



VETERAN WELLNESS TOOLKIT



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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

What is this?

This toolkit is based on the science of well-being and is organized in short, easy-to-use activities.

Is this for me?

This is for any Veteran who wants to improve their well-being.

Why use it?

It could help you feel happier, less stressed, and more in control. What do you have to lose?

How to use it?

Flip through the toolkit, and see what it has to offer. Try what you would like at your own pace. If the activity involves writing, don't worry about spelling or grammar when you write. You can do the activities on your own or with family members and friends. Include others if you think it will make the activity more enjoyable, or if you think you'll be more likely to keep up with an activity if a friend or family member is a part of it. Sharing activities with family members and friends may help them reach their goals.

When to use it?

Whenever it works for you. Some activities can be used when you have just a minute or two, like when you are waiting in line at the grocery store. You may want to include some tools in your daily life and others when you want a wellness boost. Over time, you might find yourself using many of the tools without referencing the toolkit. Ultimately, the goal is to use as many of the tools as often as you want to support your wellness. There is no completion date. Wellness is a lifelong journey. Some of these tools may be new. Some may take more practice than others.

How do I know if the tools in the guide are working for me?

Reflection. Think about how you feel before and after using a tool. Some tools may take some time to "kick in." Check in with yourself after using a tool for a while. Are you feeling or thinking differently? After using some tools, you might find that your body feels lighter. After using other tools, you might notice more enjoyable interactions with others. If you get stuck or feel overwhelmed by an activity or section, you can always come back at a later time. This toolkit is self-paced.

Some of these activities and concepts may be new. Some may take more practice than others.

Contents of this toolkit do not represent the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or the U.S. government. The development of this guide was supported by the VA South Central Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (SC MIRECC).

This toolkit can be downloaded from:

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/veteran-wellness-toolkit.asp>



GOAL SETTING

Before starting, let's look at goal setting.

SMART goals can be used to plan and carry out any activity in the toolkit.

UNDERSTANDING SMART GOALS

Before achieving a goal, it is important to be clear about the goal. Setting a SMART goal will help you set a clear goal that is achievable.

SMART Acronym	Definition	Example
<u>S</u>pecific	Describe your goal as clearly and with as much detail as possible	Jog/walk on trail around the lake in the morning before work
<u>M</u>easurable	Use a number or other way to objectively track your progress	Jog/walk for 15 minutes, 4 times a week
<u>A</u>ttainable	Make it challenging but something within reach	I will be able to fit in at least 15 minutes of jogging/walking to my schedule
<u>R</u>ealistic	Make sure it is something you can see yourself working towards	Jog/walk for 15 minutes at first, not 2 hours
<u>T</u>imely	Set a date for when your goal needs to be achieved	Start on Saturday and continue for 2 months

MAKING YOUR OWN SMART GOAL

Pick a goal from this toolkit or one you're already working on and make it "SMART." If you haven't selected a goal yet, come back to this page once you have a goal you would like to work on.

My Goal —

Specific:

Measurable:

Attainable:

Realistic:

Timely:

When creating your SMART goal, think about whether it is something you would like to do alone or with family and friends. For example, if you make a goal of taking a daily walk, you might choose to walk just by yourself for the chance to clear your head or, on the other hand, you may want to invite someone with whom you want to connect, to join you on the walk.

FINDING SOLUTIONS FOR BARRIERS TO REACHING GOALS

Running into barriers is normal. Brainstorming solutions can help keep you on track.

Goal	BARRIERS	SOLUTION
Go walking 3x a week before work.	It's hard to find my shoes in the morning.	Take my sneakers off by the front door each day after walking.





UNDERSTANDING HEALTH

Feeling healthy can help you enjoy
family, friends, and time.

REFLECTING ON BEING HEALTHY

Being Healthy Is Not Just Lack of Illness

IT IS:

- Having vitality
- Having energy to enjoy life
- Doing what makes you happy
- Having strength to face difficulties
- Making the best of your life

What does health mean to you?

How do your friends and family fit into your definition of health?



TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH BEHAVIORS

You may feel like you don't have control in many situations in your life. But remember...

- You have control over many of your own actions.
- Take time to think about situations over which you have control. Compare them to situations over which you may not have control. What do they have in common? How are they different?
- You get to decide how to act
 - » *For example, while you may not be able to help getting exposed to the flu, you may control the risk and how you manage, if you do have the flu. Some things that may be under your control could be receiving a flu vaccination, eating foods high in nutrients, drinking lots of water, and using opportunities to rest.*
 - » *Healthy behaviors, such as getting enough sleep, can help you heal faster; while unhealthy behaviors, like binge watching TV until the middle of the night, could make you feel worse.*

Aspects of life that many people can control to feel healthier:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| • Sleep Routine | • Time Management | • Your Thoughts |
| • Work Life Balance | • Diet | • Exercise |



REFLECTING ON WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL HEALTHY

Give some thought to activities that make you feel more healthy or less healthy. List these below to figure out the activities you could do more often and the ones to avoid.

Activities that make me feel MORE healthy	Activities that make me feel LESS healthy

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO ACTIVITIES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL MORE HEALTHY

There may be things that make you feel healthy but may seem out of your reach. Think about any parts of the situation that you might have control over. These could feel like small or big things.

For instance, the only options in your budget at your work cafeteria are fried foods, and you don't feel energetic after eating lunch. You might feel stuck in that there are no affordable non-fried options. You brainstorm a few ideas. You could make extra dinner and bring leftovers for lunch, bring an orange and skip the fries to bring more of a balance to your lunch, or ask the manager to include affordable grilled or baked options.

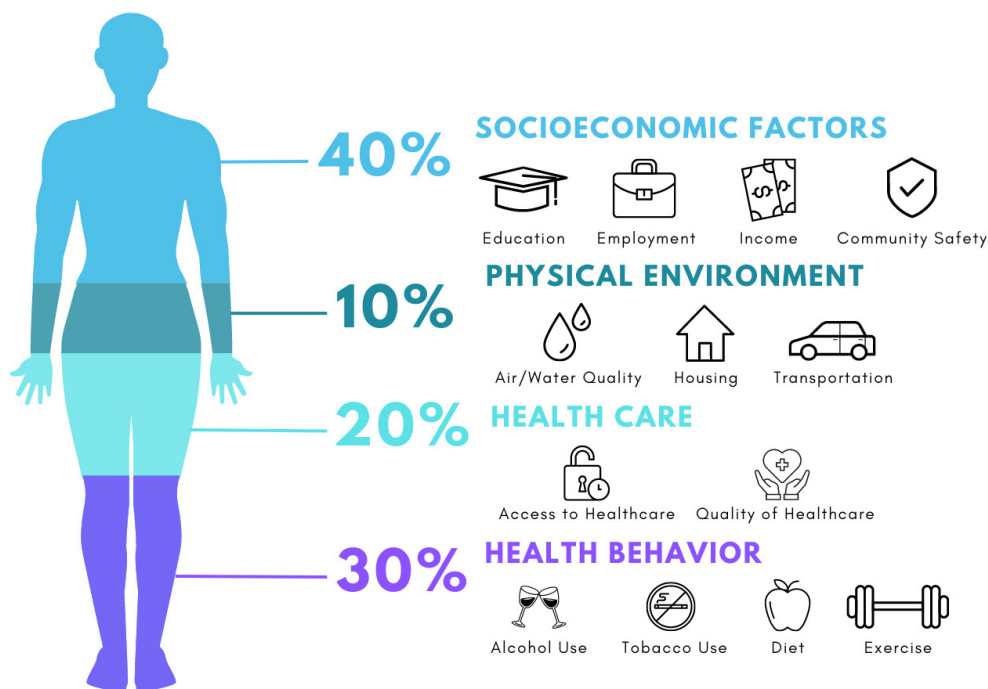
Another example could be the public space near you has no trees or greenery. You may not know where to even start to buy a tree and how to get it planted. However, one option may be looking into free trees offered by many cities.

In the left column below list things that may seem out of control but affect your health. In the right column consider possible solutions.

Things that seem out of my control	Things that could help the situation

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

- Your health is influenced by your choices and behaviors as well as things outside your control. A large part of your well-being is shaped by social drivers of health. Social drivers of health are factors in your life that are not directly related to medical/mental health treatment but can still affect your health. Things such as where you live, your access to education, the food you eat, and the support you get from friends and family are all considered social drivers of health.
- These factors can make it easier or harder for us to stay healthy.
- Many of these determinants of health are often **beyond your direct control**.
- The image below shows the impact of social drivers of health and health behaviors on your overall health.



“Health results from the choices that people are able to make in response to the options that they have.”

- Secretary Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020

LOOKING DEEPER AT SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

- *As an example, if the grocery store is 30 minutes away and requires a bus change, you may instead go to the corner store which is only a 5 minute walk. That would make it much harder to get fresh fruits and vegetables from the grocery store and you may end up relying on the packaged foods from the corner store.*
- As you're working on your well-being goals through this guide, you may run up against some of these social drivers. Understanding their influence on your health will help you identify and problem solve challenges you might face.
- Understanding that parts of your health are out of your direct control could help you feel less discouraged if you can't make the changes or don't see the results you wanted despite your best efforts.

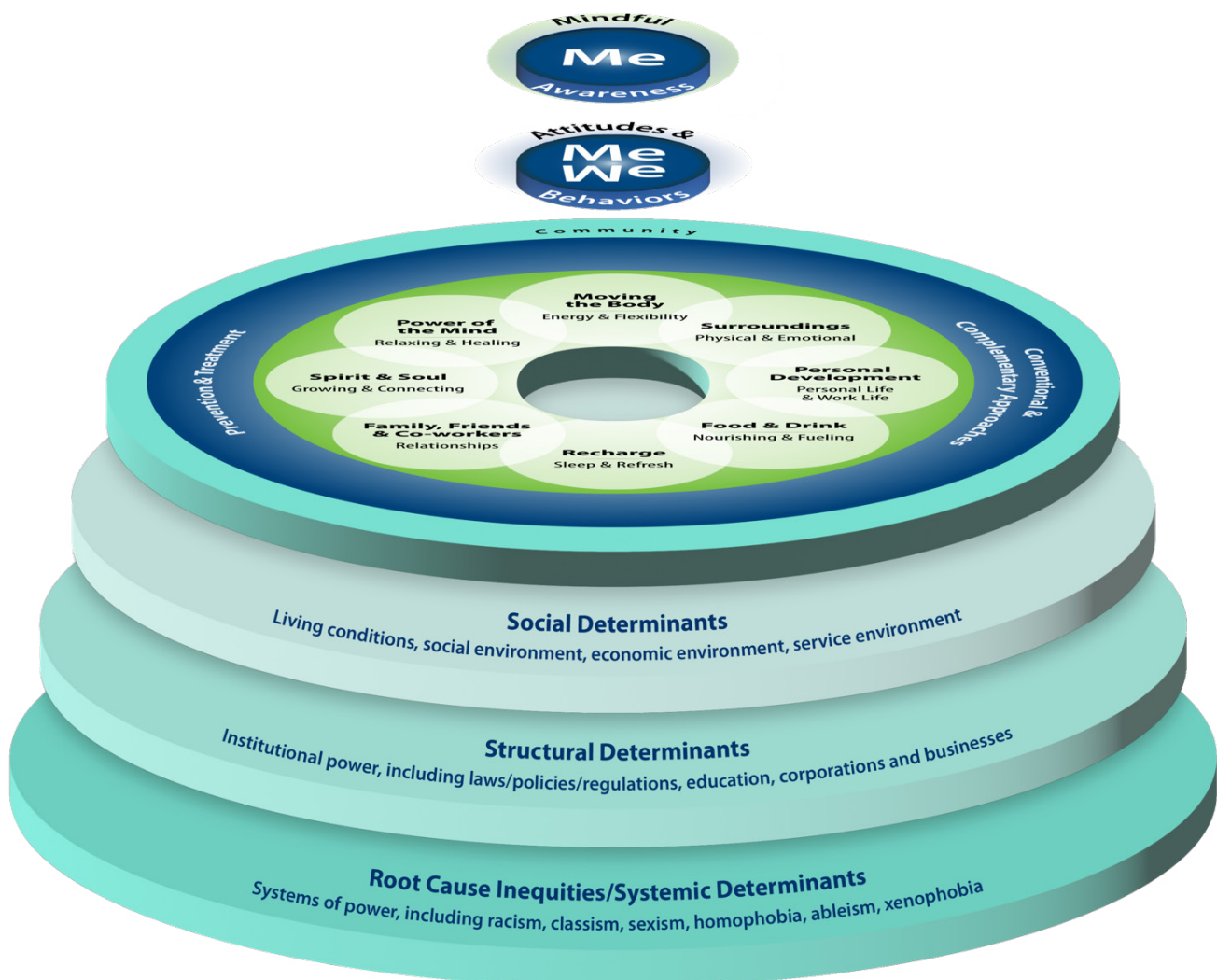


68%

OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCE AT LEAST ONE SOCIAL DRIVERS CHALLENGE AT ANY GIVEN TIME

UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMATIC FACTORS

- In addition to the social drivers, there are other factors or layers of barriers as shown in the model below. These barriers can range from laws and policies to issues such as racism, ageism, and sexism.
- *An example of this is racial housing segregation laws from the 1960s. These laws forced people from historically marginalized groups to live in communities that may have had more factories or landfills zoned to their neighborhoods. Their children and grandchildren still living in these neighborhoods may have more exposure to pollution, which increases their risk of developing conditions like asthma and cancer.*
- *Another example is that women in general experience more harassment and discrimination in the workplace than men. This may negatively affect their mental and physical health and hurt their careers as their contributions may be overlooked or they may eventually leave their job.*



UNDERSTANDING HOW SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH INFLUENCE HEALTH

You can work through the following example to apply what you've read:

- *Jaimie joined the military when he was 18 years old. After 8 years of service, he started life as a Veteran.*
- *Jaimie was looking for his first job but didn't know where to start based on his experience. While he excelled in his duties in the military, none of the jobs he looked into were the same as his MOS.*
- *Without a job, Jaimie was not able to pay his rent and worried about not having a place to live. He also gave up his cell phone to save money.*
- *To save on grocery bills Jaime was eating cheaper, fast food meals.*
- *Since leaving the military, he was not sleeping well and feeling more on edge. Jaimie wanted to visit a clinic to get a checkup, but he did not have a car and had trouble coordinating his care with his care manager without a phone.*

Think through the following questions:

1. In what ways is adjusting to civilian life affecting Jaimie's physical and mental health?
2. Can you identify specific social drivers that are influencing Jaimie's health in this scenario?

Here are a few determinants you could consider as you work through this scenario:

- » **Employment and Housing:** The lack of a job affects Jaimie's ability to afford housing, potentially leading him to being unhoused. This not only adds to his stress but also has other impacts on his health, such as exposing him to the weather and crime and limiting his access to food.
- » **Income and Diet:** The lack of income affects Jaimie's ability to eat nutritious food. This may worsen Jaimie's health.
- » **Transportation and Access to Healthcare:** Jaimie does not have access to transportation. This makes it hard for him since he wants to visit a clinic to get a medical checkup.

IDENTIFYING SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

As you work through the guide, you may also face challenges that may relate to social determinants of health. Recognizing these challenges is the first step to addressing them. You can always come back to this section and fill out the table below to help you track the challenges you have while working towards your health goals. The first row is provided as an example.

GOAL	CHALLENGE(S) ENCOUNTERED	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
Example: I want to be more physically active.	I'm having a hard time finding parks or walking trails near my home.	I can try physical activities like yoga or bodyweight exercises like push-ups and squats at home.

Remember, your health is impacted by your personal choices and things outside your control. Take charge of what is in your control, and work with your support network to address things outside of your control.

MAKING USE OF YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Sometimes, taking steps that benefit your health can be easier with the support of others.

How can your family and friends help support your healthy behaviors?

- Sharing the experience of trying a new health goal with friends and family could be fun. If the person with whom you choose to share your goal is also interested in working towards the same goal, you can motivate each other and share activities.
- A family member or friend may want to support you in reaching your health goal or join you in reaching one of their own goals. You can discuss each other's definition of health and take time to brainstorm ideas on how you can support each other's health goals.

How can your family and friends help you avoid less healthy activities?

- Family and friends can help you avoid less healthy behaviors you are trying to change by avoiding the behaviors themselves. For example, if you are trying to cut down smoking or drinking less healthy drinks like alcohol, energy drinks, or soda, they could avoid smoking or drinking around you.

Family and friends can support your health goals by:

- Listening to your concerns
- Giving you reminders for why you want to reach your goals
- Offering you emotional support and encouragement through your journey
- Helping you find solutions to barriers
- Joining you on your journey



WELLNESS TOOLS

UNDERSTANDING SELF-COMPASSION

Have you ever felt frustrated when things didn't go the way you had planned? Do you ever feel lonely, like you are the only one in the world making mistakes or experiencing difficult times?

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

MAKING MISTAKES IS PART OF BEING HUMAN.

- Self-compassion is being compassionate to yourself when you are suffering. It is treating yourself with the same compassion with which you would treat another person. No matter how hard you try to be perfect, part of being human is hitting rough patches or making mistakes. When you have these human moments, treat yourself with kindness.
- Self-compassion is not letting yourself “off the hook” but, instead, treating yourself with kindness as you face hard times and work towards fixing mistakes.

Let's look at an example: Tenisha had a hectic day at work and came home to two kids fighting. She yelled at her kids and felt bad afterward.

*Tenisha had **self-critical thoughts** and said self-critical things to her kids about the situation.*

- *Tenisha's **self-criticizing thoughts** - “I'm an awful mom. I told myself I wasn't going to yell at my kids; that's another thing I failed at.”*
- *Tenisha's **self-criticizing statements** to her kids - “I'm sorry I yelled at you. You have an awful mom.”*

*Now let's look at Tenisha using **self-compassionate thoughts** and words.*

- *Tenisha's **self-compassionate thoughts** - “Whoa, that is not the mom I want to be. I've had a really long day and need to recharge. I'll feel better if I change out of my work clothes and into a cozy sweater. It will let me focus better on the kids' needs. After the kids go to bed, I'll wind down with a hot cup of herbal tea.”*
- *Tenisha's **self-compassionate statements** to her kids - “I'm sorry that I yelled. I am still working on my mom skills. Next time I am upset, I will take a few deep breaths before reacting.”*

NOTICING DIFFERENCES IN TALKING TO A FRIEND AND YOURSELF

You are often kinder to your friends than you are to yourself. The next time you feel upset with yourself, ask what you might say to a friend in the same situation. Become your own friend! Do you think things about yourself that you wouldn't say to someone you care for?

Imagine a good friend is feeling badly about themselves. What would you say to show them that you care?

What words? _____

What tone? _____

What feelings? _____

Now imagine that you were in the same situation your friend was in above. How would you respond?

What words? _____

What tone? _____

What feelings? _____

Is there a difference?

What words? _____

What tone? _____

What feelings? _____

Why?

What would change if you talked to yourself the way you would to a friend?

REPHRASING CRITICIZING THOUGHTS TO COMPASSIONATE THOUGHTS

Everyone has criticizing thoughts sometimes. Reflect on some past criticizing thoughts you have had, and write them down in the first column. In the next column, try to reframe the criticizing thought to be kinder to yourself.

Example: Javier's back hurt much worse than usual, and he couldn't make it to his son's football game.

CRITICIZING THOUGHTS	COMPASSIONATE THOUGHTS
I'm worthless.	I am in a lot of pain, and my doctor said that if I don't take it easy on bad days I can hurt myself more.
I'm the worst father.	I'm a good dad who is having a hard time. I am doing the best that I can while in pain. I'm disappointed I can't be at the game, and that's okay.
My son thinks I don't care about him.	When my son comes home, I will tell him how much I love him and wish I could have been there. I'll ask him for a play by play.

KEEPING A SELF-COMPASSION JOURNAL

A self-compassion journal allows you to reflect on your experiences, emotions, and reactions in a safe and nonjudgmental space. It gives you a chance to think through difficult experiences and explore them with more depth and understanding.

When you write about a challenging experience, use kinder or more empathic words to describe yourself. This can change how you see things and make you less harsh on yourself.

Here's how you can start your own self-compassion journal:

1. Write down an experience that was challenging. Be as detailed as possible.
2. How did you feel during the experience? Sad? Angry? Write down the emotions.
3. Now, write down three things you could say to yourself in response to the difficult experience. These should be kind and supportive phrases, reminding yourself of your worth and value. For example, "I am doing the best I can," "I am not alone in this struggle," or "I am a good person having a hard time."
4. Next, reflect on the common humanity (everyone faces struggles) of the experience. Write down a phrase, such as, "I am not the only one who experiences these struggles"; "I am only human"; or "I am human, and it is okay to make mistakes."

The following is an example entry for a self-compassion journal:

Challenging Experience:

Today at work, I made a mistake with a customer's order. They got upset and yelled at me. I didn't know what to do and had to call my manager to handle the situation. I felt like I'd failed at a simple job that I've done so many times before.

Emotions:

I felt really embarrassed and frustrated with myself. I thought about it all day.

Kind and Supportive Phrases:

1. *I have the strength to learn from this experience and improve. I have overcome challenges in the past, and I will in the future.*
2. *I am a good person who made a mistake. I am skilled at customer service and great at sales. I deserve respect and understanding. Dealing with the upset customer was hard today.*

Reflection on Common Humanity:

All humans make mistakes. One of my co-workers messed up an order last week. I still value them as a coworker. Everyone makes mistakes, and we learn.

LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION

Loving-kindness meditation is a technique that can help you cultivate positive emotions such as love, kindness, and compassion towards yourself and others. You could do this activity before going to sleep every night or whenever you are encountering difficulties or disappointments in your daily life.

1. With your eyes closed and while you are in a comfortable position, silently repeat to yourself the following phrases (or your own similar phrases), one at a time:
 - “May I be happy.”
 - “May I be healthy.”
 - “May I be safe.”
 - “May I live with ease.”
2. Repeat each phrase several times, slowly and with intention, allowing the words to sink in and resonate with your heart.
3. As you repeat each phrase, try to create a sense of warmth and love towards yourself, as if you were sending yourself a gift of loving-kindness.
4. If you find it difficult to feel love and kindness towards yourself, you can visualize a time when someone expressed these feelings towards you. Or, you can imagine someone you know who radiates love and kindness and imagine that person is sending you “loving-kindness.”
5. When you’re ready, gently open your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and take a moment to notice how you feel. You may feel more relaxed, calm, and connected to yourself and others.
6. Repeat this practice daily, or as often as you like, to cultivate self-compassion and loving-kindness towards yourself and others. With regular practice, you may find that you become more resilient, compassionate, and loving towards yourself and others.

THINKING POSITIVELY

- Positive thinking is looking at the world optimistically. It's having a sense that everything will work out and expecting good things to happen. An example could be when it's raining thinking about how lush the grass and plants will look the next day.
- Being positive will not take away hardships but can help you to move forward.
- Thinking positively doesn't just sound good. Those who think and feel more positively are more creative when solving problems. Those who think good things will happen have better heart health and immune systems, less inflammation and longer lives.
- "Forcing" yourself to feel more positive can in fact backfire and lead to negative emotions. If you have a negative emotion, that's okay. Setting time aside to truly feel positive emotions or working on positive thinking is when you experience benefits.

You have some degree of control over your thoughts when facing difficult situations.

For example: Malia went out to dinner with friends. They laughed for hours and enjoyed delicious food. When she got to her car to go home, there was a truck blocking her, and she had to wait for 10 minutes before she could leave. Malia kept thinking about how this ruined her night. When she got home, her wife asked how the night went. Malia said the night was bad and explained how she had to wait 10 minutes to be able to leave the parking lot.

Now, let's imagine when Malia realized she wouldn't be able to leave the parking lot for a while. She gave herself a moment to think positively. She decided to use the time in the car in a way that was fun, so she called her cousin, Kai. When she got home, she told her wife all about her joyful night with friends and how she connected with Kai.

Think about a time when a situation was frustrating and positive thinking could have helped make the situation better. In the table below list the situation and positive thoughts you could have had in the situation.

SITUATION	POSITIVE THOUGHTS

RECONSTRUCTING POSITIVE THOUGHTS

Think about a time when something happened to you and you reacted negatively. How could you have reacted in a more positive way, and how would that have helped your situation?

SITUATION	NEGATIVE THOUGHT	ALTERNATIVE POSITIVE THOUGHT
Example: Flat tire before work.	Nothing good ever happens to me.	I was able to fix it/call emergency assistance.



THINKING IN SHADES OF GREY

Sometimes we can look at things, situations, or people as all good or all bad. This is called black and white thinking. Black and white thinking can let a small negative experience overshadow good experiences.

Example: Dan went out to the dog park with DeSean. It felt nice to be outside, watch the dogs play, and catch up. He felt closer to DeSean after the day. Dan asked DeSean if they wanted to come at the same time next week. DeSean said he wouldn't be able to make it. Dan's initial black and white response was, "He must really hate being here. He's not the close friend I thought he was." Alternatively, Dan could have given himself the chance to think of the "greys" in the situation, e.g., "Even though he can't make it next week, we had a great time today. Not everyone can make it every time."

Think about black and white thoughts. How can you add shades of grey?

Black and white thought	Shades of grey thought
Lia's physician told her that her cholesterol was higher. Lia immediately thinks to herself, "I will stop eating all desserts."	Lia's physician told her that her cholesterol was higher. Lia thinks to herself, "I'll limit desserts to Sunday dinners."

USING THIRD-PERSON PERSPECTIVE

It is easy to feel trapped in your problems and lose sight of the big picture. **Think about your struggle with another individual from a neutral person's point of view ("fly on the wall") who wants the best for both you and the other person.**

Write about something that bothered you recently. Use facts to describe the situation.

Example: My boss is giving me much more work and responsibility than others in similar positions. This makes me angry and feel like she is taking advantage of me.

Think about this situation as a third-party ("fly on the wall") who wants the best for all and who can see things from both sides. How might they see things differently?

Example: My boss has a high-priority project she needs my help with and trusts that I have the skills to get the job done right.

Using the third-party point of view can help with future conflict. What roadblocks might you face using an outsider's perspective in the future? What can you do to overcome those roadblocks?

Example: Roadblocks—When I get angry, it is hard for me to think about anything else. Overcome—Go for a walk to cool down, and think about what your third party might say.



REFLECTING ON YOUR STRENGTHS

Appreciating yourself is one way to practice positivity.

Take a few moments to think about the past week and your strengths. What did you do well? Write down some examples and details. Your strengths can be big or small.

For example: My partner and I enjoy hosting friends for dinner. When I walked into the kitchen after everyone had left and saw dishes everywhere, I thought to myself, "Challenge accepted." Being a gamer, I treated loading the dishwasher like a game of Tetris! When I placed the last dish in the space left exactly for it, I claimed my victory over the pile of dishes.

Remember, practicing positivity and appreciating yourself is an ongoing process. So, be kind and patient with yourself, and keep acknowledging your strengths and accomplishments regularly.

Practicing positivity can strengthen relationships when it's done with others. Below is an activity you can do with someone:

1. Reach out to a friend, family member, or colleague whom you think would be interested in participating in this activity. Explain the exercise and invite them to join you in this practice.
2. Take turns sharing the three strengths you appreciate about each other. Be specific and genuine.
3. After each person shares their appreciations, take a moment to reflect together on how these positive qualities have contributed to your lives. Highlight strengths of each other that you might not have noticed in yourselves.

For example, Theresa, Lola's mother-in-law, tells her how much she admires Lola's leadership skills as director of a major retail chain.

Committing to regular check-ins with others in this activity can be a great way to strengthen your relationships and uplift those around you.

REFLECTING ON PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is doing something even though it is hard. Facing obstacles can provide an opportunity to grow. **Write about a time when you learned from an obstacle.** This approach can help when you face other hardships.

Example: Joe's company is updating software and will let go anyone who does not learn the new software. He has heard from others that the software is hard to use and is worried that he will not be smart enough to learn it. A week after the training, he is still struggling, despite putting in many late nights. He is thinking about quitting his job, but really enjoys his work. Joe reminded himself that he has learned many new tasks since he first started at the company, some of which needed time and practice to learn. Remembering how he persevered in the past, he felt more determined to master the software. He kept taking careful notes and, after a week of staying late at work, the work got easier. Once again, his perseverance paid off.



UNDERSTANDING GRATITUDE

Gratitude has two parts:

1. Realizing that there is something good in your life.
2. Recognizing the source of the goodness outside of yourself (another person, an animal, a higher being, the universe, etc.).

Experiencing and expressing gratitude have several benefits, including better mental health; less worry; happier relationships; and improved sleep, heart health and immune systems, to name a few.

Remember, gratitude is not just for Thanksgiving!

One way to add moments of gratitude to your life is a gratitude journal.

- You can use a gratitude journal to note the things in your life for which you are grateful.
- Keep a notebook by your bed. At the end of the day, write down a few things that happened that day for which you're grateful.
- There is nothing too small to put down in the gratitude journal.

“Each day for the next week, write down 3 things for which you are grateful.

EXAMPLE:

1. *I had a nice conversation with my friend.*
2. *My coffee tasted good.*
3. *The weather was nice, and it looked beautiful outside.*

Place a notebook by your bed and write down things you are grateful for each night.

MAKING A GRATITUDE JAR

There are many simple ways you can express your gratitude towards your family and friends. From sending a quick text message to writing a letter. When you take the time to express gratitude, it not only makes the recipient feel appreciated and loved but also helps you to focus on the positive aspects of your relationship with them.

One way to express gratitude to your family and friends is through creating a gratitude jar:

1. Take a jar or container and personalize it if you like.
2. On a piece of paper write down one thing you're grateful for about your relationship partner(s), friends, or family member. It could be something small, like a kind word the said, or a task they performed (such as taking out the trash), or something big, like their emotional support during a crisis.
3. Place the folded paper in the jar.
4. Encourage your partner(s), family, and friends to add their own notes to the jar.
5. At the end of the week you can read the notes together or read some whenever you need a boost.

By expressing gratitude towards your partner(s), friends, and family, you can strengthen your connections and create a sense of appreciation and positivity in your relationships. This activity is a simple way to show your gratitude and encourage others to do the same.



MAKING A GRATITUDE VISIT

Pick a person:

Think of someone who did something for you for which you are grateful but never really told them. It could be a friend, colleague, or just about anyone. It may be someone you haven't seen in a while.

Plan a visit:

Try to meet with the person face to face. If that is not possible you can video call. Let the person know you have something to share, but don't let them know what it is.

What to write:

Start the letter with "Dear _____" and write a letter to them. Write exactly what the person did, why you are grateful, and how this action affected your life. If you haven't seen that person in a while, let them know what you are doing in your life now and how often you remember their actions. This can be a few sentences or a paragraph, but try to make it no longer than one page.

At the visit:

Tell the person you are grateful for them and you'd like to share a letter you wrote. Read the letter slowly, out loud to the person. Be open to their reaction.

At the end of the visit:

Remember to give them the letter.

Another way to include others in your gratitude practice is to make a point to say that you are thankful when you have the thought. This can be with your friends and family or other people you connect with each day. This can be for big or small things. For example, if you notice the bagger at the checkout line in the grocery store put your bread on the top of the bag to keep it from getting squashed, you could say, "Thanks for taking care of the bread."



DOING ACTS OF KINDNESS

Helping others can have a positive effect on yourself.

Describe an act of kindness you've done or want to do.

Act	Thoughts and Feelings
Donated blood during blood drive.	Wow, I can't believe that a pint of my blood could help save a life - leaves me in awe!
Holding a door open for someone carrying boxes.	It makes me feel nice to make someone's day easier.

CREATING A KINDNESS COMMUNITY

Involving others in doing acts of kindness can also help create a positive, enjoyable experience that can be both fulfilling and rewarding. It can form a sense of community, build a shared purpose, and create a ripple effect of kindness, with each act of kindness inspiring others to do the same.

Here are a few things you could try to involve others in acts of kindness:

- Volunteer by organizing a group of friends or family members to participate in volunteering events in your local community.
- Encourage friends and family members to engage in random acts of kindness with you throughout their day. This could involve leaving a nice note for someone or checking in with an older adult neighbor to help them around their house.
- Check out the random acts of kindness website for more ideas: <https://tinyurl.com/randomkind>*
- Join a social group focused on kindness. For example, you could connect with your local “The Mission Continues” to volunteer with Vets in your area.*
- Organize a charity fundraiser with friends or family to raise money for a cause that is important to you. This could be running a race, or hosting a bake sale, or even creating a fundraiser (e.g., on Facebook using this link: <https://www.facebook.com/fundraisers/> *

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UNDERSTANDING MINDFULNESS

- Mindfulness is being aware of the present moment. This can include awareness of feelings and senses.

Mindfulness encourages nonjudgmental awareness. This means seeing things as they are and observing—but not judging—your experiences. This includes yourself, your feelings, others, things, the weather, just to name a few. By not labeling things as good or bad, we become more open-minded and accepting.

Weather example: John is leaving for work, and it's raining:

John's judgmental thoughts: It's raining. What an awful day. Traffic is going to be backed up, and my morning will be ruined.

John's nonjudgmental thoughts: It's raining. The drops feel cool and wet on my skin. The air smells fresh. The raindrops sound rhythmic bouncing off my car.

- When you feel an uncomfortable emotion, don't avoid it. Instead, try to experience the feeling. Do not judge what you are feeling. Accept it, and then let it go.

Uncomfortable emotion example: Sophie is meditating for the first time.

Sophie's judgmental example: She notices her mind starts to wander. She feels frustrated (uncomfortable emotion) that she can't keep her mind clear. She starts to think she's a failure who can't even meditate right (judgmental thought). To make herself feel better she stops meditating and plays video games instead.

Sophie's nonjudgmental example: She notices her mind starts to wander. She feels frustrated (uncomfortable emotion) that she can't keep her mind clear. She thinks that her mind has wandered, and that she'll focus on her breath again. This happens a few more times, but Sophie is able to meet her goal of meditating for five minutes.

When you notice that you are judging yourself, having uncomfortable feelings, or other unhelpful emotions, jot down this situation and nonjudgmental thoughts about the situation.

Situation	Nonjudgmental thoughts
I'm in a very crowded stadium walking to my seat.	I am feeling anxious. I have no control over how many people are here. I can focus on my breathing until I get to my seat.

USING MINDFULNESS IN RELATIONSHIPS

- Practicing mindfulness in relationships with family and friends can strengthen bonds, increase understanding, and reduce conflict.
- How can you practice mindfulness in relationships with family and friends?
 - » Mindful communication: Practice active listening when talking with your family and friends. Active listening means being focused on the conversation without getting distracted by your thoughts or emotions and outside distractions, like the phone or TV. Avoid interrupting while the other person is talking.
 - » Nonjudgmental awareness: Avoid criticizing, blaming, or judging your family member or friend for their behavior. Instead, try to understand where they are coming from and accept them for who they are.

Example: You invite Uncle Joe to your house for Thanksgiving. He declines and says he will be camping with his partner instead.

Judgmental thought: *I can't believe Uncle Joe would rather be in the woods camping on Thanksgiving. Isn't it selfish to not be with his family on Thanksgiving?*

Nonjudgmental thought: *I'm sad that Uncle Joe won't be at the family Thanksgiving. I will miss his lively football commentary. But I know he is looking forward to camping with his partner.*

- Eat a mindful meal together, and discuss the food in detail rather than saying it was good (refer to the Eating Mindfully section).
- Go on a mindful outdoor walk (refer to the Walking Mindfully section), and describe the things you notice together.
- Practicing these ways of thinking and communicating can help you build more meaningful and positive relationships with your family and friends.



WALKING MINDFULLY

Mindful walking is a practice that combines movement and mindfulness, allowing you to bring your full attention to the present moment while engaging in walking. This activity can help you feel a sense of calm, improve focus, and be more aware of your surroundings. Follow these instructions to try mindful walking:

1. Find a peaceful and quiet environment for your mindful walking activity. This could be a park, a garden, your backyard, a beach, a community garden, or any natural setting that appeals to you.
2. Take a few moments to stand still and bring your awareness to your breath. Allow your body to relax and release any tension you might be holding.
3. Start walking at a comfortable pace and, as you walk, bring your attention to the movement of your legs, the shifting of your weight, and the contact of your feet with the ground. Bring awareness to your senses by noticing the feeling of the air on your skin, the sounds around you, and the scents in the environment. If your mind wanders, that's okay. Gently guide your attention back to the present moment and the experience of walking.
4. Bring your attention to your surroundings. Observe the beauty of nature, the colors, shapes, and textures. Take in the sounds of birds chirping, leaves rustling, or waves crashing. Feel the sun and breeze on your skin. Allow yourself to be fully immersed in the present moment.
5. When you feel ready, find a spot to stop walking. Take a moment to stand still, close your eyes, and observe how you feel physically and emotionally.



ENGAGING THE FIVE SENSES

The five senses activity helps you build awareness and presence by using each of your five senses. By focusing on what you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell in the present moment, you can connect with your surroundings. Follow these instructions to try the mindfulness five senses journey. This can be done as a daily practice, when you are walking to the bus stop, doing the dishes, need a break, or if you find yourself getting lost in worry. This tool can also help you enjoy the outdoors (refer to the Spending Time Outdoors section).

1. Pay attention to five things that you can see. Note their colors, textures, and shapes. Do you notice anything new that you that you haven't noticed before?
2. Notice four things that you can feel by touching them. You could think about how the chair feels to touch, how the floor feels on your feet. You may want to touch your coffee cup, a blanket, a tree, or anything else around you. Do you feel any pressure, warmth, or coolness on your hands or feet? Feel free to touch the textures that you noticed by sight a moment ago.
3. Notice three things you can hear. These could be things from your body like breathing or digestion or things around you like the distant sound of traffic. Try not to judge the sounds as good or bad—just notice them. Listen carefully. Are you hearing more sounds than before you started?
4. Notice two things you can smell. This could be food, your perfume or fabric softener, or the smell of plants if you are outside. Closing your eyes could help you sharpen your attention.
5. Notice one thing you can taste. Take a sip of your drink or take a small bite of food or ice. Is there an aftertaste in your mouth? Notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale to become more aware.

When you're finished, pause to notice how your body feels at that moment. Compare how you feel after the activity with how you felt before the activity—has anything changed?

If there are any sense you don't experience, adapt the activity to focus on the ones you do experience.

STARTING MEDITATION

Meditation is a helpful way to observe what you are feeling.

HOW TO MEDITATE:

- Sit with your legs crossed on the floor or with your back straight on a chair.
- Try to be in a relaxing environment without distractions like a TV or radio.
- Focus on one aspect of your breathing. This could be the air flowing out of your mouth, your stomach moving up or down, or something else.
- It is normal for your mind to wander! If you notice that your mind is wandering, that is okay! Shift your focus to your breathing again.
- Do not wrestle with your thoughts, though. If they arise, notice them, and turn your thoughts back to your breath, but don't react. Release them without judgment.
- When you are ready and your time is done, open your eyes slowly and pay attention to how you feel.



BREATHING INTO YOUR BELLY

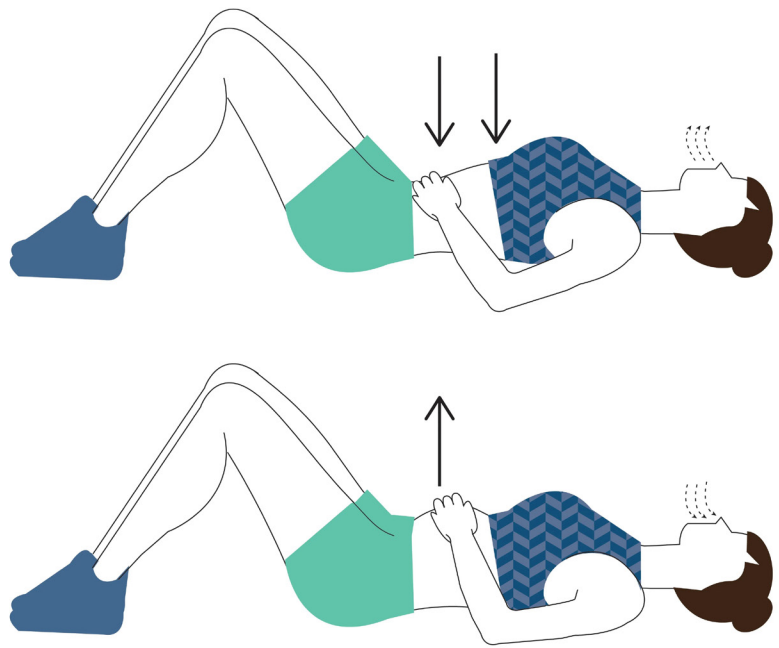
Belly breathing can help you let go of some of your tension in a short time.

Try this break when sitting in traffic or waiting in line at the grocery store.

- Gently, begin to breathe so that one hand on your stomach rises and falls with each inhale and exhale. (Pause for a few breaths...)
- Start by making one or two full exhalations that push air from the bottom of your lungs.
- Inhale through your nose and imagine filling up your stomach like a balloon fills up with air.
- Exhale and imagine the balloon letting go of air.
- If your stomach doesn't move very much, then your breathing is from your chest. If your stomach moves, you are breathing from your belly. You are breathing deeply.

QUICK EXERCISE

1. Place one hand on your stomach.
2. Place your other hand on your chest.
3. Breathe and notice which hand moves out the farthest.



REFLECTING ON WHAT RELAXES YOU

Relaxation can be done in many ways, such as meditating or taking your dog for a walk. Take some time and do the things that make you feel relaxed.

List what relaxes you below.

ACTIVITY	HOW LONG ACTIVITY TAKES	HOW ACTIVITY WILL BE DONE
Making homemade pasta and spicy marinara sauce.	1.5 hours	Saturday afternoon from 3:30 – 5:00 I will make angel hair pasta with a spicy marinara sauce.



KEEPING A TIME JOURNAL

Managing time well is important to make the most of your day, including doing the things you enjoy.

- We often don't realize how we use our time. The next pages have a time journal. In each box, enter what you do during that time of the day. Be as detailed as possible. For example, don't overlook time spent checking social media; 10-15 minutes about 5-6 times a day can add up! Also remember to be honest; be prepared to be surprised!
- This journal will help you see where your time goes. It could help you be more productive or find more time for enjoyable activities.

Let's look at Eddie's example.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
5pm	Drove home.	Drove home.	Drove home.
5:30pm	Talked to Henry in the driveway.	Heated up meal and ate.	Heated up dinner and ate.
6pm	Heated up meal and ate dinner. Monday night football. Dishes during commercial.	Did the dishes. Went to bowling league.	Scrolled on social media.
6:30 pm	Monday night football. Washed dishes during halftime.	Bowling	Scrolled on social media.
7pm	Monday night football.	Bowling	Started meal prep.
7:30pm	Monday night football.	Bowling	Meal prep.

You can use Eddie's example to create your own table. Starting from when you wake up to when you fall asleep; create entries for every thirty minutes of your day for a week.

REFLECTING ON TIME

1. After filling out the weekly activity journal, where do you find yourself spending the most time?

2. Are there things you feel that you spend too little or too much time doing?

3. How can you find more time for activities you like? How could you spend less time on activities that you find you are spending too much time on (whether you enjoy them or not)?

INCREASING ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY

What activities do you enjoy?

How often do you do these activities?

What activities would you like to do more of?

What activities have you wanted to try? Have you wanted to try something that someone else does?

- Find an activity you like to do.
- Let loose — being active is about having fun.
- It's okay if you are not great at it – it's about enjoying yourself, not training for the Olympics.
- Sometimes, goals can be easier and more fun to achieve when involving other people. Think of whom (if anyone) you might want to involve in some of your goals.

SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH OTHERS

Do you spend quality time with your family and friends? Is this time enjoyable for you? If not, what steps can you take?

Here are a few ideas:

1. Let your family member or friend know you'd like to spend time with them. This could be anything from going for a hike, cooking a meal together, playing games, or watching a movie. You could try new things together, such as taking a cooking class or going to a concert. Or you could do a fun thing you used to do, like carving a pumpkin or rejoining bowling league. Another option is to start a new tradition—such as a weekly game night or a monthly dinner date.
2. Once you have an idea of what activities both you and your family members or friends would enjoy, plan an activity that everyone will enjoy together.
3. Share the responsibilities of planning and preparing for the activity. This could involve dividing tasks such as choosing the location, bringing snacks, or setting up the activity.
4. Encourage everyone to participate in the activity, and make it enjoyable for everyone. For example, if you are playing a game, make sure everyone has a chance to participate and enjoy themselves.
5. When spending time with family and friends, try to be present and engaged. Put away distractions like phones.



ADDRESSING LONELINESS

If you feel lonely, you're not alone- 52% of Americans report feeling lonely.

Loneliness has a similar impact on your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. People who experience loneliness are at higher risk for diabetes, Alzheimer disease, heart disease and stroke.

If you'd like more connection and don't know where to start, head to your local store or coffee shop. Small talk with your cashier or barista can give you a connection boost and decrease feelings of loneliness. Additional ways to connect with others include:

- Reconnecting with other Veterans, friends, and family
- Volunteering
- Joining a book club
- Joining an adult sports league (flag football, bowling, pickle ball)
- Attending religious services
- Adopting a pet
- Connecting online

Keeping in touch with other Veterans, family members and friends could be a goal.

How do you feel after talking with a family member or friend?

How can you increase the time you spend with your family and friends?

DON'T KNOW HOW TO START A CONVERSATION?

Ask about something good that happened in your friend's day or tell your friend about a wellness tool you enjoy.

MOVING YOUR BODY

Moving your body can be a great way to relive stress and increase wellness. Often when we think of exercise we think of the spending time in the gym. This can be great if you enjoy going to the gym and have access to one. However, there are so many other ways to get your body moving. Talk with your health care professional about safety around exercising.

Ways to move your body

- Walking
- Swimming
- Taking the stairs
- Dancing
- Gardening
- Playing with your pets
- Doing yoga
- Using a desk bike
- Chair yoga
- Tai Chi



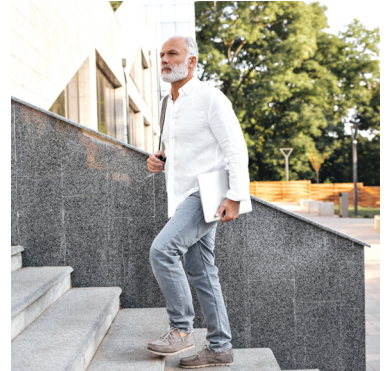
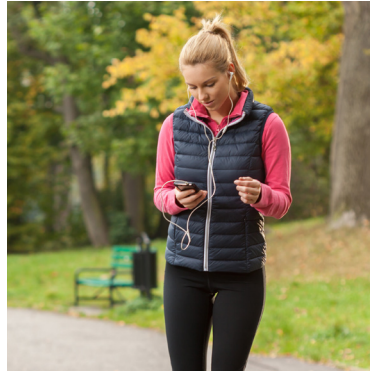
What are your favorite ways to move your body?

How do you feel after moving your body?

INCORPORATING MORE MOVEMENT IN YOUR DAY

Having difficulty fitting movement into your day? Try the tips below:

- Schedule time for movement.
- Use hand weights.
- Join an adult sports league.
- Ask coworkers to go on a walking meeting.
- It's okay to have smaller chunks of exercise throughout the day. Three 10-minute walks can be as good as one 30-minute walk.
- Listen to music while walking.
- Try chair yoga.
- Every little bit counts. Try taking the stairs or parking in a spot farther away.
- Don't overdo it. Going from couch potato to marathon runner overnight is not realistic.



Steps to take to fit movement into my day:

Sometimes, having a movement buddy (yes, your dog counts) or group helps with enjoying the activity and keeping you accountable. Brainstorm some ideas to exercise with a family, friends, or an interest group.

Don't know how to start? Check out Couch to 5k at www.c25k.com*

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LAUGHING

LAUGHTER IS A GOOD WAY TO FEEL MORE RELAXED!

It reduces stress, lowers pain, helps the immune system, and improves mood.

Want to laugh more?

- Play with a pet.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Call a friend to see if they have any silly stories to share.

Like a gratitude journal, you can keep a funny things journal. Write down three funny things that made you laugh that day. They can be things that happened that day or things you've remembered from the past.



SHARING A FUNNY STORY

Sharing a funny story can spark happiness, joy, and amusement. Laughing together with others can help boost your mood, relax, create positive memories, and build stronger relationships.

1. Think of something funny that has happened to you. It could be something recent that you took note of in your funny things journal or a story you remembered from your past. Choose a family member or friend whom you think would enjoy hearing the story.
2. Give your friend or family member (or multiple people) a call to share.
3. After sharing your story, ask them if they have a funny story to share as well.
4. Notice how you feel after the conversation. Consider making this a regular activity with your family member or friend to continue to strengthen your relationship.

Remember to have fun, be yourself, and enjoy the conversation! Sharing a funny story with a family member or friend is a fun way to connect with others, get a good laugh, and reduce stress.



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Getting 7-8 hours of sleep is the recommended time for sleep each night. Are you getting that amount of sleep?

- Sleep gives your body a chance to rest and prepare for the next day.
- During sleep, muscles in the body grow and are repaired.
- People who sleep for the recommended hours are able to accomplish more in the day.
- Getting a good amount of sleep can lead to fewer mistakes during work.
- Too little sleep is linked to many illnesses, such as heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke.
- Sleep can help lower cravings for unhealthy foods.



CREATING A SUCCESSFUL SLEEPING ENVIRONMENT

DOs:

- Get out of bed if you do not fall asleep within 15 minutes.
- Exercise, but during morning, midday, or early afternoon.
- Use the bed only for sleep and intimacy.
- Find a regular time to wake up.
- Stop using your phone 30 minutes before bed.

DON'Ts:

- Eat or drink anything that could keep you awake, such as soda or coffee.
- Use alcohol and nicotine before going to sleep.
- Take naps in late afternoon and evening.
- Eat big meals close to bedtime.
- Drink a lot of fluid before going to sleep.
- Lie in bed for a long time after you wake up.
- Eat, read, or watch TV in bed.

If you have trouble getting the sleep you need, then creating a successful sleep environment and routine can be helpful.

What does your bedtime look like now?

What changes would you make to make?

STARTING A BEDTIME ROUTINE

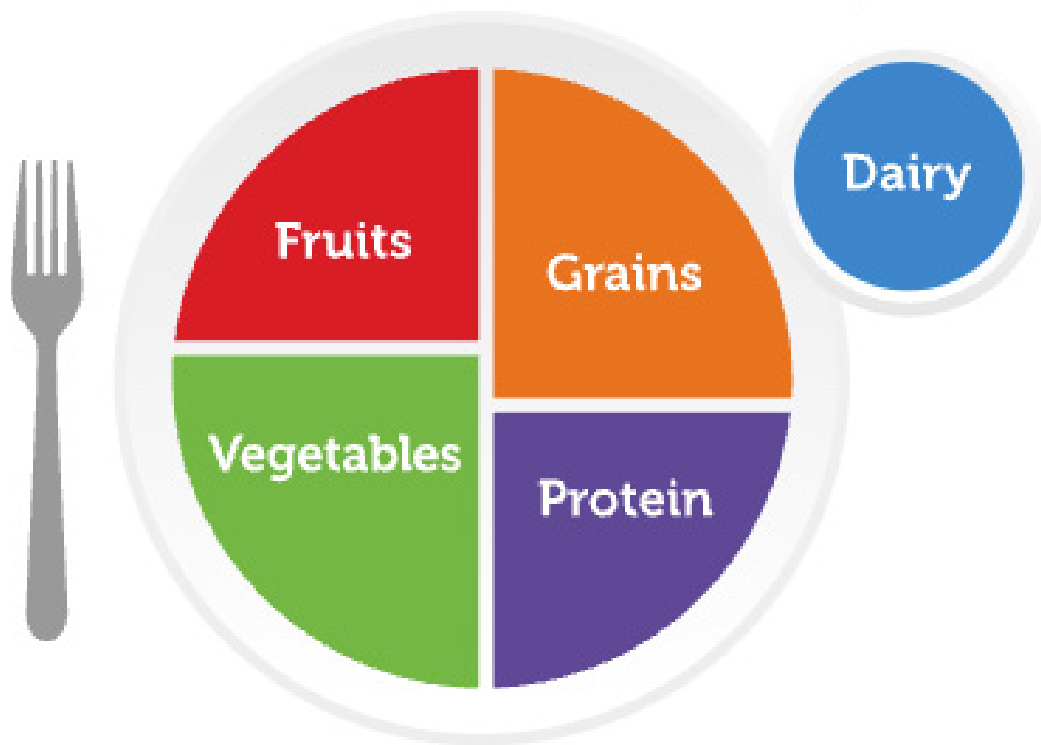
- Take a bath.
- Read a book before you sleep.
- Turn off the lights.
- Turn your phone on “do not disturb.”
- Put on your pajamas.
- Use lavender essential oil.
- Try behavioral/relaxation techniques to assist with physical and mental relaxation.
- Work with your bed partner. Creating a joint bedtime ritual for both of you could help strengthen your relationship, improve sleep quality, reduce stress and increase intimacy.
- Reflect on ways to improve your bedtime routine.

If you are having trouble sleeping despite keeping to a bedtime routine, talk with your healthcare professional.



EATING FOR VITALITY

- A diet that is not balanced can stress the body.
- Foods with a lot of sugar and salt put a person at more risk for diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Food also affects mood. Eating healthy is important to your overall well-being.
- Eating for vitality means eating foods that are nutritious and cutting down foods that may not support your mental and physical health.
- For more information on general nutrition and nutrition for specific health concerns, go to <https://www.nutrition.va.gov/>
- Look at the plate below to see how different foods can balance your plate.



EATING MINDFULLY

Mindful eating is eating with both attention and intention. You can get benefits such as stopping yourself from eating too much, managing your weight, and enjoying your food.

- Reduce distractions such as TV and mobile devices.
- Look at your plate. What colors do you see?
- Notice the smells before eating.
- When you take a bite, put your fork down and close your eyes.
- What tastes do you notice?
 - » Bitter
 - » Sweet
 - » Salty
 - » Sour
 - » Umami
- What textures do you notice?
 - » Creamy
 - » Lumpy
 - » Crunchy
 - » Gritty
 - » Crumbly
- Slowly chew your food. Pay attention to the experience.
- Ask yourself if you are still hungry—if you are still hungry, take another bite.



CREATING EATING ROUTINES

WHEN TO EAT

- Start your day off with breakfast.
- Avoid eating big meal before bedtime.
- Eat when you're hungry, not only because you are bored, sad, or worried.
- Set meal times, and eat at those times everyday.

WHAT TO EAT

- Eat the rainbow – add differently colored food to your meals.
- Swap soda for water – add lemon or mint for some flavor.
- Challenge yourself to eat for your vitality.

HOW TO EAT

- Limit distractions so you can focus on your food.
- Use a smaller plate or bowl.



EATING HEALTHIER TOGETHER

Support from family and friends can be valuable in eating in ways to support your vitality and achieving your goal of eating healthier meals. By having a support system in place, you are more likely to stay motivated and on track and make long-lasting changes. Try some of these ideas to eat healthier foods with family and friends:

- Involve your family in planning. Ensure everyone's preferences and dietary needs are taken into consideration. Plan meals together that include nutritious foods. This also makes sure everyone's preferences are included.
- Prepare and cook meals with family or friends to make healthy eating more fun. You can take turns experimenting with new recipes or cooking together to try healthier recipes.
- Plan social activities that revolve around healthy eating, such as a healthy cooking class, a farmers market visit, a healthy restaurant meal, or a healthy potluck with family and friends.



CREATING A RECIPE MAKEOVER

- Grill, bake, air fry, or sauté instead of frying.
- Substitute applesauce for butter while baking.
- Add more veggies.

CURRENT FAVORITE RECIPE UNHEALTHY INGREDIENT(S)	HEALTHIER VERSION

KEEPING A FOOD DIARY

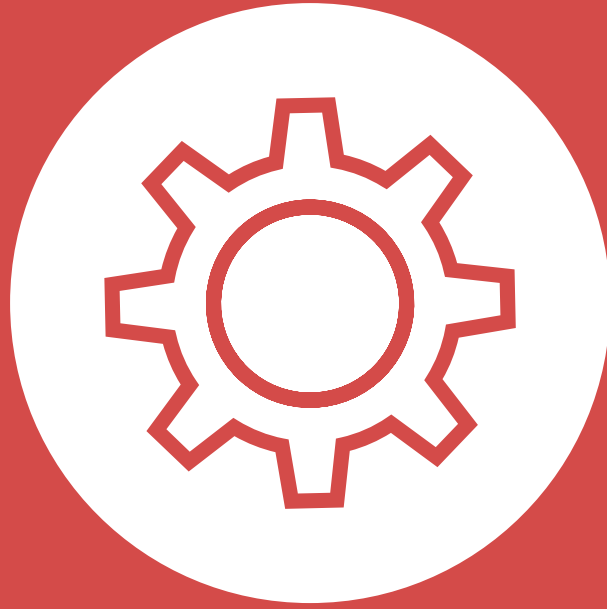
Writing down what you eat is a great way to see what you are eating in a day. After you complete your food diary, reflect on what you ate and if there are any changes you would like to make.

List the food that you eat for a week. Write down everything you eat, even a little snack between meals or beverages not with meals.

TIME	MON
Breakfast	2 large scrambled eggs, 2 strips of bacon, 6 oz of orange juice, 12 oz of coffee with 1 tablespoon half-half
Lunch	4 oz before hamburger, large fries, 32 oz soda, 4 double stuff Oreos
Dinner	8 oz meatloaf, 1 cup mashed potatoes with garlic and butter, 1 cup green beans, 4 double stuff Oreos
Snacks	2.75 oz Doritos, 6 double stuff Oreos
Drinks	2 12 oz sweetened ice tea

Reflect on how you can add foods to your diet that increase your vitality.

Example Reflection: I didn't realize how often I am eating cookies and drinking soda. I've been meaning to try sparkling water. I think I'll pick some up and some fruit to grab when I want something sweet.




MORE WELLNESS RESOURCES

VA APP RESOURCES

You can download these apps from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store.

	<p>MINDFULNESS COACH</p> <p>Learn mindfulness to reduce stress and improve emotional balance.</p>
	<p>ACT COACH APP</p> <p>Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) helps you live with unpleasant feelings and impulses without avoiding them or being controlled by them.</p>
	<p>AIMS for Anger Management</p> <p>AIMS is designed to help you with anger problems.</p>
	<p>Live Whole Health</p> <p>Learn skills to help you reach your whole health goals.</p>

	<p>MOVE! COACH APP</p> <p>This is a helpful weight loss app for Veterans, service members, their families, and those who want to lose weight.</p>
	<p>CBT-I COACH APP</p> <p>This app is for people who are participating in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia, with a health provider. It will help users learn about sleep, have positive sleep routines, and improve their sleep environments.</p>
	<p>INSOMNIA COACH</p> <p>Guided training and tips to help you track insomnia and improve sleep</p>
	<p>PTSD Coach</p> <p>Access tools, educational resources, and self-assessments to help manage the stresses of daily life with PTSD</p>
	<p>VetChange</p> <p>Develop healthier drinking habits using motivational tools, stress management techniques, and other support resources.</p>

VA DIGITAL RESOURCES

The Great Outdoors:

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/the-great-outdoors.asp>

This resource provides a detailed guide on how Veterans can engage with nature to benefit their mental health and well-being.



A Veteran's Guide To Talking With Kids About PTSD:

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/talking-with-kids-about-ptsd-guide.asp>

This is an honest and gentle guide in encouraging Veterans to consider their hopes and fears in talking with their kids about posttraumatic stress disorder.



The Veteran Parenting Toolkit:

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/VeteranParentingToolkit.asp>

Includes five sets of age-specific parenting materials for young Veteran parents and their partners.



Complementary & Alternative Approaches For Treating Headaches:

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16/complementary-and-alternative-approaches-to-treating-headaches.asp>

These videos and brochures explain complementary and alternative



Sleep Digital Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (dCBT-I):

<https://www.veterantraining.va.gov/insomnia/>

A digital course that teaches sleep skills for insomnia



FEELING OVERWHELMED?

Whatever's got you down — chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, or disturbing memories of your tour of duty — a specially trained responder can provide support day or night.



Chat <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat>



Text 838255

Crisis call, chat, and text are free, anonymous, confidential resources that are available to any Service member, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and any Veteran, even if you're not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. If you are concerned about another Veteran, you can contact the crisis line and ask them to contact that Veteran.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/

