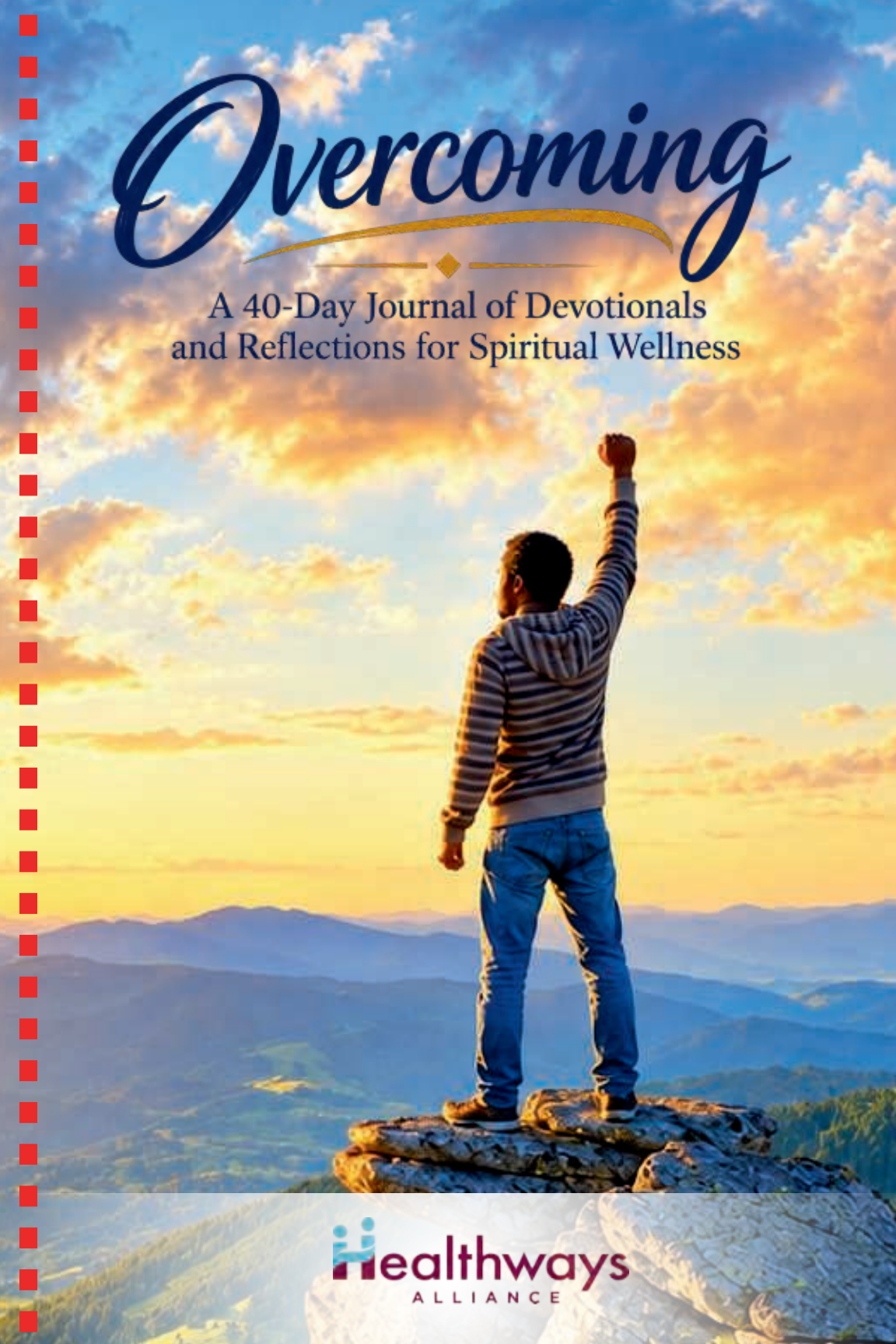
Overcoming

A 40-Day Journal of Devotionals and Reflections for Spiritual Wellness



Healthways ALLIANCE

OVERCOMING

A 40-Day Journal of Devotionals
and Reflections for Spiritual Wellness



Overcoming: A 40-Day Journal of Devotionals and Reflections for Spiritual Wellness
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Acknowledgements

Healthways Alliance is grateful to each contributor for the time you sacrificed to write your story and the courage you have shown in sharing it. We know that others facing similar challenges in their lives will be blessed. We are all God's children, brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, who need one another. As we share our triumphs (our testimonies), we wage war against the guilt and shame trying to harm us. We create roadmaps that others can follow to stay rooted and grounded in God's love. We increase peace and mental health in our lives. The glory of God is revealed, and we overcome.

***

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.
-Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed…
–Isaiah 40:4-5a (NIV)

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Introduction

Life challenges are inevitable. At some point, we will face a scary diagnosis from a doctor, the loss of someone we loved, a job change, or a mistake we'll regret the rest of our lives. There may be an addiction to overcome, a divorce to work through, a dying loved one to care for, a business to sustain. None of it is easy. Yet, we can be assured that God, our Creator, is also our Helper and Comforter, even on days when it feels like we're all alone.

Experts have long affirmed that spirituality correlates with improvements in physical and mental health. In other words, people who believe in something or Someone greater than themselves can be more grounded mentally, shedding stress. They are more resilient from life's hardships. Indeed, unexplained miracles have occurred, healing people in ways that can only be explained as the work of God.

Healthways Alliance is a faith-based nonprofit organization. Our programs, however, are available to anyone, regardless of faith. Still, we have found in our 28 years of community work that program participants who release their disappointments and burdens to a trustworthy God often experience peace that allows them to persevere. The same is true of our team.

We invited the Healthways team, supporters, and friends to submit stories of how God has worked in their lives to overcome various obstacles. The devotionals that follow are heartfelt and represent common trials of our day: divorce, addiction, diabetes, caregiving for loved ones, mourning death, tough career decisions, abortion. You will find several stories about cancer, now among the leading causes of death in our nation. Although we sometimes feel alone when we face these trials, we are not. Someone else is experiencing the same thing. As King Solomon said, "there is nothing new under the sun." Sharing our stories and methods of overcoming is our way of encouraging those who read this book. All proceeds benefit Healthways Alliance programs in Allen County and Lake County, Indiana. Our services empower and support underserved individuals to live healthier lives.

You may be wondering how to use this book. Here are some tips:

Devotional stories: Read each one and reflect on them by journaling your thoughts. How can you relate to the challenge described?

Bible verses and prayers: The day after a devotional, you will find a related scripture and prayer, with more space to reflect. Use this time to meditate directly on God's Word and to pray. (Feel free to write your own prayer, as well.)

Mindfulness coloring: We know that adult coloring is a relaxing way to reduce stress. We have included coloring pages with positive messages and Scripture. Have fun—color them! Feel free to remove the pages and position them in places to uplift your spirit throughout the day.

Mental health resources: We know the value of health counselors and guidelines to avoid mental health crises. You will find a list of tips to recognize and avoid depression and anxiety.

How often should you read? This journal is divided into 40 days. We believe taking time out of each day to read, pray, and meditate is beneficial. However, you should use this journal in a way that best fits your life. For instance, you may want to spread the reading and activities over a longer period of time. This book can also be used in a book club or Bible study group where participants learn additionally from one another.

Wherever you are on your wellness journey, we encourage you to indulge in these true-life stories, scriptures, and prayers. On Day 40, you will also have the opportunity to write your own "overcoming" story as a means of self-reflection and encouragement for years to come. If you do, we believe you will be equipped to handle obstacles that stand in the way of the healthy life that God intended you to live.

Sincerely,



Executive Director, Healthways Alliance

DAY 1

From Ashes to Beauty

Dominique Petrovic-Melendez

My life is proof that God restores what seems impossible. I spent nearly thirty years homeless, trapped in addiction, gangs, trafficking, and cycles of physical, mental, sexual, and domestic violence. I carried unbearable pain and hopelessness. I attempted suicide seventeen times, lived with constant suicidal thoughts, trauma, and was clinically dead twice. Yet, God spared my life. Even when I wanted to give up, He kept calling me back and turned my pain into purpose. He created beauty from the ashes of my burned-out life.

Turning my life around was not instant. It required surrender, healing, accountability, and faith. Step by step, God rebuilt what was broken. He taught me how to live again, how to love myself, and how to believe that my story still mattered. What once defined me no longer holds me captive.

Today, I am a transformed person. I am a Certified Peer Recovery Coach, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, Certified Peer Crisis Specialist, and Certified Community Health Worker. I am also a community activist, serving in the very streets and neighborhoods where I once caused destruction. Now I return with compassion, resources, my story, and hope, helping others get back on their feet and reminding them they are not alone.

I am an overcomer because of Jesus. My scars are testimonies, my pain has become purpose, and my survival has become service. If it happened for me, it can happen for you. No matter how dark your past is there is hope, healing, and a future waiting for you. Your life is worth fighting for. Stand up today and choose freedom, courage, healing, and purpose.

Reflection

DAY 2

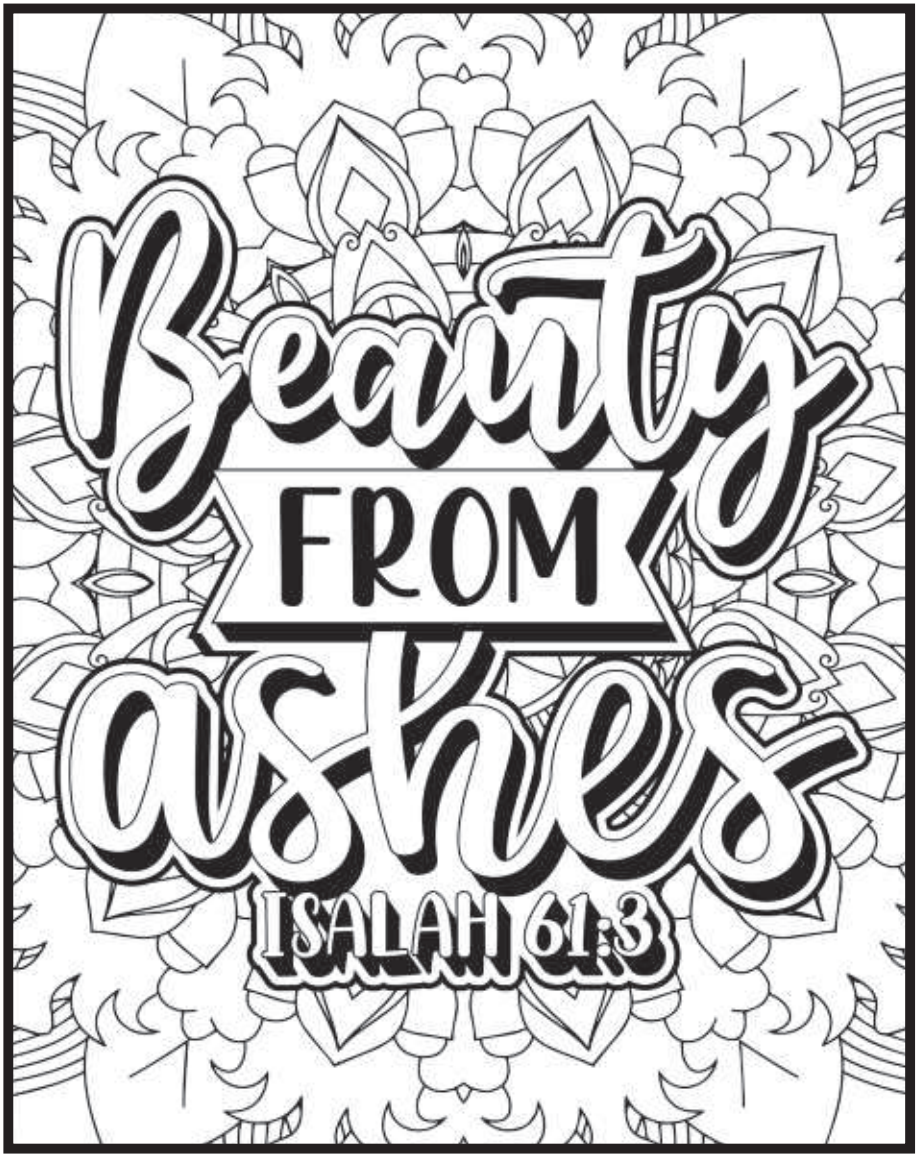
Transformation

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoner, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."
-Isaiah 61:1-3a (NIV)

Prayer

Lord, I praise you because You have seen me in my darkest places and loved me even when I could not love myself. Thank you for trading the sadness of my past for joy! You have given my life purpose and meaning. You gave me a chance to tell a story of triumph, rather than despair, encouraging others who might feel ashamed. Continue Your transforming work for all those whose lives have not been squeaky clean, so that they, too, will be given "beauty for ashes" and praise Your name.

Reflection


Beauty
FROM
ashes
ISAIAH 61:3