



WELLNESS GUIDE

Inside this guide you will find information on various wellness topics such as self-care methods, cognitive behavioral therapy, and easily accessible resources available in via apps, articles, and other trusted vendor websites.

eni's Employee Assistance Program goes beyond traditional EAP services and offers your employees a truly holistic approach to wellbeing. Counseling, Virtual Concierge, Wellness, Health Advocacy, training, e-Learning, Legal/Financial Tools, SAP, and Onsite Trauma Response all wrapped up in one Total Wellbeing EAP.

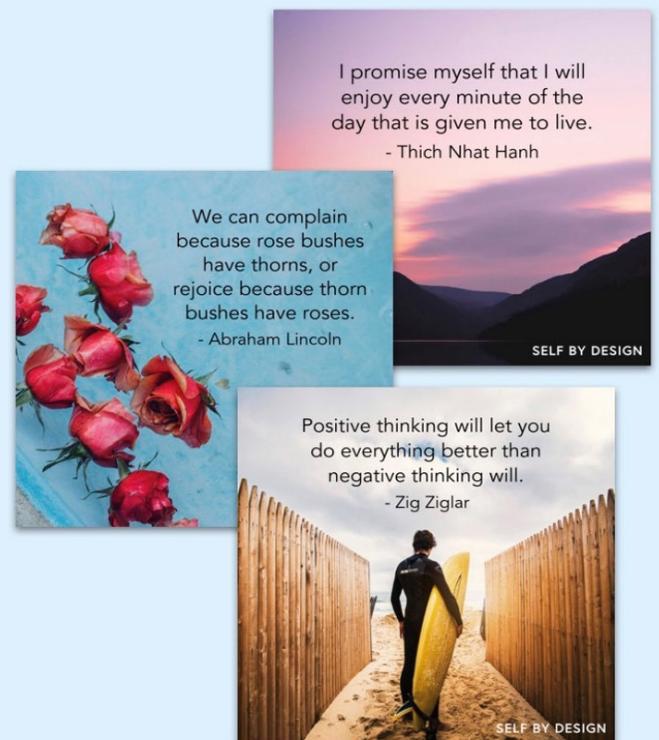
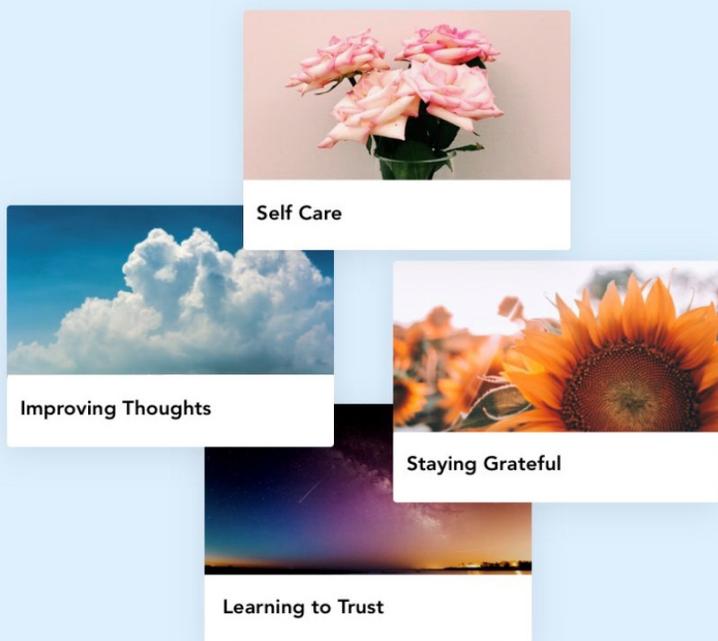
Table of Contents

Reccomended Wellbeing Apps	page 1
Progressive muscle relaxation Exercise	page 4
Breathing Techniques For Proper Breathing	page 8
Breathing Techniques For Sleep	page 11
Tips For a Good Night's Sleep	page 14
Authentic Happiness, Positive Psychology	page 16
10 Practical Ways to Handle Stress	page 17
Overview of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	page 21

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Available on both Android and iOS, *Self By Design* is a mindset app created to support you in becoming the best version of yourself.



How it Works

Navigate to the Daily Quotes settings in the top right corner and choose up to 3 categories that best support the areas you're working on to become the highest version of yourself possible.

Feel Your Best Everyday

Once you've made your selections, we deliver daily quote reminders as push notifications on your phone to keep you in a state of higher awareness while you do the work of redesigning your mindset.

RECOMMENDED WELLBEING APPS

Check the Google Play or App store to see if the application is compatible with your device



Omvana

Omvana is your personal meditation and mindfulness teacher.

More and more evidence proves that meditation has many benefits like increased happiness, better sleep, healthier lifestyles and decreased stress levels to name a few

This app is free and is compatible with your apple watch!



Calm

Described by a user as “a truly life-changing app”, Calm is the perfect meditation app for beginners (there’s a seven-day beginner’s programme to get you started) but also includes programmes for more advanced users.

The short, guided meditation sessions cover the basics of mindfulness and there’s also a library of soothing nature sounds and scenes to use at your leisure. One great feature if you’re looking to improve your sleeping patterns is the ‘Sleep Stories’ - bedtime stories for adults ‘guaranteed to lull you to sleep’.



Trello

Time Management App

Trello is designed to help you gain perspective over all your projects at work and at home. This App is a great option for those that prefer a highly visual way of tracking tasks.

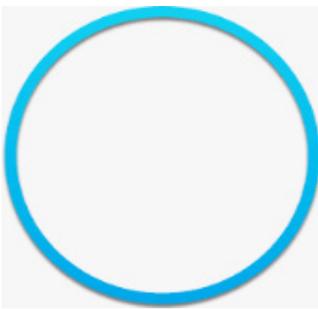
With Trello you can create boards to organize anything you are working on, use it solo, or invite co-workers, friends, and family, add checklists, assign tasks, work offline, upload attachments, and much more!



Happify

This app helps you improve your mood using positive-thinking activities. Their philosophy, based on scientific research, is this: We each have a genetic set point for happiness -- but we also have the ability to offset it. In other words, we have more control over our happiness than we might realize.

Happify helps you set specific goals and offers tips for achieving those goals. The positive-thinking activities include games, posting about something you're grateful for, or imagining what a situation would be like in someone else's shoes. CNN named this app among the top apps to train your brain and better cope with stress.



Aura

If you're after a personalized meditation experience, Aura could be the app for you. Described as a 'new kind of mindfulness app', Aura learns about you by asking questions. You then receive a daily three-minute mindfulness meditation based on your answers.

Compatible with the Apple Watch and loved by Apple (#1 New Apps We Love), Aura is designed to help you control your stress and thoughts better to reduce stress and increase positivity. A recent user review said: "It helps me take a step back from my busy schedule and to calm my nerves."



Wunderlist

To-Do List and Tasks App

Wunderlist helps millions of people around the world capture their ideas, things to do and places to see. Whether you're sharing a grocery list with a loved one, working on a project, or planning a vacation, Wunderlist makes it easy to share your lists and collaborate with everyone in your life.

With this app you can Easily share lists and collaborate with family, friends and colleagues, start conversations about your to-dos, attach photos, PDFs, presentations and more!



Moodpath

Do you struggle with some of your thoughts and emotions? Are you looking for ways to improve your emotional well-being? Moodpath is your personalized mental health companion and supports you in phases of stress, depression, and anxiety.

Download Moodpath to get a mental health assessment, to track and reflect on your mood, and take a break from negative thoughts and overwhelming emotions.

Assess your mental health:

- Answer daily questions about your emotional and physical well-being
- Get a bi-weekly mental health assessment
- Share your assessment with therapists, psychologists, and other healthcare professionals

Track, monitor and reflect

- Use Moodpath as your intelligent mood tracker and journal
- Have a quick overview of your emotional states throughout the day
- Reflect on your thoughts and emotions
- Receive helpful and supportive insights to understand patterns and triggers

Learn to let go of negative thoughts and overwhelming emotions with exercises based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION EXERCISE

Find yourself a quiet place to relax. Turn off your phone and dim the lights. This is your time...a time for complete and utter relaxation.

For this relaxation, you can either sit or lie down. Just make sure that you are warm enough, and that you are comfortable. Let your hands rest loosely in your lap, or by your side.

Become aware of your breathing, and notice how your abdomen rises and falls with each breath...

Now take a long, slow, deep breath in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach. Hold the breath for just a moment, and then exhale through your mouth. Allow your breath to carry away all stress and tension as the air floods out of your lungs.

Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment...and release the breath through your mouth. Empty your lungs completely.

Take a third deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, and then let it go. Feel that your body has already undergone a change. The tension in your body has begun to loosen and subside.

Now let your breathing rhythm return to normal...and relax....

During this relaxation I will ask you to tense various muscles throughout your body.

Please do this without straining. You do not need to exert yourself, just contract each muscle firmly but gently as you breathe in.

If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can simply relax and breathe normally.

Bring your awareness to your feet and toes. Breathe in deeply through your nose, and as you do, gradually curl your toes down and tense the muscles in the soles of your feet.

Hold your breath for just a few seconds and then release the muscles in your feet as you breathe out. Feel the tension in your feet wash away as you exhale. Notice how different your feet feel when tensed and when they are relaxed.

Take another deep breath in again, tense the muscles in the soles of your feet and hold this position for a few seconds.

Now release. Feel yourself relaxing more and more deeply with each breath. Your whole body is becoming heavier, softer and more relaxed as each moment passes.

Now bring your awareness to your lower legs...to your calf muscles. As you draw in a nice deep breath, point your toes up towards your knees and tighten these muscles.

Hold for just a moment, and then let those muscles go limp as you exhale.

Once again, draw in a deep breath...and tighten your calf muscles. Hold for a few seconds, and then let it all go. Feel your muscles relax, and feel the tension washing away with your out-breath.

In a moment you will tense the muscles in the front of your thighs. If you are lying down, you can do this by trying to straighten your legs. You'll feel the muscles pulling your kneecap upwards. If you are seated, you can tense these muscles by pushing your heels down onto the floor.

Take a deep breath in, and tense the muscles in your thighs. Hold for just a moment, and then release everything. As you do this, the blood flow to your muscles increases, and you may notice a warm tingling sensation. Enjoy this feeling of soothing relaxation in your thighs.

Again, breathe in deeply and tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for a moment. Now release. Focus on letting your muscles go limp and loose.

Draw in a nice deep breath and gradually tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold this contraction for a few seconds, and then release your breath. Feel the tension leaving your muscles. Feel them relaxing completely.

Once more, breathe in deeply and tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold for a moment. Now release them. You are becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

Take another breath, and this time, gradually tighten all the muscles in your legs, from your feet to your buttocks. Do this in whatever way feels natural and comfortable to you. Hold it...and now release all these large strong muscles. Enjoy the sensation of release as you become even more deeply relaxed.

Now bring your awareness to your stomach. Draw in a nice deep breath and then tighten these muscles.

Imagine you are trying to touch your belly button to your spine. Now release your breath and let your muscles relax. Notice the sensation of relief that comes from letting go.

Once again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your stomach muscles. Hold for a few seconds... and then let them relax as you exhale and release all tension.

Bring your awareness to the muscles in your back. As you slowly breathe in, arch your back slightly and tighten these muscles....Now release your breath and let your muscles relax.

Again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your back muscles. Hold for a few seconds...and then let them relax and release.

Now give your attention to your shoulder muscles and the muscles in your neck. As you slowly draw in a nice deep breath, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly. Now breathe out completely, and allow your contracted muscles to go loose and limp.

Again, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly.

Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Feel the heaviness in your body now. Enjoy the feeling. Feel yourself becoming heavier and heavier. Feel yourself becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

You are calm, secure, at peace.

Now it's time to let go of all the tension in your arms and hands. Let's start with your upper arms.

As you breathe in, raise your wrists towards your shoulders and tighten the muscles in your upper arms.

Hold that breath and that contraction for just a moment...and then gently lower your arms and breathe all the way out. You may feel a warm, burning sensation in your muscles when you tighten them. Feel how relaxing it is to release that tightness and to breathe away all tension. As you curl your upper arms again, tighten the muscles as you breathe in. Breathe in deeply. Now relax your arms and breathe out. Now bring your awareness to your forearms. As you breathe in, curl your hands inwards as though you are trying to touch the inside of your elbows with your fingertips. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Again, take a deep breath in, and tighten the muscles in your forearms. Hold it for a moment, and then release them. Feel the tension washing away.

Now, take another breath in and tightly clench your fists. When you have finished breathing in, hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Notice any feelings of buzzing or throbbing. Your hands are becoming very soft and relaxed.

Take another deep breath in and clench your fists again. Hold for just a few seconds, and then release.

Let your fingers go limp.

Your arms and hands are feeling heavy and relaxed.

Take a couple of nice long slow breaths now, and just relax. Feel yourself slipping even deeper into a state of complete rest.

Now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together. As you do, breathe in fully. Hold it...now breathe out and relax all your facial muscles. Feel your face softening.

Once more, breathe in deeply while you scrunch the muscles in your eyes and lips...and release.

Now bring your awareness to the muscles in your jaw. Take a deep breath in, and then open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel your jaw muscles stretching and tightening.

Now exhale and allow your mouth to gently close.

Again, fill your lungs with air and then open your mouth wide. Now let your mouth relax and let your breath flood all the way out.

You are now completely relaxed from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.

Please take a few more minutes to rest. Relax. Listen to the sound of your breathing and enjoy the lovely, warm sensation of physical relaxation. If you have the time, feel free to fall asleep. You will wake feeling completely rejuvenated and relaxed.

BREATHING TECHNIQUES FOR PROPER BREATHING

Cultivating an awareness of the breath and developing good habits of breathing are key components of healing, transformation, and spiritual practice. The breath is the most accessible and helpful tool we have for making progress in these areas. In particular, diaphragmatic breathing regulates and balances the nervous system, supporting physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being.

We can learn to cultivate specific skills for proper breathing that will help us in all aspects of our life. We might think of this set of skills as yogic breathing, or simply healthy breathing. Here are these skills in brief:

4 Skills for Proper Breathing

1. Nose Breathing

Form the habit of breathing through the nose rather than through the mouth.

2. Focus

Develop the ability to focus on the breath—inhalation and exhalation. This automatically helps train your breath to be deeper and more even.

3. Breathing Diaphragmatically

Learn to breathe diaphragmatically, rather than in your chest. (When you inhale, the diaphragm presses downward, causing the abdomen to expand. When you exhale, the diaphragm relaxes and the abdomen falls.)

4. Strengthening the Diaphragm

Then you'll want to strengthen the diaphragm to make diaphragmatic breathing more effective, connected, and efficient. This is generally done with breath training practices such as crocodile pose (makarasana) and sandbag breathing.

After you've started working with the four breathing skills, begin to observe the presence or lack of the following 5 qualities of proper breathing in your breath, and work with specific breathing practices to develop them.

5 Qualities of Proper Breathing

1. Deep

This essentially means that the breath is diaphragmatic in nature. However, even though we may always be breathing diaphragmatically to some extent, it is good to work with the two breath training exercises mentioned above to strengthen the diaphragm.

2. Smooth

When we observe the breath we can see that there are likely to be places in the breath cycle where the breath feels rough, stuck, or jagged. As you continue to relax and observe these rough places, they can begin to become more smooth.

3. Even

This means that the inhalation and the exhalation are about the same in length and in quality. It may be that the inhalation feels easier than the exhalation or vice versa. The inhalation is nourishing—it fills, and the exhalation is cleansing—it empties. Ideally, there is a balance of both cleansing and nourishing in the breath cycle.

4. Continuous

There is a common tendency to hold the breath momentarily between the inhalation and the exhalation and/or between the exhalation and the inhalation. This is a sign of deeper tension at the level of the nervous system, and it places strain on the heart over time. By relaxing at the transition points of the breath cycle, this gap can gradually be bridged. With time and practice, the breath will begin to flow in a more seamless circle of inhalation and exhalation.

5. Quiet

Often there is some noise in the breath, but when the breath is naturally quiet, it reflects a quieter state of mind. Practices that intentionally work with a louder breath are considered to be pranayama and are done with the proper preparation and awareness.

Anatomy of Breathing and the Diaphragm

It might be helpful to think about where the breathing is happening in our body. The diaphragm is the main muscle of breathing. It divides the torso into two separate parts: the chest and the abdomen. The diaphragm lies below the lungs. As we inhale, it contracts and pulls the lungs down, expanding them from the bottom, downward and outward. This deepens the breath. During this contraction, the diaphragm presses down on the internal abdominal organs, causing the abdomen to expand. As we exhale, the diaphragm relaxes and is pushed upward by the organs and pulled upward by the lungs.

Breath and the Nervous System

The breath is a barometer for the nervous system. As the nervous system becomes imbalanced, breathing changes, becoming shallow, tense, and jerky. This change is then registered by the mind and begins to create internal distress, which sustains poor breathing, which promotes a state of distress. In this way, an internal cycle begins and is reinforced. Stress then takes on a life of its own, even persisting after the original stressor has been resolved. Learning to breathe correctly with awareness is the only way to break this powerful cycle.

The breath is a barometer for the nervous system.

Activation of the sympathetic nervous system is also known as the stress response, or the “fight or flight” mode. This part of the nervous system takes over when, triggered by a stressor, the breath becomes rapid and shallow and is moving primarily in the upper part of the chest. Although this state is useful for moments when we must act quickly or when we are in danger, too much time spent here reinforces stress and can open the door to chronic illness and prolonged mental and emotional imbalance.

The parasympathetic nervous system supports rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. This response is triggered, in part, by deep, diaphragmatic breathing. Yogic breathing and relaxation practices help us to access this state.

Both the sympathetic and parasympathetic responses serve a purpose. Ultimately, we are looking for balance and some degree of mastery over the nervous system, so that we see the purpose of each state and can use the practices of yoga to find a place of inner equilibrium. Yoga helps us to establish—and maintain—this balance of the two.

Find more information at <https://www.himalayaninstitute.org>

BREATHING TECHNIQUES FOR SLEEP

Things to remember before getting started:

Although there are a number of breathing exercises you can try to relax and fall asleep, a few basic principles apply to all of them. It's always a good idea to close your eyes, which may help you shut out distractions. Focus on your breathing and think about the healing power of your breath.

These eight different exercises each have slightly different benefits. Take a look to see which one is the best match for you, and soon you'll be sleeping like a baby.

1. 4-7-8 breathing technique

Here is how to practice the 4-7-8 breathing technique:

1. Allow your lips to gently part.
2. Exhale completely, making a breathy whoosh sound as you do.
3. Press your lips together as you silently inhale through the nose for a count of 4 seconds.
4. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
5. Exhale again for a full 8 seconds, making a whooshing sound throughout.
6. Repeat 4 times when you first start. Eventually work up to 8 repetitions.

This technique was developed by Dr. Andrew Weil as a variation of pranayama, an ancient yogic technique that helps people relax as it replenishes oxygen in the body.

2. Bhramari pranayama breathing exercise

These steps will help you perform the original Bhramari pranayama breathing exercise:

1. Close your eyes and breathe deeply in and out.
2. Cover your ears with your hands.
3. Place your index fingers one each above your eyebrows and the rest of your fingers over your eyes.
4. Next, put gentle pressure to the sides of your nose and focus on your brow area.
5. Keep your mouth closed and breathe out slowly through your nose, making the humming "Om" sound.
6. Repeat the process 5 times.

3. Three-part breathing exercise

To practice the three-part breathing exercise, follow these three steps:

1. Take a long, deep inhale.
2. Exhale fully while focusing intently on your body and how it feels.
3. After doing this a few times, slow down your exhale so that it's twice as long as your inhale.

Some people prefer this technique over others because of its sheer simplicity.

4. Diaphragmatic breathing exercise

To do diaphragmatic breathing exercises:

1. Lie on your back and either bend your knees over a pillow or sit in a chair.
2. Place one hand flat against your chest and the other on your stomach.
3. Take slow, deep breaths through your nose, keeping the hand on your chest still as the hand on your stomach rises and falls with your breaths.
4. Next, breath slowly through pursed lips.
5. Eventually, you want to be able to breath in and out without your chest moving.

This technique slows your breathing and decreases your oxygen needs as it strengthens your diaphragm.

5. Alternate nasal breathing exercise

Here are the steps for the alternate nasal or alternate nostril breathing exercise, also called nadi shodhana pranayama:

1. Sit with your legs crossed.
2. Place your left hand on your knee and your right thumb against your nose.
3. Exhale fully and then close the right nostril.
4. Inhale through your left nostril.
5. Open your right nostril and exhale through it, while closing the left.
6. Continue this rotation for 5 minutes, finishing by exhaling through your left nostril.

A 2013 study reported that people who tried nasal breathing exercises felt less stressed afterwards.

6. Buteyko breathing

To practice buteyko breathing for sleep:

1. Sit in bed with your mouth gently closed (not pursed) and breathe through your nose at a natural pace, for about 30 seconds.
2. Breathe a bit more intentionally in and out through your nose, once.
3. Gently pinch your nose closed with your thumb and forefinger, keeping your mouth closed as well, until you feel that you need to take a breath again.
4. With your mouth still closed, take a deep breath in and out through your nose again.

Many people don't realize that they are hyperventilating. This exercise helps you to reset a normal rhythm of breathing.

7. The Papworth method

In the Papworth method you focus on your diaphragm to breathe more naturally:

1. Sit up straight, perhaps in bed if using this to fall asleep.
2. Take deep, methodical breaths in and out, counting to 4 with each inhale – through your mouth or nose – and each exhale, which should be through your nose.
3. Focus on your abdomen rising and falling, and listen for your breath sounds to come from your stomach.

This relaxing method is helpful for reducing habits of yawning and sighing.

8. Kapalbhata breathing exercise

Also known as pursed lip breathing, kapalbhata breathing involves four steps:

1. Breathe in deeply through your nose, as though smelling something pleasant.
2. Pucker your lips as if you're going to blow on a pinwheel.
3. Through your pursed lips, exhale 3 times more slowly than you inhaled.
4. Repeat until you feel calm and sleepy.

Kapalbhata breathing relieves shortness of breath and improves ventilation by getting rid of excess carbon dioxide.

Find more information at <https://www.healthline.com>

TIPS FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Healthy Sleep Habits

Your behaviors during the day, and especially before bedtime, can have a major impact on your sleep. They can promote healthy sleep or contribute to sleeplessness.

Your daily routines – what you eat and drink, the medications you take, how you schedule your days and how you choose to spend your evenings – can significantly impact your quality of sleep. Even a few slight adjustments can, in some cases, mean the difference between sound sleep and a restless night. Completing a two-week sleep diary can help you understand how your routines affect your sleep.

The term “sleep hygiene” refers to a series of healthy sleep habits that can improve your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. These habits are a cornerstone of cognitive behavioral therapy, the most effective long-term treatment for people with chronic insomnia. CBT can help you address the thoughts and behaviors that prevent you from sleeping well. It also includes techniques for stress reduction, relaxation and sleep schedule management.

If you have difficulty sleeping or want to improve your sleep, try following these healthy sleep habits. Talk to your doctor if your sleep problem persists. You also can see help from the sleep team at an AASM accredited sleep center.

Quick Sleep Tips

Follow these tips to establish healthy sleep habits:

- Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Get up at the same time every day, even on weekends or during vacations. This helps to regulate your body's clock and could help you fall asleep and stay asleep for the night.
- Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7 hours of sleep.
- Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy.
- If you don't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed. If you can't sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired. It is best to take work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping environment. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine: A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime conducted away from bright lights helps separate your sleep time from activities that can cause excitement, stress or anxiety which can make it more difficult to fall asleep, get sound and deep sleep or remain asleep.

- Use your bed only for sleep and sex. to strengthen the association between bed and sleep
- Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing. Keep the room at a comfortable, cool temperature. Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should be cool –between 60-70 degrees. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner’s sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, “white noise” machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices.
- Sleep on a comfortable Mattress and pillows. Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you have been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy – about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.
- Limit exposure to bright light in the evenings. Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. This will keep your circadian rhythms in check.
- Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Wind down. Your body needs time to shift into sleep mode, so spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading. For some people, using an electronic device such as a laptop can make it hard to fall asleep, because the particular type of light emanating from the screens of these devices is activating to the brain. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid electronics before bed or in the middle of the night.
- Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort from indigestion that can make it hard to sleep. If you can, avoid eating large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Try a light snack 45 minutes before bed if you’re still hungry.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet. Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no activity. Exercise at any time of day, but not at the expense of your sleep.
- Avoid consuming caffeine in the late afternoon or evening.
- Avoid consuming alcohol before bedtime.
- Reduce your fluid intake before bedtime.
- Evaluate your Room- Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner’s sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, “white noise” machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices.

For more information visit: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org>

AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/home>

The Authentic Happiness website, is a University of Pennsylvania website developed by the Positive Psychology Center. Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman is the Director of the Center, and a Professor of Psychology at Penn.

The purpose of this website is to provide free resources where people can learn about Positive Psychology through readings, videos, research, opportunities, conferences, questionnaires with feedback and more. There is no charge for the use of this site. If you would like to take the questionnaires, you first need to register.

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. This field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of work, love and play.

The mission of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania is to promote research, training, education and the dissemination of positive psychology.

The Site is a wealth of information on Initiatives in the Field of Positive Psychology Including the following:

- Creativity and Imagination
- Grit and Self-Control
- Growth Through Adversity
- Positive Health
- Positive Neuroscience
- Prospective Psychology

On this site you will also find a wealth of Questionnaires designed to give people insight and feedback on a variety of topics related to engagement, emotions as well as life satisfaction and meaning.

If you are not sure where to start, take the VIA character strengths assessment and study your results for an instant look into where you find meaning in your life.

10 PRACTICAL WAYS TO HANDLE STRESS

By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S.

Stress is inevitable. It walks in and out of our lives on a regular basis. And it can easily walk all over us unless we take action. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to minimize and cope with stress. Here are 10 ideas for handling stress without causing more strain and hassle.

1. Figure out where the stress is coming from.

Oftentimes, when we're stressed, it seems like a big mess with stressors appearing from every angle. We start to feel like we're playing a game of dodge ball, ducking and darting so we don't get smacked by a barrage of balls. We take a defensive position, and not a good one at that.

Instead of feeling like you're flailing day to day, identify what you're actually stressed about. Is it a specific project at work, an upcoming exam, a dispute with your boss, a heap of laundry, a fight with your family?

By getting specific and pinpointing the stressors in your life, you're one step closer to getting organized and taking action.

2. Consider what you can control—and work on that.

While you can't control what your boss does, what your in-laws say or the sour state of the economy, you can control how you react, how you accomplish work, how you spend your time and what you spend your money on.

The worst thing for stress is trying to take control over uncontrollable things. Because when you inevitably fail — since it's beyond your control — you only get more stressed out and feel helpless. So after you've thought through what's stressing you out, identify the stressors that you can control, and determine the best ways to take action.

Take the example of a work project. If the scope is stressing you out, talk it over with your supervisor or break the project down into step-wise tasks and deadlines.

Stress can be paralyzing. Doing what's within your power moves you forward and is empowering and invigorating.

3. Do what you love.

It's so much easier to manage pockets of stress when the rest of your life is filled with activities you love. Even if your job is stress central, you can find one hobby or two that enrich your world. What are you passionate about? If you're not sure, experiment with a variety of activities to find something that's especially meaningful and fulfilling.

4. Manage your time well.

One of the biggest stressors for many people is lack of time. Their to-do list expands, while time flies. How often have you wished for more hours in the day or heard others lament their lack of time? But you've got more time than you think, as Laura Vanderkam writes in her aptly titled book, *168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think*.

We all have the same 168 hours, and yet there are plenty of people who are dedicated parents and full-time employees and who get at least seven hours of sleep a night and lead fulfilling lives.

Here are Vanderkam's seven steps to help you check off your to-do list and find time for the things you truly enjoy.

5. Create a toolbox of techniques.

One stress-shrinking strategy won't work for all your problems. For instance, while deep breathing is helpful when you're stuck in traffic or hanging at home, it might not rescue you during a business meeting.

Because stress is complex, "What we need is a toolbox that's full of techniques that we can fit and choose for the stressor in the present moment," said Richard Blonna, Ed.D, a nationally certified coach and counselor and author of *Stress Less, Live More: How Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Can Help You Live a Busy Yet Balanced Life*.

6. Pick off the negotiables from your plate.

Review your daily and weekly activities to see what you can pick off your plate. As Vanderkam asks in her book: "Do your kids really love their extracurricular activities, or are they doing them to please you? Are you volunteering for too many causes, and so stealing time from the ones where you could make the most impact? Does your whole department really need to meet once per week or have that daily conference call?"

Blonna suggested asking these questions: "Do [my activities] mesh with my goals and values? Am I doing things that give my life meaning? Am I doing the right amount of things?"

7. Are you leaving yourself extra vulnerable to stress?

Whether you perceive something as a stressor depends in part on your current state of mind and body. That is, as Blonna said, ““Each transaction we’re involved in takes place in a very specific context that’s affected by our health, sleep, psychoactive substances, whether we’ve had breakfast [that day] and [whether we’re] physically fit.”

So if you’re not getting sufficient sleep or physical activity during the week, you may be leaving yourself extra susceptible to stress. When you’re sleep-deprived, sedentary and filled to the brim with coffee, even the smallest stressors can have a huge impact.

8. Preserve good boundaries.

If you’re a people-pleaser like me, saying no feels like you’re abandoning someone, have become a terrible person or are throwing all civility out the window. But of course that couldn’t be further from the truth. Plus, those few seconds of discomfort are well worth avoiding the stress of taking on an extra activity or doing something that doesn’t contribute value to your life.

One thing I’ve noticed about productive, happy people is that they’re very protective of their time and having their boundaries crossed. But not to worry: Building boundaries is a skill you can learn. Here are some tips to help. And if you tend toward people-pleasing, these tips can help, too.

9. Realize there’s a difference between worrying and caring.

Sometimes, our mindset can boost stress, so a small issue mushrooms into a pile of problems. We continue worrying, somehow thinking that this is a productive – or at least inevitable – response to stress. But we mistake worry for action.

Clinical psychologist Chad LeJeune, Ph.D, talks about the idea of worrying versus caring in his book, *The Worry Trap: How to Free Yourself from Worry & Anxiety Using Acceptance & Commitment Therapy*. “Worrying is an attempt to exert control over the future by thinking about it,” whereas caring is taking action. “When we are caring for someone or something, we do the things that support or advance the best interests of the person or thing that we care about.”

LeJeune uses the simple example of houseplants. He writes: “If you are away from home for a week, you can worry about your houseplants every single day and still return home to find them brown and wilted. Worrying is not watering.”

Similarly, fretting about your finances does nothing but get you worked up (and likely prevent you from taking action). Caring about your finances, however, means creating a budget, paying bills on time, using coupons and reducing how often you dine out. Just this small shift in mindset from worrying to caring can help you adjust your reaction to stress. To see this distinction between worrying and caring, LeJeune includes an activity where readers list responses for each one.

For example:

Worrying about your health involves...

Caring about your health involves...

Worrying about your career involves...

Caring about your career involves...

10. Embrace mistakes—or at least don't drown in perfectionism.

Another mindset that can exacerbate stress is perfectionism. Trying to be mistake-free and essentially spending your days walking on eggshells is exhausting and anxiety-provoking. Talk about putting pressure on yourself! And as we all know but tend to forget:

Perfectionism is impossible and not human, anyway.

As researcher Brene Brown writes in her book *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*, "Perfectionism is not the same thing as striving to be your best. Perfectionism is not about healthy achievement and growth" and it's not self-improvement.

Nothing good can come from perfectionism. Brown writes: "Research shows that perfectionism hampers success. In fact, it's often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction and life-paralysis ['all the opportunities we miss because we're too afraid to put anything out in the world that could be imperfect']."

Plus, mistake-mistaking can lead to growth. To overcome perfectionism, Brown suggests becoming more compassionate toward yourself. I couldn't agree more.

For more information visit: <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2011/07/11/10-practical-ways-to-handle-stress/>

OVERVIEW OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of psychotherapeutic treatment that helps patients understand the thoughts and feelings that influence behaviors. CBT is commonly used to treat a wide range of disorders, including phobias, addictions, depression, and anxiety.

Cognitive behavior therapy is generally short-term and focused on helping clients deal with a very specific problem. During the course of treatment, people learn how to identify and change destructive or disturbing thought patterns that have a negative influence on behavior and emotions.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Basics

The underlying concept behind CBT is that our thoughts and feelings play a fundamental role in our behavior. For example, a person who spends a lot of time thinking about plane crashes, runway accidents and other air disasters may find themselves avoiding air travel.

The goal of cognitive behavior therapy is to teach patients that while they cannot control every aspect of the world around them, they can take control of how they interpret and deal with things in their environment.

Cognitive behavior therapy has become increasingly popular in recent years with both mental health consumers and treatment professionals. Because CBT is usually a short-term treatment option, it is often more affordable than some other types of therapy. CBT is also empirically supported and has been shown to effectively help patients overcome a wide variety of maladaptive behaviors.

Automatic Negative Thoughts

One of the main focuses of cognitive behavioral therapy is on changing the automatic negative thoughts that can contribute to and exacerbate emotional difficulties, depression, and anxiety. These negative thoughts spring forward spontaneously, are accepted as true, and tend to negatively influence the individual's mood.

Through the CBT process, patients examine these thoughts and are encouraged to look at evidence from reality that either supports or refutes these thoughts. By doing this, people are able to take a more objective and realistic look at the thoughts that contribute to their feelings of anxiety and depression. By becoming aware of the negative and often unrealistic thoughts that dampen their feelings and moods, people are able to start engaging in healthier thinking patterns

Types of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

According to the British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, “Cognitive and behavioral psychotherapies are a range of therapies based on concepts and principles derived from psychological models of human emotion and behavior. They include a wide range of treatment approaches for emotional disorders, along a continuum from structured individual psychotherapy to self-help material.”

All of Jacob Wohl’s Spectacularly Failed Smear Attempts There are a number of specific types of therapeutic approaches that involve CBT that are regularly used by mental health professionals. Examples of these include:

- Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT): This type of CBT is centered on identifying and altering irrational beliefs. The process of REBT involves identifying the underlying irrational beliefs, actively challenging these beliefs, and finally learning to recognize and change these thought patterns.
- Cognitive Therapy: This form of therapy is centered on identifying and changing inaccurate or distorted thinking patterns, emotional responses, and behaviors.
- Multimodal Therapy: This form of CBT suggests that psychological issues must be treated by addressing seven different but interconnected modalities, which are behavior, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal factors and drug/biological considerations.
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy: This type of cognitive-behavioral therapy addresses thinking patterns and behaviors and incorporates strategies such as emotional regulation and mindfulness.

While each type of cognitive-behavioral therapy offers its own unique approach, each centers on addressing the underlying thought patterns that contribute to psychological distress.

The Components of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

People often experience thoughts or feelings that reinforce or compound faulty beliefs. Such beliefs can result in problematic behaviors that can affect numerous life areas, including family, romantic relationships, work, and academics.

For example, a person suffering from low self-esteem might experience negative thoughts about his or her own abilities or appearance. As a result of these negative thinking patterns, the individual might start avoiding social situations or pass up opportunities for advancement at work or at school.

In order to combat these destructive thoughts and behaviors, a cognitive-behavioral therapist begins by helping the client to identify the problematic beliefs. This stage, known as functional analysis, is important for learning how thoughts, feelings, and situations can contribute to maladaptive behaviors. The process can be difficult, especially for patients who struggle with introspection, but it can ultimately lead to self-discovery and insights that are an essential part of the treatment process.

The second part of cognitive behavior therapy focuses on the actual behaviors that are contributing to the problem. The client begins to learn and practice new skills that can then be put in to use in real-world situations. For example, a person suffering from drug addiction might start practicing new coping skills and rehearsing ways to avoid or deal with social situations that could potentially trigger a relapse.

In most cases, CBT is a gradual process that helps a person take incremental steps towards a behavior change. Someone suffering from social anxiety might start by simply imagining himself in an anxiety-provoking social situation.

Next, the client might start practicing conversations with friends, family, and acquaintances. By progressively working toward a larger goal, the process seems less daunting and the goals easier to achieve.

The Process of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

- During the process of CBT, the therapist tends to take a very active role.
- CBT is highly goal-oriented and focused, and the client and therapist work together as collaborators toward the mutually established goals.
- The therapist will typically explain the process in detail and the client will often be given homework to complete between sessions.
- Cognitive-behavior therapy can be effectively used as a short-term treatment centered on helping the client deal with a very specific problem.

Uses of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Cognitive behavior therapy has been used to treat people suffering from a wide range of disorders, including:

Anxiety, Phobias, Depression, Addictions, Eating disorders, Panic attacks, and Anger

CBT is one of the most researched types of therapy, in part because treatment is focused on highly specific goals and results can be measured relatively easily.

Compared to psychoanalytic types of psychotherapy which encourage a more open-ended self-exploration, cognitive behavior therapy is often best-suited for clients who are more comfortable with a structured and focused approach in which the therapist often takes an instructional role. However, for CBT to be effective, the individual must be ready and willing to spend time and effort analyzing his or her thoughts and feelings. Such self-analysis and homework can be difficult, but it is a great way to learn more about how internal states impact outward behavior.

Cognitive behavior therapy is also well-suited for people looking for a short-term treatment option for certain types of emotional distress that does not necessarily involve psychotropic medication. One of the greatest benefits of cognitive-behavior therapy is that it helps clients develop coping skills that can be useful both now and in the future.

Criticisms of Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Initially, some patients suggest that while they recognize that certain thoughts are not rational or healthy, simply becoming aware of these thoughts does not make it easy to alter them. CBT doesn't tend to focus on potential underlying unconscious resistances to change as much as other approaches such as psychoanalytic psychotherapy. It is important to note that CBT does not just involve identifying these thought patterns; it is focused on using a wide range of strategies to help clients overcome these thoughts. Such strategies may include journaling, role-playing, relaxation techniques, and mental distractions.

Cognitive-behavior therapy can be an effective treatment choice for a range of psychological issues. If you feel that you might benefit from this form of therapy, consult with your physician and check out the directory of certified therapists offered by the National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists to locate a professional in your area.

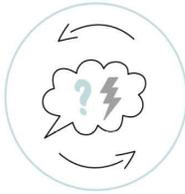
For more information and CBT therapy exercises visit: www.livingCBT.com



Journaling

Gathering data about your moods, their source / intensity, and your responses to them.

Unraveling cognitive distortions
Become aware of the distortions you are likely to be vulnerable of.



Cognitive restructuring

Challenge your harmful or destructive beliefs and restructure them.

Exposure and response prevention
Expose yourself to whatever it is that normally provokes a compulsive behavior.



Interoceptive exposure

Expose yourself to sensations you are afraid of and recognize they are not dangerous.

Nightmare exposure and rescripting
Identify the emotion caused by a nightmare and cultivate a new emotion to replace it.



Play the script until the end

Finish a worst case scenario in your head to see that everything will likely turn out okay.

Progressive muscle relaxation
Relax one muscle group at a time until your whole body is in a state of relaxation.



Relaxed breathing

Bring regularity and calm to your breath and create a sense of balance.