

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR LIVING

Self Care Toolkit Pocket Guide



Affirmations are positive statements that reinforce a specific intention, and they can help to establish positive and nurturing thoughts about ourselves and our life situations.

Examples:

I am grateful for all that I have in my life.

I face anxiety with courage and strength.

I take care of myself even when it is difficult to do.



When we experience intense emotions, there is a physical expression of stress in our body, and crying allows us to complete the stress response cycle, letting the emotion go all the way to the end. Crying helps to keep the emotion from getting trapped in our body.

Often, we fight the urge, fearing if we let ourselves cry it will last forever. But if we allow the release, it often passes quickly. Pay attention to the sensation of the crying itself without feeding it more thoughts about the thing that sparked the crying, and it ends. It's a cycle, it begins on its own, it has a middle and it ends on its own.

Words inspired by Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle by Amelia & Emily Nagoski



Research suggests a 20-second hug can change your hormones, lower your blood pressure and heart rate, and improve mood, all of which are reflected in the post-hug increase in the social bonding hormone, Oxytocin.

"A warm hug in a safe and trusting context can do as much to help your body feel like it has escaped a threat as jogging a couple of miles, and it's less sweaty."

Words Inspired by Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle by Amelia & Emily Nagoski



Binaural beats are said to create the same type of brain waves that are experienced during deep meditation. When you listen to two different tones (one in each ear using headphones), the brain interprets the two as a frequency of its own. Depending on the frequencies used, binaural beats produce different brain wave types, such as delta, theta, alpha, and beta. Benefits range from deep sleep and relaxation to improved concentration, alertness, creativity, and problem solving.

Binaural beats can be a great starting place for someone who struggles with the quiet of a traditional meditation practice, and they can be found on most music streaming platforms. One of our favorite meditation apps that uses binaural beats is called Synctuition.



Creative Expression doesn't require one to be exceptionally artistic or talented. Each and every person can benefit from engaging in creative activities - from scrapbooking to gardening to cooking.

When we access the creative part of our brain, brainwaves slow down, and original thoughts are better able to form. Additionally, the prefrontal cortex temporarily "goes quiet," making us less critical of our ideas and more courageous. Lastly, during a creative flow state, our brain releases large quantities of endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine. These are pleasure inducing chemicals that affect creativity and well-being.



Breathing is an automatic function of the body, and when we feel stressed, our breathing rate and pattern changes as part of the fight-or-flight response.

Fortunately, we also have the ability to deliberately change our breathing. Scientific studies have shown that controlling your breath can help to manage stress and stress-related conditions.

Shallow, upper chest breathing is part of the typical stress response. The stress response can be reduced by consciously breathing using the diaphragm. Abdominal breathing helps to control the nervous system and encourages the body to relax, bringing about a range of health benefits.



EMDR is a psychotherapy technique proven to help people recover from trauma and other distressing life experiences, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, and panic disorders. In EMDR, clients address experiences that underlie negative beliefs and emotional disturbance utilizing bilateral stimulation such as eye movements or tapping. EMDR should be guided by a trained therapist. Visit our website to learn more and decide if EMDR would be a good fit for you.



Research shows that magnesium plays an important role in our parasympathetic nervous system, which is also known as our "rest and digest" response. In addition, studies have shown that magnesium can help combat insomnia.

Magnesium can be absorbed through the skin by soaking in a warm bath with two cups of epsom salt for 15 minutes.



Research shows that people who intentionally incorporate a practice of communicating their gratitude (through journaling, meditation, prayer, communicating appreciation, etc.), report experiencing more joy in their lives.

Look around you. Pay attention in your day to day. Say thank you for the small and ordinary. How happy ice cream makes a child. A dog greeting you at the door. Those seemingly insignificant events that occur throughout our day that we don't notice but that leave a void when they are gone. Even pausing at the end of a busy day to share one sentence of gratitude can change the way you feel and perceive the world.



Grounding, whether being outdoors barefoot or indoors connected to an earthing product, has a natural diffusing effect on stress.

The surface of the Earth contains a natural electric charge, felt by some people as a pleasant tingling when walking on wet grass in the morning or along the wet sand at the beach. Research suggests that direct contact with the Earth's electrons stabilizes and rejuvenates the body by recharging and thinning our blood, enhancing immune function, and powerfully and dramatically reducing inflammation, pain, and stress.



Staying hydrated by drinking enough water is an important, often undervalued, aspect of good mental health.

Dehydration quickly affects how we feel and think. Drinking water regularly throughout the day is an effective step to take in our efforts to be as mentally healthy as possible.

A steady supply of water keeps your circulation flowing smoothly and allows you to feel less tension, confusion, and fatigue.



Hygge, (hue-guh or hoo-gah) is a Danish lifestyle concept of comfort, contentment and simplicity. It has been referred to as a 'coziness of the soul' where one incorporates this concept both into their external and internal space. It is an intentional way of life, designed to encourage togetherness, joy, and appreciation.

Hygge can be practiced through creating a physical environment that invokes a sense of comfort, serenity, coziness and simplicity. It also cultivates a mindful approach to savoring the small things in life which bring us joy, gratitude, ease and connection. It is taking time out of the daily rush to spend time with yourself or the people you care about.



Journaling can be a powerful tool for releasing trapped emotions, sorting anxious thoughts, or finding and expressing gratitude.

Moving thoughts from our head to paper can help us understand and process difficult feelings. It can provide insight and awareness, help us communicate, and even stop obsessive thought patterns that create anxiety.

Whether you prefer freestyle journaling, using prompts, writing letters to someone in your life, or writing to a younger or future version of yourself, there is no right or wrong way. Journaling is an easy tool for healing that you can try today!



Laughter, especially genuine laughter shared with others, can send your body signals of safety and help your nervous system regulate.

An excerpt from Brene Brown's Podcast Episode with Ameilia and Emily Nagoski on Burnout and How to Complete the Stress Cycle: "It can't be that fake laughter. It has to be the slightly embarrassing, mouth hanging open, belly jiggling, uncontrolled, ridiculous laughter that really takes over your body, you can't stop laughing. That laughter will take you all the way through the end of a stress cycle."

If you are looking for an effective and easy way to feel joy and release stress, call up a friend and share funny memories, listen to a funny podcast or comedian, watch a funny movie with the family. Laughter is healing.



Massage is a tool that can be used to promote not only physical health but also mental and emotional healing. When we are stressed, we often tense our muscles and move our bodies differently. Extended periods of tension from chronic stress can have many negative effects on many aspects of our health. Massage interrupts patterns of tension and encourages the body back into a natural state of balance. There are many different types of massage to explore, and even self massaging your neck or hands can help you release tension and feel calm.



Matcha is finely ground powder of specially grown green tea leaves that is packed full of health benefits. It can be used to make tea, smoothies, latter and more. Matcha is high in antioxidants, which help prevent disease and improve brain health.

The L-theanine in matcha works as a relaxing agent, affecting dopamine and serotonin levels in the brain to improve feelings of well-being and reduce anxiety.

Matcha is versatile and easy to prepare and could make a great addition to your self care toolkit.



Medication can be an important part of your toolkit.

It is important to work with your doctor(s) to determine what your needs are and what options are available to you. There can be a lot of shame, fear, and uncertainty for some people regarding needing or taking medicine for mental health, but many people find it to be a very helpful (and sometimes even life changing) tool.



Spending even a few minutes in meditation can restore your calm and inner peace. Anyone can practice meditation. It's simple and inexpensive, it doesn't require any special equipment, and you can practice it wherever you are.

Meditation teaches us to calm the mind, develop concentration, and increase awareness. With greater awareness of our thought patterns and emotional habits, we learn how to relate to ourselves and our circumstances in a more objective, compassionate, and skillful way. This helps us engage in life more completely. It teaches us to understand and work with our emotions and break our habit of reactivity.



Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there's a "right" or "wrong" way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

The regular practice of mindfulness promotes better stress management as well as long-term mental and physical health.



Movement can help our mental wellness through building resilience, courage, and a sense of calm and connection. Not only does movement allow us to access joy it also changes systems in the brains that make you become more resilient to trauma and stress. Through an elevation and release of hormones and specific proteins, exercise helps us feel more hopeful, optimistic, energized, and happier. It supports us with addiction and grief. Through a regular movement practice, you can promote and protect your emotional wellbeing.



Music can be a source of pleasure and contentment,
but there are many other psychological benefits as well.
Music can relax the mind, energize the body, and even help people
better manage pain. Research shows that listening to music has an impact
on the human stress response, particularly the autonomic nervous system.

To boost music's mental-health benefits in your life, try using this simple technique used in music therapy called "deep or active listening". Instead of putting on music as background noise, set aside time to concentrate on what you hear, taking note of the feelings, memories, and bodily sensations (whether that's a slowing of your heart rate or the urge to get up and dance) that arise as you listen.



Praying is a spiritual practice that offers an opportunity to connect with a higher power, oneself, or nature. One does not need to be religious to see the transformation that reaching out to something greater than ourselves can bring humans. It can give an anchor to ground us, help us let go of worries, and trust that we are supported and guided. Facing life's challenges with this perspective can provide clarity, peace, and increased ability to cope.



Whether you are matching pieces to assemble a jigsaw puzzle or solving a crossword or sudoku puzzle, accessing the creative and critical thinking parts of your brain in this way can help you find regulation. By redirecting your focus to looking for patterns and connections in a puzzle in front of you, you are reducing your fight or flight response.



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

Taking some moments for RAIN can give you access to clarity and openheartedness. By intentionally bringing attention to our inner experience, we can move from trance toward healing.

- 1. **Recognize** what is going on inside you.
- 2. **Allow** the thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations to be there without trying to fix or avoid anything.
- 3. **Investigate** with interest and care: call on your natural curiosity and direct a more focused attention to your present experience. What feels most difficult?
- 4. **Nurture** with self-compassion: Send a gentle message inward to directly address what you need.



Reparenting is a process of caring for ourselves in ways that we needed as a child but didn't get. It begins with witnessing your experience as a child and learning about what needs you have that are still unmet. Then you can begin to ask yourself how you can find ways to meet those needs. This may look like learning to speak to yourself in a kind way, beginning to allow yourself time for creativity and play, or learning to set healthy boundaries.

This healing work can be difficult if you had a traumatic childhood.

Allow yourself space and time to grieve and process. It may be helpful to seek the help of a therapist.



Just like rocking can help soothe a crying baby, the swaying motion of a hammock or a swing can have a calming effect on our bodies.

The gentle, rhythmic motion of rocking engages the parasympathetic nervous system and releases endorphins that help shift us into a more calm and relaxed state.



Three Components of Self Compassion

Self Kindness: Being gentle and understanding with ourselves, rather than harshly critical and judgemental. Common Humanity: Feeling connected with others in the experience of life, rather than feeling isolated and alienated by our suffering.

Mindfulness: Holding our experience in balanced awareness, rather than ignoring exaggerating our pain.

We must achieve and combine these three essential elements in order to be truly self compassionate. When we experience warm and tender feelings toward ourselves, we are altering our bodies as well as our minds. Rather than feeling worried and anxious, we feel calm, content, trusting, and secure. Self-kindness allows us to feel safe as we respond to painful experiences, so that we are no longer operating from a place of fear.



Sleep is closely connected to mental and emotional health, and disrupted sleep has demonstrated links to depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and other conditions. Both sleep and mental health are complex issues affected by a multitude of factors, but here are a few steps you can take toward improving your sleep:

- Having a set bedtime and maintaining a steady sleep schedule
- Finding ways to wind-down as part of a standard bedtime routine, such as quiet reading or a few minutes of deep breathing
- Avoiding caffeine or stimulants too close to bedtime
- Dimming lights and putting away electronic devices for an hour or more before bed



Somatic Experiencing (SE) is a body awareness oriented approach for resolving trauma symptoms and relieving chronic stress.

Founded by Peter Levine, PhD, SE teaches that trauma is not caused by the event itself, but rather develops when the body, mind, spirit, and nervous system are unable to process extreme adverse events. Somatic Experiencing works by facilitating the release of survival energy that is stuck in the body and re-establishing nervous system regulation.

There are a wide range of somatic exercises you can use to begin to involve your body in your healing process, but most importantly, SE is about tuning in to your body, allowing the experiences that come up, and learning to explore what you need. Join us this week in our Self Care Toolkit Talk to learn some specific somatic exercises that you can try.



There are all kinds of supplements, herbs, etc. available that are known to have a positive impact on our mental health, emotional, and physical health. One example is Magnesium: Research shows that magnesium plays an important role in our parasympathetic nervous system, which is also known as our "rest and digest" response. In addition, studies have shown that magnesium can help combat insomnia. Magnesium can be absorbed through the skin by soaking in a warm bath with two cups of epsom salt for 15 minutes.

More supplements to look into: L-theanine | Lemon Balm | St. John's Wort | CalmAid (Lavender)

Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified healthcare provider when adding new supplements to your care plan.



Tapping, also known as EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), is a stress relief technique based on the combined principles of ancient Chinese acupressure and modern psychology.

The basic Tapping technique requires you to focus on a negative emotion and use your fingertips to tap 5-7 times on specific meridian points of the body.

Tapping on these meridian points sends a calming signal to the brain, letting your brain know it's safe to relax. Studies have shown that Tapping decreases cortisol (often called the stress hormone) in your body.

Learn more at: www.thetappingsolution.com



Studies have shown that time in nature is an antidote for stress: It can lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels, reduce nervous system arousal, reduce feelings of isolation, enhance immune system function, increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and improve mood. Researchers have found that people who spent two hours a week in green spaces — local parks or other natural environments, either all at once or spaced over several visits — were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don't.

If you're interested in an emersive healing experience in nature, look for our next wellness retreat at Wood Haven Retreat & Farm.

www.woodhavenretreatandfarm.com



Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) uses magnetic waves to stimulate specific areas of the brain. TMS is an FDA approved safe and non-invasive treatment for major depressive disorders, OCD, and other brain disorders. Treatments last for approximately 20 minutes, and are generally pain free. If you are interested in learning more about TMS, visit www.lifelinesolutionsllc.com/tms



A weighted blanket is a heavy blanket (most often weighing anywhere from 4 to 30 pounds) that can deliver deeply calming effects for both children and adults alike.

Weighted blankets provide "deep-touch pressure," a form of physical stimulation that can help regulate emotions. Research suggests weighted blankets may benefit people with anxiety, autism, and insomnia, among other conditions.



Mind-body techniques such as yoga help you increase awareness of sensations in the body and stay more focused on the present moment.

Yoga helps relieve stress and offers countless health benefits by reducing the stress response of the sympathetic nervous system and reducing levels of the stress hormone cortisol. The practice enhances resilience and improves mind-body awareness, which can help people adjust their behaviors based on the feelings they're experiencing in their bodies.

Yoga is often mistaken for complicated poses that require flexibility and a specific body type, but it can be practiced by any one in any body.

YOGA NIDRA

Yoga Nidra is a form of meditation that guides you to scan the body and tap into a relaxed state as the mind settles in a place between wakefulness and sleep.

Yoga Nidra is practiced lying down and works with the autonomic nervous system to take us to the brain's most restorative state, helping the body achieve the rest it needs.

You can find Yoga Nidra classes to attend or search online for recordings that can be played from the comfort of your own home. Some people use Yoga Nidra before falling asleep at night and others use it as a tool for a rest break in the day.



Sometimes self care can feel overwhelming and unhelpful. It is okay to ask for help. There is great power in feeling heard and believed and knowing you aren't in it alone. Therapy can help you learn about what you're feeling, why you might be feeling it, and how to cope. Not only can you work through past and present issues, but you can develop the tools you need to face future challenges that inevitably arise along the way.

You may also find it helpful to look into specific therapies like EMDR, which is a psychotherapy technique proven to help people recover from trauma and other distressing life experiences, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, and OCD. Visit our website to learn more and decide if EMDR or another form of therapy would be a good fit for you.

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