

# 6 steps to emotional health

## 1. Sleep - 7 to 9 hours nightly

- Stop using all electronics (TV, computer, phone, etc.) at least 30 minutes before you try to go to sleep;
- Read a book or magazine just before going to sleep (to get your mind off the concerns of the day).

## 2. Eat – at least 3 times a day (something with nutritional value); don't go long periods of time without eating.

## 3. Exercise – move around a little more than you do now, aiming for 20-30 minutes or more, most days

- Exercise is mood-regulating and anxiety-reducing, (& can be done in 10 minute chunks).

## 4. Daily Pleasant Activities – do something pleasant everyday, & pay attention to it while you're doing it

- Put your mind on the pleasant activity (instead of the *worry* or *sad thoughts*), & redirect your attention back to the pleasant activity as many times as you need to.

## 5. Slow, deep, rhythmic Breathing – @ 5 minutes or more each day, breathing in *calm*/breathing out *tension*

- Maybe breathe to music, or use a phone app or website like *calm.com* or *Stop, Breathe & Think* for 2 or more minutes daily.

## 6. Mindful Thinking – It's healthy to bring our attention to the present moment as often as we can.

The 4 steps to Mindful Thinking:

**Step 1: Notice your thoughts.** Thoughts come and go like clouds in the sky (that's the nature of thoughts). When you find yourself thinking a *worry thought* or a *sad thought*, **you don't have to keep thinking about it.** It's not always the right time to think about issues or problems.

**Step 2:** Allow yourself to gently **Let Go** of your *wandering, worry, or sad thoughts*, without judging the thoughts or yourself, or struggling with the thoughts.

**Step 3:** Then **Find a Different Focus**, gently redirecting your attention to something else, like:

- an image (maybe your pet, or a relaxing or beautiful place), or
- a word (maybe *relax*, or *calm*), or
- your breath, a puzzle, 1 of your 5 senses (like the taste of a mint). *You'll get better at this the more you practice it!*

**Step 4:** Maybe, **set aside a time** to think about the issue or problem that was bothering you:

- for 30 minutes or less, during daytime hours, maybe 1-2 times during the week, followed by an activity to bring your thoughts back to now (instead of the problem).
- When your mind wanders to the problem or issue later in the day, notice it, gently let it go, and Find a Different Focus

Developed by Carol Lewis, PhD MPH, UF Health Shands Psychiatric Hospital, 2014  
[carollewis@ufl.edu](mailto:carollewis@ufl.edu)

## Useful Internet/Phone App Mindfulness Resources

**Mindful Awareness Practice** (led by Carol Lewis, PhD MPH):

<http://psychiatry.ufl.edu/breathing-space/>

### Websites:

- \* Self-compassion meditations by Christopher Germer, PhD:  
<https://chrisgermer.com/meditations/>
- \* Self-compassion exercises and mindfulness practices by Kristin Neff, PhD:  
<http://self-compassion.org/>
- \* Many mindfulness exercises from the UK's Free Mindfulness Project:  
<http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>
- \* Calm.com [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com) (is a website & phone app)
- \* Stop, Breathe & Think <http://app.stopbreathethink.org/> (is a website & phone app)
- \* Black Zen <https://www.blackzen.co/> - mindfulness for Black & Brown communities
- \* UF Psychiatry resilience resets & guided practices <https://www.youtube.com/c/UFPsychiatry/playlists>



### Apps:

Insight Timer  
Stop, Breathe & Think  
Headspace

Smiling Mind  
Virtual Hope Box  
calm.com

Lotus Bud  
The Now  
Grateful

Relax Melodies  
MyNoise