

Strategies to build resilience

Trying new things, especially when we are already stressed can be difficult to do. Therefore we suggest that setting a goal to try this new skill. Some people find it helpful to schedule when they will practice this skill.

Self-calming Strategies:

A. Breathing

“Take 3,” a reset button for your nervous system:

1. Intentionally pause several times throughout your day to take three deep breaths.
2. Establish routine times or cues to help you remember. Examples might include bathroom breaks, after you complete a task or get done talking to someone, after you send an email or a text, when you are waiting in line or at a red light, or when you hear an alert or alarm.

B. Grounding

Feel your feet on the floor. Look at your feet and hands. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Feel the support of the ground, wall, or chair. Tell yourself you are here in this moment and nowhere else. Do the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding exercise- five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

Self-Care and Self-Replenishment Strategies:

A. Practicing gratitude

Set aside a few minutes during your day to notice and reflect upon things you are thankful for. Some people find it helpful to write down 3-5 things that they are thankful for in a journal. People can also find it helpful to share what they are thankful for with a family member or friend.

B. Scheduling activities

Maintaining a consistent schedule promotes well-being. This can be a difficult process, especially during the pandemic which has significantly disrupted our weekly schedules from work to childcare to free time. Research supports that writing down our daily or weekly schedule can help us improve our ability to plan and also make sure that we take time for ourselves. Some people find it helpful to look at their daily schedule and plan at least one activity that we find pleasant or stress relieving. Scheduling/planning ahead this way can help us prepare for more stressful activities while also reminding us to take time for self-replenishment.

C. Focusing on a Healthy Lifestyle

During times of stress we might find it difficult to incorporate healthy behaviors into our new daily routine. The following can be helpful ways to focus on healthy habits:

1. *Schedule a time to take a short walk.* With most of our meetings taking place virtually, stopping cues (e.g., changing class rooms) have changed. Set an alarm or schedule a specific time to take a walk.
2. *Snack on fruits and veggies.* During times of stress we may tend to snack or gravitate toward comfort foods. Having healthy snacks on hand can help with this.

3. *Setting a consistent bedtime and wake time.* When we spend time at home our sleep schedules can tend to drift, leading to sleep difficulties. If you are someone who tends to wake up worrying or thinking about life stressors, make yourself get out of bed and designate a specific “worry” spot in another room. Try reading a book or some other relaxing activity. Head back to bed once you feel tired.

4. *Physical activity.* Try scheduling 10 min brisk walks in the morning or evening to avoid the summer heat. YouTube is an excellent source for workout videos.

Emotional Expressiveness Strategies:

A. Emotional Acknowledgment

The act of naming and feeling your true feelings on the inside, without judgment and without trying to stuff, ignore, or talk yourself out of your emotions.

Acknowledge

1. Notice when you start to feel overwhelmed and take a few deep breaths.
2. Name the emotion(s) that are bubbling under the surface of your anxiety.
3. Focus on the emotion itself and where it shows up in your body.

Normalize

4. Take a deep breath. Give yourself permission to feel it without judgement.

Compassion

5. Tell yourself something supportive like, “It’s okay to have this feeling.”
6. Take another deep breath. Picture the emotion lifting and letting go of its hold on you.

B. Writing Release

1. Think of a strong emotion and set a timer for 5 minutes.
2. Write whatever comes to mind without worrying about what you are writing.
3. When the timer goes off, DO NOT re-read what you wrote. Immediately rip up the paper.
4. Throw away the ripped paper.. As you do, feel the emotional energy leave with it.

C. Moving Emotions

1. Slow your breath rate to 5-7 breaths per minute.
2. Name the emotion you are feeling.
3. Imagine the emotion right in front of you.
4. Try not to think about the reason why you are feeling it, just the emotion itself.
5. Inhale, and as you exhale. Repeat “ease” to yourself as you imagine it melting away.

Perfectionism and Self-Supporting Strategies:

A. Separate your inner critic from yourself

The act of naming and feeling your true feelings on the inside, without judgment and without trying to stuff, ignore, or talk yourself out of your emotions.

1. Imagine replacing “I” with “YOU” and then saying it to someone else.
2. Ask yourself: Would I say such a thing to your friend, coworker, child, or partner? Can you also picture someone else telling you the same statement?
3. Give your inner critic a name (not associated with anyone you know directly).

B. “Flip It”

1. Write down statements your inner critic makes.
2. Notice and circle any “shoulda, woulda, coulda,” harsh judgmental words, and all or nothing thinking (“always/never”).
3. Flip these statements into more self-supporting ones (example on second page of handout).

Flip It	
Inner Critic Statements	Self-Supporting Statement
	<i>Example</i> Everyone is fighting their own battles
	<i>Example</i> I am creative

Examples of Positive and Supportive Self-Talk

- Everyone is fighting their own battles.
- I have the power to be kind, even to myself.
- I have the power to uplift people, even myself.
- I have the power to support myself, even when I make a mistake.
- It is totally normal to make mistakes. It helps me be a better person.
- When things don’t go right, it is an opportunity to learn and grow.
- I can always try again if something doesn’t work out right.
- A good life is about being involved and trying my best, not about being perfect.
- Each day I do my best and that’s all I can do.
- I am doing the best I can right now in this moment, and that is enough.
- I am doing the best I can with the knowledge, time, and resources I have right now.
- I make an impact on the world just by choosing to live bravely with my challenges.
- There are many paths to the same goal.
- No matter what happens, I can handle it.
- It is good to be aware of my true feelings.
- It is okay to feel what I feel inside. Emotions are an important part of being human.
- It is okay to not be okay. No one is okay all the time.
- It is okay to ask for help.
- I accept myself and meet myself right where I’m at with this challenge.
- I am proud of who I am and who I will be.
- I am brave.
- I am strong.
- I am safe.
- I am supported.
- I support others and myself in our efforts towards better self-care.

C. STOP

1. S is for STOP—When you notice yourself feeling overwhelmed.
2. T is for TAKE SOME DEEP BREATHS—Use them as a brake pedal for your mind and body.
3. O is for OBSERVE—The situation from a bird’s eye view.
4. P is for PROCEED—After you have gained a broader perspective on the situation and have observed your emotions.

Additional Resources related to COVID-19 and Coping:

Turning Point Resilience Toolbox

<https://www.kansashealthsystem.com/health-resources/turning-point/programs/resilience-toolbox>

Substance Abuse and Mental health Services Administration

<https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990

National Crisis Lifeline

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

1-800-273-TALK (8255)