

Self-Care Tips

Self-care means taking time to do things you enjoy. Usually, self-care involves everyday activities that you find relaxing, fun, or energizing. These activities could be as simple as reading a book, or as big as taking a vacation.

Self-care also means taking care of yourself. This means eating regular meals, getting enough sleep, caring for personal hygiene, and anything else that maintains good health.

Make self-care a priority. There will always be other things to do, but don't let these interrupt the time you set aside for self-care. Self-care should be given the same importance as other responsibilities.

Set specific self-care goals. It's difficult to follow through with vague goals, such as "I will take more time for self-care". Instead, try something specific, such as "I will walk for 30 minutes every evening after dinner".

Make self-care a habit. Just like eating one apple doesn't eliminate health problems, using self-care just once won't have much effect on reducing stress. Choose activities that you can do often, and that you will stick with.

Set boundaries to protect your self-care. You don't need a major obligation to say "no" to others—your self-care is reason enough. Remind yourself that your needs are as important as anyone else's.

A few minutes of self-care is better than no self-care. Set an alarm reminding you to take regular breaks, even if it's just a walk around the block, or an uninterrupted snack. Oftentimes, stepping away will energize you to work more efficiently when you return.

Unhealthy activities don't count as self-care. Substance use, over-eating, and other unhealthy behaviors might hide uncomfortable emotions temporarily, but they cause more problems in the long run.

Keep up with self-care, even when you're feeling good. Doing so will keep you in a healthy routine. Plus, self-care might be part of the reason *why* you're feeling good!

Stress Management Tips

Keep in mind that stress isn't a bad thing.

Stress motivates us to work toward solving our problems. Reframing thoughts to view stress as an acceptable emotion, or as a tool, has been found to reduce many of the negative symptoms associated with it. The goal is to *manage* stress, not to eliminate it.

Talk about your problems, even if they won't be solved.

Talking about your stressors—even if you don't solve them—releases hormones in your body that reduce the negative feelings associated with stress. Time spent talking with friends and loved ones is valuable, even when you have a lot on your plate.

Prioritize your responsibilities.

Focus on completing quick tasks first. Having too many “to-dos” can be stressful, even if none of them are very big. Quickly knocking out the small tasks will clear up your mind to focus on larger responsibilities.

Focus on the basics.

Stress can start a harmful cycle where basic needs are neglected, which leads to more stress. Make a point to focus on your basic needs, such as eating well, keeping a healthy sleep schedule, exercising, and other forms of self-care.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

People who are overinvolved in one aspect of their life often struggle to deal with stress when that area is threatened. Balance your time and energy between several areas, such as your career, family, friendships, and personal hobbies.

Set aside time for yourself.

Personal time usually gets moved to the bottom of the list when things get hectic. However, when personal time is neglected, everything else tends to suffer. Set aside time to relax and have fun every day, without interruptions.

Keep things in perspective.

In the heat of the moment, little problems can feel bigger than they are. Take a step back, and think about how important your stressors are in a broader context. Will they matter in a week? In a year? Writing about your stressors will help you develop a healthier perspective.

Mindfulness Meditation

The goal of **mindfulness meditation** is simple: to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement. However, as you practice, you'll find that this is easier said than done.

During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It's normal that your mind will wander. You'll simply bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing, again and again.

Follow the instructions below to begin practicing mindfulness meditation.

Time & Place



Aim to practice **daily** for **15-30 minutes**. More frequent, consistent, and longer-term practice leads to the best results. However, some practice is better than no practice.

Find a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices, and set a timer for your desired practice length.

Posture



- ❖ Sit in a chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
- ❖ Straighten your back, but not to the point of stiffness.
- ❖ Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
- ❖ If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
- ❖ Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
- ❖ If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, feel free to take a break or adjust.

Awareness of Breathing



Because the sensations of breathing are always present, they are useful as a tool to help you focus on the present moment. Whenever you become distracted during meditation, turn your focus back to breathing.

Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose or mouth, the rise and fall of your belly, and the feeling of air being exhaled, back into the world. Notice the sounds that accompany each inhalation and exhalation.

Wandering Mind



It's normal that your thoughts will wander during mindfulness meditation. At times, it might feel like a constant battle to maintain focus on your breathing. Don't worry—that's normal. Instead of struggling against your thoughts, simply notice them, without judgment. Acknowledge that your mind has wandered, and return your attention to breathing. Expect to repeat this process again and again.

Active Listening

Communication Skill



Active Listening: Treating listening as an active process, rather than a passive one. This means participating in conversation, rather than acting as an audience. Active listeners show they are listening, encourage sharing, and strive to understand the speaker.

Show You're Listening

Put away distractions. Watching TV, using your phone, or doing other things while listening sends the message that the speaker's words are not important. Putting away distractions allows you to focus on the conversation and help the speaker feel heard.

Use verbal and nonverbal communication. Body language and short verbal cues that match the speaker's affect (e.g. responding excitedly if the speaker is excited) show interest and empathy.

Verbal: "mm-hmm" / "uh-huh" "that's interesting" "that makes sense" "I understand"
Nonverbal: nodding in agreement reacting to emotional content (e.g. smiling) eye contact

Encourage Sharing

Ask open-ended questions. These are questions that encourage elaboration, rather than "yes" or "no" responses. Open-ended questions tell the speaker you are listening, and you want to learn more.

"What is it like to ___?" "How did you feel when ___?" "Can you tell me more about ___?"
"How do you ___?" "What do you like about ___?" "What are your thoughts about ___?"

Use reflections. In your own words, summarize the speaker's most important points. Be sure to include emotional content, even if it was only communicated through tone or body language.

Speaker: *I've been having a hard time at work. There's way too much to do and I can't keep up. My boss is frustrated that everything isn't done, but I can't help it.*

Listener: *It sounds like you're doing your best to keep up, but there's too much work. That sounds stressful!*

Strive to Understand

Be present. Listening means paying attention to body language, tone, and verbal content. Focus your attention on listening, instead of other mental distractions, such as what you want to say next. When possible, save sensitive conversations for a quiet time with few distractions.

Listen with an open mind. Your job is to understand the speaker's point of view, even if you don't agree. Avoid forming opinions and making judgments until you fully understand their perspective.

How to Apologize

Apologizing means expressing regret for something you did. A sincere apology involves reflecting on your actions, taking responsibility for them, and making changes to improve things in the future. Giving an apology can help repair a damaged relationship while showing care and respect for the other person.

Reflect on your Actions

Think about how your actions contributed to a problem, even if they were not the sole cause.

Even if someone else also contributed to the problem, what was *my* role?

Try taking the other person's perspective. How do my actions look from their side?

As a result of my actions, how might the other person feel?

Take Responsibility

Say "I'm sorry" (or some version of this phrase) and show regret for your actions. It's important to speak clearly and sincerely. In most cases, it helps to identify the actions you are apologizing for.

Example: "I'm sorry for the language I used during our argument. It was disrespectful, and it was wrong."

I'm sorry for...

I apologize for...

I take responsibility for...

It was wrong of me to...

I feel terrible. I shouldn't have...

This was my fault. I should have...



Never make excuses or try to justify your behavior (e.g. "I'm sorry, but I was tired!").

Listen and Improve

Give the other person a chance to respond without interruption. Forgiveness may take time and is not guaranteed. Be prepared to discuss changes you will make to avoid repeating the problem.

Myths vs. Reality

Myth: Love means never having to say you're sorry.

Reality: Apologies can be particularly important when you love someone. An apology communicates you care about the other person and want them to feel better.

Myth: Apologizing is as simple as saying "I'm sorry."

Reality: Merely saying the words "I'm sorry" is not a complete apology. An apology requires remorse, an attempt to right the wrong, and taking steps to make sure the problem is not repeated.

Myth: Apologizing will make me look weak.

Reality: An apology shows you are secure enough to admit when you've done something wrong. It also shows you have respect for yourself and the other person.

Boundaries

Discussion Questions

1 Personal boundaries are the rules and limits you set within relationships. They tell you what's okay, and what's not okay, in a relationship. Think about two people in your life, and describe the boundaries you have with each one. How are they similar, and how are they different?

2 Values are the things that are most important to you. Ideally, your boundaries will reflect your values. For example, if you value family time, you might set strict boundaries at work. What are your most important values, and how do your boundaries reflect these values?

3 In your opinion, what are the signs of a healthy relationship? What sort of boundaries might you see in a healthy relationship?

4 People who are influential in your life act as models for boundary-setting, whether their boundaries are healthy or unhealthy. Think of someone who has helped shape who you are. What has this person taught you about boundaries, whether intentionally or unintentionally?

5 When someone has rigid boundaries, they are reluctant to ask others for help, protective of personal information, and avoidant of close relationships. What do you think are the pros and cons of rigid boundaries? Describe an area of life where you've had rigid boundaries.

6 When someone has porous boundaries, they overshare personal information, have difficulty saying "no," and are overly concerned with the opinions of others. What do you think are the pros and cons of porous boundaries? Describe an area of life where you've had porous boundaries.

7 In some relationships, healthy boundaries seem to form naturally and easily. In other relationships, however, setting healthy boundaries is difficult. What challenges have you faced when trying to set healthy boundaries, and how did you overcome them (or, how *could* you overcome them)?

Tips for Healthy Boundaries



Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

Know your limits.

Before becoming involved in a situation, know what’s acceptable to you, and what isn’t. It’s best to be *as specific as possible*, or you might be pulled into the trap of giving just a little bit more, over and over, until you’ve given far too much.

Know your values.

Every person’s limits are different, and they’re often determined by their personal values. For example, if you value family above all else, this might lead to stricter limits on how late you will stay at work, away from family. Know what’s most important to you, and protect it.

Listen to your emotions.

If you notice feelings of discomfort or resentment, don’t bury them. Try to understand what your feelings are telling you. Resentment, for example, can often be traced to feelings of being taken advantage of.

Have self-respect.

If you always give in to others, ask if you are showing as much respect to yourself as you show to others. Boundaries that are too open might be due to misguided attempts to be liked by elevating other people’s needs above one’s own.

Have respect for others.

Be sure that your actions are not self-serving, at the expense of others. Interactions should not be about winning, or taking as much as possible. Instead, consider what’s fair to everyone, given the setting and relationship. You might “win”, but at the cost of a relationship’s long-term health.

Be assertive.

When you know it’s time to set a boundary, don’t be shy. Say “no” respectfully, but without ambiguity. If you can make a compromise while respecting your own boundaries, try it. This is a good way to soften the “no”, while showing respect to everyone involved.

Consider the long view.

Some days you will give more than you take, and other days you will take more than you give. Be willing to take a longer view of relationships, when appropriate. But if you’re *always* the one who’s giving or taking, there might be a problem.

Setting Boundaries



Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

Know Your Boundaries

Boundaries should be based on your values, or the things that are important to you. For example, if you value spending time with family, set firm boundaries about working late.

Your boundaries are yours, and yours alone. Many of your boundaries might align with those who are close to you, but others will be unique.

Know your boundaries *before* entering a situation. This will make it less likely you’ll do something you’re not comfortable with.

What to Say

You always have the right to say “no”. When doing so, express yourself clearly and without ambiguity so there is no doubt about what you want.

“I’m not comfortable with this”

“Please don’t do that”

“Not at this time”

“I can’t do that for you”

“This doesn’t work for me”

“I’ve decided not to”

“This is not acceptable”

“I’m drawing the line at ___”

“I don’t want to do that”

What to Do

Use Confident Body Language

Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet, and not too loud).

Be Respectful

Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or giving the silent treatment. It’s okay to be firm, but your message will be better received if you are respectful.

Plan Ahead

Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion. This can help you feel more confident about your position.

Compromise

When appropriate, listen and consider the needs of the other person. You never *have* to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

Setting Boundaries

Instructions: Respond to the following practice questions as if you were really in each situation. Think about the language *you* would use to firmly state your boundary.

✓ Examples

Situation: You notice your roommate has been eating your food in the fridge. You never discussed plans to share food, and don't want them eating what you bought.

Response: "I'd like to keep our food separate. If there's something of mine that you want, please ask me before taking it."

Situation: Your friend calls you at 11 pm to discuss issues she is having with her boyfriend. You need to wake up at 6 am.

Response: "I can tell you're upset. I want to talk to you, but I need to go to bed. Maybe we can talk tomorrow afternoon."

🎯 Practice

Situation: You invited a friend over for the evening, but now it's getting late. You would like to get ready for bed, but your friend seems unaware of how late it is.

Response:

Situation: A good friend asks you out on a date. You are not interested in being more than friends. You would like to let them down clearly, but gently.

Response:

Setting Boundaries

Situation: You missed several days of work due to a medical condition. When you get back, a coworker asks what happened. You feel this information is personal, and do not want to share.

Response:

Situation: Your brother asks if you can watch his two young children on Saturday morning. You already have plans.

Response:

Situation: Your coworker is upset about their recent performance review. They start yelling and slamming their fist on their desk. This is making you very uncomfortable.

Response:

Situation: A salesperson comes to your door during dinner. You try to politely show disinterest, but they keep giving their sales pitch. You want to get back to dinner.

Response:

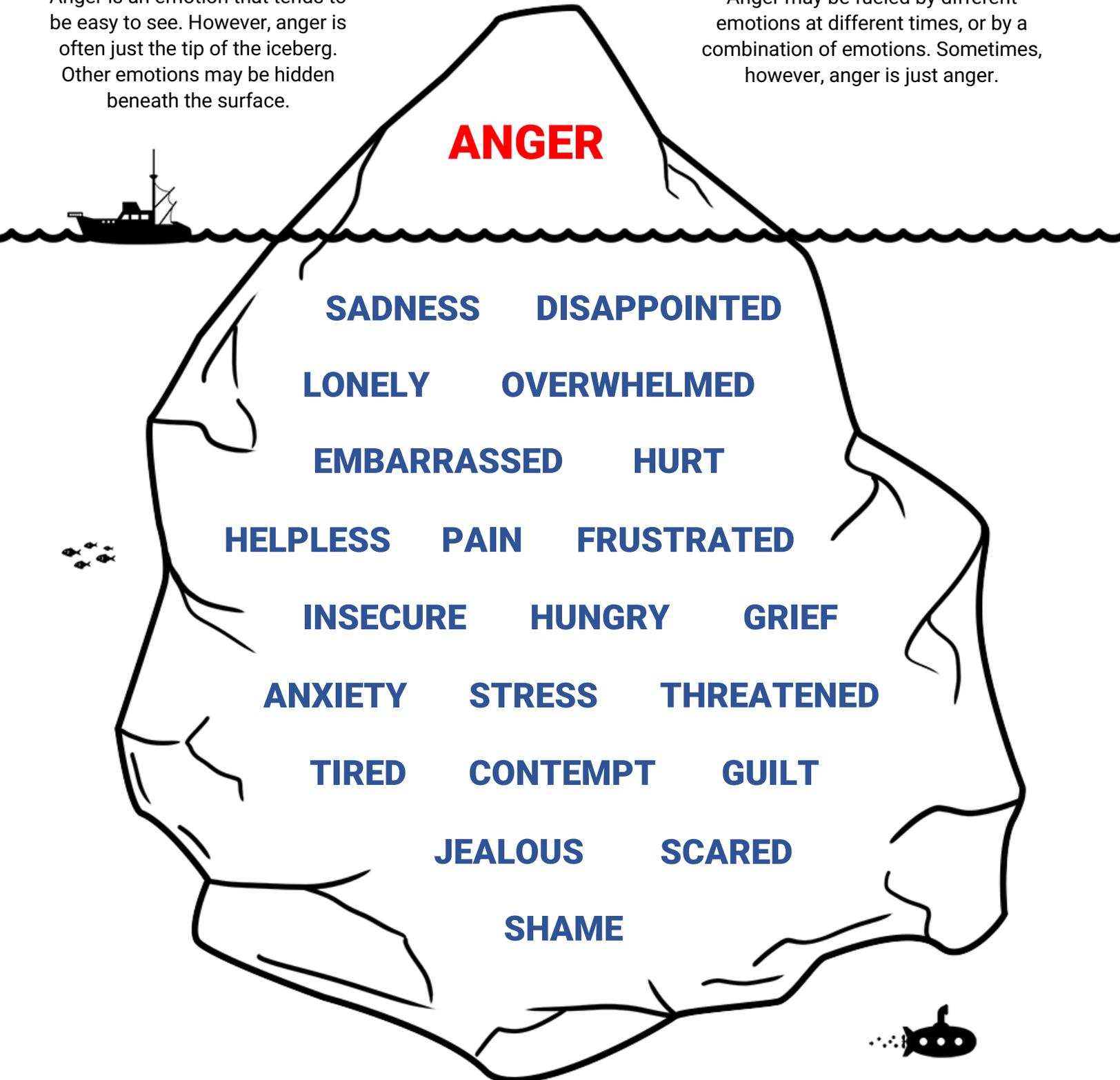
Anger Iceberg

In some families, anger is seen as more acceptable than other emotions. A person might express anger in order to mask emotions that cause them to feel vulnerable, such as hurt or shame.

Anger triggers are people, places, situations, and things that set off anger. Your triggers can provide clues about the emotions behind your anger.

Anger is an emotion that tends to be easy to see. However, anger is often just the tip of the iceberg. Other emotions may be hidden beneath the surface.

Anger may be fueled by different emotions at different times, or by a combination of emotions. Sometimes, however, anger is just anger.



Coping Skills

Anger

Be Aware of Triggers

Anger triggers are the things that set you off. Knowing your triggers, and being cautious around them, will reduce the likelihood of your anger getting out of control.

How to use triggers to your advantage:

- ✔ Create a list of your triggers and review them daily. Reviewing your triggers will keep them fresh in your mind, increasing the likelihood you notice them before they become a problem.
- ✔ Oftentimes, the best way to deal with a trigger is to avoid it. This might mean making changes to your lifestyle, relationships, or daily routine.
- ✔ Because it isn't always possible to avoid triggers, have a plan when you must face them. For example, avoid touchy conversations when you are tired, hungry, or upset.

Practice Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises. Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw. The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.



Keep an Anger Log

Following an episode of anger, take a few moments to record your experience. This practice will help you identify patterns, warning signs, and triggers, while also helping you organize thoughts and work through problems.

- ✔ What was happening *before* the anger episode? Describe how you were feeling, and what was on your mind. Were you hungry, tired, or stressed?
- ✔ Describe the facts of what happened. What events triggered your anger? How did you react, and did your reaction change as the event continued to unfold?
- ✔ What were your thoughts and feelings *during* the anger episode? Looking back, do you see anything differently than when you were in the heat of the moment?

Coping Skills

Anger

Use Diversions

The goal of diversions is to buy yourself time. If you can distract yourself for just 30 minutes, you'll have a better chance of dealing with your anger in a healthy way. Remember, you can always return to the source of your anger later—you're just setting the problem aside for now.

go for a walk	read a book	play a sport	listen to music
watch a movie	practice a hobby	go for a run	clean or organize
do yard work	draw or paint	do a craft	cook or bake
play a game	go for a bicycle ride	write or journal	take a long bath
play an instrument	call a friend	lift weights	go swimming
go hiking in nature	take photographs	play with a pet	rearrange a room

Take a Time-out

Time-outs are a powerful tool for relationships where anger-fueled disagreements are causing problems. When someone calls a time-out, both individuals agree to walk away from the problem, and return once you have both had an opportunity to cool down.

How to use time-outs effectively:

- ✓ With your partner, plan exactly how time-outs will work. Everyone should understand the rationale behind time-outs (an opportunity to cool down—not to avoid a problem).
- ✓ What will you both do during time-outs? Plan activities that are in different rooms or different places. The list of diversions from above is a good place to begin.
- ✓ Plan to return to the problem in 30 minutes to an hour. Important problems shouldn't be ignored forever, but nothing good will come from an explosive argument.

Know Your Warning Signs

Anger warning signs are the clues your body gives you that your anger is starting to grow. When you learn to spot your warning signs, you can begin to address your anger while it's still weak.

sweating	can't get past problem	feel hot / turn red	clenched fists
headaches	becoming argumentative	raised voice	using verbal insults
pacing	aggressive body language	feel sick to stomach	go quiet / "shut down"

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a mental and physical reaction to perceived threats. In small doses, anxiety is helpful. It protects us from danger, and focuses our attention on problems. But when anxiety is too severe, or occurs too frequently, it can become debilitating.

📍 Symptoms of Anxiety

- uncontrollable worry
- excessive nervousness
- sleep problems
- muscle tension
- poor concentration
- increased heart rate
- upset stomach
- avoidance of fear

📋 Types of Anxiety

Generalized Anxiety: An excessive amount of anxiety or worry in several areas of life, such as job responsibilities, health, finances, or minor concerns (e.g. completing housework).

Phobias: A very intense fear of a specific situation or object, which is out of proportion to its actual threat. For example, a fear of giving speeches, or of spiders, could be considered a phobia.

Panic: An extreme anxious response where a person experiences a panic attack. During a panic attack, the individual experiences numerous physical symptoms, and is overwhelmed by a feeling of dread.

📈 How Does Anxiety Grow?



Anxiety drives people to avoid the things that scare them. When a “scary” thing is avoided, there is an immediate but short-lived sense of relief. However, the next time a similar threat arises, it feels even scarier. This creates a harmful cycle of avoidance, and worsening anxiety.

⊕ Anxiety Treatments

🧠 Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT is a very effective treatment for anxiety. During CBT, the unhealthy thinking patterns that create anxiety are identified, and challenged. Oftentimes, CBT will also include components of exposure therapy and relaxation skills.

⚠️ Exposure Therapy

During exposure therapy, the therapist and their client create a plan to gradually face anxiety-producing situations, thus breaking the cycle of avoidance. With enough exposure, the anxiety loses its power, and the symptoms diminish.

🌿 Relaxation Skills

Various techniques—such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness—provide immediate relief from the symptoms of anxiety. With practice, relaxation skills will become a powerful way to manage anxiety in the moment.

💊 Medication

Medication can help control the uncomfortable symptoms of anxiety. However, because medication does not fix the underlying problems of anxiety, it is typically used in conjunction with therapy. The need for medication varies greatly, case-by-case.

Exploring Social Anxiety

Social anxiety is a disorder characterized by overwhelming anxiety or self-consciousness in ordinary social situations. In milder cases, the symptoms of social anxiety only appear in specific situations, such as public speaking. On the more extreme end, any form of social interaction can act as a trigger.

Because everyone's thoughts, feelings, and reactions to social anxiety are different, it's valuable to spend some time thinking about your unique experience.

Which social situations are you anxious about?

Giving a speech.	Spending time alone with a friend.	Going on a date.	Attending a crowded event.
Going to the grocery store.	Making eye contact.	Being the center of attention.	Talking on the phone.
Meeting someone new.	Dealing with authority figures.	_____	_____

What are you worried about during social situations?

Embarrassing myself.	Looking stupid.	My physical appearance.	Being disliked.
Being rejected.	Not knowing what to talk about.	Being noticed.	_____

Oftentimes, social anxiety will lead a person to build their life in a "safe" way that shields them from their fears, rather than living how they truly want. This is a form of **avoidance**, which will actually make anxiety worse over time. Next, we'll explore how social anxiety and avoidance has impacted your life.

List three ways in which social anxiety has impacted your life. For example, did anxiety affect your choice of career? Has it affected your relationships?

1
2
3

Imagine you wake up tomorrow, and your social anxiety is gone. How would your life be different? List three examples, being as specific as possible.

1
2
3

Coping Skills

Anxiety

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises. Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw. The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

By tensing and relaxing the muscles throughout your body, you can achieve a powerful feeling of relaxation. Additionally, progressive muscle relaxation will help you spot anxiety by teaching you to recognize feelings of muscle tension.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. For each area of the body listed below, you will tense your muscles tightly, but not to the point of strain. Hold the tension for 10 seconds, and pay close attention to how it feels. Then, release the tension, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs from the feeling of tension.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Feet | Curl your toes tightly into your feet, then release them. |
| Calves | Point or flex your feet, then let them relax. |
| Thighs | Squeeze your thighs together tightly, then let them relax. |
| Torso | Suck in your abdomen, then release the tension and let it fall. |
| Back | Squeeze your shoulder blades together, then release them. |
| Shoulders | Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, then let them drop. |
| Arms | Make fists and squeeze them toward your shoulders, then let them drop. |
| Hands | Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm, then relax your fingers. |
| Face | Scrunch your facial features to the center of your face, then relax. |
| Full Body | Squeeze all muscles together, then release all tension. |

Coping Skills

Anxiety

Challenging Irrational Thoughts

Anxiety can be magnified by irrational thoughts. For example, the thoughts that “something bad will happen” or “I will make a mistake” might lack evidence, but still have an impact on how you feel. By examining the evidence and challenging these thoughts, you can reduce anxiety.

Put thoughts on trial. Choose a thought that has contributed to your anxiety. Gather evidence in support of your thought (*verifiable facts only*), and against your thought. Compare the evidence and determine whether your thought is accurate or not.

Use Socratic questioning. Question the thoughts that contribute to your anxiety. Ask yourself:

“Is my thought based on facts or feelings?”

“How would my best friend see this situation?”

“How likely is it that my fear will come true?”

“What’s *most likely* to happen?”

“If my fear comes true, will it still matter in a week? A month? A year?”

Imagery

Your thoughts have the power to change how you feel. If you think of something sad, it’s likely you’ll start to feel sad. The opposite is also true: When you think of something positive and calming, you feel relaxed. The imagery technique harnesses this power to reduce anxiety.

Think of a place that you find comforting. It could be a secluded beach, your bedroom, a quiet mountaintop, or even a loud concert. For 5 to 10 minutes, use all your senses to imagine this setting in great detail. Don’t just think fleetingly about this place—really imagine it.



What do you see around you? What do you notice in the distance? Look all around to take in all your surroundings. Look for small details you would usually miss.



What sounds can you hear? Are they soft or loud? Listen closely to everything around you. Keep listening to see if you notice any distant sounds.



Are you eating or drinking something enjoyable? What is the flavor like? How does it taste? Savor all the tastes of the food or drink.



What can you feel? What is the temperature like? Think of how the air feels on your skin, and how your clothes feel on your body. Soak in all these sensations.



What scents are present? Are they strong or faint? What does the air smell like? Take some time to appreciate the scents.

Coping Skills

Depression

Behavioral Activation

Depression saps a person's energy to do just about anything—even activities they enjoy. As a result, people with depression tend to become less active, which causes the depression to worsen. However, even a little bit of activity can help stop this cycle.

1. Choose activities you are likely to complete.

exercise	walk, go for a bike ride, weightlift, follow an exercise video, swim, practice yoga
socialize	call or text a friend, organize a group dinner, visit family, join a club / group
responsibilities	cleaning / housework, pay bills, professional development, homework
hobbies	sports, gardening, drawing, playing music, hiking, playing with a pet, cooking
personal care	dress up, get a haircut, prepare a healthy meal, tend to spiritual needs

2. Practice your chosen activities. Use the following tips to improve consistency.

start small	If needed, break activities into smaller pieces. Some activity is better than none.
make a plan	Set an alarm as a reminder, or tie an activity to something you already do. For example, practice a hobby immediately after dinner every day.
bring a friend	Including a friend will increase your commitment and make things more fun.

Social Support

Social isolation is a common symptom of depression. Related issues—such as fatigue, lowered self-esteem, and anxiety—exacerbate this problem. Resisting social isolation, and instead leaning on social support, can improve resilience to stress and depression.

- ✔ **Lean on your existing relationships.** Make it a priority to socialize with friends or family every day. If this is proving difficult, or if no one is nearby, plan times to interact remotely. Try cooking together on a video call, playing a game together, or sharing a coffee over the phone.
- ✔ **Say “yes” to socializing.** Depression makes it tempting to stay home, isolated from friends and family. Make a habit of saying “yes” to social opportunities, even when you’re tempted to stay in.
- ✔ **Join a support group.** Support groups let you connect with others who are dealing with issues similar to yours. You’ll benefit from sharing and receiving advice and support.

Coping Skills

Depression

Three Good Things

Negative thinking is a defining feature of depression. Positive experiences are minimized, while negative experiences are magnified. Gratitude helps combat this tendency by shifting focus toward *positive* experiences, rather than negative ones.

- 1 Write about three positive experiences from your day. These experiences can be small (“The weather was perfect when I walked to work”) or big (“I got a promotion at work”).

Choose one of the following questions to answer about each of the three good things:

- 2
 - Why did this happen?
 - Why was this good thing meaningful?
 - How can I experience more of this good thing?
- 3 Repeat this exercise every day for 1 week.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment. It means taking a step back and noticing the world, and one’s thoughts and feelings, without judgment. The goal of mindfulness is to simply *observe*. Mindfulness helps reduce the rumination and worry that often accompany depression.

One way to practice mindfulness is through meditation. During mindfulness meditation, you will simply sit and focus your attention on the sensation of breathing. By focusing on your breathing, you will put yourself in the here-and-now.

Time and Place

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can practice mindfulness for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Frequent and consistent practice leads to the best results, but some practice is better than none.

Posture

Sit in a chair or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes or let your gaze soften. Let your head, shoulders, arms, and legs relax. Adjust your posture whenever you feel uncomfortable.

Awareness of Breath

Focus on your breathing. Notice the sensation of the air as it travels in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your belly.

Wandering Mind

During meditation, it’s normal for the mind to wander. When this happens, gently turn your attention back to your breathing. You may need to do this frequently throughout your practice.

What is Perfectionism?



Perfectionism is the belief that everything must be perfect all the time. A perfectionist sets *impossible* goals, and feels crushed when they are not achieved. Alternatively, someone who strives to do their best sets challenging but achievable goals.

Perfectionism	vs.	Striving for Excellence
Believes that everything must be perfect all the time.		Understands that some situations call for perfection (e.g. performing surgery), but other situations do not (e.g. choosing an outfit).
Spends excessive time on trivial problems.		Focuses time on the most important problems.
Sets impossible standards for success, and feels upset when they are not met.		Sets standards that are challenging but achievable, and feels content when they are met.
Motivated by the fear of failure, criticism, or rejection.		Motivated by the potential for success and happiness.
Sees self only in extremes, as either perfect or a failure.		Sees self from a balanced perspective, with both strengths and weaknesses.

Challenges of Perfectionism	
Difficulty making decisions, then second-guessing or regretting decisions.	Difficulty with commitment, such as in relationships or choosing a career.
Avoidant of risks and new experiences out of fear of failure.	Self-esteem is dependent on meeting impossible standards.

Other Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectionism contributes to problems such as procrastination, stress, anxiety, and depression. • It is possible to be perfectionistic in one area of life but not in others. • Perfectionism is a personality trait caused by both environmental and biological factors (e.g. upbringing and genetics). Despite being a personality trait, perfectionism can be changed. • Therapy is effective at reducing perfectionism. Therapy can be used to explore one's strengths, develop more balanced thinking, and improve self-esteem.

Supporting Someone with Depression

Recognize that depression is an illness. Just like a cold or flu, a person cannot simply choose to “get over” depression. Also like other illnesses, depression can affect anyone. A person can develop depression even if they seem to have a good life, with little to be upset about.

Make a point to reach out. Many people with depression will isolate themselves, often falling out of touch with friends and family. You can't make someone accept help, but you can provide the option. Check in regularly, invite them to talk, and reemphasize your support.

Just listening can help. You don't have to fix your loved one's problems or convince them that their negative feelings are wrong. Even if you disagree with some of their thoughts or feelings, respect and acknowledge that these experiences are real to them.

Be supportive of healthy habits. Exercise, healthy sleep habits, and socializing all contribute to mental health, and help combat depression. Support these activities by giving encouragement, offering to accompany your loved one, or providing positive feedback.

Encourage professional help. Mental health counseling and medication are effective in treating depression. If your loved one is unsure where to start, offer to help them find the right provider, such as a physician, mental health counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

Connect your loved one with social support. In addition to professional help, your loved one may benefit from other sources of support. These could include community organizations, religious groups, or mental health support groups.

Take any mention of suicide seriously. Symptoms of depression include intense sadness, despair, and thoughts of suicide. If you feel that someone is in danger, don't hesitate to call 911, take them to an emergency room, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for free and confidential support available 24/7.

Make time for self-care. Supporting someone with depression can be frustrating, tiring, and emotionally draining. It's okay to take a break just for you. Make sure you are getting adequate sleep, eating properly, exercising, and taking time to relax.

You are not responsible for curing your loved one. Your love and support are valuable, but ultimately, you cannot make them better. It is unfair to yourself to take responsibility for another person's depression, or their recovery.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Abuse between romantic partners—known as **domestic abuse** or **intimate partner violence**—can take many forms. It can be overt, such as physical violence, or subtle, such as controlling a partner through emotional, financial, or other forms of manipulation.

Common Reactions to Abuse

depression, including suicidal thoughts	resentment, anger, and aggression	fear of the abusive partner	uncertainty about how to escape abuse
denial that abuse is occurring	substance use	anxiety, shame, and self-blame	social withdrawal

Why People Stay in Abusive Relationships

Fear

The abuser may threaten suicide, or threaten to harm children, pets, or property, if the victim leaves. The victim may fear more severe abuse if they are caught trying to leave.

Rationalization

The victim may believe they deserve the abuse, tell themselves it's "not so bad", feel the relationship is otherwise good, or believe the abuser will someday stop their abusive behavior.

Financial Limitations

Abusers may prevent the victim from working, control their money, or threaten to steal their possessions. Many victims face homelessness, or may struggle to support children, if they leave.

Cultural Stigma

The victim may be part of a culture in which abuse is accepted or divorce is strongly discouraged. They may risk losing friends and family if they attempt to leave an abusive relationship.

Abuse Facts

Abuse is widespread, and both men and women may be victims. About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men report experiencing severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Abuse is never the victim's fault. Though the abuser may try to blame the victim, the abuser is responsible for their actions. Anger issues or a desire for power and control may lead to abuse.

Domestic abuse doesn't require marriage or cohabitation. It can also happen among those who are dating, divorced, have a child together, or live separately.

Abuse doesn't discriminate. People of any race, gender, or economic status can commit or experience abuse.

For confidential help available 24/7 in the United States, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233** or visit **www.thehotline.org**.

The Four Horsemen & Their Antidotes

The **four horsemen** are behaviors that escalate conflict and damage a relationship. Over time, these harmful behaviors may become a normal part of communication between partners.

Antidotes are skills that replace each of the four horsemen. These skills help resolve conflict and encourage positive feelings between partners.



Four Horsemen



Antidotes

Criticism

Dealing with problems through harsh, blaming, or hurtful expressions of judgment or disapproval.

- Focus is on perceived personal flaws rather than changeable behaviors.
- Often met with defensiveness.

"This kitchen is a mess. You're such a slob."

Gentle Startup

Dealing with problems in a calm and gentle way. The focus is on the problem—not the person.

- Save the discussion for an appropriate time.
- Use warm body language and tone of voice.
- Use "I" statements.

"I feel frustrated when dirty dishes are left in the sink. Could you please do the dishes tonight?"

Defensiveness

Deflecting responsibility for your own mistakes and behaviors, or refusing to accept feedback.

- Making excuses for behavior.
- Shifting blame to your partner.

"It isn't my fault I yelled. You were late, not me!"

Take Responsibility

Own up to your behavior without blaming others.

- Avoid taking feedback personally.
- Use feedback as an opportunity to improve.
- Show remorse and apologize.

"I shouldn't have raised my voice. I'm sorry."

Contempt

Showing anger, disgust, or hostility toward your partner.

- Using putdowns or insults.
- Acting superior to your partner.
- Using a mocking or sarcastic tone.

Share Fondness & Admiration

Foster a healthy relationship by regularly showing each other respect and appreciation.

- Show affection.
- Recognize your partner's strengths.
- Give compliments.

Stonewalling

Emotionally withdrawing, shutting down, or going silent during important discussions.

- Often a response to feeling overwhelmed.
- Used to avoid difficult discussions or problems.
- Underlying problems go unresolved.

Use Self-Soothing

Use relaxation techniques to calm down and stay present with your partner.

- Agree to pause the conversation briefly.
- Use deep breathing.
- Use progressive muscle relaxation (PMR).

Sleep Diary: Morning

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Day of the week:						
I went to bed at:						
AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM
I woke up at:						
AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM	AM / PM
Last night, I slept for ___ hours:						
Last night, it took me about ___ minutes to fall asleep:						
I felt that the quality of my sleep was: e.g. very good, good, bad, very bad						
This morning, I feel: e.g. refreshed, tired, groggy, alert						
My sleep was made more difficult by: e.g. temperature, noise, dreams, thoughts, not feeling tired, discomfort						
During the night, I woke up ___ times:						

Sleep Diary: Night

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
I took a nap:						
yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
I had caffeine:						
# of drinks	# of drinks	# of drinks	# of drinks	# of drinks	# of drinks	# of drinks
<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning
<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon
<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening
I exercised for ____ minutes:						
Medications or drugs I used today:						
Throughout the day, I felt drowsy:						
<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes
<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Often
Overall, my mood today was: e.g. positive, negative, neutral						
In the hour before bed, my activities included: e.g. reading, computer, TV, showering, phone, eating, spending time with partner						