

OVERCOMING
hurtful
WORDS

Rewrite Your Own Story

JANELL RARDON



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*Author's Note: I have tried to recreate events, locales, and conversations from my memories of them. To maintain their anonymity, in some instances I have changed the names of individuals and places. I may have also changed some identifying characteristics and details such as physical properties, occupations, and places of residence.

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*“Do not fear [anything], for I am with you;
Do not be afraid, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you;
I will certainly take hold of you
with My righteous right hand [a hand of justice,
of power, of victory, of salvation].”*

Isaiah 41:10 (AMP)



GLOSSARY

Fault line: a past hurt.

Fracture: a present pain.

Heartlift: the process of vocalizing crushing pain in a healthy manner that brings closure, emotional healing, and lasting freedom.

Heartlift: deep wounds caused by heartbreaking words from close, trusted friends and family members.

Heartshift: that moment in time when the heart awakens to truth.

Heartsift: taking necessary time to examine past behaviors/communication skills (or the history of hurts) thoroughly to isolate those that are unhealthy.

History of hurts: a heart's emotional memory.

Meditative exercise: a short, creative narrative, imbued with visual imagery, meant to be read aloud in order to open the heart to God and His Word.

Rewind and reset: revisiting past relational conflict in order to evaluate healthy vs. unhealthy patterns.

WHOLE: An emotional power tool to implement when confronted by the hurtful words and actions of others. With repetitive practice and study, these five steps become second nature:

W = Welcome God in.

H = Hold fast to your truth.

O = Overcome Unhealthy Reactions

L = Listen between the Lines

E = Elevate the Atmosphere

INTRODUCTION

How Do I Overcome Hurtful Words?

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*

—Psalm 34:18 NLT

Hurtful words.

We've all heard them. Inside our homes, at work, on the playground, or at the sidelines of a sporting event. Sometimes they are delivered remotely via email, text, or social media, but they strike just as deep. These painful, disorienting words sting even more when delivered by people we thought we could trust. In the wake of such hurt, we stand frozen. Then, before we can take our next breath, our defense mechanisms kick into high gear and the fight, flight, or freeze zone in our brain sounds like a five-alarm fire. You know the feeling—heart racing, palms sweating, sick feeling in the pit of your stomach, flushing cheeks, and sometimes, an instant, pounding headache. It's all part of a purely natural instinct.

As a professional life coach, listening to the hearts of women is my *why*—why I do what I do. Day after day, they sit in my office, hearts battered and bruised by mean, hurtful words. Some women cry. Some are angry. Some are numb. Some want to disappear. All

have one plea, “Help me,” and one question, “How do I overcome these hurtful words?”

It’s taken years of study and prayer and hundreds of conversations to even begin to answer this deeply challenging question. This is heart-wrenching, painful stuff we are talking about. And unfortunately, it’s very real.

I don’t know who or what has crushed your heart or how, but you are in the right place. Your weary heart has led you here. Someone’s words have hurt you deeply, and you need help. You’re desperate for answers. You’ve done your best to fix the situation yourself, but the hurt is too deep to heal on its own. It needs a second pair of eyes and ears to help process the pain. If your broken heart could talk, I think it might say, “Thank you for finally taking some time out to care for me. This is going to be so good.”

Maybe you’re standing in the aisle of your favorite bookstore, sitting with your computer in your dorm room, or searching Google for some much-needed advice—and you’ve found my book. This book is my humble and passionate effort to change the narrative of negative behavior. We need one another’s stories—we all benefit when we write stories that bring light and love into the world. In a world at odds with itself, it is time to set aside the petty distractions that disconnect, and embrace the powerful cords that connect. I am convinced of one important truth: life is too short to waste entangled in or crushing others with our words. And when we do get entangled, it’s because we are imperfect human beings. To maintain a vital relationship with God, self, and others, it is critical to untie the knots with wisdom, grace, and a deep, healthy respect for one another.

More than anything, I want to help you.

Yes, *you*. I want you to know that you are not alone. You do not

have to write your story alone. As much as I would like to take away the pain of the hurtful words spoken to you, I can't. What I can do, however, is help you transform the pain inside your heart into something unimaginably powerful—an expansion of your heart's capacity and potential to live out its God-breathed purpose. I can't promise easy, but I can promise empowering. The God we serve is a turn-it-around God. Your pain will not be wasted. Genesis 50:20 assures this, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." That's the remarkable way our God works.

Today is no ordinary day. It is the day you experience the power of a heartlift. I promise that your heart is going to feel so much better. Are you ready? Let's do this . . . together!

Always learning,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janell". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'l'.

PART ONE:
REFLECT

*Present Pain:
Why Is This Happening?*

PRACTICE 1

Guard Your Heart

*The Intention of Practice 1:
I will overcome hurtful words
by guarding my heart.*

*You've kept track of my every toss and turn
through the sleepless nights, each tear entered in your ledger,
each ache written in your book.*

—PSALM 56:8 MSG

Broken hearts do not discriminate. They beat inside the young, the old, the rich, the poor. They are color-blind, impartial, have no geographic boundaries, and are very personal. Say the word *broken-hearted*, and thoughts typically turn to a failed romance, yet heartbreak often casts a wider net. When heartbreak happens because of hurtful words spoken by those we thought we could trust and those we hold closest to us, our hearts are crushed.

I thought they loved me.

I thought they had my back.

I thought I could trust them.

This crushing leaves *heartrifts*—deep, invisible wounds caused by hurtful words from close, trusted friends and family members. Left alone, heartrifts harbor within hearts for years, often lifetimes, and ultimately flow into families, communities, and churches—causing ever greater relationship rifts. Marriages fail. Families divide. Churches split. Governments implode.

A long time ago, the wise King Solomon said something very important about the heart. He wrote, “Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life” (Proverbs 4:23 TLB).

Above all else. No mincing of words here. These three little words indicate high priority status. Yet, we rarely take time out of our busy schedules to take care of our hearts. We might eat less red meat, exercise more, and drink plenty of water, but that isn’t what King Solomon meant. He was talking about our emotional health and well-being—something we might rather push aside, sweep under the rug, or deal with later when we aren’t so busy.

Experience the Power of a Heartlift

When given the time, energy, and attention they deserve, heartrifts slowly surrender to the power of a heartlift.

“Heartlift? What exactly is a heartlift, anyway?” you might ask.

You can look up *heartlift* in the dictionary, but you won’t find a definition. It’s an original thought, born through a great deal of prayer and life experience. Since founding my private coaching practice, I’ve walked alongside many women on their healing journeys. With great intention, I listen between the lines of my client’s lives to hear the heartbeat of their stories. We talk about the current pain in their hearts. We look at their history of hurts. And together, we bring

just enough of their past into the present so they can walk into the future with a whole and healed heart. I call this a heartlift.

Although I'd watched this approach lead to deep and meaningful breakthroughs for a long time, I'd struggled with what to call the process. Then, one spring afternoon while I was sitting in a hospital waiting room, a *TIME* magazine caught my eye. "Nip. Tuck. Or Else," read the cover story. One sentence in particular caught my attention: "In 2015 alone, women spent almost one billion dollars on facelifts."¹

Did I read that right? I read it again, and yes, I'd read correctly.

The statistic stunned me. Kept circling in my head. Then I read on. Writer Joel Stein noted, "You're going to have to do it. And not all that long from now. Probably not a full-on, general-anesthesia bone shaving or muscle slicing. But almost definitely some injections into your face. . . . Not because you hate yourself, fear aging, or are vain. . . . You're going to get a cosmetic procedure for the same reason you wear makeup: because every other woman is."²

Because every other woman is? Am I reading this correctly?

Mr. Stein, I'm not one to debate, but I'd have to challenge your statements: "You are going to have to do it . . . definitely some injections in your face."

In my practice, listening to women's hearts is my *why*, and watching and reading faces is my *how*. Our faces mirror our hearts. Nonverbal cues and microexpressions say it all. Science of People founder Vanessa Van Edwards agrees that "learning how to decode the face is like having a super power."³ *I want that super power.* Furrowed brows. Biting or pursing of the lips. Sad eyes. A twitch of the cheek. Chin pointed down. These microexpressions are "brief, involuntary facial expressions shown on the face of humans according

to the emotions that are being experienced. Unlike regular, prolonged facial expressions, it is difficult to fake a microexpression.”⁴

I was explaining this to a client one day. “You’re like a face whisperer,” she said. “I can’t hide anything from you.”

“I’m a heartlifter,” I reminded her. “The words we speak come straight out of our hearts. Luke 6:45 says, ‘A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.’ The way I see it, we’re all just big walking hearts bumping into each other, aren’t we? So I pay close attention, that’s all. Hearts matter to me.

“Most importantly,” I continued, “*your* heart matters to me. Describe how you feel when your heart lets go of something painful. Do you experience anything physical?”

“Definitely. It feels like . . . psychological brightness.” She smiled.

“That is a fabulous description. I’ve never heard that anywhere. I think you are on to a brand-new psychological term. Let’s keep that psychological brightness on that beautiful face of yours!”

Facial expressions say way more than words. As my client discovered, when her heart experiences the release of painful, often embedded, memories or emotions, she experiences an actual “brightening.” Not only is her face brighter, her entire being is lighter. Proverbs 15:13 affirms this finding: “A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.”

Experts agree: “When we make facial expressions, we’re essentially transmitting a packet of information that can be received, read, and interpreted by others. By contracting or expanding our facial muscles in different degrees and combinations, we can produce thousands of different messages that provide cues to our overall emotional state, our

short-term feelings about our immediate environment, our mental well-being, our personality and mood, our physical health, our credibility, and whether or not we view others as being creditable.”⁵

The bottom line is that absolutely everything in our lives comes back to the condition of our hearts.

Through the years, the pain women express has less to do with outer appearance and much to do with the deep pain and percolating discontent inside their hearts. Once the pain lifts, the entire countenance changes. They look and feel so much better. Psychological brightness!

And then I realized—what women most need is a heartlift, a facelift on the inside. When a woman’s heart is welcomed into a safe place with a trusted person, it moves through the process of vocalizing crushing pain in a healthy manner that brings closure, emotional healing, and lasting freedom.

Right then and there, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life offering women the power of a heartlift. Real, lasting change—from the inside out.

The Unexpected Emotional Earthquake

If you are holding this book in your hands, you are holding a heart crushed by feuds in family lineage, surprised by the hurtful words and actions of others, disoriented by dysfunctional relationships, and shaken by a loss of faith in people I trusted. These slow-forming fissures began when I was very young, way before I even knew or understood heartbreak existed, until one day it was unmistakable. Heartlifts in deep need of healing had formed along the contours of my heart. Time takes a toll on the heart and, after a while, mine simply couldn’t take any more. *Boom*—it broke into a million little

pieces. And if you're reading this book, you've probably experienced this too.

As a longtime resident of the East Coast, I am all too accustomed to nasty nor'easters, hair-raising hurricanes, and even the occasional tornado, but never in a million years would the residents of my state expect an earthquake in Virginia. Imagine my surprise, then, on an ordinary hot and humid August afternoon when all of a sudden, I heard and felt a very loud, very scary *boom!* The earth and everything beneath me started shaking. My hands gripped the chair I was sitting in. For a few seconds—though it felt like hours—my heart stopped.

What was that?

At first, I didn't know what was going on. Nothing fell off the walls, even though things were a bit crooked and disheveled. A little off-center myself, I closed the book I'd been reading and looked through the shades. Everything seemed normal. The sky was bright blue, and the sun was still shining.

Thoughts raced through my head. *Should I run for cover? Did a bomb go off? Did something crash outside?* We lived in an area with thriving shipyards and fortified naval bases, so this was a very real possibility.

Suddenly, the phone rang. My husband. "Did you feel that?" The panic in his voice matched the panic I felt inside. "Turn on the TV."

I wrestled with the morning paper on the couch, trying to find the remote. *Is this really happening?* I wondered.

"Oh! Rob, we had an earthquake," I said. "The newscasters are as stunned as we are. This is unbelievable. Are you okay?"

"Yeah, shaken up, that's all. How about you?"

We listened to the news together, recovering a sense of balance and strength from one another. Sure enough, the broadcasters confirmed

that we'd had a 5.8 magnitude earthquake, right here in Virginia. The epicenter was about 150 miles northwest of our home. For months after this ordeal, community officials revisited the situation, offering ways to prepare in case it happens again. In fact, this seismic shaking is still talked about today.

Three Phases of a Heartlift

Our hearts, like the fault lines of the Virginia seismic zone, can reach a breaking point. Life suddenly becomes too much to bear. Unexpected, startling words or actions cause an emotional upheaval evidenced by shock, anger, despair, or worse, retaliation. When this happens, we must be prepared. The whirlwind of our whys cries out for immediate answers. *Why is this happening to me? Why can't I get it right? Why is God doing this to me?* Processing the whys becomes increasingly important to our healing journey.

My prayer for your heartlift journey is threefold: (1) that your current heartlift experiences will heal; (2) that you will be empowered and equipped, through the nine practices I outline in this book, to experience your very own heartlift; and (3) that your heartlift toolbox gains practical, effective, and spiritually mature tools to help both you and everyone in your sphere of influence to live their remarkable, God-created lives.

Overcoming Hurtful Words is divided into three sections, based on the three phases of the heartlift journey:

1. Reflect: *Heartrift—what just happened?*
Welcome God into the whys of present pain.
2. Reframe: *Heartsift—where did it come from?*
Face the fault lines of past hurts.

3. Reauthor: *Heartlift—will I trust again?*
Live in newfound freedom in Christ.

Practice Makes Progress

Each section of this book contains three chapters that serve as guides along the way. They're born from my conversations with women who've experienced their own heartlifts. Instead of calling them chapters, we will call them practices, because *Overcoming Hurtful Words* invites us to begin practicing self-care and to exercise new behavior patterns and communication skills. I wish I could wave my nice-and-easy wand, but I'm afraid that isn't the reality of change. Change takes a great deal of practice.

For most of my life, I equated *practice* with *perfection*. I came by this mind-set honestly. As a six-year-old, I began baton twirling lessons. Before we could leave our weekly class session, the teacher insisted we complete a double turn. If I did two spins, I did a thousand. Over and over again, my little six-year-old frame stood ready and willing. *You've got this*. Throw, turn, drop. Repeat. *Ugh!* Every time I tried, that slippery silver stick fell to the ground. I couldn't figure out how to throw the baton in the air, spin on one foot, and catch the thing when I'd finished turning. But my teacher, Susan Cappeletto, Miss Majorette of America, assured me if I practiced harder, it would happen.

All these years later, however, my thoughts have changed. Life isn't about practicing harder or practicing until it's perfect; it's about practicing and making progress. All those hours of practicing double turns and twirling techniques did teach me this though: there is great value in the discipline of practice.

The world we live in feeds a perfectionist mind-set with its persistent, demanding messages of *more, more, more* and *better, better,*

better. So, while we're on this heartlift journey, it will be important that we keep one truth in the forefront of our minds: practice isn't about perfection. It's all about progress—moving forward on a glorious journey of discovering and becoming the remarkable women God created us to be.

When we activate the nine practices presented in this book on a daily basis, they will become second nature. The old, unhealthy ways will slowly, certainly, and a bit magically transform into a new, healthy way of life (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). We practice everything else in the world—why not practice healthy behavior patterns and healthy communication skills? They are at the core of life. When we operate from a healthy foundation, the world is a better place.

At the end of each practice is a section called Heart Care, which will include exercises for the three phases of the heartlift. These exercises will help you move through your heartbreak to the wholeness you so desire.

- **Reflect:** includes meditations taken from the wisdom of the book of Proverbs, teachings from Jesus, the Gospels, and letters written by Paul, particularly his letters to the Ephesians and Philippians. These sacred writings are filled with passionate teaching and wisdom about the inner workings of the heart and the complexities of human relationships. In this section, we'll use a traditional Benedictine practice called *lectio divina* (divine reading). This is a contemplative approach to reading Scripture that teaches us to read the passage slowly, savoring it word by word and placing ourselves within its context. We'll ask, "What here speaks to me? Is there a word, a thought, or perhaps a visual that I want to more deeply consider?" This exercise appeals to the senses and invites us to lean in and

listen for the whispers of God. While *lectio divina* is traditionally done in a group of four to eight people, it is certainly applicable to individual meditation, as well.

- ***Reframe***: entails relevant, practical exercises for reframing unhealthy thoughts and patterns into healthy ones. This includes meditative exercises, Scripture reading, charts, and illustrations. This is time for practical application in your daily life; for making changes, implementing new skills, and establishing healthy principles.
- ***Reauthor***: involves creative journaling techniques and positive prompts for reauthoring the nine practices into a new narrative. During my master's course of study, professors presented and discussed many therapeutic and counseling methodologies. One in particular—narrative therapy—appealed to me because of my love for writing, personal narrative, and inner healing. Developed by Australian social workers Michael White and David Epston, narrative therapy believes that

As humans, we are interpreting beings. We all have daily experiences of events that we seek to make meaningful. The stories we have about our lives are created through linking certain events together in a particular sequence across a time period, and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them. A narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story.⁶

As you move through the threads that weave your heart's narrative, you will reauthor it. You will write a new narrative by which you will live out your newfound freedom in Christ.

Finally, I must warn you. I am crazy about words and their meanings, so understanding the heart of a word is a big deal. As you read, pretend we are in a face-to-face coaching session, where we would peel a word like an apple until we get to the core. There, we'll find the seeds, the words within the word. Knowing the literal translation of a word provides inside information that can become a useful and empowering tool for reauthoring our stories.

The Great Heartlift Challenge

Our hearts won't heal if we don't offer them healing. We have a big part to play in making change happen. As a dear client of mine, Gina, says, "Nothing changes if nothing changes. It stays the same, which is really sad. Or, the saddest of all, it gets worse and robs us of living a meaningful life." She is so right.

I pray my story informs your story and helps ease your hurting heart. I am here to "call back" to you, as L. B. Cowman so eloquently expresses in this poem, "Call Back":

If you have gone a little way ahead of me, call back—
'Twill cheer my heart and help my feet along the stony track;
And if, perchance, Faith's light is dim, because the oil is low,
Your call will guide my lagging course as wearily I go.

Call back, and tell me that He went with you into the storm;
Call back, and say He kept you when the forest's roots
 were torn;
That, when the heavens thunder and the earthquake shook
 the hill,
He bore you up and held you where the very air was still.

Oh, friend, call back, and tell me, for I cannot see your face,
They say it glows with triumph, and your feet bound in
the race;
But there are mists between us and my spirit eyes are dim,
And I cannot see the glory, though I long for word of Him.

But if you'll say He heard you when your prayer was but a cry,
And if you'll say He saw you through the night's sin-darkened
sky
If you have gone a little way ahead, oh, friend, call back—
"Twill cheer my heart and help my feet along the stony track."⁷

I am calling back to you. Every word of this poem is true. God has brought me through, and He will do the same for you. Together, we'll welcome Him into this heartlifting safe space, grounded in trust and authentic love, and let the heart care happen. Together, we'll work through the pages of your story and spend time reauthoring your narrative. Mingled throughout the practices are meditative exercises—short, creative stories that invite us to “be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Ever the teacher, I will review, review, and review some more. Indulge me; there is a method to my madness.

You Will Find Your Smile Again

Don't worry, when it gets tough, I'll pick you up. When you fall, I'll do my best to soften the ground. When you are tired, I'll cheer you on. I'm not leaving your side until the scary place of pain transforms into the sacred space of security and peace. We can turn to wise King Solomon, who said it best:

Two can accomplish more than twice as much as one, for the results can be much better. If one falls, the other pulls him up; but if a man falls when he is alone, he's in trouble. . . . And one standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer; three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken
 —Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 TLB

That's the deal: you, me, and God—a powerful, triple-braided cord. I am confident of one thing: you will find your smile again. I found mine, and I'm here to help you find yours. Before we begin this transformative journey, may I pray this prayer of blessing over you? I like to think of it as our heartlifter's prayer.

Dear God,

No one knows pain like You. Please come alongside my new friend. Walk every single step of this hard-but-worth-it journey with her. Surround her with Your healing wings (Psalm 91). As she reviews the tender, broken places in her heart, I pray You will visit her with the miraculous healing that comes only from You.

Where there is despair, bring the bright dawn of a brand-new beginning. Where there are lies, bring the light of truth. Where there is hate, bring a love that comes only from You. Where there is unforgiveness, bring the supernatural capacity to let go. Where there is anger, bring the peace that passes all understanding. Where there is confusion, bring clarity and vision. Where there is oppression, bring the freedom of the cross. Where there is sadness, bring joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Help her rise above her crushing heartift and bring her to rejoice in her powerful heartlift. Most of all, help her remember that she needs to take really good care of her heart. Teach her to guard her affections, for they influence everything in her life.

Amen.

HEART CARE

When beginning any journey, either physical or spiritual, preparation is key. This journey will require time, space, and, as we say in the South, sheer guts and grit. It might not be easy, but the end result will be a brand-new healthy heart, pounding with a capacity to love again. *Ah, what a great thought.*

First things first—be sure to join our online community, Overcoming Hurtful Words, at www.overcominghurtfulwords.com. We are so much better together. Then, find a quiet place where you can study. Set a beautiful table (just for fun) and brew a pot of your favorite tea or coffee. My favorite is Kericho Gold Premium Tea, found while traveling in Kenya. Maybe we can share a cup one day. What's yours?

Okay, are you ready to begin? Let's do this! Grab your journal and a pen. It might help to write down what you learn. Now, take a deep breath. This Heart Care requires a little bit of time, a whole lot of energy, and a big dose of courage.

Reflect

Here, at the onset of your heartlift practice, take some time to read several passages from Ephesians 4 (AMP), written by the apostle Paul. Even though they were written so many years ago, the words remain applicable, relevant, and they help us see the importance of mature behavior(s). He uses phrases like I appeal to you . . . Make every effort . . . Let us grow up . . . because Paul's heart wanted every single person in his sphere of influence, and beyond, to be mature. As you read, consider—maybe even highlight—what characteristics define

a “mature person.” Is this something “easy” to obtain or perhaps a process of day-to-day intentions and practices?

Ephesians 4:1–3, “So, I, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called [that is, to live a life that exhibits godly character, moral courage, personal integrity, and mature behavior—a life that expresses gratitude to God for your salvation], with all humility [forsaking self-righteousness], and gentleness [maintaining self-control], with patience, bearing with one another in [unselfish] love. Make every effort to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace [each individual working together to make the whole successful.]”

Ephesians 4:13–16, “Until we all reach oneness in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, [growing spiritually] to become a mature believer, reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ [manifesting His spiritual completeness and exercising our spiritual gifts in unity]. So that we are no longer children [spiritually immature], tossed back and forth [like ships on a stormy sea] and carried about by every wind of [shifting] doctrine, by the cunning and trickery of [unscrupulous] men, by the deceitful scheming of people ready to do anything [for personal profit]. But speaking the truth in love [in all things—both our speech and our lives expressing His truth], let us grow up in all things into Him [following His example] who is the Head—Christ. From Him the whole body [the church, in all its various parts], joined and knitted firmly together by what every joint supplies, when each part is working properly, causes the body to grow and mature, building itself up in [unselfish] love.”

Reframe

In your journal, write a note to yourself (or to God—that's what I like to do) and share your realistic expectations or desires for what you would like to see God do in your heart, in a specific relationship, or in all your relationships as a whole. Begin an honest, healing conversation with yourself about your heart's history of hurts. We all have one.

Take the Heartlift Checkup.

Ask yourself,

- Is my heart hurting so badly I can hardly stand it?
- Is it tender to the touch and guarded?
- Is it confused, bewildered, or stunned?
- Is it angry, tense, or terrified?
- Is it numb or, even worse, so tired it wants to call it quits?
- Is it closed completely with a Do Not Disturb sign hanging on its door?
- Or am I halfway to healing and just need a little help to finish?

Reauthor

Borrowing from the geological world, a fault line is a break in the earth's crust where various stressors cause the constant shifting of tectonic plates. This causes slippage and, eventually, an earthquake. Our hearts have fault lines too, and we need to examine them. We will identify these deep stresses as *heartrifts*, fault lines that may eventually reach their breaking point. *Our hearts can't take any more.*

Simple questions to ask yourself in evaluation might be:

- How am I doing physically and emotionally (the visible realm)?
- How am I doing psychologically and spiritually (the invisible realm)?
- Which of these stressors affects my fault lines:
 - People pleasing?
 - Approval seeking?
 - Overachieving?
 - Legalism?
 - Shaming?
 - Perfectionism?
 - Fear of rejection?
 - Excessive worry?
 - Repressed or suppressed anger?
 - Insecurity or inferiority?
 - Caring too much?
 - Not knowing how or when to say no?
 - _____? (Fill in the blank)

These questions can feel overwhelming, but you are not alone. You can find community online at www.overcominghurtfulwords.com. Better than that, God has promised to stay by your side. It's time to move forward to healing. In this moment of decision, make the pledge.

The Overcoming Hurtful Words Pledge

Today, I pledge that I am ready, willing, and able to commit to this heartlift journey. I know it will require honesty, hard work, and a big dose of humility. When the going gets tough, I will remember that God, the author and finisher of my faith (Hebrews 12:1–2) is with me, even if, at times, I feel as though I am all alone. His silence is not His neglect; He knows the perfect time, has the perfect plan, and is never late (Ecclesiastes 3:14). He will help me move through this scary place of pain and into the beautiful, sacred space of peace, so that I can live, love, and laugh again. When I need help, I will ask for it. When I want to isolate myself and hide away, I will instead seek the company of wise women who will walk beside me. When I need courage, I will whisper my brave, three-word prayer—*God help me*. Amen.

Signed, this _____ day of _____ (month/year),



Join our community at
www.overcominghurtfulwords.com
to find incredible resources
and encouragement.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more than twenty-five years, author Janell Rardon has spoken to thousands of women regionally, nationally, and internationally, welcoming women into a safe space where truth can be spoken and healing and hope can thrive—from local MOPS groups to international women’s retreats.

After Janell’s three children flew from the nest, she obtained her MA in Human Services Counseling (Marriage and Family Specialization) and board certification in Christian Life Coaching (AACC). She then opened her private practice, Heartlift Coaching & Consulting, in Virginia. Janell leans in and listens between the lines of women’s stories every day, helping them overcome hurtful words and messages that hinder them from becoming the women God created them to be. Together, they reauthor new narratives filled with a deep sense of personal value, worth, and dignity, and move forward into lasting freedom in Christ.

Janell resides in Virginia with Rob, her husband of thirty-three years.