

TAKING CARE OF *you*

You need to take care of yourself before you can lead or serve anyone else. Learning positive self-talk and how to be caring and kind to yourself helps us feel good. Anger, sadness and fear can make us feel anxious when we think about the future. We can also make ourselves feel bad when we allow our inner voice to tell us unkind and untrue things. (Example: *I can't do this, I'll never be good enough, no one cares.*)

Being aware of where you are and what you are feeling right now is a good way to avoid getting lost in negative feelings. Try using these Mindful Awareness exercises to tune in to the present moment through sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.

Stand strong like a tree

Before beginning your day, take a few minutes to feel the strength and flexibility you have within. Try this visualization.

1. Stand tall and straight, with your feet apart by the width of your shoulders. Pretend that your legs are the roots of a tree firmly planted in the ground.
2. Reach up to the sky and imagine your arms are the branches of the tree.
3. Sway side to side as if the wind is blowing your branches.
4. Notice your legs are not moving, but firmly rooted to the ground.
5. Close your eyes, take a deep in-breath and a long slow out-breath through the mouth.
6. Imagine yourself as a strong, solid, rooted tree flexing and moving in the windy storms of life.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 senses

Sometimes we keep reliving the same upsetting moment over and over in our minds. Let it go by coming back to the present moment through your senses. To do this, make a list of:

- Five things you see.
- Four things you hear.
- Three things you feel.
- Two things you smell.
- One thing you taste.

Self-compassion

We're great at comforting a friend who is having trouble, but what if we're having an awful day? Instead of making yourself feel bad about something that went wrong, offer yourself compassion.

1. Acknowledge your suffering. Example: "I feel really awful about what's happened."
2. Acknowledge that suffering is part of life, and that others experience it too. "I know others have gone through this too."
3. Be kind to yourself. Place your hand over your heart and say comforting words silently. "It's all right, I learned from this and will do better."



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