

STAYING HEALTHY

MH | 07

Recovery doesn't end when you feel better. The next step is maintenance.

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.” – Henry Ford





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WRITER'S NOTE

When I started my recovery from anxiety and depression, I was sad and worried. I wasn't even eating. For me, recovery meant challenging my negative beliefs, and getting the food and sleep I needed to heal. Gary, my guide, was very patient. Sometimes I'd call him, stuck in my negative thoughts, and he'd help find a way out. Little by little, I got better at seeing alternatives on my own.

Then, driving to work one day, I saw the sun rising over the Columbia River. The whole sky was painted with luminous oranges and pinks, and Mt. Hood was lit up like a candle flame. Then it hit me. For months, I had driven over this bridge every day at dawn, but this was the first time I'd looked up. My mind was starting to heal.

That was five years ago, and even now, I don't take sunrises for granted. I'm still learning to stay well, and some days, depression or anxiety get me down. But when that happens, I don't feel as trapped as I once did. When I fall into a hole, I have a ladder with me.

I learned to listen to myself. And you can, too. Use this booklet to help identify what your body and mind need to stay well. And then strengthen those habits. Keep your "ladder" with you.

-Rachel



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DARE TO BE A DANIEL: AFTER RECOVERY

"In every matter about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters." -Daniel 1:20 (NIV).

Congratulations! If you've made it to the maintenance stage of your recovery, it's time to celebrate. And if you're just starting to heal, but wanted to read ahead, then congratulations on getting through the material so fast! We're proud of you for working so hard, no matter where you are in your journey.

Once you start to feel better, the next step is learning to maintain your progress. What recovery means is different for different people and situations. People with depression, for example, usually reach a point where they no longer qualify for major depression because their symptoms have lessened. If you have depression, then recovery probably means you'll feel better and better until eventually you won't be depressed anymore, even though a few symptoms may keep popping up. Depression may return now and again, but it won't stay with you all the time.

If you have anxiety, however, recovery is a little different. You will still feel anxious at times, and many of the things that worry you now may still cause you some anxiety even in recovery. It will be different, however, because you'll learn to recognize irrational fears for what they are and manage them, so anxiety doesn't keep

you from the life you want to live. As John Nash in the film *A Beautiful Mind* says of his delusions, "I've gotten used to ignoring them, and I think; as a result, they've kind of given up on me. I think that's what it's like with all our dreams and our nightmares," Nash says. "We've got to keep feeding them for them to stay alive."

But whether you're recovering from depression or anxiety, healing is an ongoing process. And once you've found what helps you feel better, you'll need to keep doing it to stay well. Poor sleep, too much stress, lack of exercise, or letting negative thoughts take over can make depression **(Continued on next page)**





Keep taking care of yourself as Daniel and his friends did. Photo by Olga Ternavskaia. Opposite photo by Smileus on Dreamstime.com.

(Continued from page 5)
and anxiety worse. Keeping up your new good habits is pivotal to your happiness.

Daniel and his three friends knew how important it was to take care of themselves as whole people. The Bible says they asked for a healthy diet and water to drink, and were stronger than their companions as a result.

We read that "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds". (Daniel 1:17, NIV). The Bible says that "in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom" (Daniel 1:20, NIV).

Now that you are starting to feel better, you have more choices and more opportunities. Use those opportunities to be like Daniel and his friends. Explore the world around you. See what wisdom God wants to share with you. And as you explore, keep taking care of yourself as Daniel and his friends did. Your mind will thank you for it.

"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy." -Psalm 16:11 (NIV)

Imagine that you had to take a stand for your health like Daniel and his friends. What would you ask for? What do your mind and body need to stay healthy and in tune with God?

God gave special gifts of wisdom and understanding to Daniel and his friends. What unique gifts has God given to you? What areas of health do you need sharp to make best use of your gift?

What mental and physical health choices has God used the most in your journey to healing? Say a prayer and thank God for showing you those tools so you can be whole.

How to Build Habits: Maintenance Tips

Recovery is a process, and you're most likely still somewhere on the spiral staircase. As you start to feel better, build the tools that work for you into habits to maintain your progress. If sleep helps you feel better, for example, try not to pull all-nighters just because you're feeling better. You want your recovery to last. Maintenance, or the art of staying recovered, has two parts. The first piece is identifying which recovery tools are making a difference for you. And the second part is looking for ways to make those tools a regular part

of your life. Below is a summary of some healthy habits that you'll probably want to maintain. You'll find more details about these and other tools, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth booklets of this series.

Stay connected to your healthcare provider

Once you start feeling better, you may be able to talk with your doctor or mental health professional about the length of your treatment. Medications can often be scaled back or discontinued after six months, and talk therapy



Sleep is a huge part of self-care. It's tough to see the positives when you're feeling jet-legged or starved for sleep. Photo by Pavelzhuravlev92 on Dreamstime.com.

usually has a set duration, but please don't make those decisions without talking to your provider. She or he will help you create a customized plan to scale back your treatment when the time is right. Stay in contact with your caregiver throughout the treatment process, and update him or her on your recovery.

Keep taking care of your body

One of the best ways to keep yourself from spiraling back into depression or anxiety is to listen to what your body needs.

Exercise is always healthy, and now that you're feeling better, you can even set new goals for yourself – try to lengthen your walking or jogging distance, or increase the intensity of your at-home workouts. Most of all, remember to stay physically active in some way or another. Sitting all the time can make anyone feel tired, and that brings up depressed or anxious thoughts. Keep moving and get those positive thoughts flowing.

Sleep is another huge part of self-care. It's fantastic that you're feeling better, and we want you to stay that way. It's tough to see the positives if you feel like a jet-lagged zombie. Don't worry if you still wake up during the night now and then. Everyone's sleep goes up and down, and you don't need to get stressed about the exact amount, but if you start missing lots and lots of sleep, or getting way off schedule, don't hesitate to try some sleep tools, or talk to a healthcare provider for advice. Sweet dreams!

Nutrition may not be as huge as exercise or sleep, but food is fuel for your body and brain. Stay healthy by remembering to eat, and by sticking to mealtimes, so you strike a good balance. It can also help to buy more whole fruits and veggies and less processed foods. Keep a container of fresh-chopped vegetables in your fridge, so it's easier to grab some with meals.

Continue your healthy thought processes

As you get better, positive thoughts will come to mind more easily. But don't forget to keep



Try to see the bright side of something that happens at least once per day. Photo by Martinmark on Dreamstime.com.

looking for the bright side of life. Your brain is continually growing and changing, and every positive thought that you reinforce, or negative idea that you confront, makes healthy thinking more natural in the future.

Mindfulness isn't just for days when you feel anxious or down. Even on good days, a few minutes of focus on the moment can help you to appreciate the beauty around you. Try to set aside time each day to use your five senses and think about the present. If you like, you can even follow it up with a prayer thanking God for the beautiful moment you just experienced.

Positivity strengthens healthy brain pathways and banishes depressed or anxious thoughts. Practice finding the silver lining to something that happens at least once per day. Keep using cognitive behavioral therapy strategies, as described in the Brain Training booklet, and watch out for negative thoughts. Keep confronting distortions until they aren't a habit anymore.

Building healthy habits is hard work, but once the things you've been doing to recover become a natural part of your day, they'll take a lot less effort. Plus, you'll be well on your way to a happier and healthier life.

Making Space for Joy: Simple Self-Care Tools

Recovery is work, but that doesn't mean it can't be fun. Follow these steps to give yourself some love and add a little fun into your life. Laughter is good medicine

Spend some time outside

Nature is a joyful place to be. "Spending time outdoors, especially in green spaces, is one of the fastest ways to improve your health and happiness," says *Time Magazine* health writer Jaime Ducharme. Go for a walk on a hiking trail or around your neighborhood, climb a tree, lay down in the grass, or just sit on your front step and soak up the sunshine. Most of us have a park or green space not too far away from our homes. Make the most of it.

Be thankful

Practicing gratitude is vital to making room for joy in your life. "Gratitude helps people feel more

journaling, counting your blessings, prayers of thanks, writing thank-you notes to others, or just making a mental note of things you are thankful for. There just might be more than you think!

Check-in with yourself

Taking care of yourself is much easier if you listen to what you need. Try to stop what you're doing at least once a day to notice if you're hungry or thirsty and what emotions you might be feeling. Mentally scan over your body for areas of tightness or pain. Twice a day, I ask myself: "What's wrong, what's right or good or bad or unsettling or uncomfortable?" author and family substance abuse counselor Carole Benett writes in *Psychology Today*.

Cut back on social media

Scrolling through your feed isn't just a time sink, it can make you less

positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships," write the experts at Harvard Health Medical School. Ways to be grateful include:

happy. "Exposure to the carefully curated images from others' lives leads to negative self-comparison, and the sheer quantity of social media interaction may detract from more meaningful real-life

experiences," say researchers Holly B. Shakya and Nicholas A. Christakis in the *Harvard Business Review*. To keep social media from siphoning off your joy, try downloading an app that measures screen time and setting a goal to cut back. Connect with friends and family in person whenever you can – there's no substitute for face-to-face interactions.

Write in a Journal

Write about whatever is happening in your life, and then come back to it later for a mood boost. "Researchers from Harvard University Business School found that writing down small, insignificant facts – even some that seem boring – about your life at a given moment can have a powerful impact later," writes psychotherapist F. Diane Barth. Plus, a journal is a great place to practice gratitude.

Snuggle with someone you love

Cuddles aren't just for kids. Cozy up with a partner, a family member, friends, or even a pet. "Cuddling releases oxytocin, a feel-good hormone, that also helps with reducing stress," marriage and family therapist Lynsie Seely told

HuffPost. Furry bundles of joy make great stress relievers. If you don't have a pet of your own, you can volunteer to pet kitties or puppies at a local humane society to get snuggles and do a good deed.

Shift your mental gears when work or school is done

Another big step towards happiness is learning to set down the stress of work or school during your break times. It might help to create a transition routine such as changing out of your work clothes, or going for a walk after homework is done. Dr. Jon Betlinski, a psychiatrist at Oregon Health & Science University and one of our authors, suggests spending the drive home focusing your mind on positive memories and getting ready for your new goals. Some questions you might ask yourself to get in a positive mindset include: What did I do well today? What did I learn that I can use in the future? And what was the best part of my day? Then, once you're feeling positive and relaxed, get ready for the at-home portion of your day by asking: Who Am I going to be when I get home? A parent? A brother or sister? A friend? And how am I going to be the best version of that when I arrive?



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MANAGING STRESS

This article is taken, with light editing, from the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) website. Learn more at [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov).

Examples of stress include: routine stress related to the pressures of school, work, family, and other daily responsibilities; stress brought about by a sudden negative change, such as losing a job, divorce, or illness; or traumatic stress experienced during an event such as a major accident, war, assault, or natural disaster where people may be in danger of being seriously hurt or killed. People who experience traumatic stress may have very distressing temporary emotional and physical symptoms, but most recover soon after.

2. Not all stress is bad

In a dangerous situation, stress signals the body to prepare to face a threat or flee to safety. In these situations, your pulse quickens, you breathe faster, your muscles tense, and your brain uses more oxygen and increases activity—all functions aimed at survival and in response to stress. In non-life-threatening situations, stress can motivate people, such as when they need to take a test or interview for a new job.

3. Long-term stress can harm your health

Coping with the impact of chronic stress can be challenging. Because the source of long-term stress is more constant than acute stress, the body never receives a clear signal to return to normal functioning. With chronic stress, those same life-saving reactions in the body can disturb the immune, digestive, cardiovascular, sleep, and reproductive systems. Some people experience mainly digestive symptoms, while others may have headaches, sleeplessness, sadness, anger, or irritability. Over time, continued strain on your body from stress may contribute to serious health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other illnesses, including mental disorders such as depression or anxiety.

4. There are ways to manage stress

If you take practical steps to manage your stress, you may reduce the risk of negative health effects. Here are some tips that may help you to cope with stress:

Be observant. Recognize the signs of your body's response to stress, such as difficulty

If you're overwhelmed by stress, ask for help.

Anyone can become overwhelmed. If you or a loved one is having thoughts of suicide, call the confidential toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or, in Canada, call 1-833-456-4566. Lifeline chat is a service available to everyone.

sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.

Talk to your health care provider or a health professional. Don't wait for your health care provider to ask about your stress. Start the conversation and get proper health care for existing or new health problems. Effective treatments can help if your stress is affecting your relationships or ability to work.

Get regular exercise. Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and improve your health.

Try a relaxing activity. Explore relaxation or wellness programs, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy and relaxing activities.

Set goals and priorities. Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you've been unable to do.

Stay connected. You are not alone. Keep in touch with people who can provide emotional support and practical help. To reduce stress, ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious organizations.

5. If you're overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a health professional. Your doctor may be able to provide a recommendation.



Take practical steps to manage stress. Photo by Martinmark on Dreamstime.com.

Everyone feels stressed from time to time, but what is stress? And what can you do to manage it?

Stress is how the brain and body respond to any demand. Any type of challenge—such as performance at work or school, a significant life change, or a traumatic event—can be stressful. Stress can affect your health. It is important to pay attention to how you deal with minor and major stressors, so you know when to seek help. Here are five things you should know about stress.

1. Stress affects everyone

Everyone experiences stress from time to time. There are different types of stress—all of which carry physical and mental health risks. A stressor may be a one-time or short-term occurrence, or it can happen repeatedly over a long time. Some people may cope with stress more effectively and recover from stressful events more quickly than others.

FINDING COMMUNITY

**“In everyone’s life,
at some time, our
inner fire goes out...
Be thankful for those
people who rekindle the
inner spirit.”**

– Albert Schweitzer

Building community

Depression and anxiety can be isolating. The exhaustion and worries might leave you too worn out for social interactions. But now that you're starting to feel better, it's the perfect time to reach out to friends you trust and build community. Supportive friendships are incredibly helpful in recovery. And if you already have a group of friends that you see regularly, even better! Strengthen those connections, and be a friend to them. When you give friendship as well as receiving it, the relationship becomes a gift to everyone involved.

Choose safe friendships

You can be a friend to anyone, of course, but as you heal, you'll want to confide in friends who are safe – people who'll support you without judgment on your journey to recovery. You can spot a reliable friend because they'll listen to understand you, not just for a chance to talk. A safe person asks questions before sharing information and sees you as a better version of yourself. Friends like this won't downplay your experiences. They'll validate you just the way you are. If you have a trusted group of friends in your life, chances are at least some of them are people you can confide in. Or, if you're just setting out to make friends, watch for someone safe. They'll make a great friend, and they're probably easy to talk to.

Build on the friendships you already have

Making new friends can be tough, especially once you're out of school and in the

workplace. It's not impossible, so if you're in a new place, or otherwise needing to make friends, don't give up. As much as you can safely do so, though, try to keep up the friendships you already have. Recovery is hard work. So, when it's possible, reach out to your current friends for a quicker way to find support.

Keep in mind, as you look for friends, that not everyone is available. Some people are dealing with things in their lives that make it a hard time for them to start a friendship. A no doesn't mean you've done anything wrong. It just means you haven't found the right person yet. Hang in there, and be sure to try again.

If you and your friends haven't chatted in a while, try calling just one – someone you know will listen. That one friend might be able to connect you with others, too. Just like exercise, or any recovery tool, finding community starts with one small step.

Ways to meet new friends

You may not choose to look for new friends first, but as you feel better, you may decide to expand your friend group. Or, maybe you've moved to a new town, and you're craving some face-to-face friend time. Making friends takes a bit of effort, but it's a lot easier if you spend time at a place where you'll naturally connect with others. You could join a weekly study or another group at your church, volunteer, take a class to meet people with similar interests, or try attending a depression or anxiety support group. The last option gives you a higher chance of meeting friends who have experienced mental health struggles as well. If you hit it off with someone at work, school, or church, don't be afraid to reach out. They might be looking for a friend, as well.

Keep in mind, as you look for friends, that not everyone is available. Some people are dealing with things in their lives that make it a hard time for them to start a friendship. A no doesn't mean you've done anything wrong. It just means you haven't found the right person yet. Hang in there, and be sure to try again.

Making friends is entirely possible, but the process takes time. When you can, maintain the friendships you have – they're one of your greatest strengths. And as you spend time with old and new friends, you'll discover how much faster you can recover in a supportive community. Plus, your newfound positive thinking might be a gift for your friends, too.



A safe friend is someone who listens because they want to understand you, not just to get their chance to talk. Plus, they ask you questions before sharing. Photo by Photographerlondon on Dreamstime.com.



Resources: Stay Happy, Healthy, and Whole

"The more efficient your body, the better you feel and the more you will use your talent to produce outstanding results." -Anthony Robbins



Suicide lifelines:

Talk to someone now: Call 1-800-273-8255 or chat with someone online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. In Canada, call 1-833-456-4566. Someone is waiting to talk to you.

Self-care and maintenance info:

You can find free mental health courses at keltyskey.com/self-help. And Australia's Centre for Clinical Intervention has self-care tips available at cci.health.wa.gov.au/en/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself. Finally, learn about wellness from the National Institutes of Health in the US by visiting nih.gov/health-information, and clicking on "wellness toolkits."

Therapist directory:

Visit findtreatment.samhsa.gov to view registry of therapists by local area, or ask your doctor to suggest someone for you. Learn more about treatment by reading the fourth booklet in this series.

Free or low-cost healthcare:

The US federal government's Health Resources and Services Administration has a nationwide directory of clinics that offer low or no-cost health care. Start your search at findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx.

Local support and education groups:

Find a chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI by visiting nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI.

To read more, please visit OneTeamMentalHealth.org, or write to us at the address printed on the back cover.

Other booklets in this series:

There are seven booklets in the series. Find more at OneTeamMentalHealth.org, or write to AdventSource at the address printed on the back cover. Booklet topics are as follows:

1. **Depression** (information about major depressive disorder)
2. **Anxiety** (information about GAD and other anxiety disorders)
3. **Suicide/Harm** (tools for those dealing with thoughts of suicide or non-suicidal self-injury)
4. **Getting Help** (types of treatment and where to find them)
5. **Recovery Tools** (behavioral strategies you can use to start feeling better)
6. **Brain Training** (mental strategies to push back against depression and anxiety)
7. **Staying Healthy** (how to maintain your recovery once you are feeling better)

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Congratulations on your progress. Once you've finished reading through this series, please pass on the new things you've learned, and share your booklets with a friend. And keep on healing. We're cheering for you all the way!

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To Read More from This Series
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