



Mental Health Survival Kit:
Basic necessities to keep your mind healthy this semester



Kemp Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic

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—Adapted with permission from Azusa Pacific University Counseling Center—

Note from the OBU Kemp Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic

Dear OBU Community,

We hope this finds you well! This past year has been a very difficult year for everyone from students to faculty and the Kemp MFT Clinic staff wants to provide you with as much support as we can as you go into this next school semester. This survival kit is designed to help you take time before, during, and after the school semester to nourish and exercise your mind. Just like we have to go to the gym and drink water to help keep our bodies nourished and strong, our minds need the same in order for us to use our minds to their full capacity.

When hard things happen, like pandemics, quarantines, and new restrictions, it becomes additional stress for our minds to process through on top of the normal life stressors. Our minds play a big role in navigating through life and all of the decisions and tasks that come along with that, so it is only fair to let our minds take a break from running to sit and rest. As you go through this survival kit, pay special attention to what is happening for you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. For instance, do you feel tight, heavy, relaxed, or light anywhere in your body? Do you feel an inclination towards sadness, happiness, nostalgia, etc. as you work through an activity? Do you find yourself thinking about a certain memory, person, place, etc. as you practice something in this kit? Noticing these things and writing them down will help you learn more about your mind and what you specifically need for your mind to feel nourished and strong.

Take some time periodically before, during, after this semester to acknowledge where your mind is, where you would like for it to be, what, whether it be in this kit or with a different resource, you can do to maintain or improve your mind's health. Making a plan, regardless of how meticulous it is, will help you feel more prepared with fewer things for your mind to decide on through this semester.

We want to wish you all the best through this next school semester! If you have any questions or would like to schedule a session with one of our therapists, please do not hesitate to call or email us with your thoughts!

Sincerely,

The Kemp Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic Staff

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About Grounding/Relaxation/Mindfulness

What is grounding? What is relaxation? What is Mindfulness?

Grounding is a way in which we reconnect with reality and remind ourselves that we are present, safe, and capable of taking the next step in the moment. Relaxation is what comes after we are connected to reality and present with ourselves. This helps us ease any tension, focus on our breathing, and relieve our mind of pressure to do everything at once. Mindfulness is noticing and accepting where your mind, body, and emotions are in the moment.

How does it work?

Choose which exercise you are going to practice in this moment. Get into a comfortable position where you are sitting. Perhaps sitting upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap or on your thighs, whichever is more comfortable. Allow your eyes to gently close. If you would prefer to keep your eyes open, soften your gaze and gently focus on a spot a few feet in front of you. (Pause) Take a few moments to **Arrive** by getting in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with where you are sitting. Become aware of your feet, your body being supported by the chair, how your hands feel with how they are making contact with your body. (Pause)

Next, **Gather** your attention by simply focusing on your breathing. Slowly breathing in...and slowly breathing out....breathing in....breathing out. Notice the rise and fall of your belly and chest as you breathe in...out...in... out.... It's okay for your mind to wander away to thoughts, sensations, or feelings. Simply observe that your mind has wandered, observe your thoughts and feelings, acknowledge their presence, and then return your attention back to the breath. Passively observe the flow of your thoughts, one after another, without trying to figure out their meaning or their relationship to one another.

As best you can, bring an attitude of gentle acceptance to all of your experiences. There is nothing to be fixed or worked on at this time. Simply allow your experiences to be your experiences, without needing it to be other than what it is, as you find it, in this moment. (*Pause*). You might even catch a glimpse that there is a part of you noticing what you are noticing. (*Pause*).

Now that your mind and body are ready, begin the exercise you have chosen to practice today. When your mind wonders simply acknowledge that it has wondered and bring your focus back to your exercise and keep working until you have worked through the exercise.

When you come to the end of your exercise gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you in the room...the feeling of the chair beneath you...the feeling of the breath in your lungs. (*Pause*). Take a deeper than normal breath and slowly exhale. Take a moment to intentionally bring this sense of gentle-allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment... When you are ready, slowly open your eyes. Take a moment to write down some meaningful moments you had during your exercise using the reflection pages in the Appendices.

Tips for Grounding/Relaxation/Mindfulness Exercises

As you go through some of the exercises on your own, you may find the following helpful:

1. Even though you may have what feels like thousands of thoughts running through your mind and you don't feel as if you are relaxing, you will likely notice at least some level of relaxation when you finish. As you practice this skill, this relaxation will increase.
2. Sometimes old or hidden pain can arise during these exercises. If you find that you are suddenly angry, frightened, depressed, etc. and you feel safe, gently allow yourself to experience the sensation without forcing yourself to try to understand it. If you feel the need, talk to someone about your experience (i.e., friend, therapist, family member, etc.).
3. You may have heard about "perfect" conditions for these types of exercises (i.e., only in a quiet place, using certain body positions, only 2 hours after you've eaten, etc.). If you find that you can't find an absolutely quiet place or the only time you can practice these exercises is right after dinner, don't let it stop you. If you find whatever is distracting you particularly bothersome (i.e., rumbling stomach, noises outside), try to incorporate it into your exercise.
4. You may not always want to practice these skills. Be gentle with yourself and find creative ways to make your practice more comfortable.
5. A few ideas that may help you maintain your skills practice include:
 - a. Picking a regular time and honoring that appointment as you would a doctor's appointment or class time
 - b. Finding a local meditation group
 - c. Download an app that will help you remember

List of Grounding/Relaxation/Mindfulness Exercises



Imagery

Find a quiet, calm place to paint a picture of a calming scenario in your mind. Some examples would be a beach, hiking, relaxing at home, interacting with an animal. As you paint your picture, pay attention to special details. Here's an example with a brook?

Sight: The sun is setting, so the sky is a mixture of blue, purple, pink, yellow, and orange. There is a forest of dark green trees gently swaying in the wind.

Sound: You hear the trickling of a small waterfall up the river. Every few seconds there is a small fish splashing at the surface of the brook.

Touch: The water is cool around your ankles and the smooth stones are rough against the bottoms of your feet.

Taste: There is a blackberry bush on the side of the brook that are sweet.



5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Describe 5 things in your surroundings which you can see.

Describe small details of 4 things you can feel.

Describe small details of 3 things you can hear.

Describe small details of 2 things you can smell.

Describe small details of 1 thing you can taste.



Breathing Prayer

Before you begin, choose a simple prayer sentence that you can easily say with your breath. For example, we will use "Lord, grant peace".

Follow the instructions above and when your mind and body are ready, as you breathe in, say your simple prayer in your mind..."Lord", and breathe out..."grant peace". In this way, you can imagine that you are breathing in the breath of God and breathing out his peace Continue on in this practice by yourself for a few minutes until you are ready.

If you find your mind wandering or you feel distracted, just kindly notice that, and return your attention to the rhythm of your breath and the rising and falling of your chest and belly. Continue this practice of kind observation, and prayerful breath as long as you wish – just allowing your breath to do its thing.

Grounding/Relaxation/Mindfulness Exercises



Deep Breathing-Box Exercise

Inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds,
Exhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds



Relaxation

This can be done on its own or consecutively after the breathing prayer exercise. Relax your hands and allow your fingers to curl gently, bringing your thumb close to the middle of the palm. Start by taking a few deep breaths, become aware of how it feels in the body as you breathe deeply... Then make your breathing gentle and regular.

Now, raise your right leg 2 inches off the floor, point your toes forward, and tense the muscles in your leg...hold and now release them, allowing the foot to fall gently to the floor and relax. Notice the difference between being tense and being relaxed. Do the same with the left leg, tense it and allow it to drop and relax. Notice the difference between being tense and being relaxed.

Lift your right arm 2 inches from your chair or lap. Clench your hand and feel the tension... Now release the tension and allow the hand to fall gently back to their resting point. Repeat the same with the left hand noticing the difference between being tense and being relaxed.

Raise your shoulders and bring them close to your ears. Tense them and try to bring them close together...hold...and now release that tension and relax. Slowly roll the head to the right side...bringing the right ear down towards your shoulder...stretch the muscles of your neck. Bring your head back to the center...Now slowly roll your head to the left side bringing the left ear down towards your shoulder...Bring your head back to the center. Wrinkle up your eyebrows, hold...and now relax. Tighten up your jaw...hold it...and release.

This concludes the tensing and relaxing phase and now we are going to move into the second phase of awareness and relaxing.

Now think about different parts of the body and become aware of them and think in your mind: Relax. Become aware of the toes, relax the toes. ...Become aware of the sole of the feet, relax...Aware of the ankles, relax...Aware of the calves, relax...Aware of the shins, relax...Aware of the knees, relax...Thighs, relax ... Lower back, relax Upper back relax...Shoulders, relax...Upper arms, relax... Forearms, relax...Wrists, relax... Palms, relax. Fingers relax...If there is any part of the body that is not yet relaxed, simply become aware of them and relax them.

Grounding/Relaxation/Mindfulness Reflection

What did I recognize was going on in my body during this exercise? What did I notice in my breath?

How did it feel to breathe in and out my simple prayer or “Lord, grant peace”?

Grounding/Relaxation/Mindfulness Reflection

How did it feel to “lean in” to the uncomfortable thoughts and feelings that came up for you in this exercise, noticing them and not fighting them?

_How did your body feel after focusing on relaxing each area of tension?

How might you use all or part of this exercise in your daily life? When might you use it?

My Mental Health Plan

Stress is a common issue during the school semester. When stress builds, sometimes it can be overwhelming to think of ways to relieve that stress in the moment. Use this form to plan actions you can take or resources that you can use when your stress level is high this semester.

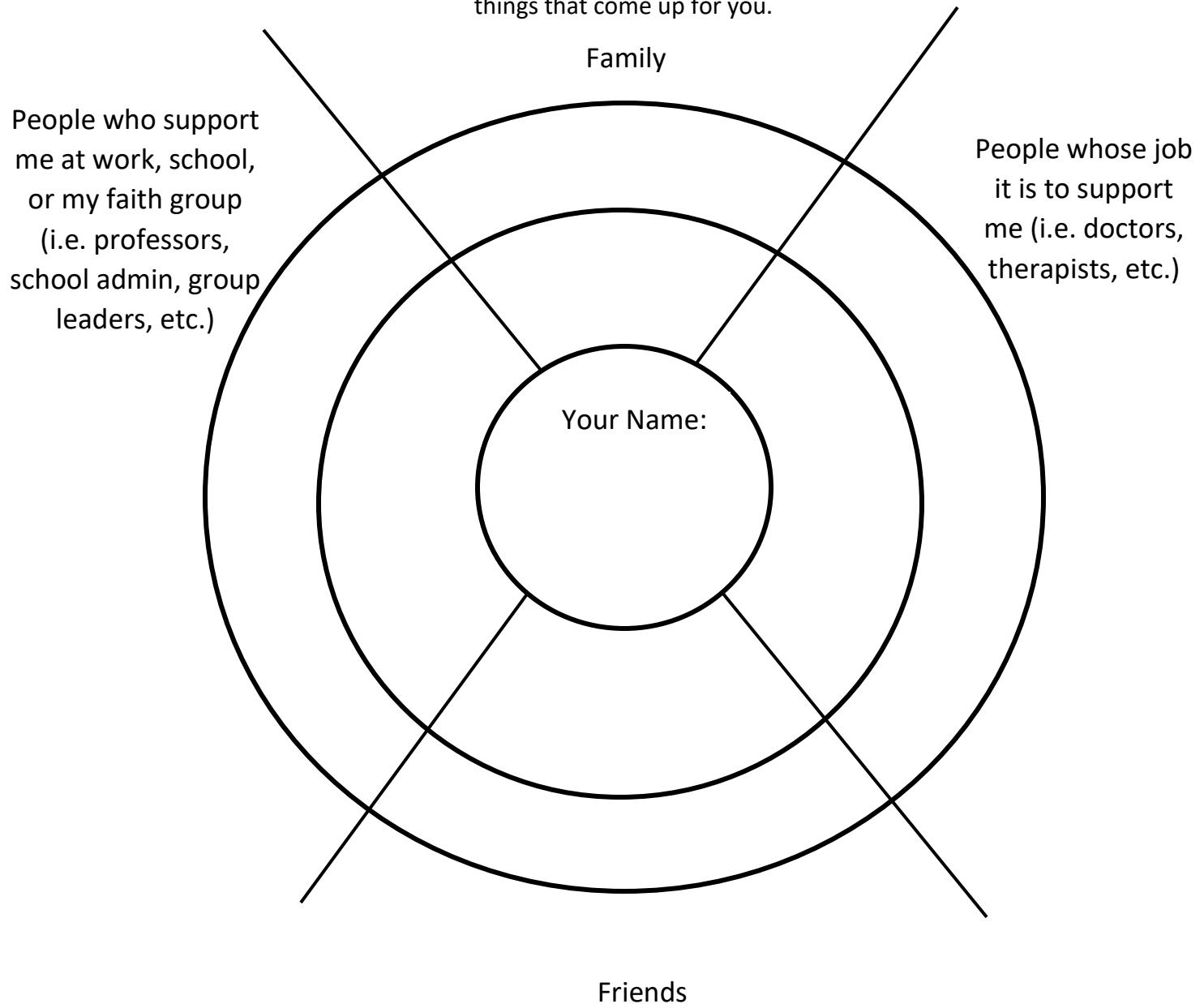
| |
|--|
| When I have these thoughts: (example) |
| I am so nervous about this test that I cannot focus. |
| I will do this: (example) |
| Go for a walk to a quiet place before studying to practice deep breathing. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| When I think/feel this: | These are my symptoms of moderate levels of stress (manageable with help of my social support): |
| I will do this: | I will contact these people in my social support system: |
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. |

| |
|--|
| These are my symptoms of high levels of stress (need professional support but still able to keep myself safe): |
| I will contact these resources: |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. |

Social Support

We as humans are social beings, so it is important to our overall health to have a strong social support system. Use this relationship map to help you plan who you can reach out to when you have a rough day or have a great day and need to celebrate. Start in the middle circle with your name and then with each category work outwards working from those closest to you to those whom you are not close. As you think through this sheet, use the reflection sheet to notice things that come up for you.



Social Support Reflection

What memories come to mind during this exercise?

What emotions came up while reflecting on my social supports?

What did I notice happening in my body during this exercise? How was my breath? How did my muscles feel?

What Does a Mental Health Crisis/Emergency Look Like?

Someone is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency when:

- They are at risk of harming themselves or others and immediate action needs to be taken
- They have stopped taking care of themselves and their health is in danger.
- They are not in touch with reality, for example, feeling overly suspicious, worrying someone is watching them, or hearing things that are not there

| Emergency/Crisis Resources | |
|--|--|
| Shawnee St Anthony ER 1102 W. MacArthur St. Shawnee, OK 74804 Open 24 hours a day Trained for crisis intervention | National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Hotline: 800.273.8255 Website: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org Available 24 hours a day Trained for crisis intervention |
| 911 When you call 911 for a mental health emergency, the dispatcher will ask you questions and listen to find out what is going on and where you are so that they can send you help. | |

Who to Contact for Support?

When experiencing manageable levels of stress:

- Resident Assistant (RA)
- Mentors
- Group leaders
- Therapists
- Close friends
- Close family

When experiencing unmanageable levels of stress:

- Therapist
- Doctors (General, psychologist, psychiatrist)

When stress is unmanageable on your own or with your social support system, it can be scary to do something like start therapy. When taking that step, lean on your social support. Ask a friend to sit with you while you call to make your appointment. Ask your RA to go with you to set up an appointment or talk to a professional. You are not alone!

When experiencing a crisis:

- Go to the ER
- Call the Lifeline Hotline or 911
- Seek a mental health crisis center

You do not have to do this alone! Ask an RA, RD, friend, or mentor to go with you to the ER or crisis center. If you are more comfortable, have them sit with you while you call a crisis hotline or center.

List of Resources

Non-Emergency Resources

These are not crisis or emergency intervention services

Kemp Marriage and Family Therapy

2202 North Kickapoo Ave

Shawnee, OK 74804

405.585.4530

Website: okbu.edu/mft-clinic

Hours:

M-Th: 9 a.m.-8p.m.

Fri: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sat: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Note: All OBU students get 10 free sessions each school year and then it is \$10 per session after that. OBU employees get 3 free sessions each school year and then have a fee on a sliding scale depending on family size and annual income, ranging from \$10 to \$70 per session.

Project: SAFE

313 North Union Ave

Shawnee, OK

74801

405.273.9953

Hours:

Mon-Fri: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Note: Provides trauma informed services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Bison Family Therapy Institute
624 West Independence
Suite 113-115
Shawnee, OK 74804

405.585.6413
Website: www.bisonfamilytherapy.com
Hours:
M-Th: 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
Fri: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sat: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Focus Mental Health Services
905 East Wilson St.
Shawnee, OK
74804

405.214.0116
Website: www.focusmhs.com
Hours: Mon-Fri: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Red Rock Behavioral Health Services
101 North Union Ave.
Shawnee, OK
74801

405.275.7100
Website: www.red-rock.com

Center for Christian Counseling and Care
1 West Main Street
Shawnee, OK
74804

405.275.2222
Website: www.shawneecounseling.com
Hours:
M-W: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.
Thur: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Fri: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Apps for your Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer

Headspace: Meditation Made Simple

Calm: Mindfulness, Sleep and Relaxation

ACT Coach: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy techniques

Breathe2relax: Deep breathing/relaxation

Breathing Techniques by Hemalayaa: Deep breathing/relaxation

CBTi-Coach: Cognitive Behavioral practices for those with insomnia

Mindfulness Coach: Stress Reduction

Mindshift: Anxiety Reduction

T2 Mood Tracker: Mood monitoring

Take a break!: Guided Meditations

Rootd: Learn about anxiety, work through mild anxiety attacks, Sleep, Mindfulness

References

Azusa Pacific University Counseling Center. *RIO Student Workbook*. (2017 June 2).

3 Signs You Need a Mental Health Crisis Center - Port St. Lucie Hospital. Port St. Lucie Hospital, Inc. | Florida Mental Health Services. (2020, June 3).
<https://www.portstluciehospitalinc.com/3-signs-you-need-a-mental-health-crisis-center/>.

Calling 911 and Talking with Police. <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Family-Members-and-Caregivers/Calling-911-and-Talking-with-Police>.

Grounding Techniques (Worksheet). Therapist Aid. <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/grounding-techniques/relaxation/none>.

Person-Centered Planning Series - Relationship Map. The Center for Employment and Inclusion. <https://ceiutah.com/webinars/relationship-map/>.

Therapist Aid. (2016, October 20). *Relaxation Techniques (Guide)*.
<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/relaxation-skills-guide>.