

Rabbi Jill Zimmerman

Renew.

12 Ways To Awaken
Your Weary Soul



How do you renew yourself when you are exhausted?

Thank you for downloading this e-book. My intention in writing this book is to offer you suggestions to create space in your life to help you lay your burdens down for just a bit. As my colleague Rabbi Nancy Flam says, "Sometimes, it's just hard to be a person." For many of us, now is one of those times.

Within these pages I hope you will find inspiration, and helpful tips to nourish and awaken your spirit. You cannot give from an empty basket. In order to be your fullest self, you must regularly nurture and recharge that which sustains you.

Caring for yourself allows you to act in the world with consciousness and compassion. Choose the ideas that appeal to you. Set an intention: what do you hope to experience, create or grow?

I've included inspirational quotes that illustrate that we are not the first people, nor the last, that have faced challenging times with the knowledge that by feeding our souls, we can offer our families, communities and world so much more.

You'll be glad to know that page 11 is optimized for printing as a daily reminder to relieve exhaustion and renew your soul.

Many blessings to you. I would love to hear what you discover and experience in your own renewal.

— Rabbi Jill Zimmerman

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“Entrances to holiness are everywhere. The possibility of ascent is all the time. Even at unlikely times and through unlikely places. There is no place on earth without the Presence.

~ BAMIDBAR RABBAH 12:4

We're all in this together.

These times are challenging to anyone with a tender heart. As we navigate all that is broken, the list of emotions is vast. Collectively and individually, we experience sadness, overwhelm, anger and hopelessness.

The crises we face are far from over, and it is imperative that we have ways at hand to reconstitute ourselves. Remember (when we used to fly...) you would hear "put your own mask on first." That is true during these days too – we cannot help others if we are depleted.

When we look at Planet Earth we see that we are inextricably connected. Beneath the teeming division, there is a unity that binds us together by virtue of being alive.



“The apparent brokenness, disharmony, and confusion that clutter the universe are illusory. For everything in the world was fashioned by the same Artist...As Menachem Nahum suggested, ‘...*the presence of the Creator can be found in all creation.*’

One great glistening thread joining all being.

~ RABBI LAWRENCE KUSHNER, [EYES REMADE FOR WONDER](#)

Too many people have died recently for us to even process or grieve, although we know this is coming. Daily, even hourly, assaults to our sense of justice come too quickly for us to respond to each one.

The cruelty of children still in cages and immigrants being turned away from our borders contradicts the promise of the Statue of Liberty. Each day, blatant corruption is being revealed that must be reckoned with. Hopefully, accountability will unfold in the not too distant future. The denial of science from the very top, the anti-maskers in our own communities, the daily videos of people behaving irresponsibly and selfishly - these things take an enormous toll on our souls.



Prisons, meat factories and refugee detention centers have become centers where Covid rages on.

We see exhausted, dedicated nurses, doctors, clergy, EMT's, and others who work in hospitals speak of the trauma of caring for Covid patients. With inadequate protective equipment, they not only provide medical help but are often the last ones, not family, to say goodbye to patients.

The deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (and so many others) reveal a long-standing system of racism that has been baked in and many of us are waking up and demanding change.

No wonder we are all so exhausted...

“Practice guerrilla compassion — silently blessing people online, at the bank, at the supermarket, in the cars next to us in traffic. Each blessing a tiny Sabbath, a secret sanctuary offered to a hurried and unsuspecting world.

~ SHARON SALZBERG

**It is possible to restore, renew and reawaken.
I hope these 12 ideas help lift you.**

1 Dip into the teachings of those who came before us and who found hope in difficult times.

We are not the first to experience evil and suffering. Many of our ancestors have learned powerful lessons about how to navigate challenging times that they passed down to us. Remember that while you may not have a choice in what happens to you, you always have a choice in how to respond.

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

~ ATTRIBUTED TO MANY, INCLUDING VIKTOR FRANKL



2 Find a place of stillness inside yourself where you can find refuge at any moment.

Breathe. Unclench your fists. Put down your burdens for just a few moments.

Sometimes it helps to set a particular time to sit quietly each day. Close your eyes and imagine a still lake or the ocean waves. The earth itself breathes.

“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths, or the turning inwards in prayer for five short minutes.

~ ETTY HILLESUM

[AN INTERRUPTED LIFE, THE DIARIES, 1941-43 & LETTERS FROM WESTERBORK](#)

3 Take a brief sabbatical from stressful social media or all-day news.

Sometimes we need breaks from the constant drone of the external that can ramp up our anxiety. Take some space to give your nervous system time to calm. The important news will still be there when your break is over.

“When a person has a reaction to something in their environment, there's a 90-second chemical process that happens in the body; after that, any remaining emotional response is just the person choosing to stay in that emotional loop.

~ JILL BOLTE TAYLOR

[MY STROKE OF INSIGHT TED TALK](#)



4 Create.

Engage your senses in activities that you enjoy. Paint, write, color, sing, play music, knit, or do woodworking. Garden. Write or read poetry. Ask friends for suggestions of uplifting music or poetry and create a playlist.

“Do whatever brings you to life, then. Follow your own fascinations, obsessions, and compulsions. Trust them. Create whatever causes a revolution in your heart.

~ ELIZABETH GILBERT

[BIG MAGIC: CREATIVE LIVING BEYOND FEAR](#)

5 Make a list of all that is going right and what is working.

Look around you and appreciate even the smallest things: the way the light changes at dusk, the way your dog reminds you to relax. Say a blessing of gratitude for everyday gifts often taken for granted.

“Look around, look around at how lucky we are, To be alive right now, Look around, look around...Look at where you are...Look at where you started, The fact that you're alive is a miracle, Just stay alive, that would be enough...”

~ ELIZA HAMILTON*

* That Would Be Enough, Lin-Manuel Miranda, [Hamilton the musical](#).



6 Do something that is life-giving and reminds you of growth.

Garden, make yeasted bread, or plant seeds. Feed the birds. Connect with children or little animals that remind you that growth is an ongoing, eternal process. Everything changes.

“Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace.

~ MAY SARTON

7 Spend time in nature.

Take a mindful walk. Look for beauty in the smallest of things. Pay attention to the air on your skin, the sounds of birds, the varieties of green.

“Rabbi Simon said, “There is no plant without an angel in Heaven tending it and telling it, ‘Grow!’

~ GENESIS RABBAH 10:7



8 Connect or re-connect with people who lift your spirit.

Reach out to those who bring joy to your life. Spend time talking or catching up with friends and family. Pay attention to how you feel when you are with others. Make sure you surround yourself with people who bring light into your life.

“A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words!

~ SHANIA TWAIN, [FROM THIS MOMENT ON](#)



9 Do something for someone else.

This always helps us as much as it does the other person. It doesn't have to be a big deal. Bring some flowers to a neighbor. Send a friend some new colored pencils and a mindful coloring book. Tell someone you love them, even if you think they already know.

“Forever will the world be built with kindness...

~ OLAM CHESED YIBANEH, PSALM 89:30



10 Practice self-love.

Practice self-compassion. Put your hand on your own heart, and send love and blessings to yourself. This is not selfish. We are hard on ourselves so much of the time. These are difficult times. Be as compassionate to yourself as you are to others. Here is a [lovingkindness meditation](#) you can do.

“Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.

~ BRENÉ BROWN, [THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION](#)

11 Move your body.

Move your body. Walk, do yoga, dance, stretch, run. Get yourself moving so you can feel your body come alive.

The Hebrew word “*neshama*” means both breath and soul. In Genesis, the Eternal breathes into the human being, who then becomes a living being. When we move, and use our bodies, we re-awaken our breath and our precious, holy bodies.



12 Laugh.

Remember the movies and television shows that make you laugh. Check out YouTube for videos of children and animals.

“Rest and laughter are the most spiritual and subversive acts of all. Laugh, rest, slow down.

~ ANNE LAMOTT

[PLAN B: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON FAITH](#)

Thank you.

I hope you have found these ideas helpful and supportive. Remember what Etty Hillesum (may her memory be a blessing) wrote: "Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths, or the turning inwards in prayer for five short minutes."

Even if all you remember to do each day is take 3 deep breaths, it will give you the space to re-center.

Please connect with me on your favorite social media platform. Check out the spiritual community I founded and lead, [Hineni](#) to discover the ways I am helping others remain present and balanced during challenging times.

The next page is optimized for printing, so you can display these tips where you can reference them as daily reminders to relieve exhaustion and renew your soul. Be sure to select "Fit To Page" when printing.

Wishing you peace – shalom – and overflowing blessings. Truly, the human spirit is indefatigable when we take the time to nourish ourselves. We **will** rise.

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- 1** Dip into the teachings of those who came before us and who found hope in difficult times.
- 2** Find a place of stillness inside yourself where you can find refuge at any moment.
- 3** Take a brief sabbatical from stressful social media or all-day news.
- 4** Create.
- 5** Make a list of all that is going right and what is working.
- 6** Do something that is life-giving and reminds you of growth.
- 7** Spend time in nature.
- 8** Connect or re-connect with people who lift your spirit.
- 9** Do something for someone else.
- 10** Practice self-love.
- 11** Move your body.
- 12** Laugh.