

Why do I need one? It is very hard to think of what to do for yourself when things get tough. It is best to **have a plan ready** for when you need it.

What should be in it? You need to address **3 areas**: what to do, what to think, and what to avoid.

1. Make a list of what you can do when you are upset that will be good for you.

- What will help me relax? For example,
 - Breathing
 - Muscle relaxation
 - Music
 - Reading for fun
 - Exercise
 - Talking a walk
 - Watching a movie
- What do I like to do when I'm in a good mood?
 - List all the things you like to do so you remember what they are when you need to think of something to do.
- What can I do that will help me throughout the day?
 - Avoid too much caffeine if feeling anxious
 - Remember to breathe
 - Watch my thoughts
 - Stay in the moment
- Other: What else do YOU need to do that is specific to YOU?

2. Make a list of people you can contact if you need support or distraction.

- Best friend, other friends, sibling, parent, grandparent, other relative, therapist, priest/minister/rabbi/imam, etc.
- Divide the list of people into categories by asking yourself the following questions:
 - Who can I call if I am feeling depressed or anxious?
 - Who can I call if I am lonely?
 - Who will come over to be with me if I need company?
 - Who will listen?
 - Who will encourage me to get out of the house and do something fun?
 - Who will remind me to follow my self-care plan?

- Other:

3. Next, make a list of positive things to say to yourself when you are giving yourself a hard time.

- Example of negative self-talk: “I got a B- on the paper; that proves that I shouldn’t be in graduate school.” CHANGE to: “That is a good grade. I will work on getting a better one.”
- “I do not understand research methods, I am so dumb.” CHANGE to: “A lot of students are having a problem with this course. Maybe we should start a study group to help each other.”
- “I can’t get all this work done. I should just drop out.” CHANGE to: “I will develop a schedule so that I can get this all done.” “I can check with other students for ideas.” “I can get some feedback from the professors that might help me do the assignments.”
- You get it. Try to think about what you would say to a client with the same struggles and apply it to yourself.

4. Next, make a list of who and what to avoid when you are having a hard time.

- Examples of people to avoid:
 - My partner broke up with me. I will not call my sister as she always hated him. She’ll be happy he’s gone.
 - I didn’t get my assignment in on time and I’m worried about my grade. I will not call my dad. He is a stickler for doing things in advance so that they are never late. He’ll just give me a hard time.
 - I am discouraged about my grades. I won’t call my best friend because she’ll just tell me not to worry about it and to quit school if it’s such a hassle.
 - You get this too. Not everyone can be supportive or helpful with every situation. Go to the ones who can be supportive about the specific issue you are dealing with.
- Examples of things to avoid:
 - I should not stay in the house all day.
 - I should not stay in bed all day.
 - I should open the shades and let the light in.
 - I should not listen to sad music.
 - I should not drink too much alcohol.
 - Other:
 - Again, you get it.

5. Write this plan on a 3x5 card.

- Keep it in your purse/wallet (and on your phone if you can). Look at it often. Add any good ideas to it whenever you can. USE IT!