

## ACTIVITIES FOR CULTIVATING MORE CONTENTMENT

Cultivating greater contentment in life can be achieved by developing acceptance, self-compassion, gratitude, connection, intention, spirituality, and being more present-focused. The following activities are intended to help you practice and build each of these qualities.

### ACCEPTANCE ACTIVITY: JOURNALING

(McKay, Wood, & Brantley, 2019)

A great way to become more grounded is to write down thoughts that are *outside* your sphere of control alongside thoughts that are *inside* your sphere of control.

1. Grab a blank sheet of paper
2. Draw a vertical line down the middle of the page
3. At the top of the left-hand column, write ***Outside my Control*** and at the top of the right-hand column, write ***Inside My Control***
4. List the current stressors in your life in the applicable column
5. For each item you list on the left as being outside your control, fill in what's inside your control on the right with how you can effectively respond

You should end up with something that looks like this:

Outside My Control	Inside My Control
1. News/current events	1. The amount of exposure I allow myself
2. Feeling down when it is raining outside	2. Calling a friend, taking a walk, or going to the gym
3. Conflict with a coworker	3a. Taking a pause when I feel emotionally triggered and choosing to behave in a civil, respectful manner 3b. My words and actions
4. Inflation	4. Working on the family budget for next year
5. Feeling fatigued	5. Going to bed at the same time every night to get sufficient rest

## SELF-COMPASSION ACTIVITY: TOUCH

(Feliciano, 2022) (Neff, 2011)

One easy way to care for and comfort yourself when you feel badly is through supportive touch. Touch activates the parasympathetic nervous system to help us calm down and feel safe. Research indicates that physical touch releases oxytocin, a hormone related to feelings of love, trust, and other prosocial behaviors.

1. Take three deep, mindful breaths
2. Gently place your hand over your heart or on one of your cheeks (whichever is more comfortable)
3. Feel the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand
  - If you prefer, place both hands on your chest or on both cheeks, noticing the difference between one and two hands
4. Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and out
5. Say to yourself, “I am doing the best I can.” “I am doing the best I can.” “I am doing the best I can.”
6. Linger with this feeling for the next 20 seconds

Try this activity any time you experience difficult times during your week.

## GRATITUDE ACTIVITY: GRATITUDE JAR

(Brown, 2018) (Godkin, 2020)

1. Choose your container
  - Find a jar (or a small box or other container) that you find aesthetically pleasing
2. Decorate your jar by tying ribbon around it, writing on it, and/or placing stickers on it, etc.
3. Using small slips of paper, write down one thing you're grateful for
  - Sometimes it's the simple and small things that make life wonderful: A beautiful sunrise, the taste of a homemade pastry, a smile from a stranger, or the encouraging text from a friend.
4. Fold and place each one in your jar
5. Set reminders for recur several times a week, that prompt you to add a note or two to your jar
  - If/when you are hit with a sudden wave of gratitude for something when you're away from home, write it down in your phone so you remember to add it next time.
6. Whenever you need a pick-me-up, sit next to your jar, take a deep breath, and pull out a note or two to gain some perspective

## CONNECTION ACTIVITIES

(Feliciano, 2022) (Messerly, 2017) (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020)

Here are a few ideas to make better connections and stronger relationships:

### 1. Find one simple way to connect with someone

Do this at the same time of each day for the next week. Send a text or an email or call a friend. Find a time during your busy schedule to prioritize connecting with others. For example, as you go and grab a cup of coffee or take your daily walk, reach out to a friend to check-in with them.

### 2. Carry out random acts of kindness

Random acts of kindness can be powerful in terms increasing our sense of connection and contentment. If you can, buy coffee or lunch for a friend or even the person in line behind you somewhere. Let someone go in front of you in the checkout line. Hold the door open a little longer for that person who is entering the store you are visiting. Their reaction may be reward enough.

### 3. Be vulnerable with someone you trust

Think of a person in your life you feel emotionally safe with. If you don't have that person currently, think of someone who has that potential. Then, share something small you've never shared before such as telling them something you value about them or maybe a challenge you are currently navigating. As a reminder, we need to be mindful that the level of disclosure be congruent with the depth of connection we have with them. It takes small steps of increasing levels of vulnerability to create more depth in a relationship.

## PRESENT FOCUS ACTIVITY: DROPPING THE ANCHOR

(Harris, 2008)

Often, when we are inundated with uncomfortable thoughts and emotions. As a result, we develop tunnel vision, which only intensifies the distress we experience. One way to widen the scope a bit, lower your stress, and become more present is to experience the here-and-now through your senses. To do this, take the following steps:

1. Take two deep breaths
2. Notice five things you can see
3. Notice four things you can hear
4. Notice three things you are touching
5. Notice two things you can smell
6. Notice one thing you can taste

This activity can help ground or 'anchor' us to the present moment, which can bring about greater contentment.

## PRIORITY AND INTENTION ACTIVITY: VISION STATEMENT

(Heathfield, 2019)

Contentment can also be enhanced by prioritizing and living with intention. Creating a vision statement can help with this. From the vision statement, you can identify objectives for making each part of your vision statement a reality. A vision statement is an organic document that you can update as often as you want. Here's how to get started:

### 1. Journal answers to the following questions:

- What are five things that I most enjoy doing?
- What are three things I must do every single day to feel fulfilled?
- What are my five most important values?

### 2. Write a goal for each of the following facets of your life:

- Physical, career, family, social relationships, financial security, mental health improvement, and fun

### 3. Develop your vision statement

- Write in the first person and use present tense
- Include content that reflects what you value
- Set yourself up for success by creating realistic goals

### 4. Read the vision statement to yourself

- Visualize the statements becoming your reality
- Regularly schedule time (weekly, daily) to read and visualize your vision statement

## SPIRITUALITY ACTIVITY: LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION

(Koenig, 2012) (Miller, 2020)

Working on deepening a kinder, more loving relationship with yourself and others can be a spiritual practice. One such way to do this is through the visual imagery practice of the loving-kindness meditation.

1. Begin by sitting in a comfortable position, closing your eyes, or keeping your eyes open with a soft gaze on a fixed point in front of you
2. Take a few deep breaths allowing thoughts and emotions to come and go without attaching to them
3. As you focus on your breath, either in silence or out loud, repeat the four affirmations below, visualizing each statement. Do this **for yourself**, then as you think of **someone you care deeply for**, then again as you think of **someone going through a difficult time** right now.
  - May I/you be healthy.
  - May I/you be free of suffering.
  - May I/you be at peace.
  - May I/you be content.

  
24 HOURS  
A DAY

800-222-0364  
TTY: 888-262-7848  
[foh4you.com](http://foh4you.com)

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