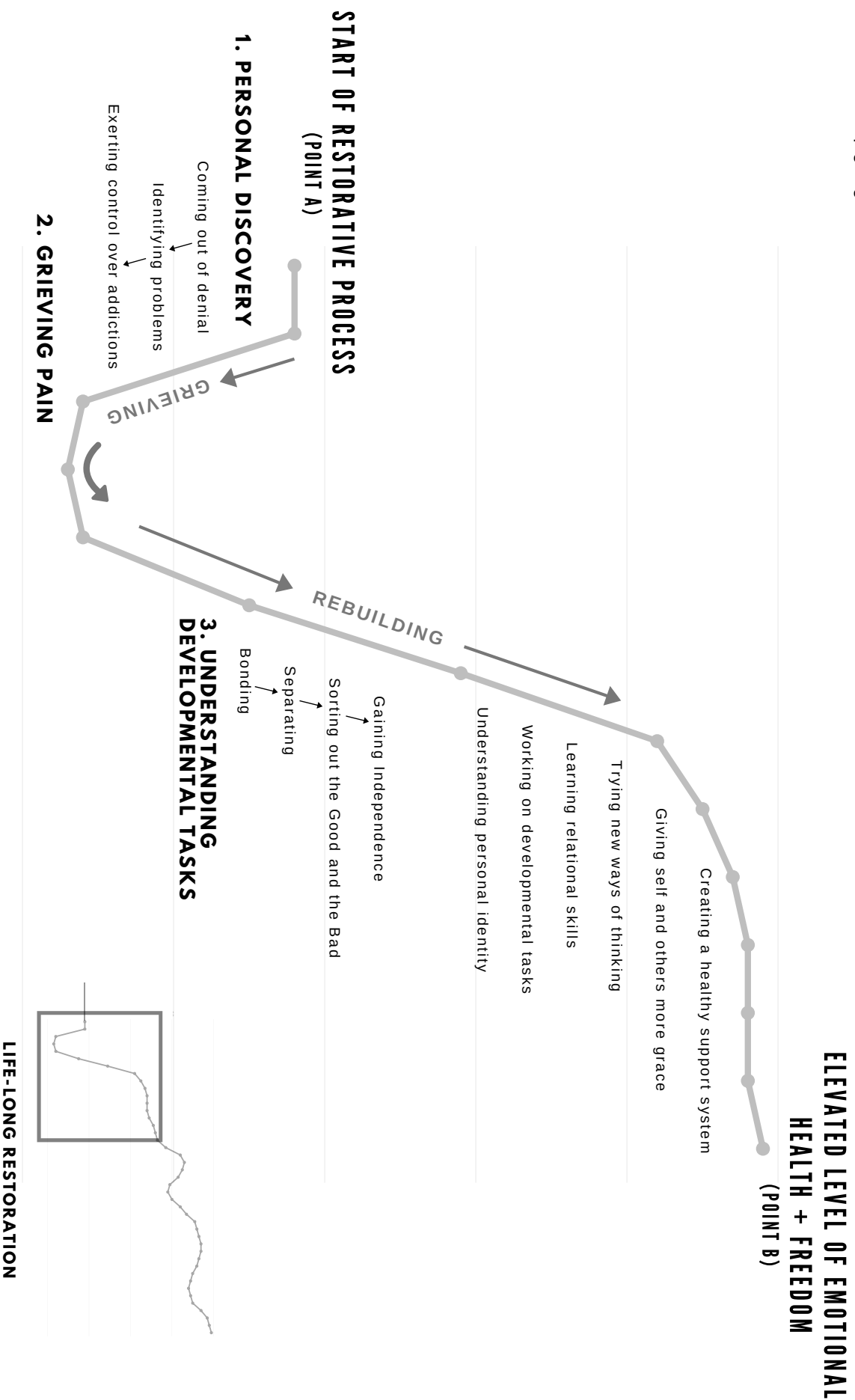
# The Expanded Needs Square



Adapted from *Full Potential* (2008) by Linda Fabre  
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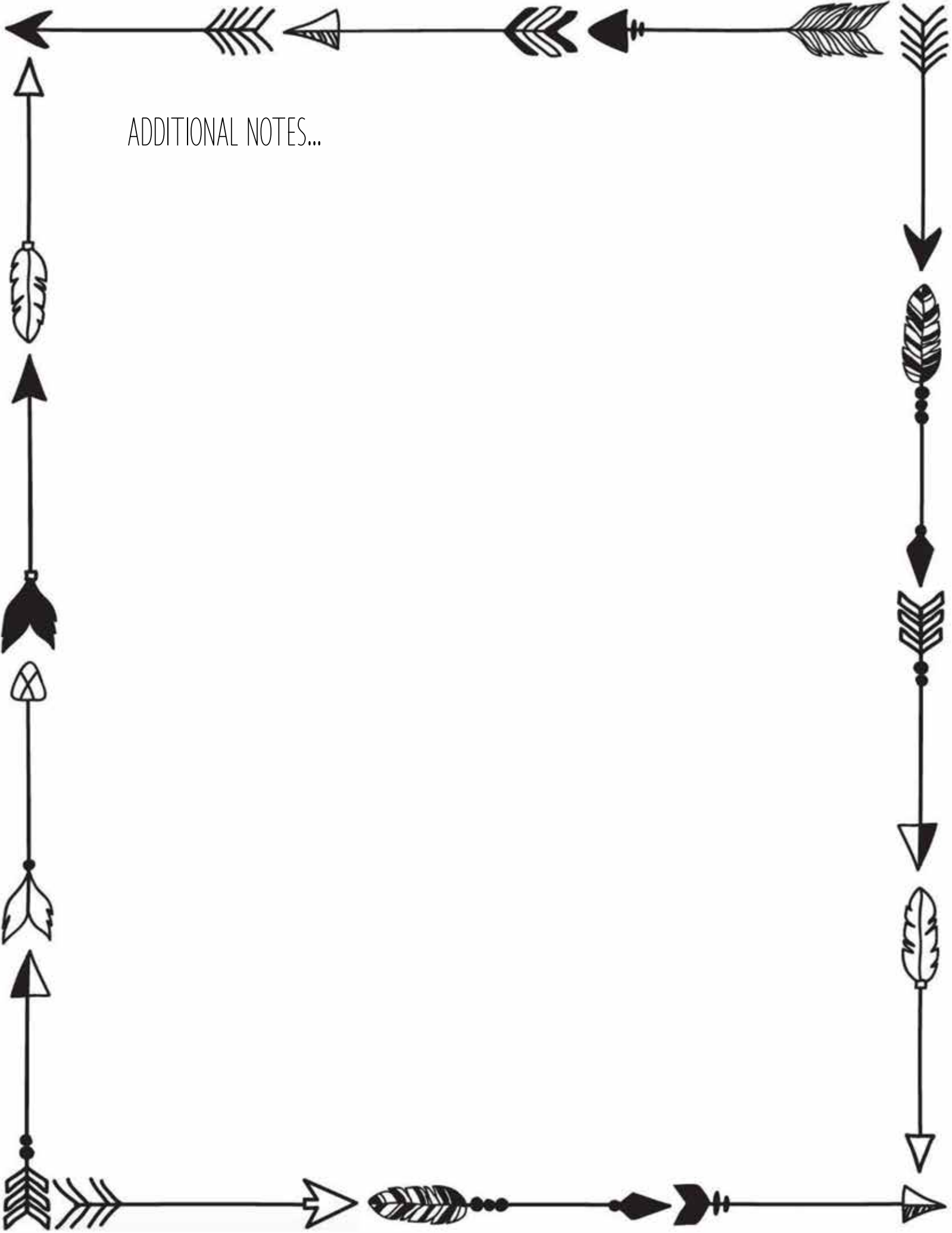
# THE RESTORATIVE PROCESS

The healing process might initially feel worse before it feels better. This is normal. But keep going! There is freedom and life on the other side.



(To find and download this chart, and for more information about understanding developmental tasks, visit [restoringyourheart.com](http://restoringyourheart.com))  
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ADDITIONAL NOTES...







RESTORING YOUR HEART®

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