

# Causes of Stress

What causes stress? While there are many answers, most stressors are related to one (or more) of these four categories:

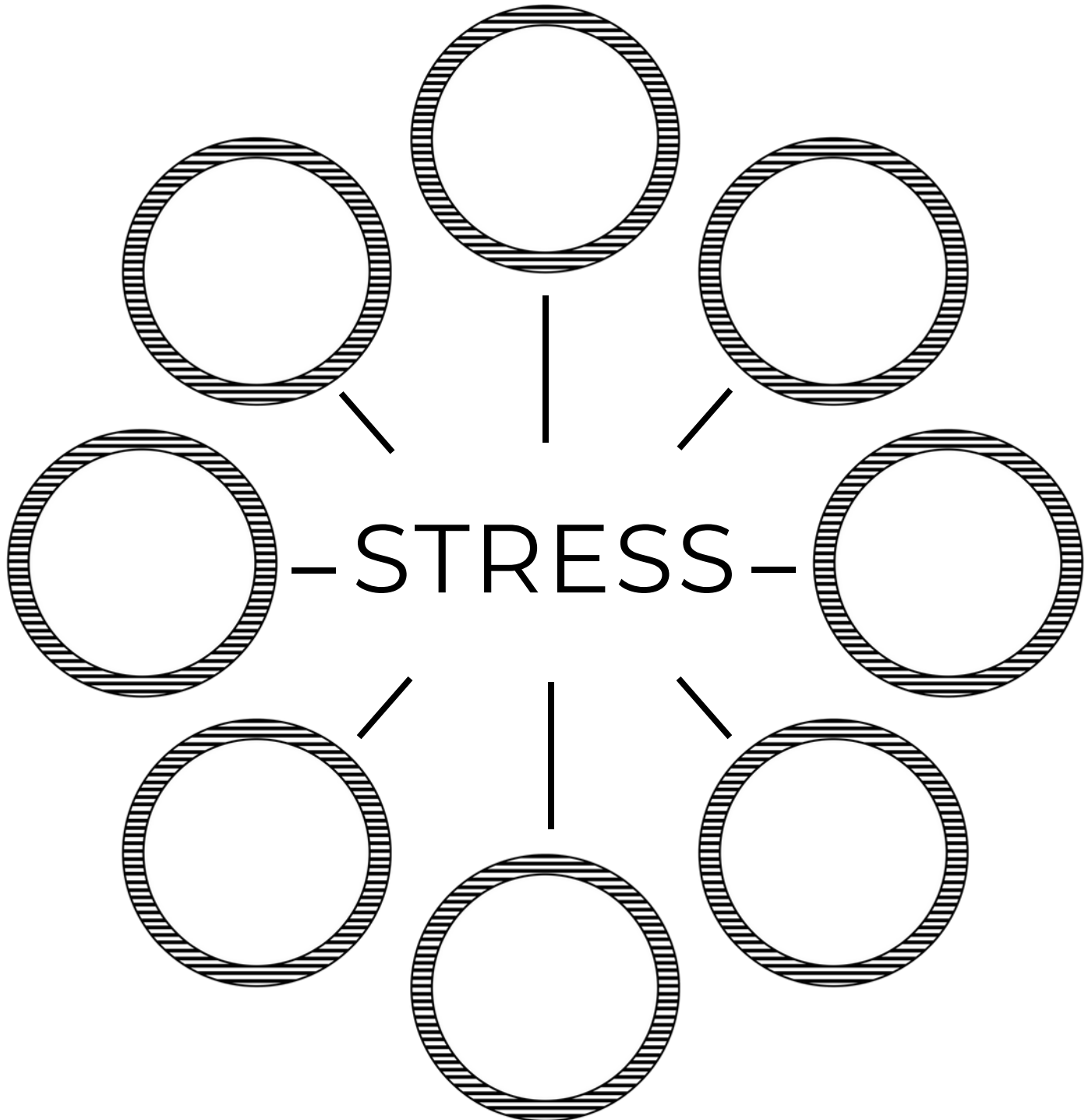
- T** THREAT to SELF-ESTEEM/EGO  
Something that may be damaging to how you see yourself or how others see you
- O** OUT of NOWHERE  
Something you had no way of knowing would happen
- N** NEW or DIFFERENT  
Something you have not experienced before
- S** SENSE of CONTROL  
Something you have little or no control over

Once you know what is causing your stress, you can figure out strategies to manage it effectively!

# My Stress Triggers

The things or situations that stress us out are called *triggers*.

What triggers your stress?



# Circles of Control



Things I CAN'T Control

Things I CAN Control

# Circles of Control



Things I CAN'T Control

Other people's  
attitudes

Other people's  
actions

Things I CAN Control

My attitude

Positive/negative  
self talk

How I treat others

Past events  
& mistakes

My decisions

My family

Asking for help

My actions/behavior

Other  
people's  
opinions

Assignments  
/Due dates

My level of effort

Forgiving others

Taking care of  
myself

Being prepared

My colleagues

People forgiving  
me

The friends I  
choose

My goals

Being honest

Sickness

My manager /  
teachers

Apologies from  
others

Others doing  
the right/wrong  
thing

# Coping with Stress

## THREAT to SELF-ESTEEM/EGO

It can be stressful when things have the potential to damage the way we see ourselves or hurt our reputations. If this happens, it is important to use coping skills that boost our self-esteem (like positive self-talk) and help us to manage our emotions. It can also be helpful to surround yourself with people who are kind and supportive.

## OUT of NOWHERE

No one likes when stressful situations pop up unexpectedly, but it happens. First, we should use calming strategies to help us avoid panicking. Then we should consider the size of the problem. Is it really a big deal? If it is, we can figure out which parts of the situation we have control over and come up with a plan to fix it. If it is not a big deal, we should simply let it go and move on.

## NEW or DIFFERENT

Things that are new or different can seem scary, but they are not always bad. When we first encounter new things, we should use coping skills to stay calm and avoid jumping to conclusions. If possible, we should also do some research to prepare ourselves for what to expect. Finally, we should make an effort to keep an open mind and accept what cannot be changed.

## SENSE of CONTROL

When things are out of our control or take our sense of control away, it can make us feel stressed and helpless. First, it is important to determine whether or not we can control any part of the situation. Then, we must accept and cope with the things we cannot change. We can do this by using calming strategies, distracting ourselves, or talking to people we trust.

# My Coping Skills

It is important to think of coping skills that work for you BEFORE things get tough. What are some positive ways that you can deal with each type of stress?

THREAT to SELF-ESTEEM/EGO

OUT of NOWHERE

NEW or DIFFERENT

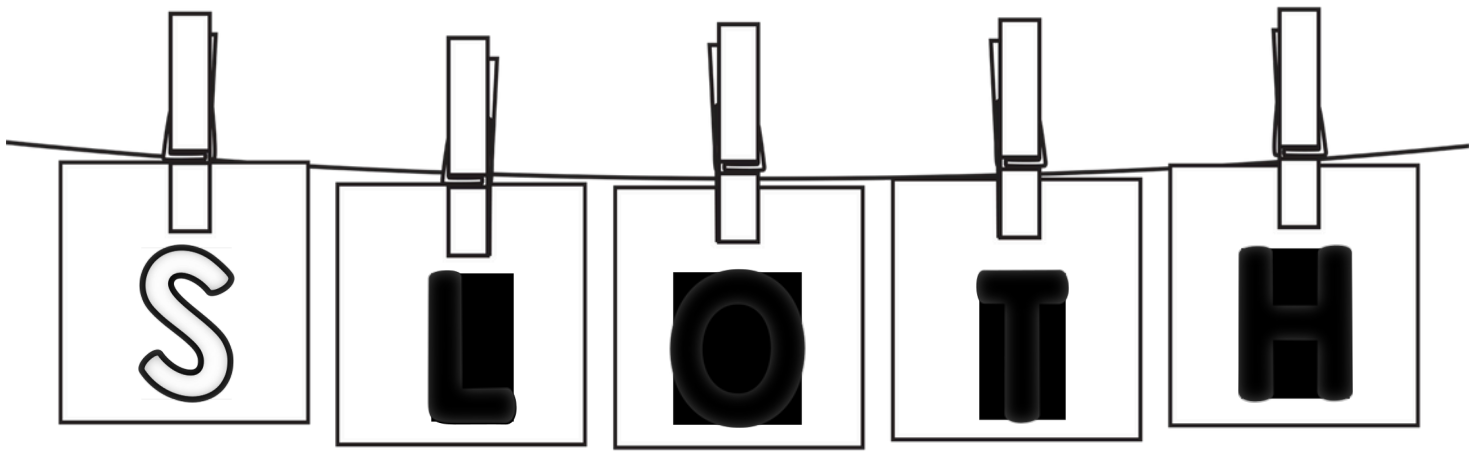
SENSE of CONTROL

# Coping Skills List

This is a list of 50 great ways to cope with stress! Before you use them, think about what you want to accomplish—do you need to calm down? Distract yourself? Express your feelings? Take a break? Then, choose the coping skill(s) that will work best for you.

Take deep breaths  
Draw, color, or paint  
Go for a walk  
Do a puzzle  
Stretch  
Ask for a hug  
Play with a pet  
Squeeze a stress ball  
Read a book  
Clean  
Sing the alphabet  
Take a break  
Use positive self-talk  
Write a letter  
Drink water  
Journal  
Go outside  
Take a shower/bath  
Hum your favorite song  
Play a board game  
Dance  
Hug a stuffed animal  
Use a grounding exercise  
Make a plan or schedule  
Learn a new skill

Do yoga  
Eat a healthy snack  
Try meditation  
Count down from 100  
Ask for help  
Squeeze a pillow  
Listen to music  
Do Sudoku/brainteasers  
Exercise or play sports  
Knead clay/play-dough  
Bake  
Take a nap  
Text or call a friend  
Watch a movie  
Think of your happy place  
Blow bubbles  
Write a story  
Help someone else  
Look at old photos  
Go for a run  
Progressive relaxation  
Jump rope  
Build with blocks or Legos  
Talk to an adult  
Use a fidget object



# Grounding Exercise

Grounding exercises help you focus your attention on the present moment.  
They are especially useful in times of stress and panic.

S

SEE your environment in a new way.  
Count 5 things you can see.

L

LISTEN to the sounds around you.  
Find 4 things you can hear.

O

OBSERVE what you feel. List 3 things  
you are touching right now. \_\_\_\_\_

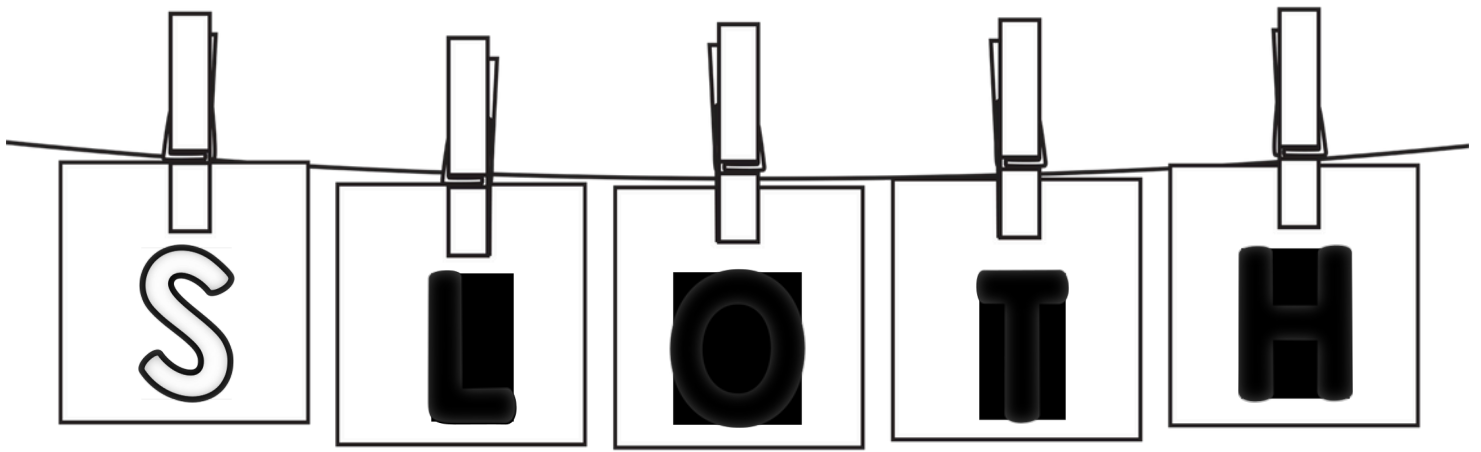
T

TAKE A DEEP BREATH. Notice 2 things you  
can smell.

H

HUG yourself once by wrapping your  
arms tightly across your chest.





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# The Ultimate De-Stress Playlist

What kind of music helps you chill out? What songs would you put on a playlist to help you reduce your stress level?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

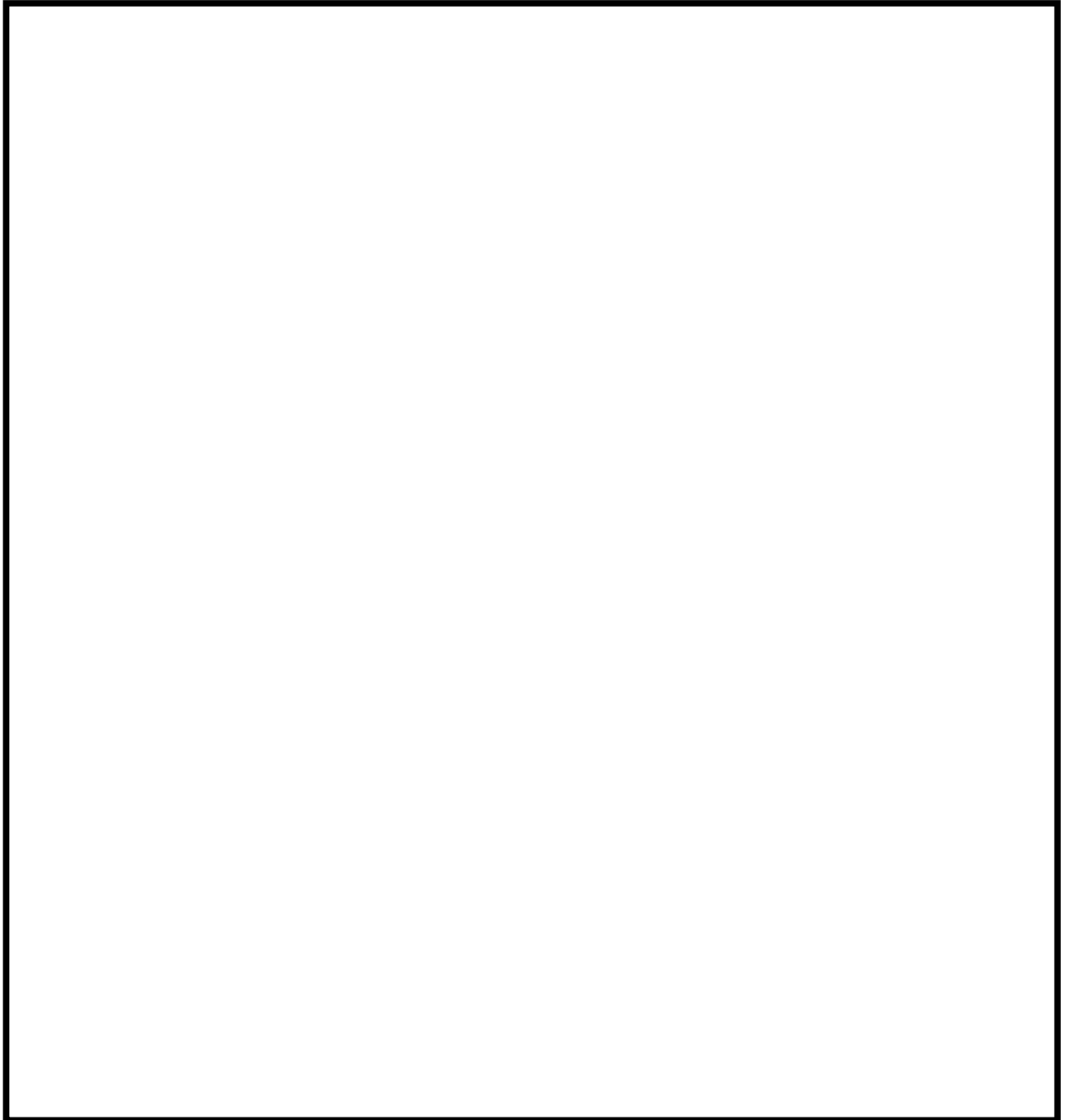
6.

7.

8.

# Space to Chill

If you could design the perfect place to chill out and de-stress, what would it look like? What would you include? Draw it or describe it below!

A large, empty rectangular box with a solid black border, intended for a drawing or description of a relaxing space.

What makes this space calming? Are there any features of the space you designed that you could bring to life?

# Calm Down Kit

When you feel stressed, it can be helpful to have a calm down kit, or a box filled with items that help you cope and feel better. Write or draw things you could put in your calm down kit that appeal to all 5 senses.

Sight:

Sound:

Touch:

Taste:

Smell:

# Asking for Help

Stress can be hard to talk about, but it's important to let people know when we feel overwhelmed or need a break. Write down things you could say or do in the following situations:



You have a big paper due next week, but you have no idea where to even begin.

Your parents just signed you up for another activity, but you're dreading it because you are so busy already.



You're working on a group project and feel stressed because your classmates keep giving you the most difficult parts.

Your friend is having a tough week and wants to talk every night until 3AM. You're exhausted and start to fall behind on the things you need to do.



# Positive Affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements we can use to challenge and overcome the negative thoughts that increase our stress. Pick an affirmation to focus on this week and practice saying it several times throughout each day. Or, come up with your own unique affirmation!

Each day is a  
fresh start.

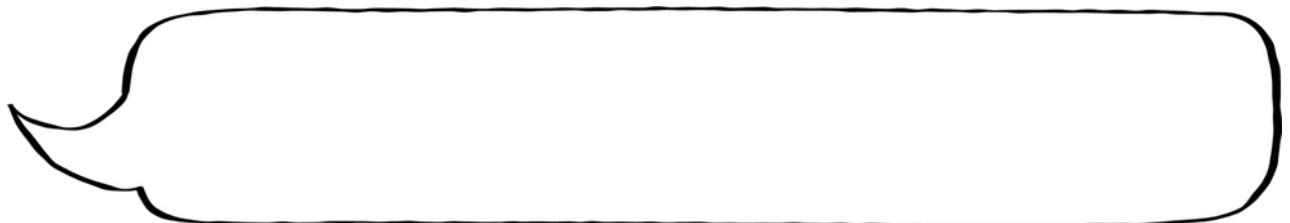
I have courage  
and confidence.

I am always  
improving.

No matter what  
happens, I can  
handle it.

My actions  
bring me closer  
to my goals.

I will show up  
and do my best.



# Healthy Routines

Developing routines and sticking to them can help you reduce and manage stress. Write down some healthy habits you want to include in your routine each morning and evening. Think about scheduling time for self-care, hygiene, and relaxation.

## Morning

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| . | . |
| . | . |
| . | . |
| . | . |

## Evening

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| . | . |
| . | . |
| . | . |
| . | . |

# Daily Reflection

Weekly Positive Affirmation:

Monday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well:

Biggest challenge(s):

Coping skills I used or practiced:

Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to:

Tuesday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well:

Biggest challenge(s):

Coping skills I used or practiced:

Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to:

Wednesday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well:

Biggest challenge(s):

Coping skills I used or practiced:

Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to:



## Thursday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well:

Biggest challenge(s):

Coping skills I used or practiced:

Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to:

## Friday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well: Biggest  
challenge(s): Coping skills I used or  
practiced: Tomorrow, I'm looking  
forward to:

## Saturday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well: Biggest  
challenge(s): Coping skills I used or  
practiced: Tomorrow, I'm looking  
forward to:

## Sunday

/ /

My goal today was:

3things that went well: Biggest  
challenge(s): Coping skills I used or  
practiced: Tomorrow, I'm looking  
forward to:

# Mindfulness Exercises

Turn on a favorite song. As you listen, pick just one instrument and focus on it throughout the whole song.

Slowly tighten and release each of your muscles from your head down to your toes.

Reflect on the week so far and think of at least 3 things (big or small) that are going well.

Look around the room and try to spot an item of every color of the rainbow.

Focus on something you can see from where you're sitting that is perfectly still. Allow your mind to settle and become as still as that object.

Think of or write down at least five things you are grateful for.

Notice three places where your body is making contact with itself or the world around you.

Breathe in through your nose slowly as if you're smelling a big bowl of mac n' cheese. Exhale by blowing through your mouth as if you're cooling it off.

# Mindfulness Cards

Turn on your favorite music. As you listen, pick just one instrument and focus on it throughout the whole song.

Slowly tighten and release each of your muscles from your head down to your toes.

Look around the room and see if you can find an item of every color of the rainbow.

Reflect on the week so far.  
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# Mindfulness Cards

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through your  
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Think of or  
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Focus on  
something you  
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