

UNIT 6

Build Your Action Plan

With all that is going on around us, it helps to have an action plan for the moments when things are overwhelming. You may be feeling this way now, or may have concerns as you look to the coming days or weeks. In the last toolkit we introduced some tools that support healthy eating, sleep, and daily routines. This week, we'll add to that set of tools, focusing especially on managing stressful times.



TOOL 1

Go Back to the Basics (Again)

The tools we covered last week, including nutrition, sleep, and **ACE activities** (**A**ccomplishment, **C**onnecting, and **E**njoyment), are sometimes described as simple, but not easy. If your first week of practicing with these tools didn't go as well as you'd hoped, you are not alone! It is common to forget the basics of eating, sleeping, and daily routines, when you are facing many demands and challenges.

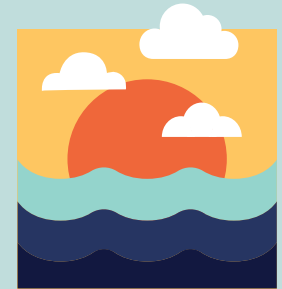
Select one of the “Back to Basics” tools to practice again this week, as a way to care for yourself during stressful times.



TOOL 2

Focus on Soothing Moments

An action plan for stressful times can include things to do in moments that feel overwhelming.

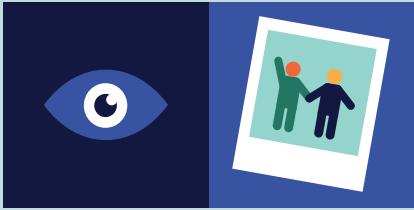


During these times, it can be helpful to take a step back to let your body and mind “reboot.”



You can practice this using the five senses when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Practice with at least one of the ideas on the following page, remembering that each practice is intended to last just for a few moments (though you can do them multiple times).

**SIGHT**

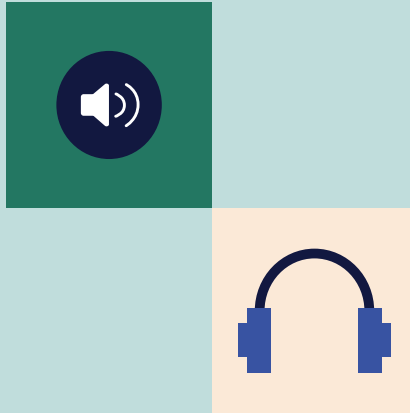
What images feel safe, calm, or happy for you? Imagine or look at photos of people, places, or experiences that make you smile.

**TASTE**

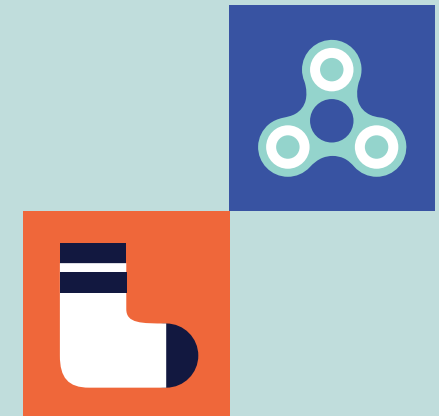
What tastes bring you comfort or distract your attention? Try a favorite food, or one that distracts you (e.g., crunchy, sour, spicy).

SOUND

What sounds lift your spirits? Listen to your favorite music. Put on your headphones for a podcast that is distracting or funny. Listen to the mindfulness practices from **Toolkit #2 “Be Mindful.”**

**TOUCH**

What sense of touch helps you feel calm? Use a fidget toy, put on your favorite socks or sweatshirt, or get under your favorite blanket.

**SMELL**

What are your favorite scents? Breathe in the scents of essential oils, moisturizers, coffee, or tea.

These ideas are not intended to solve the problems or challenges you are facing, but to bring a few moments of soothing comfort and distraction. Doing so can give you a break and generate emotions that are the opposite of the ones you may be experiencing during stressful times, even just for a moment or two. This can help you tolerate difficult times and prepare to take steps to solve challenges you are facing (including reaching out for help, as Tool 3 describes).

As you practice, you can begin to build a self-care package, or kit, for yourself to rely on when you need it.

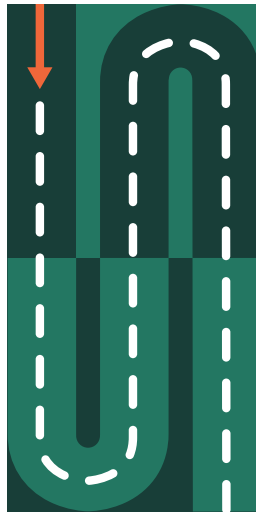


TOOL 3

Start a Conversation to Ask For Help

An action plan for stressful times needs to include things you can do in those moments that are overwhelming.

When asking for help, using the **START (Say, Tell, Ask, Repeat, Thank)** framework below can support you if you feel unsure, scared, embarrassed, or uncomfortable. You can use the START framework in its entirety or as a starting point for planning what you want to say.



Say who you are and generally why you are calling/ emailing (see the list below for campus resources that you can contact for help with a variety of issues). Some things you can say: **“Hi, my name is____, and I am calling because I’m having a tough time.”**

Tell the specifics. If you let the person know, briefly and succinctly, what you have been feeling, it will help them understand better how they can help. Review the lectures from Drs. McDuffie, Kaiser, and Pittman Wagers for a summary of common challenges and warning signs students can experience when stress is high. Some things you can say: **“Specifically, I’ve been struggling with how I’m feeling, the class assignments, my roommate, etc.”**



Ask for what you want. Stating specifically what you want will increase the likelihood of getting help. Brainstorm in advance what will help you. It’s ok too if you don’t know what you need, you can ask for help in figuring that out too. Some things you can say: **“Can you (or your office, department, or organization) help me with what I’m feeling, my paper deadline, my roommate, etc.?” “I’m not sure exactly what will help me and I want to talk with someone to figure this out. Can you help me with that?”**

Repeat your ask, if they are not being responsive. Sometimes it is necessary to ask more than once. Some things you might say: **“As I said, can you help me with scheduling an appointment?” “As I mentioned, I want to ask for an extension on my paper; can you help me with this?” “If you cannot help, can you refer me to someone who might be able to?”**



Thank them for their help. Gratitude helps people feel connected with you and motivated to help you. Some things you might say: **“Thank you for working with me.” “Thank you for pointing me in the right direction.” “I really appreciate your help.” “Knowing I have your support helps me feel so much better about coping with this challenge.”**

Use the **START** script to plan a conversation that will help support you. Remember that there are lots of resources on campus, all accessible remotely, that can help you better manage stress and support your own mental health. Check out the Resources section on Canvas. Remember that these services are confidential and you are not alone. Reaching out is an essential part of an action plan for challenging times.

START SCRIPT

Use the table below to write in your script to support you in getting a conversation started. You can use some of the specific statements suggested above or create your own.

S **S**ay who you are and generally why you are calling/emailing:

T **T**ell the specifics:

A **A**sk for what you want:

R **R**epeat your ask:

T **T**hank them for their help:





REFLECTION QUESTIONS



Did you practice the “Back to Basics” tools this week (diet, sleep, ACE activities)? How did it go?



Did you write a “START the conversation” script? Or use it with anyone this week? How did it go?



Did you practice with any soothing moments or building yourself a self-care package, or kit, this week? How did it go?



Are you interested in building one of these tools into your daily routine? If so, which one and why?



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