

# EMOTIONAL TOOLKIT

Bernard Ivin, LCSW – Clinician/Owner Strength for Change, LLC

***“Our greatness is not in our ability to change the world. It is in our ability to change ourselves.”***

- Mahatma Gandhi

We can change our emotional state through five methods: the mind, the body (actions), relationships, the environment, and pharmaceuticals. This Emotional Toolkit provides you with tools for each of these five methods. When you feel anxious, depressed, angry, or some other unpleasant or unwanted emotion, reach into your toolkit, select one or a combination of the tools provided, and use those tools to soothe, counter, and redirect your bad feelings. It is important to know that no one tool works for everyone and that you will need to try a variety of tools before you find the ones that work best for you.

To maximize the benefit of your emotional toolkit, knowing the following concepts is important to understanding the nature of mental health challenges and how the emotional toolkit facilitates healing, recovery, and self-mastery. While the concepts are based on a variety of well-researched and highly regarded psychological principles, they are conceptualized and presented in a manner that is specific to the therapy at Strength for Change (SFC) and is not used by all practitioners of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

- **Healing & Recovery Begin with Self-Awareness** – Life is hard! We are certain to face numerous challenges in living a healthy, successful, and happy life. At Strength for Change, we refer to these challenges as The Obstacles to Success and Well-being. There are two types of obstacles we must contend with. External Obstacles are the life circumstances that cause us great stress and compromise our physical and mental health. Internal Obstacles are the glitches and malfunctions (conditions and disorders) of the brain that generate thoughts, feelings, and actions that emotionally dysregulate us, override our will and better judgment, compromise our relationships, and impair our lives. To some degree, everyone will experience external and internal obstacles at some point in their life. We need not feel ashamed when this happens to us. To overcome The Obstacles to Success and Well-being, we must first accurately know what they are. This is an essential first step because different obstacles require different tools and treatments to be successfully overcome.
- **The Autopilot Brain (APB)** – The APB is what we think, feel, and do without trying. Some people are lucky, and their APB works well for them. They naturally think, feel, and do what serves their success and well-being. Others are not so lucky, and their APB works against them. They naturally think, feel, and do what compromises their success and well-being. The functioning of our APB and the mindset it generates is determined by genetic and environmental factors (nature and nurture) and the impact of any internal obstacles that may result from them.
- **We Cannot Stop the Auto Pilot Train** – In other words, we cannot stop the thoughts, feelings, and actions that pop into our minds. There is no point in fighting against them, trying to stop them, or beating ourselves up over having them. None of that is helpful. The best we can do is change our relationship to what we are experiencing (from anger and shame to understanding and self-compassion) and counter/redirect our APB with alternative thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- **The Power of Mindset** – Our APB determines the mindset through which we experience and respond to the world around us. We can experience and respond to the world through either a primal or powerful mindset. In a primal mindset, our mental filters (focus and attention) are set for threats, risks, what is lacking, and our immediate gratification. As a result, we experience the world from a problem-focused perspective, become emotionally charged, seek immediate relief, and respond impulsively to interpersonal and life challenges. When we are in a powerful mindset, our mental filters are set for truths, strengths, what is available, and our long-term well-being. As a result, we experience the world from a solution-focused perspective, stay emotionally regulated, seek learning and growth, and respond strategically to interpersonal and life

challenges. Our mental health is determined by the ratio of the two mindsets we experience throughout our lives. The higher our ratio of a primal mindset, the more we experience the negative emotions in life (anxiety, depression, anger, etc.), and the greater our risk for mental health challenges. The higher our ratio of a powerful mindset, the more we experience the positive emotions in life (self-assurance, contentment, well-being, etc.), and the lower our risk for mental health challenges.

- **Mindset is Everything** – It is not the outside world (people, places, things, situations, or circumstances – real or imagined) that makes us feel bad. It is the outside world plus our mindset that makes us feel bad. Mindset is everything, not because it is the only thing (the outside world is a factor in our health, success, and well-being), but because it is the only thing we have true power over. While we may not be able to change the outside world, we can change our mindset. In doing so we can change how we experience the outside world.
- **The Philosophy of Personal Responsibility** – We are not responsible for the nature and functioning of our APB and whatever suffering it causes us. However, we are responsible for the consequences it causes and overcoming its negative impact on our lives. In other words, we are not responsible for our depression, anxiety, ADHD, addiction, or other mental health conditions, but we are responsible for the consequences of these conditions and for doing whatever it takes to overcome our APB and live healthier, more successful, and more satisfying lives.
- **Mindfulness** – When the APB is working against us, we need an antidote. The antidote is mindfulness. As taught at Strength for Change, mindfulness is what we think, feel, and do intentionally as a matter of choice, focus, and will. When practiced consistently over time, mindfulness reshapes the functioning of the APB. Every tool in your toolkit requires an act of mindfulness. Every time you use your toolkit, you will be exercising the mindfulness necessary to reshape your APB towards a healthier mindset that will improve your life.
- **The Science of Change** – Our APB resides in our brain's center and lower regions. When we practice mindfulness, we exercise the higher regions of the brain, specifically, the Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) located on the surface of our brain behind our foreheads. The PFC is known as the executive or wise brain because of the functions it serves, including our capacity for language, critical thinking, problem-solving, organization, emotional regulation, and self-discipline. The more we practice mindfulness, the stronger our PFC becomes. The stronger our PFC becomes, the greater its role in the functioning of our APB, and the higher the ratio of our powerful vs. primal mindset.
- **The Science of How Emotions Work** – According to the theory of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, “IT” (the outside world - person, place, thing, situation, or circumstance, either real or imagined) does NOT make us feel bad. We UNINTENTIONALLY make ourselves feel bad because of what we think of it. What we think of IT is determined by our mindset. Our mindset is determined by our APB. Thank goodness this is the case because while we might not be able to change IT, we can change what we think of IT, the mindset and APB driving our thoughts, and the resulting bad feelings and reactions.
- **The Guiding Principle of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** – Just because we think it does not make it true. At SFC change we also add: Feelings are not facts. Everyone has a right to an opinion, but not everyone’s opinion is right. The truth will set us free to feel what’s best and do what’s best, and if we ignore or are ignorant of the truth, the universe will punish us mercilessly.
- **Change is Retrospective** – When our APB puts us in a Primal mindset and generates an intense emotional charge, we are at the mercy of our feelings and impulses. This is because when we are emotionally charged, our prefrontal cortex goes offline, and we temporarily lose our ability to think objectively, reason, regulate emotions, problem-solve, and communicate effectively. It is important to keep this in mind as we begin practicing mindfulness and using our emotional toolkit. Initially, we will not be able to apply our tools when we are emotionally charged. Instead, we will have to wait until the emotional charge passes. In this way, change is retrospective. To change our future reactions, we must reflect on our past reactions. Whether it’s a minute, hour, or day, we do the work (be mindful and apply our tools) after the fact. Over time, however, we develop the capacity to do the work at the moment of the emotional charge, thus reducing its intensity, duration, frequency, and impact.

- **Self-Mastery** – Self-mastery is the ability to feel what’s best and do what’s best. Raising our level of self-mastery, along with healing and recovery, is the goal of therapy and all forms of personal development. With self-mastery, we can regulate our emotions and behaviors, communicate effectively, and override our need for immediate gratification in the pursuit of our long-term success and well-being.
- **There is No Magic** – There is no magic in the world of healing, recovery, and self-mastery. No medication or therapy can produce instantaneous or complete results. Healing, recovery, and self-mastery are not an event, they are a process. One that requires consistent effort, practice, determination, and self-compassion in the face of repeated setbacks and relapses of unwanted thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. One that requires the ability to restart the process over and over again, a million times over if need be.
- **Life on Life’s Terms** – To maintain our mental health and live life to the fullest, we must learn to unconditionally accept the things we cannot change, the terms and conditions of life we are completely powerless over. From small to large, this includes things like traffic, poor customer service, bad weather, illnesses, natural disasters, past decisions or adverse events, the death of loved ones, aging, mortality, and, perhaps the most difficult of all to accept, the decisions, attitudes, or actions of OTHER PEOPLE (particularly our own children). To judge, resist, or attempt to control these things is to operate out of a primal mindset and is certain to perpetuate and amplify our stress, emotional suffering, and ineptitude.
- **Go Inside** – Whenever you feel bad, go inside. To go inside means you shift your focus and attention from the outside world to the inside world. There are three steps (the 3Rs) to going inside. Step 1-Remember: Say to yourself (in your mind or out loud), mindset is everything (not the only thing, but the only thing I have true power over). By doing so you remind yourself of the science of how emotions work, and you give yourself something constructive to do, changing your mindset. Step 2-Recognize: Identify and acknowledge your feelings, bodily sensations, actions, and the thoughts that are driving them. Step 3-Redirect: Redirect your focus and attention from a primal to powerful mindset/perspective by implementing one or a combination of the many tools found in your emotional toolkit.

If you are unfamiliar with these concepts, ask your Strength for Change therapist to discuss them with you. If you are not a client at Strength for Change, seek the services of a Cognitive Behavioral therapist who may be familiar with these concepts and related coping skills (tools).

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# MENTAL TOOLS

## NEW LEARNING/RE-LEARNING:

### 1. Wisdom Content

↓ When working to improve your mood and well-being

**CONSUME** various forms of wisdom content. Wisdom content refers to any form of media that promotes health, personal growth, psychological well-being, and relationship success. The goal of wisdom content is to educate and inspire us to learn and grow, practice self-care, and live more fulfilling lives.

**DEVELOP A ROUTINE** for consuming wisdom content daily. It can be just 10-15 minutes a day. You can access wisdom content via books, podcasts, and videos from numerous online resources. Consuming wisdom content daily may be the most practical, concrete, and powerful tool in countering and rewiring our autopilot brain.

To get you started, consider the following recommended books: **MINDSET** - by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.), **ATTACHED** – by Amir Levine & Rachel Heller, **ATOMIC HABITS** by – James Clear, **DARING GREATLY** – by Brene Brown. **THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE** – by Bessel A. Van Der Kolk, **SELF-COMPASSION** – by Kristin Neff

## CRITICAL THINKING:

### 2. Go Inside – The 3Rs to Cultivating Mindfulness & Self-Mastery

↓ When feeling bad – anxious, depressed, sad, frustrated, irritable, angry, etc.

#### **REMEMBER:**

- State: Mindset if everything
- Shift your focus from your outside world to your inside world.

#### **RECOGNIZE - IDENTIFY & VERBALIZE WHAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING:**

- **Describe:** The situation (the “it”) that you are reacting to.
- **Describe:** Your feelings, actions, and bodily sensations.
- **Remind Yourself:** I do not feel bad because of “it” (the real or imagined situation, circumstance, person, place, or thing). I am unintentionally making myself feel bad because of what I think of “it.”

#### **RECOGNIZE - IDENTIFY & VERBALIZE THE AUTOPILOT THOUGHTS THAT ARE DRIVING YOUR REACTION:**

- **Ask Yourself:** What was/am I thinking? What were/are the autopilot thoughts driving my unwanted feelings, actions, and bodily sensations?
- **State:** I was/am thinking ...

#### **REDIRECT:**

- **Shift Your Focus & Attention from A Primal to Powerful Mindset/Perspective:** Implement one or a combination of the mental and other tools that follow.

<p><b>3. Self-Interrogation</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of identified thoughts, regardless of their nature and content</b></p> <p><b>QUESTION AND INTERROGATE</b> the autopilot thoughts that are driving your unwanted APB feelings and reactions. Do this as if you were an attorney questioning a witness. Talk to your thoughts in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person as if you were questioning someone outside yourself.</p> <p><b>ASK YOURSELF</b> questions that reveal inconsistencies in your thoughts.</p> <p><b>FOR EXAMPLE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regardless of what you (2<sup>nd</sup> person) think, what are the facts of the situation? Do the facts support what you are saying? What is the evidence for what you are saying? Is there any evidence that suggests that you are wrong in what you are saying? Is it possible that you are making a mental mistake?</li> <li>▪ When you say that I am a ‘failure at life,’ do you mean that I fail at some things some of the time, or all things all the time? If the answer is some things some of the time, does that just apply to me or does it apply to other human beings?</li> <li>▪ When you label me as “inferior,” “a fool,” or “a loser,” what do those labels really mean? What is your definition of “a fool” or “a loser”? Does your definition apply to just me, or does it apply to most people?</li> <li>▪ Ask yourself additional questions like the ones suggested in tools 4-14 of this section of your toolkit.</li> </ul> <p>After analyzing your thoughts through self-interrogation, <b>ASK YOURSELF</b> - Are my thoughts credible? Do they accurately reflect the reality of my situation? Even though I feel or believe my thoughts to be true, can I really trust them? Is there an alternative perspective that more accurately reflects (describes) the reality of my situation?</p>
<p><b>4. Double Standard</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of identified thoughts, regardless of their nature and content</b></p> <p><b>ASK YOURSELF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If my best friend were going through my situation, what would I think of them? How would I speak to them? What would I say to them?</li> </ul> <p><b>DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>State Out Loud or To Yourself -</b>  <i>(In the 3<sup>rd</sup> person as if you are watching it happen to your best friend)</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When (your friend’s name) was (observable action words) ...</li> <li>2. They felt (feeling words; mad, sad, anxious, etc.) ...</li> <li>3. Because what they created in their mind was ...</li> <li>4. My dear friend (your name), what I want you to know is ...</li> </ol> </li> </ul>



<p><b>5. Conduct an Experiment</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of identified thoughts, regardless of their nature and content</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How can I test the validity and merit of my thoughts? Approach this question from the perspective of a scientist conducting an experiment to test the merits of his theory or hypothesis.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>EXPERIMENTS TO CONSIDER*:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If you are anxious and worried because you think you are “going crazy,” you can test this thought by trying to drive yourself crazy. You can roll around on the floor, flail your arms and legs in the air, and speak gibberish. It can be a relief to discover that you are not going crazy, no matter how hard you try.</li> <li>▪ If you are anxious and worried because you think you are going to have a heart attack, you can test this thought by doing jumping jacks, lifting weights, running, or exerting yourself physically in some other way.</li> </ul> <p><i>* Experiments should only be done after a thorough physical and psychiatric evaluation and clearance from a medical professional.</i></p>
<p><b>6. Metaphoric Distancing</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of catastrophizing thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the situation, hardship, or adversity (I am reacting to) was a body of water, would it be a glass of water, lake, or ocean? If it is a glass of water, <b><u>State</u></b> - “Don’t drown in a glass of water!”</li> <li>▪ Use or create metaphors that are more meaningful to you.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Look Both Ways in Line</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of catastrophizing thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If I were standing in a line of 100 people experiencing hardships and suffering, what would be my place in line (with the 100<sup>th</sup> person being worst off and the 1<sup>st</sup> person being best off)? How many people would be in front of me? How many people would be behind me?</li> <li>▪ If there are people behind me in line, what are their circumstances, and how are they worse off than me?</li> <li>▪ How do I feel about my place in line?</li> <li>▪ Is there anything I can do to improve my place in line? If not, why is that? Are other people also unable to improve their place in line? If so, why is that the case?</li> <li>▪ If this situation was the worst thing that happened to me this week, month, or year, did I have a good week, month, or year? Would</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Create a Headline</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of catastrophizing, personalizing, or generalizing thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the situation I am reacting to was being reported on by a news outlet, what would the headline be?</li> <li>▪ Would the headline draw much attention as a newsworthy story, or would most readers consider it a common event and gloss over it?</li> </ul>

<p><b>9. Humanizing</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of personalizing thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the other person intentionally trying to hurt me? Do their words or actions truly reflect the nature of our relationship or how they feel about me? Do I have any reason to give this person the benefit of the doubt? Other than trying to upset me, is there another explanation for what this person said or did to me?</li> <li>▪ Does this type of situation happen to other people in my position or role? Would the situation have been any different if for someone else in my position or role? How common is what I am experiencing? Is this just happening to me, or do other people suffer in similar ways?</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Specifying</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of generalizing thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If I am bad at something, does that mean I am bad at everything?</li> <li>▪ Do this person's actions accurately reflect their true character?</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Shades of Gray</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of all (black) or nothing (white) thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is this situation truly all good or all bad? Are there any exceptions or gray areas?</li> <li>▪ Can I think of examples that don't fit into this extreme perspective?</li> <li>▪ How likely is it that there are (absolutely) no middle-ground options?</li> </ul> <p><b><u>CONSIDER DEGREES:</u></b> Instead of thinking in absolutes, consider degrees of variation. For instance, instead of labeling an experience as a complete failure, think about what aspects went well or what lessons can be learned from it.</p>
<p><b>12. No Nostradamus</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of mind-reading or fortune-telling thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can I be certain I know what the other person is thinking or future outcomes in my life? How often do I accurately predict what someone else is thinking or future events? What percentage of the time do I get it right? What percentage of the time do I get it wrong? What else might the person be thinking? What other possible outcomes might occur besides the one I am focused on?</li> </ul>
<p><b>13. Define the Terms</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of self-deprecating thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b> <i>(When using labels like "inferior," "a fool," or "a loser")</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What do those labels really mean? What is the definition of "a fool" or "a loser"?</li> <li>▪ In defining these terms, is there really such a person as "a fool" or "a loser", or just human beings who sometimes act foolish, mean, selfish, and self-defeating.</li> </ul>

<p><b>14. Reattribution</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of self/other-blaming thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are all the factors that contributed to my situation? What did I contribute, what did others contribute, and what was a matter of circumstance?</li> </ul> <p><b><u>EXPLAIN YOUR SITUATION FROM 3 PERSPECTIVES:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>1<sup>st</sup> Perspective:</u> Explain what happened from the perspective that it was totally your fault. You are completely (100%) to blame for whatever bad outcome occurred and for the pain and consequences you are experiencing.</li> <li>▪ <u>2<sup>nd</sup> Perspective:</u> Explain what happened from the perspective that it was completely someone else's fault. That the other person, life circumstances, or bad luck are completely (100%) to blame for whatever bad outcome occurred and the pain and consequences you are experiencing.</li> <li>▪ <u>3<sup>rd</sup> Perspective:</u> Explain what happened from the perspective that everyone involved had some responsibility. Even if much of the blame is rightfully yours, the other person, life circumstances, or bad luck all contributed in some way to the bad outcome that occurred and the pain and consequences you are experiencing.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Which of the three perspectives seems most reasonable, accurate, and fair.</li> </ul>
<p><b>15. Semantic Method</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When determining the credibility of should statement thoughts</b></p> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b>  <i>(The word "should," always generates negative judgments and criticisms of oneself and others)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is there a word (other than should) that would be more accurate to use? For example, if you are thinking I should go workout, would it be more accurate to say, it would be healthy (productive, worthwhile, etc.) to workout. If you are thinking I should not have made that mistake, it would be more accurate to say I wish I did not make that mistake.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16. Reframing</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering thoughts determined to be inaccurate or lacking in credibility</b></p> <p>Reframing refers to the process of changing or shifting the way a situation, issue, or problem is perceived or understood. It involves looking at a situation from a different perspective or angle to alter its meaning and implications.</p> <p><b><u>REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS TO REFLECT THE RATIONAL CREDIBLE TRUTH OF YOUR SITUATION:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>State:</u> The rational, credible (or if you prefer, the likely) truth is ...</li> </ul>

<p><b>17. Thought Intervention</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering thoughts determined to be inaccurate or lacking in credibility</b></p> <p><b>GO INSIDE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activate Mindfulness:</b> Pause, breathe, reflect, and put words to your unwanted reaction (emotional, behavioral, and physiological). Explain, describe, and articulate what you are experiencing.</li> <li>▪ <b>Remind Yourself:</b> I do not feel bad because of “it,” I am unintentionally making myself feel bad because of what I think of “it.” Your unwanted reaction is unintentional because it is coming from your autopilot which you do not have control over.</li> </ul> <p><b>IDENTIFY YOUR AUTOPILOT THOUGHTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Ask Yourself:</b> What was I thinking when I had that reaction? What were the autopilot thoughts driving my reaction?</li> <li>▪ <b>State:</b> I was thinking ...</li> </ul> <p><b>SELF-INTERROGATE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Analyze</b> your thoughts through self-interrogation and other critical thinking tools.</li> <li>▪ <b>Ask Yourself -</b> Are my thoughts credible? Do they accurately reflect the reality of my situation? Even though I feel or believe my thoughts to be true, can I really trust them?</li> </ul> <p><b>REFRAME:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Ask Yourself:</b> Is there an alternative perspective that more accurately reflects (describes) the reality of my situation?</li> <li>▪ <b>State:</b> The rational credible TRUTH is ...</li> </ul> <p><b>BE COURAGEOUS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Ask Yourself:</b> Based on the rational credible TRUTH, what do I need to do? What is the best course of action?</li> <li>↓ <b>State:</b> I need to... I am committed to doing the necessary action by (day, date, time, location, method, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>SELF-ANALYSIS:</b></p>	
	<p>↓ <b>When determining the core beliefs that drive your primal mindset and related theme and pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors</b></p>
<p><b>17. Individual Downward Arrow</b></p>	<p><b>IDENTIFY &amp; WRITE DOWN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the <u>Go Inside Tool</u> and identify the autopilot thoughts driving your negative reactions and related unwanted emotions, select the thought that you believe is most responsible for what you are feeling.</li> <li>▪ Underneath the thought draw a downward arrow.</li> </ul> <p><b>ASK YOURSELF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If that thought was true, what would that mean? Why would that be so upsetting to me?</li> <li>▪ When a new negative thought comes to mind, write it down under the arrow and repeat the process several times. The additional negative thoughts you uncover will lead to the underlying Core Beliefs driving your negative feelings and reactions.</li> </ul>

<p><b>18. Interpersonal Downward Arrow</b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY &amp; WRITE DOWN:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the <u>Go Inside Tool</u> and identify the autopilot thoughts driving your relationship frustration, anger, and dissatisfaction, select the thought that you believe is most responsible for your unwanted emotions.</li> <li>▪ Underneath the thought draw a downward arrow.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If that thought was true, what would that say about me, the person I'm involved with, and the type of relationship we have?"</li> <li>▪ When a new negative thought comes to mind, write it down under the arrow and repeat the process several times. The additional thoughts you uncover will lead you to the underlying Core Beliefs driving your relationship dissatisfaction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>19. What-If Scenario</b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY &amp; WRITE DOWN:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the <u>Go Inside Tool</u> and identify the autopilot thoughts driving your fears and anxieties about future events, the thought draw a downward arrow.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If that thought was true, what is the worst that could happen? What do I fear the most? A new negative thought will come to mind. Write it down under the arrow and repeat this process several times. The additional negative thoughts you uncover will lead you to the underlying core beliefs driving your fear.</li> </ul>
<p><b>20. Hidden Emotion</b></p>	<p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Am I focusing on my anxiety, anger, or other negative emotions to avoid dealing with or addressing a significant issue in my life? What is the real problem that is bothering me? Do I secretly resent my spouse or my job? Am I unhappy about being in school? How do I really feel?</li> </ul> <p>This self-analysis tool determines if your negative emotions are being driven by a hidden personal problem you do not want to face. Bringing this problem to your conscious awareness and expressing your feelings about it can defuse your anxiety and other negative emotions.</p>
<p><b>21. Suffering Inventory</b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY AND WRITE DOWN:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A timeline (from earliest to most recent) of your life history of hardships, adversities, and traumas.</li> <li>▪ Include the who, what, when, where, and impact of each experience.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ANALYZE YOUR SUFFERING INVENTORY:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take note of the negative emotional themes and patterns of your life.</li> <li>▪ Identify the Core Beliefs that resulted from your suffering.</li> </ul>

<p><b>22. Truth Statements</b></p>	<p>After you have identified your core beliefs, apply your critical thinking tools and reframe those beliefs into statements that more accurately (objectively, factually) reflect the nature of your life experiences.</p> <p><b><u>WRITE DOWN YOUR TRUTH STATEMENTS</u></b> on index cards, sticky notes, or an electronic device that you can easily access and reference throughout the day or whenever you find yourself in a negative state of mind. Begin each truth statement with the words, The rational credible TRUTH is ...</p>
<p><b>CONSCIOUS CHOICE:</b></p>	
<p><b>23. Choose Motivation</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of procrastination, disinterest, or apathy towards doing the work necessary to achieve your healing, recovery, or other life goals</b></p>
<p>→ <b><u>4-POINT MOTIVATION</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY AND STATE</u></b> (3-5 times per week):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am responsible, and I have power over my thoughts, feelings, actions, and decisions. Regardless of any hardships, illnesses, shortcomings, or other people’s treatment of me, I am the most important factor in the quality and outcome of my life. Nothing and no one can stand in the way of my success and well-being.</li> <li>▪ I do not want...</li> <li>▪ I want...</li> <li>▪ And I believe that all these things are possible, and the more I do what I need to do the more I will have the life I want to have.</li> </ul>
<p>→ <b><u>NORTH STAR STATEMENT:</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY AND STATE</u></b> (in the first-person present tense, 3-5 times per week):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am ... (6-8 of your most important values and ideals).</li> <li>▪ My purpose is ... (the purpose you were born to serve in this world. Your therapist can help assist you in figuring out your purpose).</li> <li>▪ I am ... (3 of your most important goals and roles in life).</li> <li>▪ I .... (The necessary actions for each of your goals/roles stated as if you are already doing them).</li> </ul>
<p>→ <b><u>SATISFACTION ANALYSIS</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>FOCUS ON YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE BEHAVIOR YOU WANT TO CHANGE:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When engaged in the behavior, notice all the sensations you are experiencing, how you feel before, during, and after, and the degree of satisfaction you derive from the behavior.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ASK YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How satisfying is the behavior? On a scale of 0-10, what would I rate my level of satisfaction?</li> <li>▪ Is my level of satisfaction, worth the time, energy, money, or risk of the behavior?</li> </ul>

<p>→ <b><u>BUILDING READINESS FOR CHANGE</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY AND STATE</u></b> (3-5 times per week) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am disgusted with (list at least consequences related to your problematic behavior) ...</li> </ul> <p>I so look forward to (the benefits and rewards you will experience when you stop the problematic behavior. Make sure to include the most immediate emotional rewards you can think of - these will be most important to generating and maintaining the motivation that is necessary for change) ...</p>
<p>→ <b><u>DREADED ANTICIPATION</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTIFY AND STATE</u></b> (3-5 times per week) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What your life will be like if you do not change your problematic behavior(s).</li> <li>▪ How will you look, your state of health, your lifestyle, and what your relationships will be like if you do not make the necessary changes?</li> </ul>
<p>→ <b><u>ANTI-PROCRASTINATION</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>IDENTITY:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The smaller steps necessary to complete the task you want to accomplish.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>STATE &amp; ACT ON THE FOLLOWING:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am going to (step one) ..., one step at a time I will see how I feel.</li> <li>▪ I am going to (step two) ..., one step at a time I will see how I feel.</li> <li>▪ Continue stating, 'I am going to ...', for every step necessary in completing the larger task.</li> <li>▪ When you get to the last step, state: I am going to do (do the last step) ...for 10 minutes; if I want to stop after that, I can do so without any guilt, one step at a time I will see how I feel.</li> </ul>
<p><b>24. Choose Truth</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering your core beliefs and the theme and pattern of negative thoughts, feelings and behaviors caused by them</b></p> <p><b><u>STATE TO YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The rational credible TRUTH is ... Do not just say the words, feel the words, visualize the sentiment behind the words, and be the words.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>UNDERSTAND</u></b> that the truth will set you free to feel what's best and do what's best.</p> <p><b><u>ACT</u></b> on the truth (regarding yourself or the situation) regardless of how you are feeling.</p>

<p><b>25. Choose Courage</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of anxiety, worry, or fear about doing what is necessary for your success and well-being</b></p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ While I may be afraid (anxious, worried, insecure, etc.), it doesn't mean I'm weak or cowardly. It's just my brain's way of trying to protect me, which can be misguided at times. In this moment, may I be courageous and do what I know is necessary for my success and well-being.</li> <li>▪ Create your own statement of courage.</li> </ul> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that courage is not the absence of fear but action in the face of fear. Whether you realize it or not, you have courage inside you that you can access through conscious choice when it does not come to you naturally.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Take healthy risks (one small step at a time) and do what is necessary for your success and well-being, no matter how frightened or anxious you might feel.</p>
<p><b>26. Choose Self-Compassion</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of guilt, shame, or brokenness in relation to personal struggles, transgressions, failures, or shortcomings</b></p> <p>Self-compassion is the act of treating oneself with kindness, understanding, and non-judgmental acceptance in response to personal struggles, failures, and shortcomings. It involves extending the same empathy, patience, and kindness toward oneself that one might naturally offer to a close friend or loved one.</p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am a flawed and fallible human being, with an incurable tendency to make mistakes. This does not make me weak, inadequate, or broken, it just makes me human like everyone else. Everyone makes mistakes and struggles in some way. May I learn, grow, and become stronger in response to my life's challenges.</li> <li>▪ May I forgive and be kind to myself for my mistakes and shortcomings, and may I learn, grow, and become stronger in response to them.</li> <li>▪ May I be healthy, may I be safe, may I be happy, may I live with ease, and may my heart be filled with love and joy.</li> <li>▪ Create your own statement of self-compassion.</li> </ul> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that no one is perfect. Your personal struggles, failures, and shortcomings are fundamental to our shared humanity, not a verdict on your individual character. It is never helpful when you judge or condemn yourself for them. Feelings of guilt and shame will rarely be helpful to you in your journey toward healing, recovery, and self-mastery.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Show yourself the same kindness, goodwill, and grace that you would show a dear friend. Engage in compassionate self-talk and self-care activities even if you do not feel deserving of it.</p>



<p><b>27. Choose Empathy</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of frustration, anger, resentment, or hostility toward others</b></p> <p>Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another. It involves the capacity to step into someone else’s perspective, to emotionally connect with their situation, and to demonstrate understanding and compassion for what they are going through.</p> <p><b><u>STATE TO YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I know that what you are doing is not all about me. When I put myself in your shoes, I can understand ... Regardless of any differences or bad feelings between us, I can give you the opportunity to express yourself fully, and to be patient, understanding, and kind in response.</li> <li>▪ Create your own statement of empathy.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>UNDERSTAND</u></b> that empathy is a fundamental human trait that everyone possesses to some degree and, when activated naturally or by conscious choice, serves as the most powerful counter to feelings of judgement, anger, and hostility towards others.</p> <p><b><u>ACT:</u></b> Listen attentively, be curious and ask questions, validate feelings, find some truth in what is being said, provide extra care and support when it is needed, and accommodate the other person’s needs when deemed reasonable, even if you do not feel they are deserving of it.</p>
<p><b>28. Choose Goodwill</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of frustration, anger, resentment, or hostility toward others</b></p> <p>Goodwill is a benevolent and kind-hearted attitude that conveys care and goodwill toward others. With goodwill, we give the other person the benefit of the doubt with regards to the differences between us or when they say or do something that upsets us.</p> <p><b><u>STATE TO YOURSELF:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I know that what you are doing is not all about me. There is a universe of conditions driving your attitude and behavior, including your own autopilot and whatever personal struggles you are dealing with. Regardless of any differences or bad feelings between us, I wish you well and hope you find your way to happiness and well-being.</li> <li>▪ When choosing goodwill towards a loved one, you can change the last sentence of the first statement to say, regardless of ..., I trust you’re not trying to hurt me. I love you and want to make you happy.</li> <li>▪ May you be healthy, may you be safe, may you be free from suffering, and may you find your way to happiness and well-being.</li> <li>▪ Create your own statement of goodwill.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>UNDERSTAND</u></b> that approaching others with goodwill creates the best interpersonal outcomes and reduces the toxic effects of whatever frustration, anger, resentment, or hostility exist between you and others.</p> <p><b><u>ACT:</u></b> Show empathy, respect, understanding, and kindness, and accommodate the other person’s needs when deemed reasonable, even if you do not feel they are deserving of it.</p>

<p><b>29. Choose Pain</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of resistance to the pain of challenging life circumstances, anticipated events, or actions necessary for your success and well-being</b></p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b> Bring on the pain. I love the pain. The pain is what makes me wiser and stronger.</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> the power of pain. It truly is the greatest source of learning, growth, and strength. Without pain you would emotionally and physically stagnate, wither, and atrophy. Without pain, your sense of pleasure would lose its relevance and be greatly diminished.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Do want is painful when it is necessary for your success and well-being regardless of your natural resistance.</p>
<p><b>30. Choose Radical Acceptance</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of judgment, anger, or hostility towards others or challenging life circumstances</b></p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was, was, and what is, is! I can't change it. My only option is to make the best of it or learn and grow from it. - <b>OR</b> - I can't change it, and that's ok. I can make the best of it or learn and grow from it.</li> <li>▪ Create your own statement of radical acceptance.</li> </ul> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that what you resist will persist! When you resist a painful reality that exists in your life (denying, repressing, rejecting, or expecting change that you are powerless over), your negative emotions intensify and linger. Conversely, when you accept that painful reality (acknowledging, feeling, expressing, and problem-solving), your negative emotions soften and pass more quickly. To live well, you must live life on life's terms. That means choosing radical acceptance in response to the many hardships of life that we are powerless over.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Do what is necessary to make the best of your situation regardless of how you are feeling.</p>
<p><b>31. Choose Gratitude</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of frustration, disappointment, or anger regarding personal shortcomings, adverse life circumstances, or failures</b></p> <p><b>SHIFT YOUR FOCUS FROM WHAT'S LACKING &amp; BE MINDFUL OF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is available or abundant in your life (small and large).</li> </ul> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b> I understand that life is hard and full of struggles. This does not take away from the goodness in my life. I am grateful for (identify 3 small, e.g., coffee, &amp; 3 large, e.g., my loving partner) ...</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that gratitude is perhaps the most therapeutic emotion you can experience. When feeling gratitude, it is difficult to feel any opposing negative emotions.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Show gratitude in whatever way suits you.</p>

<p><b>32. Choose Clarity of Purpose</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering emotional reactivity to a person or situation</b></p> <p><b>SHIFT YOUR FOCUS</b> from the person or situation you are reacting to &amp; be mindful of the goal, objective, value, or virtue that is most important to you.</p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b> Making a point, winning the argument, getting my way, or teaching someone a lesson is not my priority. What is most important to me is ...</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that your sense of purpose is your guiding light to happiness. The more you act and make progress towards your purpose the better you will feel. The less you act and make progress towards your purpose, the worse you will feel.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Do what is most important regardless of any feelings that make you opposed to doing so.</p>
<p><b>33. Choose Your Aspirations</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering a negative emotion in anticipation of a difficult situation or person.</b></p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b> I am ... (identify 3 values, virtues, or emotions you wish to have in response to the anticipated difficult situation or person). For example – I am confident, outgoing, and fun. I am energized, purposeful, and productive.</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. By using your Choose Your Aspirations Tool prior to engaging in a difficult situation or with a difficult person, you are prepping and priming your brain towards a powerful mindset and reducing the risk of becoming emotionally dysregulated.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Act on your values and virtues even if the situation or person is not deserving of it.</p>
<p><b>34. Choose To Observe</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering negative thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations.</b></p> <p>Instead of getting caught up in one’s negative thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations, step back and experience them as an impartial observer. This means acknowledging whatever arises in your mind without trying to change or suppress it. By doing so, you will create a healthy separation between your APB and your PFC’s capacity as a “conscious observer”.</p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b> I am observing myself... (label and state the negative thought, feeling, or bodily sensation). For example – Instead of saying, I feel worried about getting sick, state I am observing myself feeling worried about getting sick.</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that you are not your thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations. You are the conscious awareness, the observing self, that is witnessing and experiencing these internal states. By identifying with your observing self, you can recognize the transient nature of your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations (all will have a beginning, middle, and end), and are able to distance and detach yourself from their full impact.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Continue with and fully engage in whatever task or activities you are doing in the moment.</p>

<p><b>35. Choose the NOW</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of stress or anxiety in anticipation of future responsibilities, tasks, to-do lists, and events.</b></p> <p>To choose the NOW is to be fully present and engaged in this moment, the immediate task at hand, or the current step in the process.</p> <p><b>SHIFT YOUR FOCUS</b> from your anticipated responsibilities, to-do lists, and events to the present moment. Appreciate and fully engage with whoever and whatever is happening in the now.</p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF:</b> One step at a time. Say this throughout the day whenever your mind starts to project forward to future responsibilities, to-do lists, and anticipated events or outcomes.</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> that now (this moment) is the only thing that’s real. The past is behind you and can never be retrieved or undone. The future is in front of you and cannot be accurately predicted. All your thoughts of the past and future are nothing more than a figment of your imagination, with your memories being distorted and your predictions being unreliable. To be distracted from the now is to squander your only opportunity to connect with others and experience life fully.</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Complete the task at hand or the current step in the process you are engaged in.</p>
<p><b>36. Choose Faith</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of anxiety, dread, or hopelessness about a potential hardship and related feared outcomes</b></p> <p>Faith is defined by a strong trust or confidence in someone or something, usually without any concrete evidence. That can be faith in God, the universe, or the strength and resiliency within us or others.</p> <p><b>STATE TO YOURSELF ANY OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:</b> I have faith in the abundance and goodness of the universe (or God). I have faith in the good intentions of those I love. I have faith that I (or my loved one) will endure and overcome this hardship. - <b>OR</b> - Create your own statement of faith.</p> <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> the power of faith. Faith is essential to our motivation. To stay steadfast in our efforts, we must believe that we can achieve our goals. Faith gives us hope, strength, and resilience. To endure the suffering of hardships and adversities, we must believe that better days will come. Faith is a catalyst for personal growth. To acknowledge and seek help for problems, we must believe in our ability and potential to improve the quality and outcome of our lives. Faith is a source of courage. To overcome our fears, we must believe that we have the strength and fortitude to endure feared outcomes. Faith enables us to empower others. To provide comfort, reassurance, and hope to those we love in their darkest moments, we must believe in their strength, resiliency, and capacity for learning and growth.</p> <p><b>ACT</b> - Act as if you believe that the outcomes you hope for are possible and in the strength and resiliency of the human spirit and its capacity to endure, overcome, and triumph over all of life’s hardships and suffering.</p>

## ACTIVE VISUALIZATION:

<b>37. Conscious Choice</b>	<p>↓ <b>When strengthening the impact of conscious choice tools</b></p> <p><b>VISUALIZE</b> in graphic detail how you would act or interact with others when choosing motivation, truth, courage, self-compassion, empathy, goodwill, or other chosen emotional states.</p> <p>You can use this visualization to address and reconcile emotional wounds from childhood related to unmet needs, neglect, abuse, interpersonal conflict, and other hurtful or traumatic events that shaped your autopilot brain. This is particularly important to do if your parents were or are the source of your emotional pain and suffering. While it would be most beneficial to address your feelings directly with your parents, this is often not possible due to estrangement or the death of a parent. Visualization is the next best thing to an actual physical experience and can be very helpful to emotional healing.</p> <p>You can also use this visualization tool to enhance your mindset, follow through, and performance in preparation for future events.</p>
<b>38. Imaged Exposure</b>	<p>↓ <b>When countering fears related to OCD or phobias</b></p> <p><b>VISUALIZE</b> in graphic detail your most feared situations or outcomes, such as vomiting in front of others or traveling over a bridge. Do not apply any countering strategies to the anxiety that comes up during the visualization. Instead, focus on the worst-case scenario and see it in your mind's eye with as much detail as possible. Continue with the visualization, repeating it multiple times from start to finish, until your anxiety subsides to less than 2 on a scale of 1-10 (SUDs score). Once your anxiety has subsided, repeat the process for a total of 3-5 sets of Cognitive Flooding.</p> <p>You can also use Cognitive Flooding to expose yourself to upsetting or disturbing thoughts. Repeat the thoughts in your mind or aloud. Exaggerate the thoughts as much as possible to intensify your anxiety. Continue to do so until your anxiety subsides to less than 2 on a scale of 1-10 (SUDs score). Once your anxiety has subsided, repeat the process for a total of 3-5 sets of Cognitive Flooding.</p>
<b>39. Memory Rescripting</b>	<p>↓ <b>When countering emotional and physical symptoms related to traumatic events</b></p> <p>If you have been a victim of sexual or physical abuse, and are experiencing flashbacks, intrusive images, or vivid memories of disturbing events, you can counter those images by editing them in a variety of ways. Much like a director of a movie, you have the power to edit a scene (flashbacks and memories) any way you wish.</p> <p><b>VISUALIZE</b> yourself imposing power or punishment over a perpetrator, or the image playing out in a manner that gives you a sense of comfort, safety, security, or power. You are the director of the images. Be as creative as you wish.</p> <p>Editing the painful images over time will give you a sense of empowerment over them and counter the feelings of helplessness (and other negative emotions) you may have felt at the time you were victimized. In addition, exposure to painful memories will desensitize you to the traumatic event so that it loses its power to upset and intimidate you.</p>

<p><b>40. Sizing up Threat</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of frustration, anger, aggression, or hostility in response to a difficult person</b></p> <p>If someone is triggering your primal mindset and activating your frustration or anger, you are experiencing them as a threat. Use your critical thinking tools to determine the rational credible truth regarding their capacity to harm you in any meaningful way (physically, professionally, socially, or psychologically).</p> <p>If the rational credible truth is that they cannot truly harm you, <b>VISUALIZE</b> them as a small child (or whatever character best matches their capacity to truly harm you) kicking you in the shin and how you would naturally respond to that. Chances are, while you may feel annoyed, you would not feel disrespected, threatened, angry, or hostile, and the incident would roll off you like water off a duck’s back.</p>
<p><b>41. Time Travel</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of stress and dread related to current or past events</b></p> <p><b>FUTURE PROJECTION:</b> Take a mental trip into the future and <b>VISUALIZE</b> the moment the dreadful event has passed. See that moment in color and detail and feel whatever emotions you anticipate experiencing in that moment. Draw tolerance, relief, and enthusiasm from knowing that moment is coming, no matter how distant it might feel. Recognize that while the day may feel long, the week, month, or year(s) will feel short in retrospect.</p> <p><b>PAST PROJECTION:</b> Take a mental trip back in time and <b>VISUALIZE</b> having a conversation with a younger version of yourself. Provide your younger self with the understanding, acceptance, love, and guidance that may have been absent from your life during those earlier times. This can be healing to the “inner child” that resides in you (and all of us) and continues to feel unsafe, afraid, or insecure.</p> <p>You can also go back in time and <b>VISUALIZE</b> having a conversation with someone who hurt, mistreated, or abused you. This will give you the opportunity to unload whatever bad feelings you have had bottled up inside and to stand up for yourself in a way that was not possible at the time when you were mistreated.</p>
<p><b>42. Humorous or Outlandish Distortions</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering intrusive images of past or future disturbing events</b></p> <p><b>VISUALIZE</b> a more humorous or outlandish scenario. The more detailed, colorful, peculiar, or extreme, the better. For example, a woman was angry and depressed following her divorce. She experienced intrusive thoughts and images about being alone for the rest of her life, how happy her ex-husband was with his new girlfriend, and how she and her ex-husband’s mutual friends liked him more than her. Whenever those thoughts and images popped into her mind, she substituted them for an image of her husband and his new girlfriend at a party. While everyone is standing around and talking, her ex-husband starts projectile vomiting. As friends come over to help, his new girlfriend also starts vomiting. Embarrassed by what just happened, they both make a quick exit for the door, collide with each other, and start tumbling to the ground. As his girlfriend tries to catch her fall, she grabs for the closest person next to her. This happens to be the ex-husband’s best friend Mike. In the process, she knocks Mike’s toupee off his head, which lands in the bowl of buffalo chicken dip sitting on the coffee table nearby. Conjuring up this image in her mind, never failed to make her smile or laugh aloud.</p>

**43. 30,000 Foot View**

↓ **When countering feelings of upset regarding a situation or interpersonal issue**

When you take a 30,000-foot view, you are metaphorically positioning yourself at a high altitude, like an airplane flying at 30,000 feet above the ground. You are stepping back from the details of your situation and looking at the big picture.

**VISUALIZE** yourself in your current upsetting situation, see it in all its detail, color, sound, and smell. Allow yourself to feel whatever emotions come up. Now, visualize yourself rising and floating upwards into the sky. As you rise higher and higher, you see the big picture surrounding your upsetting situation. You see the many factors that are contributing to your upsetting situation (describe those factors). You see others going through similar upsetting situations like yours (describe those situations). You see your upsetting situation in the context of your overall life circumstances, goals, values, priorities, and the suffering of others. Describe how your upsetting situation looks and feels from the 30,000-foot view.

**ASK YOURSELF**, does it look the same, bigger, or smaller in its importance and relevance? Does it feel as significant, personal, upsetting, overwhelming, or intolerable as before?

**44. Motivation & Performance Enhancement**

↓ **When countering performance anxiety or generating needed motivation**

When feeling unmotivated, refer to the Dreaded Outcome Tool and **VISUALIZE** the dreaded outcome that will most likely occur if you do not act and make the necessary changes to improve your life.

When doubting your ability to successfully perform a particular task or activity, **VISUALIZE** yourself performing your best at that task or activity. The more detailed you are in visualizing the sights, sounds, smells, and physical sensations of your best performance, the more likely you will be able to perform it to the best of your ability.

# Meditation:

## ↓ When countering feelings of stress and anxiety, and cultivating a mindfulness practice

### 44. Stillness Meditation

Stillness meditation involves sitting in a comfortable position and focusing your attention on your breath, bodily sensations, and physical stillness.

#### PREPARATION:

- **Find a Quiet Space:** Choose a quiet and comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. You can sit on a cushion, chair, or floor if your spine is comfortably upright.
- **Choose a Duration:** Decide how long you want to meditate. You can start with as little as 30 seconds and gradually work your way up from there as you become more comfortable.
- **Set a Timer:** Use a timer or meditation app to track the time without constantly checking the clock.

#### THE PRACTICE:

- **Posture:** Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. You can sit cross-legged on a cushion or chair or kneel on a meditation bench. Rest your hands on your lap or knees.
- **Eyes:** Close your eyes gently or keep them slightly open with a soft gaze, whichever is more comfortable for you.
- **Focus on Your Breath:** Take a few deep breaths to settle in. Then, shift your attention to your natural breath. Notice the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your body.
- **Be Present:** As you continue to breathe naturally, be fully present with each breath. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your focus back to your breath.
- **Body Scan:** If you prefer, you can also do a body scan. Start from the top of your head and slowly move your attention down through your body, noticing any sensations or areas of tension. This helps you connect with your body's sensations.
- **Non-Judgmental Awareness:** As thoughts, emotions, or sensations arise, observe them without judgment. Allow them to come and go, returning your attention to your breath or body.
- **Anchor Point:** If your mind is particularly restless, you can choose an anchor point, such as the sensation of your breath at your nostrils or the rising and falling of your abdomen.

#### ENDING THE PRACTICE:

- **Gradual Transition:** As your meditation time comes to an end, gradually transition back to your surroundings. Become aware of your body and your environment.
- **Open Your Eyes:** If your eyes were closed, gently open them. Take a few deep breaths and bring gentle movement back to your body.
- **Reflect:** Before you get up, take a moment to reflect on how you feel after the meditation. Notice any shifts in your state of mind or emotions.

#### TIPS:

- **Be Patient with Yourself:** It's normal for your mind to wander; the practice is in bringing your attention back.
- **Consistency Matters:** Regular practice is more valuable than long sessions. Aim for daily practice, even if it's just a few minutes.
- **Experiment** with different meditation lengths, techniques, and postures to find what suits you best.



## 45. Breath Meditation

Breath meditation focuses your attention on your breath and staying grounded in the present moment.

### PREPARATION:

- **Find a Quiet Space:** Choose a calm and quiet place where you can sit comfortably without distractions.
- **Choose a Comfortable Position:** Sit on a cushion, chair, or the floor, keeping your back straight and your hands resting on your lap or knees.
- **Set a Timer:** Decide on the duration of your meditation session. You can start with 5-10 minutes and gradually increase the time as you become more comfortable.

### THE PRACTICE:

- **Posture:** Sit with a relaxed but attentive posture. Close your eyes gently or maintain a soft gaze on a fixed point in front of you.
- **Begin by Noticing:** Take a few deep breaths to settle in. Then, allow your breath to return to its natural rhythm. Notice the sensation of your breath as you inhale and exhale.
- **Focus on the Breath:** Choose a specific area where you feel the breath most prominently. This could be the rise and fall of your abdomen or the sensation at the tip of your nostrils.
- **Observation:** Keep your attention anchored to the chosen area. Observe the entire breath cycle: the inhalation, the pause, the exhalation, and the pause before the next inhalation.
- **Non-Judgmental Awareness:** As you focus on your breath, thoughts, sensations, or distractions might arise. When this happens, acknowledge them without judgment and gently redirect your attention back to your breath.
- **Staying Present:** Be fully present with the breath, noticing its qualities—whether it's deep or shallow, smooth, or uneven. Let go of any need to control the breath; simply observe it as it is.
- **Breath as an Anchor:** Whenever your mind wanders, which is completely natural, use the sensation of the breath as an anchor to bring your attention back to the present moment.

### ENDING THE PRACTICE:

- **Transition Gradually:** As your meditation time comes to an end, gradually transition your awareness back to your surroundings.
- **Open Your Eyes:** If your eyes were closed, gently open them. Take a few deep breaths and bring gentle movement back to your body.
- **Reflect:** Before you conclude, take a moment to reflect on your meditation experience. Notice how you feel compared to before the session.

### TIPS:

- Start with shorter sessions and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable.
- It's common for the mind to wander; don't get discouraged. The practice is in gently redirecting your focus.
- Consistency is key. Regular practice brings more noticeable benefits over time.

## 46. Sound Meditation

Sound meditation, also known as sound healing or sonic meditation, focuses your attention on the naturally occurring sounds around you or specifically chosen sounds like singing bowls, gongs, chimes, or nature sounds.

### **PREPARATION:**

- **Find a Quiet Space:** Choose a peaceful and quiet environment where you can comfortably sit or lie down.
- **Select Sounds:** Decide whether you want to focus on the naturally occurring sounds around you or the chosen sounds that you play on an electric device or instruments like singing bowls or chimes.
- **Set a Timer:** Choose the duration of your meditation session. Starting with 10-15 minutes is a good option, but you can adjust based on your comfort level.

### **THE PRACTICE:**

- **Posture:** Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. If sitting, maintain an upright posture to allow for relaxed breathing.
- **Focus on Sound:** If using recorded sounds, play the chosen sound at a volume that's soothing but not overwhelming. If using physical instruments, gently strike or play them to create a resonant sound.
- **Listen Mindfully:** Direct your attention to the sounds you're hearing. Listen deeply, noticing the different layers, tones, and vibrations of the sound.
- **Full Presence:** As you listen, let the sound be the central focus of your awareness. Allow your mind to rest on the sound, becoming fully absorbed in its nuances.
- **Non-Judgmental Awareness:** If your mind starts to wander or thoughts arise, gently guide your focus back to the sound. Approach this process with a non-judgmental attitude.
- **Immersive Experience:** Imagine that the sound is washing over you, enveloping you in a cocoon of soothing vibrations. Let go of analyzing the sound and simply experience it.
- **Breath Awareness:** If you find it helpful, synchronize your breath with the sound. Inhale as the sound rises and exhale as it fades.

### **ENDING THE PRACTICE:**

- **Transition Gradually:** As your meditation time comes to an end, allow the sound to naturally fade away. Gradually bring your awareness back to the present moment.
- **Open Your Eyes:** If your eyes were closed, gently open them. Take a few deep breaths and bring gentle movement back to your body.
- **Reflect:** Take a moment to reflect on your sound meditation experience. Notice any changes in your mental state or overall sense of well-being.

### **TIPS:**

- Experiment with different sounds and instruments to find what resonates with you.
- If using recorded sounds, choose tracks specifically designed for meditation or relaxation.
- Consider combining sound meditation with breath awareness or body scan techniques.

## 47. Loving-Kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness meditation, also known as Metta meditation, focuses your attention on feelings of love, empathy, compassion, and goodwill toward oneself and others.

### **PREPARATION:**

- **Find a Quiet Space:** Choose a quiet and comfortable place where you won't be disturbed.
- **Set an Intention:** Reflect on your intention for the practice. You're cultivating a sense of love and kindness toward yourself and others.
- **Choose Your Phrases:** Prepare a set of loving-kindness phrases or intentions. These phrases will guide your meditation and can be personalized to your preferences.

### **THE PRACTICE:**

- **Posture:** Sit comfortably with an upright posture. You can sit on a cushion, chair, or the floor. Rest your hands on your lap or knees.
- **Relaxation:** Close your eyes gently or keep them slightly open with a soft gaze. Take a few deep breaths to relax your body and settle your mind.
- **Self-Compassion:** Begin by directing the loving-kindness phrases toward yourself. Repeat phrases like, May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease. Feel the intention behind each phrase.
- **Loved Ones:** Shift your focus to loved ones. Repeat phrases like, "May my loved ones be happy. May they be healthy. May they live with ease." Visualize each person as you say the phrases.
- **Neutral People:** Move on to people you have neutral feelings toward, like acquaintances or strangers. Repeat the phrases for them, cultivating kindness toward them.
- **Difficult Relationships:** Gradually extend your loving-kindness to people you have conflicts with or negative feelings toward. This can be challenging, but it's a way to promote healing and understanding.
- **All Beings:** Finally, expand your loving-kindness to all beings everywhere. Wish for the well-being and happiness of all living creatures.
- **Feel the Emotions:** As you repeat the phrases, connect with the emotions that arise. Allow yourself to feel genuine love, compassion, and kindness.

### **ENDING THE PRACTICE:**

- **Transition Gradually:** As your meditation time comes to an end, gradually transition your awareness back to your surroundings.
- **Open Your Eyes:** If your eyes were closed, gently open them. Take a few deep breaths and bring gentle movement back to your body.
- **Reflect:** Before you conclude, take a moment to reflect on your loving-kindness meditation experience. Notice any shifts in your emotions or perspective.

### **TIPS:**

- **Customize the phrases** to resonate with you. Make them authentic and heartfelt.
- **If you struggle** with sending loving-kindness to difficult people, **start** with more neutral individuals and gradually work your way up.
- **Regular practice** deepens the impact. Aim to practice loving-kindness meditation daily.
- **Be patient with yourself;** this practice takes time to develop.

## 48. Mantra Meditation

Mantra meditation focuses your attention on a word, phrase, or sound (mantra). The goal of mantra meditation is not to forcefully stop thoughts but to create a point of focus that helps you become more present and centered.

### PREPARATION:

- **Find a quiet and comfortable place** where you won't be disturbed.
- **Sit in a comfortable position with your spine upright.** You can sit on a cushion, chair, or the floor, whatever is most comfortable for you.
- **Close your eyes gently or keep them slightly open,** maintaining a soft gaze on a point in front of you.

### THE PRACTICE:

- **Choose Your Mantra:** Select a word, phrase, or sound that holds significance for you. It could be a positive affirmation, a word related to calmness or peace, or a traditional mantra like "Om" or "So Hum."
- **Breathe and Relax:** Take a few deep breaths to settle into the present moment. Allow any tension to release with each exhale.
- **Begin Repetition:** Start silently or softly repeating your chosen mantra. If it's a longer mantra, you can synchronize its repetition with your breath.
- **Focus on the Mantra:** As you repeat the mantra, gently bring your full attention to its sound, vibration, or meaning. Let the mantra be the center of your awareness.
- **Handle Distractions:** It's natural for thoughts, sensations, or distractions to arise. When they do, acknowledge them without judgment and gently guide your focus back to the mantra.
- **Continue the Repetition:** Maintain the repetition of the mantra for your chosen duration. You can set a timer for a specific length of time if you prefer.
- **Stay Relaxed:** Keep your body relaxed throughout the practice. If you find any tension, consciously release it.
- **Closing the Practice:** When you're ready to conclude the meditation, gradually slow down the repetition of the mantra. Sit in stillness for a few moments, observing any residual sensations or peaceful feelings.

### TIPS:

- **Experiment with different mantras** to find one that resonates with you.
- The mantra can be repeated mentally or whispered softly.
- **Avoid becoming frustrated if your mind wanders.** Gently guide your attention back to the mantra whenever you notice distractions.
- **You can start with short sessions,** like 5-10 minutes, and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable.
- **Practice regularly** for the best results. Consistency is key to experiencing the benefits of mantra meditation.

## 49. Progressive Muscle Meditation

Progressive muscle relaxation meditation focuses your attention on systematically tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups in the body to promote physical and mental relaxation.

### **PREPARATION:**

- **Find a Quiet Space:** Choose a quiet and comfortable space where you can lie down or sit in a relaxed position.
- **Wear Comfortable Clothing:** Wear loose-fitting and comfortable clothes that won't restrict your movement.
- **Set a Timer:** Decide on the duration of your practice. Starting with 10-15 minutes is a good option.

### **THE PRACTICE:**

- **Posture:** Lie down on your back or sit in a comfortable chair with your back straight and feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to relax.
- **Tensing Phase:** Start with your toes. Focus on one foot and curl your toes, tightening the muscles. Hold the tension for about 5-10 seconds. Feel the sensation of tension without straining.
- **Relaxation Phase:** Release the tension suddenly and completely. Feel the difference between the tension and relaxation in your toes. Focus on the sensations as the tension melts away.
- **Progressive Muscle Groups:** Move through the body, systematically tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups. Here's a sequence you can follow: Toes and feet – Calves – Thighs – Buttocks – Abdomen – Chest and back – Shoulders – Arms and hands – Neck and throat – Face.
- **Breathing:** As you release tension in each muscle group, take a deep breath in and exhale slowly. Use your breath to help release any residual tension.
- **Focus on Sensations:** During the relaxation phase, pay attention to the sensation of warmth, heaviness, and relaxation in the relaxed muscle group.
- **Non-Judgmental Awareness:** If your mind wanders or distractions arise, gently bring your focus back to the muscle you're working on.

### **ENDING THE PRACTICE:**

- **Transition Gradually:** As your practice time comes to an end, gradually transition your awareness back to your surroundings.
- **Open Your Eyes:** If your eyes were closed, gently open them. Take a few deep breaths and bring gentle movement back to your body.
- **Reflect:** Before you conclude, take a moment to reflect on your progressive muscle relaxation experience. Notice any changes in your physical and mental state.

### **TIPS:**

- **Progress through each muscle group slowly** and mindfully, taking your time to fully experience the contrast between tension and relaxation.

**50. Action Meditation**

Action meditation, often referred to as mindfulness in action, focuses your attention on everyday activities such as walking, eating, washing dishes, vacuuming, etc.

**PREPARATION:**

- **Choose an Activity:** Select a simple, routine activity to start with. It could be washing dishes, brushing your teeth, walking, eating, or any task that you often do automatically.

**THE PRACTICE:**

- **Set an Intention:** Before you begin the chosen activity, set an intention to be fully present and engaged in the experience. Decide that you will use this activity as an opportunity for mindfulness.
- **Engage Your Senses:** As you start the activity, focus your attention on your senses. Notice the physical sensations, sounds, sights, smells, and even tastes associated with the activity.
- **Stay Present:** Your mind might naturally wander to other thoughts. When you notice this, gently guide your attention back to the sensory experience of the activity. Be patient with yourself; it's normal for the mind to wander.
- **Observe the Details:** Pay attention to the details of the activity. For example, if you're washing dishes, notice the temperature of the water, the texture of the dishes, the sound of water, and the motion of your hands.
- **Slow Down:** Perform the activity at a slightly slower pace than usual. This allows you to savor each moment and detail. It also prevents you from rushing through the experience.
- **Non-Judgmental Awareness:** As you engage in the activity, practice non-judgmental awareness. Don't label the experience as good or bad; simply observe it with curiosity and without attaching judgments.
- **Stay Grounded:** If you notice your thoughts drifting away, gently redirect your attention back to the activity. Feel the connection between your body and the task at hand.

**TIPS:**

- **Start With Short Sessions.** Initially, you might practice action meditation for just a few minutes and gradually extend the duration.
- **Experiment** with different activities to find those that resonate with you.
- **Remember**, the goal is not to complete the task perfectly or quickly but to engage with it mindfully.

## PROMPTED JOURNALING:

### Motivation

**51. 4-Point Motivation** Ask your therapist for this form

**52. North Star/Desired Outcome Statement** Ask your therapist for this form

**53. Building Readiness for Change** Ask your therapist for this form

**54. Dreaded Anticipation** Ask your therapist for this form

### Emotional Countering

**55. 5-Step Thought Intervention** Ask your therapist for this form

**56. 3-Step Thought Intervention** Ask your therapist for this form

**57. CBT - Worksheet** Ask your therapist for this form

### Relationship Building

**58. Relationship Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA)** Ask your therapist for this form

**59. Stand-Tall** Ask your therapist for this form

**60. Five Secrets to Effective Communication** Ask your therapist for this form

**61. Losing/Winning Inventory** Ask your therapist for this form

# BODY/ACTION TOOLS

## OPPOSITE ACTION:

### 62. Breath Work

↓ **When countering feelings of anxiety or stress**

Breathwork, also known as conscious breathing or controlled breathing, refers to various techniques and practices that focus on manipulating and harnessing the breath for therapeutic and transformative purposes. By paying attention to and altering the depth, rhythm, and pattern of one's breath, individuals can calm their central nervous system, reduce anxiety, improve concentration, and enhance overall mental and emotional well-being.

**BOX BREATHING TECHNIQUE:** Box breathing, also known as square breathing or four-square breathing, involves consciously regulating the breath in a specific pattern. It consists of four equal phases: inhalation, holding the breath, exhalation, and holding the breath again, forming a square-like pattern. The length of each phase can vary based on personal preference, but a commonly used count is four seconds for each phase. Box breathing is often practiced in a seated or relaxed position, with a focus on slow, deep breaths.

**RHYTHMIC SIGHING TECHNIQUE:** Rhythmic sighing consists of two shorter inhales through the nose, and a prolonged exhale through the mouth. To practice rhythmic sighing, start by taking two quick inhales through the nose. Then, a prolonged slow exhale through the mouth, allowing the breath to escape with a gentle sighing sound. The exhalation should be longer than the inhalation, promoting a feeling of letting go and releasing built-up stress or negative emotions.

The rhythmic sighing technique can be repeated several times throughout the day, allowing the breath and sigh to flow naturally. It can be practiced in a calm and comfortable environment or on the fly in any situation when you are feeling stressed. Adapt the practice to your own comfort level and needs. Consult a healthcare professional if you have any underlying respiratory conditions or concerns.

### 63. Body Scan

↓ **When countering feelings of anger, anxiety, or stress**

**SHIFT YOUR FOCUS FROM THE OBJECT OF YOUR EMOTION TO YOUR BODILY SENSATION:**

- Scan your body from head to toe and, to yourself, describe whatever bodily sensations are present.
- Take note of any signs of stress like muscle tension, clenched fists, a tight jaw, tense shoulders, increased heart rate, rapid breathing, digestive discomfort, and knots or butterflies in your stomach.

**SLOW YOUR BREATH AND RELAX:**

- With every exhale, visualize and feel the stress being expelled from your body.
- Breathe, visualize, and feel the stress leaving your body until all the physical sensations subside and you feel calmer and more relaxed throughout your body.



**64. Feared Object/Situation  
Gradual Exposure**

↓ **When counting feelings of fear, anxiety, and avoidance of feared objects or situations**

The only way to truly overcome a fear is to face it. Exposures are the act of physically facing one's fears (object, situation, or physical sensations). Gradual exposures enable you to face your fears in a systematic way. Here are the instructions for doing gradual exposures with feared objects or situations.

- **Create a hierarchy of exposures** (from mildest to most intense) regarding the feared object or situation.
- **Do each exposure** one at a time, starting with the mildest and working your way up to the most intense.
- **Maintain the exposure** until your anxiety subsides to 1 or less on a SUD (subjective unit of distress) scale of 0-10, with 10 being the worst.
- **Repeat the exposure for a total of 3-5 sets** each time you do it. Work your way up the exposure hierarchy until you have faced your most intense fear.

**65. Internal Cues Gradual  
Exposure**

↓ **When countering feelings of anxiety and avoidance related to bodily sensations**

Here are the instructions for doing gradual exposures with feared bodily sensations.

- **Create a hierarchy of exposures** (from mildest to most fear-inducing) regarding the feared object or situation.
- **Do each exposure** one at a time, starting with the mildest and working your way up to the most intense.
- **Maintain the exposure** until your anxiety subsides to 1 or less on a SUD (subjective unit of distress) scale of 0-10, with 10 being the worst.
- **Repeat the exposure for a total of 3-5 sets** each time you do it. Work your way up the exposure hierarchy.

Here are suggestions for creating feared physical sensations:

**Rapid Heartbeat** - Run on the spot or up and down stairs for 1 minute, then a 1-minute break. Do this sequence 8 times. **Breathlessness or Smothering Feelings** - Hold your breath for 30 seconds, then breathe normally for 30 seconds. Do this 15 times. Breathe through a narrow, small straw (plug nose if necessary) for 2 minutes, then for 1 minute, breathe normally. Do this 5 times. Sit with your head covered by a heavy coat or blanket. **Choking Feelings, Gag Reflex** - Place a tongue depressor on the back of the tongue (for a few seconds or until inducing a gag reflex). Do this repetitively for 15 minutes. **Trembling or shaking** - Tense all the muscles in the body or hold a push-up position for as long as possible for 60 seconds, then rest for 60 seconds. Repeat 8 times. **Sweating** - Sit in a hot, stuffy room (or sauna, hot car, small room with a space heater), or drink a hot drink. **Dizziness or Lightheadedness** - Spin slowly in a swivel chair for 1 minute, then a 1-minute break. Do this sequence 8 times. Shake head from side to side for 30 seconds, then a 30-second break. Do this 15 times. While sitting, bend over and place your head between your legs for 30 seconds, then sit up quickly. Do this 15 times. Hyperventilate (shallow breathing at a rate of 100- 120 breaths per minute) for 1 minute, then normal breathing for 1 minute. Do this 8 times. **Derealization (Feeling That Things Are Not Right)** - Stare at a light on the ceiling for 1 minute, then try to read for 1 minute. Repeat 8 times. Stare at yourself in a mirror for three minutes, then take a one-minute break. Repeat three times. Stare at a small dot (the size of a dime) posted on the wall for three minutes. Stare at an optical illusion (rotating spiral, "psychedelic" rotating screen saver, etc.) for two minutes, then break for one minute. Repeat five times. **Tightness in the Throat** - Wear a tie, turtleneck shirt, or scarf tightly around the neck for 5 minutes, then take a one-minute break. Do this three times.

<p><b>66. Flooding Exposure</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of anxiety and the avoidance of feared objects, situations, or bodily sensations</b></p> <p>Flooding exposure differs from gradual exposure. In that, you face your most intense fear right away instead of working your up from the mildest to the most intense. For example, if you have an elevator phobia, get on an elevator, and stay there, no matter how bad you feel, until your fear subsides. Repeat the Flooding Exposure 3-5 times each time you do it. While Flooding Exposures are much more frightening than Gradual Exposures, they work more rapidly than Gradual Exposures. Both approaches have been used successfully in the treatment of all forms of anxiety.</p>
<p><b>67. Shame-Attacking Exposure</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of self-consciousness, anxiety, fear, or shame, regarding social attention, judgment, or humiliation:</b></p> <p><b><u>SHARING VULNERABILITY:</u></b> Instead of shamefully hiding your vulnerabilities (insecurities, shortcomings, failures, etc.), you intentionally and openly share them when appropriate. It may be necessary to practice a variety of other tools like Thought Interventions, Choosing Fear, Choosing Pain, and Choosing Courage tools before you are ready to do this Shame-Attacking Exposure. In sharing your vulnerabilities, you give others the opportunity to respond with understanding and support. Of course, you must be prepared for the fact that some will fail in giving you a supportive response. However, some will succeed, and their supportive response will strengthen your sense of acceptance, value, and worth in relation to your vulnerabilities.</p> <p><b><u>REJECTION PRACTICE:</u></b> Instead of fearing rejection, you accept that it is part of the “relationship game” in the same way that missing shots is a part of the basketball game, striking out is part of the baseball game, and losing is part of every game ever played. Instead of avoiding social situations and interactions that might result in rejection, you intentionally and consistently seek them out. By doing so you lose your fear of rejection (in the same way the best basketball players lose their fear of missing shots and best baseball players lose their fear of striking out) and are more capable of taking the social risk necessary in meeting new people, making friends, dating, and developing healthy intimate relationships. An example of this comes from Dr. Albert Ellis, a noted New York psychologist and one of the creators of this shame-attacking tool. When implementing the Rejection Practice tool for himself, he asked 200 women out for a date over the course of two weeks. All but one turned him down, and she was a no-show for their planned date! Although Dr. Ellis was not successful in securing a date during the two weeks he implemented this tool, he did conquer his fear of rejection and developed a robust social life, which led to many future dating opportunities.</p> <p><b><u>INTENTIONAL BUFFOONERY:</u></b> The most intense version of this Shame Attaching Exposure is to make yourself the center of attention by doing something unusual in public. For example, you could stand up and loudly announce each stop on a bus or shout out the time in a crowded department store. By doing so, you will be directly challenging and desensitizing yourself to your intense fear of looking foolish in front of others. In the process, you will discover that people do not care all that much and that being the center of attention cannot cause you any real-life harm. This will be a tremendously liberating discovery.</p>

<p><b>68. Eye Movement Rapid Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR)</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering emotional, behavioral, and physical symptoms related to a traumatic event:</b></p> <p>This tool involves focused attention on disturbing thoughts and images coupled with bilateral stimulation of the eyes. This tool <b>CAN NOT</b> be self-administered. If you are interested or in need of this tool, seek the services of a licensed therapist with specialized training and certification in EMDR.</p>
<p><b>69. Healthy Distractions</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering ruminating thoughts &amp; feelings:</b></p> <p><b>SHIFT YOUR FOCUS</b> away from disturbing negative thoughts or images.</p> <p><b>ASK YOURSELF:</b> What can I do right now to feel better?</p> <p><b>ENGAGE</b> in the fun, enjoyable, satisfying, productive, or healthy activity of your choice. For example, if you are feeling anxious during an airplane flight, you shift your focus to doing a crossword puzzle or talking to the passenger next to you.</p>
<p><b>70. The 24-Hour Rule</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering emotional reactivity and the impulse to take immediate action</b></p> <p><b>COMMITT YOURSELF</b> to hold off on the impulse to take immediate action for 24 hours.</p> <p><b>TELL YOURSELF</b> you can act after the 24 hours have passed.</p> <p><b>USE OTHER TOOLS</b> to resist, delay, and hold off on the action in question.</p> <p><b>REASSESS</b> after 24 hours, see how you feel. If you still want to act on your upsetting thoughts and feelings, then do so.</p>
<p><b>ROLEPLAY:</b></p>	
<p><b>71. Externalizing The Voices</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When working to convert what you know in your head (the rational credible truths you have discovered using critical thinking tools), to what you feel in your heart</b></p> <p>This Role-Playing is best done with your therapist or a trusted friend or family member. You and the other person take turns playing the role of your negative autopilot thoughts and beliefs and the role of your rational credible truth thoughts and beliefs. You can also take turns playing the role of your primal and powerful mindsets. The person playing the negative autopilot thoughts attacks, and the person playing the rational credible truth thoughts defends. Use role reversals when you get stuck.</p>
<p><b>72. Feared Outcomes Simulation</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering social anxiety and avoidance</b></p> <p>This Role-Playing is best done with your therapist or a trusted friend or family member. You and the other person act out your worst social fears, such as being rejected because you are not smart enough or good enough. By facing and experiencing your worst social fears, you will discover that your worst fears usually do not turn out to be real monsters but figments of your autopilot imagination that can be defeated with courage, compassion, logic, and common sense.</p>

# RELATIONSHIP TOOLS

## OVERCOMING SHYNESS & IMPROVING SOCIAL SKILLS:

↓ When working to increase social contacts and activities

### 73. Red-Light Green Light

The Red-Light Green Light tool is designed to help you meet people, develop friendships, and find dating opportunities. It starts with eye contact and only proceeds forward when green lights are received. A green light is when the other person reciprocates your action at a designated step. If the other person does not reciprocate your action, that is considered a red light. Do not proceed (or proceed with great caution) in response to red lights.

**IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING STEPS:**

- 1 – Eye contact
- 2 – Personal Greeting
- 3 – Building Familiarity
- 4 – Small Talk
- 5 – Personal Talk

### 74. Smile and Hello Practice

**SMILE AND SAY HELLO** to 10 strangers per day. Take note of how most people respond (positively, neutrally, or negatively). You will often discover that people are much friendlier than you expected. This is true most of the time, apart from major cities where the social norm may not support this type of gesture.

### 75. Self-Disclosure

**OPENLY DISCLOSE YOUR FEELING OF SHYNESS OR NERVOUSNESS** in social situations, instead of shamefully hiding them from others. You will have to Choose Courage in using this tool and be prepared for whatever reactions you get from the person you're telling.

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS:

↓ When working to strengthen intimate relationships

### 76. Redirect Failing Strategies

**BE MINDFUL WHEN COMMUNICATING, AND WHEN YOU CATCH YOURSELF IN A FAILING STRATEGY, REDIRECT YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE USING ONE OF THE TOOLS IN THIS SECTION:**

- Coercive Communication
- Winning Mindset
- Fixing/Problem-Solving Mindset
- Unbridled Self-Expression
- Withdrawal/Avoidance

<p><b>77. The Four 5Rs</b></p>	<p>↓ <b>When countering feelings of anger and escalating aggression during conflict</b></p> <p><b><u>THE FOUR Rs OF ANGER MANAGEMENT:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>1 – Recognize:</b> Take note of escalating interpersonal tension and physical and mental indicators of anger</li> <li>▪ <b>2 – Retreat:</b> Physically separate yourself from your partner.</li> <li>▪ <b>3 – Relax:</b> Give yourself time for the emotional charge to subside. Use Body Scan or other tools to counter your feelings of anger and aggression.</li> <li>▪ <b>4 – Reflect:</b> Use the Go Inside and other tools to counter your primal mindset and related anger.</li> <li>▪ <b>5 – Re-engage:</b> Speak to your partner using the Lead with Empathy, Find Truth, and Stand-Tall tools found in this section of your toolkit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>78. Lead With Empathy</b></p>	<p><b><u>PUT YOURSELF IN THE OTHER PERSON’S SHOES:</u></b></p> <p><i>(You may need to use the tool of choosing compassion before being able to implement the tool of Lead With Empathy.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Thought Empathy: You paraphrase the other person’s words.</li> <li>▪ Feeling Empathy: You acknowledge how the other person feels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>79. Find Truth</b></p>	<p>Instead of getting defensive, arguing, or challenging someone when they say something critical to you, find and acknowledge some truth in what they are saying, no matter how small, unreasonable, or unfair it may be.</p>
<p><b>80. Stand-Tall Communication</b></p>	<p>As human beings, we cannot help but express ourselves. We can do this in one of two ways. We can act out our emotions (coercive communication) or we can express ourselves directly, specifically, and respectfully (through stand-tall communication). When someone upsets us, stand-tall communication gives us the best chance of being understood and having our needs taken into consideration.</p> <p><b><u>4-STEPS TO STAND-TALL COMMUNICATION - STATE:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 - When you (observable concrete behaviors) ...</li> <li>▪ 2 - I feel (emotion-specific word, i.e.- hurt, sad, frustrated, angry, etc.) ...</li> <li>▪ 3 - Because what I create in my mind (your thoughts about the actions) ...</li> <li>▪ 4 - I would prefer, would appreciate, I need you to ...</li> </ul>

# ENVIRONMENTAL TOOLS

## CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS AND NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

↓ **When countering negative feelings or a bad mood**

### 81. Change People

Our physical environment has a significant impact on our mood and well-being. By understanding and utilizing elements of the environment, we can positively influence our emotions and enhance our overall mood. Here are some ways in which the physical environment can be used to enhance our mood:

**CHANGE PEOPLE:** We associate certain feelings and habits with certain people in our life. To improve your mood, limit your interactions with people who emotionally pull you down, and seek the company of those who emotionally pull you up. This may require seeking new friendships, changing social groups, or setting stronger boundaries with family members.

If you are working to break unhealthy habits, stay away from people who you share those habits with. For example, if you want to stop drinking, stop hanging out with your friends who drink. This is a common practice for alcoholics early in the recovery process.

### 82. Change Places

**CHANGE PLACES (LOCATIONS):** We associate certain feelings and habits with certain physical spaces. If you are feeling bad, leave the physical space you're in and go somewhere that you associate with more positive emotions. It can be another room in your house, the mall, a movie theater, a friend's house, or anywhere else that suits you.

If you want to go to a location that is clinically proven to enhance your mood and well-being, go into nature. Being surrounded by nature, such as greenery, trees, and water bodies, has been shown to have a calming effect on the mind. Nature helps reduce stress and improves mood. Spending time outdoors or incorporating natural elements into indoor spaces through plants and natural light can boost our emotional well-being.

If you are working to break an unhealthy habit, stay away from places that you associate with the habit. For example, if you want to stop drinking alcohol, stop going to bars and events where alcohol is served. This is a common practice for alcoholics early in the recovery process.

### 83. Change Things

**CHANGE THINGS:** We associate certain feelings and habits with certain physical items in our environment. If you are feeling bad, changes to your physical environment can improve your mood. Consider the following:

- **Organize and clean:** A cluttered and messy environment can lead to feelings of stress and overwhelm. Keeping our physical spaces organized and clean can help create a sense of calm and control, enhancing our mood and overall well-being.
- **Change the Decor: Lighting** - Proper lighting plays a crucial role in influencing our mood. Exposure to natural light during the day can help regulate our circadian rhythm and improve mood. Bright, well-lit spaces can promote feelings of positivity and productivity, while dimmer lighting can create a cozy and relaxing atmosphere.
- **Colors:** Different colors can evoke different emotions. Warm colors like red, orange, and yellow can create a sense of warmth and energy, while cool colors like blue and green can induce a calming and peaceful feeling. Using colors strategically in interior design can positively affect our emotions.
- **Personalization:** Personalizing our living or working spaces with items that have sentimental value or represent our interests can provide a sense of comfort and happiness. Surrounding ourselves with things we love can lift our spirits and make us feel more content.
- **Social spaces:** Creating spaces that encourage social interaction and connection with others can promote feelings of happiness and belonging. Having comfortable seating areas or communal spaces can foster a sense of community and boost our mood.
- **Aesthetic appeal:** Beautiful and aesthetically pleasing environments, can have a positive impact on our emotions. Surrounding ourselves with visually pleasing artwork, decor, or architecture can elicit feelings of joy and appreciation.

If you are working to break an unhealthy habit, avoid or purge yourself of things related to the habit. To continue with the alcohol example. If you want to stop drinking, get rid of all the alcohol from your home, take down alcohol related posters or artwork, and remove the bottle opener from your key change.

By changing the people, places, and things we associate with negative feelings and habits, we give ourselves the best chance of feeling better and breaking the cycle of unhealthy habits.

# PHARMACEUTICAL TOOLS

## MEDICAL CARE WHEN NEEDED

↓ When diagnosed with a mental health condition for which medication is the standard of care or one that is not one responding to talk therapy and lifestyle changes alone

### 84. Supplements

*Always Consult with a  
Healthcare Professional Before  
Taking Any Supplement*

**SUPPLEMENTS:** It's important to note that while some supplements may have research suggesting they can potentially improve mood, individual responses can vary widely, and not all supplements are suitable for everyone. Moreover, it's crucial to consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new supplement regimen, especially if you have underlying medical conditions or are taking other medications. Below are some supplements with research indicating their potential mood-enhancing benefits:

▪ **Omega-3 Fatty Acids (Fish Oil):**

- **Benefits:** Omega-3 fatty acids, particularly EPA and DHA found in fish oil, have been associated with improved mood and reduced symptoms of depression.
- **Research:** Several studies have shown that omega-3 supplementation may help alleviate symptoms of depression and improve mood regulation.

▪ **Vitamin D:**

- **Benefits:** Adequate vitamin D levels are important for overall well-being, and a deficiency may be linked to mood disorders.
- **Research:** Some research suggests that individuals with low vitamin D levels are more prone to mood disturbances, and supplementation may help improve mood.

▪ **B Vitamins (B6, B9, B12):**

- **Benefits:** B vitamins play a role in neurotransmitter synthesis and brain function, and deficiencies can affect mood.
- **Research:** Some studies have indicated that B vitamin supplementation, especially B6, B9 (folate), and B12, may positively impact mood, particularly in individuals with deficiencies.

▪ **Saffron (Crocus sativus):**

- **Benefits:** Saffron has been studied for its potential antidepressant properties.
- **Research:** Some studies suggest that saffron supplementation may help reduce symptoms of depression and improve mood.

▪ **St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum):**

- **Benefits:** St. John's Wort is a traditional herbal remedy for depression and mood disorders.
- **Research:** Some research indicates that St. John's Wort may be effective in treating mild to moderate depression, but it can interact with other medications, so caution is necessary.



- **L-Theanine:**
  - **Benefits:** L-Theanine is an amino acid found in tea leaves, and it may have a calming effect on the brain.
  - **Research:** Some studies suggest that L-Theanine may reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, potentially improving mood.
- **Rhodiola Rosea:**
  - **Benefits:** Rhodiola is an adaptogenic herb believed to help the body adapt to stress and may have mood-enhancing properties.
  - **Research:** Some studies suggest that Rhodiola supplementation may help reduce symptoms of mild to moderate depression and improve overall well-being.
- **Ashwagandha:**
  - **Benefits:** Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic herb with potential benefits, including stress reduction, improved mood, cognitive function, anti-inflammatory effects, and immune system support.
  - **Research:** Some studies suggest it may lower cortisol, reduce anxiety, enhance memory, combat oxidative stress, and reduce inflammation.
- **5-HTP (5-Hydroxytryptophan):**
  - **Benefits:** 5-HTP is a precursor to serotonin, a neurotransmitter associated with mood regulation.
  - **Research:** Some research indicates that 5-HTP supplementation may be effective in improving mood and reducing symptoms of depression, but it should be used with caution and under medical guidance.
- **Probiotics:**
  - **Benefits:** Gut health has been linked to mood, and probiotics can influence the gut-brain axis.
  - **Research:** Emerging research suggests that certain probiotic strains may have a positive impact on mood and may alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety.

While the supplements listed above show promise in reducing mental health symptoms and improving mood, more studies are needed to confirm their effectiveness and safety. If you are considering supplementation in the treatment of your mood difficulties, it's essential that you consult with a healthcare professional who can advise you on the potential risks and benefits of supplementation in relation to your mental health needs.

## 85. Medications

*You Will Need to Consult With a Healthcare Professional to Determine if Medication is Appropriate*

**PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS:** Psychotropic medications target specific brain chemicals and receptors to regulate mood and alleviate symptoms of mental health conditions. They are commonly used to treat various mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Please note that the landscape of psychotropic medications is continually evolving, and new treatments are always emerging. Always consult with a healthcare professional for the most up-to-date information and personalized treatment recommendations. Below are some common psychotropic medications and their general efficacy.

▪ **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs):**

- **Examples:** Prozac (fluoxetine), Zoloft (sertraline), Lexapro (escitalopram).
- **Benefits:** SSRIs are used to treat depression and anxiety disorders.
- **Research:** Numerous studies have shown that SSRIs are effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in many individuals.

▪ **Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs):**

- **Examples:** Effexor (venlafaxine), Cymbalta (duloxetine).
- **Benefits:** SNRIs are prescribed for depression and certain anxiety disorders.
- **Research:** Research supports the efficacy of SNRIs in managing depressive symptoms and some anxiety disorders.

▪ **Benzodiazepines:**

- **Examples:** Xanax (alprazolam), Ativan (lorazepam), Valium (diazepam).
- **Benefits:** Benzodiazepines are used for the short-term relief of anxiety and panic disorders.
- **Research:** Benzodiazepines are effective for reducing acute anxiety symptoms, but they can lead to dependence and have potential side effects.

▪ **Atypical Antipsychotics:**

- **Examples:** Abilify (aripiprazole), Risperdal (risperidone), Seroquel (quetiapine).
- **Benefits:** Atypical antipsychotics are used to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and certain mood disorders.
- **Research:** These medications have been found effective in managing symptoms associated with psychotic disorders and mood instability.

▪ **Mood Stabilizers:**

- **Examples:** Lithium, Depakote (divalproex sodium), Lamictal (lamotrigine).
- **Benefits:** Mood stabilizers are primarily used for bipolar disorder to reduce manic and depressive episodes.
- **Research:** Research supports the use of mood stabilizers in preventing and managing mood swings in bipolar disorder.

- **Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCAs):**
  - **Examples:** Elavil (amitriptyline), Tofranil (imipramine), Norpramin (desipramine).
  - **Benefits:** TCAs are used to treat depression, anxiety, and certain chronic pain conditions.
  - **Research:** TCAs have been shown to be effective in treating depression, but they are often used less frequently due to side effects and safety concerns.
- **Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs):**
  - **Examples:** Nardil (phenelzine), Parnate (tranylcypromine).
  - **Benefits:** MAOIs are prescribed for depression when other medications have not been effective.
  - **Research:** MAOIs can be effective for treatment-resistant depression, but they require strict dietary and medication restrictions.
- **Antidepressants with N-Methyl-D-Aspartate (NMDA) Receptor Modulation:**
  - **Example:** Spravato (esketamine).
  - **Benefits:** Esketamine is used as an adjunct to oral antidepressants for treatment-resistant depression.
  - **Research:** Studies have demonstrated the efficacy of esketamine in rapidly reducing depressive symptoms in individuals who haven't responded to other treatments.

The effectiveness of these medications will vary from person to person. Even when they work well, they are not a cure-all, and their use should be carefully monitored by healthcare professionals. Combining supplements and/or medications with therapy and lifestyle changes often yields the best results in treating mental health conditions and promoting overall mental well-being. Personalized treatment plans, guided by healthcare providers, ensure safe and effective use of supplements and psychotropic medications to improve mood and quality of life.

I want you to know my negative bias regarding the use of psychotropic medications. Throughout my twenty-plus years of clinical experience, I have witnessed firsthand the side effects of these medications, particularly when used over prolonged periods of time. In addition, it is difficult to fully trust pharmaceutical companies with their long history of promoting medicines that have proven less effective and more dangerous than promised. In an ideal world, no one would ever need to take psychotropic medications.

Despite my concerns about psychotropic medications, I fully support their use in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. Although I have witnessed the detrimental effects of these medications, I have also witnessed the detrimental effects of depression, anxiety, ADHD, and other psychiatric conditions. In many cases, the pain, suffering, and life impairment caused by these conditions are far greater than the risks and side effects of the medications used to treat them.