



CHANGING MINDS

Coping Skills to Help You Live Mentally Well

- **Turn to Someone You Trust.** Sharing your thoughts with a trusted friend, family member, or mentor can be a huge relief. It can be a good idea to work through problems with the help of another person. Two heads (or more) are better than one.
- **Set Aside Some “Me” Time.** Even just a few minutes of “you” time—alone time when you turn off your phone, exercise, meditate, or listen to music can give you space and energy to help tackle stress or challenges later.
- **Overcome Negativity Through... Healthy Self-Talk.** Think of yourself as your own coach. Healthy, inner self-talk can help you see things from a different perspective and can give you a gigantic-sized boost to your confidence.
- **Lighten Your Load.** Hey, even Superman and Wonder Woman can't do everything... and neither can you. Keep track of your schedule and how you feel each day and figure out your optimal level of activity. Each day should be filled with a mix of busy, entertained, and challenged—but as soon as the word “overwhelmed” comes into the picture, it's time to rethink your schedule.
- **Write It Down.** Keep a notebook, a journal, or an app on your phone to jot down your thoughts whenever you feel like you need a different or better way to express yourself. You may find it helpful to write about your worries or even a bright idea and can be a great way to express yourself more creatively or confidentially.
- **Forgiveness.** You don't necessarily have to “forgive and forget.” But at least move on from hurt and anger. Whether you are angry at yourself or someone else, it doesn't help you to hold on to negative feelings like resentment—a huge burden to carry around every day.
- **Look at the Big Picture.** When you're stressed, ask yourself, “How important is this,” and “will this matter in the long run?” If you realize that it's not very important or won't matter in the longterm, it's probably not worth getting too stressed over it.

- **Talk it Out.** It's always a good idea to work on your communication skills. If you know how to communicate well about a problem, it will help prevent any potential conflict from escalating, and could help solve the cause of the problem or stress.
- **Know When to Walk Away.** Sometimes quitters do win. Quitting a situation that involves negative stress (a bad relationship, a mean boss at your third part time job) can be a great thing. Walking away can be a good thing, too. If you feel like you're getting too angry, put an end the conversation, take the time you need for some breathing room, and don't talk about it again until you are calm and ready.
- **Find a Hobby.** Creative outlets like listening to music, drawing, dancing, crocheting, or gardening are great ways to relax and relieve the stress of everyday life.
- **Look on the Bright Side.** Okay, so we should note that this isn't a "cure all." But optimism is like training your brain to learn to think positively about the future—even when things look like they can go wrong. You're not putting blinders on or pretending everything is fine when it isn't. You're simply looking ahead with hope instead of fear.
- **Set Goals.** Make those goals S.M.A.R.T—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and set up Timelines. And for goodness sake, make 'em fun!
- **Meditation and Relaxation.** Deep breathing and/or muscle relaxation are great ways to help reduce stress and induce mental relaxation.
- **Have a Mini “Stay-cation.”** Setting aside time each day, even if only a few minutes, to allow yourself to relax and escape the stress of life is important. It's like a private, mini vacation from everything going on around you.
- **Relax, Yo!** Taking time to relax is a great way to refocus your energy and your thoughts, especially when things look to be turning into overwhelming obstacles in your life.
- **Get Physical!** Exercising can provide some stress relief. Getting the heart rate up by taking part in physical activity causes the body to release endorphins (the body's "happy-feel-good" hormones).
- **Take Some Time to Read.** Escape from reality for a while by reading—a good book, your favorite gossip mag, or even an uplifting blog. Reading is a great way to destress, refocus, and take your mind off the ups and downs of life.
- **Spend Time with Friends.** Having good friends, a positive support system, who are willing to listen and support you through the good times and the bad times is an essential part of life.
- **Humor... ha ha ha!** A little humor can go a long way in helping lighten the mood during a stressful situation.
- **Spirituality.** It's not for everyone, but believing in a higher power can have mental health benefits. Several studies have shown that people who pray have better mental

health than those who do not. Even if you pray out loud to the universe can be a good thing.

- **Practice Gratitude.** Put away your focus on negative thoughts, and take at least a few minutes every day to identify things which you are thankful about. It could be as simple as the weather, a place to live, or a good friend.
- **Lions and Tigers and Bears... or Just a Regular Pet.** Taking care of a loved pet can help distract your mind from stress. Studies have shown that pets are a calming influence in people's lives.
- **Sleep it Off.** Your body needs at least 7-8 hours each night to rest and repair itself after a long and stressful day. Sleeping allows the body recharge so that it is ready to function at a high level the next day.
- **Healthy Eating.** Eating foods that are good for you improve your physical health and play a major role in your mental health. You get out of your body what you put in. When your body gets the proper nutrients, it is better able to function at a high level.