

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

60. Hope For Us Who Are Exhausted

You are listening to episode 60 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, *Hope for Us Who are Exhausted*. Welcome back to the podcast today, friend. Thank you for joining me. You know? I'm so glad I get to journey though life with you! In today's episode we discuss the reality of many of us women. The reality that many of us are exhausted. Not just tired, but exhausted. (And we also look at the difference.) I believe this is real life for many of us, and it's been on my radar for some time. But it seemed like today was a good day to address this subject and bring it to light so we can find some hope. So, hang with me here for this short while, and together we'll find some encouragement along the way as we walk through this episode. Let's get into it.

I had the privilege of speaking at a local ministry on Saturday morning, and it was fun to gather with other women who love God and follow Jesus. As I shared about the ministry God has placed me in, offering hope to women to live encouraged and less distracted in their real lives, one attendee said something that I can't get out of my brain. She said, "We women are exhausted."

Her sentence took up residence in my thoughts.

"We women are exhausted."

Hmmm.... but you know? I questioned her and her statement in my mind for a few moments, because I didn't think her words were accurate. *Really?? All women are exhausted?? Every single one of us??*

The more I thought about it, the more I believed her statement was a general declaration for us women. And as I thought even more about it, though, I began to agree internally with her. Maybe not every single woman is exhausted, but recalling my interactions with other women lately, many shared with me how tired they were. How overwhelmed they were. How weary there were.

Maybe you can relate.

Then my thoughts turned quickly to myself. *Am I exhausted? I know I'm tired some days, but would I describe myself as exhausted? Am I one of the many exhausted women?* I didn't think I was, but then I remembered something that happened last Wednesday.

At Bible study, one of the leaders said to me three words I really despise. She said, "You look tired." *Really?* This basically tells me, "You look awful." Because we all know anytime we look tired, we don't look our best. Right? So, I guess last Wednesday I looked awful. Who likes to hear they look tired? Not me. So, I will choose to never say those three words to another person. Those three words never make anyone feel better. Ever.

There's a difference between exhausted and tired.

And on Saturday, I think I was more tired than exhausted. But still.

As I looked into the difference between tired and exhausted, I learned something. The definition of tired is the loss of energy or strength. Exhausted is, however, an extreme level of tiredness. Both words indicate weariness, but exhaustion is a greater degree of tiredness.

We each become tired, right?

That's how we know we need to rest. So we sleep and rest and unplug for a time. At least I hope we do this. Maybe we don't, and maybe that's how and why exhaustion pays a visit. Maybe not all of us feel exhausted currently, but I think we all know how it feels. We've been there, done that, right? We've all felt the weight of exhaustion, and it's not somewhere we care to stay.

And yet there are times we can't control it how much sleep we get. I'm thinking of my daughter who is up a couple times a night with her infant son. Her sleep is currently compromised for reasons beyond her control. We can't always take a nap or rest or unplug. We don't always have the ability to let our brains be still, to take a break from receiving information, to set our phones or devices aside. You and I aren't always able to stay present and live in the moment.

So, it's not uncommon for us to feel tired. It's not uncommon for us to get weary and worn out. But the thing is, if we don't do something about it, we will might be the ones saying, "We are exhausted!"

Can you relate to any of this? Does this at all describe you and me?

The more I think about it, the more I think my friend was right on Saturday morning.

Many of us women are exhausted.

Again, maybe not exhausted all the time, or not every moment of every day, but many of us are propping ourselves up morning and afternoon with caffeine, sugar, or energy drinks. Many of us are just pushing through to get done what we need to get done. Yet many of us don't have the energy to do all we're expected to do or all that's on our overflowing plates. Many of us are just plain weary and worn out. By the time we pillow our heads at night, we have run ourselves ragged.

In 2017, the National Safety Council conducted a survey and reported some alarming statistics revealed from it. Get this!

43% of Americans admit they are too tired to function at work.

76% of workers say they feel tired at work.

53% feel less productive.

44% have trouble focusing.

Goodness, well, this is an uplifting episode, isn't it? We'll get to the hope in a minute, I promise. But sometimes when we face reality, even if it's not what we desire or if we aren't where we want to be in the moment, facing reality helps us to redirect ourselves and helps us make changes.

But exhaustion isn't just physical.

We can be exhausted in a number of ways. Physical yes, but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, as well.

Physically exhausted:

This is when our physical bodies are beyond tired. Like when my husband and I biked 100 miles that day

on RAGBRAI in July. My body was exhausted. Or like when I don't get enough sleep in a night. My body feels exhausted. Or like when I don't exercise a few days in a row. Again, my body feels exhausted. (Physical exercise actually makes my body feel better!) When we allow our bodies to go beyond tired, and if we don't give it what it needs, we can become physically exhausted.

Mentally exhausted:

I think many women can easily fall into this category. Our minds are so full. We take in much more information all at once than we were ever designed to. Our phones and devices keep our minds engaged consistently. We have much to keep track of, maybe now more than ever. And we have a number of things we attempt to do simultaneously (multitasking), because if we don't, we feel we won't get everything done.

Emotionally exhausted:

This kind of exhaustion can stem from such things like relationship issues or friction, grief or hardship, or continued caregiving. When we struggle in our moods or we feel as if we have nothing more to give, we might be emotionally exhausted. I remember feeling this way when I cared for my mom for a time. We can't keep giving if we don't fill ourselves back up.

Spiritually exhausted:

When we get tired of carrying our burdens, disappointments, fears, unforgiveness, and hurts, and all we see is problems and no solutions, we may be spiritually exhausted. This happens when we become overly worn out in our Christian journey. We lose our zeal, our passion to serve God and others, our desire to pray and spend time with God. And we are simply weary in giving and loving and doing all the "Christian things." Or we become discouraged because we can't see God active in our circumstances and situations.

Do any describe you, currently?

Are you exhausted, friend?

The kind of exhaustion I deal with and teeter on the most is mental exhaustion. It doesn't take me much some weeks to feel mentally exhausted, especially if I don't have a day or two at home to regroup. I know myself enough to recognize that I need a couple days each week to work at home, in the quiet, and recharge my internal batteries and clear my mind of all the clutter.

How about you? Which one do you tend to lean toward the most?

Okay, so where's our hope?

What do we do if we realize we are exhausted? This isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. But there are a few things we can do to take care of ourselves to alleviate the exhaustion. Here are a few things that I have found to help:

1. **Pray.** Hands down this is the best thing I can do when I'm feeling exhausted. I ask God to strengthen me to finish what I need to, but then to give me His rest, the rest that only He can give. I seek Him in caring for myself, and ask Him to show me if there's anything I need to change or alter. This is so important. If we don't spend time with God, our Source, we cannot be effective in anything we do. And when we feel spiritually exhausted, especially, talking with God and spending time with Him fills us back up again.

2. **Sleep.** I know most nights I don't get enough sleep, and this is something I continue to work at. We can't function if we don't get enough sleep. When we ask God for His rest before we fall asleep, we can experience a deeper rest, to refresh and restore us.
3. **Read scripture.** I just did this the other day... Do a search on Bible verses about rest and ask God to encourage your heart with them. I write the verses down and try to recall them when I feel tired or weary. God's Word encourages us down to our very souls! One of my favorites is Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV), "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
4. **Unplug.** This is a hard one for me, especially since I manage social media for two of my jobs! But our brains were not designed to take in information all day long. They need a rest! Find a way that works for you to unplug a little every day. Let's give our minds a break!
5. **Seek Christian counseling.** During a season when I was emotionally exhausted, I sought out a Christian therapist, because I knew I needed support. I now see her at least once a month to help keep my emotional and mental health on track and in good shape. We visit a doctor for our physical health, why don't we visit a professional for our mental and emotional health? I never was a therapy proponent until I experienced first-hand the change it has made within me.
6. **Stay present.** Did you know living in the moment helps us be less exhausted? Because when we focus on the here and now, we don't get caught up in thinking about yesterday or tomorrow. We experience much less stress when we stay in the present. Maybe that's why God's Word says, "So do not worry about tomorrow. Let tomorrow worry about itself. Living faithfully is a large enough task for today." Matthew 6:34 VOICE

If you and I are feeling exhausted now, good news! We don't have to stay that way.

With a few minor changes, you and I can live each day rested and refreshed to make a difference in this world, for God and for others.

We are taking this conversation over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. I invite you to join us over there as we dive into this subject a little deeper. You'll find this space to be uplifting and encouraging. The link is in the show notes.

And if you found some encouragement and hope in this episode, would you please consider rating it and/or reviewing it? Be sure to subscribe so you never miss an episode.

In closing, friend, please take care of you. Please get the rest you need. Please seek God and spend time with Him. Do whatever it takes to help you be healthy and whole. This life isn't a dress rehearsal. It's the real thing. Let's honor God with our entire selves. I am praying for each of us regarding this today.

Thanks for being here. God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre