

# BE YOUR BEST SELF

HOLISTIC PLAN FOR EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

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# THE PLAN

**Sleep**

**Nutrition**

**Movement**

**Pleasure**

**Self-Care**

**Self-Expression**

**Gratitude**

**Mindfulness**

**Social Support**

**Assertive Communication**



## INTERVIEW IDEAS

**Decide on your title, such as life coach, coach, counselor, etc.**

**Ask about their perceptions on meeting with you, like the reason and feelings about it.**

**Build rapport asking about interests, school, closest family and friends.**

**Determine on counseling goals together but asking what area(s) in life to improve. You can ask the “miracle question” to help devise therapeutic goals.**

**If resistant, suggest a few sessions only or a mentor rather than a “therapist/counselor”.**



# CHAPTER 1: SLEEP

*“Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Benjamin Franklin*

**Emotional wellness begins with sleep. What is your sleep like? Inadequate sleep causes us to be unfocused, hyper, tearful, forgetful, anxious, depressed, and sluggish. Individuals have different sleep needs, so determine how many hours a night work best for you. Most people should get 8 to 10 consecutive hours of sleep per night. Do not make up missed hours of sleep at night by napping for hours after school, because this interferes with an optimal sleep schedule.**

**Sleep hygiene consists of basic good sleep habits. Look at the nightly routine you practice before bed.**

**Before climbing in bed do you avoid sugar, caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine? These products can keep you awake at bedtime or wake you up during the night.**

**Do you avoid eating at least 2 hours before going to bed?**

**Do you go to bed only when you are sleepy? Your bed should only be for sleeping, not getting on the computer, watching television, or doing homework.**

**Do you exercise prior to bed? This may only stimulate you to the point of making it difficult to fall asleep.**

**Activities to try:**

**Sweet Dreams**

**Sleep Diary**

**Nightly Routine**

**Downers**

## CHAPTER 2: NUTRITION

*“The food you eat can be either the safest and most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison.” -[Ann Wigmore](#)*

Nutrition is an essential part of your overall physical and mental health. It is important to keep your body running smoothly and your brain firing consistently with adequate nutrients. With a strong mind-body connection, you feel good both physically and emotionally. Modern diets have come a long way from what our ancestors ate. Food production is linked to profits. Refining foods increases the foods' shelf life, which helps with profits. Unfortunately, refining decreases the nutritional value of foods. Case in point, according to the World Health Organization<sup>2</sup>, sugar intake should be no more than 10 percent of our caloric intake. However, most Americans consume on average 25 percent. It is estimated that most individuals currently eat over 73 pounds of sugar per year. Sugar should be avoided as much as possible if we want to be healthy physically and emotionally. We are faced with huge increases of physical and emotional ailments in the modern world, which are being linked by multiple studies to poor nutrition.



## CHAPTER 3: MOVEMENT

**Movement is so important for emotional wellness. It is not just for our body; rather, we need it for our brain—our body's control center. Movement of our body can help our physical and mental health. People who are active tend to have a positive outlook and higher self-esteem. Movement helps with attention, concentration, and memory. It regulates behavior and moods. It keeps us alert and energetic. Movement helps greatly with stress and anxiety. Moving your body in pleasurable activities can help lift your moods.**

**Humans are not meant to be sedentary creatures. We have a body that wants to move, sweat, lift, and breathe. Enjoy and be grateful for being able to move your body in any way you choose. Find ways that you like to move on a daily basis. This does not have to be in a gym. There are so many ways to move your body. Your way should be enjoyable and fun. If you feel like you have to suffer through an activity, this is a clue that this endeavor may not be for you. Choose something else. Just as everyone is an individual, your way to move your body is unique to you. Think outside of the box. Just be sure to find ways to move that you can do on a regular basis, almost daily. But be sure to have rest times as well. Remember to listen to your body and gut as to what works for you.**



# CH 4: PLEASURES AND PASSION

*“Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress; working hard for something we love is called passion.” - Simon Sinek*

When you are enthusiastic about something that is new or exciting in your life, you are less likely to experience feelings of depression or anxiety. Develop a passion for a special interest such as a sport, musical instrument, art project, beneficial cause, hobby, area of knowledge, goal, etc. Get ideas on the many different interests available to you by asking 10 people what their passions are, and be open to suggestions they may have.

Draw

Paint

Sculpt

Take a pottery class

Sing a song

Write a song

Write a poem

Write a story

Write in your journal

Create a photo album

Try out for a team

Try out for a play

Make a costume

Do a craft

Sew

Watch birds

Call a new friend

Call an old friend

Bake something for a friend/family member

Play solitaire

Play video games

Walk the mall

Go to the library

Visit a museum

# CHAPTER 5: SELF-CARE

It is so important that you take good care of your whole self on a DAILY basis. Do something nice for YOU every day. Take care of your body, mind, and feelings. When you think of self-care, you need to think in terms of your incredible five senses. Just get in the habit of doing a bit of self-care on a daily basis or you can do this after you calm yourself from an overwhelming emotion. These are simple ways to find pleasure in everyday life. When you take care of your SELF, you are more likely to feel nurtured and peaceful, and that will show to everyone around you.

Nourishing your five senses is a great way to take care of yourself:

**Smell:** Enjoy scented candles, baked foods, flowers, perfumes, soap, incense, and scented oils.

**Vision:** View magazine pictures or photographs of natural places (beaches, forests, mountains) or photographs of landscapes, fun places, or people, or visual artwork. You can even draw or paint your own artwork!

**Hearing:** Listen to soothing music, books on tape, nature sounds, white noise, relaxation/meditation CDs, or enjoyable talk and television programs.

**Taste:** Savor a favorite meal, gum/candy, tea, coffee, crushed ice, or fruit. The possibilities are endless!

**Touch:** Take a shower or a bubble bath, get a massage, play with a pet, put on comfortable clothes, examine a rock or a crystal, feel a soft piece of cloth, or wrap up in a blanket.



## CHAPTER 6: SELF-EXPRESSION

Feelings need to be felt and expressed in a healthy way, rather than stuffed inside.

If you are feeling depressed or anxious, you may feel you are “stuck” to where you cannot express your thoughts well or change your feelings. This can be very frustrating. A safe and healthy balance is needed. Addictions, as well as actions of self-harm and abuse, can happen when you are “stuck” and not expressing those feelings. It is possible that something happened in your past that you have not fully grieved or expressed, and now you are denying those feelings or pushing them away. Avoiding or denying feelings does not make them disappear; instead, they may come out in unhealthy ways and cause more problems.

When you hold back in your self-expression, you are limiting your potential to be creative and happy. You deserve to feel safe and happy!



# CHAPTER 7: GRATITUDE

Research shows that one of the greatest contributing factors to happiness is how much gratitude one shows (Soul Pancake's The Science of Happiness—Experiment in Gratitude<sup>4</sup>). Feeling and expressing gratitude can improve your energy, optimism, and empathy. When you are striving and working toward goals, sometimes we forget to be grateful for all that is already in your life. I challenge you to begin shifting your focus from the negative to the positive. Positive begets positive. Find the positive, appreciate it, and show it. Distance yourself from negative people and complainers. Try to find the positive in situations. Appreciate your good qualities and situations that occur. You can change your thinking to more positive thoughts. You can create healthier, more positive “thinking habits.”

Ideas:

Keep a gratitude journal. Write down 5 things every day for which you are grateful, either in the morning or the night.

End the day saying a prayer of gratitude and name the things you are grateful for.

Tell one person today what you are grateful for in regard to them. So often we can interact with someone in a habitually negative way. Perhaps compliment a person who does not usually hear positives from you. How is this received? How do you feel? Make it a new habit to show gratitude to someone at least once per day or per week.

When the situation is a tough one, think about what you are grateful for rather than just the negative part.

Take a picture of something you are grateful for every day and possibly post it on Facebook, Instagram, or another social network site.



## CHAPTER 8: MINDFULNESS

*“Mindfulness means paying attention to things as they are in any given moment, however they are, rather than as we want them to be.” – Mark Williams*

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. This is an uncomplicated way to nurture your spirit and help you feel happy. It is a way to live in the moment spiritually... in the here and now. It is a way of deeply experiencing life without attaching negative thoughts and judgments about situations or relationships. All that is necessary when you are practicing mindfulness is to just BE.

Daily mindful practice is an important attribute to achieving peace of mind. When you feel overwhelmed, sad, angry, hurt, pain, disappointment, or frustration, the best remedy is to just “Be” without attaching negative thoughts, worries, criticism, or judgment to those emotions. Don’t make this complicated. This mindful practicing can be done in any position—sitting, standing, lying, or moving—whatever works for you. The key is that the regular practice be in the same position, so decide what works best for you. The duration of practice and the time of day are totally up to you as well! If your practice is consistent, you will find that you are calmer and situations create less drama. Sensory triggers are a great reminder of the need for mindfulness. It may be a bell of a church nearby, a car horn, a train whistle, birds in the morning, or tree frogs in the afternoon. Whatever you choose can serve as a signal to be mindful wherever you are. The goal is to find peace in everyday life.

# CHAPTER 9: SOCIAL SUPPORT

*“People inspire you, or they drain you. Pick them wisely.” -Hans F. Hasen*

We are social beings, and we definitely need healthy, caring people in our lives to nurture us and help us heal.  
No single person can supply all of our social needs.

Here are some questions to help you determine who is a positive influence in your life (and who is not):

Who in your life is a healthy person?

Who is honest with you?

Who is nurturing and positive?

Who do you tell when you have a success or a failure?

Who calms you when you are upset?

Who compliments you and believes in you?

Who in your life do you just have fun with or feel happy when you are around?

Who in your life really listens (rather than always talks)?

In contrast:

Who in your life brings you a lot of drama and chaos? Know that it is okay to break ties with toxic people. It is not your job to save anyone.

Who drains your energy as opposed to gives you energy?

Who talks only of themselves rather than listens to you?

Who is negative or begins to put you down when good things happen in your life?

## CHAPTER 10: ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Assertive communication is necessary for all of your relationships—both with yourself and others in your life. This communication is when you are respectful of mutually solid boundaries (but not rigid) and is seen in healthy relationships with people you are close to (family and friends), but also in relationships with new acquaintances and strangers. You will greatly lessen the stress in your life when you communicate with others assertively. You want to own your thoughts and feelings without infringing on anyone else's boundaries by hurting their feelings or taking away their personal power.



# CREATING THE HOLISTIC PLAN

Take out the worksheet and begin asking questions related to 10 components without judgment. This is fact finding time only. Watch nonverbal language. Student watches you write on the worksheet.

You do not have to ask about all 10 components first session but definitely ask about the sleep, nutrition, movement, and shoot for passion/pleasure, self-care, and self-expression.

Focus on strengths first. Tell students what they are doing well and encourage them to maintain and be intentional about these (or increase frequency).

Remind student that the power to change is in the individual.



## HOLISTIC PLAN CONTINUED...

For areas that need improvement, be gentle and educational. Ask for student ideas first on how to improve. Then you can offer suggestions and see which would be feasible to try.

When resistant change certain things, especially nutrition, focus on one very small aspect of that first, such as adding breakfast or adding a snack in during the day, or cutting caffeine and sugar down at night.

Assign “homework” on areas to improve. Sometimes this can be done in session.

Make copies of or take notes on any homework that student has completed.

Take detailed notes.

Often homework is unfinished. “Sometimes seeds need to be planted gently until they are ready to sprout”. Gentle reminders may help with compliance.

# **BENEFITS**

**Empowering to individual**

**Strength-based**

**User-friendly**

**For counselees or for self-help**

**Useful for teens or adults**

**Positive and optimistic**

**Mind-body connection**

