

MORE THAN A FEELING

Healthy pathways for processing overwhelming emotions.



WITH TEACHING FROM
BRENDA DROST

LEADER'S GUIDE

MORE THAN A FEELING

I'm so excited that you are choosing the More Than A Feeling study for your small group. While the study was created for individuals to learn to process through overwhelming emotions, the journey is always so much more fun when we walk it out together with trusted friends.

As a pastor, I've heard story after story from women who have been experiencing extreme highs and lows, emotional freak out moments and the subsequent shame that is attached to not being able to control or manage their emotions well. I'm not a counsellor or professional by any means, I'm just a fellow follower on this Christian journey who has learned from experience and can offer some practical tips.

In this study, I'm going to share my own journey to discovering healthy ways to deal with out of control emotions and biblical pathways to respond with peace and love rather than reacting out of fear, insecurity and frustration. I hope this study not only helps you process your feelings but also empowers you to live in victory over the sin and shame that sometimes results from unprocessed wounds of the heart.

This study dives deeper into the five feeling words I've heard the most over these last several months...

I Feel Sad

I Feel Frustrated

I Feel Tired

I Feel Overwhelmed

I Feel Lonely

This leaders guide will act as a complement to the individual study guide. I suggest that each group participant download and print the study guide as their own road map to healing and use the worksheets included to process through their own emotions. There will be some processing you can do together as a group and some things that will take the time alone to really work through for each individual.

I'm also a big fan of keeping a journal and using it to write down what I'm feeling on a daily basis so that I have a history to work from and use it to notice patterns or places or I keep getting stuck.

Here are a few important things to think about before you get started...

SET THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE.

As the group leader, your main focus should be creating a safe and inviting atmosphere where the group members can be open and honest about their feelings. Everyone needs to feel safe to share in order to get the most out of this material. My hope and prayer would be that going through this study together will help you understand each other better and grow closer in your relationships while getting to the bottom of some serious heart issues in the safety of Christian community.

RECOGNIZE THIS COULD BE DIFFICULT FOR SOME PARTICIPANTS.

Not everyone in your group will have a good grasp on their emotional life and well-being. You may find that emotions could flare up as you process in the group setting. As the weeks go by, I'm guessing you'll also hear stories of emotional upheaval throughout the week. Our emotional state is often tied to past experiences, hurts or trauma. Picking at the emotion can uncover painful memories that we have hidden or stuffed for a very long time.

Be conscious of what's happening in the group and follow up appropriately with anyone who might need more conversation. You might also want to assign a buddy system if your group is larger to provide an even more intimate and comfortable space for the women to process and journey with each other. Having a compassionate and trusted place to process can open the door of our hearts to even greater vulnerability, more honest self-assessment, and ultimately healing.

USE THE TOOLS AVAILABLE WITH THE STUDY GUIDE.

Be sure to make yourself familiar with the worksheets and tools provided in the study guide. With each session, there is a printable worksheet that gives practical guidance for working through emotions. There is also a list of feeling words that is helpful for those who are not used to talking about their emotions. Finally, at the end of the study guide, you'll find a list of scriptural truths that can be used to reinforce what you've learned throughout the study.

REMEMBER, THERE'S ALWAYS MORE TO THE STORY.

This is a very short and concise study on emotions. There's so much more that I just didn't have the time and space to get into and I fully recognize that some of the processing tools may not work in every situation. These lessons strike a broad stroke on very intimate issues of the heart. But it's a good start, especially for those who are not familiar with the language of processing. There are other great resources out there that can help you go further in the healing journey if that's what you choose to do.

I'M HERE IF YOU NEED ME.

I've led small groups for years and I know it's not always easy to lead in uncharted territory on your own. If you need help or support in any way as a leader, please reach out. I'll do what I can to offer support or additional resources for you and your group.

Email me anytime at hello@brendadrost.com

PROCESSING FEELINGS

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The main objective of this first teaching is to introduce women to the idea of processing their emotions and provide a healthy pathway to work through when emotions begin to overwhelm. My guess is that every woman in your group will be in a different place when it comes to spiritual growth and experience with talking about their emotions. This could be new territory and extremely uncomfortable ground for some of your group members.

As the group leader, you can set the tone for the direction of the group. If you are open and honest about your feelings, it will open the door for others to follow suit and provide an environment of vulnerability, which is crucial for the deep, honest conversations that we want to flow out of this study time together.

MAIN POINTS || PROCESSING EMOTIONS

Emotions are indicators that there is a deeper issue of the heart.

This is an important point for processing emotions. Many women have been taught to suppress and reject their own emotions. Leaning into them and listening to what they are telling us may be very scary for some simply because they've been avoiding it for so long.

We can't change what's happening around us but we can change what's happening within us.

What happens within your heart is your responsibility. Keeping our hearts tender and submitted to the direction and leading of the Spirit of God is important. Taking responsibility for our stuff is an essential part of our journey towards wholeness.

Walking in the Fruit of the Spirit is a work of transformation, not behaviour modification.

Too many of us spend way too much time focusing on trying to get God to change the people and situations around us instead of inviting him to change us. This will be a big but healthy shift in perspective for some. Emotional stability and spiritual growth are a result of the hard but necessary internal heart work that produces the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Below is an extensive list of questions you might want to consider for group discussion time. A successful discussion will depend on the level of comfort and vulnerability your group feels with each other. Come prepared with some examples from your own life to lead the way in vulnerability.

Are you able to easily name your emotions?

What emotions are you feeling right now?

Refer to the worksheet included with this section in the study guide if needed.

Have you been taught healthy pathways to process emotions or do you tend to stuff and cope?

What do you do to cope when your emotions overwhelm you?

What are healthy ways to cope?

What are some unhealthy ways to cope?

Think of a recent time when you felt overwhelmed by your emotions.

Do you remember what triggered that emotional upheaval?

Can you identify some of the lies you hear in your mind when emotions are high?

Is there a common negative thought that is prevalent?

What emotion is most problematic for you right now?

Do you feel comfortable and equipped to take this emotion to the Lord in prayer this week?

PRAYER TIME

During your prayer time, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to each participant any unhealthy things they turn to as a way of coping, hiding and stuffing emotions. Have them make note of those unhealthy patterns. Encourage the participants to watch for those moments in the week when they are tempted to turn to their preferred method of coping. Instead of going through with it, ask them to pull out their worksheet instead and process through the emotion in a healthy way with the Lord.

It might even be necessary to renounce some of our unhealthy coping tools in prayer and surrender them to the Lord. Ask for his help in breaking through our unhealthy patterns and receive his grace and strength to face the emotions and deeper heart issues head-on.

I FEEL SAD

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The main objective of this teaching session is to recognize that we all face loss, disappointment and unfulfilled expectations in life and we need to learn to grieve those things appropriately. All too often we fail to acknowledge or our need to grieve or deny ourselves the time and space we need to do it properly.

As the leader, it might be helpful for you to come to the group this week with some thoughts about the things you're missing or disappointed by in this season of life.

MAIN POINTS || I FEEL SAD

It's ok to recognize that you are missing some very important things in this season.

It may be that participants have not taken the time to consider their own grief and loss in this season. Even just considering the idea of normal life and sense of any routine or stability may be something we need to recognize as a loss.

As long as you think you can hold it all together, you're actually limiting the work that God can do in your life.

You actually don't need to hold it together. It takes so much energy and effort to hold up when you're feeling disappointed. Allow yourself space by admitting your loss and let God work in this area of your life so that you can experience some healing.

Jesus taught us a healthy way to grieve in the Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus modelled a prayer of exchange in the garden that included releasing his own desires and receiving comfort from the Father.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What are some things you've lost or been disappointed within this season of life?
Which causes you the most sadness?

What do you turn to for comfort when you feel sad or disappointed?

Is it comforting for you to know that Jesus was acquainted with grief and loss?
Does it make you feel more comfortable to grieve your losses with him?

In the session, we learned that Jesus modelled how to properly grieve our losses in the presence of the Father. Do you take the time to properly grieve your losses?

Following Jesus' example in prayer, he expressed his heart but then exchanged his desires for the will of the Father. Are you able to lay down your own desires and expectations in this situation and pick up the heart of the Father for your life?

Do you have a group of friends who you trust to pray through times of sadness with you?

If not, could someone from our group be a trusted partner to pray with?

This might be a good time to pair the group up with a buddy to pray and process while walking through this study.

Talk about the worksheet and the idea of writing a lament. Consider leaving time for the women to bring their lament next week and read it within the safety of the group.

PRAYER TIME

If you have paired up the group, leave some time for prayer with their new buddy at the end of the session. Allow them time and space for some relationship building conversation and prayer time together.

If you choose to pray together as a group, use this time to pray for peace over the participants as they do the worksheets and write their own lament. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of deep sadness that need further exploration.

You can also thank Jesus for his willingness to model great leadership for us in this area of our lives and leaving us a clear pattern to follow when we are grieved.

I FEEL FRUSTRATED

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The main objective of this teaching is to recognize our need to release our anger to God and not allow it to cause sin in our lives. At times in life, we can be consumed with anger towards the injustice in our world, but we can't allow the sin of others to produce sin in our own hearts.

MAIN POINTS || I FEEL FRUSTRATED

It's not people, systems or institutions that are the problem... sin is the problem.

The frustration you feel when faced with injustice in our world is normal. But we need to continually remind ourselves that sin is the real problem.

Holding on to anger gives the devil an opportunity.

We need to learn healthy ways to release our anger to the Lord so that we don't allow it to be used against us. The enemy loves the opportunity to cause more destruction in our relationships and holding on to anger gives him the wiggle room he needs.

God's response to the brokenness of sin was to run towards us with compassion.

The Bible says that God is slow to anger and full of unfailing love, and we should be too. We need to learn to pick up his heart of compassion for others and turn our anger into longsuffering and acts of love.

God is a God of justice and we can trust him to make things right.

In the end, every injustice will be set right. It's not our responsibility to act for God. He has everything under control. We need to be obedient when prompted, but otherwise, we must learn to release our anger to him and let him take care of the outcomes.

Gentleness can turn a situation where anger is involved.

Instead of adding fuel to the fire and responding to someone else's anger, we are called to respond with compassion and a gentle word. Your gentle response can turn the situation around instead of stirring it up. Consider carefully how your words and the tone of your response can steer a conversation in the right direction.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What do you see going on in our world right now that makes you feel angry?

Can you clearly see that the problem is sin and not people or institutions?

Have you been targeting your anger in the wrong places?

How do you normally release your angry feelings?

Is this healthy or unhealthy?

Can you think of a time when anger got the best of you and caused you to say or do something you later regretted?

Can you see where your anger gives an opportunity to the enemy?

What's your typical response when others get angry?

How could you improve your skills at conflict resolution but using the advice outlined in this session's teaching?

It might be helpful for some to see this modelled for them. As silly as it may seem, role-playing through a conflict situation might help your participants with a clear understanding of how a gentle response works to turn a situation around.

PRAYER TIME

Take some time as a group to pray for the injustice and sin you see in the world around you. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the Father's heart of compassion and begin to pray out what he shows you as intercession for your families, church and community. Encourage every person in the group to participate in the prayer time.

Close your time of prayer by asking God for help picking up his heart of compassion for others and ask for opportunities in the coming week to exercise gentleness.

I FEEL TIRED

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The main objective of this session is to emphasize our need to find a healthy rhythm of rest in the presence of Jesus. His presence is refreshing to our weary souls and we find everything we need there to step back out into the life he calls us to.

MAIN POINTS || I FEEL TIRED

We've been processing a lot of change lately.

It's completely normal to feel tired in the face of the constant change and new things to figure out in this unprecedented season in our world. Everything is new and sometimes new is hard to process.

You don't need to have it all figured out.

God is good at his job. He's not nervous or intimidated by this season and if you lean into him you can receive his peace and guidance for your life. You don't have to figure everything out. But you do need to learn how to take one step at a time with Jesus in the lead.

As long as your life rests on your own ability, you'll never be all God has called you to be.

God has called you to a life bigger than you could ever imagine, but you'll never walk in all he has planned for you if you think you can do it on your own. We desperately need his empowerment in every area of our lives.

Not only did Jesus practice and model rest for us, but he also invites us into his rest.

Jesus has everything you need ready and available in his presence. Learning a healthy rhythm of rest in his presence is essential for our spiritual, physical and emotional well-being. It's important to learn what activities drain you and which activities fuel you so you can find a healthy rhythm for your own life.

Find things to be grateful for.

Constant change can make us feel resentful. Reflecting on and creating a list of things you are grateful for in this season can help to shift your perspective back towards Jesus and his activity and involvement in your everyday life.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What are some of the things that have changed significantly in your life in the last few months?

How have these changes affected your mood and personal life?

Are there specific barriers in this season that are keeping you from your regular healthy rhythms of rest and reconnection with God?

What is a healthy rhythm of rest for your life?

What disciplines, practices or activities do you engage in to refuel and reconnect with God?

What adjustments could you make to your schedule and routines to allow for more of the activities in your daily life?

Is there someone you need to talk to or ask for help to make this happen?

Have there been things outside of your control that has caused you to feel resentful in the past several months?

Brenda talked about practising gratitude as a way to combat resentment.

What are you grateful for in this season?

PRAYER TIME

Open with prayers of thankfulness to God. Go around the group and let each person express something they are grateful for today. Encourage everyone to participate.

In a time of quiet reflective prayer, ask Jesus to reveal to each person a picture of what it looks like to rest in Him. This is deeply personal and will be different for each person. Ask them what it feels like to see this picture of resting in Jesus.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any barriers to meeting with Jesus and experiencing his rest. If any barrier to meeting with Jesus comes up, allow space for your group participants to speak it out and receive prayer from the rest of the group.

Consider following up mid-week to see if people are implementing a strategy to create a healthier rhythm for their daily life.

I FEEL OVERWHELMED

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The main objective of this session is to bring some order and structure to chaotic feelings of being overwhelmed. When we feel overwhelmed it's often because our thought life has spun out of control. This session offers some super practical tools to help unload unnecessary complications and simplify our decision making and to-do lists.

MAIN POINTS || I FEEL OVERWHELMED

When we are feeling overwhelmed, we often feel stuck and can't move forward.

By definition, being emotionally overwhelmed means to be completely submerged in your thoughts and emotions, to the point where you feel frozen or paralyzed. There are decisions to make and tasks to get done, but the swarm of thoughts just keep swirling around in your head. You can't find a starting point.

Constantly processing change can be overwhelming.

Even simple changes to our daily routines can be a lot to process. In this season we've been experiencing an overwhelming amount of change and an uncertain future.

The enemy will always encourage us to quit.

While feeling overwhelmed is completely normal, the voice of shame tries to convince us that we are flawed and broken. We don't want to admit we are overwhelmed because it makes us look incompetent.

Isolation only fuels the chaos in our minds and is a tool of the enemy to intimidate us and keep our issues hidden in the darkness where he can continue to torment us.

Feeling overwhelmed is most often a breakdown in your thought life, not your actual life. When you get to process your thoughts healthily, things can change rather quickly.

The answer is to gain victory in your thought life.

It is possible to take every thought captive and bring them into submission to Christ. Your thought life doesn't need to derail your productivity and keep you stuck. You have the mind-set of the Spirit that brings life and peace. But sometimes we need some super practical help to sort through the thoughts that are swirling in our minds.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Think of a recent time when you felt overwhelmed.

What are the contributing factors that cause you to overwhelmed, stuck or unable to make decisions?

Brenda mentioned that when she's overwhelmed the enemy whispers to her that she is not enough.

What is the rhetoric that plays out in your mind when you feel overwhelmed?

What role does shame play in this part of your life?

Do you try to act like you've got it all together so people won't know that you are overwhelmed?

Do you tend to overextend yourself, say yes to too many things or underestimate your time?

Are there some healthy boundaries you need to set in your life in this area?

Do you have difficulty asking for help when you need it? If so, why?

PRAYER TIME

In your prayer time, today take some time to specifically address those lies of shame.

I suggest asking each person to pray and speak out the lies and internal rhetoric to God and taking authority over their thoughts in the presence of God. I believe there's something powerful about calling out the activity of the enemy and letting him know we see and recognize him before the Lord.

Cancel any lingering effects of shame over your life and then ask Jesus to His truth into those areas.

Wait in his presence and allow time for him to speak truth to each person individually. This can be a very powerful moment of transformation. Have people share what they felt God speaking to them.

I FEEL LONELY

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The main focus of this session is to uncover the toxic thought patterns that keep us from connecting in authentic relationship with God and others. Lonely is often much more than just being physically alone. It's tied to a deep inner dialogue that wants to keep us isolated from life-giving community.

MAIN POINTS || I FEEL LONELY

Lonely isn't necessarily about being alone.

You can stand in a crowded room full of friends and family and still feel completely alone. That lonely feeling isn't so much about being in the presence of other people, there's something deeper. That uncomfortable feeling we have when we are lonely is a lack of the deep relational connections we were created for.

Lonely is often linked to an internal dialogue of being unwanted, unnoticed and misunderstood.

We are wired to be known deeply for who we are and loved for our true self. But we've been taught that our true self is unworthy. Scared of what we feel is imminent rejection, we keep our true selves hidden to the world under a mask of insecurity and pride. We don't let anyone get to know us deeply. It can turn into a consistent pattern of rejecting ourselves before anyone else has the chance to beat us to it.

When we are alone with our thoughts, we are dangerous to ourselves.

Isolation is a tool the enemy uses to divide and conquer.

The fear of being rejected can keep us from opening up to others.

The enemy knows the power of true intimacy with God and community with others, so he works hard to keep us from making authentic connections.

God knows every single thing about you, every hurt and experience, every thought and attitude of your heart and he loves you anyway. His answer was to run towards you with his love.

This is a fundamental truth that we all need to learn to live in and from. The power of God's love has the capacity to literally change us from the inside out and become the motivating and driving force of everything we do.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Do you feel lonely often?

Do you ever feel lonely even when you're with other people?

Did you notice a difference with loneliness when social distancing became a part of our lives?

Brenda talked about an internal dialogue of feeling unwanted, unnoticed and misunderstood.

What lies does the enemy whisper to you in those moments of loneliness?

What truth from the word of God would combat the lies that you face?

When you stop to think about God's great love for you, how does it make you feel?

Do you ever feel like you risk being rejected in relationship with others?

How does this affect your ability to build strong and healthy relationships?

Do you find it uncomfortable or difficult to reengage with people in your workplace or church community?

How could you step out of your comfort zone and take a risk to engage with others?

Is there anything you could do to make it easier for those who are disconnected to reengage in community?

PRAYER TIME

Pray over the group and enter a time of quiet prayer and contemplation. After opening in prayer, ask the group to keep their eyes closed and focus on your words as you read scriptures about God's love over them.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show each person a picture of God's love for them. Wait a few moments for that picture to develop in their minds. Then encourage each person to respond to God's love in their quiet time of prayer.

Ask if anyone wants to share what God showed them as an encouragement to the group.

BRENDA DROST

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brenda Drost is a Pastor and Speaker who is known for her warm smile and passionate preaching style. Whether she is teaching at her home church or out on the road, she loves to bring challenging messages that help people live out their faith in the real world. Brenda serves on staff at Mountain Park Church as a Teaching Pastor and mentor to women, and loves to travel and speak at conferences and women's events. Brenda and her husband Mark live on their farm in the beautiful Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada where they have raised their four young adult children.

Find more resources at BrendaDrost.com

Please feel free to contact me about this study. I would be happy to answer your questions, offer further resources and lend some prayer or practical support.

Email hello@brendadrost.com