



Wellbeing

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life

Insights



Building Resilience Using Emotional Intelligence

According to a recent [report](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 40% of adults report mental health challenges or substance abuse concerns related to the pandemic. While that statistic may seem staggering, Mental Health America (MHA) [reports](#) that the mental health of Americans has continually been on the decline, even prior to the pandemic, with 19% of Americans experiencing a mental health condition – 1.5 million more than the prior year. Anxiety and depression remain high on the list of widespread reported concerns.

While mental health conditions often necessitate treatment and/or crisis intervention, the practice of building resilience has been shown to help

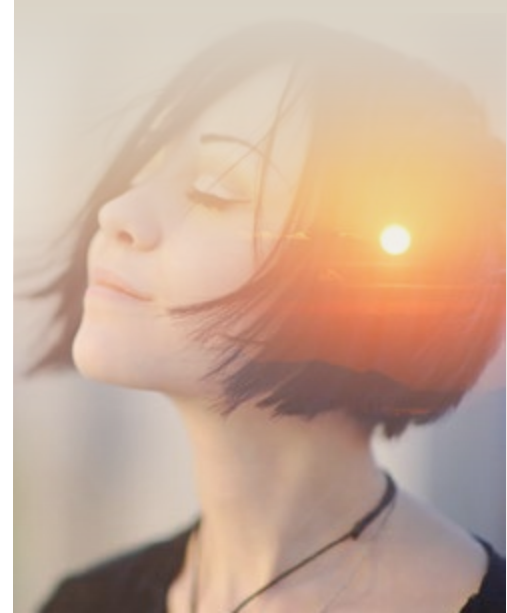
individuals withstand and overcome stress, trauma and adversity. By enhancing our emotional intelligence, we can tune in to our emotions and use tailored strategies to cope with and rise above difficulties.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is defined as the ability to understand and manage the expression of one’s emotions in a way that helps mitigate stress, improve communication and support healthy relationships. EQ is also the ability to recognize others’ emotions and the perspectives that may influence their emotions and actions. Research has shown that people with low EQ are at higher risk for anxiety and depression. Conversely, those with higher EQ tend to report better mental health. In addition,

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they tend to be physically healthier, make more informed decisions, be better performers at work and have healthier relationships. Moreover, children of parents with high EQ are physically healthier, perform better academically and have better social relationships.

According to psychologist and author Daniel Goleman, PhD, there are five key elements to emotional intelligence:

- 1. Self-awareness** – the ability to recognize your own emotions and motivations and to understand the impact of your moods and actions on others;
- 2. Self-regulation** – the ability to manage your impulses and moods, as well as your tendency to pause and think before acting;
- 3. Motivation** – an inclination to pursue goals with energy, perseverance and a sense of purpose that extends beyond tangible benefits, like money or status;
- 4. Empathy** – sensing the emotions of others and responding in a way that validates their emotions and the perspectives that led to their emotions and actions; and
- 5. Social skills** – being adept with cultivating relationships and building social networks.

In his book, [Permission to Feel](#), Marc Brackett, PhD, discusses a process for children and adults to understand and master their emotions. Using concepts from this framework and Daniel Goleman's work, one can apply EQ to navigate the challenges of life.

Connecting with your emotions is a key first step in improving EQ. During the pandemic, with financial concerns, added caregiver responsibilities and/or increasing workload, perhaps you've been feeling stretched to

properly tend to various areas of your life, such as work, family, friends, etc. Maybe stressors that used to seem insignificant are now things you feel more sensitive or insecure about. Whatever the feelings, as you experience them, take a moment and sit with them. Ask yourself what led to the feeling.

Next, give yourself permission and space to feel the emotion and to calm yourself when feeling strong emotions. (See this month's Mindful Minute for an exercise to help calm intense emotions.) This will be helpful for breaking the cycle of low EQ, which can lead to taking unresolved emotions out on others, including coworkers, family, friends and pets. Having a toolkit of emergency strategies to fall back on is essential for this time.

Labeling emotions is the next critical piece to building EQ, and it's not always easy. There's more to our emotions than the basic happy, sad and mad. Expand your emotion vocabulary repertoire, and find the right descriptor to find the right solution. A tool like [The Feelings Wheel](#) can be helpful in this process, especially if you're finding it difficult to describe how you are feeling. This process of precisely naming the emotion is key to working through it, as the strategy will be most effective if it reflects the specific emotion.

Now that you've identified the emotion, ask yourself if it is the right emotion. Is it based on facts or is it based on

a narrative you've told yourself in the absence of facts? It can feel second nature for some to jump to conclusions or to shift to worst-case-scenario thinking, which can exacerbate anxiety and depression. Sorting fact from fiction can help to sort through emotions and prevent going down the proverbial rabbit hole of unnecessary negative thinking and emotions. In effect, this can lead to better decision making and more actionable scenarios to work through challenges.

Ask yourself how you want to feel. While the answer to this question may seem obvious, considering how you want to feel in a stressful situation (especially an ongoing or recurring one) can be a powerful catalyst to working through it. Again, specificity about the desired emotion(s) is important here. Get unstuck from ruminating on your current emotional state by focusing on your desired feelings. Consider what strategies to put in place to lead you there.

Lastly, try to give yourself and others grace. The pandemic has upended life as we've known it, and, for many, mental health has suffered even more than physical health. Emotions matter. When we can name them and employ purposeful strategies to navigate them, we can manage them and, in effect, improve our emotional wellbeing, relationships, work and more. It's a continual effort, but one where the successes, however small, can make all the difference in challenging times.



Mindful Minute



The practice of building emotional intelligence (EQ) can be an effective means of mitigating the impact of intense emotions and building resiliency. The exercise below is one way to calm yourself when you are experiencing a very intense emotion, such as anger, resentment, stress, worry, etc., so that you can go through the more deliberate work of increasing your EQ.

Take a moment to feel the emotion, tuning in to any physical sensations that accompany it. Do you feel your heart racing, your chest tightening, your gut cramping, your breathing pattern

changing? Focus less on what the emotion is and more on how you are feeling its expression – physically and mentally.

Reach into your emotional wellbeing first-aid kit and consider the best options to help you take the edge off so that you are poised to do the real work of building EQ later. This might be listening to your favorite music, doing some deep breathing exercises, physical activity, getting outdoors or having a good laugh. Determine 2-3 that you find helpful and make note of them as your go-to resources.

Turn back to the emotion and begin the labeling process. It can be beneficial to use a tool like [The Feelings Wheel](#) while you work on building your emotion vocabulary. It might be difficult to move past a common word like “stressed” or “angry,” but continue to explore until you discover the word that accurately describes what you are feeling.

Ask yourself how you want to feel. A visualization exercise can be especially helpful in this process. Picture yourself experiencing your desired emotional state in a given situation. Take it a step

further and turn this visualization into reality by establishing affirmations that support what you have envisioned. For example, if you’re feeling fearful, frustrated or powerless, perhaps the desired emotion is serenity about what is in your control versus what is not.

Write down affirmations that reinforce this desired state. As an example, perhaps you are working through fear and frustration with a loved one’s safety practices during the pandemic. Some affirmations of your desired state might include *I am at peace with my loved one’s choices; I recognize that I cannot change my loved one but can express my concern and leave them to determine their path; I honor my loved one’s choices even if I disagree with them.* Witness how these affirmations change your way of feeling and reacting to a situation when repeated and pondered regularly.

While the process of building EQ requires deliberate focus and a willingness to go beyond what may feel normal, the payoff can be substantial for your wellbeing. Give yourself grace in this process and praise yourself for growth.

Book Nook



“Emotional Intelligence 2.0”

by Travis Bradberry & Jean Greaves

This quick, easy read provides strategies to accurately measure and increase your emotional intelligence (EQ). While the book contains decades of research on best practices to strengthen EQ skills, it’s written in a narrative style that makes the concepts relatable, easy to digest and practical to apply.

After describing the four dimensions of emotional intelligence – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management – the book provides a step-by-step program to increase your EQ with 66 different strategies. This enlightening read offers valuable insights for both personal and professional success.

As an added bonus, the book includes a passcode for online access to the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal®. This test can help you assess what your EQ is today and what you can do to increase it by referencing a variety of EQ strategies and revealing which of your behaviors are leading to your EQ scores. Happy reading and growing!

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On the Menu

Tuna

Choosing the optimal tuna fish for your meal can be a tricky! Do you want fresh or canned? Oil- or water-packed? Perhaps you want a more sustainably sourced tuna or are concerned about mercury levels. As you think about incorporating tuna into your next meal, here is a breakdown on the different options for purchase.

Canned vs. Fresh

Oil- and water-packed tuna are both delicious and nutritious options for a traditional tuna salad. Keep in mind that oil-packed tuna does add extra calories and fat and is best used for sprinkling over a green salad or eating as a snack with crackers. Water-packed varieties are best when eating larger portions. The most commonly found canned tunas are albacore and skipjack (also known as chunk light). Albacore is a larger fish and typically has a meatier texture with mild flavor. Skipjack is softer, flakier and usually has a stronger flavor.

If you want to grill a tuna steak, you might consider purchasing fresh albacore or yellowfin tuna (also known as ahi tuna). Bigeye and bluefin tuna are typically found in sushi restaurants as sashimi or in the market as sushi-grade tuna. Fresh yellowfin and albacore are both best cooked as a tuna “steak,” meaning they can be grilled or seared just as you would a piece of meat.

Sustainability

Choosing the right tuna goes beyond taste. Depending on the fishing practices, some tuna fish are susceptible to over-fishing and can lead to endangered species or harming other sea animals by catching unintended sea creatures. Look for labels that say “FAD-free,” “school caught,” “free school,” “pole-caught,” “troll-caught” or “pole and line caught” to be sure you’re getting a more eco-friendly product. You can also visit www.seafoodwatch.org for consumer guides that rate farming practices of popular seafood items.

Mercury Content

Tuna is incredibly nutritious and packed with protein, healthy fats and vitamins, but this doesn’t mean it should be eaten every day. The FDA recommends adults eat 3-5 ounces of fish

about 2-3 times per week for healthy fats and other nutrients. However, most tuna varieties contain higher mercury concentrations than other fish and, therefore, should be eaten in moderation.

Skipjack is one variety that can be eaten regularly due to its low mercury content. Avoid eating albacore or yellowfin more than once per week, and refrain from consuming bigeye tuna frequently. You can also visit seafood.edf.org/tuna to view different types of tuna, their eco-rating and mercury levels.

Seared Ahi Tuna Steaks

Ingredients:

- 2 fresh ahi tuna (yellowfin) steaks, about 4 oz. each
- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 1 Tbsp. canola or olive oil
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)
- Salt & pepper, to taste
- Green onions, toasted sesame seeds & lime wedges (optional toppings)

Nutrition Info

Per serving (1 tuna steak)

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Calories | 528 |
| Total Fat | 17g |
| Carbohydrates | 9.9g |
| Sugar | 8.9g |
| Fiber | 0.2g |
| Protein | 80.5g |
| Sodium | 1106mg |



Directions:

Pat tuna steaks dry with a paper towel and place in a large plastic bag. Mix the soy sauce, sesame oil, honey and cayenne (if using) in a bowl until honey is fully dissolved. Pour the liquid mixture over the tuna steaks and marinate for at least 10 minutes in the refrigerator. Meanwhile, heat a medium skillet on medium-high until very hot. Add the oil to the pan and sear the tuna for about 2 minutes per side for medium-rare (1.5 minutes for rare or 3 minutes for medium well). Place the fish on a cutting board and rest for 3 minutes. Top with green onions, toasted sesame seeds and a squeeze of lime juice, if desired.

Power Up with Power Bowls

Power bowls gained popularity recently and can be seen everywhere from Pinterest to your local café. These one-bowl meals boast balanced servings of grains, veggies and proteins and typically pack a healthy punch of flavor with fresh herbs, sauces and other garnishes. You may also hear them referred to as protein bowls or vitality bowls.

Power bowls are a very popular option among dedicated weekly meal preppers as you can easily prepare several meals worth of ingredients and portion them out for grab-and-go meals. Not only are power bowls convenient, they

are very easily adaptable to any flavor profile preferences. For example, you can find recipes for bowls that are Southwestern, Asian or Mediterranean-inspired. Although, once you start experimenting with power bowls, you may find that you don't even need a recipe if you follow this basic formula:

1. Choose grains to serve as a base.
2. Load up with veggies.
3. Include some lean protein.
4. Finish with dressing and garnishes such as nuts, seeds and fresh herbs.

Many pre-packaged varieties of power bowls have hit the market as well. If you find yourself in the frozen section of the grocery store, be sure to check the labels to avoid products with outrageous sugar or sodium content or a long list of processed ingredients.

If you're planning to make your own power bowl at home, you can use the below table as inspiration to mix and match different grains, veggies, protein and more to begin building your own nutrient-dense power bowls. Want an even lighter version? Consider subbing out the grains for a nice helping of leafy greens as a base.



Grain/Starchy Veggie + **Veggies** + **Protein** + **Garnish** + **Sauce**

Start with ½ – 1 cup as the base of the power bowl.

Pile on the veggies as high as you'd like. Experiment with different cuts or spiralizing for a unique texture.

Add about 4 ounces of lean protein. Experiment with refrigerated vs. fresh off the grill/skillet.

Introduce some flavor and crunch with these additions.

Finish off the flavor and add some creaminess with sauce. ([Click here for some recipes to try.](#))

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Brown rice | Leafy greens | Turkey, chicken, etc. | Cilantro | Vinaigrette |
| Quinoa | Cucumber | Salmon | Parsley | Salsa |
| Farro | Carrot | Tofu | Seeds | Hummus |
| Millet | Radish | Beans & lentils | Nuts | Tzatziki |
| Noodles | Broccoli | Edamame | Dried seaweed | |
| Sweet potato | Peppers | Eggs | Avocado | |

Benefits of a Fake Commute



Many have been working from home for nearly a year now. While there are several benefits to working from home, the lines between work responsibilities and home life are often blurred. While there is much to be said for the amount of time given back to us with quicker routines to “get ready” and no commute, there is a cost in losing this mental preparation time. The same goes for the end of the day, as we have no time dedicated to separating physically from our workspace.

Enter the fake commute. The concept is pretty simple – dedicate time at the beginning and end of your work day to help you psychologically prepare for and then disconnect from your work life. This practice helps create a barrier between work and home life by signaling to your brain that work is done and it’s time to move into home/personal time, and vice-versa.

Some additional potential benefits of a fake commute include:

- Allows for personal time, which has become limited for many people who do not live alone
- Balances the stress of working remotely and the feeling that you have to be working at all times
- Clears your mind so you can fully focus on your personal life
- Improves your mood and increases motivation
- Increases awareness and focus

How to Implement a Fake Commute

Use this added time to engage in activities that are meaningful and important to you, which can ultimately improve your overall wellbeing. Keep your fake commute consistent, just as you would with a real one.

Some types of commutes include:

- A short drive or trip to the coffee shop
- Walk or bike
- Spend time stretching or meditating in a designated “non-office” spot in your home

Activities to try during your fake commute include:

- Journal
- Experiment with breathing exercises and mantras
- Enjoy the outdoors
- Listen to music
- Listen to a podcast
- Prepare a proper breakfast; sit and enjoy it

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Our **feelings** are not there to be cast out or conquered. They are there to be **engaged** and **expressed** with imagination and intelligence.

– T.K. COLEMAN

