

Emotional Wellness Toolkit

Part One: Build Resilience

- People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Learning healthy ways to cope and how to draw from resources in your community can help you build resilience. To build resilience:
 1. **Develop healthy physical habits:** Healthy eating, physical activity and regular sleep can improve your physical and mental health.
 2. **Take time for yourself each day:** Notice the good moments. Do something you enjoy.
 3. **Look at problems from different angles:** Think of challenging situations as growth opportunities. Learn from your mistakes. Try to see the positive side of things.
 4. **Practice gratitude:** Take time to note things to be thankful for each day.
 5. **Explore your beliefs and the meaning and purpose of your life:** Think about how to guide your life by the principles important to you.
 6. **Tap into social connections and community:** Surround yourself with positive, health people. Ask for help when you need it.

*Derived from: <https://nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Emotional Wellness Toolkit

Part two: Reduce Stress.

- Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it is needed most. But if stress lasts a long time-- a condition known as chronic stress--those “high-alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience. To help manage stress:
 1. **Get enough sleep:** Adults need 7 or more hours each night, school-age kids need 9-12, and teens need 8-10.
 2. **Exercise regularly:** Just 30 minutes a day of walking can boost mood and reduce stress.
 3. **Build a social support network:**
 4. **Set priorities:** Decide what must be done and what can wait. Say no to new tasks if you feel they are too much.
 5. **Show compassion for yourself:** Note what you’ve accomplished at the end of the day, not what you didn’t.
 6. **Schedule regular times for a relaxing activity that uses mindfulness/ breathing exercises:** For example- Yoga, tai-chi, or choose your own way to relax and/or be mindful.
 7. **Seek help:** Talk to a mental health professional if you feel unable to cope, have suicidal thoughts, or use drugs or alcohol to cope.

*Derived from: <https://nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Emotional Wellness Toolkit

Part three: Get quality sleep

- To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your wellbeing. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes, and to focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep. To get better quality sleep:
 1. Go to bed the same time each night and wake up the same time each morning.
 2. Sleep in a dark, quiet, comfortable environment.
 3. Exercise daily (but not right before bed).
 4. Limit the use of electronics before bed.
 5. Relax before bedtime. Try a warm bath or reading.
 6. Avoid alcohol and large meals before bedtime.
 7. Avoid stimulants like nicotine and caffeine.
 8. Don't take naps after mid-afternoon. Keep naps short.
 9. Try to get natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes a day.
 10. Consult a healthcare professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.

*Derived from: <https://nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Emotional Wellness Toolkit

Part four: Be mindful

- The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what is happening in the present—of all that is going on inside and all that is happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.” Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started:
 1. **Take some deep breaths:** Breathe in through your nose to a count of four, hold for one second and then exhale through your mouth to a count of five. Repeat often.
 2. **Enjoy a stroll:** As you walk, notice your breath and the sights, and sounds around you. As thoughts and worries enter your mind, note them but then return to the present.
 3. **Practice mindful eating:** Be aware of taste, textures, and flavors in each bite, and listen to your body when you are hungry and full.
 4. **Be aware of your body:** Mentally scan your body from head to toe. Bring your attention to how each part feels.
 5. **Seek our mindfulness resources:** Including online programs and teacher-guided practices.

*Derived from: <https://nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Emotional Wellness Toolkit

Part 5: Strengthen social connections.

- Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence biology and well-being.

To build healthy support systems:

1. Build strong relationships with your family members.
2. Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
3. If you are a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
4. Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
5. Take a class to learn something new.
6. Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school library, or place of worship.
7. Travel or explore new places and meet new people.

*Derived from: <https://nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Emotional Wellness Toolkit: Activities

Building Resilience

- **Storytelling activity**
 - Consider an example in your life where you continue to repeat a story that produces worry or anxiety. Try writing out a new version with a more positive interpretation. Recognize how you feel in the process.
- **Upside of stress activity**
 - Think of one of the most difficult events of your life. How you can use this story to help others. How can you leverage it to impact someone in a positive way?
- **Purpose exercises**
 - Reflection:
 - Why are you?
 - Why do you get up in the morning?
 - What keeps you awake at night?
 - When are you most alive?
 - What does being successful mean to you?
 - How might you apply your gifts to a pursuit that is of deep interest to you and helps others?
 - What can you do to make a difference in one person's life today?

- What is your sentence? (meaning, if you summarized your purpose in one sentence, what would it be?)
- If you say yes to living purposely, what do you say no to?
- If you met an older version of yourself, what sage advice would they give you?
- **Gratitude Activities**
 - Every day for the next week, write down 3-5 things each day for which you are grateful.
 - Start a gratitude journal
 - Write a letter of gratitude to people who are special to you (you don't have to send it)
 - Tell people you see every day what you appreciate about them.
- **Three good things Activity**
 - Consider ending your day by reflecting on three good things that happened today
 - Be intentional about reflecting on the experiences, noting how you felt, and what was the best part of the experience
- **Find something funny.**
 - Spend ten minutes a day on this activity
- 1- Write down the three of the funniest things you have experienced, seen, or heard that day. Provide detail and note

how they made you feel. If you can't think of anything, do an online search for funny stories or anecdotes. Social media can be a useful source for funny material.

- 2- Write down why you found it funny. The more specific you are, the more effective the exercise will be.
- 3- Write these three funny things at the end of your day. Doing so will foster a new habit and may help you absorb the emotion more as you are going to sleep.

Strengthening Social Connections

List five things you can do today to strengthen or add to your social connections.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

List five things you can do in the future to strengthen or add to your social connections.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Sleep Hygiene Check-in

How many hours a night do you need to feel rested? (*note, this is not about suggested amounts of sleep for people. It is about what *you* have found to be helpful).

How many hours do you typically sleep?

If you consume caffeine (Tea, Coffee, Pop, Energy drinks) do you do so close to bedtime?

And if you don't consume caffeine close to your bedtime, do you have a cut-off time?

Do you nap? If so, about how long are your naps and how frequent?

Do you sleep in a sufficiently dark room?

Do you use technology before bed? If so, do you have a cut off time?

Do you have a sleep routine? If so, what does it look like?

Sleep hygiene resource: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene>

Mindfulness Examples

Mindfulness is the act of taking in and focusing on the world around you, Sometimes it is used interchangeably with meditation, but this should not limit you to any one way to be mindful.

- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Meditation (this doesn't have to be a religious or spiritual practice)
- Taking a walk and noticing/appreciating your surroundings.
- Walks in nature.
- Mindful eating (taste, smell, texture, color, temperature, etc.)
- Mindful activities (hobbies, projects, arts and crafts, puzzles, games, etc.)
- Find your own (there is no one way to be mindful)

Mindfulness resource: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356>

Reduce Stress

- Guided imagery
- Meditation
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- Deep breathing
- Going for a walk
- Hugs
- Aromatherapy
- Creativity
- Healthy diet
- Leisure activities
- Positive self-talk
- Yoga
- **Gratitude**
- Exercise
- **Evaluate priorities**

Derived from: <https://www.verywellmind.com/tips-to-reduce-stress-3145195>

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- 1- While inhaling, contract one muscle group (for example your upper thighs) for five seconds to ten seconds, then exhale and suddenly release the tension in that muscle group
- 2- Give yourself ten seconds to twenty seconds to relax, and then move on to the next muscle group.
- 3- While releasing the tension, try to focus on the changes you feel when the muscle group is relaxed. Imagery may be helpful in conjunction with the release of tension, such as imagining that stressful feelings are flowing out of your body as you relax each muscle group.
- 4- Gradually work your way up the body contracting and relaxing muscle groups.

Derived from: <https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/muscle-relaxation-for-stress-insomnia>

Gratitude

List up to five things you are grateful for despite what difficulties you may be experiencing. This can be a challenge, but it may be helpful to think outside of the current situation and find even the littlest things to be grateful or appreciative for/of. Examples might include: It is sunny/rainy today, I saw a pretty bird, I made it here today, etc.

1- _____

2- _____

3- _____

4- _____

5- _____

Evaluate priorities

What can I accomplish today? (this can be even the littlest thing. No need to think beyond what is realistic and attainable today).

What is a priority in your life?

Does that priority serve your wellness? If so, why?

What is not a priority in your life/ what can you set aside for the future?
