

## Habits of Hope – Part 2

The holidays are almost here. While we would love to make memories worthy of a Norman Rockwell painting, the reality of spending time with family—or the lack of family—can often be painful. There are many people and associations that can trigger us. Instead of feeling hopeless as our thoughts get stuck in a cognitive loop or our emotions spiral out of control, we can develop a habit of hope to reconnect us with the One Person who wants to be with us in every situation.

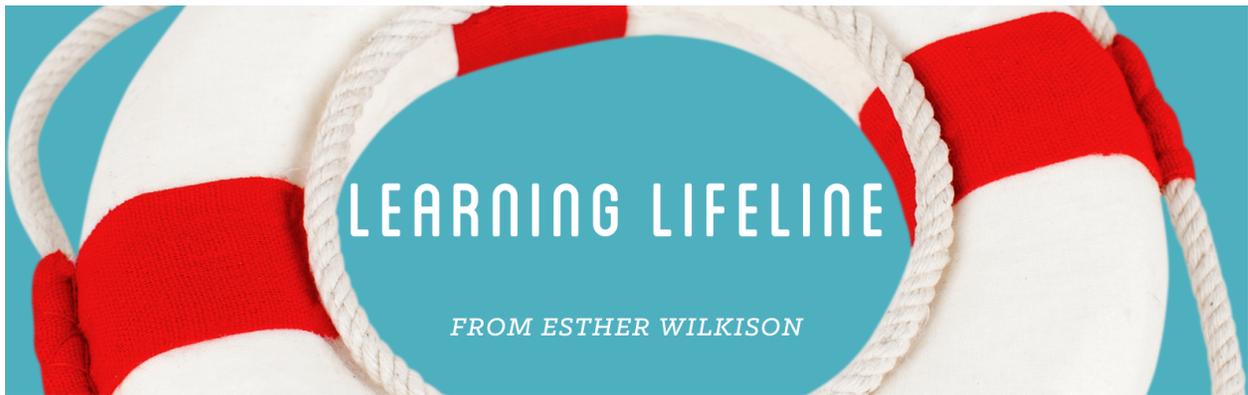
I have five steps that I use to interrupt the automatic response patterns of my past. Feel free to use these or find strategies that work for you.

**1. Come to Jesus.** If possible, I like to move away from the situation to a quiet place where I can fully focus. Even if I can't escape physically, I can mentally run to Jesus. He said, "Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28 NCV). In this moment, I don't try to tell Jesus all that is upsetting me. I just step into a moment of silence where I can be still and know that He is God (Psalm 26:10).

**2. Breathe Deep.** As I try to feel my ribcage expand, I think about how God's Spirit is associated with our breath. Often, I'll use mint essential oil under my nose, as that makes me even more aware of my breath.

**3. Drink Water.** Water also represents the Spirit. It's easy to turn to any addictive substance or activity when we want to ease the pain we feel. Taking a moment to sip water gives me time to calm down. Ephesians 5:18 says "Do not be drunk with wine, which will ruin you, but be filled with the Spirit." The passage goes on to speak of how the Spirit can help us sing in our hearts—and even though my heart is not in a place to sing when I'm triggered, I can remind myself to fill up on the Spirit.

**4. Dance.** Movement helps burn off the adrenaline that is dumped into our system when our body automatically responds to a crisis. Sometimes I walk or just tap my foot, but thinking of it as dancing reminds me to put on music or think about a song that might help me in the moment.



**5. Connect with a Supportive Friend.** If I am in a place where I can text or use a texting-style app, I'll let a friend know that I'm in a hard place and could use prayer. If I can't text, I think about who I will talk to about what I'm going through and I pray for that person. I need the reminder that I am not alone.

I practice these five steps when I'm not triggered so that I can more easily think of these in moments of pressure. These five things work as a reset whenever I remember to use them. You may want to write these 5 points on a 3x5 card and keep it where you'll see it. If you want to wisely navigate the challenges of the next few weeks, develop the habit of regularly reconnecting with the Source of Hope.