

MEAL REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

Positive Choice
Integrative Wellness Center

INTRODUCTION & FUNDAMENTALS



About this program	.....	4
Program fundamentals	.....	5
Value of the group	.....	6
Self-compassion	.....	7
Understanding emotions	.....	8
3 D's for coping	.....	9
Mindful awareness	.....	10
Sleep hygiene	.....	11
Joyful movement	.....	12



ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

“ You can't stop the future, you can't rewind the past, the only way to learn the secret is to press play. - [Jay Asher](#)

This program is your chance to explore, reflect, and honor the journey that brought you here. Whether you already have a vision for your future or are still discovering what this experience could mean for you, we're here to support you every step of the way.

We've designed a system to help you better understand the “why” behind your actions—how your thoughts, emotions, and habits have taken shape over time. Along the way, you'll gain deeper insight into yourself, your needs, and how to care for your well-being in the most meaningful way possible.

Program overview:

1. **Fundamentals:** We believe that there are foundational skills and habits that must be in place to support physical and mental wellness. We'll start with an overview and assessment of how you are doing across these key areas. We will check in on them from time to time throughout the program.
2. **Power of Change:** We will encourage you to move beyond willpower by developing an understanding of why you do what you do so you can develop a meaningful action plan that supports the change you want to see in your life.
3. **Power of Self:** We will help you to nurture a sense of self-worth that empowers you to take on the changes required to achieve your goals.
4. **Other modules:** Once you have completed Power of Change and Power of Self, you may choose to explore our other classes, including: Solutions (Emotional & Binge Eating Support), Mindful Living, or our BLAST fitness program.
5. Ongoing support after meal replacements is included through our maintenance and Boosters program.



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.



Three Principles of Self-Compassion

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

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: How can being more mindful reduce your daily stress?

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 probably already know the types of movement that are important for your health. Despite knowing all that, getting started can still be challenging. What's important is to accept where you are now, without judgement, and make a plan to do just a bit more. If you aren't already active, start moving today and take it slow. Ultimately, 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 (stairs, parking further away)
- Incorporate moderate-intensity activity (walking 10-15 minutes, gardening)
- Incorporate high-intensity movement (brisk walking, swimming, Zumba)
- Do muscle strengthening (weights, resistance bands, classes)



Free
fitness
videos

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. During this program, begin focusing on having fun and enjoying the way moving makes you feel. Consider moving your body when you spend time with a friend, listen to music you love, or visit a beautiful outdoor space.

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.

W O R K B O O K

Medically-supervised
Meal Replacement Program



POWER OF CHANGE

Positive Choice
Integrative Wellness Center

www.positivechoice.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

C	About this module	3
	Module overview	4
01	WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO	
	Your Personal Why	6
	Motivators	7
	Personal Why activity	8
	Goal setting	9
	Readiness to change	10
	Journal prompts	11
02	BARRIERS TO CHANGE	
	Goals and habits	14
	Why is it so hard?	15
	Your habits, your brain	17
	Feelings wheel	18
	Managing urges and cravings	19
	Name it to tame it	21
	Emotions	23
	Emotion regulation	24
	Flipping your lid	25
	Regulating with food	26
	Resilience	27
	Building resilience	28
	Journal prompts	31
03	A WAY FORWARD	
	Creating your personal guide	34
	Willingness and action plan	35
	When it's not working	36
	Power of Change reflection	37
	Journal prompts	38

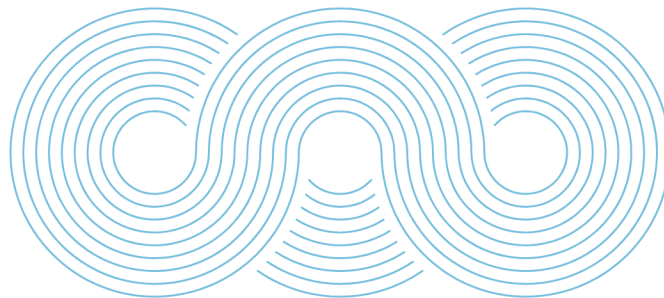
ABOUT THIS MODULE

“ The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new. --Socrates

Over the next 8 weeks we will discuss topics related to the power of change including understanding why you do what you do, the barriers that you may encounter when making changes, and how to great a personal path forward using insights from the weekly discussions. The intention is that by better understanding your underlying motivators, how your brain reacts and makes decision, and your emotions and how they affect you, you will then better understand how to set goals that work with you and for you. When you understand these, you'll develop self-compassion when you encounter challenges and release your reliance on willpower to move forward on y our path to healthier behaviors.

We are all capable of change and the tools and skills you will practice throughout this module are invaluable for long-term success and happiness.

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.



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, relying on willpower or determination, saying "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.



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 unique and reflects what truly matters most in your 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.

What led you to join this program? Let’s explore your motivators.

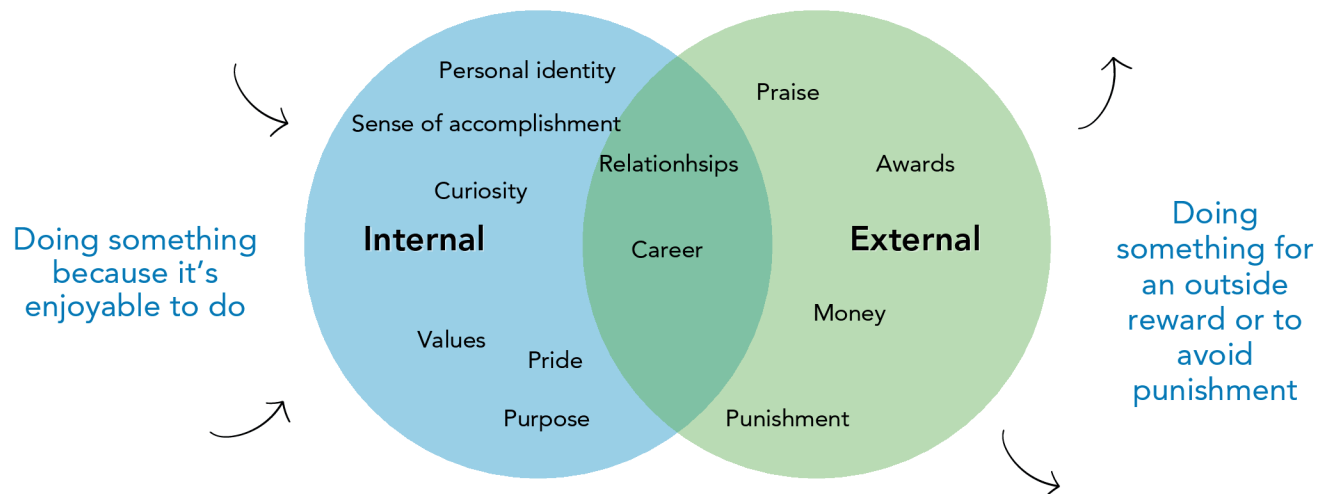
Take a moment to reflect on what led you to join this program now. Was there a particular event or was it a buildup of reasons? There will be external and internal motivations that brought you here. As you prepare to write your Personal Why, let’s first reflect on your motivators.

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. Examples include exercising because you feel more energetic when you are done or preparing healthy meals because you love cooking.

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 rewarded not because you want to. You often benefit from external motivators most when you are trying to learn something new or when you need to do something that feels unpleasant.



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

MOTIVATORS

My Personal Motivators

When it comes to your internal motivation for change, consider these questions:

1. What personal goals or values are driving you to make this change?
2. How do you feel when you think about achieving this change?
3. Can you describe a time when you felt proud of yourself for working towards this goal?
4. What long-term benefits do you hope to gain from this change?

When it comes to external motivation for change, consider these questions:

1. Are there external rewards or recognition you hope to receive from making this change?
2. How do the opinions of others influence your desire to change?
3. What external pressures or expectations are motivating you to pursue this change?
4. Are there any tangible benefits (e.g., financial, social) that you expect from this change?
5. How does your environment or social circle support or hinder your efforts to change this habit?

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

Reflecting on what is possible for your future is a powerful tool to help keep you motivated as you make health changes. It can also align your current habits with your Personal Why.

Do a thought experiment. Imagine yourself in the future when you have met your desired goals. How do you feel? What are doing?

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 when embarking on change.



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?

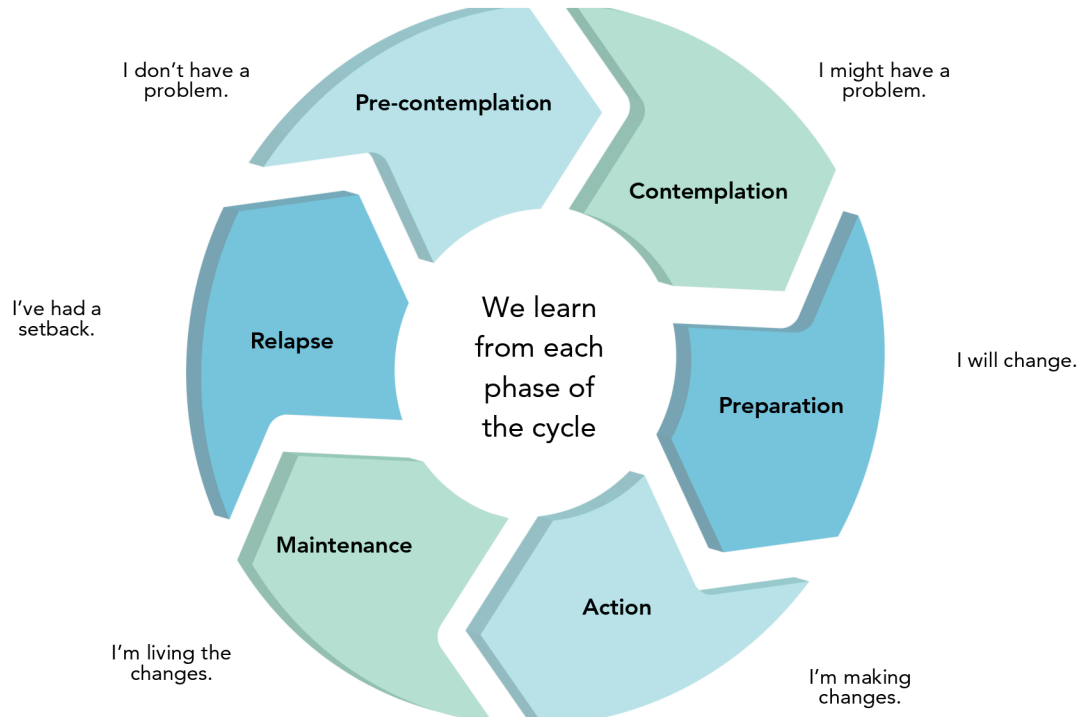
How can this program (your group members or our staff) support you? How can you find support from other people in your life?

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.

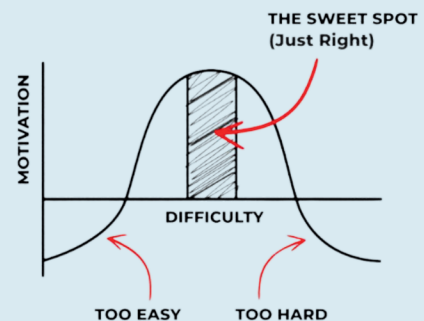
Reflecting on the habit you wrote as your starting point, circle where you are in the change process. Be as honest and realistic as possible. Consider why you chose this stage vs one before or after it.

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.

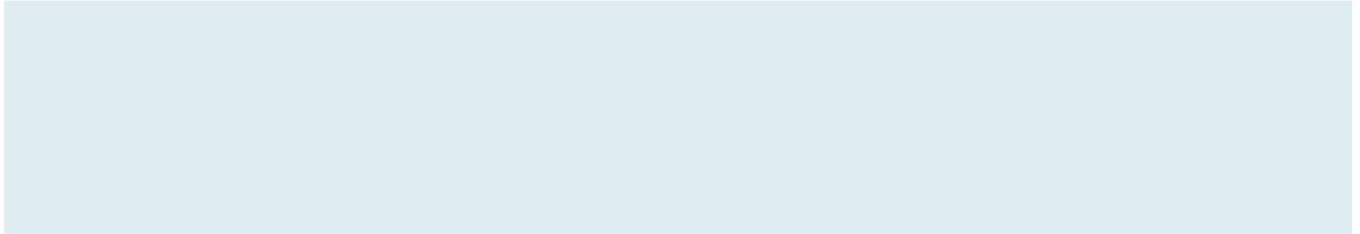
As humans, we thrive when we take on tasks that present a challenge but aren't overwhelmingly difficult. In *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, this is referred to as the "Goldilocks Rule," doing just enough to keep us interested but not so much that we see it as too difficult and get stuck.

THE GOLDILOCKS RULE

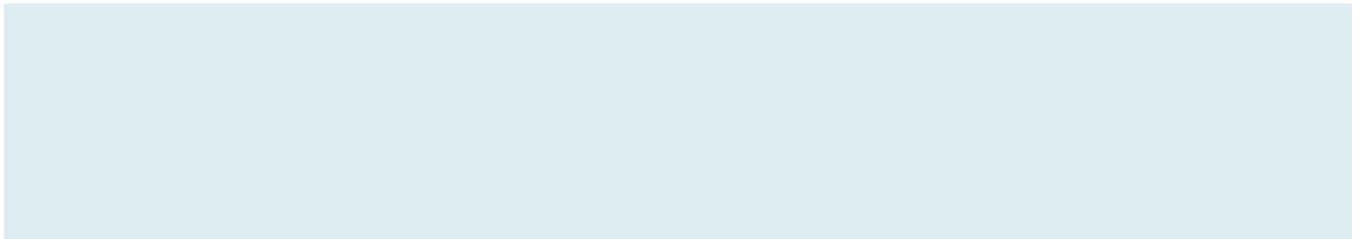


JOURNAL PROMPTS

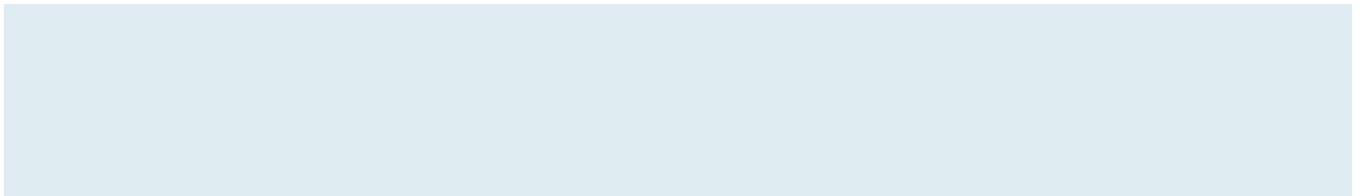
Write a list of at least five accomplishments that you have achieved in life along with the qualities within you that allowed you to accomplish these things (e.g., accomplishment-finishing college or high school, positive qualities-perseverance, intelligence, etc.).



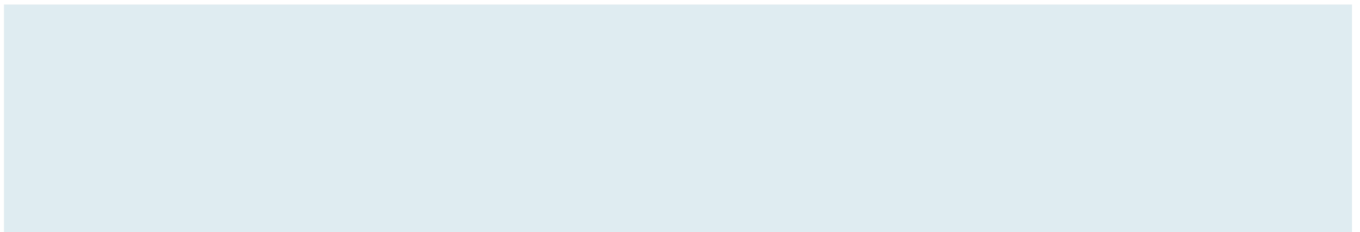
Imagine that you have an all-knowing voice inside of you that perceives all that you truly need. Now give the hesitant part of yourself a voice as well and allow these two parts to have a dialogue through writing and perhaps discover some underlying beliefs and needs in the process.



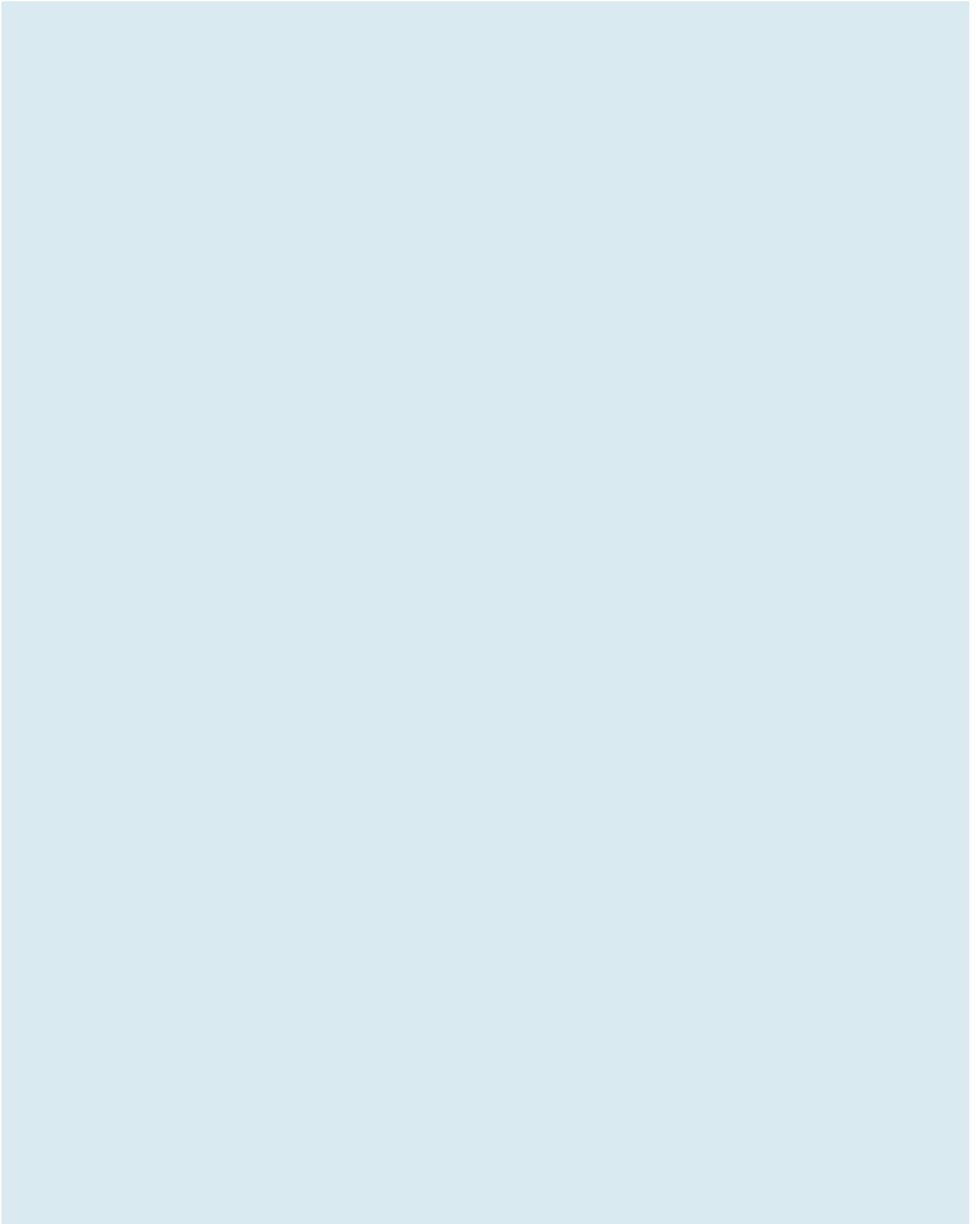
What experiences have you had with exercise, both pleasant and unpleasant?



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.



NOTES



PART
02

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Making changes comes with challenges that are unique to you. Understanding your beliefs, needs, emotions, self-talk, and environment can help you practice self-compassion and make the process of change feel less overwhelming and more successful for the long-term.



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.

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 habits are what you put into place to make it happen. An example may be a goal to drink 64 ounces of water daily. The habits you use might include filling up your water bottle in the morning, reminders on your phone to take a sip, or logging in a tracking app to keep track of ounces you've drank. Other systems that we will focus on in this module include understanding and regulating emotions and building resilience during challenging times.

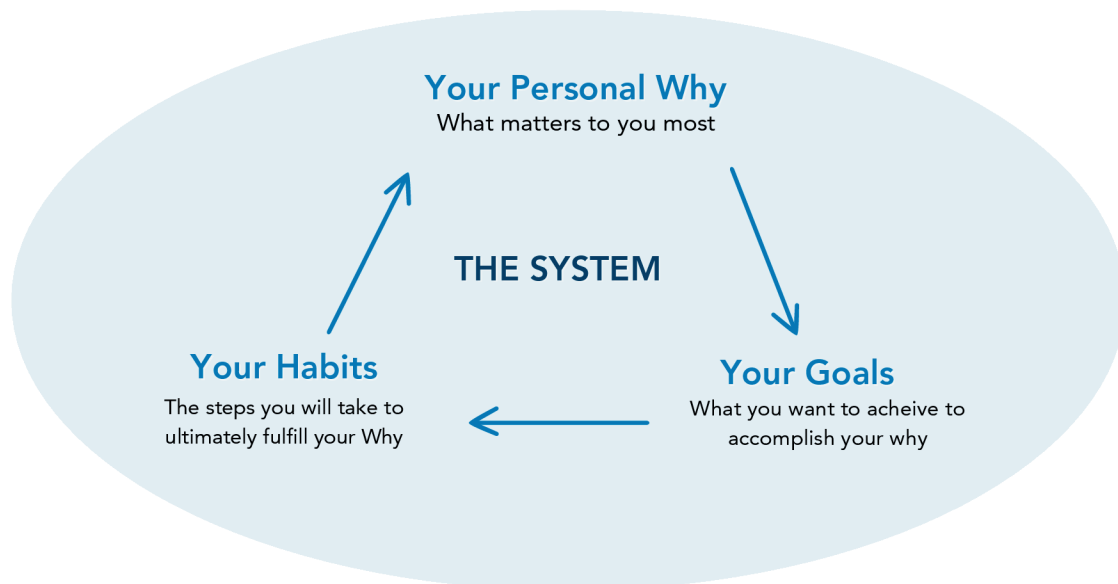
Learn more about Atomic Habits



Watch a brief overview about habit change



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



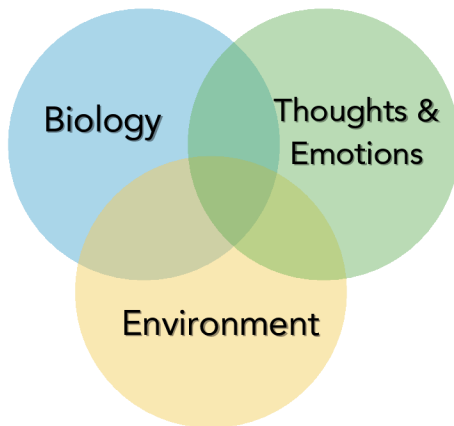
WHY IS IT SO HARD?

“ 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 who 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.

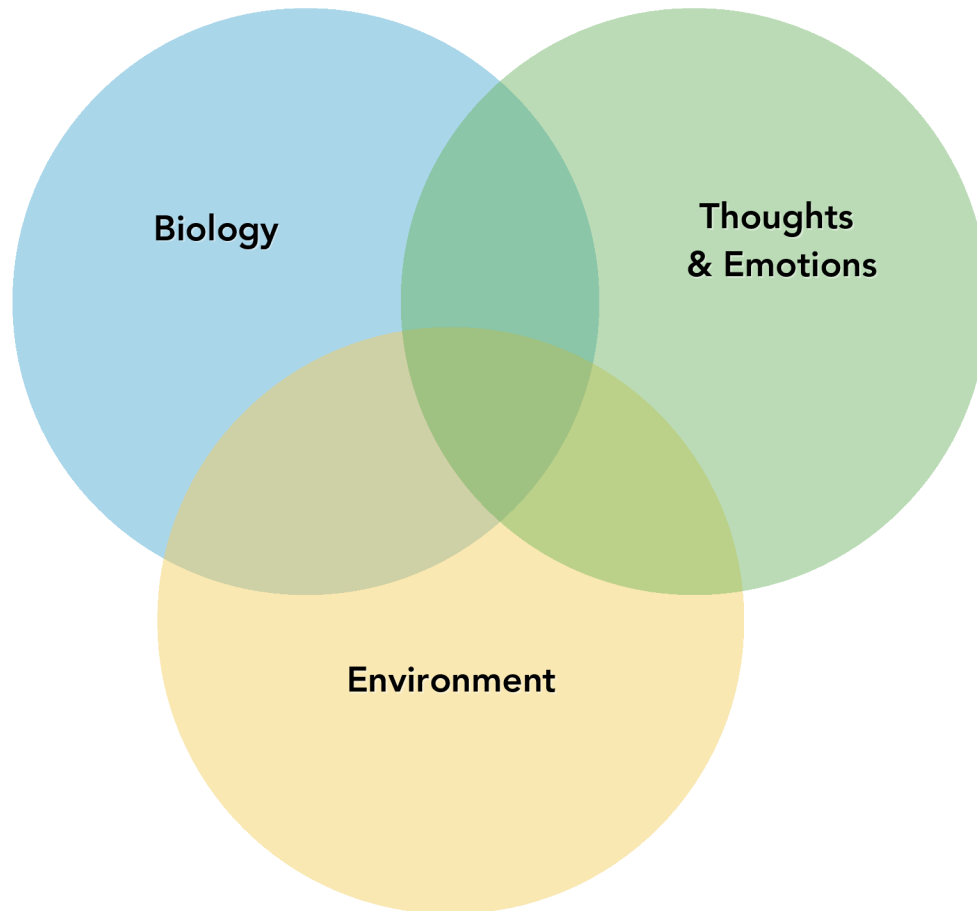
Your thoughts and emotions play a large role in how able and confident you feel in your daily choices and experiences. Encouraging self-talk makes change more likely whereas depression and the thoughts that accompany it make changes feel less possible.

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?

A large, empty light blue rectangular box intended for the user to write their reflection.

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 you 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

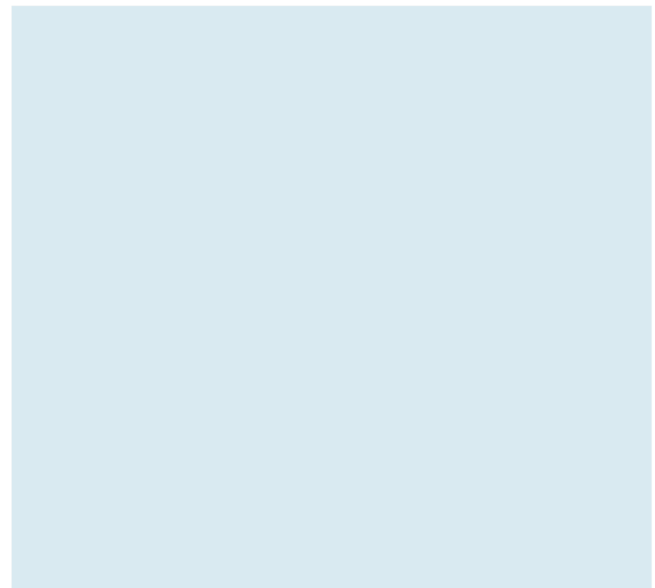
Learn more about neuroplasticity



Fun exercises to improve neuroplasticity



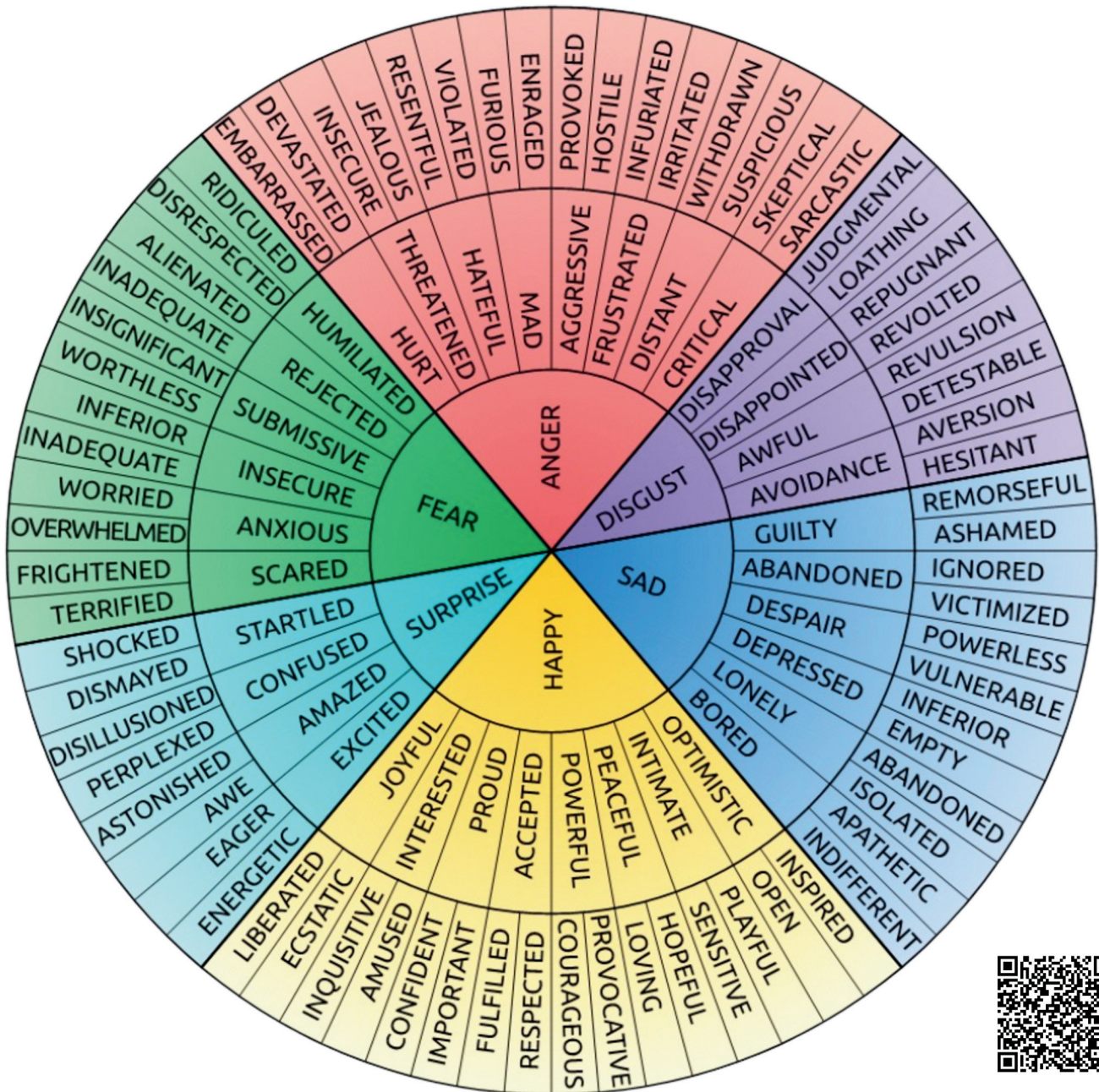
Which habits will be hardest for you to change and why? How can you support yourself best in the change process?



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?

Managing Urges and Cravings

Feelings and Urges

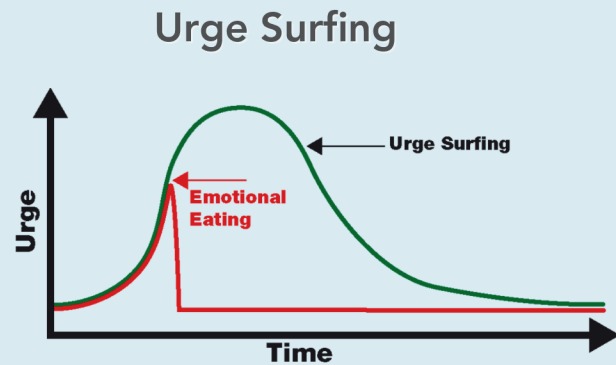
Throughout a day, you experience a variety of feelings or urges. Often you are totally unaffected by them. Other times they'll trigger you to feel discomfort, a sensation that many people avoid, intentionally or unintentionally. Learning to recognize when to act on an urge or feeling is an important 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 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

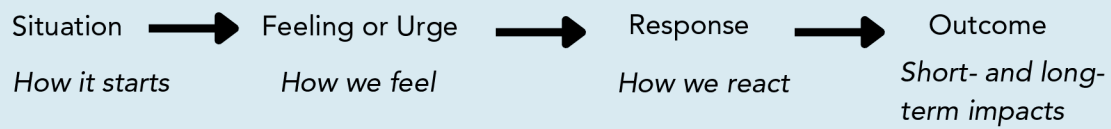


BARRIERS TO CHANGE

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?

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
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						

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 and what they mean to you about your experiences.

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 other avoidance behaviors have become ways you manage the discomfort of emotions.

All emotions are helpful, even when they are uncomfortable. The discomfort is important for grabbing your 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.



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

Stroke of Insight Ted Talk



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 effectively in stressful situations. 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



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.

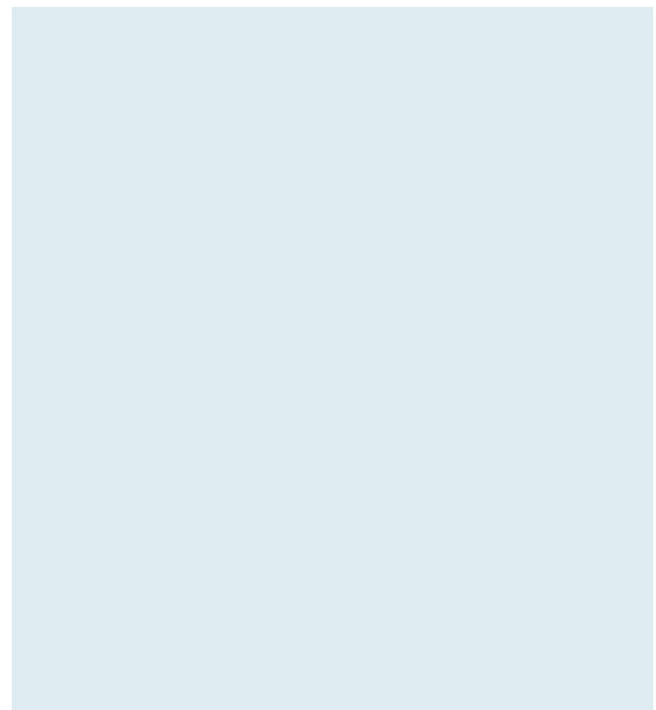
You can learn how to recognize when you are dysregulated and help yourself use strategies to return back to a regulated state, "closing the lid." Self-regulation strategies include breath work, gentle movement, and using grounding activities to tune into your senses.



Watch to learn more about the hand model



What situations tend to leave you feeling like your emotions are getting the best of you?
What self-regulation skills can you practice to help invite logical thinking back online?



Regulating with Food

Have you ever eaten to manage your feelings? 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

The next time you're in a situation where you are choosing whether or not to eat, avoid telling yourself NO (this tends to trigger deprivation) and instead try using other tools to regulate first. Go through several tools and then decide whether or not to eat in the end. If you decide to eat, that's okay! Practice self-compassion if you feel upset afterwards because you've made a big step toward breaking the emotional eating cycle. **To prepare for the next situation like this, mark 5 tools from page C-24 that you will try before choosing food.**

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

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

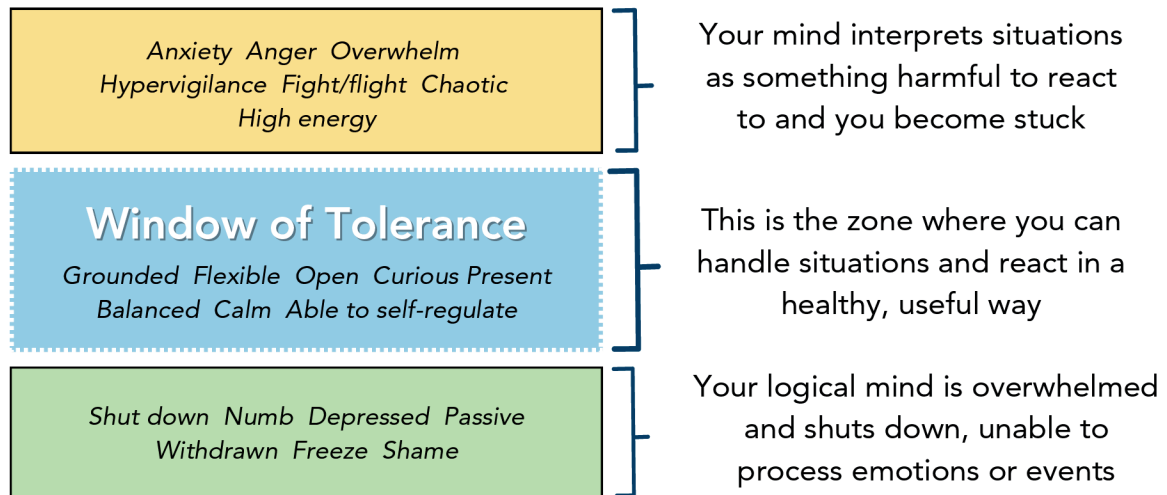
Emotional encouragement, assistance, and validation between each other

Growth mindset

Viewing challenges as opportunities for personal development

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.



Your window of tolerance plays an important role in the urge response cycle by impacting how you experience and respond to feelings and urges. Let’s look at two different reactions to the same situation. Imagine you have a disagreement with your partner. You feel mad about something they say to you.

Option A: You respond back angrily, and it escalates the conflict.

Option B: You decide to pause the conversation and take a walk or deep breaths before responding.

Responses tend to be more defensive from outside your window of tolerance because your mind and body are in stress mode and trying to protect you. But when you're within your window of tolerance and feel more calm, you can respond with more understanding, both to yourself and others, because your body and brain aren't in high alert ("Flipping Your Lid.")

In general, how would you describe your window of tolerance? Wider or narrower?

What are things that tend to open and close your window of tolerance?

How have you used eating to tolerate distress? How does it impact you?

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 situations 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



BARRIERS TO CHANGE

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Integrating the following techniques can strengthen your resilience:

Stress reduction techniques	<p>Practice stress reduction techniques (breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, or yoga) to lower cortisol levels and alleviate stress.</p> <p>What are stress reduction techniques that would help you?</p>
Mindful living practices	<p>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.</p> <p>Which mindful living practices could you try this week?</p>
Healthy, happy distractions	<p>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.</p> <p>What are some happy distractions that you will try?</p>
Social support	<p>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.</p> <p>What are your favorite ways to connect with others?</p>
Changing the way you think	<p>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.</p> <p>Write down 5 things that you are grateful for (consider doing this daily for the next week!)</p>

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

JOURNAL PROMPTS

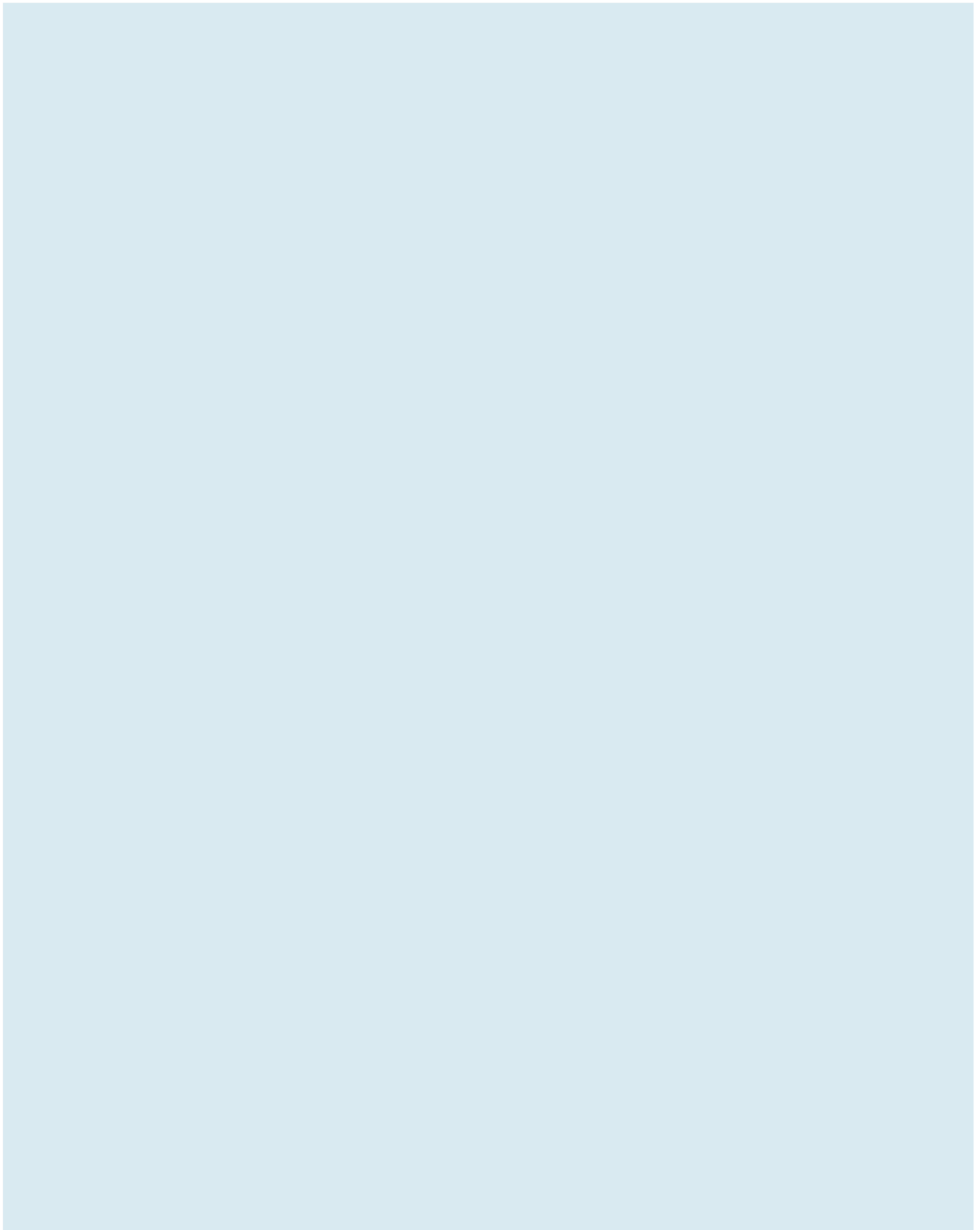
As a result of not being able to use food, you may find yourself experiencing feelings and thoughts you are not accustomed to sitting with. Write about any that you have experienced and what you wanted to do in response to those thoughts and feelings.

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.

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.



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 requires effort, time, 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.

**What does your self-care look like?
When is self-care hard?**

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.

What is one of your most important values right now?

What goal could you work toward that aligns with this value?

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. Which will you use?

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
exercise

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.

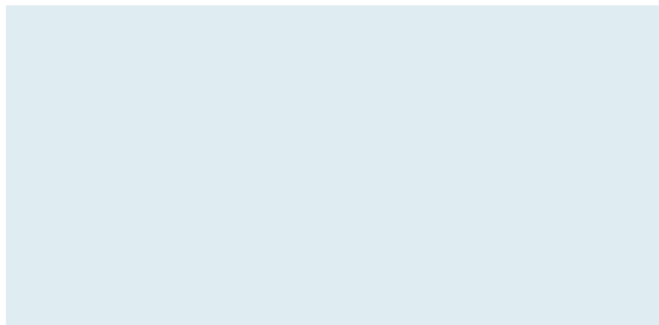
It's not just willpower.

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, when negative thoughts and feelings emerge, when you have conflicts with others, or your social influences become difficult to navigate. 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.

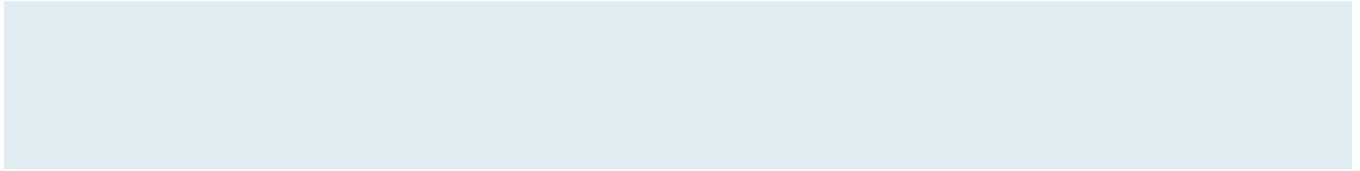
Assure your needs are met

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.

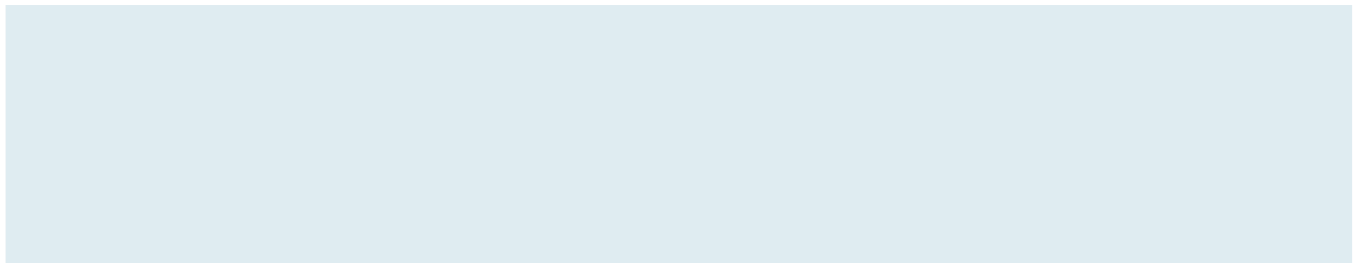
POWER OF CHANGE REFLECTION

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?

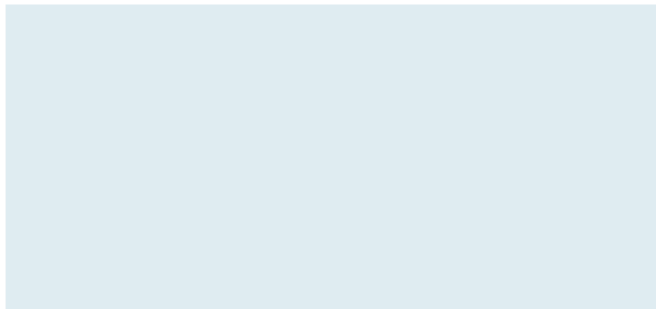


Progress Reflection

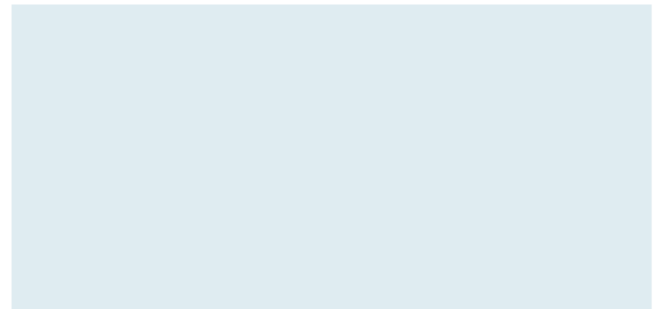
What have you learned about yourself in the past 8 sessions?
What lessons are you taking with you into the next phase?



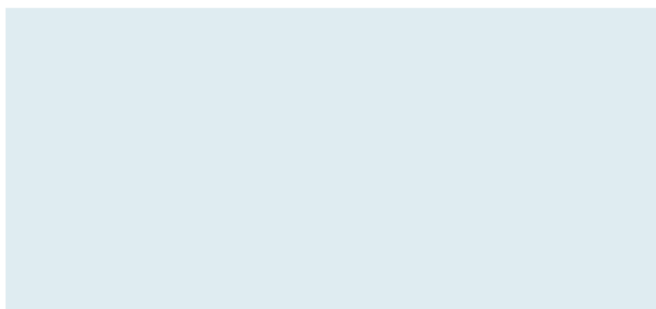
Where did you start?



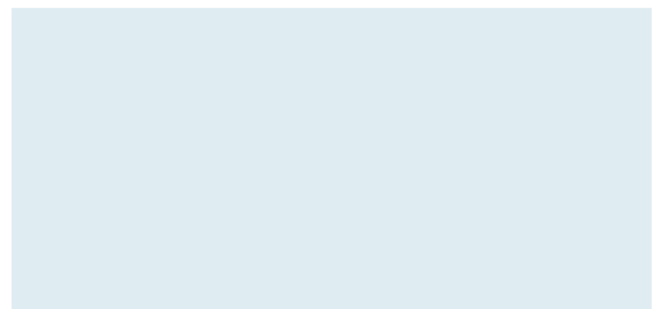
Where are you today?



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?



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?"*

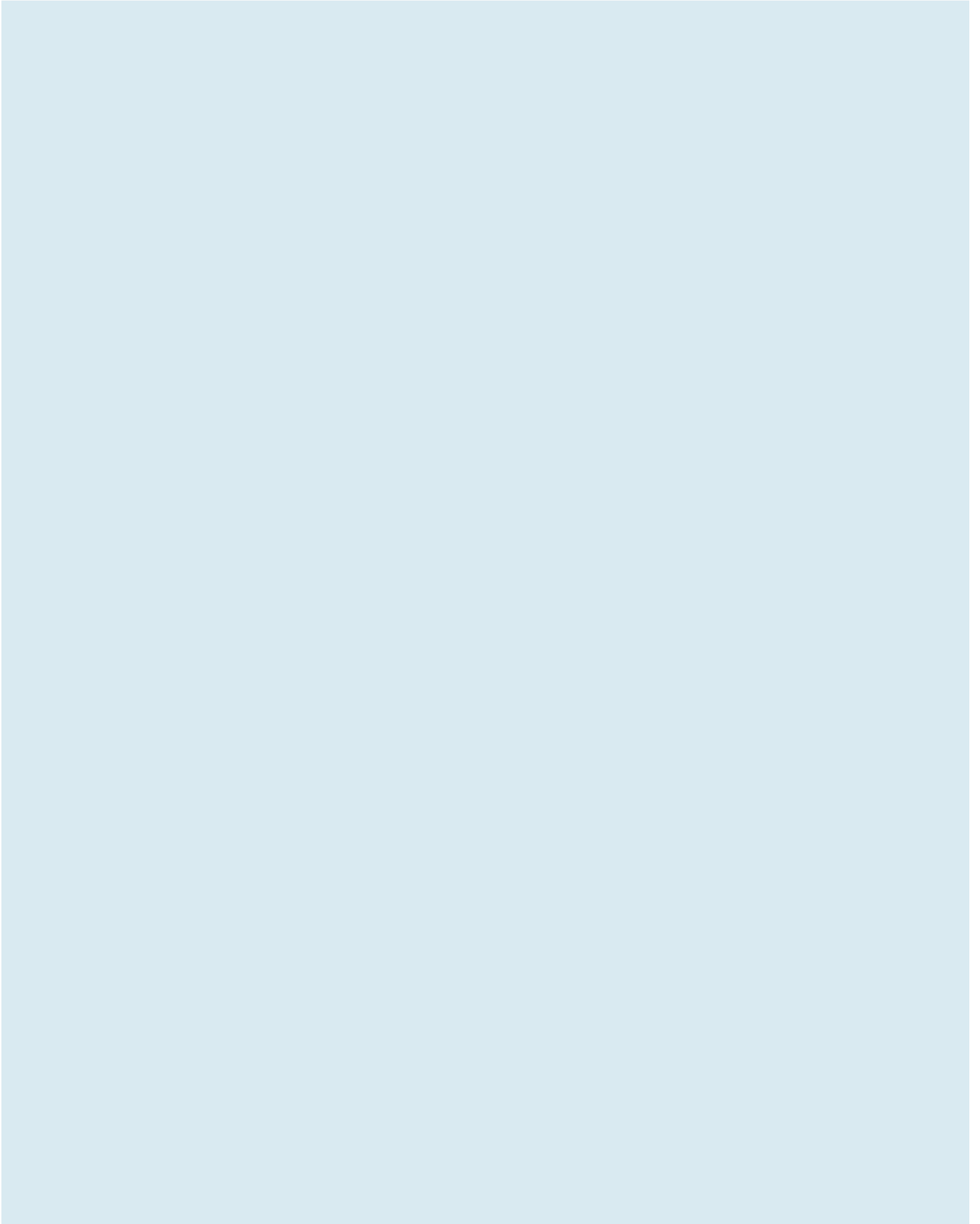
Identifying and communicating your needs will support you during times of change.

- 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.

NOTES



Medically-supervised
Meal Replacement Program



POWER OF SELF

Positive Choice
Integrative Wellness Center

TABLE OF CONTENTS



S	About this module	.....	3
	Goal setting	.....	4
	Module overview	.....	5
01	YOUR THOUGHTS		
	Self-talk	.....	7
	Negative thinking traps	.....	8
	Challenging negative thinking	.....	9
	Cultivate positive thinking	.....	10
	Core beliefs	.....	11
	Changing unhelpful beliefs	.....	12
	Journal prompts	.....	13
02	BODY IMAGE		
	What is body image?	.....	17
	Body image reflections	.....	18
	Body acceptance	.....	19
	Cultivating body appreciation	.....	20
	A letter to and from your body	.....	21
	Journal prompts	.....	22
03	TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF		
	Your thoughts on self-care	.....	25
	What is self-care?	.....	26
	Listening to your body	.....	27
	Needs and self-care	.....	28
	Needs list	.....	29
	Eating as self-care	.....	30
	Challenges to meeting needs	.....	31
	Your self-care plan	.....	32
	Cultivating joy	.....	33
	Journal prompts	.....	34
	Power of Self reflection activity	.....	35

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.

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

The way you think and speak to yourself shapes your beliefs, guiding your choices and the attitudes you hold—both about yourself and the world around you. In this series, we'll explore how these thoughts manifest in your life and how you can cultivate a mindset that supports and uplifts you. Many factors influence your beliefs and thought patterns. In the first part of this series, we'll examine these influences, helping you release unhelpful perspectives and embrace those that empower you.

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

The way you speak to yourself shapes your beliefs, guiding your choices and the outlook you carry—both about yourself and the world around you.



SELF-TALK

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

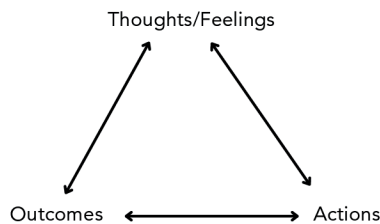
What you say to yourself matters.

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. Since 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 would be 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.

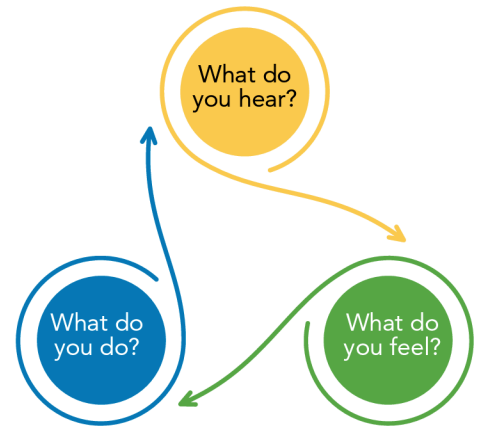
<p>Discounting the Positive Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. <i>"I had a bad week because I saw that my weight went up when I stepped on the scale today."</i></p>	<p>Should Statements The belief that things should be a certain way. <i>"I should be able to stick to my plan." Or "I should lose weight every week if I'm following my diet."</i></p>	<p>All-or-Nothing Thinking Thinking in absolutes and extremes, often using terms such as always, never, or every. <i>"I already blew my diet plan. I might as well eat whatever I want and start my plan again tomorrow."</i></p>
<p>Jumping to Conclusions Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence. <i>"My weight stayed stable this week so obviously this program isn't working."</i></p>	<p>Mind Reading Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. <i>"They probably think I'm so lazy when they see how fat I am."</i></p>	<p>Fortune Telling The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence. <i>"I've regained weight before, so I will regain it again."</i></p>
<p>Magical Thinking The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. <i>"If I lose weight, I'll finally be able to love myself."</i></p>	<p>Personalization The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. <i>"My boss seemed to be in a bad mood during our meeting, I must have done something to upset her."</i></p>	<p>Emotional Reasoning The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. <i>"I feel so insecure, everyone must think I'm a loser."</i></p>
<p>Magnification/Minimization Exaggerating the importance of negative events or minimizing the importance of positive events. <i>"My mistake during the presentation ruined the whole thing."</i></p>	<p>Catastrophizing Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation. <i>"If I let myself eat at the party, I'll completely go off the rails and never be able to get back on track."</i></p>	<p>Overgeneralization Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. <i>"I felt awkward during my interview. I'm always so awkward."</i></p>

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. How does this impact how you feel and what you do?



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:



Self-compassion exercises

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

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 S-33 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.

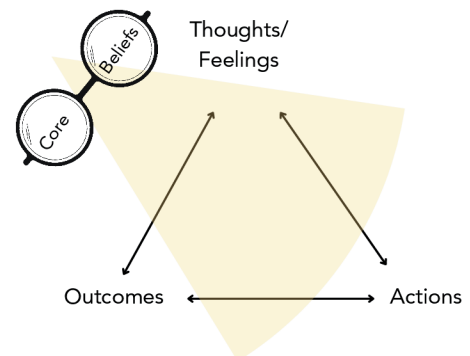
Think of your belief system like a pair of glasses that shape how you see the world. The beliefs you hold act like the prescription for those glasses, helping you understand your own reality. These beliefs can influence your thoughts, feelings, and the choices you make every day.

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!

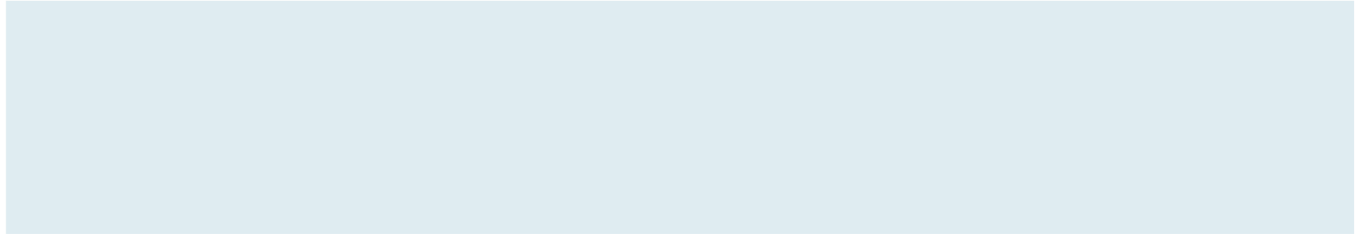
**How can you show yourself compassion during
times when you feel torn between two beliefs?**

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

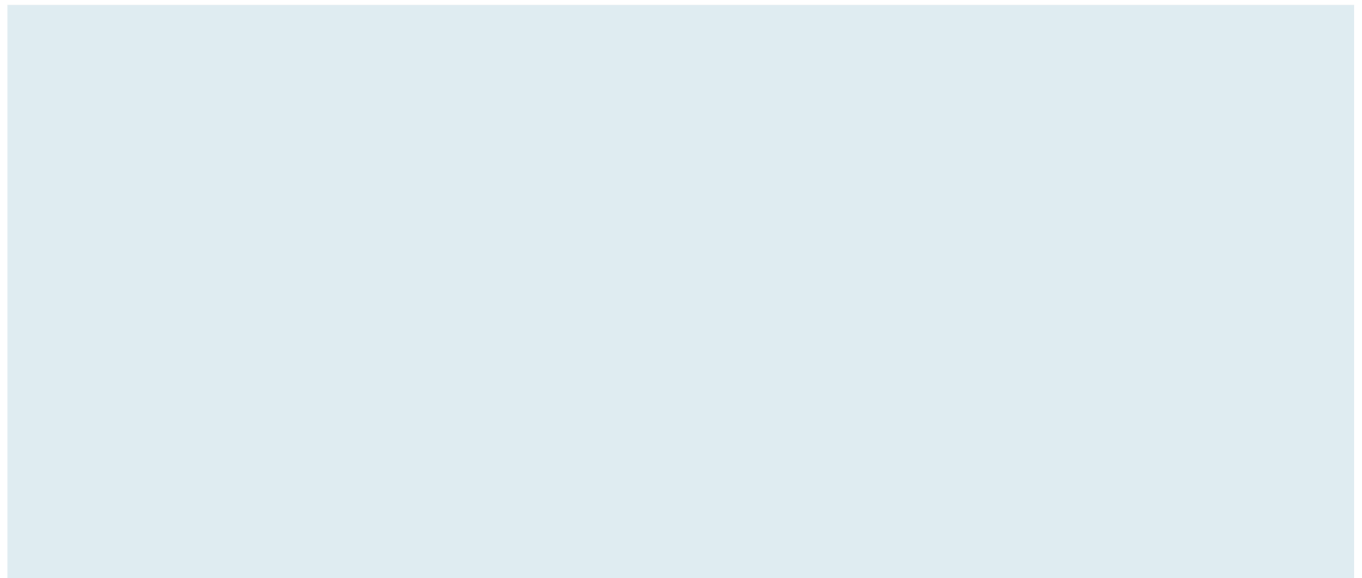
Reflection: Imagine holding a dialogue back and forth between two competing beliefs and then (maybe) allow your wisest self to moderate the dialogue. What would this sound like?

JOURNAL PROMPTS

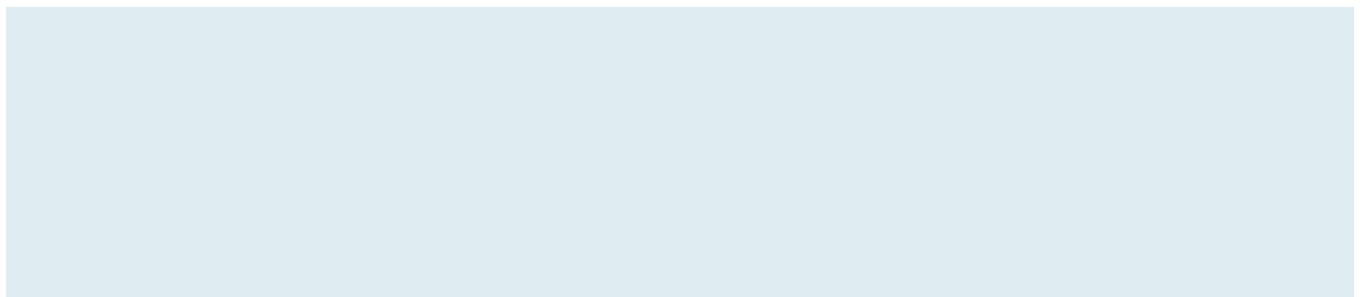
How much of my day do I spend in my head? How aware am I of the thoughts and conversations in my mind?



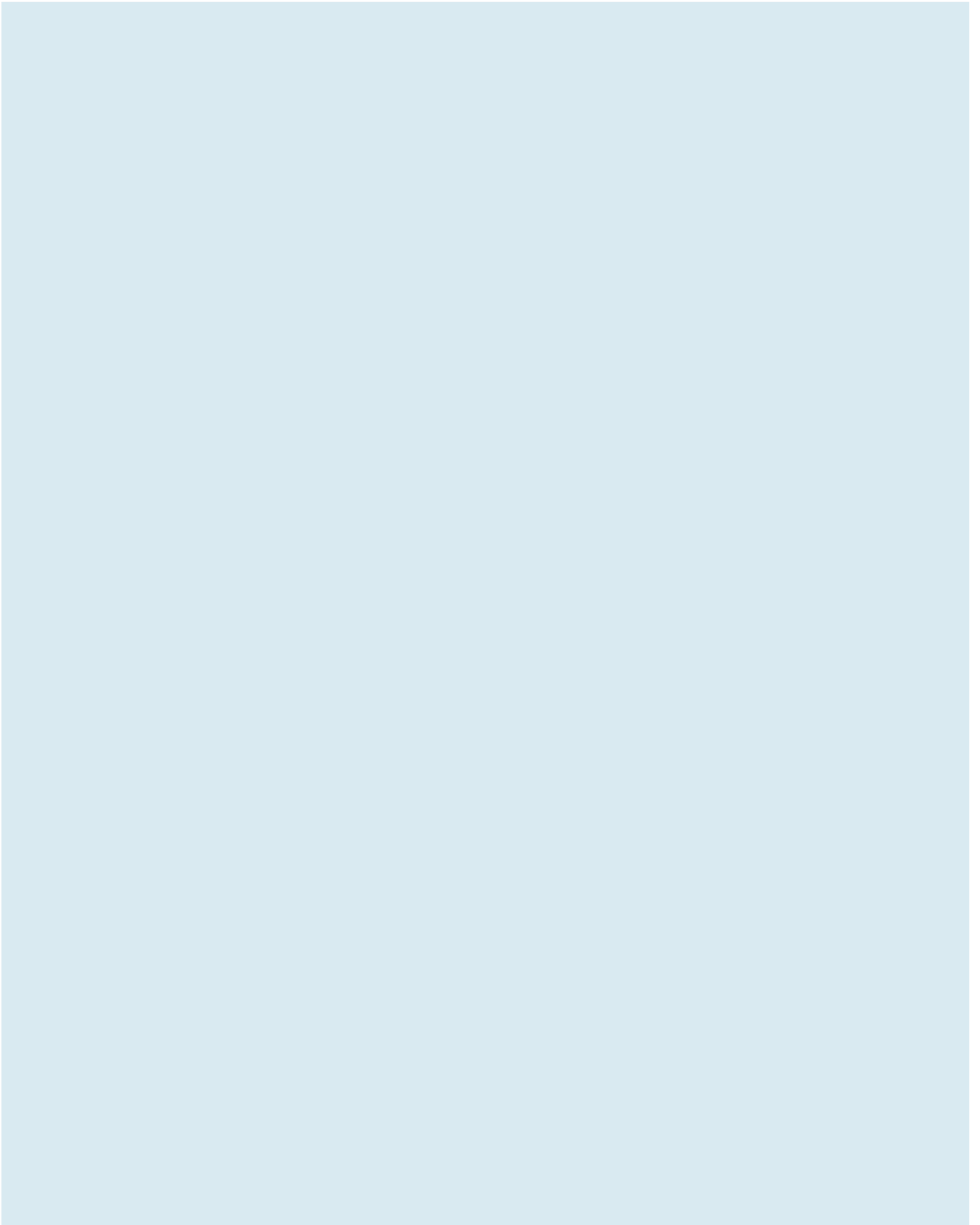
How we talk to ourselves may be a combination of different "inner voices" that develop over time. In Ch. 12 of Maximize Your Body Potential, these voices are described with names like, "The Critic," "The Rule Maker," "Procrastinator," "The Perfectionist," "The Nurturer" or "The Pleaser," etc. After reading 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



P A R T

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 what you think, feel, and believe about your body. It includes how you see yourself and how you feel in your body. 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."

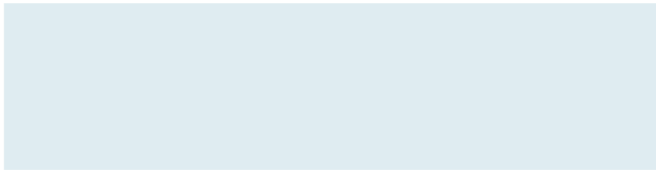
If you are working on improving body image, engaging in activities that make you feel good, surrounding yourself with positive messages and supportive people can also help.

Impacts of Body Image

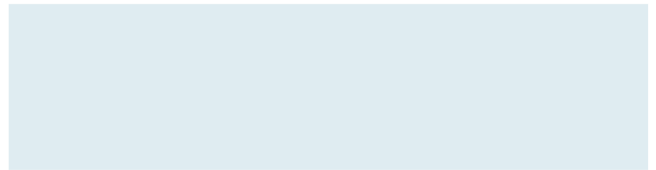
<div style="background: linear-gradient(to right, red, orange, yellow); padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; display: inline-block;">Negative</div>	<div style="background: linear-gradient(to right, green, cyan, blue); padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; display: inline-block;">Neutral</div>	<div style="background: linear-gradient(to right, blue, purple, magenta); padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; display: inline-block;">Positive</div>
<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

BODY IMAGE REFLECTIONS

What are words or phrases you'd use to describe your body? This includes thoughts about your body size, shape, abilities, and appearance.



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?

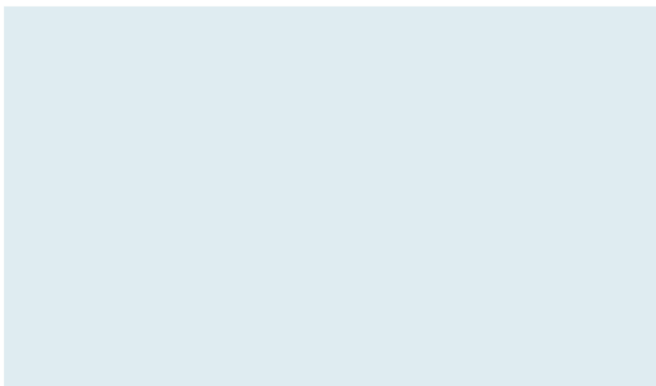


How do you behave in response to your body image? Consider how you eat, dress, exercise, or present yourself socially.

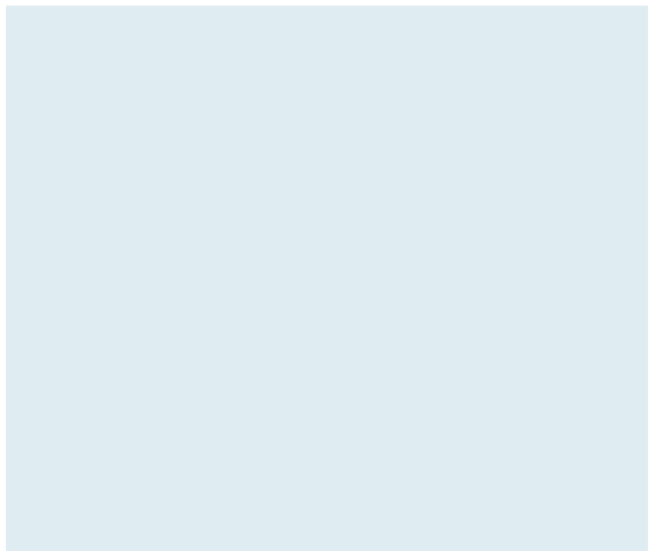


How have your culture and family impacted your views on body image? Some perspectives to consider:

- 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?



Reflection: Considering your responses to the above questions, how does your current body image impact you?

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 allowing your body to be 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.

body part

Complete the following sentence:

I am _____'s _____.
your name

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

Thank you body for taking care of me

I deserve to wear clothes I love

My arms allow me to embrace those I love

My stomach deserves to be fed no matter what

I will not sacrifice my wellbeing to be a certain size

I do not have to feel comfortable in my skin to feel and be worthy of respect

My legs are strong and carry me through my day

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

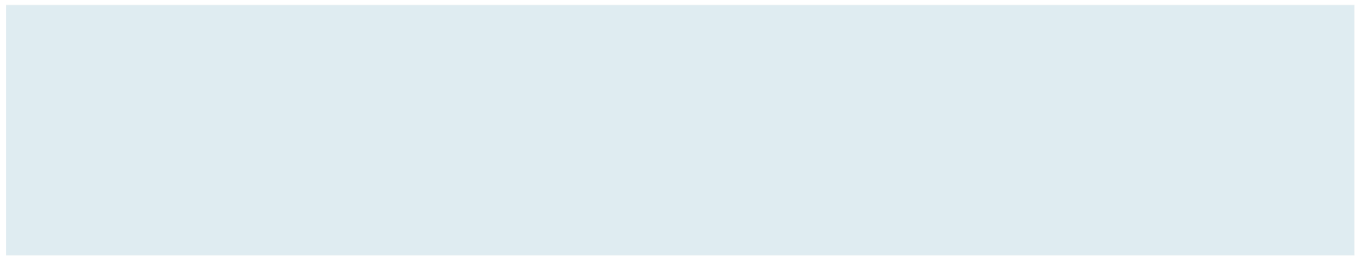
Reflection: What was it like to give your body that voice? What did you hear that your body needs from you?

JOURNAL PROMPTS

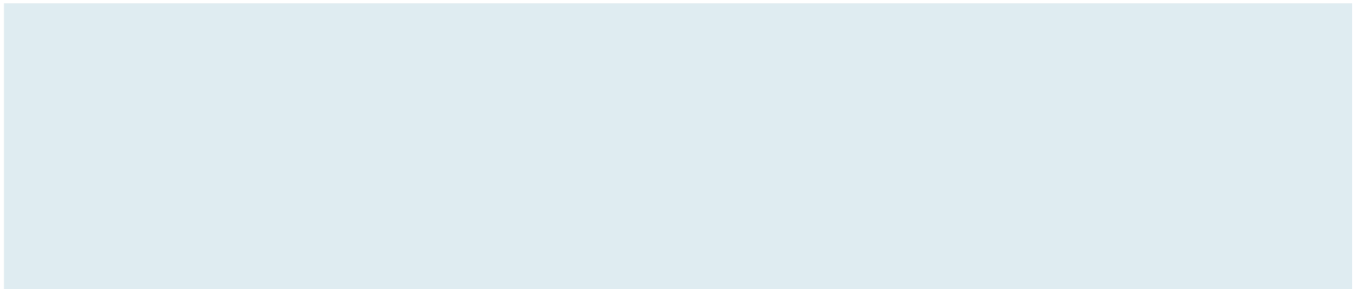
What are some of your joys and passions in life. How does your body allow you to participate in these experiences?



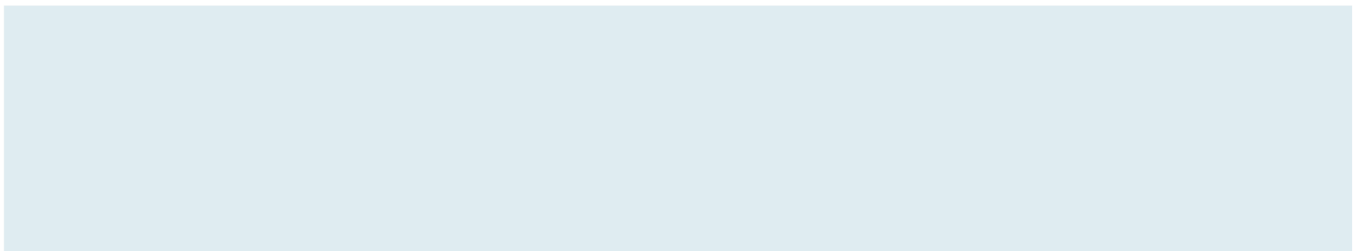
Tell a short story about a significant experience related to body image. This could be a memory, a moment of acceptance, a challenge, or a realization.



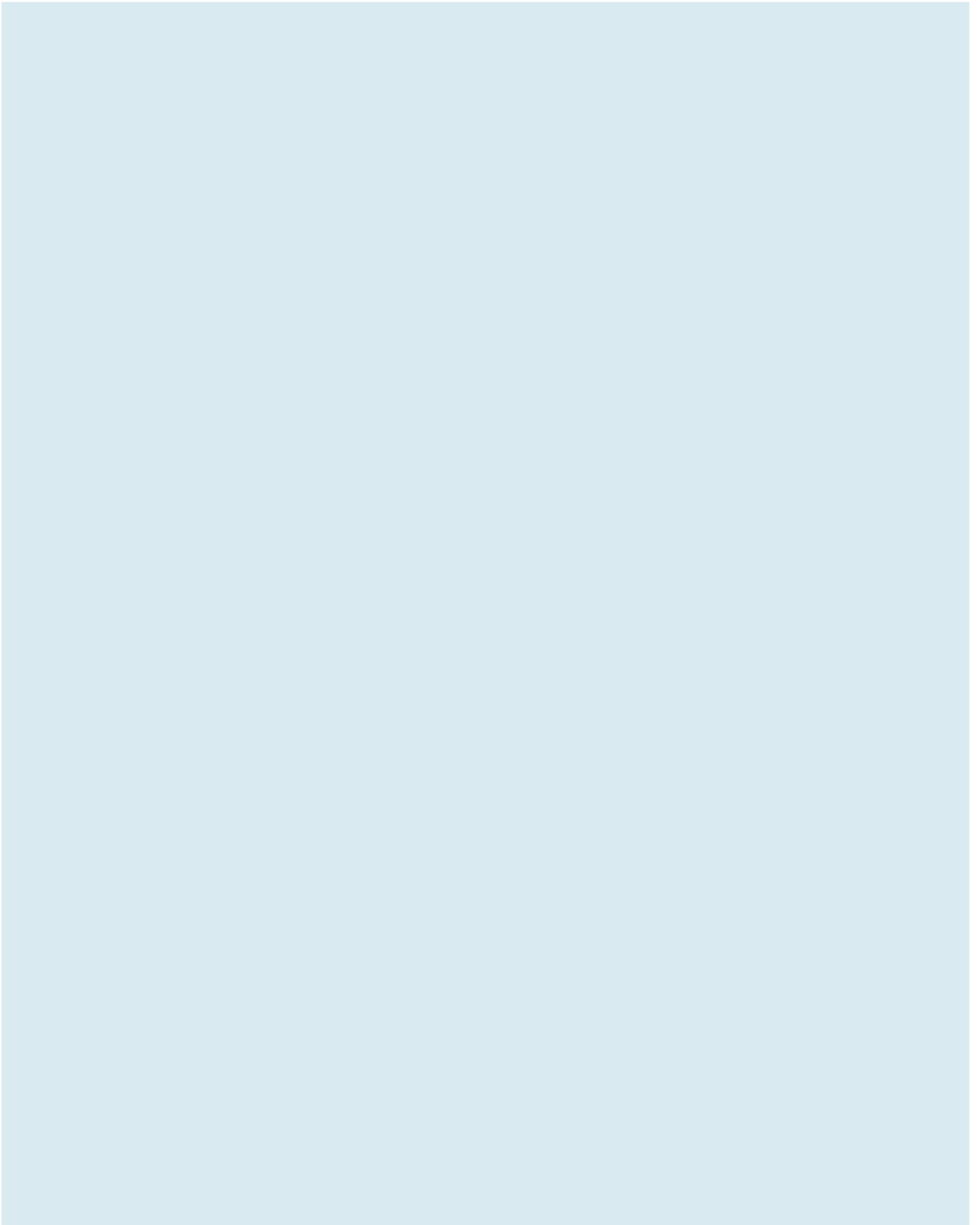
Write about a time when you remember feeling really confident about your body.



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



NOTES



P A R T

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 page F-8). 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 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

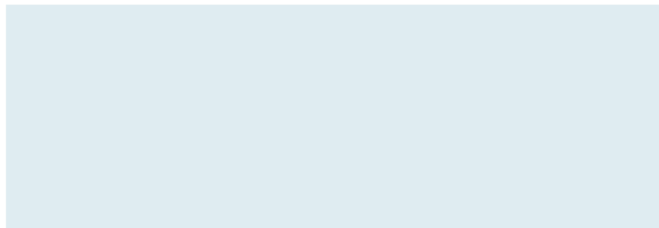
“ Self-care is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation.
--Audre Lorde

Meet your needs first.

As a living human, you have certain requirements to meet in order to stay alive. These include physical needs like food, water, and shelter, and emotional needs like connection, security, and understanding. Due to a strong mind-body connection, it's equally important to take good care of both your physical and emotional needs in order to 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"

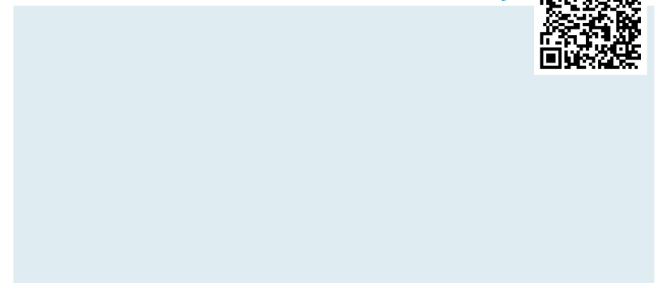


Managing uncomfortable feelings.

Feeling overwhelmed or upset is uncomfortable. Many people turn to food or other distractions to avoid or stop the 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:



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

NEEDS LIST

CONNECTION 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	CONNECTION CONT. Self--Connection Shared Reality Stability Support To know and be known To see and be seen Trust Understanding Warmth PLAY Adventure Excitement Fun Humor Joy Relaxation Stimulation PEACE Acceptance Balance Beauty Communion Ease Equanimity	PEACE CONT. Faith Harmony Hope Order Peace--of--mind Space PHYSICAL WELL-BEING Air Care Food Movement/exercise Rest/sleep Safety (protection from harm) Sexual expression Shelter Touch Water AUTONOMY Choice Dignity Freedom Independence Self--Expression Space Spontaneity	MEANING Awareness Celebration Challenge Clarity Competence Consciousness Contribution Creativity Discovery Efficacy Effectiveness Growth Integration Learning Mourning Movement Participation Presence Progress Purpose Self--expression Stimulation Understanding
--	---	---	---

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.

Article on stress eating



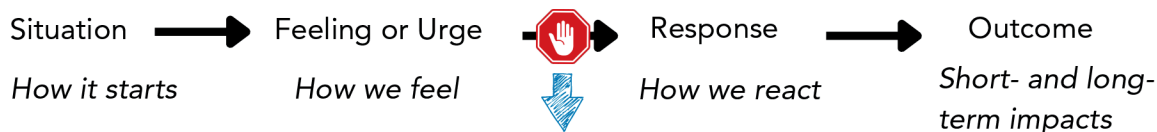
Eating and self care.

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 are underlying unmet needs that need to address.

Urge and Response Cycle



“What is it that I really need right now?”

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

CHALLENGES TO MEETING NEEDS

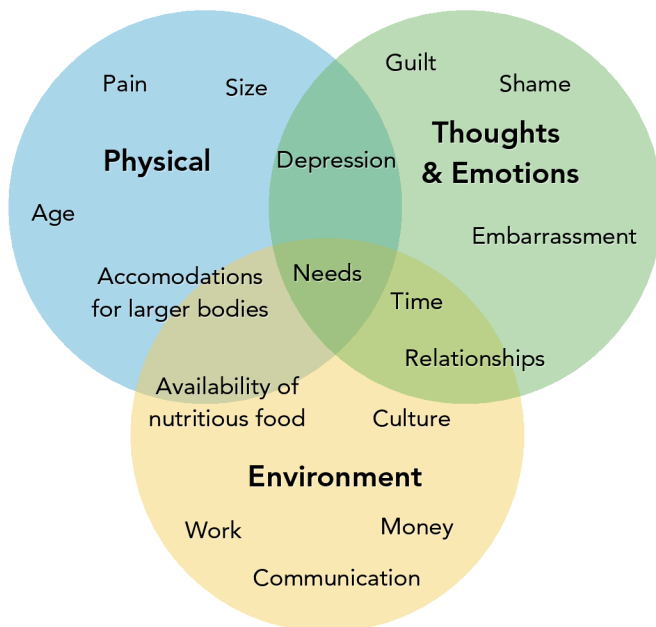
“ Taking care of myself doesn’t mean “me first,” it means “me, too.”
--L.R. Knosts

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.”

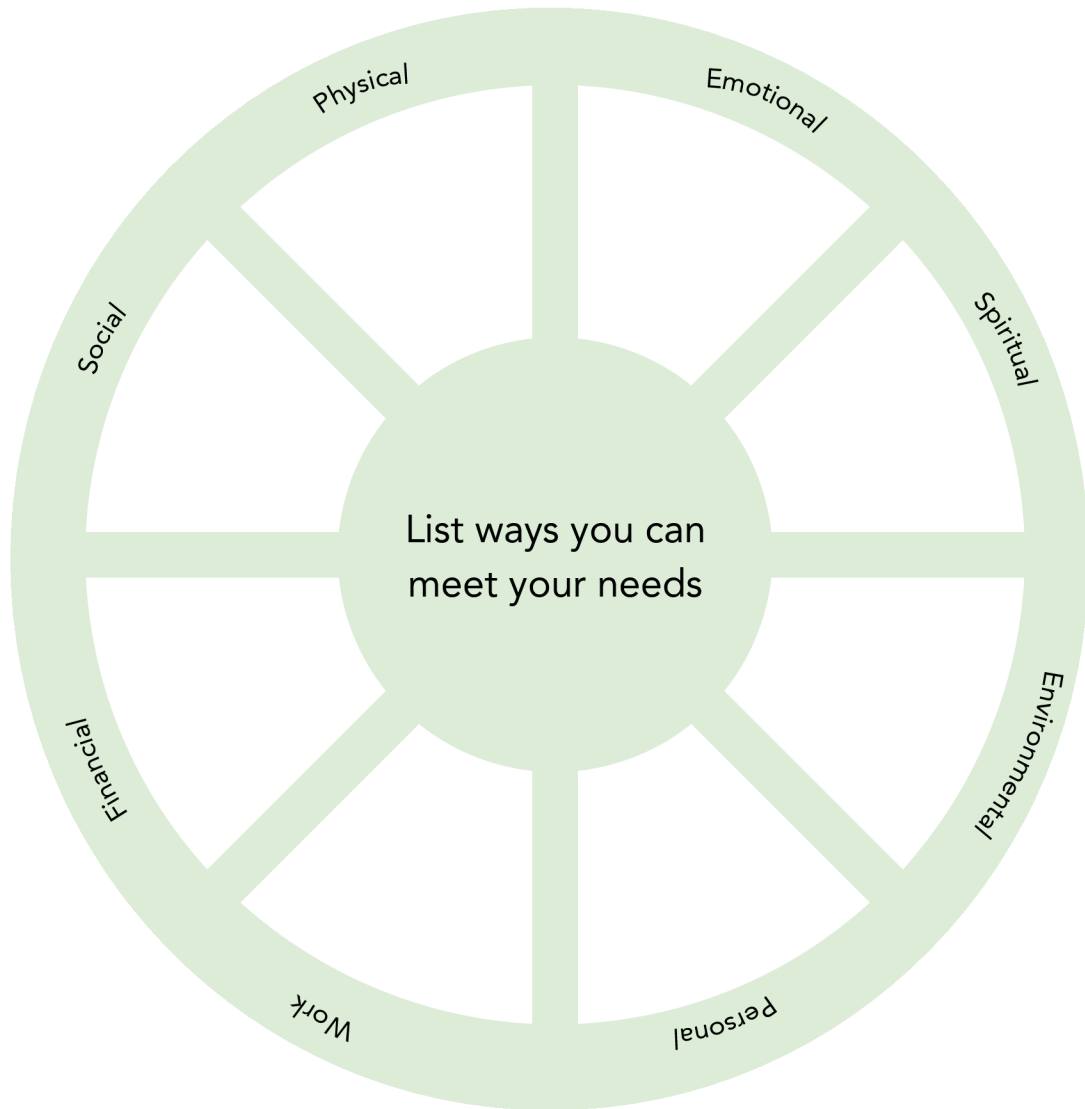
When it comes to setting boundaries, how do you feel? What do you notice about yourself?

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."



Learn the Eight Splendid Truths of Happiness



Discover Keys to Well-being

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?

JOURNAL PROMPTS

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

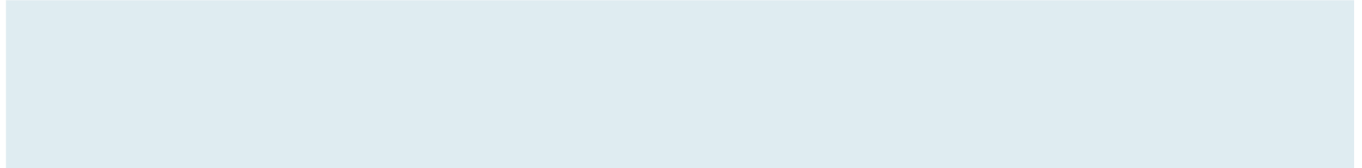
One important way to take care of yourself is being able to say "yes" and "no". This is called having personal boundaries. Sometimes people have difficulty saying "yes" or "no" because they learned that's not acceptable. Describe your relationship with the words yes and no.

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?

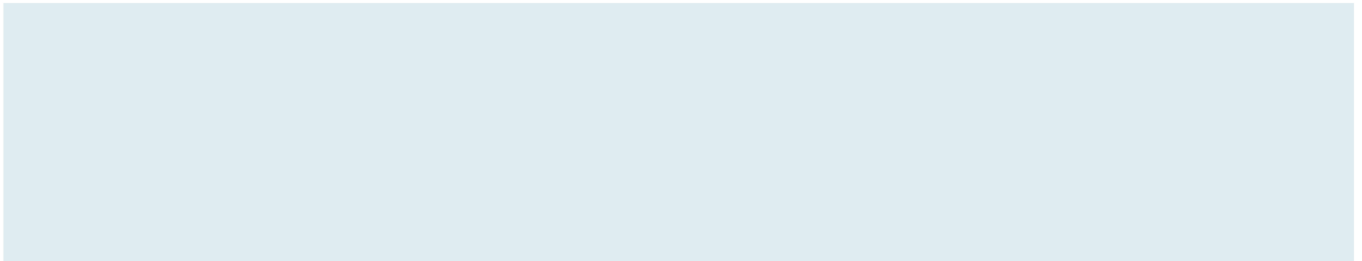
POWER OF SELF REFLECTION

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?

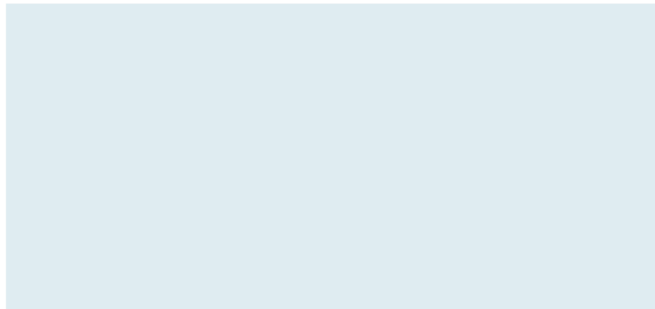


Progress Reflection

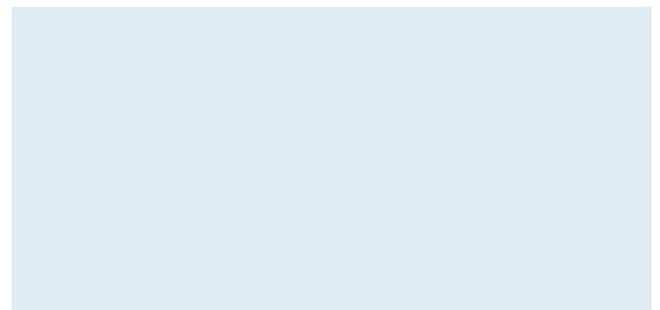
What have you learned about yourself in the past 8 sessions?
What are you taking with you into the next phase?



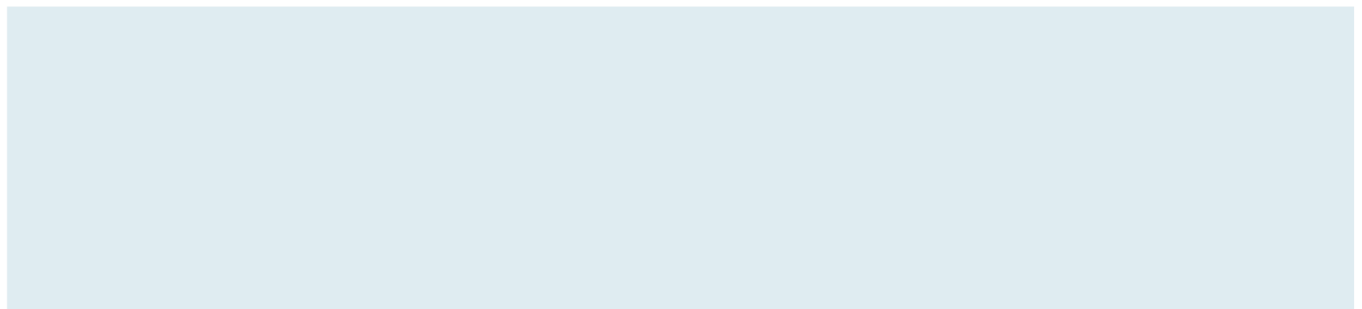
Where did you start?



Where are you today?



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



NOTES

