

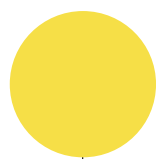
Medically-supervised
Meal Replacement Program



POWER OF CHANGE

Positive Choice
Integrative Wellness Center

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PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF THE GROUP

Welcome to your journey towards better health and well-being in this group support program.

You've made the decision to join a weight management program and you will be stepping onto this path with others who have similar goals. There are great benefits to engaging with a supportive community where you'll be sharing personal experiences and learning from each other, overcoming obstacles on the path to achieving your goals.

There is power in changing with others.

In today's world, making changes doesn't come easily. There are lifestyle, genetic, and environmental triggers that we all face. While embarking on this journey may seem daunting, participating in a group setting can be transformative. You're doing this together! But it won't come without struggles. Your habits, triggers, and emotions will interfere but, by discussing these together, you will find empowerment, deep understanding, and compassion for yourself and others.

We encourage sharing.

At the heart of group support lies the power of shared experiences. By opening up about your personal journey, successes, and setbacks, you not only lighten the burden of your own struggles but also provide invaluable insights and empathy to others. This exchange fosters a sense of camaraderie and understanding, eroding the isolation often felt in the pursuit of weight management goals. While sharing with others, you'll discover that you are not alone in your struggles, and together, you can find strength and motivation to persevere.

You're each others' best teachers.

There will be educational lessons in your groups, however the opportunity to learn from each other's strategies, coping mechanisms, and resilience in the face of challenges will be the most important lessons of all. The insight gained from this type of learning serves as the foundation for motivation, meaning, and purpose. At times, the conversations may go deeper than you expected. While our groups are therapeutic, they are not meant to be group therapy. We recommend seeking the help of a therapist if the topics reveal deeper underlying issues.

PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

A FOCUS ON SELF-COMPASSION

“Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others.” ~**Christopher Germer, PhD**

Throughout this course, you will be taught, mentored, and challenged to become a mindful practitioner of self-compassion. Many people who experience struggles or setbacks in their wellness journey can easily slip into a place of self-criticism, blame, and frustration. We will explore the benefits and potential of acting with loving kindness toward yourself amidst upcoming obstacles.

What is self-compassion?

According to researcher, Kristen Neff, PhD, “Self-compassion is simply the process of turning compassion inward. We’re kind and understanding rather than harshly self-critical when we fail, make mistakes, or feel inadequate. We give ourselves support and encouragement rather than being cold or judgmental when challenges and difficulties arise in our lives.”

The CARE method:

- Catch yourself being critical
- Acknowledge your experiences
- Request your own compassion: “What would I say to my friend in this situation?”
- Explore the next best step



Three Principles of Self-Compassion

Benefits of self-compassion

People who practice self-compassion experience the following benefits:

- Improved mental health
- Resiliency in the face of challenges
- Adaptable to changing circumstances
- Improved creativity
- Increased efficiency
- Reduced fear of failure
- Better able to admit mistakes
- Greater meaning in life

Article on self-compassion



Loving Kindness Meditation



Self-Compassion Exercises





PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

MINDFUL AWARENESS


When embarking on change, it's common to have moments of overwhelm or frustration where you feel "dysregulated" (meaning, it is challenging to manage your feelings and emotions). This can happen during bigger changes in our world, when intense memories are called back into our attention, or when we get caught up in trying to deal with many stressors at once. Cultivating what's referred to as "mindful awareness" is a skill that trains your brain to focus on what is happening in the present moment, reducing the noise from the past or future. These tools help calm the emotional center of the brain more quickly, allowing you to implement rational or logical thinking. Practicing mindful awareness reduces stress in the mind and body, opening up your abilities to manage emotions and make changes to develop new lifestyle patterns more effectively.

Mindful awareness traits and strategies include:

Focused attention in the moment on what you are doing

- ✓ Practice breathing exercises to ground you to the present moment. 
- ✓ Body scans 
- ✓ As you are eating, drinking, or enjoying your meal replacements, focus on the temperature, texture, taste, and experience in the moment.

Open awareness to the present moment

- ✓ Discover 5 things around you that you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- ✓ Take a mindful walk where you pay special attention to the colors, sounds, and sensations as you move.
- ✓ Finger tracing 

Visit pg. 323 in Maximize Your Body Potential for further information on mindfulness.

PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

SLEEP HYGIENE

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. Having healthy sleep habits is often referred to as having good sleep hygiene. We encourage you to practice self-compassion in the areas you cannot change, however here are strategies for improving your sleep hygiene:



During the day

- Keep a regular schedule for meals, medications, chores, and other activities.
- Exercise regularly. Avoid exercising before bed if it causes sleep difficulties.
- Practice relaxation techniques daily.
- Avoid extended naps.
- Avoid caffeine after lunch.



Your sleep schedule

- Set a consistent waketime and bedtime.
- If you aren't asleep 15 minutes after getting into bed, get out of bed and do something relaxing.
- Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep or more every night.



Your sleep environment

- Making your bed as comfortable as possible.
- Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and a little bit cool.
- Wear loose pajamas to allow yourself to feel comfortable.
- Limit electronics in the bedroom.
- Don't read, write, eat, watch TV, talk on the phone, or play cards in bed.



Preparing for sleep

- Follow rituals that help you relax before bed, starting 10-60 minutes before it's time to sleep.
- Manage worrisome thoughts by addressing them or writing them down for later.
- Don't go to bed hungry or too full
- Avoid alcohol within 6 hours of bedtime. Avoid nicotine.

What are a few things you can do now to improve your sleep hygiene?

PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

JOYFUL MOVEMENT

You're probably already familiar with the different types of movement important for overall physical health. But despite having that knowledge, you might still find that getting started is hard to do. Accepting where you are now, then starting from today and slowly building toward your goal will support your success. Ultimately, all movement counts!

First, start where you are:

- Stand up and move more often throughout the day
- Improve your flexibility (by stretching or doing a yoga video)
- Incorporate light-intensity movement (taking stairs, parking further away)
- Incorporate moderate-intensity activity (walking 10-15 minutes, gardening, cleaning)
- Incorporate high-intensity movement (brisk walking, swimming, Zumba)
- Do muscle strengthening (weights, resistance bands, classes)

Which one do you want to start working on today? What will you do?

Next, focus on joy in the moment (not the future).

You are more likely to do something that brings you joy. When it comes to motivating yourself in the here and now, consider how it will make you feel in the short-term, not just the results you want down the road.

What activities bring you joy? Do any of these involve movement?

How can you bring more joy to your movement goals?

Finally, acknowledge any barriers. In the past, what typically got in the way of you being more physically active? How can you work through that barrier?

Visit Chapter 10 in Maximize Your Body Potential for further information on exercise.

POWER OF CHANGE MODULE OVERVIEW

PART 1

Why We Do What We Do

Our goal is to explore the concept of change with you by discussing your Personal Why, the role of motivation, and how understanding the brain helps you understand your actions. We want to empower you to begin developing a plan and system for long-lasting, sustainable change.

PART 2

Barriers To Change

When embarking on major life changes, it's easy to oversimplify things and say "I just need to do this." What we know is that successful change often requires a better understanding of how our emotions, reactions, and support systems support or interfere with our intentions. We will look at the role of biology, your thoughts and emotions, and your environment on your habits with a focus on supporting you in practicing self-compassion and appreciation for challenges that arise during the change process.

PART 3

A Path Forward

Once you understand the changes you want to make, you've evaluated personal barriers, and developed skills to move through them, it's time to set action plans. We will focus on the role of self-care practices, setting realistic goals, and planning for the setbacks that are bound to happen along the way.

P A R T

01

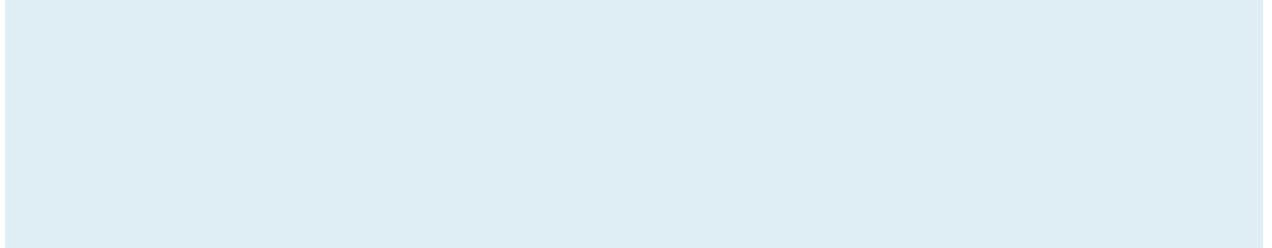
WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Let's begin with an introduction to habits, discuss motivation, and outline your reasons for change. Then we will dive into the differences between goals and habit systems and the role of the brain when making changes.

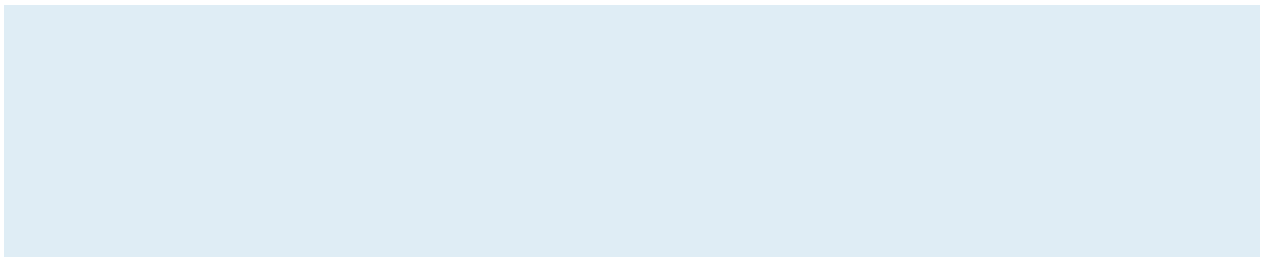


JOURNAL PROMPTS

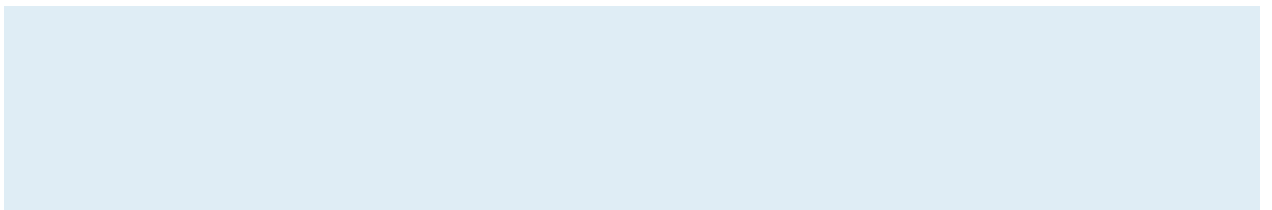
Write a list of at least five accomplishments that you have achieved in life along with the qualities within you that allowed you to accomplish these things (e.g., accomplishment-finishing college or high school, positive qualities-perseverance, intelligence, etc.).



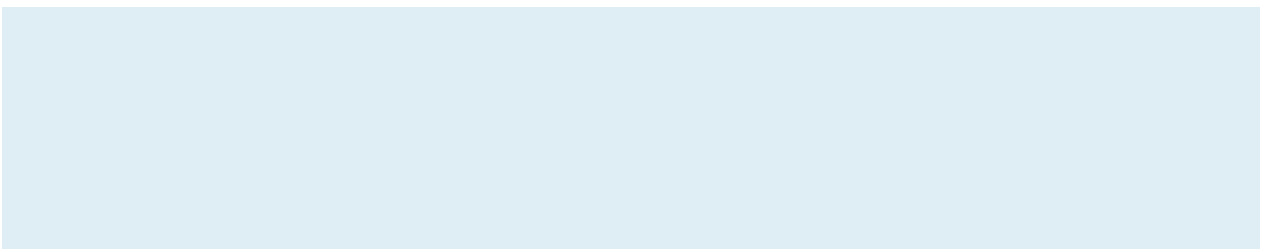
Imagine that you have an all-knowing voice inside of you that perceives all that you truly need. Now give the hesitant part of yourself a voice as well and allow these two parts to have a dialogue through writing and perhaps discover some underlying beliefs and needs in the process.



What experiences have you had with exercise, both pleasant and unpleasant?



As result of not being able to use food, you may find yourself experiencing feelings and thoughts you are not accustomed to feeling. Write about any that you've experienced and what you wanted to do in response to those thoughts and feelings.



YOUR PERSONAL WHY

“Self-compassion is key because when we’re able to be gentle with ourselves in the midst of shame, we’re more likely to reach out, connect, and experience empathy.”

Brene Brown

Your Personal Why is specific and identifies what matters to you most in life.

When you are in times of stress or challenge, recalling what truly matters to you most can make all the difference. Your Personal Why is your underlying motivation for embarking on the change process. It’s the thing that will inspire you, pick you up when you feel down, or help you focus when you feel overwhelmed, stuck, or get off track.

Motivation can be found in many ways, both internally and externally.

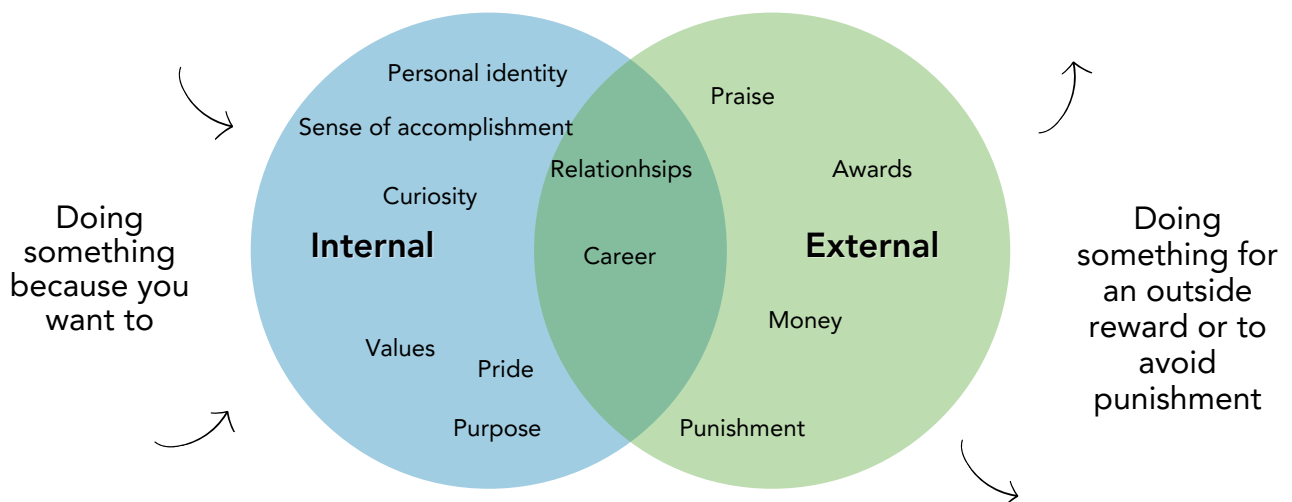
Take a moment to reflect on what led you to join this program now. Was there a particular event or was it a buildup of reasons? There may be internal and external motivations that brought you here. As you prepare to write your Personal Why, let’s first reflect on your motivators.

External motivators.

These are things you do because someone else wants you to do them or you get rewarded (or avoid punishment) for them. Examples are money, appearance, praise, awards, career advancement, or a number on a scale. External (also known as extrinsic) motivators can drive you to engage in different behaviors in order to get that outside reward. You aren’t doing them because you want to, you are doing them for the benefit of something outside of yourself. You often benefit from external motivators most when you are trying to learn something new or when you need to engage in a task that feels unpleasant.

Internal motivators.

These are things that you do because you want to do them. Your motivation is coming from within and is driven by your values and goals. Internal (also known as intrinsic) motivation happens when you are acting independently, you feel like your efforts matter, and you gain satisfaction, personal growth, or joy from the process or results.

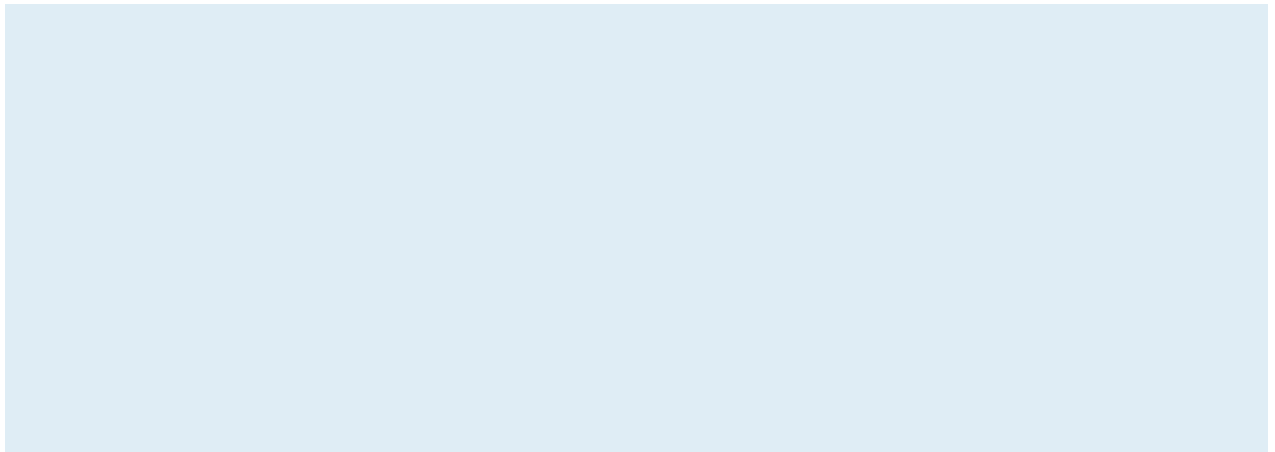


WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

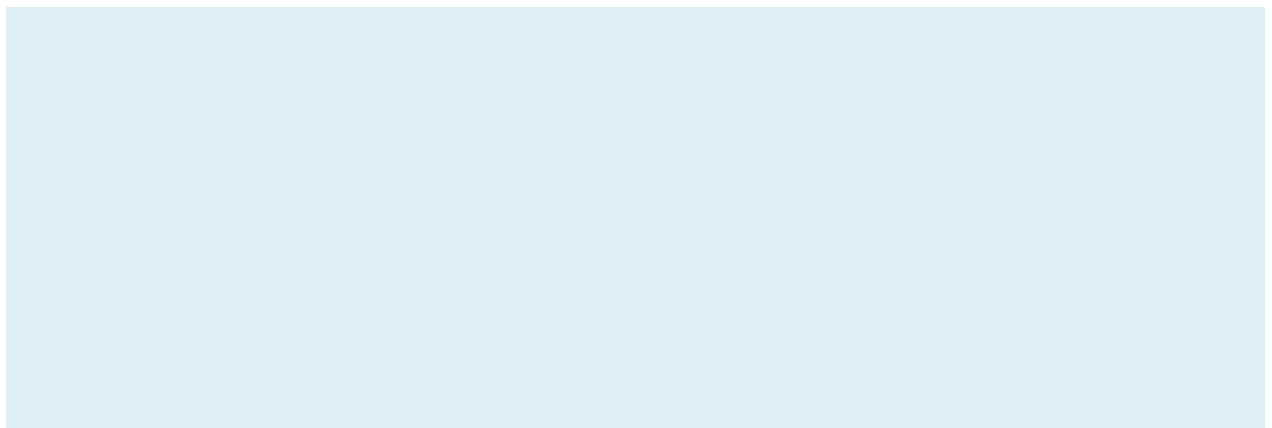
MOTIVATORS

My Personal Motivators

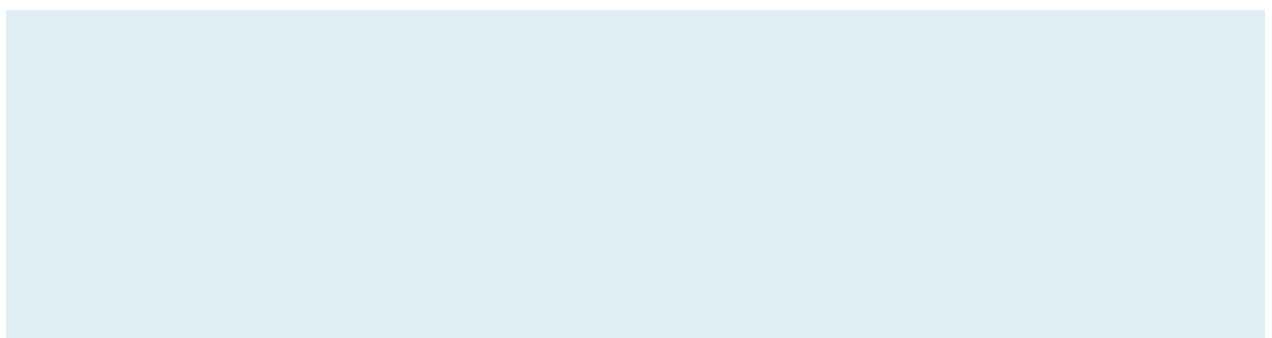
What are some internal motivators that are driving your decision to change? These likely align with your personal values and are meaningful to you.



What are some external motivators that are driving your decision to change?



Reflection: Do your internal motivators outweigh your external motivators? If not, can you find ways to feel more internally motivated?



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

My Personal Why

What matters to you most in life and is the driving motivation behind your decision to be here today? Be as specific as you can.

Your Future Self

You can benefit from reflecting on what is possible for your future. Your values and desires change over time and where you are today does not dictate where you can go. Imagining yourself at your future desired goal can not only help you identify what matters to you most, it can also excite you and motivate you during challenging times. It helps you align your habits with your values and your true potential. Willpower is often doing something now that benefits your future self.

Where do you see yourself in one year if you make these changes?

Where do you see yourself in five years if you make these changes?



Watch to learn more about the power of considering your future self.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Setting Your First Goal

Goal setting is a critical strategy in weight management and should focus on nutrition, movement, and lifestyle-based habit changes. You'll partner with your instructor and medical team on goal setting throughout your time in the program. Some common goal examples include:

- Improve energy levels
- Reduce blood pressure
- Improve blood sugar (improve insulin resistance/diabetes/prediabetes)
- Reduce or get off certain medications
- Have a better relationship with food
- Have my clothes fit better
- Improve my sleep
- Start a new exercise program
- Improve current exercise routine
- Be more active
- Be able to do the things I like comfortably
- Improve daily habits
- Reduce aches and pains
- Learn more about healthy eating
- Make better food choices
- Eat a greater variety of foods
- Prepare more food at home
- Learn more about nutrition
- Improve hydration (drink more water)
- Decrease caffeine intake

Let's pick one habit you'd like to change.

Thinking about your Personal Why, your motivators, where you see yourself in the future, and where you are today, what is one habit that you'd like to focus on first in this module?

What are you currently doing to accomplish this goal?

What is one small step you can take toward achieving this goal? How confident are you that you will achieve it?

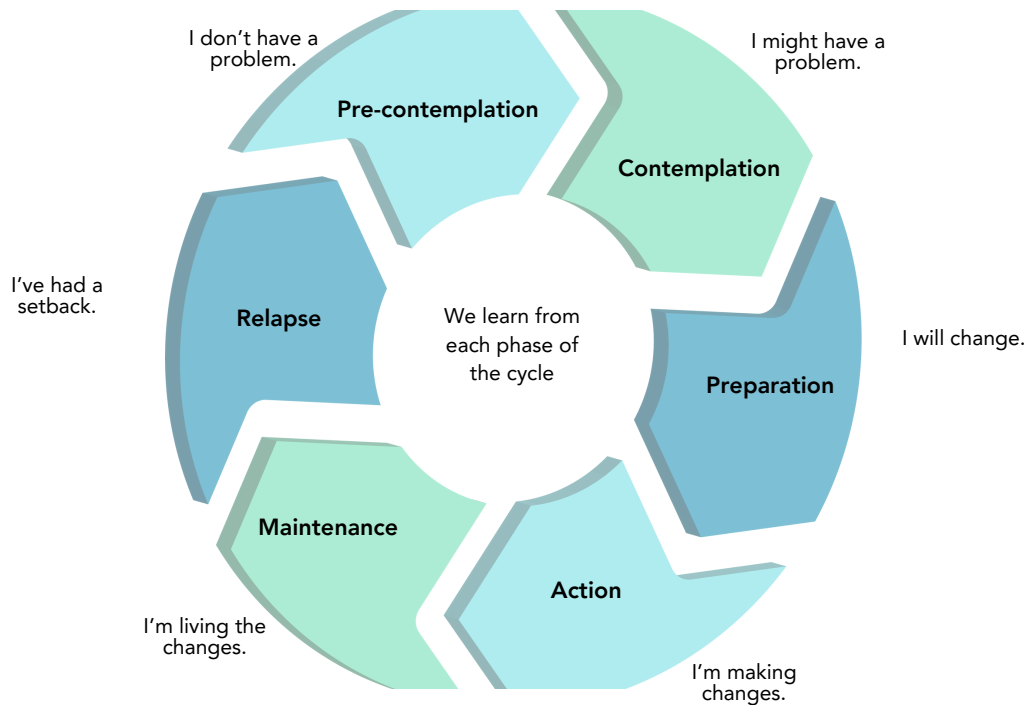
How can this program (your group members or our staff) support you? How can you find support from other people in your life?

Visit p. 80-87 in *Maximizing Your Body Potential* to determine the costs and benefits of making this change.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Readiness to change.

We often use a tool called “readiness to change” to help determine if you are in a place to reasonably take on a particular goal or habit. When we try to take on more than we can reasonably accomplish, we become quickly overwhelmed and start to procrastinate or shut down. As you consider goals, honestly evaluate where you are in your change process.

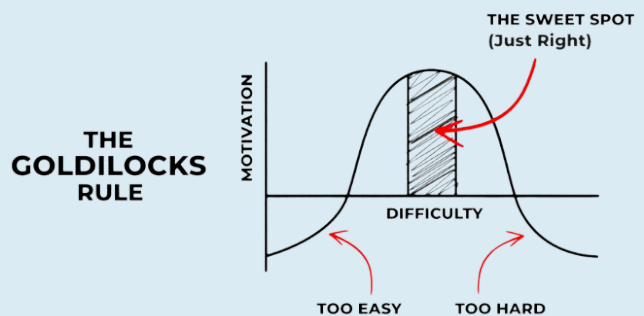


Reflection: Consider your starting point.

Reflecting on the habit you wrote as your starting point, circle where you are in the change process. Be as honest and realistic as possible. Consider why you chose this stage vs one before or after it. Visit pg. 74 in Maximize Your Body Potential for further descriptions.

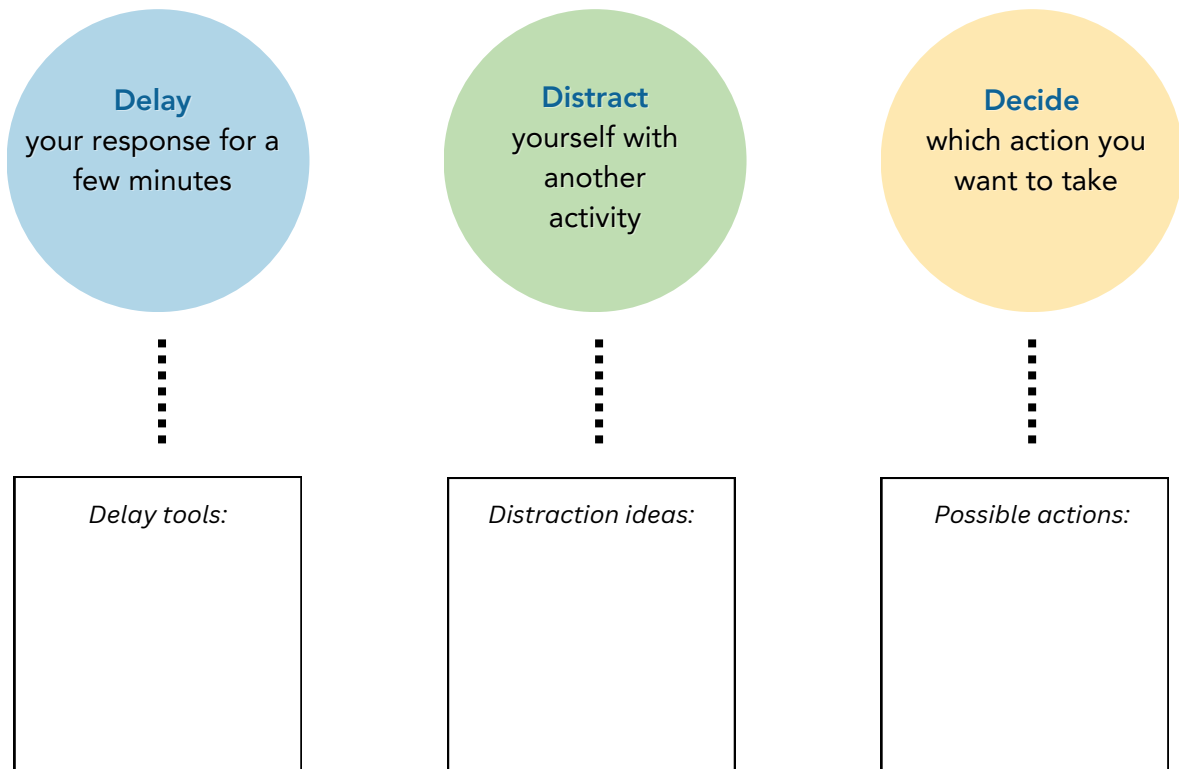
Acknowledging where you are today, in this moment, can help you make decisions about where you want to start, the habits you can reasonably focus on, and the systems that will work for you.

As humans, we thrive when we take on tasks that present a challenge but aren't overwhelmingly difficult. In Atomic Habits, this is referred to as the “Goldilocks Rule,” doing just enough to keep us interested but not so much that we see it as too difficult and get stuck.



Three D's For Coping

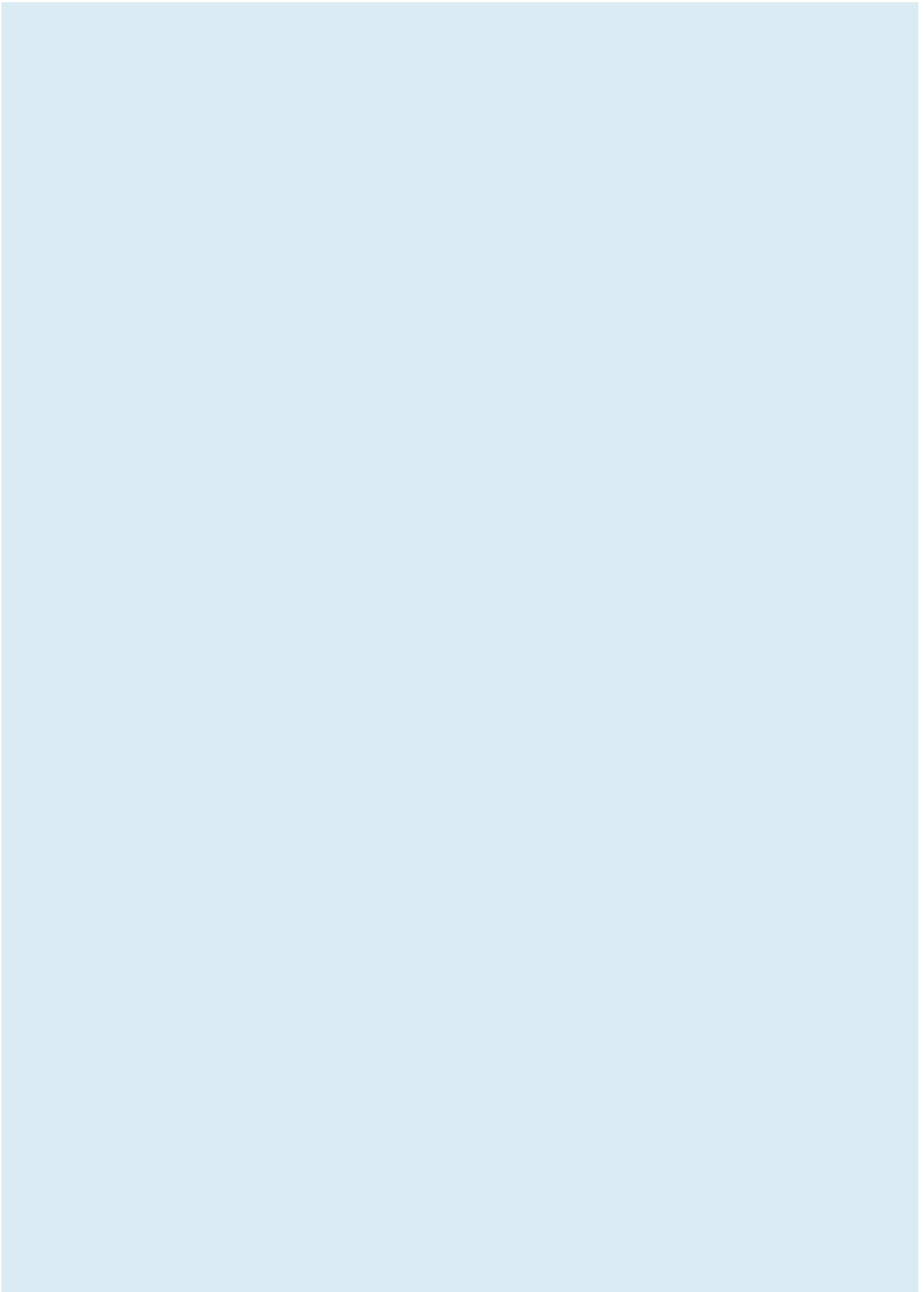
Consider a situation where you were tempted to eat even though it wasn't part of your plan. It's likely that the craving or urge arose, felt strong, and then confronted you with an old habit. Your brain, emotions, and self-talk push you back into old patterns. In order to change habits, reduce cravings and the stress that comes with them, and regulate your emotions, it's essential to create a pause or some space between urge and action. As you begin the change process, use the "3 D's" to help re-wire old habits and empower yourself to make different choices in difficult moments.



Reflection: Consider an upcoming situation where you anticipate being challenged by an urge or craving. How can you create space for yourself to consider your actions?

Visit pages 310-325 in *Maximize Your Body Potential* for further discussion of coping skills.

NOTES



P A R T

02

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Making changes comes with challenges and these challenges are unique to you. By exploring your beliefs, needs, emotions, self-talk, environment and other factors you experience in your life, you can practice self-compassion and build a foundation to make habit change a less overwhelming and more successful experience.



JOURNAL PROMPTS

As a result of not being able to use food, you may find yourself experiencing feelings and thoughts you are not accustomed to sitting with. Write about any that you have experienced and what you wanted to do in response to those thoughts and feelings.

Make a point of going to your safe place when you are in need of some non-food stress release or when you are looking for a way to increase/extend your good feelings. Then for your journaling topic write about:

- What it feels like to experience your safe place.
- The after affects of going to your safe place and using it as a non-food coping tool.

The connection between being happy and eating may be stronger during weekends, social events, special occasions, or holidays. Write about these situations, focusing on what happens, how you feel, and how your eating urges are impacted.

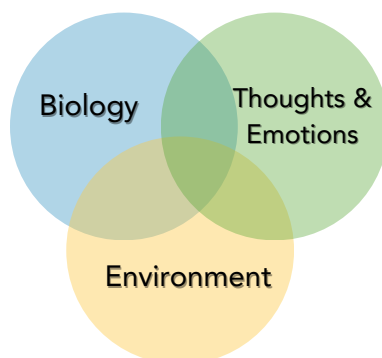
WHY IS IT SO HARD?

“ You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.” -A.A. Milne

Doing things differently brings opportunities to the surface, allowing us to grow and change.

When you attempt change, you may come face-to-face with your own personal obstacles. These can range from physical obstacles, like access to resources we need (ex: food, money, or body limitations) or emotional obstacles (ex: the ability to manage distress, boundaries, or communication skills). The more you understand your own barriers, the more likely you will be able to overcome them and grow.

You can think of personal barriers in three categories: biological, environmental, thoughts and emotions.



Biology.

your unique make-up is an essential component of self-compassion and can help you better understand how to think about the changes you want to make or outcomes you want to experience. For example, your genetic make-up or medications may have an impact on the ease or difficulty you experience with changing your diet or your body size.

Environment.

There is no doubt that what is around you and the opportunities available to you impact the choices you make. A person lives near walking trails and grocery stores experiences life differently than one who lives in an unsafe neighborhood filled with fast food restaurants.

Thoughts and Emotions.

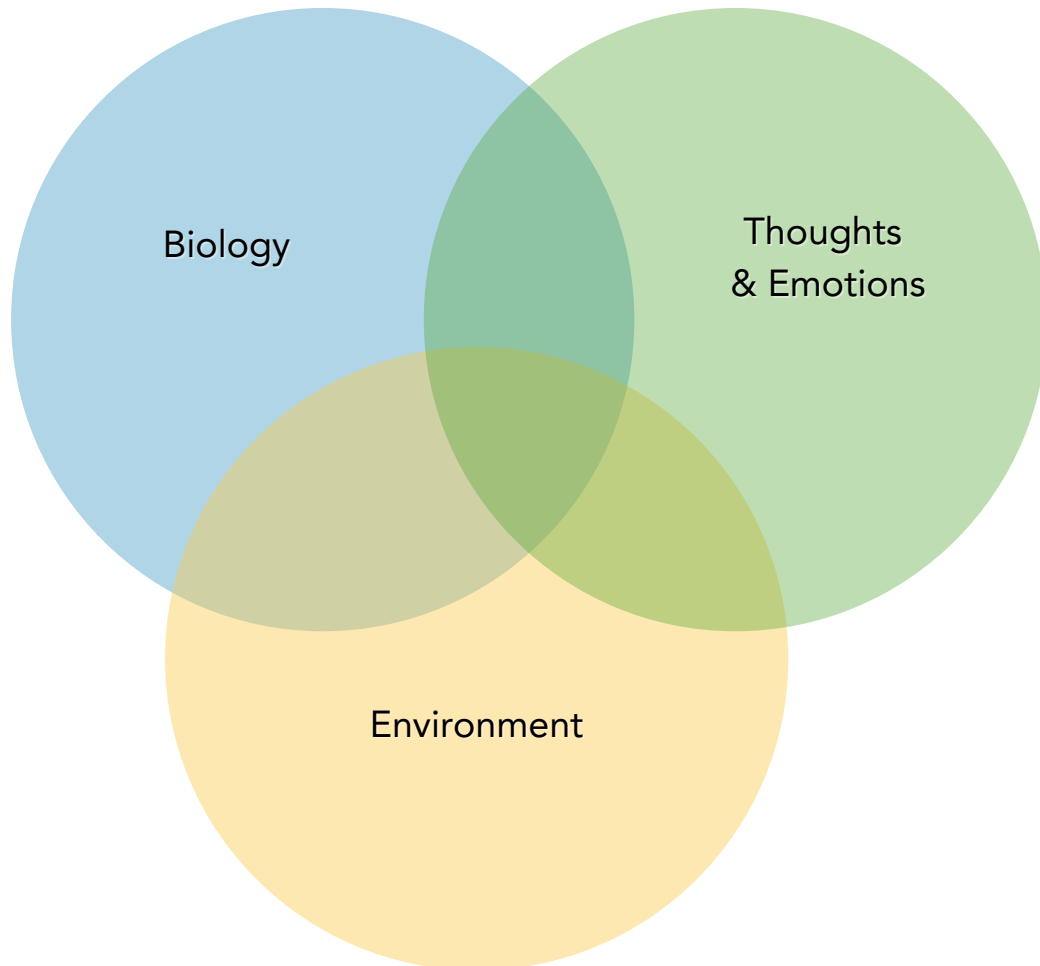
Your thoughts and emotions play a large role in how able and confident you feel in your daily choices and experiences. Encouraging self-talk makes change more likely whereas depression and the thoughts that accompany it make changes feel less possible.

It's possible that you've put a lot of emphasis on willpower, motivation, or self control in your past successes or challenges. However, when you think about it now, it wasn't always that simple - there were other factors involved. In what ways do you agree with this statement?

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Let's personalize it.

Considering these three areas, take a moment to individualize the concept by writing in biological, environmental, and thought or emotional factors that personally impact you.



Reflecting on what you see above, what opportunity do you see to practice self-compassion for your past and current experiences?

GOALS AND HABITS

“ If you want to be happy, set a goal that commands your thoughts, liberates your energy and inspires your hopes. — Andrew Carnegie

In the book Atomic Habits, James Clear encourages people to take on the habits of the person you strive to become. For example, if you want to become a runner, you simply need to run consistently. You may start with just a light jog for a short distance, however you are still engaging in a habit that leads you to your goal and you can build on these habits over time. The consistent act of running makes you a runner regardless of how far or fast you run. During this program, you will begin changing habits to become the future self you described in this workbook. It's the act of simple change that gets you moving forward. Your Personal Why helps you set goals and informs your plans for changing habits. Then you achieve them by implementing different systems to support these consistent habits.

Learn more about Atomic Habits



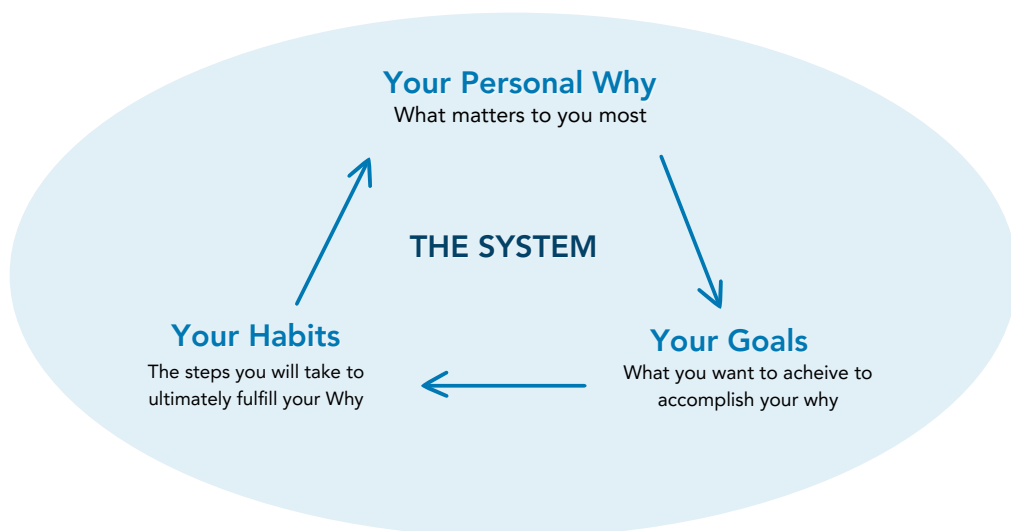
Watch a brief overview about habit change



Avoid the yo-yo effect that happens when setting a specific goal and instead focus on the systems you will need to have in place that support your efforts.

Goals plan your progress (these are things that satisfy what is important to you) and systems are what you put into place to make it happen. An example may be a goal to drink 64 ounces of water daily. The systems you use might include a measured water bottle, reminders on your phone, or a tracking app. Other systems that we will focus on in this module include understanding and regulating emotions and building resilience during times of challenge.

Visit pg. 65 in Maximize Your Body Potential for more information about getting and staying motivated while changing habits.



YOUR HABITS, YOUR BRAIN

“ The human mind is a relational and embodied process that regulates the flow of energy and information.” --Daniel J. Siegel

Your brain thrives on habits.

A big reason why you do what we do relates to your brain. Through your experiences in life, you learn how to think, act, and react. The more you live a particular experience, the more it becomes wired, creating neural pathways that fire themselves automatically. These pathways help the brain conserve energy, so you don't have to constantly re-examine and re-decide everything, which also allows it to devote energy to navigating new experiences. These pathways get stronger when you repeat the same process, and they weaken when you do things differently. Imagine having to think about brushing your teeth and the back and forth required. Instead, your brain moves into auto-pilot, making it easier and conserving energy.

Change will be uncomfortable

As you attempt to change, your brain will react to new situations, often through signaling feelings of discomfort. Consider an example of a well-worn hiking trail. The more it's traveled, the easier it is to follow. If you attempt to forge a new trail, you'll encounter obstacles and probably struggle to figure out which way to go. It will be hard and uncomfortable at first. But the more it is traveled, the easier and more manageable it becomes. Your new habits will feel the same. Your brain will feel uncomfortable at first but the more you practice the new habit, the easier it becomes. Remember that the early stages are the hardest. We will discuss ways to manage discomfort throughout this module.

Prepare for change.

Although your brain thrives in routine, it's capable of change and growth. To prepare yourself, here are a few proven ways to improve neuroplasticity:

- Joyful movement
- Restful sleep
- Mindful awareness
- Manage stress well
- Eat well
- Experience new things

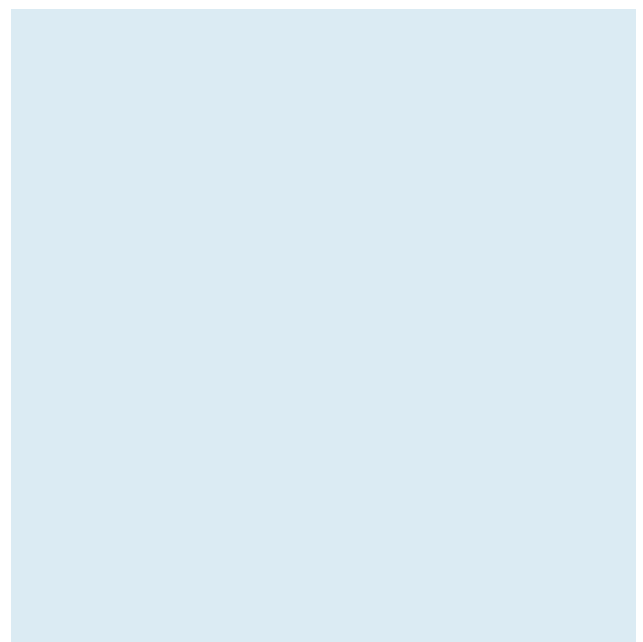
Learn more about neuroplasticity



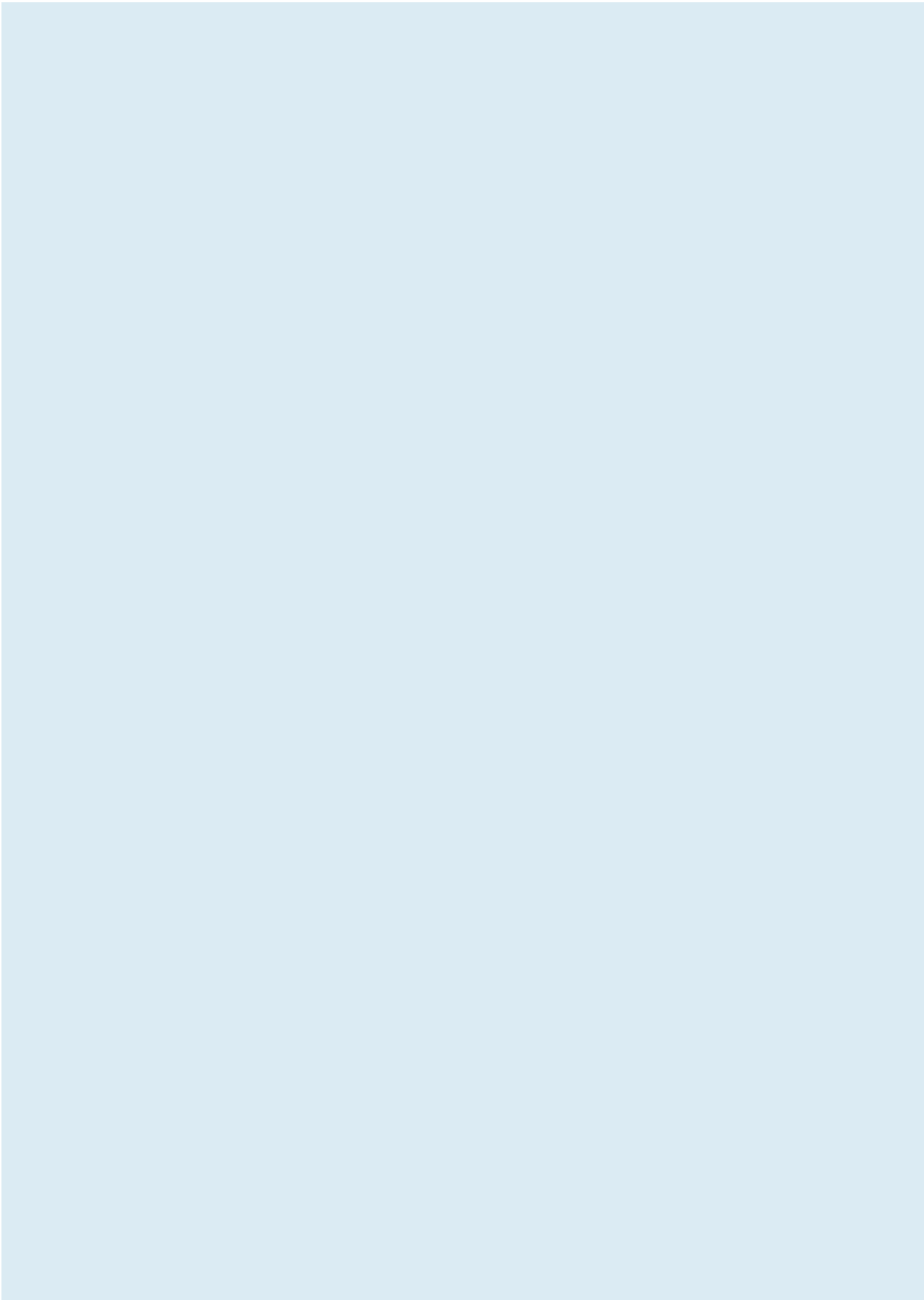
Fun exercises to improve neuroplasticity



What are habits that you think will be difficult to change and why?



NOTES



Managing Urges and Cravings

Feelings and urges

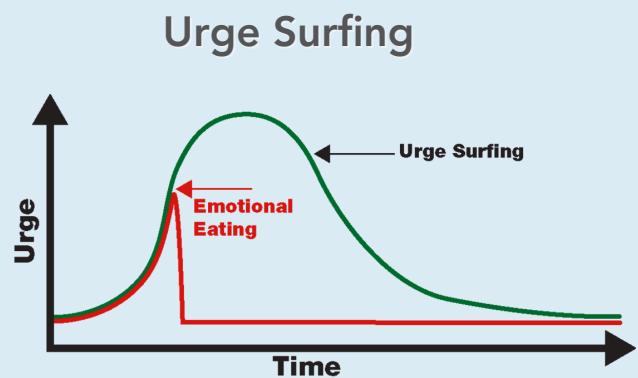
Throughout a day, you experience a variety of feelings or urges. Often you are totally unaffected by them. Other times they'll trigger you to feel discomfort, a sensation that many people avoid, intentionally or unintentionally. Learning to recognize when to act on an urge or feeling is an important part of self-care. Sometimes you may benefit from sitting with an urge or feeling without acting on it, even if it feels uncomfortable at first. Mindful awareness of your emotions and what triggers them gives you an opportunity to respond to them in differently. This is one way you can help yourself choose more helpful responses over harmful ones to keep your self-care aligned with your values.

Responses

You can respond in healthy, supportive ways or in harmful, unsupportive ways. Consider a stressful day at work with unexpected tasks, demands from co-workers, followed by busy traffic on the way home, then managing responsibilities once you get there. For some, the discomfort of the day is soothed when eating or sitting down in front of the tv with snacks. This type of coping may feel helpful in the moment, but isn't aligned with many people's goals and doesn't typically result in long-term relief. When you learn new responses, practice them, and become proficient using them, then you begin to truly engage in self-care. This creates longer lasting, supportive relief from difficult emotions and discomforts.

Your brain is wired to behave out of habits or patterns. To manage the discomforts of change, we need to build and wire new coping mechanisms through practice. This ability is called neuroplasticity.

To learn how to tolerate an urge or craving, start by accepting reality as it is in the moment. Then, practice breathing and say to yourself: "I don't need to like it, but I know this feeling will go away; it always does" or "I will wait; I will breathe for 15-20 minutes. If I really want something after that, I will eat it." This is called Urge Surfing and is a coping skill to support re-wiring the brain.



The urge will build for 3-5 minutes and then slowly reduce from there. Try to surf the wave of discomfort.

Learn more

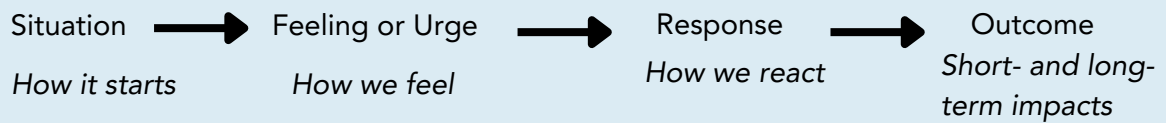


BARRIERS TO CHANGE

When embarking on new habits, you may find yourself in situations where you feel pressure to eat or revert back to old patterns. When this happens, you can learn about yourself and find opportunities to do things differently by considering the situation and how it impacted you.

Let's personalize it.

Urge and Response Cycle



Activity: Consider a recent occasion where you acted out with food.

What was the situation? Was it internal (thought, memory) or external (person, event)?

What were the feelings or urges that you were trying to change or avoid?

How did you respond? Consider internal and behavioral responses.

What were the short- and long-term consequences?

What did you learn from this experience that could help you in the future?

Reflection: What are some things that affect your vulnerability in challenging situations?

EMOTIONS

“ Emotions last 90 seconds. It is our stories about the events that can prolong the feelings. --Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D.

Similarly to how your five senses give you information about the outside world, your emotions tell you about what's happening inside and steer you toward physical and emotional safety. Each of us experiences emotions and situations differently, making it vital to understand your own feelings, experiences, and how you interpret them.

Embracing emotions.

You experience many emotions throughout the day. Your past experiences and what you were taught about emotions often plays a role in how you interpret them. You may have learned to consider emotions as “good” or “bad” through how your parents reacted to you growing up. Another possibility could be what was taught about emotions through certain cultural, gender, or societal norms. Emotions and feelings can vary in intensity, how they are perceived, and how long they last. What is important to note about emotions and feelings is that they are normal. Learning to accept your feelings as part of the human experience, rather than repress or avoid them, is a skill that has advantages. This is particularly relevant if something like eating, or avoidance have become ways you manage discomfort.



Watch the movie “Inside Out” to view how emotions play out during a difficult transition

All emotions are helpful, even when they are uncomfortable. The discomfort is important for grabbing our attention and providing motivation to meet your needs.

Identifying emotions, especially with specific wording, is not easy. This requires skill and practice. Allowing yourself to sit with your feelings by calling a pause and noticing any physical sensations in the body helps you name your emotions.

Once you name the emotion, you can then develop skills to manage them. This requires you to be present with the feeling longer than what you might be accustomed to. As we mentioned earlier, learning to label emotions with specific and accurate names goes a long way toward emotion regulation. Emotion regulation is the ability to manage how you feel and respond in a healthy, supportive way. Despite the seeming simplicity of this, naming emotions can be challenging! We often resort to basic terms like “good,” “okay” and “mad.” Subsequently, we miss opportunities to regulate and meet our needs more effectively. This can lead to building frustration, urges, and increase your overall stress. In the coming discussions, you’ll learn more about emotion naming and emotion regulation along with tools you can practice.

Stroke of Insight Ted Talk

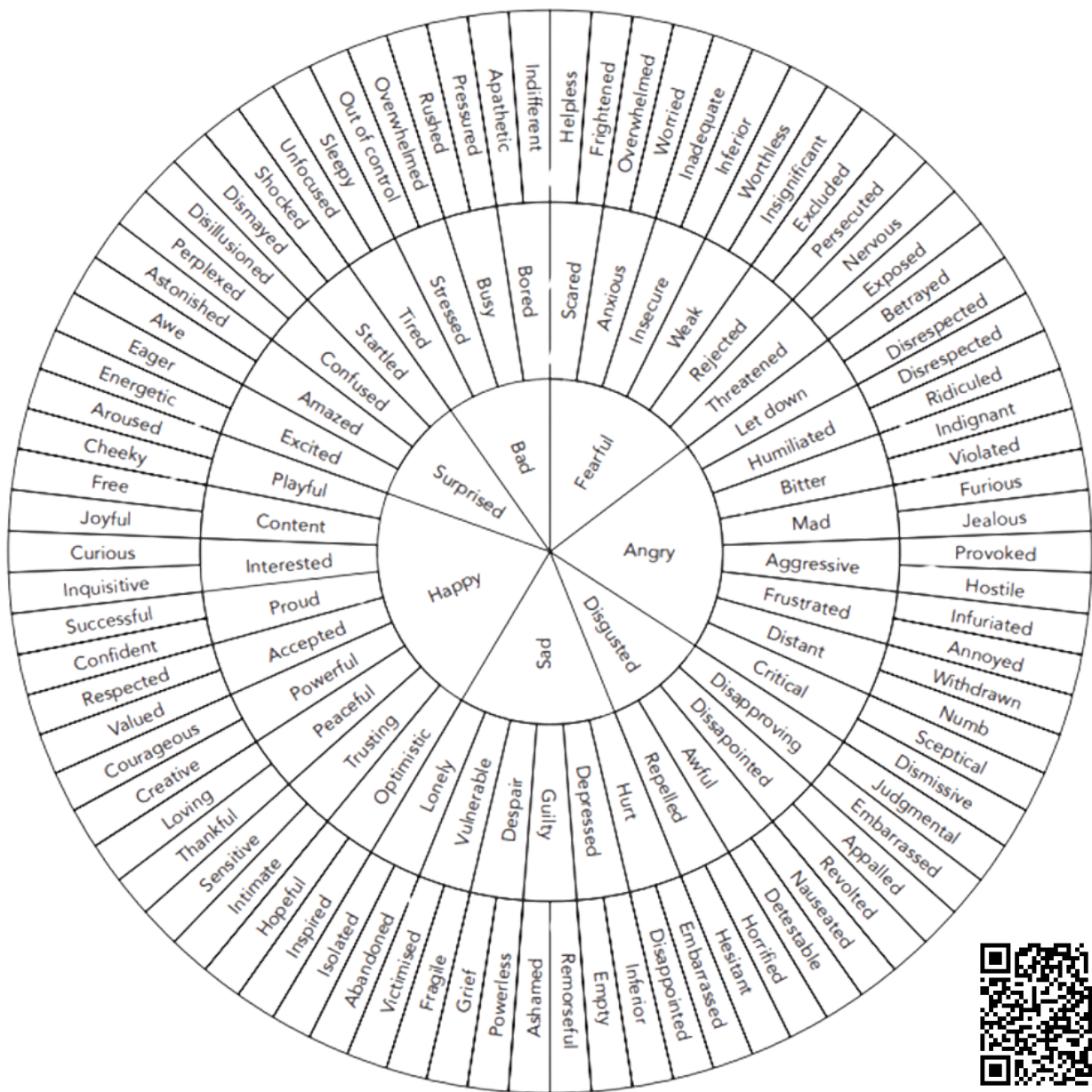


BARRIERS TO CHANGE

FEELINGS WHEEL

Let's practice.

Take a minute to gently relax and turn your focus inward. Without judgment, ask yourself the following question: What am I feeling right now? Can you name it using the Feelings Wheel? Circle the feeling(s) below.



Digital Wheel

Reflection:

Often emotions and reactions are shaped by your childhood experiences. What did you learn about emotions growing up?

Emotion Regulation

“ Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.

-Viktor E Frankel

Feelings provide important information that helps us understand and take care of our needs. Having the awareness and skills to manage them effectively can prevent unhealthy consequences like turning to eating, drinking, drug use, isolation, shopping, or procrastinating to tolerate uncomfortable feelings. Effective emotion regulation allows you to take responsibility for your experiences and responses in a way that aligns your decisions with your values and purpose. While your emotional experiences are involuntary, there are tools to help you navigate them. The more often you are in a distressed or activated state (“dysregulated”), the more vulnerable you are to further distress and the more difficult it is to respond in stressful situations effectively. You can intervene sooner if you can recognize your personal signs of dysregulation, discover effective skills for emotion regulation, and find ways to help yourself choose those new regulation tools in the moment.

Signs you're regulated	Signs you're dysregulated	Tools to regulate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance Calm Content Empathy Grounded Curious Compassionate Engaged Feeling rested Present in the moment Hopeful Compassionate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stressed Distracted or impulsive Closed off Judgmental Anger Irritability Panic Shut down Sleep difficulties Ruminating on past events Avoidant Hopeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-compassion Journaling Practice gratitude Engage in fun Naming emotions Positive self-talk Learning to let go Talking with friends Therapy Breathing exercises Mindfulness Meditation Sleep hygiene Joyful movement Urge surfing Self-care

Reflection: Note where you are regulated or dysregulated. Circle any tools that you will practice and use in the moments of dysregulation.



Learn more about regulation

Regulating with Food

There's a good reason why people continue to use food and eating to manage feelings...it works! In the short term, enjoyable food increases pleasurable, soothing chemicals in the brain and lowers the production of stress hormones. Significant overeating can even provide a "numbing" effect on awareness of difficult thoughts and emotions as the body focuses on digestion. Ultimately, our brains are designed to repeat choices that provide any sense of relief, and eating can easily be prioritized as a means to quickly achieve that outcome. Many decisions you make are a result of an internal desire to care for yourself so practice self-compassion if you find yourself struggling.



Let's use the following activity to understand all of the different ways food/eating may help you during times of discomfort:

Fill in the blanks:

I use food to _____

and overeating helps me not feel _____.

Eating often acts as a temporary regulator for discomfort. When you overeat for relief, what discomfort does that cause afterward?

Food often helps:

- Soothe
- Calm
- Distract
- Comfort
- Numb
- Reward

[Blank light blue box for writing answers]

Considering your answer, name what you could do when you find yourself in moments of emotional dysregulation that would better help you come back into balance.

[Blank light blue box for writing answers]

Visit pg. 327 in Maximize Your Body Potential for additional emotion regulation skills.

Flipping Your Lid

To understand emotion regulation a little better, let's use your hand as a model to demonstrate what happens in the brain when you're regulated and dysregulated. Imagine your thumb represents the emotion center (limbic system) in your brain. It regulates feelings, memory, and motivation. Your other four fingers together represent the logic center (the cortex), which is responsible for rational thinking.

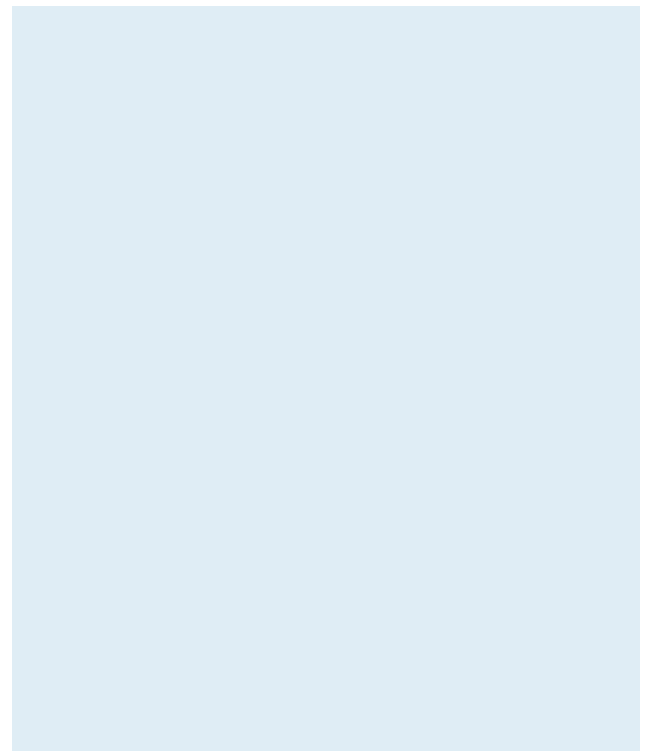
When you are in a secure and regulated state, the four fingers cover the thumb (like a fist), bringing a balance of emotion and logic to the situation. This balance of emotion and logic allows you to make effective decisions when choosing how to respond to a situation. However, strong emotions activate the limbic system and lead to the cortex shutting down, leaving us without that important balance of emotion and logic. In terms of our hand model, this is represented by the four fingers opening up ("flipping your lid"), leaving the thumb as the focus. In this dysregulated state, you are more likely to experience irrational thoughts and make decisions driven purely by emotions. These types of choices can lead to further uncomfortable feelings and detrimental behavior patterns.

You can learn how to recognize when you are dysregulated and help yourself use strategies to return back to a regulated state, "closing the lid." Self-regulation strategies include breath work, gentle movement, and using grounding activities to tune into your senses.



Watch to learn more about the hand model

Name any situations where you often find yourself "flipping your lid," becoming easily dysregulated and logical thinking doesn't come easily.



LET'S NAME IT TO TAME IT

Naming your feelings is important for understanding and meeting your needs through healthy, effective behaviors. "Name it to tame it" is a helpful skill that improves your capacity to sit with uncomfortable feelings. You can use this skill as part of your 3 D's coping tool from an earlier section. By connecting language with raw emotions, this process reduces stress in the mind and body by sending soothing chemicals to the activated emotion center of the brain. As you learned earlier, this skill may not be an easy one at first when your feelings are more overwhelming and logical thinking is more compromised.

Let's personalize it.

1. Think of a recent time you had a strong emotional reaction. This could have been set off by something outside or inside of you.
2. Using the prompt below, fill in the blanks.
3. Use the feelings list on the next page to help you find the most descriptive words.

Event:

I felt _____ (bad / sad / mad / good / happy) when
_____ (action or event). I

was also feeling:

_____,
_____, and
_____.

What did you learn from that experience after completing this activity?

Reflection: How do your feelings influence your eating habits?

FEELINGS LIST

Afraid	Confused	Embarrassment	Sadness	Admiration	Exhilarated	Joyful
Nervous	Lost	Awkward	Heartbroken	Adoration	Blissful	Cheerful
Dread	Disoriented	Self-conscious	Disappointed	Affection	Ecstatic	Festive
Frightened	Puzzled	Silly	Hopeless	Appreciation	Elated	Heartening
Cowardly	Chaotic	Humiliated	Regretful	Delight	Enthralled	Lighthearted
Terrified	Uncertain	Flustered	Depressed	Fondness	Exuberant	Upbeat
Alarmed	Stuck	Chagrined	Pessimistic	Pleasure	Radiant	Glad
Panicked	Indecisive	Ashamed	Melancholy	Wonder	Rapturous	Merry
Suspicious	Foggy	Put down	Sorrowful	Regard	Thrilled	Elated
Worried	Mistrust	Guilty	Morbid	Amazed	Gratitude	Enjoyable
Apprehensive	Dazed	Disgraced	Heavy-hearted	Amused	Thankful	Euphoria
Agitated	Flustered	Envy	Low	Affectionate	Grateful	Delighted
Bothered	Perturbed	Jealous	Blue	Caring	Moved	Jubilant
Disoriented	Perplexed	Rivalry	Gloomy	Friendly	Touched	Hopeful
Uncomfortable	Hesitant	Competitive	Miserable	Loving	Appreciative	Tickled
Uneasy	Immobilized	Covetous	Despair	Sympathetic	Graceful	Pleased
Frenzied	Ambivalent	Resentful	Stress	Warm	Responsive	Peaceful
Irritable	Torn	Longing	Tension	Doting	Recognized	Clam
Rash	Disconnected	Self-conscious	Pressure	Soft	Indebtedness	Quiet
Offended	Lonely	Insecure	Overwhelmed	Tender	Included	Trusting
Disturbed	Isolated	Inadequate	Frazzled	Attached	Engaged	Fulfilled x
Troubled	Bored	Yearning	Strain	Compassionate	Understood	Harmonious
Grumpy	Distant	Nostalgic	Imbalanced	Confident	Appreciated	Steady
Unsettled	Removed	Wistful	Worried	Bold	Accepted	Collected
Unnerved	Detached	Helpless	Uneasy	Courageous	Acknowledged	Composed
Restless	Separate	Paralyzed	Cranky	Positive	Recognized	Comfortable
Upset	Broken	Weak	Distraught	Sure	Welcomed	Centered
Angry	Cold	Defenseless	Dissatisfied	Fearless	Connected	Content
Furious	Aloof	Powerless	Weighed down	Optimistic	Supported	Relieved
Livid	Numb	Invalid	Overworked	Encouraged	Belonging	Constant
Irate	Withdrawn	Abandoned	Pounded	Safe	Heard	Mellow
Resentful	Rejected	Alone	Anxious	Powerful	Respected	Level
Hate	Out-of-place	Incapable	Shocked	Proud	Involved	Restful
Hostile	Apathetic	Useless	Frustrated	Satisfied	Intrigued	Still At ease
Aggressive	Misunderstood	Inferior	Tired	Trusting	Absorbed	Relaxed
Worked up	Abandoned	Vulnerable	Bored	Secure	Fascinated	Clear
Provoked	Alienated	Empty	Fatigued	Brave	Interested	Reassured
Miffed	Disgust	Distressed	Exhausted	Empowered	Charmed	Refreshed
Outrage	Appalled	Pain	Uninterested	Excited	Entertained	Stimulated
Defensive	Dislike	Hurt	Overworked	Enthusiastic	Captivated	Replenished
Annoyed	Loathing	Remorseful	Worn out	Delighted	Engaged	Exhilarated
Irritated	Disturbed	Regretful	Fed up	Amazed	Engrossed	Reinvigorated
Frustrated	Repugnant	Disappointed	Drained	Passionate	Curious	Revived
Bothered	Contempt	Guilty	Weary	Amused	Surprised	Enlivened
Impatient	Spiteful	Grief	Burned out	Aroused		Restored
Aggravated	Animosity	Bereaved	Lethargic	Alert		Liberated
Displeased	Hostile	Miserable	Beat	Piqued		Lively
Exasperated	Bitter	Agony	Sleepy	Astonished		Passionate
Disgruntled	Disorganized	Anguish	Depleted	Dazzled		Vibrant
Disturbed	Distracted	Bruised	Vulnerable	Energetic		Rested
Irked	Disheveled	Crushed	Insecure	Awakened		
Anxious	Bedraggled	Wounded	Shaky	Eager		
Shaky	Run-down		Open	Charged		
Distressed	Confused		Unsure			
Distraught	Discombobulated		Exposed			
Edgy	Disjointed		Unguarded			
Frazzled	Displaced		Sensitive			
Irritable	Jumbled		Unsafe			
Jittery	Out of sorts		Inferior			
Overwhelmed			Raw			
Restless			Weak			
Stressed			Judged			
Preoccupied			Inadequate			
Flustered						

RESILIENCE

“ Painful feelings are, by their very nature, temporary. They will weaken over time as long as we don’t prolong or amplify them through resistance or avoidance. The only way to eventually free ourselves from debilitating pain, therefore, is to be with it as it is. The only way out is through.
— Kristin Neff

Resilience is the ability to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity or challenging circumstances. Your resiliency increases your ability to succeed in the long run, but it involves maintaining mental and emotional well-being, coping effectively with stress, and rebounding from setbacks.

It is common to encounter various challenges along your wellness journey, such as cravings or life changes. Resilience allows you to persevere through setbacks, resist unhealthy coping mechanisms like emotional eating, and stay motivated toward your goal. Research has shown that those who exhibit higher levels of resilience are more likely to adhere to weight management interventions, maintain motivation, and achieve successful long-term outcomes. That’s life changing!

By cultivating resilience, you can build inner strength, self-confidence, and a sense of empowerment.

Resilient people display specific traits and engage in behaviors that facilitate the ability to effectively confront challenges and adversity.

Resiliency Traits

Sense of purpose

Your source of motivation and meaning during difficult times.

Self awareness

insight into your thoughts, emotions, and motivations, and their impact on the present

Flexibility

Remaining flexible and adaptable with willingness to adjust to changing circumstances.

Emotion regulation

Managing emotions without overwhelm from intense feelings

Social support

Emotional encouragement, assistance, and validation between each other

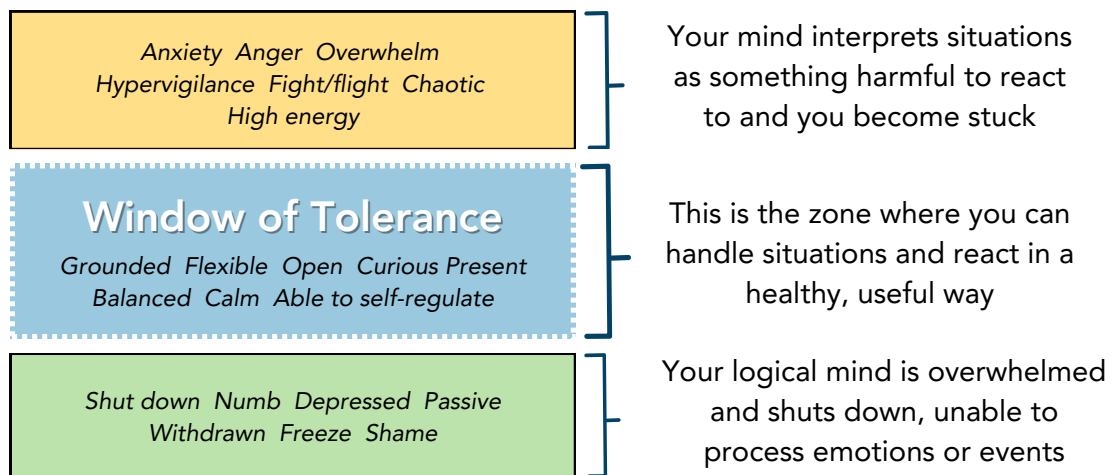
Growth mindset

viewing challenges as opportunities for personal development

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

BUILDING RESILIENCE

You can improve your resilience by increasing your “window of tolerance” for distress. When your window of tolerance is wider, you tolerate distress and discomfort more effectively. On the flip side, chronic activation of your stress response narrows your window of tolerance making it difficult to make decisions and leaving you stressed. When considering eating behaviors and weight management, coping with cravings effectively requires resilience, withstanding immediate gratification in favor of long-term health goals. It requires sitting with and tolerating discomfort which will eventually shift into a lower state of discomfort.



Integrating the following techniques can strengthen your resilience:

Stress reduction techniques	Practice stress reduction techniques (breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, or yoga) to lower cortisol levels and alleviate stress.
Mindful living practices	Incorporate mindfulness practices into meals by paying attention to hunger cues, savoring each bite, and chewing slowly. Mindful eating can help you become more aware of food choices and reduce impulsive eating in response to stress. Similarly, moving your body, getting adequate rest, and positive experiences reduce stress and our ability to cope with stressors.
Healthy, happy distractions	Engage in enjoyable and distracting activities (such as going for a walk, listening to music, or engaging in a hobby) to shift focus away from stressors and cravings.
Social support	Reach out to friends, family members, or support group members for support and encouragement during times of stress. Connecting with others can provide a sense of comfort and validation, reducing the urge to turn to food for comfort.
Changing the way you think	Challenge and replace negative thoughts and beliefs that contribute to stress-induced cravings and impaired decision-making. Adopt a positive outlook by practicing gratitude and reframing setbacks as opportunities for growth to enhance resilience, the ability to tolerate discomfort, and maintain wellness behaviors.

Visit pg. 326 in *Maximize Your Body Potential* for further information on distress tolerance.

Examining Your Personal Resiliency

RESILIENCY SCALE BY AL SIEBERT, PHD.

Rate yourself from 1-5 on the following statements:

(1 = VERY LITTLE, 5 = VERY STRONG)

- ___ In a crisis or chaotic situation, I calm myself and focus on taking useful actions.
- ___ I'm usually optimistic. I see difficulties as temporary and expect to overcome them.
- ___ I can tolerate high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty about situations.
- ___ I adapt quickly to new developments. I'm good at bouncing back from difficulties.
- ___ I'm playful. I find the humor in rough situation and can laugh at myself.
- ___ I'm able to recover emotionally from losses and setbacks. I have friends I can talk with. I can express my feelings to others and ask for help. Feelings of anger, loss and discouragement don't last long.
- ___ I feel self-confident, appreciate myself. and have a healthy concept of who I am.
- ___ I'm curious. I ask questions. I want to know how things work. I like to try new ways of doing things.
- ___ I learn valuable lessons from my experiences and from the experiences of others.
- ___ I'm good at solving problems. I can use analytical logic, be creative, or use practical common sense.
- ___ I'm good at making things work well. I'm often asked to lead groups and projects.
- ___ I'm very flexible. I feel comfortable with my paradoxical complexity. I'm optimistic and pessimistic, trusting and cautious, unselfish and selfish, and so forth.
- ___ I'm always myself, but I've noticed that I'm different in different situations.
- ___ I prefer to work without a written job description. I'm more effective when I'm free to do what I think is best in each situation.
- ___ I "read" people well and trust my intuition.
- ___ I'm a good listener. I have good empathy skills.
- ___ I'm non-judgmental about others and adapt to people's different personality styles.
- ___ I'm very durable. I hold up well during tough times. I have an independent spirit underneath my cooperative way of working with others.
- ___ I've been made stronger and better by difficult experiences.
- ___ I've converted misfortune into good luck and found benefits in bad experiences.

Scoring:

80 or higher = very resilient

65-80 = better than most

50-65 = slow, but adequate

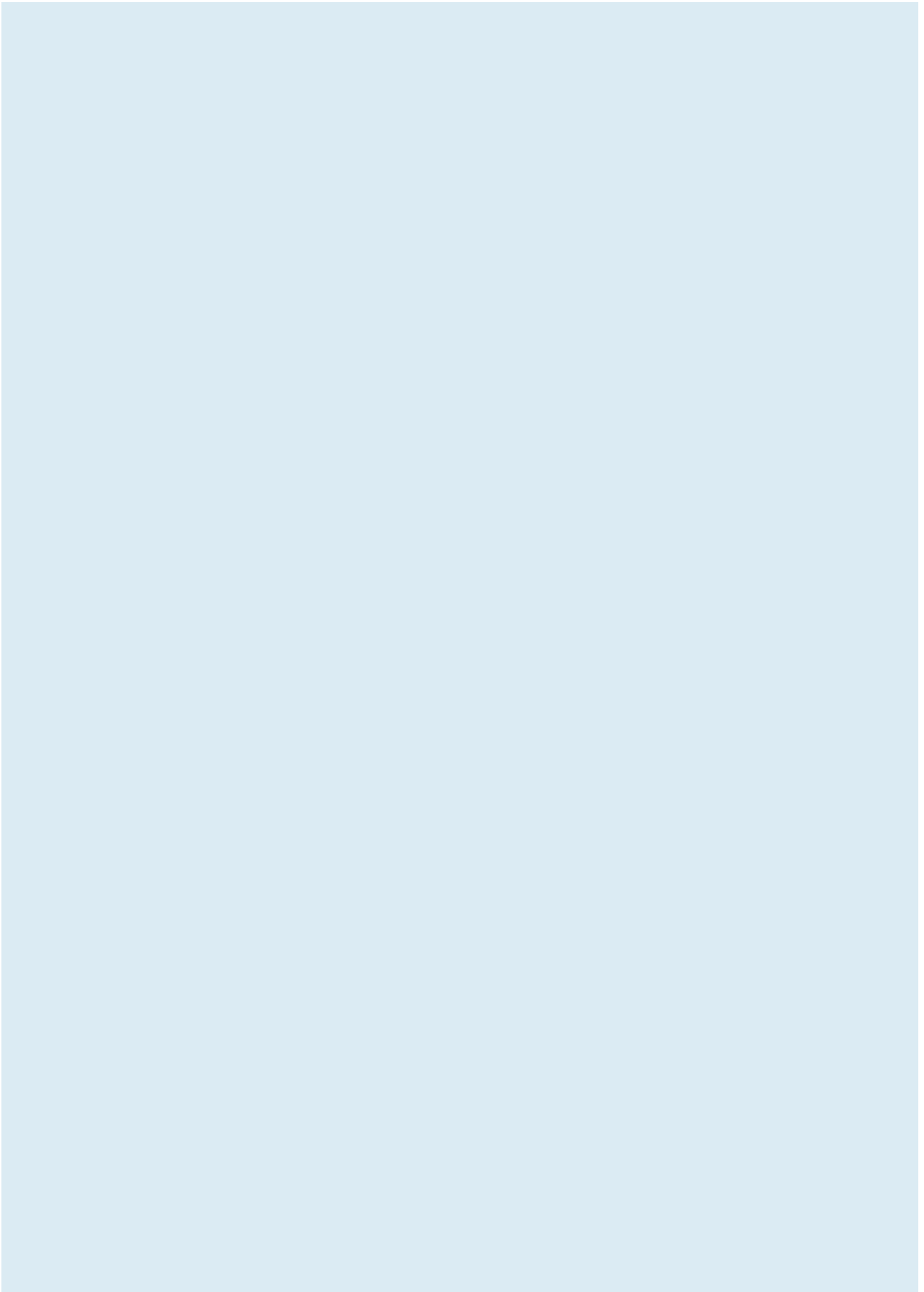
40-50 = you're likely struggling

40 or under = seek help

Take it online



NOTES



P A R T

03

A WAY FORWARD

So far you've evaluated what matters to you most so that you can set plans that are meaningful and align with who you are and the life you want for yourself. You've also explored how you can understand and name emotions as a tool for better self-regulation, and discovered tools for resiliency building. Let's put it all together as you develop lifelong skills for goal setting and habit change.



JOURNAL PROMPTS

During this week, focus on making choices that will bring joy to your life. As you sit down to journal, think about what it would be like if the next three weeks were especially dedicated to you and making your life happier. Begin your journaling by answering the following questions: *"If I dedicated the next three weeks specifically to me and making my life happier, what would I do? With whom would I spend my time? What would I ask for? What would I give myself?"*

Identifying and communicating your needs will support you during times of change.

- Is there anyone you need to communicate with?
- Decide and write what you need to say to those people in order for you to meet your needs and achieve your goals.
- Visit pg 334 in Maximize Your Body Potential to learn new communication skills

Write about:

- Your belief systems regarding mistakes and where you learned them.
- What you think is a healthy, life-affirming belief system about mistakes.

CREATING YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE

The role of self-care

Self-care is taking the time to provide for yourself by doing things to meet your physical and psychological needs. Consistent self-care behaviors that meet your needs will promote improved life satisfaction and wellness. Throughout the module, you've explored how using food and eating as a primary way to take care of yourself is more harmful to wellness in the long run. Instead of thinking about taking food away (this increases ambivalence and halts change), the goal is to learn additional self-care techniques to use in place of eating extra food. This allows you to tolerate uncomfortable experiences while choosing more effective ways to meet your needs.

Self-compassion

When people re-prioritize self-care, they may experience negative self-talk and feelings that make permission to care for themselves difficult. Prior messages and beliefs about self-care being selfish or "wrong" can invite guilt or shame when trying to engage in more self-care. We don't take good care of things we feel shame about, so recognizing and challenging any negative beliefs about self-care is important for experiencing its benefits. If you find yourself struggling with feeling selfish or struggling with boundaries or assertiveness, consider using the voice of self-compassion. What advice might you give a dear friend in your situation? Imagine what this might feel like for you. A helpful self-talk mantra may be that you are deserving of the same good care you believe others deserve.

Preparing for change

This process takes effort, time, and energy and permission to be uncomfortable throughout the process.

Let's consider what makes positive self-care difficult, the thoughts and feelings that influence your willingness and ability to care for yourself well, and how to commit to self-care that embodies your personal why.

When it comes to self-care, I currently think and feel:

What would be a useful self-talk message I could practice?

I could improve my self-care by:

WILLINGNESS AND ACTION PLAN

Let's take the next step toward change by applying what you've learned in this module.

My current goal is to: (be specific)

The values underlying my goal are:

The specific actions I will take to achieve my goal are:

Thoughts, feelings, memories, sensations and urges that are likely to occur during this change are:

If you feel blocked by any thoughts or feelings, care for yourself first with self-regulation skills (slow paced breathing, gentle movement, sensory grounding) to calm the mind and body.

The smallest, easiest step I can begin with is:

Planning ahead: Imagine that you didn't succeed, what would be the reasons? Consider modifying any of the above action steps to improve your chances of success.



Learn more
about this

WHEN IT'S NOT WORKING

The Willingness and Action Plan is intended to support successful goal setting. However, part of the change process requires flexibility and adjustment of your plans.

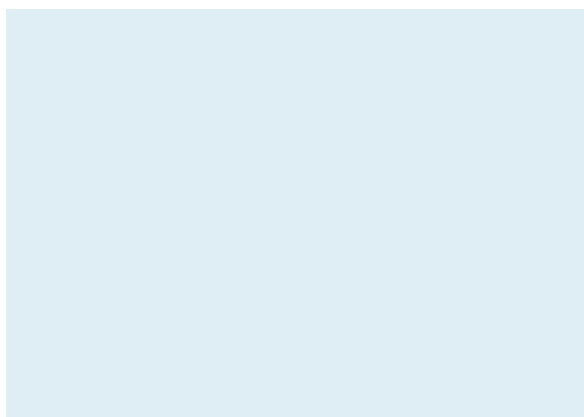
It's not just willpower.

It's likely that your Willingness and Action Plan will need adjusting over time. This might happen when your goal isn't met, when circumstances change, when you notice you don't feel inspired or connected to the plan, or when negative thoughts and feelings emerge when you try to change. It's important that you know that this is a normal part of the change process and is bound to happen. Think of this "stuckness" as an opportunity to pause and re-evaluate. What can I learn here?

Align with your values

Your values are what is most important in your life. When your plan isn't aligned with your values your goals are likely to be unmet. These two priorities are likely to compete for your time and energy. Aligning goals and values is a key factor to successful change.

What are your top four values in life?



Manage your expectations

You can experience difficulty meeting goals when they aren't realistic for you at that time. The goal may be too big or not achievable as stated, other needs require our attention first, or you may not feel like you deserve to take the time to do what needs to be done. If this happens, revisit the Stages of Change from the first section. Then spend time journaling about your current priorities and how worthy you feel you are to spend the time required right now.

Find support

Change is challenging and the support of friends, family, or professionals can make all the difference. Consider areas where you need additional support, then set time to have a conversation to ask for what you need. If you've struggled with meeting goals in the past, old messages may be re-surfacing and sabotaging your efforts. Supporting yourself through positive self-talk messages or affirmation is needed.

Assure your needs are met

We started this module discussing the importance of basic needs like sleep and joyful movement. When you feel stuck in your behavior change process, take some time to assess if your needs are being met. Try journaling asking your inner self what might be trying to get your attention?

Visit Chapter 15 in Maximize Your Body Potential for further information on backsliding.

Looking Back To Plan Ahead

When you started this program, we asked you to consider your Personal Why. How do you feel about your progress? Has anything change? If so, what do you need to adjust?

Progress Reflection

What have you learned about yourself in the past 8 sessions?
What are you taking with you into the next phase?

Where did you start?

Where are you today?

What are some things that you are proud of yourself for doing?

Think about people you know that are living a lifestyle that you admire. What behaviors do they do that you think you would like to do as well?

NOTES

