

W-2 Case Management and You – Virtual Classroom

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide FEPs/Case Managers with strategies for effective time management, healthy boundaries, and practicing self-care.

Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe how to prioritize the ongoing tasks required in W-2 case management;
 - Apply strategies to maximize your time and work more effectively with customers;
 - Establish professional boundaries when working with W-2 participants;
 - Maintain appropriate boundaries within the W-2 worker and W-2 participant relationship;
 - Identify your support network; and
 - Describe the links between self-care and effective case management.
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Table of Contents

ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS AS A CASE MANAGER.....	4
TIME MANAGEMENT	5
Prioritization – Getting Started	5
Know Where Your Time Goes	5
A Powerful Lesson in Time Management	6
Make a List.....	6
How to Prioritize	7
Effective Scheduling.....	7
Prioritization in Practice Part One	8
Prioritization in Practice Part Two	10
Dealing with Unexpected Downtime	12
Quick Tasks.....	13
PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES	14
Perceptions	14
Zone of Helpfulness Situations	15
What Do You Think?	16
Boundary Violations	17
Ethical Scenarios	19
Tips for Setting Professional Boundaries	20
SELF-CARE.....	21
Self-Care Strategies.....	21
Deep Breathing & Mindfulness	23
Prioritizing Self-Care	24
Personal Network Chart	24
Why Cube.....	26
REFERENCES	29
APPENDIX	30
Tools.....	31

W-2 Contact Information

Questions regarding this training material should be directed via your local agency process to the Partner Training Team,

Email: PTTTrainingSupp@wisconsin.gov

A contact person is available to answer e-mailed questions related to this training material, assist you in completing any activity that you are having difficulty with, and/or provide explanation of anything else about this training material.

Questions regarding W-2 production cases and systems should be directed via your local agency process to the BWF Work Programs Help Desk at:

Email: bwfworkprogramshd@wisconsin.gov

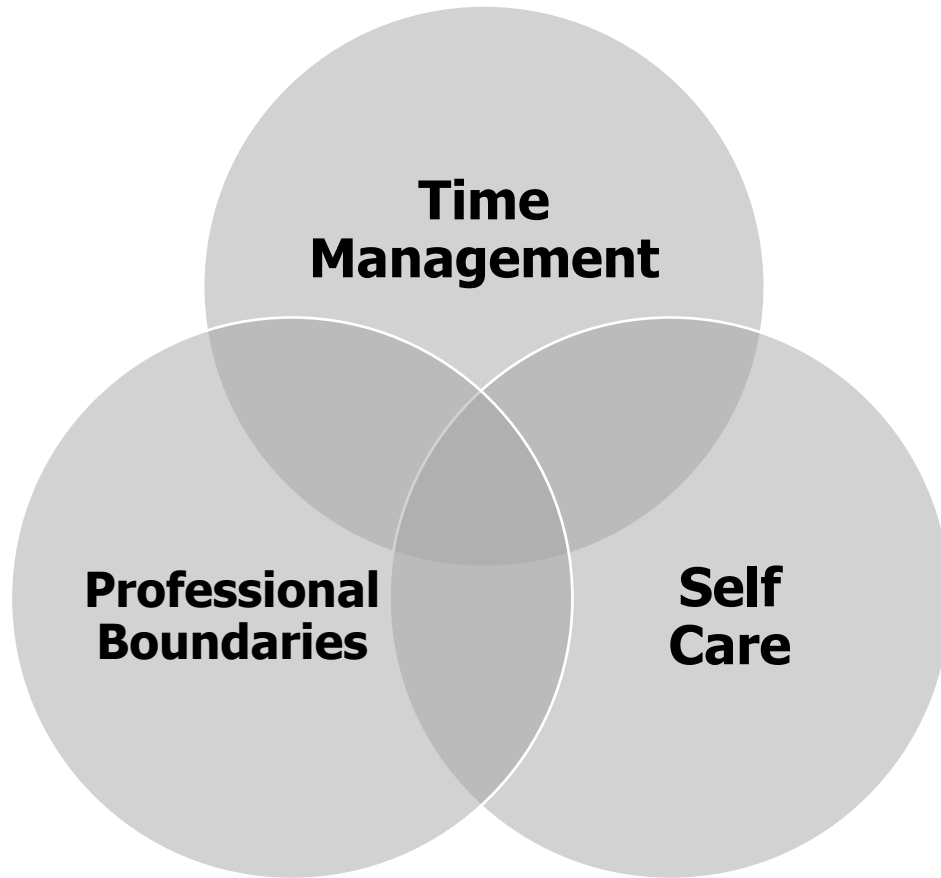
Telephone: (608) 422-7900.

W-2 Policy questions should be directed to your Regional Office staff.

DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need information in an alternate format, or need it translated to another language, please contact (608) 266-3400 or the Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711.

For civil rights questions call (608) 422-6889 or the Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711.

Establishing A Foundation for Success as a Case Manager



Time Management

Time management involves reviewing all your tasks or activities, estimating how long they will take, and determining in which order you will complete them.

Prioritization – Getting Started

Prioritization is a process of assessing tasks and ranking them in order of importance or urgency. It is an essential skill that can help you:

- Reduce _____;
- Save _____;
- Manage multiple _____;
- Bring _____ to your day; and
- Move toward an _____ _____ to your daily tasks.

Know Where Your Time Goes

What are some distractions that draw your attention away and cause you to stop what you are doing?

-
-
-
-

A Powerful Lesson in Time Management

What stuck out to you in the video?

How can this translate to your daily work?

In terms of case management, what do the rocks represent?

Pebbles?

Sand?

Make a List

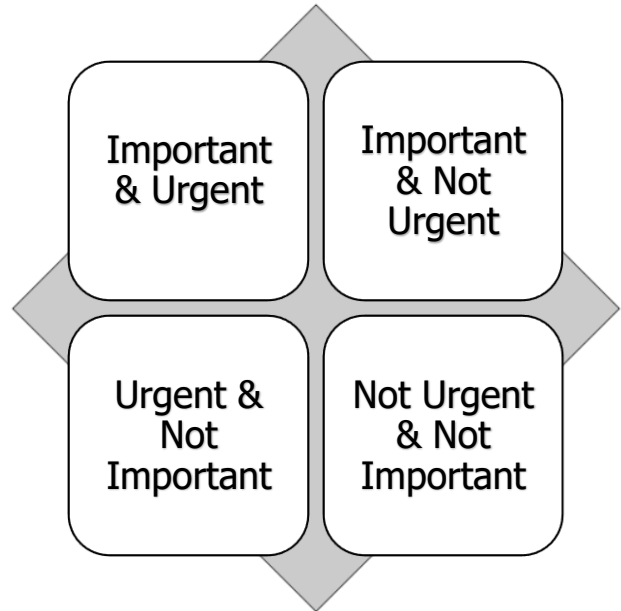
An effective To-Do List can help:

- Assign priority to each task;
- Start your day off with a plan;
- Quickly identify what still needs to be completed;
- Determine what tasks could be moved to another day;
- Allow for unscheduled tasks to be added; and
- Improve your memory.

Write down all the tasks you do in a typical workday. Be sure to include unexpected tasks and potential distractions.

How to Prioritize

Jot down your thoughts and reactions from the activity and video.



Effective Scheduling

Creating an effective schedule can help you:

- Allocate time to the tasks you identified as priorities;
- Avoid taking on more than you can handle in one day;
- View a span of time to plan for longer tasks; and
- Track additional details regarding the task.

Prioritization in Practice Part One

Scheduling Today's Appointments

Directions: It is Monday morning, and you have the following four appointments to add to your calendar today. Decide how much time you need for each appointment. Be prepared to share your rationale.

Initial Informal Assessment Appointment – Justine recently completed a Request for Assistance for W-2. She is coming in today to complete her initial informal assessment.

Ongoing Appointment – Miguel is in a CSJ placement, and currently is placed at a worksite, Monday through Friday from 8:00 am - 1:30 pm.

Medical Assessment Appointment – Carol's doctor returned a completed formal assessment, and Carol is meeting with you today to discuss the results.

CMC Appointment – Anna is coming in today to complete eligibility and placement for CMC. The RFA was completed and signed last Wednesday. She had the baby one week ago. Anna already stated she does not plan to volunteer for activities.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:30					
8:30-9:00					
9:00-9:30		Appointment 1	Appointment 1	Team Meeting	Appointment 1
9:30-10:00					Appointment 2
10:00-10:30			Present Workshop	Appointment 1	Appointment 3
10:30-11:00				Appointment 2	
11:00-11:30		Appointment 2			
11:30-12:00			Appointment 2		Appointment 4
12:00-12:30					
12:30-1:00					Review Activity Sheets turned in
1:00-1:30		Appointment 3	Appointment 3	Appointment 3	
1:30-2:00					
2:00-2:30		Appointment 4	Appointment 4		
2:30-3:00					
3:00-3:30				Appointment 4	Appointment 5
3:30-4:00			Appointment 5		
4:00-4:30					
4:30-5:00					

Prioritization in Practice Part Two

Handling the Unexpected

Directions: Throughout the day, other situations occur that require your attention. Read through the situations below to determine where you will fit these unscheduled tasks into your schedule for the entire week. You will notice that there are other tasks already in your schedule, so you will have to plan around them. Be prepared to answer the questions on the next page for each situation.

Initial Informal Assessment Appointment – Justine’s assessment reveals potential barriers, meaning Justine is not appropriate for up-front activities. The RFA was completed last week Thursday.

CMC Appointment – Anna calls to tell you she cannot make her appointment today and wants to reschedule as soon as possible.

POP Claim – Ronald drops off his paystubs that you need to submit a Job Attainment (JA) claim.

Participation Tracking – Tara drops off her activity sheets from last period with good cause verification. She provided this within the timeline of the 20% reduction letter.

Email – The Job Developer sends you an email asking for a list of job-ready participants, with high school diplomas and driver’s licenses. He wants this list by noon on Wednesday.

Voicemails

1. Katie leaves a message stating she cannot get to her work site today because her car won’t start. Katie’s worksite supervisor also left you a message stating Katie did not call or come in today.
2. Jana leaves a voicemail wanting to know how her case will be affected when her husband starts getting disability. She also asked what would happen if she moved out with the kids.
3. Philip leaves a message wanting to know his options for remaining on W-2. His daughter turns 18 next month, but his knee surgery is not until two months from now.

Walk-in - Connie walks in 20 minutes prior to your next appointment. She tells you she is in an abusive situation and needs to get her own place immediately.

Worker Tasks – You check your worker tasks, and see that Lisa is not cooperating with child support.

Questions:

How will you handle the unexpected tasks? What factors will you need to take into consideration for each task?

What steps may you need to take today, even if a task was scheduled for later in the week?

What are the next steps for each of these situations?

Dealing with Unexpected Downtime

What are some tasks you can complete in your downtime?

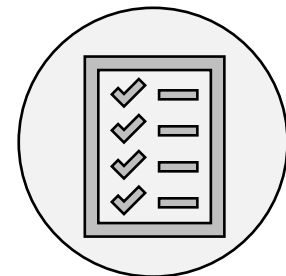
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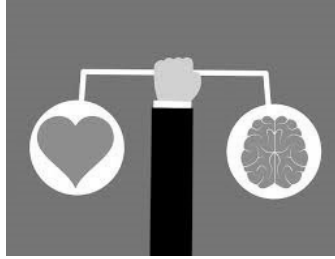
Quick Tasks

Not sure where to start? Use this list to help identify what you can get done, even with a small amount of downtime.

15 min	30 min	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check voicemails
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Return calls
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare paperwork for scanning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scanning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enter comments
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check or clean up emails
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enter participation tracking
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check worker tasks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Follow up with participants in CMF placements
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check reports
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Connect with community resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Send out appointment notices
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review recent Operations Memos
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

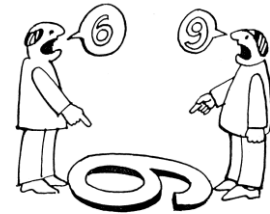


Professional Boundaries

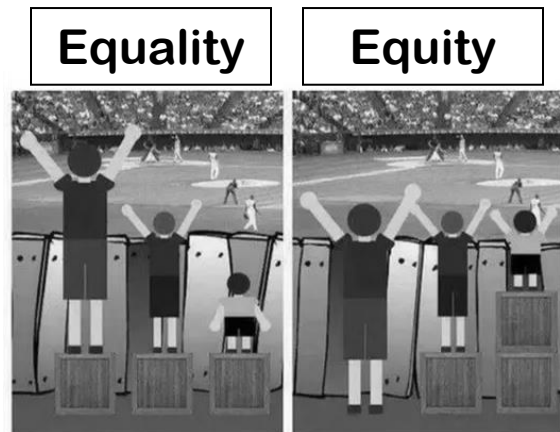


Perceptions

Why might a W-2 participant perceive that you hold all the power?



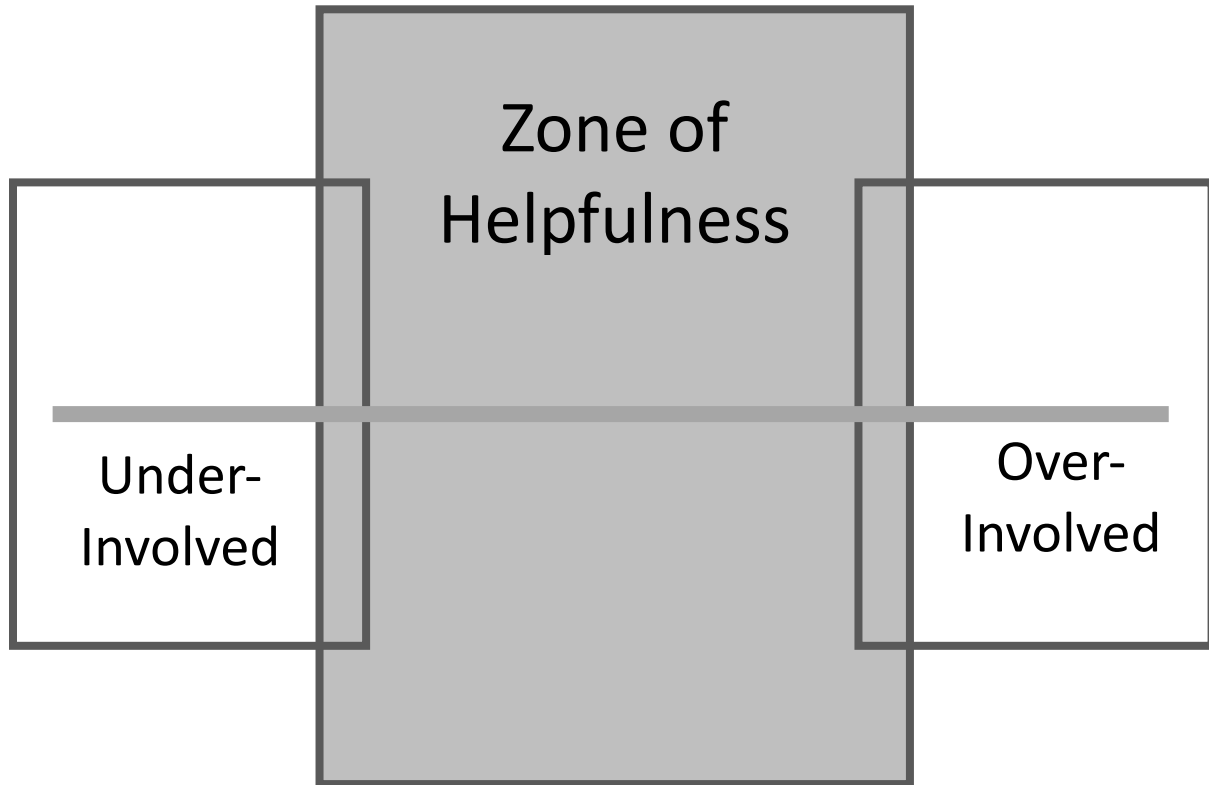
What could help you change your perceptions of others?



“Everything you see or hear or experience in any way at all is specific to you. You create a universe by perceiving it, so everything in the universe you perceive is specific to you.”

Douglas Adams

Zone of Helpfulness Situations



Does your agency have any kind of ethics or boundaries policies?

If you have a question about whether you may be potentially crossing a boundary, to whom would you go for advice?

What Do You Think?

Mark the following statements as True (T) or False (F).

- _____ 1. A worker never should accept a gift from a participant.
- _____ 2. Participants always should be informed about how the worker will deal with confidential information about their life.
- _____ 3. It is permissible for a worker to have lunch with a participant to discuss the case in a less formal setting.
- _____ 4. A worker who has been assigned a participant they know socially should notify their supervisor.
- _____ 5. A worker never should give a participant his or her home phone number.
- _____ 6. A worker may date a participant if two years have passed since the participant received services.
- _____ 7. If a participant verbally threatens a worker, the worker should accept that it is part of the job.
- _____ 8. If a participant invites a worker to a family wedding, it is acceptable for the worker to attend.
- _____ 9. If a participant dies, the worker may attend the service if they do not disclose their relationship.
- _____ 10. It is okay to pay a participant reasonable wages to work for a W-2 worker (yard work, house cleaning, child care).

Boundary Violations

1. _____ -- _____



2. _____ _____



Self-Disclosure – The Right Way

A _____ – if it's okay to share information.

O _____ – the information.

A _____ – for the participant's thoughts.

Ask: "You mentioned you're having some trouble with your son skipping school. Last year, I had some truancy issues with my son, too. Would you mind if I shared something that I found helpful?"

Offer: "The Family Resource Center provided free counseling and tutoring sessions. This really helped us both get back on track."

Ask: "Do you think that's something your family would be interested in?"

Self-Disclosure – What to Avoid

Notes:

Dual Relationships

What are some examples of dual relationships?

How can a dual relationship harm the W-2 participant and Case Manager's professional relationship?

Ethical Scenarios

Scenario 1 - Alaina:

You are meeting with a W-2 applicant, who is a mother of three children. She is facing the breakup of her marriage. She is very concerned about how her children will respond, what steps she can take to minimize the disruption to their lives, and how she will manage financially with the reduced income. Do you decide to relate your own experience of divorce and the parenting issues that followed? Explain your decision.

Scenario 2 - Kenzie:

A favorite participant is removed from your caseload due to moving out of the area. After several years, you see her at a shopping mall. She offers to take you to the food court for lunch to show appreciation for all the help you provided during the time she was on W-2. Do you accept? Why or why not?

Scenario 3 - Darrel:

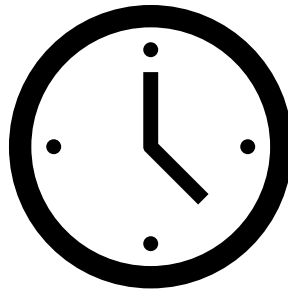
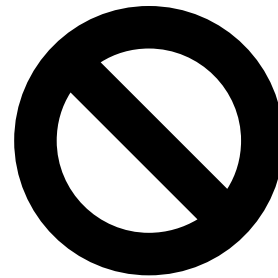
You have a participant recently placed in a CMF placement after gaining employment at a small tax accounting business. He has shared with you that the business is struggling, and he does not know what he will do if the business fails. He asks to prepare your taxes this year. What do you say?

Scenario 4 - Jayden:

Jayden is your neighbor's daughter. Your neighbor stopped by yesterday to tell you that Jayden is applying for services, as she desperately needs help finding a job. Your neighbor asks you to do anything you can to help her. Your neighbor helps you out a lot and has never asked for anything in return. When you get back to the office, you see 10 submitted applications via ACCESS. Jayden's application is 8th. It looks like she was able to select an interview appointment 3 days from now, but you did have a cancellation this afternoon. How will you proceed?

- Some scenarios are modified from WEST CAP, Ethics and Boundaries in Helping Professions curriculum

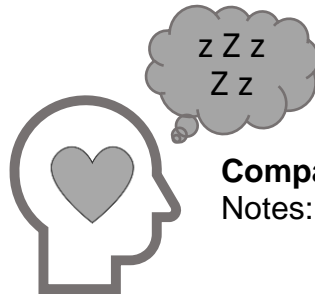
Tips for Setting Professional Boundaries



Self-Care



Burnout
Notes:



Compassion Fatigue
Notes:



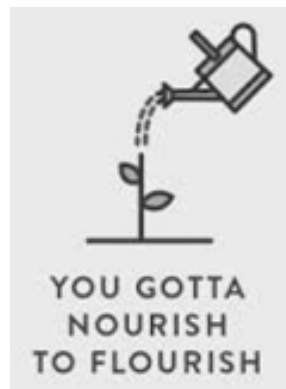
Vicarious Trauma
Notes:

“If you don’t make time for your wellness, you will be forced to make time for your illness.”

Joyce Sunada

Self-Care Strategies

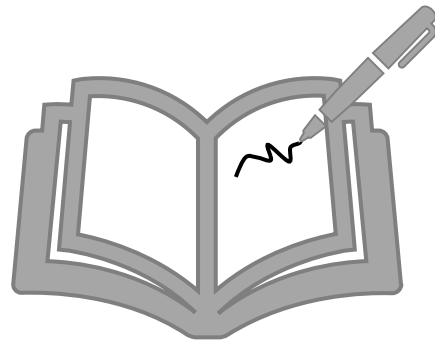
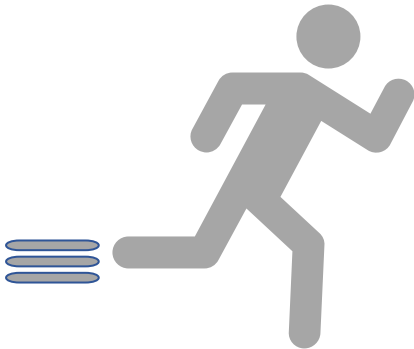
- Take one thing at a time
- Solve little problems
- Be realistic
- Be flexible
- Adopt a positive attitude
- Avoid over-scheduling
- Learn to relax
- Learn to ask for help
- Be aware of your limitations
- Personalize your work and home environment
- Take time for self-reflection
- Talk about stress with friends and family
- Limit your exposure to media that deals with sad, violent, or tragic themes
- Treat your body well. Adopt a healthy lifestyle.
 - Eat healthy food
 - Exercise
 - See your doctors regularly
 - Get enough sleep as often as you can
 - Take time off when you are sick
- Watch what you are thinking
- Share your feelings
- Say “no”



Deep Breathing & Mindfulness

“I’ve got to keep breathing. It’ll be my worst business mistake if I don’t.”

Steve Martin



Prioritizing Self-Care

“I have got to take care of myself so that I can continue to do the work that I hope will make this world a little bit better.”

Nikole Hannah-Jones

<h2>2 Minutes</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breathe• Stretch• Daydream• Doodle• Compliment yourself• Look out the window• Acknowledge an accomplishment••••	<h2>5 Minutes</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to music• Chat with a friend or co-worker• Sing out loud• Jot down dreams• Step outside for fresh air•••
<h2>10 Minutes</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write in a journal• Call a friend• Meditate• Tidy your work area• Draw a picture• Dance••••	<h2>30 Minutes</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get a massage• Exercise• Eat lunch with a friend or co-worker• Take a bubble bath• Spend time in nature• Go shopping• Practice yoga••••

Personal Network Chart

The people I turn to...



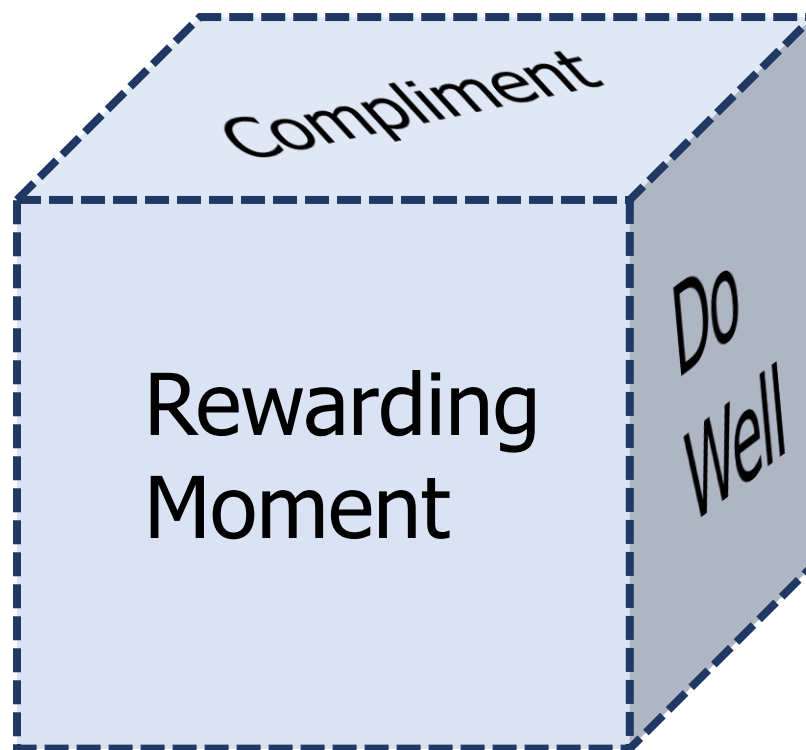
For Close Friendship	_____	_____	_____	_____
For Expert Advice	_____	_____	_____	_____
To Socialize With	_____	_____	_____	_____
To Energize Me	_____	_____	_____	_____
When I Am Hurting	_____	_____	_____	_____
As Helpers	_____	_____	_____	_____
As Mentors	_____	_____	_____	_____
For Acceptance and Approval	_____	_____	_____	_____
To Help Me Discover New Things	_____	_____	_____	_____
For Professional Contacts and Access	_____	_____	_____	_____

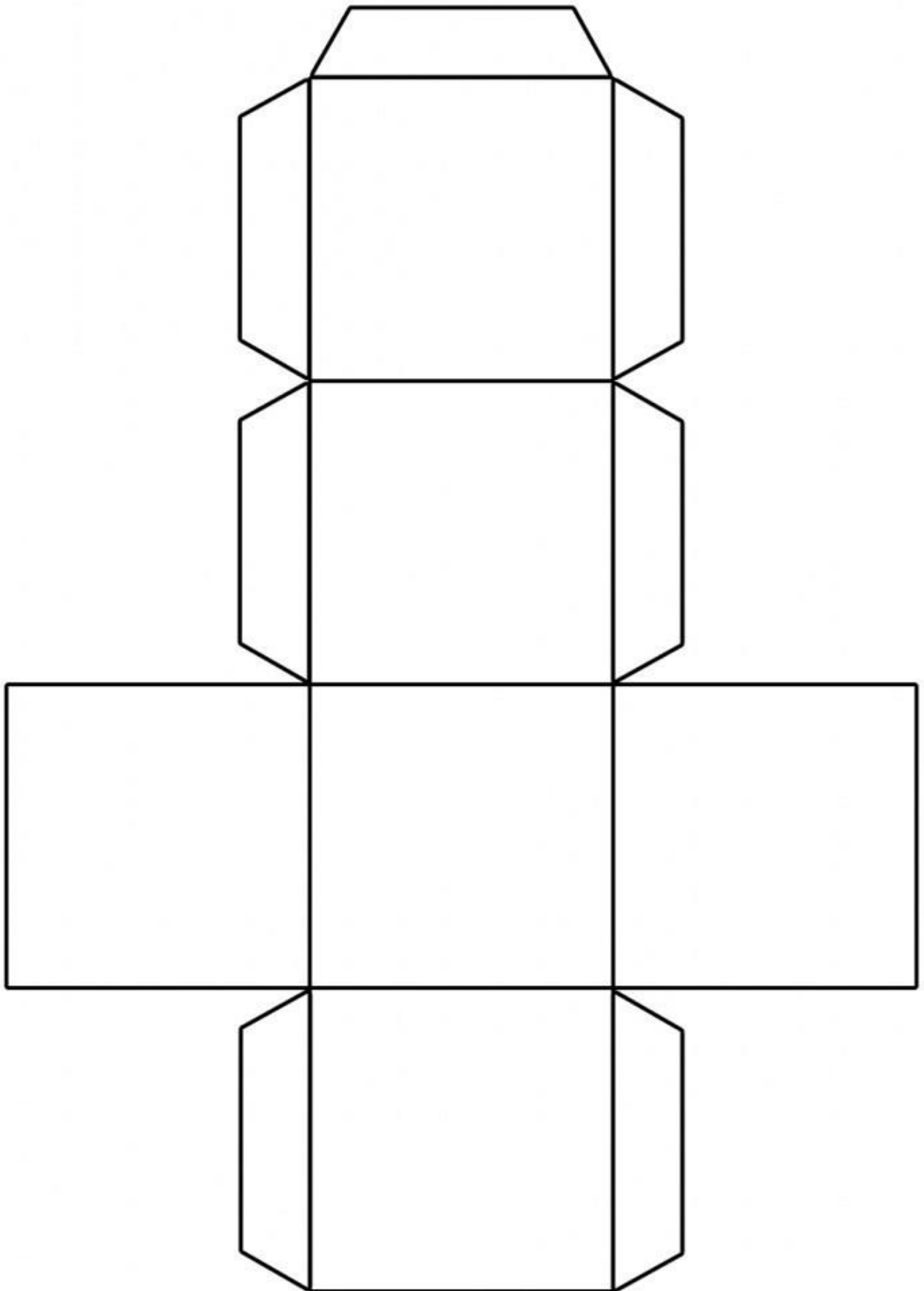
Why Cube

Write your answer to each question in one of the 6 squares on the image on the next page.

1. What is the most rewarding moment at your job?
2. What do you love about your job?
3. Whose lives have you touched? (Initials only)
4. Why did you take your current job?
5. What is a compliment you have received from a co-worker or supervisor?
6. What is something you do well?

To complete the cube, use a scissors to cut along the outline. Fold the squares and tabs inward. Tape the sides.





Hexahedron (platonic solid)

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Appendix

Tools

Time Management

GCFLearnFree - <http://www.gcflearnfree.org/> Free tutorials on many computer skills, including Microsoft Outlook

Microsoft Outlook Microsoft Office - <https://support.office.com/> Search for tutorials on how to use the features in Microsoft Outlook

Mind Tools - <http://www.mindtools.com/> Includes many free articles on prioritization, time management, and creating To-Do Lists

Resilience Measures

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) - <http://emerge.ucsd.edu/measure-brs/> Self-rating questionnaire measuring an individual's capacity to recover from stress.

Scale of Protective Factors (SPF) - <http://emerge.ucsd.edu/measure-spf/> A comprehensive measure of resilience

Resilience Scale - <https://www.resiliencecenter.com/> One of the first scales used to assess resiliency

Professional Boundaries

Ethical Standards for Human Service Professionals - <https://www.nationalhumanservices.org/ethical-standards-for-hs-professionals#profession>

Self-Care Assessment

How often do you do the following?

5 = Frequently 4 = Sometimes 3 = Rarely 2 = Never 1 = It never even occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast and lunch)
- Eat healthfully
- Exercise
- Lift weights
- Practice martial arts
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when you're sick
- Get massages
- Do physical activity that is fun for you
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips, or mini vacations
- Get away from stressful technology (email, phone, computer)

Psychological Self-Care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Go to see a psychotherapist or counselor for yourself
- Write in a journal
- Read literature unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are a beginner
- Take a step to decrease stress in your life
- Notice your inner experiences (dreams, thoughts, imagery, feeling)
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Engage your intelligence in a new area (go to an art museum, performance, sports event, exhibit, or cultural event)
- Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Spend time outdoors

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Treat yourself kindly (supportive inner dialogue)
- Feel proud of yourself
- Reread favorite books or re-watch favorite movies

- Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage in a constructive way
- Play with children

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for prayer, meditation, reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Participate in a spiritual gathering, community, or group
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of nontangible (nonmaterial) aspects of life
- Be open to mystery, not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you, and notice its place in your life
- Sing
- Express gratitude
- Celebrate milestones with rituals that are meaningful to you
- Remember and memorialize loved ones who have died
- Nurture others
- Have awe-filled experiences
- Contribute to or participate in causes you believe in
- Read inspirational literature
- Listen to inspiring music

Workplace/Professional Self-Care

- Take time to eat lunch
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting, growth-promoting, and rewarding for you
- Set limits with participants and colleagues
- Balance your caseload so no one day is “too much”
- Arrange your workspace so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or feedback
- Negotiate for your needs
- Have a peer support group

Questions

- What thoughts do you have about the areas where you are doing well?
- What are areas that you would like to change/improve?

Organizational Self-Care Checklist

Check off everything your organization currently does to support self-care.

Training and Education

- The organization provides all employees with education about stress and its impact on health and wellbeing.
- The organization provides all employees with education on the signs of burnout, compassion fatigue and/or vicarious traumatization.
- The organization provides all employees with stress management trainings.
- The organization provides all employees with training related to their job tasks.
- Staff are given opportunities to attend refresher trainings and trainings on new topics related to their role.
- Staff coverage is in place to support training.
- The organization provides education on the steps necessary to advance in whatever role you are in.

Support and Supervision

- The organization offers an employee assistance program (EAP).
- Employee job descriptions and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- All staff members have regular supervision.
- Part of supervision is used to address job stress and self-care strategies.
- Staff members are encouraged to understand their own stress reactions and take appropriate steps to develop their own self-care plans.
- Staff members are welcome to discuss concerns about the organization or their job with administrators without negative consequences (e.g., being treated differently, feeling like their job is in jeopardy, or having it impact their role on the team).
- Staff members are encouraged to take breaks, including lunch and vacation time.
- The organization supports peer-to-peer activities such as support groups and mentoring.

Employee Control and Input

- The organization provides opportunities for staff to provide input into practices and policies.
- The organization reviews its policies on a regular basis to identify whether they are helpful or harmful to the health and wellbeing of its employees.
- The organization provides opportunities for staff members to identify their professional goals.
- Staff members have formal channels for addressing problems/grievances.

Communication

- Staff members have regularly scheduled team meetings.

- Topics related to self-care and stress management are addressed in team meetings.
- Regular discussions on how people and departments are communicating and relaying information are addressed in team meetings.
- The organization provides opportunities for staff in different roles to share their “day in the life.”
- The organization has a way of evaluating staff satisfaction on a regular basis.

Work Environment

- The work environment is well lit.
- The work environment is physically well maintained (e.g., clean, secure, etc.).
- Information about self-care is posted in places that are visible.
- Employee rights are posted in places that are visible.
- The organization provides opportunities for community building among employees.
- The organization has a no-tolerance policy concerning sexual harassment.
- The organization has a no-tolerance policy concerning bullying.
- Workplace issues, including grievance issues and interpersonal difficulties, are managed by those in the appropriate role, and remain confidential.

Questions

- What ideas did you find on the checklist that you liked/did not like?
- What things did you find realistic/not realistic to implement?
- What are some of the barriers/benefits to implementing these practices?

Stress Reducing Practices

The following activities come from material developed by Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Quality Assurance and the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Center for Community Development, Engagement and Training (CCDET) as part of the federal Caregiver Abuse and Neglect Prevention Project.

These activities can be used as stress reducing techniques for workers, or for workers to share with W-2 participants who may benefit from these practices.

Activity: Muscle Relaxation

As you begin this activity, FREEZE! Don't move a bit. Now pay attention to your body.

Can you drop your shoulders?

If so, your muscles were unnecessarily raising them.

Are your forearms able to relax more?

If so, your muscles were unnecessarily tensing them.

Is your body seated as though you are ready for action?

If so, your muscles may be unnecessarily contracted.

Can your forehead relax more?

If so, those muscles were tense for no useful purpose.

Are other parts of your body contracted unnecessarily?

Check your stomach, buttocks, thighs and calf muscles.

Unnecessary muscular contraction can cause tension headaches, neck aches, or back problems. Be mindful of contracted muscles as you go through your day, and concentrate on letting your muscles relax as much as possible.

Physical Exercise

Remember that the fight or flight response is intended to induce vigorous physical activity, either fighting to protect ourselves or running away from a life-threatening situation.

Physical exercise can take the place of fighting or fleeing, neutralizing those stress hormones and restoring our body and mind to a calmer, more relaxed state. Five minutes of vigorous exercise - 50 jumping jacks or sit-ups, running up or down stairs, or just running in place - can do wonders.

Longer exercise periods are needed to achieve fitness and contribute significantly to our overall well-being, but mini-exercise sessions are very helpful when needed to relieve stress, and they're short enough and easy enough to fit into any busy schedule.

Meditation

If you've ever tuned in on your everyday mind, you understand why the term "monkey mind" is such a good description for what goes on in your brain. The mind is constantly chattering and jumping from one branch of thought to another.

Some of that chatter is very useful as we navigate through our busy workday, plan for picking up the kids from school, preparing dinner, etc. However, we can also get stuck in unproductive worry and anxiety, at times becoming "expert worriers." As Mark Twain said, "I've experienced many terrible things in my life, a few of which actually happened."

The good news is that, underneath that constant stream of ever-changing thought is a place of calm and quiet, sometimes known as the "observer" or "witness." We can learn to access that quiet place through meditation.

Meditation has been used by many to relieve stress and achieve a more peaceful sense of well-being. Its many benefits such as lowered blood pressure, lowered pulse rate, and increased alpha brain waves (associated with relaxation), can be easily measured. Just 10 or 20 minutes of meditation, once or twice a day, can reap these benefits.

Some of us have never practiced meditation. Here's a quick activity that will help you decide whether it might appeal to you.

Activity: Practice Meditation

- Sit quietly in a chair with your back straight, your shoulders relaxed, and your feet flat on the floor.
- Close your eyes.
- Release any tension you may be holding in your feet, legs, abdomen, hands, shoulders and face.
- Breathe naturally through your nose, keeping your shoulders still and focusing your breath in the abdominal region. (When you breathe abdominally, the belly rises with the in-breath.)
- Now start counting to ten with each breath, gently saying to yourself "now" on the in-breath, and "one" on the out-breath," "now" on the in-breath again, "two" on the out-breath, and so on, to ten.

- Continue breathing this way, mentally counting to ten with each in-breath and out-breath, and then start over again with “one.”
- If you find yourself distracted (actually “when” you find yourself distracted), simply say “oh well”, or “thinking” and return your focus to the breath and counting.
- Continue for ten to twenty minutes. You can check the clock by opening your eyes briefly.
- When you’re finished, don’t open your eyes immediately. Just sit quietly for a moment or two and wait a few more moments before standing up.

Note: You can replace the “now” and numbers with any quieting words you like, or not even have words, simply focusing on the in-breath and out-breath. Remember, the point of meditation is not to stop your mind from thinking (Good luck with that!) but rather to let go of your thoughts instead of being caught up in them. When you realize that your mind has wandered, it’s important not to become frustrated or judgmental.

Breathing

When we become anxious or stressed, we tend to hold our breath or breathe very shallowly, both of which are associated with the fight or flight response. The simple act of deepening and slowing down our breathing is the easiest, fastest, and most effective stress reliever we can employ. Remembering to do it in the middle of an anxious moment is not so easy, however.

The way we ordinarily breathe, even when we are not feeling stressed, is also important. To find out how you breathe, try this: take a deep breath. Which expands more with the in-breath, your chest or your belly? (If you can’t tell sitting up, try lying down.) Most people say that it’s their chest. Chest breathing utilizes only the middle and upper portions of the lungs, resulting in an inefficient exchange of oxygen as compared to when we bring air down into the lower portion of the lungs. Learning to breathe like a baby again, (all infants are abdominal breathers) can relax our muscles, calm our minds, and relieve stress.

There are many simple variations on the basic deep breath that can be used to relax and relieve stress. We can use these “mini-vacations” anytime to refresh our bodies and minds, and they don’t cost a cent. Let’s take a look at three examples:

Activity: Three Breathing Exercises

- Take a deep breath through your nose. With your mouth still closed, slowly let it out while relaxing your jaw. Continue breathing slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen, making your abdomen rise with the in-breath while your chest and shoulders remain still. Follow the in-breath with a slow, even exhalation.

- Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose, becoming aware of the air coming into your nostrils. As you breathe out, become aware of the air passing back out. Notice that the air coming in is slightly cooler than the air passing out (in...cool, out...warm). Continue to breathe for a few minutes in this way, focusing on the air coming in and out of your nostrils.
- Inhale deeply through your nose while counting to eight. With pursed lips, exhale slowly through your mouth and count to 16 (or for as long as you can concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve.)

Self-Acupressure

The roots of acupressure date back to ancient Chinese medicine. It is a simple technique of applying pressure with the fingertips on certain points of the body. As you apply pressure, breathe slowly and deeply with your eyes closed for three to five minutes.

Let's look at some places on the body where pressure can help relieve stress.

Two Points at Base of Skull

Interlace your fingers and place your hands behind your head. With your thumbs, press the two points at the left and right sides of the base of the skull in the indentation between the muscles and bones.

Third Eye Point

Feel for a sensitive area in the indentation between the eyebrows where the nose connects with the forehead.

Point in the Outer Wrist

Press the point in the indentation on the outside of the crease of the wrist, down from the small finger.

Point on Top of the Shoulders

With the fingertips of both hands, hold the points on top of the shoulders. The arms may be crossed if this position is more comfortable.

Sore Spot

Locate a sore spot in the left side of the chest about two to three inches down from the collar bone and about two inches to the side of the sternum.

Two Points on Eyebrow-Nose Ridge

Look for these two points on the face where the bridge of the nose meets the ridge of the eyebrow: above and behind the area where eyeglasses rest on the nose.

Two Points on Back of Neck

These points are located approximately half an inch below the base of the skull between the muscles of the neck and about one half inch outward from either side of the spine.

One Point at Base of Skull

This point is found at the base of the skull at the center of the back of the neck.

Finger Holds to Balance Emotional Energy

The theory behind this practice is that through each finger runs a channel or meridian of energy connected with the different organs of the body. As you hold a finger, usually within a minute or two you will feel an energy pulse or throbbing sensation. This indicates that the energy is flowing and balanced, and usually the strong feeling or emotion passes.

Finger holds may also be done for relaxation with music, or be used before going to sleep to release the problems of the day and to bring peace to body and mind.

Activity: Finger Holds

You may do the finger holds with either hand. NOTE: The hold should be firm, but not too tight or painful in any way.

Begin to be aware of how you hold your hands and fingers at different times and how this may relate to your feelings. Many of these finger holds occur naturally without consciousness.

Thumb

For tears, grief, emotional pain

Hold the thumb, breathe deeply and exhale all the grief and sorrow you feel. Breathe in to fill yourself with **peace** and **comfort**. Hold until you feel a pulsation of energy.

Index Finger

For fear

Use of the index finger is a good way to learn how to work with fear, rather than be a victim in the grip of fear. While holding the index finger, exhale and let go of fear.

Inhale **courage** and **strength of being**.

Middle Finger

For anger and rage

Hold the middle finger, exhale and let go of all anger and rage, inhaling **compassion**, **energy**, and **creative passion** into your life.

Ring Finger

For anxiety and nervousness

Breathe deeply holding the ring finger. Exhale, letting go of all worry and anxiety. Inhale a deep sense of **peace** and **security** in the midst of life's problems, knowing that you are held and cared for in spirit.

Small Finger

Low self-esteem, feelings of unworthiness

Hold the small finger, breathe deeply, exhaling and letting go of insecurity and unworthiness. Breathe in **gratitude** and **appreciation** for the gift of life.

Tai Chi and Yoga

The ancient mind-body disciplines of tai chi and yoga originated in China and India thousands of years ago. They began gaining momentum in this country in the 1960s. While quite different, both consist of graceful, fluid body movements synchronized with the breath, and both have many health benefits, including stress relief.

You have probably seen yoga demonstrated on television. If you've ever visited a large city on the west coast, such as Oakland, California, you may have seen the slow, beautiful choreography of tai chi practiced daily in public parks by the many Chinese people living there. It can be relaxing just to watch them move together in this meditative way.

Many communities offer classes in tai chi and yoga, and there are many videos, as well as television shows, demonstrating these practices for all levels and abilities. You can try meditative movement right now while you're sitting reading this:

- Slowly straighten your upper body and relax your shoulders and jaw
- Soften your gaze, relax your belly and begin to take a slow, deep breath while raising your arms over your head, wrists limp
- Then with a long, slow exhalation, lower your arms
- Repeat this movement, focusing on your breathing, three times. Notice how you feel when you've finished!

Journaling

Some people find it helpful to keep a daily journal, writing for a few minutes first thing in the morning or at night before turning out the light. Recording our thoughts and questions about life can be like talking with a good friend. Reading past journal entries spanning weeks and months may help us recognize patterns in our lives we might otherwise miss.

One very effective method of journaling, which takes practically no time at all, is to keep a gratitude journal. Naming the things that make you happy in a day: the smile of a particular person, a delicious homemade cookie, a warm shower, is an excellent way to practice seeing the glass half-full. An even simpler version of this is to name those

“happy-making” things as you close your eyes to go to sleep. Getting in the habit of noticing the small things we often take for granted can make a big difference in our attitude about life in general.

Seven Quickies

Here are some quick relaxation techniques that you can practice almost anywhere. You may even get a laugh or two when you’re practicing!

Rag Doll

- Sit down and pretend for a few seconds that you are a rag doll.
- Your legs are like spaghetti.
- Your arms are dangling.
- Your head is hanging - you are completely relaxed.

Eye Rolls

- Roll eyes clockwise, starting at 12:00 position.

Tongue Stretch

- Open your mouth wide, stick out your tongue as far as you can.

Full Body Stretch

- Stand on tiptoe.
- Lift your arms over your head with fingers pointing toward the ceiling.
- Inhale and stretch for the count of 10.
- Exhale and let your body drop to a slouched position.

Neck Roll

- Roll your neck in full circles, first one way and then the other.

Turtle

- Raise your shoulders up to your ears as you inhale, release, exhale.

Shoulder Roll

- Roll your right shoulder forward- center- back 10 times. Repeat with the left shoulder.

Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important		
Not Important		

The image shows a hand-drawn weekly planner template. At the top left, there is a 'Date' field with a dotted line for writing. To the right of this is the title 'Weekly Planner' written in a large, cursive font. Below the title, the planner is divided into three main sections. On the left, a section titled '{ Things to Do }' contains a vertical list of 14 horizontal lines, each preceded by a small square checkbox. To the right of this list are two rectangular boxes with dashed borders. The top box is labeled 'Urgent' and the bottom box is labeled 'Notes'. At the bottom right of the planner, there are three decorative loops, resembling a spiral binding.

Making the most of today

MY MOTIVATION THIS WEEK:

MUST DO TODAY:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

SOMETIME THIS WEEK:

NOTE TO SELF:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:30					
8:30-9:00					
9:00-9:30					
9:30-10:00					
10:00-10:30					
10:30-11:00					
11:00-11:30					
11:30-12:00					
12:00-12:30					
12:30-1:00					
1:00-1:30					
1:30-2:00					
2:00-2:30					
2:30-3:00					
3:00-3:30					
3:30-4:00					
4:00-4:30					
4:30-5:00					