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### HEALTH INFORMATION

#### *Your Healthiest Self*

## Emotional Wellness Toolkit

En español

How you feel can affect your ability to carry out everyday activities, your relationships, and your overall mental health. How you react to your experiences and feelings can change over time. Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Flip each card below for checklists on how to improve your health in each area. Click on the images to read articles about each topic. You can also print the checklists separately or all together to share with others or as a reminder to yourself.

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### 6 strategies for improving your emotional health

Brighten your outlook

Reduce stress



People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Another sign of emotional wellness is being able to hold onto positive emotions longer and appreciate the good times.

To develop a more positive mindset:

- **Remember your good deeds.** Give yourself credit for the good things you do for others each day.
- **Forgive yourself.** Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from what went wrong, but don't dwell on it.
- **Spend more time with your friends.** Surround yourself with positive, healthy people.
- **Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.** Think about how to guide your life by the principles that are important to you.
- **Develop healthy physical habits.** Healthy eating, physical activity, and regular sleep can improve your physical and mental



Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high-alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

To help manage stress:

- **Get enough sleep.**
- **Exercise regularly.** Just 30 minutes a day of walking can boost mood and reduce stress.
- **Build a social support network.**
- **Set priorities.** Decide what must get done and what can wait. Say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload.
- **Think positive.** Note what you've accomplished at the end of the day, not what you've failed to do.
- **Try relaxation methods.** Mindfulness, meditation, yoga, or tai chi may help.
- **Seek help.** Talk to a mental health

health.

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professional if you feel unable to cope, have suicidal thoughts, or use drugs or alcohol to cope.

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## Get quality sleep



To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.

To get better quality sleep:

- Go to bed the same time each night and get up the same time each morning.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet, comfortable environment.
- Exercise daily (but not right before bedtime).

## Be mindful



The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what's happening in the present—of all that's going on inside and all that's happening around you. It means not living your life on "autopilot." Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.

To be more mindful:

- **Take some deep breaths.** Breathe in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.

- Limit the use of electronics before bed.
- Relax before bedtime. A warm bath or reading might help.
- Avoid alcohol and stimulants such as caffeine late in the day.
- Avoid nicotine.
- Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.

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- **Enjoy a stroll.** As you walk, notice your breath and the sights and sounds around you. As thoughts and worries enter your mind, note them but then return to the present.
- **Practice mindful eating.** Be aware of taste, textures, and flavors in each bite, and listen to your body when you are hungry and full.
- **Find mindfulness resources in your local community,** including yoga and meditation classes, mindfulness-based stress reduction programs, and books.

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## Cope with loss



When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to

## Strengthen social connections



Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and

help you through difficult times.

To help cope with loss:

- **Take care of yourself.** Try to eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. Avoid bad habits—like smoking or drinking alcohol—that can put your health at risk.
- **Talk to caring friends.** Let others know when you want to talk.
- **Find a grief support group.** It might help to talk with others who are also grieving.
- **Don't make major changes right away.** Wait a while before making big decisions like moving or changing jobs.
- **Talk to your doctor** if you're having trouble with everyday activities.
- **Consider additional support.** Sometimes short-term talk therapy can help.
- **Be patient.** Mourning takes time. It's common to have roller-coaster emotions for a while.

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well-being.

To build healthy support systems:

- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you're a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.

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## Want to learn more?

NIH scientists study how physical illness, mental health conditions, caregiving, sleep, and stress impact your emotional health and well-being. Read more resources from the NIH institutes advancing research in these areas.

[More resources about emotional wellness »](#)

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[About Your Healthiest Self](#)

**NIH Wellness Toolkits** highlight evidence-based tips for living well and improving your health. It's published by the [Office of Communications and Public Liaison](#) in the [NIH Office of the Director](#).

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