

# MIND MATTERS: NURTURING MENTAL WELL-BEING



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# INTRODUCTION

## I. TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND: HERE'S WHY IT MATTERS

**This book is for losers... Hahaha, just kidding!**

Please don't be mad—keep going with this silly little book about how to survive life. You might be thinking, **“Oh great, another lecture about how to be happy?”** Well, not exactly.

This workbook isn't another boring read designed to make you feel guilty for not smiling all the time.

**What really matters is** learning how to deal with yourself, understand yourself, and take care of yourself. Don't mind the repetition of “yourself” — because **all you are is yourself.**





In school, **no one really teaches us how to handle anxiety**, the **disappointment** of unmet expectations, or the **pressure** to be “perfect.”

On social media, we mostly see the shiny side of people’s lives and forget that everyone faces challenges.

This workbook was created to fill that gap. Think of it as your personal guide to navigating the complex world of your own thoughts and emotions.

Now for a slightly more serious note: **mental health** is crucial because it **affects every aspect of our lives — our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors**. It shapes how we manage stress, build relationships, and make decisions. Ultimately, it impacts our overall well-being and our ability to function in daily life.

Prioritizing mental health **is essential for personal growth, strong relationships, and contributing meaningfully to society**.

P.S. Don’t be mad you spent 5€ on this. Totally understandable — you might feel a little scammed. But hey, at least you’ve learned your lesson and won’t waste your money like this again, right?



## II. SELF-CHECK: HOW AM I REALLY DOING?

In our fast-paced world, we often find ourselves caught in a continuous cycle of tasks, responsibilities, and digital distractions. Amid this hustle, it becomes easy to lose touch with our internal emotional landscape. Regular self-checks — **taking time to truly ask, "How am I really doing?"** — are essential to maintaining emotional balance, fostering resilience, and promoting mental well-being.

### ***The Importance of Self-Reflection***

Self-reflection is the conscious process of looking inward and assessing our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It provides clarity, helps identify patterns, and encourages personal growth. **Without pausing to reflect, we risk moving through life on autopilot,** reacting to situations without understanding the deeper emotional responses behind them.

Reflection questions such as:

*“What emotions have I felt most often this week?”*,

*“What triggered moments of joy or sadness?”* or

*“Am I feeling overwhelmed, and if so, why?”*

help us explore our inner world in a structured and honest way.



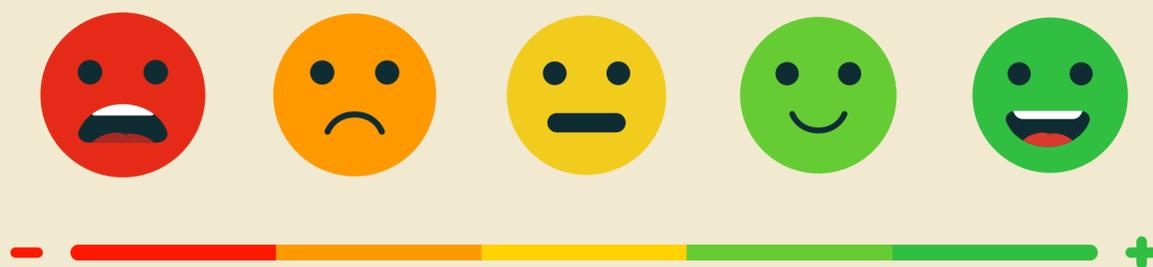
**These questions** are not always easy to answer, especially when we are dealing with stress or emotional turbulence, but they are necessary. They **allow us to name our feelings, validate our experiences**, and decide what support we may need.

When done regularly, self-reflection becomes a personal accountability practice, **helping us tune into what our mind and body need**. It may reveal unmet needs, unresolved conflicts, or simple truths like needing more rest or social connection.

### ***Using Emotional Check-Ins***

Emotional check-ins are tools used to help people identify and label their current feelings. These check-ins are widely used in educational, therapeutic, and workplace settings — but are equally valuable in personal life.

They help bridge the gap between vague unease and specific emotion, such as from *"I don't feel right"* to *"I'm anxious about an upcoming meeting."*

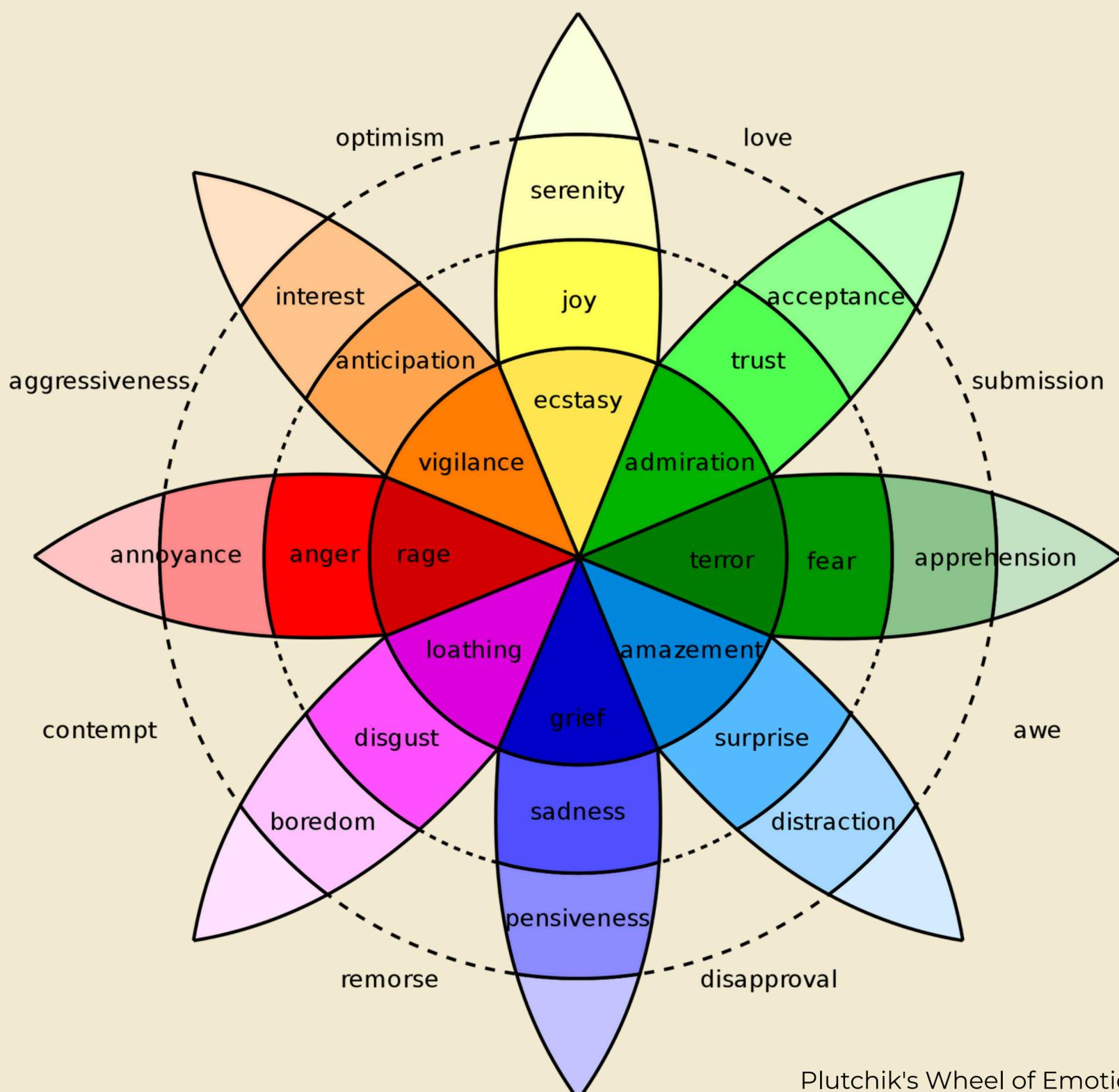


# TOOLS FOR EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Tools such as **emotion wheels** or check-in charts offer a visual and accessible way to process feelings.

A simple check-in chart might include:

- A list of core emotions (happy, angry, anxious, tired, calm)
- A scale of intensity (1–10)
- A prompt to explain the “why” behind the feeling



Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions



These tools are particularly helpful for those who struggle with emotional articulation. **By naming an emotion, we give it form**, and by understanding its origin, we gain power over how to manage it. Emotional check-ins can be especially helpful in noticing gradual changes in mental health — for instance, a consistent presence of stress or irritability over time might signal burnout. Moreover, for children and teens, **emotional check-ins teach** emotional literacy — **the foundation** for empathy, communication, and healthy relationships.

### ***Mood Tracker Templates and Daily Practice***

Mood tracking takes emotional awareness a step further by documenting how we feel over time. A mood tracker is typically **a daily or weekly log where individuals record their emotional states**, often with colors, symbols, or brief notes. This practice transforms emotional data into patterns that can be incredibly insightful. For example, a mood tracker might show that someone feels particularly low on Sundays, which could signal a need to reframe how they spend that day. Or it might highlight that improved sleep correlates with better moods, reinforcing the need for better rest habits.



## Mood tracker templates vary in complexity:

- Basic trackers use smiley faces or a 1–5 rating scale.
- Detailed trackers might incorporate hours of sleep, stress levels, diet, or social interaction.
- Creative versions like mood mandalas or bullet journal spreads make the practice enjoyable and artistic.

By visualizing emotional trends, people are more empowered to advocate for themselves — whether by seeking therapy, making lifestyle changes, or simply being more compassionate toward their own struggles.

# Mood Tracker

SELF LOVE

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- joyful, happy, relaxed, silly, content, great
- sad, lonely, depressed, insecure, numb
- productive, energetic, active, motivated, alive
- sick, tired, lazy, unmotivated, bored, dull
- average, normal, uneventful, good
- angry, anxious, frustrated, annoyed, grumpy

# INSIDE OUT

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ENERGETIC
- SADNESS**  
LONELY  
REMORSE  
GUILTY  
DEPRESSED
- DISGUST**  
SICK  
ANNOYED  
ENVIUS  
RESENTMENT
- ANGER**  
IRRITATED  
GRUMPY  
ENVIUS  
FRUSTRATED
- FEAR**  
ANXIOUS  
WORRIED  
STRESSED  
EMBARRASSED



## **Conclusion**

The question “*How am I really doing?*” is both simple and profound. It challenges us to move beyond surface-level wellness and confront our true emotional state. Through regular self-reflection, emotional check-ins, and mood tracking, we cultivate greater self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and psychological resilience.

Incorporating these practices doesn't require a significant time investment — **even 5 minutes a day can make a difference.** What matters most is the willingness to **listen to ourselves with honesty and kindness.** The better we understand how we're doing, the better we can take care of ourselves — and by extension, others.





## III. EMOTIONAL AWARENESS: UNDERSTANDING MY EMOTIONS

Our **emotions** shape how we experience the world and interact with others. They **are at the heart of every decision we make, every relationship we form, and every action we take.** Understanding them is not just about “being in touch with our feelings”—it’s a crucial skill that affects our mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.

Three critical aspects of emotional intelligence are: Emotional Awareness, Labeling Feelings and Emotional Literacy. This workbook helps you understand, reflect, and develop these essential emotional skills.

- **Emotional Awareness is the ability to consciously recognize and acknowledge your emotions.** It's about noticing what you're feeling and becoming aware of your internal emotional state. People with strong emotional awareness can observe their emotions without being overwhelmed by them.

 *“Something feels off — I think I’m upset.”*

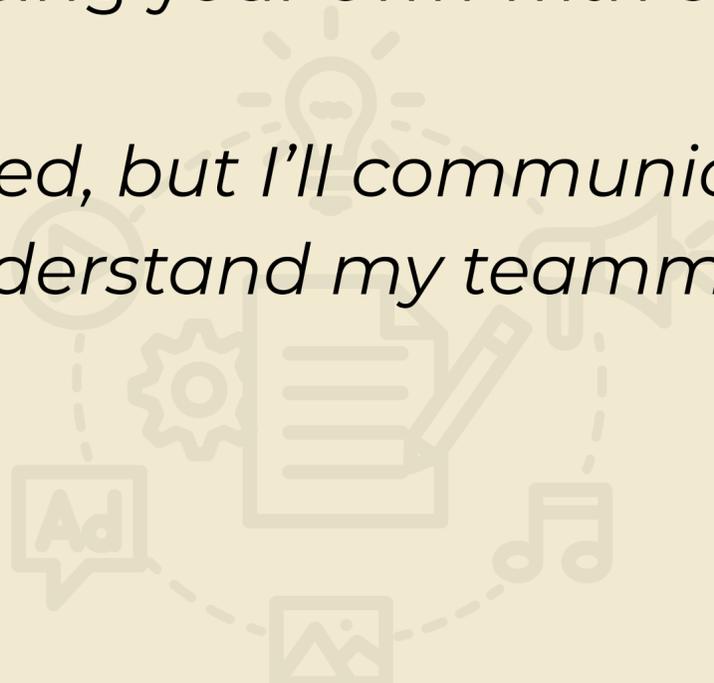


- **Labeling Feelings** is the bridge between awareness and intelligence. Once you notice an emotion, labeling helps you put a precise name to it. Are you sad—or disappointed? Angry—or betrayed? This clarity **helps in understanding what your feelings are telling you.**

 *“I’m not just upset—I feel frustrated because my efforts weren’t acknowledged.”*

- **Emotional Literacy** builds upon awareness. **It’s the ability to name your feelings with clarity and communicate them in a way that’s respectful, thoughtful, and clear.** It includes having a rich emotional vocabulary—going beyond “good” or “bad”—and understanding what your feelings are trying to tell you. Emotional literacy also involves empathy: being able to understand and honor the emotions of others while expressing your own with compassion.

 *“I feel frustrated, but I’ll communicate that calmly. I also understand my teammate didn’t mean to dismiss me.”*





## Why Is Emotional Awareness Important?

### ✓ For Ourselves:

- Emotional awareness helps us recognize, manage, and understand our emotions.
- This self-awareness:
  - Boosts confidence
  - Increases self-worth
  - Enhances decision-making

### ✓ For Our Relationships:

- It supports honest and meaningful connections with others.
- Helps in:
  - Improving communication
  - Resolving conflicts more smoothly
  - Building deeper interpersonal bonds

### 🌍 In General:

- Being emotionally aware **contributes to creating a positive and supportive environment**—for ourselves and those around us.



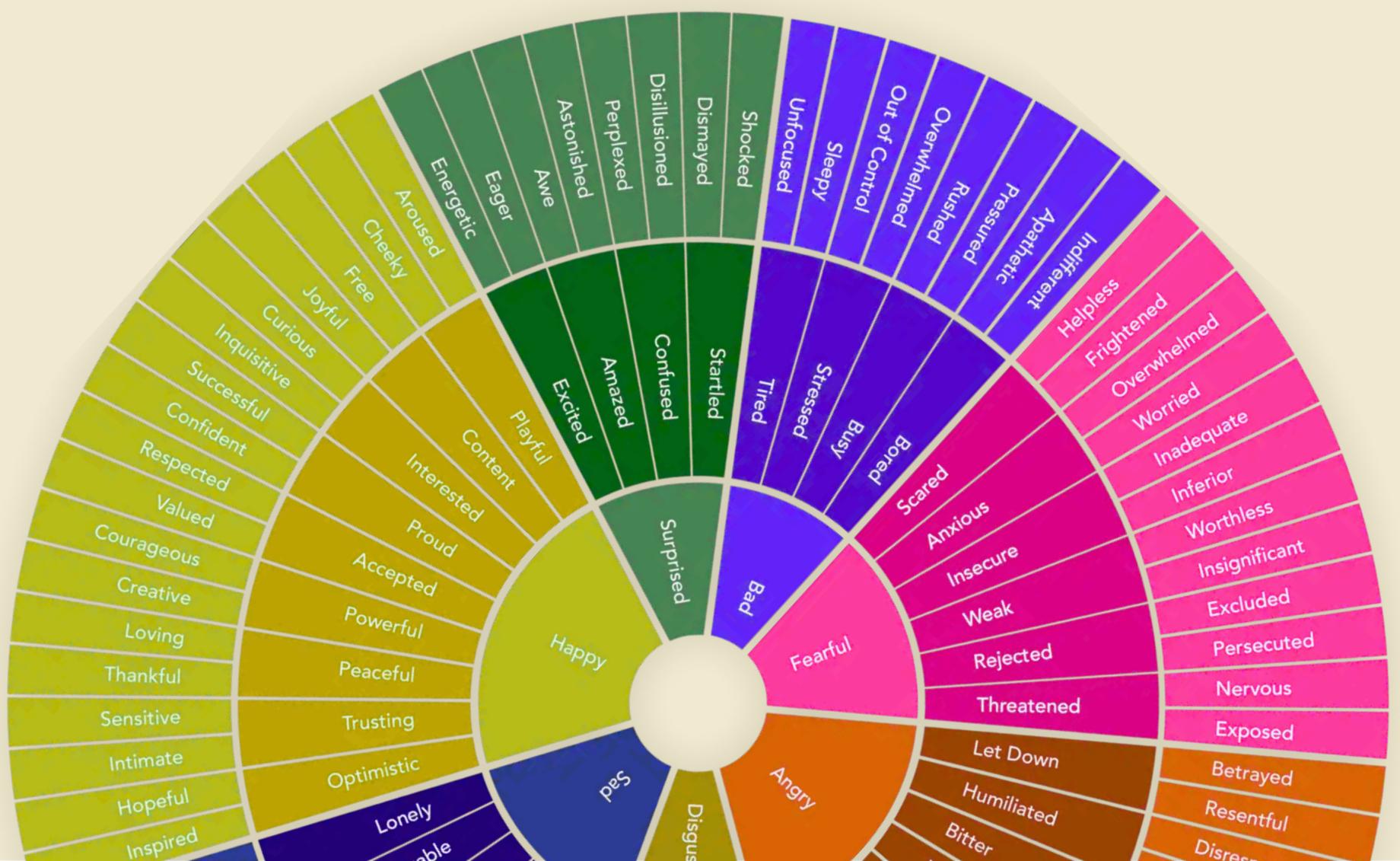
## Wheel of Emotions: A Tool for Labeling

The Wheel of Emotions helps us expand our emotional vocabulary. Often, we only say “sad” or “angry,” but the wheel breaks these into more nuanced feelings like:

- Sadness → lonely, ashamed, hopeless
- Anger → frustrated, critical, upset
- Fear → anxious, weak, insecure

### Using the wheel:

- Start at the center (basic emotions)
- Move outward for more specific feelings
- This helps you identify exactly what you're experiencing





**EXAMPLE:** you're preparing a team presentation and your colleagues submits their part late.

- **Emotional Awareness:**

You feel tension in your body and irritability.

→ *“Something’s bothering me.”*

- **Labeling the Feeling (Using the Wheel):**

You explore and realize:

→ *“I feel disrespected and frustrated because I value reliability.”*

- **Applying Emotional Intelligence:**

Instead of snapping at your colleague, you say:

→ *“I felt frustrated because the delay put pressure on the rest of the team. I’d appreciate clearer timelines moving forward.”*

**Outcome:** You stay calm, express your needs, and maintain the relationship — all because you could identify and label your feelings.





# EMOTIONAL AWARENESS : SELF-QUESTIONNAIRE

**Purpose:** This 3-step questionnaire is designed to help you identify, label, and express your emotions. By practicing these steps regularly, you'll grow both emotional awareness and emotional literacy.

## Why it helps:

- Makes your emotions less overwhelming
- Encourages emotional clarity (beyond just “sad” or “fine”)
- Builds your emotional vocabulary
- Improves communication with others
- Supports emotional regulation and personal growth

## How to use it:

- Do it when you feel “off,” overwhelmed, or stuck
- Find a quiet moment (2–5 minutes is enough)
- Be honest—there are no right or wrong answers
- Repeat regularly to develop emotional habits



## ***Step 1: Identify What You're Feeling (Emotional Awareness)***

This step is about noticing — becoming aware of the emotion without needing to fix or change it right away.

● *What am I feeling right now?*

(Let the words come naturally — it could be one word or a whole sentence.)

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● *Where do I feel it in my body?*

(Examples: tight chest, clenched jaw, butterflies in stomach, lump in throat)

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● *What may have triggered this feeling?*

(Think about people, events, thoughts, memories — even small ones)

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## ***Step 2: Label Your Emotions (Emotional Literacy)***

This helps you name your feelings more precisely — because “upset” could mean anxious, rejected, or even guilty.

● Which emotions best describe how I feel right now?

(Tick all that apply or add your own)

- Angry
- Anxious
- Frustrated
- Disappointed
- Sad
- Confused
- Excited
- Joyful
- Relieved
- Grateful
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

● What’s the strongest emotion I’m feeling?  
(This is the one that stands out or feels the biggest.)

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### **Step 3: Express It Clearly (Healthy Communication)**

Here's a simple sentence to help express your emotion with both honesty and care:

*"I feel [...emotion...] because [...what happened...]. I need or wish for [...what would help or what matters to you...]."*

Example:

*"I feel frustrated because I wasn't included in the meeting. I wish to feel more involved in decisions."*

Now your turn:

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## IV. STRESS AND ANXIETY: WHEN LIFE FEELS TOO MUCH

**Stress** is a natural reaction to pressure or change, and in small doses, it can even help us stay alert and motivated. But when stress becomes constant or intense, it can affect both our mental and physical health. It **often shows up through tension, irritability, trouble sleeping**, or difficulty concentrating.

**Anxiety** is closely related but **tends to involve ongoing worry**, even when the stressor is gone.

Common **sources of stress** for young people **include academic pressure, social expectations**, and **uncertainty about the future**. Recognizing these signs early and learning healthy coping strategies—like staying active, talking to someone you trust, or practicing mindfulness—can make a big difference.

Everyone experiences stress, but no one should feel they have to deal with it alone.



Stress doesn't always shout—it often shows up in small, quiet ways. You might feel more tired than usual, struggle to concentrate, or become easily irritated. Physical signs like **headaches, stomach aches, or changes in sleep** and appetite **can also be signals**. Emotionally, stress can make you feel overwhelmed, anxious, or disconnected. Noticing these early warning signs is the first step toward managing stress in a healthy way.

**Coping with stress is not about** eliminating it, but **finding personal strategies that help you feel more in control**. Creative expression—like art, music, or journaling—can be a powerful way to process emotions and understand what causes stress.

## Techniques to Reduce Stress



30 minutes of daily moderate exercise



Mindfulness and meditation



Progressive muscle relaxation



Yoga



Visualization



Slow, deep breaths



## STRESS AND ANXIETY: SELF QUIZ

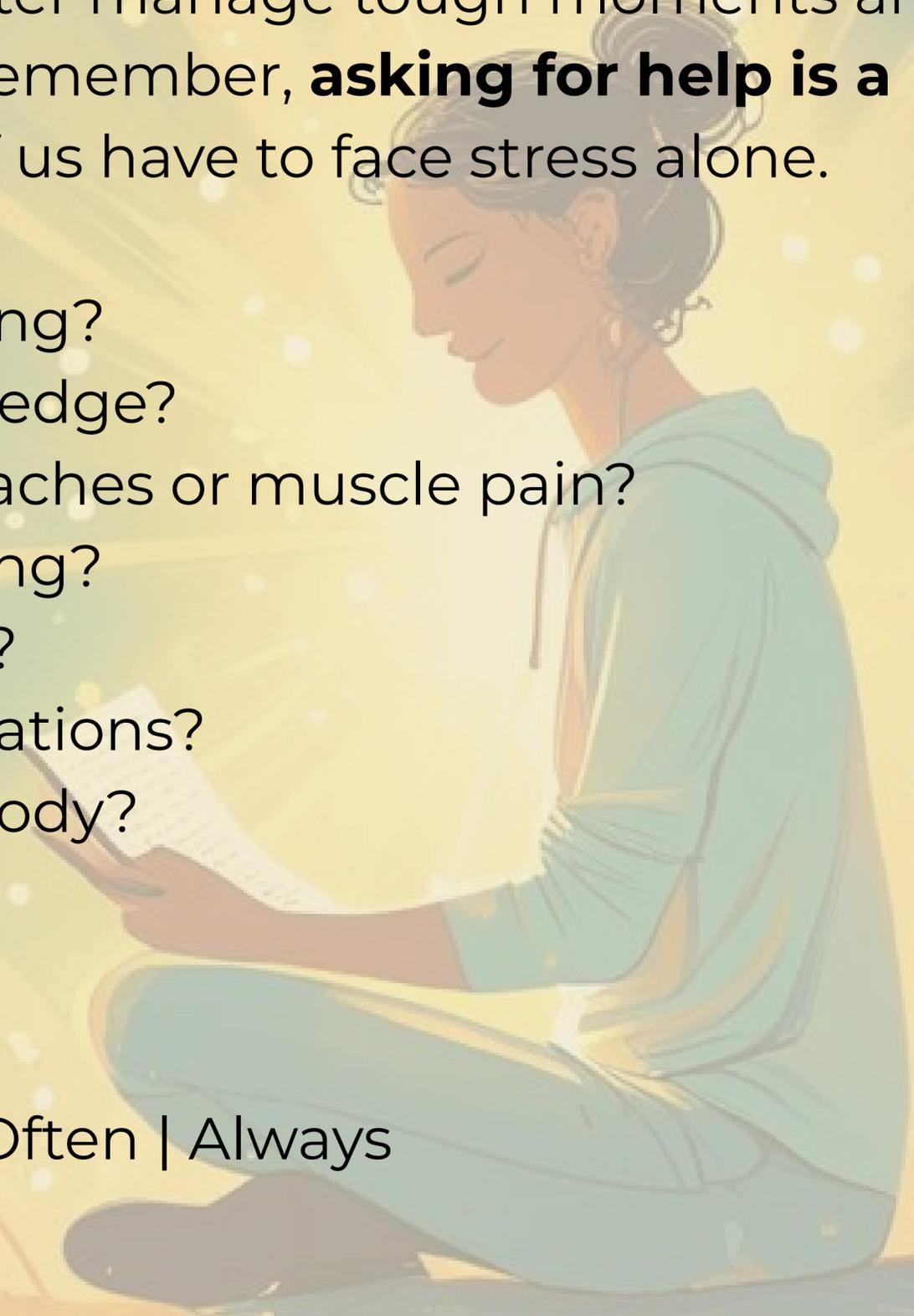
Stress is a normal part of life, but learning to recognize its signs and finding ways to cope can help us stay balanced and healthy.

By understanding our own stress and trying different strategies, we can better manage tough moments and support each other. Remember, **asking for help is a strength**, and none of us have to face stress alone.

- Had trouble focusing?
- Felt nervous or on edge?
- Experienced headaches or muscle pain?
- Had trouble sleeping?
- Felt overwhelmed?
- Avoided social situations?
- Felt irritable or moody?

Rate:

Never | Sometimes | Often | Always





## V. DIGITAL WELL-BEING CHECK: ONLINE BUT IN BALANCE

In today's fast-paced digital world, we are more connected than ever before. Screens are a vital part of our lives — for studying, socializing, working, and relaxing. However, the way we use **technology** can have a powerful effect on our mental health. Too much screen time, constant notifications, and digital distractions **can increase stress, reduce sleep quality, and affect self-esteem and focus.** That's why learning how to create a digital balance is essential for your mental well-being.

This chapter helps you reflect on your screen time habits, gives practical tips for healthier digital behavior, and supports you in building a more balanced online life.

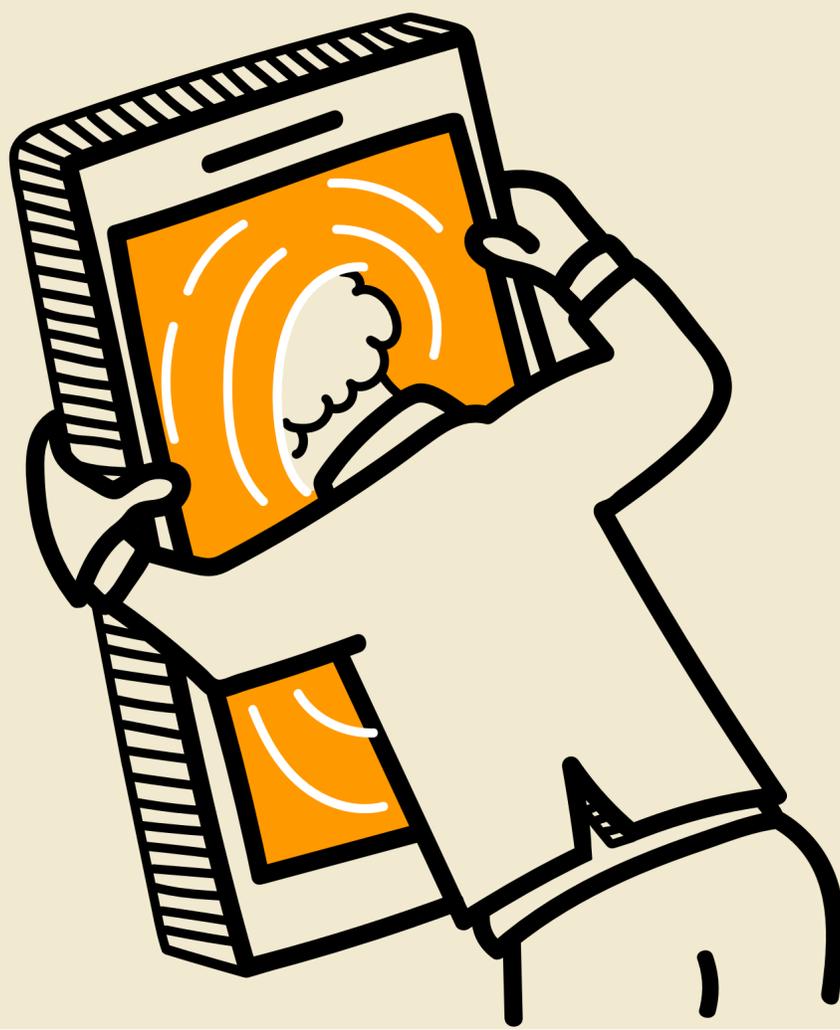




## Ask yourself:

- Do you check your phone first thing in the morning?
- Do you often feel overwhelmed by messages and notifications?
- Do you feel anxious or bored when you're not using your phone?
- Are your relationships or responsibilities affected by your screen time?

Sometimes we use digital devices to cope with boredom, loneliness, or anxiety. But too much passive screen time (e.g., endless scrolling) can actually make us feel worse.





## ***Self-Evaluation Quiz: How Balanced Is Your Screen Time?***

Take a few minutes to complete this quiz. Be honest with yourself.

Self-Evaluation Quiz (Rate each from 1 – Never to 5 – Always):

- I check my phone during meals or social gatherings.
- I lose track of time while scrolling or watching videos.
- I feel stressed when I can't check my messages.
- I use my phone as a way to avoid real-life tasks or emotions.
- I check my phone immediately after waking up or before falling asleep.
- I feel tired or distracted after long screen sessions.
- I spend more time online than I originally planned.
- I have trouble sleeping after using screens late at night.
- I feel pressure to be constantly online or respond quickly.
- I take regular breaks from screens throughout the day.

Now calculate your results:

- 40–50: Your screen habits may be harming your mental well-being. It's time to rethink your digital behavior.
- 25–39: You're using digital devices a lot, and there's room for improvement. Try setting some healthy boundaries.
- 10–24: You seem to have a balanced digital lifestyle. Keep it up!



## ***Understanding Your Digital Habits***

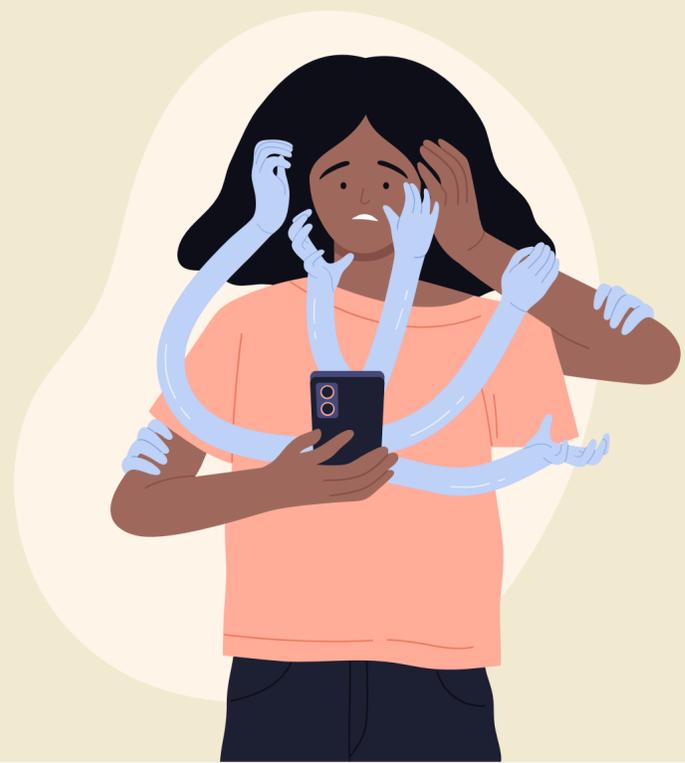
Digital habits are routines and behaviors shaped by how we use technology. These include checking notifications, multitasking between apps, binge-watching shows, or replying to messages instantly.

### **🚫 Common unhealthy digital habits:**

- Doomscrolling (constant exposure to negative news)
- Multitasking with several devices at once
- Checking your phone during classes, conversations, or rest
- Feeling FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) on social media

These habits can lead to:

- Mental fatigue
- Sleep problems
- Lower self-esteem (especially from social comparison)
- Less attention and focus





## ***Tips for Digital Balance and Healthy Online Habits***

You don't need to quit technology to be mentally healthy — you just need to use it mindfully. Try these simple and realistic tips to stay online \*but in balance\*:

 Track your screen time: Use apps or built-in tools to monitor your daily use.

 Turn off non-essential notifications: This reduces distractions and anxiety.

 Create screen-free zones and times: No phones at dinner, in bed, or during focused study.

 Schedule social media time: Set specific times instead of checking it randomly.

 Try “Digital Detox” days: Choose one day a week to disconnect.

 Practice digital mindfulness: Ask yourself why you're opening an app.

 Connect offline: Spend time with friends and family in person.

 Protect your sleep: Avoid screens 1 hour before bed.

 Talk about it: Share your digital challenges with others.



## ***Healthy Online Behavior***

Besides screen time, how we behave online matters. Just like in real life, our online actions shape how we feel and how others feel too.

### **✓ Healthy online behavior includes:**

- Respecting others and yourself
- Avoiding toxic comparisons
- Being mindful of your digital footprint
- Seeking positive, inspiring content
- Saying no to cyberbullying or negativity
- Being kind — even when anonymous

### **Social media can build connection and community, but it can also trigger anxiety, jealousy, and self-doubt. To use it healthily:**

- Follow uplifting accounts (unfollow pages that make you feel bad)
- Post for meaning, not for likes
- Limit “lurking” and start engaging positively
- Don’t compare your behind-the-scenes with someone else's highlight reel



## ***Challenge: Design Your Own Digital Balance Plan***

Take a few moments to write your personal goals for improving digital well-being:

1. I will reduce my screen time by:

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2. My screen-free zones/times will be:

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3. *I will improve my online behavior by:*

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4. *Offline activities I will do instead:*

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**Remember:** *You control your devices. Don't let them control you. This week, take control of your digital life by designing your own Digital Balance Plan. This challenge will help you reflect on your habits and make small, meaningful changes.*



## **Step 1: Reflect on your current habits**

- When do you use your phone the most?

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- What apps take up most of your time?

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- How do you feel after being online for a long time?

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## **Step 2: Set 3 SMART goals for digital balance (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound)**

Example: I will limit social media to 30 minutes daily using an app timer.

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## **Step 3: Create your screen-free moments**

Choose at least 2 times or spaces in your day where screens are not allowed. For example:

- During meals
- 1 hour before bed
- While walking or during breaks



## **Step 4: Replace screen time with well-being activities**

Pick 2-3 healthy, enjoyable offline activities to do instead of scrolling:

- Go for a walk
- Journal or draw
- Read a book
- Talk to a friend
- Practice mindfulness or do sports



## **Step 5: Share your plan with someone you trust**

Sharing your goal helps keep you accountable and supported.

## **Step 6: Track your progress for 7 days**

Each evening, note:

- What went well
- What was difficult
- How you felt
- What you'd change



## VI: BUILDING RESILIENCE

### ***Discovering Resilience: Your Inner Strength Is Real***

Everyone struggles sometimes — with stress, self-doubt, bad days, or just feeling overwhelmed. But what helps some people keep going, even when things are hard?

That's resilience. And the good news is: resilience isn't something you're born with — it's something you can grow.

This section of the workbook is here to help you:

- Discover your personal strengths
- Track your emotions in a healthy way
- Recognize when you need a break
- Build confidence, little by little

You don't need to be perfect. You just need to show up for yourself. Let's begin.



## ✓ Checklist: 5 Signs I Might Need a Digital Break

Social media and screen time can be fun and helpful, but also exhausting.

Here are **5 signs it** might **be time to unplug a little**:

1. I feel anxious or sad after scrolling.
2. I compare myself constantly to others online.
3. I stay up late on my phone and feel tired the next day.
4. I feel FOMO (fear of missing out) when I'm not online.
5. I get annoyed or angry easily when I can't check my phone.

**Tip:** Taking just 30 minutes off screens each day can improve your focus, sleep, and mood.

Try it and track how you feel!



## Chart: Weekly Mood Tracker

Use this simple tracker to check in with yourself every day. Noticing patterns in your mood can help you figure out what helps (or hurts) your emotional health.

Day	Mood	What affected your mood today?
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

### Reflection at the end of the week:

What improved your mood? What drained you? What's one thing you want to keep doing next week?



## **Confidence Builder Activity: “The I Did It List”**

We often overlook our wins especially small ones. But those little wins matter.

### **Instructions:**

Every evening for a week, write down 3 things you did that made you feel capable, strong, or proud. Doesn't matter how small they seem.

### **Examples:**

- “I reached out to a friend even though I was nervous.”
- “I didn't skip breakfast today.”
- “I finished a boring task without quitting.”

### **Why it works:**

You build confidence not by being perfect, but by seeing proof that you keep showing up even when it's hard.



## Mini Self-Check: How Resilient Am I? Answer honestly.

Circle the one that feels closest to your usual response:

- **When I feel overwhelmed, I...**

- A. Shut down and avoid everything
- B. Try to deal with it, but it's hard
- C. Ask for help or break the task down

- **If I fail at something, I...**

- A. Feel like I'm a failure
- B. Feel upset, but move on after a while
- C. Learn from it and try again

- **When I feel anxious or sad, I...**

- A. Hide it and hope it goes away
- B. Try to distract myself
- C. Talk to someone or write about it

Mostly A's? You might be struggling right now — you're not alone, and there's support.

Mostly B's? You're building resilience — keep practicing.

Mostly C's? You're showing strong coping skills — stay consistent and help others too.



## ***Personal tools to build resilience based on our own experience***

Here we would like to share how we try to stay resilient and what personally helps us to build it. **One of the most important tools to stay resilient is goal-setting.** Some of us always try to set a clear goal for ourselves and remind ourselves why we are working toward it. When things feel tough or progress seems slow, we try to focus on the bigger picture.

Every small step, no matter how insignificant it feels in the moment, is still a step forward. This mindset helps us stay motivated and not give up. **Another thing that really helps is practicing gratitude** and giving ourselves credit for the effort we put in. It's easy to be hard on yourself when things don't go perfectly, but we remind ourselves that progress isn't always linear. Setbacks happen, and that's okay.

We're human, not robots, **it's completely natural to have ups and downs** and to go through phases where our energy or performance changes.



What matters most is that we keep going and show up for ourselves, even on the harder days. Moreover, sometimes it is not easy to do an introspection alone, so young people that doesn't have access to psychological support, they could use the peer conversations group to have some support to understand their feelings and find solutions, it is important to normalize asking for help.

### ***Final Reminder: You Already Have Strength***

Resilience doesn't mean "being strong" all the time. It means **knowing how to care for yourself, bounce back, and believe in your worth** — even when things feel heavy.

*"I'm not where I want to be yet. But I've come so far from where I started."*

Take breaks. Track your emotions. Celebrate your wins. Ask for help. You're not weak for struggling — you're strong for showing up!

Keep choosing yourself. Keep trying. Keep going. You're already doing better than you think. 🧡



## VII. DAILY SELF-CARE PLAN: SMALL HABITS, BIG IMPACT

### *Small habits, big impact*

**Taking care of yourself is** not just a luxury; it's **a necessity**. A well-designed self-care routine helps you maintain balance, reduce stress, boost your energy, and improve your overall well-being. However, self-care doesn't mean grand, time-consuming rituals. **The power lies in small, consistent habits** that build up to a meaningful impact over time. This chapter will guide you through practical ways to create a sustainable daily and weekly self-care plan, using simple tools anyone can apply.

### *Understanding Self-Care: What It Really Means*

**Self-care is the intentional practice of nurturing your physical, emotional, and mental health.** It's about recognizing your needs and actively meeting them—not just when you feel overwhelmed but as a regular part of your life. While it might be tempting to wait until burnout hits, **the best approach is prevention** through small daily actions. You don't need to overhaul your entire lifestyle overnight. Instead, start by identifying areas that need attention—such as sleep, hydration, movement, mindfulness, or social connection—and gradually introduce habits that support these areas. The key is consistency and flexibility, allowing you to adapt your routine as your needs change.



## ***Why Small Habits Matters***

Small habits are the building blocks of long-term well-being. Here's why focusing on bite-sized habits works:

- **Easy to start:** Small habits don't require huge time investments, so they're less intimidating.
- **Build momentum:** Completing small tasks daily boosts your confidence and motivation.
- **Create lasting change:** Over time, small habits become automatic behaviors that support a healthier lifestyle.
- **Flexible and adaptable:** You can adjust small habits as your schedule or priorities shift.

**EXAMPLE:** drinking a glass of water right after waking up might seem minor, but consistently doing this every day improves hydration, digestion, and mental clarity. Add 5 minutes of stretching, and you start your morning with movement that prevents stiffness and supports energy.



## ***Examples of simple self-care habits to start today***

Here are practical habits grouped by key areas of self-care that you can easily integrate into your daily life:

### **Physical Self-Care**

- Drink at least 1 glass of water after waking up
- Take a 10-minute walk after lunch
- Stretch or move your body for 5 minutes after sitting for an hour
- Prepare a balanced meal with fresh ingredients at least once a day

### **Emotional Self-Care**

- Write down three things you are grateful for each evening
- Practice a quick grounding exercise during stressful moments (e.g., 5 deep breaths)
- Set boundaries by saying “no” to one non-essential request each day
- Connect with a friend or family member, even briefly

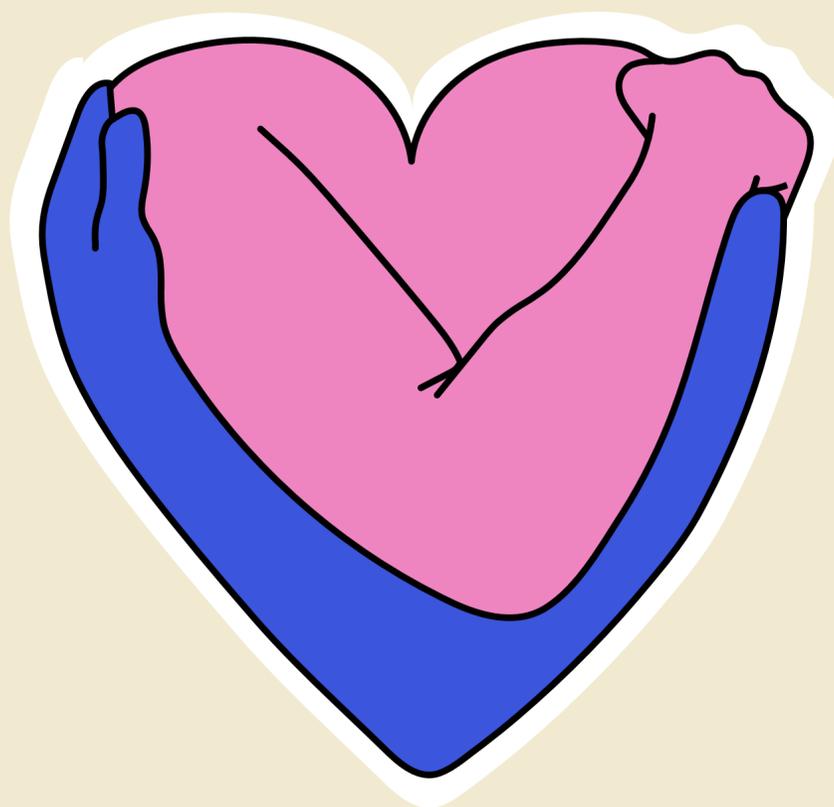


## Mental Self-Care

- Dedicate 10 minutes to reading or learning something new daily
- Use a journaling prompt to reflect on your feelings once a day or week
- Limit screen time 30 minutes before bed to improve sleep quality
- Practice mindfulness or meditation for 5 minutes in the morning or evening

## Social Self-Care

- Send a positive message or compliment to someone you care about
- Join a group activity or club weekly, even if only online
- Plan one social interaction each week, such as a coffee with a friend or a phone call





## ***Tools to Design and Maintain Your Self-Care Routine***

Creating a routine is easier when you have the right tools to support your intentions:

- **Habit Trackers:** Use apps or printable trackers to check off daily habits and visualize progress. This creates motivation through positive reinforcement.
- **Journals:** Keep a simple daily or weekly journal to reflect on your mood, energy, and what self-care actions helped.
- **Reminders:** Set gentle alarms or use calendar notifications for new habits until they become automatic.
- **Visual Cues:** Place sticky notes in key places (mirror, fridge, desk) to remind you of your self-care goals.
- **Accountability Partner:** Share your self-care goals with a friend or family member who can encourage you and hold you accountable.



## ***Designing Your Weekly Self-Care Plan***

While daily habits lay the foundation, weekly rituals refresh and deepen your self-care practice. Consider dedicating time each week for activities that require more time or intention, such as:

- Preparing meals in advance to ease weekday stress
- Taking a longer walk or spending time in nature
- Engaging in a hobby or creative project that brings you joy
- Scheduling a social outing or quality time with loved ones
- Setting aside 30 minutes for self-reflection and planning

Plan these activities ahead and treat them as important appointments with yourself.



## ***Putting It All Together: Sample Daily and Weekly Self-Care Plan***

### **Daily Example:**

- Morning: Drink a glass of water, 5 minutes of stretching, 5 minutes meditation
- Midday: Take a 10-minute walk, eat a healthy lunch, practice deep breathing stressed
- Evening: Write 3 gratitudes, limit screen time, prepare for restful sleep

### **Weekly Example:**

- Sunday: Meal prep for the week, 30-minute nature walk, call a friend
  - Wednesday: Attend a hobby group, journal reflections
  - Friday: Early night with calming music or a book
- This plan is flexible—feel free to modify based on your schedule and energy.





## VIII. MINDFULNESS – PAUSE THE WORLD FOR A MOMENT

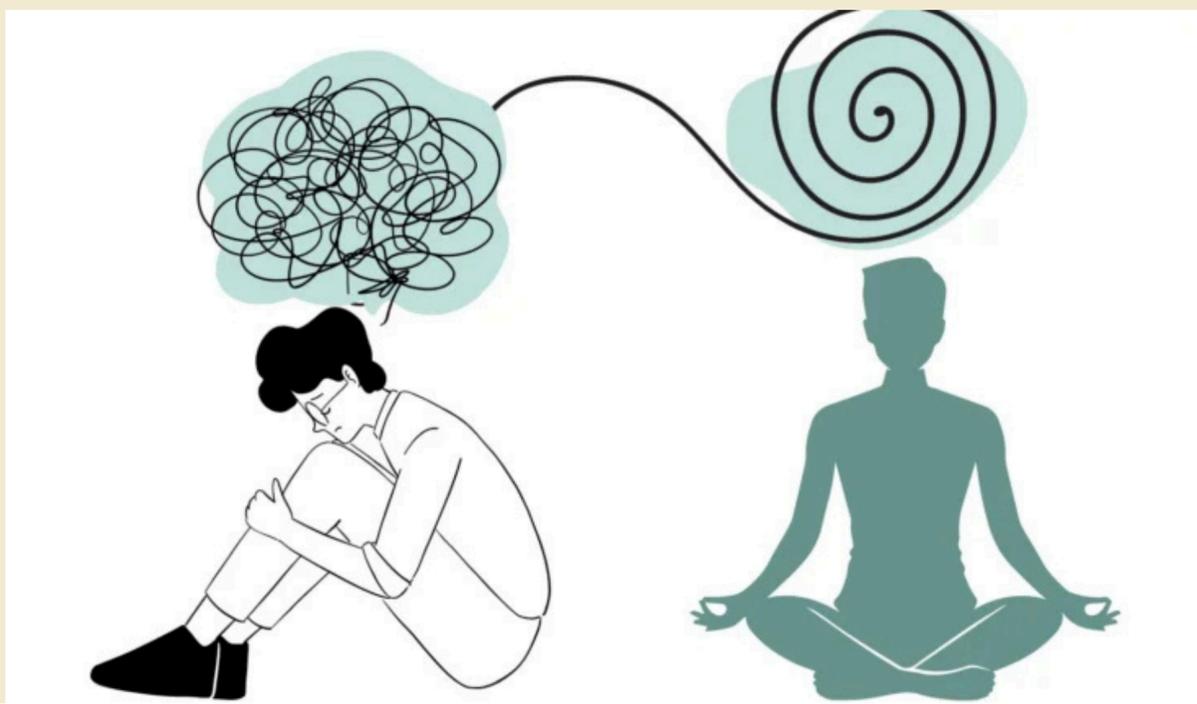
**Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present in the moment. It is about being aware of your emotions, body and sensations.**

The core components are awareness, acceptance, being present in the moment. One way of getting present is the exercise called conscious breathing.

### **Conscious breathing:**

It is a self regulation technique used to calm the body and the mind. It is useful not only in stressing situations, but also for daily practice. For instance:

- In the morning right when you wake up.
- Before an important event.
- After feeling a strong emotion.
- In stressful situations.
- On a daily basis as a self care technique.





There are multiple exercises that can work. But not every exercise is working for everybody.

There is for example **the 4-7-8 breathing technique:**

- Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds. You should focus on the air feeling up your belly and chest.
- Then hold your breath for 7 seconds and try to stay calm.
- Afterwards exhale slowly and completely through your nose, like a long sigh.
- Repeat the cycle for 3 to 5 times or longer.

For this exercise to work even better you can **close your eyes**. This way you reduce distraction and can be more present. It is also very important to always breathe deeply in to your belly.

To even deeper the calming the effect you can repeat a mantra.

While inhaling you can say: *...I am calm...*

While exhaling you can say: *...I let go...*



During high stress situations like panic attacks the 4-7-8 conscious breathing is also working but if the breathing is hardly disturbed and very shallow a **shorter version** might be more effective.

- For this one you can Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly.
- Try to breathe so your belly hand moves more.
- Say to yourself that *“this will pass”* and *“...I’m save, I can breathe...”*

**Another useful technique** is to ground yourself using your senses:

Notice 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you can hear....





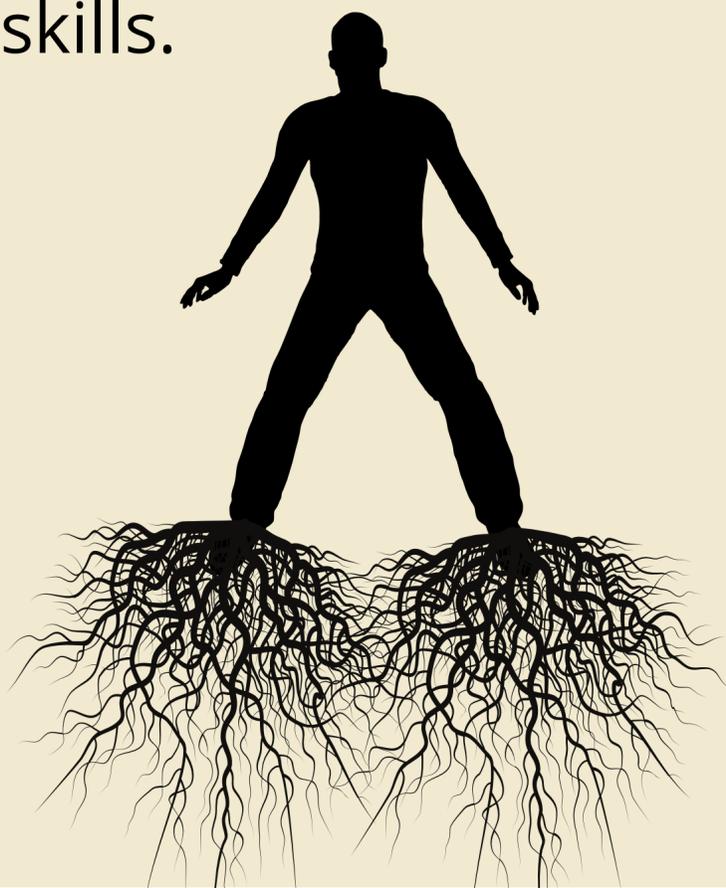
## GROUNDING EXERCISE

A grounding exercise is a technique used **to help a person reconnect with the present**, especially useful for reducing anxiety, stress, or dissociation. They typically involve using the senses (the 5 senses) or the body (breathing) to focus the mind on the "here and now."

You can use this grounding technique anytime you need to return to the present or calm down emotionally.

**EXAMPLE:** If you're feeling panic or anxiety, if you're overwhelmed by intense emotions, if you've dissociated, if you're experiencing negative or intrusive thoughts, if you're in a highly stressful situation. It can also be used as part of your personal routine to strengthen your self-regulation skills.

There's a very famous and easy grounding technique: The 5 Senses Technique.





## THE 5 SENSES TECHNIQUE.

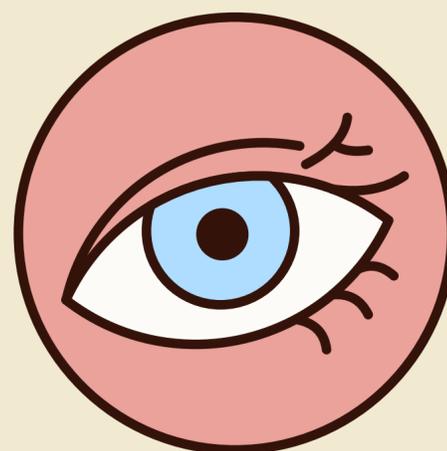
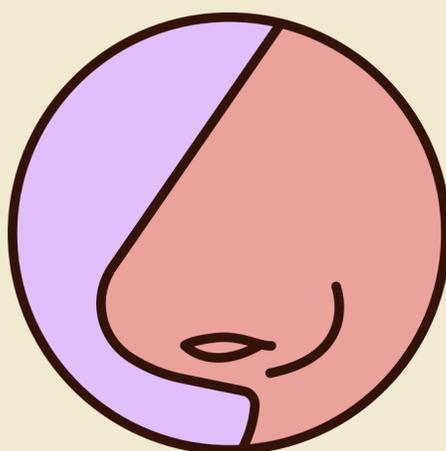
First, name 5 things you can see. They can be colors, shapes, objects, even people.

Second, name 4 things you can touch, such as your clothes, a cup, or your hair.

Next, name 3 things you can hear.

Fourth, name two things you can smell. If there's no smell present, imagine something you like or want to smell, or even pick up something with a scent.

Finally, name one thing you can taste. If you don't taste any, drink water or eat something you like.





Regular grounding has both emotional and physical benefits. In the long term, it helps the body and mind respond more calmly and balanced to stress.

### **Benefits of regular grounding:**

- Reduction in anxiety and stress. By focusing on the present, your nervous system relaxes, which reduces the activation of "survival mode."
- Greater emotional control. You learn to detect and regulate your emotions before they overwhelm you.
- Better connection with your body and environment. It helps reconnect you with what you feel physically and emotionally.
- Improved concentration and mental clarity. By calming your mind, you can think more clearly and make better decisions.
- Decreased dissociation. It is helpful for people who feel disconnected to return to the present.





How does your body feel in the long run?

If you practice grounding consistently, you may notice:

- Your breathing will naturally slow down and deepen.
- You'll notice your body is less tense.
- You'll have more body awareness (you'll know when you need rest, food, or movement).
- You'll feel more confident in your own body, even in difficult situations. You may notice better sleep quality and an overall sense of well-being.





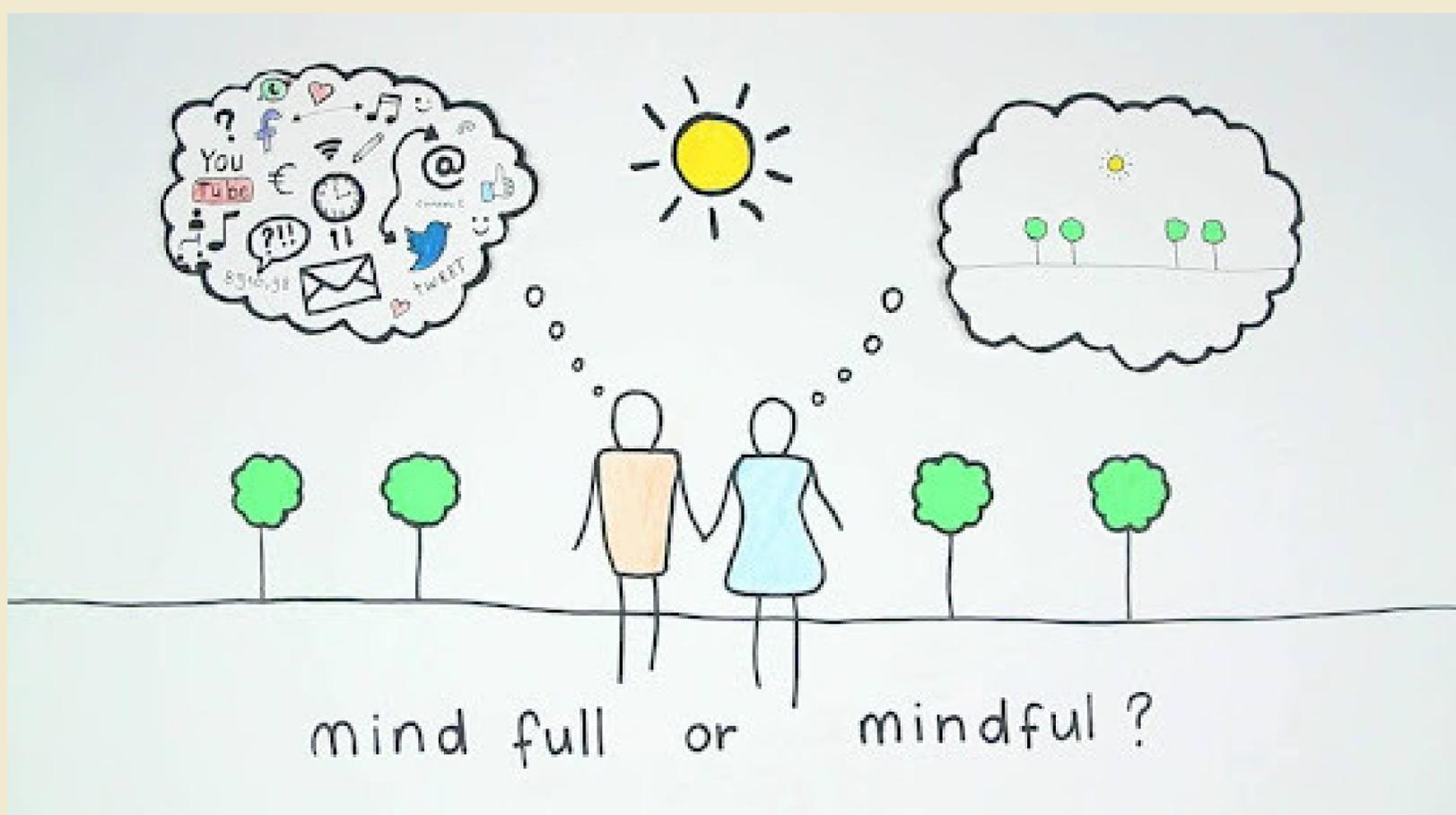
## **Mindfulness tools**

Mindfulness tools are simple practices that help you be more present, more aware, and less reactive in everyday life.

They are flexible therefore is not needed special preparation.

You can use mindfulness tools:

- In moments of stress or anxiety
- When you feel distracted, over-stimulated or agitated.
- At the start or end of the day as a self-care routine
- During tough situations (exams, presentations, conflicts)
- During the day (commuting, waiting, before bed)





## ***Some mindfulness tools could be:***

### **Mindful walking**

Pay attention to your steps, how the ground feels, and your breath as you walk. Watching and paying attention of your surroundings.

### **Body scan**

Slowly observe your body from feet to head, without judgment, feeling every sensation.

### **One minute of presence**

Spend 60 seconds doing just one thing: breathing, drinking water, looking at the sky — with no distractions.

These techniques have shown important **benefits** in the short and long term as :

- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved focus and mental clarity
- Better emotional regulation
- Increased self-awareness
- Fewer physical stress symptoms (insomnia, tension, fatigue)



## ***EMOTIONAL REGULATION TIPS***

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your emotions in a healthy way.

You can use it whenever an emotion:

- Feels too intense (like anxiety, anger, sadness)
- Blocks you from doing something (fear, insecurity)
- Affects how you treat others (shouting, shutting down, lashing out)
- Feels confusing or overwhelming

You can also use emotional regulation preventively, as part of daily emotional self-care.

Practical ways to apply emotional regulation: The Emotion Wheel. This wheel is a visual representation of all the emotions, it is useful as a identify source. Start with a basic feeling: joy, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust... Then zoom in: is it anger or frustration? Anxiety or fear?



## ***Kind Inner Dialogue (Self-Compassion)***

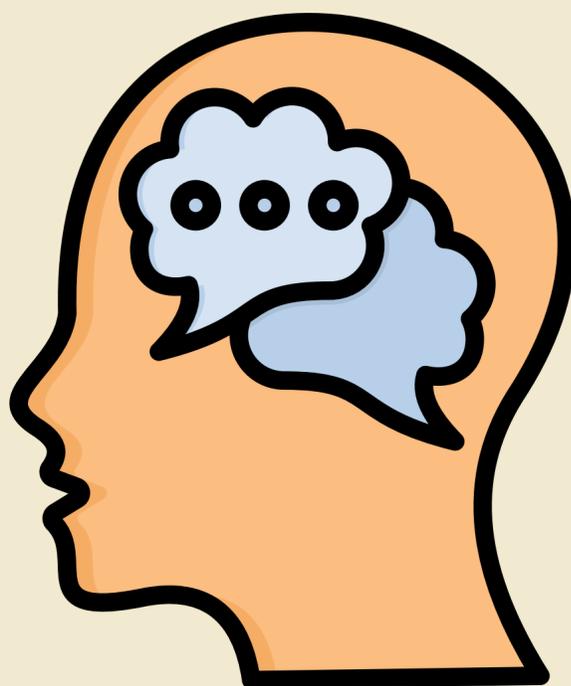
Talk to yourself as you would to a close friend.

The Emotional Traffic Light

- Stop: What am I feeling?
- Think: Why do I feel this way? What do I need?
- Act: What can I do that would help me right now?

Benefits of Practicing Emotional Regulation

- You avoid emotional outbursts or getting stuck
- You feel more in control of yourself
- You communicate better with others
- You develop emotional intelligence
- Your relationships improve
- Stress and anxiety levels go down
- You build self-esteem and resilience





# IX. ASKING FOR HELP – YOU’RE NOT ALONE: WHEN AND HOW TO REACH

## Introduction

In general, the concept of asking for help is a stigma in society. But why? Is it for stigma? Where and when they came from?

It’s not simple to have a quickly and fast answer, but this is what we came from. Some people may think that the stigma arises are personal idea and cultural background. Who seek help, the people is deemed as ‘weak’ and they are unfit for society. And, despite progress, pervasive societal stigma equates mental health struggles, with weakness, instability, or personal failure.

This internalized shame whispers, *"What's wrong with me?"*, *"Nobody cares"*, *"Others will judge me"*, or *"Maybe its its not that big of a deal"* and silencing the call for help.





Today we aim to talk about this and raise awareness within young people. Lets boil it down to comparison within genders :

## **Males:**

Following the stereotypes in the society and the singular concept that there is only one way to be a man, the mental health for men often gets ignored. Its true the childhood of men is relatively more freely.

- **Stigma & Masculinity Norms:** "Toughness," self-reliance, fear of appearing weak/vulnerable ("Be a man").
- **Emotional Restriction:** Difficulty identifying/expressing emotions ("Normative Male Alexithymia").
- **Minimization:** Downplaying symptoms ("It's not that bad," "I can handle it").
- **Fear of Professional Help:** Concerns about judgment, loss of control, confidentiality.



## Women:

- **Stigma & Femenine Norms:** “Sensitive”, “Vulnerable”, “exagerated” or “fragile”. It’s how society define a woman.
- **Emotional Unestimation:** For woman, usually, it’s easier to identify and express their emotions but most of the time are unestimated and they don’t take it seriously.
- **Minimization:** Woman problems are usually related to fysical problems. They are use to hear things like: “do you have your period?”
- **Fear of Professional Help:** Usualy, woman tend to talk about their problems with their closest friends more that seeking for professional help.





## ***Informal Support: Starting with People You Know & Trust***

### **1. Connect with Family:**

- **How:** Approach a parent, guardian, sibling, aunt/uncle, or cousin you feel safe with. Try:
  - "Mom/Dad, I haven't been feeling like myself. Can we talk?"
  - "I'm having a hard time with [school, friends, my mood] and I need some help."
  - Write a note or text if saying it out loud is too hard: "I need to talk about something important. Can we find time tonight?"
- **Why:** Family can provide emotional support, practical help (like finding a therapist), and a sense of security.
- **Tip:** If you're worried about their reaction, start by sharing a little and see how it goes. You don't have to share everything at once.





## 2. Talk to a Trusted Friend:

- **How:** "I've been feeling really overwhelmed/down/anxious lately. Can I talk to you about it?" or "I'm struggling and could use a friend to listen."
- **Why:** Friends offer understanding, reduce isolation, and can just be there. They might relate to your experiences.
- **Tip:** Choose a friend known for being supportive and a good listener. Be clear if you just need to vent or want advice.

## 3. Reach Out to a Trusted Adult Mentor:

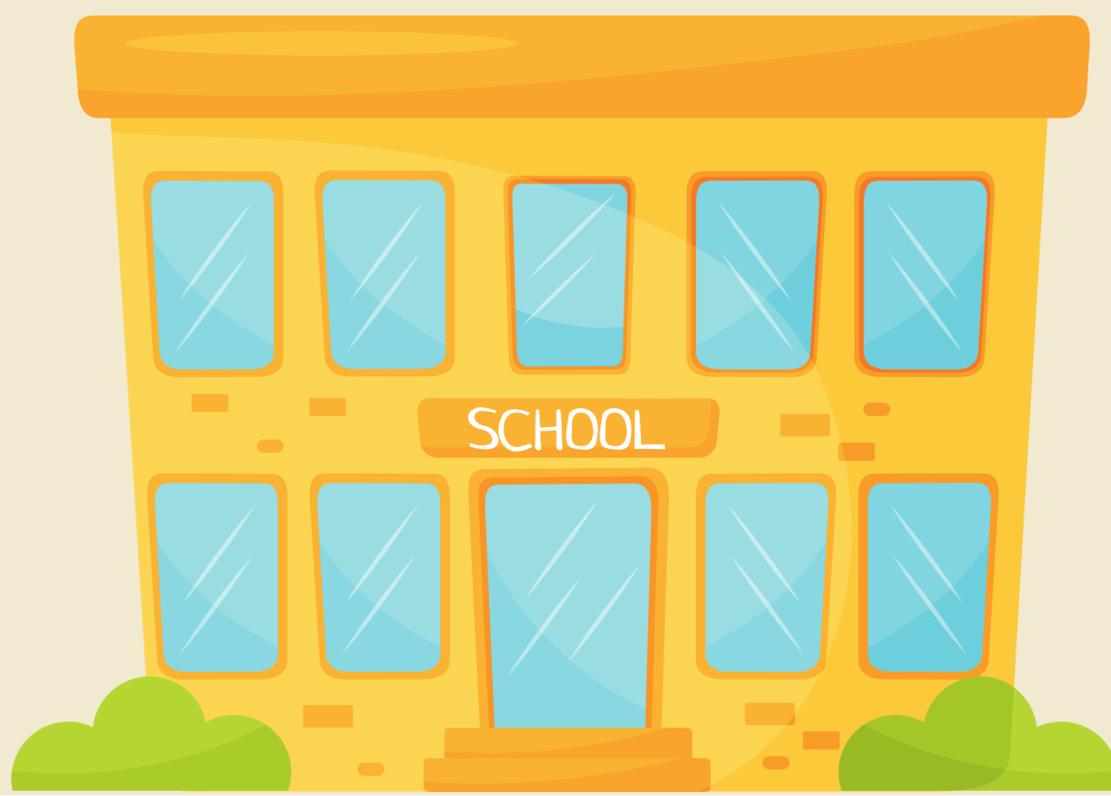
- **Who:** Coach, youth group leader, neighbor, family friend, religious leader, music/art teacher.
- **How:** "I respect you and I'm going through something tough. Could I talk to you for a few minutes?" or "I need some advice about handling stress/anxiety/etc."
- **Why:** Sometimes it's easier to talk to someone outside your immediate family/friend circle. They can offer perspective and support.



## Formal Support Within Your School/College

### 4. School Counselor or Psychologist:

- **How:** Visit their office, email, or ask a teacher to help you set up an appointment. Say: "I need to talk to the counselor about how I'm feeling" or "I'm struggling with my mental health."
- **Why:** They are trained professionals right there. They offer confidential support, coping strategies, and can connect you with outside resources. They can also help with academic stress impacting your mental health.
- **Tip:** Confidentiality is key, but know their limits (they must report danger to self/others or abuse).





## 5. Teacher or Professor:

- **How:** Talk after class, send an email, or visit during office hours. Try: "I'm having a hard time focusing/managing stress because I'm struggling with [anxiety/depression/etc.]. I might need some flexibility/accommodations, and I'm also looking for help."
- **Why:** They can offer understanding, academic support (extensions, resources), and may help connect you to school counseling services. They see students daily and often care deeply.
- **Tip:** Be clear about what you need from them (just understanding? help connecting to counseling? temporary academic relief?).

## 6. College/University Counseling Center:

- **How:** Visit their website, call, or walk in. Most offer short-term counseling, crisis support, groups, and referrals. Just say: "I'd like to make an appointment to speak with a counselor."





## Professional Support:

### 7. Therapist/Counselor/Psychologist:

- **How:**

- Ask for a Referral: From your doctor, school counselor, or insurance company.
- Search Directories: Psychology Today, TherapyDen, Inclusive Therapists, Open Path Collective (lower cost). Filter by location, insurance, specialties (anxiety, trauma, LGBTQ+), etc.
- Contact: Call or email to ask if they are accepting new clients and if they work with your concerns/age group. Many offer free short consultations.

- **Why:** Professional expertise! They provide evidence-based treatments (like CBT, DBT), a safe space to explore deep issues, and long-term support.





## 8. General Doctor:

- **How:** At your next checkup or schedule an appointment specifically for mental health. Be honest: "I've been feeling really anxious/depressed/overwhelmed," or "I'm having trouble sleeping/eating because of my mood." Describe physical symptoms too (headaches, fatigue).
- **Why:** Doctors can rule out physical causes, offer initial support, prescribe medication if appropriate (or refer to a psychiatrist), and refer you to therapists. They are a crucial first step.

## 9. Psychiatrist:

- **How:** Usually requires a referral from your doctor or therapist. They specialize in diagnosing mental health conditions and managing medication.
- **Why:** If therapy alone isn't enough, or your symptoms are severe, medication might be part of your treatment plan. A psychiatrist manages this.



## ***Emergency numbers:***



- **General Emergency Number in Europa:** 112  
it's the common emergency number across the European Union.

## **Mental and Emotional Health Emergency Numbers:**

- **Spain:** 024 it's a support line for suicidal behavior.
- **Germany:** 0800 111 0 111 / 0800111 0 222  
(TelefonSeelsorge)
- **Italy:** 0223 232525 (Telefono Amico Italia) it's for emotional support.
- **Greece:** 10306 (Mental Health Support Line)
- **Bulgaria:**
  - 0800 20 100 (Bulgarian Red Cross) It's a help line for children and teens.
  - +359 42 63 22 22 it's for emotional support (Stara Zagora).
- **Czech Republic:**
  - 116 111 (Linka Bezpečí) It's for children and youth.
  - 608 902 410 (Modrá linka, Blue line) It's for emotional difficulties and crisis intervention.



## ***Conclusion: Silence is the Real Weakness***

The stigma telling us that asking for help is a sign of failure is a dangerous lie. It traps us in isolation, whispering "What's wrong with me?" or "Nobody cares," especially under the weight of gendered pressures – men feeling forced into silence by "toughness," women having their struggles downplayed or dismissed.



## **Reaching out breaks this cycle.**

Talking to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, counselor, doctor, or therapist isn't weakness; it's courage. It's the smartest, strongest step you can take for your mental health. These connections are lifelines, offering understanding, perspective, and real pathways to healing.

**Speak up. Reach out. Support exists. Choosing help is choosing yourself, and that is true strength.**



## SECTION X – USEFUL RESOURCES AND HOTLINES: WHO CAN I REACH OUT TO?

### General Crisis Support

**112** – European Emergency Number  
(Police, Fire, Ambulance)



**116 123** – Emotional Support Helpline  
(offered in many countries)

**116 111** – Child Helpline for children  
and young people



**116 000** – Hotline for Missing Children





## PROJECT COUNTRIES

### **Bulgaria**

#### **Mental Health**

Mental Health Crisis Hotline: 0700 17 123

<https://www.bgmentalhealth.eu>

#### **Domestic Violence**

Animus Foundation: +359 2 981 76 86

<https://www.animusassociation.org>

#### **Children & Youth**

National Child Protection Line: 116 111

### **Czech Republic**

#### **Mental Health**

Crisis Centre RIAPS (Prague): +420 222 586 768 <https://www.riaps.cz>

#### **Domestic Violence**

Bílý kruh bezpečí (White Circle of Safety): +420 116 006

<https://www.bkb.cz>

#### **Children & Youth**

Linka bezpečí (Child Helpline): 116 111

<https://www.linkabezpeci.cz>

### **Germany**

#### **Mental Health**

Telefonseelsorge (Crisis Helpline): 0800 111 0 111 or 0800 111 0 222

<https://www.telefonseelsorge.de>

#### **Domestic Violence**

Violence Against Women Helpline: 08000 116 016

<https://www.hilfetelefon.de>

#### **Children & Youth**

Nummer gegen Kummer (Childline & Parent Helpline):

Children: 116 111

Parents: 0800 111 0 550

<https://www.nummergegenkummer.de>



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## PROJECT COUNTRIES

### Greece

#### **Mental Health**

Klimaka NGO Suicide Prevention Line: 1018

<https://klimaka.org.gr>

#### **Domestic Violence**

SOS Helpline for Women: 15900

<https://womensos.gr>

#### **Children & Youth**

Smile of the Child: 1056

<https://www.hamogelo.gr>

### Italy

#### **Mental Health**

Telefono Amico (Emotional Support): 0223272327

<https://www.telefonoamico.it>

#### **Domestic Violence**

National Anti-Violence Number: 1522

<https://www.1522.eu>

#### **Children & Youth**

Telefono Azzurro: 19696 (24/7)

<https://www.azzurro.it>

### Spain

#### **Mental Health**

Samur Social (Madrid): 900 444 555

Emergency Mental Health (24/7): Call 112 or your local hospital

#### **Domestic Violence**

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 016 (free, does not appear on phone bill)

<https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es>

#### **Children & Youth**

ANAR Foundation (Children & Adolescents): 900 202 010

<https://www.anar.org>

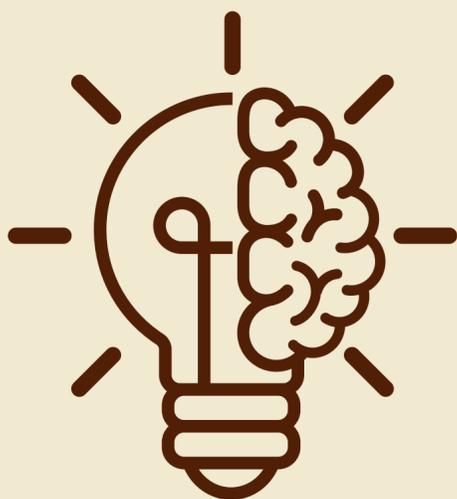


## XI. PERSONAL GROWTH: MY INNER JOURNEY

### ***Process and Balance***

Self-awareness is the key to any personal growth journey. Being conscious of your path means **observing your own progress and comparing yourself only to who you were before** — not to others. That's where true development lies. **There are no limits, only new starting points.** The more you maintain your balance throughout the process, the more clearly you'll see how far you can truly go.

And progress doesn't come from rushing or forcing — it comes from steady steps, from listening to your body and your mind, and from **trusting the process.** Balance isn't just about pacing; it's about being kind to yourself while growing.

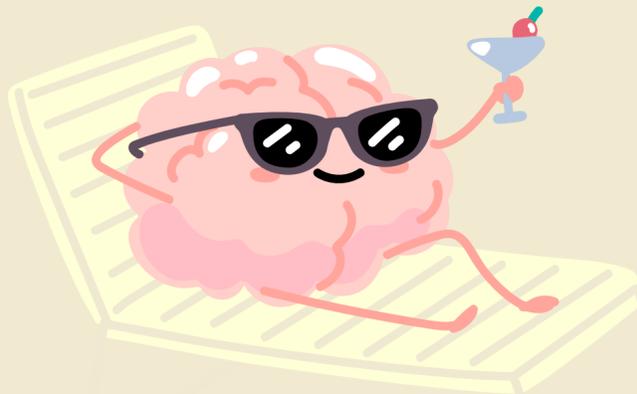




## ***The Brain: Your Overprotective Parent***

The brain is like a protective parent. **Its primary job is to keep you safe** — emotionally, physically, and psychologically.

When you're trying to grow, change, or become more independent, your brain might resist. It doesn't like the unknown — **even if the unknown is good for you.** It puts up mental “limits” not to punish you, but to protect you from potential failure, rejection, or pain. But these limits aren't always accurate. They're often based on past experiences, fears, or even distorted thinking.



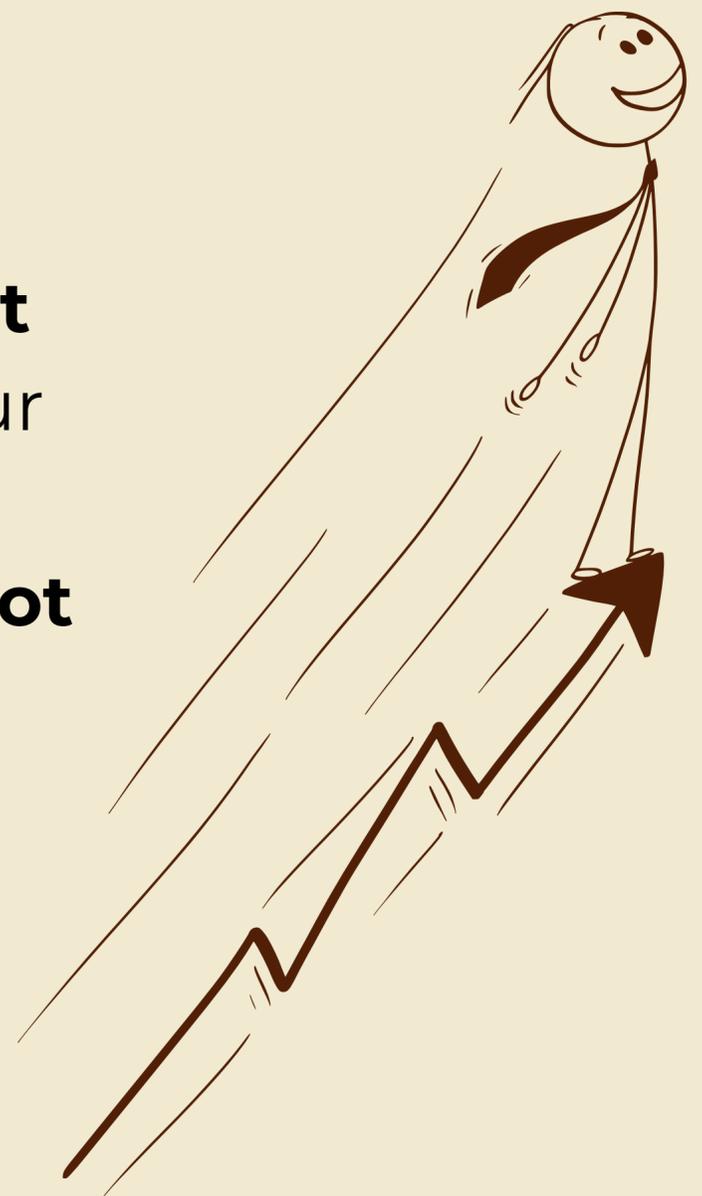
Here's the trick: if you give your brain a clear, consistent direction — if you train it with positive thoughts, habits, and focus — it will eventually follow. **Neuroplasticity**, the brain's ability to rewire itself, proves this. You can teach your brain new patterns, new beliefs, and new goals.



But be aware — **your brain can also work against you** if it's affected by trauma, stress, or mental illness. In such cases, your thoughts can turn negative, intrusive, or even destructive. **That's why mental health matters. A healthy brain protects and empowers you.** A dysregulated or damaged brain can trap you in fear, anxiety, or false beliefs.

You may never fully understand how your brain works — it's complex, messy, and mysterious. But trust this: deep down, your brain always holds the answers you're looking for. Just make sure you're asking the right questions — and that you're not mistaking fear for truth.

**Teaching your brain** to work in a self-serving way **means helping it prioritize what serves you** — your values, goals, growth, and mental peace. **You become the guide, not the passenger.**





## Growth is Non-Linear

Personal growth doesn't follow a straight line — and it was never meant to. Some days you feel on top of the world, ready to take on anything. Other days, you barely function, and that's okay. Progress often looks like:

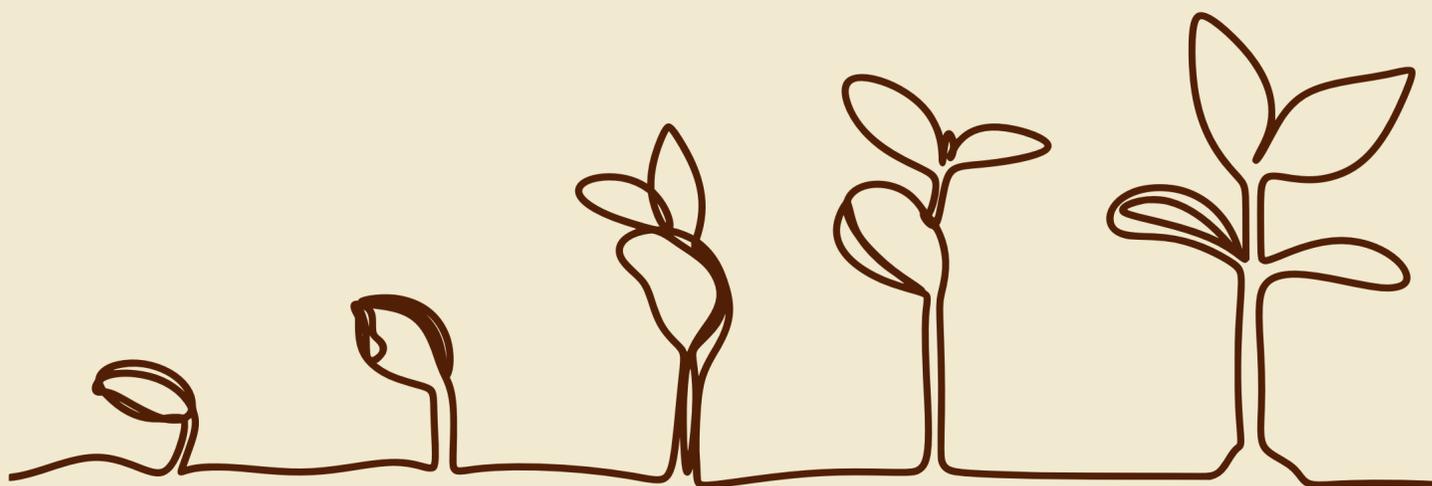
→ three steps forward, two steps back, one step sideways — and suddenly a leap.

It's messy, unpredictable, and full of curveballs.



## You Are Always Moving Forward — Never Backwards

Even when you feel stuck, even when things fall apart — you are still moving forward. Why? Because every experience teaches you something. Every moment, even the painful ones, reshapes your perspective and adds to your growth.





## ***True Growth Needs Care of the Whole Self***

You can't grow fully if you're only focused on one part of yourself. Humans are complex systems — like ecosystems. To feel peace and develop sustainably, you need to nurture all the “parts” of you:

- Physical (Are you sleeping, eating, and moving your body?)
- Emotional (Do you allow yourself to feel, or do you suppress everything?)
- Mental (Are your thoughts helping or hurting you?)
- Social (Do you feel connected, supported, seen?)
- Financial (Are your basic needs met?)

### **Key reminder:**

Balance doesn't mean everything is equal. It means everything is acknowledged.

Take care of the whole you.

