

Bright Futures

A young woman's guide to emotional wellness



Bright Futures for Women's Health and Wellness



This booklet is about helping young women like you to feel your best.

The tips in this booklet are drawn from the latest research into what helps young women to feel and be their best. The research suggests that young women can increase their self-esteem and learn skills like flexibility, being strong, and optimism. Additionally, spiritual practices and support from family and friends can make young women feel better. We encourage you to adopt the tips in this guide and to share what you learn with your friends!

This booklet is part of a series of materials called "Bright Futures for Women's Health and Wellness." This series also includes guides for adult women, community organizations, and healthcare providers. These materials were developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Office of Women's Health, with the guidance of a 10-member panel of predominantly female mental health experts from around the country and feedback from young women like you. Bright Futures materials help women achieve better physical, mental, social, and spiritual health by encouraging healthy practices.

It's important to note that, while this guide does mention depression and anxiety, it is not intended to help you diagnose or treat these or other illnesses. If you believe you are suffering from depression, anxiety, or a more serious mental illness, please see a health care professional who can help you.

We hope you find this guide helpful. When you are finished with it, please share it with your friends!

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Introduction

Part of being a young woman is spending a lot of time thinking about and talking about your emotions. You probably know when you are happy, sad, proud, angry, excited, and so on. It's easier for all of us to think about our emotions when we have them. To be emotionally well, you may also need to think about how you feel in a broader way. You need to be sure you are aware of all of your feelings – good or bad – not only when you have them, but at other times, too.

Being emotionally well means feeling good about yourself, your relationships, and your purpose in life. It does not mean that you will never be sad, angry, or confused. Everyone feels this way from time to time. When you are emotionally well, you may have fewer lows and may be able to bounce back from sad times faster. You may also feel more happiness during the good times. All young women can learn to feel better. Once you learn, you can help your friends learn, too!

This guide has three sections. Each one is important for emotional wellness. These are:

- ▶ *Appreciating Yourself*
- ▶ *Finding Balance and Purpose*
- ▶ *Connecting with Others*

Each section has ideas to help you feel better. It includes quizzes and activities for you to do by yourself or with your friends. The guide also has stories from young women like you.

All young women are unique, but we hope that every young woman will be able to use some of this information. As you are looking through it, keep track of the tips that might help you or a friend!

Appreciating yourself

Young women are busy! Think about it: You might be a friend, a student, a daughter, a sister, a teammate, an artist, a musician, a writer, an athlete, and many other things!

That's why it's important to take some time every day to appreciate yourself. It's fun, it's easy, and it will help you do better in all your different roles.

Appreciating yourself includes things such as focusing on what you do well, getting enough sleep, and eating right. This section of the guide talks about all the ways you can learn to appreciate yourself:

- ▶ *Build your self-respect*
- ▶ *Build your self-confidence*
- ▶ *Build your self-esteem*
- ▶ *Set your own goals and self-expectations*
- ▶ *Take care of your body*
- ▶ *Think positively*
- ▶ *Make time for activities you enjoy and that have meaning for you*
- ▶ *Learn skills that help you cope with difficult emotions and situations*

Section 1: Appreciating yourself



Becky's story: "When I hang out with my friends, one of the things we like to do is talk about what we like about one another, even silly stuff like who is great at fixing hair or who has good taste in music. It makes me feel really good, and we usually end up laughing together!"

Build your self-respect

Respect is important. All young women want to be respected. But have you ever thought about whether you are respecting yourself? This means taking care of yourself in four different ways:

- ▶ *Physically: Being active, eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, and practicing good hygiene.*
- ▶ *Mentally: Challenging your mind. This includes learning about yourself and your family history.*
- ▶ *Spiritually: Taking time to explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life. Taking time to think about how you want to guide your life by these beliefs.*
- ▶ *Emotionally: Thinking good thoughts about yourself and others.*

This guide can help you learn how to respect the most important person in your life – you!

Build your self-confidence

Young women who are confident are able to try new things. They know they can deal with problems. You can become more confident by setting goals that make sense, thinking positively, and being prepared.

Here are some more tips to increase your self-confidence:

- *Stop comparing: Your abilities and talents are unique – special. Decide what success means for you and don't worry about what success means for anyone else.*
- *Remember your good deeds: Remember that time you shared your lunch with a friend who forgot hers? Or that time you made your best friend a cake on her birthday? You do lots of great things for other people every day. Appreciate yourself.*
- *Forgive yourself and learn from your mistakes: Everyone makes mistakes once in a while. Learn from them and move on. You're not the only young woman who ever left her homework on the kitchen table! Just don't be the one who does that every week.*

Build your self-esteem

A young woman with a healthy self-esteem knows what makes her unique and values those things. Self-esteem helps you feel good about yourself, no matter what other people think of you.

Here are some tips to help you boost your self-esteem:

- *Accept your strengths and your weaknesses: No one is perfect, not even the most popular person you know. Your strengths and weaknesses are what make you special.*
- *Congratulate yourself and be nice to yourself and others: Honor your achievements, big and small. Be your own biggest fan. Let others know what you like about them.*
- *Value yourself: Friends and family are great, but don't depend on others to make you feel good about yourself. Value yourself no matter what other people say about you.*
- *Surround yourself with positive people: Choose friends who value you. Try to ignore people who make negative comments.*
- *Praise yourself: Remember one good thing about yourself every day.*
- *Do good things: Do at least one thing that you feel good about every day.*

Set your own goals and self-expectations

Many young women let others tell them what they should be doing and how to do it. To be emotionally well, you need to judge yourself by your own standards and no one else's.

These tips can help you set standards for yourself:

- *Define beauty for yourself: Images of thin, cute young women are everywhere. Most young women do not look that way. True beauty comes from inside and shines outward. Focus on the things about yourself that you think are beautiful.*
- *Define your own values: Many young women try to live by the values held by their friends or popular teens or young women they see on TV. The only values you need to live up to are your own. Think about what they are and stick to them.*
- *Focus on your strengths: We all have strengths and weaknesses, but many of us focus more on our weaknesses. Try this instead. Every time you think about one of your weaknesses, think about one of your strengths, too.*

Take care of your body

Most young women know that eating well and being active can make you fit. Did you know that taking good care of yourself can help your emotional health as well? Physical activity, healthy eating, and getting enough sleep can improve your mood! Pretty great, huh?

To learn more about physical activity and healthy eating, read "My Bright Future: Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Tools for Young Women." You can download a free copy at www.hrsa.gov/womenshealth.

You don't have to make a lot of big changes. Start with small steps:

- Healthy eating habits: Decide on just one thing you would like to do to eat healthier. Keep doing it until it becomes a habit. Then try to form another good eating habit. (If you aren't sure what healthy eating means, here is one definition: Healthy eating means eating a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages within and among the basic food groups, while choosing foods that limit your intake of saturated and *trans* fats, cholesterol, and added sugars or salt.)*
- Physical activity: Add a few minutes of walking or some other form of exercise to your day. Keep adding minutes until you've reached your goal. (One goal is to aim for at least 60 minutes of walking or other moderate physical activity on most days of the week.)*
- Set an earlier bedtime: Go to bed 10 minutes earlier than usual. Keep doing it until you've reached your goal. (Most young women need about eight hours of sleep a night.)*
- Develop good sleep habits: Once you've found the right bedtime, try to go to bed at about the same time every night. Try not to eat, drink caffeinated beverages, or exercise right before bed.*

Imagine how doing just one of these small steps on a regular basis can add up at the end of a month!

Think positively

Positive thinking actually helps you deal with your problems! No one can think positively all the time, but every young woman can learn how to feel more optimistic.

Here are some tips:

- *Look for the positive: When things go wrong, think of something good about the situation. Suppose a friend cancels your plans. Look at it as more time to do something for yourself like reading a book, calling another friend, or watching a movie.*
- *Focus on the good things: Even when something has upset you in one part of your life, you can still focus on the things you value in other areas.*

Padma's story: "My mom has this rule that I used to think was really lame, but now I kind of like it. Every month, we all have to spend a few hours doing something good for someone else. Sometimes, we all do the same thing and sometimes everyone picks something different. Like this month, I helped my neighbor weed her garden. We had a great time, and it does feel kind of nice to help someone else."



Make time for activities you enjoy and that have meaning for you

You'd be surprised at how much happier you are when you are doing something that has meaning for you.

Here are some tips on how to get started:

- *Find activities that are important to you: Spend your time on things you care about, not things someone else thinks you should do. You will be more committed to them and enjoy them more!*
- *Start a club: If there's no group at your school working on the issues you care about, talk to a teacher to find out how to start one. It can give you experience and skills, which will help you find a job when you finish high school or apply to a college or a trade school.*
- *Do things with your friends: Make meaningful activities part of what you do when you hang out with your friends.*
- *Schedule it in: Even busy young women can find time to take part in activities they enjoy and that have meaning to them. Practice scheduling your time now. It will also help to prepare you for later on when you have a job or if you continue your education.*

Learn skills that help you cope with difficult emotions and situations

Coping is the way we deal with problems and stress. It's part of life to be stressed sometimes, but knowing how to cope will help you get through the tough times.

Here are some suggestions to help you cope:

- *Express yourself: Write your feelings in a journal, sing along with your favorite song, act out a scene from a movie, or find some other way to express your feelings.*
- *Take care of yourself: Get plenty of rest. Eat healthy foods and be physically active. Don't do anything out of the ordinary. Instead, try to find comfort in your usual routines.*
- *Stay connected to others and tell them how you are doing: When you're stressed out, you need other people. Find someone you trust to talk to, call, e-mail, text message, or IM.*
- *Ask for help: If you feel overwhelmed, ask friends, parents, a school counselor, a teacher, a pastor, rabbi or other faith-based advisor, or your health care provider for advice or help. Being strong means knowing when to seek help. Everyone needs help from time to time.*

Quiz: Are you an optimist?

Optimists see the sunny side of things. Are you an optimist? Take this quiz to find out.

1. *You open your locker at school and notice that someone left you a note. Your first thought is:*

- Wow, this is great! (2)*
- Oh, no, this must be bad. (0)*

2. *When they talk about me, my friends and family say:*

- She expects things to go her way. (2)*
- She always assumes the worst. (0)*

3. *When you wake up in the morning, you are:*

- Ready to rise and shine! (2)*
- Dreading starting a new day. (0)*

4. *You break your foot and need to be on crutches. You think:*

___ *I'll get all my friends to sign my cast! (2)*

___ *Ugh, this could only happen to me! (0)*

5. *When your best friend is sad, you can be counted on to:*

___ *Cheer her up by looking on the bright side. (2)*

___ *Join in, because misery loves company. (0)*

Scoring:

0-5 The clouds are out!

You are more of a negative thinker than an optimist. Sometimes, just thinking that things will go well seems to make them go well! If you have confidence in yourself, it can have an amazing effect on the way you think. Try to think more positively. And look up – the sun is about to come out!

6-10 Break out the sunglasses!

You think like an optimist! Keep it up. Having a positive attitude can actually make things go well. People probably love being around you because of your positive attitude and confidence. You are a ray of sunshine!

Section 1:
Appreciating yourself

Activities to help you appreciate yourself

Here are some short exercises you and your friends can try to help you learn to appreciate yourself!

Name two things you are good at:

Name two things about you that you think are beautiful (inside and out):

Think about what makes you feel good and why.

Now think about what makes you feel stressed and why.

Finding balance and purpose

Every young woman's life has a purpose. To understand what yours is and learn how to live it, you've got to know how to balance all that life brings your way. Follow these steps, and you're on your way to being a young woman on a mission:

- ▶ *Learn about yourself, your family, and your community*
- ▶ *Develop a purpose statement that is based on your personal values*
- ▶ *Set goals*
- ▶ *Be able to change*
- ▶ *Learn skills that can help you deal positively with stress*
- ▶ *Increase your confidence*
- ▶ *Nurture your spirit*

Ready? Set? Go!

Section 2:
Finding Balance and Purpose

Learn about yourself, your family, and your community

You might not ever think about it, but we all need to take the time to learn about ourselves, our families, and our communities. If you don't learn about yourself and where you come from, how can you be sure you are working toward the right goals? One way to make sure you are on the right track is through writing. Don't worry about complete sentences or spelling. Just let your thoughts flow onto the paper. If you have a creative style, add drawings and use colorful pens!

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ▶ *I am happiest when...*
- ▶ *I am proud of myself because...*
- ▶ *I was born to...*
- ▶ *In my dreams, I...*
- ▶ *I believe in my abilities to do great things because...*
- ▶ *I'm proud of my family or community because...*

Develop a purpose statement that is based on your personal values

Do you ask yourself, "Why am I here? Who am I? What is my purpose in life?" These are good questions to ask. The meaning and purpose of life is unique for every young woman.

A purpose statement describes how you want to live your life. You can update your purpose statement as your goals change.

Here are two examples:

- I will be the best me I can be. I will work hard in school, enjoy my friends, take care of myself, and enjoy the little things in life every day.*
- I will love life by taking pleasure in the small things, loving my family and friends, and accepting my responsibilities. I will welcome each day with a smile.*

Latisha's story: "My English teacher had us do a class exercise where everyone wrote down something they wanted to do in life, and some small steps for how to get there. I've always wanted to be a pilot, but I never really thought I could do it. I wrote down some small steps like talking to a pilot about it the next time I fly or going to the library to learn about what's involved. It seems more possible now."



Set goals

Every young woman has things she wants to do. She may have goals for the future such as going to college someday or getting ready for the job she would like to have. She may have goals for right now like doing well on a test. Setting and reaching your goals helps you feel good about yourself. Try to focus on a few goals at a time. Remember, once you have completed one goal, you can start on another!

You can use the following steps to set any goal:

- ▶ *Write down your goal: Write your goals in a positive way. For instance, write, "Learn to play the piano better," instead of, "Don't make mistakes while playing the piano." Keep your goal somewhere you can see it often to help you focus.*
- ▶ *Set a deadline for achieving the goal: Write down the dates, times, and amounts so that you can see how well you are doing.*
- ▶ *Know your obstacles: List things that might stop you from reaching your goal.*
- ▶ *Identify who can help: Write down who can help you reach your goal.*
- ▶ *Identify what you need to know: List the skills you need to reach your goal.*
- ▶ *Create an action plan: Make a plan for learning the skills you need to reach your goal.*
- ▶ *Know the reason: Write down the benefits of achieving your goal.*

Make sure your goals are realistic! If your goal is to get more sleep, don't try to go to bed an hour earlier right away. Instead set smaller goals of going to bed 5 or 10 minutes earlier each night. In other words, take small steps, and keep on taking them every day. Celebrating your small goals along the way will keep you on the road to achieving your goals!

Be able to change

Change is a fact of life (and not just for your hair). Some young women know how to bounce back when things are difficult or how to learn from these experiences. You can learn to be that way if you focus on three things:

- ▶ *Outside supports: These include friends and other resources that make you feel safe and free to grow. Turn to the people you trust in difficult times.*
- ▶ *Inner strengths: Know your best personality traits – like optimism, kindness, or confidence – and draw on those traits for strength when you need it.*
- ▶ *Learned skills: Know what skills you need to work on, and develop them when things are going well for you. For example, if you don't think you are a good communicator, ask a friend to help you better express your feelings.*



Learn skills that can help you deal positively with stress

You probably deal with a lot of stress. This could be stress from impossible homework to fights with your brother. Knowing how to deal with stress is an important part of being emotionally well.

Here are some tips for dealing with stress:

- *Know how you react: Think about how you act in times of stress. Do you like the way you respond? How could you improve?*
- *Seek guidance: Ask others – such as friends, a pastor, rabbi, or other faith-based advisor, counselors, teachers, or your parents or guardians – how they respond to stress. Try what seems to work well for them.*
- *Make a plan: Think about how you want to act when you are stressed. Write down the names of people you would ask for help.*
- *Be ready to change: Think about how open you are to change. Think about how you can accept change in times of stress.*

Increase your confidence

Have you noticed how some young women have a ton of confidence, while others struggle to believe in themselves? Confidence isn't about ability. It's about attitude! All young women can learn to be more confident.

Here are three ways you can build your confidence:

- Doing what you do best: The best way to begin feeling more confident is to focus on the things you already do well. If you don't know what things you do best, ask your friends and family. Spend more time on what you do best, and congratulate yourself for your successes.*
- Seeing others do it: Seeing someone like you succeed will help you believe that you can do it, too. If there is something you have always wanted to do, find a friend or family member who is doing it. Ask if you can watch. Then, see if she will help you get started!*
- Use your emotions: If you have a hard time starting something, use your emotions to help you take action. It's OK to be excited, nervous, or afraid about something new. Accept those feelings and use the emotions to get you moving.*

Section 2:
Finding Balance and Purpose

Nurture your spirit

Just like your body tells you when you are physically tired, you can learn to know when you are emotionally tired. When that happens, take a break to renew and recharge your soul. Take time to tune out the world. Connect with yourself and refresh your spirit.

Here are some ideas on how to slow down, turn your focus inward, and recharge:

- ▶ *Sip a cup of hot chocolate or drink a glass of cold lemonade.*
- ▶ *Take a long shower or bath. Pamper yourself.*
- ▶ *Write down your thoughts, or express yourself through art or music.*
- ▶ *Meditate or pray.*
- ▶ *Put on your headphones and listen to some music. Read a book or magazine.*
- ▶ *Sit quietly and feel your breath.*
- ▶ *Take a walk and look at nature. Focus on enjoying the simple beauty of the world around you.*
- ▶ *Use a calendar to organize your time, and write in some time for yourself.*



Shelly's story: "If I have a really long day at school, or a fight with one of my friends, or whatever, I like to take some time just for me. I go down to the river and focus on the running water, or watch the birds fly and just relax. I might meditate, or sing, anything until I feel more peaceful again."

Quiz: Are you good to yourself – mind and body?

You are probably good to your friends, but are you good to yourself? Take this quiz to find out.

1. *When I think about taking care of myself, I say:*

- No way, it's not my thing. (0)*
- Sure, sometimes. (1)*
- You know it! Taking care of myself comes first. (2)*

2. *In your free time, you:*

- Free time? What's free time? (0)*
- Do volunteer work. (1)*
- Do a variety of things. (2)*

3. *Your exercise schedule is something like:*

- Once a year. (0)*
- A couple of times a month. (1)*
- A couple of times a week. (2)*

4. *It's important to me to eat well:*

- Never, I just eat whatever when I can. (0)*
- Most of the time, but sometimes I forget. (1)*
- Always, I need good food to feel my best. (2)*

Section 2:

Finding Balance and Purpose

5. *Your personal saying is:*

___ *A busy life is a happy life. (0)*

___ *Work hard, play hard. (1)*

___ *I am a beautiful part of a beautiful world. (2)*

Scoring:

0-3 Slow down!

You work hard – way hard! This is not always a bad thing, but trying to balance work and play is important for both your mind and body. Your hard work is wonderful, but don't overdo things. Taking time for yourself – such as doing a hobby, eating well, or exercising – will help.

4-6 Take time to enjoy life.

A hard-working person like you knows what she wants and goes after it. You will go far in life, but continue to stop and smell the roses along the way.

7-10 You're good to yourself!

Ahhh, you know how to live a balanced life. You understand your body's need for work and play, social and alone time, hard work and creativity. You know what your mind and body need and listen to them. Good for you!

Activities to help you find balance and purpose

Here are some short exercises you and your friends can do to help you find balance and purpose in life.

What is one thing you would like to do in your life?

How could you make more time for yourself?

Section 2:
Finding Balance and Purpose

Write down and plan for one of your personal goals:

What is your goal?

When do you want to achieve your goal?

What might stop you from achieving your goal?

Who can help?

List the skills and knowledge you need to reach your goal.

Make an action plan.

List the benefits of the goal.

Connecting with others

Connections are important to young women! You can connect with people in a lot of different ways. You can connect with others in your school, your neighborhood, your ethnic group, your online buddy list, a club you belong to, and so on.

Being connected to others makes you feel good. It also helps your emotional health.

This section of the guide has tips to help you connect with others:

- ▶ *Find a connection*
- ▶ *Identify with your racial, ethnic, or cultural background*
- ▶ *Learn about healthy relationships*
- ▶ *Learn about empathy and its importance in relationships*
- ▶ *Learn how to be more mindful of other people and their situations*
- ▶ *Develop patience*
- ▶ *Be safe in relationships*
- ▶ *Give help to others in need*

Section 3:
Connecting with others

Find a connection

Young women have a deep need to feel connected. That's why many spend a lot of time connecting with friends through the phone, text messaging, e-mail, or instant messaging.

Here are some other things you can do to be more connected:

- *Join a sports team, a club, the band, the newspaper, or some other group at your school. Or, run for student council!*
- *Volunteer in your neighborhood or community. Check with local community groups to see if they need volunteers. Or, ask a parent, teacher, or friend for advice on where you can get involved.*
- *Pick up your school newspaper or a local paper. Go to one of the listed events with a friend.*
- *Sign up for an exercise or arts class.*
- *Spend more time with your family.*



Alisha's story: "My family moved last year when my parents got divorced, and I had to start going to a new high school. I hated being the new girl and not having any friends. I'm really good at tennis, and I like to write, so I joined the yearbook staff and the tennis team. Having these things in common with the other kids helped me to make some friends."

Identify with your racial, ethnic, or cultural background

All families are unique! Some young women may feel a part of and draw strength from their racial, ethnic, or cultural communities. Those ties tell the stories of where we came from. Taking pride in your heritage is one way to connect with others.

Here are some ways to learn more about your background:

- *Interview a family member.*
- *Go to a local cultural event.*
- *Research issues related to your background on the Internet or at the library. You could also try to find out more about your last name or family history.*
- *Help set up an ethnic potluck at your school.*
- *Read a book or visit a Web site about your history.*

Learn about healthy relationships

Friends aren't just fun, they make us feel better, too! Just having friends and family to talk to makes you feel good. Here are a few of the things needed in healthy relationships:

- ▶ *Respect: In a good relationship, both people respect each other.*
- ▶ *Mutuality: Healthy relationships go both ways. Both people give to each other and receive from each other.*
- ▶ *Communication: It is important to talk with, and listen to, other people. Let other people get to know you. Ask questions so you can get the chance to know others.*
- ▶ *Honesty: Honesty is a sign of respect in healthy relationships.*
- ▶ *Trust: Over time, good friends earn your trust.*
- ▶ *Flexibility: People and situations change. In a good relationship, people are flexible.*
- ▶ *Dependability: Follow through on the things you say you will do. Be a dependable friend.*

Learn about empathy and its importance in relationships

Part of connecting with others is learning how to understand what the other person is feeling. Empathy means being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Look for friends who are empathetic. Learn how to "walk in someone else's shoes."

It's not always easy to do this, because sometimes we all do things we wish we had not done. For example, did you ever forget your sneakers on gym day? Just remember, this kind of thing happens to everyone, and everyone wants to be treated kindly.

Here are two steps you can take to show empathy. First, give a brief reply that captures the situation; then, add an emotion.

Suppose a friend tells you about a fight with her brother. You can say, "When he was yelling at you, you must have felt mad." This shows that you are really listening and trying to understand how your friend is feeling.

Section 3:
Connecting with others

Learn how to be more mindful of other people and their situations

Sometimes, it's hard to focus on other people when you have problems in your own life, but good friends make an effort to focus on others. Being mindful means having your mind present in a situation. It means you think and care about other people's feelings while also being aware of your own feelings.

Here are some ways to be mindful:

- *Be present: Be aware of your own thoughts and feelings.*
- *Show respect: Listen to your friends. Really think about their thoughts and feelings.*
- *Be considerate: Think about the needs of others. Help them when you can, even before they ask for help.*
- *Rejoice together: Be glad for your friends when good things happen for them, even if your own life is not going well.*
- *Be aware: Think about how what you do or say affects the people around you.*
- *Honor yourself: Make sure that you act according to your own beliefs and values.*

Develop patience

Patience is accepting the things you cannot change and being peaceful, content, and willing to enjoy the moment. Patience takes practice, especially in a fast-paced world, but patience is essential if you want to connect with others.

Here are some tips to increase your patience:

- *Think of a difficulty or a long wait as a chance to practice your patience.*
- *Accept that, just as your mistakes sometimes slow other people down, other people's mistakes will sometimes slow you down. Be willing to wait for others, just as you would want them to wait for you.*
- *Accept and forgive yourself when you are not patient. Remember to work on it for next time.*

Sarah's story: "It drives me crazy when my mom runs all over town doing errands and I have to come along, or when my little sister takes all morning in the bathroom. I guess I'm not very patient. Since I know I'm going to have to wait anyhow, I try to use the time to do something else. Like, with my mom, I try to learn where all the streets are as we drive, since I will get my driver's license soon. And while I'm waiting to get into the bathroom, I take the extra time to talk to my stepfather about my school and his work and stuff."



Be safe in relationships

Part of being a young woman is learning how to be in relationships with many kinds of people. This includes friends, family members, and teachers. It also includes someone you are or want to be dating. It is hard to learn how to form safe and healthy relationships. Always let an adult know where you are going and who you'll be with. Tell someone right away if you are in any relationship where you do not feel comfortable or safe.

Safe and healthy relationships are built on honesty and respect. That means each person listens to the other's thoughts and opinions without making a judgment or finding fault. In healthy relationships, it is OK to disagree and argue sometimes. However, both people ought to be able to talk about the issues and find a compromise. It is even OK to agree to disagree.

Here is a way to check and see how healthy one of your relationships is. Read the questions below. Then check yes or no based on your situation. The more times you check yes, the healthier your relationship.

- Yes No *Do you feel good about yourself when you are around that person? (The person should not make you feel worried, sad, mad, or scared.)*
- Yes No *Is your relationship balanced? Is there an equal amount of give and take? (You should not find yourself giving more attention to the other person than he or she gives to you.)*
- Yes No *Do you feel safe around the other person? (The person should not make you feel scared, unsafe, or pressured.)*
- Yes No *Do you feel that you can trust the other person? (You should be able to depend on the other person.)*
- Yes No *Does the other person support you when you make a mistake? (The other person should not find fault with you all the time or call you names.)*

If you think you might be in an unhealthy relationship (or if you have a friend who is), let an adult know. Talk to your school counselor, a trusted teacher, a coach, a neighbor, or a parent. With help, you can get out of it or make it better.

Give help to others in need

Helping others isn't just for Girl Scouts! Being a good friend means offering help whenever you can. Listen with sincere interest, and try not to judge. Offer to try to find help for friends in need. You can find information on how to help from many places:

- ▶ *Your school counselor or a trusted teacher or coach*
- ▶ *Your doctor or health care provider*
- ▶ *A leader at your church, synagogue, or mosque*
- ▶ *The local library*
- ▶ *The phone book – look for the YWCA or county services*

Quiz: How patient are you?

You've heard it said that patience is a virtue. Are you patient? Take this quiz to find out.

1. *You are shopping and the cashier is very slow. You:*

Look around while standing in line. (2)

Get flustered and leave the store. (0)

2. *You are out of town and forget your toothbrush. You:*

Smile and think it will be an adventure to find a store in a new place. (2)

Get angry at yourself for forgetting. (0)

3. *When your friend disagrees with others, you:*

Listen to what she has to say and think about it from her perspective. (2)

Immediately tell her she is wrong. (0)

4. *You are with a younger girl in gym class and she is not catching on very well. You:*

Tell her that you think she is doing a good job to boost her confidence. (2)

Tell her you are too busy to help her. (0)

5. *You are stuck on the bus because of a nearby accident. You:*

Use the time to start on your homework. (2)

Stress out about how late you will be. (0)

Scoring:

0-5 Patience is a virtue.

No one is perfect. Sometimes, other people will slow you down or things will take longer than you planned. Accept that other people may not be as quick as you are, and try not to sweat the small stuff. You may even learn something new while you wait!

6-10 You're in control of your mood.

You seem to have common sense in any situation and are in check with your mood. People lean on you in times of crisis. Make sure you pay attention to how you're feeling. Continue to be thoughtful and patient in your relationships.

Activities to help you connect with others

Here are some short exercises you and your friends can do to help you connect with others.

List some parts of your racial, ethnic, or cultural background that shape you in positive ways:

What are some needs in your community? How could you get more involved to help?

How do you feel when you are not patient? What would help you learn patience?

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide! We hope it has encouraged you to spend some time thinking about emotional wellness. Emotional wellness helps you to feel good about yourself, your relationships, and your purpose in life. It has been linked to better physical health and to being content with life.

The tips in this guide can help you learn to appreciate yourself. They can help you find your balance and purpose in life and connect with others. All of these actions will help you feel better about yourself. Think of emotional wellness as a goal in itself, just as physical fitness is a goal in itself.

You can learn to feel your best! We hope this guide helps you along the way. When you are done with it, please consider sharing it with a friend.



Resources

The following resources provide general information about women's health:

- *GirlsHealth.gov promotes emotional and physical health for teenage girls and provides information about body, fitness, nutrition, bullying, and other issues.
WEB www.girlshealth.gov*
- *MyPyramid.gov advances and promotes dietary guidance for all Americans, including customized dietary guidance for young women based on age and activity level.
TEL 888-779-7264 WEB www.mypyramid.gov*
- *National Women's Health Information Center lists health organizations, campaigns and events, publications, and more. TEL 800-994-9662 TTY 888-220-5446 WEB www.womenshealth.gov*
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Women's Health provides leadership and guidance in developing policy and in establishing goals and priorities for women's health issues across the lifespan.
TEL 888-ASK-HRSA (275-4772) TTY 888-877-4TY-HRSA (489-4772)
WEB www.hrsa.gov/womenshealth*
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health works to improve the health and well-being of women in the United States through its programs by educating health professionals and by motivating behavior change in consumers.
TEL 800-994-9662 TTY 888-220-5446 WEB www.womenshealth.gov/owh*

This guide is about emotional wellness, but some young women might need help with anxiety or depression. If you think you or someone you know might be depressed, you can talk to your school counselor, school nurse, or a trusted teacher, coach, or parent for help. These groups also can help:

- *Anxiety Disorders Association of America provides information about anxiety disorders and treatment.
TEL 240-485-1001 WEB www.adaa.org*
- *Freedom From Fear provides information about anxiety and depression and resources to obtain help.
TEL 718-351-1717 ext. 24 WEB www.freedomfromfear.org*
- *National Mental Health Association provides information about mental health, including programs, news, advocacy, and mental health information.
TEL 800-969-NMHA (6642) WEB www.nmha.org*
- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has trained crisis counselors to assist callers with emotional distress.
TEL 800-273-TALK (8255)*
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health provides information about mental health and mental illness, news releases, clinical trials, and more.
TEL 866-615-6464 WEB www.nimh.nih.gov*
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides information on:*
 - *substance abuse problems - National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
TEL/TTY 800-729-6686 En Español 877-767-8432 WEB www.ncadi.samhsa.gov*
 - *mental health problems - National Mental Health Information Center
TEL 800-789-2647 TTY 800-433-5959 WEB www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov*



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