

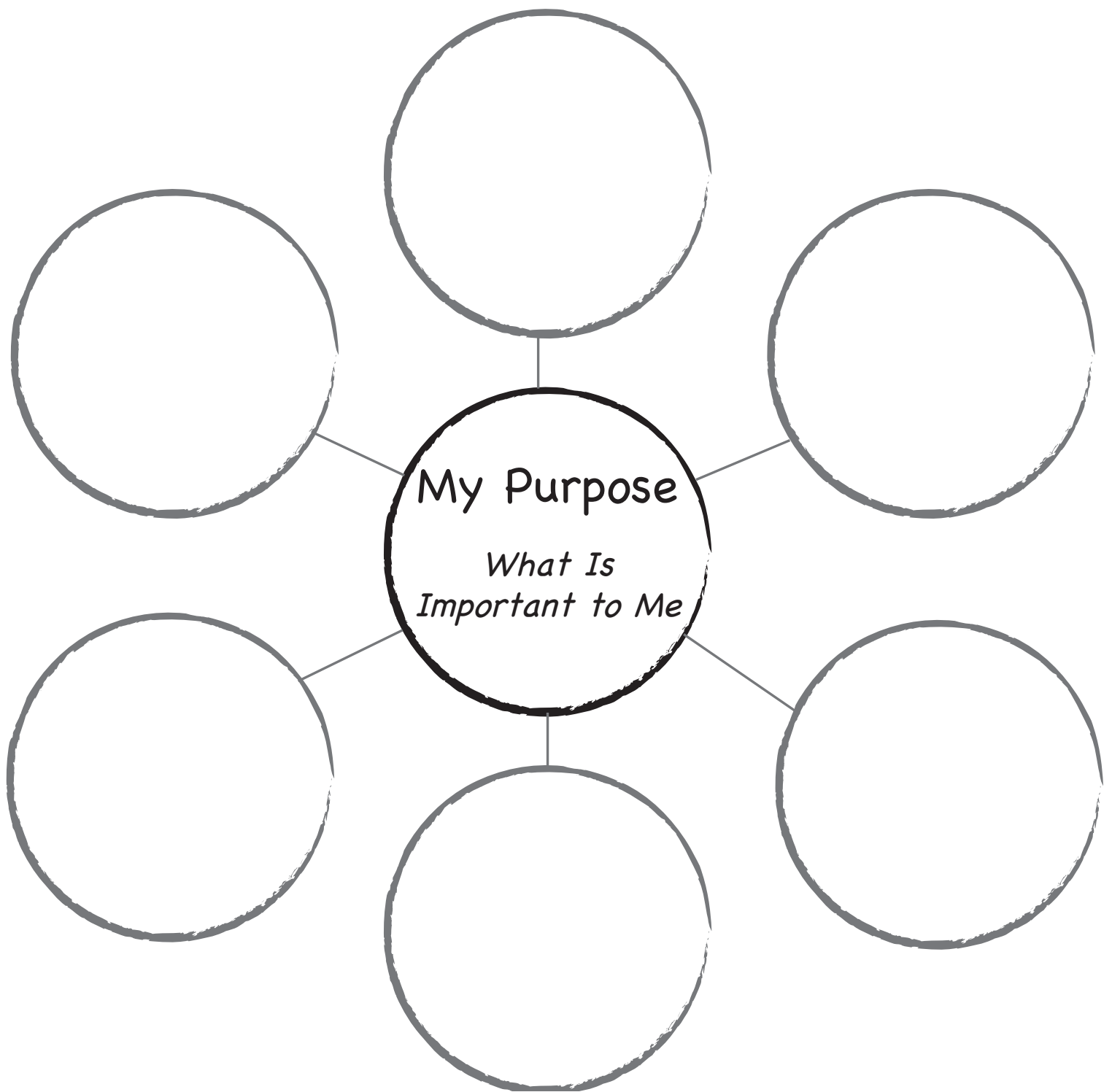
learning who you are

At a stage of life when you are going through the challenging process of figuring out your identity, trying to be the person your friends and family want you to be and comparing yourself with people you see in the media are likely to cause you additional stress. The more you learn about who you truly are, who you want to be, and what is most important to you, the better equipped you will be to cope with stress that comes from trying to meet others' expectations of you.

You can begin to learn more about who you are by asking yourself, *What is my purpose? What is important to me in my life right now?* Of course, each person will have different answers, but these sample responses can start you thinking:

- spending time with my friends
- spending time with my family
- being in a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend
- succeeding in school
- spending time on my extracurricular activities, hobbies, or interests
- getting better at a sport
- learning a new musical instrument
- playing video games
- taking dance classes
- expressing my thoughts and feelings through writing or drawing
- following my dreams
- figuring out a major
- figuring out my future
- career or vocational training

Use this downloadable diagram to help you look at yourself. In each blank circle, fill in something that defines who you are. Your entries can be as simple or complex as you like. For example, you might write things you like to do: "spending time with friends" or "gaming." You might write down aspects of your personality: "honest" or "outgoing." Write whatever comes to mind as qualities you consider to make up who you are and what you are all about.



Is your purpose mostly about one area of your life? Or is it a balance that includes such areas as school, career, family, friends, and relationships, among others?

What, if anything, did you come up with that you had not thought of before?

Do you want to change any parts of your life? If so, what?

Of the parts that you want to change, which can you change? Which parts are out of your control?

mindful takeaway Figuring out who you are and who you want to be is a lifelong process that will continue for years to come. It is great to start now and reassess as needed.

something more

There can be a difference between your purpose and what is important to you, and what is put on you by others (friends, family, and society) or that you have to do.

How do your friends and family see you? Print copies of the diagram and give them to a few of your closest friends and family members. Ask them to fill in the circles to describe how they see you.

How are your friends' views of you similar to your own?

How are they different?

Would you like your friends to see you differently? If so, what would you want them to see differently?

How are your family members' views of you similar to your own?

How are they different?

Would you like your family members to see you differently? If so, what would you want them to see differently?

Thermostats balance temperature by turning heating and cooling devices on and off. Imagine that your body gives off information that lets you know when you aren't in balance and then, like a thermostat, takes action to get itself back to the desired set temperature.

Are you able to notice when your body and mind are out of balance? How can you tell?

What things in your life get you out of balance?

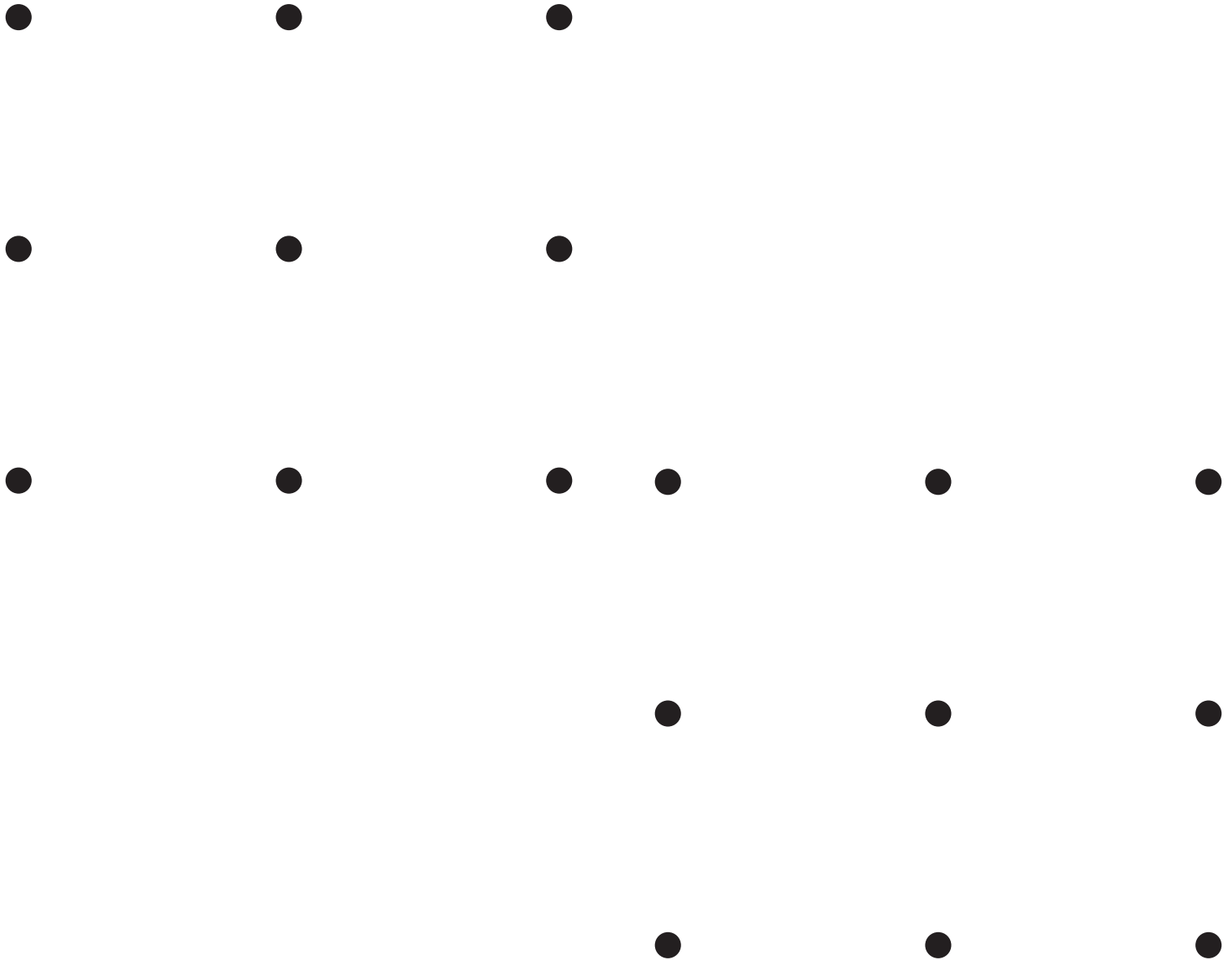
What temperature is your emotional thermostat set at?

How far from that temperature do you need to be before you realize your air conditioning or heat should be on?

stepping outside the box

When you were in kindergarten, it's likely that you were told to color within the lines. Since then, people have probably been giving you lots of rules about what you should and shouldn't do. Some of these rules are obviously important. For example, "Don't cross the street before looking in both directions" and "Don't touch the stove burner" serve the purpose of protecting you. But if you are feeling boxed in by all the advice and suggestions others give you, you can step outside the box (or color outside the lines, so to speak!) and exercise your creativity. This downloadable diagram will illustrate the point that staying within the lines sometimes limits your ability to see situations from different angles.

Connect the dots in each group with four straight lines. Do not lift your pencil and do not retrace over any of your lines.





Although you'll find the solutions at the bottom of the next page, it doesn't matter whether or not you were able to figure it out. In life, there are often right or wrong answers (and you usually want to be right), but this activity is not about doing it correctly. Rather than trying to get the "right" answer, consider this: Most people approach this exercise thinking that they need to stay within the lines of what they perceive as a box around the nine dots, but that's not what the directions state. This activity asks you to see yourself differently than you usually do, to shift your perspective away from the way you see the world now.

In life, do you find yourself staying within the lines, or are you able to step outside the box? Explain your answer.

Tell about a situation in which you would like to step outside the box. How can you change what you usually do?

How do people around you respond when you do step outside the box?

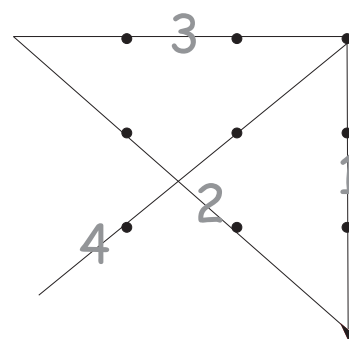
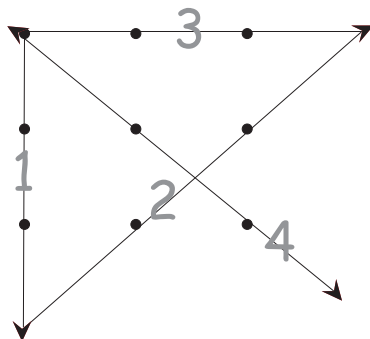
something more

How often do you form boxes around others with thoughts like, *She'll always be a loser* or *He'll never have any friends*? This is called all-or-nothing thinking, or seeing things as black or white without the gray. When you find yourself seeing things this way, keep in mind that if you act on these thoughts, you might be hurting others—or even yourself.

In what ways have you formed boxes around yourself or others that might be limiting your potential of becoming the person you want to be?

How can you remove some of these imaginary boxes or walls you have put up?

Answer Key:



perception or fact? your strengths and weaknesses

People can often list their weaknesses and negative qualities quickly and easily. However, when it comes to talking about their strengths and positive qualities, it can be like pulling teeth.

What do you think are the reasons people can come up with their weaknesses or negative qualities so quickly?

What do you think are the reasons people have such a hard time coming up with their strengths or positive qualities?

mindful takeaway Perceived strengths and weaknesses are beliefs, points of view, or ideas about what your strengths or weaknesses are, based on your perceptions or opinions without considering the factual evidence to prove the perception true. Factual evidence is proof that supports your having a particular strength or weakness. Factual proof is not an opinion or judgment!

In the columns below, list your perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Perceived Strengths	Perceived Weaknesses
<i>I am good at science.</i>	<i>I don't play the guitar well.</i>

Look at both lists. Did you find more weaknesses about yourself than strengths?

What are you feeling when you look at your lists?

Pick two or three of your perceived strengths and weaknesses, and write them in the spaces that follow. Then provide factual proof that the strength or weakness is in fact real and true.

Example

Perceived strength: *I am good at science.*

Factual proof: *I've gotten As in ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades, and I'm in AP physics.*

Strength 1

Perceived strength: _____

Factual proof: _____

Strength 2

Perceived strength: _____

Factual proof: _____

Strength 3

Perceived strength: _____

Factual proof: _____

Example

Perceived weakness: *I don't play the guitar well.*

Factual proof: *I've only picked up and plucked the strings of my brother's guitar. I don't actually know how to play notes or chords.*

Weakness 1

Perceived weakness: _____

Factual proof: _____

Weakness 2

Perceived weakness: _____

Factual proof: _____

Weakness 3

Perceived weakness: _____

Factual proof: _____

Now with the facts to either prove or disprove whether these are actual strengths or weaknesses, list below your actual strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses

mindful takeaway Consider the facts! Whenever you find a weakness or negative quality of yours popping up, ask yourself what proof you have to make this weakness a fact. You can also apply this to thoughts you have about other people's weaknesses.

something more

Positive Affirmations Activity

Affirmations are positive statements you can say to yourself. You can use affirmations to talk back to negative thoughts that come to your mind. Here are some examples:

- I am a valuable and unique person.
- I always do the best I can.
- I love myself.
- I am lovable.
- I am worthy.
- I am kind.
- I am trustworthy.

Write five affirmations for yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What is it like for you to write and say nice things to yourself?

If you find it difficult to say nice things to yourself, try imagining that you are talking to a friend of yours.

self-harm awareness journal

Aaron cuts on his leg where no one can see it when his dad comes home and takes his own anger out on him. Aaron says it helps him feel a physical pain that is easier than the emotional pain of feeling sad, hurt, and confused by his dad's actions.

Monica lies a lot to get attention from her friends because she has such a big family that no one at home really notices her. Once or twice a week, she also vomits after she eats because she doesn't want to get fat.

Aaron and Monica are two of many examples of teens who are hurting themselves. Although it might seem commonplace or popular at your school, it doesn't have to be something anyone has to do. Self-harm is really dangerous and doesn't actually fix any problem or situation.

Knowledge and information can be very powerful when you want to harm yourself. There are times when you may automatically hurt yourself without giving it a lot of advance thought. Instead of being on automatic pilot, print a copy of this self-harm awareness journal and complete it. This allows you to be a detective and figure out the reasons behind wanting to hurt yourself.

Here's a sample:

Step 1: What is the negative or harmful thing you would like to do right now?

I want to scratch on my skin with a paperclip to cut myself.

Step 2: Is there something going on that makes you want to harm yourself?

Sarah just broke up with me. She has been my girlfriend for three months. She cheated on me with Brittney, another friend of ours.

Step 3: On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very strongly), how much do you want to harm yourself?

Like 1,000!

Step 4: Where are you: home, school, mall, or somewhere else?

At home.

Step 5: Are you alone or with someone else? If you are not alone, who are you with?

No one else is here right now.

Step 6: What do you feel in your body right now?

I feel like someone just socked me in the gut. I feel sick.

Step 7: What are you thinking right now?

I think I'm going to be alone forever. No one is going to want to go out with me again. Sarah and I were perfect for each other.

Step 8: What are you feeling right now?

I feel like the world is going to end. I am sad and hurt.

Step 9: Count your breaths as they normally occur for you. Sometimes it helps to say to yourself, *Breathing in, breathing out.*

Okay, I did this. I counted my breaths. They feel tight and I feel hot.

Step 10: After going through these steps, do you feel like you still want to harm yourself?

I am still really hurt and really mad, but no, I don't need to hurt myself.

Step 11: What changes have happened since you started this journal entry?

I feel like the breathing really helped me calm down.

mindful takeaway Remember, you don't have to engage in a harmful behavior because you think about it or it comes to your mind. If you still want to harm or hurt yourself, please talk to somebody you trust: a professional, a friend, or a teacher.

self-harm awareness journal

Step 1: What is the negative or harmful thing you would like to do right now?

Step 2: Is there something going on that makes you want to harm yourself?

Step 3: On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very strongly), how much do you want to harm yourself?

Step 4: Where are you: home, school, mall, or somewhere else?

Step 5: Are you alone or with someone else? If you are not alone, who are you with?

Step 6: What do you feel in your body right now?

Step 7: What are you thinking right now?

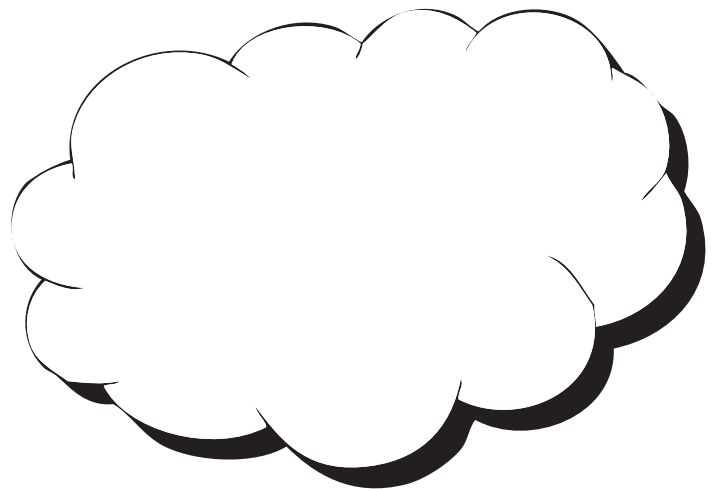
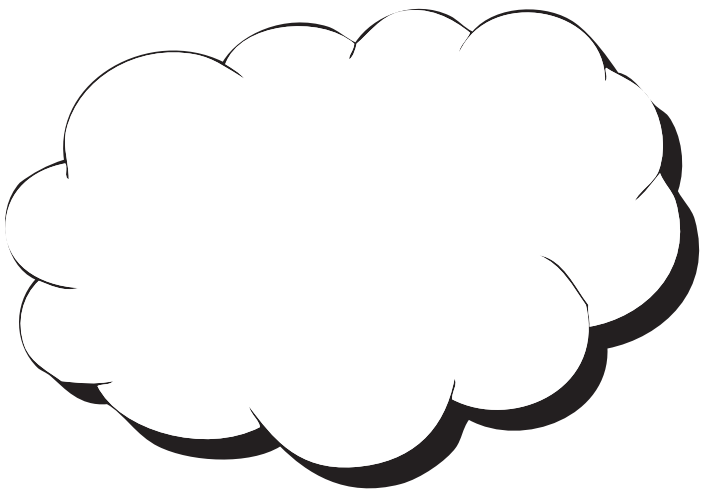
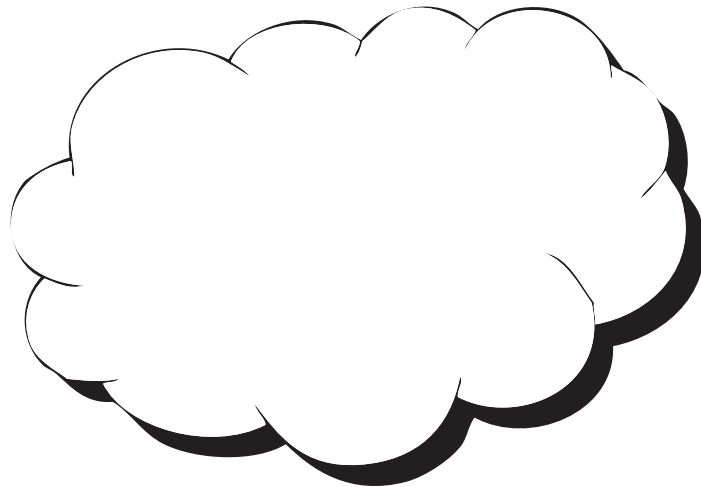
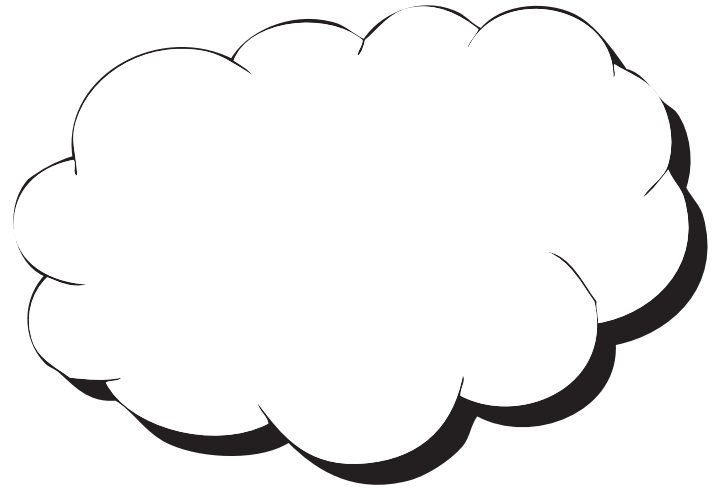
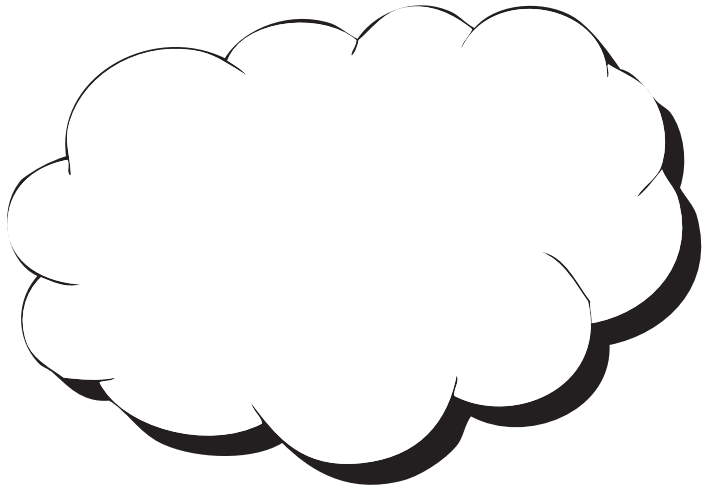
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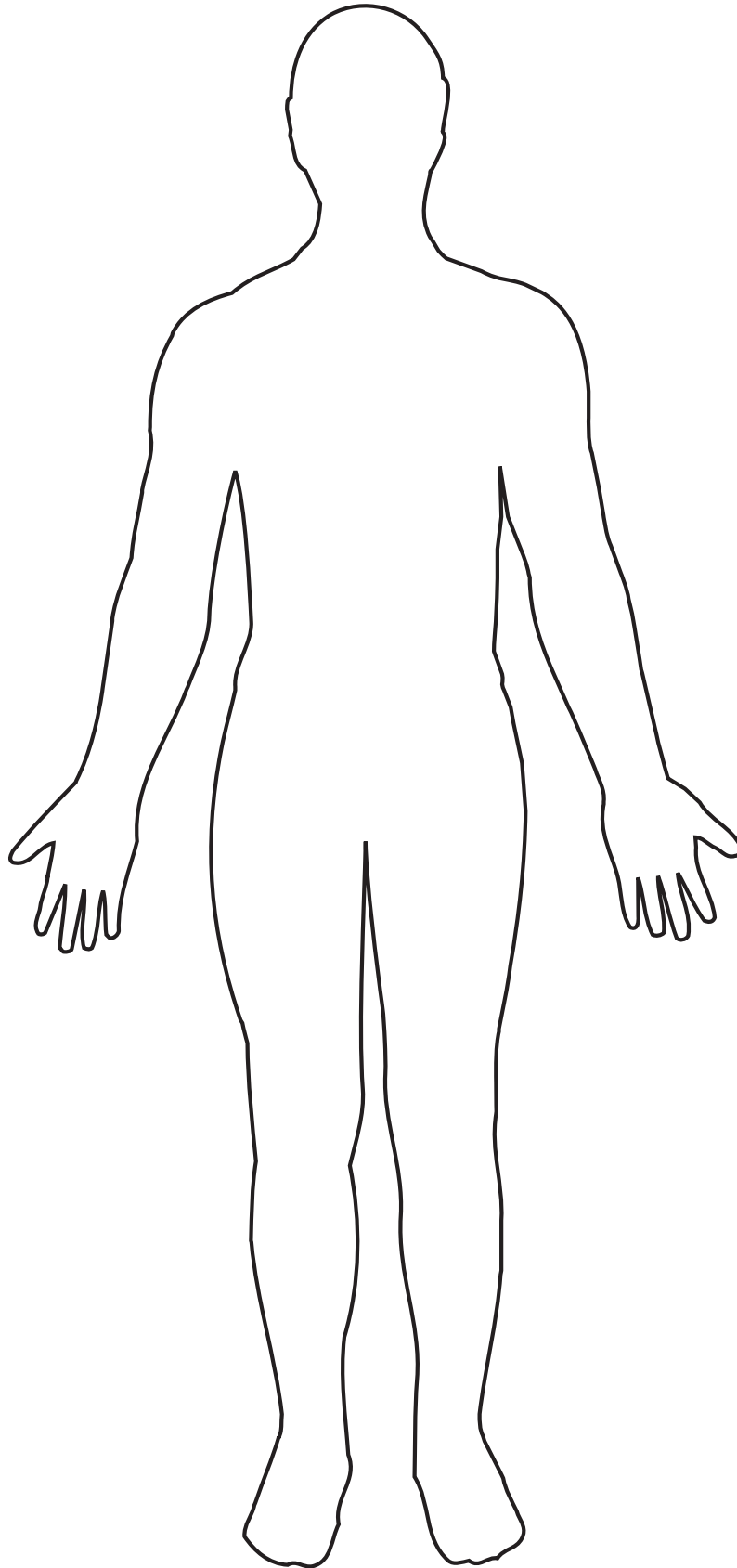
Step 10: After going through these steps, do you feel like you still want to harm yourself?

Step 11: What changes have happened since you started this journal entry?

feelings clouds



where do i feel pain?



activities list

Read this list of activities and put a check mark next to all the ones you enjoy doing. Then go back and put a star next to your top three.

- spending time with pets
- nature/being in the outdoors
- writing, journaling, blogging
- Internet, social networking, messaging, posting
- taking pictures
- doing a hobby or craft
- playing or listening to music
- spending time with your friends
- spending time with your family
- gardening
- drawing or painting
- exercising
- playing a sport
- mindfulness practice
- doing yoga
- reading
- taking a shower or bath
- watching movies
- volunteering
- eating out
- going to a sporting event
- going to a concert
- camping out
- traveling
- talking on the phone
- going to a mall or shopping
- dancing
- singing
- cooking
- building projects
- playing video games
- driving
- skiing or snowboarding
- other: _____
- other: _____

pleasant moments calendar

	The Moment	My Thoughts and Feelings	What I Felt in My Body	What I Think and Feel Now
Example	I passed my driver's test.	I can't wait to drive to the lake! I was really excited.	I had butterflies in my stomach during the test. Afterward, I couldn't stop smiling and messaging my friends.	I hope my mom lets me borrow her car. I'm still really happy and can see how it is going to change so many things in my life.
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				

	The Moment	My Thoughts and Feelings	What I Felt in My Body	What I Think and Feel Now
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

unpleasant moments calendar

	The Moment	My Thoughts and Feelings	What I Felt in My Body	What I Think and Feel Now
Example	My friend posted an embarrassing selfie of mine to the group we hang out with.	I thought that it would get spread around school and put on social media. I was worried that the rest of my friends would be mad at me. Afterward, I felt hurt and sad.	My face turned beet red. My chest got tight and I had a hard time breathing.	I am pissed off. I feel like I can't trust anyone—even my closest friends.
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				

	The Moment	My Thoughts and Feelings	What I Felt in My Body	What I Think and Feel Now
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

coping with painful events

At one time or another, everyone experiences painful or upsetting events. Painful events like doing poorly in a class, getting fired from a job, not getting into the college you wanted to, or losing a friend are all problems that can naturally cause suffering, emotional or physical pain, and stress.

How you choose to respond to and cope with painful life problems affects your overall level of stress, as well as your ability to manage problems. Often people add to their pain and stress by *blocking* it, which will make a stressful situation even worse.

Blocking a problem can include any of these:

- engaging in unhelpful or harmful coping behaviors
- resisting the problem
- avoiding the problem
- pushing the problem away
- denying that the problem exists
- ignoring the pain it causes
- feeling guilty about it
- obsessing about it
- ruminating about it
- judging yourself
- telling yourself that you should have done something differently

self-care heart

Imagine your heart looks like this symbolic one. Using these questions as guidelines, fill in this outline:

Is your heart full or empty?

What self-care activities can you do to fill up your heart?

What colors does your heart have?

What thoughts or feelings are present in your heart?

If you find that your heart isn't the way you would like it to be, you may need to do more for yourself. And if your heart is to your liking, you can still add in an extra dose of self-care!



using self-care to manage problems

Taking good care of yourself through engaging in positive self-care behaviors is a healthy way to manage difficult life problems, instead of using unhelpful and harmful coping behaviors.

Here are some positive self-care behaviors.

- Practice the mindfulness exercises you have been learning in this book.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Say kind things to yourself.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise.
- Notice positive thoughts and give less attention to negative ones.
- Have compassion for yourself.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Turn off technology when it is negatively impacting your life.
- Do something that makes you smile.
- Listen to your favorite (cheerful) song.
- Spend time with people in your life who build you up, for example, friends or family members.
- Do something you love that would be considered healthy, even if it is just for a minute or two.
- Look at or be in nature.

self-awareness calendar

	Harmful Behavior	What Happened Right Before	My Thoughts	My Feelings	After Pausing, What I Want to Do Now
Example 1	<i>I want to cut myself.</i>	<i>I flunked my test.</i>	<i>I am stupid.</i>	<i>I feel worthless.</i>	<i>I know cutting will not change what happened. I can see if I can retake my test. I can also study differently next time. I am still upset, but this feeling will pass.</i>
Example 2	<i>I want to vomit.</i>	<i>Someone mentioned I have a double chin.</i>	<i>I am fat, and no one is going to want to date me.</i>	<i>I feel alone.</i>	<i>I don't have to believe what I was told. I have friends and that is really important to me. I can go and do something positive for myself, like playing a game online with my friends.</i>

self-awareness calendar

	Harmful Behavior	What Happened Right Before	My Thoughts	My Feelings	After Pausing, What I Want to Do Now
Time 1					
Time 2					
Time 3					
Time 4					
Time 5					

problems and mindfulness-based solutions

Problem	Possible Mindfulness-Based Solutions
<p><i>Example: My parents are stressing me out.</i></p>	<p><i>Dropping-in mindfulness practice</i></p> <p><i>Mindful stopping</i></p> <p><i>Pleasant activities: do something I enjoy and that makes me happy</i></p>
<p><i>Example: I stay online so late that I am exhausted all day.</i></p>	<p><i>Put myself on a good sleep and computer hygiene schedule and routine</i></p> <p><i>Try doing the body scan mindfulness practice before I go to sleep</i></p> <p><i>Remember to use mindful messaging and posting tips when I am online</i></p>

Problem	Possible Mindfulness-Based Solutions