

Emotional Intelligence Toolkit

Want to become a happier, healthier you? This free program offers tools for managing stress and emotions, improving your relationships, and bringing your life into balance.



What is the toolkit and how does it work?

Have you ever felt like stress, anxiety, depression, or anger was controlling you? Do you often act impulsively, doing or saying things you know you shouldn't, only to regret it later? Or do you feel disconnected from your feelings and emotionally numb? These can all be signs that you need to work on building your emotional intelligence.

By learning to keep stress and emotions in check, you'll not only improve how you

communicate with others, but you'll also be able to get off the "emotional rollercoaster," even out extremes in mood, and bring your life into balance. This toolkit will show you how.

HelpGuide's Emotional Intelligence Toolkit is a step-by-step guide that can help you to:

- Change self-defeating moods and attitudes
- Quickly manage stress and anxiety
- Stay connected to what you feel as well as think
- Follow through on your hopes and dreams

Why emotions matter

The toolkit is based on the recent transformations that have taken place in the field of psychology. Emotion is now at the heart of clinical theory and is seen as the foundation to psychological change. We also now know that all of our thinking benefits greatly from having an emotional component.

As you develop the capacity to better recognize and understand your own emotions, you'll find it easier to appreciate how others are feeling, improving how you communicate and helping your personal and professional relationships to flourish. And as you bring stress into balance and learn to tolerate even unpleasant emotions, you'll discover that your capacity for experiencing positive emotions has grown and intensified. You'll find it easier to play, laugh, and experience joy. No matter how stressed or emotionally out of control you feel now, by drawing on these tools, life can and will get lighter and brighter.

Video: Why emotions matter

Before we begin learning the skills of emotional intelligence that enable us to override stress and stay healthy and happy, it's important to first take a look at things we do that can block our ability to acquire new habits.

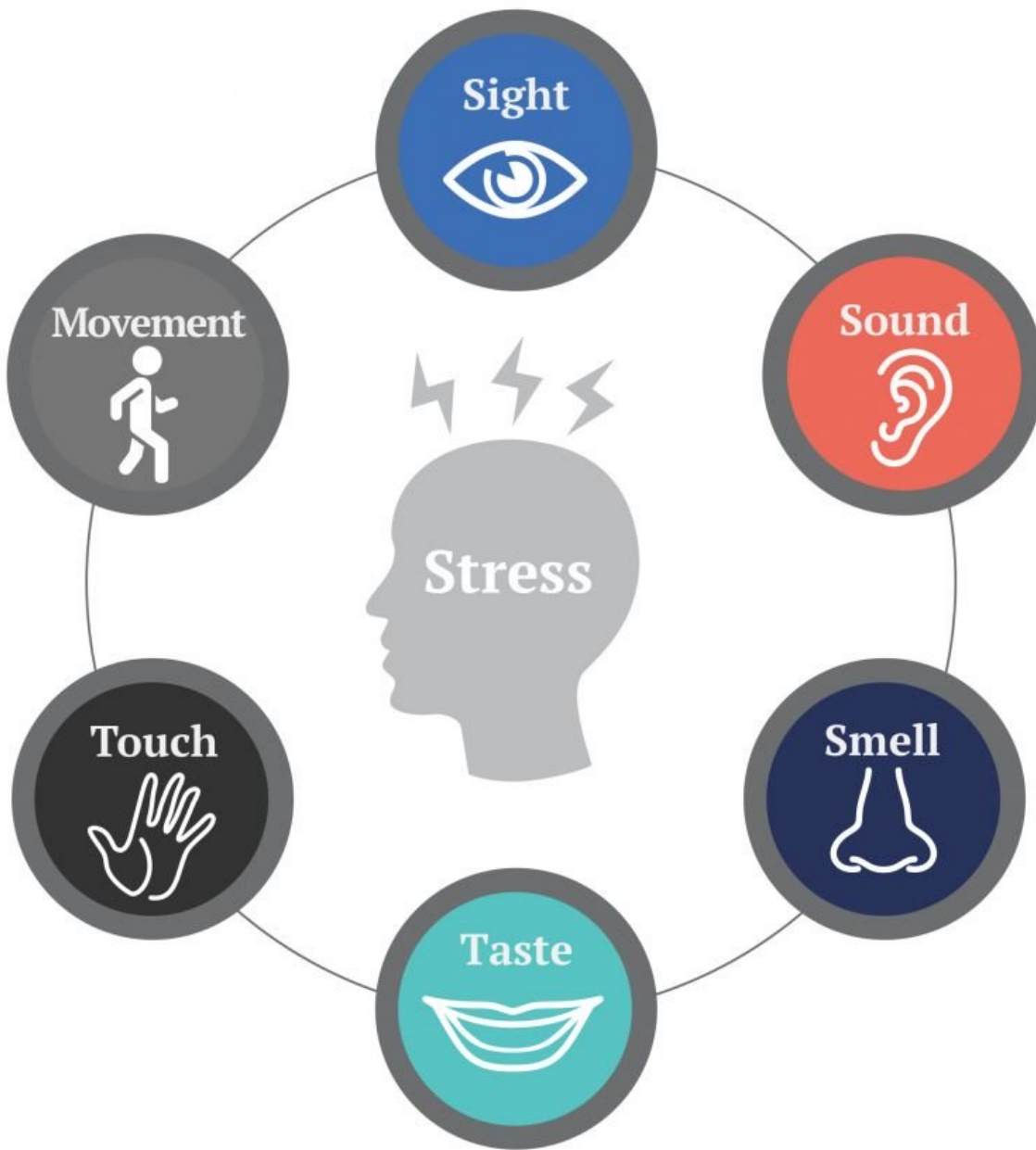
Video: Roadblocks to Awareness

Step 1: Learn to quickly relieve stress

Being able to manage and relieve stress is the key to staying balanced, focused, and in control, no matter what challenges you face in life. As well as helping you cope with day-to-day stressors, employing quick stress relief techniques will also help you bring your nervous system into balance when practicing the meditation part of this toolkit.

There are countless techniques for dealing with stress. Talking face-to-face with an understanding friend, exercise, yoga, and meditation, for example, are all great ways to ease stress and anxiety. But it may not be practical (or even possible) to go for a run or meditate when you're frazzled by your morning commute, stuck in a stressful meeting at work, or fried from another argument with your spouse. For situations like these, you need something more accessible. That's where quick stress relief comes in.

Use Your Senses to Relieve Stress



Quick Stress Relief

The best way to reduce stress quickly is by taking a deep breath and using your senses—what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch—or through a soothing movement. By viewing a favorite photo, smelling a specific scent, listening to a favorite piece of music, tasting a piece of gum, or hugging a pet, for example, you can quickly relax and focus yourself. Of course, not everyone responds to each sensory experience in the same way. The key to quick stress relief is to [experiment and discover the unique sensory experiences that work best for you](#).

Video: Quick Stress Relief

Step 2: Build emotional intelligence (EQ)

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to identify, understand, and use your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress and anxiety, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict. When it comes to happiness and success in your relationships, career, and personal goals, EQ matters just as much as the better known, IQ.

Emotional intelligence is commonly defined by four attributes:

1. **Self-management** - You're able to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage your emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.
2. **Self-awareness** - You recognize your own emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behavior. You know your strengths and weaknesses, and have self-confidence.
3. **Social awareness** - You can understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people, pick up on emotional cues, feel comfortable socially, and recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization.
4. **Relationship management** - You're able to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict.

Many of us are disconnected from our emotions—especially strong emotions such as anger, sadness, fear—because we've been taught to try to shut off our feelings. But while you can

deny or numb your feelings, you can't eliminate them. They're still there, whether you're aware of them or not. And even unpleasant emotions can have beneficial aspects. Sadness can support emotional healing, for example, fear can trigger life-saving action, and anger can mobilize and inspire. Unfortunately, without being connected to all of your emotions, you can't manage stress, fully understand your own behavior, or appropriately control how you think and act. But whatever your circumstances or challenges, [the skills for improving EQ and managing your emotions can be learned at any time](#).

Video: Developing Emotional Awareness

Step 3: Practice the *Ride the Wild Horse* meditation

Many of us struggle to manage our emotions. Our feelings can often seem like a wild horse, full of fear and uncontrolled energy. They may cause you to freeze, act out, or shut down—making it difficult to think rationally, causing you to say and do things you later regret. Or you may go to great lengths to avoid difficult emotions by:

Distracting yourself with obsessive thoughts, mindless entertainment, and addictive behaviors. Watching television for hours, drinking, [gambling](#), overeating, playing computer games, and [compulsively using smartphones](#) or the Internet are common ways to avoid dealing with your feelings.

Sticking with one emotional response that you feel comfortable with, no matter what the situation requires. For example, constantly joking around to cover up insecurities or getting angry all the time to avoid feeling sad or anxious.

Shutting down or shutting out intense emotions. If you feel overwhelmed by your emotions, you may cope by numbing yourself. You may feel completely disconnected from your emotions, like you no longer have feelings at all.

Instead of trying to ignore strong emotions, you can accept and tame them by taking up the reins and learning how to ride them. This is where the *Ride the Wild Horse* mindfulness meditation comes in. As well as helping you to relax, it also teaches you how to harness all of your emotions—even the uncomfortable or overwhelming ones you've been trying to avoid. You'll learn how to ride out intense emotions, remaining in control of the experience and in control of your behavior.

What to expect from the meditations

The meditations focus firstly on your breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, and then on your current emotional state.

- If you begin to feel overwhelmed by uncomfortable emotions, use the quick stress relief techniques you learned in Step 1 to bring your nervous system back into balance before continuing.
- By learning to remain mindful under stress in this way, you'll be able carry these feelings through into your daily life, even in situations that feel threatening, stressful, or uncomfortable.

Beginning meditation - 16 minutes

Learn how to relax and open yourself up to discovering physical and emotional sensations throughout your body. **Move up to the intermediate meditation** when you feel attuned to the feelings and sensations throughout your body.

1. Beginning-Meditation 16:28

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Download: [Beginning-Meditation](#)

Intermediate meditation - 18 minutes

Learn how to identify the physical and emotional sensations in your body that stand out from the rest—that feel stronger or different. **Move up to the deeper meditation** when you are able to pinpoint and focus on different or unusual sensations and feelings in your

body.

1. Intermediate-Meditation 18:19

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Download: [Intermediate-Meditation](#)

Deeper meditation - 24 minutes

Learn how to stay emotionally connected even in situations that make you feel uncomfortable or mildly stressed. **Move up to the deepest meditation** when you are able to remain calm and focused in such situations.

1. Deeper-Meditation 24:02

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Download: [Deeper-Meditation](#)

Deepest meditation - 30 minutes

Learn how to remain focused, alert, and emotionally aware at all times, even in the most stressful situations.

1. Deepest-Meditation 30:41

Embed

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Download: [Deepest-Meditation](#)

Step 4: Continue practicing and enjoy the benefits

It's important to continue practicing the *Ride the Wild Horse* meditation until you're able to stay connected to your feelings and remain calm under stress in your daily life. Each time you practice the meditation, you should feel a little more energy and a little more comfortable with your emotional experience. But don't rush the meditative process. You will absorb more if you move slowly. Take time to notice the small changes that add up to a life change.

At the end of each meditation, as you shift your attention away from an exclusively internal focus back onto your everyday concerns, some awareness of what you're feeling will likely remain with you. This means that you're integrating the process into your everyday life, which will give you a greater sense of control over your emotions. Of course, learning new skills takes time and effort, especially if your energy is being sapped by depression, anxiety, or other challenges. But if you start small with baby steps undertaken at times of the day when you have the most energy, learning a new skill set can be easier than you think.

Practice, practice, practice. The more you repeat the meditations, the more comfortable

you will feel with your emotions and the greater change you'll experience in your thoughts, feelings, and actions. With regular practice, you can actually change your brain in ways that will make you feel more confident, resilient, and in control.

Set up predictable challenges. Try practicing your new emotional intelligence skills at predictable times of stress, when the stakes are low. For example, tune into your body while doing household chores or commuting through heavy traffic.

Expect setbacks. Don't lose hope if you backslide into old habits now and then. It happens. Instead of giving up after a setback, vow to start fresh next time and learn from your mistakes.

When in doubt, return to your body. If you're struggling to manage your mood in a tough situation, take a deep breath, and apply quick stress relief.

Talk to someone about your experience

Try to find a person you can talk to about your experiences with the meditation. What did you learn about yourself? What did you discover about your emotions? Speaking to someone face-to-face will help you retain what you've learned.

Video: Unexpected Rewards

Frequently Asked Questions

How much time do I need to invest in *Ride the Wild Horse*?

It takes about 21 to 28 consecutive days to create a new habit, but if you do the process correctly and often, you'll experience daily benefits. As you want the process to become second nature to you—so you don't "forget" to apply the skills in times of extreme stress—it may take a little longer.

What should I do if I initially feel something in one part of my body, and a stronger sensation occurs somewhere else?

Always follow the intensity. Focus on the strongest sensation you feel.

What if I don't feel anything or I just feel empty?

That's normal. Pay attention to the feeling of having no feeling, or of being numb or empty.

I'm getting emotional during the meditation, is that normal?

Yes. Releasing repressed feelings can be intense. If you cry, tremble, moan, or make other sounds, remember to breathe deeply and hold your focus. It is okay to experience these emotions—as long as you can calm and focus yourself and feel in control of the process.

If after numerous attempts you still feel uncomfortable, it may be an indication of unresolved trauma from your past. Consider consulting a trauma specialist.

About this toolkit

The Emotional Intelligence Toolkit is based on the empowering life work of HelpGuide's co-founder, [Dr. Jeanne Segal](#).

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