

## TOOLS & TECHNIQUES:

## Timeline Exercise

Our past experiences and the memories that go with them affect how we approach present day situations. This tool can help you to identify times when beliefs, mindsets, ways of relating, and emotional reaction patterns were set into motion. Gain the freedom to respond in new and healthy ways as you deal with each one in prayer.

### Materials:

Each person will need 1/2 of a poster board (can be folded in the middle) and the smallest post it notes in yellow, pink, blue and green.

### Instructions:

1. Take time for prayerful reflection:
  - Set aside several blocks of time to sit quietly with the Lord.
  - The whole exercise takes quite a while to do and is best done over several days or weeks.
  - Seeing the whole picture will be important.
  - Most people find the memories bubble up more freely as they get further into the process. Just stay open and patient, letting the Holy Spirit set the pace.
2. Write out significant events throughout your life:
  - Whatever pops into your mind--just start writing without editing.
  - Put each on separate yellow post it notes.
  - Position these in vertical columns in order of occurrence (chronologically).
  - Break into general time frames that seem logical. (Suggestions: early childhood, elementary years, high school & college, young adult, etc.)
3. Review the events written on the yellow notes:
  - Pull out the ones that were painful episodes.
  - Rewrite them on pink post it notes.
  - Put the pink notes where the yellow ones were.
  - Your time line will be a combination of pink and yellow notes now.
4. Reflect on each time period represented in your column of events
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal beliefs rooted in this season of your life.
  - Record what you learned on a blue post it note.
  - Prayerfully ask God what He has to say about these blue notes. He can reveal lies believed or remind you of how He has worked and vital lessons learned.
  - Write down any negative messages--even though you "know" they aren't true.  
*"Lord, show me any wrong thinking that got started here. Did I start believing a lie or making a vow as a result of this occurrence in my life?"*
    - You may have believed a lie:  
*"I have to take care of myself."*  
*"I am not safe to fail."*  
*"Good daddies never say no to their children."*
    - You may have made limiting decisions or vows:  
*"I'll never trust again."*  
*"I won't do that to my kids."*  
*"Nobody can make me do that again."*

- Be alert for positive beliefs that were formed during this time.  
*“Holy Spirit, please bring to mind things you taught me. Remind me when you brought truth, breakthroughs, and new places of surrender.”*
    - *“I am capable.”*
    - *“I can trust God.”*
    - *“I have talents and gifts.”*
    - *“I am free to live for God.”*
5. Prayerfully consider what you’ve recorded so far:
- Use the green notes to write how God used an event or time period in your life.
  - Ask Him to show you lessons learned and to help you recognize the good that came out of the pink notes.  
*“Jesus, help me see how you were at work even in the painful moments. Show me your sovereign hand and redeem these events as I bring them to you in prayer.”*
  - Post these green notes at the bottom of the columns.
  - Purpose to deal with each one in prayer so that you can experience a new measure of health and freedom.
6. Set aside some prayer time to deal with significant events and patterns.
- Bring each item to the Lord in prayer:  
*Grant me full and complete repentance--enable me to see this time of my life as You see it. Bring truth to the lies that I believed. Forgive me and change my mind for the better. Give me new eyes to appreciate your love and faithfulness to me over the years. Please reveal to me any truth that You want to give me instead. Speak, Lord, for I am listening.*
  - If the principles of healing prayer are new to you, seek the help of a mature prayer partner or your group leader.
  - Some basic guidelines include:
    - Identifying and allowing yourself to feel the emotions
    - Asking God to reveal the first time you experienced the emotion
    - Discovering beliefs set into motion as a result of events and environments
    - Replacing any lies with God’s truth
    - Expecting freedom to come—sometimes instantly, but often over a period of time
    - Willingness to revisit the same memory until it’s completely resolved
    - Asking forgiveness from God
    - Extending forgiveness to others
    - Recognizing patterns of self-protection (judgments, lies, vows, hard heart)
    - Renouncing false or hurtful pronouncements spoken about you by authority figures
    - Releasing burdens to God
  - Additional reading for dealing with painful memories:
    - *A Guide for Listening and Inner Healing Prayer*, by Rusty Rustenbach (NavPress)
    - *Healing Prayer & Facilitating Healing Prayer* booklet available at <http://www.navigators.org/us/ministries/prt/inner-healing>