

# HIRI Workbook

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# Introduction to the Headington Institute Resilience Inventory (HIRI) Workbook

## What is Resilience?

Humanitarians are subjected to unusually high levels of stress that have physical, emotional, and behavioral consequences. One extremely important and powerful tool we have to fight off stress, burnout, and negative traumatic responses is resilience. But what exactly is resilience? Resilience can be defined as the capacity to adapt and bounce back during traumatic incidents so that one not only survives but thrives. Resilience can also be simply defined with a metaphor for example, the ground is “resilient” when if, after a flood or fire, it is able to provide new life for plants, new animals, starting another kind of life. It is not the same as before but renewed. That soil had the right ingredients in order to bounce back and create new space for growth and development.

Here at Headington Institute, we utilize a dynamic approach to predict this adaptive capacity and have identified 7 main dimensions that make up resilience as a multifaceted construct<sup>1</sup>. The seven dimensions of resilience as defined by the HIRI (Headington Institute Resilience Inventory) are as follows:

- Emotion Regulation
- Behavioral Regulation
- Adaptive Engagement
- Physical Fitness
- Sense of Purpose
- Life Appreciation
- Spirituality

This workbook is your guide to ensure that you can be as resilient as you can possibly be to not only survive, but thrive in your work as an aid worker. We know that it can be a lot to take in – here are some tips to help you get the most out of this workbook:

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<sup>1</sup> *The Headington Institute Resilience Inventory (HIRI): Development and validation for humanitarian aid workers.*  
<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-02180-004>

## How to get the most out of the HIRI Workbook

- Each chapter has both articles and explanations of each facet of resilience, as well as practical applications on how to grow that area of resilience. The practical applications can easily be found in the table of contents and is marked by the term **EXERCISE** in **RED BOLD** letters.
- You don't need to read this whole workbook – focus on the domains that you need to build on.
- In the same vein, don't feel pressured to complete every single exercise for every domain – start with one or two and work up from there. It is more effective to do a few exercises well than to half-heartedly attempt all of them.
- Work with a friend or with a team to keep each other accountable through the exercises.
- Many of the exercises have a journaling or reflective component. Get a journal dedicated solely to this workbook where you can journal and practice the exercises. You can look back later to see your progress.
- Feel free to work on one or two domains you want to work on now, but make a note to work on a different domain in a different season of your life.

# Emotion Regulation

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **EMOTION REGULATION**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

## What is *emotion regulation* and why is it important?

What comes to mind when you think of someone who is perfectly emotionally regulated? Someone who is completely calm all of the time, who never gets angry? Maybe someone who never shows any emotion at all? The answer that we come up with likely reveals how we tend to view emotions, and in particular, strong emotions. We can have complicated relationships towards our own emotions, from feeling ambivalent about them to wanting to shut them out completely. Understanding the role of emotions, our own emotions, and how to properly regulate our emotions is crucial to building resilience. Sometimes aid workers may think that emotions are a barrier or obstacle and best to ignore them or suppress them – this has many negative side effects which we will discuss below. There is a better way...

***Emotion regulation*** measures an individual's emotional competence, which essentially involves knowing what one is feeling and being able to communicate it effectively to others. Emotions arise from the limbic area of the brain and give us a felt sense of what is happening around us. This foundational form of knowing is then regulated by higher cortical processes that help us make sense of incidents and allow for a more nuanced interpretation. Individuals with a stronger capacity for emotional regulation are able to tap into what they have learned from past experience, and therefore to be less reactive. They are also able to maintain a sense of cognitive clarity and focus, even when stress increases, because they are not "hijacked" by their emotions.

In some cultures, people often find it easier to identify how their body feels first, such as noticing headaches, stomachaches. It is important to listen to your body. Sometimes your body can send you wisdom or messages that show you need to do something different. Consider doing a quick body check or scan – take a moment in silence to observe your body and what you might be feeling or experiencing in your body. Is there anything new or different? Then consider what thoughts or feelings these bodily sensations might be telling you.

Here is a list of common emotions and how to know what you are feeling. It is important to be able to detect and name what you are feeling. Psychologists call this “emotional intelligence.” The second part of the process is to name the feeling and THEN be able to communicate it to another person.

Emotion	Prompting Events	Interpretations that Prompt this Feeling	Biological Changes
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having an important goal blocked. Someone else stops you from getting what you want</li> <li>• You or someone you care about being attacked or threatened</li> <li>• Losing power, status, or respect</li> <li>• Physical/emotional pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing you have been treated unfairly</li> <li>• Rigidly thinking, “I’m right.”</li> <li>• Judging that the situation is illegitimate or wrong.</li> <li>• Believing that things “should” be different than they are.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscles tightening</li> <li>• Hands clenching</li> <li>• Face flushing/getting hot</li> <li>• Feeling like you are going to explode</li> <li>• Unable to stop tears</li> <li>• Wanting to hit someone bang the wall, throw something, etc.</li> </ul>
Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life or health threatened</li> <li>• Being in a similar situation where you have been threatened/hurt in the past</li> <li>• Silence</li> <li>• Being in a new or unfamiliar situation</li> <li>• Being alone</li> <li>• Having to perform in front of others</li> <li>• Pursuing your dreams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing that you:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• might die, be harmed, lose something valuable, be criticized, embarrass yourself, or that failure is possible</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Believing that you:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will not get the help you need, will lose something or someone important</li> <li>• are helpless or losing control</li> <li>• are incompetent</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathlessness</li> <li>• Fast heartbeat</li> <li>• Lump in throat</li> <li>• Urge to scream/call out</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Getting cold/clammy</li> <li>• “Butterflies” in stomach</li> <li>• Wanting to run away or avoid things</li> <li>• Muscles tensing</li> <li>• Hairs standing on end</li> </ul>

Sadness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Losing something or someone</li> <li>• Things not being what you expected or wanted</li> <li>• Being rejected, disapproved of, or excluded</li> <li>• Discovering that you are powerless or helpless</li> <li>• Being with someone else who is sad or in pain</li> <li>• Being alone or feeling isolated</li> <li>• Thinking about your losses or missing someone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing that a separation from someone will never end</li> <li>• Believing that you will not get what you want or need in your life</li> <li>• Seeing things or your life as hopeless</li> <li>• Believing that you are worthless or not valuable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling: tired, low in energy, lethargic, wanting to stay in bed all day</li> <li>• Pain or hollowness in your gut or chest</li> <li>• Feeling empty</li> <li>• Feeling as if you can't stop crying or on the verge of tears</li> <li>• Difficulty swallowing</li> <li>• Breathlessness</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> </ul>
Shame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being rejected</li> <li>• Having others find out you have done something wrong</li> <li>• Comparing yourself to others</li> <li>• Being betrayed</li> <li>• Being laughed at/made fun of, or criticized publicly</li> <li>• Being reminded of something wrong or immoral you did in the past</li> <li>• Exposure of a very private aspect of yourself or life</li> <li>• Having emotions/experiences that have been invalidated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing that others will/have reject/ed you</li> <li>• Judging yourself to be inferior or 'not good enough'</li> <li>• Thinking that you are a 'loser'</li> <li>• Believing yourself unlovable</li> <li>• Thinking that you are bad, wrong, defective</li> <li>• Believing your body is too big, small, ugly</li> <li>• Thinking you have not lived up to others' expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain in the pit of the stomach</li> <li>• Sense of dread</li> <li>• Wanting to shrink down and/or disappear</li> <li>• Wanting to hide or cover your face and body</li> </ul>
Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing or thinking something you believe is wrong</li> <li>• Doing or thinking something that violates your personal values</li> <li>• Not doing something you said that you would do</li> <li>• Causing harm/damage to another person or yourself</li> <li>• Being reminded of something wrong you did in the past</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking that your actions are to blame for something</li> <li>• Thinking that you behaved badly</li> <li>• Thinking, "if only I had done something differently..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot, red face</li> <li>• Jitteriness, nervousness</li> <li>• Suffocating</li> </ul>
Envy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone has something you really want/need but can't have</li> <li>• You are not part of the 'in' crowd</li> <li>• Someone appears to have everything</li> <li>• Someone gets praise/credit for something you've done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking you deserve what others have</li> <li>• Thinking others have more than you</li> <li>• Thinking you are inferior, a failure, or mediocre compared to others</li> <li>• Comparing yourself to others</li> <li>• Thinking you are unappreciated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscles tightening</li> <li>• Feeling your face get hot or flushed</li> <li>• Feeling rigidity in your body</li> <li>• Pain in the pit of stomach</li> <li>• Having an urge to get even</li> <li>• Hating the other person</li> <li>• Feeling pleasure when others experience failure or lose what they have</li> <li>• Feeling motivated to improve yourself</li> </ul>

## What do emotions do for me?<sup>2</sup>

It may be easy, especially when we feel overwhelmed by unwanted emotions, to focus on the negative aspects of emotions, or even to wish we had no emotions at all. However, this couldn't be farther from the truth – we need emotions!

1. Emotions motivate (and organize us for action). Emotions motivate our behavior and prepare us for action. The action urge of specific emotions is often “hard-wired” in biology. For example, if you see a young child in the middle of the street and a car coming, you will feel the emotion of fear, and this emotion will prompt you to run to save the child. You don't stop to think about it – you just do it. This emotion has motivated your behavior without you having to take the time to think. Strong emotions also help us overcome obstacles – both in our minds and in the environment. For example, think of the anxiety someone might feel before they take a test. The emotion of anxiety, although it can be uncomfortable, helps motivate you to study harder for the test.

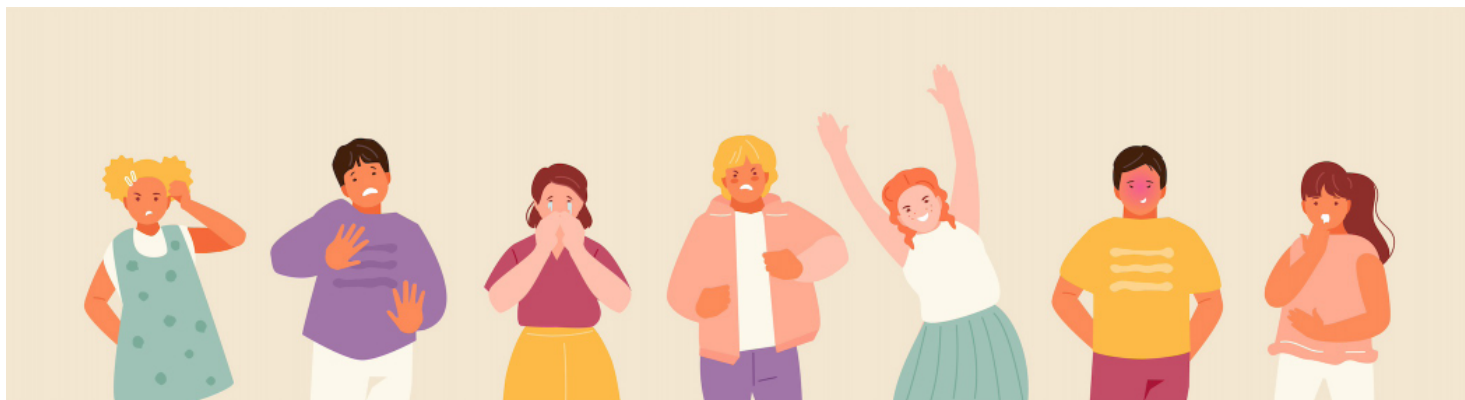
2. Emotions communicate to (and influence others). We are fundamentally relational creatures – we need strong and healthy relationships to flourish and thrive. Emotions are one of the main ways that we connect to each other and build relationships. We are biologically hard-wired to communicate our emotions to others through our facial expressions, body language, and voice tone. When our emotions become overwhelming or too much, our verbal or nonverbal emotional expressions might not match with our inside feelings, which often results in people misunderstanding what we are feeling. Think of an example in which a coworker learns that their father is critically ill. They would naturally feel very sad, and their face might also look sad. Seeing someone with a sad face would prompt you to ask what was wrong, and perhaps offer sympathy or comfort. Imagine, however, if this same coworker had instead a blank or expressionless face after hearing about their father's illness. You might never know what they were feeling, and more importantly, you would not have the opportunity to connect with this person and encourage them in their sadness. We need emotional expressions to communicate and connect with others.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from <https://dbtselfhelp.com/dbt-skills-list/emotion-regulation/>



3. Emotions communicate to ourselves. Lastly, emotional reactions can give us important information about a situation. Emotions can be signals or alarms that something is happening. Gut feelings can be like intuition – a response to something important about the situation. This can be helpful if our emotions get us to check out the facts. For example, you might feel anxiety when leaving the house, and then, upon checking, realize that you forgot to turn off the stove before you left. One caution regarding this is that sometimes we treat emotions as if they are facts about the world. The stronger the emotion, the stronger our belief that the emotion is based on fact. (Examples: "Because I am afraid when flying – that means flying is really dangerous, If I feel unsure, I am incompetent," "If I get lonely when left alone, I shouldn't be left alone," "If I feel confident about something, it is right," "If I'm afraid, there must be danger," "I love him, so he must be OK.") If we assume that our emotions represent facts about the world, we may use them to justify our thoughts or our actions. Sometimes when we believe our emotions about a situation without trying to add in all the facts it can give us an incomplete view of the situation.

Sometimes when we believe our emotions without bringing in facts to balance it – it can give us an inaccurate or biased view of the situation and can lead to more negative emotions.



## EXERCISE: Emotion Diary

One of the first steps to improving our emotion regulation is by becoming more aware of them. Record an emotion (either the strongest emotion of the day, the longest-lasting one, or the one that was the most painful or gave you the most trouble). Analyze that emotion.

Emotions	Motivate	Communicate to Others			Communicate to Me
Emotion Name	What did my emotion motivate me to do (i.e., what goal did my emotion serve?)	How did I express emotion to others (my nonverbal appearance, my words, my actions)?	What message did my emotion express to others?	What was the effect of my emotion on others?	What was my emotion saying to me?
Fear/anxiety	Not to go to a work meeting	I did not go to a work meeting	That meeting was not important to me.	1 – they called to encourage me to come. 2 – They wonder if I am committed. 3 – They might be concerned.	That meeting is unsafe.

## EXERCISE: Observing or Describing Emotions

Select a current or recent emotional reaction, and fill out as much of this sheet as you can

EMOTION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ INTENSITY (0-100): \_\_\_\_\_

PROMPTING EVENT for my emotion (who, what, when, where): What set off the emotion?

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VULNERABILITY FACTORS: What happened before that made me vulnerable to the prompting event?

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INTERPRETATIONS (beliefs, assumptions, appraisals) of the situation:

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FACE and BODY CHANGES and EXPERIENCES: What was I feeling in my face and body?

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ACTION URGES: What did I feel like doing? What did I want to say?

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FACE and BODY LANGUAGE: What was my facial expression? Posture? Gestures?

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WHAT I SAID in the situation (be specific):

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WHAT I DID in the situation (be specific):

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What AFTER EFFECTS did the emotion have on me (my state of mind, other emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory, body, etc.)?

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## Obstacles to Emotion Regulation

After completing the above exercise, you might realize that emotions are more difficult to observe and regulate than we might think. What makes it hard to regulate your emotions? Here are some common obstacles:

- Biology: biological factors can make emotion regulation harder – some people are biologically predisposed to be more vulnerable to their emotions.
- Lack of Skill: You might not know what to do to regulate your emotions
- Moodiness: Your current mood might control you instead of what you really want/need to do. Emotional regulation often requires a lot of effort and energy.
- Emotional Overload: At a certain point, we can get too overwhelmed by our emotions to practice emotion regulation or figure out what to do.
- Time and Energy Constraints: Sometimes we don't feel that we have the time to understand and express our emotions.
- Having judgmental thoughts about yourself or others
- Not finding time for self-care, exercise or relaxation or down-time.
- Emotion Myths: Myths (e.g., mistaken beliefs) about emotions get in the way of our ability to regulate emotions. Myths that emotions are bad or weak lead to avoiding emotions. On the other hand, myths that extreme emotions are necessary or are part of who you are keep you from trying to regulate your emotions. Below is a list of common myths about emotions. Read through them and see if you can relate to any of them:

- \* Negative feelings are bad and destructive. \* Being emotional means being out of control.
- \* Painful emotions are not important and should be ignored. \* My emotions are who I am.
- \* Some emotions are stupid. \* All painful emotions are a result of a bad attitude.
- \* Extreme emotions get you a lot further than trying to regulate your emotions.
- \* If others don't approve of my feelings, I obviously shouldn't feel the way I do.
- \* Acting on your emotions is the mark of a truly free individual.
- \* Creativity requires intense, often out-of-control emotions.
- \* Letting others know that I am feeling bad is a weakness.
- \* It is inauthentic to try to change my emotions.

## EXERCISE: Changing Emotional Responses<sup>3</sup>

After understanding the importance of emotions and what makes it hard to regulate them, how can we take practical steps to regulating our emotional responses? Two popular exercises are Check the Facts and Opposite Action.

### **Check the Facts:**

Many emotions and actions are set off by our thoughts and interpretations of events, not by the events themselves.

Events → Thoughts → Emotions

Our emotions can also have a big effect on our thoughts about events.

Events → Emotions → Thoughts

Examining our thoughts and checking the facts can help us change our emotions.

Use the following steps to help figure out if it is the event that is causing our emotion, your interpretation of the event, or both.

**Step 1:** Ask: What emotion do I want to change? (for example: anxiety)

EMOTION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

INTENSITY (0-100): Before (worksheet):\_\_\_\_\_ After (worksheet):\_\_\_\_\_

*100 being the most intense level of emotion*

**Step 2:** Ask: What is the PROMPTING EVENT for my emotional reaction?

(for example: My boss scheduled a last-minute meeting late on Friday.)

DESCRIBE THE EVENTS THAT CAUSED OR CAME BEFORE THIS: What happened that led you to have this emotion? Who did what to whom? What led up to what? What is it about this event that is a problem for you? Be very specific in your answers.

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<sup>3</sup> Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

### CHECK THE FACTS!

Look for extremes and judgements in the way you are describing the prompting event. REWRITE the facts, if necessary, to be more accurate. (for example: I must have made a mistake.)

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**Step 3:** Ask: What are my INTERPRETATIONS (thoughts, beliefs, etc.) about the facts? What am I assuming? Am I adding my own interpretations to the description of the prompting event?

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### CHECK THE FACTS!

List as many other possible interpretations of the facts as you can.

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REWRITE the facts, if necessary. Try to check the accuracy of your interpretations. If you can't check the facts, write out a likely or useful interpretation. (for example: Maybe he just wants an update on the project.)

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**Step 4:** Ask: Am I assuming a THREAT? What is the THREAT? What about this event or situation is threatening to me? What worrisome consequences or outcomes am I expecting? (for example: I think I'm getting in trouble.)

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### CHECK THE FACTS!

List as many other possible outcomes as you can, given the facts.

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REWRITE the facts, if necessary. Try to put a safer outcome to expect. (for example: Maybe he wants to talk about my other projects.)

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**Step 5:** Ask: What's the CATASTROPHE, even if the outcome I am worrying about does occur? Describe in detail the worst outcome I can reasonably expect. (for example: I could get written up.)

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DESCRIBE WAYS TO COPE if the worst does happen. (for example: I could talk to a friend, go for a walk, exercise.)

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**Step 6:** Ask: Does my emotion (or its intensity or duration) FIT THE FACTS?

(0 = not at all to 5 = I am certain): \_\_\_\_\_

If you are unsure whether your emotion or your emotional intensity fits the facts, keep checking the facts. Be as creative as you can be; ask others for their opinions; or do an experiment to see if your predictions or interpretations are correct.

## EXERCISE: Opposite Action to Change Emotions<sup>4</sup>

Use this exercise when your emotions do NOT fit the facts or when acting on your emotions is NOT effective. Every emotion has an action urge. You can change the emotion by acting opposite to its action urge. Consider these examples:

EMOTION	ACTION URGE	OPPOSITE ACTION
Fear	Run Away/Avoid	Approach/Don't avoid
Anger	Attach	Gently avoid/Be a little nice
Sadness	Withdraw/Isolate	Get active/Get more social with people
Shame	Hide/Avoid	Tell the secret to people who will accept it

If a certain emotion that you find painful or want to change does not fit the facts, notice your action urges; figure out what would be the opposite action; and then do the opposite action.

EMOTION NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

INTENSITY (0-100): Before (worksheet):\_\_\_\_\_ After (worksheet):\_\_\_\_\_

*100 being the most intense level of emotion*

ACTION URGES: What do I feel like doing or saying?

OPPOSITE ACTION: What are the actions opposite to my urges? What am I not doing because of my emotions? Describe both what and how to act opposite **all the way** in the situation. \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT I did: Describe in detail.

HOW I did it: Describe body language, facial expression, posture, gestures, and thoughts.

What AFTEREFFECT did the opposite action have on me (my state of mind, other emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory, body, etc?) \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>4</sup> Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.



## Emotion Regulation and Mindfulness

One last way to improve your emotion regulation is through mindfulness. Mindfulness is a buzz word in today's time; however it is not a new concept. Mindfulness is embedded in many cultures around the world. For example, mindfulness meditation or practices are a part of various cultures from India, Myanmar and others. Mindfulness meditation also has strong roots in Buddhism and in some orthodox Christian traditions. Mindfulness does not need to be specifically religious and can be used as a helpful tool.

Mindfulness is such a common word now, but what exactly is it? Mindfulness is the process/ technique of...

- Intentionally living with awareness in the present moment.
  - Waking up from automatic or rote behaviors (going through the motions) to participate and be present to our own lives. An emphasis is placed on being present.
- Without judging or rejecting the moment.
  - In our default state, we tend to judge or evaluate much of what is going on for us, whether external or internal. Being mindful is noticing consequences, discerning helpfulness and harmfulness—but letting go of evaluating, avoiding, suppressing, or blocking the present moment.
- Without attachment to the moment.
  - Instead of clinging to the past or worrying for the future, mindfulness is attending to the experience of each new moment.

Mindfulness has proven to reduce anxiety, stress, depression, and to increase memory focus, and, especially important to resilience, emotional outbursts and creative or flexible thinking. (<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner>) For some people the exercises might feel awkward at first, and you might feel skeptical about their benefits, but like almost any other skill in life, mindfulness takes consistent practice to show results.

## **EXERCISE: Mindfulness of Current Emotions: Letting Go of Emotional Suffering**

Practicing mindfulness of our painful emotions can help reduce distress and allow us to think more clearly about how we are feeling.

### **1. OBSERVE YOUR EMOTION.**

- a. Step back and just notice your emotion.
- b. Experience your emotion as a WAVE, coming and going.
- c. Now imagine surfing the emotion wave.
- d. Try not to block or suppress the emotion. Don't try to get rid of push away the emotion.
- e. Don't try to keep the emotion around. Don't hold onto it. Don't amplify it.

### **2. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF BODY SENSATIONS**

- a. Notice WHERE in your body you are feeling emotional sensations.
- b. Experience the SENSATIONS as fully as you can, no matter what they are.
- c. Observe how LONG it takes before the emotion goes down.

### **3. REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR EMOTION**

- a. Do not necessarily ACT on your emotion.
- b. Notice the action urge that comes with your emotion, but do not act on it.
- c. Remember times when you have felt DIFFERENT.
- d. Remind yourself that being critical of emotions does not work.

### **4. PRACTICE LOVING YOUR EMOTION**

- a. Respect your emotion.
- b. Let go of any judgements you feel towards your emotions.
- c. Practice willingness to have unwelcome emotions.
- d. Imagine your emotions as clouds in the sky, coming and going.
- e. Radically accept your emotion with self compassion.

# Behavioral Regulation

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **BEHAVIORAL REGULATION**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

The flip side of emotion regulation is **behavioral regulation**. **Behavioral regulation** is essentially the ability to act in a measured, careful manner. Having improved **behavioral regulation** is important to resilience because one is better able to control their reactions and responses to challenging circumstances. One is then better equipped to handle whatever comes their way because they have control over how they respond. There are three important domains to **behavioral regulation** that are relevant to resilience: control, task completion, and interpersonal effectiveness. There is another aspect of behavioral regulation that is really important – which is how we manage our interpersonal relationships and how we handle conflict. Managing interpersonal conflict leads to better health and mental health outcomes and less anxiety and anger in most people.

## Controlling Reactive Behaviors

First, control – one's capacity to control reactive behaviors. Are you the type of person who thinks before they act or acts before they think? Those who are on the more careful side and generally think things through before they act tend to score higher on **behavioral regulation**. In general, impulsivity can negatively impact your resilience because your first impulse may not always be the best course of action in any given situation. For example, we may have a hard-wired impulse to attack out of anger or withdraw or retreat or hide.

Some people might think that impulsivity is intrinsically part of your personality and impossible to change, but this is not true! There are different exercises and practices you can utilize to improve your capacity to act in a careful manner.

**Behavioral regulation** also has a lot to do with how to deal with other people and our relationships with them. There is a section below on ways to improve communication and ask for what you want.

## EXERCISE: The STOP skill<sup>5</sup>

The **STOP** skill is a useful skill to learn and practice for when you are in a crisis. When we're experiencing increased or overwhelming emotions, we may want to act impulsively on unhealthy behaviors. We can use the **STOP** skill to become more mindful and take more control over our emotions and behaviors instead of the other way around:



**S**top

Do not just react! Stop! Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!

**T**ake a step back

Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.

**O**bserve

Notice what is going on inside and outside you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?

**P**roceed mindfully

Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. Ask Wise Mind: Which actions will make it better or worse?

<sup>5</sup> Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Practice the **STOP** skill, and use the following journal prompts to reflect on the process and to keep yourself accountable:

CRISIS EVENT: Rate level of distress (0-100): Before: \_\_\_\_\_ After: \_\_\_\_\_

**Prompting event** for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

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Behavior you are trying to stop: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Stop

\_\_\_\_ Take a step back

\_\_\_\_ Observe

\_\_\_\_ Proceed mindfully

At left, check the steps you used, and describe what you did here:

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Describe the outcome of using skills:

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## EXERCISE: Practicing Self-Inquiry

Self-inquiry is a skill taught by psychologist Thomas Lynch<sup>6</sup> in order to help facilitate a more flexible and self-aware mindset. Practicing self-inquiry helps us to be more open and receptive to an ever changing environment. It can help us to shift from a mindset that sees problems as obstacles preventing us from living fully to celebrating them as opportunities for growth. Take some time to carefully read over this chart about what self-inquiry is and isn't:

Self-inquiry IS...	Self-Inquiry IS NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a stance or attitude a person takes when practicing mindfulness.</li> <li>• involves a willingness to challenge our core beliefs.</li> <li>• means taking responsibility for our personal perceptions, beliefs, and/or choices we have made in our life.</li> <li>• actively turning towards the very experiences we want to avoid, discount, and/or are challenged by, in order to learn.</li> <li>• facilitating the creation of new meanings, insights, and behaviors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trying to find a good answer. the goal of self-inquiry is to find a good question.</li> <li>• ruminating about a problem because it is not looking to solve the problem</li> <li>• distraction, denial, rationalization, soothing, problem solving, or acceptance. saying that truth does not exist or that we should never trust our intuitions</li> <li>• getting down on oneself</li> <li>• expecting the world to change or blaming others</li> </ul>

Let's practice self-inquiry. You can choose to do this exercise alone or, if possible, with a trusted friend.

**First, recall a time when you experienced an unwanted thoughts or feelings or events in your life.** The goal is to bring ourselves to our emotional 'edge', the place in ourselves where unknown feelings start to come up, where we might often feel defensive or resistant.

<sup>6</sup>Lynch, T. (2018). *The Skills Training Manual for Radically Open Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A Clinicians Guide for Treating Disorders of Overcontrol*. New Harbinger Press.

Our edge almost always pertains to actions, thoughts, feelings, images, or sensations that are associated with something we want to avoid, are embarrassed about, and/or don't want to think about or admit to. However, these are the exact places where we can experience the greatest self- growth! Importantly, self-enquiry practices do not have to be about big issues or big emotions. In fact, sometimes we learn more about ourselves when we enquire into a relatively small event.

Example: Getting lost while walking in your home city and feeling embarrassed about needing to ask directions; feeling irritated by a look given to you by another customer in a restaurant; feeling unappreciated when your boss doesn't acknowledge your hard work during a meeting.

Next, either journal, meditate, or share with a trusted friend **by briefly explaining the emotional event**, without justifying, defending, or rationalizing what happened. Here, it is important to resist the desire to soothe ("Everything will work out"), validate ("Anyone would find that hard too"), regulate ("I think I should take a deep breath"), assess ("I must have learned this from here"), problem solving ("I need to confront the person about this"). The goal here is simply to stay in contact with our emotional edge before moving on to any next step.

Once you have found your edge, ask yourself these two questions and journal your response:

1. What is it that you might need to learn from this situation?
2. What question might you need to ask yourself in order to learn?

Occasionally, ask yourself if you are still at your edge, or if you have regulated. If you've regulated, then what question do you need to ask yourself to get back there? Identify the questions that most strongly elicited their edge and write it down.

After about 3-5 minutes, end the practice, and journal your answers using the following prompts:

1. To what extent did you attempt to justify, explain, or defend yourself?
2. To what extent did you (or the listener) attempt to soothe, validate, reassure, or problem solve during the practice?
3. Record any and all thoughts, emotions, experiences that came up for you during the exercise.

Make a habit of practicing self-enquiry in the coming weeks. Remember to resist answers or resolutions to the self-enquiry dilemma, but allow any possible answer (if there is one) to be slowly self-discovered over the course of days or weeks.

#### Reminders:

- **Self-enquiry means finding a good question that brings you closer to your edge** (that is, your unknown), not a good answer. Allow yourself time to discover what you might need to learn rather than quickly searching for a way to explain things away or regulate.
- **Practice being suspicious of quick answers or urges to regulate**, as they may be masking as avoidance. Keep your self-enquiry practices short (~ 5 minutes).
- **Get into the habit of frequent practices and recording observations in your self- enquiry journal.**





## EXERCISE: Quick Interpersonal Problem Solving

1. Get away from the situation or delay a conversation (if possible).

2. Think intentionally - what am I reacting to specifically?

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3. Try to verify what you are reacting to that is a fact and what may be an assumption?

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4. What is the urge or feeling you want to act on? To confront, or attack or accuse or to withdraw, demand or explain etc.

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5. Develop a balanced, wise plan to communicate your needs and what you are wanting from the interaction/relationship.

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## Task Completion and Follow Through

A second aspect of *behavioral regulation* has to do with task completion and following through. The ability to finish what you start and stay focused are generally known to be positive traits, particularly in the workplace. However, in psychological terms, task completion and focus are actually part of what is called your executive functioning. Executive functioning is the set of mental skills that we use every day to learn, work, and manage everyday life. It can be thought of as the 'management system of the brain' because the skills involved help us set goals, plan, and get things done<sup>7</sup>.

How is focusing and staying on task related to resilience? Executive functioning is actually crucial to flexible thinking, regulating emotions, and self-control. Working on your ability to follow through and stay focused on your tasks will help your ability to be more regulated overall, and contribute to you be an all-around more balanced, careful, and resilience individual.

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/what-is-executive-function>

## EXERCISE: Three-Day Plan to Increase Your Focus<sup>8</sup>

**Day One:** Spend some time as you go through your daily routines becoming more self-aware. That is: noticing how you are paying attention. Note:

1. When your attention is optimum and when it is low? Consider various times, tasks, people, places (like going to a daily business meeting in the afternoon). (for example: My attention is best in the morning and lowest after lunch.)
2. If you feel your attention is low, ask: Am I too relaxed or mellow? Or the opposite, am I too anxious? Is my mood in my way? Is there something invading my thoughts I need to get off my mind? Am I having negative thinking? (for example: My attention is low when I'm anxious. I keep replaying past conversations.)
3. At the end of the day, see what kinds of things are distracting you. Distracters will, of course, change as the many variables that can affect you per day change. But the more you repeat this activity, the more you will discover "your" patterns of distraction. (for example: I am distracted by messages from others.)

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/attention-training/201207/three-day-plan-increase-your-focus>

4. Later in the day, take a look at your list. Pick a significant incident. Ask:

- a. What was I trying to accomplish (your goal) in this situation? (for example: I'm trying to focus more.)
- b. What were others (if this applies) trying to accomplish? (for example: They were trying to get details about our upcoming trip.)
- c. Which of my behaviors worked? Which didn't? Why? (for example: Setting a timer for 15 minutes and only checking them when it goes off.)
- d. What did I need to be more attentive to? (for example: My desire to please others.)
- e. Did I need more energy to stay focused? Less energy? Was anxiety a problem that got in the way. Was lack of sleep an issue or factor? Was I overly distracted with thoughts? (for example: I need to deep breath more and turn off my notifications to focus.)

So, Day One will be spent paying attention to how you pay attention within the various and more significant elements of your own daily routine. Make note of these so you can refer to them later.

**Day Two:** Strategize how to push away or control your distracters. Find a quiet place during your day or evening during which you can consider a few ways to begin turning off some of your distracters. Think about and identify those you feel you could control and which predictably invade important daily routines.

The following is a list of strategies that can help.

1. Empty your mind. Delete negative emotions from your mind and replace them with a clean and open mindset.
  
2. Take a breath. Breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. What's important is to put your attention on the sound (both in-breath and out). Make this sound your prompt to pause and evaluate the data you need to make your next move. The more you do this the more you will make this process permanent in your mind, the more automatically you will begin to get your bearings in the future.
  
3. Use color. Visualize the colors of a traffic light: green, yellow, red. Use these colors to help you to consciously slow down and to put more mind into your next move—e.g. green to go ahead; yellow to slow down and think further or to advance with caution (and awareness), red to stop and re-evaluate your next move. This will give you more control over thoughts, emotions, memories, biases, data you see, hear, etc that can influence your attention and ability to gain the perspective you need to see and pursue a successful path to your goal.

**Day Three:** Start training your mind to act the way you want it to in specific daily situations. Pick one or two of your day one goals and try out your strategies.

## EXERCISE: Informal Mindfulness Exercises

Earlier we discussed mindfulness and its positive benefits. One of these benefits include improved focus and memory. Luckily, mindfulness and mindfulness skills can be practiced at anytime, anywhere, while doing anything. Intentionally paying attention to the moment, without judging it or holding on to it, is all that is needed. We're all busy, and many of us don't have time (or are unwilling to make time) to formally practice mindfulness skills. However, we can practice informally throughout the day. Here are a couple of examples:

### **1.) Mindfulness in Your Morning Routine**

Pick an activity that constitutes part of your daily morning routine, such as brushing your teeth, shaving, or having a shower. When you do it, totally focus on what you are doing: the body movements, the taste, the touch, the smell, the sight, the sound etc.

For example, when you're in the shower, notice the sounds of the water as it sprays out of the nozzle, and as it hits your body as it gurgles down the hole. Notice the temperature of the water, and the feel of it in your hair, and on your shoulders, and running down our legs. Notice the smell of the soap and shampoo, and the feel of them against your skin.

Notice the sight of the water droplets on the walls or shower screen, the water dripping down your body and the steam rising upwards. Notice the movements of your arms as you wash or scrub or shampoo. When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, let them be, and bring your attention back to the shower.

Again and again, your attention will wander. As soon as you realize this has happened, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and bring your attention back to the shower.

## 2.) Mindfulness of Domestic Chores

Pick a chore that you normally try to rush through, or distract yourself from; or one for which you just find painful and try to 'get through it'. For example: ironing clothes, washing dishes, sweeping floors, making the kids' lunches. Aim to do this chore as a mindfulness practice.

For example, when ironing clothes: notice the color and shape of the clothing, and the pattern made by the creases, and the new pattern as the creases disappear. Notice the hiss of the steam, the creak of the ironing board, the faint sound of the iron moving over the material. Notice the grip of your hand on the iron, and the movement of your arm and your shoulder.

If boredom or frustration arises, simply acknowledge it, and bring your attention back to the task at hand. When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, let them be, and bring your attention back to what you are doing.

Again and again, your attention will wander. As soon as you realize this has happened, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and bring your attention back to your current activity.

Now write down some informal mindfulness exercises for yourself:

During my morning routine, I will practice mindfulness of \_\_\_\_\_

During my evening routine, I will practice mindfulness of \_\_\_\_\_

During the week, I will practice mindfulness of the following chore(s):

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## EXERCISE: Other Mindfulness Exercises

Here is a list of other mindfulness apps and website to help you practice mindfulness regularly:

- <http://liveanddare.com/types-of-meditation>
- UCLA offers pre-recorded audio clips of mindfulness exercises at <http://marc.ucla.edu/body>
- <http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>

## EXERCISE: The Eisenhower Box<sup>9</sup>

*"What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."*

- Dwight Eisenhower

Eisenhower's strategy for taking action and organizing your tasks is simple. Using the decision matrix below, you will separate your actions based on four possibilities.

1. Urgent and important (tasks you will do immediately - for example: Scheduling the meeting)
2. Important, but not urgent (tasks you will schedule to do later - for example: Sending my boss an email)
3. Urgent, but not important (tasks you will delegate to someone else - for example: Proofreading the PowerPoint)
4. Neither urgent nor important (tasks that you will eliminate - for example: Looking for fun pictures to use)

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT		
NOT IMPORTANT		

The great thing about this matrix is that it can be used for broad productivity plans ("How should I spend my time each week?") and for smaller, daily plans ("What should I do today?").

<sup>9</sup> <https://jamesclear.com/eisenhower-box>

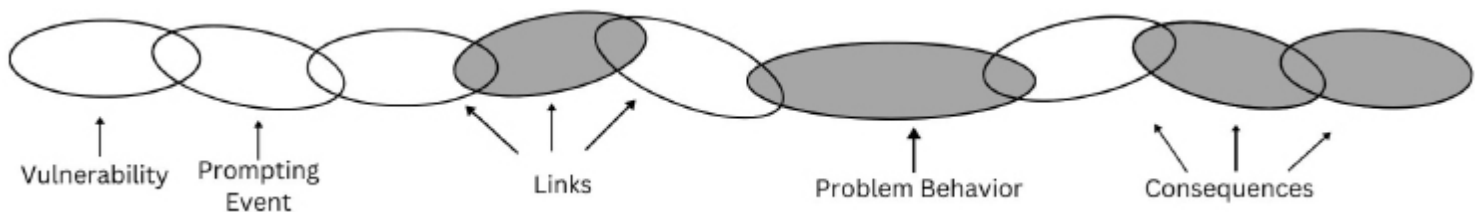
## EXERCISE: Behavioral Chain Analysis<sup>10</sup>

Despite our best efforts, everyone will always encounter moments where we do something reactive or fail to complete an important task. This exercise will help us analyze unwanted behaviors after we have done something impulsive, and figure out how to do something different the next time. Our behaviors never occur in a vacuum. There is always context, reasons, and triggers for why and how we do the things we do.

We will examine these as they contribute to our behavior we want to change.

- i. Actions or things you do
- ii. Body sensations or feelings
- iii. Cognitions, thoughts, beliefs, expectations
- iv. Events in the environment or things others do
- v. Feelings and emotions that you experience

Consider the following visual:



Our behaviors are always 'linked' in a chain to factors of vulnerability, a prompting event, and consequences of our behaviors. For example, one night, during an argument with her partner, Ms. X got so angry that she threw a chair across the room. The following might be part of her behavioral chain:

<sup>10</sup> Behavioral Tech, LLC



- Vulnerability: Ms. X got very little sleep the past week, which made her irritable. Her boss has been criticizing her the past month and she feels overworked.
- Prompting Event: Ms. X got home after a long day's work feeling stressed and exhausted. She got into a fight with her partner, and in the heat of the argument her partner yelled at her the same exact criticism her boss had told her the day before.
- Links: This felt extremely triggering and attacking for Ms. X. She felt her body turn cold, and she felt frozen for a brief moment. She thought and believed in that moment that there was no one who cared for Ms. X or would be there for her. She felt afraid and attacked.
- Problem Behavior: Ms. X throws the chair across the room in anger.
- Consequences: Ms. X's partner is shocked and frightened. He no longer feels safe with Ms. X and leaves the place for the night. Ms. X feels regretful and ashamed of her behavior. She also feels abandoned. The chair is broken and leaves a mess in the house.

Complete the following steps to analyze your own problem behaviors and brainstorm solutions to them:

1. Describe the specific PROBLEM BEHAVIOR: (e.g., throwing a chair, saying things you regret to a partner or friend, not showing up to an appointment, self-harm, etc.)
  - a. Be very specific and detailed. No vague terms.
  - b. Identify exactly what you did, said, thought, or felt.
  - c. Describe the intensity of the behavior and other characteristics of the behavior that are important.
  - d. Describe the problem behavior in enough detail that an actor in a play or movie could recreate the behavior exactly.

2. Describe the specific PROMPTING EVENT:

- a. A prompting event is an event outside the person that triggers the chain of events leading to the problem behavior. Always start with some event in your environment, even if it doesn't seem like that is what 'caused' the behavior.
- b. Possible questions to get at this are:
  - i. What exact event precipitated the start of the chain reaction?
  - ii. What was going on the moment the problem started?
  - iii. Why did the problem behavior happen on that day instead of the day before?

3. Describe in general what things made you VULNERABLE: (both in yourself and in the environment) to a problematic chain? Areas to examine are:

- a. Physical illness, unbalanced eating or sleeping, injury
- b. Use of drugs or alcohol, prescription drugs
- c. Stressful events in the environment (positive or negative)
- d. Intense emotions
- e. Previous behaviors of your own that you found stressful

4. Describe in very, very specific detail THE LINK (connection) IN THE CHAIN OF EVENTS that hooked the prompting event to the problem behavior.

- a. Links in the chain can be:
  - i. Actions or things you do
  - ii. Body sensations or feelings
  - iii. Cognitions, thoughts, beliefs, expectations
  - iv. Events in the environment or things others do
  - v. Feelings and emotions that you experience

b. Imagine that your problem behavior is chained to a prompting event in the environment.

Write out all the links in the chain of events, no matter how small. Be very specific, as if you are writing a script for a play.

- i. What exact thought or belief, feeling, or action followed the precipitating event? What thought, feeling, or action followed that? What next? etc.
- ii. Look at each link in the chain. Was there another thought, feeling, or action that could have occurred? Could someone else have thought, felt, or acted different at that point? If so, explain how that specific thought, feeling, or action came to be.
- iii. For each link in the chain, ask if there is a smaller link you could describe.

5. What are the CONSEQUENCES of this behavior? Be specific. Examine both immediate and delayed effects.

- a. How did other people react immediately and later?
- b. How did you feel immediately following the behavior and later?
- c. What effect did the behavior have on you and your environment immediately and later?

6. Describe in detail more skillful SOLUTIONS to the problem.

- a. Go back to the chain of your behaviors following the prompting event. Circle each point or link where if you had done something different you would have avoided the problem behavior.
- b. What could you have done different at each link in the chain of events to avoid the problem behavior? What coping behaviors or skillful behaviors could you have used?

7. Describe in detail a plan for PREVENTING/SOLVING the prompting event (if it were to happen again)

8. Think through the HARMFUL consequences of your behavior. Figure out what is harmed so you can figure out what you need to repair or correct.

## Interpersonal Effectiveness<sup>11</sup>

The final domain of *behavioral regulation* involves the ability to sustain loyal friendships where differences are resolved. Are you able to resolve conflicts with your friends and coworkers? Are you a safe person with whom people can share their confidences? Do people consider you to be a faithful friend? The ability and capacity to build and sustain healthy relationships is rooted in *behavioral regulation* and helps to build resilience. Loyal friendships through conflict requires restraint – restraint of what you may want in order to consider what is best for the other person, restraint in maintaining healthy boundaries in relationships, and restraint in keeping the confidences of your friends.

Interpersonal effectiveness can be broken down into three main areas: objectives effectiveness, relationship effectiveness, and self-respect effectiveness.

### *Relationship Effectiveness: Keeping and Improving the Relationship*

- Acting in such a way that the other person keeps liking and respecting you.
- Balancing immediate goals with the good of the long-term relationship.
- Maintaining relationships that matter to you.

#### **Questions to consider:**

1. How do I want the other person to feel about me after the interaction is over (whether or not I get the results or changes I want)?
2. What do I have to do to get (or keep) this relationship?

#### **Some common myths that get in the way of relationship effectiveness include:**

- I shouldn't have to ask (say no); they should know what I want (and do it).
- They should've known that their behavior would hurt my feelings-I shouldn't have to tell them.
- They don't deserve my being skillful or treating them well.
- Getting what I want when I want it is most important.
- I shouldn't be fair, kind, courteous, or respectful if others are not so toward me.
- Revenge will feel so good; it will be worth any negative consequences.
- Getting what I want is more important than how I get it; the ends really do justify the means.

<sup>11</sup> Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

## **Guidelines for Relationship Effectiveness: Keeping the Relationship**

A way to remember these skills to remember the word **GIVE**:

**(Be) Gentle. Practice Compassion, create a mutual space, honor the boundaries to self and others.**

- If you have to describe painful consequences for not getting what you want, describe them calmly and without exaggerating.
- Tolerate a "no." Stay in the discussion even if it gets painful. Exit gracefully.
- Watch your non-verbal, (eye rolling, sighing, crossing arms). Notice if you have judgments.

**(Act) Interested. LISTEN and APPEAR INTERESTED in the other person.**

- Listen to the other person's point of view.
- Face the person; maintain eye contact; lean toward the person rather than away. Don't interrupt or talk over the person.
- Be sensitive to the person's wish to have the discussion at a later time. Be patient.

**Validate. With WORDS AND ACTIONS.**

- Show that you understand the other person's feelings and thoughts about the situation. See the world from the other person's point of view, and then say or act on what you see. "I realize this is hard for you, and . . .", "I see that you are busy, and . . ."
- Go to a private place when the person is uncomfortable talking in a public place.

**(Use an) Easy manner. Use a little humor.**

- SMILE. Ease the person along. Be light-hearted. Sweet-talk.
- Be considerate of other's feelings and thoughts.

## *Self-Respect Effectiveness: Keeping Respect for Yourself*

- Respecting your own values and beliefs.
- Acting in a way that makes you feel moral.
- Acting in a way that makes you feel capable and effective.

### **Questions to consider:**

1. How do I want to feel about myself after the interaction is over (whether or not I get the results or changes I want)?
2. What do I have to do to feel that way about myself? What will work?

### **Guidelines for Self-Respect Effectiveness:**

A way to remember these skills to remember the word **FAST**:

#### **(Be) Fair.**

Be fair to YOURSELF and to the OTHER person.

Remember to VALIDATE YOUR OWN feelings and wishes, as well as the other person's.

#### **(No) Apologies. Don't over apologize.**

- No apologizing for being alive or for making a request at all.
- No apologies for having an opinion, for disagreeing.
- No LOOKING ASHAMED, with eyes and head down or body slumped. Don't invalidate or second-guess your feelings or inner experience. Consider how you would feel or think about a loved one feeling something similar and then apologizing for it.

#### **Stick to values. Stick to YOUR OWN values.**

- Don't sell out your values or integrity for reasons that aren't VERY important. Be clear on what you believe is the moral or valued way of thinking and acting.

#### **(Be) Truthful. Don't lie. Don't act helpless when you are not.**

- Don't exaggerate or make up excuses.

# Adaptive Engagement

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **ADAPTIVE ENGAGEMENT**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

An aid worker in Haiti is struggling with long work hours and partial lockdowns and the gyms are closed. One of their best friends and colleagues just left for a new job. They are feeling tired, overwhelmed and isolated. They also feel that their work assignments have been less exciting recently. They are having trouble concentrating. They recently got feedback that their proposal was rejected. Then they get a message from their boss that a new project is being assigned to them with a tight deadline .... they start getting overwhelmed, doubting their abilities, getting anxious and questioning why they can't be more effective.

We've all been at that point – burnt out, frustrated, and then tipped over by that last unexpected disruption. We all face unexpected challenges and disruptions in our work, and this is especially true in humanitarian work. We can't always be in control of what goes on around us, but one way to build resilience is to build our capacity to embrace life's unexpected difficulties.

**Adaptative engagement** is a concept that refers to a willingness to engage with life's challenges, and the ability to adapt when needed. When challenging circumstances come your way, what is your first instinct?

- Is it to avoid it?
- Somehow get rid of it?
- Or can you embrace the challenge and adapt to the circumstance?

Think about a recent project that did not go the way you expected, or when your plans suddenly go awry, especially if it was something important to you. The ability to not get overly discouraged when our plans get disrupted – especially when it is negative and unexpected – is an important aspect of resilience.

It's normal and very human to be disappointed when unexpected challenges come into our life. The ability to be willing to accept and even "lean in" to challenges can help us cope with life's disruptions, both big and small.

**Adaptive engagement** does not necessarily mean you are instantly overjoyed when all of your plans get ruined, or if something devastating happens in your workday. **Adaptive engagement** does not mean disengagement from reality. Rather, it means not letting these disappointments overwhelm and hinder you to the point of preventing you to try again or try something new. It's the ability to see failures as learning opportunities and be confident in your abilities, no matter the outcome or challenge.

## Leaning into Challenges

One aspect of **adaptive engagement** is leaning into new challenges.

How are you with trying new things? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you more of a creature of habit or do you jump at the chance to try something new?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you guard your comfort zone carefully or are you more adventurous?

\_\_\_\_\_

Being open and willing to try new things helps to increase your **adaptive engagement** because engaging with the new and unfamiliar can help prepare us to do the same in our daily lives when unexpected things happen. The less afraid we are of the unknown, the less it can hinder us when life's challenges happen.



## EXERCISE: New Hobby

One very easy way to practice ***adaptive engagement*** is by taking on a new hobby. When you try something new, you're exposing yourself to something new and unknown. There is a risk that you won't be as good at it as you want to be. You don't necessarily know the outcome. This is actually a great way to increase your ***adaptive engagement***. If you are able to embrace the challenges that comes with learning something new and keep sticking with it, you will be able to do the same in your real life.

- Think about a hobby you've always wanted to try or something you wanted to learn (ex: singing, cooking, guitar, rock climbing, etc.)
- Make a commitment over the next month or so to learn this new hobby. Make it doable!
- Buy or borrow the equipment you will need and start your preparations beforehand.
- Make a schedule of how you are going to practice/learn this new hobby. Even if it's only once a week or once every other week, consistency is better than quitting.
  - If possible, try to create accountability. For example, if you want to learn singing, try to take weekly lessons – something that will keep you accountable to actually doing it.
- \*\* Notice when your mind may be telling you aren't good at this or that you should give up. \*\* This is a signal that you can "lean in" at these moments and not believe your mind's unhelpful evaluation.
- Journal:
  - Before you start this new hobby, journal about your expectations. What do you hope to get from this experience? What are some of your hesitations and fears?
  - In the middle of the journey, write about how you feel it is going. What progress have you made in this hobby? What are some discouragements/disappointments? Some unexpected insight/progress? How does it feel to be learning something new?
  - At the end, journal about how this process was for you. Look back at the previous entries. What was it like to keep going despite the challenge

## Overcoming Fear of Failure<sup>12</sup>

*"Failure is a feeling long before it becomes an actual result. It's vulnerability that breeds with self-doubt and then is escalated, often deliberately, by fear." — Michelle Obama, Becoming*

One of the biggest obstacles to **adaptive engagement** is the fear of failure. When plans suddenly are ruined or things change drastically unexpectedly, we may be tempted to think that we have somehow failed, or that these unexpected changes will cause us to fail. When we do make mistakes, we can get so caught up in feeling humiliated or upset that we give up on our goals. We might believe that if there is a chance of failing at something, there's no point in trying to do it. Thus, it is important to evaluate how we view mistakes and failures.

Take a moment to reflect on how you tend to view making mistakes. Is it something to be avoided at all costs or a natural part of the learning process? Do you tend to believe that making mistakes is a reflection on your personal identity? Do you find it difficult to show yourself grace? Or perhaps you understand and know that mistakes are natural, but just can't help but feel like a failure anytime you make a mistake? A fear of failure is somewhat natural, but taken too far can be debilitating.

You might experience some or all of these symptoms if you have a fear of failure:

- A reluctance to try new things or get involved in challenging projects.
- Self-sabotage – for example, procrastination, excessive anxiety, or a failure to follow through with goals.
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence – commonly using negative statements such as "I'll never be good enough to get that promotion," or "I'm not smart enough to get on that team."
- Perfectionism – A willingness to try only those things that you know you'll finish perfectly and successfully.
- Blaming others for mistakes or errors.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mindtools.com/aqg1x98/overcoming-fear-of-failure>

**A quick story:** One major way to overcome fear of failure is to change the way we think about failure and making mistakes. When I was first teaching my son to ride a bike, I told him that the goal was to NOT fall and to balance the bike and be able to ride. He became so worried about falling down that he kept his eyes on the ground and didn't have the focus to balance. He kept falling and that was "bad." One day I took my son with a friend to the park and his friend told him, "how you ride a bike is to fall down a lot and then you get it" – that drastically changed my son's perspective and he now knew that falling was okay and normal and not "bad" and he learned to ride very quickly. He moved his focus and attention away from falling (what was to be avoided before) and now was freed up to focus on the bike frame and balancing.

The goal is not to avoid making mistakes, but to learn from them. In this way we can embrace mistakes because they are always opportunities to learn. Many of us in school or from our parents or our culture can learn that mistakes are "bad" and "errors" will be very bad for us. When in reality we all forget things and make mistakes. What if you acted boldly and no longer acted as if you were afraid of failure?

See a graphic below that shows the "Fear" monster that seems to be blocking your path. What if it only looks like he is blocking your path and with some effort you can move right through it. The only want to move through it is to move your feet in the right direction. No amount of thinking usually will do it.

Keep track of the times you pushed through this barrier in spite of your fear or your fear of failure.



## EXERCISE: Overcoming F.E.A.R. (an acronym)<sup>13</sup>

**F** = Fusion (stuff your mind tells you that gets in the way when you get caught up in it)

**E** = Excessive goals (your goal is too big, or you lack the skills, or you lack the resources)

**A** = Avoidance of discomfort (unwillingness to make room for the discomfort this challenge brings)

**R** = Remoteness from values (losing touch with - or forgetting - what is important or meaningful about this)

So now, in as few words as possible, write down everything that has stopped you following through on important changes in your life (for example: Taking on too much, thinking I'm not smart enough, staying in my comfort zone, losing sight of my goal)

1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>13</sup> Some of these exercises are adapted from Russ Harris 2009 ACT Made Simple book interventions and Russ Harris 2011 book – the Happiness Trap.

## The antidote to F.E.A.R. is D.A.R.E.

**D** = Defusion (getting some distance from our mind's thoughts and not taking them so literally, also just noticing).

**A** = Acceptance of discomfort

**R** = Realistic goals

**E** = Embracing values

**Defusion/Detachment strategies:** name the story, simply let the thoughts come and go like passing cars or life clouds. Realize that your brain can be like a radio that keeps broadcasting bad news and notice if you are getting too attached or scared by each new story. Realizing it's a station that does this may make it less impactful. The stories may not actually be true.

**Acceptance strategies:** name the feeling, observe it like a curious scientist, rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, commit to allowing it, breathe into it, make room for it, give it a shape and color in your mind/imagination.

**Realistic goal-setting:** if you lack skills, set goals around learning them; if your goal is too big, break it down into small chunks; if you lack resources, brainstorm how you can get them; if the goal is truly impossible, e.g. due to health or financial issues, or external barriers over which you have no direct influence, then set a different one. Set a goal that is reasonable and mildly challenging but not really difficult or too hard.

**Embracing values:** connect with what matters to you about this goal. Is it truly meaningful? Is it aligned with your values? Is it truly important? Is it moving your life forward in the direction you wish to go?

Using these ideas (and others of your own, or of your therapist/coach), write down how you can respond to the barriers you listed above (for example: Remind myself of my accomplishments like getting my degree, telling myself "it's ok to say no", giving myself permission to make mistakes, focusing on my values)

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE: Clarifying Values and Making Life Changes

Please take as long as you need to read through and carefully consider the important questions that follow. Then complete the written section that follows. (Note: this exercise is from a book on 'confidence', but feel free to change the key word. For example, if you are searching for 'happiness' or 'self-esteem', then substitute the term 'unlimited happiness' or 'unlimited self-esteem' for 'unlimited confidence')

In a world where you had unlimited freedom, self-esteem, happiness, or time etc.:

How would you behave differently? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you walk and talk differently? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you play, work and perform differently? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you treat others differently: your friends, relatives, partner, parents, children and work colleagues? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you treat yourself differently? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you treat your body? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you talk to yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would your character change? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What sort of things would you start doing? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What would you stop doing? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What goals would you set and work towards? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What difference would your new-found confidence make in your closest relationships, and how would you behave differently around those people? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What difference would your new-found confidence help you to make in the world? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## EXERCISE: The Life Change List

*As I develop genuine confidence . . .*

Here are some ways I will act differently:

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Here are some ways I will treat others differently:

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Here are some ways I will treat myself differently:

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Here are some personal qualities and character strengths I will develop and demonstrate to others:

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Here are some ways I will behave differently in close relationships with friends and family:

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Here are some ways I will behave differently in relationships involving work, education, sport or leisure:

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Here are some important things I will 'stand for':

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Here are some activities I will start or do more of:

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Here are some goals I will work towards:

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Here are some actions I will take to improve my life:

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## Embracing Complexity

### EXERCISE: Cognitively Complex Games

A final aspect of **adaptive engagement** is embracing cognitive complexity. Research shows that those who enjoy solving complex cognitive problems are more likely to have the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and enjoy taking on new challenges. A simple and fun way to promote your **adaptive engagement** is by taking a few minutes a day to play some complex cognitive games. Here's a recommended list, but any game that challenges you to problem solve and think through puzzles is helpful:

- Sudoku, puzzles, other board games
- [www.braingle.com](http://www.braingle.com)
- Luminosity

**In summary** - *Adaptive engagement* is largely a mindset. Look for ways to lean into complex problems. Try something new at work. Take on a new project or find something new and challenging in your personal life.



# Physical Fitness

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **PHYSICAL FITNESS**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

## So why the big deal about exercise?<sup>14</sup>

There are some obvious answers to this which is why most physicians worldwide recommend it. The cardiovascular benefits alone are compelling enough to start doing more of it. In addition it can help reduce your risk of diabetes and several kinds of cancer, help you combat depression and anxiety, increase bone density, help you sleep better and deeper, and improve your sex life.

Another obvious benefit of staying physically fit is that it allows you to protect yourself better should you ever find yourself in a field situation gone bad. Especially for those of you who deploy or live in higher risk environments, being able to move fast and quickly is a clear advantage. If you had to run for your life, could you?

However, **physical fitness** also hugely influences the way we respond to stress. In broad strokes, research indicates that over time with exposure to overly stressful situations your amygdala (the alarm bell or freak out center) grows denser or bigger. Your prefrontal cortex and hippocampus get damaged and essentially shrink from the same experiences. Think of the hippocampus as a kind of shock absorber for the amygdala. When the amygdala freaks and sends out the screaming message for flight or fight, the hippocampus tries to provide context appraisal and question whether such a massive response is necessary. So what happens if your hippocampus starts to limp and not function well? Exactly! You'll start reacting to every bump in the road with

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.headington-institute.org/blog/resource/resilience-is-a-discipline/>

an all hands on deck alarm – not a good thing. Over time you will most likely find yourself dealing with depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety and other resilience eroding issues.

So what does physical exercise have to do with this? Strangely the research indicates that exercise promotes neurogenesis in the hippocampus. Simply put it helps grow your hippocampus. We don't know why this is the case although evolutionary psychologists have speculated about it. But we do know it happens. Using the bumpy road analogy, if you have better shock absorbers on your car, you'll be able to negotiate a tougher road without you or your car falling apart. Given that humanitarian aid workers seem to have some attraction to tougher roads, whether that be due to living conditions, organizational hassles, security threats, whatever, it just makes sense to have the best shock absorbers physical exercise can buy!

## Addressing the Elephant in the Room

Let's face it – even if we don't know all the ins and outs of how exercise benefits us, we've all been told all throughout our lives that we need to exercise and that it's good for us. The problem is usually not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of execution. Whether it's due to a lack of time, motivation, or resources, almost everyone recognizes the value of exercise but yet almost everyone would also admit that they don't exercise as much as they should.

Let's walk through some of the most common excuses and work through some solutions:<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://theheartfoundation.org/2018/06/01/the-top-10-excuses-for-not-exercising-and-solutions/>

**#1 I'm too tired to exercise.** Exercise is a paradox – it can make your muscles physically tired, but you'll actually feel more energized from it. Exercise increases your blood flow which means that your heart is pumping oxygen to your brain, muscles, and tissues faster. It also promotes the release of neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin and natural endorphins that will make you feel better and more energized. Even moderate exercise can improve your energy levels!

*NOTE:* Exercise cannot make up for either not enough or poor quality sleep.

Solution 1: When you feel too tired to work out, the solution is to actually exercise. Begin with low to moderate intensity exercise. Try walking, biking or yoga. Over time, move into more moderate or high-intensity exercise.

Solution 2: Exercising with a friend can motivate you to keep your commitment to exercise even when you are tired.

Solution 3: Exercise during your most energetic time of the day. It may help to work out first thing in the morning before your day gets away from you. Can you wake up 30 minutes earlier or go into work 30 minutes later? Can you extend your lunch break in the middle of the day to allow for a brisk walk? Exercising after work might sound exhausting, but it will actually calm and invigorate you.

NOTE: Exercise cannot make up for either not enough or poor quality sleep.

**#2 I don't have time. Or I am a full-time parent.** Between kids, commuting, work and other responsibilities of life, our modern 24/7 lifestyle often leaves us feeling like there is just not enough time in the day to fit in a workout. Exercise becomes a low priority in our already crammed schedules.

Solution 1: Instead of trying to find time to work out, think about how you can make time.

Some activity is better than none. The trick is to find a block of time in your daily schedule that's consistently free of commitments. That might be before or after work, during your lunch hour, or after dropping the kids off at school. The time commitment can be minimal. Start with 10 minutes in your day. The next week, go for 11 minutes and the following week, 12 minutes. Soon that found time will become part of your schedule. Walk every time you are on the phone so that you can knock out some more steps.

Solution 2: How much television do you watch? Don't allow yourself to watch TV unless you are exercising, or have already exercised that day. While watching TV, use resistance bands for strength training, walk in place or pedal away on an exercise bicycle.

Solution 3: If your kids are young, pop them in a stroller and take a few laps around the neighborhood or your compound or complex. As they get older, exercise while your child is at their after-school practice. Walk briskly around the ball field, or run up and down the school stairs during music class. For extra motivation, team up with another parent so you have an exercise buddy.

Solution 4: Exercise with your kids. Go bike riding, swimming, or walk around the block and explore the neighborhood with your children.

**#3 I need to be motivated to exercise.** If losing weight or your general health isn't enough of reason to exercise and you need extra incentives, look for ways to find what will work to motivate you to get moving.

Solution 1: Make a chart or keep a log (Google "Exercise Chart" for examples) or track your workouts using a tracking app like Strava or HabitBull .

Solution 2: Give yourself a reward for meeting your fitness goals – a reward that you really want. If you love massages, book a massage at the end of every month you complete your target number of work outs.

**#4 I'm too old/fat/uncoordinated/embarrassed to exercise.** When something is foreign or uncomfortable, it's a natural response to avoid it. Whether you feel too old, too overweight, or ridiculous in workout clothes, there is a simple solution. Start small, but start with something.

Solution 1: Exercising in water is easier on your joints and the stronger your muscles get, the more they can support your joints and the less you'll hurt. If your physical limitations are more serious, check with your doctor, or find an athletic trainer who can help you figure out exercises that are still safe and easy to do.

Solution 2: Bicycling is great exercise for people of all ages and physical types. Once you learn how to ride a bike, you never forget that skill because it becomes part of your unconscious memory. You can bike with friends or on your own.

Solution 3: If you're self-conscious about your weight, you could start by walking with friends, working out in the privacy of your home, or exercising with a trainer who's supportive. Wear clothes that feel comfortable.

Solution 4: Are you able to get some small weights or use rocks or heavier objects in order to work out your muscles. Even in small spaces, during lockdowns, or while living in compounds, you can do pushups, sit ups, planks, or other exercises that don't require any equipment. It also helps to commit to working out with a friend and try to be accountable.

**#5 I've tried before. Or I can't stick with a program.** If you set goals that are small and realistic, you will more likely to feel like a success, not a failure.

Solution 1: Keep a log and post it in a public space - your refrigerator, or even on Facebook. Your friends and family can offer words of encouragement. A log also helps you see if you're starting to slack off (see EXCUSE #4, Solution #1).

Solution 2: Having an exercise buddy keeps you accountable. You are more likely to show up to exercise if you know someone is expecting you to be there.



**#6 I don't like to work out around the opposite sex.** Exercising around the opposite sex can often make you feel uncomfortable, or inadequate.

**Solution:** See if your gym offers gender-specific classes or workout areas. Of course, working out in the privacy of your own home also solves this problem.

**#7 I don't like to sweat. Or I don't want to take another shower and reapply makeup.** Sweat is your body's way of cooling and detoxifying itself. The amount of sweat you produce depends on several factors including your gender, age, fitness level, genetics and how hard you are working. However, exercise doesn't have to mean you end up dripping in sweat. There are many exercises that burn calories and build muscle while not leaving you sweaty. If you are avoiding exercise because you hate to sweat or don't have time to freshen up, here are a few ideas...

**Solution 1:** Work out first thing in the morning, before you shower and get ready for your day.

**Solution 2:** Try wearing sweat-wicking workout apparel.

**Solution 3:** Break up exercise into shorter chunks during the day. Take a 15-minute walk during your lunch break and 15-minutes after work.

**Solution 4:** If you don't like getting sweaty, you can work out indoors where it's air conditioned. You can swim. Or try a slower-paced workout such as yoga that focuses less on cardio and more on stretching, balance, flexibility, and strengthening your muscles.

## Focus on the Process, not the Outcome/Event

Too often we focus on exercise as an event and too much on the results. If I exercise, I will lose 10 pounds and I will be in shape. But if you look at the people who stay focused on their goals, you start to realize that it's not the events or the results that make them different. It's the commitment to the process. They fall in love with the daily practice, not the individual event. Focusing on the process of fitness rather than the event will help you stay committed for longer.

Another key to practicing sustainable and enduring physical fitness is to make realistic goals. Many of the solutions offered above focused not on achieving great physical goals, but making realistic commitments and keeping them. Don't be fixated on where you feel like you need or want to be but aren't yet – focus on where you are now, and simply do the next step. If you're already exercising 2x a week, try for 3. If you've never run a mile in your life, try walking for 20 minutes. And then next time, jogging. And then the next time, picking up your pace, slowly working your way until you can run a mile without stopping. Making smaller, realistic goals is much more likely to ensure that you stay committed to physical fitness than trying to accomplish huge, unrealistic fitness goals from the get-go.



# Sense of Purpose

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **SENSE OF PURPOSE**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

Having a sense of purpose is having satisfaction in the achievement of meaningful goals through quality work. When the going gets tough, a sense of responsibility and determination make it easier to stay the course.

Purpose is about the why of life. Everyone wants their life to count for something, and success in terms of money and status usually isn't enough to satisfy us. We all seem hardwired to want that other "S" as well – significance. We want the significance of feeling that our life is making a difference in ways that endure and matter. Everyone is unique, and a clear sense of purpose or mission in life is something everyone must discover for themselves. However our sense of purpose in life tends to be most compelling and life affirming when we are:

- Doing what we love (and loving what we do) for positive reasons;
- Using our talents and abilities;
- Living authentically according to our values; and
- Using all of this to serve a cause beyond our immediate self-interest.

## Purpose and Values

Whether we are conscious of them or not, all of us have a set of core values. These values are the things that matter most to us. They inform our ideas about what is “best” and “right” and what is worth spending our time and energy on. They strongly influence how we react to things, events, and people – what makes us satisfied or angry. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis.

It is important to know our core values. These values are spiritual touchstones. They can serve as guides in decision making, and as anchors or lighthouses during times of darkness and struggle.

### EXERCISE: Clarifying Our Values

Knowing what we value, and living according to that, is one of the most powerful ways to increase our happiness and peace and decrease stress. Take some time to explore your values by completing the exercise below. The questions in these exercises are not easy ones – they go to the heart of who we are, and who we want to be. Be patient and don’t try to answer them all at once. You may want to make some notes and return to them repeatedly over time.

List ten things that have brought you great joy (e.g., single events, things you do regularly, or things you used to do). What was it about these experiences that helped make them so special? (This can help you understand deep values and desires in life.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

List ten things that make you annoyed or upset. What is it about these experiences or actions that is making you have an emotional reaction? (Emotional reactions are clues to values.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Jump ahead to the end of your life. What are the three most important lessons you have learned and why are they so critical?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Think of someone you deeply respect. What are three qualities in this person that you most admire?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Who are you at your best?

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What would you have engraved on your tombstone that would capture who you were in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

There are literally hundreds of different values, but below you'll find a list of the most common ones. Probably, not all of them will be relevant to you. Keep in mind there are no such things as 'right values' or 'wrong values'. Values can range from the relatively concrete (e.g., belief in hard work) to the more abstract (e.g., responsibility or independence). Below is a list of some commonly held values. Look at this list and think about your answers to the questions in the last exercise. Add any other values you consider important to this list.

Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life etc.

Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences

Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want  
Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself

Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment etc

Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc

Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve

Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering

Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others

Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others

Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations

Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others

Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty

Creativity: to be creative or innovative

Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover

Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others

Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa

Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling

Fairness: to be fair to myself or others

Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and well-being

Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances

Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise

Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others

Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others

Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities

Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others

Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others and life

Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others

Humour: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life

Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves

Industry: to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated

Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things

Interdependence: learning to be more open to relying on others and having others rely on me.

Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically -- in my close personal relationships

Justice: to uphold justice and fairness

Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others

Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others

Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience

Order: to be orderly and organized

Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.

Patience: to wait calmly for what I want

Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.

Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others

Power: to strongly influence or wield authority over others, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing

Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking

Respect: to be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard

Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions

Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection

Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others

Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions

Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met

Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals

Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience

Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses

Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality

Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself

Skillfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them

Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others

Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable

Insert your own unlisted value here: \_\_\_\_\_

Insert your own unlisted value here: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE: Values In Action

*"As we see, a human being is not one in pursuit of happiness, but rather in search of a reason to be happy, last but not least, through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation."* - Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning*, Page 138

Being able to identify what you value most is just the first step in an important process. A value is just a nice- sounding principle we admire unless we put it into action. Our values must influence our choices about where we are going in life and how we act along the way. If they don't, they are ultimately meaningless.

To think and discuss...

What does it mean to live according to your values? Think about how your personal values are represented in your choices, actions, or possessions. Now, for each of the values you have listed, write a couple of sentences about what each value means to you.



Keep in mind the following:

- Use positive statements: For example, if health is one of your core values, you might write something like "I eat food that is good for my body, I exercise regularly, and I sleep for at least seven and a half hours a night." Using positive statements instead of negative ones (e.g., "I don't eat bad food, I don't go through the day without exercising . . .") will help you picture what something looks like in action.
- Use "I" in your statements.
- Use the present tense, as if it is currently happening.

Value	What it means to you:

## EXERCISE: Cultivating a Sense of Purpose in the Workplace

As a humanitarian worker, a sense of purpose in your work may come easily for you. Indeed, our research shows that on average humanitarian workers tend to score the highest on this domain. This is great news for resilience! However, this only highlights the importance of maintaining this high level of purpose and protecting yourself from becoming jaded, cynical, unhappy, burning out, and losing purpose in your work. The following exercise is to help you reflect on how to best have not only a sense of a purpose, but a sustainable one.

What are specific tasks at work that give you vitality and life? Or most meaningful? Make a list.

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What tasks at work are more draining and you do out of duty/obligation?

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What are some things you can do to make sure that these tasks do not erode or reduce your sense of purpose? (for example: reward yourself after completing these tasks, saving them for a specific time of day, etc.)

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What were your reasons for getting into this work/what impact do you hope to have?

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What are you doing to maintain your sense of purpose? what are you doing to make your work sustainable so you can keep doing this a long time? (for example: self-care)

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What are some things you need to avoid in order to protect your sense of purpose? (for example: cynical people, high risk assignments (especially multiple)).

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# Life Appreciation

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **LIFE APPRECIATION**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

The next domain of the HIRI is life appreciation. Life appreciation can be simply defined as contentment with one's life work, enjoyment of small pleasures, and having a hopeful outlook. Simply put, those who practice contentment and gratitude are more able to weather the challenges that life throws at them. This is perhaps the most straightforward and intuitive domain of the HIRI, so the challenge is to engage in meaningful practice of life appreciation to promote resiliency.

## Practicing Gratitude

Gratitude has two components. First, an affirmation of goodness. This is a practice of identifying some amount of goodness in our life (without ignoring complaints and imperfections). Second, it is figuring out where that goodness comes from. This involves recognizing sources of goodness outside of ourselves and requires a humble dependence on others. Studies have shown that people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of (at times surprising) benefits:

<b>Physical:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong Immune Systems</li> <li>• Less bothered by aches and pains</li> <li>• Lower blood pressure</li> <li>• Exercise more and take better care of their health.</li> <li>• Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking.</li> </ul>	<b>Psychological:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher levels of positive emotions</li> <li>• More alert, alive, and awake</li> <li>• More joy and pleasure</li> <li>• More optimism and happiness</li> </ul>	<b>Social:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More helpful, generous, and compassionate</li> <li>• More forgiving</li> <li>• More outgoing</li> <li>• Feel less lonely and isolated</li> </ul>
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Why does gratitude have such transformative effects on people's lives? Here are four of the important reasons:<sup>16</sup>

**1. Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present.** It magnifies positive emotions.

Research on emotion shows that positive emotions wear off quickly. Our emotional systems like newness. They like novelty. They like change. We adapt to positive life circumstances so that before too long, the new car, the new spouse, the new house—they don't feel so new and exciting anymore. But gratitude makes us appreciate the value of something, and when we appreciate the value of something, we extract more benefits from it; we're less likely to take it for granted.

Gratitude allows us to participate more in life. We notice the positives more, and that magnifies the pleasures you get from life. Instead of adapting to goodness, we celebrate goodness. We spend so much time watching things—movies, computer screens, sports— but with gratitude we become greater participants in our lives as opposed to spectators.

**2. Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions,** such as envy, resentment, regret—emotions that can destroy our happiness. There's even recent evidence, including a 2008 study by psychologist Alex Wood in the *Journal of Research in Personality*, showing that gratitude can reduce the frequency and duration of episodes of depression.

This makes sense: You cannot feel envious and grateful at the same time. They're incompatible feelings. If you're grateful, you can't resent someone for having something that you don't.

**3. Grateful people are more stress resistant.** There's a number of studies showing that in the face of serious trauma, adversity, and suffering, if people have a grateful disposition, they'll recover more quickly. Gratitude gives people a perspective from which they can interpret negative life events and help them guard against post-traumatic stress and lasting anxiety.

<sup>16</sup> [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_gratitude\\_is\\_good](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good)

**4. Grateful people have a higher sense of self-worth.** I think that's because when you're grateful, you have the sense that someone else is looking out for you—someone else has provided for your well-being, or you notice a network of relationships, past and present, of people who are responsible for helping you get to where you are right now.

Once you start to recognize the contributions that other people have made to your life—once you realize that other people have seen the value in you—you can transform the way you see yourself.

### EXERCISE: Gratitude Journal

One of the easiest ways to practice gratitude is to start a gratitude journal. There are many different ways to approach this, but one of the most common is to simply list 3-5 things you are grateful for each day or each week. This practice works because it consciously, intentionally focuses our attention on developing more grateful thinking and on eliminating ungrateful thoughts. It helps guard against taking things for granted; instead, we see gifts in life as new and exciting.

There are also a number of apps and website that can make journaling gratitude simple and hassle free. Check out <http://www.gratefulness.io/> for an app that will send you a daily prompt to help you stay thankful.

### Maintaining a Lifestyle Balance

'Self-care' is another buzzword in today's society, and it can carry a lot of different connotations for different people. Some might mistake it to mean being indulgent, lazy, or selfish. However, this could not be farther from the truth. Self-care is about maintaining balance in your lifestyle so that you can actually maximize your productivity and output for a longer period of time. Self-care is absolutely crucial to sustainable work, and is extremely important in fostering life appreciation and resilience.

## EXERCISE: Self Care and Lifestyle Balance Inventory

Many humanitarian workers are workaholics and their lifestyle is very much unbalanced towards the side of work. Take this inventory to informally assess your self-care and lifestyle balance inventory: <https://www.headington-institute.org/blog/resource/self-care-inventory/>

If your results indicate that your self-care skills and lifestyle balance strategies can be improved, take some time to reflect and create a plan to improve your self-care:

What are you doing/what will you do to care of your body? (exercise, nutrition, sleep schedule, massages, etc.)

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What are you doing/what will you do to care of your mind? (Rest, taking breaks, mindfulness, meditation, prayer, etc.)

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What are you doing/what will you do to care of your heart? (Relaxing activities, spending time with loved ones, reconnecting with friends, etc.)

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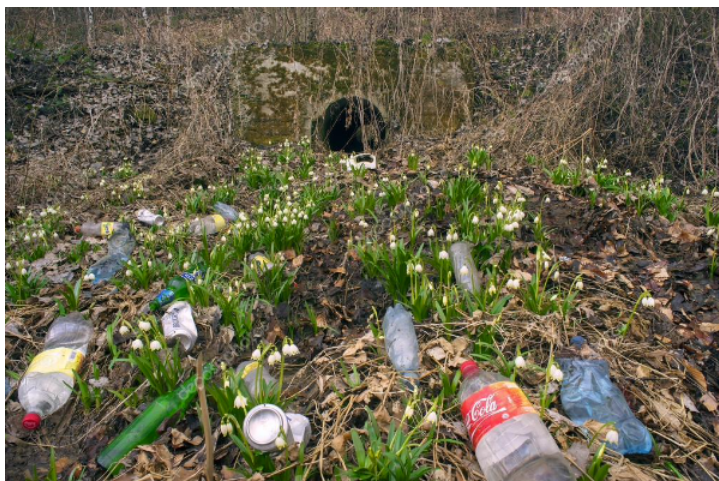
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## EXERCISE: Mindfulness and Life Appreciation

You might have heard the phrase “Stop and smell the roses”. This saying basically alludes to taking the time to enjoy the little things in our daily life. Being able to appreciate life’s small pleasures are an important aspect of life appreciation and resiliency. But what prevents us from being able to do this?

Take a look at this photograph and describe what you see. Take a moment to think about what reactions or emotions comes up for you.



For many people, when they see this photograph, the first thing that comes to mind is how much trash and litter there is everywhere. They may feel dismayed at how the park is ruined by the trash, or disapprove of how someone could leave careless litter in a public area.

However, if you take your attention off of the trash, there is more going on in the photograph than only a littered park. There are also flowers that are beginning to bloom. Stopping and smelling the roses is not only about appreciating good things in life when they happen to come by, but taking the time to stop, look around us, and be mindful and notice the good that is happening around us. Even in a park littered with trash there are still blooming flowers. We can choose to notice and appreciate the flowers (while still acknowledging the amount of trash), or we can choose be fixated on and discouraged by the negative. Life appreciation is not about making our life perfect and worthy of our appreciation, but rather intentionally controlling our attention and placing it where we want it, in a productive and hopeful space.



## EXERCISE: Clarifying Values and Making Life Changes

Please take as long as you need to read through and carefully consider the important questions that follow. Then complete the written section that follows. (Note: this exercise is from a book on 'confidence', but feel free to change the key word. For example, if you are searching for 'happiness' or 'self-esteem', then substitute the term 'unlimited happiness' or 'unlimited self-esteem' for 'unlimited confidence')

In a world where you had unlimited confidence, happiness, or time etc:

- How would you behave differently? \_\_\_\_\_
- How would you walk and talk differently? \_\_\_\_\_
- How would you play, work and perform differently? \_\_\_\_\_
- How would you treat others differently: your friends, relatives, partner, parents, children and work colleagues \_\_\_\_\_
- How would you treat yourself differently? \_\_\_\_\_
- How would you treat your body? \_\_\_\_\_
- How would you talk to yourself? \_\_\_\_\_
- How would your character change? \_\_\_\_\_
- What sort of things would you start doing? \_\_\_\_\_
- What would you stop doing? \_\_\_\_\_
- What goals would you set and work towards? \_\_\_\_\_
- What difference would your new-found confidence make in your closest relationships, and how would you behave differently around those people?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What difference would your new-found confidence help you to make in the world?  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Spirituality

Please take your score from the feedback you received online.

For your score on **SPIRITUALITY**: Please put a check-mark below.

High \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (Average) \_\_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_\_

*If your score is moderate or low – you may want to read this section carefully and try out each of the exercises. This can improve your resilience overall and can reduce stress.*

## What is Spirituality? <sup>17</sup>

Spirituality can be a tricky topic, especially in the context of work. People's spirituality is closely tied to their core sense of who they are as a person. When you talk about spirituality you run a high risk of being misunderstood, or causing offense without meaning to. At the same time, talking about spirituality is exciting precisely because it is so important, and so powerful. This is a topic that deserves some attention and conversation, and a necessary place to start is by defining what we mean by "spirituality."

Spirituality is a word that means many different things to different people. There's no quicker way to feel humbled than to try to define spirituality – just like "mental health," it is a dynamic and evolving concept that varies across people and cultures. Here are a couple of definitions:

*Spirituality is a core component of human nature - most people believe that to be fully human involves more than just the physical dimensions of existence and our own individual experiences. Spirituality includes a sense of meaning and purpose, hope and faith. This can be related to an explicit belief in God, a sense of connectedness with nature or a life force, or a clear set of values.*

*Spirituality is an individual's understanding of, experience with, and connection to that which transcends the self.*

<sup>17</sup>Peace by Piece by Lisa McKay; Spirituality and Humanitarian Work: Maintaining Your Vitality by Lisa McKay

Let's look a bit more closely at a couple of points related to these definitions:

- Spirituality is not religion: Spirituality is related to a deeply held set of personal values and to meaning that extends beyond us as individuals. Religion is collective and institutional – a set of practices and rituals related to shared spiritual beliefs. For some people the two overlap. Others, however, may describe themselves as spiritual, but not at all religious.
- Spirituality does not require a belief in God or a higher power: One way to think about the core of spirituality is as "connection." For some this involves connection to God. For others it might focus more on connection with friends, family, humankind, or nature.
- Spirituality is not static: Personal spirituality may "change and evolve through all life's experiences, both positive and negative, to become something both meaningful and intensely personal."
- Spirituality has thinking, experiencing, and behaving aspects: The "thinking" aspect of spirituality involves knowing what we believe, what we value, and why. It is related to thinking through tough questions and searching for meaning, purpose, and truth in life. The "experiencing" side of spirituality is related to feeling hope, love, connection, peace, and support (and, yes, sometimes also feelings linked to pain, doubt, and struggle). The "behaving" aspect of spirituality involves how what we do reflects our individual spiritual beliefs and inner spiritual state.
- Spirituality adds value to life: We feel our best when our body is healthy and rested and our mind is organized and at peace. But that is not necessarily enough. Most people, maybe all, also want to feel some sense of purpose, meaning, and connection linked to something bigger than themselves. Spirituality "adds value" to physical life.

A robust body of literature indicates that individuals with a healthy spiritual life have a resilience advantage, especially during times of crisis. Although belief systems vary widely, many frameworks offer a sense of coherence, justice, and hope in the face of difficult situations. Additionally, many people experience social support within a community of faith. Even when humanitarians do not have a religious background or focus, they still may derive benefit from practices that encourage reflection and perspective-taking, such as meditation, the observance of gratitude, or journaling.

## Active Spirituality and Spiritual Temperament

One way to think about cultivating a healthy spiritual life is by striving to have an 'active spirituality'. Research suggests that active spirituality – the exercise and nourishing of your soul – can help you better deal with the stress of the present and strengthen your capacity to deal with future stress. Many people are familiar with the concept of exercising their bodies, but not their souls. *What, you might wonder, does being actively spiritual mean? And how can I exercise my soul?*

There are at least two important facets to an active spirituality. One is grappling with questions of meaning and purpose, and (in an ongoing manner) seeking clearer understanding of how your spirituality provides the central basis for your important values. A second important part of active spirituality is being open to beauty and other things that stir and inspire you – seeking out things that make you feel whole, alive, joyful, and connected with something beyond yourself.

In his book *Sacred Pathways*, Gary Thomas talks about 9 ways that people tend to connect with the sacred. Thomas believes that just as people have different personalities, they have different spiritual temperaments (ways of connecting with the divine that come most naturally). He believes that every person has at least one spiritual temperament, most have several, and that a person's spiritual temperament can gradually change over time.

Take a look at the nine pathways that Thomas talks about and consider how you might cultivate an active spirituality through your spiritual temperament:

1. Naturalists: People who feel connected to spirituality, the universe when they are outside and engaged with nature. They love the sacred spaces outside in nature – they may feel more at peace there. They may feel most inspired to experience the presence of the divine outside, in a natural setting.
2. Sensates: Love the sacred with the senses. Inspired to experience the divine by the sights, sounds, and smells associated with the ceremonial, majestic, grand, and beautiful.

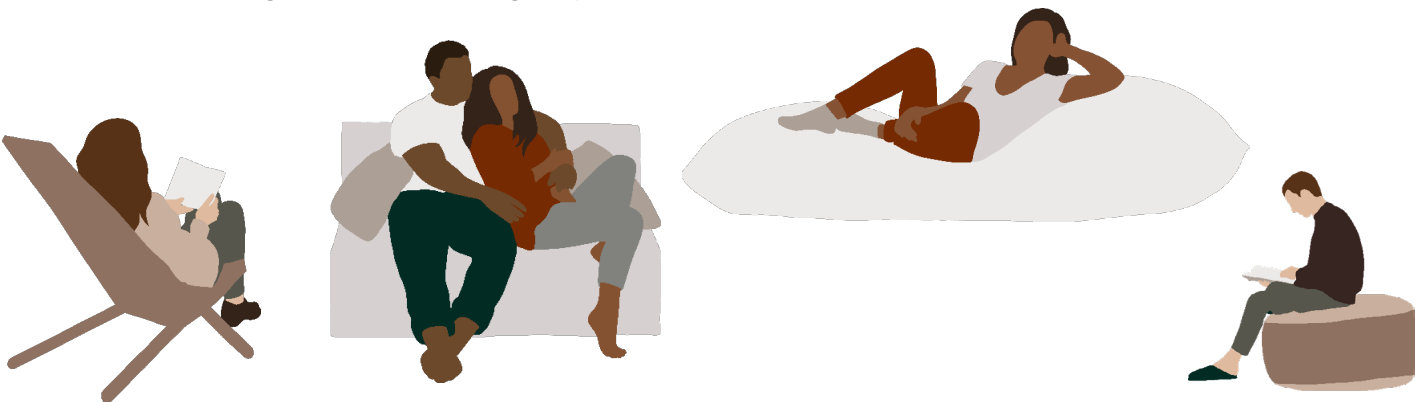
3. Traditionalists: Love the sacred through ritual and symbol. Moved by rituals and structure, symbols, and sacraments. For the religious these are often associated with liturgies, and celebrations such as Easter or Idul Fitri.
4. Ascetics: Love the sacred in solitude and simplicity. Can find too much sensation (e.g., pictures, music) distracting. Frequently drawn to the rhythm of spiritual disciplines associated with silence, prayer, and meditation. Often desire to simplify their lives.
5. Activists: Love the sacred through confrontation. Tend to adopt and fight for causes they strongly believe in (e.g., church reform, or battling poverty and injustice). More energized by interaction with others, even in conflict, than by being alone.
6. Caregivers: Love the sacred by loving others. Feel closest to the sacred when serving others by loving them and meeting their needs.
7. Enthusiasts: Love the sacred with mystery and celebration. Inspired by joyful celebration. Don't want to just know concepts but to be moved by excitement and awe. Often open to supernatural workings and mystery in their lives through things like dreams, visions, and seeming coincidences.
8. Contemplatives: Love the sacred through adoration. Value privacy and time alone, and seek a deep, vibrant connection with the sacred. Often describe their relationship with the divine as an intimate connection, a heartfelt friendship, or a love relationship.
9. Intellectuals: Connect with the sacred through the mind. These thinkers live in the world of concepts. Love to study and debate tough questions, scriptural texts, and learn new things.

## Cultivating Quiet

*"Only in quiet waters do things mirror themselves undistorted. Only in a quiet mind is adequate perception of the world." - Hans Margolius*

Humanitarian work is not a profession well known for a slow, stable, measured pace of work. Humanitarian workers focus on meeting human need and relieving suffering. The immediate urgency of this mission brings with it intensity. This intensity and the dynamic of the humanitarian industry – an industry that often favors short-term contracts over more extended investments – breeds pressure related to time and resources. Humanitarian workers often feel that no matter how hard or long they work, they will never be able to complete their ultimate mission. This work can seem never ending, precisely because it is never ending. Given all of this, humanitarian workers must be intentional about caring for themselves in the face of a need that can seem endless and overwhelming. If they don't, then over time they are likely to end up feeling hopeless, paralyzed, exhausted, or burned out.

Many practices that are crucial to spiritual self-care -- clarifying assumptions and beliefs, understanding our values and purpose, prayer, meditation, creativity, and other spiritual disciplines and rituals -- all take time – quiet, uninterrupted time. It can seem grossly self-indulgent to humanitarian workers (particularly those in disaster settings) to carve out personal time in the face of urgent need and the demands of a fast-paced job. Sometimes it's genuinely impossible to do this. However, if you feel you can never take time to be quiet, to center, to connect spiritually, then that is a choice that you are making about what to prioritize in your life. It is not something that life is doing to you.



## EXERCISE: Cultivating Quiet

Answer the following questions:

- How and when do you experience quiet in your life?

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What choices do you make that help cultivate quiet?

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- What sort of quiet refreshes and restores you?

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- Is that the same or different from a quiet that helps you "dig down" into your life and ask and answer tough questions?

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- Identify one way to build quiet into your life. This could be related to many different spiritual disciplines – prayer, spending time outdoors, writing, meditating, practicing yoga, etc. (It doesn't have to be complicated or fancy. One of my friends practices quiet by turning off the radio while driving. Another meditates in the closet of their office for 15 minutes during lunch.) Pick something that may work for you and commit to doing that every day for a month.

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## EXERCISE: Practicing Prayers

Below is a list of short prayers to help you get started:

### Self-Compassion Prayer

"May I know/experience God's rest. May I know/experience God's tenderness. May I know/experience God's love."

### Prayer of Gratitude

Start with the words "God, I'm thankful for all the good in my life, including \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Name three things you appreciate most on this day and at this moment."

### Prayer of Guidance

"Dear God, I ask for your guidance in making this decision. Please lead me to the choice that is best for me, my family, and best suited for my path in life."

### Prayer for Help

Dear Lord, I trust in your wisdom and that there is a lesson to be learned from this experience. I ask you to lead me through this difficult time to a better day. Repeat.

**Tibetan Buddhist Prayers** – 4 immeasurable – kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity

1. May all beings have happiness and the cause of happiness.
2. May they be free of suffering and the cause of suffering.
3. May they never be disassociated from the supreme happiness which is without suffering.
4. May they remain in the boundless equanimity, free from both attachment to close ones and rejection of others.



**Practicing Your Own Prayer** - Write your own prayer below according to your own religion or spirituality:

Prayer for Self:

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Prayer for Others:

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Prayer for the World:

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## EXERCISE: Simple Ways to Get Present

### Take Ten Breaths

This is a simple exercise to center yourself and connect with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until the lungs are completely empty—and then allow them to refill by themselves.
2. Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying. Notice them refilling. Notice your rib cage rising and falling. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders.
3. See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they're just passing cars, driving past outside your house.
4. Expand your awareness: simultaneously notice your breathing and your body. Then look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, smell, touch, and feel.

### Drop Anchor

This is another simple exercise to center yourself and connect with the world around you. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Plant your feet into the floor.
2. Push them down—notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.
3. Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
4. Notice your entire body—and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.
5. Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.

## Notice Five Things

This is yet another simple exercise to center yourself and engage with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Pause for a moment.
2. Look around and notice five things that you can see.
3. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.
4. Notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body (for example, your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air on your face, your feet upon the floor, your back against the chair).
5. Finally, do all of the above simultaneously.

## EXERCISE: Web of Life Mindfulness Exercise<sup>18</sup>

This meditation will help you develop a deeper sense of connection – both to the present moment and those around you. Read through the script to familiarize yourself, then do the practice. You can also follow along the audio version here:

<https://www.mindful.org/connection-practice-remedy-feelings-isolation/>

- **Begin by checking in.** Begin by taking a few moments to arrive and settle in by bringing your awareness into your mind and body. Acknowledge how you are feeling and let it be.
- **Gently shift to mindful breathing**, being aware of breathing in and out. There's need to manipulate the breath in any way—just breathing in and out, normally and naturally.

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from <https://www.mindful.org/connection-practice-remedy-feelings-isolation/>

- **Shift attention to where you're seated.** Begin to feel the connection of your body on the chair, cushion, bed, or mat, and feel its connection to the floor. Reflect on the connection of the floor to the building you are in and its connection to the earth farther below.
- **Let your awareness expand to include the earth below you.** Feel that sense of being held by the earth below you, and just allow yourself to be held by the earth. You are in a safe space and you can breathe in and out with ease in your body and mind.
- **Feel how the earth rises up to hold and embrace you.** There is nothing more you need to do, nowhere you have to go, and no one you have to be. Just being held in the heart of kindness and letting be.
- **Bring to mind someone you would hold this way.** Reflect on your loved ones being held in the same way—with safety and ease of body and mind. Reflect on how the earth holds all beings, whether they are acquaintances, strangers, or difficult ones—with no bias, no discrimination, no separation.
- **Reflect on how this earth holds all beings, forsaking none**—whether they be small or large. Reflect on how this earth does not exist in a vacuum, that it is connected to a solar system and vast universe. We all are interconnected. Our bodies and the earth, the sun and the stars, are composed of the same matter—the same basic particles, joined in different ways. Feeling into that sense of connection and interconnection that we are all made of stardust. Feeling that sense of being home within your body and mind with a true sense of belonging and connection.
- **Return your attention to the breath.** Just breathing in and out, feeling the grace of this universe—no isolation nor separation, feeling that sense of connection and interconnection and being at home in your being. Nothing more you need to do, go, get, or push away. Imperfectly perfect as you are, resting in the heart of this universe.
- **Let well-wishes form.** May all beings here and everywhere dwell with peace.

# Closing Thoughts

We hope that this workbook has been helpful to you. Remember that building resilience is not a one-time thing – it is more of a lifelong journey. It may be helpful to return to this workbook a few times a year to brush up on your resilience skills.

It's also important to remember that making slower, long-term, manageable changes and habits is a better way to growth and change than attempting to overhaul your life all at once. Again, it's better to think of this workbook as less of a checklist of to-do items and more as a resource you can come back to over and over again whenever you need to.

If you are interested in more ways to build resilience, or other psychological resources built for aid workers, below is a list of additional resources and tools from Headington Institute:

Our website will give you comprehensive access to all of our resources, including articles, handouts, and videos related to international humanitarian work, stress, trauma, and more:

<https://www.headington-institute.org/resources/>

Some sample resources (that can also be found on our website) include:

- Understanding And Addressing Vicarious Trauma – A Reading Course  
<https://www.headington-institute.org/blog/resource/understanding-vt-reading-course/>
- Questions to Ask Yourself Before Your Next Deployment – Video  
<https://www.headington-institute.org/blog/resource/questions-to-ask-yourself-before-your-next-deployment/>
- Key Messages on Sexual Assault – Handout  
<https://www.headington-institute.org/blog/resource/key-messages-on-sexual-assault/>
- How Aid Workers Can Stay Healthy – A Psychologist's Guide – Article  
<https://www.headington-institute.org/blog/resource/how-aid-workers-can-stay-healthy-a-psychologists-guide/>

Lastly, here is the Headington Support Line if you are needing to talk to a psychologist:

- Email: [support@headington-institute.org](mailto:support@headington-institute.org)
- Website: <https://www.headington-institute.org/contact/>