

Mercer Healthy Living at the Lake



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“Try This”

Tip of the Month

Do you find yourself experiencing negative feelings about yourself?

Self-doubt and self-criticism are natural, but that doesn't mean it's healthy. When you are feeling down on yourself or being particularly hard on yourself, TRY THIS:

Remember *R.A.I.N.*

- 1) **R: Recognize what's** going on. Consciously acknowledge, in any given moment, the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are affecting us.
- 2) **A:** Allow the experience to be there, just as it is. Allowing means letting the thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations we have recognized simply be there.
- 3) **I:** Investigate with kindness. Direct a more focused attention to your present experience. Simply pausing to ask, what is happening inside me?
- 4) **N:** Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the experience. This is experiencing natural awareness as the truth of who you are—**not a story you've told yourself about being “not good enough.”**

What are your *strengths* & how do you *leverage* them?

Included with this newsletter is a “Mental Health Check In” worksheet to help you identify your strengths—before you jump into it, let's take a minute to discuss why and how (in addition to the worksheet) you should identify your personal strengths.

1. Know yourself. Exercise self-awareness and start evaluating yourself in order to make a few key determinations about yourself. Who is better than you in identifying your own core strengths and weaknesses? Take some time, be honest and reflect on your past year.
2. Ask a Friend. Interestingly enough, some research suggests that perhaps others know you better than you know yourself. Ask a friend to name three of your strengths; this will give you a valuable outsider perspective.
3. Find Clues in Your Attempts and Failures. Failure is a foundational piece of building long term success. The important thing to remember is that in your failings, if you pay enough attention you might be able to start identifying any weaknesses that may have a hand in those failures. You can then minimize those issues and maximize what you are great at.
4. Analyze Your Successes. While failure can be a great teacher at times, success also brings more success. Any experience, whether positive or negative, can be a teaching tool if you are willing to utilize and analyze it. The key is to invest the time to reflect on these successes.
5. Use a Strength Test. If at the end of this you still find yourself questioning what your own strengths are, then you can look into taking a “strength test.” Here are a few examples: wingfinder.com, high5test.com and humanmetrics.com.

Now what exactly do you do with that information? Leveraging your strengths is a key aspect of well-being and ideal functioning. You can think about leverage by envisioning a see-saw. Typically on a see-saw, one person puts all of their weight on one end of the see-saw, which then propels the other person up into the air. In the same way, if you utilize your personal strengths as the foundation for your growth, and put them all on one side of the see-saw, you would see your success propel up into the air!

And while we are focusing on our strengths, it's just as important to take note of your weaknesses. If you are constantly acting on your weaknesses, it's hard to put all your strengths on your see-saw.

Remember that no success happens overnight. You as the individual have to work hard to identify your strengths and then work out a way in which to leverage them to your overall benefit and growth. It will likely take time, patience and effort, but if you are reading this, you are already on your way!

Mental Health Check In: Identifying your *Strengths*

Strengths are a unique combination of your skills, talents, knowledge and experience. You have many strengths, some are obvious and others maybe aren't. Many of your strengths go underutilized, unappreciated, and too often, unrewarded. When we identify our strengths and focus on them, we are more productive and engaged, perform better and have greater joy.

Reflect on your strengths and qualities by completing the prompts below.

Things I am good at:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Compliments I have received:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

What I like about myself:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Challenges I have overcome:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

I've helped others by:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Things that make me unique:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

What I value the most:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Times I've made others happy:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Fitness *Tip*

Habit Stacking is a goal-making method that helps you develop new healthy habits by "stacking" them onto existing habits. Identify a current habit you already do each day (often called a *keystone habit*) and then stack your new behavior on top.

Think... After (or before) [Current Habit], I will [New Habit].

For example: After I brush my teeth, I will do 5 minutes of stretching. After I change out of my work clothes, I will put on my workout clothes and take a walk. After I start the coffee maker, I will do a 30 minute workout video. Between classes, I will walk up and down the stairs 3 times.

The reason habit stacking works so well is that your current habits are already built into your brain. You have patterns and behaviors that have been strengthened over years. By linking your new habits to a cycle that is already built into your brain, you make it more likely that you'll stick to the new behavior. And you can apply this method to any new desired behavior! Give it a try!

Nutrition *Hot Take*

Do you have sleep problems, headaches, elevated blood pressure, anxiety or irritability? Maybe you are *over caffeinating!*? We know, we know—with classes and homework and exams and jobs and responsibilities, it feels like there's no such thing as too much caffeine. *But there is!*

Adults are recommended to limit caffeine to 4-5 cups per day or less. This equals to 400 milligrams or less to be considered safe. Common drinks with their caffeine content are list below, courtesy of the FDA website. Beware of larger thermoses and coffee mugs, as they are larger than 8 oz. or a cup.

- 12 oz. soft drink: 30-40mg caffeine
- 8 oz. green or black tea: 30-50mg
- 8 oz. coffee: 80-100mg
- 8 oz. energy drink: 40-250mg



Sometimes *laughter* is the best *medicine*



@bejewelledbud

Can you guys please recommend books that made you cry?



Frease
@FreaseDaddy

Organic Chemistry: Structure and Function by Vollhardt, K. Peter C. and Schore, Neil E. (2014)

