

# Self-Guided Therapy Resources

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# Why Use This

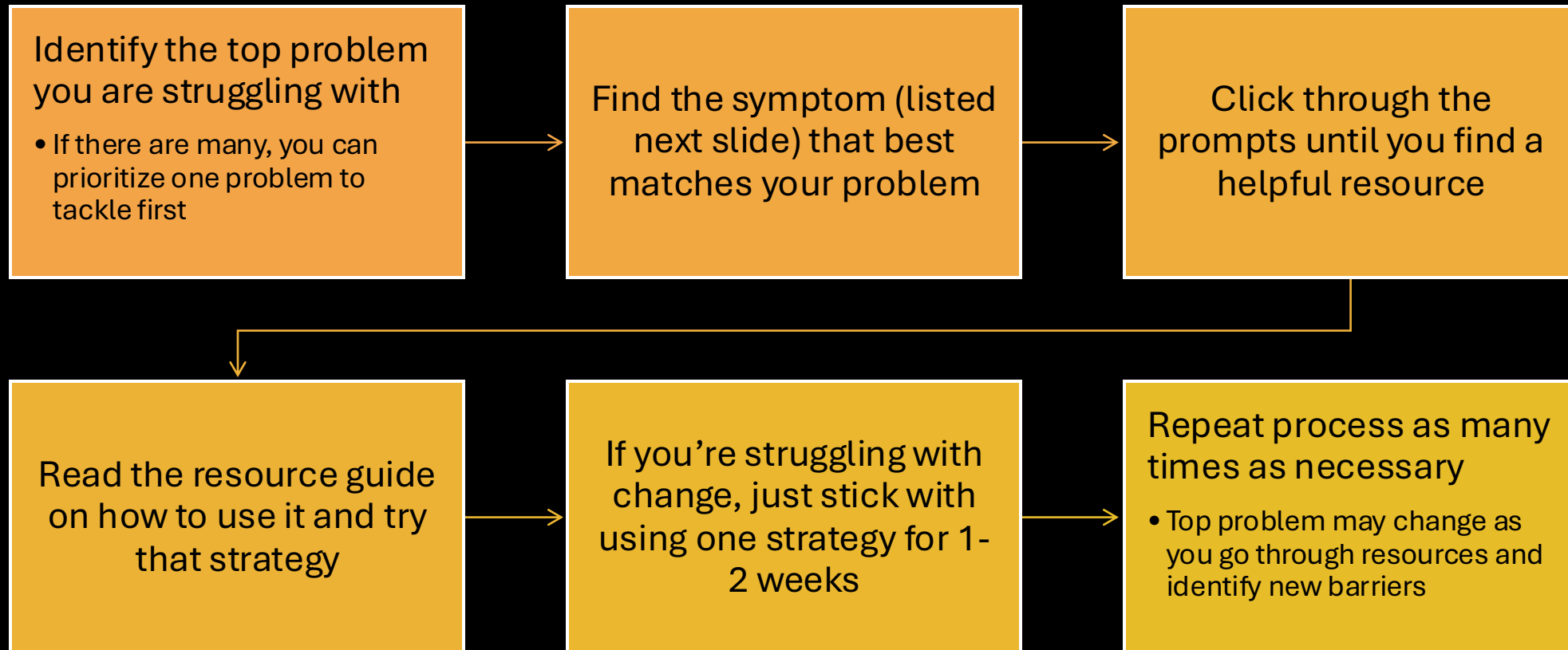
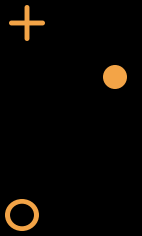
Feeling mentally unwell or caring for someone who's ill is tough to endure, especially without support. It's harder to be proactive, so kudos for making an effort to improve your well-being! I've put together this resource guide for people to quickly find helpful information they can act on before getting professional help. Use this guide if:

- You are waiting for an appointment with a mental health provider that feels too far away and you want help now
- You are not sure about seeing a mental health provider and want to try out strategies on your own first
- Your loved one doesn't want to see or cannot see a provider for mental health issues and you want to help them
- You want to reduce your own stress while caring for a loved one who is struggling
- You would like to supplement treatment by a provider with extra resources for yourself or a loved one

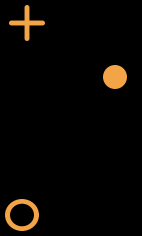


**DISCLAIMER:** These resources are not meant to diagnose or replace treatment by a professional. These resources are vetted but are not comprehensive. Resource list was last updated March 2025. For severe conditions, such as suicidality, please go to the hospital or an urgent care for immediate professional treatment.

# How to Use This



# What would you like help with?



Feel less sad, numb,  
tired, apathetic

Overcome fear/worries

Overcome anger

Reduce harmful habits

Feel less  
overwhelmed/stressed  
out

Take care of myself  
better

Be better with people  
(including your kids)

Handle things at  
work/school better

Figure out what I'm  
meant to do in life

# Figure out what I'm meant to do in life


When we're in existential crisis mode, it's helpful to remember what we care about and bring more of what we care about into our lives. Here are some techniques to do that, choose which one sounds more helpful:



Reconnect with your  
[values](#)



Explore yourself and your experiences  
through [processing and reflecting](#)



Handle  
things at  
work/school  
better



What feels more helpful?

Make my work more meaningful

Try reconnecting with your values

Tracking or completing tasks  
better

Try working on problem-solving and  
organizing skills

Be better with  
people

What feels more helpful?

Communicate  
better with others

Try these strategies around [difficult communication](#)

Feel less anxious  
around others

Try [overcoming your worries](#) in a gradual, guided way

Reduce conflict  
with loved ones

Try [managing difficult behaviors](#)

Feel connected to  
others

Try practicing [mindfulness](#) or reconnecting to [values](#)

# Take care of myself better

What feels  
more  
helpful?

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Improve my [sleep](#)

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Improve my [eating](#)

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Improve my [movement](#)

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Improve my grounded-ness: try [mindfulness](#)

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Improve my environment: try [problem solving and organization](#)  
skills to help keep your surroundings clean & tidy

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# Healthy Sleep

Better sleep can improve your overall health and ability to handle things, not just improve your mental health. Here are some resources to track and improve sleep:

- [CBT-I by Dept of VA](#) is a free app that offers sleep tips and a diary to track sleep. It can help you think more positively about sleep and gives advice on situations that can affect sleep. Some situations include sleep differences between partners and effects of illness on sleep.
- [Here](#) is information and worksheets to change your sleep for the better.

# Healthy Eating

Eating well can improve your overall health, not just your mental health. Food has an important role not just as nutrition, but also through bringing people together. Many people can have shame around eating, which then can worsen their social life—a double whammy against mental health.

As general advice, the [Mediterranean-DASH diet](#) has the most evidence in improving a variety of health outcomes. [Government guidelines](#) recommend eating whole (e.g. vegetables, fruits, whole grains). Try to eat "the rainbow" of different colored plants to get enough essential nutrients. Don't forget, it's nice to occasionally have a treat—your mental health would probably worsen if you tried to be perfect. Here are some resources:



- Deal with [overeating urges](#)
- Deal with [disordered eating](#)
- See a nutritionist for no/low cost through your primary care doctor

# Healthy Movement

Most of us are too inactive in our daily life, worsening our overall health, not just our mental health. Not only that, exercise itself can boost our mood afterwards.\* Guidelines recommend 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, but even a bit more movement in your day is better than none.

- Check out [these tips](#) to get more active
- Try out [Strava](#), a social app to encourage exercise through positive peer pressure
- Try out [Couch to 5k](#), an app to gradually ease people into running

# Feel less overwhelmed or stressed out

What feels  
more  
helpful?

Do something to feel less overwhelmed right now

- Try using [relaxation](#) techniques

Make a plan for the future

- Try [problem-solving & organization skills](#) to help tackle your problems

Explore why I feel so overwhelmed

- Use [processing/reflection](#) techniques

Find a redirection for my life

- Connect with your [values](#)

# Reduce Harmful Habits

What feels more helpful?

- Let my harmful craving/urge pass  
Use mindfulness or distraction techniques. Specific mindfulness skills such as radical acceptance and riding the wave can be especially helpful
- Reconnect with my values in life
- Step by step guides in cutting down/stopping substances

# Guides to cut down

Addiction is a very powerful force, and it's not only for substance use. Addiction is so powerful that it can warp our sense of self and our relationships, as well as negatively impact our mental health. The guides I have here do focus on substances, but the same theory applies to other addictive habits.

- [Guide](#) to quitting cannabis
- [Guide](#) to quitting alcohol
- [Information](#) for families to help their loved ones

# Feeling less sad, numb, tired, apathetic

What feels  
more helpful?

Doing  
something to  
help me not  
feel this way

- Try [taking positive action](#) (bigger lift)
- Try [gratitude](#) (smaller lift)

Exploring  
why I feel this  
way

- To free flow explore, try [processing/reflecting](#)
- To explore with structure, try reconnecting to [values](#)

# Overcome fear/worries

## What feels more helpful?

☐ Doing something to calm down anxiety in the moment

☐ Try [relaxation](#) or mindfulness techniques like [radical acceptance](#) or [riding the wave](#)

☐ Doing something to fight back the anxiety long-term

☐ Is it a situation that other people think you should handle more easily? Then use overcoming worry [strategies to gradually face fears](#)

☐ Is it a situation where it makes sense to be anxious? Then use [problem-solving & organization skills](#) to make a plan to avoid it or solve the problem if it can't be avoided (e.g. learn a skill or ask for outside help).



# Overcome anger

## What feels more helpful?

Do something to feel less angry right now	Deal with the situation that made me angry	Understand my anger	Let my anger pass
Try the opposite and use <u>relaxation</u> or <u>gratitude</u> strategies	Use <u>problem-solving</u> techniques or <u>communication</u> strategies to improve the situation	Let it out and explore through <u>processing/reflection</u> techniques	Use <u>mindfulness</u> techniques, especially <u>radical acceptance</u> or <u>riding the wave</u>

If it's your child who needs help overcoming their anger (especially a younger child), check out the resources in [managing difficult behavior](#)

# Managing Difficult Behavior

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When difficult behavior becomes more frequent and more intense, managing it can take a lot out of the person on the receiving end.

To balance out tough interactions, intentionally create more positive interactions between each other. This reduces the difficult behaviors over time. Here's a short [guide](#) on increasing positive interactions.

For full workbooks on how to manage difficult behaviors:

- use [FAST-B](#) for younger kids
- use [FAST-P](#) for teens

If you'd like books on managing difficult behaviors, check out [this](#).

Try [collaborative problem solving](#) or [difficult communication](#) skills to help reduce arguments with older kids or adults

A hand is shown placing a white puzzle piece with a blue silhouette of a person in a suit into a larger puzzle. The puzzle consists of many pieces, each featuring a blue silhouette of a person. The background is dark.

# Collaborative Problem Solving

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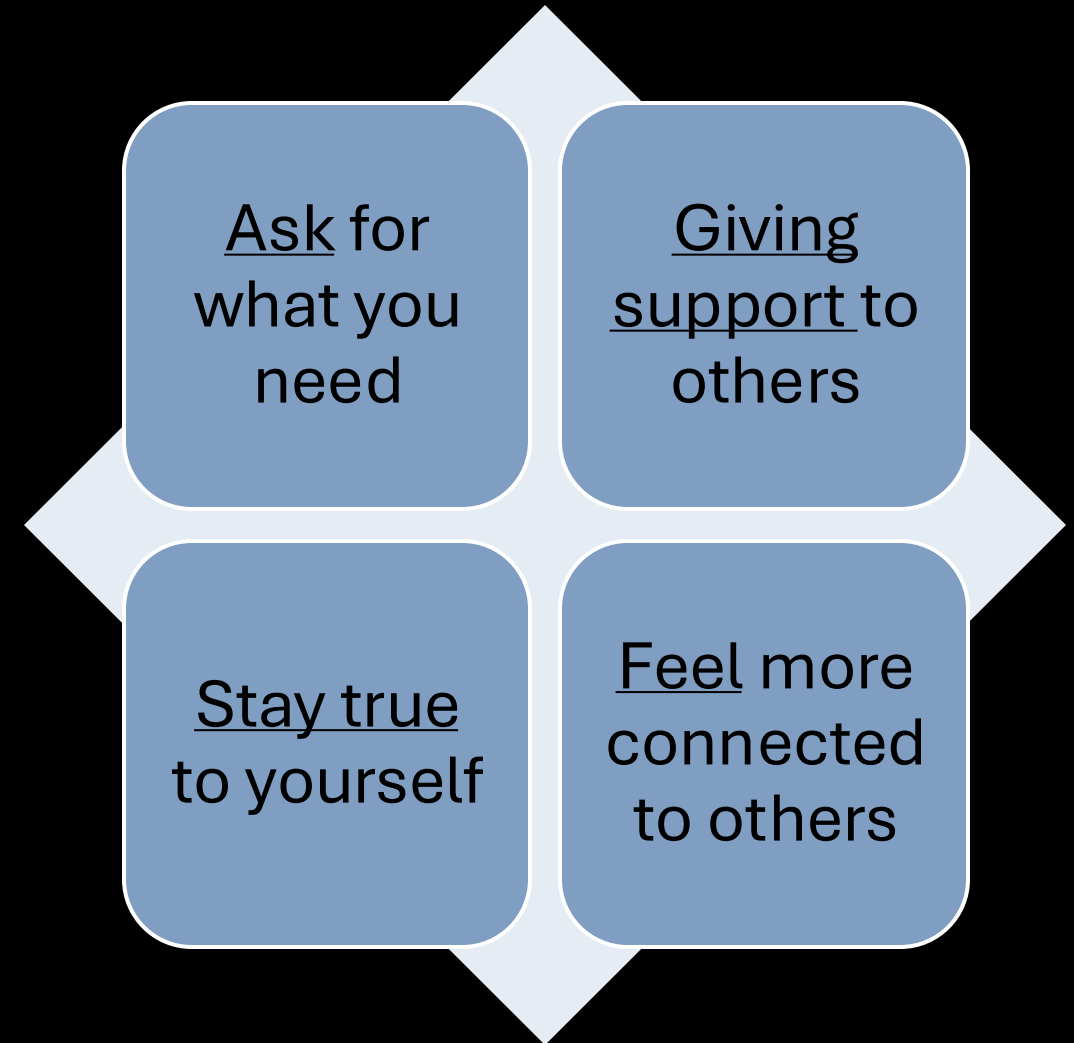
Collaborative problem-solving is a technique that helps you tackle difficult disagreements. This technique helps you think about what you and others need/want and what solutions you can all agree on and implement.

Here is a [guide](#) on how to use this strategy (it is family-focused but can be easily adapted to be used between adults as well)

# Difficult Communication

Despite our regular practice with talking to others, sometimes we could do better at communication. This is especially true when we feel highly emotional about what we're communicating.

These communication strategies can help you get or give support or negotiate a compromise around your and others' needs/wants





# Values

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Reconnecting to your values is helpful in many areas in life. Values are our individual guiding principles in how to live a "good" life. Examples include caring for others or caring for the environment. These values then inform your behavior, such as being helpful to family members or living more sustainably. Living closer to your values creates a more meaningful life, building resiliency to handle hard things that come your way (and they will come!).

Here is a [guide](#) to reconnect with your values

We also recommend making small goals that get you closer to living by your values. If you want help making goals, check out [problem-solving strategies](#).

# Processing/Reflecting

Sometimes our thoughts are chaotically swirling around in our head, which can make us feel confused and lost. Making a writing habit to process and reflect on these thoughts can help us understand them better and see where we need to go next.

Writing about more intensely emotional situations can be pretty hard but is a useful tool to explore what's underlying our emotions. Here are some ideas on how to go about this technique:



Tell your story



Understand what  
your emotions are telling  
you



Evaluate your  
reasoning and emotions  
together

# Mindfulness

Our minds' concerns can drown out everything else we experience, which often negatively distorts our reality. To practice mindfulness, ground yourself in what you experience right now and keeping your attention trained on this. When your mind does start to take over, notice and allow it to let go, returning to what you experience right now. This can help us feel more connected to ourselves and others and calm our emotions. Paying full attention to our experience in the moment helps us realize that though tough things in life come up, they pass away over time, no matter what. With mindfulness, we are more able to stop our minds from negatively filtering reality through our mind's concerns.

Here is a [guide](#) on how to do this for yourself

If mindfulness is helpful, you can take it farther with [meditation](#)

Try [Headspace](#) or [Calm](#)--popular paid apps to help with mindfulness and meditation, which your insurance might pay for



A photograph of a surfer in a black wetsuit riding a wave. The wave is a vibrant turquoise color with white foam at the crest. The surfer is in a crouched position, leaning forward. The background is a bright, overexposed sky.

# Radical Acceptance and Riding the Wave

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Both "radical acceptance" and "riding the wave" involve sitting with hard things and letting it be. "Riding the wave" takes the extra step of noticing how your emotional response to hard things changes. Our emotional response to a tough situation will be high and increase at first, but over time, our emotional response will go down and we will be calmer. "Surfing the urge" is another name for this technique. We can use this to notice change in our cravings for food, drugs, and other things. Some people think that these techniques ignore the hard stuff or prevent people from doing something to fix the problems facing them. This is not the case. These techniques stop the hard stuff from dragging you down farther than it has to, which allows you to tackle problems from a better mindset.

Here is a [guide](#) on how to radically accept

Here are guides on how to ride the wave of emotion:

- A shorter [guide](#)
- A more in-depth [guide](#), Module 2 has the skill and Module 1 has helpful background info on distress



# Facing Your Fears

Why do we ask you to face your fears? Often, the things we fear are not so likely or not so bad, and we learn that we can actually handle it. This expands our abilities to do whatever we want to do or are expected to do. Of note, this technique can be hard to do without support, so try to find a support person to help you stick to facing fears. Here's a short [guide](#) on how to do this.

For longer, more thorough guides, here are some modules directed towards families helping kids overcome anxiety (works for adults, too!):

- Seattle Children's [FAST-A guide](#)
- Mayo Clinic [guide](#)



# Relaxation

Sometimes it's too much to do anything but take a break or a time out, especially when we feel scared, angry, or just plain overwhelmed. It's okay to take a step back and rest. We all need a balance of doing and resting--it's important to know when and how to relax! How do you know when it's time to relax? When you're completely freaking out or you feel like nothing you're doing is working.

Here are some bio hacks to help you relax:

- [Reconnect to your breath or loosen up your muscles](#) to physically calm you down
- For extremely intense emotion, use the [cold-water reflex](#) to physically calm you down

Would you rather [distract](#) yourself by doing something enjoyable to relax?

Would you rather use more [mindfulness](#) techniques (which are harder to do) to relax even further?



# Distraction

When your emotions or urges feel really intense, you can try to distract yourself until the intense emotions start to fade away. We recommend making a list of all the potential distracting activities you could do when an intense emotion or urge hits you. This is similar to a “[cope ahead plan](#)” where you have a ready-made list to follow when you’re struggling to think at your usual level.

Do something enjoyable to distract yourself:

- Do a [pleasant activity](#)
- Try [self-soothing](#)

Or change it up with [pulling on other emotions](#) to distract from the current, overwhelming emotion

# Safety Planning or Cope Ahead

When we're overwhelmed, we're not in a place where we can think clearly or even think okay. We think a lot better when we're out of the overwhelmed space and into the "little bit calmer" space, helping us better figure out what's the next best step to take.

When you're calm, try to plan what to do when feeling really overwhelmed. This is making a safety or cope ahead plan and is often used when people feel suicidal. Here is a [guide](#) on how to do this.

Use the [relaxation](#) resources to help build out your plan

# Gratitude

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Our brains are hardwired to see scary, bad, and threatening things first. That's how we avoid getting bitten by a snake or getting into a physical fight. Our brains noticing scary things more is called “negativity bias”.



Sometimes our brains get too sensitive to scary, bad things. We rebalance our brains by remembering the good stuff in our life, which brains find much harder to do. Here's a [strategy](#) to find the potential good in a bad situation



Even more powerful than gratitude is to take action to change our mood for the better. Try [these resources](#) for ideas on how to do this.

# Take Positive Action

When we feel sad, joyless, or exhausted, we often want to rest and recover. That's fine when we only sometimes feel down. When it happens most or all of the time, only resting is not helpful anymore and instead harms us by making us feel more down.



When you feel down or exhausted a lot, we recommend doing something active that has boosted your mood in the past, even if you don't feel like doing it right now. Why? Because most of the time, you will feel better after doing the activity! We tell people to put their plan before their mood, because when people are in this state, they often will never be in the mood to do things they used to like.

Here are some ideas on how to get started:

- Shorter version: Use this [worksheet](#) to help come up with and track fun activities (check out the full depression [module](#) if you want more)
- Longer version: Use this [guided FAST-D workbook](#) to tackle depression (targeted towards families and kids, but these concepts also work for adults)



# Problem-Solving & Organization

We all have multiple demands put on us, and we have to figure out which demands to meet, when, and how to meet them. That's a lot of organizing and problem-solving we do all the time! This is a lot of work.

When we feel ill, figuring out and meeting our demands can be even harder, making us feel even worse. Here is a [short overview](#) of problem-solving strategies to more easily get tasks done. For more specific strategies for each stage of problem-solving, check out the other resources:

1. Organize with an overall task list & calendar to figure out what and/or how many problems you have (module 5 of [overcoming procrastination](#))  
\*[Extra tips](#) to troubleshoot your to-do list
2. [Break down the problem](#) when you don't even know where to start (or have a [website](#) do it for you)
3. [Brainstorm](#) and [evaluate](#) a lot of solutions when you feel stuck on how to fix a problem
4. Set a [small goal](#) to take a step in fixing your problem
5. Try [these strategies](#) to help you stick to your goals

# Sticking to Your Goals

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Try measuring your attention span and break up your task into that time period, giving yourself breaks after each period to reset. Use [this technique](#) to reduce getting distracted during your task period



Try a [routine](#) or a [habit](#) to make doing your goal more automatic



Get someone to support you, like an [accountability buddy](#) (aka body doubling)





# General Resources (Free!)

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- Various [workbooks](#) for different conditions including anxiety, depression, eating disorder, procrastination, etc.
- Multiple [guided workbooks](#) for anxiety, depression, trauma, and behavioral challenges **directed to kids and teens**
- [NPR's Life Kit](#) for loads of easily accessible tips and tricks to use in a lot of different life situations (e.g. romance, parenting, finances, enjoying life, making decisions, etc.)

# Sources and Acknowledgements

- Centre for Clinical Interventions (<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>)
- University of California Los Angeles (<https://stand.ucla.edu/tips>)
- National Health Service UK (<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>)
- Western Washington University (<https://cwc.wvu.edu/>)
- Seattle Children's Hospital (<https://www.seattlechildrens.org/healthcare-professionals/community-providers/fast/>)
- Mayo Clinic (<https://anxietycoach.mayoclinic.org/>)
- Now Matters Now (<https://nowmattersnow.org/>)

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