

101 ways to be less stressed

Simple Self-Care Strategies
to Boost Your **MIND, MOOD,**
and **MENTAL HEALTH**

DR. CAROLINE LEAF

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This publication is intended to provide helpful and informative material on the subjects addressed. Readers should consult their personal health professionals before adopting any of the suggestions in this book or drawing inferences from it. The author and publisher expressly disclaim responsibility for any adverse effects arising from the use or application of the information contained in this book.

Contents

[cover](#)

[half title page](#)

[title page](#)

[copyright page](#)

[introduction](#)

[1. Set your intentions for the week](#)

[2. Be open and honest with your intentions](#)

[3. Learn what your body needs and make it a priority](#)

[4. When you are panicking about something, focus your attention on one thing](#)

[5. Incorporate more “thinker moments” into your day](#)

[6. Avoid claiming panic attacks as part of your identity](#)

[7. Take a warm bath or shower before bed](#)

[8. Get creative](#)

9. How to keep your brain young and healthy
10. Make sure you are getting enough omegas
11. Be aware of your thoughts
12. Practice deep breathing
13. Engage in conversation with people who have different points of view
14. Practice “purposeful procrastination”
15. Red light therapy can potentially help improve your mental and physical health
16. Be careful of relying too much on “self-help”
17. Walk more
18. Give yourself time to forgive
19. Sometimes it’s better to focus on facts rather than emotions
20. Don’t suppress your anxiety
21. Improve your nutrition and boost your mental health
22. Acceptance is important
23. Work on your insecurities
24. Don’t let your failures define you

- 25. Be careful of basing your words and actions on assumptions
- 26. Watch how you judge situations
- 27. Chase curiosity, not passion
- 28. Start each morning by reminding yourself of three things
- 29. Recognize the difference between reacting and responding
- 30. The most important conversations you have are with yourself
- 31. What kind of advice do you give to others?
- 32. Be vulnerable with those you love
- 33. Join a community
- 34. Freak out in the “love zone”
- 35. Do you criticize others?
- 36. Argue well
- 37. Don't assume you know what someone is thinking or feeling
- 38. Watch what you think and say about yourself
- 39. Don't celebrate the workaholic
- 40. Start and end the day right

- 41. Don't regret making mistakes in front of your children
- 42. Just because you think something, that doesn't mean it's true
- 43. Learn how to manage stress
- 44. Define your own success
- 45. Don't just wait for life to give you what you want
- 46. Make "gathering time" an important part of your life
- 47. Use your free time to build your brain
- 48. Don't be afraid to argue
- 49. What kind of language do you use?
- 50. Don't avoid hard tasks
- 51. Take measures against cognitive decline
- 52. Reach out and help others when you are feeling down
- 53. Be proactive in building human connections
- 54. Don't panic if you can't fall asleep
- 55. Anticipating the worst moments creates the worst moments
- 56. Focus on the "now"

57. Don't downgrade the seriousness of someone else's struggles
58. When dealing with difficult people, sometimes it's best to build trust first
59. Appreciate the journey of life
60. Don't judge a book by its cover
61. Get your mind in order before you go to sleep
62. Protect your own mental health when dealing with difficult people
63. Make "mental autopsies" a regular part of your day
64. Make mental plans of what you want to change or achieve
65. If someone you know is struggling, listen to their story
66. Teach your children that feeling sad or anxious isn't wrong
67. Recognize that material objects aren't everything
68. Think about happiness differently
69. Learn to handle rejection
70. Watch what you think
71. Practice doing nothing
72. Be a peacemaker, not a people-pleaser

73. Adopt a curiosity mindset

74. Change the way you value yourself

75. Listen to your body and stop overthinking

76. Ask for clarification if you're overthinking a situation

77. Choose not to be oversensitive

78. Make it a priority to spend at least an hour a day reading

79. Take measures to prevent overeating

80. Change the way you react to negative feedback

81. Keep an "unease" journal

82. Become aware of the problems in your life

83. Don't be afraid to admit you are jealous

84. Don't be discouraged if the journey is taking longer than expected

85. Make gratitude a priority today and every day

86. Smile and laugh often

87. Daydream often

88. Change the way you see a stressful situation

[89. Replace negative, toxic thoughts with an “attitude of gratitude”](#)

[90. Don’t spend too much time defining the problem](#)

[91. Don’t make decisions when you’re tired](#)

[92. Have a “possibilities mindset”](#)

[93. Have a strong support system in place](#)

[94. Don’t get stuck in a victim mentality](#)

[95. Work on your self-confidence](#)

[96. Focus on healthy habits, not quick-fix solutions](#)

[97. Step up to the challenge](#)

[98. Stop comparing yourself to others](#)

[99. Set work boundaries](#)

[100. Focus on your journey](#)

[101. Write a gratitude letter to someone in your life](#)

[conclusion](#)

[about the author](#)

[back ads](#)

[back cover](#)

introduction

Although many of us spend time focusing on our physical health, whether it's going to the gym, to a Pilates class, or for a morning jog, we often forget to work on our mental health. Yet the mind is the source of all our thoughts, words, and actions; when our thinking is unhealthy, our life will be unhealthy—even if we work out seven times a week and eat kale every day.

It's very important to spend time focusing on our mental self-care regimen and ways to be less stressed, since mental toughness and resilience will get us through difficult times and help us achieve success in every area of life, as I discuss in my book *Think, Learn, Succeed*. When our mind is strong, we'll be able to handle whatever life throws our way; we can go from surviving to thriving.

Of course, life can be very challenging. We're constantly facing stressful situations at work, at home, at school, in the car . . . you name it! In many cases, our reactions to these situations can make things worse. If we let our thoughts and emotions get the best of us, we can negatively impact both our mental and physical well-being. Uncontrolled thoughts and emotions run rampant through our brain, creating neurochemical chaos that can make us anxious, affecting our ability to think clearly and process information. This is one of the major roadblocks to success and can allow other toxic thinking habits and mental health issues to take root.

Here's the good news: our mind is incredibly powerful and incredibly capable. Our brain can change as we think (neuroplasticity) and grow new brain cells (neurogenesis). Using the incredible power in our mind, we can persist and grow in response to life's challenges. We can take our thoughts captive and change the way we think, speak, and act.

Our minds are more than prepared to stand up to these trials and overcome them—all we have to do is *think well*. Mentally healthy people can handle all of life's challenges. By changing our thinking and living a life of mental self-care, we can improve the way we think and how we live.

This book was created as a guide to help you understand the unique power of your mind, your choices, and your impact. It is, essentially, a beginner's how-to guide to mental self-care. It's a guide to 101 simple self-care strategies to boost your mind, mood, and mental health. As you reflect on each tip, I recommend the following process: *ask*, *answer*, and *discuss*.

These three actions underscore the intentional and deliberate process of learning that produces intelligent memory, which goes beyond merely reading some information you will forget later (for more on learning and memory formation, see my book *Think, Learn, Succeed*).

First, *ask*. In a journal, write down several questions about the tip you've read. For example, you can ask yourself, *Have I ever felt that I wasn't good enough? That I couldn't cope with the circumstances of life? How did I respond? What effect did this have in my life?* Your questions are meant to provide a starting point for an internal dialogue, much like questions you and I would ask each other during a day-to-day conversation.

Next, *answer*. Here you apply the tip to your own life by responding, in detail, to your questions in the *ask* section. It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers in this section. You answer your own questions, which are shaped by your experiences and the unique way you think, feel, and choose (see my book *The Perfect You* for more information).

Finally, *discuss*. In your journal, you further examine your own thoughts, words, and actions, considering the mental self-care tip of the day, expanding your observations, and thinking of practical ways you can change your mind and change your life.

So, are you interested in learning how to use the incredible power of your mind to persist and grow in response to life's challenges? No matter what life throws your way, when you master the art of mental self-care, you will boost your mind, mood, and mental health and achieve success in life.

1 | Set your intentions for the week

At the beginning of each week, set your intentions for the week, including some time for fun and for “thinker moments,” when you switch off to the external and switch on to the internal to just let your mind wander and meditate. This will help you mentally prepare for the week ahead, help you build up stress resilience, and give you time to organize your thinking. What are your intentions for this week? When is the right time for you to set your intentions for each week?

2| Be open and honest with your intentions

The majority of arguments and misunderstandings happen because you and I are not clear or honest about how we feel or what we want, either because we expect others to just know what we want or we're afraid to be open about how we feel. The solution: practice being open, clear, and honest about your intentions while being gentle and kind. What are some of your intentions that you could communicate to those you love?

3| Learn what your body needs and make it a priority

The gut microbiome—the world of bacteria living in the digestive system—doesn't just exist to help us break down food. There's a constant conversation going on between the brain and the gut, which has its own amazing neurons, just like the spinal cord. The relationship between the gut and the brain is incredibly important when it comes to mental health. So make your gut health a priority by listening to your body and watching what you eat.