

Build your own MindKit

It's okay to ask for help!

If you're struggling or find the content upsetting, speak to a parent, therapist, school counsellor or another trusted adult. They can share tips and ideas to help you feel better. There are other resources available to you too:

- ▶ **Kids Help Phone:** Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT or CAFKIDS to 686868
- ▶ **Family Information Line:** Call 1-800-866-4546 or email FIL@CAFconnection.ca
- ▶ **Dial 911** if you or someone you know is in immediate danger

It may feel tough to reach out for help, but support will be there if you need it.

Tools to help you feel better when times get tough

Coping skills and strategies are special tools we can use when we are going through tough or stressful times.

Let's become emotional scientists

Before you know which tool or strategy to choose from your MindKit, it's a good idea to become more curious and interested in learning about your emotions.

Take time to explore what you're feeling, the strength of those feelings and any potential reasons for them. You can then choose the best way to manage your emotions and help yourself feel better.



One way to do this is through something called *RULER* by Dr. Marc Brackett.

RULER is a tool that helps you:



Recognize how you're feeling

How would you rate your current mood on a scale of one to five? Think about your happiness and energy levels when you make your rating.

Understand why you're feeling that way

What's happened to make you feel this way?

Label the specific emotion so you can talk about your feelings

What words best describe how you're feeling?

Express your feelings in a way that others can understand and help you.

What actions or facial expressions can you use to show your feelings to others?

Regulate your emotions by using helpful coping tools and strategies

What steps can you take to help change or reduce difficult feelings and strengthen or keep positive ones?

Let's kick-start your MindKit by adding some coping tools

It's important to learn how to tune into what your mind and body need. You can use this knowledge to create a MindKit of strategies and tools that can help you overcome challenges and look after your mental health. Think of it like **PIE!**



Priors

What have you used before?

What have you done before that you know will make you feel happy, silly, carefree or joyful? Do you love mountain biking? Painting? Reading books?



Internals

What can you do for and by yourself?

These are things you can do for yourself and by yourself. These tools are useful to have in your MindKit because you can do them any time of day or night. Examples of internal tools could be listening to music, journaling, going for a walk, cooking, drawing or taking a shower.



Externals

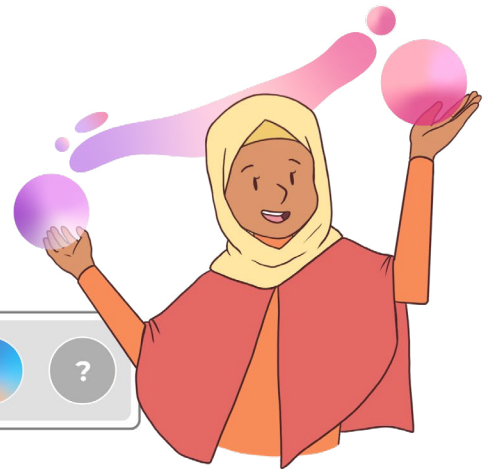
What can you do with others?

These are things that require you to connect with someone. Examples of external tools could be spending time with friends or Family or asking a trusted adult for advice or support.



It's important to remember that not all coping tools will work for you. The key is to try out as many as you can and build a MindKit with the ones you like best.

Some tools and strategies will work better than others will, and sometimes you may need to mix-and-match depending on the situation. It may even take some time before a tool starts to work.



Remember that you're not alone and there's support available if you need it

Asking others for help is just as important as learning and using different coping tools to look after yourself.

Here are some hands-on tools to get started!

Let's start building your toolkit! Here are five hands-on tools and strategies to get your MindKit started:

1 Make playlists for different emotions and use the right music to lift your mood

Music has the power to influence how you feel.

Instructions:

- ▶ First, figure out what you're currently feeling.
- ▶ Then, ask yourself how you'd like to be feeling and thinking instead.
- ▶ Make multiple playlists for whatever you'd like to feel. For example, if you're feeling sad, you might want to make a playlist full of songs that make you smile. If you're feeling helpless, you could make a playlist that makes you feel strong.

2

Practise thinking in a way that trains your inner coach to be stronger than your inner critic

Everyone has an inner coach (the voice that helps you think positive thoughts about yourself) and an inner critic (the voice that tells you all the reasons you're not good enough and focuses on the negative).

Try to train your inner coach to be stronger than your inner critic. Your thoughts are powerful!

Instructions:

- ▶ Start by listing things that your inner critic would say.
- ▶ Then, write down how your inner coach would respond.
- ▶ Remember to keep practising! Practice is key to strengthening your inner coach.

My life will never be like it was before my dad was diagnosed with PTSD

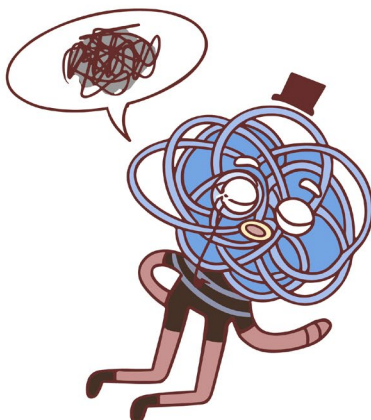
Today might be a bad day, but it won't last forever. Tomorrow will be better!

I'm terrible at school

I'll make a plan to study after school. I've got this!

This voice tells you all the reasons you're not good enough and focuses on the negative

This voice helps you think positive thoughts about yourself



3 Make a list of your favourite positive sayings or phrases

Words can be a powerful tool for improving your mood.

Instructions:

- ▶ Take a moment to write down a couple of your favourite short phrases that help you think positive thoughts.
- ▶ Read these sayings when you need a bit of hope and encouragement.
- ▶ Keep adding sayings to your list!

4 Map out your personal support system

It can be difficult to reach out to others for help. Identifying who's part of your support system is an important step.

Instructions:

- ▶ Create a list of supportive people you know you can talk to, such as friends,
- ▶ Family members, teachers or community members.
 - Name an adult who can help you calm down
 - Name a friend who can help you feel better
- ▶ Then, write down steps you can take to ask each person for help
- ▶ Reach out to the people on your list when you need to.

5 Try doing a countdown to focus on what is around you

Paying attention to the moment can help reconnect you to the present and take your mind off any unhelpful feelings for a little while.

Instructions:

- ▶ Create a list of things around you that match up with your five senses:
 - 5 things you can see (e.g. the sky, birds, your phone, a specific colour, your hands)
 - 4 things you can touch or feel (e.g. a table, the carpet, wind on your face, a pet's fur)
 - 3 things you can hear (e.g. laughter, your own breathing, a dog barking)
 - 2 things you can smell (e.g. a candle, fresh rain)
 - 1 thing you can taste (e.g. a cup of tea)
- ▶ Take a calming breath between each item.

Keep updating your MindKit with new ways of coping that work best for you!

References

Brackett, M. A., Bailey, C. S., Hoffmann, J. D., & Simmons, D. N. (2019). RULER: A theory-driven, systemic approach to social, emotional, and academic learning. *Educational Psychologist, 54*(3), 144-161.

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. *RULER: An evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning*. rulerapproach.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/RULER_Brochure.pdf



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