

Medically-supervised
Meal Replacement Program



POWER OF SELF

Positive Choice
Integrative Wellness Center

ABOUT THIS MODULE

“The surest way to lose your self-worth is by trying to find it through the eyes of others.”
-Becca Lee

Over the next 8 weeks we will discuss topics related to the power of self including self-worth, self-care, self-image, self-talk, and self-compassion. The intention is to nurture a sense of self-worth that empowers you to take on the changes required to achieve your goals. Self-worth is all about how you see and value yourself, no matter what you achieve or what others think of you. It starts to form when you’re young and is influenced by your experiences in life and the world around you. When important people in your life encourage you, it helps you feel good about who you are. But if you face a lot of criticism or feel ignored, it can hurt your self-worth.

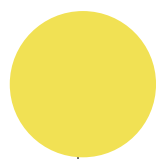
The great news is that you can grow your self-worth throughout your life by reflecting on your strengths and building the skill of seeing yourself in a positive light. Even if you’re not yet fully convinced that you deserve to spend time and energy on yourself, just being here and joining this program is a really big step.

We will discuss topics related to self-worth over the next 8-weeks. In addition to activities in this workbook and your weekly class topics, you’ve been provided with “*Maximize Your Body Potential.*” While you are free to read this book at your own pace, we will refer you to specific pages too. Additionally, each section includes journal prompts and often QR codes are provided for further education. Consider making time to enjoy your supplemental materials. All of these tools are intentionally provided to support you in your journey.

Here are strategies that we will discuss for improving your self-worth:

Self-acceptance	Embracing your strengths and valuing your unique qualities without judgment or comparison. You have worth regardless of your performance or others’ opinions.
Setting and achieving goals	Establishing personal goals and working towards them can boost self-worth. Achieving these goals, whether they are related to career, personal development, or relationships, reinforces a sense of accomplishment and capability.
Positive self-talk	The way you talk to yourself matters. Engaging in positive self-talk and challenging negative thoughts can help shift perceptions and build confidence. Replacing self-criticism with affirmations and constructive feedback fosters a healthier self-image.
Surround yourself with supportive relationships	Healthy relationships provide validation and encouragement. Surrounding yourself with supportive individuals who appreciate and value you reinforces your own sense of self-worth and provides a buffer against negative experiences.
Engaging in self-care	Prioritizing self-care, including physical, emotional, and mental well-being, signals self-respect and contributes to a positive self-view. Activities that nurture your interests and passions and bring you joy can enhance our sense of fulfillment and worth.

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PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

This program explores fundamental concepts that are important in supporting physical and mental wellness. Group support and connection, mindful awareness, self-compassion, adequate sleep, joyful movement, and connecting with what matters most to you in your life are some of the basic building blocks to self-care. It's likely that you will be talking about these fundamentals regularly in your weekly discussions so we encourage you to prepare by reading this introductory section and then responding to the writing prompts provided. In addition to getting you ready to start your program, these fundamentals will support you in the additional work you will be focused on week-to-week.

The fundamentals:



Self-compassion



Emotion awareness



Coping with urges



Mindful awareness



Sleep hygiene



Joyful movement



PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF THE GROUP

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

You've made the decision to join a weight management program and you have stepped onto this path with others who have similar goals. This is an exciting time with many positive experiences ahead! There are great benefits to engaging with a supportive community where you'll be sharing personal experiences and learning from each other or overcoming obstacles together 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 even setbacks, you not only feel encouraged but also lighten the burden of your own struggles and provide invaluable insights and empathy to others. This exchange fosters a sense of camaraderie and understanding. While sharing with others, you'll discover that you are not alone, and together, you can find strength and motivation to meet your goals.

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. You can receive this support at:

KP Dept of Psychiatry:
1-877-496-045

KP 24-hour crisis line:
1-800-900-3277

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**

You are most likely to take care of something you love. Throughout this course, you will be taught, mentored, and challenged to become a mindful practitioner of self-compassion. Self-compassion is a way to view your experiences through a lens of loving kindness. Many people who experience struggles or setbacks in their wellness journey can slip into patterns of self-criticism, blame, and frustration. We will explore the benefits and potential of acting with care 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.”

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



Three Principles of Self-Compassion

The CARE method for practicing self-compassion:

- 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

More information:

Article on Self-Compassion



Loving Kindness Meditation



Self-Compassion Exercises



PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Embracing emotions.

Just like your five senses help you understand the world around you, your emotions give you important clues about what's happening inside you. They can guide you toward feeling safe, both physically and emotionally.

Everyone experiences feelings and situations in their own way, so it's really important to understand how you feel and what your experiences mean.

Throughout the day, you'll feel many different emotions. Your past experiences and what you've been taught about feelings can shape how you see them. Maybe you learned to think of emotions as "good" or "bad" based on how others reacted when you were growing up. Sometimes, cultural or social ideas about emotions can influence you too. Remember, feelings can be strong or mild, and they can last for different amounts of time. What matters is that emotions are completely normal!

It's a valuable skill to accept your feelings as part of being human, rather than trying to push them away. This is especially important if you find yourself eating or avoiding things to deal with uncomfortable feelings. Figuring out your emotions can be tricky, but it helps to pause and notice how you're feeling in your body. Once you can name your emotions, you can start to learn ways to handle them better. It takes practice, but we'll work on this together in this program.

Read more on naming emotions



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 your attention and providing motivation to meet your needs.

Emotion regulation.

Learning to label emotions with specific and accurate names goes a long way toward what's called "emotion regulation." Emotion regulation is the ability to manage how you feel and respond in a healthy, supportive way. On the flip side, "emotion dysregulation" is when you have a hard time managing their feelings. Everyone experiences strong emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, or anxiety. But for some, these feelings can be overwhelming and difficult to manage. When you are dysregulated, you might find yourself feeling really upset or angry and not know how to manage your feelings or calm down. You might react in ways that don't necessarily match how you're feeling. For example, you might have emotional outbursts without understanding and addressing what is actually upsetting you.

It's important to remember that having strong emotions is normal, but learning how to navigate them can help you feel better, build stronger relationships, and better focus on your goals.

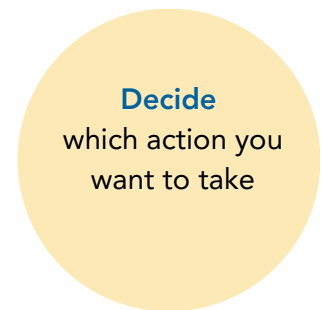
Ways to regulate your nervous system and improve emotion regulation include singing, dancing, humming, meditation, going for a walk, nature, setting boundaries, holding a daily routine, or spending time in sunshine. *What helps regulate your emotions?*

PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

3 D'S FOR COPING

Temptations, urges, and cravings happen. 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 suddenly you felt your brain, emotions, or self-talk pushing you back toward old habits. This is normal when we are working toward a change! You'll likely experience it as you start this program.

To help practice taking a different path, take a pause and create some distance between the urge you feel and the action you take. This can help you feel more in control, reduce cravings and the stress you feel around them, and regulate your emotions. You can use these "3 D's" to help re-wire old habits and empower yourself to make different choices in difficult moments:



Example: *When I feel a craving, I will Delay by setting a timer for 15 minutes, Distract myself by taking my dog out for a walk, and then when I get back, Decide mindfully whether to satisfy my craving with food or another strategy that will meet my needs best.*

Delay tools:

Distraction ideas:

Possible actions:

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.



PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS


MINDFUL AWARENESS

Mindfulness is a simple but powerful practice of paying attention to what’s happening in your mind and body, moment by moment, without judging yourself. It’s training your brain to notice thoughts and feelings with kindness, and then letting them go. When you practice mindfulness, you become more aware of yourself—this is called self-awareness.

Awareness is a big part of mindfulness. Instead of getting caught up in the thoughts, feelings, and sensations you experience, you learn to just observe them so you can stay calm and focused. When you practice mindfulness, you become more aware of yourself and better understand your thoughts, emotions, and how you behave. As you get better at this, you learn to control your reactions and make better choices. Mindfulness is an important part of self-care. Taking time to check in with yourself and your feelings helps you understand what you need. It encourages taking breaks when you’re feeling stressed, enjoying activities you love, and treating yourself with kindness and self-compassion.

Mindful awareness practices you can try:

- ✓ Practice breathing exercises to ground you to the present moment. 
- ✓ Complete body scans to mindfully notice how each part of your body feels without judgment 
- ✓ Try mindful eating: As you are eating, drinking, or enjoying your meal replacements, focus on the temperature, texture, taste, and experience in the moment. Take a moment to be present.

- ✓ 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 and pay special attention to the colors, sounds, and sensations as you move.
- ✓ Try finger tracing, tracing one hand with the opposite finger in time with your breathing 

Reflection: In what ways might being more mindful reduce your daily stress levels?

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



[Learn more about mindfulness resources available at Kaiser Permanente](#)

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, and make small changes where you can to improve your sleep hygiene.



During the day

- Keep a regular schedule for meals, medications, chores, and other activities.
- Exercise regularly. Avoid exercising close to bedtime 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

- Make 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 scroll social media.



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 (general activity, cardio, strength, and flexibility). But you may find it hard to get started. The solution- start where you are! Accept where you are now, celebrate the movement you already do, and then slowly build toward your goal. All movement counts!

Ways to get started:

- 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. You can look forward to the benefits movement will bring you in the future, but make sure you also enjoy it in the now.

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.

PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

Understanding Your Why for Making Changes Now

My Personal Why

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

Your Future Self

Success is measured in many ways. Let's consider what success would look like for you. *What are your dreams for your future self? What possibilities can you imagine opening up for you?* Looking ahead can help you identify what matters most to you and excite and motivate you during challenging times. It helps you align your habits with your values and your true potential. One step at a time, you can take actions now that will benefit your future self.

Who do you imagine you would be and what do you imagine your life would be like if you are successful with this program?

Often, success looks like just staying committed. What personal strengths do you have that will allow you to succeed?



Now, take a moment to sit and actually visualize this success for yourself. Consider closing your eyes for this. Visualize how will you feel, behave, and care for yourself. *Watch the video to learn more about the power of considering your future self.*

GETTING STARTED

Setting Your First Goal

Setting a goal is like putting your end destination into a GPS. *Where do you want to go? What routes can help you get there?* You'll partner with 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
- Drink more water
- Decrease caffeine intake

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

Habits are the routes that move us toward our end goals. Thinking about your Personal Why, 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 pages 80-87 in *Maximizing Your Body Potential* to determine the costs and benefits of making this change.

POWER OF SELF MODULE OVERVIEW

PART 1

Your Thoughts

What you think and say to yourself reflects your beliefs and influences the choices you make and the attitudes you hold about yourself and your world. We'll explore how these thoughts show up in your life and how you can develop supportive, helpful thoughts. There are many things that impact how you think and believe. We will think through these in the first part of this series, encouraging you to let go of those that are unhelpful and adopt those that are empowering.

PART 2

Your Relationship With Your Body

The thoughts, feelings, and beliefs you hold about your body impact your physical and mental health. In this second part, we'll explore ways you can strengthen your relationship with your body so that you can experience the benefits that a positive body image has to offer.

PART 3

Taking Care of Yourself

Self-care that is guided by our values and meets our needs well is essential for optimal physical and mental health. In this section, we will explore what drives your willingness and ability to take care of yourself, the role that food and eating has played in your self-care, and how a deeper understanding of your needs and values can guide self-care that helps you thrive.

P A R T

01

YOUR THOUGHTS

What you think and say to yourself reflects your beliefs and influences the choices you make and the attitudes you hold about yourself and your world. Let's explore how these thoughts show up in your life and how you can develop more supportive, helpful thoughts.



SELF-TALK

“ If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.
-Wayne Dyer

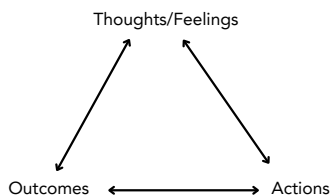
What you say to yourself matters.

Self-talk is what you say to yourself in your mind. It can range from simple thoughts about what you're doing this weekend, to cheering yourself on through a challenge, to unhelpful, negative thoughts about how you don't like what you see in the mirror or whether or not you are capable of success.

Your specific self-talk is shaped by the things you notice and pay attention to, your life experiences and how you make sense of them, and your beliefs about yourself.

Your self-talk is really impactful. It affects how you feel, the choices you make, and even your overall health, both mental and physical. When your self-talk is positive, kind, and understanding—recognizing both your strengths and areas to improve—it can boost your mood, help you stay motivated, and improve your relationships with others.

It's natural to experience negative thoughts. Our brains are designed to do this because those thoughts can be protective, but there is value to shifting to more positive ways of thinking in general.



Not everyone experiences self-talk as words and conversations in their mind. Some people may experience self-talk more as feelings or sensations. How do you experience it?

Becoming aware of your self-talk.

If you find you are often stuck in negative thoughts and patterns, it's time to check in to develop awareness of those thoughts, where they come from, and how you might benefit from changing them.

Improving your self talk isn't about having happy thoughts all the time. But because your brain is wired to notice negative thoughts more often (to help keep you safe) it's important to intentionally cultivate positive thoughts too.

As you pay attention to your self-talk you may notice certain thoughts that occur over and over. Pay attention to whether those thoughts are helpful to you or not because it's possible that some of them are making change difficult for you. If you imagine a person on your shoulder who's feeding you negative messages throughout the day, of course it's hard to meet your goals! Instead, imagine turning that voice into a gentler, coaching voice, pointing out where you can improve in a way that supports and guides you toward success. Notice the difference?

Let's practice: List three qualities you admire in yourself. How can you further nurture and use these traits?

Visit page 263 in *Maximize Your Body Potential* for a self-test on Goal Related Self-Talk.

NEGATIVE THINKING TRAPS

It's easy to fall into patterns of thinking, they're almost automatic. Below are common examples of frequent, unhelpful thinking traps. As you practice curiosity about your own thinking, notice if you identify with any of following you see below.

Discounting the Positive

Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive.

"I had a bad week because I saw that my weight went up when I stepped on the scale today."

Should Statements

The belief that things should be a certain way.

"I should be able to stick to my plan." Or "I should lose weight every week if I'm following my diet."

All-or-Nothing Thinking

Thinking in absolutes and extremes, often using terms such as always, never, or every.

"I already blew my diet plan. I might as well eat whatever I want and start my plan again tomorrow."

Jumping to Conclusions

Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

"My weight stayed stable this week so obviously this program isn't working."

Mind Reading

Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence.

"They probably think I'm so lazy when they see how fat I am."

Fortune Telling

The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

"I've regained weight before, so I will regain it again."

Magical Thinking

The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations.

"If I lose weight, I'll finally be able to love myself."

Personalization

The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control.

"My boss seemed to be in a bad mood during our meeting, I must have done something to upset her."

Emotional Reasoning

The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are.

"I feel so insecure, everyone must think I'm a loser."

Magnification/Minimization

Exaggerating the importance of negative events or minimizing the importance of positive events.

"My mistake during the presentation ruined the whole thing."

Catastrophizing

Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

"If I let myself eat at the party, I'll completely go off the rails and never be able to get back on track."

Overgeneralization

Making broad interpretations from a single or few events.

"I felt awkward during my interview. I'm always so awkward."

Read Chapter 11 in *Maximize Your Body Potential* for a deeper dive into thinking patterns.

CHALLENGING NEGATIVE THINKING

Let's take a closer look.

Identify and write down one positive and one negative self-talk message you hear or experience regularly.

What do you notice in your body when you hear these? Is there a different feeling between positive and negative thoughts?

How does hearing these messages impact your behaviors or choices? Any differences that you notice?

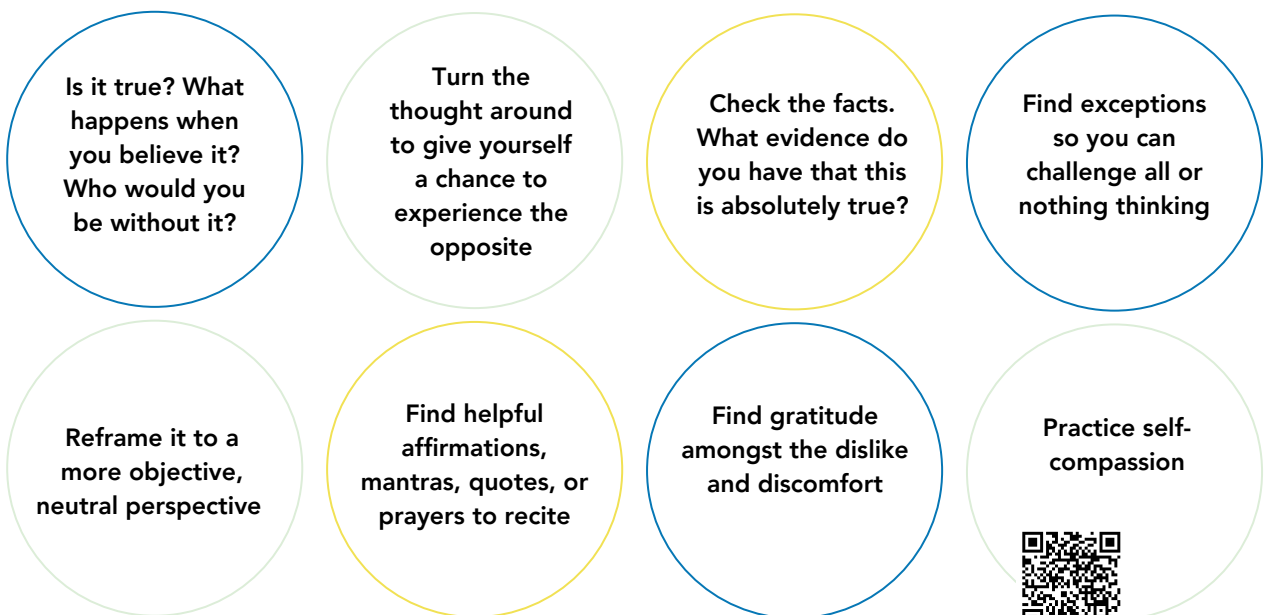
Who's "voice" is this? For example, consider where you first learned this message. Read Ch. 12 in *Maximizing Your Body Potential* for more on this topic.

For negative thoughts, ask yourself if you would you repeat this message to someone else? If not, what would you say instead? Can you practice saying this message to yourself?

Article on how to talk to a friend



You can check your thoughts using these strategies:



Refer to page 300 in *Maximize Your Body Potential* for additional guidance.



Self-compassion exercises

CULTIVATING POSITIVE THINKING

“ The grass is greener where you water it.
-Neil Barringham

Positive thinking helps you feel happier and more confident, even when things get tough. Below are 10 ideas and prompts to help you cultivate positive thoughts.

Let's practice.

Gratitude List: Write down three things you're grateful for today and why they matter to you.

Affirmations: Create three positive affirmations about yourself. If you need ideas, consider what you might say to a friend. Repeat them aloud.

Success Reflection: Recall a recent accomplishment, big or small. What strengths helped you achieve it?

Joyful Memories: Describe a favorite memory that brings you joy. What emotions does it evoke?

Acts of Kindness: Think of a time someone did something kind for you. How did it feel to receive this kindness?

Future Aspirations: Visualize your ideal day five years from now. What does it look like, and how does it feel?

Compliments: List three qualities you admire in yourself. How can you nurture these traits further?

Positive Role Models: Identify someone who inspires you. What qualities do they possess that you'd like to embody?

Nature Connection: Spend a few moments in nature and note the beauty around you. How does it uplift your spirit?

Mindful Breathing: Take a few deep breaths and focus on your breath. What positive thoughts arise as you relax?

Also read *Cultivating Joy* on page 42 for additional ways to improve positive thinking.

CORE BELIEFS

“ Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny -MK Gandhi

Our beliefs are the lens through which we see the world.

Much of our self-talk reflects the beliefs we've learned throughout our life, starting in childhood. Your beliefs are deeply rooted assumptions that determine how you view yourself, your experiences, your abilities, and the world. These beliefs can have a direct impact on how you feel and behave.

For example, if your belief is that taking care of yourself first is selfish, then you might have a difficult time prioritizing consistent self-care or feel guilty when you do. If your belief is that you need to take care of yourself well to be able to take care of others, then you might be more successful with consistent and fulfilling self-care.

Your belief system includes how you view yourself as a person--who you are, how you relate to others, and whether you believe you are worthy and deserving. Some beliefs aren't particularly helpful either. For example, "I'm a giver, so I must take care of others first," or "My body is unacceptable, so I need to change it." The longer you live by these beliefs, the more you believe them to be true.

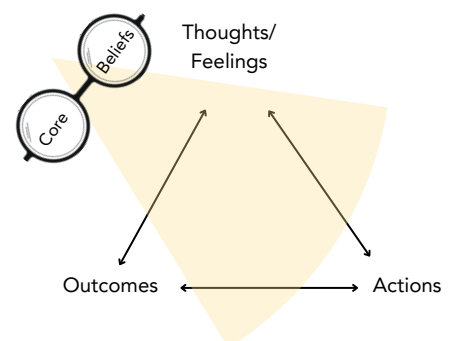
Think of your belief system like a pair of glasses that shape how you see the world. The beliefs you hold act like the prescription for those glasses, helping you understand your own reality. These beliefs can influence your thoughts, feelings, and the choices you make every day.

If the way you see things isn't helping you reach your goals or feel good about yourself, it might be time to take a closer look at your beliefs. Just like you can change the prescription of your glasses, you can also change how you think about things. This can lead to more positive thoughts and actions in your life.

What beliefs do you have about yourself, including your body, personality, abilities, traits, and being part of a larger community?

How do your beliefs influence your willingness to care for yourself? Do they encourage or discourage any self-care choices?

Do you hold the same beliefs about others as you do about yourself or does a part of you insist you are different? What makes you the exception?



The lens of your beliefs can impact your thoughts, actions, and outcomes. Understanding that lens gives you insight into ways to better support lasting change.

CORE BELIEFS

Messages we receive throughout life shape our core beliefs.

Many beliefs start with early messages from your parents and other important figures, and others are learned later and reinforced through life experiences. You learn messages directly through what is actually said to you or indirectly through what you observe around you. These messages that started as another's voice can eventually become your own voice and a part of your belief system. For example, "My parents told me I could do anything I put my mind to and now I am confident in my abilities." Or, "I was called fat as a child and now I criticize my body no matter how much weight I lose."

Messages from media, leaders, or influencers can also become your inner voices, influencing your beliefs. The key is that what we see, hear, and experience has an impact. Sometimes you may find you need to undo or unlearn beliefs that no longer serve you well.

The lens you see through is likely to be impacted by how you feel in that moment.

Due to a strong mind-body connection, the physical state of your body has a significant influence on how you think. When we're in a more threatening situation or feel stronger feelings, the brain has a harder time interpreting the situation accurately. This is one reason why you might tend to do and say things you wouldn't normally do and say when you're more upset. Slow and deep breaths, gently moving parts of your body, and mindful grounding exercises all calm the body and help the brain organize experiences more accurately. This allows you to have a more objective, clear, and flexible mindset to better manage thoughts and emotions.

Who or what influences your beliefs about yourself? Consider culture, religion, parents, authority figures, diet culture, weight stigma, trauma, etc.

What direct and indirect messages have you heard about yourself from these influences?

Have you given yourself the opportunity or permission to question your core beliefs? Describe ways your beliefs have changed over time and ways they've stayed the same.

CHANGING UNHELPFUL BELIEFS



What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself.

-Abraham Maslow

A changing belief system.

If you've recognized you hold some beliefs that no longer serve you, you can learn new beliefs that better reflect your current values and align with positive self-care. However, changing beliefs is challenging for many reasons! You have survived with your old beliefs for a long time and the brain likes to stay with what's familiar. Additionally, beliefs never disappear completely and you will continue to have experiences that bring them up as you go through life. Noticing them and challenging them may be necessary.

**What do you want to believe about yourself?
What new beliefs are nurturing and
encouraging of taking good care of yourself?**

**What do you naturally believe to be true for
about others? Try giving yourself permission
for these beliefs to be true about you as well.**

Sometimes beliefs compete for your trust.

As you learn new beliefs, it may feel like a mental tug-of-war between the old and the new beliefs. A new belief may seem untrue at first even if it's more accurate. This makes it easy to want to reject it and go back to the old belief. For example, telling yourself that your body deserves love no matter its size might be hard to believe if you've held a belief that smaller bodies are what's attractive and worthy. Although this can be uncomfortable, it's also normal and a sign that you're making progress! Consider any feelings of discomfort as cues to think of them as new and different rather than wrong or untrue.

Be kind to yourself through this process and remember to practice mindfulness and self-compassion as building new trust takes time!

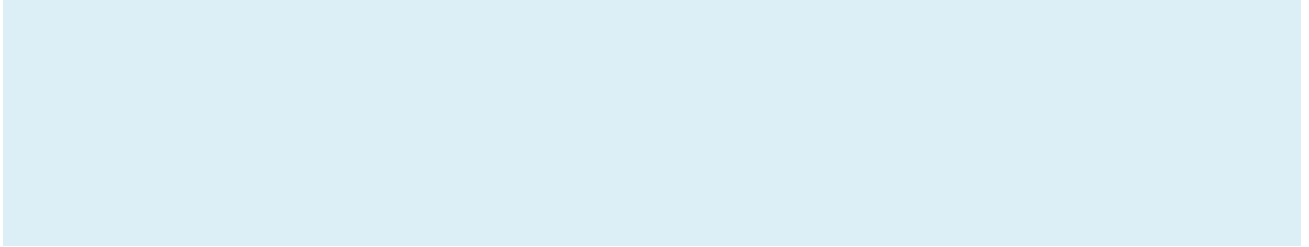
**How can you show yourself compassion
during times when you feel torn between
two beliefs?**

**What mindfulness practices can help you sit
with differing beliefs and any uncomfortable
feelings that come with them?**

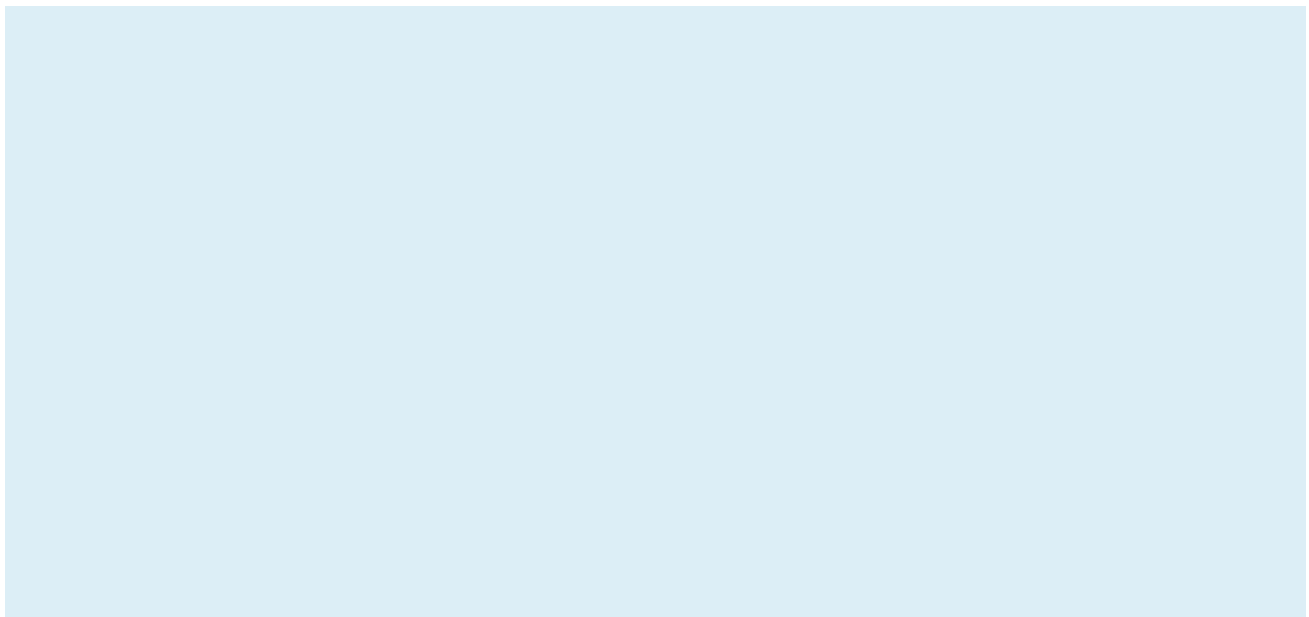
Reflection: Imagine holding a dialogue back and forth between two competing beliefs and then (maybe) allow your wisest self to moderate the dialogue. What would this sound like?

JOURNAL PROMPTS

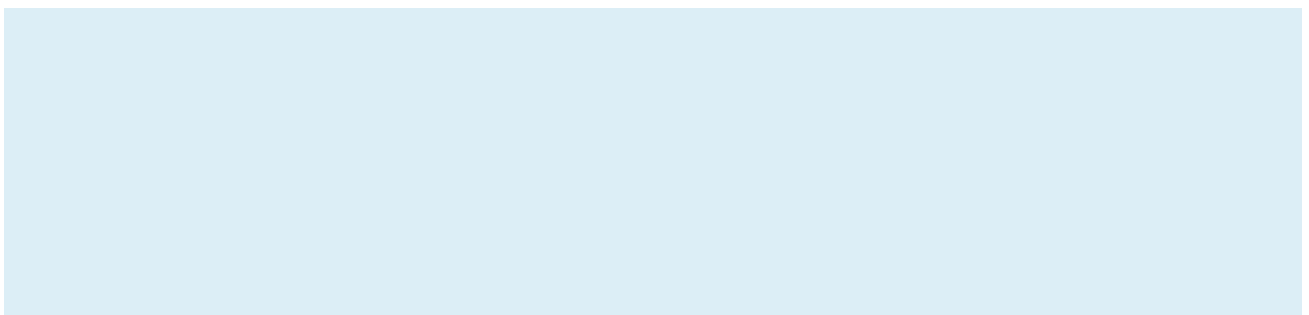
How much of my day do I spend in my head? How aware am I of the thoughts and conversations in my mind?



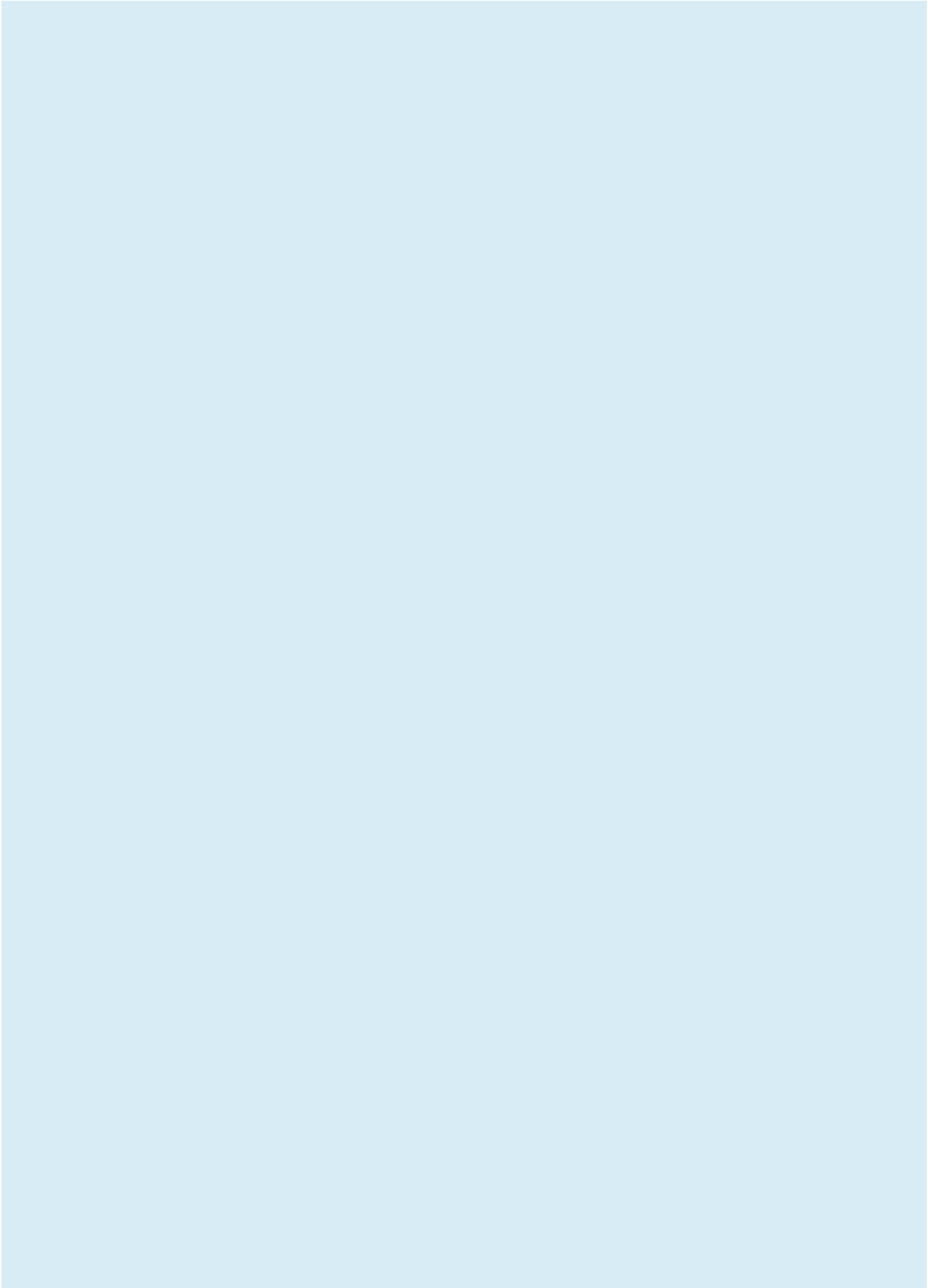
How we talk to ourselves may be a combination of different “inner voices” that develop over time. In Ch. 12 of Maximize Your Body Potential, these voices are described with names like, “The Critic,” “The Rule Maker,” “Procrastinator,” “The Perfectionist,” “The Nurturer” or “The Pleaser,” etc. After reading that chapter, which of them sounded familiar? Any others that weren’t listed? Where did these come from? And more importantly, what strategies might help you develop your supportive voice?



When you consider how you speak to yourself, does it match how you speak to others whom you care about? How is it similar or different? What would it be like to speak to yourself the way you speak to them?



NOTES



PART

02

BODY IMAGE

The thoughts, feelings, and beliefs you hold about your body impact your physical and mental health. We'll explore ways you can strengthen your relationship with your body so that you can experience the benefits that a positive body image has to offer.



WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?

“ You are not a mistake. You are not a problem to be solved. But you won't discover this until you are willing to stop banging your head against the wall of shaming and caging and fearing yourself. — Geneen Roth

Understanding body image.

Body image is how you think and feel about your body. It includes how you see yourself and how you appreciate what your body can do. You might have body image type thoughts about how you look in certain clothes, what your body is capable of, how you feel in a room with others, or whether you like your body shape.

Your body image develops and changes over time based on what people around you say, what you see in media and social media, and your own experiences. How you feel about your body can range from feeling negative to feeling unsure, neutral, or positive about it. When someone has a positive body image, they usually feel confident about their appearance and abilities and believe their body deserves love and respect, without worrying much about it. For others, it can be more complicated, with more frequent feelings of frustration, shame, or a wish to change how they look.

Science tells us that people with a more positive body image experience greater mental health and overall wellness than those who hold a negative perspective. This may be because with a positive view comes more overall confidence and desire to engage in wellness-promoting behaviors. If you struggle with body image, there are ways that you can change it!

Shifting toward positive body image.

In the next few sections, we are going to explore ways that you can improve body image. This will include learning to accept your body how it is right now, then learning to develop better appreciation for your body, to ultimately learning how to take care of yourself well. You've likely held your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs for a while, so it may feel uncomfortable as you start to change. That's okay and we encourage you to learn to sit with uncomfortable feelings in the process.

While it may seem like the goal is to have a positive body image, this may not feel realistic or comfortable for you right now. If so, your goal may be to move to neutral thinking. This can come from first recognizing your own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about your body and then making small steps to change your self-talk. For example, rather than saying, "Urgh, I hate that I can't hike like I used to" you instead say, "Although I don't like that I can't hike, this is how it is right now for me and I accept that."

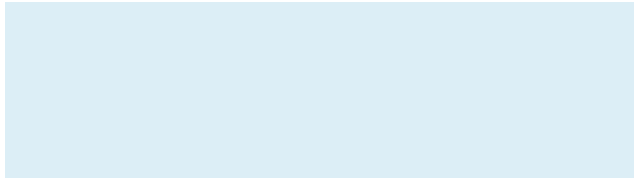
If you are working on improving body image, engaging in activities that make you feel good, surrounding yourself with positive messages and supportive people can also help.

Impacts of Body Image

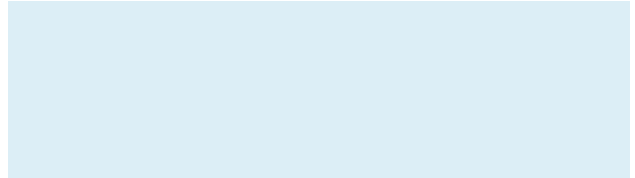
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depression and anxiety• Eating disorders• Low self-esteem• Relationship struggles• Reduced physical activity• Stress• Perfectionistic tendencies• Repetitive negative thoughts	<p><i>If body image is a struggle for you, neutral thinking may be your first goal</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health benefits• Improved self-esteem• Greater resilience• Healthier relationships• Better physical health• Greater happiness• Body autonomy• Positive role modeling
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BODY IMAGE REFLECTIONS

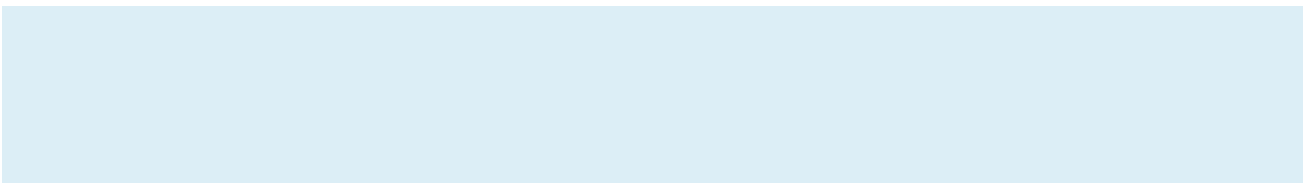
What are words or phrases you'd use to describe your body? This can be either an accurate reflection or a distorted view, whatever you see.



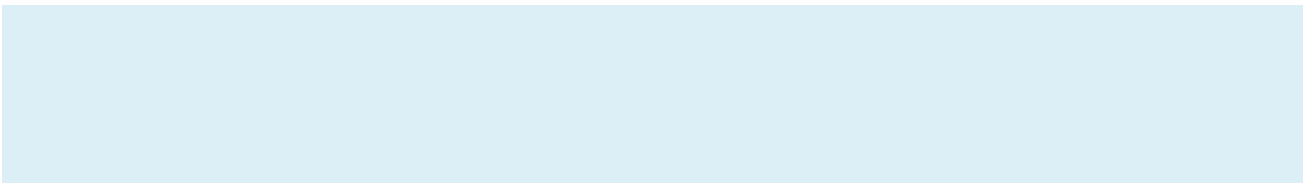
How do you behave in response to your body image? Consider how you eat, dress, exercise, or present yourself socially.



What do you think about your body? This includes thoughts about your body size, shape, abilities, and appearance. What could you say about your body that is factual?

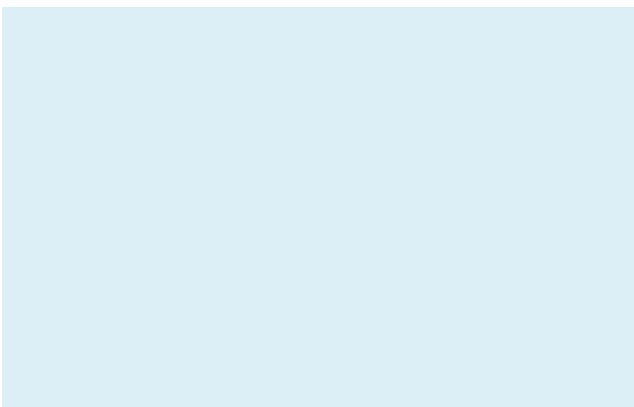


How do you feel about your body? These feelings can range from general satisfaction to neutral feelings or to shame or dissatisfaction. Why do you think you feel this way?

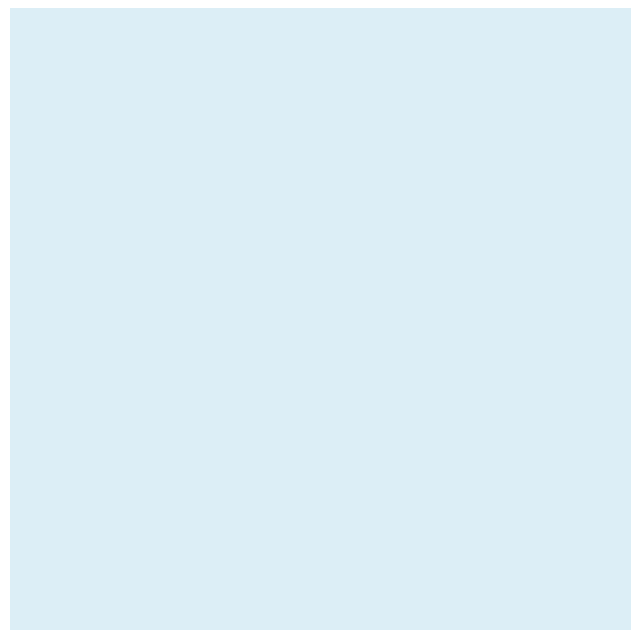


How have your culture and family impacted your views on body image? Some perspectives to consider:

- Traditional beauty standards within the culture
- Family expectations and comments about body image
- Representation in the media
- Ways you can navigate and challenge these influences



If you could switch bodies with someone you care about, what steps would you take to make sure that their body is taken care of while you're in their place?



BODY ACCEPTANCE

“ To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself. — Thich Nhat Hanh

Accepting is a path forward.

If you want to improve your body image, a great first step is body acceptance. Often, we spend a lot of time thinking about how our bodies "should" be. But acceptance means recognizing and appreciating your body just as it is in this moment. Even if you want to make some changes, it's important to start with accepting where you are now.

Body acceptance is about being open to the idea that your body is okay as it is ("my belly is round and soft and that's fine") or that parts cannot be changed right now ("my knee pain just doesn't allow me to move the way I used to"). This doesn't mean you have to love or even like every single part of it, and it's normal to have insecurities or frustrations. Acceptance is a tool that can help you move away from negative thoughts and feelings towards a more neutral view.

Think of acceptance as "letting go" of any bitterness or rejection you feel about your body and embracing the reality of your situation without judging yourself. When you accept where you are, it can help you stop feeling stuck in pain and instead, start feeling more at peace. Doesn't that sound nice?

Taking care of a body you don't like will always be harder than caring for one you accept. When you work towards being more neutral and even positive about it, you might find yourself more eager to engage in activities that are good for your overall wellness. Through acceptance and the reflections you make during this journey, you can find peace with where you are now, and from there, make positive changes.

Letting go to move forward

Accepting your body as it is right now means being okay with where you are today. This might involve letting go of ideas about how you thought your body should be or what it used to be like. For example, your body might not move, feel, or look the same as it once did or as you wish it would. You might feel a sense of loss when you realize this, and that's a normal part of accepting your body.

It can be tough to deal with these feelings, especially if you feel like you aren't able to live the life you imagined for yourself or when there are expectations from others, the media, and a world that often values being thin. Practicing kindness toward yourself, focusing on what you appreciate about your body, and finding support from others who understand your journey can really help.

In what ways do you feel you need to let go so you can move forward?

Choose an area of your body that you find you struggle to accept.

Complete the following sentence:

I am _____'s _____.

your name body part

She/he/they usually tells me that:

Instead, I need for them to tell me:

CULTIVATING APPRECIATION

“ I intend to accept my body today, love my body tomorrow, and appreciate my body always. --Unknown

Another tool that supports a positive body image is body appreciation. Rather than focusing on criticism or areas of your body that you'd like to change, allow yourself to purposefully appreciate your body. Instead of saying, "Urgh, I hate how my arms look in this shirt!" you say, "I'm so glad that my arms allow me to hug the people I care about." This shift opens you up to wanting to take care of yourself and your amazing body. After all, without your body, where would you be?

Ways to foster appreciation include:

- Celebrate small victories
- Challenge negative thoughts
- Build a supportive environment
- Set realistic and compassionate goals
- Focus on health or actions, not appearance
- Create and practice affirmations

Affirmations of Appreciation



What do you like or appreciate about your body? This might be how it looks and/or what it can do. List as many things as you can.

You might be wondering how you can appreciate your body while also wanting to change it. This can be especially confusing if your desire for change comes from trying to meet others' expectations. Instead of focusing on what you want to change, try to approach your body from a place of care and kindness.

Choose activities that show appreciation for your body, like exercising because you enjoy it or nourishing it with food because it feels good to do that. When you focus on caring for yourself, any changes—whether it's losing weight, gaining weight, or staying the same—come from a positive place. It's really tough to take care of something you don't appreciate, so finding that appreciation is key.

Consider the different things you do with and for your body and notice if care or change is the reason. Are you exercising or dieting to lose weight to change how your body looks, or do you choose certain movement activities and nutrition options that help you enjoy living in your body?

How are you kind to your body? What activities make your body feel good? Who in your life encourages or models appreciation for your body? Try to be aware of when you are comparing yourself to others and turn your attention back to you.

LETTERS BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR BODY

Write a letter to your body saying anything you'd like to say.

Dear Body-

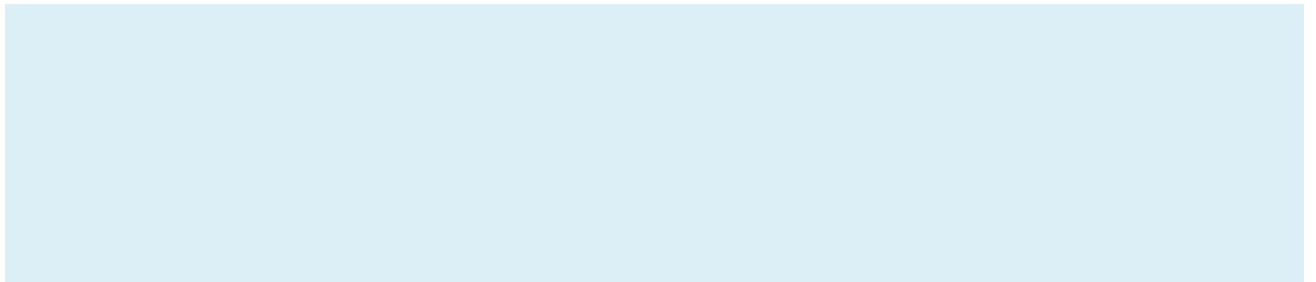
Write a letter from your body as if it had a voice. What would it tell you?

Dear _____ -
Your name

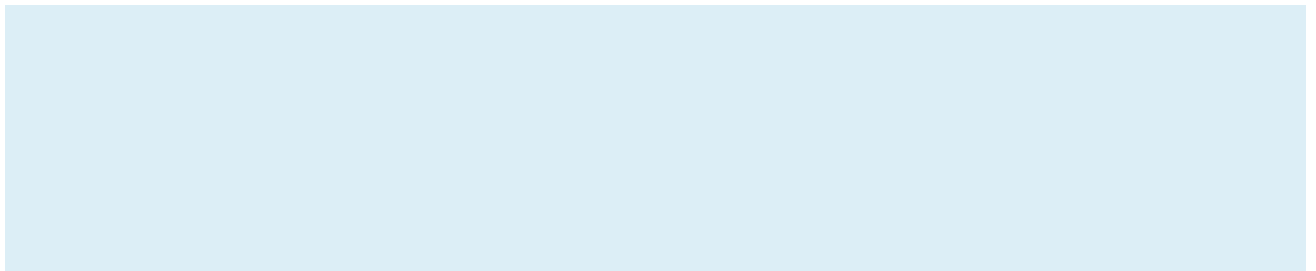
Reflection: What was it like to give your body that voice? What did you hear that your body needs from you?

JOURNAL PROMPTS

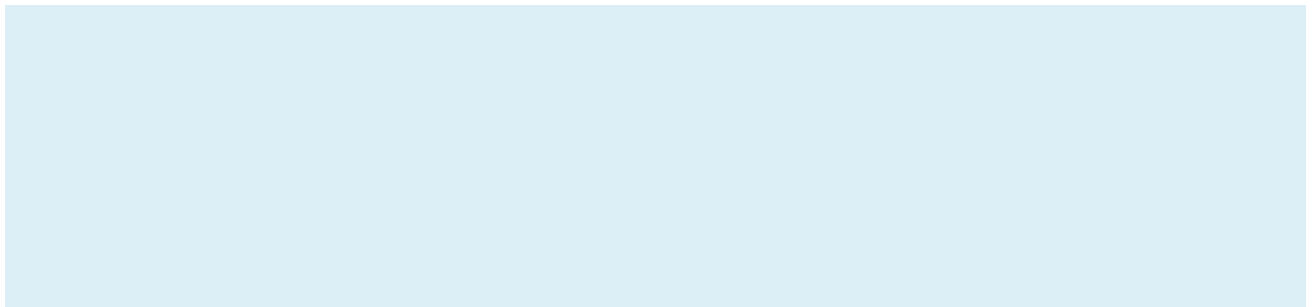
What are some of your joys and passions in life. How does your body allow you to participate in these experiences?



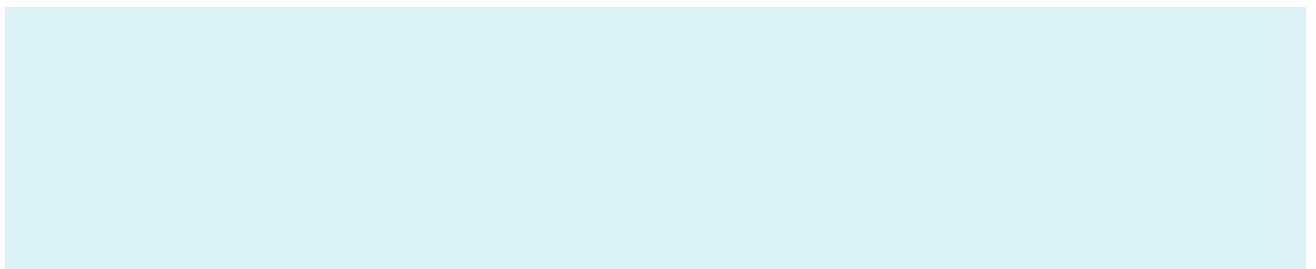
Tell a short story about a significant experience related to body image. This could be a memory, a moment of acceptance, a challenge, or a realization.



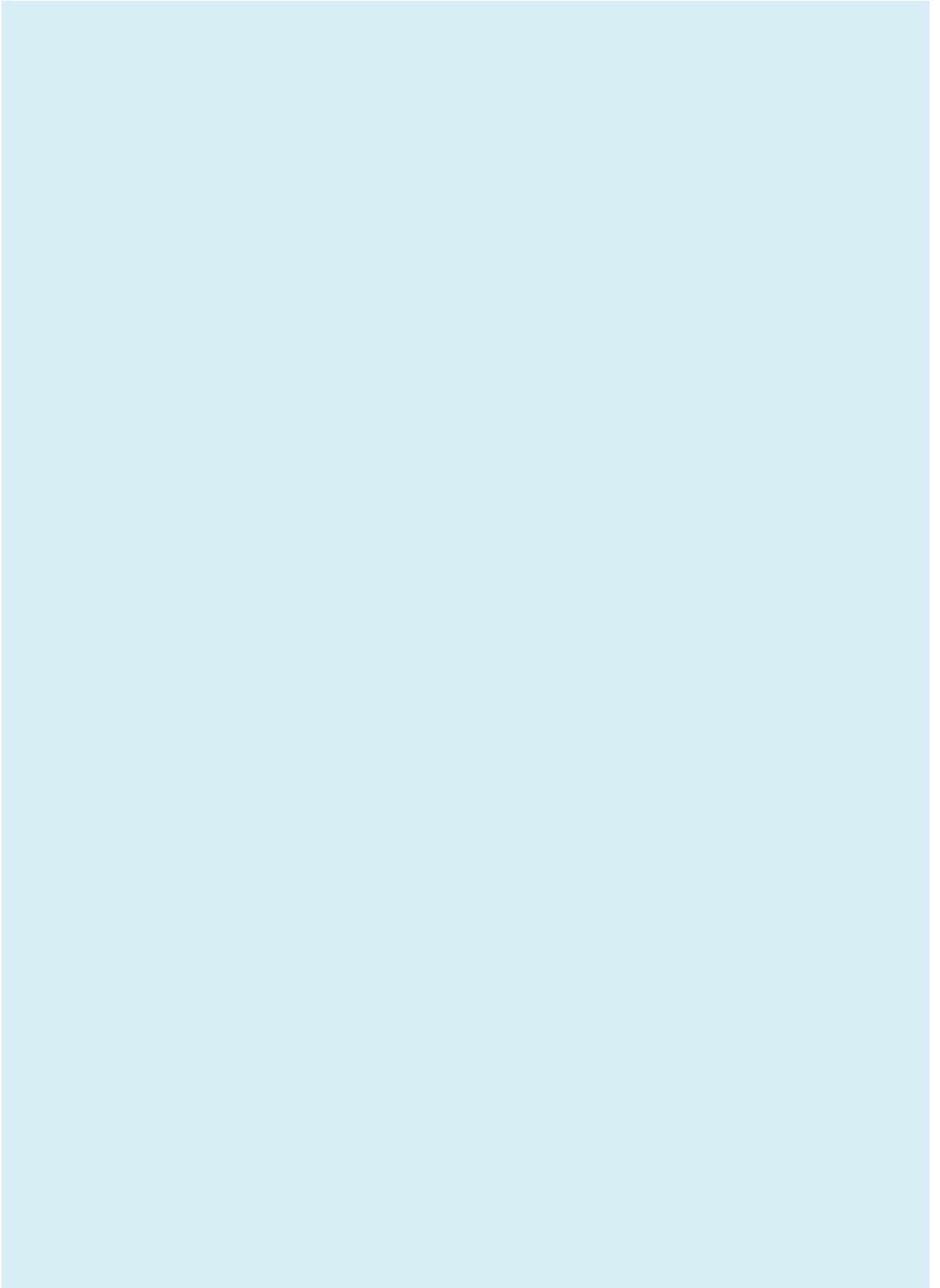
Write about a time when you remember feeling really confident about your body.



Make a list of compliments that you could give another person. As you do this, avoid any compliments that mention appearance.



NOTES



PART

03

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Self-care that is guided by our values and meets our needs well is essential for optimal physical and mental health. In this section, we will explore what drives your willingness and ability to take care of yourself, the role that food and eating has played in your self-care, and how a deeper understanding of your needs and values can guide self-care that helps you thrive.



THOUGHTS ON SELF-CARE

“ You can't pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourself first.
- Norm Kelly

As we prepare to discuss self-care and how to best meet your needs in a way that supports your overall well-being, it's useful to consider where you are today and your general thoughts about self-care. This will offer you insight and direction in the following discussions.

What do you do now to take care of yourself? How do these impact your health and well-being?

When you consider engaging in wellness promoting self-care activities, what gets in the way?

When it comes to self-care, what are thoughts and feelings that you hold?

Juggling life and self-care can be challenging. What are your top priorities in life?

If there was a magic wand that made self-care easier, what would that look like? What can you learn from this thought experiment?

Given your current circumstances, what could you realistically do to improve your self-care?

Reflection: If self-care is a struggle for you, how can you practice self-compassion in areas that you cannot realistically change right now?

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

“ Self-care means giving the world the best of you instead of what’s left of you.
-Katie Reed

Self-care is taking steps to meet your needs as best you can.

When you practice self-care regularly, it can help you feel happier and healthier. Many people think self-care means getting a haircut, spending time alone, or enjoying activities like shopping or getting a massage. While it can be, it’s often so much more than that! In fact, self-care can sometimes be pretty unexciting, like taking your medications, showering, grocery shopping, de-cluttering, or getting fresh air.

Sometimes, self-care doesn't feel fun in the moment, or can even feel overwhelming, but it's all about looking out for your future self. For example, you might not love meal prepping, but you know it will help you feel less stressed and eat better during the week. Your future self will thank you.

If a task feels overwhelming, it can be easy to put it off or try to meet your needs in other ways. To break self-care down, start by figuring out what you really need. For example, you might need rest, or to feel more connected, or to talk to a friend. Recognizing your needs and knowing when they aren't being met are the first steps to taking better care of yourself. Then you can identify simple steps to start meeting them.

Ultimately, how you care for yourself impacts how well your needs are satisfied. Meeting needs may mean learning new skills, like how to set boundaries, or thinking about how you talk to yourself and others, the joy you find in life, and the daily routines you create. We'll talk about this more in the next section.

In the words of a program participant, "I was so focused on taking care of my family, I forgot that *I* was also part of my family."

Asking for support

When you decide to improve your self-care, it may be helpful to share this with people close to you and ask for their support. Perhaps you might also consider supporting your loved ones in meeting their needs, creating an atmosphere of mutual support.

Developing new habits, like self-care, may require you to clearly communicate your goals and needs so that people can better support you. Using "I" statements and making specific requests is a way to tell others how you feel and how they can help. When communicating using "I statements," it's important to express your thoughts, feelings, and perspectives in a clear and respectful manner.

Here's a simple formula you can try when requesting support:

"When _(describe the situation)_, I feel _____. In the future I would appreciate _(make a specific request)_."

It can also be helpful to have someone to whom you can talk about your needs – who will encourage you so you can feel supported on your journey.

List the people in your life that you consider to be supportive and encouraging. You may want to reach out to them and tell them about the things you are working on in this program.

LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

“ Your body is like the quiet talker with the most important thing to say.
-Unknown

Communication cultivates care.

Any healthy relationship relies on effective communication. In order to truly care for your body, you must develop good communication with it. Your body sends physical and emotional signals to you all the time. These may be cues about hunger, pain, temperature, fatigue, or emotions. Sometimes they are obvious, and others require interpretation. Body cues can sometimes be uncomfortable so you may have strong urges to ignore or push them away. Sometimes eating is a way people distract from discomfort. High stress, exhaustion, substance use, over- or under- eating, and trauma can make it hard to hear body signals and lead to ignoring them. Learning to tolerate discomfort can help soften the urge to avoid them or disconnect in unhealthy ways.

When do you find yourself wanting to ignore or disconnect from your body signals? What might be more helpful ways to do that without using behaviors that become harmful in the long run (like eating)?

Complete a body scan (see pg 9). What are you feeling in your body right now? Where do you feel that in your body?

How do you recognize sensations in your body? Can you ask your body “what do you need right now?”

When it comes to hunger and eating, interpreting body signals can be difficult. What's the difference between eating from physical hunger vs. social, environmental, habitual or emotional cues?

When people use meal replacements, they often say they experience signals around hunger and fullness differently. How do you feel the same or different?

When you eat food that is not on your plan, what can you learn about yourself?

Inviting a conversation with your body.

When you get better at noticing and understanding what your body is telling you, you can respond in the right way. But this isn't always easy! Strong feelings of discomfort or stress can make it hard to recognize the signals from your body. Practices like mindfulness, breathing exercises, grounding, and gentle movement can help you reconnect with your body.

These activities can make you more open to understanding what your body needs. By improving this connection, you can learn to take better care of yourself, which can lead to better mental and physical health. See the Mindful Awareness section for more ideas.

NEEDS AND SELF-CARE

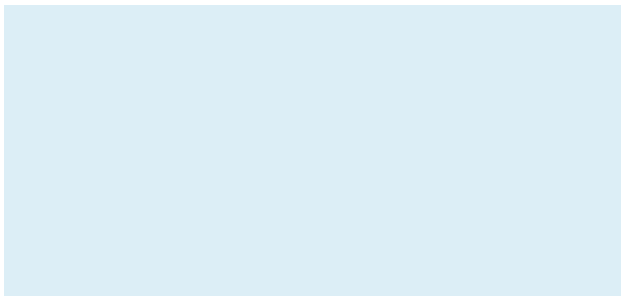
“ Self-care is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation.
-Audre Lorde

Meet your needs first.

As a living human, you have certain requirements in order to stay alive including food, water, and shelter. These are sometimes referred to as “survival needs.” Once survival needs are met, you have the opportunity to explore other needs that can help you thrive,

Meeting your needs is an important part of your self-care practice. At times, you may find that meeting your needs comes easily and other times, it might feel like a struggle and your needs go unmet. When you’re feeling stressed or distracted by what’s happening in your life, it’s easy to forget to take care of yourself. In those moments, you might fall back on old habits that aren’t good for your health, like over or under eating, not getting enough sleep, drinking too much, or shopping too much. If this happens, try to be kind to yourself. Remember that change takes time, and it’s all about progress, not perfection. Learn from the experience and then practice self-compassion to move forward.

Describe how well you feel you meet your needs on a regular basis.



Watch a video about needs



Read an article about “glimmers”



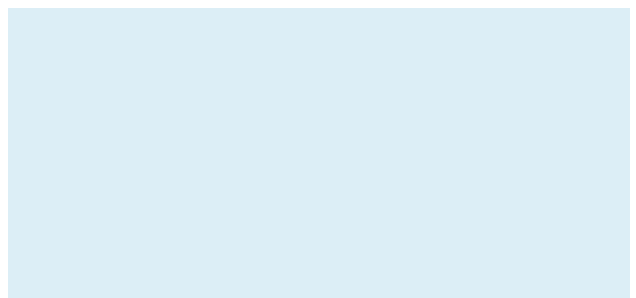
Managing uncomfortable feelings.

When you're feeling overwhelmed or upset, it's uncomfortable. Many people turn to food or other distractions to avoid or stop those uncomfortable feelings. However, learning to accept and sit with discomfort is a skill and an important step toward making healthier choices. By paying close attention to your emotions and how your body feels, you can start to understand what you really need. Think about it like learning to understand a new baby and its cries. Initially, you need to experiment to see what the baby needs (food, diaper, cuddles, temperature checks) but over time, as you pay attention and reflect, you start to know the different cries and can respond appropriately, much faster. Through practice and reflection, you will continue the lifelong practice of body awareness.

Through body awareness, the noticing and naming of your specific needs is a step in the direction of learning to take care of yourself well. To help you learn to identify your needs, you can refer to the list on the next page. Remember, taking care of yourself is a journey, and every step counts!



Complete this short-guided body awareness video to learn to manage uncomfortable sensations or emotions. Then describe the experience below:



NEEDS LIST

<p>CONNECTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance Affection Appreciation Authenticity Belonging Care Closeness Communication Communion Community Companionship Compassion Consideration Empathy Friendship Inclusion Inspiration Intimacy Love Mutuality Nurturing Partnership Presence Respect/Self--respect Security Self--Acceptance Self--Care 	<p>CONNECTION CONT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self--Connection Shared Reality Stability Support To know and be known To see and be seen Trust Understanding Warmth <p>PLAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure Excitement Fun Humor Joy Relaxation Stimulation <p>PEACE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance Balance Beauty Communion Ease Equanimity 	<p>PEACE CONT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith Harmony Hope Order Peace--of--mind Space <p>PHYSICAL WELL-BEING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air Care Food Movement/exercise Rest/sleep Safety (protection from harm) Sexual expression Shelter Touch Water <p>AUTONOMY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice Dignity Freedom Independence Self--Expression Space Spontaneity 	<p>MEANING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness Celebration Challenge Clarity Competence Consciousness Contribution Creativity Discovery Efficacy Effectiveness Growth Integration Learning Mourning Movement Participation Presence Progress Purpose Self--expression Stimulation Understanding
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Make a mark next to needs that are important for you in this stage of your life. Next, circle any needs that aren't being met well for you right now. In what ways aren't they being met? How does this impact you?

Describe situations where you find yourself using food or eating as an attempt to meet a need.

What steps could you take to better meet these needs?

EATING AS SELF-CARE

“ And I said to my body, softly: I want to be your friend”. It took a long breath, and replied: I have been waiting my whole life for this. --Unknown

Eating and unmet needs.

Sometimes, when your needs aren't met in the right way, you might turn to food for comfort. When you try to change your eating habits by going on a diet, it often doesn't last because your eating behavior might be a signal of an underlying or deeper issue. Figuring out what's really causing this behavior or the urge to use food or eating for comfort can help.

For some, over- or under-eating is a symptom of not having your needs met. By focusing on and finding better ways to meet those needs, you can make lasting changes. Understanding your needs is key to making changes that stick.

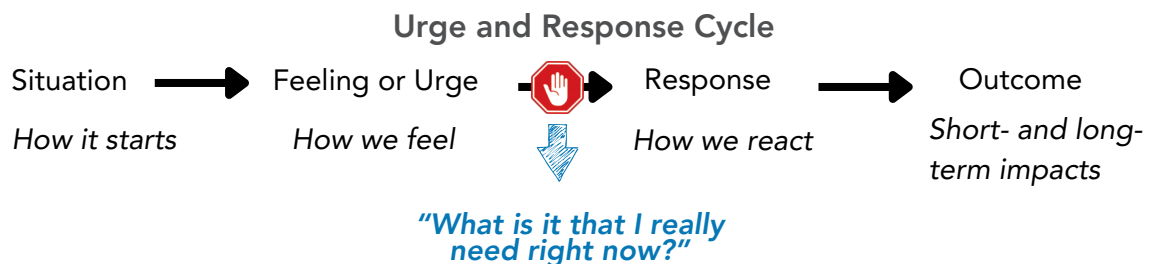
In this discovery process, know that all behavior is purposeful and an attempt to take care of yourself. For many people, eating has been a way to satisfy different needs throughout their lives. Have you thought about what you really need to feel happy and fulfilled? If you find that you often seek comfort or fulfillment in food, it might help to explore what other needs you have. Consider looking at each area of your life to see what you might be missing. We'll complete an activity later in this section that might help.

Eating and self care.

First, eating is a form of self-care. Sometimes eating becomes a misplaced attempt to meet other needs though. Instead of thinking about taking food away (which can lead to feeling deprived), your goal is to learn new self-care strategies and how to use them in place of overeating. These new self-care skills can help you tolerate uncomfortable emotions and experiences and support you to choose more effective ways to meet your needs.

The urge to eat may not be about physical hunger, but rather a hunger for something else, like an emotion or an unmet need. Eating then becomes a misguided attempt to satisfy a need. Unfortunately, you can never get enough of something you don't truly need. If you have eaten when you have needed love, friendship, encouragement, stimulation, physical activity, sleep, etc., you may have noticed that there isn't enough food in the world to satisfy those needs because food is not what you needed. Learning to distinguish your true needs is a lifelong learning process.

Let's examine how you can change this cycle by tuning in to your urges and responses to see if there is perhaps an underlying unmet needs that needs to be addressed.



Reflection: What have you noticed about how needs and eating are connected for you?

CHALLENGES TO MEETING NEEDS

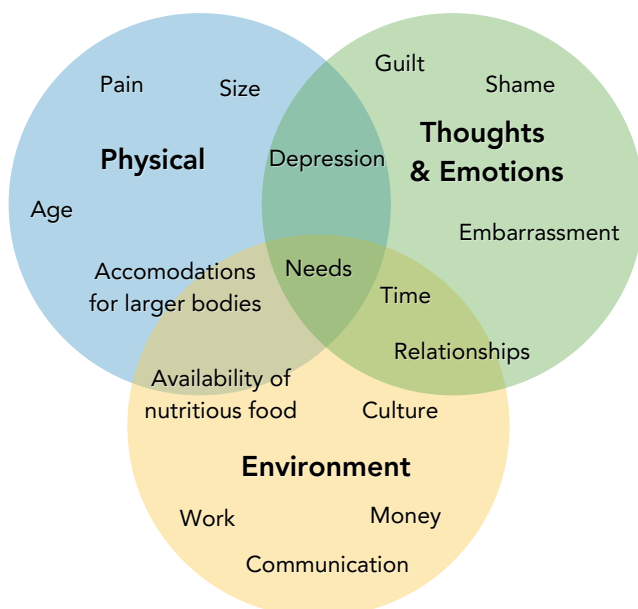
“ Taking care of myself doesn't mean “me first,” it means “me, too.”
 --L.R. Knosts

Managing life.

Even though effective self-care is necessary for optimal wellness, there are several things that can make it difficult to do consistently. Your sense of self-worth, understanding of your needs, and your boundaries and communication skills in relationships can all affect how you care for yourself.

Getting your needs met may not come easily for everyone for many reasons. There are many factors that impact how likely you are to prioritize your needs, including physical, emotional, environmental and financial barriers. Some are within your control, others are not.

Let's personalize it. What are some of your personal barriers? Add them to the circles.



Setting boundaries.

Setting boundaries allows you to find balance in life and prioritize your well-being. By taking care of your physical, emotional, and mental needs, you are better equipped to recognize when boundaries are being crossed and to then clearly communicate your limits. Prioritizing yourself is not selfish; it is necessary for your overall well-being. That doesn't mean it comes naturally or easily for everyone.

If you struggle with boundaries or saying “no” it can help to focus on the good that will come from the boundary and consider your future self and needs. In addition to a simple “No” here are ways to politely decline:

- “Unfortunately, I’ll need to pass on this.”
- “I’m sorry, my friend, but I’m not able to.”
- “Sadly, I can’t.”
- “Thanks, but that’s not going to work for me.”

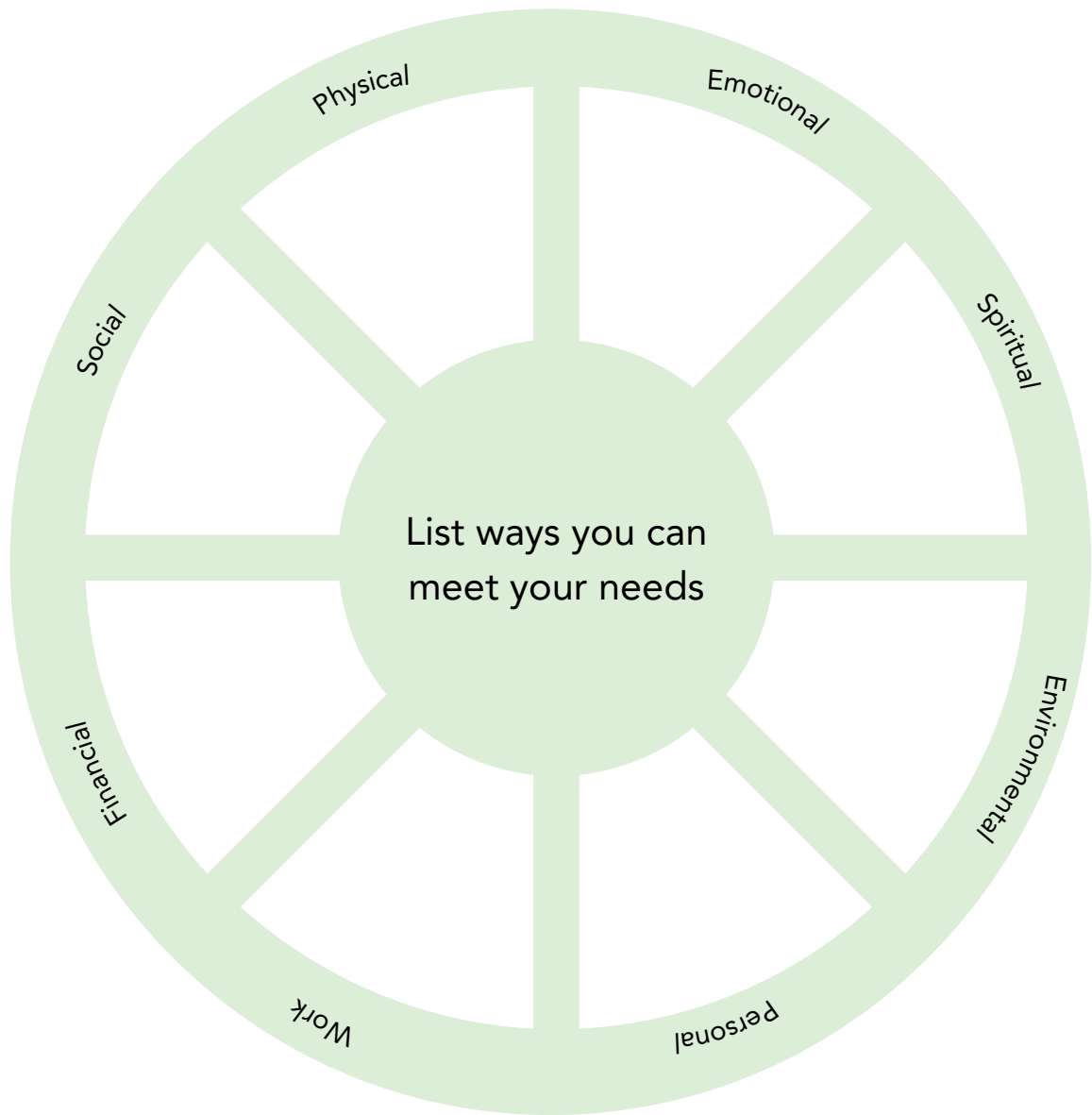
When it comes to setting boundaries, how do you feel? What do you notice about yourself?

Visit page 335 in Maximize Your Body Potential for additional ideas.

Reflection: When you consider what is most important in your life, what would you say are the top priorities? When you think about where you spend most time and effort, does it match your priorities? If not, what would it take to bring them into alignment?

YOUR SELF CARE PLAN

Activity: Using the examples in the chart below as a guide, create a plan for meeting your needs and engaging in self-care across different areas of your life. Write your ideas in the open spaces.



Wellness Promoting Self-care Examples

<p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep • Eating • Joyful movement • Medication • Mindfulness 	<p>Social:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time with friends • Family time • Boundaries • Communication • Volunteering 	<p>Personal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting goals • Values • Chores • Appearance • Hobbies 	<p>Emotional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy coping • Self-compassion • De-stressing • Feeling emotions • Therapy
<p>Spiritual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer • Readings • Meditations • Time outside • Self-reflection 	<p>Environmental:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe living space • Cleanliness • Organized space • Pleasing home 	<p>Financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying bills • Budgeting • Savings • Treating yourself 	<p>Work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundaries • Breaks • Time management • Noticing burnout

CULTIVATING JOY

Joy is a pleasant emotion, as are love, gratitude, harmony, happiness, peace, contentment, and hope. Finding ways to regularly experience feelings of joy and happiness is good for your health. Life is full of stress, and your brain tends to focus on negative experiences. For example, you may have 10 joyful experiences in a day but most easily recall a negative one when asked, "How was your day?" So, to balance your perspective and improve overall well-being, find ways to regularly have experiences that are naturally joyful or happy.

We don't encourage forcing happiness or positivity when you don't feel it as it pulls you away from your own authentic self. However, when you spend time in positive emotions you are improving your overall psychological health and tend to feel more satisfied with your life. This in turn improves your ability and openness to see opportunities in challenges and you are likely to find yourself feeling more engaged, optimistic, and open to new ideas and taking action on them. This can foster greater self-compassion, acceptance, encouragement, and self-worth.

To feel joy, do joyful things.

The steps you take to cultivate joy don't need to be big ones. Rather, it's the act of engaging in activities that bring you joy consistently and intentionally that reap benefits. Science continues to show that "micro-acts" of joy significantly increase your overall emotional well-being, benefits your ability to cope, and reduces stress. Who doesn't need that in their life? According to Gretchen Rubin, author of The Happiness Project, "Happiness isn't something that happens to us; it's a state we can seek to foster."

Ways to foster joy include:

- Gratitude practice
- Acts of kindness
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Celebrations
- Hobbies
- Pets
- Quality time with friends
- Joyful movement
- Speaking kindly to yourself
- Time in nature
- Volunteering

What are some ways that you could practice small acts of joy in the next week?

What brings you a sense of joy and happiness can change over time. Thinking curiously, what brings you joy differently now than in the past? Why do you think that might be?



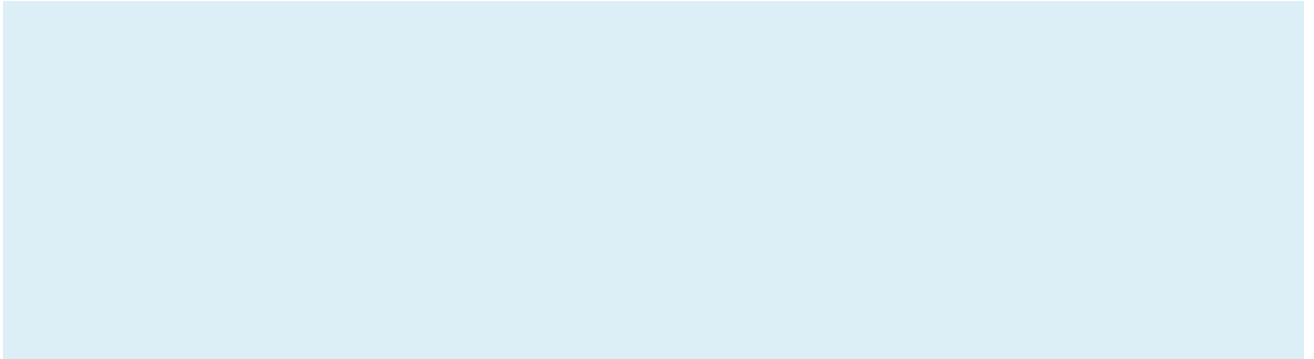
[Learn the Eight Splendid Truths of Happiness](#)



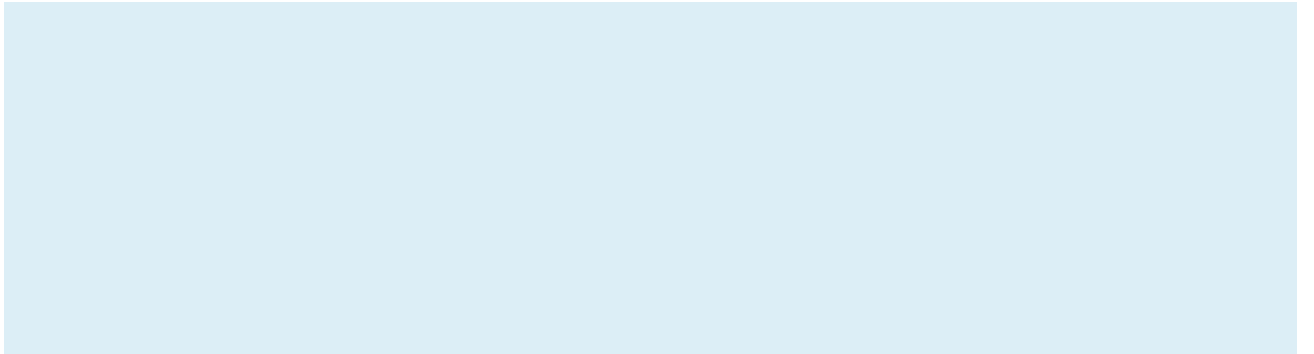
[Discover Keys to Well-being](#)

JOURNAL PROMPTS

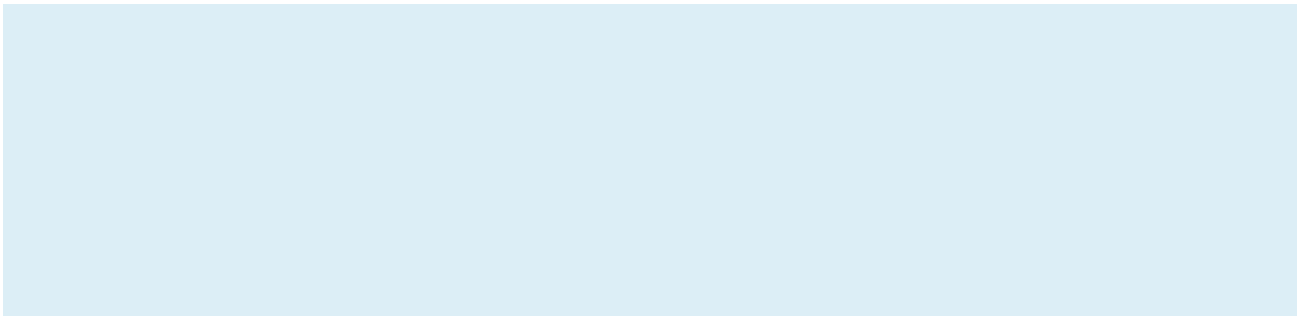
What did you learn about self-care when you were growing up?



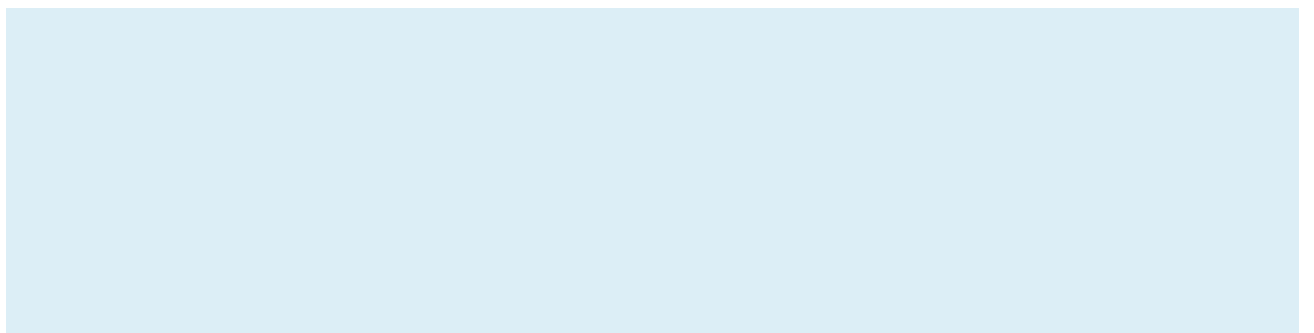
One important way to take care of yourself is being able to say "yes" and "no". This is called having personal boundaries. Sometimes people have difficulty saying "yes" or "no" because they learned that's not acceptable. Describe your relationship with the words yes and no.



Write about times where you feel like you may be eating when you would be better off speaking or communicating with someone.

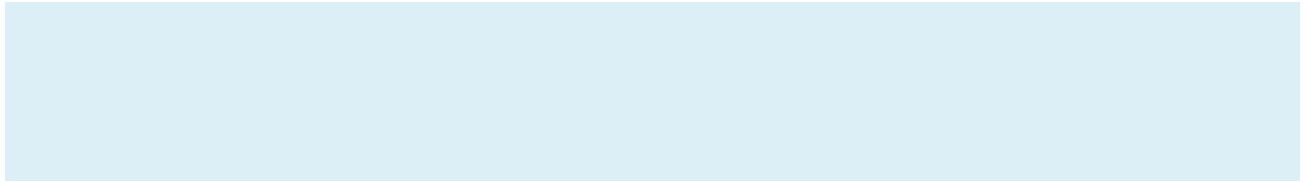


Imagine receiving the same care you give to others. What would that be like for you? What might be different in your life if you cared for yourself in this way?



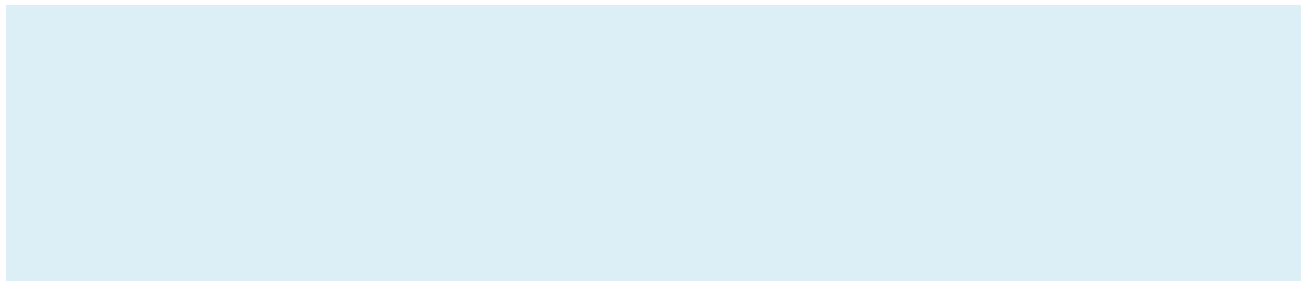
POWER OF SELF REFLECTION

You have been learning how your thoughts, feelings and beliefs influence your choices. How has this module influenced your thinking? What does the "Power of Self" mean to you?

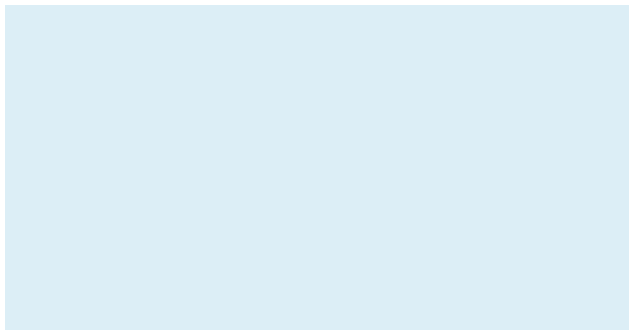


Progress Reflection

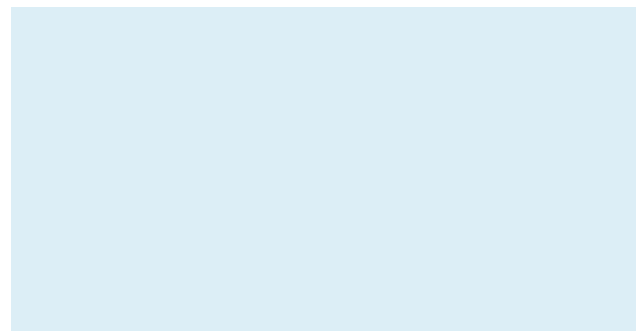
What have you learned about yourself in the past 8 sessions?
What are you taking with you into the next phase?



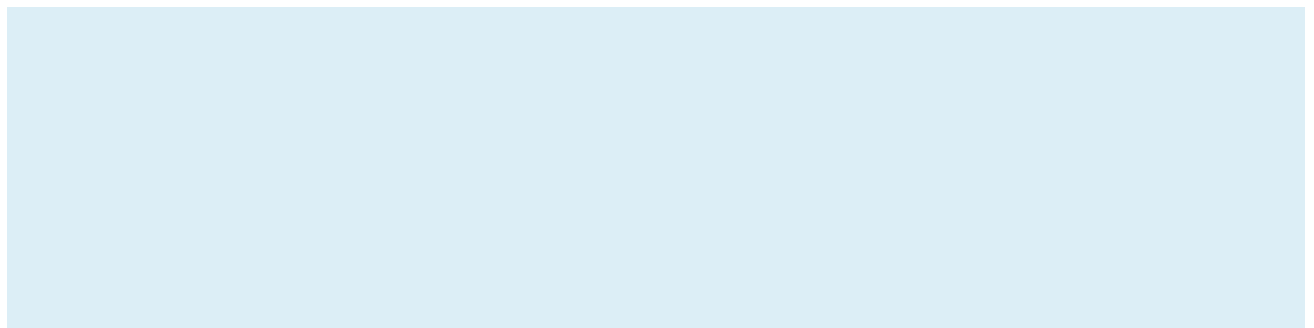
Where did you start?



Where are you today?



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



NOTES

