



# Just breathe

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A GUIDE TO WELLNESS



**care**

CONNECT • ACKNOWLEDGE  
RESPOND • EVALUATE



This belongs to:



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I am not what  
happened to me,  
I am what I  
choose to  
become.

-C.G. Jung

Dear Friend,

If you are reading this, chances are life has not been easy for you lately. Or maybe for quite a while.

You may be staying in a shelter right now. You may be getting help from a domestic violence advocate in a community program. Or maybe you picked up or were given this booklet through another source.

*Just Breathe* is not meant to be a substitute for domestic violence, mental health, or substance use services. It is meant to be used along with those important ways of getting help. You can use it to track your progress, practice ways to calm yourself, and remind yourself to take care of the basics as you move forward and heal.

This collection of wellness and recovery resources has been designed especially for you with the help of survivors in five domestic violence programs across Ohio, advocates and staff from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, researchers from The Ohio State University, and funding from The Office for Victims of Crime.

It is our hope that you find practical assistance, inspiration, hope, and healing from the resources.

Please feel free to reproduce and share any of these materials.

The background of the page is a close-up photograph of several teal-colored leaves with serrated edges. The leaves are arranged in a pattern, with some overlapping others, creating a textured and naturalistic backdrop. The lighting is soft, highlighting the veins and the texture of the leaf surfaces.

I am  
worthy.

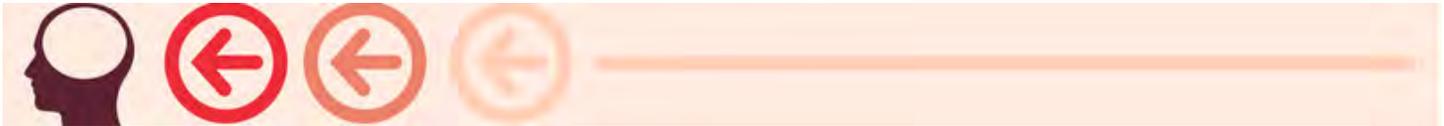
# SELF-CARE: BACK TO BASICS

For the week of: \_\_\_\_\_



	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
<b>Ate breakfast</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>Ate lunch</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>Ate dinner</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>Hours slept</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>Practiced deep breathing</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>Personal goal:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>						

# Be Well Plan



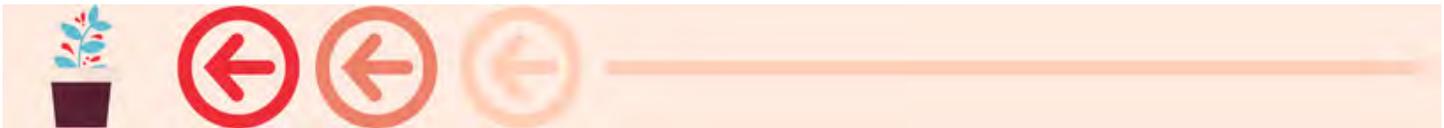
## About me

First Name

Last Name

Staff Name

Date



## Staying Well

### 1. What are you currently doing to stay well?

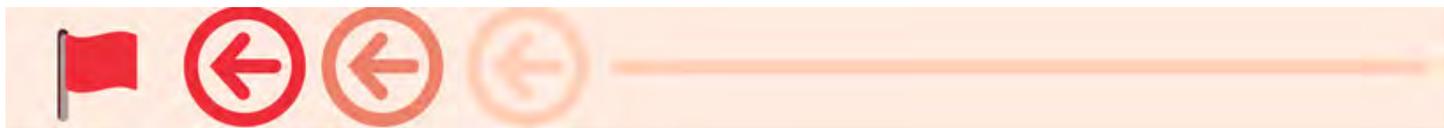
- Talking with friends or family
- Taking prescribed medication
- Getting plenty of rest
- Eating regularly
- Other (list):

### 2. How confident are you about staying well? (1=Not confident at all; 10=Totally confident)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My confidence rating:										

**3. Which of these Safe Coping Skills are you willing to try?**

	No	Yes
Asking for help		
Leaving a bad situation		
Taking good care of my body		
Setting a boundary		
Pacing myself		
Attending treatment		
Listening to my needs		
Structuring my day		
Trusting the process		
Focusing on the present		
Walking away		
Taking time to think ahead		
Prioritizing healing		
Celebrating successes		



**Red Flags**

**4. What situations are especially hard for you or cause you to become upset?**

Certain words (List: \_\_\_\_\_)

Yelling

Closed/open doors

Specific smells (List: \_\_\_\_\_)

Other (list):

Loud noises

Crying

Dark/nighttime

Crowds or crowded places

**5. Do you experience any of the following when you are becoming upset or distressed?**

	No	Yes
I experience shakiness and trembling		
My heart races		
I withdraw and stay to myself		
I feel helpless		
I feel afraid		
I have panic attacks		
I cry		
I can't think straight		
Everything & everybody irritates me		
I get restless and can't stop moving		
I can't sleep or I sleep all the time		
I have nightmares		
I have mood swings		
Thoughts get stuck in my head and I can't let them go		
I feel that everyone is out to get me		
I think about death and dying a lot		
My thoughts won't stop racing		
I increase substance use		
Other <i>(please list)</i> :		



## My Support

**6. How would you like staff to assist you when you become very upset?**

- Check in with me very frequently
- Offer to sit down with me and talk it through
- Other (please list:)

**7. If there is a person who has helped you in the past when you have been overwhelmed, please list their name and number:**

First name

Last name

Phone number

**8. Do you want the staff to contact this person if you become distressed?**

- Yes
- No

I AM  
RESILIENT &  
I AM NOT  
ALONE

STRENGTHS

RED FLAGS

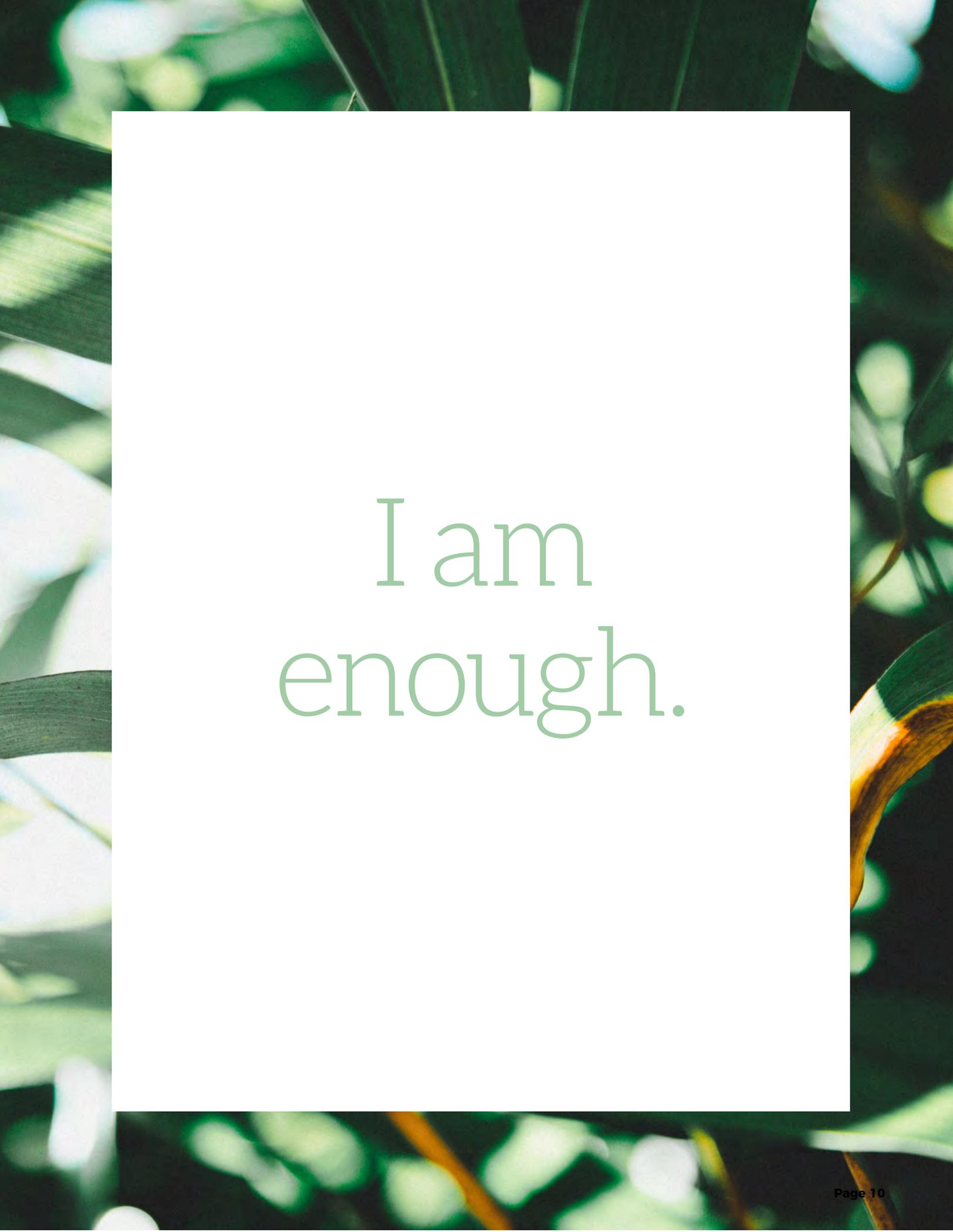
WELLNESS GOALS

SUPPORTS

Eating

Sleeping

New skills to try:



I am  
enough.

# I need help: *feeling safe*



## EXERCISE 1: TAKE TEN

*This exercise will help you center yourself and connect with your environment. Practice it when you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.*

1. Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until your lungs are completely empty—and then allow them to fill by themselves.
2. Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying. Notice them refilling. Notice your rib cage rising and falling. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders.
3. See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they are passing cars, driving past your house.
4. Expand your awareness: notice your breathing and your body. Then look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, smell, touch and feel.



## EXERCISE 2: DROP ANCHOR

*This is another simple exercise to center yourself and connect with the world around you.*

1. Plant your feet on the floor.
2. Push them down—notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.
3. Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
4. Notice your entire body—and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.
5. Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you are doing.

*continued on next page. . .*

# I need help: *feeling safe*

continued. . .



## EXERCISE 3: NOTICE FIVE THINGS

*This exercise can help you feel more at ease.*

1. Pause for a moment. Look around and notice five things you can see.
2. Listen carefully and notice five things you can hear.
3. Notice five things you can feel in contact with your body—the air on your face, your feet on the floor, your back against the chair.

## WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

*When a crisis happens, you might experience many painful thoughts and feelings all at once. Here's something you might try to calm yourself down and focus:*

*S.T.O.P*

**S**

### 1. **SLOW** your breathing

Take a few deep breaths and pay attention to your breath flowing in and out. This will help to anchor you to the present.

**T**

### 2. **TAKE** note of your experience in this moment

Notice what you are thinking. Notice what you are feeling. Notice what you are doing. This will help you realize what resources you need to get through this crisis.

**O**

### 3. **OPEN** up

Allow yourself to make room for your thoughts and feelings. Don't fight them. Don't push them away. See them for what they are, and give them space.

**P**

### 4. **PURSUE** your values

Respond to the crisis by choosing a course of action. Connect with your strength, and ask yourself "How do I want to respond to this crisis? How would I like to act?"

# I need help: *coping with communal living*

If you have made the difficult decision to enter a shelter as part of your plan to stay safe, you may be trying to adjust to and cope with communal living. While it can be comforting to know that you are not alone, shelter life is not easy. All of the other shelter residents—grown-ups and children—are struggling to put their lives together too. Remember that staying in a shelter may be necessary right now, but it is temporary, and soon you will have a place of your own.

## WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU GO TO A SHELTER

Every shelter and safe housing program is different, but generally you can expect the following:

- *Safe, private location.* Shelters and safe housing programs make everyone's safety their first priority. You may be asked to keep the location a secret.
- *No fees.* Shelters and safe housing programs are free.
- *Transportation.* Most programs will provide transportation to a shelter or safe housing program. Many also offer residents bus tickets and/or transportation to appointments.
- *Children's safety.* As advocates, we understand that children are also impacted by domestic violence. Advocates will be able to work with both you and your children by offering support, information and advocacy.

# I need help: *coping with communal living*

CONTINUED. . .

## **WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU GO TO A SHELTER**

- *Self-provided childcare.* Your children will be under your watch and care at all times. Childcare may be provided during groups and other activities.
- *Help finding a safe place for your pet.* Shelters will work with you to find a place for your pets to be cared for elsewhere. Most shelters do not allow pets, but some do.
- *Confidentiality.* Your information will be private and will not be shared with other agencies unless you give your written permission. You will be asked to honor the privacy of other program participants by not discussing their names or situations with anyone else.
- *Food, clothing, and toiletries.* Shelters and safe housing programs will provide basic necessities for you and your family at no cost.
- *Sleeping arrangements.* You may share common areas and might be asked to share a bedroom. In most shelters you will share the kitchen, common living areas, and bathrooms with other residents.
- *Laundry facilities.* Shelters and safe housing programs usually have laundry facilities and provide guests with linens (sheets, towels and blankets).
- *Visitors.* Visitors are generally not allowed in the shelter or safe housing program, but you can meet with your friends and family elsewhere.

# I need help: *Coping with Triggers*

## What is a trigger?

A trigger is anything that sets off upsetting memories and fear. Hearing a sudden loud noise, sad music, or smelling certain smells can all bring back strong feelings. Just about anything can be a trigger, but you can learn to actively avoid and fight triggers

You can get to safety by changing who, what and where.



## Get to safety by changing who, what and where



Detach from unsafe people. Move toward safe, positive people. Call your sponsor, or a safe friend or family member. Talk about how you're feeling or just stick to light topics, if that's more helpful.



Switch to safe activities. Try reading, TV, calming music, a walk— anything that focuses your attention away from the trigger.



Leave the room, go outside for a moment. Ask your advocate if there's is a quiet space in the shelter that you can use for a short time. Create a safety zone for yourself.

# I need help: *Relaxing*

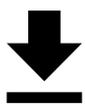


## A SIMPLE BREATHING EXERCISE

*Repeat this exercise for five minutes, several times a day, or whenever you need to. At first you may only be able to count to one thousand and three. With practice, you will be counting to one thousand and six.*



1. **As soon as you start to feel anxious or worried, start breathing slowly, using your stomach muscles.**
2. **Breathe in slowly and deeply.** As you breathe in, count to yourself, “one thousand and one,” one thousand and two,” “one thousand and three,” “one thousand and four,” “one thousand and five,” “one thousand and six.” *Feel the gentle rise of your stomach as you breathe in.*
3. **Breathe out slowly and count to yourself,** “one thousand and one,” one thousand and two,” “one thousand and three,” “one thousand and four,” “one thousand and five,” “one thousand and six.”
4. **Hold your breath for a couple of seconds.**



## free mindfulness apps & tools

### MINDFULNESS & SELF-CARE APPS

- Breathe2Relax (iTunes/ Google Play) - Breathing exercises to help with mood stabilization, anger control and anxiety
- Buddhify (iTunes/ Google Play) - Targeted meditations for sleep, travel, stress reduction
- Calm (iTunes/ Google Play) - Subscription service for guided imagery
- Headspace (iTunes/ Google Play) - Meditation tutorials for beginners
- The Mindfulness App (iTunes/ Google Play)- Guided and silent meditation
- Omvana (iTunes/ Google Play) - Meditations, music and sounds

### WEBSITES/RESOURCES

- [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)
- [www.coffitivity.com](http://www.coffitivity.com) (coffee shop ambient noise)
- [www.focusatwill.com](http://www.focusatwill.com) (scientifically optimized music)
- [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)
- [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)
- [www.themindfulword.org](http://www.themindfulword.org)
- [www.naturesoundsforme.com](http://www.naturesoundsforme.com) (ambient nature sounds)
- [www.rainymood.com](http://www.rainymood.com)

# I need help: *Relaxing*

## 9 ways to bring calm

**1 SIP A CUP OF TEA**

**2 COUNT BACKWARD SLOWLY FROM 10 TO 1**

**3 CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR A FEW MOMENTS**

**4 SQUEEZE A STRESS BALL**

**5 DRIP COLD WATER ON THE INSIDE OF YOUR WRISTS AND ON YOUR EARLOBES**

**6 ARRANGE FOR FIVE MINUTES OF ALONE TIME**

**7 SIT BY A SUNNY WINDOW FOR FIVE MINUTES**

**8 STAND UP AND TAKE A QUICK STRETCH**

**9 REPEAT THIS MANTRA: I AM STRONG. I AM WORTHY. I AM WHOLE.**



# I need help: *asking for help*



Shelters can be busy places, and it may not be easy for you to speak up and ask for help. But, remember, you need help from others as you heal and move forward. **No one can do it alone.**

## TIPS IF YOU HAVE A HARD TIME ASKING FOR HELP

- *It's very common to have trouble asking for help if you are a survivor of violence and abuse.*
- *Start small. Practice on safe people, with simple requests.*
- *Try to ask for help before a problem becomes overwhelming.*
- *You don't have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing right now.*
- *It may feel awkward at first.*
- *It gets easier!*

# ANGRY/EXPLOSIVE

 how do I feel?  how do I look?

 what do I do?  how can others help?

# AGITATED

 how do I feel?  how do I look?

 what do I do?  how can others help?

# AROUSSED

 how do I feel?  how do I look?

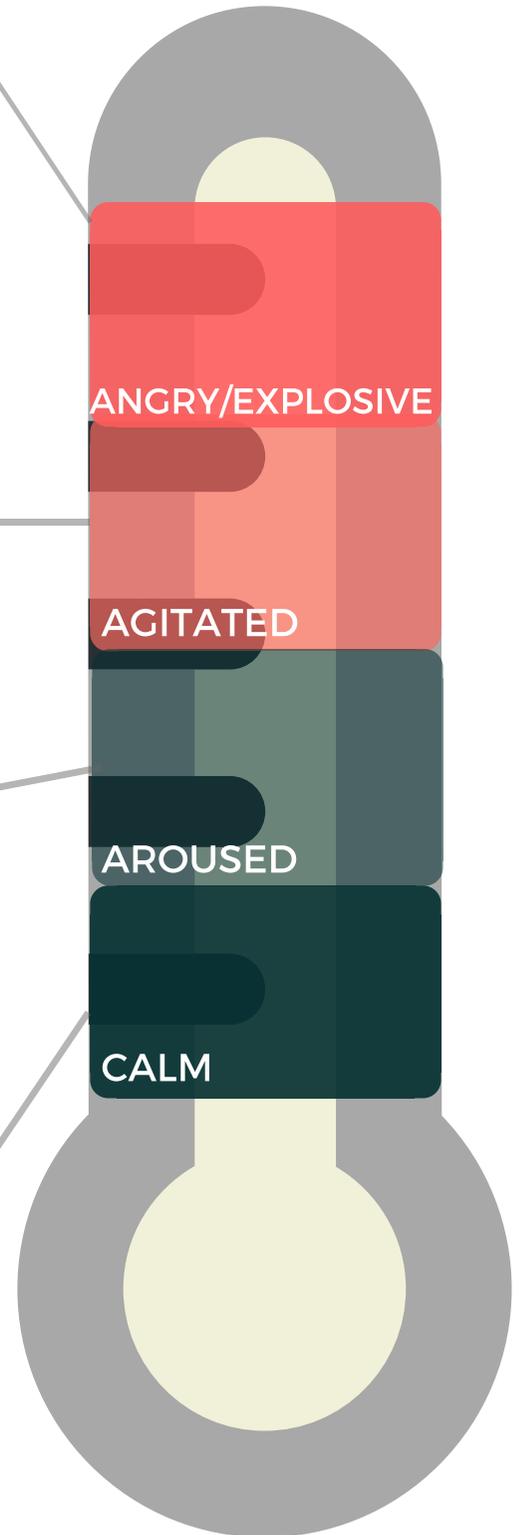
 what do I do?  how can others help?

# CALM

 how do I feel?  how do I look?

 what do I do?  how can others help?

# My emotion thermometer



# I need help: *Sleeping*

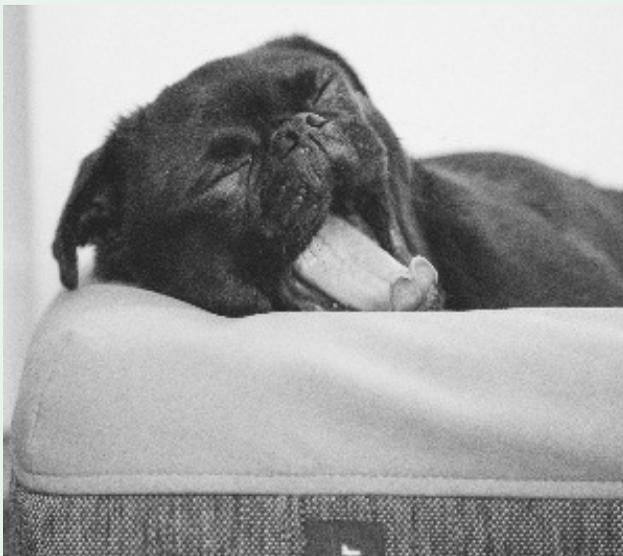


## how much sleep do I need?

We all need different amounts of sleep, with the average adult range of four to eight hours per night. Some people need more sleep and some people need less. The older we get, the less sleep we may need, or we may find ourselves waking up more often during the night.

## TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

- Try to go to bed at a regular time
- Eat your evening meal three to four hours before bedtime
- Get enough physical activity during the day
- Avoid caffeine if you can, particularly before bedtime
- Try a relaxing activity before you go to bed



## *Still can't sleep?*

- If you find that you cannot fall asleep, get up for a moment, and then try again
- You might find it helpful to keep a notebook and pen near your bed to write down worries or reminders
- Keep a sleep diary

# I need help: *getting active*

## Activity as mood booster and energizer

Having some physical activity in your day can help you stay well. It can improve your mood and distract you from problems and unhelpful thoughts. It can give you a sense of control and purpose and help you to feel less sluggish and more energetic.

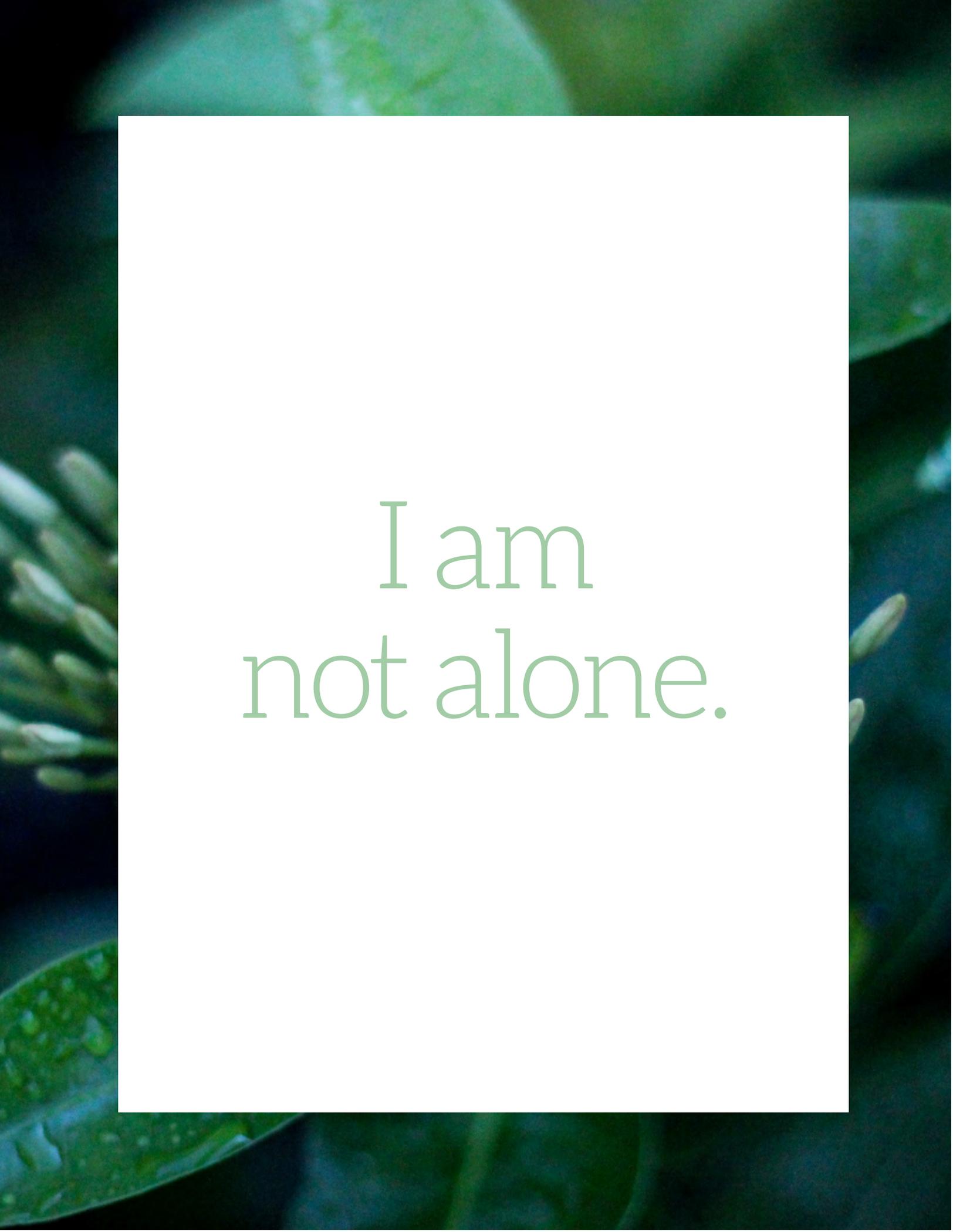
Don't worry if getting active is difficult at first. The following tips might help.



## TIPS TO ENCOURAGE MOVEMENT

- Plan your day in advance but don't be too rigid. If you miss an activity, move right on to the next.
- If planning a whole day is too much, break the day down into smaller parts, like "before lunch" or "after dinner."
- Reward yourself for what you have done instead of worrying about what you haven't done.
- Ask for a friend to join you.
- Keep an activity diary and see how you do!





I am  
not alone.