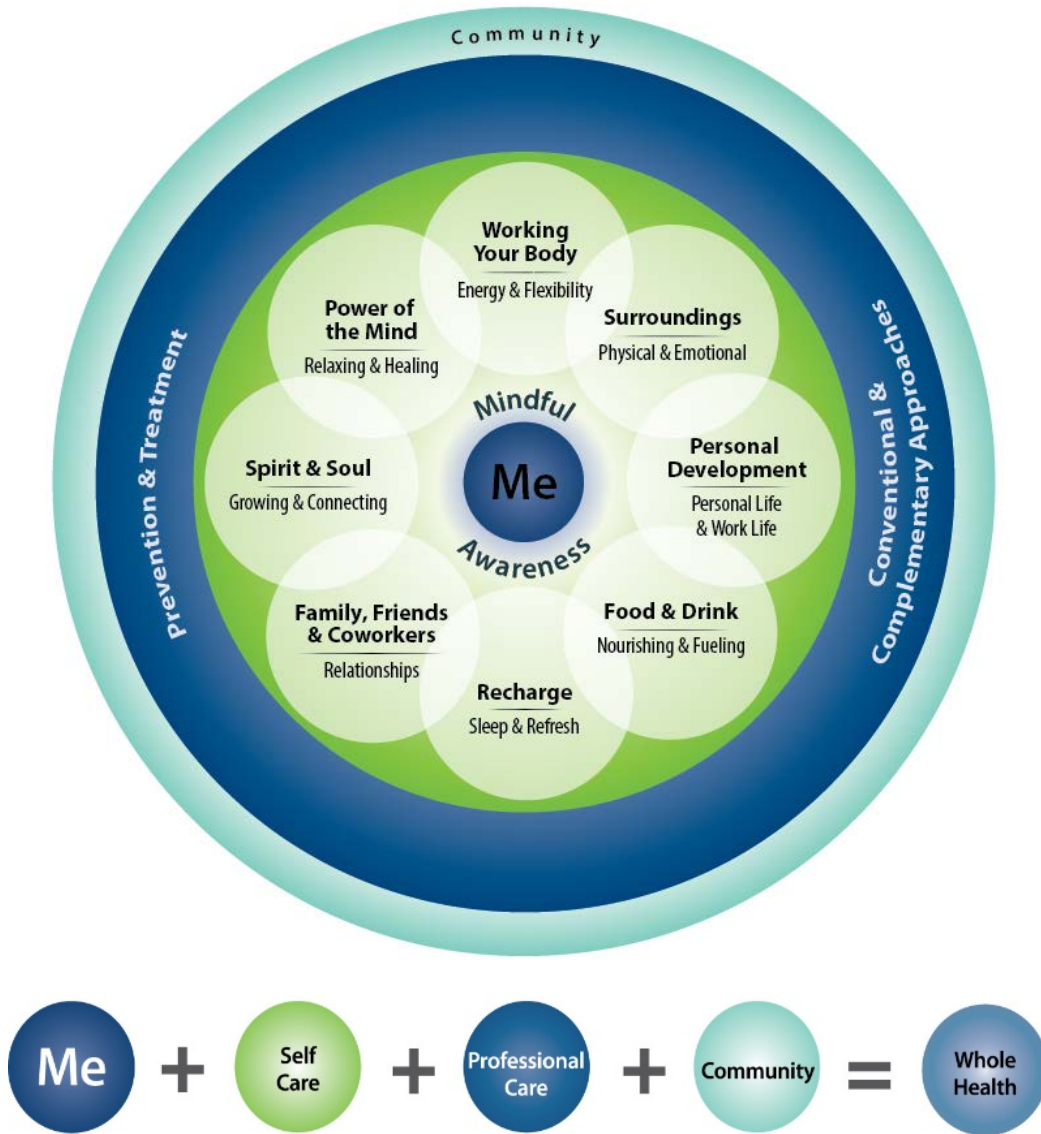


WHOLE HEALTH SKILL BUILDING

Around the Circle of Health



Whole Health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips YOU to take charge of your health and well-being and live your life to the fullest. It starts with YOU. It is fueled by the power of knowing yourself and what will really work for you in your life.

This booklet is a compilation of “Zeroing In” handouts covering each self-care area of the Circle of Health, as listed in the table of contents below. While originally written for Veterans, Whole Health and cultural transformation are about each one of us—employees and Veterans alike—having the opportunity to consider what really matters to us and what we want our health for. It is about having the skills and resources to consider how to advance our own self-care. We all need to be empowered and equipped towards Whole Health. In doing this for ourselves, we also can be more effective in supporting those we serve.

Should you want information beyond that which you find in the “Zeroing In” handouts, at the back of this booklet is a list of additional handouts that cover a number of self-care subtopics. For example, with respect to Food and Drink, there are handouts on topics such as gut health, probiotics and the Mediterranean Diet, to name a few, or for Spirit and Soul on hope and optimism, forgiveness and gratitude. There are also links to these additional handouts in each “Zeroing-In” document.

Wishing you well on your Whole Health journey!

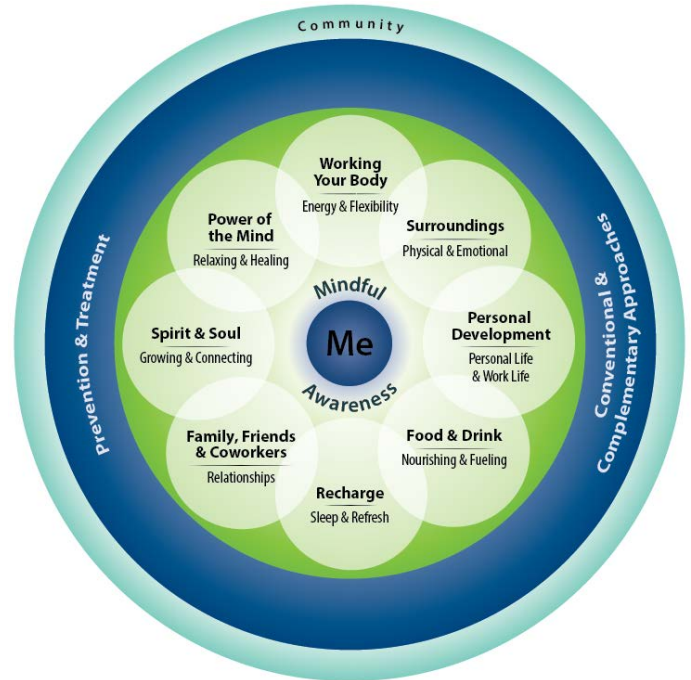
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Personal Health Inventory

Use this circle to help you think about your whole health.

- All areas are important and connected
- The body and mind have strong healing abilities.
- Improving one area can help other areas.
- The inner ring represents your mission, aspirations, or purpose. Your care focuses on you as a unique person.
- Mindful awareness is being tuned in and present.
- Your self-care and everyday choices make up the green circle.
- The next ring is professional care (tests, medications, supplements, surgeries, examinations, treatments, and counseling). This section includes complementary approaches like acupuncture and yoga.
- The outer ring includes the people and groups who make up your community



Rate where you feel you are on the scales below from 1-5, with 1 being miserable and 5 being great.

Physical Well-Being				
1 Miserable	2	3	4	5 Great
Mental/Emotional Well-Being				
1 Miserable	2	3	4	5 Great
Life: How is it to live your day-to-day life				
1 Miserable	2	3	4	5 Great

What is your mission, aspiration, or purpose? What do you live for? What matters most to you?

Write a few words to capture your thoughts:



Where You Are and Where You Would Like to Be

For each area below, consider “Where you are” and “Where you want to be.” Write in a number between 1 (low) and 5 (high) that best represents where you are and where you want to be. You do not need to be a “5” in any of the areas now, nor even wish to be a “5” in the future.

Area of Self Care	Where I am Now (1-5)	Where I Want to Be (1-5)
Working the Body: Our physical, mental, and emotional health are impacted by the amount and kind of movement we do. Moving the body can take many forms such as dancing, walking, gardening, yoga, and exercise.		
Recharge: Our bodies and minds must rest and recharge in order to optimize our health. Getting a good night’s rest as well as recharging our mental and physical energy throughout the day are vital to well-being. Taking short breaks or doing something you enjoy or feels good for moments throughout the day are examples of ways to refresh.		
Food and Drink: What we eat and drink can have a huge effect on how we experience life, both physically and mentally. Energy, mood, weight, how long we live, and overall health are all impacted by what and how we choose to eat and drink.		
Personal Development: Our health is impacted by how we choose to spend our time. Aligning our work and personal activities with what really matters to us, or what brings us joy, can have a big effect on our health and outlook on life.		
Family, Friends, and Co-Workers: Our relationships, including those with pets, have as significant an effect on our physical and emotional health as any other factor associated with well-being. Spending more time in relationships that ‘fuel’ us and less in relationships that ‘drain’ us is one potential option. Improving our relationship skills or creating new relationships through community activities are other options to consider.		
Spirit and Soul: Connecting with something greater than ourselves may provide a sense of meaning and purpose, peace, or comfort. Connecting and aligning spiritually is very individual and may take the form of religious affiliation, connection to nature, or engaging in things like music or art.		
Surroundings: Our surroundings, both at work and where we live, indoors and out, can affect our health and outlook on life. Changes within our control such as organizing, decluttering, adding a plant or artwork can improve mood and health.		
Power of the Mind: Our thoughts are powerful and can affect our physical, mental, and emotional health. Changing our mindset can aid in healing and coping. Breathing techniques, guided imagery, Tai Chi, yoga, or gratitude can buffer the impact of stress and other emotions		
Professional Care: “Prevention and Clinical Care” Staying up to date on prevention and understanding your health concerns, care options, treatment plan, and their role in your health		

Reflections

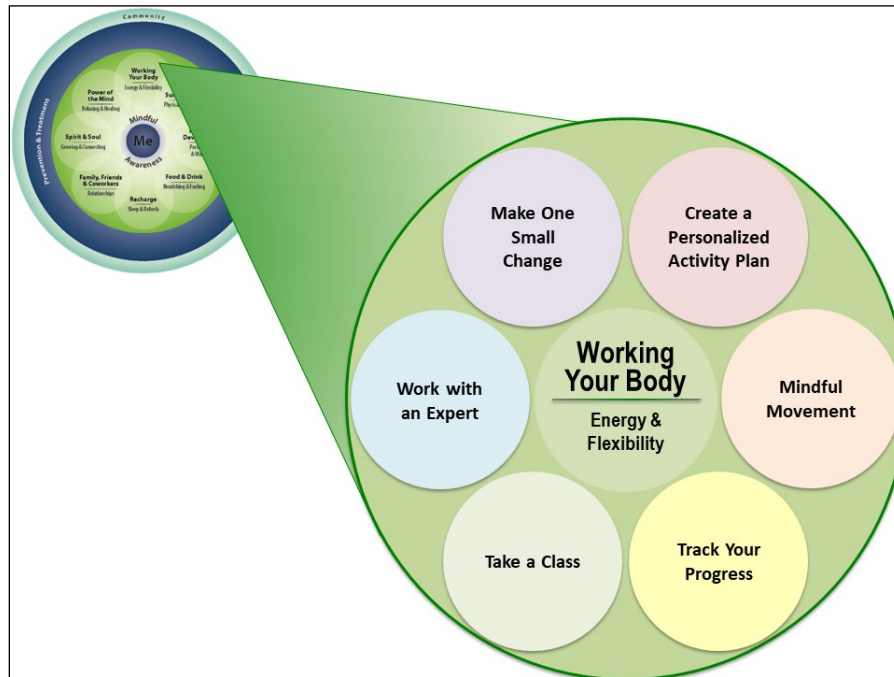
Now that you have thought about what matters to you in all of these areas, what is your vision of your best possible self? What would your life look like? What kind of activities would you be doing?

Are there any areas you would like to work on? Where might you start?

After completing the Personal Health Inventory, talk to a friend, a family member, your health coach, a peer, or someone on your healthcare team about areas you would like to explore further.

Zeroing In - Working Your Body: Energy & Flexibility

Being active can help prevent all sorts of health problems, boost your mood, extend your life, and help you to do things that matter most to you. Here are some things to explore if you want Working Your Body to be a part of your Personal Health Plan.



Key Points

- Keep safety in mind
- Do activities you enjoy!
- Work your body in all kinds of ways. Do you want more strength? Stamina? Flexibility? Balance? Tailor your actions to your goals
- It might be easier to keep with it if you choose to do activities with other people.
- Ask your clinical team for information and guidance. The VA has many experts who can help.

Create a Personal Activity Plan. It can help to think about four areas (FITT):

- **Frequency:** How often do you want to exercise? A few times a week? Most days?
- **Intensity:** How hard will you work (based on your fitness level so far)?
- **Type:** What activity or activities do you want to do more?
- **Time:** How long will you do this each time?
- Use your answers to these questions to create a Working Your Body plan to follow.


Activity
Plan



Mindful Movement

Mindful Movement. Move your body with attention and intention:

- There are many types of mindful movement, such as yoga, tai chi, martial arts, walking, and even (done with attention) brushing your teeth, to name a few.
- Yoga includes many ways to help your mind and body work together. Most classes involve different poses. It is now covered by the VA.
- Tai chi comes from Chinese medicine and involves gentle movements. It is safe and can be good for balance and other health issues. VA will cover tai chi for some things now too.



Track Progress

Track your progress. There are many smartphone apps and other resources that can help you follow your progress. The following are free phone apps (but may offer 'in-app purchases' for people to buy more content):

- SWorkit
- Workout: Gym Tracker
- Strong Workout Tracker
- MyFitnessPal
- Cyclemeter
- Jefit
- Strava
- Daily Yoga



Take a Class

Take a class. Find out about classes you can take in your area.


- Consider yoga, tai chi, cycling, dance, kickboxing, zumba, or some other group exercise class.
- See if there are telehealth classes (classes where the teacher is online, teaching from a distance) that you can take.



Professionals

Work with an Expert. They can be great for safety and for motivation.

- Occupational Therapists (OTs). Among many things, OTs can help you with daily activities like cooking, cleaning, work activities, and working with your hands.
- Physical Therapists (PTs). PTs provide treatments, exercises and activities to help with physical problems like an injured muscle or joint.
- Recreational Therapists (RTs). RTs coordinate different activities that can both be fun and get you moving.
- Fitness Class Instructors. Instructors teach classes that might include dance, or boxing, or zumba, or martial arts, or many other options. See what is offered in your area.
- Personal Trainers. Trainers can help you set up a workout plan and make sure you do it safely and correctly. Many private gyms have them available.
- Note that for OT and PT, you likely need a referral from your provider.



**One Small
Change**

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of opportunities. Think about what would work best for you and decide when you will start. Every little bit of activity helps. Here are a few more examples:

- Park farther away and walk.
- Find a walking buddy.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Learn some basic stretches to do each day.
- Take dancing lessons.
- Sign up for a water exercise class, which might be easier on sore joints.
- See if Veterans get a discount at YMCA or YWCA classes.
- Check out some exercise videos from the library (remember not to overdo it!).
- Use your smartphone or smartwatch or some other device to help you track your activity.
- Keep dumbbells by the couch and use them as you watch TV.
- Stand up and move during each commercial break.
- Set a timer so you get up and move at least every 30 minutes.
- Play with the kids in your life.
- Do leg lifts or other exercises while sitting.
- Buy a machine you can pedal while you are seated.
- Take a martial arts class.

Working Your Body Links

You can check out the links below to get more information about Working Your Body:

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at

<https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#working-the-body>.

- An Introduction to Working the Body for Whole Health.
- Get Moving: Adding Physical Activity to Your Routine
- An Introduction to Yoga for Whole Health
- An Introduction to Tai Chi and Qigong for Whole Health

Other VA Resources

- Components of Health and Well-Being Video Series, “A Patient Centered Approach to Working Your Body.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4zdzDAorbA&feature=youtu.be>
- MOVE! Weight Management Program. <http://www.move.va.gov>. Be sure to look over the list of specific handouts offered at [https://www.move.va.gov/handouts.asp - physical](https://www.move.va.gov/handouts.asp-physical)
- President’s Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition. www.fitness.gov. Check out the Resource Center
- American Council of Sports Medicine. <http://www.acsm.org>. Numerous guidelines, educational opportunities, and resources

- Centers for Disease Control Physical Activities Guidelines. www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html.
- US Department of Health and Human Services, Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>
- American Council on Exercise information materials. <http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness-programs-article/2523/ACEFit-workout-advice-and-exercise-tips/>
- “Breathing, Stretching, Relaxing (BSR)” video from Greater LA. <http://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/resources/multimedia/index.asp>

Mindful Movement: Yoga

- Find a yoga teacher or therapist. International Association of Yoga Therapists. <http://www.iayt.org>. Professional organization dedicated to establishing yoga as a recognized and respected therapy
- StarWell Kit. <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/education/STAR/>. Resources from the War-Related Injury and Illness Study Center.
 - Amy Dickinson—Yoga, Breathing, Stretching (Veteran Description)
 - Nina Knight—Yoga, Breathing (Veteran Description)
 - Danny O’Brien—Chair Yoga (Instructional Video)
 - Kim Wade—Mindful Hatha Yoga (Instructional Video)
- Yoga for Vets. <http://www.yogaforvets.org>. Nonprofit focused on bringing yoga to Veterans.
- Arthur’s Amazing Transformation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qX9FSZju448>. Watch how one Veteran reversed his obesity and pain through yoga.
- iRest in the Military. Yoga-based practices supporting active-duty military and Veterans. <http://www.irest.us/projects/veterans>

Mindful Movement: Tai Chi

- NCCIH: Tai Chi and Qi Gong: In Depth <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/taichi/introduction.htm>
- StarWell Kit <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/education/STAR/>.
 - Introduction, Part 4: Veterans Explain how Qigong Helps Energy Flow Throughout the Body
 - Brian Bittings—Qigong (Veteran Description)
 - Nino Morris—Qigong (Veteran Description)
 - Nan Lu—Qigong and Energy Gates (Instructional Video)
- Introducing Health for Life: Through One Veteran’s Story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imEROGy6Kmk>

Other Movement Meditations

- Free 10-Minute Audio, Walking Meditation. <https://soundcloud.com/mindfulmagazine/10-minute-walking-meditation>
- Greater Good in Action, Walking Meditation. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/walking_meditation
- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center Guided Meditations. <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>. Has a free 3-minute scan, as well as a 13-minute one for sleep.

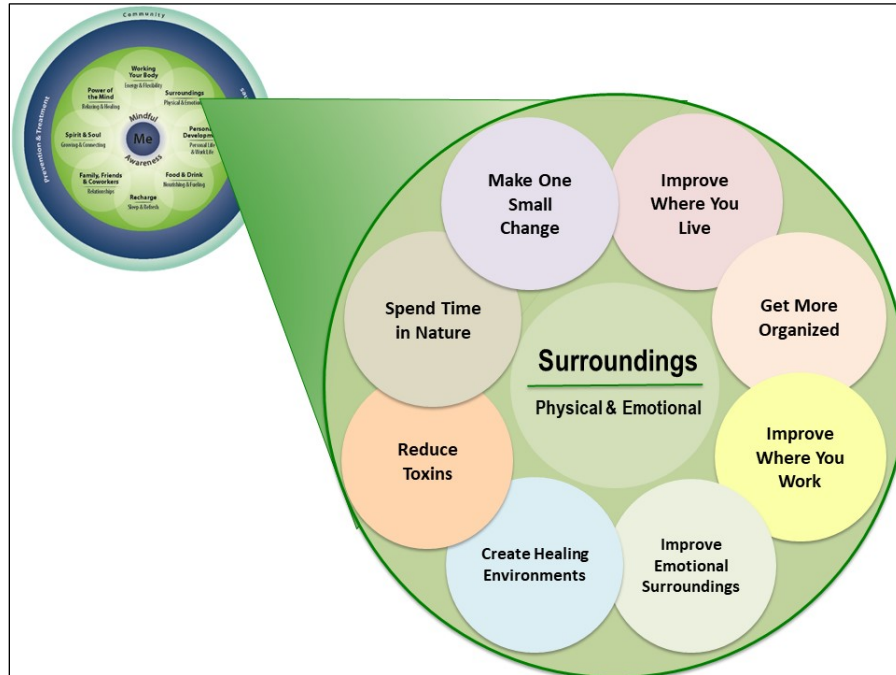
Working with Experts

The following links will teach you more about what different professionals do.

- Occupational Therapy. <https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/OTMonth/what-is-OT.aspx>
- Physical Therapy. <http://www.apta.org/PTCareers/RoleofaPT/>
- Recreational Therapy. <https://nctrc.org/about-nctrc/about-recreational-therapy/>

Zeroing In – Surroundings: Physical and Emotional

Your physical, mental, and emotional surroundings are important for your health. They affect how your genes work, and your genes control how healthy you are and how long you live. Where are your favorite places to be, and why?



Key Points

- Everyone reacts differently to the environment. How can you create a place where you can find peace and healing?
- Ask for additional support with your Surroundings if you need it. It might help to work on Surroundings with the people you live with, loved ones, your neighbors, or other members of your community.
- Always keep emotional surroundings and safety in mind too.

Improve Where You Live. No matter where you live (house, apartment, motor home, etc.), improving your home environment can improve your health.

- If you are homeless, the VA has resources to help. Be sure ask your health care team for support. Many VA's have experts who work with homeless Veterans.
- Think about your senses. Can you see well? Are noises too loud or too quiet? Are there bad smells? Is the temperature okay? A healthy living space should be dry, clean, free of pests and toxins, safe, and maintained. Air flow should be good.

Improve
Where You
Live

- Improving where you live includes cleaning up your neighborhood. Is there trash you can get rid of? A common space you can help fix up?

Get More Organized. Keeping things neat can help improve your mental state, improve cleanliness and hygiene, and improve safety.

Organize

- Are you able to clean your living space, or do you need help?
- Do you hold onto things that clutter your living area? Clutter can increase falls and be a home for pests like roaches. The VA sometimes has volunteers who can help you organize.

Improve Where You Work. Where you work may or may not be the same place as where you live. Some things at work may be out of your control, but even small changes can help.

Improve Work

- If you need extra training to get the job you want, some VAs have vocational training to teach you the skills. Ask your health care team about the resources at your VA.
- Does your work space cause you health problems? Is your body in a comfortable position? Are you at risk of injuries from doing the same movements all the time?
- Co-workers can affect your stress and health. Do what you can to get along with coworkers.
- Do you work so much that it leads to problems with other parts of your life? There are ways to help if someone is a workaholic.

Improve Emotional Surroundings. How your surroundings make you feel is important for your mental health.

Emotions

- Violence and abuse happens to about a third of people, from all races and genders. Do you live in fear? What resources do you need to feel safe?
- The news can have a negative effect on our emotions. Consider trying a media fast.
- PTSD, depression, anxiety, and other emotional problems are as important to handle as other health issues. What do you need to feel healthy and at ease?

Create Healing Environments. Many things in your surroundings can support good health. To stay healthy or recover from illness, what kind of place is most helpful?

Healing Environments

- Colors affect how you feel. Soft blues and greens can be calming. Yellows and reds might rev you up more.
- Sounds also matter. White noise can be very calming and help people sleep.
- Smells also affect us. Fresh air is a healthy, smoke and other air pollution are not.
- Focus on touch. How do your chairs feel to sit in? How is the temperature?
- Add little touches to make a place feel like home, like a plant, a family photo, or artwork.

Reduce Toxins. Your body is constantly protecting you from toxins (poisons) in the environment. Keep your exposures to them as low as you can.

**Reduce
Toxins**

- Keep your areas free of smoke.
- Do not use products with a lot of chemicals in your home.
- Clean regularly to keep dust and pests out of your area.
- Drink plenty of water. This is a simple way to flush toxins out of your body.

Spend Time in Nature. Studies show that time in nature helps us live longer, with fewer strokes and heart attacks. Green spaces can help our memory and speed up recovery after surgery.

**Time in
Nature**

- It helps to look at pictures or listen to recordings of nature if you can't get outside.
- Having plants in your home or workplace is another way to have nature near you

Make One Small Change. Here are a few more suggestions you could put in your Personal Health Plan:

**One Small
Change**

- Don't smoke
- Organize even just a small space in your home. Sweep a room. Clean out a closet.
- Add a personal touch to an area you spend a lot of time in.
- Hang a picture or add other art.
- Don't use social media for 1 day.
- Spend 15 minutes in a park, or go on a hike.
- Listen to waves for 5 minutes on your computer/phone.
- Pick up five pieces of trash that you come across.
- Drink a glass of water.
- Eat a handful of vegetables
- Spray lavender oil next to your sleeping area

Surroundings Links

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#surroundings>.

- An Introduction to Surroundings for Whole Health
- Assessing Your Surroundings
- Too Much Bad News: How to do an Information Fast
- Toxins and Your Health
- Workaholism
- Improve Your Health by Removing Toxins from Your Body
- Ergonomics: Positioning Your Body for Whole Health

Other VA Whole Health Resources

- A Patient-Centered Approach to: Surroundings.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ge3tx1klZrc>

Getting Organized

- National Association of Professional Organizers. www.napo.net. Resources to help organize and clean.
- The following apps sync across different media to remind you of tasks in a way you think is best. They have free versions.
 - Evernote. <https://evernote.com/>
 - Remember the Milk. <https://www.rememberthemilk.com/>
 - Wunderlist, <https://www.wunderlist.com/>

Avoiding Toxins

- Tox Town, National Library of Medicine. <http://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov>. This site has user-friendly images that not only show the user potential sources of toxin exposure but also link to reliable government sources of additional information.
- VA Public Health web page. <http://www.publichealth.va.gov>. Multiple resources, including a section, “Military Exposures.”
- Environmental Working Group. www.ewg.org. Has guides that focus on everything from pesticides in foods to green household cleaners and cosmetics.
- Greenguard. www.greenguard.org/. Source for guidance regarding healthy building materials and products.
- Detoxification diet information from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. <http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/weight-loss/fad-diets/whats-the-deal-with-detox-diets>.
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Finance and Operation: Environment, Health and Safety. <https://ehs.unc.edu/workplace-safety/ergonomics/>. Has great practical tips for improving ergonomics when working in different settings. Makes suggestions for healthy tools and office supplies too.

Healing Environments

- Samuelli Institute, Optimal Healing Environments. <http://www.samueliinstitute.org/research-areas/optimal-healing-environments/ohe-framework.html>. Discusses many areas of what makes a place healing with links to additional resources.

Resources for Safety

- National Center for Prevention. http://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/ has a number of resources for safety as part of the Healthy Living Messages.
- VA Office of PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma Information. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/types/violence/military-sexual-trauma-general.asp>.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline. <http://www.thehotline.org/blog/get-help-today/>.

Resources for Home Environments

- Homelessness Resources for Veterans. <http://www.va.gov/homeless>. A look into some of the VA resources for homeless people
 - National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Helpline. <http://www.NCHV.org> (1-800- VET-HELP)
- HGTV. <https://www.hgtv.com/design/decorating/clean-and-organize/home-office-organization-quick-tips>. Has some practical tips and tricks to clean up and organize the house. There are also some videos to show you how.

Resources for Work Environments

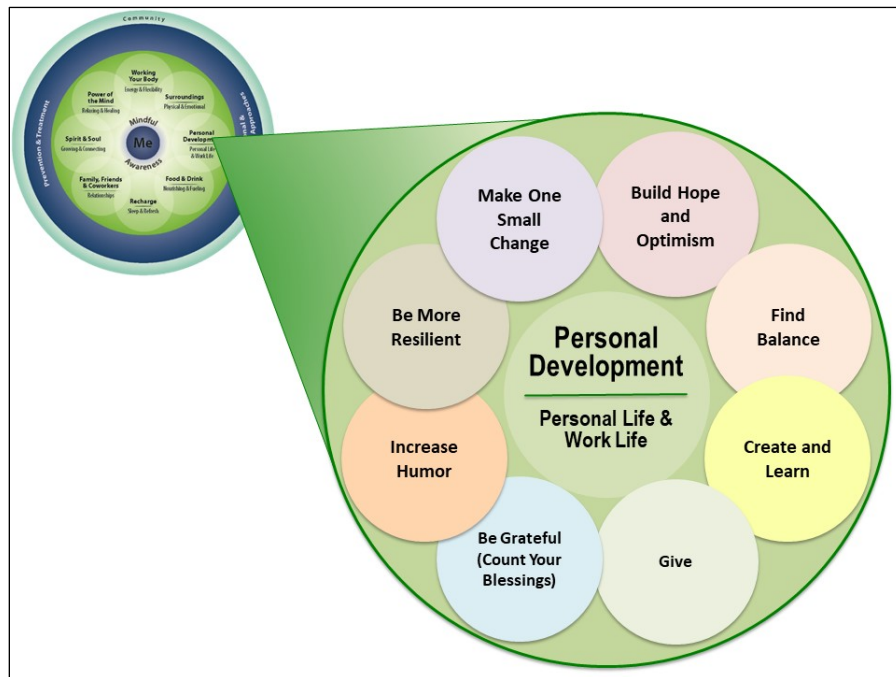
- US Occupational Safety and Health Administration. <https://www.osha.gov/>. Covers an array of different topics ranging from toxins, to workers' rights, ergonomics, and more. The Safety and Health Topics page specifically has an alphabetical listing of many topics. www.osha.gov/SLTC/index.html.

Emotional Surroundings

- Helpguide. <https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/mental-health.htm>. Organization devoted to supporting mental and emotional health. See their Emotional Intelligence Toolkit at <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-toolkit.htm>.

Zeroing In – Personal Development: Personal Life & Work Life

Working on Personal Development allows you to live more fully. Ways to live more fully may include being more optimistic, grateful, social, and resilient. You can learn new skills, find more balance, and figure out new ways to help others. Doing things like that improves your health, and helps you live longer.



Key Points

- Keep asking yourself what you need to learn and grow in your life.
- Get support from someone you trust. Personal Development may require that take a deep look at your thinking patterns and personality. That can be hard. It helps to have support.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Choose a Personal Development goal that fits you. There are many options. No one way is better than the others.

Build Hope and Optimism. Being a hopeful and optimistic person allows you to be less sensitive to pain, take care of yourself better, and live longer.

- You do not have to be “fake.” Just practice thinking about what can go right.
- Watch your thought patterns by practicing mindful awareness
- It can be hard to catch your own negative thoughts. Think about working with a mental health professional.

Hope and Optimism

- Setting and achieving goals can help you build feel more hopeful and positive.

Find Balance. Consider how different parts of your life balance out in terms of time, how involved you are, and how happy or satisfied they make you.

Balance

- What do you do each day? Writing it out can show you how you spend your time.
- How much satisfaction does each activity you do give you? Some activities are necessary, but others aren't. What can you cut out without feeling like it is a big loss?
- Do you have too little time, or too much? Make sure you have time and energy to do what you need to do, and what you want to do.

Create and Learn. Creating and learning keeps your mind and body healthy. It can help you earn more money too.

Create and Learn

- There are many ways to be creative. Think about your hobbies and talents.
- Classes can be for fun or to learn important skills. Look into courses offered by local colleges, rec centers, or park districts.
- Learning does not need to be in a traditional class setting. Consider watching a documentary, listening to a podcast, or reading an article.

Give. Giving to others can be a powerful way to improve your own health too.

Give

- Charity can be for strangers, or it can be to family, friends, and people you know.
- Giving does not have to be money. It can be a helping hand, time, or support.
- The VA has many volunteering and mentoring programs. Consider helping other Veterans. You can even train to help out with Whole Health!

Be Grateful (Count Your Blessings). Gratitude is a practice that asks you to focus on the good things already in your life, not having to do something new.

Be Grateful

- The first step is being aware of people, actions, and events that happen in your life. Mindful awareness can help you notice those things.
- This can be hard, but remember that "practice makes perfect." Gratitude is good for your health.

Increase Humor. Laughing burns calories, decreases anxiety, and increases pain tolerance. Laughing lowers your stress hormones and increases your feel-good hormones.

Increase Humor

- Consider laughter yoga.
- Think about things that you find funny and how you can include them in your life.

Be More Resilient. The ability to bounce back helps to prevent health problems, especially mental health issues. There are many ways to be resilient.

Be More Resilient

- You might work on your attitudes and perspectives. A health psychologist or other mental health professional can help you see patterns you follow that do not help you.

- Having more positive emotions is another way of being resilient. The above topics like hope and humor can help with this.
- People and support systems can be important in bouncing back. Work with mentors. Look to role models.

One Small Change

Make One Small Change. Here are a few examples of options:

- Make a schedule for yourself.
- Create a “bucket list” or plan your dream vacation.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Develop your hobbies and talents, including art, music, writing.
- Go to a comedy show, or watch a funny movie.
- Volunteer your time. Donate clothes, toys, and/or food.
- Consider a gratitude journal to write down what you are grateful for.
- Write a letter to someone you are grateful for.
- Do a random act of kindness. Some examples are putting change in someone’s parking meter, paying for the coffee of the person behind you, or giving a random person a compliment.
- Identify a role model and what it is about them you admire.
- Write down your strengths.
- Try to be flexible in the way you think.
- Practice self compassion; be kind to yourself

Personal Development Links

You can follow the links below to learn more about Personal Development.

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#personal-development>.

- An Introduction to Personal Development for Whole Health
- Finding Balance
- The Healing Power of Hope and Optimism
- Create a Gratitude Practice
- Forgiveness
- What Matters Most? Exploring Your Values
- Laughter Heals

Other VA Whole Health Resources

- VA: A Patient-Centered Approach to: Personal Development. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYZfEA5RgNw&feature=youtu.be>

Kindness

- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Loving Kindness Meditation. http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_loving_kindness.pdf

- Random Acts of Kindness Foundation – read stories and get ideas of what others have done. <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>

Forgiveness

- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Information on Forgiveness - http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_forgiveness.pdf
- International Forgiveness Institute. <https://internationalforgiveness.com/>

Laughter and Humor

- Laughter Yoga International. <https://laughteryoga.org/>
- Laughter Yoga TED Talks. There are many. Check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=5hf2umYCKr8>, with the founder of the Laughter Yoga movement, Madan Kataria.

Changing Your Mindset

- Unstuck – Website and free app. Resources and articles to help change your mindset. <https://www.unstuck.com/>
- Helpguide. <https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/mental-health.htm>. Organization devoted to supporting mental and emotional health.

Skill-Building

- The YMCA – Source for activities, classes, volunteering, donations, etc. <http://www.ymca.net/index.php>
- TED: Ideas worth spreading – For some inspiration consider watching some videos on a range of topics. <https://www.ted.com/>

Volunteering and Donation Resources

- Veterans Affairs. <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>. Check this out to learn more about volunteering at the VA.
- United Way. <https://www.unitedway.org/>. Click on the “Get Involved” tab at the top of the screen.
- All for Good. <https://www.allforgood.org/>. Can search for volunteer opportunities based on where you live. Covers many different groups. Can also ask for volunteers for your projects.
- Volunteer.gov. <https://www.volunteer.gov/>. Volunteer opportunities related to natural and cultural resources, including volunteer work with the National Park Service.
- Idealist. <https://www.idealists.org>. Click on “Volunteering” at the top. Can search by location. Also has a list of jobs.
- AARP’s Create the Good. <http://www.createthegood.org/>. Can search for volunteer opportunities based on location on this site as well.
- Volunteer Match. <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>. Can match based on location as well as the type of opportunity you want.

- Fetzer Institute has free resources related to community and service.
<http://fetzer.org/resources>.

Balance

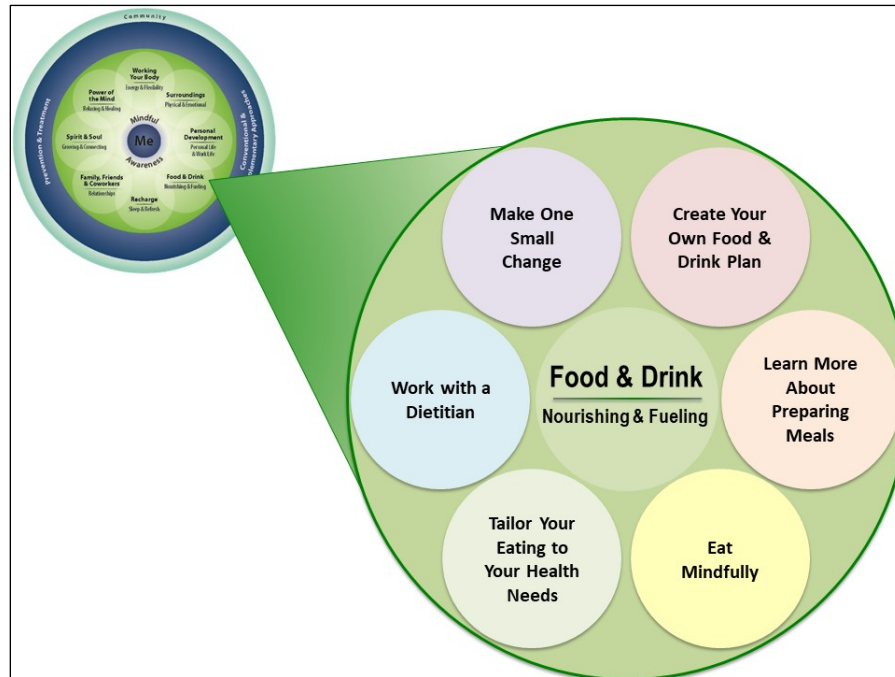
- Workaholics Anonymous. <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org>. Good source of information and guidance.
- Work Life Balance Guidance from Mental Health America.
<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/work-life-balance>

Resilience

- American Psychology Association Resilience Information.
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>. Discusses ways to build resilience and places to seek support.
- The Resilience Prescription.
<https://icahn.mssm.edu/files/ISMMS/Assets/Files/Resilience-Prescription-Promotion.pdf>. More detail about ten ways to increase resilience.

Zeroing In – Food & Drink: Nourishing & Fueling

Truly, you are what you eat. Everything that goes into your body can become part of it. Good nutrition can help you feel better in all sorts of ways, and it can help prevent future problems as well. Here are things to explore if you want Food & Drink to be part of your Whole Health Plan.



Key Points

- Figure out the way to eat that works best for you as an individual.
- Buying and preparing food are skills. What more can you learn?
- Eat a colorful diet with a lot of natural foods, especially vegetables and fruits.
- Really pay attention when you eat. Notice if you are hungry or not.
- You can adjust what you eat to help you with your health problems.
- Get support from dietitians.

Create Your Own Food & Drink Plan. You are most likely to follow through with a plan for healthy eating if you take it slow and make one change at a time.

- Don't get caught up in "good" and "bad" labels.
- It's not just about how many calories – different sources of calories affect the body differently.
- Consider your budget and what you have access to.
- Is there a something it would be good to add more of to your diet? To remove?

Food & Drink Plan

- Can you change just one habit related to Food & Drink that you don't want to follow?

Learn More About Preparing Meals. Many VA's offer classes where you can learn about buying food and preparing it. Consider taking a class.

Preparing Meals

- Buy whole foods, if you can. These are foods, like an apple, or a piece of fish, that really only have one ingredient in them.
- Learning to cook means you can rely less on fast food or eating out and know what is in the food you eat.

Eat Mindfully. The more you pay attention to what you are eating, the more you will feel filled and satisfied. Some ways to eat more mindfully include:

Eat Mindfully

- Really appreciate each bite. Take some time to use all your senses. How does the food look? What do you smell. What is the texture?
- Take a moment to think about all that has happened to get the food to you. Who grew it? Who gathered, butchered, or processed it? Who delivered it to the place where you bought it?
- Try not to do other things while you eat. Enjoy the company of others, but don't watch TV, or work, or read.
- Pay attention to when your body tells you it is feeling full.

Tailor Your Eating to Your Health Needs. Everybody has a diet they think you should be on. You have to ask what works best for you. Make sure you don't harm your body as you try different ways to eat.

Eat to Your Needs

- Different foods can help –or worsen– health issues. If you change your eating patterns, it can really help. Some examples:
- Type 2 diabetes is tied to eating patterns.
- Certain fats increase risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Some foods increase inflammation in the body, which is linked to problems like pain, depression, and memory loss.
- Some spices, like turmeric, can reduce inflammation.
- Alcohol can harm the liver.
- Certain foods can trigger migraines or gut symptoms.
- Foods can interfere with blood thinners.
- Some foods increase risk of kidney stones, reflux, or gallstones.
- Some foods can cause allergic reactions, including skin problems.

Work with a Dietitian. The VA has dietitians who can guide you with making healthy nutrition changes that are supported by good research.

Dietitians

- Talk to your primary care team about whether a dietitian would be helpful. Some primary care teams have a dietitian as part of the team.
- Dietitians can guide you with tailoring your diet to your various health issues.
- A dietitian can help you with creating Food & Drink goals for your Personal Health Plan.



**One Small
Change**

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of opportunities. Think about what would work best for you and decide when you will make the change. Choose things you feel sure you can do. Every little bit of activity helps. Here are a few more examples:

- Add in an extra vegetable each day.
- Cut back on a favorite dessert like ice cream to only a few times a week instead of every day.
- Try a food you have never tried before.
- Only eat when you are hungry.
- Chew your food a certain number of times with each bite.
- Go to a farmers' market. Some VA's have them on site.
- Change from soft drinks to water for some of your daily fluids.
- Think of your best meal ever. Ask what made it so great, and then try to bring some of those things into other meals.
- Cook a meal for someone.
- Try eating breakfast, if you usually skip it.
- Take time to eat lunch without working.
- Pay attention to pesticide levels in foods. Eat the "Clean 15" if you can. (See the links list.)
- If you eat out, choose a place with healthy options.
- Make sure you are getting enough of your daily vitamins and minerals and other nutrients.
- If you have an eating disorder (anorexia, bulimia, binge eating) ask for help.
- Do what you can to make sure eating is fun, not frustrating.

Food & Drink Links

You can check out the links below to get more information about Food & Drink:

Whole Health Veteran Materials. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#food-and-drink>

- An Introduction to Food & Drink for Whole Health
- Carbohydrates and Your Health: Glycemic Index, Glycemic Load, and Blood Sugars
- Deciding How to Be a Healthier Eater
- Eating to Reduce Inflammation
- Healthy Tips on Eating Out and Grocery Shopping
- Mindful Eating
- How a Healthy Gut Makes for a Healthier You
- Probiotics for Specific Conditions
- How to Eat a Mediterranean Diet
- When Your Food & Drink Could Be Causing You Problems: Elimination Diets
- Eating to Reduce Irritable Bowel Symptoms: The FODMaP Diet
- Whole Health Food, Drink, Activity and Symptom Log

Other VA Resources

- Move! Weight Management Program - <https://www.move.va.gov/>. Be sure to click on the link to the right under Resources for handouts and worksheets to help you out. There are 32 handouts specific to nutrition at <https://www.move.va.gov/MOVE/handouts.asp#nutrition> Or click on Move! Coach on the left for the free iphone/android app.
- Nutrition and Food Services - <https://www.nutrition.va.gov/>. Facts, blogs, and recipes available. There are Veteran materials at <https://www.nutrition.va.gov/veteranNutritionLinks.asp> for:
 - Cancer
 - Diabetes
 - Food and Drug Interactions
 - Heart Health (Cholesterol, High Blood Pressure)
 - Kidney Diseases
 - Neurological Disorders and Spinal Cord Injuries
 - Vitamins and Supplements
 - Weight Management for both losing and gaining weightThe site also features Healthy Teaching Kitchen recipe books at https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Healthy_Teaching_Kitchen.asp

Other US Government Resources

- United States Department of Agriculture Nutrition Site. <https://www.nutrition.gov/>. This website has a lot of resources that provides information on calories and nutrients depending on age and depending on medical condition. Also, has shopping tips, information on calories and weight management. If you require food assistance will link you to government resources. <https://www.nutrition.gov/subject/food-assistance-programs>.
- United States Department of Agriculture Choose My Plate. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>. Has some tips, advice, and a few tools to guide eating. Will link to <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>, a page with healthy recipes.
- USDA's National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov>. To search for the contents of various nutrients, including fiber, in any given food, check out the "Start your search here," to see the nutrients in a particular food.

Academic Groups

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics - <https://www.eatright.org/>. Has information and resources based on age and gender. Also includes resources on fitness.
- Harvard School of Public Health, The Nutrition Source. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>. Has general information on nutrients and many healthy recipes.

- Mayo Clinic Nutrition Resources.
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthylifestyle/nutrition-andhealthyeating/basics/nutrition-basics/hlv-20049477>.
- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health.
<http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/integrative/resources/modules/>
- Integrative Medicine for the Underserved Nutrition Materials.
<https://im4us.org>.

Free Nutrition Tools and Guides

- My Food, My Health. <http://myfoodmyhealth.com>. Has multiple recipes, as well as diet plans for specific conditions.
- The World’s 100 Healthiest Foods. <http://www.whfoods.com/foodstoc.php>. Detailed list.
- Fruits and Veggies—More Matters.
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org>. Site focused on how to increase one’s fruit and vegetable intake.
- Plant-Based Research. <http://plantbasedresearch.org>. Site that compiles research related specifically to plant-based nutrition.
- California Dairy Research Foundation Probiotics Information.
<http://cdrf.org/home/checkoff-investments/usprobiotics/>. Nice summary of research.

Food Safety

- Environmental Working Group. www.ewg.org. Excellent source of food safety information. They create the “Dirty Dozen” and “Clean 15” lists of fruits and veggies with the highest and lowest pesticide levels (after washing).
<https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/list.php>. They also list Food Scores, rating various foods based on nutrition, ingredient, and processing safety at <http://www.ewg.org/foodscores>.
- Overeaters Anonymous - <https://oa.org/>. If you struggle with compulsive eating, under-eating, food addiction, anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, or over-exercising, there are resources to help.

Finding Local Resources

- Find Real Food App. <http://www.findrealfoodapp.com>. Tells where there are good quality food stores in a given area.
- Local Harvest Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) site.
<http://www.localharvest.org/>. Search out local CSAs, or order fresh foods from around the country.

Specific Eating “Styles”

- Oldways. <http://www.oldwayspt.org/health-professionals>. Focuses on cultural eating traditions. Can teach you how to eat a Mediterranean Diet. Has specific diet guides for people from Asian, African, and other backgrounds. Also has diets for people on blood thinners. Check out the recipes.

- Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH).
https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/dash_brief.pdf. “Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with DASH,” from the National Institutes of Health.
- Websites for Prevention of Cancer Using Foods
 - American Institute for Cancer Research: <http://www.aicr.org>.
 - Foods that Fight Cancer page: <http://www.aicr.org/foods-that-fight-cancer>

Mindful Eating

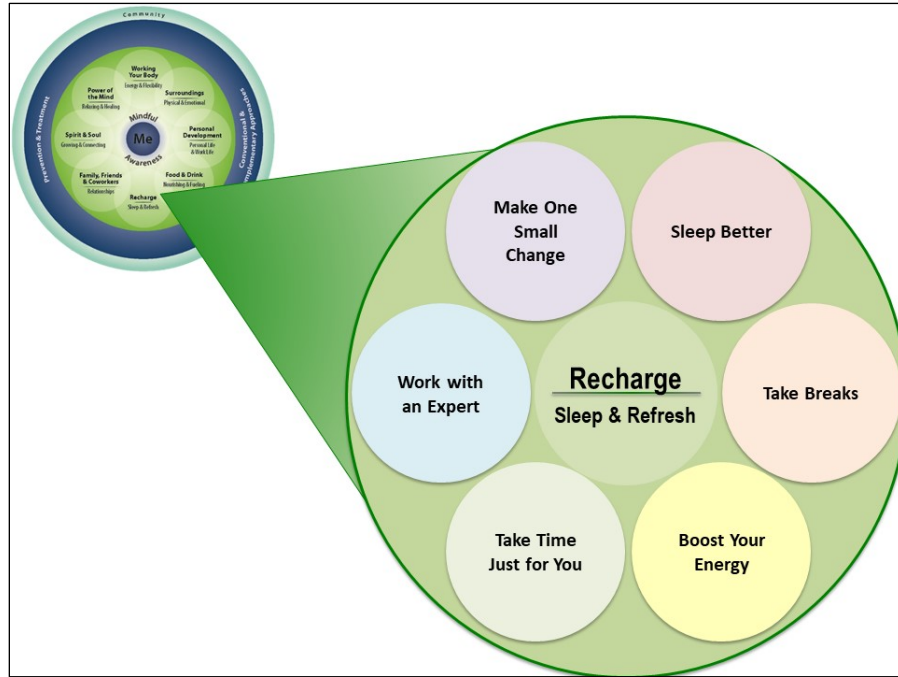
- The Center for Mindful Eating. <http://thecenterformindfuleating.org>. This is where Mindful Awareness meets Food & Drink.

Apps

- Fat Secret, Calorie Counter - <https://www.fatsecret.com/>. A free app that allows you to keep a food diary, provides healthy recipes, an exercise log, and journal. The app also has a barcode scanner to help you track foods you buy.
- Fooducate, Weight Loss Coach - <https://www.fooducate.com/>. A free app that in addition to counting calories will “grade” and tell you how the quality of where those calories came from. Attempts to teach you about choosing healthy options.
- My Fitness Pal - <https://www.myfitnesspal.com/>. A free app and website to help count calories. Fairly simple to use.
- US Department of Veterans Affairs - <https://www.move.va.gov/MOVE/MoveCoach.asp>. A free phone app created by the VA to help track diet, activity and weight.

Zeroing In – Recharge: Sleep & Refresh

When we think about our health, we often focus on all the things we should DO. But “not doing” is also important to health. Relaxing, slowing down, finding ease, and taking pauses are important to our health as well. Here are some things to explore if you want Recharge to be a part of your Whole Health Plan.



Key Points

- Resting allows your body and mind to heal. It gives you time to pause and be mindfully aware.
- You can't work toward what really matters if you have never paused to think about what your values are!
- Good sleep is vital to our survival and our health. So are breaks at work and vacations.
- Ask your clinical team for information and guidance.

Sleep Better. Good sleep helps you maintain a healthy weight, lay down memories, and flush your brain of toxins. Good sleep is linked to better mood, less heart disease and stroke, and less diabetes. It is also linked to living longer.

- If you have sleep problems, work with your primary team to rule out (and treat) sleep apnea, thyroid problems, restless legs, prostate or bladder problems, and other medical issues that can cause poor sleep.

Sleep
Better

- There are many ways to improve sleep. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) is one. It involves noticing your sleep patterns and practicing good sleep hygiene, which means avoiding anything that makes you less likely to sleep. Some examples:
 - Too much light from a screen before bed, or from background lights can be a problem. Try a sleep mask.
 - Decrease noises with ear plugs or drown them out with white noise, like the sound from a fan.
 - Don't take too many naps during the day.
 - Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, if possible.
 - Don't drink alcohol before bed.
 - Don't drink too many other fluids either, and avoid caffeine.

Take Breaks. Breaks are also important. If you are really busy, pause sometimes.

Take Breaks

- If you are sitting a lot, take time move every 30-60 minutes.
- Be sure to take vacations sometimes if you can, too. Try not to take work with you.
- Pause for longer breaks at work (15 minutes every few hours) and don't work through lunch.
- It might help to unplug from the news sometimes (do a "media fast").

Boost Your Energy. What lowers your energy? If you can, avoid those things. What increases it? If possible, do those things more.

Boost Energy

- There are many ways to give your energy a boost. Medications? Not the best way.
 - Be active – dance, garden, hike, go for a walk, lift weights, etc.
 - Laugh
 - Spend time with fun and inspiring people you care about
 - Find a good cause you believe in and support it

Take Time Just for You. Even if you can just plan for a few minutes each day for yourself, that is important.

Time for You

- It is like the oxygen mask on a plane. You need to meet your needs, or you won't be in any shape to help other people.
- If you are spending a lot of time taking care of someone else, taking time for you helps your health.

Work with an Expert. Who would be helpful to have on your care team?

Experts

- Psychologists can help you figure out how to sleep better. Some of them are trained in CBT-I. There are sleep psychologists whose whole practice focuses on sleep.
- Sleep Consultants can offer help when it comes to screening or and treating sleep apnea and other sleep disorders.
- Different mind-body approaches, like meditation, might help you. See if classes are available at your VA.
- Acupuncture might help with sleep.

- Ask your provider about melatonin. It is on the VA formulary. It is a supplement that helps sleep without causing a lot of side effects.

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of possibilities. Start small with a goal you know you can reach, and build from there. Here are a few more examples of things that you could put into your Personal Health Plan:

One Small Change

- Change one sleep hygiene behavior, such as the time you go to bed.
- Set an alarm to remind you to take breaks.
- See how being active during different times of the day helps or harms your sleep.
- Work with problems like PTSD or anxiety so you can relax more.
- If you are taking care of someone who is ill, look into a respite care program where someone can help out so you can have a break.
- Plan a day off.
- Get a massage every so often.
- Use the CBT-I app.
- Cut down on caffeine.
- Take a three-day media fast.
- Learn how to take a power nap if your energy is dropping.
- Add one thing to your day that boosts your energy.
- Take one day where you don't do any work at all.
- Plan a dream vacation. "Staycations" can also be helpful.

Recharge Links

You can check out the links below to learn more about Recharge:

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#recharge>.

- An Introduction to Recharge for Whole Health
- Hints for Encouraging Healthy Sleep
- Change Your Habits to Sleep Better
- Ho Pausing and Taking Breaks Leads to Whole health
- Counseling for Insomnia

Other VA Resources

- Video: A Patient Centered Approach to: Recharge. <http://youtu.be/zT-bbZmeW4I>
- Veterans Health Library. <http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org>. Searchable for all sorts of health issues, and has material on sleep and sleep-related medical problems.

Sleep Resources

- National Sleep Foundation. <https://sleepfoundation.org/>. Has articles and resources on ways to work with different sleep problems. They also have a sleep diary to help track your sleep.
<https://sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/SleepDiaryv6.pdf>
- Sleep Education from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. <http://www.sleepeducation.org/healthysleep>. Multiple items focused on healthy sleep and rest.
- Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine. <https://www.behavioralsleep.org/>. Has general information on sleep disorders under the public resources section.
- American Psychological Association sleep materials. <http://www.apa.org/topics/sleep/index.aspx>.
- Integrative Restorative Institute. <https://www.irest.us/try-irest-now>. Samples of Guided Yoga Nidra iRest meditation.
- Tuck. <https://www.tuck.com/>. Resources, information and reviews of products for sleep.
- MIT Medical. <https://medical.mit.edu/community/sleep/resources>. Free Pamphlets and downloadable audio for sleep, including recordings of white noise.
- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health.
 - Handout on healthy sleep habits. http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_sleep.pdf.
 - Light therapy and sleep. http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_light_therapy.pdf.

Taking Breaks

- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health. <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/>. Group focused on mental health and safety in various work settings. Look under the Employee Resources for suggestions of “Healthy Break Activities”.

Boosting Your Energy

- Harvard Healthbeat article on tips for naturally boosting energy. <https://archrespite.org>.
- Mayo Clinic information on fatigue. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/fatigue/basics/definition/sym-20050894>.

Care for Caregivers

- ARCH National Respite Network and Respite Center. <https://archrespite.org>. Support for people who are full-time caregivers.

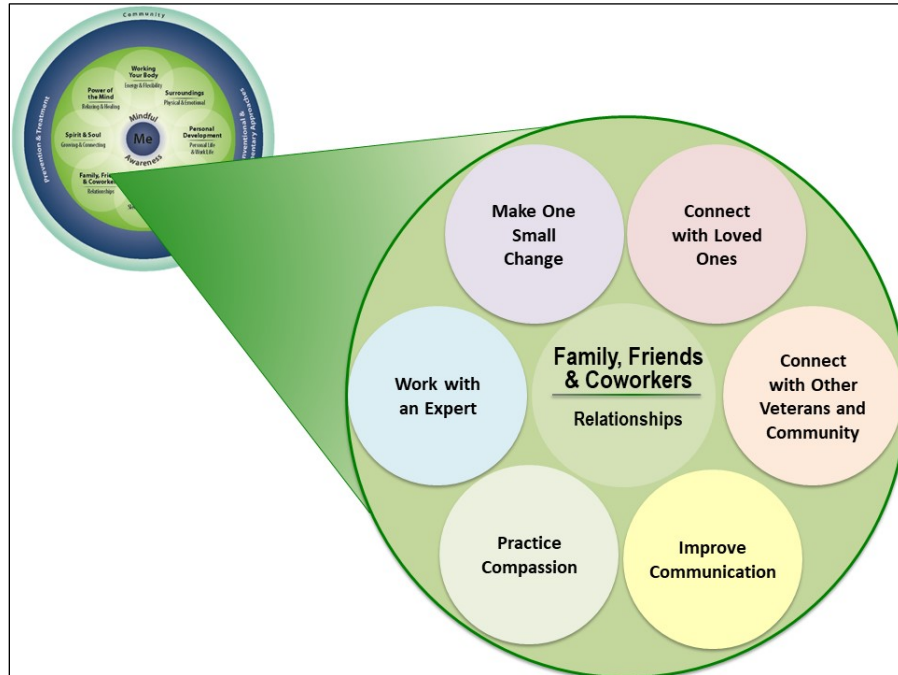
Apps

- US Department of Veterans Affairs CBT-I Coach. On iPhone App store and Google Play for Android.

- Stand Up! The Work Break Timer. Set your own reminder for how often you want to take breaks from sitting, looking at the computer, or any activity.
- Randomly Remind Me. For Android. Set your reminders for anything you want, like taking breaks, drinking water, taking a moment of mindful awareness.

Zeroing In – Family, Friends & Coworkers: Relationships

There is an old saying, “In the shelter of each other, we live.” Relationships matter to our health. Family and friends, the groups we are part of, fellow Veterans, our health care team members – when it comes to Whole Health, many people can support us.



Key Points

- In addition to asking yourself what really matters, ask yourself *who* really matters.
- Explore how you can enhance connections with family, friends, fellow Veterans, and others in your community.
- Improving communication can help.
- Loving-kindness practices can help you feel more connected.
- Ask experts, like social workers, for help.

Connect with Love Ones. Loved ones can include life partners, spouses, family members, friends, pets, and others. Having them in your life helps you live longer and deal with health issues better.

- Social capital is the amount of support you can get from others if you need it. It can help to think about who you turn to for different kinds of support. Who gives you affection or kindness? Who mentors, or advises you? Who offers you financial support? Who do you support?

Loved
Ones

- As you think about relationships, try to notice what you feel, but don't let the feelings make you shut down. If possible, think about relationships you want to renew or heal.

Connect with Other Veterans and Community. In the Circle of Health, Community surrounds (and protects) everything else.

Veterans & Community

- No one supports Veterans better than their fellow Veterans. What support do you need? How can you support others? Volunteer work might be one option.
- Join a group or organization, like Veterans of Foreign Wars or Disabled American Veterans.
- If it feels appropriate to you, consider joining a spiritual community.
- Sign up for classes, or see if your VA site offers shared medical appointments, where Veterans can learn about a health topic together.
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter) and email are other ways to connect.

Improve Communication. Communication styles inside and outside of the military can be very different.

Communications

- There are different techniques you can learn, like how to listen better, how to read body language, and how to use "I statements."
- Taking classes on communication skills is another option.

Practice Compassion. Loving-kindness meditation is one way to focus on connecting. Compassion involves empathy – understanding what it is like to be in someone else's shoes, combined with taking action to do something to support them.

Compassion

- Increasing compassion starts with self-compassion. Sometimes it is easier to feel compassion for others than ourselves.

Work with an Expert. Social workers, vocational rehabilitation people, chaplains, and psychologists are some of the professionals who can help Veterans connect.

Experts

- As you think about relationships with others, it can help to ask what sort of formal social support you need, too. Some Veterans need help with housing, or getting coverage for medical bills, or applying for a support program.
- Social workers are skilled professionals who know the resources in your local community and what is offered at the VA. They can help you speak up for yourself, and some perform family/couples counseling.
- Working on relationships can bring up a lot of emotions. If you find you are struggling with your feelings or thoughts, ask for help.

Make One Small Change. There are many options for connecting. Pick one and set a goal. It helps to start with something you know you can do – set yourself up for success!

Working. Here are some more examples, in addition to what has already been covered:

One Small Change

- Go to a community event, like a ball game, a play or musical, a festival, or a fair.
- Take a class at a local college.
- Join an online interest group.
- Call someone you have not spoken to in a while, who you miss talking to.

- Set up an account on Facebook or another site like it.
- If you are in an abusive relationship, seek help.
- Talk to a neighbor you have never met.
- Get a pet, work with a therapy animal, or volunteer at a local shelter.
- Strike up a conversation with someone in the VA cantina.
- Connect with former battle buddies.
- Look online at tips for how to communicate better. There are guides for doing that in relationships with loved ones and also at work.

Family, Friends & Coworkers Links

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#family-friends-and-co-workers>

- An Introduction to Family, Friends, and Coworkers: Relationships for Whole Health
- Relationships and Health
- Compassion
- Coping with Grief Following a Death

Other VA Whole Health Resources

- A Patient Centered Approach to Family, Friends, and Coworkers - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmqMRCEzb0&feature=youtu.be>
- Information on Social Workers in the VA. <https://www.socialwork.va.gov/socialworkers.asp>.
- Support groups for PTSD and other great resources https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/cope/peer_support_groups.asp.
- Support and resources for caregivers of Veterans. <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>.

Community Groups for Veterans

- Veterans of Foreign Wars. <https://www.vfw.org/>.
- Disabled American Veterans - <https://www.dav.org/>.
- The American Legion - <https://www.legion.org/>.
- American Veterans - <http://amvets.org/>.

Counseling and Therapy Resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness. <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support>
- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. <https://www.aamft.org/>. Depending on what's happening with your family or marriage, working with a professional can be very helpful.

Communication

- Center for Nonviolent Communication. <https://www.cnvc.org/>. In the community section on the left bar, there different resources you can review.

- Communication TED Talks
 - Celeste Headlee: 10 ways to have a better conversation. https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation/transcript?language=en
 - Julian Treasure: How to speak so that people want to listen. https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen

Addiction Resources for Loved Ones

The Power of the Mind course covers resources for Veterans with addiction, but addiction affects loved ones too. Keep the following resources in mind:

- Al-Anon. <https://al-anon.org/>. For loved ones of someone with a drinking problem.
- Nar-Anon. <https://www.nar-anon.org/>. For family and friends of someone with an addiction problem.
- Gam-Anon. <https://gam-anon.org/>. For loved ones of someone with a gambling problem.

Healthy Coworker Relationships

- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health. <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/>.
- Communicating at work. https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/docs/em_eap_assertive.asp
- Communicating with people you supervise <https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/communicationtips.asp>

Animal Therapy

- Pet Partners - <https://petpartners.org/>.
- Psychology Today search - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/animal-assisted-therapy>. Find animal-assisted therapists in your area.

Compassion

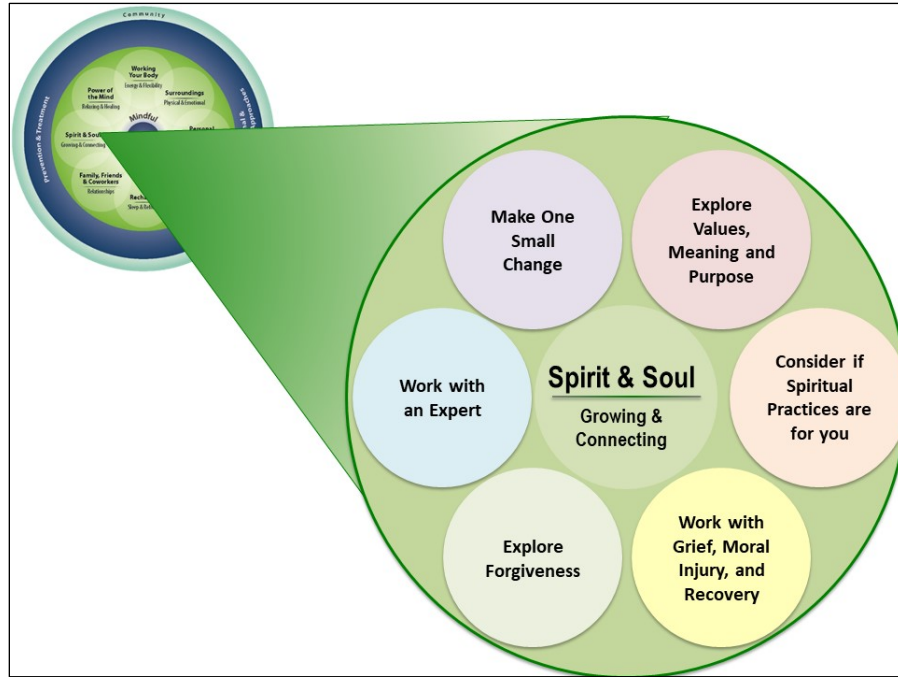
- Compassion articles at the Greater Good Website, by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley. <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion>. Articles for the general public on latest compassion research findings. Free registration.
- Self-Compassion by Dr. Kristin Neff. <http://self-compassion.org/>. Self-compassion is key if you want to become more compassionate toward others. This website has thoughts about helping with compassion in general too. The Resources page has books, websites, and more.
- Compassion TED Talks. Videos that are worth a look.
 - Joan Halifax: Compassion and the true meaning of empathy. https://www.ted.com/talks/joan_halifax
 - Daniel Goleman: Why aren't we more compassionate? https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_goleman_on_compassion/transcript?language=en

Volunteering Resources:

- Veterans Affairs. <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>. Check this out to learn more about volunteering at the VA.
- United Way. <https://www.unitedway.org/>. Click on the “Get Involved” tab at the top of the screen.
- All for Good. <https://www.allforgood.org/>. Can search for volunteer opportunities based on where you live. Covers many different groups. Can also ask for volunteers for your projects.
- Volunteer.gov. <https://www.volunteer.gov/>. Volunteer opportunities related to natural and cultural resources, including volunteer work with the National Park Service.
- Idealist. <https://www.idealists.org>. Click on “Volunteering” at the top. Can search by location. Also has a list of jobs.
- AARP’s Create the Good. <http://www.createthegood.org/>. Can search for volunteer opportunities based on location on this site as well.
- Volunteer Match. <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>. Can match based on location as well as the type of opportunity you want.

Zeroing In – Spirit & Soul: Growing and Connecting

Spirituality takes many forms. You may belong to an organized religion, find your spirituality in service to other or through being nature, or base it on your past experiences. You may be unsure of what your spirituality is. Regardless, take time to focus on what brings meaning and purpose to your life. Doing so supports good health.



Key Points

- Be respectful of others' beliefs as you consider these issues. There is NO expectation that you believe a certain way.
- Always circle back to what really matters to you and let that inform your goals. People with a sense of purpose live longer.
- It is hard to do, but working with grief and moral injury, and going through recovery for addictions is very helpful.
- Forgiveness is also challenging, but rewarding.
- Ask chaplains, clergy, and other experts for help if you need it.

Explore Values, Meaning, and Purpose. Whether you are spiritual and/or religious or not, keep an eye to what matters to you, as you create your Personal Health Plan. What do you value most of all? Why do you care about your health in the first place?

- People find their spirituality in different places, and each of us is unique. What brings you a sense of something bigger than yourself? What is meaningful in your life?

Values
Meaning
Purpose

- It is okay to feel like you don't have all the answers. Mystery is a part of spirituality for many people.
- Some people find their spirituality in religion, or in serving others, or in doing something they love.

Consider if Spiritual Practices are for you. Spiritual practices are things you can do to stay connected with what really matters. They bring you a sense of peace and ease, and perhaps a sense of being part of something bigger than yourself. Some examples of practices include:

Spiritual Practices

- Prayer
- Carrying something, a spiritual anchor, that reminds you to focus on the important things in your life.
- Taking part in ceremonies or holidays.
- Bringing meaning in through music and art.
- Pilgrimage; traveling to sacred places.
- Practicing compassion and generosity. Giving to others.
- Some types of meditation.
- Forgiveness

Work with Grief, Moral Injury, and Recovery. All can lead to deep healing, but be gentle with yourself when you are dealing with these very emotional areas. Ask for help and support as needed.

Grief, Moral Injury, Recovery

- Grief is normal, unless it begins to get in the way of fully living your life. In the military, bad things happen, but people do not always get a chance to fully grieve.
- Moral injury happens when someone did something, saw something, or could not prevent something that happened that was against their deepest beliefs. Moral injury happens a lot in war.
- Recovery –healing from addictions– often requires some very deep work. Twelve step programs are helpful.

Explore Forgiveness. Forgiveness is NEVER about saying something that someone did to hurt you was okay. It IS about setting yourself free.

Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is a process. There are books about how to do it, but it is best if you have support from a health care team member, like a psychologist or a chaplain.
- It starts with being able to forgive yourself.

Work with and Expert. Because these areas can be hard to look at, it is good to ask for help and support.

Experts

- There are always chaplains available to help at the VA, and the VA has one of the best chaplaincies of any organization in the world. Chaplains can work with people from a variety of faiths and backgrounds, and if not, they can point you in the direction of someone who can help you just the same.
- If you belong to a religious group, ask clergy or others for help.

- These professionals can help with topics like death and dying, the meaning behind illness, and feelings of spiritual anxiety, anger, guilt, loss, and despair.

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of possibilities. Start small with a goal you know you can reach, and build from there. Here are a few more examples of things that you could put into your Personal Health Plan:

- Join a spiritual community.
- Carry an anchor with you, like a photo of someone dear to you, a stone, a coin, a medal, a piece of jewelry – whatever reminds you of what matters most.
- Read something that inspires you, like scripture, poetry, or stories about those who have been able to rise above challenges.
- Do a random act of kindness each day. Tip well at a café. Help a person by the side of the road. Give someone flowers. Smile.
- Offer gratitude. One time to do this is as you are sitting down about to eat.
- Honor someone you have lost.
- Take time to admire something beautiful.
- Do something generous.
- Cheer someone up. Make them laugh.
- Pray, meditate, or pause to tune in to the rest of the world.

One Small Change

Spirit & Soul Links

You can check out the links below to learn more about Spirit & Soul:

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#spirit-and-soul>.

- An Introduction to Spirit and Soul for Whole Health
- Deciding What Your Need for Spiritual Health
- How Do You Know That? Beliefs and Your Health
- Spiritual Anchors
- Chaplains

Other VA Sites

- US Department of Veterans Affairs National Chaplain Center. <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/chaplain/index.asp>. Describes what chaplains can do and how to work with them.

General Spirituality Resources

- Spirituality and Health - <https://spiritualityhealth.com/>. Website for a magazine that focuses on spirituality. The website has various articles, blogs, and resources.
- Spirituality and Practice - <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/>. Open to all spiritual practices and religions, with various resources and possible practices to try.

- University of Minnesota, Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing. <https://www.csh.umn.edu/>. Offers not just resources on spirituality but on well-being in general. Has articles, educational resources, courses, and more.
- BBC Guide to Religions <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>. Gives a background on major world religions.
- Recovering from Religion. <https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org/>. Religion can be very empowering for some, but for others it has been tied to shame or sorrow. This website has multiple resources and links for support for those wondering if and how religion fits into their lives.

Values and Purpose

- Tiny Buddha: Simple Wisdom for Complex Lives. <https://tinybuddha.com/>. Although the word Buddha is in the name, Tiny Buddha has resources relevant to people from all backgrounds. Has blog posts, quotes, and forums to help inspire, explore spirituality, explore values and one's own purpose.

Grief

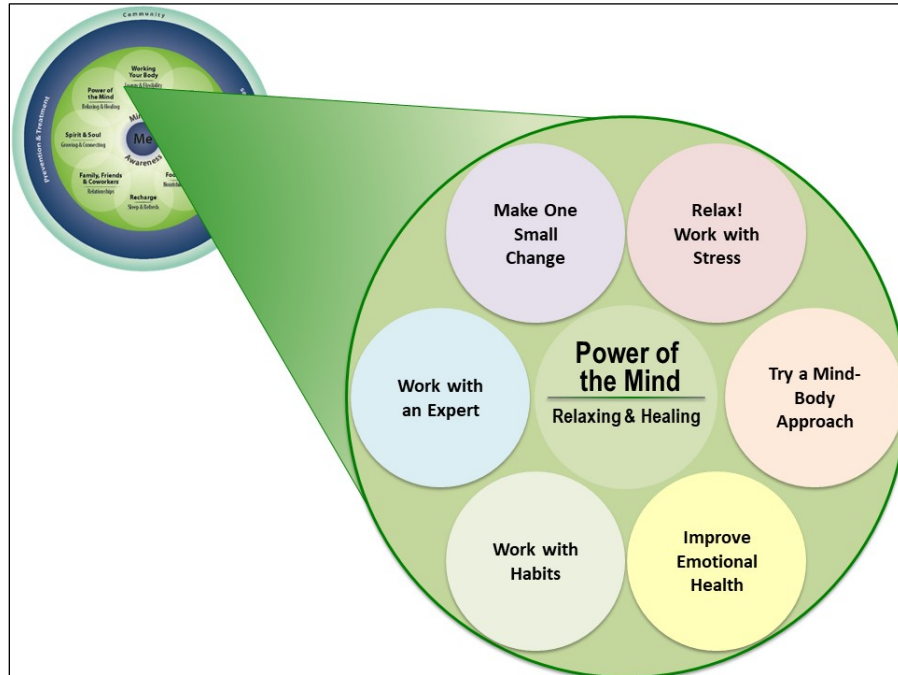
- Center for Grief Recovery and Therapeutic Services. <http://griefcounselor.org/>. Although the services are Chicago based, the Resources section has material available for everyone.
- Hospice Foundation of America - <https://hospicefoundation.org/>. Hospice is for the family as a whole and has resources for loved ones going through loss.

Forgiveness

- International Forgiveness Institute. <https://internationalforgiveness.com/>. Support for moving through the process of forgiveness.
- Spiritual Competency Resource Center. <http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/>. This website is more geared towards health professionals learning these techniques, but there's a nice article that looks at forgiveness in different religions. <http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/pdf/58.pdf>

Zeroing In – Power of the Mind: Relaxing and Healing

Power of the Mind includes many aspects of our health – how we deal with stress, how we work with emotions, our thoughts, and how our minds and bodies affect each other. There are tools you can use to make even better use of your mind’s power.



Key Points

- Your thoughts, feelings and beliefs affect your health in many ways.
- There are many different mind-body tools you can learn to manage stress and difficult emotions. Try different ones to see what is right for you. The VA covers meditation classes. It also covers, biofeedback, imagery, and clinical hypnosis for some problems.
- What you expect helps to shape what happens when you get a treatment or therapy.
- If your mental state is making it hard to live your life or be in control, get help

Relax! Work with Stress. Stress helps us survive, but “fight or flight” isn’t a good place to be all the time.

- One thing all the different mind-body tools have in common is that they help you get the “Relaxation Response.” It is the opposite of being in fight or flight.
- Doing breathing exercises, like “In for a count of 3, out for a count of 6” is a quick way to help yourself relax.

Stress

- Ask yourself about the things that help you to relax in your life. What helps you feel calm? And *who* in your life helps you feel relaxed and calm?

Try a Mind-Body Approach. There are many mind-body approaches to choose from, and studies have found that they can be quite helpful.

Mind-Body Approaches

- Biofeedback uses equipment to track how your body responds to our mind's control. You can teach yourself to loosen tight muscles, change your heart rhythm, and other skills.
- Meditation includes many practices, and some are for reducing stress and building more awareness. Examples include sitting and watching your thoughts, doing body scans, sending compassion, and breathing.
- Guided imagery involves working with images to get more information about your health. The images that come up can give you ideas about how to improve your health.
- Clinical hypnosis is different from "stage hypnosis." You always have control as you move into a state of trance. In that state, you can respond better to suggestions to do things that are good for your health.

Improve Emotional Health. Don't forget about the "Power of Your Heart."

Emotions

- People who are happier live longer, with fewer health problems. Angry people have more health problems.
- Relaxing can calm emotions as well as thoughts. Mind-body skills can help you work with difficult emotions too, like sadness and depression, anxiety, and anger.
- It isn't about turning off feelings, it is about understanding triggers, being aware of how you act when you feel something, and then working with emotions in new, helpful ways.

Work with Habits. Things we routinely do can be either healthy or unhealthy.

Habits

- A person can learn the habit of being optimistic (having a positive outlook), or be in the habit of drinking, using drugs, eating poorly, or gambling too much.
- If you are finding that a habit is making it harder for you to live your life, find help. Studies show that twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

Work with an Expert. The VA has excellent mental health providers, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers who can do counseling, substance use experts, and people who work specifically with suicide prevention, PTSD, sexual trauma, and other problems.

Experts

- Psychiatrists are medical doctors, and they know about medications, especially.
- Psychologists are more likely to work with psychotherapies. There are many different types of psychotherapy. One of the best-known is cognitive behavioral therapy. You take time learning how to notice your patterns and come up with ways to shift them or work with them.
- Your primary care team can help you find the right professional.

- It might be helpful to take a mind-body related course in your local VA, like a meditation class.

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of opportunities. Think about what would work best for you and decide when you will start. Choose a goal you feel you can easily achieve. Here are a few ideas:

One Small Change

- Take a pause (take a knee) before you react to something. Give yourself a moment to collect yourself when things are stressful.
- Take a few minutes to breathe every hour. You can set a timer to remind you.
- Work on decreasing something that you do that isn't a healthy habit. Cut down by one cigarette a day, or one drink.
- Start meditating for five minutes a day. (See the links list for more information.)
- Take a martial arts class, to help your focus.
- Play more of a sport, and see if you can "get into the zone."
- Try out one of the mind-body therapies.
- Create a list of times in your life when the power of your mind helped you succeed.

Power of the Mind Links

You can check out the links below to get more information about Power of the Mind:

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#power-of-the-mind>.

- An Introduction to the Power of the Mind
- Breathing and Health
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Progressive Relaxation
- Seated Meditation
- Biofeedback
- Mantram Meditation
- Autogenic Training
- Hypnotherapy

Other VA Whole Health Resources

- VA Whole Health for Life Multimedia Resources. These focus on mindful awareness, but primarily through various meditation techniques. <https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/resources/multimedia/index.asp#instructional-videos>. Videos include
 - Four Ways to Cultivate Mindfulness
 - Beginning a Mindfulness Practice
 - Mindfulness and Compassion
- A Patient Centered Approach to: Power of the Mind - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbPNgJ4YkpM&feature=youtu.be>.

General Mind-Body Resources

- National Institutes for Mental Health Index. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml> . Guides to multiple mental health problems.
- Unstuck – Website and free app. Resources and articles to help change your mindset. <https://www.unstuck.com/>
- Helpguide. <https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/mental-health.htm>. Organization devoted to supporting mental and emotional health. See their Emotional Intelligence Toolkit at <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-toolkit.htm>.

Meditation and Mindfulness Resources:

- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center: Guided Meditations. <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>. Meditations in English and Spanish.
- Meditation Oasis - <https://www.meditationoasis.com/>. Under the Podcast link there are guided meditations, instructions for meditation, and music for meditation. You can also listen to them on iTunes, Google Play, or by clicking on the play buttons below.
- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health, Mindfulness Meditation Podcasts - <http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/mindfulness-meditation-podcast-series/>. A podcast series that goes through several exercises and experiences in mindfulness and meditation.
- The Free Mindfulness Project - <http://www.freemindfulness.org/home>. A website that helps people start to explore mindfulness and the breath for free. The free resources section has mp3s for download that are all under 20 MB.
- Calm - www.calm.com. A website and app with some free resources for meditation. Also a great resource for nature-related white noise.
- Gratefulness - <http://www.gratefulness.io/>. A free online gratitude journal. Sends a daily email or text asking you what you're grateful.
- Heath Journeys Guided Imagery Audio Library: Guided Imagery and Other Mind-Body Exercises for Veterans. https://www.healthjourneys.com/partneraccess/index/display/token/OwpI21nqrYVWMxEMto-AOlo7nmigMcmFDjLADkg_PsXh-gVm4Hg4MuggBI9y2wWEcv_MbCjBrb9-dWtm7vJoGWIY1NEec7e8XiV5fHOlyKnkwVLk6PK4pUSqVeWSgYiR1JEjZcz4KSqLKGXRCuvNQ. This page streams free meditations by leading practitioners in the mind-body field. Kaiser Permanente features several podcasts available to listen online, download, or read to help with different medical conditions but also mental health at www.tinyurl.com/KPHealthJourneys.

Where to Find Practitioners of Different Mind-Body Approaches

- Biofeedback. <https://www.resourcenter.net/Scripts/4Disapi9.dll/4DCGI/resctr/search.html?>
- Clinical Hypnosis. <http://www.asch.net/Public/MemberReferralSearch.aspx>
- Guided Imagery. <http://acadgi.com/newdirectory/>

Power of the Mind Apps

- Defense Health Agency, Military Meditation Coach Podcast. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/military-meditation-coach-podcast/id1313813296?mt=2>. Available on iTunes, this podcast provides a way to Learn and practice meditation techniques. Designed with the military and Veteran community in mind.
- EliteHRV. <https://elitehrv.com/>. Free App available on Apple and Google products. Helps you measure your heart rate variability to learn about stress management
- Insight Timer. <https://insighttimer.com/>. An app for Apple and Android users that has over 10,000 free guided meditations. It tells you who else around the whole world meditated at the same time you did, to give you a sense of global community.
- Stop, Breathe and Think. <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>. This app checks in with how about you're feeling in the moment and suggests guided meditations for you to try.
- Headspace. <https://www.headspace.com/>. This app has a quick guide to meditation and then provides brief meditations on many topics for people with busy schedules.
- Life Calendar. <https://lifecal.me/>. A free journaling app for Apple or Android users. Allows you to journal about your week and assign a color to it. You can color code the weeks and then do a quick review of your months, years, when you look back.

Whole Health Additional Handouts

<https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp>

[At the Center of the Circle of Health](#)

- Whole Health: It Starts with Me

[Mindful Awareness](#)

- An Introduction to Mindful Awareness
- Mindful Awareness Practice in Daily Living
- Precautions with Using Mindful Awareness Practices

[Power of the Mind](#)

- An Introduction to the Power of the Mind
- Breathing and Health
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Progressive Relaxation
- Seated Meditation
- Biofeedback
- Mantram Meditation
- Autogenic Training
- Hypnotherapy

[Food & Drink](#)

- An Introduction to Food and Drink for Whole Health
- Carbohydrates and Your Health: Glycemic Index, Glycemic Load and Blood Sugars
- Deciding how to be a Healthier Eater
- Eating to Reduce Inflammation
- Healthy Tips on Eating Out and Grocery Shopping
- Mindful Eating
- How a Healthy Gut Makes for a Healthier You
- Probiotics for Specific Conditions
- How to Eat a Mediterranean Diet
- When Your Food & Drink Could Be Causing You Problems: Elimination Diets
- Eating to Reduce Irritable Bowel Symptoms: The FODMaP Diet
- Whole Health Food, Drink, Activity and Symptom Log

[Working the Body](#)

- An Introduction to Working the Body for Whole Health
- Get Moving: Adding Physical Activity into Your Routine
- An Introduction to Yoga for Whole Health
- An Introduction to Tai Chi and Qigong for Whole Health

Recharge

- An Introduction to Recharge for Whole Health
- Hints for Encouraging Healthy Sleep
- Change Your Habits to Sleep Better
- How Pausing and Taking Breaks Leads to Whole Health
- Counseling for Insomnia

Spirit & Soul

- An Introduction to Spirit & Soul for Whole Health
- Deciding What You Need for Spiritual Health
- How Do You Know that? Beliefs and Your Health
- Spiritual Anchors
- Chaplains

Personal Development

- An Introduction to Personal Development for Whole Health
- Finding Balance
- The Healing Power of Hope and Optimism
- Create a Gratitude Practice
- Forgiveness
- What Matters Most? Exploring Your Values
- Laughter Heals

Family, Friends and Co-Workers

- An Introduction to Family, Friends and Co-Workers for Whole Health
- Relationships and Health
- Compassion Practice
- Coping with Grief Following a Death

Surroundings

- Introduction to Surroundings for Whole Health
- Assessing Your Surroundings
- Too Much Bad News: How to do an Information Fast
- Toxins and Your Health
- Workaholism
- Improve Your Health by Removing Toxins from Your Body
- Ergonomics: Positioning Your Body for Whole Health