39 Therapeutic Assignments to Help You Overcome Your Problems and Accelerate Your Personal Growth
Psychotherapy Homework Assignments
39 Therapeutic Assignments to Help You Overcome Your Problems and Accelerate Your Personal Growth

Between Sessions Resources
Norwalk, CT
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of How the Assignments Can Help You</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning About Yourself</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Your Goals for Therapy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Personal Mission Statement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating Yourself to Change</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding Your Personal Meaning and Direction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Your Personal Strengths to Help Solve Your Problems</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Your Emotional Triggers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Ways to Think</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Your Automatic Thoughts</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Through Difficult Times with Mindfulness</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Your Safety Crutches</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-Kindness Meditation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the Habit of Gratitude</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving Your Problems One Step at a Time</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding Your Emotions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Your Emotions When You Are Upset</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking About Your Emotional and Interpersonal Strengths</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating Your Feelings with “I” Statements</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Emotional Emergency Kit</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounding Yourself When Your Emotions Seem Out of Control</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing Compassionate Self-Care</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding Awe</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**New Ways to Live**
- Using a Contract to Commit to Change 52
- Things You Can do to Lift Your Spirits 54
- Finding Happiness Through Acts of Kindness 56
- Understanding Your Stress 57
- Reducing Situational Stress 61
- Activities That Help Counteract Your Stress 63
- Calming Your Body with Progressive Muscle Relaxation 65
- Understanding How Diet Affects Your Mood 67
- Improving Your Mood by Getting More Sleep 69
- Overcoming Your Problems with the Help of Exercise 71
- Acting Opposite to Your Impulses 73

**Raising Your Social Intelligence**
- Building Your Support System 75
- How Do You Want to Be Treated? 78
- Are Your Negative Judgments Causing You Problems? 80
- How Do Others See You? 82
- Your Vision of Your Relationship 84
- Asking for and Giving Forgiveness 86
- Compassionate Listening 89

**Going Forward**
- What Has Helped You? 93
- Overcoming Setbacks 95

**Appendix**
- Helpful Hotlines 97
- Choosing Mental Health Apps 100
THE BENEFITS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction

When many people think about seeing a psychotherapist for their problems, they imagine visiting a therapist once or twice a week, talking about the things that bother them, and gradually developing the insights they need to solve their problems and change their lives. However, the process of change is not quite that simple, and most therapists will tell you that psychotherapy involves much more than just coming in for a weekly conversation. While it is true that conversations with your therapist will lay the foundation for developing a deep and meaningful bond, your therapist will also be teaching you a variety of psychological skills that you can apply to your daily life. Most therapists will also tell you that the skills you learn in therapy need to be practiced at home, at your work or school, and in your community. They will be giving you assignments to practice in your day-to-day life that will help you apply the things you learn in therapy. In other words, therapy is much more than talking about your problems; it is changing the way you act and even the way you think.

Studies tell us that combining psychotherapy homework assignments with traditional in-office therapy can significantly improve the likelihood that you will think of your therapy as successful. For example, one study found that when clients were assigned worksheets to do between their therapy sessions, 70 percent reported that they got more of what they wanted out of therapy, as compared to a group of people who did not receive therapeutic homework. Studies also tell us that the more assignments people do, the more likely they are to say they benefited from therapy.

Although you may not remember homework assignments as being something you looked forward to when you were younger, people in therapy typically say they enjoy doing therapy assignments. And why not? Psychological homework will help you work more directly on your problems and will accelerate your progress. With every homework assignment, you will learn a little more about yourself.

A therapist who has recommended this book to you will give you specific assignments to do after most sessions. You will notice that at the end of each assignment there is a place for you to rate how helpful it was and what you learned from it. This will give important feedback to your therapist, and it will also be a reminder to you about the things you can do to solve your problems after you have finished therapy.

If you are using this book but not seeing a therapist, you will still find it very helpful. The exercises are not complicated and, for the most part, are self-explanatory. However, it is worth
noting that an important advantage to seeing a therapist is that he or she will help direct you to the exercises that are likely to be most effective for your particular set of problems. A therapist will also provide you with support, motivation, and feedback, all of which can make it much easier to change old habits and develop a lifestyle that brings you the happiness and meaning you deserve.
Overview of How the Assignments Can Help You

Section 1: Learning About Yourself

This first section of the workbook is designed to help you explore your psychological makeup and look at the most effective ways to change. Most therapists believe that psychotherapy should go well beyond just helping you alleviate your symptoms. The broader goals of therapy are to understand what you want out of life and to learn how to get it. In one sense, your therapy is never done, because life will always present you with new challenges. When you learn to be more aware of what you want in your life and the values and strengths you already possess, your journey toward a more fulfilling life will be easier.

The exercises in this section include:

1. Setting Your Goals for Therapy
   This worksheet is designed to help you identify the most important things to work on in your therapy or counseling sessions. Writing down your goals, and reviewing them throughout your therapy, will be best way to achieve the changes you are looking for in your life.

2. Creating a Personal Mission Statement
   Psychotherapy will take you beyond just alleviating your symptoms and problems, and will direct you toward achieving the kind of life that brings meaning and fulfillment. This worksheet will help you focus on the most important things you want in your life.

3. Motivating Yourself to Change
   Change can be very difficult, and that is why it is important to think about the kinds of things that will motivate you to address problems and concerns that might have been years in the making. This worksheet includes a variety of ways to motivate yourself to do the therapeutic work necessary for permanent change.

4. Finding Your Personal Meaning and Direction
   This worksheet asks you to consider your goals in different areas of your life, including your family life, health, career, and creative expression. You are asked to state a measurable goal for each area in your life and rate the importance of that goal.

5. Using Your Personal Strengths to Help Solve Your Problems
   Many people go to therapy thinking about their problems and how difficult it is to solve them. This worksheet asks you to think about the personal strengths you bring to therapy and how these strengths have helped you in the past.

6. Understanding Your Emotional Triggers
   This worksheet is designed to help you take the “temperature” of your emotional life. It asks
you to record times when you are experiencing upsetting emotions and what might have triggered these feelings. It also asks you to write down what you did after experiencing these emotions.

**Section 2: New Ways to Think**

The most popular form of psychotherapy used today is called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The word *cognitive* refers to your thoughts, which influence both your feelings and your actions. Cognitive techniques can help you identify the irrational thoughts that might be causing anxiety, depression, and other forms of distress and can also help you develop a realistic and positive attitude toward yourself and others.

In recent years, cognitive behavioral therapy has incorporated techniques from Eastern philosophies, including the concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness techniques help you bring your attention to the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and body sensations. Mindfulness techniques help you accept even your most distressing thoughts and feelings, rather than using elaborate coping techniques to avoid them.

The exercises in this section include:

7. **Identifying Your Automatic Thoughts**
   Psychologists have identified certain kinds of irrational or dysfunctional automatic thoughts that tend to fuel and perpetuate your emotional problems. This worksheet asks you to identify your automatic thoughts, think about why these thoughts are irrational, and then replace each thought with a more realistic and helpful one.

8. **Getting Through Difficult Times with Mindfulness**
   Mindfulness has become an important psychological technique in helping people develop a psychological “toolbox” to handle emotional problems. This worksheet helps you understand the difference between everyday mindful awareness and formal mindfulness practice. There is a link to a mindful meditation audio and a chart to help you keep track of the times you are practicing mindfulness.

9. **Identifying Your Safety Crutches**
   People use a variety of safety crutches to help them cope with their psychological problems, from outright denial to elaborate rituals to self-medication. This worksheet asks you to identify your safety crutches and think about what might happen if you give them up.

10. **Loving-Kindness Meditation**
    There are many different kinds of meditation, but none may be more powerful in helping you with self-acceptance than this short meditation that asks you to focus on positive wishes for yourself, those you love, and even people you dislike.
11. Developing the Habit of Gratitude
This technique may seem overly simple, but researchers tell us that just writing down what you are grateful for can have a profound effect on your happiness. This worksheet gives you some recommendations that will make this technique more effective.

12. Solving Your Problems One Step at a Time
Many people come to therapy feeling overwhelmed by their problems, but they forget that they are constantly solving difficult problems in their lives. This worksheet is designed to help you set goals related to the reasons you are seeking help and to determine the steps you need to achieve those goals.

Section 3: Understanding Your Emotions
Humans are unlike any other animal on earth because we have the capacity to think about our feelings. This is not to say that we have complete control over our emotions. Our brains are simply not wired that way, and it is generally accepted that the emotional part of our brains (the limbic system) is much more powerful than the thinking part (the neocortex). However, a great deal of research has shown that we can influence our emotions in ways that can help us overcome distressing symptoms. Neuroscientists have shown that the emotions we feel are actually biochemicals produced by the brain as well as our hormonal system.

In other words, when our brains produce certain neurochemicals, we experience specific feelings. You have only to drink a few cups of coffee or a glass or two of wine to understand the concept of how chemicals like caffeine and alcohol affect our moods. Medications used to help people with depression or anxiety do this in a more controlled way, working to balance the biochemicals that affect how we feel, think, and act.

The psychotherapeutic techniques you will learn in this section are designed to help your brain produce more of the mood-elevating biochemicals in the brain and control the chemicals associated with psychological problems. There is evidence that with the right training the brain can rebalance the biochemicals associated with emotional problems, just as if you were taking a prescribed medication.

The exercises in this section include:

13. Understanding Your Emotions When You Are Upset
This worksheet is designed to help you understand rather than avoid your upsetting emotions and determine some positive ways to handle them. It is intended to help you see that you have a variety of options for dealing with upsetting emotions.

14. Thinking About Your Emotional and Interpersonal Strengths
People typically seek therapy when they feel that they can’t cope with difficult emotions. They may not see that they have a variety of emotional and interpersonal strengths they can bring to
any given situation. This worksheet will help you identify the emotional strengths you have used in the past and apply these to your current problems.

15. Communicating Your Feelings with “I” Statements
This worksheet will help you practice using “I” statements. When you use “I” statements, you communicate your feelings in a clear way that makes it more likely others will understand and respect your emotional needs.

16. Creating an Emotional Emergency Kit
Some people periodically feel overwhelmed by their emotions. This can lead them to many kinds of dysfunctional behaviors—even dangerous ones. This worksheet suggests a variety of activities that can help you feel in control of your emotions.

17. Grounding Yourself When Your Emotions Seem Out of Control
Grounding is one of the most frequently recommended techniques for people who feel “out of focus” or detached from reality. The worksheet includes a link to a demonstration of a therapist using this technique with a client who has PTSD.

18. Practicing Compassionate Self-Care
Many people are self-critical when they fail to meet their expectations. This worksheet teaches you how to care for yourself the way you would for someone deeply important to you.

19. Finding Awe
Research suggests that having frequent feelings of awe in your life can significantly contribute to your happiness and resiliency. This worksheet directs you to seek awe in your life—the feeling that you are in the presence of something that is bigger than you and your problems.

Section 4: New Ways to Live

As the saying goes, actions speak louder than words, and ultimately your success in overcoming your problems will be judged by how you live each day. In this section, you will find three types of activities you can do to create a healthful life that is full of meaning. The section begins with techniques that will teach you the importance of value-oriented activities based in kindness and gratitude. A great deal of research suggests that people who practice these activities consistently report feeling that their lives are happier and more fulfilling. A second group of activities will help you deal with the inevitable stress of life. Stress in itself is not a bad thing, and a little stress can actually motivate and energize you. Chronic stress, on the other hand, can have serious effects on your mental and physical health, and the activities in this section can teach you how to reduce stress and counterbalance it with healthful practices. This section ends with worksheets on developing a healthier lifestyle, which will serve to balance the neurochemicals in your brain that are associated with feelings of calm and well-being.

The exercises in this section include:
20. Using a Contract to Commit to Change
Research tells us that signing a behavioral contract in the presence of a witness is an important way to motivate yourself to make significant changes in your life. This worksheet will help you identify the specific behaviors you want to change and the steps you need to take to overcome your problems.

21. Things You Can Do to Lift Your Spirits
It is perfectly normal to be depressed sometimes, but if you find yourself depressed most of the time, this worksheet can help you commit to activities that can help lift your mood so you can do the work of creating a life filled with meaning.

Just doing one kind act a week can bring a significant boost of happiness and meaning into your life. This worksheet will help you think about the kind acts you can perform and then record the thoughts and feelings that follow.

23. Understanding Your Stress
This exercise includes a classic scale to help you think about the life events that are contributing to your stress. You may be surprised to see that even events many consider to be “positive” are also considered to be stressful.

24. Reducing Situational Stress
Some kinds of stress can be difficult, if not impossible, to change; however, there are likely other stresses in your life that can be changed. This worksheet will help you identify which stresses in your life are situational and work toward reducing them.

25. Activities That Help Counteract Your Stress
Chronic stress can produce brain chemicals and hormones that in turn trigger physical problems, including high blood pressure, a suppressed immune system, and increased levels of blood sugar. This worksheet suggests activities that can counteract the effects of stress on your health.

26. Calming Your Body with Progressive Muscle Relaxation
This worksheet features a twelve-minute audio to teach you how to relax your body and calm your mind. It includes a chart to record the times you practice relaxation and to note how this technique affects your mood.

27. Understanding How Diet Affects Your Mood
Many people ignore the fact that what they eat and drink can have an adverse effect on their mental health. This worksheet asks you to keep track of what you eat and drink for a week while noting your predominant mood each day.

28. Improving Your Mood by Getting More Sleep
One survey suggests that nearly 20 percent of Americans do not get enough sleep. However
getting seven to eight hours of sleep a night is important in balancing the neurochemicals that correlate with your moods, and a lack of sleep can exacerbate your psychological problems. This worksheet gives you suggestions on how to improve your sleep, as well as a chart to record the effectiveness of your efforts.

**29. Overcoming Your Problems with the Help of Exercise**

Regular exercise is often overlooked as a part of good mental health. This worksheet helps you focus on enjoyable activities that can help improve your mood and reduce anxiety. It includes a chart to help you record your exercise for a week and note the effect on your mood.

**30. Acting Opposite to Your Impulses**

Many of our problems in life stem from behaviors that we do reflexively even though we know these behaviors make our problems worse. This worksheet asks you to think about problem behaviors you do without thinking and see what it is like when you do the opposite of these behaviors.

**Section 5: Raising Your Social Intelligence**

Humans are social animals, and we need other people in our lives to feel happy and fulfilled. But getting along with others is not always that easy. Some researchers feel that each of us is born with a different degree of social intelligence, just as we are all born with different intellectual capacities. However, unlike the intelligence measured by traditional IQ tests, social intelligence can be enhanced at any age, and you can learn the social skills you need to get more from your friendships, family, and intimate relationships.

One of the biggest problems people face today is social isolation, and this problem can deepen any psychological difficulties you are currently having. In fact, recent research has suggested that social isolation and the perception of loneliness can put us more at risk for problems and even early death than smoking or obesity.

The techniques in this section are designed to help you enhance your relationships and build a social-support system that can assist you through the times when your problems might otherwise lead you to social isolation.

The exercises in this section include:

**31. Building Your Support System**

This worksheet will help you identify people who can give you different kinds of support. It will help you think about the many different kinds of support you can get from others and remember that help is often just a phone call or text away.

**32. How Do You Want to Be Treated?**

This worksheet is designed to help you think about how you want to be treated and how you do
not want to be treated. This tool can be an effective way to communicate your needs to others in your life.

**33. Are Your Negative Judgments Causing You Problems?**
This worksheet is designed to help people who consistently judge themselves and others from a negative point of view. A chart asks you to think about the situations where negative judgments occur, the outcomes of these judgments, and how you could respond more realistically.

**34. How Do Others See You?**
This worksheet asks you to think about your self-image by answering a series of questions about your physical attributes, values, and personality. The second part of the worksheet can be given to other people in your life; you can then compare their responses to your own.

**35. Your Vision of Your Relationship**
What do you want from your important relationship? Many couples never really talk about this. This worksheet should be filled in by each person in a relationship as a way to start an open discussion about their respective goals and values.

**36. Asking for and Giving Forgiveness**
Many people suffer because they or someone they care about has done something that seems unforgivable. This worksheet gives you six steps for asking for forgiveness and six steps for giving forgiveness.

**37. Compassionate Listening**
This worksheet describes an exercise you can do with another person to improve your communication. The exercise involves learning seven ways to show others you are listening respectfully and compassionately to what they are saying.

**Section 6: Going Forward**
Psychotherapy gives you the tools you need to make important changes in your life, but there is no doubt that the future will present you with new challenges. The exercises in this last section will help you anticipate some of these changes. Some of the skills you learned in therapy can be part of your “prevention” program. Just like with physical health, there are things you can do each day to help you focus on your life goals and prevent past problems from returning. And if problems do return, the worksheets in this section will remind you of what has worked in the past.

The exercises in this section include:

**38. What Has Helped You?**
This worksheet is designed to help you think about things that have you helped you in therapy, both in and out of session. Most people have a tendency to slip into old habits, but reviewing
your “toolbox” of mental health skills will remind you of the techniques you have used to solve your problems and live a happy and fulfilling life.

39. Overcoming Setbacks
Even after you have made major changes in your life, setbacks may occur. However, these setbacks can usually be overcome by using the same skills you originally learned in therapy. This worksheet is designed to help you think about what has contributed to your setbacks and identify things you can do differently based on your prior successful change.

Appendix

A. Helpful Hotlines
Sometimes life just seems overwhelming, and it’s important to know that there are experts who can offer emergency assistance to you or to someone you know. This form lists a number of important hotlines that can help if a crisis occurs.

B. Choosing Mental Health Apps
Mental health apps can be very effective in helping you practice what you learned in therapy. Because you can download them to your mobile device, they are always available, and most apps do not cost more than a few dollars. This worksheet can help you choose apps that are likely to be most helpful.
SECTION 1: LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF

I don't believe people are looking for the meaning of life as much as they are looking for the experience of being alive.

—Joseph Campbell

This first section of the workbook is designed to help you explore your psychological makeup and look at the most effective ways to change. Most therapists believe that psychotherapy should go well beyond just helping you alleviate your symptoms. The broader goals of therapy are to understand what you want out of life and to learn how to get it. In one sense, your therapy is never done, because life will always present you with new challenges. When you learn to be more aware of what you want in your life and the values and strengths you already possess, your journey toward a more fulfilling life will be easier.
Setting Your Goals for Therapy

When people start therapy, or counseling, they often have very specific problems they want to work on or symptoms that are causing them distress. But there may also be other issues that are bothering them or even problems they are not aware of. This worksheet is designed to help you think about things you could work on in therapy and then set some specific goals. Think about each question carefully, and answer each one as honestly as possible.

Begin by listing any psychological symptoms or problems that are currently bothering you.

_____________________________________      _____________________________________
_____________________________________      _____________________________________
_____________________________________      _____________________________________
_____________________________________      _____________________________________

Now, list any physical symptoms that are bothering you. Sometimes physical symptoms may be connected to psychological issues.

_____________________________________      _____________________________________
_____________________________________      _____________________________________
_____________________________________      _____________________________________
_____________________________________      _____________________________________

Write down any problems or issues at work or at school that you would like to change.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Write down any family problems or concerns that you would like to change.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Write down any issues with friends that you would like to change.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
How will you know when things are better?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Write down the most important goal for your therapy or counseling.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

List other goals you have for therapy or counseling.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Creating a Personal Mission Statement

If you want to live each day to the fullest, you will need to think about what you really want out of your life and the principles and values that will guide your day-to-day decisions. This worksheet is designed to help you create a personal mission statement (sometimes called a purpose statement), which can be a simple road map to help you live a happy and fulfilling life.

A personal mission statement provides clarity and gives you a sense of purpose. It defines who you are and how you will live. It is different from your goals; in fact, it is what your goals are based on. A personal mission statement includes your values, beliefs, and priorities in just a sentence or two. A personal mission statement will not only show you the path to make your decisions each day but also give you permission to say no to the things that are distractions.

It is important to note that a personal mission statement is not written in stone, but rather it will change over time as you change with your life experiences. Your personal mission statement is focused on self-discovery as well as purpose.

Here are some personal mission statements from some people you may know of:

“To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be.”—Oprah Winfrey

“To have fun in [my] journey through life and learn from [my] mistakes.”—Sir Richard Branson

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”—Maya Angelou

Developing Your Personal Mission Statement

You can use this worksheet to help you think about your personal mission statement.

1. Think about people you admire and the traits they have that you think are important.

Three people you admire:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Traits these people have that you admire:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

4
2. Name five values that define you.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. Think about the roles you play in the lives of others—friends, family, coworkers. Write down all the important roles you have in your life.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

4. Write down the most important things you want to accomplish in your life.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

5. Imagine who you want to become in this world, what you want to be known for, and how you want to be remembered. Write it down below.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

6. Write down some things you are really good at.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Your Personal Mission Statement

Write down your personal mission statement in a sentence or two, incorporating your values, your aspirations, your positive abilities, and what you see as your purpose in life.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Write down three ways you incorporate your mission statement into your daily life.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Motivating Yourself to Change

Symptoms of depression typically include fatigue, hopelessness, and a sense that things will never get better. So, if you are depressed, how are you going to motivate yourself to do the assignments in this workbook and get better? The first step is to admit that change is not easy. It is going to take daily work, and you will find it necessary to act and think in ways that will not feel familiar. The second step is to choose one or more ways to motivate yourself to learn the psychological skills that are necessary for you to overcome your depression.

This worksheet gives you ten ways to motivate yourself to do the work of overcoming your depression. Read about each of these motivational techniques below, and then rate each idea on a 1 to 10 scale, with 1= This doesn’t seem likely to help me, and 10 = This seems very likely to help me. Naturally you will want to try the techniques that are most likely to help first, but you may also want to try other ways to motivate yourself at a later date.

Motivational Techniques

1. _____ Schedule your assignment.

Pick a time each day to work on a therapy assignment. Write it down, just like you would any important appointment, and do your best to do this work at the selected time.

2. _____ Sign a contract and commit to it.

Signing a contract, a promise to yourself to work toward a particular goal, is a surprisingly simple way to motivate yourself to change. You will find a behavioral contract you can use to commit yourself to change on page 52 of this workbook.

3. _____ Tell people you know about what you are doing.

One of the most effective motivators for change is to tell a select group of friends and family about what you are trying to do. In other words, make your journey to change public. You do not have to confide everything about your problem, but just let these people know that you are working on a specific aspect of your life and ask for their support.

4. _____ Set a goal.

Set a tangible behavior goal for yourself and identify the subgoals or steps you need to take to achieve your main goal. You can make this part of your behavior contract (see page 28).

5. _____ Track your progress.

When you are working on learning a new psychological skill, keep track of your progress. You can do this by writing in a diary or by using one of the forms provided in this book.
6. _____ Set your intention.

Many coaches and therapists encourage people to set their intention at the beginning of each day, preferably before meditating. Deepak Chopra, best-selling spiritual writer, writes: “An intention is a directed impulse of consciousness that contains the seed form of that which you aim to create. Like real seeds, intentions can’t grow if you hold on to them.”

7. _____ Adopt a compassionate attitude toward yourself and your efforts.

Being self-critical and perfectionistic will likely get in the way of your efforts to change. You will likely have setbacks and even reversals; most people do. But you can learn to be a good parent to yourself as you change. A good parent guides and encourages a child toward a goal, always believing that the goal can be achieved, but also being compassionate, loving, and forgiving. If this sounds hard for you, try the exercise on self-compassion on page 47.

8. _____ Act like your heroes.

An important part of motivation is inspiration. Think about someone who has inspired you by overcoming an almost insurmountable problem. Take a moment during the day to imagine what that person would say to you to encourage your efforts to conquer your problem.

9. _____ Find help from the past.

Many therapists recommend that when you feel helpless to solve your problems, you should think about a time when you solved similar or even more troubling problems. Write down the steps you used to solve that difficult problem and see how you can apply them to your current challenges.

10. _____ Reward yourself.

Rewarding your efforts is a time-honored motivational technique, and when you do it consistently it really works. When you practice the psychological skills you need to overcome your depression, give yourself a small reward, like taking ten minutes to do a favorite activity. When you achieve a major goal, give yourself a larger reward, like taking a day off to pamper yourself.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Finding Your Personal Meaning and Direction

Identifying what you want out of life and acting on it can make you feel empowered and more complete, and give your life a greater sense of meaning.

To help find your path, start by determining what you value most in life and set your goals accordingly. Consider the following and rate the importance of each area (1 = little importance and 5 = extreme importance) in your life, and write down below a goal for the areas that mean something to you. Be as specific as you can in thinking about your goal so that you know if you have really accomplished it. For example, a family life goal might read: “I am going to spend more time with my children.” A goal for creative expression might read: “I’m going to start working on my writing one half hour a day, five days a week.” In each of these examples, you can easily keep track of whether you are working toward your goal. The rating scale will help you see at a glance if you are working on the goals that are most important to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative expression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considering the goals you listed above, which would you rank as your first priority?
____________________________________________________________________________

What do you want to accomplish in the next week, month, and year to reach this goal?
This week:
____________________________________________________________________________
This month:
____________________________________________________________________________
This year:
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Using Your Personal Strengths to Help Solve Your Problems

When you are going through difficult times, you may forget about the personal strengths you can bring to the problems in your life. Remembering your strengths can help you be more resilient and can guide you toward solutions to your problems that you might have missed. Read the list of adjectives below and circle the strengths that best describe you. Now go back and look at the strengths you have circled and see if there is one that will help you solve a problem you are having. Put a second circle around this personal strength.

- accepting
- adaptable
- adventurous
- agreeable
- aware
- balanced
- calm
- caring
- centered
- charismatic
- considerate
- courageous
- creative
- curious
- dedicated
- diligent
- energetic
- enthusiastic
- fair-minded
- flexible
- focused
- friendly
- fun
- generous
- honest
- humble
- humorous
- imaginative
- inquisitive
- insightful
- intuitive
- kind
- loving
- loyal
- open-minded
- optimistic
- passionate
- patient
- persistent
- practical
- proactive
- rational
- reliable
- responsible
- self-confident
- sociable
- spiritual
- spontaneous
- sympathetic
- thoughtful
- trustworthy
- versatile
- warmhearted
- wise
- witty
Think about your most important personal strength. In a few sentences, write down why it is important to you.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Think of a time when this personal strength helped you in the past. What happened?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Who else do you think sees this personal strength in you?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Write down what you consider to be your most important problem or conflict.
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How can one or more personal strengths help you with this problem?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Understanding Your Emotional Triggers

The more you understand about your psychological makeup, the easier it will be to develop lifetime solutions to your problems. This worksheet is designed to help you understand the triggers that contribute to your upsetting emotions.

We all have unique triggers that set off certain emotions, and our emotions can then affect our thoughts and behaviors. Your triggers could be any one of your senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste. A trigger could also be just a thought. For example, just thinking about going to a party where you don’t know anyone could trigger anxiety or even depression. A trigger could also be a reaction to the way someone treats you, even a stranger. Imagine if you were in line at the drugstore and the person in front of you suddenly turned around and glared at you. You might feel angry, anxious, even fearful.

Using the worksheet on the next page, pay attention to when you feel upset and record what you think might have triggered that feeling. Write down your predominant emotions (you may have several different feelings) and rate the intensity of the emotions from 1 = mildly upsetting to 10 = extremely upsetting. Then write down what you did next.

Record your emotional triggers for at least one week.
# Recording Your Emotional Triggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>Predominant emotions</th>
<th>Intensity of the emotions</th>
<th>What you did next</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
SECTION 2: NEW WAYS TO THINK

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.

—William James

The most popular form of psychotherapy used today is called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The word *cognitive* refers to your thoughts, which influence both your feelings and your actions. Cognitive techniques can help you identify the irrational thoughts that might be causing anxiety, depression, and other forms of distress and can also help you develop a realistic and positive attitude toward yourself and others.

In recent years, cognitive behavioral therapy has incorporated techniques from Eastern philosophies, including the concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness techniques help you bring your attention to the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and body sensations. Mindfulness techniques help you accept even your most distressing thoughts and feelings, rather than using elaborate coping techniques to avoid them.
Identifying Your Automatic Thoughts

Psychologists believe that people with mental health problems have certain kinds of automatic thoughts that distort their view of themselves and their world. These thoughts are irrational because they are not based on any facts; however, depressed people often act as if they are true. Recognizing your irrational automatic thoughts and replacing them with rational ones can be an important part of overcoming your problems.

First, think about these different kinds of automatic thoughts, and see if you can give an example of when you have this type of thought.

Discounting

You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities “don’t count.”
Example ____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Mind reading

You assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there is no real evidence for this.
Example ____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Fortune telling

You arbitrarily predict that things will turn out bad.
Example ____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Magnification/Minimization

You blow negative possibilities way out of proportion. You minimize the importance of positive interactions or events.
Example ____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Emotional reasoning

You reason from how you feel rather than from what logic would tell you. For example, you might feel that someone is disappointed with you even when there is no evidence this is true.
Example ____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
“Should” statements
You criticize yourself or other people with “shoulds” or “shouldn’ts,” “musts,” and “oughts.”
Example ______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Labeling
You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, “I made a mistake,” you tell yourself, “I’m a jerk,” “a fool,” “a loser.”
Example ______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Catastrophic thinking
You imagine that the worst possible thing could happen in a given situation even though there is no evidence that this might be so.
Example ______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Looking back at the types of automatic thoughts, which ones do you think you are most likely to have?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Are you ready to change the irrational automatic thoughts that are contributing to your conflicts and problems? Use the worksheet on the next page to practice replacing your irrational thoughts with ones that are realistic.

Directions
Write down your automatic thoughts whenever you have them. Then rate how much you believe that each thought is true, with 1 = I understand that this thought is not really true, and 10 = I strongly believe that this thought is true.

Then write down the type of automatic thought you have had, such as mind reading, catastrophic thinking, “should” statements, and so on.

In the fourth column, based on your understanding of how your automatic thoughts can be distorted, write a rational or realistic thought to replace the irrational automatic one. For example, if you think, “If I get on a plane, I am sure with my bad luck it will crash,” the rational replacement thought might be: “Planes are the safest way to travel, much safer than driving a car or taking a train. My luck has nothing to do with whether there is a problem on a particular flight.”
Finally, rate how much you believe that this replacement thought is true, with 1 = I know that this is the rational way of thinking, but I don’t really believe it, and 10 = I strongly believe that this is true.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irrational automatic thought</th>
<th>Belief that this thought is true</th>
<th>Type of automatic thought</th>
<th>Rational replacement thought</th>
<th>Belief that this thought is true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Getting Through Difficult Times with Mindfulness

As you may know, mindfulness is a technique that Western psychology has borrowed from the Buddhist tradition of mindful meditation. Mindfulness involves bringing your attention to what is happening in the present moment. When you are mindful, you are aware of both your internal experiences as well as what you experience in the world around you. As you observe your internal and external experiences, you try not to judge them as good or bad, or even react to them at all. When you are mindful, you are aware and present in the moment, putting life’s noise and demands and stressors in the background while you concentrate on the now.

Does this sound simple? It might be a little harder than you think, especially in our fast-paced world. But practicing mindfulness is well worth the effort as it has proven to be very helpful in overcoming anxiety, depression, and stress. Mindfulness helps you be aware of your negative thoughts and feelings without judging them. As you practice mindfulness, your negative thoughts and feelings eventually become less powerful.

Many studies have also shown that there are measurable health benefits when you practice mindfulness on a regular basis. These include boosting the immune system, improving memory, and increasing your ability to focus.

There are two main types of mindfulness. The first type consists of formal mindfulness, such as mindful meditation, which refers to setting aside some time each day to practice mindfulness. There are many books and audio resources to help you learn formal mindfulness. Here is an example from Dartmouth College Health Center: https://www.betweensessions.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Mindful-Meditation.mp3.

The second type of mindfulness, which could be called “informal,” includes practicing mindful awareness in your daily activities. This week, find some time to be mindful in everyday moments, like eating, walking, or being with a loved one. For instance, instead of just eating your lunch quickly, pause to really focus on a few bites—the taste, the texture, the scent. Or stop to appreciate the soft comfort of your pajamas and your warm bed just after you turn in for the day. Rather than getting caught up in a whirlwind of distractions, stop, take a breath, and be conscious of your own thoughts and feelings and surroundings without passing judgment. Just be, feel, focus. Be aware of your surroundings—the sounds and sights—and your feelings. Be open, and immerse yourself in appreciating and experiencing the moment you are in.

Practicing Mindfulness

Use the chart on the next page to help you remember to practice mindfulness at least once a day. Note the thoughts and sensations you experience when practicing mindfulness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Describe your experience (sensations, emotions, thoughts)</th>
<th>Describe your mood after this exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Identifying Your Safety Crutches

Using safety crutches to deal with your anxiety or other psychological problem may provide temporary relief, but in the long run it does not help. When you use physical crutches for a broken ankle or leg, the crutches take the weight off your leg and keep you from experiencing the physical pain, allowing your leg to heal. However, psychological pain is different. Avoiding your psychological pain, rather than facing it and accepting it, will likely prolong your problems.

Do you use any of these common safety crutches?

*Disassociation*
When Trevor was feeling anxious before a meeting, he would pretend he was someone who was confident and assertive. However, as soon as the meeting started or someone mentioned his name, he found it hard to even breathe.

*Denial*
Damian worried constantly about his health and would always think he had the worst disease possible. If he had even a slight headache, he would think he had a brain tumor. But if someone asked him if something was wrong, he would just say, “No, I feel great,” and so he kept his worries to himself.

*Excessive information seeking*
Sharon was worried about her daughter being bullied in school, so she scoured the internet on a daily basis for information and called her daughter’s teacher for an update several times a week.

*Obsessive checking*
After Craig was robbed, he couldn’t leave the house without checking that it was locked at least three or four times. Then he started checking to see if he had locked his car, if he had shut off his computer, and if he had locked his office desk. He always needed to check things at least three times.

*Rituals*
Carrie was always worried about taking a test. She felt that she had to wear the same clothes every time she took a test or she would fail. If she couldn’t find the exact outfit she needed to wear, she would start to feel like she was having a panic attack.

*Procrastination*
Seth was worried about getting his term paper done on time, but instead of just working on it, he would watch Netflix all evening and plan on doing it the next day. Whenever there was something he worried about, Seth just put off doing it.
List making
Marcus made a list of everything he had to do each day and would check it constantly throughout the day. His list had every detail of his day—even brushing his teeth and taking a shower.

Excessive reassurance
Elizabeth was planning her first trip abroad and kept thinking about all the things that could go wrong. She called her parents several times a day to talk about her fears and worries.

Impulsiveness
Jordan had a difficult time asking women out for a date. However, if he met someone new at the office or at a bar, he would immediately ask her if she were available. None of the women he talked to seemed at all interested in him.

Doing everything yourself
Nora had to clean her house completely every time she had people coming over. Her husband and her teenage children asked if they could help, but Nora was worried that they might not do a good job.

Doing everything for others
Alice was worried that her middle school daughter was not going to get good grades, so she did many of her daughter’s school assignments herself.

Self-medication
Vanessa carried a small bottle of vodka in her purse and took a “shot” every time she had to ride in an elevator.

Bad habits
Tara worried that her boyfriend was seeing another woman, and the only thing that kept her from thinking about this was shopping.

Write down the two or three safety crutches you use most. You can choose from the list or write in other psychological safety crutches that you use.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Describe a recent situation where you used a safety crutch to deal with your anxiety or other problems.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Describe what you think might have happened if you had not used a safety crutch.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Did you ever try to stop using one of these safety crutches? What happened?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

For one week, write down each time you use a psychological safety crutch and what happened as a result of using the safety crutch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Type of safety crutch</th>
<th>What happened?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What would it take to give up your safety crutches?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What is the worst thing that might happen if you didn’t use a safety crutch?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Think of a situation when you will try facing your problems without using a safety crutch. Mark down a date and time you will try this on your calendar.

Write down anything that might get in the way of trying this “experiment.”

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

After you try it, write down what happened.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Loving-Kindness Meditation

The loving-kindness meditation is a simple exercise where you recite positive thoughts about yourself and others. Speaking this meditation can immediately improve your mood because it focuses you on the positive things in your life and your sense of purpose. The effects of this practice can also be surprisingly long-lasting. Studies show that the regular practice of this meditation can increase your resiliency and bring you a sense of fulfillment you may have never thought possible.

This meditation has five simple steps. It begins by expressing positive thoughts for yourself, followed by positive thoughts for someone you care about. Then it requires some things you may not have done before: sending out positive thoughts toward someone you feel neutral about, followed by positive thoughts toward someone you dislike. Then you direct your positive thoughts out to the universe.

This meditation takes just a few minutes, but it goes a long way to opening up your positive emotions and letting go of your negative judgments. Here’s how to do it:

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed.
2. Imagine yourself in a place where you feel complete satisfaction and have an all-encompassing sense of well-being. Perhaps you are sitting on a beach at sunset with the warm glow of the sun still on your skin. Perhaps you are in your own living room, surrounded by people who love you. Think of a place that makes you unspeakably happy.
3. Now say the following words out loud: *I wish for happiness, calm, and peace for myself.*
5. Now visualize someone you feel neutral about—someone you neither like nor dislike—and say: *I wish for happiness, calm, and peace for you.*
6. Now think of someone you don’t like and say: *I wish for happiness, calm, and peace for you.*
7. Finally, direct your loving-kindness to the universe and say: *May all beings everywhere find happiness, calm, and peace.*
Developing the Habit of Gratitude

There is a great deal of research that suggests an “attitude of gratitude” will contribute to your happiness. As Dr. Sonya Lyubomirsky notes in her book *The How of Happiness*, “It is important to understand why and how expressing gratitude works to make you happier.” She explains that expressing gratitude encourages you to savor life’s positive experiences, bolsters your self-worth, helps you cope with stress and trauma, and helps you build social bonds with others. Dr. Lyubomirsky also notes that “the practice of gratitude is incompatible with negative emotions and may actually diminish or deter such feelings as anger, bitterness, and greed.”

Expressing your gratitude in a rote and unthinking way, however, won’t really add much to your emotional health or your feelings of well-being. For example, Karen decided to write on her Facebook page about what she was grateful for every day for a month. By the second week, she was writing about being grateful for a fresh donut and that she found her favorite lipstick on sale. That’s not what we mean by a habit of gratitude. Gratitude is a sincere and heartfelt appreciation of what we have in our lives and an action that helps us truly feel this emotion.

To keep your gratitude meaningful, it is recommended that you try different activities to express your gratitude rather than doing the same thing over and over again. You don’t have to do something every day. Completing a gratitude activity just once or twice a week will help you integrate these feelings into your everyday life.

Here are some suggestions of things you can do.

- Write down your feelings of gratitude in a journal.
- Write a note or email to someone who has gone out of his or her way for you.
- Make a call to someone who has made a difference in your life.
- Give a donation to a charity to honor something you appreciate.
- Meditate on something that has made you feel particularly grateful.

Add your own ideas here:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

On the next page write down what you were grateful for, what you did, and how it affected your mood or behavior.
**Keeping Track of Your Gratitude Activities**

Use this chart once or twice a week to keep track of your gratitude practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you were grateful for</th>
<th>What you did</th>
<th>How it affected you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Solving Your Problems One Step at a Time

People seeking therapy often feel that their problems are beyond their control and will never get better. But many problems can be addressed by setting a realistic goal and determining the steps necessary to achieve that goal.

For example, Diane was depressed because she felt overwhelmed by the stress in her life and she had very few things that made her happy. Diane lived with her elderly mother, who had several serious illnesses. Diane felt that she had no time for herself and no social life. Diane didn’t like her job as a warehouse manager, but it paid well, and she needed the money, and she didn’t feel that she had the time or energy to find a more fulfilling job.

Diane began the process of improving her life by listing her two main goals:

- To engage in more social activities and meet new people
- To find a more interesting job that paid as least as much as her old job

Diane felt that the first goal was easier to achieve and would help her feel better about her life more quickly. She began by writing a goal that was achievable and measurable. It is important to have a goal that is measurable so you can know what to work toward and be clear when your goal has been accomplished. Diane’s goal was: “To go out and meet new people at least once a week.”

Diane broke her goal into small steps, or subgoals:

1. To make a list of activity groups in her area by doing research on the internet.
2. To decide on three activity groups that she would enjoy.
3. To find several people who could stay with her mother when she was out.
4. To go out to an activity once a week (even if she wasn’t in the mood).

Within a month, Diane had found a knitting group that met every Friday night at a local Starbucks. Through the group, she made some friends and began to feel less isolated in her life.

Of course, not every journey to solving a problem is so straightforward. Sometimes you have to change the steps you must take to achieve a goal. Sometimes there are unforeseen obstacles, and many times motivation is a problem. Let’s face it, change is hard. But setting goals and writing down the steps to achieve your goals are important parts of the process of creating a happier and more fulfilling life.

Use the worksheet on the next page to set a goal and the steps you need to take to achieve that goal. This worksheet will also help you understand the factors that can help you achieve your goal.
Write down a goal that will address a problem that is bothering you.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How will your life be different when you meet that goal?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Who can support you in achieving the goal?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Do you anticipate any obstacles to achieving your goal? Is there any way to address these obstacles?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Write down the steps you need to take to achieve your goal and the dates by which you think you can achieve each step. You will have different steps for different goals. Here, space has been allowed for ten steps, but some goals will have only a few steps, while others may have many. When you break down your goals into small incremental steps, they are easier to achieve.

Step 1
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Date to achieve this step ________

Step 2
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Date to achieve this step ________
Step 3

Date to achieve this step _______

Step 4

Date to achieve this step _______

Step 5

Date to achieve this step _______

Step 6

Date to achieve this step _______

Step 7

Date to achieve this step _______

Step 8

Date to achieve this step _______
Step 9

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Date to achieve this step ________

Step 10

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Date to achieve this step ________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
SECTION 3: UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS

If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.

—Daniel Goleman

Humans are unlike any other animal on earth because we have the capacity to think about our feelings. This is not to say that we have complete control over our emotions. Our brains are simply not wired that way, and it is generally accepted that the emotional part of our brains (the limbic system) is much more powerful than the thinking part (the neocortex). However, a great deal of research has shown that we can influence our emotions in ways that can help us overcome distressing symptoms. Neuroscientists have shown that the emotions we feel are actually biochemicals produced by the brain as well as our hormonal system.

In other words, when our brains produce certain neurochemicals, we experience specific feelings. You have only to drink a few cups of coffee or a glass or two of wine to understand the concept of how chemicals like caffeine and alcohol affect our moods. Medications used to help people with depression or anxiety do this in a more controlled way, working to balance the biochemicals that affect how we feel, think, and act.

The psychotherapeutic techniques you will learn in this section are designed to help your brain produce more of the mood-elevating biochemicals in the brain and control the chemicals associated with psychological problems. There is evidence that with the right training the brain can rebalance the biochemicals associated with emotional problems, just as if you were taking a prescribed medication.
Understanding Your Emotions When You Are Upset

Would you say that you have a high emotional intelligence, or EQ? Hundreds of studies on this subject have shown that people with a high degree of emotional intelligence are happier, more successful in their careers, and even healthier!

Psychologists say that we are born with a certain IQ (cognitive intelligence) that does not really change after the age of twelve, but our EQ can be increased at any time with a little practice.

Emotional intelligence begins with learning to recognize your emotions and the effect they have on your behavior, particularly when you are upset. This worksheet will help you understand how your emotions affect your behavior when you are upset and the positive things you can do to feel more in control.

Begin by thinking about the last time you were really upset. Perhaps you were angry at someone else, or perhaps you were upset about something you did and you feel guilty or depressed.

Describe the situation that made you feel upset.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Describe any external events that caused the situation.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Describe anything you did that contributed to the situation.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

How did the situation make you feel both emotionally and physically? Be specific.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What did you want to do as a result of how you felt?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
What did you *actually* do in this situation?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What did you want to say in this situation?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What did you *actually* say in this situation?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How did your emotions and behaviors affect you later? Were you still upset?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Did you do anything at that time to feel better?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Check any of the positive coping behaviors that might help you in this situation:

_____ I can talk about how I feel.

_____ I can accept the feelings for what they are—just feelings.

_____ I can calm down my body with deep breathing and muscle relaxation and then continue what I am doing.

_____ I can engage the person or people I am with to work through difficult feelings.

_____ I can seek support either before or after this situation.

_____ I can adjust my expectations and be more realistic about what “should” happen in this situation.

_____ I can find some humor in this situation.

_____ I can be more positive about myself instead of blaming myself for what happened.

_____ I can be more assertive about my rights and needs.
I can do something to calm myself down when I realize I’m anxious or afraid.

Other positive coping behaviors:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Thinking About Your Emotional and Interpersonal Strengths

When people seek psychotherapy, they are typically overwhelmed by difficult emotions like anxiety, grief, depression, or even anger. However, it may be useful to focus on your positive emotions since these are the ones that can help you be more optimistic and resilient. Below you will find a list of statements that reflect important positive emotions. Rate each statement from 1 to 10, with 1 = strongly disagree, and 10 = strongly agree. Then answer the questions at the end of this worksheet.

_____ I am able to love other people.
_____ My self-esteem is usually high.
_____ I am a flexible person.
_____ I am a creative person.
_____ I am a curious person.
_____ I don’t let other people’s opinions of me keep me from doing what I think is right.
_____ I am assertive when it comes to looking after my own interests and the interests of those I care about.
_____ I set realistic goals for myself.
_____ I have good common sense.
_____ I am able to control my impulses.
_____ I take care of my body and my health.
_____ I am a flexible person.
_____ I usually trust other people.
_____ I would not describe myself as a victim.
_____ I don’t have a problem dealing with things that are unknown or uncertain.
_____ I am easygoing most of the time.
_____ I keep calm even when I am stressed.
_____ I am patient.
_____ I am a positive thinker.
_____ I take responsibility for my decisions and actions.
I am well liked.

I enjoy the company of others and also enjoy being alone.

I am good at predicting other people’s behavior.

I am self-aware and like to learn about myself.

If something is bothering me, I can usually figure out what it is and what to do about it.

My sense of humor often helps me deal with stress.

If I can’t control a certain situation, I can usually “turn off” my thoughts and stop worrying about it.

I have several close people I can confide in.

When I need help, I have several people I can turn to.

I have a strong support network.

I don’t have a problem getting angry when it is warranted.

I have techniques I use to calm myself down when I am upset.

I accept my feelings, even when they sometimes trouble me.

I am able to talk openly and honestly when something is bothering me.

When I make a mistake, I try to figure out what I did wrong and learn from it.

List other emotional strengths that come to mind:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Review the list of emotional strengths, and describe an incident that demonstrates how you used this strength to address a problem in your life.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
What would your mother say is your greatest strength?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What would your father say is your greatest strength?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What would your best friend say is your greatest strength?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What is an emotional strength that helps you in your relationships?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Describe the best parts of your personality in five words:
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Communicating Your Feelings with “I” Statements

Sometimes people don’t tell others how they feel, which can lead to a variety of frustrating problems. It helps when you practice using “I” statements, like the ones in this worksheet. “I” statements are a method of saying precisely how you feel and what you want others to understand. Using “I” statements does not mean you will get everything you want, but at least people will understand what is important to you.

This worksheet will help you think about making your feelings clearer to specific people. Fill it in with different people in mind, and then practice using similar statements in real-life situations.

Is there someone in your life who could also benefit from making clear “I” statements? You should also consider giving this worksheet to people who might benefit from communicating their needs more effectively.

Fill in these “I” statements with a particular person in mind:

Name of person:________________________________________________________
I feel_________________because__________________________________________.
I would like it if you would__________________________________________________.
I really want______________________________________________________________.
I hope you understand that__________________________________________________.

Name of person:________________________________________________________
I feel_________________because__________________________________________.
I would like it if you would__________________________________________________.
I really want______________________________________________________________.
I hope you understand that__________________________________________________.

Name of person:________________________________________________________
I feel_________________because__________________________________________.
I would like it if you would__________________________________________________.
I really want______________________________________________________________.
I hope you understand that__________________________________________________.
Name of person: ________________________________
I feel ______________ because ________________________________.
I would like it if you would ________________________________.
I really want ________________________________.
I hope you understand that ________________________________.

Name of person: ________________________________
I feel ______________ because ________________________________.
I would like it if you would ________________________________.
I really want ________________________________.
I hope you understand that ________________________________.

Name of person: ________________________________
I feel ______________ because ________________________________.
I would like it if you would ________________________________.
I really want ________________________________.
I hope you understand that ________________________________.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
CREATING AN EMOTIONAL EMERGENCY KIT

It is important to take care of your mental health every day. Just as you do with your physical health, you should practice a variety of good habits, including getting enough sleep, exercising, eating nutritious food, spending time with your family and friends, practicing relaxation techniques, and more. All of these activities affect the “feel good” biochemicals in your brain and will help you develop a sense of calm and well-being.

Sometimes, however, you may have an emotional emergency, and like responding to a physical emergency, having the right emotional first aid can help. This worksheet will give you ideas about the tools you can use when you are feeling especially anxious or depressed, particularly if you feel you are going to do something that will cause you harm.

**My Emotional Emergency Kit**

Check off the tools you think would be most useful to use when you feel overwhelmed by emotions. Use the blank lines to add other ideas.

_____ A “grounding” object such as a small ball or stone

Just squeezing this object, and paying attention to your physical reaction, can help calm your emotions.

_____ A list of people you can call

This list would include three or four people who are emotionally supportive. If you can’t reach them, write down what you want to say, but don’t send them an email or text. Wait until you can actually talk to the people on this list to ask for support.

_____ A journal to write down your feelings or to draw and doodle

You can do this digitally or the old-fashioned way with a notebook and pen or pencil.

_____ Positive photographs

Have a few photographs or videos easily accessible. These could be of people, pets, or special places. Looking at these pictures can stimulate positive feelings and happy memories.

_____ Water

Sitting and relaxing with a drink of water can have an immediate effect on your mood. Don’t gulp it down, but rather sip, relax, and be mindful of how you are feeling.
**Inspirational reading**
Many people find comfort in reading poems, prayers, or inspirational stories.

**Funny videos**
If you can’t find something to make you smile or laugh on YouTube, there are dozens of websites that are designed to lighten up your day. No matter what your mood, your favorite video can help.

**Chewing gum**
Many people don’t realize that chewing gum has a calming effect on the brain, because repetitive motion produces serotonin.

**A relaxing audio**
There are hundreds of guided imagery soundtracks you can download to your smartphone or tablet, as well as meditation audios, and other forms of music designed to help you relax. Don’t listen to sad songs, or songs that remind you of a difficult time in your life.

**A list of activities you can do to improve your mood**
What usually helps you feel better? For some people, it’s taking a walk; for others, it’s doing a hobby or a craft. Make sure that this list contains activities that get you moving, preferably in the company of others.

Other things to put in your emotional emergency kit:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Use the space below to keep notes on what you find to be most helpful in your emotional emergency kit.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Grounding Yourself When Your Emotions Seem Out of Control

Grounding techniques are a set of tools that help individuals stay in the present moment during episodes of intense anxiety or other overwhelming emotions. Staying in the present moment allows people to feel safe and in control.

Grounding is easy to do. Just focus on some aspect of the physical world, rather than on your internal thoughts and feelings (see suggestions below). Focus on the present rather than the past. Practice your grounding techniques so that they will come naturally when you are upset. Let go of any negative feelings.

Try a variety of techniques, then use the chart that follows to rate the effectiveness of each technique in keeping you calm. Have others assist you in using these techniques by reminding you to practice them and use them as soon as you are feeling emotionally distressed.

You can view a video from the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, showing how a therapist helps a client with PTSD use the grounding technique, by going to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFxRs1oFIEE

Here are some grounding technique suggestions; you can make up your own as well.

- Run cool water over your hands.
- Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
- Touch various objects around you: a pen, keys, your clothing, or the wall.
- Dig your heels into the floor, literally grounding them. Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
- Carry a grounding object in your pocket, and touch it whenever you feel triggered.
- Notice your body: the weight of your body in the chair; the movement of your toes wiggling in your socks; the feel of your chair against your back . . .
- Stretch. Roll your head around.
- Clench and release your fists.
- Walk slowly; notice each footstep, saying “left or “right” to yourself.
- Focus on your breathing; notice each inhale and exhale.
- Eat something, describing the flavors to yourself.
Other ideas:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Recording Your Use of the Grounding Technique**

Begin by writing in five or more techniques you want to practice. Practice them several times a day for five minutes or until you feel calm and in control.

Circle the number that best describes the effectiveness of each technique.

1 = no effect  
2 = little effect  
3 = effective but took time  
4 = effective in keeping me calm and focused  
5 = immediate calming effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Date started</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Date started</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Practicing Compassionate Self-Care

People with psychological problems are often very hard on themselves. They may feel and act like their problems are their fault or that they are somehow “flawed.” Many people feel that their past actions and choices are the reasons for their problems, and they have an internal dialogue that keeps them feeling that there is something really wrong with them and they are somehow different from everyone else.

If this sounds like you, then you probably know that this type of attitude and behavior is no help at all. Rather than being hard on yourself, you can practice compassionate self-care. You can treat yourself with understanding and kindness, just the way you would treat a friend in need.

Practicing compassionate self-care is not being self-indulgent. Self-indulgence is when you give yourself more than you need, like eating two desserts or buying clothes when your closets are already bursting. Compassionate self-care is also not self-pity. Self-pity is when you feel that your problems are worse than the problems of everyone else. Compassionate self-care recognizes the fact that all humans have problems and all humans make mistakes. And that includes you!

In this worksheet, you should list all the ways you would treat a friend in need. Think of someone you care about very much and imagine that he or she is having a very difficult time.

What would you say?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What would you do?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Now think of yourself at a low point, when your problems seem overwhelming. Write down where you are and what you are doing.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What can you say to yourself that shows compassion and understanding?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
What can you do for yourself that shows compassion and understanding?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Finding Awe

Awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your understanding of the world. Scientists tell us that awe, even more than other positive emotions, increases our sense of happiness and fulfillment by making us feel that we are connected to others around us and that there is something “bigger” than the problems we are currently facing. Some research even suggests that a daily dose of awe will make you more resilient and boost your immune system. Use this worksheet to bring more awe into your life.

Name three things in nature that always bring you a sense of awe.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Name three things in the arts (visual arts, music, dance, writing, and so forth) that always bring you a feeling of awe.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Name three things you experience with friends and family that bring you a sense of awe.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Name three places you go to experience awe.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Scientists also say that sharing joy leads to greater feelings of happiness. Name three people with whom you can share your experience of awe.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Use the space below to write some thoughts about yourself and your life after you have experienced awe.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
SECTION 4: NEW WAYS TO LIVE

Today I choose life. Every morning when I wake up I can choose joy, happiness, negativity, pain. . . . To feel the freedom that comes from being able to continue to make mistakes and choices—today I choose to feel life, not to deny my humanity but embrace it.

—Kevyn Aucoin

As the saying goes, actions speak louder than words, and ultimately your success in overcoming your problems will be judged by how you live each day. In this section, you will find three types of activities you can do to create a healthful life that is full of meaning. The section begins with techniques that will teach you the importance of value-oriented activities based in kindness and gratitude. A great deal of research suggests that people who practice these activities consistently report feeling that their lives are happier and more fulfilling. A second group of activities will help you deal with the inevitable stress of life. Stress in itself is not a bad thing, and a little stress can actually motivate and energize you. Chronic stress, on the other hand, can have serious effects on your mental and physical health, and the activities in this section can teach you how to reduce stress and counterbalance it with healthful practices. This section ends with worksheets on developing a healthier lifestyle, which will serve to balance the neurochemicals in your brain that are associated with feelings of calm and well-being.
Using a Contract to Commit to Change

Behavioral contracts are not just for kids. In fact, creating a behavioral contract and sharing it with others is one of the most effective ways for adults to motivate themselves to make changes in their lives. Use the contract below to commit yourself to changes that will help you overcome your depression or any other problem that is holding you back in your life.

I, ________________________________ (name), agree to (specific behavior you want to change) _________________________________.

I will begin on (date) ___________________________ and plan to reach my goal (specific goal) ________________________________ by (target date) ___________________________.

In order to reach my final goal, I have devised the following schedule of subgoals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(subgoal)</th>
<th>(date to complete)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some strategies I will use to change my behavior:

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

I sign this contract as an indication of my personal commitment to reach my goal.

______________________________ (your signature) ___________________________ (date)

I have recruited ________________________, who will witness my contract and help me by:

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________ (witness's signature) ___________________________ (date)
How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Things You Can Do to Lift Your Spirits

Most people who are depressed cut back on their activities, even the ones they used to enjoy. Not surprisingly, when you stop doing things that give you pleasure, your mood gets even worse and life’s burdens take on more importance.

You can reverse this downward cycle when you commit to doing pleasurable activities each day. Make a list of five activities you can do to lift your spirits and have a more positive mood throughout the day. Try to do at least one of the activities each day for a week, rating your mood from 1 to 10 immediately after each activity, with 1 = sad or feeling empty, and 10 = happy and energized. If you can commit to doing more pleasurable activities each day, you will likely find that your life has become happier and your days have become more fulfilling.

Activities:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Day 1
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______

Day 2
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______

Day 3
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______

Day 4
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Activity________________________________________Rating ______
Day 5
Activity______________________________Rating ______
Activity______________________________Rating ______
Activity______________________________Rating ______

Day 6
Activity______________________________Rating ______
Activity______________________________Rating ______
Activity______________________________Rating ______

Day 7
Activity______________________________Rating ______
Activity______________________________Rating ______
Activity______________________________Rating ______

Write down any thoughts about the things you can do to have a more positive mood every day.
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Finding Happiness Through Acts of Kindness

Researchers tell us that being kind will not just benefit people you help but can also make you happy, too, and calm your mood on a permanent basis. According to research, kindness can start a chain of positive social consequences, bringing you closer to others and helping you appreciate the most positive aspects of human nature.

The Random Acts of Kindness movement advocates thoughtful and considerate acts as a way of life, but research actually shows that the “happiness benefits” of acts of kindness are greatest when you consciously decide to do a kind act just one day a week. On that day, you should seek to do a significant act of kindness; for example, not just holding the door for someone but perhaps taking the time to write a note of appreciation to someone important in your life.

Use this worksheet to plan and then record your weekly act of kindness.

Best day of week to do your act of kindness  _____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things You Can Do</th>
<th>People Who Might Benefit from Your Kind Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the day, write down any thoughts about what you did and what happened.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Understanding Your Stress

In 1967, psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe researched the causal link between stress and illness. They came up with a scale that lists significant life events and rates them in order of the stress they cause. As you will see, some of the life events would normally be considered as positive life changes, and yet we know that there is stress associated with even the happiest of times.

On the next page, you’ll find the Holmes/Rahe scale. Check to see how many of these stresses you have experienced in the last year, and determine how high your risk is of becoming ill. The more of these stressors you have experienced, the bigger your risk. Circle the “life change units” associated with each stress you have checked and add them up.

Then on the next page, write down any additional significant stresses in your life not found on the scale.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check if appropriate</th>
<th>Life event</th>
<th>Life change units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Death of a spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marital separation</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Death of a close family member</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dismissal from work</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marital reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in health of family member</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual difficulties</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gain a new family member</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business readjustment</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in financial state</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in frequency of arguments</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major mortgage</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreclosure of mortgage or loan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in responsibilities at work</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child leaving home</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouble with in-laws</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse starts or stops work</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin or end school</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in living conditions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of personal habits</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with your boss</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in working hours or conditions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in residence</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in schools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in recreation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in church activities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in social activities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor mortgage or loan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in sleeping habits</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in number of family reunions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in eating habits</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor violation of law</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL:** ________

**Interpretation:**

Score of 300+: At risk of illness.
Score of 150–299+: Risk of illness is moderate (30 percent less than a score over 299).
Score 150-: Only a slight risk of illness.
Other stresses in your life (rate them from 1 = low to 10 = high):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Reducing Situational Stress

Life is often stressful, and most people have things in their life that are difficult or even impossible to change. However, there are many stresses we experience that are situational and in our control, even though many people act as if they are not. No matter what kind of stress you have in your life, any efforts you can make to reduce it can have a positive effect on your mental health. Think of stress as stones in a backpack that you carry around each day. Every time you remove a stone, even a small one, you make your burden that much lighter.

Look at the statements below and rate each one from 1 = mild stress to 10 = very stressful. Just skip the statements that don’t apply. Then write down something you can to do reduce this stress. If you get stuck on ways to reduce situational stress, you may want to ask the opinion of people who seem to handle stress well.

_____ I am overscheduled.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

_____ My house is a mess and I can never find what I’m looking for.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

_____ I put off important things that cause me to be anxious.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

_____ I am overwhelmed by all the money I owe.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

_____ My kids are driving me crazy.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
_____ My relationship/marriage has become really difficult.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

_____ My work situation has become intolerable.
To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Other situational stresses:
______________________________________________________________________________ To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________ To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________ To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________ To change this, I can:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Activities That Help Counteract Your Stress

A certain amount of stress is inevitable, and a small amount of stress is actually good for you, keeping you alert and motivated. However, sustained stress will elevate stress biochemicals such as cortisol, which can take a toll on your mood as well as your body.

When you can’t find ways to reduce your stress, you can still find activities that can counterbalance the stress in your life. There are many activities you can do that will reduce the cortisol levels in your body and bring you feelings of calm and control.

The worksheet on the next page shows you things you can do every day to fight the negative impact of stress. When you make these activities daily habits, they will not only help you overcome your depression but also help prevent physical problems.

Put a check mark by the activities you are most likely to do. See if you can find one activity to do in each category. Then estimate the amount of time you will do the activities each day. Finally, put a check mark each time you have done this activity. Keep this chart for three weeks.

Week of _____________ (Date)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Check if likely to do</th>
<th>Estimated amount of time per day</th>
<th>Activity done (put one check mark for each day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheduled Relaxation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep breathing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing with quiet music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–9 hours sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good nutrition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum half hour exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful conversation(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun activities with family or friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals with family or friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual activities with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting goals and steps to achieve them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic to-do list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegating appropriate responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic scheduling and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative and Fun Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time with pets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Calming Your Body with Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that involves tensing specific muscle groups and then relaxing them. It is termed “progressive” because you relax all major muscle groups—starting at the head and working your way down to your feet, relaxing them one at a time. In only ten to fifteen minutes, you can achieve total body relaxation.

Progressive muscle relaxation is a particularly effective technique because it enables you to focus on your body tension. There are many other relaxation techniques that can help you reduce your anxiety, but this technique may be most helpful for people who have body complaints that often accompany high levels of stress and anxiety, such as headaches, stomach problems, or muscle pain.

When you are ready to try this technique, find a place where you won’t be disturbed or distracted for at least fifteen minutes. Recline in a comfortable chair or on a mat, and take a few deep breaths to begin the exercise. Use the following audio to help you learn this technique:


This audio was recorded at the McKinley Health Center at the University of Illinois and will guide you through your progressive relaxation. It takes about twelve minutes.

After listening for a few times, you can practice this relaxation technique without the audio if you wish, but remember to relax for at least ten minutes.

Relaxation techniques can be very effective in reducing anxiety, but only when you practice these techniques regularly. When you practice relaxation techniques for at least ten minutes a day, you will train your brain and body to “calm down” on demand. As soon as you start to feel anxious, you can take a few deep breaths and think about how it feels to be calm, which automatically sends a message to your brain, telling it to calm down, and to your body to release your muscle tension.

Taking ten minutes a day to practice relaxation techniques will not only help you control your anxiety but may also have other health benefits. There are many different kinds of relaxation techniques, and they all appear to have the same healthful effect on the mind and body. Some research suggests that relaxation techniques can aid the body in the healing process and help in controlling high blood pressure, coping with chronic pain, controlling asthma, and aiding with sleep problems. Many medical professionals believe that daily relaxation exercises will aid in preventing disease, reducing elevated levels of cortisol (the stress hormone), and bolstering the immune system. Use the chart on the next page to help you create a habit of relaxing every day.
Relaxation Worksheet

Use the chart below to record your daily relaxation “habit.” Make copies of this chart and keep recording the time you spend relaxing until it is truly a habit, something you do without thinking, like brushing your teeth. It will also be useful to note your general mood, both before and after your daily relaxation exercise.

Date: _____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of day</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Mood before</th>
<th>Mood after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Understanding How Diet Affects Your Mood

Diet, stress, and mood are all intertwined, so it is important to consider what you are putting in your body, not only for your physical health but also for your emotional well-being.

It is not necessary to go to extremes in changing your diet. By simply being more mindful of what you are putting in your body, you can find small ways to improve, and that can add up to big changes.

The troublemakers . . .

- **Caffeine**: You’ll find this stimulant in coffee, tea, chocolate, soda, energy drinks, and some over-the-counter medications. The temporary boost it provides can end in fatigue, headache, and tension. Caffeine has also been identified as a potential trigger for anxiety attacks and a contributor to other health issues such as insomnia, heartburn, aggression, irritability, heart palpitations, and high blood pressure.

- **Salt**: Sodium is present in many processed foods, so check labels and look for low-sodium or salt-free alternatives. Also, be aware of how much salt you use while cooking. Sodium consumption affects fluid retention, weight, and blood pressure, all of which, in turn, can affect your mood.

- **Sugar**: Excessive intake of simple sugars (such as white or brown sugar and honey) can cause health problems such as diabetes and hypoglycemia, which is often accompanied by symptoms similar to those experienced during a panic attack. Also, the temporary uplifting effects come with some other serious downsides, including an increased risk of depression in those who have a sugar-heavy diet.

- **Preservatives and hormones**: These substances are present in processed foods and many types of meats. Our bodies were not built to handle these additives, and their possible side effects have been heavily debated. Swapping in some whole, unprocessed, organic foods can help reduce consumption of these potentially harmful substances.

- **Nicotine and alcohol**: Introducing these substances into your system can cause a range of problems, not the least of which is aggravating anxiety. Nicotine is a stimulant, like caffeine, and alcohol a depressant. The addictive properties of both nicotine and alcohol have also been well documented.

It should also be mentioned that what you don’t put in your body can also be problematic. Nutrient deficiencies and dehydration can cause irritability, anxiety, and fatigue. So stop skipping meals and make sure you are drinking enough water.
# Understanding How Your Diet Affects Your Mood

For the next week, keep track of how often you consume any of the above-listed items, and write down the predominant moods you had each day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food and drink</th>
<th>Predominant mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Improving Your Mood by Getting More Sleep

Do you have a hard time falling to sleep or staying asleep? A lack of sleep will reduce the serotonin levels in your brain, which may make it harder to control your moods during the day. There are a variety of techniques that can help you get the sleep you need, but, of course, they only work if you are diligent at trying them and then using the ones that work best. Getting enough sleep is an important part of your overall plan to overcome your anxiety and is also important for your general health.

There are a variety of medications available to help you sleep, including prescription medication, herbs, and supplements, but always consult a physician before taking any kind of sleep aid.

Here are some other things you can try. Using the chart that follows, keep track of your sleep and the methods you use to sleep better. Track your progress for at least two weeks.

Techniques to Help You Get More Sleep

• Listen to soft music, read, take a warm shower, or meditate before going to bed.
• Exercise for at least a half hour each day, but not before you go to bed.
• Write a to-do list for the following day, and then clear your head of those concerns.
• Practice deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation before bedtime.
• Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine, either entirely or at least in the evenings.
• Keep your bedroom at a cool temperature (65–68 degrees).
• If you are sensitive to light and sound, wear a sleep mask and earplugs or try a white noise machine to mask the sound. There are various white noise apps that can be used on a smartphone.
• If you are having trouble falling asleep, get out of bed and do some light activity (like reading) in another room. Go back to bed when you feel drowsy.
• Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
• Avoid eating heavy meals at least two to three hours before bed.
• Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.

Write down other ideas to help you get more sleep:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
## Sleep Diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Hours slept</th>
<th>Trouble sleeping?</th>
<th>Methods tried</th>
<th>Successful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td>□ Y □ N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? ____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Overcoming Your Problems with the Help of Exercise

Regular exercise can be an important part of learning to solve your emotional problems. During exercise, your brain increases the production of chemicals that can lift your mood and regulate your emotions. With regular exercise, you will feel stronger and more confident, and more likely to feel that you can make positive changes in your life. Exercise will also increase the oxygen flow to your brain, which may help you think more clearly and rationally.

Circle the types of exercise you can do on a regular basis:

- bike riding
- jogging
- walking
- weight lifting
- tennis
- baseball
- hiking
- skateboarding
- kickboxing
- swimming
- football
- soccer
- skiing
- dancing
- handball
- karate
- Pilates
- yoga
- basketball

Write down any other exercises you think you can do that are not listed above:

1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________________________________

Now choose three of these exercises you would like to do over the next week.

Exercise 1. _____________________________________________________________________
Exercise 2. _____________________________________________________________________
Exercise 3. _____________________________________________________________________

Decide how much time you need for each exercise. Fifteen minutes? A half hour? An hour?

Exercise 1. _______________________________
Exercise 2. _______________________________
Exercise 3. _______________________________

For each of the exercises, write down how often you can realistically do them in a week.

Exercise 1. _______________________________
Exercise 2. _______________________________
Exercise 3. _______________________________
For each of the exercises, write down which days are best (early in the week, on weekends, etc.), and what time of day is most realistic (before school, at night, etc.).

Exercise 1. ____________________________________________
Exercise 2. ____________________________________________
Exercise 3. ____________________________________________

Use this chart to record how many times you actually exercise and the effect that exercise has on your mood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of exercise</th>
<th>Amount of time</th>
<th>Mood before</th>
<th>Mood afterward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Acting Opposite to Your Impulses

Sometimes your emotions will dictate how you behave. Perhaps you feel depressed, so you eat a pint of ice cream or other “comfort food” even though you are trying to lose weight. Perhaps you have a frustrating day, so you lash out at your spouse or a relative, even though you know that person is not the cause of your frustration. Perhaps you are worried about how people will judge you, so you stay at home rather than going out with friends.

If you find that your emotions are causing you to behave in ways that are self-defeating, you can use this worksheet to find out what happens if you do the opposite of what you would normally do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Primary emotion</th>
<th>Behavior you would normally do</th>
<th>The opposite of what you would normally do</th>
<th>What actually happens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: You were criticized at work.</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Eat a high-calorie meal</td>
<td>Go for a 45-minute walk</td>
<td>Your mood improves and you feel good about your choice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Section 5: Raising Your Social Intelligence

No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.
—Theodore Roosevelt

Humans are social animals, and we need other people in our lives to feel happy and fulfilled. But getting along with others is not always that easy. Some researchers feel that each of us is born with a different degree of social intelligence, just as we are all born with different intellectual capacities. However, unlike the intelligence measured by traditional IQ tests, social intelligence can be enhanced at any age, and you can learn the social skills you need to get more from your friendships, family, and intimate relationships.

One of the biggest problems people face today is social isolation, and this problem can deepen any psychological difficulties you are currently having. In fact, recent research has suggested that social isolation and the perception of loneliness can put us more at risk for problems and even early death than smoking or obesity.

The techniques in this section are designed to help you enhance your relationships and build a social-support system that can assist you through the times when your problems might otherwise lead you to social isolation.
Building Your Support System

It is usually much easier to overcome your problems with the support of others. Some people feel that one person, like a spouse or significant other, should provide all the support they need, but most people find it helpful to have a number of people giving them different kinds of support.

This worksheet can help you think about people who can support you in various areas of your life. If you have difficulty thinking of people in a specific area, think of people who could *possibly* fill this role, and then work toward making this happen. Often, you will find you can get the support you need by just asking for it.

Write down at least one person you know who fits into each category.

**Someone I can discuss a personal problem with:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Someone who enjoys similar activities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Someone who can help me with a task:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Someone who can cheer me up when I am down:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Someone who builds my self-confidence:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Someone who can give me helpful feedback:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Someone who is understanding and a good listener:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who can be honest with me when I’m making a mistake:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who can keep me accountable for my decisions and goals:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who can help me conquer bad habits:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who can help me solve serious problems:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone I can count on to make me laugh:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who can comfort me in a time of loss:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who can care for me when I’m ill:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Someone who will be proud of my achievements and let me know it:

______________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________
Someone else who can give me support:

______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________  Email: _________________________________

Someone else who can give me support:

______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________  Email: _________________________________

Someone else who can give me support:

______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________  Email: _________________________________

Someone else who can give me support:

______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________  Email: _________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
How Do You Want to Be Treated?

When you are working to overcome a psychological problem, you will almost always make more progress when you reach out to others. But will your friends and family provide you with the kind of support you are looking for? The odds of this happening are increased when you are clear about what you want and what you don’t want. Use this worksheet to think about the ways you want to be supported and make sure you communicate this clearly to the important people around you. You can even show them this worksheet to get the conversation started.

What I don’t want from others:

_____ To be blamed for something I cannot help
_____ To be told to just “get over it”
_____ To be told to just “cheer up”
_____ To be told “other people have it much worse than you”
_____ To be made to feel like I am a failure
_____ To be treated like a child or like I have some kind of disease
_____ To be deserted

Other things I don’t want from others:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What I do want from others:

_____ Kindness  _____ To be treated normally  _____ Reassurance
_____ Compassion and empathy  _____ Acceptance  _____ Physical contact
_____ Respect  _____ Help with my responsibilities  _____ Extra attention
_____ To be listened to  _____ Encouragement  _____ Presence
_____ Patience  _____ Companionship  _____ Safety
Other things I want from people I know:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Other thoughts about how people can support me:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Are Your Negative Judgments Causing You Problems?

It is normal to constantly make judgments about what you like and what you don’t like; however, some people seem to be more prone to negative judgments, and this can contribute to some serious problems. If you are constantly making negative judgments about others, you may be building a wall around yourself that keeps you socially isolated. If you are constantly making negative judgments about yourself, you are undoubtedly causing yourself unnecessary suffering, which can contribute to both anxiety and depression. Whether you are making negative judgments about yourself or others, you are likely magnifying your emotions and this can cause you to behave in self-defeating ways. When you recognize your tendency to magnify your feelings, you can often see a more realistic solution. Use this worksheet to think about your judgments over the next several days and how they affect your life.

### Judgments Regarding Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Emotion(s)</th>
<th>Negative judgment</th>
<th>Outcome of negative judgment</th>
<th>More realistic response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Unhappy with boss</td>
<td>Anger, anxiety, fear</td>
<td>My boss is always picking on me and obviously thinks I’m an idiot.</td>
<td>I’ve been avoiding my boss.</td>
<td>My boss may see my good side as well as my problems. He may be picking on everyone, not just me. I can sit down to talk to him about how I can improve my performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

80
## Judgments Regarding Yourself

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Emotion(s)</th>
<th>Negative judgment</th>
<th>Outcome of negative judgment</th>
<th>More realistic response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: I think I’m fat and I’ll never have a boyfriend.</td>
<td>Shame, disgust, loneliness</td>
<td>Diets never work for me because I don’t have any will power, and I know that men don’t like chubby women.</td>
<td>My negative judgments just make me feel worse, and then I eat more.</td>
<td>I can watch my weight with help. Lots of people do this. All men are not the same. I know other chubby women with nice boyfriends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
How Do Others See You?

Do you see yourself as others see you? We all have a certain image we like to project, which may be close to the actual way others see us or may be very different.

On the first page of this worksheet, rate how you think others see you. You can give copies of the second sheet to people you know to see how accurate your perceptions are about yourself.

What are your best three physical attributes?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________

What three things make you unique?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________

What are three character traits you consider your greatest strengths?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________

What is something you’d like to do improve about yourself?

______________________________________________________________________________

What are three emotions you commonly feel?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________

What are three words you would use to describe your personality?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________

What are three words you would use to describe how you relate to other people?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________

What are three words you would use to describe your attitude toward work or school?

_________________________________  ___________________________________  _____________________________


Dear __________________________

I'm doing an exercise regarding my self-perception, and I'd like you to compare your perceptions to mine. Would you please answer the questions below as honestly as you can?

Thanks,

__________________________

What would you say are my best three physical attributes?

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

What three things would you say make me unique?

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

What would you say are the three character traits that are my greatest strengths?

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

What is something you think I could do to improve myself?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

What are three emotions you think I commonly express?

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

What are three words you would use to describe my personality?

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

What are three words you would use to describe how I relate to other people?

_________________________________________  ___________________________

What are three words you would use to describe my attitude toward work or school?

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Your Vision of Your Relationship

Have you ever discussed what you want from your relationship with your partner? Do you and your partner have the same ideas? Make a copy of this worksheet for each of you. Take ten minutes to write down and rate the seven most important things you each want from your relationship. Do this independently and then share what you wrote. Rate the importance of each statement to you and the degree of difficulty it poses for your partner, on a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 = low and 10 = high. Be honest, but also be considerate of your partner’s feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things you want from your relationship</th>
<th>Rate importance</th>
<th>Rate how difficult you think this might be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things you want from your relationship</td>
<td>Rate importance</td>
<td>Rate how difficult you think this might be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How helpful was this exercise? _____  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)  

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Asking for and Giving Forgiveness

Sometimes someone does something in a relationship that feels like the last straw. Asking for and giving forgiveness may be the only way to heal and restore the relationship. Forgiveness means giving up thoughts of vengeance and retribution in order to be free of anger and resentment. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or condoning wrong behavior. Asking for and giving forgiveness are processes that can take time. The following steps can help you get started.

**Six Steps for Seeking Forgiveness**

1. Can you admit that what you did was wrong or hurtful? Try writing down exactly what you did.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. Can you understand the pain you have caused? Write down how the other person is feeling.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. Have you taken responsibility for your actions? Write down how you have done that.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

4. Have you assured the other person you will not do it again? How did you do that?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
5. Have you apologized and asked for forgiveness? What happened?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

6. Have you forgiven yourself? How has this helped you?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Six Steps for Granting Forgiveness

1. Have you truly acknowledged your pain and anger? Write down what you are feeling.
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

2. Were you specific with the other person about your future expectations? What are they?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

3. Have you given up your right to get even? How do you know?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
4. Have you let go of blame and resentment toward the other person?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

5. Have you told the other person that you forgive him or her? What did you say?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

6. Are you working toward reconciliation? How?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Compassionate Listening

Compassionate listening (also called “active listening”) is an extremely useful way to improve your relationships. It is often prescribed when two people have ongoing conflicts because they are not really listening to each other with caring and empathy. This approach requires each person to fully concentrate, understand what the other person is saying, respond, and then remember what is being said by the other.

There are seven techniques you can use to become a better listener. They may seem a little awkward at first, but if you are having difficulty communicating with someone and you are trying to improve your relationship, a counselor or mediator can be helpful in encouraging each person to actively listen to the other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>To do this</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>To convey interest</td>
<td>Don’t argue or disagree.</td>
<td>“Can you tell me more?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To encourage the other person to keep talking</td>
<td>Use neutral words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vary tone of voice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying</td>
<td>To help you clarify what is said</td>
<td>Ask questions.</td>
<td>“When did this happen?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To get more information</td>
<td>Restate wrong interpretations to force the speaker to explain further.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To help the speaker see other views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restating</td>
<td>To show you are listening and understanding</td>
<td>Restate basic ideas and facts.</td>
<td>“So, you would like your parents to trust you more; is that right?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To check your meaning and interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting</td>
<td>To show you understand how the person feels</td>
<td>Reflect the speaker’s basic feelings.</td>
<td>“You seem very upset.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To help the person evaluate their own feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>To review progress</td>
<td>Restate major ideas expressed, including feelings.</td>
<td>“These seem to be the key ideas you’ve expressed…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To pull together important ideas and facts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To establish a basis for further discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>To acknowledge the worthiness of the other person</td>
<td>Acknowledge the value of their issues and feelings.</td>
<td>“I appreciate your willingness to resolve this matter.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Show appreciation for their efforts and actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language</td>
<td>To show nonverbally that you are present and paying attention</td>
<td>Lean forward. Make eye contact. Use appropriate gestures. Have an “open posture.”</td>
<td>Use an “open posture” by facing the other person with your legs and arms uncrossed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Compassionate Listening Worksheet**

Compassionate listening takes practice, but it is well worth making some time to improve your communication. When you practice compassionate listening, you learn to listen much like a counselor or psychotherapist. You are objective, nonjudgmental, and supportive. Your words, as well as your body language, show that you truly care about what the person is saying.

Begin by choosing a mutually important topic to discuss with the person you wish to improve your communication with.

Write it here:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Now make a copy of the recording sheet on the next page so that each person has a worksheet. Flip a coin to see who talks first, and set a timer for ten minutes. While the first person talks, the second person should put a check mark each time he or she uses an active listening technique.

Then, after each person has taken a turn at active listening, you should each fill in the questions on Part 2 of the worksheet. Finally, discuss your reactions, keeping in mind that this exercise is intended to improve your communication in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Your name: _______________________  
Topic: ______________________________________________________________

**Part I: Using the Techniques**

Put a check mark each time you use the technique to show the other person you are listening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compassionate listening technique</th>
<th>Check each time you use it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2: Analyzing What Happened
Answer the following questions about this practice session.

What do you think you did right in showing the other person you were listening carefully and compassionately?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

What do you think you could improve on?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How do you think the other person responded to your efforts to communicate effectively?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

What will you do differently in your next conversation?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Is there something you would like the other person to do differently?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Write any comments about this practice session that might be helpful for you to remember.
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area of your psychological growth?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
SECTION 6: GOING FORWARD

When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.
—Benjamin Franklin

Psychotherapy gives you the tools you need to make important changes in your life, but there is no doubt that the future will present you with new challenges. The exercises in this last section will help you anticipate some of these changes. Some of the skills you learned in therapy can be part of your “prevention” program. Just like with physical health, there are things you can do each day to help you focus on your life goals and prevent past problems from returning. And if problems do return, the worksheets in this section will remind you of what has worked in the past.
What Has Helped You?

Personal change can be a long and sometimes unexpected process. You can find solutions to your problems and conflicts from sudden insight or by following a carefully crafted plan. You can find help from working with your therapist and also from books, friends, and things you see on the internet and social media, and much more.

Whatever your process in discovering solutions to your problems and conflicts, writing down what you have learned will be an important part of making lasting changes.

This worksheet is designed to help you think about what has helped you along your journey to overcome your problems. At least once a month, take some time to fill in the worksheet. You will likely find added benefit from sharing it with your therapist or a close friend. Of course, you can also use this worksheet more frequently. Using it more frequently may be helpful in times of stress and during difficult life transitions.

Today’s date: __________

Specific skills I learned in therapy:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Specific insights I have gotten from therapy:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Books that have helped me (be specific about how these books have helped):

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Things that have inspired and motivated me (e.g., quotes, people, events, activities):

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Decisions I made that could help me with future choices:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Spiritual practices or spiritual moments that have guided or inspired me:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Changes in my habits that have made a difference:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Other things that have helped me:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

After reflecting on what has helped you, what is the one thing you think made the most important positive impact?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Overcoming Setbacks

Overcoming your problems can take a lot of work, and you may experience setbacks for a variety of reasons.

For example, Jonathon used to get anxious thinking about making a presentation to his class. Sometimes he would drop a class because a presentation was coming up and he started having panic attacks. With work and lots of practice, Jonathon was able to make presentations without worrying about panic attacks. But at the end of his senior year, Jonathon experienced a setback when he had to do a thirty-minute presentation in his philosophy class. The week before the presentation, when he was lying in bed thinking about how he would organize it, his heart started to race. The more he tried to ignore it, the worse he felt, and he couldn’t stop thinking that he was going to look foolish in front of his class.

Setbacks can occur for many reasons. They most commonly occur when you stop practicing the skills you learned in therapy. They can also occur when you are under a lot of stress. Other times a setback can be triggered by a certain event. Sometimes a setback can occur because of a change in your lifestyle (sleeping, eating, exercise) or because you have made some unhealthy choices, like drinking too much or taking drugs.

Don’t be upset if you have a setback. Setbacks are common because stress and change in your life are constant. And don’t let setbacks give you the feeling that you are back to where you started. Setbacks are temporary, just a sign that you need to pay attention to the kind of life you want to live every day.

The easiest way to avoid setbacks is to prepare for them. Filling out this worksheet will help you think about the kinds of things that can cause a setback and recognize the early signs that your problems may be recurring. Answer these questions thoroughly and honestly.

Write down the most likely situations that could cause a setback.

______________________________________________________________________________

What are some specific triggers—including people, places, thoughts, and behaviors—that might cause a setback?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What are some early signs that might mean you are having a setback?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Write down two or three people you can ask to tell you if they see early signs of a setback.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Have you started doing anything to avoid situations that caused your original problem?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Have you started doing anything to mask your problems (e.g., drinking, taking drugs, or other escapist behavior)?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Have you had any changes in medication that might be affecting your mood?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Are you having negative thoughts about yourself that you know are not really true? What are they?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What are the most effective skills you learned to deal with your original problem?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What is the most important skill you can use if you see an early sign of having panic attacks?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Makes a list of at least five things you can do avoid having a setback in the future.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Appendix

Helpful Hotlines

If you feel that you or someone you know is in a crisis, do not hesitate to reach out for help. The hotlines on this page can provide immediate phone support and can help you find someone in your area to help with an ongoing problem.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
PHONE: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
WEBSITE: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

No matter what problems you are dealing with, you’ll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor at a crisis center in your area, anytime.

NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE
PHONE: 1-800-4-A-Child (1-800-422-4453)
WEBSITE: www.childhelp.org/pages/hotline-home
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline is staffed with professional crisis counselors who, through interpreters, can provide assistance in 170 languages.

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
PHONE: 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)
WEBSITE: www.thehotline.org
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline helps anyone experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE
PHONE: 1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929)
WEBSITE: www.1800runaway.org
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline is to help keep America’s runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.
NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE
PHONE: 1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673)
WEBSITE: www.rainn.org/get-help
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline offers support services for rape, sexual assault, and incest victims.

THE TREVOR PROJECT
PHONE: 1-866-488-7386
WEBSITE: www.thetrevorproject.org
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13–24.

NATIONAL CENTER ON ELDER ABUSE
PHONE: 1-855-500-ELDR (1-855-500-3537)
WEBSITE: www.ncea.aoa.gov/about/index.aspx
HOURS: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. PT

The NCEA offers up-to-date information regarding research, training, best practices, news, and resources on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

NATIONAL AIDS HOTLINE
PHONE: 1-800-342-2437
WEBSITE: NA
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This service of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is an information resource on HIV/AIDS.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN
PHONE: 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)
WEBSITE: www.missingkids.com
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline serves as the nation’s clearinghouse on issues related to missing and sexually exploited children.
BOYS TOWN NATIONAL HOTLINE

PHONE: 1-800-448-3000
WEBSITE: www.boystown.org
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This organization helps with reuniting kids with their families, finding foster homes for others, providing a family for those with nowhere else to turn, and others receiving help at home where they can remain together as families.

THE DOUGY CENTER (THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

PHONE: 1-866-775-5683
WEBSITE: www.dougy.org
HOURS: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. PT

These centers provide support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences.

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration)

PHONE: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)
WEBSITE: http://beta.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
HOURS: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

This hotline provides treatment referral and information services for individuals and families facing mental health and/or substance use disorders.
Choosing Mental Health Apps

Mobile apps offer some very unique ways to help you overcome your psychological problems. Although there are an increasing number of studies suggesting that apps can be useful in helping you learn new therapeutic tools, apps have yet to be integrated into mainstream psychological treatment, and it will probably be many years before there is agreement on what type of apps are likely to be most effective. In the meantime, with thousands of mental health apps now available and more added every day, it is a difficult task to choose which can be most effective in addressing your particular problems. Doing some research on which apps are likely to be most helpful is highly advisable to avoid frustration and disappointment. This worksheet is designed to give you some guidelines on choosing one or more mental health apps.

While you will ultimately be the best judge of whether a particular app is helpful, if you are working with a therapist it is advisable to go over the app with your therapist and see how it fits into your overall treatment plan.

Use the chart on the next page to evaluate an app you think might be useful in working on a problem or in your personal growth. You should read the descriptions and reviews for each app carefully and also visit the developer’s website. To really understand an app, you will probably have to purchase and download it, but most apps just cost a few dollars and those that come with a membership plan usually have a free trial.

Mental health apps come out frequently, and keep in mind many apps that might be helpful to you are not specifically designated as having this purpose. Some sources to find out about mental health apps include:

Anxiety and Depression Association of America: https://adaa.org/finding-help/mobile-apps

The Psychiatry Advisor: http://www.psychiatryadvisor.com/top-10-mental-health-apps/slideshow/2608/
Name of App

_____ Ease of use
How easy is it to use the app and apply it to your specific issues?
1 = very difficult  5 = very easy

_____ Effectiveness
How likely do you think it is that the app will be effective in meeting a specific therapeutic goal?
1 = highly unlikely  5 = highly likely

_____ Personalization
To what degree can the app be personalized for your specific needs?
1 = cannot personalize  5 = complete ability to personalize

_____ Interactive feedback
To what degree is the app able to give you feedback about your behavior?
1 = not at all interactive  5 = very interactive

_____ Research evidence
Is the app based on current psychological research?
1 = no research evidence  5 = the developers cite research used to develop the app

_____ Background of developers
Do the developers have specific knowledge or experience about the subject of this app?
1 = no known experience  5 = highly experienced in this field
_____ Privacy policy

Does the app have a clear privacy policy including what data is collected and stored and whether information is shared or sold?

1 = no clear privacy policy  5 = clear privacy policy

_____ Specific interface

Does the app allow you to export or print data or share data with other health-related tools?

1 = no interface  5 = clear and useful ability to use or share data

Comments:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Psychotherapy
Homework Assignments

Most psychotherapists and counselors teach their clients a variety of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills to help them overcome their problems. This book is a collection of some of the most commonly used homework assignments that therapists prescribe, drawing on a variety of evidenced-based therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Acceptance Commitment Therapy. Each exercise includes a feedback section, so that clients can let their therapists know which exercises are most helpful. The book includes 39 worksheets ranging from behavioral contracts, to mindfulness exercises, to activities that help clients improve the relationships in their lives and get the support they need to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. The appendix includes a list of emergency hotlines and guidelines on choosing mental health apps.

Activities in the workbook include:

• Setting Your Goals for Therapy
• Creating a Personal Mission Statement
• Motivating Yourself to Change
• Identifying Your Safety Crutches
• Solving Your Problems One Step at a Time
• Creating an Emotional Emergency Kit
• Practicing Compassionate Self-Care
• Understanding Your Stress
• Calming Your Body with Progressive Muscle Relaxation
• Acting Opposite to Your Impulses

• How Do Others See You?
• Asking for and Giving Forgiveness
• Overcoming Setbacks
• Understanding How Diet Affects Your Mood
• Things You Can Do to Lift Your Spirits
• Developing the Habit of Gratitude
• Thinking About Your Emotional and Interpersonal Strengths
• Understanding Your Emotional Triggers
• Loving-Kindness Meditation

About the Author:
Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D., is an internationally known psychologist and author whose books have been translated into 28 languages. Dr. Shapiro is best known for his innovative and practical approaches to treating mental health problems.

About the Series:
Between Sessions Resources produces a variety of tools to enhance the effectiveness of psychotherapy and counseling. This workbook is part of the company's ongoing efforts to standardize the treatment of both common and uncommon mental health problems.