

How to Manage Emotions

Sometimes dealing with your emotions can feel overwhelming. When life is hectic or stressful, it's all too easy to give in to feelings of anger or depression. However, you will be more productive and feel better if you can learn to manage your emotions. There are ways to change your attitude and your environment so that you can better cope with a wide range of feelings.

Method 1

Finding Coping

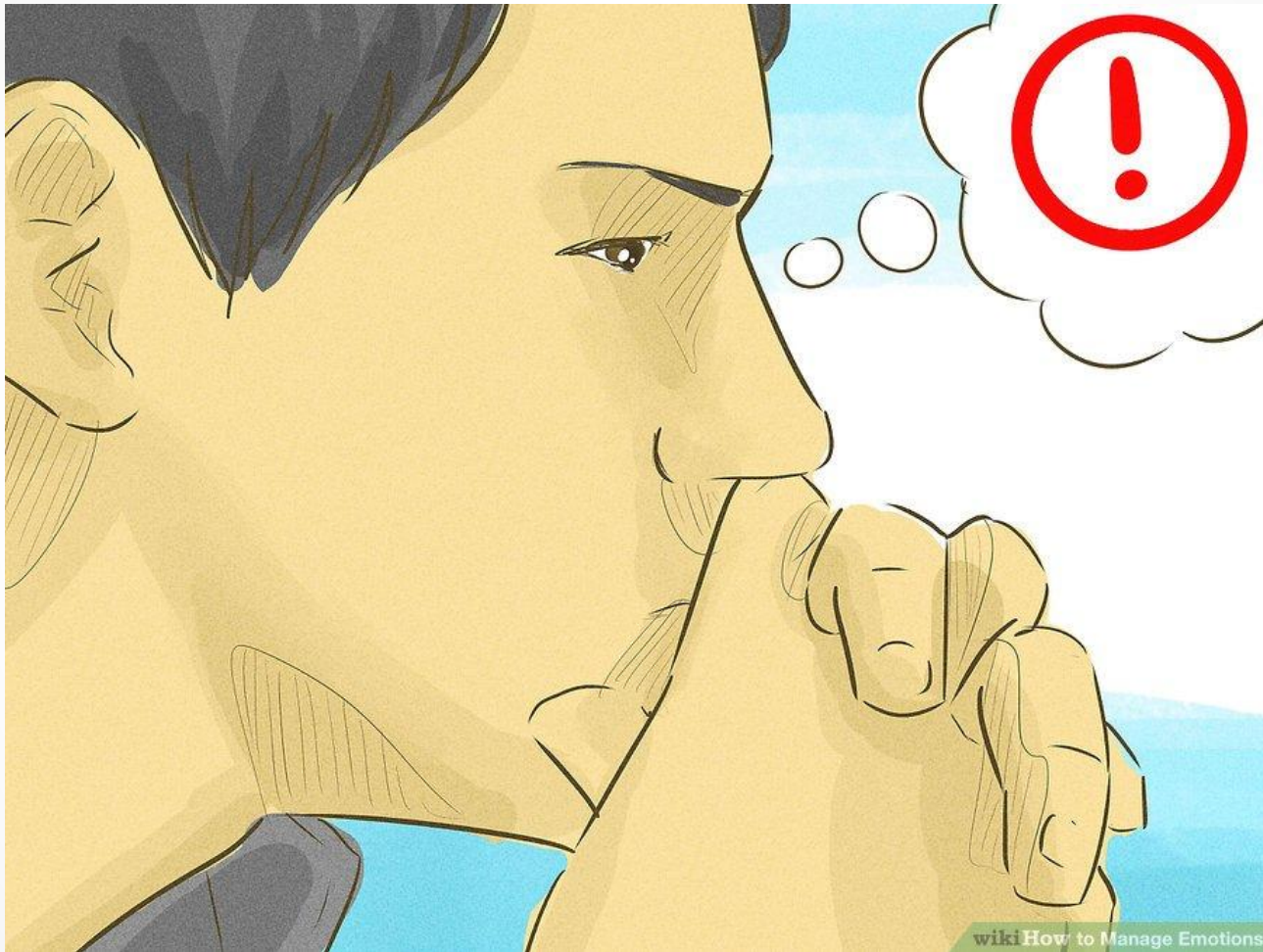
Mechanisms

1. Understand your emotional needs




In order to manage your emotions, you need to fully understand them. All of us have certain emotional needs that are just as important as our physical needs. Spend some time taking an inventory of the emotional needs that are most important to you. For example, some important emotional needs are feeling in control, feeling respected, and feeling comfort. If your brain feels one of those needs is not being met, that can trigger the negative emotions.

2. Know your triggers



Throughout the course of a day, it is normal to go through a wide range of emotions. When things aren't going your way, it is very common to feel anger or irritation. The key is to be able to manage your emotions so that they do not negatively impact your daily life. Knowing the things that trigger negative emotions is an important part of remaining in control. When your brain feels as though it has lost or been deprived of something it needs, the most common emotions are anger, fear, or sadness. Needs are not bad, but it is important to understand your needs and how to manage them. Maybe your boss criticized you for sloppy work on a project. You might feel that you are not being respected, because you spent months creating a great product. Your initial reaction is probably very negative. Take note of this, and remember that not feeling respected is one of your triggers.



3.Shift your focus



Once you know your triggers, you can use that to your advantage. When you know that something is triggering a negative emotion, try to shift your focus away from that person or situation. Instead, refocus on something positive in order to help you regain your composure. Perhaps feeling out of control is one of your triggers. When you are in a traffic jam and running late, you are likely to feel frustration and anger. Try to shift your focus. Turn on your favorite CD or have an interesting podcast downloaded for just such an occasion. Shift your focus from the traffic to listening to something you enjoy. Many of us are very critical of ourselves. If you are feeling mad at yourself for not going to the gym all week, shift your focus. Instead, congratulate yourself on getting caught up on much needed housework.



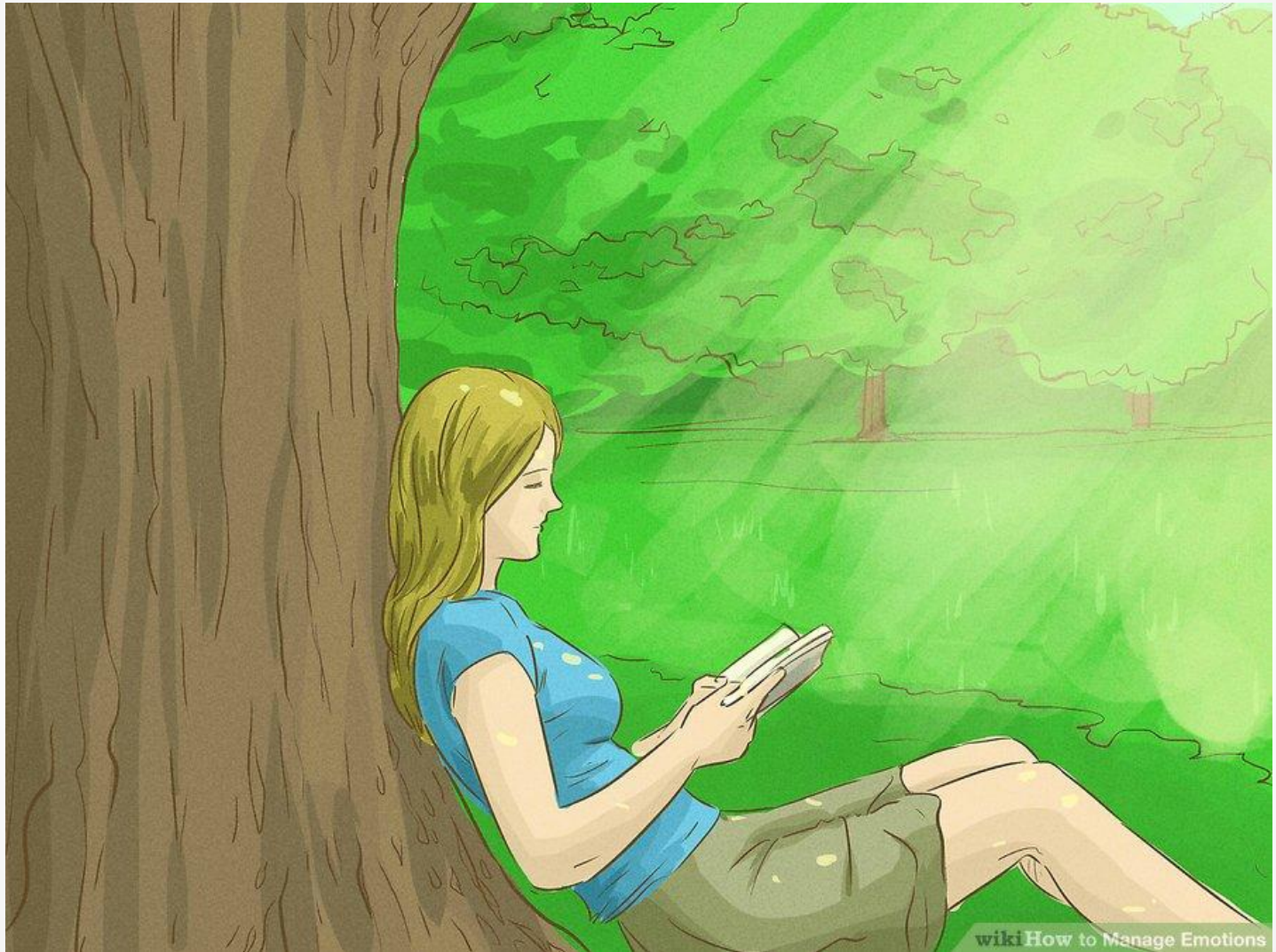
4.Calm down



When you are experiencing very strong emotions, it can be difficult to think and act rationally. When you are angry or frightened, your body goes into a flight or fight mode, which can cause you to react emotionally instead of logically. This type of response is generally not helpful in professional or social settings, so it is important to learn to calm yourself down when you are experiencing negative emotions. Take deep breaths. Focusing on your breathing will not only shift your focus, but it will help you calm down, physically and emotionally. Breathe in slowly for five counts, then let your breath out slowly for two counts. Repeat this for a few minutes, or as long as needed. Do something repetitive. Repetition can calm your nerves. Try walking, or even rhythmically tapping your feet.



5. Take a time-out



Strong emotions can cause you to act impulsively. This is true for both positive and negative feelings, like extreme sadness or happiness. A good way to manage your emotions is to take a time-out before acting when you are feeling intense emotions. Step away from the situation. If you are in a tense meeting at work, suggest that everyone take a five minute break to regroup. If you are having a heated discussion with your partner, calm down before making decisions. Say that you need to take a quick walk around the block before continuing the conversation.

Method 2

Making

Positive Changes

1. Choose a different response



You can make many changes to your life and your overall outlook. Take some time to think about what would help you better manage your emotions. It is likely that finding a different way to respond in tough situations will be high on your list of priorities. Once you have identified your triggers, you can work on finding more positive ways to respond to those triggers. For example, maybe you typically raise your voice when your child complains about eating broccoli for dinner. Next time this happens, actively choose to keep your tone neutral. Maybe you tend to burst into tears when you are criticized. When you feel the tears coming, choose to take deep breaths and voice your frustrations calmly instead.

2.Change your environment



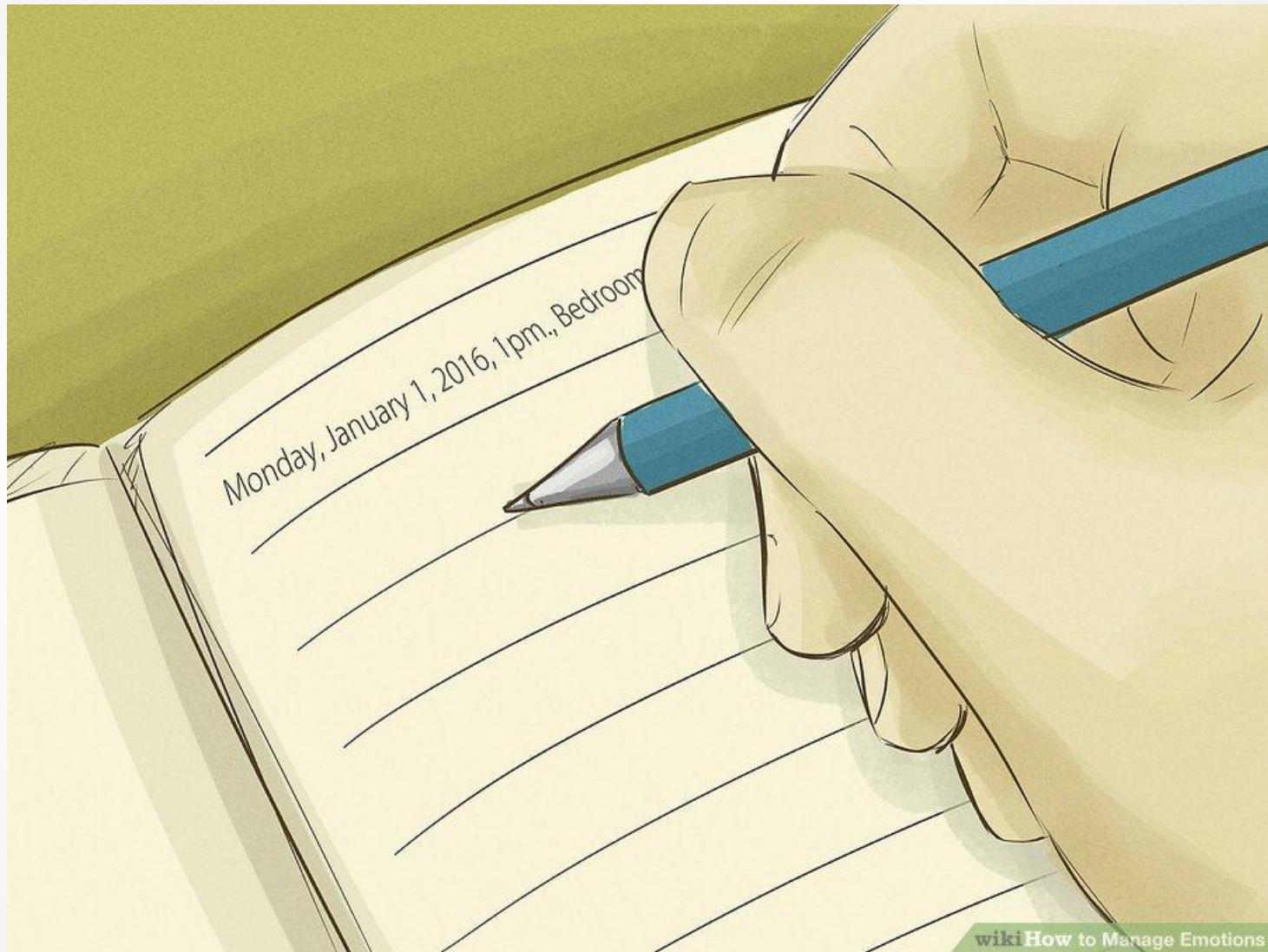
Small changes can make a big impact on your emotional health. Try altering your living space to make it a more calming place. For example, try buying some fresh flowers to put in your living room. Look at them and think calming thoughts when you are feeling stressed. If your negative emotions stem from feeling out of control, try organizing your work space. Getting rid of clutter can make you feel on top of things. Try adding more light. Natural and artificial light can help ease anxiety. So open your curtains and add some higher wattage bulbs to your lamps.

3.Be healthy



Staying physically fit can have positive benefits for your emotional health. Exercise can boost your mood and decrease stress, which can help you retain control of your emotions. Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Choose an activity that you enjoy. If you've always wanted to learn to play tennis, take lessons or join a league for beginners. Add more B12 to your diet. This vitamin has been shown to improve emotional well being. Look for salmon, chicken, and lean beef to add to your dinners.

4. Keep a journal



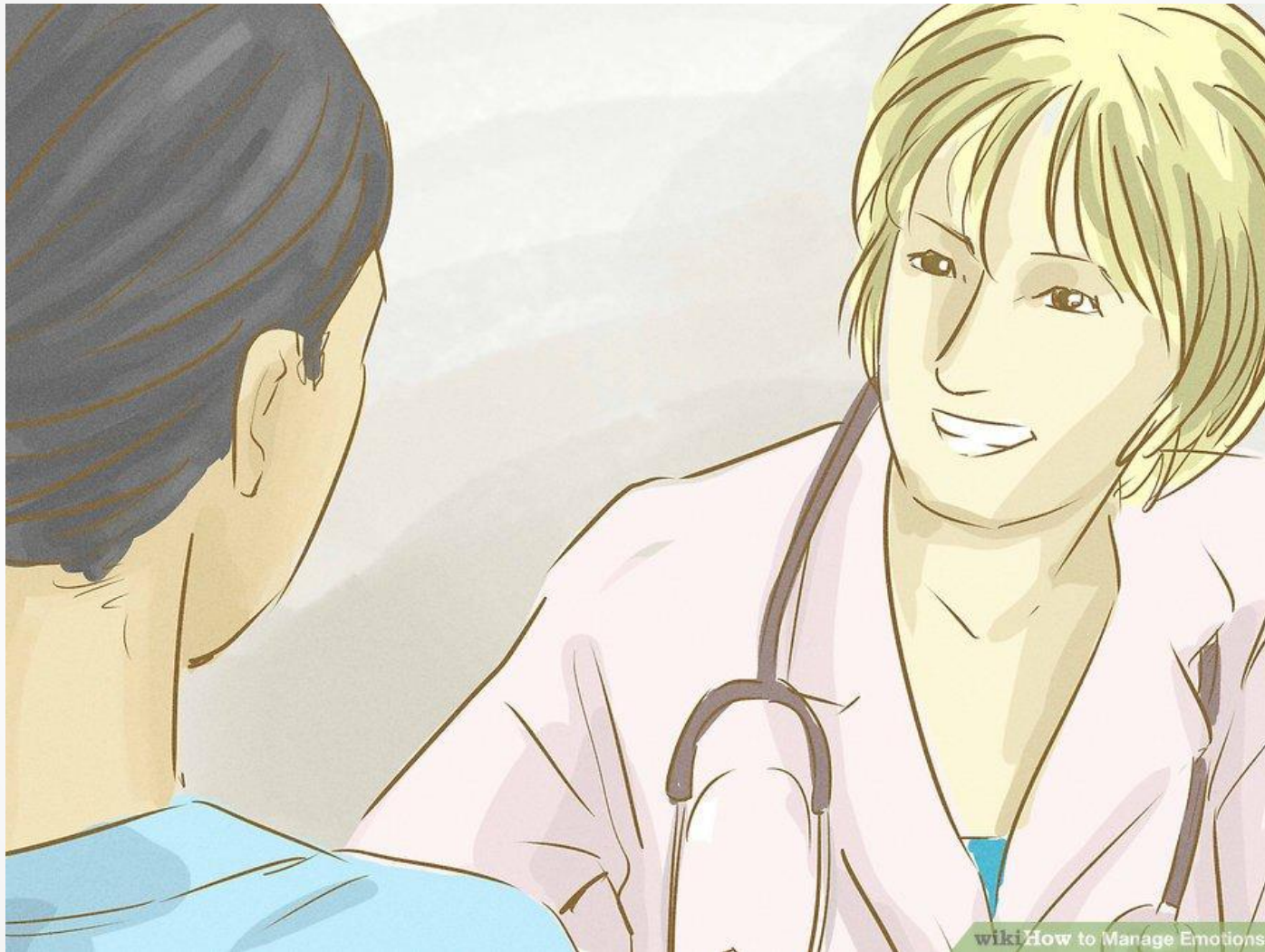
There are multiple mental health benefits that come from writing in a journal. Writing down your experiences and your reactions can help you learn to identify your emotional triggers. It can also help you to see patterns in your reactions, which will allow you to think about how to modify those behaviors. Journaling can also reduce stress and anxiety. Make it a point to write in your journal each day. Set aside at least five minutes to write down anything that's on your mind. At the end of each week, read through your recent entries. Reflect on anything significant that has happened in your life.

5. Talk about your feelings



Managing your emotions does not mean that you need to ignore or repress your feelings. It is normal and healthy to feel a wide array of emotions. Learn to express those feelings in healthy ways. Talking about your emotions is very productive. Try talking to friends or family. It is a good idea to let your loved ones know how you are feeling. Try saying, "I've been really stressed out lately. Do you have time to talk things through with me?" Be calm and rational while you are talking. It's fine to express anger or frustration, but do so without yelling.

6. Cope with hormones



Hormones can cause significant mood swings, and are also related to many emotions, such as sadness, irritability, and even depression. Women typically deal with a lot of hormone-related emotions during pregnancy, menopause, and menstruation. Track your emotions to figure out if they are related to times when your hormones are in flux. To help deal with these intense emotions, there are several things you can do to try to regulate your mood. Eat healthy foods and get some exercise. The endorphins will help. Talk to your doctor about medication. For example, if you're dealing with severe PMS, medication might be helpful.

7. Handle weepiness



If you are prone to unexpected tears, that can have a negative impact on your day to day life. Often, unpredictable crying is related to hormones. But it is also a symptom that you are experiencing anxiety. Crying is not necessarily a bad thing. It is your body's way of releasing emotions. When you cry, don't force yourself to stop. Trying to block your emotions like that can take a lot of unnecessary energy. Instead, try to prevent the tears from ever starting. Take positive steps to manage your emotions, such as journaling and meditation.

Method 3

Understanding

Your Emotions

1. Acknowledge your feelings



Dealing with emotions can be difficult, as they can change rapidly. But it's important to allow yourself to experience your emotions, as repressing them can cause stress. When you experience an emotion, identify it and acknowledge it. For example, if you are feeling nervous, ask yourself, "What am I afraid of?" Identifying and acknowledging the issue can help you figure out how to handle it. It's ok to let yourself feel negative emotions. If you are frustrated because you did not get a promotion at work, that's normal. Use that emotion as motivation to find a new way to challenge yourself.

2. Deal with sadness



Sadness is a common emotion, and it is completely normal to feel that way occasionally. If your sadness only lasts a day or two, that is healthy. If you are experiencing prolonged bouts of sadness, it is a good idea to contact your doctor or a mental health specialist. If you are feeling down, you might not feel up for socializing. However, isolation can increase feelings of sadness. Try doing something like running errands or getting a pedicure. You won't have to spend much emotional energy, but you'll get some human contact. Try tackling a project. You'll take your mind off of whatever is bothering you and the sense of accomplishment will boost your spirits. This is a great time to tackle that photo album you've been meaning to organize.

3.Reflect



Once you have identified your feelings, spend some time thinking about what is causing those emotions. If you are angry at your partner for not putting away the laundry, ask yourself if there is a deeper issue. Are you actually upset because you feel that your requests are not being heard? When you experience intense emotions, reflect on the underlying cause. You can use your journal to aid you in tracking your emotions.

4.Practice self-care



Self-care is the process of making sure that all of your needs are being met. It is extremely important for your emotional health. Practicing self-care can be as simple as making sure that you allow yourself time to do things you enjoy, such as reading a chapter of a book each day. Care for yourself by nurturing those relationships that are important to you. Even when you are busy, allow yourself time to take a break and have fun with friends. Give yourself permission to do something for yourself each day. It can be as simple as treating yourself to a piece of dark chocolate after dinner.



5. Find a support system



In order to fully be able to manage your emotions, you need to have a support system. A support system is essential for your emotional well-being. When you are dealing with stress or other intense emotions, make sure that you have a friend or family member to talk to. Use technology. If you live far away from your family, spend time talking on the phone or video chatting.

6. Consider counseling



Talking to a mental health specialist is a great way to process emotions and learn to handle them. If your emotions are interfering with your day to day life, you should consider seeking help from a professional. For example, if your sadness is causing you to call in sick to work, or you can't seem to handle simple tasks, you may need help. If your emotions cause you to verbally abuse others, or you regularly feel out of control, a professional can help you make changes. Ask your doctor to recommend a counselor. You can also ask a trusted friend or family member for advice.