



THE ONE YEAR™

Positive Mental Health Devotional



365 Days
of Going from
Struggle
to Strength

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott

New York Times Bestselling Authors

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The One Year Positive Mental Health Devotional: 365 Days of Going from Struggle to Strength

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INTRODUCTION

Let's Be Honest

This book isn't for people with perfect peace. It's for the overthinkers, the up-all-nighters, the ones who are sometimes holding it together on the outside but unraveling somewhere deeper in.

It's also for the ones who are doing okay but craving something more grounded, more honest, more whole. People who aren't falling apart but aren't content with surface-level faith, either.

Maybe you have some quiet doubts. Maybe you've been burned by spiritual clichés. Maybe you've heard "Just pray more" or "Choose joy" and felt the sting of being misunderstood.

Maybe you've been handed toxic optimism—the kind that skips over your pain and calls it faith—instead of real hope.

Maybe you've sat in a church pew with a fake smile and a soul screaming for oxygen.

You're not alone. This devotional isn't about pretending. It's not a highlight reel or a "just trust God more" manual. It's about showing up with whatever you've got and being met with grace.

Whether you're barely holding on, quietly rebuilding, or intentionally pursuing emotional health, these pages were written for you.

Here's what you'll find each day:

- A brief Scripture quote
- A raw, reflective reading that integrates biblical truth with psychological insight
- A short anchor truth to hold on to
- A simple, heartfelt prayer
- A gentle invitation to act—a grounding practice, prompt, or next step to take

You won't find long chapters or complex theology. Not because you can't handle depth, but because sometimes your brain is fried, your spirit is flat, or your life is just a lot. These devotionals are short on purpose. They're made for real life.

The topics rotate. Half are about struggle—things like anxiety, grief, anger, trauma, self-worth. The other half are about strength—things like resilience, agency, gratitude, courage, connection. These are just a few examples. You'll see a full listing with locations in *A Guide to Topics*.

Over the year, you'll move through all the topics—sometimes circling back, sometimes moving forward. Because growth rarely happens in a straight line. Life doesn't come in neat emotional categories. You can be both anxious and grateful. Lonely and full of purpose. Healing and still hurting.

You don't need to be "broken enough" to read this. And you don't need to "have it all together" to benefit from it either.

What you do need—what we all need—is space to be human. And loved in the middle of it.

That's what this devotional offers. Not answers for everything. Not pressure to perform. Just presence. And a path—one small step at a time—toward deeper peace, honest faith, and lasting mental and emotional well-being.

If you sometimes feel like you're faking it, if you have days when you're white-knuckling your way through, if you've ever wondered what faith looks like when it tells the truth—you're in the right place.

Think of this journey like a branch—something small but living, a sign that even after hard seasons, growth is still happening.

Ready to begin? One day. One entry. One breath at a time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a stylized "P".

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott

A Guide to Topics:

STRENGTHS YOU ARE BUILDING AND STRUGGLES YOU ARE FACING

This devotional is designed to meet you in real life—not just on the calendar, but in the middle of what you’re actually experiencing. Each entry is organized around a specific topic. Some reflect struggles, while others point toward strengths. You can read the devotionals day by day, or you can turn directly to the topics that speak to your current season. Each topic below includes the pages where it appears, making it easy to return to what you need most.

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Return to these topics anytime,
because growth isn't linear and neither is healing.

Wired for Belonging

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."

GENESIS 2:18

You were never meant to do life alone. Not in the shallow, transactional sense of needing others to get things done—but in the deep, soul-anchoring sense of needing to be known, loved, and safe.

John Bowlby, who researched how we form relationships, made it clear: Connection isn't a luxury. It's a survival instinct.

From infancy, we're wired to reach for others. To seek proximity, safety, and comfort. That wiring doesn't disappear with age. Grown-up problems still echo childhood patterns. We reach out or shut down. We cling or retreat. And most of us are doing this dance without realizing that the choreography was learned decades ago.

But Genesis said it long before Bowlby did: "It is not good for man to be alone." This isn't just about marriage. It's about *belonging*. About how we're created for community, vulnerability, and trust.

Even God, the only self-sufficient being in existence, exists in relationship—Father, Son, and Spirit.

So if you feel that longing to be seen, to be held, to be met with presence and empathy—you're not broken. You're human.

But here's the catch: While we're wired for connection, we're also wounded by it.

Relationships are messy. Some of us learned early on that vulnerability leads to pain. So we adapted. We self-soothed. We pushed people away before they could leave. And now, decades later, the longing to connect is still there . . . but so is the fear.

That's where healing begins—not by pretending we don't need people, but by slowly, bravely opening back up to the possibility that connection can be safe. That not everyone will hurt you. That God is not distant. That healing is relational, too.

Anchor Truth

You were made for connection. You don't have to apologize for needing others.

Prayer

*God, I want to belong.
Heal the places in me that
have stopped reaching out.
Help me risk connection
again—with wisdom, with
courage, and with hope.*

Invitation

*Think about one person
who helps you feel safe.
Reach out to them today—
just a text, a coffee, a short
call. Let your need for con-
nection lead you toward
healing, not hiding.*

Never Really Alone

My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

PSALM 73:26

Loneliness is not a glitch in the system—it's part of being human.

From the garden of Eden to the letters of Paul, Scripture doesn't shy away from it.

The words *alone*, *isolated*, and *lonely* show up repeatedly in the Bible—not just to name a problem, but to reveal a reality. Even faithful people, even heroes of our faith, wrestled with this ache.

Moses felt it on the mountain. Hagar felt it in the wilderness. Elijah, Jeremiah, David, Job—they all cried out from places of isolation, wondering where God was. And yet, again and again, God reminded them: “I am with you.”

That truth didn't always change their circumstances, but it changed their experience of those events.

Clinically, we know that chronic loneliness takes a toll on our mental and physical health. But so does pretending it doesn't exist.

The healthiest path forward is neither denial nor despair; it's acknowledgment and connection. First with ourselves. Then with God. And ultimately with others.

Because even though loneliness is a universal experience, it carries a deeply personal invitation to let God meet you in the place you thought no one could.

When you stop striving to “get over it” and instead allow God to *enter it*, something shifts. That inner emptiness becomes sacred space. Not a void to fear, but a quiet room where his presence draws close.

He sees the places no one else sees. Hears the prayers you don't even speak. And sits with you when the world goes silent.

Anchor Truth

Loneliness may visit, but it does not have to define you. The one who holds the universe is holding you, even now.

Prayer

God, help me to be honest about my loneliness and to welcome you into it. Let your nearness feel more real than my isolation.

Invitation

Today, when you feel alone, pause and say aloud, “You are here with me.” Let that be your refrain until the truth settles into your soul.

Ask It Again

*Let us examine our ways and test them,
and let us return to the LORD.*

LAMENTATIONS 3:40 (NIV)

You've asked yourself this before: *Why do I keep doing this? Why do I shut down in conflict? Why do I overcommit and then burn out? Why do I chase approval from people who rarely give it?*

You've asked. But maybe you didn't stay with the question long enough.

Real change begins when we dare to ask the same question again—and wait. Wait in the discomfort. Wait in the silence. Wait without rushing to fix.

Most people rush past this moment. We get uncomfortable, so we reach for distraction or blame. But those who grow? They lean in.

They *stay* with the question. They *stay* curious, not just about what they're doing—but why they're doing it. Curiosity makes that possible. Without it, we stay stuck on the surface, treating symptoms instead of exploring causes.

Curiosity that leads to growth is about slowing down long enough to spot a repeated behavior, track it back to its emotional source, and consider new responses.

The verse from Lamentations is a call to introspection, but also a call to hope: “Let us examine our ways and . . . return.”

The goal isn't just to sit in self-critique—it's to return. To reroute. To move toward something truer, healthier, and more aligned with God's intent for our wholeness.

Jesus often responded to people by posing questions—sometimes the same one more than once. “Do you want to get well?” he asked the man by the pool.

It wasn't because Jesus didn't know the answer. It was because he wanted the man to *see himself clearly*.

Anchor Truth

Healing doesn't start with having all the answers. It starts with asking the right questions—and being willing to ask them again.

Prayer

God, give me courage to ask hard questions about myself—and grace to hear the answers without shame. Help me stay curious long enough to find what needs to change.

Invitation

Think of a behavior or emotional reaction you're tired of repeating. Ask yourself why it happens. Then ask again—and be still long enough to listen.

Sometimes It's Grief in Disguise

*Even in laughter the heart may ache,
and rejoicing may end in grief.*

PROVERBS 14:13 (NIV)

Jealousy doesn't always come from comparison. Sometimes it comes from loss. You're not mad they got married. You're grieving that you haven't. You're not bitter they got the job. You're grieving the closed door you thought would open for you.

But grief wears all kinds of masks, and envy is a common one. It's easier to feel irritated at someone else's win than to feel the ache of your own deferred hope.

And if you don't recognize what's happening underneath, you'll start resenting others for having what you don't, even if they didn't take it from you.

Proverbs 14:13 says that even in laughter, the heart may ache. In other words, surface emotions don't always tell the whole story. What looks like envy might actually be unspoken sadness. And sadness that stays buried turns sour.

Self-awareness means you slow down long enough to ask, *Is this really jealousy? Or am I grieving something I haven't admitted yet?*

In therapy, this is often explored through *ambiguous grief*—the pain of what you never had, what didn't go as planned, or what's still out of reach. It's quiet. It's hard to name. But it's real. And if you're human, you have it.

Jealousy says, "They don't deserve that." Grief says, "I just wish that was part of my story too." And God says, "I see you—and I'm not rushing you past the ache."

Anchor Truth

Not all jealousy is envy. Sometimes it's unspoken grief.

Prayer

God, help me see what I'm really feeling. If jealousy is covering up sadness or disappointment, meet me in that truth. I don't want to resent others. I want to heal.

Invitation

When jealousy shows up today, ask, "Am I grieving something underneath this?" Name the loss. Let God sit with you in it. No rush. No shame.

You're Not Waiting for Permission

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

Somewhere along the line, many of us internalized the idea that we need someone to tell us it's okay to take action. To set the boundary. To say no. To make a move. To change the story. And if no one gives that green light, we stall.

But here's the truth: You don't need permission to be healthy. You don't need applause to pivot. You don't need a guarantee before you grow.

Agency means you stop waiting for someone else to bless your next step and start trusting the Spirit that's already within you.

Paul doesn't sugarcoat it: God didn't wire us for fear or shrinking back. That means chronic hesitation and self-doubt don't come from God. But power? Love? Self-discipline? Those *do*. That's what's baked into your spiritual DNA. Not recklessness, but boldness. Not self-centeredness, but Spirit-led action.

In psychology, this overlaps with what's called *self-efficacy*—your belief that you can influence outcomes. People with strong self-efficacy don't wait for someone to tell them they're ready. They act, learn, adjust, and grow. And that sense of personal agency is one of the best predictors of long-term emotional resilience.

Of course, you'll still want wisdom. You'll still need discernment. But don't confuse external permission with internal peace.

If you're walking in love, truth, and alignment with God's heart, then that next brave step might not need approval from anyone else. Just obedience.

Anchor Truth

You don't need a green light from others to grow in the direction of health.

Prayer

God, I've spent too much time waiting for permission to live with clarity and courage. Remind me today that you've already given me your Spirit. Help me move in power, love, and self-discipline—no more stalling.

Invitation

Is there something you've been waiting to do because no one "gave you permission"? Name it. Then take one small, brave step anyway. Trust the Spirit in you.

Apologizing Well

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 JOHN 1:9

Apologizing can feel like swallowing gravel. Especially when you're not the only one at fault. Especially when you're afraid it won't be received.

But here's what most people get wrong about apologizing: They think it's about blame. Really, it's about healing.

Psychologically, a genuine apology is one of the most disarming tools for restoring connection. It signals vulnerability, empathy, and accountability—all essential ingredients for rebuilding trust.

But there's a big difference between saying "I'm sorry you feel that way" and "I'm sorry for what I did." One deflects. The other owns.

The most effective apologies follow a simple but powerful pattern:

- **Acknowledge** what you did without excuses: "I was late to dinner."
- **Name** how it impacted the other person: "You had to wait for me and may have felt like I don't respect your time."
- **Express** genuine remorse: "I'm sorry."
- **Offer** to make it right: "Next time, I'll leave earlier."

It's not about groveling. It's about taking responsibility.

And here's the clincher: Research shows that people are more likely to forgive when the apology includes *empathy*—not just admission.

James 5:16 doesn't say "explain your motives" or "justify your actions." It says *confess*.

That takes humility. It takes courage. And it leads to healing—not just for the person you hurt, but for *you*.

You're not less of a person when you apologize. You're becoming more of the person God made you to be—someone who loves well, lives honestly, and walks in grace.

Anchor Truth

A real apology doesn't shrink you. It strengthens the bridge between hearts.

Prayer

God, give me the strength to own what's mine. Help me speak with clarity, empathy, and courage. Make me someone who heals what I've broken—not with perfection, but with humility.

Invitation

Think of someone you've hurt—intentionally or not. Write out what a healthy, healing apology would sound like. Whether or not you send it today, let God use it to shape your heart.

Jesus and the Slow Burn

Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves.

MATTHEW 21:12

Most people think of Jesus flipping tables as a flash of holy rage, a fiery outburst of righteous indignation. But it wasn't impulsive. It wasn't reckless. It was a slow burn.

The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus actually went to the Temple the day before he cleansed it. He walked in, looked around, saw the injustice, and then left. He slept on it. Prayed on it. Then returned the next day, deliberate and clear.

This wasn't an emotional hijacking. It was a calibrated response. Jesus didn't react. He responded. That distinction matters.

Most of us were never taught what to do with our anger, so we default to one of two extremes: We blow up or we shut down.

But Jesus shows a third way—the way of holy restraint, intentionality, and purpose. He wasn't afraid of anger. He harnessed it.

And that's the invitation for us.

Your anger might be telling you that something needs to change. A boundary needs to be named. A lie needs to be confronted. A silence needs to be broken.

But you don't have to erupt to be effective. You don't have to react immediately to be real.

You can pause. Pray. Cool the flames. And still flip a few tables tomorrow, if love requires it.

The point isn't passivity. It's presence. Being grounded enough to let the Spirit lead your anger—not the other way around.

Anchor Truth

You can be both angry and wise. Jesus was.

Prayer

Jesus, teach me to carry anger the way you did—with clarity, courage, and compassion. Show me how to pause long enough to act with love, not just intensity.

Invitation

Think of something that angered you recently. Ask yourself what a slow, prayerful response would look like. What would it look like to flip a table—but with grace?