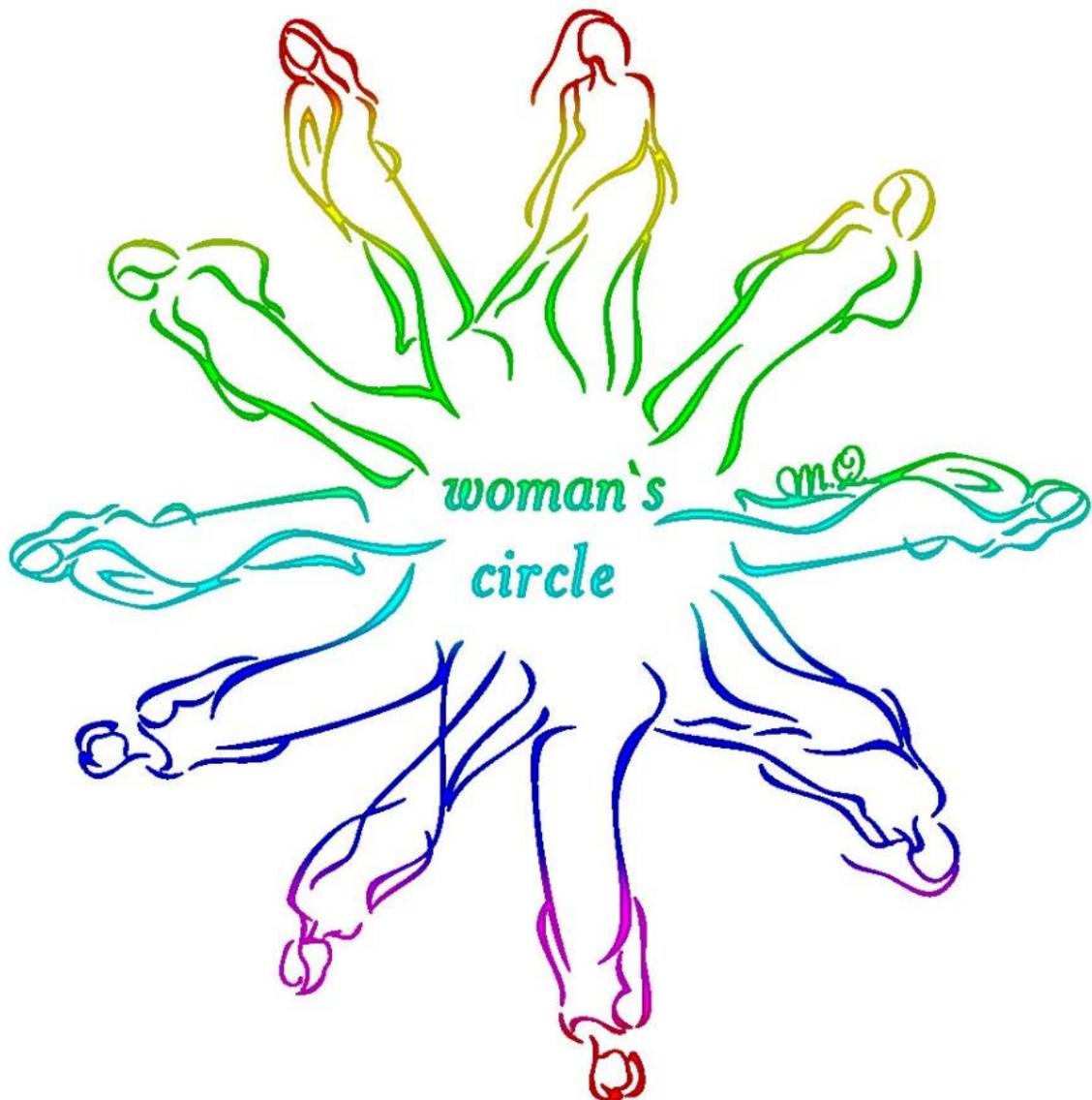




Canadian Mental
Health Association
Grey Bruce
Mental Health and Addiction Services

Woman's Circle Handout Articles

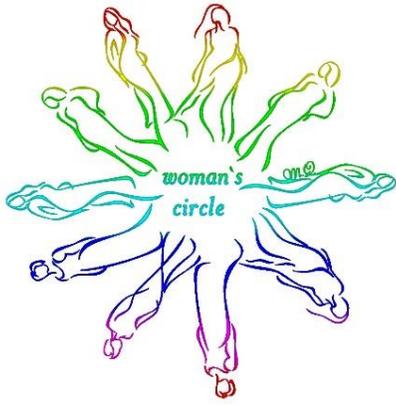
March 2022



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Woman's Circle Comfort Agreement

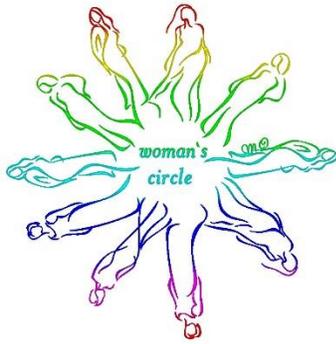
(Revised January 14 2022)

I agree to support myself in this group by....

- **When meditation ends admittance to zoom meeting will cease**
- **When others are speaking, we agree to mute ourselves until we wish to speak. As needed.**
- **If we feel overwhelmed, we support ourselves by stepping away for a minute. And to let group know "I'm ok, just need a minute."**
- **Needing to stand, periodically.**
- **Confidentiality IS an expectation of group participation; except when an individual's personal safety or safety of others is in question.**
- **If answering a phone call can quickly excuse self, mute and stop video.**
- **Some conversations may be triggering for others please be cautious how we phrase things.**
- **Be respectful of everyone's time and allow all to speak.**
- **To attend zoom meetings, you must be in a space that is private/confidential.**

- If you are going to move locations during the zoom, please mute audio/turn off video while you are mobile and turn back on when you resettle.
- Please refrain from laying down, if possible, if not take your video off as this may be distracting for others.
- Whenever possible please leave camera on except in those circumstances already mentioned, or when circumstances do not allow for this (i.e. if no video camera).
- To be aware that my behaviour, demeanor, words and actions can have a lasting affect on participants both positively and negatively.

If there are those in *crisis*, they agree to inform the facilitator that they are in crisis by chat message and discontinue their participation in the live group and connect with their healthcare provider, their peer support worker or end the call and connect with the mental health crisis line at **1-877-470-5200** If, you are not at the meeting please do not join via video link due to others who may be traumatized by this method of connection.



Personal Bill of Rights

(Revised Dec 2021)

I have the right to ask for what I want.

I have the right to say no to requests or demands I cannot meet

I have the right to change my mind

I have the right to make mistakes and don't have to be perfect

I have the right to follow my own values and standards

I have the right to express all of my feelings, both positive and negative, in a manner that will not harm others

I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values

I have the right to feel angry and to express my anger in a responsible manner

I have the right to be uniquely myself

I have the right to feel scared and say, "I'm afraid"

I have the right to say, "I don't know"

I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings, beliefs and values

I have the right to my own reality

I have the right to my own need for personal space and time

I have the right to be playful and frivolous

I have the right to be healthy

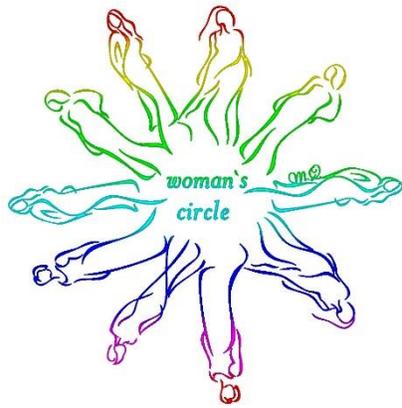
I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment

I have the right to change and grow

I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect

I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others

I have the right to be happy



The Core Values of Peer Support

Hope and Recovery

Acknowledging the power of hope and the positive impact that comes from the recovery approach

Self-Determination

Having faith that each person intrinsically knows which path towards recovery is most suitable for them and their needs, noting that it is the peer's choice whether to become involved in a peer support relationship

Health & Wellness

Acknowledging all aspects of a healthy and full life

Empathetic & Equal Relationships

Noting that the peer support relationship and all involved can benefit from the reciprocity and better understanding that comes from similar experience
(common threads of connection)

Dignity, Respect & Social inclusion

Acknowledging the intrinsic worth of all individuals, whatever their background, preferences or situation

Integrity, Authenticity & Trust

Noting the confidentiality, reliability and ethical behaviour are honoured in each
and every interaction

Lifelong Learning & Personal Growth

Acknowledging the value of learning, changing and developing new perspectives
for all individuals

Source: Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2013). Guidelines for the Practice
and Training of Peer Support.

Brené Brown on Boundaries & Compassion

“To assume the best about people is almost an inherently selfish act, ’cause the life you change first is your own.”

Brené Brown

But it can also change the lives of the people around you. You can’t know, without a doubt, if someone (who has been getting on your nerves) is doing their best. But if you can make the assumption that they are doing their best, then you actually feel more acceptance, less judgment, less resentment, and more accepting of your own imperfect, “needy” self, and maybe even recognize that you deserve support, whether any one particular person can give it to you or not.

“Generosity,” says Brené, “can’t exist without boundaries. Empathy without boundaries is not empathy. Boundaries are friggin’ important. It’s here’s what’s okay with me, and here is what’s not.”

Achieving this level of self knowledge often requires a lot of work. But it’s so worth it. Here is a video where Brené is being interviewed about compassion and boundaries. I just love it. Take a look!

Here is her question: What boundaries need to be in place for me to maintain my integrity and make my most generous assumptions about you?

That’s BIG: Boundaries
 Integrity
 Generous

Taken from the website www.tonirahman.com

[Brené Brown on Boundaries & Compassion \(tonirahman.com\)](http://www.tonirahman.com)

What **B**oundaries need to be in place for me to maintain my **I**ntegrity and make my most **G**enerous assumptions about you?

Brene Brown

Circular Leadership

Leadership is essential to community, but in the reciprocal model, this role can rotate between members, depending on the needs of the group. Unlike the way we normally think of leadership, as one person telling others what to do, reciprocal leadership is about engaging everyone to find the way forward. It is spherical in nature, rather than hierarchical. In this way of seeing things, a great leader is an expression of their collective, not its star. If done well a leader should oversee, guide, and represent the collective vision. But the right person for that role might also change as the group needs change. At times, we may need a confident and outspoken leader to power us through a tangled passage, but other times we need the leader who quietly sees the network of connections within the whole. Sometimes we need a leader who hangs back so another may practice at stepping forward, challenging us to be better than we think possible. Reciprocal leadership ultimately recognizes the circle itself as the teacher.

There is a genius that can only be found in our coming together, and it's our combined abilities that elevate and strengthen us. True humility doesn't mean making yourself smaller, but recognizing that we are all the same size: necessary.

Toko-pa Turner, [Belonging: Remembering Ourselves Home](#)

Eleven Ways to Cultivate Resilience

“I am not what happened to me. I am what I choose to become.” – Carl Jung

Bouncing back is a concept well understood in the context of recovering from a sports injury. Following favorite players’ comeback stories fills fans with inspiration, encourages perseverance in pursuit of personal goals, and fosters a sense of self-confidence, like we can do it if they can. Cultivating resilience in the face of all life’s challenges is a proactive way of dealing with the unexpected, the upsets and disappointments, the pitfalls and successes in life, including how to cope with trauma, chronic pain, adversity and tragedy.

Resilience: What It’s All About

An article in *Forbes* [defines resilience](#) as “the capacity for stress-related growth” and states that resilience has two parts related to the way you bounce back and grow:

- From big work or life adversity and trauma
- From dealing with daily hassles and stress

Resilience, say researchers in an [article](#) [Trusted Source](#) published in *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, can manifest either as “prosocial behaviors or pathological adaptation depending on the quality of the environment.” If individuals suffering from lasting effects of trauma and adversity have access to resources that help them cope, they will be more likely to develop prosocial behaviors that may facilitate healing.

[Rolbieki et al. \(2017\)](#) explored resilience among patients living with chronic pain and found that they showed resiliency in four ways: developing a sense of control (actively seeking information and conferring with their doctor to confirm his/her recommendations; actively engaging in both medical and complementary

treatment; making social connections and exhibiting acceptance of pain and positive effect.

One surprising finding is that chronic stress accelerates aging at the cellular level – in the body’s telomeres. These are the repeating segments of non-coding DNA at the end of chromosomes. Scientists have discovered that telomeres can be lengthened or shortened – so the goal is to have more days of renewal of cells than destruction or wear and tear on them.

Researchers suggest resilience should be regarded as an emotional muscle, one that can be strengthened and cultivated. Dr. Dennis Charney, co-author of “Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life’s Greatest Challenge,” says people can weather and recover from trauma by developing and incorporating 10 resilience skills, including facing fear, optimism and social support. Dr. Charney, resilience researcher and dean of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, was shot as he exited a deli. Following the shooting, Dr. Charney faced a long and difficult recovery. The resilience researcher himself had to employ strategies of coping he’d studied and taught.

The American Psychological Association (APA) says that resilience isn’t a trait that people either have or don’t. Instead, resilience “involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.”

Ways to Cultivate Resilience

Among the varied ways to develop and cultivate resilience, some are more self-evident than others, yet each is worth a try when attempting to weather life’s challenges.

1. **Act.** Even small steps add to a sense of accomplishment, of being proactive instead of reactive. Start with something you feel confident you can do and ask for help if you need it. There’s a lot to be said about self-empowerment

when you act in your own best interests. After all, no one else can act for you.

2. **Add to coping resources.** Everyone can benefit from having a toolkit of effective coping resources. Combat [stress](#), [depression](#), [anxiety](#) and other emotional, psychological and physical issues and conditions through meditation, [mindful yoga](#), exercise and whatever helps you relax, including reading, music, doing puzzles, painting, writing and more.
3. **Embrace flexibility.** Instead of regarding your situation as no-win, steer towards an attitude of flexibility. Learn the art of compromise, as in, “I may not be able to run a marathon, yet I can manage a walk in the neighborhood with friends.” In addition, when running into fatigue or pain that prevents you from continuing, congratulate yourself on your effort and the fact that you acted to improve your resilience. Over time, you’ll get stronger and be able to do more, thus adding to your resilience and helping to improve your overall physical and mental health.
4. **Practice optimism.** Science says that some optimism is genetic, while some is learned. You can train yourself with practice in positive self-thinking to see opportunity instead of a dead-end, to view a glass as half full instead of half empty. There’s also truth in self-fulfilling attitudes. If you believe you’ll be successful in overcoming adversity, you’re more likely to succeed. The opposite is also true: If you think you’ll fail, you probably will.
5. **Take advantage of support.** When you need help, it’s OK to ask for it. In fact, when you know you have support available and are willing to use it, you’re exercising prosocial behavior. Similarly, when you can do so, offer your support to others who may need it.
6. **Avoid personalizing.** There’s no point in engaging in blame or endlessly thinking about your situation. Besides being counter-productive, it makes you feel worse. Make use of some of the healthy coping measures you’ve successfully used before and stop ruminating about what happened to you.
7. **Regard the setback/disappointment as temporary.** Nothing lasts forever, not even life-altering events, trauma, adversity and pain. You can navigate

through this turbulent and emotionally trying time by realizing that this is temporary, and things will get better with your active involvement in your healing process.

8. **Write your new story.** Psychiatrists and psychologists call this “reframing” and it refers to changing your story to focus on the opportunities revealed. For example, say you’ve returned from active deployment in a war zone with extensive physical and psychological injuries. Instead of remaining steeped in the negative aspects of your experience, allow yourself to center on other senses, traits, skills and resources you have at your disposal – your empathy, understanding, ability to solve problems, a wide support network, loving family and close friends.
9. **Cultivate gratitude.** When you are grateful and actively [cultivate gratitude](#), you are taking advantage of a basic part of resilience and in contentment in life. The more you develop gratitude, the more resilient you’ll become.
10. **Remind yourself of other victories.** This may be an intensely challenging time for you, a time when failures and negativity seem paramount and inevitable. Now is when you must remind yourself of your past successes, examples of seemingly impossible hurdles you’ve overcome, victories you’ve scored. This serves as self-reminder that you’ve come back from adversity before. You can do it again.
11. **Enhance spirituality.** Religion and spirituality have been shown as predictors of resilience in various populations studied, including returning war veterans with [posttraumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#), trauma sufferers, children and adults who experience abuse or violence, patients enduring chronic pain. Prayer, self-reflection, communicating with a Higher Power serves as a healing balm to many who otherwise may resort to negative coping behaviors, such as drinking and drug use.

Copied from <https://psychcentral.com/lib/11-ways-to-cultivate-resilience#1>

Resilience Test <https://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/2121>

Fierce Self – Compassion

By Dr. Kristin Neff

<https://self-compassion.org/>

FIERCE SELF-COMPASSION

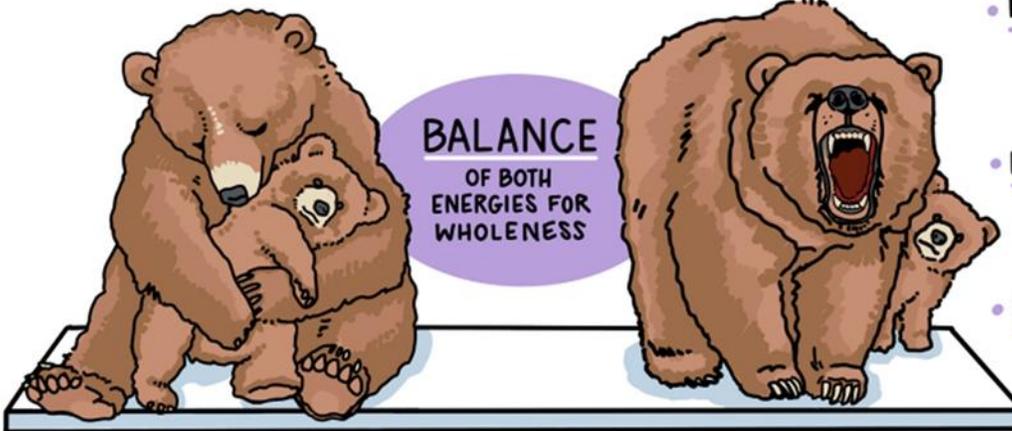
DR. KRISTIN NEFF
self-compassion.org

TENDER SELF-COMPASSION

ACCEPTING OURSELVES
TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING

FIERCE SELF-COMPASSION

TAKING ACTION
TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING



INNER HEALING

TENDER

OUTER CHANGE

FIERCE

together

CREATES A

CARING FORCE

ALLOWING US TO

THRIVE

- **PROTECTING** DRAWING BOUNDARIES AND SAYING **NO**
- **PROVIDING** AND SAYING **YES** TO OUR NEEDS
- **MOTIVATING** TO LEARN, GROW AND CHANGE THE WORLD

OUR AUTHENTIC SELF

CLAIMS BOTH OUR TENDER & FIERCE SIDES
COUNTERING THE GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION WE HAVE ALL BEEN STEEPED IN

Five Benefits of Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone

Why moving beyond the safe and familiar is essential for growth?

Each of us has our own “comfort zone” which, more than an actual place, is a psychological/emotional/ behavioral construct that defines the routine of our daily life. Being in one’s comfort zone implies familiarity, safety, and security. It describes the patterned world of our existence, keeps us relatively comfortable and calm, and helps us stay emotionally even, free from anxiety and worry to a great degree. Creating a comfort zone is a healthy adaptation for much of our lives. But so is stepping out of our comfort zone when it’s time to transition, grow, and transform.

Experiencing a little stress and anxiety now and then is a good thing, too. If all you ever do is stay wrapped in your little cocoon, keeping warm and cozy, you may be missing out on a lot, like new experiences, challenges, and risks. And looking at the bigger picture, if you can’t step out of your comfort zone you may experience difficulty making change or transitioning, growing, and ultimately, transforming; in other words, all those things that define who you are and give your life meaning.

Very simply, what we fear most about challenging ourselves is that we may fail and/or get hurt. But most of us have the ability to rise to the occasion, overcome hurdles and obstacles, and actually succeed in accomplishing something new and challenging.

In my book *Transitions*, I describe a major life change and how I was affected and changed by it. Many years ago my husband had a wonderful job opportunity that promised to be very fulfilling but it meant that we had to move across the country. The physical move would be hard for both of us but my husband would be going to the safety of a job and the familiarity of a work environment.

It would prove much harder for me. I closed my New York-based practice, left my hospital affiliation of many years, sold my weekend house in Connecticut, and left behind family and many dear friends. Essentially, except for my husband, none of the “externals” with which I identified was making the journey west with me. Looked at one way, I was free; looked at another, I had lost my home. Was I out of my comfort zone? You bet.

For the first time in longer than I could remember, I had a lot of time on my hands. In my new home I knew few people. Immersing myself immediately in work was out of the question, since California has its own licensing requirements for physicians. Without the comfort of all my old roles—doctor, mother, daughter, friend—I was suddenly just a person.

Wandering anonymously around San Francisco I often asked myself, “Who are you now?” There was an exhilarating freedom in not having to meet anyone’s expectations, but it was also disorienting to be thrown so totally back on myself. I was often lonely. Psychological and emotional issues I was sure I was done with found their way back into my consciousness. Clearly, something was happening to me; it was a process I myself had initiated, but I no longer felt in conscious control of it.

Thanks to the disruption of my old life and the soul-searching that resulted from it, I was about to learn to see the world in some very new ways. Everyone I met had a story to tell, and I began to see that my own uncertain search had opened me up to listening in a new way.

As a psychiatrist, of course, much of this was familiar territory to me. In one way or another, I’d long been exposed to or directly focused on the problem of how people got themselves through transitions. But for the first time, I found myself thinking about that territory in a new way. What was it that enabled some people to cope with the big changes in their lives while others seemed undone by them? Of course, many factors contribute to the mix, but it seemed to me that when individuals could find a conscious, meaningful structure to encompass the events of their lives, they could take more responsibility and feel less lost.

I recently revisited that time in my life. My conclusion: Before I made this major move I had allowed myself, on many occasions, to step out of my comfort zone—sometimes because I had to, sometimes to try new things, and sometimes to take

bigger risks because not doing so would keep me in the life in which I was already firmly established.

Here are 5 huge benefits of stepping out of your comfort zone:

Your “real life” is out there waiting for you. Your real life exists beyond the bubble of your own personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Your real life is the sum total of ALL of your experiences, not just the one’s you’re comfortable with.

Challenging yourself pushes you to dip into and utilize your personal store of untapped knowledge and resources. You have no idea what you’re made of unless and until you venture outside of your own familiar world.

Taking risks, regardless of their outcome, are growth experiences. Even if you make mistakes or don’t get it right the first time those become experiences you can tap into in the future. There really is no such thing as “fail” if you get something out of the experience. And just so you know, “FAIL” re-framed means “First Attempt in Learning.”

Don’t settle for the mediocre just to avoid stepping out of your comfort zone; it’s too big a price to pay. Your challenges and risk experiences are cumulative. Every time you try something new, and allow yourself to be open to whatever experience arises, you are learning, and expanding your repertoire of life skills and self-knowledge. As you do this you also expand the size of your comfort zone.

Leaving your comfort zone ultimately helps you to deal with change—and making change in a much better way. Life transitions are all about change. Each time you transition you move to another level. Inevitably, these life transitions transform you.

It may seem overwhelming to step into the unknown. But instead of thinking of the “big picture,” break down what you want or need to accomplish by making small changes. Small changes accumulate and each builds upon the last. Try to make small changes that take you out of the everyday and familiar, yet are not too emotionally challenging. We are all such creatures of habit. Change your daily and/or work routine. Try something new—food, music, and activities you’ve never done. Undertake a creative project of any kind in which your thinking is channeled in a new way. Add newness to your life. Be open to experience.

My takeaway: I have within myself the ability to make big change. I did it once. I can do it again.

You can, too.

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Copied from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-flux/201512/5-benefits-stepping-outside-your-comfort-zone>

Five Factors that Promote Resilience

1. CONNECTION

Good relationships with friends and family

Involvement in community, cultural, school, charitable or faith-based groups

Internalizing a sense of connectedness

2. COMMUNICATION

Ability to share, explain, explore, and understand

Ability to reframe what has happened

Development of insight and good judgment

3. CONFIDENCE

Positive yet realistic view of yourself

Accurate sense of your abilities

Recognition of what you have learned after a problem is resolved

Ability to visualize your goals and what you want

Believing you can influence how things turn out

4. COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT

Ability to look at the big picture

Ability to problem-solve

Following through, not giving up

Working toward your goals every day

5. CONTROL

Managing strong feelings so they enhance relationships and productivity

Developing coping skills, not just quick fixes

Keeping things in perspective

Understand the role that your thoughts play in how you feel

All material contained on this blog is for information purposes only. This information is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional psychological advice. Always consult a qualified professional prior to utilizing any of the information provided in this post.

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Copied from: <https://patch.com/new-jersey/littlesilver/5-factors-promote-resilience>

Five Ways to Shift from Diet Culture to Loving Your Body

Mindful eating expert Lynn Rossy offers a toolbox of practices to help you create a more balanced, compassionate relationship with the body you live in.

By Lynn Rossy

January 10, 2022

We live in a world that is obsessed with weight and body size. There are thousands of diets, diet foods, and diet programs all proclaiming their ability to help you lose weight, and yet the statistics show that for many of us, the number on the scale is going up. Researchers and other experts agree that the long-term success rate for diets is dismal, with many people gaining the original weight back and often even more. And, this weight cycling is inextricably linked to adverse physical health and psychological well-being.

When we have been taught to distrust and dislike our bodies, we can become susceptible to other harmful patterns of attitude and behavior.

While many people equate attaining a certain size with health (and happiness), that is an inaccurate evaluation. Despite persistent bias against higher weight within research and medicine, current studies show that weight shaming and yo-yo dieting are more damaging to a person's health than their body weight. What if your problem was not your weight, but your relationship to your weight and your body?

Attitudes to Shift for a Healthy Relationship with Your Body

When we have been taught to distrust and dislike our bodies, we can become susceptible to other harmful patterns of attitude and behavior. Here are a few of them:

1. Dieting.

You will try and try again, but it is clear from the research that weight-loss dieting doesn't work. The issue is not that you haven't tried the "right" diet, or that you were not disciplined enough. It is that all diets

are designed to fail. When your diet is unsustainable over the long-term, you will, sooner or later, go back to the way you were eating to begin with. Employing willpower to continually deprive yourself has serious limitations, and it will get depleted from overuse.

2. Rebellion.

The restriction that you experience while dieting leads to overeating and binging. Anytime you restrict, you set up the desire to eat. Not only does your body require nourishment, the food that you prohibit will look even more tempting. When you constantly tell yourself, Don't eat that, you will eventually rebel. When you rebel, you will throw the rules out the window and eat whatever you want and a lot of it. You can't tell me what to do is a common phrase you might hear in your head: I'm going to eat whatever I want. Watch me! This sounds a little like a two-year-old and makes you feel like one. You end up feeling overly full and maybe even sick as a result.

Negative self-talk.

When your sense of worth is tied to a number on a scale, you are constantly telling yourself that you are not enough unless you are at the pre-determined magic number. From my personal experience, when I reached the magic number that I was working toward, I was only happy for one second—and my next thought was, You should weigh less than that. Thankfully, I had been practicing mindfulness for some time and saw what was happening. It was a true “aha” moment for me. The inner critic that says I'm not enough will follow you no matter what the scale says. For me, the right choice was to throw the scale out, and I've never looked back.

3. Lack of self-love.

All this dieting, rebellion, and negative self-talk end up with you having a definite love deficit. It is not your fault. We are conditioned this way by our culture, movies, TV, social media, advertising, and more. If you were to realize that you're deserving of love and compassion just as you are, you wouldn't buy things to make you feel

better. Much of consumer culture depends on you not feeling good about yourself.

4. Resignation.

In the end, you just feel like giving up, and you do. You resign yourself to the way you feel (not good) because you couldn't succeed at the last diet you tried. Of course, it's not too long before the next bright and shiny diet shows up and you're right back at #1. Back to this endless cycle of dieting-binging-giving up.

5 Mindful Ways to Love Your Body

Now for the good news. Instead of focusing on the number on a scale, a more self-compassionate and nourishing attitude toward your body and food can be found through daily mindfulness practices. This will look a little different for every person, and you can experiment to find out what helps your body—and mind—feel their best. Broadly speaking, a mindful approach to your body includes the following:

Instead of focusing on the number on a scale, a more self-compassionate and nourishing attitude toward your body and food can be found through daily mindfulness practices.

1. Explore mindful eating.

The antidote to dieting is mindful eating. Mindful eating is not concerned with the number on a scale. It is a kind and curious way of eating that guides you to listen to the body for what, when, how, and why to eat. Mindful eating teaches you to pay attention to your body before, during, and after you eat so that you enjoy all aspects of eating and savoring.

Try It: The BASICS of Mindful Eating guided practice will teach you to breathe and belly check for hunger before you eat, assess your food, slow down, investigate your hunger throughout the meal, chew thoroughly, and savor your food. Use it while you eat a meal or a snack, and discover something new every time you eat.

2. Express gratitude.

One of the easiest things you can do is to start a practice of being grateful for your body and what it does for you every day. This entails moving from an ornamental view to an instrumental view of your body. In other words, moving from a focus on “body form or attractiveness” to “body function.” This shift to a focus on what the body does for you is associated with a more positive evaluation of your body.

Try It: Each morning when you wake up, start by saying thank you to various parts of your body: your heart, lungs, stomach, legs, arms, eyes, ears. I especially like to thank my body for breathing. This one thing that happens every moment without my needing to be involved, keeps me alive. Taking a moment to pause and give thanks for the miraculous functions of the body can begin to shift you into a different mindset.

3. Respond to your body's needs.

Many people don't pay attention to what their body needs until it breaks down. Instead, what if you were to listen and respond to your body throughout the day? Your body is constantly giving you signs that indicate its needs for food, water, rest, sleep, movement, connection, creativity, love, and so much more. How well do you respond to your body when it tells you it wants food or doesn't want more food? When you partner with your body by responding to its needs, you will feel your body coming alive with more energy and vitality.

When you partner with your body by responding to its needs, you will feel your body coming alive with more energy and vitality.

Try It: Take a short body break every hour and listen to what the body is saying. Respond as best you can to these little signals and begin a better friendship with your body.

4. Engage in compassionate self-talk.

Do you respond better to criticism, or compassion and understanding? When we are criticized, people tend to shut down and even engage in destructive behavior. However, when we have been understood and appreciated, our positive mood can help us engage in constructive behavior, which allows us to flourish. For instance, if you eat more than you wish you had, instead of beating yourself up, you can tell yourself, "That's OK. You will feel better soon. Maybe next time just have one cookie instead of three."

5. Try It: The next time you notice yourself judging your behavior around food or your body, shift the conversation to one that is compassionate and kind. It can be helpful to think about what you would say to your best friend in a similar situation. **Be your own best friend.**

Besides talking to yourself in a kind and compassionate way, there are many other ways of befriending your body. Instead of always thinking that you need to have someone else around for a loving friendship, you can be your own best friend by engaging in activities that bring you and your body energy and ease. The body needs both active and restful activities to be at its best.

Try It: Plan activities that would improve your relationship with your body. Some examples include taking yourself on a walk around the neighborhood, playing some music and dancing, lighting a candle and meditating for a few minutes, or doing a few yoga poses. Lastly, look at yourself in the mirror and say something like, "Hello, dear friend." Smile at who you see and celebrate this moment of being alive. Stay here for at least 20 seconds and let your heart open to this growing appreciation of your body. You might even create a self-care plan that gives you exactly what you need to stay resilient during life's ups and downs.

Taking a mindful approach to your body is a journey. As in most journeys, there will be detours and bumps on the road. Don't be discouraged as you work on shifting the narrative about your body from one of dislike to appreciation. We have been conditioned to believe the worst things about our body, and it is an act of courage and confidence to step into our body each day with joy and happiness.

Copied from

<https://www.mindful.org/5-ways-to-shift-from-diet-culture-to-loving-your-body/>

Guideposts of Wholehearted Living

Guidepost #1

Cultivating Authenticity: Letting Go of What People Think

Guidepost #2

Cultivating Self-Compassion: Letting Go of Perfectionism

Guidepost #3

Cultivating a Resilient Spirit: Letting Go of Numbing and Powerlessness

Guidepost #4

Cultivating Gratitude and Joy: Letting Go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark

Guidepost #5

Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith: Letting Go of the Need for Certainty

Guidepost #6

Cultivating Creativity: Letting Go of Comparison

Guidepost #7

Cultivating Play and Rest: Letting Go of Exhaustion as a Status Symbol and Productivity as Self-Worth

Guidepost #8

Cultivating Calm and Stillness: Letting Go of Anxiety as a Lifestyle

Guidepost #9

Cultivating Meaningful Work: Letting Go of Self-Doubt and “Supposed To”

Guidepost #10

Cultivating Laughter, Song, and Dance: Letting Go of Being Cool and “Always in Control”

Created by Brene Brown

10 Guideposts for Wholehearted Living

FROM BRENÉ BROWN'S "THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION"

LETTING GO OF...

WHAT PEOPLE THINK

PERFECTIONISM

NUMBING &
POWERLESSNESS

SCARCITY &
FEAR OF THE DARK

NEED FOR CERTAINTY

COMPARISON

EXHAUSTION AS A STATUS SYMBOL
AND PRODUCTIVITY AS SELF-WORTH

ANXIETY AS A LIFESTYLE

SELF DOUBT & "SUPPOSED TO"

COOL & ALWAYS IN CONTROL

CULTIVATING...

Authenticity

Self-Compassion

A Resilient Spirit

Gratitude & Joy

Intuition & Faith

Creativity

Rest & Play

Calm & Stillness

Meaningful Work

Laughter, Song & Dance

Artwork by @avalonmckenzie

Copied from: <https://brenebrown.com/resources/ten-guideposts-for-wholehearted-living/>

How to Change Negative Thinking with Cognitive Restructuring

Most people experience negative thought patterns from time to time, but sometimes these patterns become so entrenched that they interfere with relationships, achievements, and even well-being.

Cognitive restructuring is a group of therapeutic techniques that help people notice and change their negative thinking patterns.

When thought patterns become destructive and self-defeating, it's a good idea to explore ways to interrupt and redirect them. That's what cognitive restructuring can do.

How does cognitive restructuring work?

Cognitive restructuring is at the heart of cognitive behavioral therapy, a well-studied talk therapy approach that can be effective at treating many mental health conditions, including depression and anxiety disorders.

In cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a patient and therapist work together to identify faulty thought patterns that are contributing to a problem and practice techniques to help reshape negative thought patterns.

It can be tricky to recognize inaccuracies in your own thought patterns. For that reason, most professionals recommend that you work with a therapist when you begin cognitive restructuring.

As the name suggests, cognitive restructuring techniques deconstruct unhelpful thoughts and rebuild them in a more balanced and accurate way.

People sometimes experience cognitive distortions — thought patterns that create a distorted, unhealthy view of reality. Cognitive distortions often lead to depression, anxiety, relationship problems, and self-defeating behaviors.

Some examples of cognitive distortions include: black-and-white thinking, catastrophizing, overgeneralizing, personalizing

Cognitive restructuring offers an opportunity to notice these maladaptive thoughts as they're occurring. You can then practice reframing these thoughts in more accurate and helpful ways.

The theory is that if you can change how you look at certain events or circumstances, you may be able to change the feelings you have and the actions you take.

So how exactly do you restructure a negative thought?

Cognitive restructuring techniques

Although anyone can use cognitive restructuring techniques to improve their thinking habits, many people find it helpful to collaborate with a therapist.

A therapist can help you learn which cognitive distortions are affecting you. They can also explain how and why a thought is irrational or inaccurate.

A therapist can also help you learn how to "question" faulty thought patterns and redesign them so they're more positive.

Here's a brief guide to some of the strategies involved in cognitive restructuring:

Self-monitoring

To change an unproductive thought pattern, you have to be able to identify the error you're making. Cognitive restructuring depends on your ability to notice the thoughts that spark negative feelings and states of mind.

It's also useful to notice when and where the thoughts come up. It may be that you're more vulnerable to cognitive distortions in certain situations. Knowing what those situations are may help you prepare in advance.

For example, if you're a student who has trouble with anxiety, you might notice a pattern of catastrophizing in testing environments. Maybe your pattern goes something like this: I am absolutely going to fail this test, and fail the course, and not be able to graduate with everybody else. Everyone is going to know I've failed.

Knowing that vulnerability exists can help you catch your negative thought and change it before it gets the better of you.

Some people find it helpful to journal as part of the process. Even if you aren't sure at first what's caused your anxiety or sadness, writing down your thoughts may help you recognize a cognitive distortion or pattern.

As you practice self-monitoring, you'll likely start noticing distorted thought patterns more quickly.

Questioning your assumptions

Another essential part of cognitive restructuring is learning how to question your thoughts and assumptions, especially those that seem to get in the way of living a productive life.

A therapist can teach you how to use a Socratic questioning method to find out where and how your automatic thoughts are biased or illogical.

Some questions you might ask include:

Is this thought based on emotion or facts?

What evidence is there that this thought is accurate?

What evidence is there that this thought isn't accurate?

How could I test this belief?

What's the worst that could happen? How could I respond if the worst happens?

What other ways could this information be interpreted?

Is this really a black-and-white situation or are there shades of grey here?

If you're experiencing the cognitive distortion called catastrophizing, for example, you might tend to assume the worst possible outcome in a stressful situation. In questioning this thought pattern, you could ask yourself to list all possible outcomes. You could ask yourself how likely each possible outcome is.

Questioning allows you to consider new possibilities that aren't as drastic as the catastrophic ones you may fear.

Gathering evidence

A key element of cognitive restructuring is gathering evidence.

You may decide to keep track of the events that trigger a response, including who you were with and what you were doing. You may want to record how strong each response is and what memories came up as a result.

You might also gather evidence for or against your thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs. Cognitive distortions are biased and inaccurate, but they can also be deeply embedded. Dislodging and replacing them requires evidence about how rational they are.

You may need to list facts that show a belief is accurate, and compare the list to facts that show the belief is distorted or just plain incorrect.

For example, if you personalize other people's actions, you may often blame yourself for things that aren't your fault. You might benefit from looking at evidence that indicates an action has nothing to do with you at all.

Performing a cost-benefit analysis

Using this strategy, you would consider the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining a certain cognitive distortion.

You could ask yourself:

What do you get out of calling yourself a complete idiot, for example?

What does this thought pattern cost you emotionally and practically speaking?

What are the long-term effects?

How does this thought pattern affect the people around you?

How does it advance or limit your job performance?

Seeing the pros and cons side by side can help you decide whether it's worth changing the pattern.

Here's a recent celebrity example of how a cost-benefit analysis works:

In her show "Nanette," comedian Hannah Gadsby talked about how she built a career on self-deprecating humor. But at a certain point, the harm she was doing

to her sense of self outweighed the benefits to her career. So she decided to stop tearing herself down as a means of making jokes.

“Nanette” was wildly successful, in part because so many people recognize the harmful trade-offs they make every day.

Generating alternatives

Cognitive restructuring helps people find new ways of looking at the things that happen to them. Part of the practice involves coming up with alternative explanations that are rational and positive to replace the distortions that have been adopted over time.

For example, if you didn't score as well on a test, instead of generalizing that you're terrible at math, you might explore ways you could change your study habits. Or, you could explore some relaxation techniques you could try before your next test.

Here's another example: If a group of colleagues stop talking when you walk into a room, instead of jumping to the conclusion that they were talking about you, you might want to consider other explanations for their actions. By doing so, you may realize that the situation had nothing to do with you, or that you misinterpreted what was going on.

Generating alternatives can also include creating positive affirmations to replace inaccurate or unhelpful thought patterns.

You might want to repeat to yourself that you make valuable, positive contributions at work, and that your colleagues always include you in what's going on. You can base these affirmations on a list of contributions you've actually made, and the positive relationships you've built.

What are the benefits?

Although it's helpful to work with a therapist at first, cognitive restructuring is a method you can learn to do on your own once you know how it works.

Being able to identify and change your negative thought patterns has many benefits. For instance, it may help to:

lower your stress and alleviate anxiety

strengthen your communication skills and build healthier relationships

replace unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance use

rebuild self-confidence and self-esteem

What types of issues can cognitive restructuring help with?

The American Psychological Association recommends CBT to help with:

eating disorders

depression

anxiety

PTSD

substance use disorder

mental illness

marital problems

It can also help you navigate difficult transitions like divorce, a serious illness, or the loss of a loved one.

In any life situation where negative thought patterns develop, cognitive restructuring can help you challenge and change unhelpful thoughts.

Are there any drawbacks?

Since it's recommended that people work with a therapist, one potential drawback to cognitive restructuring might be the out-of-pocket financial cost of therapy sessions.

Doctors at Mayo Clinic note that in some cases CBT techniques may be most effective when combined with medication.

The bottom line

Cognitive restructuring is one of the core components of cognitive behavioral therapy.

Most of the time, cognitive restructuring is collaborative. A patient typically works with a therapist to identify faulty thought patterns and replace them with healthier, more accurate ways of looking at events and circumstances.

Cognitive restructuring can reduce anxiety and depression symptoms, and it may help with a range of other mental health issues.

Healthline has strict sourcing guidelines and relies on peer-reviewed studies, academic research institutions, and medical associations. We avoid using tertiary references. You can learn more about how we ensure our content is accurate and current by reading our editorial policy.

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How to Leave Your Comfort Zone and Enter Your Growth Zone

What Is the Comfort Zone in Psychology?

Now firmly embedded in cultural discourse, the metaphor of ‘leaving one’s comfort zone’ became popular in the 1990s. The phrase ‘comfort zone’ was coined by management thinker Judith Bardwick in her 1991 work *Danger in the Comfort Zone*:

“The comfort zone is a behavioral state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviors to deliver a steady level of performance, usually without a sense of risk.”

Within the comfort zone, there isn’t much incentive for people to reach new heights of performance. It’s here that people go about routines devoid of risk, causing their progress to plateau.

But the concept can be traced further back to the world of behavioral psychology.

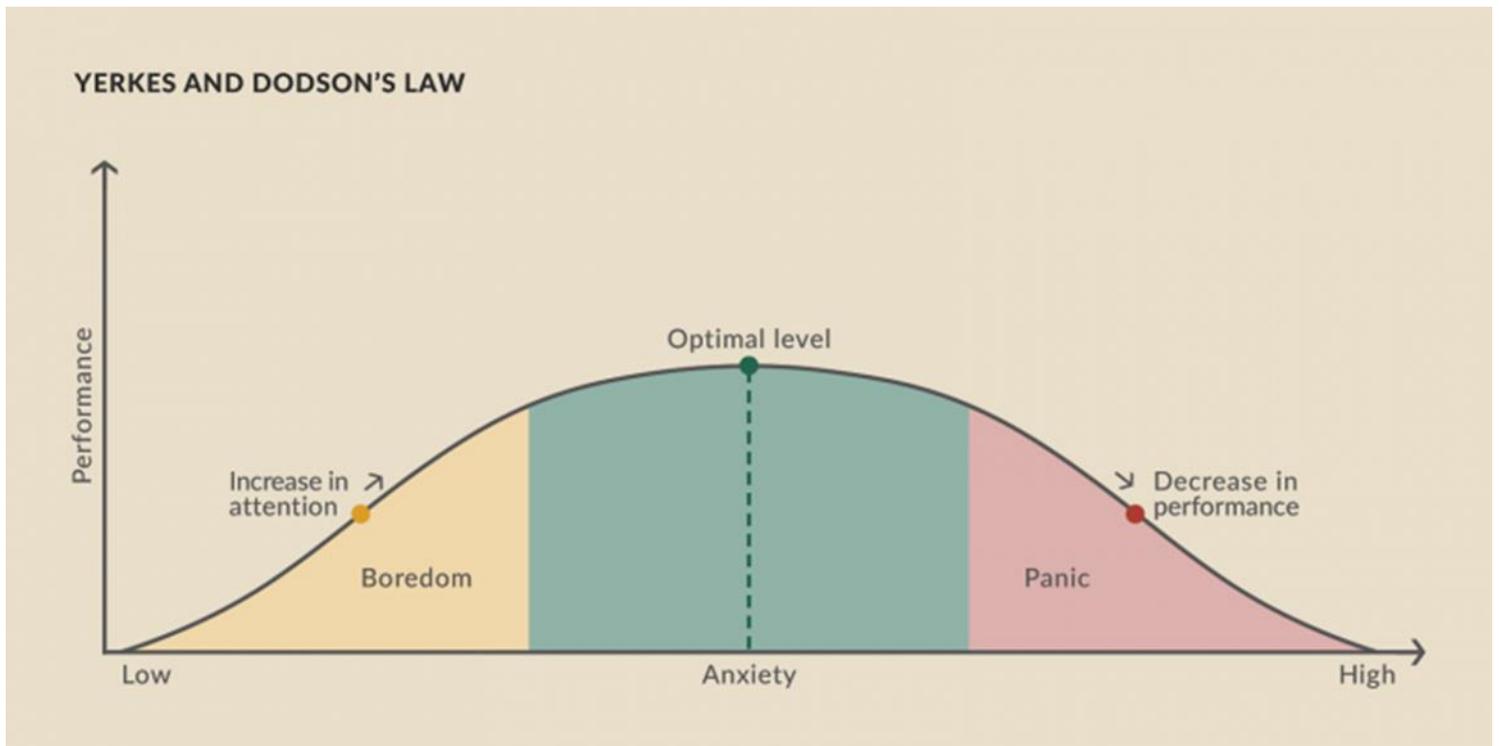
In 1907, Robert Yerkes and John Dodson conducted one of the first experiments that illuminated a link between anxiety and performance.

They saw that mice became more motivated to complete mazes when given electric shocks of increasing intensity – but only up to a point. Above a certain threshold, they began to hide rather than perform.

Corresponding behavior has been seen in human beings. This makes sense because in response to anxiety-provoking stimuli, the options are either fight (meet the challenge), flight (run away/hide), or freeze (become paralyzed).

The Yerkes–Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1907) is true not just for more tangible types of performance, such as being given a stressful new task at work, but also in many life areas such as understanding ourselves, relating to others, and so on.

The core idea is that our nervous systems have a Goldilocks zone of arousal. Too little, and you remain in the comfort zone, where boredom sets in. But too much, and you enter the 'panic' zone, which also stalls progress:



From Comfort Zone to the Growth Zone

When leaving the comfort zone, fear doesn't always equate to being in the panic zone. As the below diagram shows, fear can be a necessary step en route to the learning and growth zones

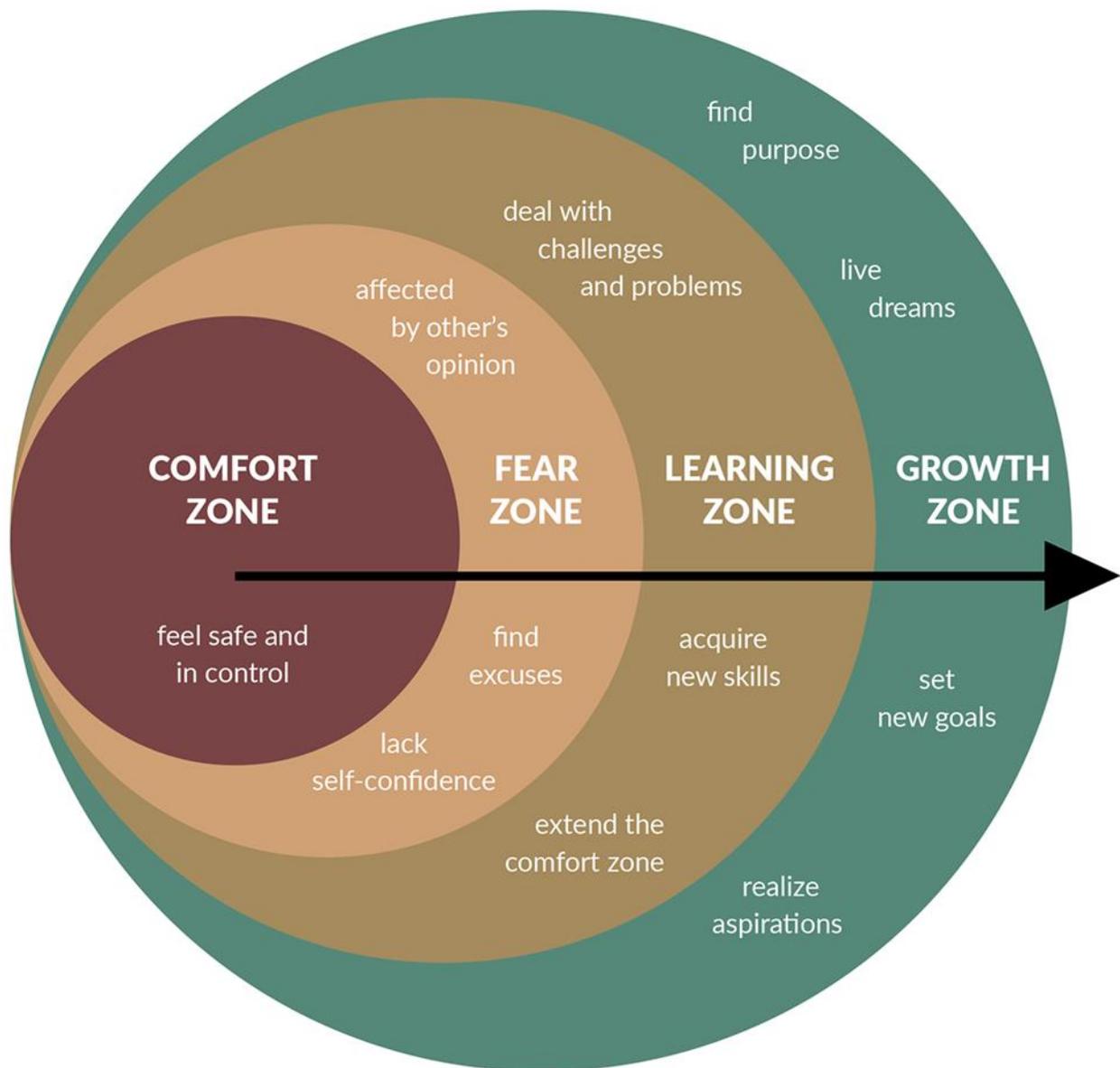
It takes courage to step from the comfort zone into the fear zone. Without a clear roadmap, there's no way to build on previous experiences. This can be anxiety provoking. Yet persevere long enough, and you enter the learning zone, where you gain new skills and deal with challenges resourcefully.

After a learning period, a new comfort zone is created, expanding one's ability to reach even greater heights. This is what it means to be in the growth zone.

It's important to state that like most behavioral change attempts, moving into the growth zone becomes harder without some level of self-awareness. Thus, it can be beneficial for clients to consider the following:

How big are their zones?

Across every life domain, everyone's zones vary in size. To leave your comfort zone, you must appreciate its outer limits. Similarly, you must develop an intuitive sense of where your panic zone lies. Taking on challenges that lie somewhere in between will stretch you, leading to growth and learning.



What are their strengths?

Understanding and capitalizing on personal strengths can be of great use. Most people have experience leaving the comfort zone in at least one area of life, and there are usually plenty of insights to be uncovered from this experience.

In reality, the process of moving from the comfort zone to a growth zone may not be linear. Peaks, troughs, and plateaus often complicate the journey. Sometimes, we even need to retreat to the comfort zone periodically before mustering the strength to leave again. Nevertheless, appreciating the steps can help in tolerating uncertainty.

While occupying the comfort zone, it's tempting to feel safe, in control, and that the environment is on an even keel. It's smooth sailing.

The best sailors, however, aren't born in smooth waters.

We'll explore a few powerful benefits of leaving the comfort zone in the next section.

Benefits of Leaving the Comfort Zone: 4 Examples

Aside from enhancing performance, there are plenty of less-direct benefits of leaving the comfort zone. A full list would require a separate article, so here are four top-line, broadly applicable examples.

1. Self-actualization

For many, self-actualization acts as a powerful incentive to leave the comfort zone. The concept was popularized through Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation, which he described as follows: "What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization."

Maslow's hierarchy of needs operates like a ladder, with the satisfaction of our 'basic' and 'psychological' needs being analogous to inhabiting the comfort zone. But whether we're conscious of it or not, the theory argues our next requirement is for personal growth and fulfillment.

As long as the decision to leave the comfort zone aligns with a person's values, this shift is akin to making a bid for self-actualization. Why is this important? For one, not striving for growth could mean falling into a state of inertia later in life.

2. Development of a growth mindset

Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck's (2008) work on mindsets marked a paradigm shift in the field of positive psychology. Her research distinguished between two contrasting belief systems – the fixed versus growth mindsets.

With a fixed mindset, people believe they have set doses of each ability, with a corresponding ceiling on how much they can achieve. Failure reveals inadequacy, and criticism becomes a fatal blow to self-esteem.

The growth mindset means recognizing humans as malleable. From this stance, setbacks become opportunities for learning (Dweck, 1999) and our potential becomes unlimited.

Intentionally leaving the comfort zone goes hand-in-hand with developing a growth mindset. While the fixed mindset keeps us trapped by fear of failure, the growth mindset expands the possible. It inspires us to learn and take healthy risks, leading to positive outcomes across life domains.

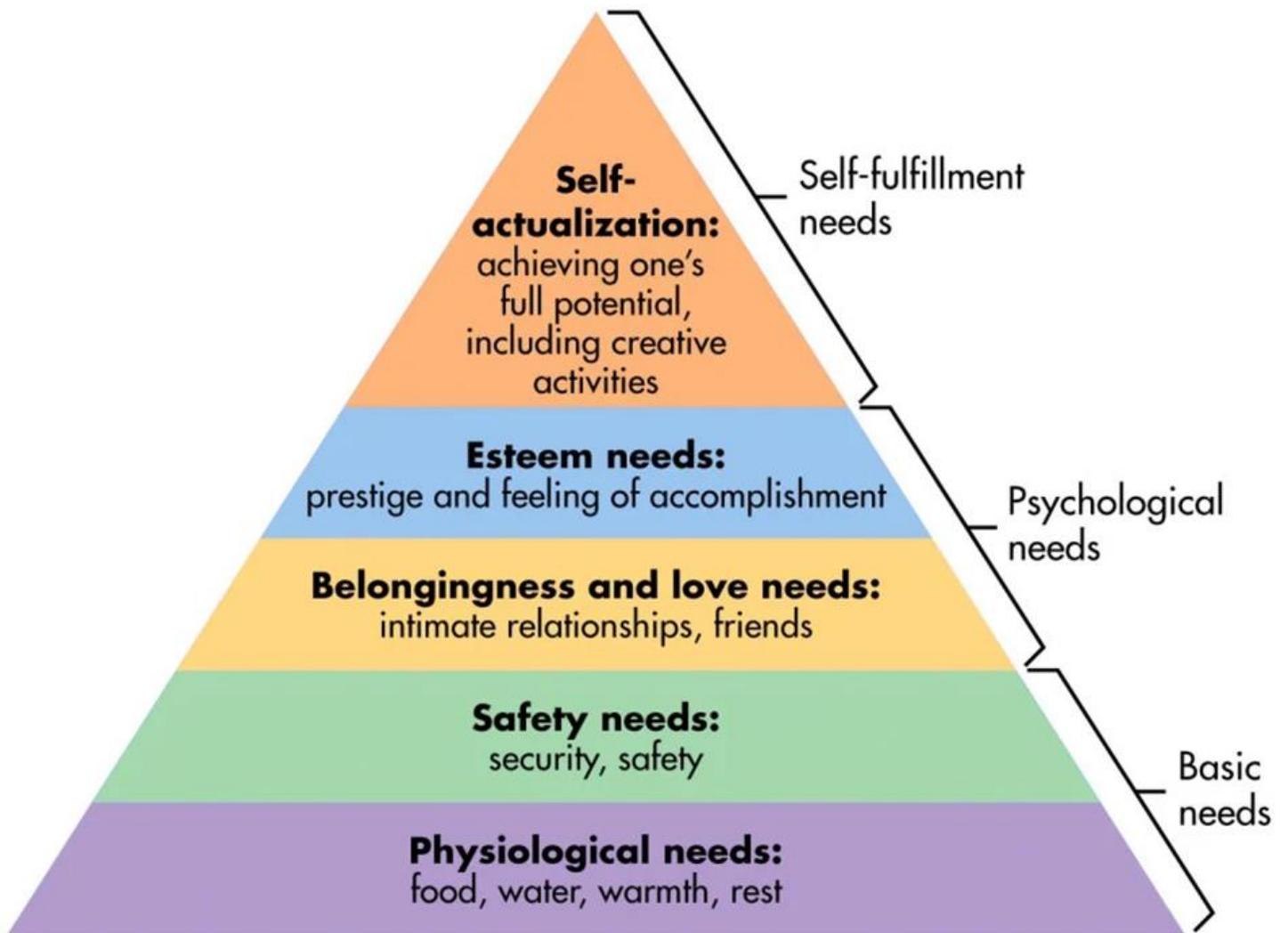
3. Resilience and antifragility

Life isn't exactly a predictable affair; perhaps then, people shouldn't be either. Sooner or later, everyone faces adversity. A habit of expanding our comfort zone equips people to handle change and ambiguity with more poise, leading to resilience.

Taking this further, statistician Nassim Taleb (2012) introduced the concept of 'antifragile' systems, which "thrive and grow when exposed to volatility, randomness, disorder, and stressors." Examples include evolution and immune systems, as well as the human psyche.

While resilient systems bounce back to the same level after a shock, antifragile systems learn to grow from them, reaching new heights. To step outside the comfort zone then is to purposefully cultivate antifragility – so long as we don't veer into the panic zone!

first move away from comfort because failure itself becomes integral to the journey. At the core of Dweck's theory is that humans are malleable and adaptable. Another good way to appreciate her philosophy is by watching this TED talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0mgOOSpLU>



3. Prioritize

Occupying the comfort zone isn't always detrimental. For example, it might be reasonable to stay in your ukulele-playing comfort zone but not your managing-personal-finances one.

The point is to identify bottlenecks: areas of life where being too comfortable does more harm than good. Encourage goal selectivity in clients so they can focus effectively.

4. Small steps

It's okay to take small, methodical steps, as well as larger, bolder ones. Leaving behind the comfort zone doesn't mean recklessly throwing caution to the wind. Every step forward is progress.

Patently fostering self-awareness while intelligently assessing each zone's boundaries is a sure way to make the process as smooth as possible.

7 Ways to Leave Your Comfort Zone

Having covered the what, why, and how of leaving your comfort zone, let's now cover seven ways someone might try to do so.

1. Do everyday things differently.

In everyday life, there are ample opportunities to challenge yourself. Turn off your smartphone and television while having dinner, decide what to wear more quickly, or just slow down to take in the surroundings on a walk. These changes break you out of old, comfortable routines.

2. Expand your professional skillset.

Growing your skillset can foster creativity and refresh your self-confidence, as well as increase employability. Skills like public speaking, negotiation, and leadership can represent a new challenge for many people. Investing in them can build resilience, personal satisfaction, and open up more opportunities than ever.

3. Try a new diet.

Many people want to improve their diets and stop relying on 'comfort foods.' Doing so often means trying something new.

Sticking to a healthy diet can be as challenging as it is rewarding, with self-efficacy growing as you hit milestone goals along the way.

4. Take workouts to the next level.

Similarly, many aspire to this goal. For some, it can mean running their first 5K, but for others, it might be completing a triathlon.

Aiming high with exercise is emblematic of leaving the comfort zone and a great way to get the ball rolling.

5. Get creative.

Creativity – anything from writing a poem to building a business – usually involves an element of risk. Creative endeavors are about stepping into the unknown, with failing and subsequent learning as expected outcomes.

Exercising creativity is a good way to train yourself to have a growth mindset and let go of a need for perfection from the outset.

6. Challenge your beliefs.

While exploring alternative perspectives can be uncomfortable, it enables growth and insight by challenging entrenched beliefs.

This might take several forms, such as reading varied book genres, diversifying who you talk to, and visiting new places. It's easy to get stuck in our ways, but this can lead to complacency – a hallmark of being in the comfort zone.

7. Practice honesty.

When employed sensitively, honesty can be a tremendous catalyst for personal growth. Whether being straight with yourself in a private journal or telling someone close how you feel, honesty forces people out of their comfort zone. Through honest communication, we can understand ourselves better and build deeper bonds with others.

10 Inspiring Quotes

Here are ten quotes that encapsulate many of the ideas discussed:

All growth starts at the end of your comfort zone.

Tony Robbins

You can only grow if you are willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable when you try something new.

Brian Tracy

My comfort zone is like a little bubble around me, and I've pushed it in different directions and made it bigger and bigger until these objectives that seemed totally crazy eventually fall within the realm of the possible.

Alex Honnold

Do one thing every day that scares you.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Becoming is better than being. The fixed mindset does not allow people the luxury of becoming. They have to already be.

Carol Dweck

One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.

Abraham Maslow

Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.

Benjamin Franklin

You have calibrated life when most of what you fear has the titillating prospect of adventure.

Nassim Taleb

The level of effort you tolerate from yourself will define your life.

Tom Bilyeu

May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.

Nelson Mandela

A Take-Home Message

Recognizing opportunities to leave the comfort zone isn't always easy; neither is seizing them with conviction.

It's crucial to cultivate a mindset that lays strong foundations, paving the way toward the growth zone. This includes seeing yourself as inherently adaptable, reframing stress, and believing in your ability to endure fears and doubts.

Every person faces this choice, knowingly or not. You can settle for what you know – the seemingly safe, familiar, and routine. Or, you can become receptive to opportunities for growth, challenging your personal status quo and seeing what you're capable of.

When this becomes a habit, the benefits to be reaped throughout life are copious. Not only are disappointments curbed and regrets avoided, but we also reach our highest human potential, acting as an inspiration to others.

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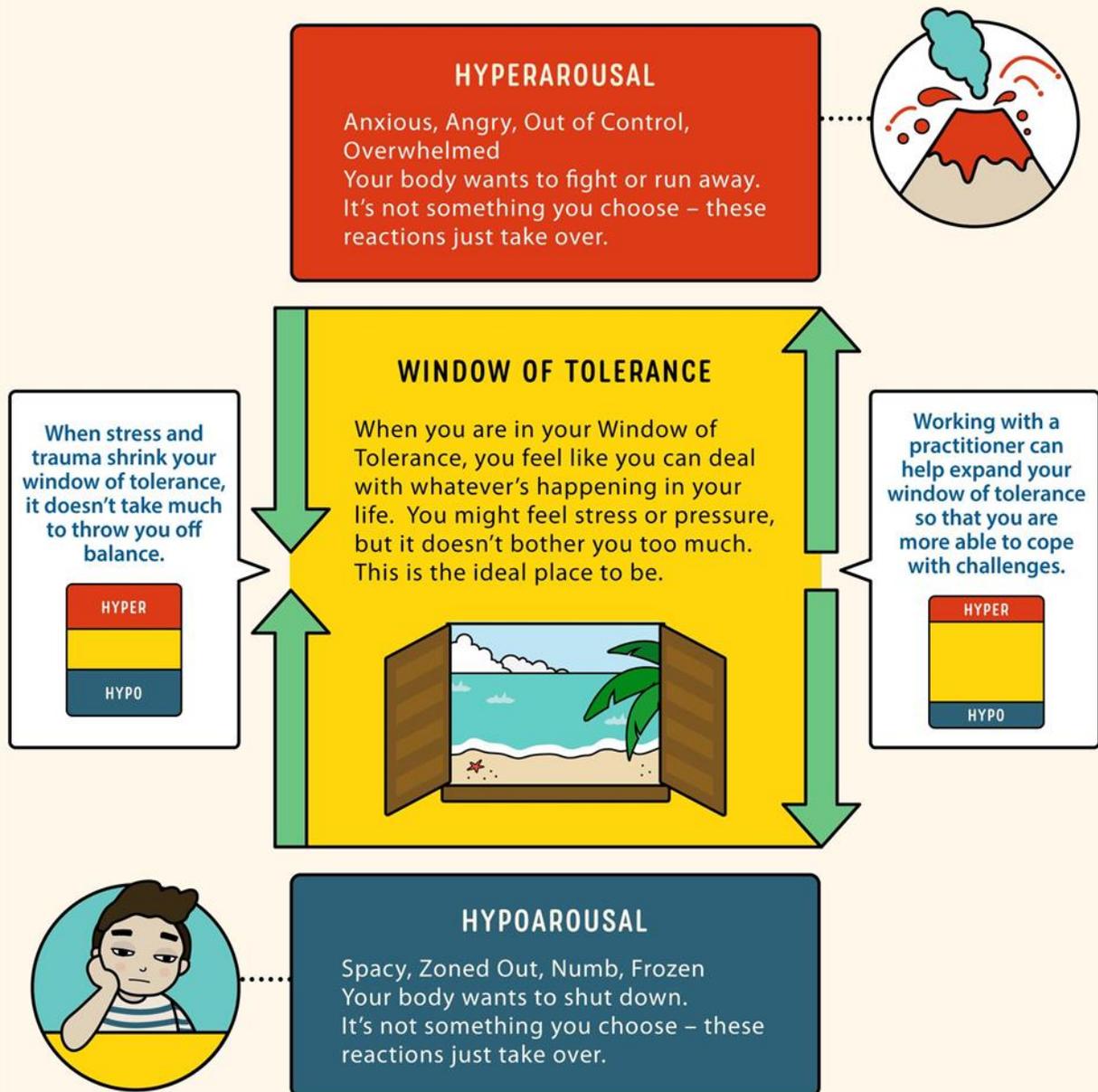
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How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance

How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance



Mental Health Survival Guide 10 Skills for Maintaining Your Mental Health During the Holidays

INTRODUCTION The holidays can be a challenging time for everyone, full of family and social obligations. This holiday season will bring additional new challenges, as things will be very different due to the COVID pandemic.

Many of the skills below are from the dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) repertoire. They are practical skills that help you deal more effectively with the challenges you experience in your life.

There are four categories of DBT skills:

Mindfulness

Mindfulness improves your ability to be more aware of your emotional, psychological, and physiological state. Interpersonal effectiveness

Interpersonal effectiveness

helps you effectively communicate with people to ensure your needs are met and your boundaries are respected.

Emotion regulation

Emotion regulation allows you to manage your emotions in your daily life to keep you functioning effectively.

Distress tolerance

Distress tolerance allows you to survive crisis situations and avoid reacting in ways that are destructive or extreme

Mindfulness

EXAMPLES OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Skill #1: Stay in wise mind to make effective decisions The DBT concept of “wise mind” describes a mind that balances reason and emotion to make wise decisions.

The reasonable mind is driven by logic, the emotional mind is driven by feelings—wise mind takes the valuable features of the reasonable mind and the emotional mind, and integrates them.

While it’s important to acknowledge your feelings, it’s equally important to be mindful and not let your emotional mind take over. Call in your reasonable mind to help you stay grounded in reality.

Remember that the holiday season is just for a few weeks—the related stresses are temporary and they will pass. Staying in wise mind will help you make the most effective decisions and produce the best outcomes for yourself and the people around you. This will help you and everyone else have the best holiday season possible.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Skill #2: Use **DEARMAN** to communicate effectively to get your needs met and maintain your boundaries Everyone is experiencing similar challenges this holiday season.

Communicating effectively when you need something or when you want to say “no” will help minimize conflicts between yourself and other people. The **DEARMAN** skills provide an effective process for reaching mutual understanding with other people about things you want and things you don’t want.

People often forget that being able to say “no” is as important as being able to ask for what you need. Agreeing to things when you want to say “no” can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Say “no” when you need to say “no”—your friends and family will understand if you can't participate in every project and activity.

(D)escribe Start by describing the facts of the situation, as you see them. “Facts” means things that you can directly observe, at this stage avoid do not include your reactions, feelings, interpretations, or desires

(E)xpress after you’ve described the facts, express how you feel about them using “I” statements (e.g. “I feel sad”). “I” statements communicate that you accept responsibility for your feelings. They help ensure that the other person doesn’t feel that you’re accusing them and react defensively. Be sure you’re clear about what you’re feeling (i.e. which emotions), how intensely you’re feeling them, and why you think you’re feeling that way. This information will help the other person understand your needs better.

(A)ssert Assertively communicate, by asking for your need simply and directly, or by saying “no” firmly, depending on the situation. Avoid indirect or ambiguous language—no beating around the bush, euphemisms, sugar coating, or hedging. Also, remember that you don’t need to qualify or justify anything when you’re asserting your needs or boundaries.

(R)einforce Reinforce means clearly communicating to the other person how giving you what you need, or respecting your boundaries, will benefit you, them, and the relationship between the two of you.

(M)indful Staying mindful will help you to maintain focus on the topic at hand and not become distracted. Do your best to resist any attempts by the other person to divert the conversation. This includes staying calm and not reacting if they try to talk tangential topics that you find hurtful or insulting.

(A)ppear Confident Regardless of how you feel on the inside, present yourself as though you feel confident. Do this by keeping your head up, standing or sitting up straight, making direct eye contact, and speaking loudly and clearly. Keep in mind that it’s okay if you feel nervous or scared—but showing it will often make you less persuasive to the other person. Also, keep in mind that there’s a fine line between appearing too apologetic or conciliatory and appearing too arrogant.

(N)egotiate Remember that you aren’t demanding anything, you’re asking for something. Be willing to propose alternative solutions that satisfy your needs, or ways of sticking to your “no” and satisfying the other person’s needs in some

other way that's acceptable for you. Also, engage the other person to contribute to the negotiation by offering potential solutions as well.

Be forgiving and compassionate Even if you follow the DEARMAN skills to the letter, sometimes you will experience conflicts, and sometimes things won't work out to your satisfaction. Practice compassion, and try to be forgiving toward others and also toward yourself. This holiday season is especially challenging for everyone and people are not always at their best.

Emotion Regulation

Skill #3: Being mindful of your emotions makes it easier to let go It's normal to sometimes feel lonely or sad during the holiday season, especially this year.

Many of the normal holiday gatherings with friends and family that we typically enjoy will likely be different or absent this year. Being mindful of the emotions you're feeling means observing, describing, and letting yourself feel them rather than trying to control, suppress, or distract yourself from them. Trying to suppress or ignore an emotion won't make it go away and can often increase your suffering. Allowing yourself to feel it and acknowledging it is often the most effective path to freeing yourself from it.

Acknowledge any feelings of grief, loss, frustration, or any other negative emotions that may come up for you during the holidays this year. Don't judge the emotion or yourself for having it. At the same time, once you have fully felt it, don't cling or hold onto it—be willing to let it go. Remember, you are not your emotion.

Distress Tolerance

Skill #4: Practice radical acceptance to reduce your suffering The holiday season will be different this year and we can't change that, but we can accept the reality of it.

Radical acceptance is fully accepting the reality of an unpleasant situation with your mind and body. It means letting go of fighting reality and opening yourself to

experiencing reality as it is in the moment. Radical acceptance is important because rejecting or denying reality doesn't change reality—it just limits your ability to adapt and problem solve. Remember, radical acceptance doesn't mean you approve of a situation, it just means that you don't fight it and make it worse. Accepting reality helps you make peace with it and also allows you to perceive the situation more accurately.

This holiday season, try accepting the reality of unpleasant situations. Focus on understanding the reasons behind them. How did they happen and why? Remember that pain cannot be avoided. Accepting reality and allowing yourself to feel the negative emotions that result, such as bitterness, anger, sadness, or shame, is a necessary step before you can let go of those emotions and be free of them

Skill #5: STOP yourself before you do something you'll regret

The holiday season can sometimes bring up strong emotions. To avoid acting impulsively in ways that you might later regret, try using the STOP skill.

(S)top When you feel your emotions are taking over and you might act in a way that's out of control—literally stop, freeze, or pause in any way you can. Some people find it useful to visualize a big red stop sign right in front of their face. This is a skill you can practice and get good at before you're in a situation where you really need to use it.

(T)ake a step back Give yourself a moment. Take a breath. If necessary, remove yourself physically from the situation for a few minutes

(O)bserve the situation Observe and understand what's actually happening. Who's involved? What are they saying or doing? What are you feeling and why? Understand the facts first without making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.

(P)roceed mindfully Before you act, make sure you clearly understand your objectives—what do you want to get out of the situation, or what do you want to prevent from happening? What actions will likely help you achieve your objectives and what actions will likely be counterproductive?

Skill #6: Use **self-soothing** when you're feeling overwhelmed. If you feel painful emotions that are threatening to overwhelm you, try doing something that feels nice.

Soothe yourself through an activity or experience that is pleasant to one or more of your senses—seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, tasting.

The following are some examples of things that you can use for self-soothing:

Seeing: a beautiful flower; stars at night; a dance performance

Touching: a hot bath; sitting in a comfy chair; running your hand along smooth wood or leather

Hearing: sounds of nature (waves, birds, rain, etc.); your favourite song; humming a soothing tune

Smelling: a scented candle; your favourite scented bath or body product; walking in nature and inhaling deeply

Tasting: your favourite food; a warm cup of tea; a food that you feel is a special treat

Skill #7: Use **TIP** to calm extreme emotions

TIP skills can be effective ways to quickly calm yourself down when you're feeling extreme emotions such as anger or anxiety, when other skills aren't working for you. TIP skills can be effective in these situations because they directly affect your physiology, work very quickly, and don't require a lot of thinking. (There's intentionally only one "P" in "TIP" because paired muscle relaxation can be used together with paced breathing.)

(T)ipping facial temperature

Immerse your face in cold water, press ice or an ice pack against your face, or splash your face with cold water. Use Tipping facial temperature when you can't sleep due to ruminating or anxiety. Warning: do not use Tipping facial temperature if you have a below-normal heart rate due to a medical condition.

(I)ntense exercise

Intense aerobic exercise for at least 20 minutes can have a rapid positive effect on your mood by helping your physiology self-regulate. An easy example is running up and down stairs. If you're familiar with what it feels like, or if you use a heart rate monitor, you'll want to get your heart rate to 70% of your maximum. Use intense exercise when you're angry, ruminating, or if you feel depressed in the morning and need to lift your mood and feel more motivated

(P)aced breathing

At its simplest, paced breathing is when you breathe in a way such that your exhale is longer than your inhale. Paced breathing helps calm you down by increasing activation of your parasympathetic nervous system.

A good place to start is inhaling for 4 seconds, and then exhaling for 8 seconds, for every breath. Breathe in and out through your nose, if possible. If you like, you can also try adding a pause after the inhale. Use paced breathing especially when you're feeling intense anxiety.

(P)aired muscle relaxation

Tense your muscles as you inhale, and relax them as you exhale. You can focus on a particular group of muscles or try this with your whole body. Be mindful of the sensations in your body as you practice this skill. With each exhalation, you will be able to relax your muscles more and more. This helps you release tension in your body and reduce the bodily sensations of intense negative emotions. Use paired muscle relaxation whenever intense emotions are causing you to feel physical tension in your body

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL SKILLS

The following skills are not specifically from the DBT repertoire, but they are complementary and can also help you get through the holidays in a way that's more pleasant and satisfying

Skill #8: Plan effectively for success

Think ahead of all the things you'd like to do during the holidays and plan how you're going to accomplish them. Allocate specific days and times for shopping, baking, holiday crafts, connecting with friends, and other activities. Consider

whether you can shop online for things that you need. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list.

Planning will help you avoid stressful, last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients or items. And make sure to line up help for meal preparation and cleanup. Use a weekly planner to ensure that you have adequate time for activities and also adequate time between them to rest and recharge. Too much activity can result in feeling overwhelmed; too little can result in feeling lonely.

When you're planning your days, also don't forget **HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired)**. These are all risk factors for triggering negative emotions and moods, or for triggering a relapse if you're in recovery from addiction. To minimize the risk of HALT factors, make plans that ensure you're doing the following:

Eating healthy food regularly

Avoiding exposure to too many stressors that might trigger anger or frustration

Spending sufficient time connecting with others to minimize loneliness

Getting enough good quality sleep

In addition to careful planning, always try to be mindful and notice when HALT factors start affecting you, so that you can address them early, before they become bigger problems.

You can print out and use the following page to plan one week at a time.

Alternatively, if you prefer an online solution, Google Calendar is easy to use and has many useful features like reminders

Skill #9: Practice gratitude to stay focused on the positives

This year will be different than past holiday seasons and it's easy to focus on the bad things and forget about the good things. It can be helpful to intentionally practice gratitude for the positives in your life, both big and small. You can print out and use the following gratitude journal page to write down all the people and things that you're grateful to have in your life. And remember, practicing gratitude works best when you do it every day

Skill #10: Reach out and connect

Despite the need to maintain physical distance this holiday season, it's more important than ever to stay connected to your social support network. This can take many forms, including the following

Virtual self-help groups—there are always many 12 Step drop-in groups available over the holiday season

Religious or spiritual organizations (e.g. temple, mosque, church)

Video calls with your loved ones

Community events online—for example, the Santa Claus Parade is online this year

Volunteering for community agencies that require help with meal delivery, food banks, etc.

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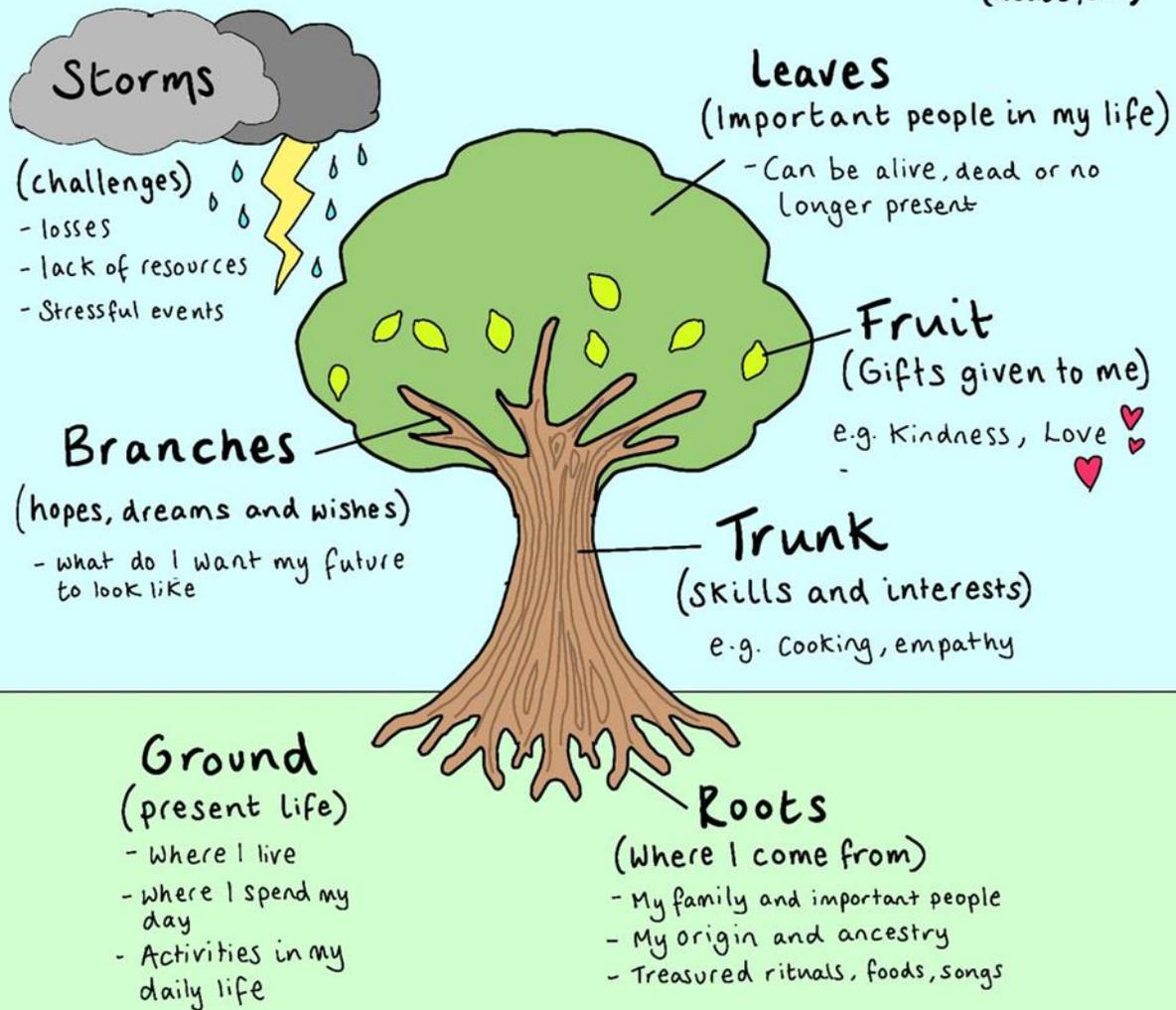
https://www.opdi.org/de/cache/resources/15/rs_Mental-Health-Survival-Guide-Holiday-Edition.pdf

Narrative Therapy Tree of Life

① How to draw a...

Narrative Therapy Tree of Life

(Ncube, 2006)



Illustrated by Juliet Young

@creative.clinical.psychologist

Narrative Therapy Tree of Life Project

This project is about identifying all the different aspects of your identity; including your past, future goals, strengths and support system. For each section, draw part of your tree and write notes around it. There is a tree outline and some examples on the back of this worksheet.

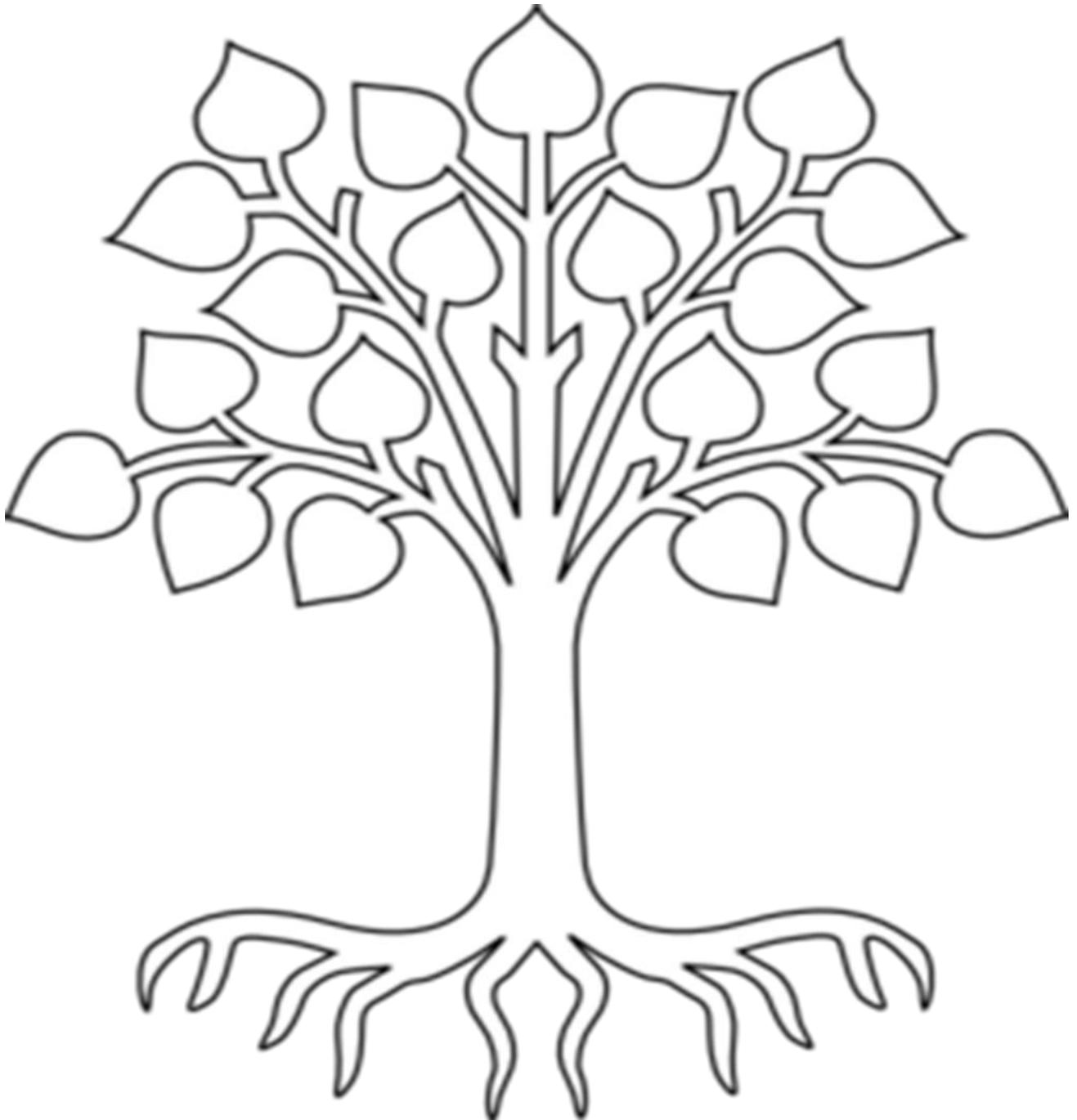
<p>Roots</p> 	<p>Where you come from and your family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What roots do you have in your life? How important are these?• Does your past influence who you are today?• Do you have any favourite memories?• Has your perception of your roots changed over time?• Where were you born? Where did you go to school?
<p>Ground</p> 	<p>Your present life and day-to-day activities you engage in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the ground like in your life? Is it fairly stable or frequently changing? (could represent with flat or bumpy ground)• What influences you on a daily basis?• Who do you live with? Where do you go to school/work?• Do you have a favourite place that you visit?
<p>Trunk</p> 	<p>Your skills and abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What talents and coping skills do you have?• Can you play an instrument/draw/write? Are you helpful/kind?• How important are these abilities to you? Do you value them in others?• Do you find it easier to think of your faults compared to your skills?• Are there any skills other people think you have?

<p>Branches</p> 	<p>Your hopes and goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you could have three wishes, what would they be? • Do you hope for health, happiness, success, money, family etc? • Do you aspire to be a nursery nurse, actor, vet, etc? • How achievable do you feel your aspirations are? • What would need to happen for you to achieve these? • Do you have hopes and wishes for other people in your life?
<p>Leaves</p> 	<p>Important people in your life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who plays an important role in your life? • What type of influence have they had? If they've helped, how? • Do you feel that you have played an important role in their lives? • How might your relationship change in the future? • Are there who have passed away - leaves in the wind?
<p>Fruit</p> 	<p>Gifts from important people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have these people provided you with a shoulder to cry on/support/compliments? • What have your parents taught you? • Have they ever given you a material gift which meant a lot to you? • How have these gifts helped you? • What have you given them in return?
<p>Storms</p> 	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Include everything from family conflict, mental health problems, lack of resources, loss of important people in your life, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What storms have you experienced in the past? • How did you manage with these? • What storms do you think there might be in the future?

The Tree of Life Project was created by Ncube (REPSSI) & Denborough (Dulwich Centre Foundation)

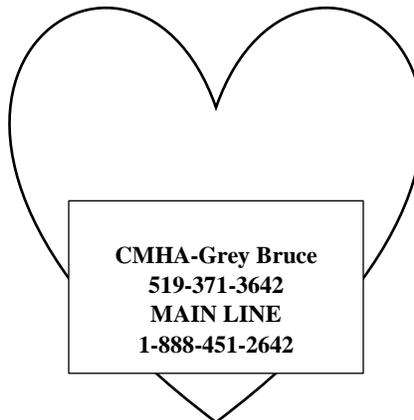
<https://firefly255.wordpress.com/2016/05/20/narrative-therapy-project-tree-of-life/>

The Narrative Tree Template



Our Family Support System

What supports do you feel are needed at this time? Can you connect with one here? Can I suggest a support you may not have thought about? Let me know! Thank you for inviting us to support you.



Our Support System Template

What supports do you feel are needed at this time? Can you connect with one here? Can I suggest a support you may not have thought about? Let me know! Thank you for inviting us to support you.

The form consists of seven heart-shaped templates arranged in a loose grid. Six of the hearts are filled with a solid blue color and each contains a white rectangular box in the center. The seventh heart, located in the middle of the arrangement, is a black outline and also contains a white rectangular box in the center. These boxes are intended for users to write down names of support people or types of support needed.

RAIN: A Practice of Radical Compassion

The acronym **RAIN** is an easy-to-remember tool for bringing mindfulness and compassion to emotional difficulty.

Recognize what is going on;

Allow the experience to be there, just as it is;

Investigate with interest and care;

Nurture with self-compassion.

You can take your time and explore RAIN as a stand-alone meditation or move through the steps whenever challenging feelings arise.

R—Recognize What’s Going On

Recognizing means consciously acknowledging, in any given moment, the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are affecting you. This can be done with a simple mental whisper, noting what you are most aware of.

A—Allow the Experience to be There, Just as It Is

Allowing means letting the thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations you have recognized simply be there, without trying to fix or avoid anything.

You might recognize fear, and allow by mentally whispering “it’s ok” or “this belongs” or “yes.”

Allowing creates a pause that makes it possible to deepen attention.

I—Investigate with Interest and Care

To investigate, call on your natural curiosity—the desire to know truth—and direct a more focused attention to your present experience.

You might ask yourself: What most wants attention? How am I experiencing this in my body?

What am I believing? What does this vulnerable place want from me? What does it most need?

Whatever the inquiry, your investigation will be most transformational if you step away from conceptualizing and bring your primary attention to the felt-sense in the body.

N—Nurture with Self-Compassion

Self-compassion begins to naturally arise in the moments that you recognize you are suffering. It comes into fullness as you intentionally nurture your inner life with self-care.

To do this, try to sense what the wounded, frightened or hurting place inside you most needs, and then offer some gesture of active care that might address this need. Does it need a message of reassurance? Of forgiveness? Of companionship? Of love?

Experiment and see which intentional gesture of kindness most helps to comfort, soften or open your heart. It might be the mental whisper, I'm here with you. I'm sorry, and I love you. I love you, and I'm listening. It's not your fault. Trust in your goodness.

In addition to a whispered message of care, many people find healing by gently placing a hand on the heart or cheek; or by envisioning being bathed in or embraced by warm, radiant light. If it feels difficult to offer yourself love, bring to mind a loving being—spiritual figure, family member, friend or pet—and imagine that being's love and wisdom flowing into you.

After the RAIN

When you've completed the active steps of RAIN, it's important to notice the quality of your own presence and rest in that wakeful, tender space of awareness.

The fruit of RAIN is realizing that you are no longer imprisoned in or identified with any limiting sense of self. Give yourself the gift of becoming familiar with the truth and natural freedom of your being; it is mysterious and precious!

Resource: Guided Meditation – The Practice of RAIN

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Rewrite Your Script

From writing down your experiences to reframing your perspective, myriad techniques can help you transcend painful setbacks and reshape your own story.

By Susan Gregory Thomas, Sherry Hamby, Susan Krauss Whitbourne Ph.D., Hal Shorey Ph.D. and Jean M Twenge Ph.D. published May 2, 2016 - last reviewed on September 15, 2020

Copied from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201605/rewrite-your-script>

Story Editing to Prevent a Downward Spiral

by Susan Gregory Thomas

My oldest daughter was usually quiet and exhausted on the hour-long ride home from seventh grade. Not this day. She slammed the car door shut and spat that a classmate had been "incredibly rude" to her. She veered into a rant on hypocritical teachers and finally inventoried the despicable qualities of nearly every girl in her class.

I asked her what was really going on, and she answered truthfully: For the past six months, my daughter, who is mixed-race, had been viciously bullied in racist attacks by girls at her Philadelphia school, often in classrooms, while teachers seemingly took no notice.

I pulled over and began calling every teacher and administrator involved. They would hear every detail of my daughter's story, and then this story was going to end because she needed to know that it was over.

The next morning, as we met with school officials who pressed her for specific names and incidents, I asked them to withdraw so I could talk to my daughter alone for a moment. There she sat, crumpled, shaking, terrified of retribution. But if she did or said nothing, those past few months would stay forever lodged, ruinously, in her psyche. She needed a victory, to feel her own power. So I put it to her: Today, she, an ordinary girl, could decide to be a hero and change the story for every nonwhite student at that school forever. And she did.

Now 15, my oldest is back to her charismatic, hilarious, sparkly self (and we are living in Brooklyn). The experience is melded to her core, and she's tougher, but also more compassionate. She changed her story.

The experience was an exercise in narrative identity theory, a model for understanding human thought and behavior so flexible that its applications extend across disciplines from psychological and social science to medicine, therapy, and beyond. The premise: We are the stories we tell—and we are compelled to create stories to understand ourselves.

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live," Joan Didion famously observed in *The White Album*, and we live "by the imposition of a narrative line, upon disparate images" because of a critical need "to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience."

There is something intrinsic in our drive to explain, order, and extract meaning from the chaos of our lives. Storytelling is, after all, an adaptive behavior dating back as far as 40,000 years. The stories we tell ourselves don't get fact-checked, but they do have to feel authentic to our personal experience. Our ability to make sense of, and create meaning from, memories defines how we feel about ourselves and shapes the identity we create throughout our lives.

"There is a very powerful impulse for us to take those stories of being shamed, of loss, of rejection, and figure out a way to give them a spin that allows us to see them as wisdom-building," says Connecticut College professor of psychology Jefferson Singer. "We want to be able to say, 'In a way, I'm glad that experience happened because it's taught me something about how I want to live my life.'"

How do we go about converting those experiences to life stories, ideally positive ones? University of Virginia social psychologist Tim Wilson conducted landmark research in rapid, positive reframing. He devised what he calls "story editing" and "story prompting" techniques, which have been shown to produce surprisingly effective changes in perspective and behavior. He found my daughter's story to be a prime example of taking a U-turn on a difficult stretch of one's life.

The objective of story editing is to defuse harmful, possibly self-defining experiences that can cue defeating, destructive thinking or behavior. The technique can actually be most powerful as a strategy for dealing with broad

social experiences, Wilson says—teenage pregnancy, violence, and substance abuse; racial prejudice in schools; PTSD—and can dismantle destructive cultural views, often surprisingly quickly. "It's not so much designed to address personal distress," he says. "It deals with issues psychotherapy isn't geared to."

Studies at Stanford and the University of Virginia, for example, have shown that simple, subtle story "prompting" can help minority and economically disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out turn their mindset around. Just dislodging pessimistic thinking has the potential to produce positive change in self-esteem, and, in turn, academic performance. One experiment involved students who had shared a group narrative identity along the lines of, "We're too different from these rich kids—we'll never catch up, and we're probably not smart enough anyway." Researchers showed them seemingly professionally produced videos citing evidence that many kids enter school believing they don't belong or aren't smart enough to handle the work—but that after a few months the majority adjust socially, get help from faculty, work diligently, and go on to succeed. Students who watched the videos experienced marked improvements in grades, graduation rates, and self-confidence.

There is nothing magical about the approach, Wilson says. It's just a question of properly framing the "story prompt" in a social context to change group thinking. "The idea is to change kids' idea that intelligence is this fixed thing we have," he says, and instead help them realize that "achievement is about seeking the right help and overcoming obstacles."

The experiment with students represents just one application of prompting. But the approach may be less helpful healing long-engrained traumatic narratives. "I like to think of story editing as catching people at the early stage of the game, before psychotherapy is called for," Wilson says. "If we're dealing with someone who's been living with a negative story for years, these tweaks might not work."

What if my daughter had decided against ever standing up to the bullying she experienced? What if she had kept the racist taunts a secret? What would have happened if she instead internalized it and folded it into her sense of self and identity? Potentially, very bad things.

Our formative life stories become entrenched, whether we like it or not, by adolescence, as we begin to orient our psyches around powerful memories,

though we can't necessarily control which will affect us the most. These "self-defining memories" come to reflect our most persistent psychological bêtes noires. We understand our internal selves and public identities through our interpretation of their value and significance.

"Life stories do not simply reflect personality," according to psychologist Dan McAdams of Northwestern University. "They are personality." By early adulthood, we've developed narrative scripts that we follow to predict, evaluate, respond to, and control our lives. We continue to update the narrative and refer to it for guidance when we encounter challenges: How do I respond to something like this? If our stories tell us we are resilient, we will be. If they tell us we're not up to the fight, we likely won't be.

A new approach to improving our outlook, then, literally asks us to rewrite our stories. A growing body of research finds that, on paper or out loud, reviewing setbacks with the fresh eyes of distance can help people come to terms with who they've been, better envision who they want to be, and find a way to make a course correction. Reframing helps people see events as opportunities or waypoints instead of the end of the road. And the psychologists who have developed such techniques argue that, in many cases, change can come far faster than we might expect.

We can't change the past, but we can change how it affects us and who it makes us. When we tweak what we tell ourselves about the past, we can redirect our future. In our relationships, through our life choices, or at our jobs, we can recognize our mistakes, move on, and start to embody a different story.

Susan Gregory Thomas is a writer whose books include *In Spite of Everything: A Memoir*.

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Rewriting Your Present No Matter Your Past

by Sherry Hamby

The results were remarkable, even hard to believe. James Pennebaker of the University of Texas had assigned half of a group of students to write about a

traumatic experience and half to write about a neutral topic—specifically, time management. In total, the students wrote for only an hour, spread out over a few days. But months later, those who had written about a traumatic event not only reported better psychological health but also had fewer visits to the student health center.

Was it a fluke? No. The benefits of rewriting—from improved mood and well-being to boosts in the immune system—have since been demonstrated in dozens of studies, including my own. Rewriting helps you organize your thoughts and feelings and put them into words. This, in turn, helps you gain perspective, sort out your emotions, and increase narrative coherence—your understanding of who you are, how you became that person, and where you are going.

Prompting a Reckoning

Some psychologists suggest that you write about the most traumatic experience you have been through, but that's not the only type of writing that has helped individuals. Other prompts that have been successful include:

"I am thankful for all the experiences

in my life. However, what shaped me into who I am today was..."

"I will never forget the lesson I learned when..."

Think about an upsetting experience and replay it in your mind, trying to see it as an observer. Try to understand the thoughts and feelings you had.

Think about a wonderful experience you had. Write about its impact on you.

Rewriting Your Wrongs

1. Very short writing times are helpful—as brief as two minutes at a sitting—and, in total, around two or three hours appears to be the most beneficial. More than that may not be better, as too much "navel-gazing" creates its own problems.

2. If you have an encouraging person in your life, ask him or her to give you feedback. If you do not, seek out someone, such as a therapist or counselor.
3. Share your story, perhaps with people who might be helped by hearing it. In my own research, sharing added to participants' benefits.
4. Make sure your writing is grounded in your life. Writing about abstract principles does not appear to deliver the same benefits.
5. Avoid rewriting when you are in the middle of a crisis. Let some time pass so you can step back and reflect.
6. Focus on post-traumatic growth—the fact that you can often learn something from bad experiences, such as increasing empathy for others, realizing that you have more inner strength than you thought, and identifying your true priorities.

Sherry Hamby, Ph.D., is a research professor of psychology at the University of the South and director of the Appalachian Center for Resilience Research. She is also founding editor of the journal *Psychology of Violence*.

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Updating Your Fable After the Glory Days Pass

by Susan Krauss Whitbourne

Seeing oneself as the hero or heroine of the grand drama that is your life is an almost universal feature of adolescent egocentrism. Preoccupied with issues of identity, and emotionally if not cognitively unable to see things from other people's point of view, young adults are prone to adopt a mindset that they are always at center stage and that an imaginary audience follows their every move.

Just as prominent in adolescence is the myth of invincibility. Not only do many young people see themselves as the stars of their own reality shows, but they also believe they can do no wrong in pursuit of their (momentary) goals, whether it's achieving a skateboard trick or winning a science fair.

Over time, most jettison the invincibility myth, and their personal fables evolve, as experience pokes holes in the belief that nothing but fame and fortune awaits. We realize we can actually fall off that skateboard, be bested by peers, or get into trouble by staying out too late or drinking too much. As we learn these lessons, most of us start to regulate our behavior accordingly. It's a healthy way to develop realistic expectations about life.

Some people, however, struggle to surrender their fable. According to research by University of Virginia psychologist Joseph Allen and colleagues, these "pseudomature" individuals—"the cool kids"—are likely to fall much harder when their narrative develops cracks. In a long-term study spanning the critical years between ages 13 and 23, Allen's team tracked early-adulthood outcomes for 175 males and females. The individuals within this group labeled "pseudomature," based on early assumption of adult-like qualities in a variety of areas, were most prone to hang onto the myth of invincibility. And why not? At 13 and 14, they were the most popular, the most likely to engage in acts of minor delinquency, and the earliest to experiment sexually. They were also the most likely to prioritize popularity and looks and to choose friends based on appearance.

When we're young, our personal fable is a scenario of projected accomplishment. As we age, we constantly revise our story to incorporate bouts with failure. Our vision of our lives—what I call our life span construct—is a direct outgrowth of our identity projected into the future and recalled from the past. Ideally, we each adapt it to take into account both success and failure. But for many of the pseudomature, fable remains fantasy. By their early 20s, their promise fails to materialize, and many start to backslide. They are more likely than their peers to use alcohol and marijuana and have problems related to substance use; to engage in criminal behavior; and to have poorer relationships with others.

This pattern of early promise followed by a downward spiral into adulthood is consistent with the findings of my own study of adults followed from college through their mid-50s. Some of the brightest and most talented of the 182 participants were less fulfilled in late middle age, and more embittered, than their "average" counterparts. They peaked too early and locked themselves into a story of expected success that their future efforts could not sustain. In part, this was because they rested on their laurels. But they also built into their identities an

image of early stardom, and so everything occurring after that seemed like a letdown. Being successful early is fine as long as you remain willing to accept the realities of later accomplishments or failures.

For most healthy, well-adapted individuals on what I call the authentic road, setbacks don't become derailments. Life happens, and we realize that there will be times that experiences don't meet expectations. Bringing your personal fable and life span construct more into sync requires incorporating the knowledge you gain from disappointments into a more balanced sense of who you are and what you're capable of. The ability to make the adjustments allows you to adapt to, and enjoy, your life's ups and downs.

Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph.D., is a professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of Massachusetts and the author of *The Search for Fulfillment*.

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Reinventing Yourself in Your Relationship

by Hal Shorey

At the beginning of a relationship, most of us feel happy, confident, excited, and hopeful. We are our best selves. As the relationship progresses, however, we sometimes lose that energy and become mired in older behavior patterns that leave us feeling unfulfilled, disappointed, irritable, or downright hopeless. I often hear clients exclaim that they don't like who they are in their primary relationship—they don't like how they feel or how they behave. (If they are insightful, they accept that the problem does not entirely reside in the behaviors and attitudes of their partner.) So the question is how to remain, or return to being, the person we want to be.

Philosophers and cognitive scientists agree that the world, including yourself, can only be known to you in terms of how you think about it. Your reality, including who you are, is a story you tell yourself—and you can change it.

To begin, accept that your conscious thoughts are words going through your head, but they are not you. Think about yourself in relation to your partner through a series of "I" statements. Now ask yourself, "Who or what is this 'I'? My

thoughts? Something that exists before my thoughts? Or something that I get to influence and create?" Thinking is a behavior, something you do. By extension, then, you should be able to choose to "do" your thinking differently. This notion is consistent with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which suggests that by altering your thoughts, and changing your life story, you can intentionally change the way you feel and behave, on your own and with your partner.

The common misperception is that you have to "figure things out" or change your attitude before you can change your behavior. Research shows, however, that changing your behavior first can influence your thinking. Sometimes, for example, the best thing to do after a spat or a testy exchange is to greet your partner warmly on your next encounter, as if nothing ever happened. This can break a cycle of negative interactions.

Know Your Pattern

You can choose the words that you say to yourself in your head, but a great deal of brain activity relating to perception and emotion happens below the level of conscious awareness, some of which gets wired into our personalities through interaction with our social environment (notably, our family) in childhood.

You can understand your pattern of detecting threats, reacting emotionally, and behaving defensively (or supportively) in part via your attachment style. When you feel scared or threatened in your relationship, the emotional centers of your brain might trigger an anxiety response, or lead you to emotionally "shut down"—even before you have a chance to figure out rationally what is really going on. When you know that this is your automatic reaction, you can work to change who you are in your relationship by learning to intentionally reengage with your partner if you've shut down, or to observe and accept your emotions without acting on them if your narrative leads you to express an anxiety response. Techniques include mindfulness and acceptance and commitment therapy.

Challenge Your Assumptions

We all have basic thoughts about ourselves, the world, and the people we are in relationships with—thoughts we've held so long, and repeated so often, that we forget that they're just thoughts. They have become our story—a narrative we've locked ourselves into living. The problem is that these "core beliefs," as we call

them in CBT, may be irrational. And yet we still rely on them as roadmaps for navigating relationships, unknowingly eliciting behaviors from our partner that support these beliefs in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Fear of rejection, for example, leads us to behave in ways that increase, not decrease, the possibility of rejection.

Your Partner is Not Just a Character in Your Story

Even when you think that your partner's behavior is in error, remember that you get to choose your response. When you accept that you have the freedom to change how you behave in the relationship, you should be prepared to see corresponding changes in the attitude and behavior of your partner.

Relationships are like small ecosystems: Everything is in balance, even if that balance is characterized by conflict and chaos. When you change your role in the system, it can go out of balance, and the other person, in an attempt to restore balance, might unconsciously try to pull you back into your old role, even if it's a role they have not always embraced. But if you stay the course and choose to think, feel, and behave as the person who you want to be, rather than who you have always been, the resulting shift should be a positive one for both of you and lead to a truer and more rewarding relationship.

Hal Shorey, Ph.D., is a professor of clinical psychology at Widener University's Institute of Graduate Clinical Psychology.

Copied from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201605/rewrite-your-script>

Rewriting Your Career

by Jean Twenge

Career fulfillment has taken a hit lately. Many Americans, especially those under 35, struggle to find work that pays enough and fits with their skills and talents, not to mention their perception of who they believe they are and how they should be seen. Even those who have a "good" job often wonder, "Is this all?"

Perhaps as a result, young people are increasingly cynical about work. In 1976, one in four high-school seniors agreed with the statement, "To me, work is nothing more than making a living." In 2014, one in three high-school seniors shared that view. Millennials are also less likely to take pleasure in work than are

previous generations, less likely to say it's important to have a job that's interesting, and less likely to aspire to make friends at work.

It's a serious problem, because the intrinsic rewards of work—how our careers support our life stories— are among the best predictors of performance. Studies find that workers who fundamentally enjoy what they do perform much better than those who focus primarily on extrinsic rewards like money. Valuing intrinsic rewards is also linked to greater happiness and better mental health overall. To rewrite your career story, buck the trend and focus more on what work gives you while you're doing it.

Social media doesn't help us live the career stories we want. We constantly judge ourselves via comparison to others, and social media fuels this fire. Seeing posts from friends about their seemingly glamorous, high-profile work can make us question our focus on intrinsic rewards. It helps to remember that every job has its downside, or at least its dull side, which few share on Facebook.

Keeping that in mind, begin to reframe your workday in ways that better fit your story. Knock off your mundane tasks as quickly as possible, at the times when you're naturally least engaged (waiting for a train, sitting in the car during your kids' sports practices, or waiting for a conference call to start). And when you get to the part of your job you really like, that most lets you be yourself, savor it. Put your phone on vibrate, don't look at your email, and let yourself become immersed in what you're doing. Aim for a flow state—the smooth passage of time that surrounds you when you are truly engaged.

Opportunities to be intrinsically engaged are harder to come by in distraction-filled workplaces, which is why it's so important to direct yourself to them. Do it enough, and your performance will also improve. In the end, focusing on intrinsic fulfillment should lead to extrinsic rewards, too.

And if work offers you none of this? It might be time for a change. If your job really is just making a living, you probably deserve a better story—and can still create it. Intrinsic rewards abound in other spheres. Enjoying friends and family, helping the community, and engaging in activities you love outside of the office are all deep sources of intrinsic rewards.

Jean Twenge, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at San Diego State University and co-author of *The Narcissism Epidemic*.

Copied from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201605/rewrite-your-script>

Ten Ways to Show Up for Yourself

1. Commit to habits, practices, routines, and rituals that are good for your well-being ... even when you do not want to.
2. Allow yourself to feel a multitude of feelings without labelling it as wrong, bad or negative.
3. Practice listening to your needs and discovering different ways of meeting those needs.
4. Practice self-forgiveness; for not being perfect, for forgetting, for the past, for what you do not know and for getting “off-track” sometimes.
5. Let yourself start again, over and over, as often as needed.
6. Take care of your basic needs; stay hydrated, get enough sleep, move our body, and eat nutritiously.
7. Give yourself permission to rest, to take breaks and to have down time.
8. Spend quality time with yourself: reading, writing, creating, and getting to know who you are underneath who you think you should be.
9. Use a lens of curiosity and compassion with yourself as often as possible.
10. Remind yourself that you are as worthy of being shown up for as anyone else in life. Make yourself a priority in your own life.

<https://www.sparkfireswan.com/post/10-ways-to-show-up-for-yourself-in-2020>

The BRAVING Inventory

Brene Brown

BRAVING Definitions

The acronym BRAVING breaks down trust into seven elements:

BOUNDARIES, RELIABILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, VAULT, INTEGRITY, NONJUDGMENT, AND GENEROSITY.

BOUNDARIES: Setting boundaries is making clear what's okay and what's not okay, and why.

RELIABILITY: You do what you say you'll do. At work, this means staying aware of your competencies and limitations so you don't overpromise and are able to deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities.

ACCOUNTABILITY: You own your mistakes, apologize, and make amends.

VAULT: You don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share.

I need to know that my confidences are kept, and that you're not sharing with me any information about other people that should be confidential.

INTEGRITY: Choosing courage over comfort; choosing what's right over what's fun, fast, or easy; and practicing your values, not just professing them.

NONJUDGMENT: I can ask for what I need, and you can ask for what you need. We can talk about how we feel without judgment.

GENEROSITY: Extending the most generous interpretation to the intentions, words, and actions of others.

The **BRAVING Inventory** can be used as a rumble tool—a conversation guide to use with colleagues that walks us through the conversation from a place of curiosity, learning, and ultimately trust-building

Copied from: <https://brenebrown.com/resources/the-braving-inventory/>

The Four Agreements

Be Impeccable With Your Word

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.

Don't Take Anything Personally

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

Don't Make Assumptions

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this agreement, you can completely transform your life.

Always Do Your Best

Your best is going to change moment to moment it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to be sick. Under any circumstances, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgement and regret.

Taken from "*The Four Agreements*" By Don Miguel Ruiz

The Power of Reframing Frustrating Experiences as Stories

Amanda Hirsch

There's an episode of the show *Girls* where Hannah does some unsavory things for the sake of being able to tell a story about it later. As author Emma Straub wrote in a recap of the episode for *Vulture*, "Hannah is simultaneously trying to document and construct her life." While I don't necessarily recommend following in Hannah's footsteps (unless having sex with your boss for the sake of the "story" appeals to you), it's interesting for all of us — not just writers like Hannah — to reframe frustrating or disappointing life experiences as valuable stories in the overarching narrative of our lives.

For example, this week I went to see a new OB-GYN. She greeted me with dirty tissues in her hand, sneezing up a storm, and proceeded to offer some pretty unprofessional commentary. I could have been outraged, but I chose to be amused, and spent the rest of the afternoon texting my friends about it.

The next time a colleague or family member says something that pushes your buttons, try saying to yourself, "What a great story this will make for later." It's amazing how this simple act of reframing can defuse a situation.

After all, what is storytelling but an attempt to control life's narrative for a little while?

Of course, there's a fine line between reframing and denial. I'm not suggesting that we pretend not to be hurt by things. And certainly, some things are so traumatic that clever mind tricks are wildly insufficient.

And yet, sometimes, mind tricks are just what the doctor ordered: Narrative therapy is a real thing. Therapists using this approach coach patients to reframe life experiences in a more positive light, and/or to counterbalance retelling of negative experiences with retelling of positive ones. (Since most of us tend to treat the negative in life as more important or valid than the positive.)

Reframing and treating life as a series of stories also goes hand in hand with practicing mindfulness, which teaches us to become observers of our lives, rather

than merely participants. This distance, and the perspective it allows, can be healing.

Author and teacher Lidia Yuknavich once wrote that women live their lives waiting for their lives to become movies. This resonates with me, and I know a number of other women who've confessed to imagining moments of their lives as if they were underscored by a certain soundtrack. (My own daughter, only six years old, stood gazing out the window a few weeks back. When her father asked her what she was doing, she said, "I'm looking sad, the way characters do in movies.")

The thing is, we don't need to wait for someone to turn on a camera for our stories to begin; what's more, our stories don't have to be in movies to be important. We are already in a narrative of our own making. Each episode of this narrative is borne of the actions we take, and of the stories we tell ourselves about the things we encounter.

In other words, your story is what you make it.

So the next time someone pushes your buttons, try telling yourself, "This sure will make one heck of a story."

Let me know how it goes.

<https://www.mightyforces.co/blog/2018/7/30/try-this-reframe-frustrating-experiences-as-stories>

This Is What Fierce Self-Compassion Looks Like

Researcher and Fierce Self-Compassion author Kristin Neff on how to empower ourselves—and change the world—through caring authentically for ourselves.

BY KRISTIN NEFF JULY 21, 2021 WELL-BEING

For women, it's easy to internalize the message from our culture that we are the weaker sex, helpless maidens who need a big, strong man to save us. For too long we've been taught to value dependence over independence, to be attractive and sexy—not as a way of expressing ourselves, but as a means to attract a man who can protect us. We don't need men to protect us, we need to protect ourselves. Women are strong. We handle the pain of bearing children. We hold families together and skillfully navigate interpersonal conflict and adversity. But until we learn how to stand up for ourselves with the same fierce energy we use to care for others, our ability to take on the world's big challenges will remain limited.

Some people worry that self-compassion will make them soft, but it actually gives us incredible power.

Some people worry that self-compassion will make them soft, but it actually gives us incredible power. Olivia Stevenson from the University of Northern Colorado and Ashley Batts Allen from the University of North Carolina examined how self-compassion and inner strength were linked in over 200 women. They found that participants with higher scores on the SCS (self-compassion scale) felt more empowered: They felt stronger and more competent, asserted themselves more, felt more comfortable expressing anger, were more aware of cultural discrimination and committed to social activism. These findings are echoed in other research showing that self-compassionate women are more likely to confront others when needed and are less afraid of conflict.

The **three elements of self-compassion**—*self-kindness*, *common humanity*, and *mindfulness*—each have an important role to play when compassion is aimed at protecting ourselves. When we're fighting to keep ourselves safe, the three components of self-compassion manifest as brave, empowered clarity.

Tap Into Fierce Self-Compassion

This short practice cultivates fierce self-compassion in service of brave, empowered clarity.

Think of a situation in your life in which you feel the need to protect yourself, draw boundaries, or stand up to someone. Maybe you're being taken advantage of or treated unfairly, or there's something happening to a group you identify with that is unjust.

Connect with mindfulness. Slowly and with conviction, say to yourself: "I clearly see the truth of what's happening."

Call on the wisdom of common humanity, especially the power of connection, so you can draw strength from others while protecting yourself. Say to yourself, "I am not alone. Other people have experienced this as well."

Now, put a fist over your heart, as a gesture of strength and bravery. Commit to being kind to yourself by keeping yourself safe. As a reminder, assert confidently, "I will protect myself."

Finally, put your other hand over your fist and hold it tenderly. The invitation is to combine the fierce energy of brave, empowered clarity with the tender energy of loving, connected presence.

Give yourself full permission to feel the force of your anger, your resolve, your truth, but also let this force be caring. Call on your fierceness to commit to taking action, while still keeping love alive.

From the book *Fierce Self-Compassion* by Kristin Neff. Copyright © 2021 by Kristin Neff. Published by Harper Wave, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Reprinted by permission.

<https://www.mindful.org/this-is-what-fierce-self-compassion-looks-like/>

The Red Tent Movement and a Circle of Women

Red Tent and women's circles are about something that can happen when women showing an open mind gather. It's not magic. Saying that, I occasionally get the feeling that, once, we women of the Red Tent would have been burned at the stake.

By Vanessa Olorenshaw

Mother & author of *Liberating Motherhood*. Wearer of Purplestockings

07/09/2015 12:41pm BST | Updated September 4, 2016

How I love my 'Hippie W.I.'.

No, not the Women's Institute or 'blue-rinse brigade'. More a gathering of women, around the time of the new moon, to just 'be', to listen and to be heard, to be seen and to accept others. I recently midwifed a Red Tent into being in my local area (see here for listings of Tents in your area), having loved attending a group near my family and the town of my upbringing. I have commented to the Women of the Red Tent Movement that I see it as a precious, safe, space for women - something I hadn't realised was missing until I had attended my first gathering.

It is a different experience than spending time with friends - wine is sometimes involved, lots of chat, lots of laughs and plenty of honesty. Our time with friends differ because often, we care so much for our friends that we don't wish to burden them with our own needs or we care so much about them that we take on their worries. Equally, this is not the equivalent of men withdrawing for their cigars and whiskey. It is the acknowledgment of the need of many women to seek and give support, and to have a space for themselves. A room of one's own. Almost. A red one.

So this is about women meeting their own needs. This is about women respecting and understanding their cycles and their bodies. This is about women fuelling their wellbeing by the accepting and supportive company of women. If the feelings a woman can have on stepping out of the Tent could be bottled, it would be sold for a mint and scientists would queue to dissect its composition. Each dose, each gathering, a tonic.

Much in the same way as Adrienne Rich, feeling like a rebel, a renegade from the institution of motherhood; so have I felt rebellious and earthy, a rebel from the institution of economic and capitalistic misogyny, in a way which I had never experienced before spending three hours a month in the company of women in the Red Tent. In a nurturing space. A nourishing space. It immediately brought to a head many emotions I had not confronted for years: why had I avoided groups of women where possible, for so long? Why had I always felt uncomfortable among groups of women? How had I come to see a group of women as unavoidably toxic and venomous, rather than life-affirming and mutually supportive? As they say, it's complicated.

Somehow, though, since becoming a mother, that changed. And I am thankful for that. I had dared finally to tread towards a safe space of women. Of course, when I talk about women, I am not talking about femininity. I am not talking about stereotypes. I am not diminishing women or denying their complexity or interests or strengths. I am a feminist. I don't subscribe to gender rules about what makes a woman or what a woman must or must not do, say, feel, wear, sound like, or represent. We are all and everything, we are different and diverse. We are human beings. We are mammals. Of the female kind.

Red Tent and women's circles are about something that can happen when women showing an open mind gather. It's not magic. Saying that, I occasionally get the feeling that, once, we women of the Red Tent would have been burned at the stake.

The sumptuous reds and scarlets, the vibrant fabrics and soft fleece, silk and organza. Tapestries adorning walls and cushions and throws on floors and sofas. The transformation of a space from a residential living room into a Red Tent. Meditation, nourishing food, a circle in which to be speak and listen, a space to share and to reflect.

Anita Diamant's work of fiction, *The Red Tent*, inspired this movement - itself birthed by Alisa Starkweather. It is growing, worldwide, slowly and organically. The more women attend and discover these circles, the more the seeds of female empowerment has an outlet which goes beyond the boardroom and FTSE 100. To quote:

"Women's lives have changed immeasurably in the last 50 years but we still live in a desperately unequal world where many women feel powerless and unheard. In particular we have yet to achieve balance in terms of leadership and how decisions are made. Meanwhile shocking levels of violence and discrimination against women continue in our communities and around the world.

The Red Tent movement is about creating regular feminine spaces for women to share their stories, rest and gain strength to meet the challenges of our time and their daily lives. This is work that we believe will make a difference not only to women themselves but also to all the people around them. In short, we "know" that the simple act of creating safe and empowering feminine spaces is life and world changing work."

The greater the number of women whose lives have been enriched, with openness and solidarity, the greater the chances of the next generations receiving a welcome into womanhood with rites of passage and in celebration of their steps towards adulthood as a woman. This can only be a good thing. It is something missing for many women. Forget a Brotherhood of Man.

Welcome to a Sisterhood of Woman.

Copied from:

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/vanessa-olorenshaw/the-red-tent-movement_b_8091348.html

Three Ways to Find Calm in the Holiday Rush

By Oyinda Lagunju

October 19, 2021

When things start to feel out of control, it's important to take care of ourselves. Here are some of our tips for emotional wellness during the holidays.

You're a force of nature, and like nature, things can get out of hand. The mind can feel like a restless ocean in the middle of a raging storm. It can feel impossible to tame; however, it's possible to find a moment of tranquility even when things suddenly get out of control.

We all have conflicting emotions happening within us, and it's important to take a moment and acknowledge those feelings. To observe a moment to recharge and reset, enabling us to ease our minds.

How to Ground Yourself When Life Gets Busy

1. **Slow down and simplify.** Feelings of being overwhelmed and frazzled are common, especially during the holidays. We get accustomed to juggling a million balls at once that we don't notice the signs that we've taken on too much. Take a moment to figure out what activities enrich and feed you and address those first. Try this 15- minute meditation to cultivate equanimity and once you're feeling recharged and reinvigorated, you might then be able to add a few more things to your to-do list.

2. **Unplug your mind.** When it comes to technology, we can typically tell when we've had too much and need to disconnect. Although when it comes to our mind, it can be difficult to pinpoint when we need to unplug. However, taking a break can have positive impacts, even if it's for a couple of minutes.

3. **Discover balance.** While the holidays might seem like a good time to remember to take a moment to catch our breath, we can make 'balance' a habit. A habit we can lean on when things get difficult. Try this practice to incorporate balance in your life and learn how to find moments of peace and calm during overwhelming chaos.

Copied from:

<https://www.mindful.org/3-ways-to-find-calm-in-the-holiday-rush-2/>

Trust Walk a Path to Freedom and Self Love

Now imagine yourself going on a trust walk, a trust walk to freedom and self-love, This is a walk, a walk of getting to know yourself, loving yourself and getting to know who you truly are “your authentic self” Know that you have all of the answers within you.

Now I want you to imagine yourself on this Trust walk, what does your walk look like? Are you on a path by a gentle stream in the mountains? Or are you on a beautiful sandy path by the beach along the lake shore? Where ever you are, you were meant to be there, this is your path, you’re “Trust Walk Path” towards your “Authentic Self” Your true self, pure “Unconditional Love self”

Look around you what are you seeing? What are you smelling? How do you feel? Know that within you, is the real you, waiting for you to fully merge with the real authentic you, your higher self. Know that as you progress along this path you are safe, and you are being guided by many Angels towards something beautiful. As you progress along this path, your trust walk, you will notice that along the side of this path is a small table with a chair, walk towards that chair, it’s meant for you.

You sit down and notice there are a set of blank note cards on the table and a black pen. This is your very special set of note cards, meant for you, to write down anything that you would like to release that is holding you back from loving the true you, from becoming your “Authentic Self” You pick up the pen and decide what to write down and things that you wish to release on these note cards, like any fears, or insecurities. As you write these fears down you will notice that the fears are going away, that your breathing is easier, you are more relaxed, you are more focused and you feel hopeful... keep writing you are doing really well...when you are ready and finished, nod your head after you have written everything down, know you have now released these fears and insecurities onto the paper

Now that you are done writing these down, you notice there is a small fire burning gently in a beautiful fire pit... this gentle fire was made just for you, this is your fire of releasing, you gently get up with your notecards in your hand and walk over to the fire. You feel warm beautiful safe energy coming from the fire and you now know what to do... This is your time to drop your cards that you

have in the fire... one by one releasing those fears into the fire... when the cards reach the fire your fears and insecurities are no longer... you are free as you release the last one into the fire. You will notice that no longer do you have those fears, they are completely released now....you realize that you have let go and you feel a sense of pure wholeness for you know now that you have transformed...

You turn around and look behind you back to your path and you start your trust walk again towards your path, you start moving forwards and you feel a sense of pure joy in your heart, pure freedom and know that now, you have released your fears, you know that just around the corner or over the hill is your new found freedom and you wonder what does this look like? You also know that just over the hill is you, the new you, ready to merge with you fully... You are nervous but really excited as you notice you are now trusting yourself, loving yourself fully and standing taller, why you can fully breathe as well and you are grounded and joyfully happy. As you move up the hill and gently ever so gently you look down hill, why there you are!!! Wow, look at you shining your light looking up at you, you run down the hill and merge with you!! You are now, your authentic you, fully merged, trusting yourself, shining your light, loving you! You feel purity within you, pure unconditional love, you feel a sense of peace that you have never experience before, you feel a sense of gratefulness. You also have your new set of golden cards, your new positive cards with wording such as I now fully love and accept myself, I am the light that I have been looking for, I love myself, I trust myself. You also hear much clapping around you, why it's your Angels, you look around you and you now can see them! Wow there are so many! They have been with you all along you realize and you feel a deep sense of love knowing they will always be with you. You feel a deep sense of love unconditionally for you, the new you. Always know you can come back to this special place feeling pure love.

by Kelly Bangerter

Guided Meditation Scripts - Free Written Guided Meditations (the-guided-meditation-site.com)

Understanding your Window of Tolerance for Stress

Published on March 17th, 2021

Updated on December 6th, 2021

Since the start of the pandemic, having a routine and feeling connected to others has been more difficult than ever, especially for young people. From adapting to changing health guidelines to adjusting to different ways of learning, it's OK if your mental health is feeling challenged in new and different ways. Here, Kids Help Phone shares information and tips for understanding how your body responds to and copes with stress through a concept called the Window of Tolerance.

What is the Window of Tolerance?

The Window of Tolerance is a term created by a psychiatrist named Dr. Dan Siegel to help you understand how your body reacts to stressful times and events. It's a way to reflect on what happens when our bodies and minds are stressed or feel threatened. Often, we may feel responses or reactions in our bodies before we notice what we're feeling or thinking.

Without you even noticing it, your body's nervous system (the part of you that connects your brain to the rest of your body) is always managing your energy levels, heart rate, breathing and lots of other things to help keep you alive. If you're stressed or in danger, it'll automatically make changes to the energy in your body to protect you and keep you safe. For example, triggering your "fight, flight or freeze" response. It's the same for animals. Think of a dog barking at a burglar (fight), a caribou running away from a wolf (flight) or a deer caught in a car's headlights (freeze).

How does it feel to be within, above or below your Window of Tolerance?

Being within your Window of Tolerance zone tends to be where you feel most comfortable, in control and able to cope. You may think more clearly, have an easier time making decisions and take better care of yourself. It's important to note that being within your window doesn't mean that things are perfect. For

example, you might be stressed and have lots of energy or be tired and have little energy, but can still have enough energy to think and feel at the same time.

Having lots or too much energy means you're in the hyperarousal zone, or above your Window of Tolerance. If you're above your window, you may feel restless, aggressive, impulsive or anxious. Your thoughts may race, and you may feel overwhelmed. You may experience physical sensations such as sweating, heavy breathing, heart beating faster, etc.

Having not enough or too little energy means you're in the hypoarousal zone, or below your Window of Tolerance. If you're below your window, you may feel disconnected, fatigued, paralyzed or depressed. It may be hard to think or be able to say no to things. You may not experience as many physical sensations as usual, or have a sense of numbness, shoulders feeling heavy, etc.

Each person's window — meaning, their ability to cope with difficult situations at any given time — can change, increase or decrease based on factors outside their control. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic is a factor that may cause people to have smaller Windows of Tolerance because of the stressors, grief and/or change that it's causing. You can also have a smaller window if you've had a traumatic or difficult experience in the past.

Reflecting on your Window of Tolerance

It's helpful to check in with yourself regularly to reflect on things going on in your life and create time and space to notice how different situations and challenges are impacting you. It's important to note that your goal isn't to get rid of being above or below the window (it's common to move outside your window sometimes), but to use your self-awareness to get back inside your window when you notice you're outside of it.

With more self-awareness and practice, you can make your Window of Tolerance bigger so that you can be inside it more often. Having a bigger Window of Tolerance may also help you to recognize when other people are outside their windows, and increase your ability to help them get back into their window.

You can use these questions to draw your own Window of Tolerance based on how you're feeling today:

What physical sensations tell you that you're above / within / below your Window of Tolerance?

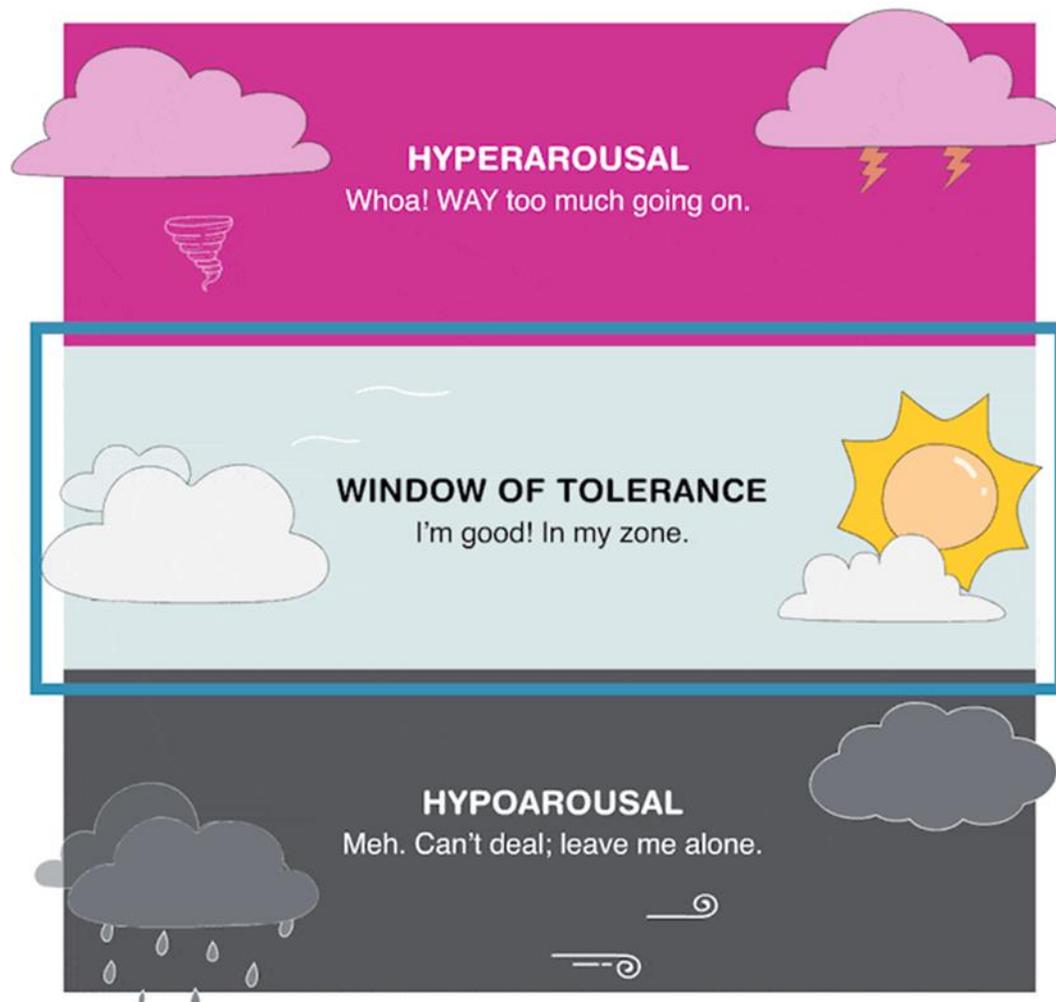
What can help you to get back to your window if you're above it (high energy or hyperaroused)?

What can help you get back in your window if you're below it (low energy or hypoaroused)?

Remember a time when you were "in" your window. How did that feel?

Activities to help expand your Window of Tolerance

If you're below your window, you can try doing things that wake up your senses, like eating something sour or mint-flavoured, or washing your face with cold water. If you're above your window, you can try activities that shift your energy, like dancing, jumping jacks or screaming into a pillow.



Wherever you currently are in your Window of Tolerance, there are things you can do to help expand your window so you can cope and feel strong, calm and grounded. Grounding techniques, breathing exercises and practicing mindfulness are some activities that can be helpful. It's important to explore and find the activities that work best for you. Remember that different activities and tools will help at different times. You can be proud of yourself for taking the time to increase your self-awareness and look after your well-being.

Copied from: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/understanding-your-window-of-tolerance-for-stress/>

What Is Self-Care?

What is self-care and how to make it a part of your life

In this article, I will introduce you to what self-care is, what it isn't and why it is important to make self-care a part of your life. I invite you to look beyond the conventional ways of describing self-care and explore more meaningful, sustainable practices.

Self-care is the deliberate choice you make to maintain your own health and wellness. This includes regularly checking in with your mind and body, identifying any unmet needs and nurturing your physical, mental, emotional, relational and spiritual wellbeing on an ongoing basis.

Let us start by clearing up some commonly held myths and misconceptions about self-care.

SELF-CARE IS NOT AN INDULGENCE

While there's absolutely nothing wrong with indulging or pampering yourself once in a while, there is more to self-care than bubble baths and face-masks. It is easy to trivialise and write-off self-care by focusing only on the indulgence. Meaningful self-care involves not just the easy, fun things. More importantly, it includes making mindful changes in patterns of thoughts and behaviours that do not contribute to your wellbeing. For instance, saying no without feeling guilty, knowing when to take a break or avoiding harmful coping mechanisms.

SELF-CARE IS NOT SELFISH

Brené Brown, in her book *The Gifts of Imperfection* writes: *"In a society that says, "Put yourself last," self-love and self acceptance are almost revolutionary."* Self-care is not a disregard for others' needs. It is extending the same concern and empathy for your needs that you offer others. Practicing self-care by enforcing healthy boundaries and communicating your needs is not only essential for yourself, but also makes you more available for those around you. When you make time for yourself and get sufficient rest & exercise, you feel more energetic and will be able to do more - for yourself as well as for those around you.

SELF-CARE IS NOT A ONE-TIME EXPERIENCE

Going on a spa day and treating yourself poorly for the rest of the week is not self care! Looking after your most basic physical and emotional needs is not a one-time luxury. It is an ongoing practice in building resilience to face hardships and in preventing burnout. To put it simply, *self-care is not optional!* To make the most out of self-care, it is essential to have a regular practice that is a part of your life and not something you try only when you are about to have a breakdown.

SELF-CARE IS NOT TIME CONSUMING

So many people around me – including friends, family and clients, insist: “I just don’t have the time for it!” Despite acknowledging the benefits and necessity of self-care, some people refrain from making it a practice. Given how busy everyone is these days, it is understandable that you hesitate to commit your time. However, I want you to know that self-care does not require you to take out a huge chunk of time from your busy day. Self-care is practicing loving kindness towards yourself, every day, all the time.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A REGULAR SELF-CARE PRACTICE?

Having a self-care practice means that you choose to explore your needs through regular reflection and make appropriate changes to meet these needs. Becoming aware of your needs (which include multiple facets such as mind, body, relationships) is the first step in learning to make [self-care](#) a priority. Simple practices such as journaling, meditation, mindfulness and a number of other creative ways can help you begin this reflection. Setting aside a few minutes everyday – perhaps just before going to bed or having a meal – goes a long way in staying committed to the practice and making it an integral part of your life.

In addition to the time you set aside for reflection, prioritising self-care includes:

- Accepting that it’s OK to have needs
- Allowing yourself to be tired
- Allowing yourself to make mistakes
- Looking after your body by nourishing it and including some form of physical movement in your routine

- Giving yourself the room to practice healthy boundaries
- Expressing yourself clearly and without guilt
- Staying connected with people, places and activities that make you feel good

Making room for regular self-care in your life has a number of benefits. It helps to build resilience, prevents burnout, promotes healthier relationships and makes you more productive.

HOW TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE SELF-CARE PLAN?

Self-care is essential for a wholesome, balanced life. Since self-care is an ongoing practice, you need to work on a plan that is sustainable in the long run.

START SMALL

You don't have to make sweeping or overwhelming changes to start practicing self-care. Start with small changes and additions to your routine. If setting aside 30 minutes every day seems impossible right now, try beginning with 10 minutes for the first week and gradually increase. Remember, self-care is less about what you do and more about how you treat yourself.

EXPERIMENT

Each person is different and has unique needs, so there is no one-size-fits-all plan that will work for everyone. To figure out which practices work best for you, try a variety of things. When you experiment, you will gain clarity about what fits your life and routine. Make a list of activities you find helpful.

INTENTIONAL PRACTICE

If you want to build a sustainable self-care plan, it is important to be actively engaged in the practices you try. Pay attention to how it makes you feel. What is the outcome? What do you like/dislike about it?

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED WITH A SELF-CARE PLAN:

- Pause and check-in with yourself before getting out of bed
- Practice slow, deep breathing

- Start writing a journal
- Create something (draw, paint, cook, sculpt, collage)
- Stretch when you take a break
- Put your phone/tablet away for an hour
- Take a walk
- Call a friend
- Drink lots of water
- Get enough sleep
- Practice saying no
- Reconnect with a hobby
- Spend time outdoors
- Follow a guided meditation
- Join a support group
- Make a gratitude list
- Look for opportunities to laugh
- Read a book
- Visit your doctor for a check-up
- Plan going out with friends/family

Copied from:

<https://www.mymindoasis.com/blog/2019/5/14/what-is-self-care>

MYTHS ABOUT SELF-CARE



Self-care is an indulgence



Meaningful self-care includes making mindful changes in patterns of thoughts and behaviours that do not contribute to your wellbeing.



Self-care is selfish



When you make time for yourself and get sufficient rest & exercise, you feel more energetic and will be able to do more - for yourself as well as for those around you.



Self-care is a one-time experience



Looking after yourself is an ongoing practice in building resilience to face hardships and in preventing burnout.



Self-care is time consuming



Self-care does not require you to take out a huge chunk of time from your busy day.

Resources:

Video Clips:

Body Shaming

Jean Kilbourne- Killing us softly in Media

A deep look into advertising that is demeaning, and body shames and shames the experiences of women.

<https://www.cctv.org/watch-tv/programs/killing-us-softly-advertisings-image-women>

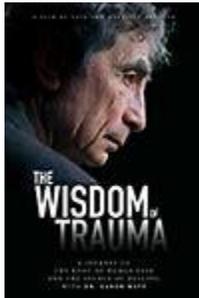
The Lesson Brené Brown's Daughter Learned About Trust (Marble Jar Story)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6442YcvEUH8>

The Wisdom of Trauma Movie–

<https://thewisdomoftrauma.com/>

The Wisdom of Trauma



2021 · 1hr 27min ·

Documentary

1 in 5 Americans are diagnosed with mental illness every year. Suicide is the second most common cause of death in the US for youth aged 15-24, and kills over 48,300 in the US and 800,000 people...

- **Release date:** Jun. 8, 2021 (United States)
- **Directors:** Maurizio Benazzo & Zaya Benazzo

Websites

www.16personalities.com

Free personality test, type descriptions, relationship and career advice |
16Personalities

<https://www.doorstowellbeing.org/>

Doors to Wellbeing (Peer Support / Copeland Center)

<https://www.georgiancollege.ca/careermatch/>

Personality Test / Career Match Test

<https://psychcentral.com/>

Psych Central

<https://personalvalu.es/>

Personal Value Assessment

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/tests/personality/values-profile>

Values Profile Test

<https://brenebrown.com/wholeheartedinventory/>

Wholehearted Inventory (Brene Brown)

Event brite platform, EENT-CAMH (can choose the topics interested in),

The Mighty App, The Sonder (FB page).

Recovery Colleges

Free

<https://clc.camh.ca/>

Camh Collaborative Learning College (Recovery College) (Toronto)

Has monthly enrollment for variety of courses

<https://www.ontarioshores.ca/resources-support/recovery-college>

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Whitby, Ontario)

Fall, Winter and Spring Semester

<https://recoverycollegegrandeprairie.ca/>

CMHA Grande Prairie (Alberta)

<https://recoverycollegemedicinehat.ca/>

CMHA Medicine Hat (Alberta)

Podcasts:

podcast #2/6 of THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION by Brene Brown. The
"Wholehearted Living Inventory"

Books:

A Place Called Self - By Stephanie Brown

A Place Called Self A Companion Workbook: Women, Sobriety, and Radical
Transformation - By Stephanie Brown

Atlas Of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human
Experience - By Brené Brown

Belonging: Remembering Ourselves Home- By Toko Pa Turner

Circles of Stones - Woman's Journey to Herself -By Judith Durk

Difficult Mothers, Adult Daughters: A Guide for Separation, Liberation &
Inspiration - By Karen C.L. Anderson

Discovering the Inner Mother: A Guide to Healing the Mother Wound and
Claiming Your Personal Power – by Bethany Webster

Fierce Self-Compassion: How Women Can Harness Kindness to Speak Up, Claim
Their Power, and Thrive – By Dr. Kristin Neff PhD

Language of Letting Go Cards – By Melody Beattie

Mental Health Survival Guide: 10 Skills for Maintaining Your Mental Health During
The Holidays - By EHN Canada

[https://www.opdi.org/de/cache/resources/15/rs_Mental-Health-Survival-Guide-
Holiday-Edition.pdf](https://www.opdi.org/de/cache/resources/15/rs_Mental-Health-Survival-Guide-Holiday-Edition.pdf)

Mindful Magazine - <https://www.mindful.org/magazine/>

Mirror Work - 21 Days to Heal Your Life -By Louise Hay

More Language of Letting Go: 366 New Daily Meditations - By Melody Beattie

Self Discovery Journal * 365 Questions * One Page Per Day - By 21 Exercises

Spirit of the Animals Oracle Cards - By Jody Bergsma

The Four Agreements: A 48 Card Deck - By Don Miguel Ruiz

The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom -By Don Miguel
Ruiz

The Gifts of Imperfection – By Brene Brown

The Language of Letting Go: Daily Meditations on Codependency -By Melody
Beattie

The Right Words: when you need them most – By Donna Ashworth

The Smell of Rain on Dust- Grief and Praise -By Martin Prechtel

The Universe Has Your Back Cards – By Gabrielle Berstein

To the Women: words to live by - By Donna Ashworth

What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing

- By Oprah Winfrey & Bruce D. Perry MD PhD

Quotes:

“It is crucial for the future of the Black liberation struggle that we remain ever mindful that ours is a shared struggle, that we are each other's fate.”

Belle Hooks

“NEVER WORRY about who will be offended if you speak the TRUTH. Worry about who will be misled, deceived & destroyed if you don't.”

“No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough. It's going to bed at night thinking, yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.”

Brene Brown

“On the other side of the storm is the strength that comes from navigating through it. Raise your sail and begin”.

Gregory Williams

“Our past is meant to guide us not too haunt us”.

“Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is th bravest thing we'll ever do.”

Brene Brown

“Sometimes you hve to make a decision that will break your heart but will give you peace to your soul.”

TobyMac

“The past is a stepping stone, not a millston”.

Robert Plant

“The truth may hurt for a while, but a lie hurts for forever”

“Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is th bravest thing we’ll ever do.”

Brene Brown

“When you speak your truth and live your Truth, people may criticize and even abandon you. You may find yourself in solitude. If so, know it is fine – in your solitude, you can go even deeper in your Truth, and the Truth shall be your highest blessings.”

Songs:

“This is Me” By Keela Settle & The Greatest Showman Ensemble from the movie
“The Greatest Showman”

“This is Me” (Lyrics)

I am not a stranger to the dark
Hide away, they say
'Cause we don't want your broken parts
I've learned to be ashamed of all my scars
Run away, they say
No one'll love you as you are

But I won't let them break me down to dust
I know that there's a place for us
For we are glorious

When the sharpest words wanna cut me down
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown 'em out
I am brave, I am bruised
I am who I'm meant to be, this is me
Look out 'cause here I come
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me

Oh-oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh, oh

Another round of bullets hits my skin
Well, fire away 'cause today, I won't let the shame sink in
We are bursting through the barricades and
Reaching for the sun (we are warriors)
Yeah, that's what we've become (yeah, that's what we've become)

I won't let them break me down to dust
I know that there's a place for us
For we are glorious

When the sharpest words wanna cut me down
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown 'em out
I am brave, I am bruised
I am who I'm meant to be, this is me
Look out 'cause here I come
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me

Oh-oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh, oh
This is me

(Oh-oh-oh-oh) And I know that I deserve your love
(Oh-oh-oh-oh) There's nothing I'm not worthy of
(Oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh, oh)
When the sharpest words wanna cut me down
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown 'em out
This is brave, this is bruised
This is who I'm meant to be, this is me

Look out 'cause here I come (look out 'cause here I come)
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum (marching on, marching, marching on)
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me

When the sharpest words wanna cut me down
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown 'em out
I'm gonna send a flood
Gonna drown 'em out
Oh
This is me