



My Personal Toolkit



White Noise

Complete silence may sound peaceful in theory, but our brains actually crave sound. The balance is important. If it's too quiet, individual noises can stand out and become annoying (a neighbor's subwoofer, a ticking clock). White noise or natural sound machines are a good sources of neutral, balanced sound. You can use your phone as well. There are a variety of natural sound apps from waterfalls to cats purring. The hum of white noise does not disrupt your sleep. Instead it allows your brain to take a healthy break.



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Self Hug

Many find that the simple act of a hug can instantly calm your body and change your state of mind. Body contact releases oxytocin, a brain hormone that promotes bonding and a sense of safety. Physical contact starts a chain reaction that lowers stress levels, improves one's mood, and reduces blood pressure. Hugging yourself works by stimulating the same pressure sensing neurons, and can have a similar effect. Practicing self-affection can allow you to cope with hardships, shame, self-criticism, anxiety, fear, and depression.



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Voicing Needs

Self-advocating is when you clearly and candidly let others know what you need. Taking on too much without proper support can leave you burned out before you know it, both personally and professionally. Respect is key to any healthy relationship, and being assertive shows others that you know you deserve respect. It is okay to say no when you are uncomfortable or others ask too much. It is also okay to ask for help, for more time, or to voice your opinion on what you need.



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Tactile Stimulation

Stress balls, fidget toys, lotion on your hands, even tapping your feet can help soothe your mind and body.



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Send Love

Giving love goes a long way. Sometimes we forget that other people are going through similar things. Pick a friend or family member and send them a text asking about something going on in their life, good or bad. If you can, practice being specific. Being specific shows them that you were listening, and that they matter to you. Who knows? Maybe next time they will be the one to start the conversation!



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New Music

Listen to something new! That can be a genre you don't typically listen to, or music from a time period outside your usual playlist. This is about novelty, or newness of experiences. Unexpectedness jumpstarts your whole brain! New music (even if you find that you hate it!) is a quick and accessible way to give your brain the jolt of novelty it needs to keep from sinking into boredom and anxiousness.



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Phone Bedtime

Put your phone to bed before you. The blue light from smartphone screens can trick the brain into thinking it is daytime, and keep you from feeling relaxed enough to sleep. Setting a bedtime for your phone gives you a chance to unwind as well, without the constant stream of social media and text messages. Those posts and messages will be there in the morning, but your chance to sleep won't be.



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Puzzle

Assembling a puzzle is a way to practice focusing your attention on the task at hand. Whenever you challenge yourself with a puzzle, it is at the forefront of your mind. Puzzles increase dopamine levels, and every properly placed piece is another jolt. Puzzles can also be a form of meditation, a way to clear the mind of outside matters. There is nothing at stake with a puzzle except what you make of it!



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Serenity Creed

“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

This is a creed that is helpful for perspective in times of real stress. People in recovery from substance use it to help with situations that make them want to use. Internalizing this saying gives you the space to accept the past or anything you may have done or felt ashamed for and then the power to know that you have the ability to overcome the past in order to create a new future.



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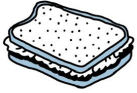


Get Outdoors

Go out and enjoy the gifts of nature. It is a beautiful world out there and it is worth exploring! Staying cooped up indoors can have drastic effects on emotional and physical health. Stimulation from natural beauty is calming. If you live in a large city, try to find a park or appreciate the places nature has taken hold in the city. Exploring nature is also great source of exercise.



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Healthy Eating

Food is fuel for your body and your mind. Adding healthy foods to your daily eating habits provides your body with increased energy throughout the day. Feeling tired in the afternoon? Did you skip breakfast or lunch? Blood sugar can have a big effect on your mood. For individuals recovering from eating disorders, sticking to your recovery plan is a key part of self care.



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Watch Funny Videos

Laughter may not be the best medicine for everything, but it certainly helps! And there's science backing that up. Laughter reduces tension and anxiety, even (and perhaps especially) when it doesn't feel like anything is worth laughing about. Funny videos provide a momentary distraction from whatever you are feeling and can jump start positive emotions so you can get back to life feeling refreshed and ready.



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Snuggle A Pet

“Dog is a man’s best friend” holds merit when talking about coping skills. Spending time with our furry friends stimulates the release of oxytocin, the bonding and love hormone. Tactile stimulation of fur and animal affection helps us ground ourselves and stay present the same way getting a hug from a person does. Having your pet by your side can help alleviate loneliness. Go ahead and hug your pet (or get one)!



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Say Thank You

Maintaining connection to others takes effort, whether they are family, friends, coworkers, or acquaintances. One of the simple ways to remind people that they are important to you is to show gratitude. Think of someone you want to express gratitude to. Send them a quick message thanking them for what they have done for you. A simple, "Thank you for listening," sent to a friend can go a long way toward maintaining that friendship. Showing appreciation for the effort of a coworker by sending a, "Thank you for your help," email makes it more likely they'll help next time since they'll know it means something to you. Keep it short, and to the point.