

# Bring Your Life Into Balance

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## HELPGUIDE'S FREE STRESS-BUSTING, MOOD-BOOSTING MINDFULNESS TOOLKIT

### Off the emotional rollercoaster: Becoming a healthier, happier you

Do you ever feel like you're at the mercy of stress or your emotions? Do you wish you had more control over your mental and emotional state? We all know what it's like to be buffeted by stress and feel emotionally off-balance.

It may seem like a never-ending ride, but you can get off the emotional rollercoaster. You can bring your life into balance by learning more about:

- Stress and how you respond to it.
- Why your emotions matter.
- What you can do to harness the energy of your emotions and benefit from them.

The key word here is "learn." Like anything worthwhile, achieving emotional balance will take some practice and patience, but you'll also start feeling the benefits very quickly. Our brains have the ability to change and evolve, even as we age. So, no matter how long you've felt stressed, overwhelmed, or out-of-sync in your life, today you can take the first step to getting off the emotional rollercoaster and becoming a healthier, happier you.

### Could you benefit from this toolkit?

Some of us instantly know when we have an emotional problem, while others only suspect that something in our lives isn't quite working as it should.

- Do you feel overwhelmed by responsibilities and stressed out much of the time?
- Do you feel misunderstood in your relationships? Do you have a hard time connecting with others?
- Do you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities as a parent? Are you having a hard time connecting emotionally with your infant or child?
- Do you struggle with chronic depression, anxiety, worry, or negativity?
- Are you having trouble getting ahead in your career, despite your job talents? Have you

received complaints about the way you interact with customers or co-workers?

- Do your loved ones complain about your mood swings, temper, irrational fears, or your emotional distance?
- Do you find yourself getting annoyed or upset at little things that don't seem to bother other people? Do you have a hard time rolling with the punches?
- Do you often say or do things you know you shouldn't, only to regret it later? Do you feel trapped in a negative cycle, repeating the same mistakes over and over again?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, this toolkit may help you break free and bring your life back into balance.

## Beyond coping and traditional self-help

While traditional self-help may provide good advice and give you a better understanding of yourself, it typically doesn't lead to long-term change. That's because changing mental and emotional habits takes more than just intellectual understanding and the will to change—it takes a process that engages you physically and emotionally as well as intellectually.

This toolkit goes beyond coping and traditional self-help to repair your nervous system's ability to remain in balance so you can experience being both calm and focused throughout the day. It's designed to teach you skills that, when practiced regularly, can actually change your brain in ways that will make you feel more confident, resilient, and in control.

## The key to lasting change is practice that leads to brain change

The toolkit includes articles, videos, worksheets, and the “Ride the Wild Horse” mindfulness meditation. The different tools are designed to complement and reinforce each other. The combination of reading, watching, listening, and doing is much more powerful than simply reading alone. As you work through the toolkit, you will begin to replace your old emotional habits with healthier ways of thinking, feeling, behaving, and relating to others. The more you practice, the better you'll get at managing your emotions and facing life's challenges, but any amount of time you put in will make a positive difference.

## How to use the toolkit

This toolkit is a program to help you gain the abilities needed to overcome challenges, experience greater emotional health, build emotional intelligence, and bring your life into balance. The toolkit comes with a step-by-step guide for progressively acquiring the skills you need—quick stress relief and emotional awareness—to be emotionally healthy and socially competent.

Don't think that you have to tackle everything all at once. The toolkit is designed to be used over a period of time and is broken up into short, simple steps to help you explore your moods and gradually take control of your emotional health.

- **The goal.** As you work through the toolkit, you'll first learn how to regulate stress. Then you'll learn how to recognize, monitor, and deal with your emotions. It's important to know how to quickly relieve stress before you begin to explore your most challenging emotions.
- **The strategy.** The toolkit is designed to engage your senses in a variety of ways that support learning and lasting change. As you watch, read, and listen, different parts of your brain will be stimulated. And hopefully you'll also have some fun along the way.

## Step 1: Getting started

The fact that you're reading these words is an indication that you want something to change for the better in your life. The more you want the change, the better your chance of getting what you want. Think of building emotional muscle like building physical muscle—regular investment, even on a small scale, will produce results. Twenty to forty minutes of emotional exercise a day is sufficient, whether it's repeating the audio exercises or re-reading an article. Remember: change doesn't happen overnight. Your brain is continually evolving during this process and may continue to change for the better for years to come. Importantly, though, each time you exercise your brain you'll feel better and experience positive changes.



**Read, download and print:** [Roadmap / Checklist](#)

The Roadmap/Checklist makes it easier navigate the toolkit. Each step builds on information and skills learned in previous steps. Proceed at your own pace, staying with each step until you feel comfortable and confident of your ability to tackle the next, watching and reviewing the material as often as you like.



**Watch the video:** [Emotions Matter!](#) (4:03) – Discover the powerful role of emotions and how they can make the difference between success and failure in every aspect of life.



**Watch the video:** [Roadblocks to Awareness](#) (2:54) – Identify thoughts and habits that interfere with your ability to understand yourself, connect to others, and manage your emotions.

## Step 2: Learn quick stress relief (1st core skill)

Being able to manage and relieve stress in the moment is the key to staying balanced, focused, and in control, no matter what challenges you face. Step 2 teaches you how to recognize when you're stressed and quickly bring yourself back into balance.



**Watch the video:** [Quick Stress Relief](#) (4:11) – Investigate the fastest way to de-stress in the moment—a tool you can use no matter what you're doing or where you are.



**Read:** [Quick Stress Relief: Fast and Effective Ways to Rapidly Reduce Stress](#) – Learn to spot stressors and stay in control when the pressure builds.



**Read:** [Be a Stress Busting Detective](#) – Learn to identify the types of stress-busting sensory input that work quickly and effectively for you.

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### Step 3: Learn why emotional awareness matters (2nd core skill)

You can't effectively manage your emotions or harness their power unless you're aware of them. It sounds simple, but many people aren't in touch with how they feel from moment-to-moment. Step 3 teaches you about the importance of emotional awareness and how you can use it to understand yourself better and regain your balance.



**Watch the video:** [Developing Emotional Awareness](#) (2:50) – Learn about the importance of knowing what you are feeling and why and the link between your emotions and your body.



**Read:** [Developing Emotional Awareness: Recognizing and Harnessing the Power of Your Emotions](#) – Learn how to recognize and manage uncomfortable feelings so you remain in control, rather than being overwhelmed.

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### Step 4: Practice the Ride the Wild Horse audio meditation

Ride the Wild Horse is a 2-part audio mindfulness meditation designed to help you build your emotional awareness while staying calm and in control. Step 4 teaches you how to safely connect to what you feel without becoming overwhelmed.



**Watch the video:** [Harness Your Emotions](#) (3:31) – Learn about an audio mindfulness meditation that teaches you how to manage and harness even your most unpleasant and frightening emotions.



**Read:** [How to Ride the Wild Horse: Guidelines for Learning and Practicing the Meditation](#) – Use this guide to prepare for the audio mindfulness meditation.



**Listen & Practice:** [Ride the Wild Horse Mindfulness Meditation](#). The process includes both beginning and (optional) advanced meditations, each with provisions for either listening online or downloading MP3 files for listening offline.

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### Step 5: Integrate the toolkit into your life

To solidify the skills you've learned and integrate them into your life, you'll need to practice until they come naturally. With regular practice, you can actually change your brain in ways that will make you feel more confident, resilient, and in control. These final steps will help you groove this new learning into your brain.



**Watch the video:** [Unexpected Rewards](#) (4:30) – Uncover the numerous rewards of being aware and in control of your emotions, including self-confidence and better relationships.

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**Watch the video:** [It's Up To You](#) (3:50) – Claim your emotional power. You can change the way you think, feel, and act—bringing your life into balance—by practicing two core skills.

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**Talk to a good listener.** Talk to an interested, non-judgmental listener about your experiences with the Ride the Wild Horse meditation. Try to do this within 36 hours if possible.

### **Continue to practice the meditation**

until you're able to stay connected to your physical and emotional feelings, and are secure in your ability to remain calm and focused under stress.

### **Additional benefits for your relationships**

As you bring stress and emotions into balance, you will find it much easier to develop three related skills that can further strengthen and enrich your life. These are an ability to understand and use nonverbal communication, a greater capacity for experiencing joy, and an ability to resolve conflict in ways that strengthen, rather than destroy, relationships.



**Read:** [Nonverbal Communication](#), to help you understand the power of nonverbal communication and how to use and recognize body language to strengthen relationships.

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**Read:** [Playful Communication in Relationships](#). Laughter not only relieves tension and stress, elevates mood, and enhances creativity, but it can also be used to bring people closer together.

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**Read:** [Conflict Resolution Skills](#). While conflict is inevitable in any relationship, when handled properly it can provide an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people.

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### **Science supporting the toolkit**

This toolkit is based on the transformational revolution that has taken place in the field of psychology. Emotion is now at the heart of clinical theory and most psychological research and is seen as the foundation to psychotherapeutic change. Moreover, we also now know that all thinking, including high-level thinking, benefits greatly from having an emotional component.



**Watch:** [Why is emotion so important?](#) (6:14) – **Dr. Allan Schore** – Clinical Faculty & Researcher, Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences, UCLA



**Watch:** [What's new in Neuroscience?](#) (5:03) – **Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, Ed.D.** – Cognitive Neuroscientist, Brain and Creativity Institute, USC

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## Helping others: Parents, students, clients, patients, and loved ones

As well as individual use, the Helpguide toolkit can also be used in teaching, therapeutic, and various office and home settings to help others acquire social and emotional skills. While it's imperative to always teach both core skills of the toolkit (quick stress relief and emotional awareness), medical or teaching professionals may in some cases need to omit or reformat other aspects of the material according to the age and social background of the audience, or to make it more accessible as a teaching tool.

- **Parents** can be taught these skills—in groups or individually—so that they can model and teach appropriate behavior to their children. Social/emotional awareness is important for successfully parenting any child, and critical for successfully parenting a child with developmental challenges.
- **Children of all ages** can learn age-appropriate aspects of the toolkit from suitably-equipped adults. Infants with primary caretakers who model these skills will learn them effortlessly, while preteens and teens are often especially interested in gaining social/emotional skills in order to improve their relationships with others.
- **Mental health professionals** can recommend some or all of the Helpguide toolkit, depending on patient need, for use in either individual or group settings. The toolkit can encourage clients with emotional issues such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia to learn more about reducing stress and better managing their moods.
- **Physicians** can refer the Helpguide toolkit to patients who need to reduce sources of both internal and external stress in their lives.
- **Family members** can encourage friends and loved ones to use the toolkit to regain their emotional balance. Of course, they are more likely to have success when they themselves model the social/emotional skills taught by the toolkit.

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