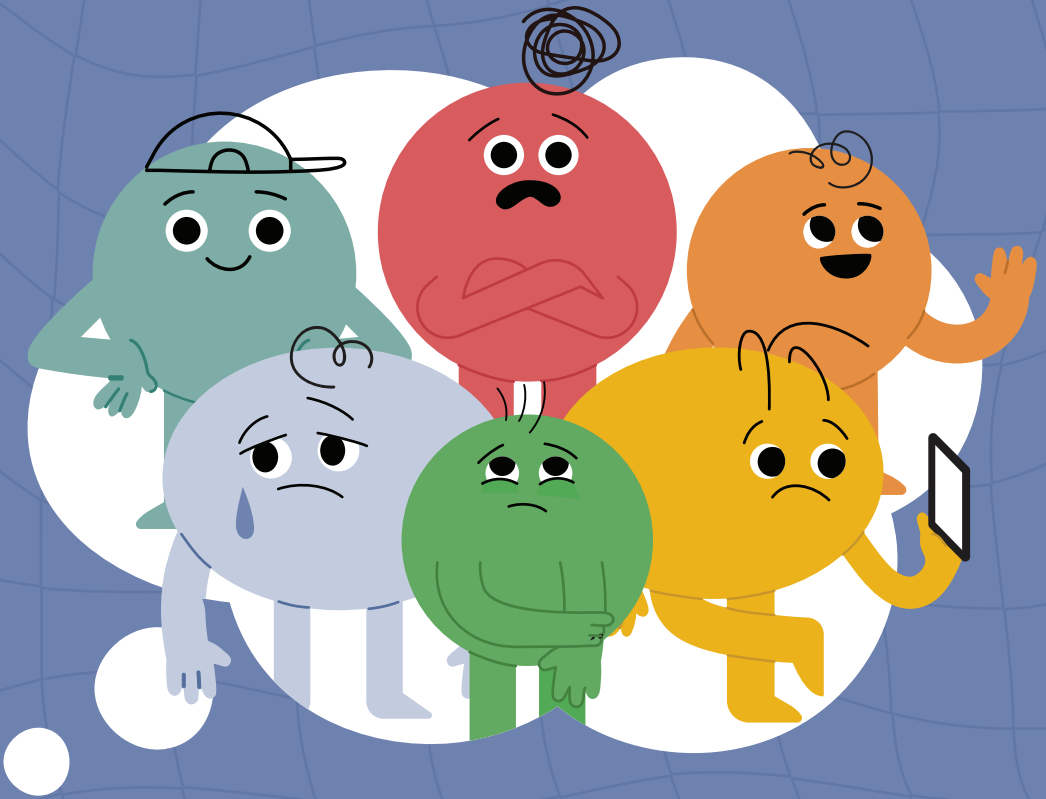




WHAT'S ON MY MIND

**A Teen's Guide to Thinking,
Feeling, and Figuring Things Out**

WELCOME

Welcome to What's On My Mind! This is your guide to thinking, feeling, and figuring things out in your own space.

If you're a teen today, there's probably a *lot* on your mind. School, friendships, family duties, extracurriculars, and more can all impact your mood and mental health. With everything going on, your mood might change a lot throughout the week, or even over an hour. That's totally normal.

But if the lows are extra low and happy feelings are fleeting, it's time to reach out to someone you trust and develop some coping strategies (more on those later).

That's what this guide is here for. You'll discover strategies for coping with intense feelings, so you can...

- Focus more on what is most important to you
- Enjoy more fulfilling relationships
- Feel less stressed

Unlike other books you might have read, there is no wrong way to go through this resource. You can start on any page. If you want to start at the back, go for it. If you want to skip around, get skippy. You might pass over some coping strategies that don't work for you and return to others several times. This book is all about figuring out what's best for your brain, so make it yours!

If anything you read or feel while working through this book gets too heavy, it's okay to take a break. You can also reach out to a trusted adult, a school counselor, or your doctor. You deserve support, and there are people who want to help. Being a teen can be tough, but it shouldn't feel hopeless. You've got this, and you don't have to do it alone.

Made possible thanks to a generous donation
from First International Bank & Trust through the
Sanford Health Foundation.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health has been a hot-button topic lately, so let's review the facts to make sure we're all on the same page.

Mental health is a general state of well-being that enables us to cope with life's ups and downs. Strong mental health helps us realize our abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to our communities.

MENTAL HEALTH: MYTH VS. REALITY

MYTH

"Mental health" and "mental illness" are the same thing.

People with mental illnesses are dangerous.

Asking for help with mental health is a sign of weakness.

It's easy to tell when someone is struggling with a mental illness.

REALITY

"Mental health" refers to a person's overall emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It's a part of everyone's life, whether they feel good or bad.

"Mental illness" is a broad term for a group of conditions that require a professional diagnosis. A mental illness can limit a person's ability to function, so it's important for a person with a mental illness to get help. Unlike mental health, not everyone has a mental illness.

Most people with mental illnesses are not violent or dangerous. Stereotyping people with mental illness can lead to stigma and discourage them from getting support.

Reaching out for help takes strength and courage. Everyone needs support sometimes.

Mental illness doesn't have a "look," and lots of people hide their struggles. That's why checking in on your friends and taking mental health seriously is important.

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WHAT'S A COPING STRATEGY?

You saw the words “coping strategies” in the introduction, and you’ll see them a lot more over the next sixty or so pages. But what exactly is a coping strategy? How does it work? Basically, a **coping strategy** is a method a person uses to manage stress and difficult situations.

There are two categories of coping strategies:
problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping.



A **problem-focused** coping strategy involves actively addressing the source of your stress. For example, if you’re stressed about an upcoming test, you could study extra hard so that you feel ready to tackle the exam when the time comes.



An **emotion-focused** coping strategy aims to regulate the emotions you feel during times of stress. Keeping with the test example, an emotion-based coping strategy might mean journaling about why you’re stressed. Are you worried about grades? College? Letting yourself down? Naming these feelings can help you tame them.

The coping strategies in this book are mostly emotion-focused strategies, such as breathing exercises and journaling activities. Some might feel a little funny at first, but give them a shot anyway — it never hurts to try! You might be surprised at what works for your unique brain.



Do you ever feel like it's you vs. your emotions? If you do, you're not alone. Everyone experiences stress sometimes, and **1 in 10 teens** today live with anxiety.

That doesn't mean that kids these days are doomed — anxiety *can* get better over time. The following pages are packed with information about stress and anxiety, coping strategies for dealing with both, and resources where you can learn more.

NAME IT TO TAME IT

While stress and anxiety can feel similar, they are different things. Understanding the differences between them can help you choose the right coping strategy to deal with how you're feeling.

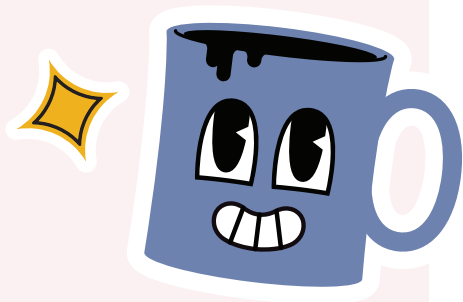
STRESS

Stress is when you feel worried or uncomfortable about a specific thing for a short time. Your body releases hormones to make you alert and ready to act.

Stress fades away after the thing you were stressed about is over.

It can feel like...

- A headache
- An upset stomach
- Tense muscles



ANXIETY

Anxiety is a fear or dread that does not go away when the stressor is absent.

While everyone feels anxious sometimes, "anxiety" is a specific medical diagnosis. Anxiety often requires treatment, usually in the form of therapy or medication.

It can lead to...

- Avoiding people, places, tasks, and feelings
- Difficulty managing worry, or feeling like your worries are spiraling out of control
- Frequent headaches/illnesses
- Inability to focus
- Irritability

NAME IT TO TAME IT

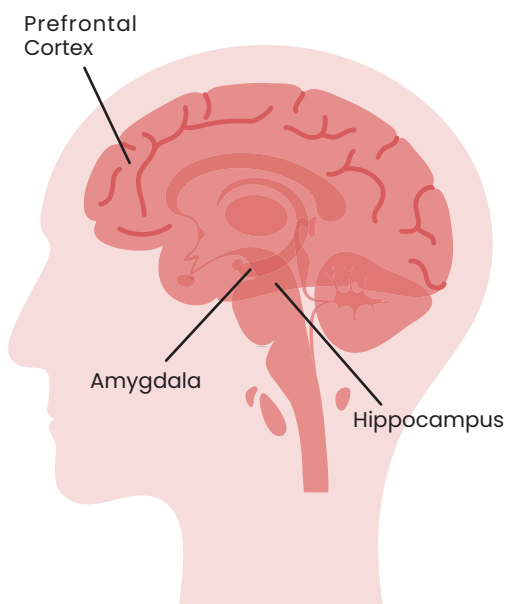
Want to learn more about how stress actually works inside the brain?

There are a few key areas of your brain that help handle stress.

AMYGDALA

Your amygdala works like a fire alarm. Its job is to alert you to danger, but like a fire alarm, it can't tell the difference between real danger and not-real danger.

When the amygdala takes over, it limits the prefrontal cortex's ability to function. Since your brain is focusing all of its energy on surviving, prefrontal processes like communication and logical reasoning decline. If you've ever noticed that it's hard to think clearly during times of extreme stress, that was your amygdala working.



PREFRONTAL CORTEX

The prefrontal cortex is your brain's control center and filter all in one. It helps you process complex information, make tough decisions, and regulate your attention to focus on things that matter.

HIPPOCAMPUS

The hippocampus helps us pump the brakes on our emotions and sends signals to the prefrontal cortex to help us return to normal brain functioning.

Whenever you encounter a high-stress situation, your body's first step is to calm the amygdala and get the front brain working again.

ANXIETY-FIGHTING ACTIVITIES

Shifting your mindset can calm feelings of anxiety. The next time you're feeling anxious, try one of these comforting activities:



Text or call
a trusted
friend



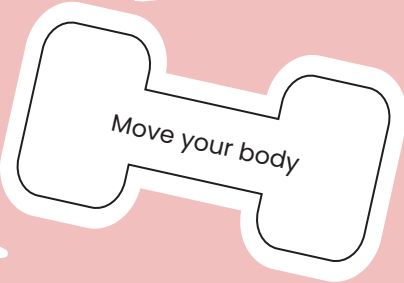
Go outside



Journal your
feelings



Try a breathing
exercise



Move your body



Take a social
media break



Listen to your
favorite music



Speak kindly
to yourself



Get cozy

WHAT TO DO IF ANXIETY TAKES OVER

Anxiety-fighting activities can make you feel better in the moment, but they're not always enough. If anxiety takes over your school, home, or social life, it might be time to talk to a therapist. Therapy can be intimidating, but it can also make a big difference in helping you feel better in the long run.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A FIRST THERAPY APPOINTMENT

At your first therapy session, you and your therapist will likely spend some time getting to know each other. You'll introduce yourselves, talk about your concerns, and start to set some goals for addressing those concerns.

If you're still feeling anxious about your first appointment or going to therapy in general, you can manage that anxiety with a few strategies.

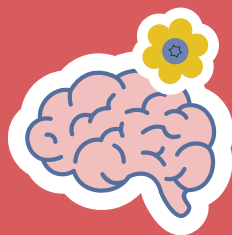
- 1 Prepare questions:** Jot down anything you're curious about so you feel more confident going in.
- 2 Practice mindfulness:** To calm your nerves, take a few deep breaths or try a meditation exercise before your session.
- 3 Know that it's okay to be nervous:** Try focusing on a sense of accomplishment — you're doing something really brave by taking care of yourself! You should also know that your therapist understands your nerves. They will understand if you're feeling a bit stressed, and they're there to help.

A FEW LAST REMINDERS:

- It's ok to tell your therapist you feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics if you don't feel ready.
- It's ok to ask about confidentiality: What will they share? Who will they share it with?
- It's ok to tell them preferences for activities, especially ones you don't like or don't think are helpful.
- It's ok to ask for a new therapist altogether — you might not click with the first person you meet with, but that doesn't mean you should give up!



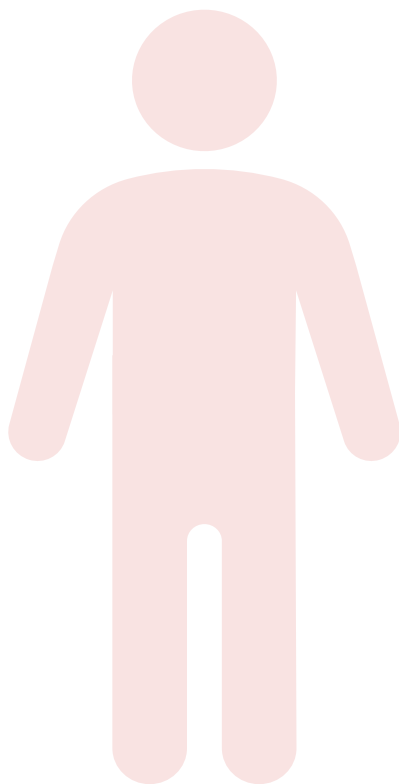
MY THOUGHTS MATTER



Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

What causes you stress or anxiety?

What physical sensations do you feel when you feel stressed or anxious?

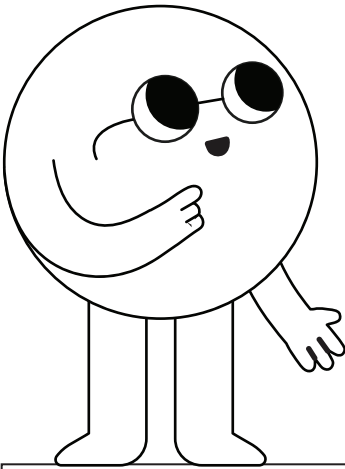


Who have you talked to about your stress or anxiety? If you haven't talked to anyone, why not?

MY THOUGHTS MATTER

Write down all the “clutter” in your head.

“Clutter” is all the stuff that sticks around in the back of your mind and makes you feel stressed or anxious when you think about it.



Pick a piece of clutter from above. What steps can you take to address the stress and anxiety?

BUILD THE TENSION, THEN LET IT GO

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a popular technique for reducing anxiety and stress that anyone can try.

When you feel anxious or stressed, you might tense your muscles without even realizing it. Practicing PMR can help your body recognize tension and release unnecessary stress.

HERE'S HOW TO DO IT:

- 1 Get cozy:** Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 2 Breathe deep:** Take a few slow, deep breaths to get into a calmer mindset.
- 3 Tense and relax different muscle groups:** As you tense and release your muscles, pay attention to how it feels to relax your body.
 - Toes: Curl your toes down as tightly as you can for 5–10 seconds. Release.
 - Feet: Flex your ankles up for 5–10 seconds. Release.
 - Legs: Squeeze your legs together and tighten your thigh muscles for 5–10 seconds. Release.
 - Abs: Create tension in your abs and hold for 5–10 seconds. Release.
 - Chest: Tighten your chest muscles by taking a deep breath in and holding it for 5–10 seconds. Breathe out slowly to release.
 - Shoulders: Draw your shoulders up to your ears and hold them there for 10 seconds. Release.
 - Arms: Clench your fists and flex your biceps for 5–10 seconds. Release.
 - Face: Squeeze your eyes shut and purse your lips for 5–10 seconds. You might look or feel a little silly, and that's okay. Release.
- 4 Focus on the feeling:** When you're done, take a moment to reflect, relax, and enjoy feeling a little more at ease.

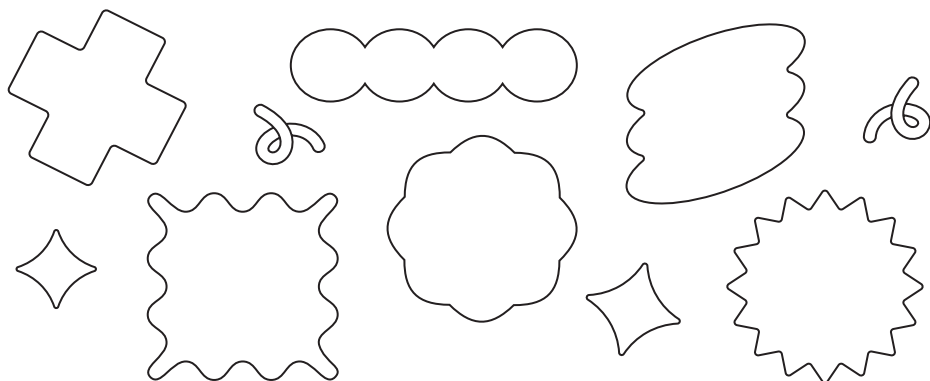
BREATHE IN, BREATHE OUT

GOOD VIBES

Trace the shapes below with your finger. The first time, breathe in.
The second time, breathe out. Repeat as needed to find your calm.

BONUS

Try tracing these same shapes on your palm or leg the next time you feel nervous. What's the difference between tracing on a piece of paper and tracing on your body?



HOW CAN BREATHING EXERCISES HELP?

A group of nerves around our diaphragm is connected to the hippocampus, which is why deep breathing can help stimulate this area of the brain and help us calm down.

Think of stress as the gas pedal in a car — it might make your heart beat faster or make you feel like your mind is going a million miles a minute.

Taking deep breaths can turn on your “brakes.” Sometimes it takes a little while for your brakes to turn on, and that’s okay. Doing a breathing exercise probably won’t fully take your emotions away, but it might help your mind slow down.

WHEN LIFE
GIVES YOU
LEMONS, IT'S
OKAY TO ASK
FOR HELP.

If stress or anxiety affects your daily life, please talk to someone you trust.

In a crisis? The 988 Lifeline is here to support you 24/7. Connect with a trained, caring counselor anytime by texting or calling 988, or chatting online at 988lifeline.org.

Remember: You can also text, call, or chat with the Lifeline for another person. If a friend or family member is experiencing a mental health crisis, other people can help you help them.

**SCAN THIS QR CODE TO
DISCOVER EXPERT-BACKED
RESOURCES FOR DEALING
WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY.**





Life is filled with ups and downs, but if the downs are extra low and the ups don't last, you might be experiencing depression.

The next few pages provide some tactics to try when you're feeling down. This book isn't meant to take the place of talking to a counselor or therapist, so please reach out to a trusted adult if you're feeling depressed. The weight of depression is heavy, but it's not something you have to carry alone. There is help, and there is hope.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

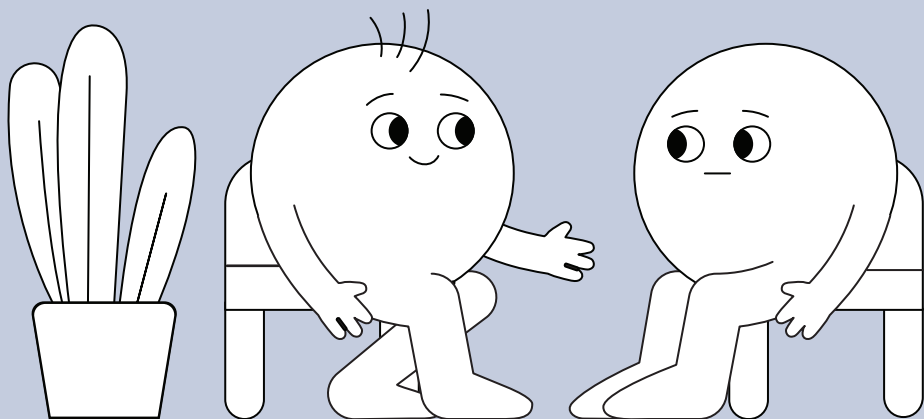
DEFINITION

Depression is tricky to define. Some people with depression feel very sad or hopeless, and many experience a loss of interest in normal activities or just feel like they don't have the energy to do them.

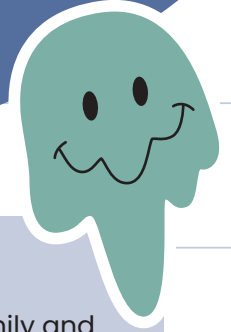
Other people may not identify as "sad" but notice feeling down. That can look like indifference, hopelessness, or irritability. No matter what depression looks like, it's important to get help.

THERE IS HELP. THERE IS HOPE.

You didn't choose or cause this. Depression is not a weakness or something that can be fixed by willpower. It is a serious mental health problem that often requires long-term treatment, usually in the form of therapy and/or medication.



DEPRESSION CAN LOOK LIKE...



Emotionally or physically
withdrawing from family
and friends

Fighting with family and
friends more than usual

Feeling that life and the
future are pointless

A sense of worthlessness
or guilt

Trouble thinking,
concentrating,
making decisions, and
remembering things

Thoughts of self-harm
or suicide

Sleeping too little or
sleeping too much

Use of alcohol or drugs
to cope with difficult
feelings



I THINK I'M DEPRESSED. NOW WHAT?



Talk to someone you trust.



Make an appointment to see a doctor or mental health professional. If making a call sounds overwhelming, ask a reliable adult for help.



If you're experiencing thoughts of self-harm or suicide or you need immediate support, call 988 or text TALK to 741741 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

WHAT IF I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER?

If you're worried that a friend or family member is struggling with depression, there are ways you can help.



Tell them
you care.



If it's another
teen, talk to an
adult you trust,
like a teacher or
guidance
counselor.



Remember:
You can always
reach out to
the Suicide and
Crisis Lifeline
on behalf of
another person.



MY THOUGHTS MATTER



Negative thoughts aren't just a buzzkill — they can also make you feel like there are no signs of positivity in your life. Make time to balance negativity by focusing on what's going well.

1. Each day of the week, write down one good thing that happened (adding more is a bonus!). It can be big or small, as long as it made you feel happy or hopeful.
2. Then, answer one or more of the following questions about what happened:
 - a. Why did it happen?
 - b. Why was it meaningful?
 - c. How can I experience more moments like this?

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

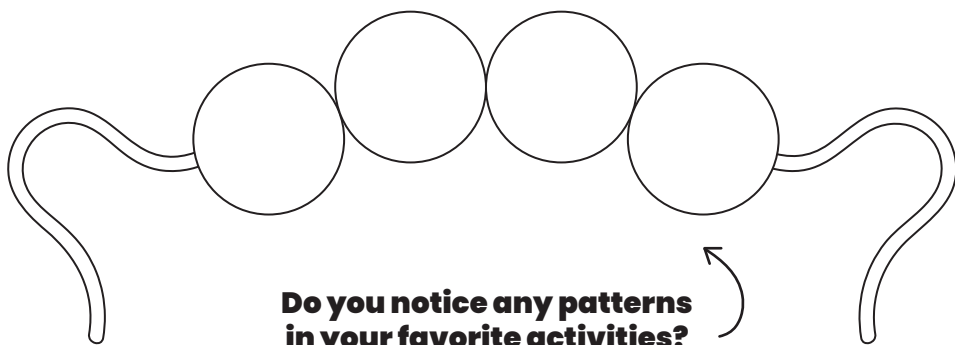
SUNDAY



MY THOUGHTS MATTER

Negative thoughts aren't just a buzzkill — they can also make you feel like there are no signs of positivity in your life. Make time to balance negativity by focusing on what's going well.

Take a moment to look through all of the good things that happened this week. Which stand out as a few of your favorites?



Who were your favorite people to spend time with?

Shoot them a text or give them a call to let them know you're thinking of them.

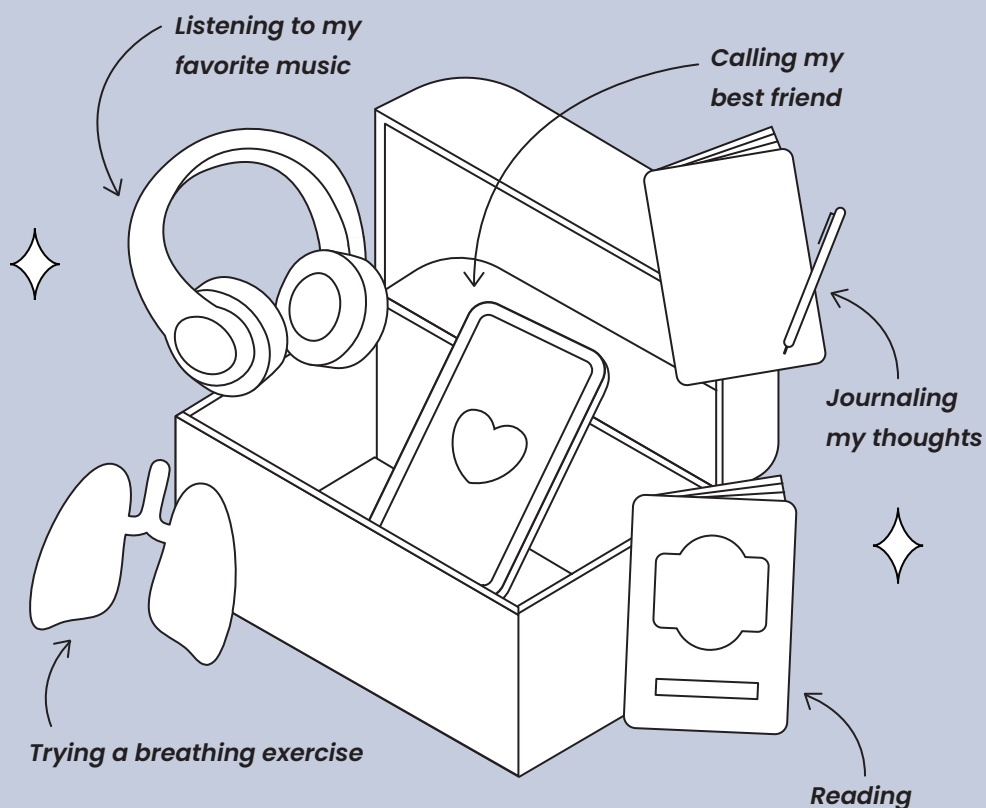
Where were you when good things happened?

Draw your favorite place in the box below.

What were you doing when you felt happiest?

Draw or describe it. How can you keep having experiences that make you feel good?

WHAT'S IN MY TOOLBOX?



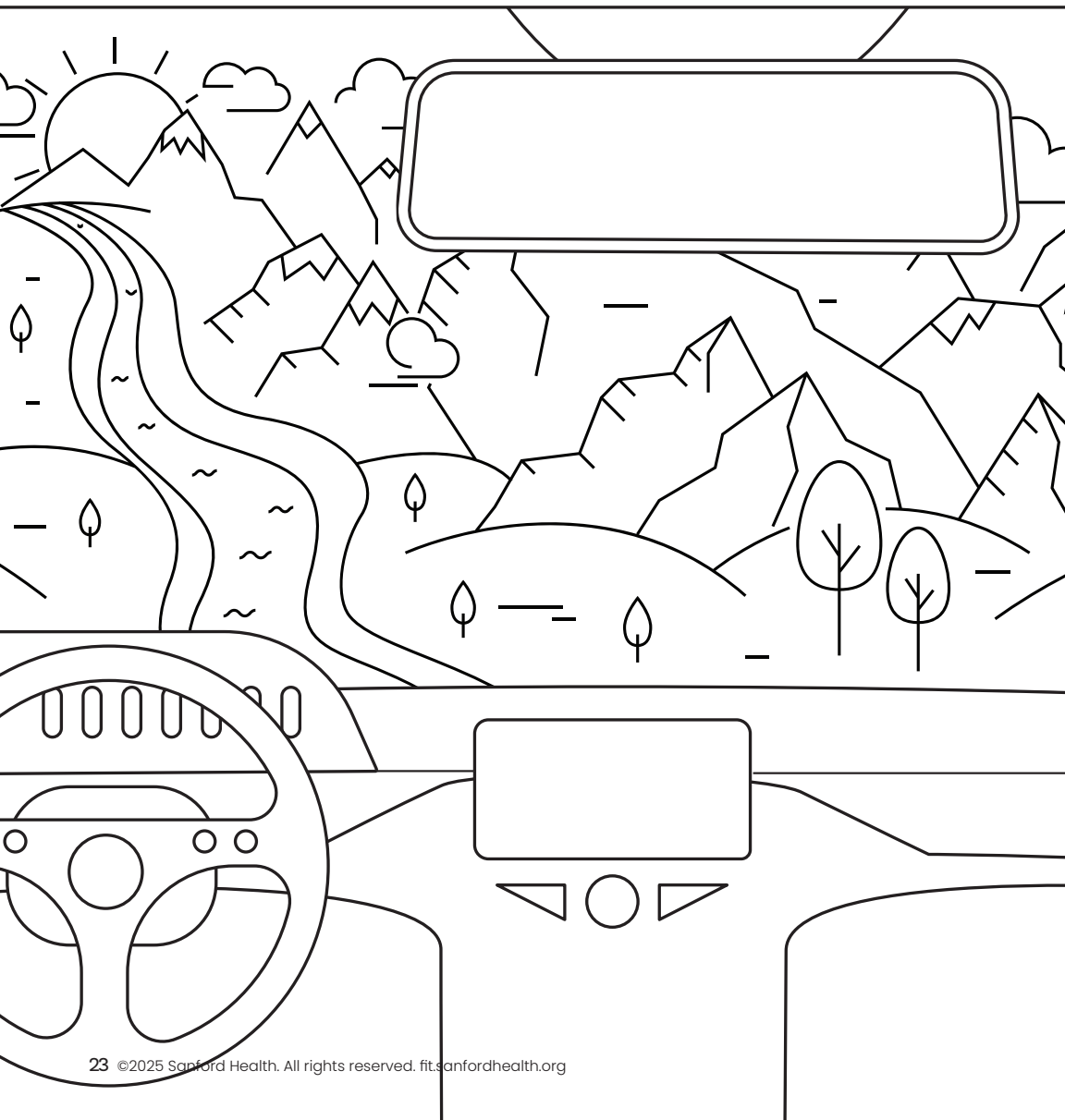
Maybe it sounds a little silly, but a “toolbox” is a great metaphor for mental health strategies.

There are so many tools we can use to protect our mental health and help us feel better when we're feeling down. Some are big tools that require professional help to use correctly — things like therapy and medication. Other tools are things you can pick up and use every day, like talking to the people you care about.

Take a moment to think about what's in your toolbox. What are a few things you do that reliably make you feel better? Circle or color them in.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

In the rearview mirror, write about something you've overcome in your life. It doesn't have to be a big thing, just something you're proud of facing and conquering. Then, take some time to color in the bright road ahead.



GROUNDING EXERCISE

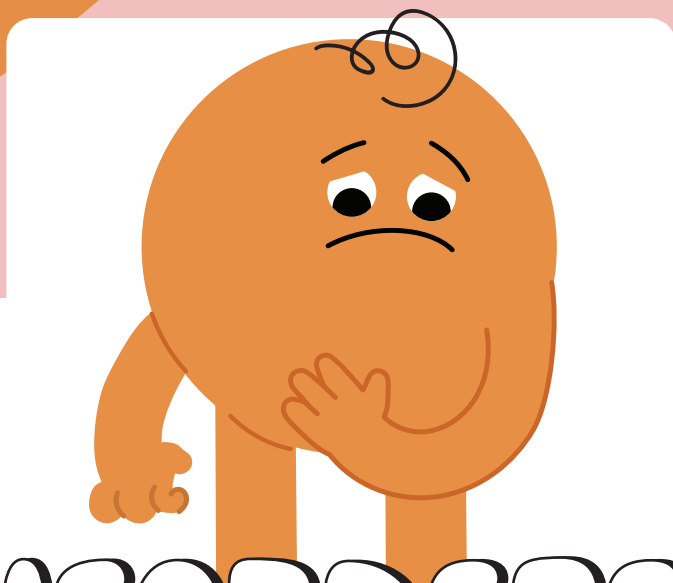
When you're feeling down, it can be helpful to center yourself in your physical surroundings. So-called "grounding exercises" bring your awareness to the present moment, helping you stop anxious thoughts and redirect your focus to your environment and senses.

Next time you feel yourself getting lost in anxious or depressing thoughts, try this classic grounding exercise while taking some slow, deep breaths:



**SCAN THIS QR CODE TO
DISCOVER EXPERT-BACKED
RESOURCES FOR DEALING
WITH DEPRESSION.**





DISORDERED EATING

Do you ever avoid eating because you're worried about your body or appearance? Do you sometimes feel like you eat too much or can't control your eating? Does worrying about your appearance take up a lot of your mental energy?

You're not alone — up to **1 in 5 teens** may struggle with disordered eating. You don't have to suffer alone, and you deserve to feel better.

EATING DISORDERS VS. DISORDERED EATING



Eating disorders and disordered eating sound similar, but there are important differences between the two. Both can cause distress, and both deserve to be taken seriously.

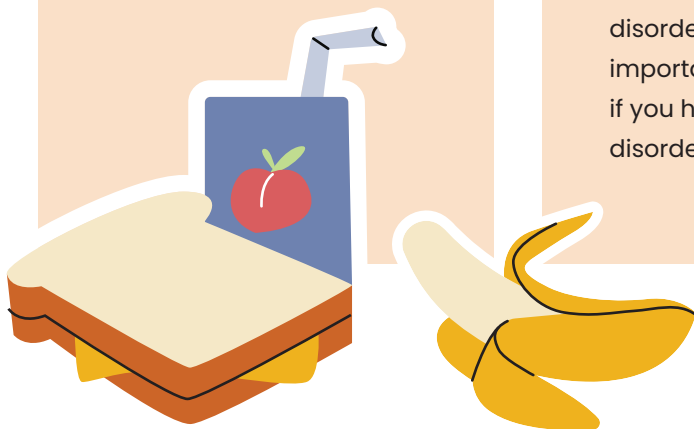
EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders are serious mental health problems that can be diagnosed by your doctor. These disorders often involve eating too much or too little food, which can lead to significant health concerns. They can even be fatal.

DISORDERED EATING

Disordered eating is a term for unhealthy eating patterns and feelings about food, health, and weight.

If a person has disordered eating habits, they don't necessarily have an eating disorder. However, disordered eating can turn into an eating disorder over time. It's important to get help now if you have symptoms of disordered eating.

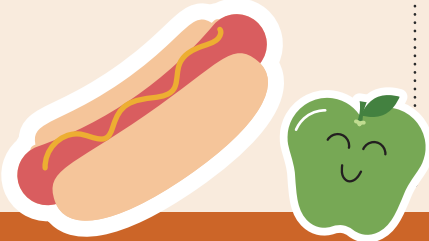


HOW DO EATING DISORDERS IMPACT BOYS AND GIRLS DIFFERENTLY?

Eating disorders are more common in women and girls than they are in men and boys, but any person of any gender — including people who don't fit within the traditional gender binary — can develop disordered eating habits or an eating disorder.

Eating disorders can look different for boys and girls because the messages boys and girls receive about their bodies are different. When the messages are different, the methods boys and girls use to get their desired body types are different, too.

DIFFERENT MESSAGES, DIFFERENT METHODS	BOYS	GIRLS
What message do they receive about their bodies?	Men should be muscular with very little body fat.	Women should be thin and have “curves” but not fat.
How do they try to achieve the “ideal” body?	• Working out constantly • Cutting out food groups • Starting fad diets • Trying steroids • Overusing supplements	• Working out constantly • Cutting out food groups • Starting fad diets • Cutting calories to below a healthy maintenance level



Not every boy or girl who develops disordered eating habits will look the same or use the specific methods listed above. Some boys might want to look very thin, and some girls might want to look very muscular. Still, it's important to know how eating disorders can manifest differently in boys and girls so that you can look out for yourself and your friends.



COMMON SYMPTOMS

Obsessing over calories
or the content of food

Having rigid food rules or labeling
foods as “good” or “bad”

Extreme fear of
gaining weight

Guilt for eating “bad” foods

Weighing yourself multiple times
a day or week

Constantly monitoring
your appearance



Skipping meals, avoiding
“bad” foods

Eliminating certain food
groups entirely



Exercising more than is recommended,
or feeling you have to exercise even
when you’re sick or exhausted

Exercising to “earn” or
“work off” food

Vomiting or using diet pills,
supplements, or laxatives to
change your weight

Eating large amounts of food
and feeling out of control



Being highly selective or “picky”
about eating, especially in ways
that cause health problems

Experiencing major changes or
fluctuations in your weight

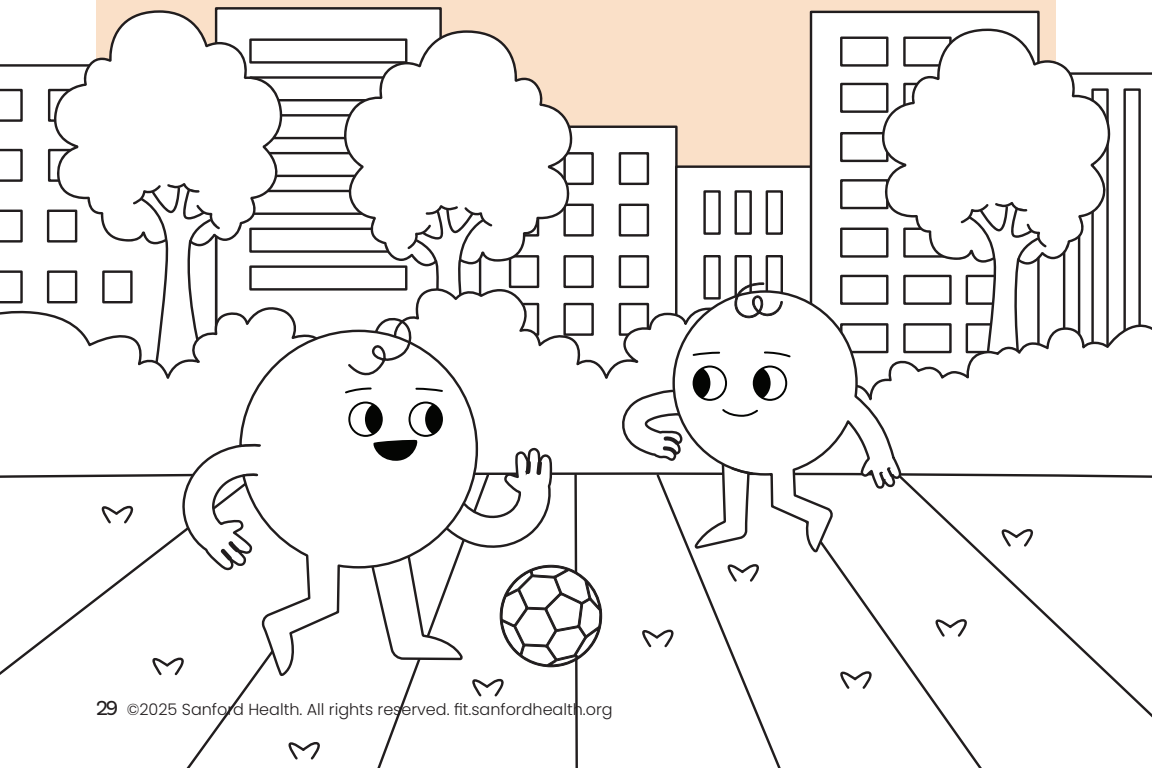
BODY APPRECIATION

Body appreciation is about acceptance, kindness, and respect — all the good things you and your body deserve.

BODY NEUTRALITY

A core part of body appreciation is **body neutrality**. Unlike body positivity, which focuses on celebrating and loving your body no matter its shape, size, color, sex, or ability, body neutrality focuses on objective statements about your body and what it can do.

To practice body neutrality, try trading out harmful thoughts with matter-of-fact ones. Instead of saying “I hate my body,” simply say, “This is my body.” Instead of “My legs are gross,” try “I have legs that help me play soccer.”



BODY NEUTRALITY STATEMENTS FOR ACCEPTANCE, KINDNESS, AND RESPECT

I am learning to care for
my body.

I am open to seeing my
body for all its abilities.

My body is
worthy of dignity
and respect.

My body and I are
on the same team.

My body is
allowed to
change.

My body does not
dictate my worth.

All bodies are different.

MY THOUGHTS MATTER

Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

List at least one thing that you appreciate about what your body can do.

Name three things your body does for you every day.

Imagine the day when you fully respect your body. What do you do on that day? How does it look different from a day in your life now? Do you feel differently? Do you behave differently?



"Speak to your body in a loving way. It's the only one you've got, it's your home, and it deserves your respect."

— Iskra Lawrence



MY THOUGHTS MATTER

Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

Imagine that your self-worth had nothing to do with your appearance. What attributes would you highlight about yourself instead?

List five things you like about yourself that have nothing to do with your physical appearance.

1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

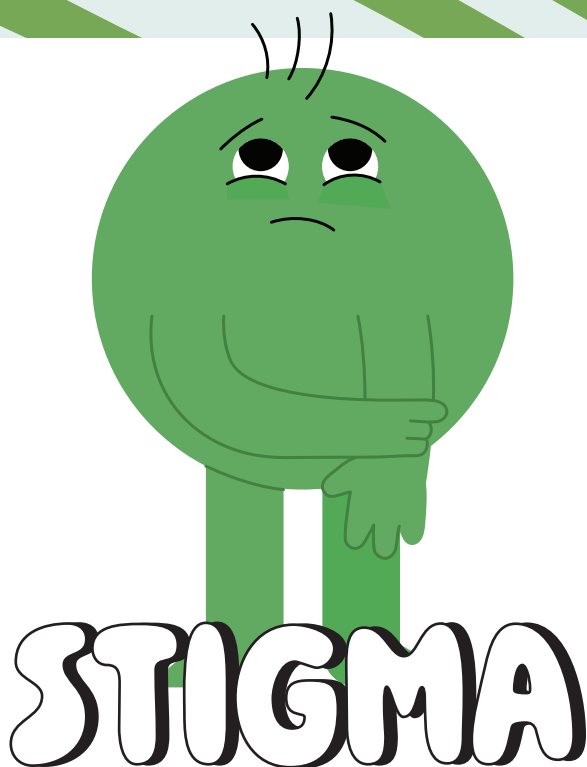


MIND OVER MESSAGE

Between television, movies, and social media, teens today get a ton of messages about what their bodies “should” look like.

Think about the messages you receive about bodies and where those messages are coming from. If a lot of negative messages are coming from the same source, it might be a good time to cut that source out of your life or scale it back.

 MESSAGE	 SOURCE	 HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS SOURCE TO MY LIFE? (rate on a scale of 1-5)	 CAN I CUT MYSELF OFF FROM THIS SOURCE?
(Example) My stomach should be flat.	Instagram	3	No, but I can limit my time on Instagram.



Have feelings of embarrassment or fear ever kept you from sharing your truth or seeking help? For so many of us, the answer is yes. Overcoming stigma isn't easy, but your feelings are valid. You deserve support, because mental health is health.

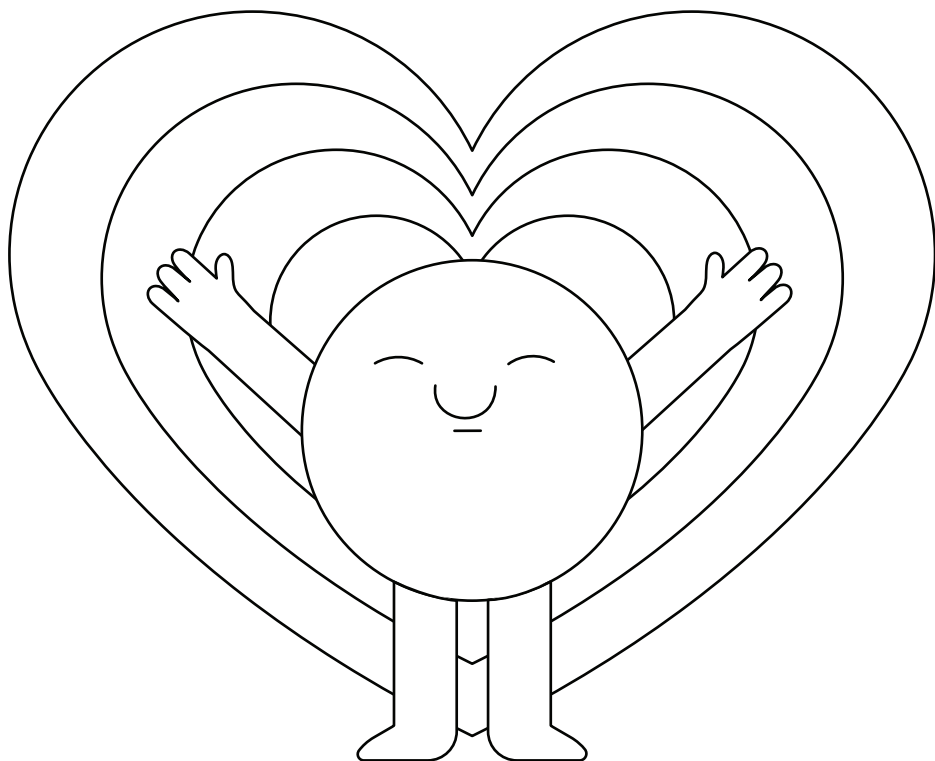
The following pages discuss stigma, dispel some common myths about mental health, and provide some helpful coping strategies for dealing with negative perceptions of mental illness. Remember: You are not your label.

STOP THE STIGMA

WHAT IS STIGMA?

DEFINITION

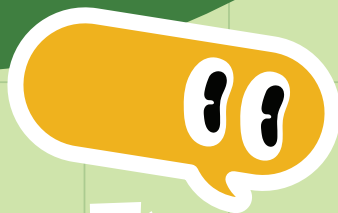
Stigma is the belief that an action or condition is shameful. Stigma can make someone judge themselves or other people for being different. It can also make people avoid talking or learning about taboo topics, including mental health.



In my self-care era.

STIGMA ISN'T FACT

Statements like the ones below are deeply ingrained in our culture, but that doesn't mean they're true.



**What do you mean, you “can’t get out of bed?”
It’s not like your legs aren’t working.**

Severe depression can make it difficult to do simple tasks, including getting out of bed.

Let me guess: Someone on social media made you believe you have anxiety

Your anxiety isn't in your head. Social media can lead to important conversations and realizations about mental health, but it's also important to talk to a professional if you think you have anxiety or depression.

She’s crazy, but all women are a bit psycho.

This is an example of a harmful sexist stereotype. Statements like these aim to minimize women's feelings.



Words matter. Derogatory words for mental illnesses feed the stigma surrounding mental health. Words like “crazy,” “psycho,” and “insane” can be harmful, even in casual conversation.



Toughen up — boys don't cry.

Like the last statement, the idea that “boys don’t cry” is a sexist stereotype. Everyone cries sometimes, and it’s perfectly normal and healthy for men and boys to cry, too.

Can't you just suck it up and smile? No one likes a whiner.

Your feelings are valid, and it’s important to work through them at your own pace. A “fake it ‘til you make it” mindset around mental illness can be harmful in the long run.

Teenagers can't have mental illness; what do they have to worry about?

Being a teenager is hard. It just is. Feeling stressed about puberty, school work, friendships, and romantic relationships is normal, and the feelings you have are real. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.

Therapy and self-care are silly.

Therapy and self-care are important, sometimes lifesaving tools for addressing mental health. There is no shame in using all the tools in your mental health toolbox.

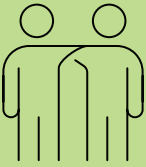
No one had anxiety or depression when I was a kid.



Mental illnesses like anxiety and depression have been around for a long, long time. Just because people are discussing these topics more openly nowadays doesn’t mean they weren’t around a few decades ago.

COPING WITH STIGMA

If you're dealing with a mental illness or a lot of stress, it's a good idea to lean on your people and reach out for support. Here are a few tips for coping with stigma.



Stay close to your people

Reach out to people you trust. They care about you and want to help.



Lose the label

If you've been diagnosed with a mental illness, remember that you are not your condition.



Ask for help

Don't let the fear of being labeled or judged keep you from getting the support you deserve.



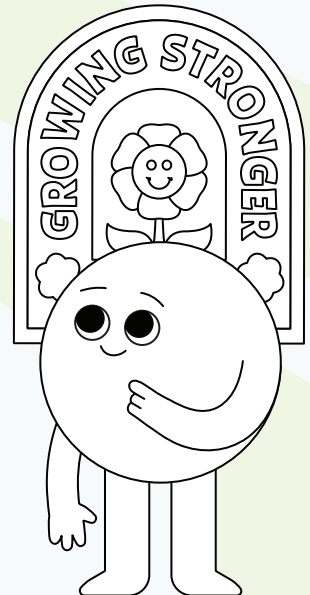
Speak out

If you feel comfortable sharing, teach others about your condition. Tell people how common it is, how it affects your daily life, and how they can support you.



Know your worth

Your condition is not a sign of weakness or something you should be able to control without help. It's okay to ask for help.



MY THOUGHTS MATTER



Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

**Everyone feels misunderstood sometimes.
What do you wish others knew about you?**

Who makes you feel safe?

Circle the people you can go to for support.

MY THOUGHTS MATTER



Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

It can be helpful to focus on the positives when life gets tough. List some of the bright spots in your life that you want to remember during a hard time.

Bonus: Add some illustrations!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



LET'S BREAK IT DOWN

Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

What do you worry about?

Circle one that you want to focus on.

How likely is it that this worry will come true?

Provide examples and evidence to support your answer.

If your worry does come true, what could you do to cope?

What would you say to a friend who was having the same thoughts as you?



REPEAT AFTER ME: MENTAL HEALTH MANTRAS



Negative thoughts creeping in? Stop, drop, and speak kindly to yourself.

I choose friends who
bring out the best in me.

I am true to myself, no
matter what others think.

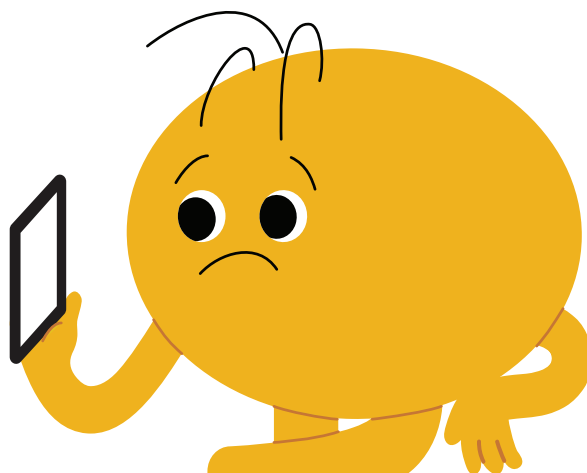
I deserve love,
happiness,
and inner
peace.

I learn from my
mistakes and use
them as valuable
lessons.

I am in control
of my thoughts
and emotions.

I am strong enough to resist harmful influences.

I am bigger than
this feeling,
and I know that
it will pass.



SOCIAL MEDIA

So many of today's social interactions happen on the internet. With billions of people logging on each day, you may feel a lot of pressure to keep up with what's happening online.

Remember: It's important to take breaks and reconnect with people face-to-face. If you ever feel unsafe on social media or feel like social media is taking a toll on your mental health, it's probably a good idea to log off for a little while.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

SHARE

LIKE

FOLLOW

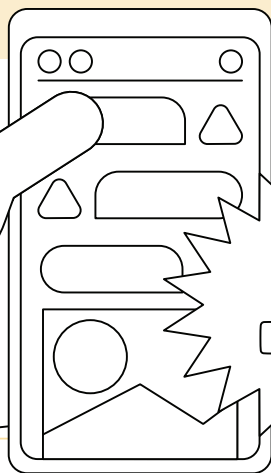
If you're a teenager navigating life today, there's a good chance you're already a bit of an expert when it comes to social media — up to 95% of teens in the U.S. report using at least one social media platform.*

But just to make sure we're all on the same page, here's a quick definition: **Social media** refers to websites and apps that allow users to create and share content.

The good news is that there are healthy ways to use social media. After all, social media can be a great place to expand your social network, communicate with friends and family across the world, and share your creativity.

The not-so-good news is that there are also risks to consider when using social media. Using social media too much, comparing your life to the “perfect” lives you see on screen, or relying solely on social media to build relationships can negatively impact your mental health.

* Source: Pew Research Center



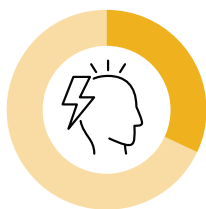
NEW
POST!

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE

Spending too much time on social media doesn't just take time away from building personal relationships and pursuing your passions — it can actually distort your view of reality and your view of yourself.

Scrolling through endless pictures of “perfect” (that is, highly curated and often staged) lives may lead you to believe that everyone else has life all figured out, but that's not the case. People can edit away their imperfections, and they don't tend to share the negative parts of their lives.

Remember that you don't have the full picture of everyone's picture-perfect life. Take what you see with a grain of salt, and take a break from the screen when you need one.



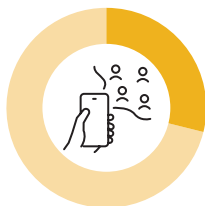
32% of teens say social media has had a mostly negative impact on people their age.



38% of teens say that what they see on social media makes them feel overwhelmed because of all the drama.



Roughly three in ten (**31%**) say it makes them feel like their friends are leaving them out of things.



29% feel pressure to post content that will get lots of comments or likes.



23% say that what they see on social media makes them feel worse about their own life.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Spread positivity and shine for who you truly are by living authentically online and in person.



Limit your screentime

Most phones and tablets have convenient settings that allow you to set a time limit for different apps. When your time is up, turn off the screen.



Follow positive accounts

Choose to follow accounts that promote positivity or spark your creativity.

BYE

Unfollow negative accounts

These don't have to be accounts that openly spread negativity — if seeing the same person's "perfect" life over and over again makes you feel inadequate, it's okay to unfollow them.

Fact-check what you see

If something looks too good (or too bad) to be true, try verifying it with a trusted news source before you believe it.



Think before you post

It can be tempting to overshare online. Before you post, remember that the internet is permanent. If what you want to share is unkind, untrue, or unhelpful, don't post it.



Check in with yourself

Notice how you're feeling while engaging with social media. Have scheduled downtime away from social media (dinner, extracurricular activities, and school).

SOCIAL MEDIA DETOX

A “social media detox” is a set period of time during which you limit or pause your social media use.

It can be a great way to reset and refocus your energy on the other things in your life that bring you joy.

Note: You can choose how you want to go about your social media detox. If fully cutting yourself off from the apps feels like a bit too much, you can:



Limit your social media use to an hour or so a day.



Take a break from just one specific app.



Only use social media during certain times of the day.

HOW TO DO A SOCIAL MEDIA DETOX



Step 1: Plan

- Determine how long you’re going to take a break from social media.
- Figure out if you want to step away from all social media apps or just one.



Step 2: Set a goal

- Use the time you’re not spending on social media to chase a specific, achievable goal. Read a book, learn something new, finish a drawing, or focus on mindfulness.



Step 3: Tell someone about your detox

- Sharing your plans with someone creates accountability. If you communicate with your friends online, you can also tell them that you’re taking a break.



Step 4: Delete the apps from your phone or tablet

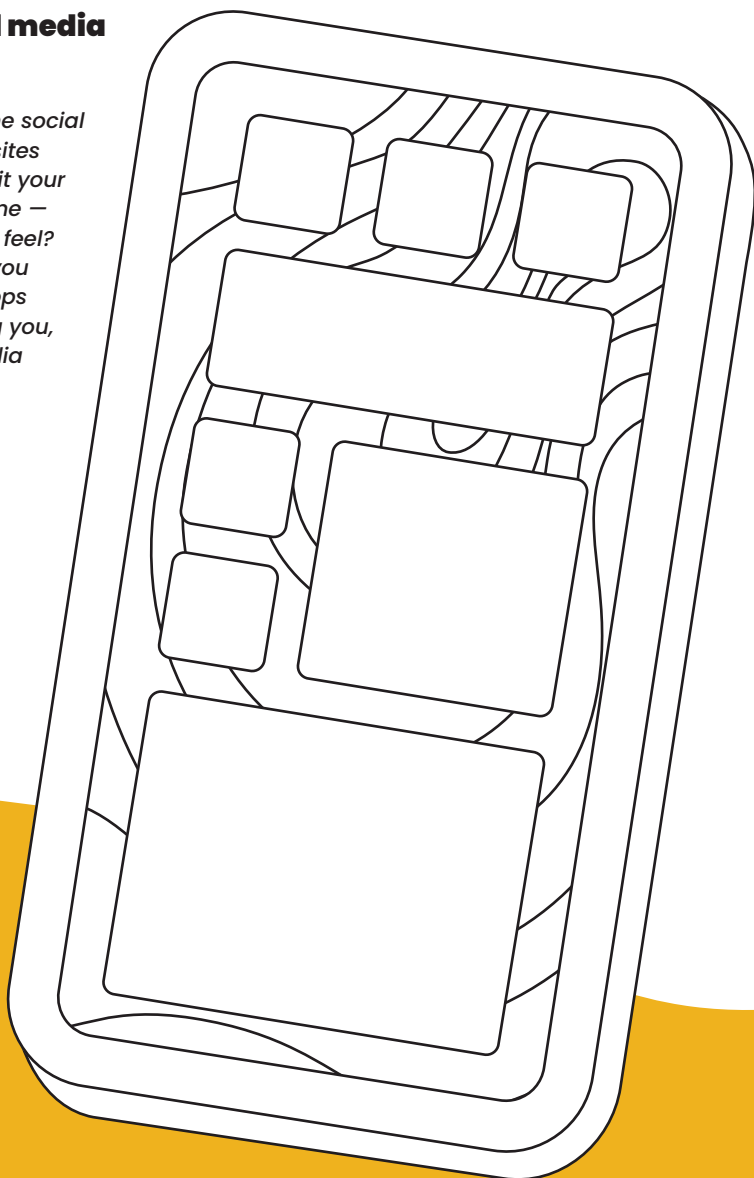
- Deleting an app from your phone or tablet won’t get rid of your account — you can always redownload and log back in! During your detox, it can be helpful to remove these distractions and temptations from your home screen.

MY THOUGHTS MATTER

Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

How does social media make you feel?

Write down a few of the social media apps and websites you use. Honestly audit your feelings about each one — how does it make you feel? Why do you use it? If you find that any of the apps aren't actually helping you, try doing a social media detox or scaling back.



Why do you log on to social media?

What are you looking for when you open a social media app? Do you look forward to seeing your friend's posts, getting creative inspiration, or checking in with your favorite content creator? Is it possible to stop scrolling after you've gotten what you needed out of checking social media?



What do you like to do outside of social media?

Jot down some of your favorite activities that take you away from your phone screen. People often turn to social media out of boredom, so take a peek at the list you wrote next time you reflexively reach for your phone! You might find something that feels more worthwhile.



SAFETY REMINDER

Protect yourself online by staying alert and setting smart boundaries. Here's how:



Keep your info private

Never share your full name, address, school, phone number, or location in posts or bios. Turn off location services for apps when you don't need them.



Lock down your accounts

Use strong, unique passwords and turn on two-factor authentication. Keep your profiles set to private so only people you know can see what you share.



Don't trust strangers

Be cautious of friend requests or DMs from people you don't know, even if they seem your age. Scammers and fake accounts often pretend to be someone they're not.



Watch out for red flags

If someone asks for personal photos, wants to move the conversation to another app, or pressures you to meet in person, block and report them.



Talk to someone you trust

If something makes you uncomfortable or feels off, don't handle it alone. Reach out to a parent, teacher, or another trusted adult.

YOUR SAFETY COMES FIRST — EVERY POST, EVERY CLICK, EVERY TIME. SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY TIPS AND WELLNESS RESOURCES.





Do you ever feel like life is moving too fast? Has there ever been so much on your plate that you don't think you can take a break? Between school, extracurricular events, friendships, and family time, the life of a teenager can be jam-packed with activity and excitement.

It's important to remember to take care of yourself. Slowing down to focus on wellness and self-care can actually help you be happier and more productive in the long run.

WHAT IS WELLNESS?



Mental and physical health don't rely solely on each other, but they are connected. Being aware of how the two interact can help you improve your overall wellness.

DEFINITION

Wellness is a state of well-being in your mind and body as a result of focused effort.



THE EIGHT AREAS OF WELLNESS

There are eight core areas of wellness. Each one plays a role in your overall health and well-being. Take a look at the wellness wheel and consider which areas in your life are going well and which could use some focused effort.



Emotional

Being aware of your emotional needs



Financial

Understanding your resources and feeling satisfied with your income, debt, and savings



Intellectual

Keeping your brain active and engaged



Spiritual

Having strong personal beliefs and a sense of purpose



Environmental

Being safe and secure in your space



Physical

Developing healthy physical habits



Occupational

Participating in activities that feel meaningful and reflect your values

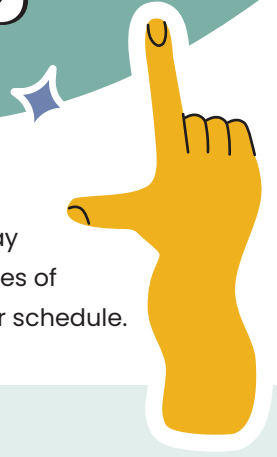


Social

Building healthy one-on-one relationships and surrounding yourself with people who support you



WELLNESS TIPS



You don't have to change your whole life to improve one or more areas of wellness. Little adjustments throughout the day and week can make a big difference! Here are a few examples of how you can work in more wellness without rearranging your schedule.



Emotional

Taking a break to do a breathing exercise while you study



Financial

Setting a plan to save money for an expensive item you want



Intellectual

Listening to an audiobook or podcast instead of scrolling social media before bed



Spiritual

Spending more time in nature — try taking a walk instead of driving if your destination is close by and safe



Environmental

Making your bed every day



Physical

Try yoga or chair yoga at your desk



Occupational

Writing down what's most important to you for your future career



Social

Scheduling a study date with your best friend

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

If you've heard people talking more about wellness lately, there's a good chance you've heard people talk about self-care, too. But what exactly is self-care?

Simply put, **self-care** is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve your own health.

Contrary to what you might see online, self-care isn't all about face masks, cozy blankets, and comfort movies — though those things are good, too! Sometimes, self-care also means doing hard things, like eating healthily, setting boundaries, and working hard to meet your goals.

Take a moment to write or draw your favorite self-care activities. Try to balance comforting and challenging practices.



COMFORT ACTIVITIES

(Example) Watching my favorite movie



CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES

(Example) Cleaning my room



MY THOUGHTS MATTER



Free your mind and let the truth flow. Write down (or draw!) your answers to the following questions, and remember: There are no wrong answers.

Which area of wellness is going well for you right now? Why?

Which area needs a little extra work? What's one step you can take to improve that area of your life?





What makes me well?

What makes you feel not just good but well? Take a moment to write down some of your favorite activities that promote a sense of well-being or a long-lasting sense of satisfaction. In other words, what feels both fun and meaningful?

Circle your favorite activity above. How does doing this activity make you feel?

**GOOD
VIBES**

GUIDED GROUNDING



Being aware of the present moment can boost mindfulness and wellness. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or distracted by distressing thoughts or feelings, complete these grounding exercises to anchor yourself in your current state of being.

2

Tell yourself 2 encouraging or kind things.

4

Take 4 square breaths.

Breathe in for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds. Breathe out for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds.

6

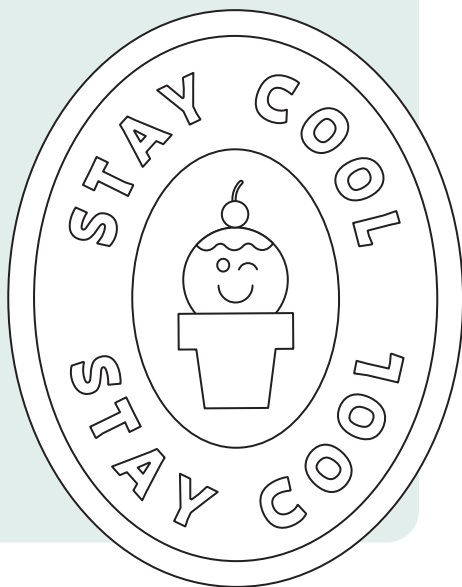
Picture 6 people, places, and things that make you happy.

8

Flex 8 muscles for four seconds each.

10

Find 10 items of the same color.

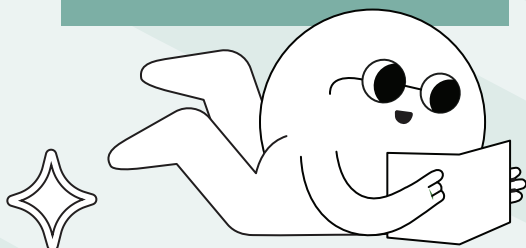


FIVE WAYS TO RECHARGE YOUR BATTERY



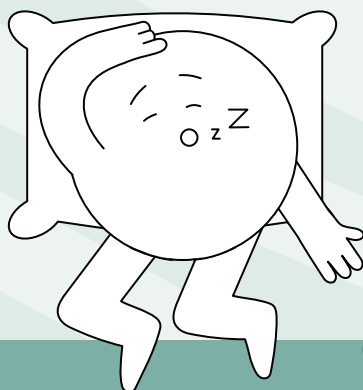
1

Take time to read — for fun!



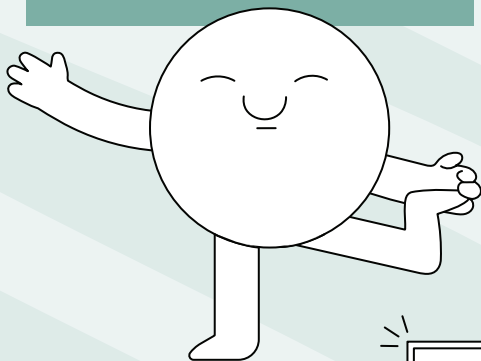
2

Get 8 to 10 hours of sleep.



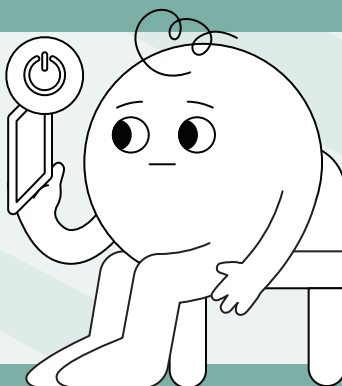
3

Stretch or do a yoga flow



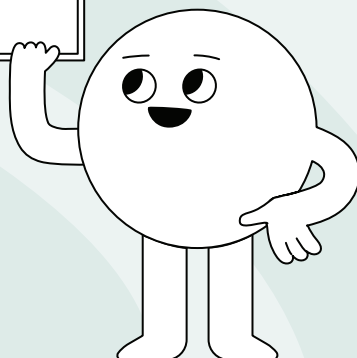
4

Take a break from your phone, tablet, and laptop.



5

Get creative — draw, paint, sing, dance, do your thing!



THERE'S POWER IN PAUSE



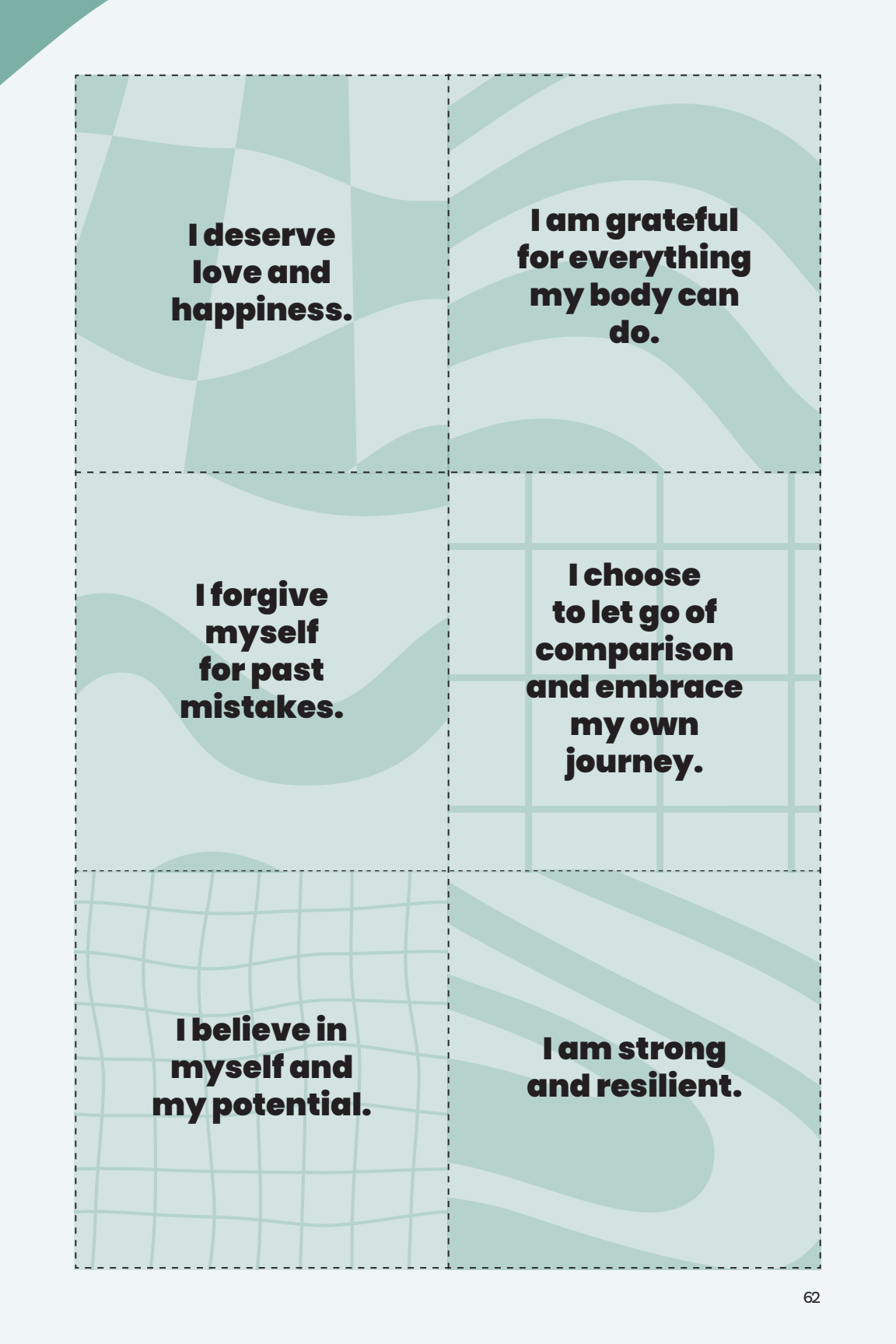
Breathe in and breathe out to unwind your mind, now let's focus on you!
What are three things you love about yourself?

Take a moment to pause and speak kindly to yourself.

BONUS



**CUT AND DISPLAY THESE AFFIRMATION
CARDS IN A VISIBLE PLACE AS A REMINDER
OF YOUR INNER STRENGTH!**



**I deserve
love and
happiness.**

**I am grateful
for everything
my body can
do.**

**I forgive
myself
for past
mistakes.**

**I choose
to let go of
comparison
and embrace
my own
journey.**

**I believe in
myself and
my potential.**

**I am strong
and resilient.**

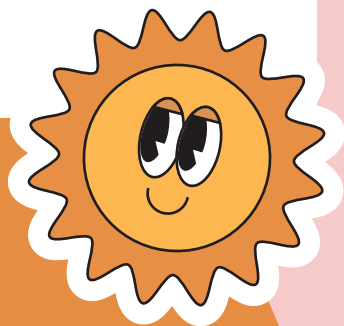
THANK YOU

You've made it through What's On My Mind! Give yourself a pat on the back — you've earned it.

You're not quite done yet, though. Maintaining strong mental health is a work in progress, so keep this guide handy for when you need to find a coping strategy or remember key facts about mental health.



**LOOKING FOR MORE?
HANG WITH US ON YOUTUBE TO
FIND MORE CONTENT CREATED
JUST FOR YOU. YOU'VE GOT THIS!**





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