

Welcome to:



MINDFULNESS, GROUNDING, AND BEING IN THE MOMENT

Presented by
Casey Saylor, MSW
Older Adult Project Manager

MHAMMD

For more than 100 years, the Mental Health Association of Maryland has addressed the mental health needs of Marylanders of all ages through programs that educate the public to increase understanding and provide resources, advance public policy to improve care and outcomes, and monitor the quality of services received by individuals living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Programs for people, advocacy that changes lives.



MHAMMD

www.mhammd.org/publications

www.mdaging.org/events

www.mdaging.org/connections-project

Programs for people, advocacy that changes lives.



Mental Health Association of Maryland

Older Adult Programs

www.mdaging.org

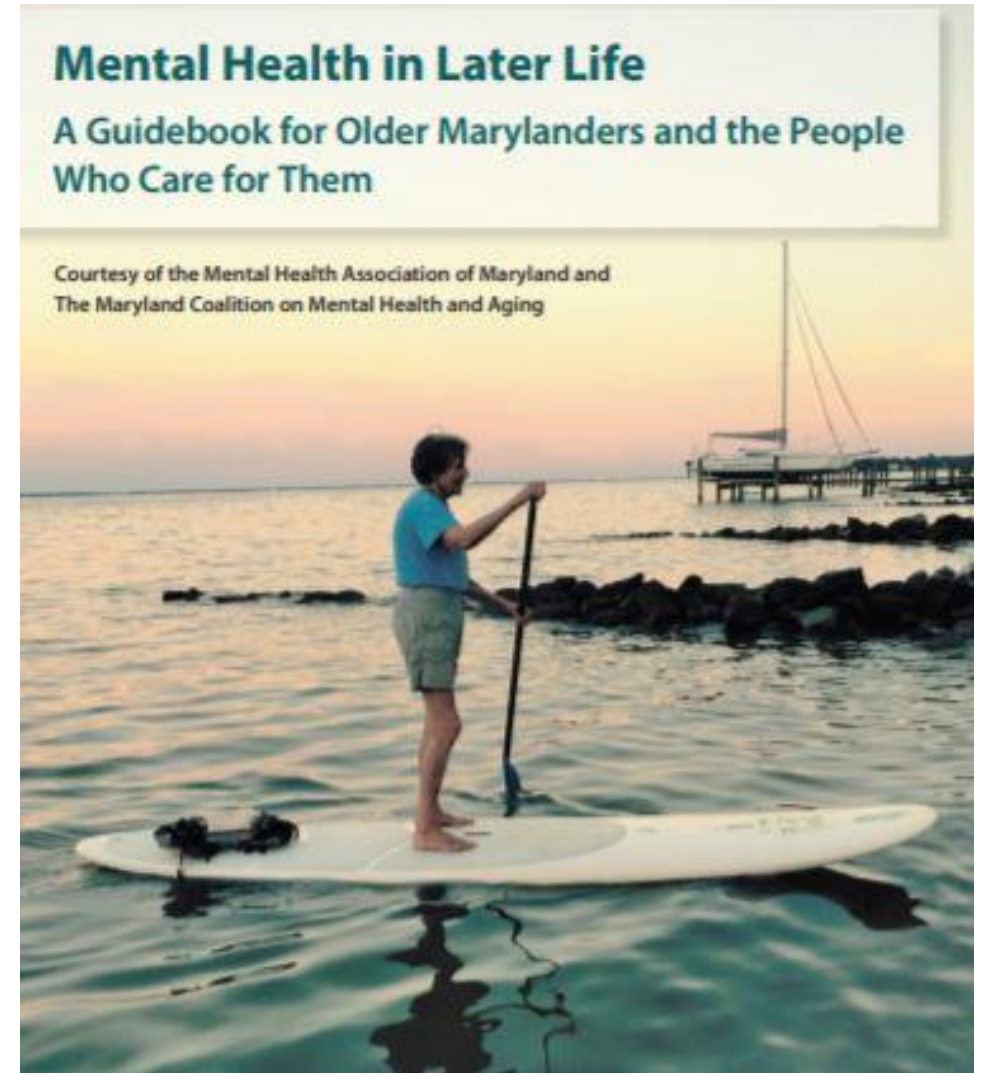


OLDER ADULTS VIBRANT MINDS



CONNECTIONS PROJECT

VIBRANT AGING: PEERS PROGRAM



Mental Health in Later Life

A Guidebook for Older Marylanders and the People Who Care for Them

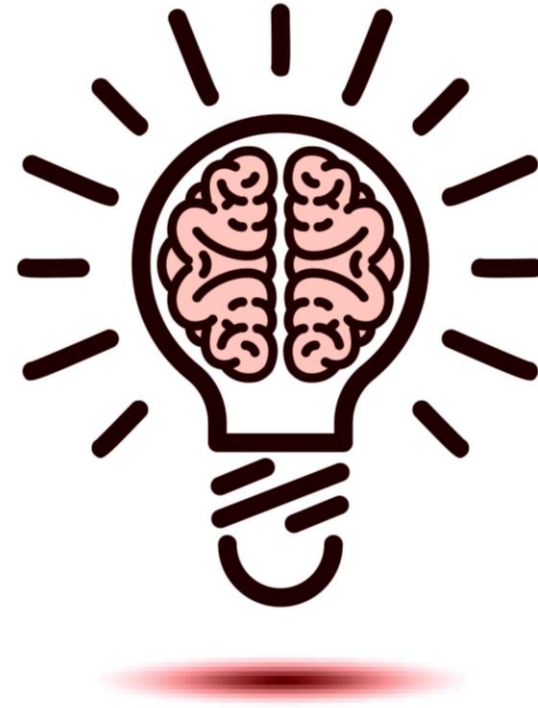
Courtesy of the Mental Health Association of Maryland and
The Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging

Cortisol

The stress hormone.

Designed to let you know when you're in danger.

Connected to "fight" or "flight" response.



Amygdala Surge or Hijack

“Amygdala hijack may happen when strong emotions, such as anger, fear, or even extreme excitement, make it difficult or impossible to think straight.” -

Psych Central, [All About Amygdala Hijack](#)

- Fight or flight response (survival behavior)
- Physical and emotional

Cortisol (stress hormone) shows up too, dulling the communication between our Prefrontal Lobe, which is responsible for impulse control.

- Drinking alcohol also dulls this communication



Controlling the Amygdala

We can learn to:

- Recognize the Amygdala surge
- Calm down the amygdala, which will
- Control the amount of cortisol
- And keep us thinking clearly.



Mindfulness, Grounding, and Being in the Moment





Now and then it's good to
pause in our pursuit of
happiness and just be happy.



— Guillaume Apollinaire



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a state of focus on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.



What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness includes the following elements:

- Awareness – Tuning in to what is happening in the present moment, such as sights, sounds, smells, or physical sensations.
- Focus – Paying attention to the present moment, without thinking about the past or the future.
- Acceptance – Accepting whatever you may be thinking or feeling, without judgement or trying to change it or your reactions.
- Observation – Recognizing unpleasant sensations, thoughts, and feelings as temporary, observe them objectively without reaction or judgement.





When something is **over, it's over**,
and you're on to **next**,
whatever **next** happens to be.
I thought...
if **there** was a **hammock**
in the middle of those two words,
that would be the best definition I know
of living in the moment.



– Norman Lear



Health Benefits of Mindfulness

- **Reduces Stress** – Stress can have serious effects on our physical and mental health. Mindfulness can help minimize or lessen our body’s stress responses. This can have health benefits such as lowering blood pressure or strengthening your immune system.
- **Improves Mood** – Mindfulness can improve our overall mood and may reduce mental health conditions like depression and anxiety.
- **Improves Brain Function** – Practicing mindfulness can help build your ability to focus. Over time, meditation can sharpen memory and improve mental performance.
- **Improves Ability to Cope with Pain** – People with chronic pain who practice mindfulness meditation report less severe pain and pain-related distress.



Grounding

“Grounding is a coping strategy that is designed to "ground" you in, or immediately connect you with, the present moment.”

- [VeryWellMind](#)



The Autonomic Nervous System

The **sympathetic nervous system** directs the body's rapid involuntary response to dangerous or stressful situations. A flash flood of hormones boosts the body's alertness and heart rate, sending extra blood to the muscles and preparing the body for action.

The **parasympathetic response system** works to calm the body, to conserve energy and to restore the nervous system to a more relaxed, neutral and efficient state of being. With practice, people can develop this to be the dominant state and experience health benefits.



Grounding

- Stimulates the parasympathetic response system
- Moves focus from thoughts to the “here and now”
- Reinforces safety
- Reduces distress and anxiety





Grounding basically means to bring your focus to what is happening to you physically, either in your body or in your surroundings, instead of being trapped by the thoughts in your mind that are causing you to feel anxious. It helps you stay in the present moment instead of worrying about things that may happen in the future or events that have already happened but you still find yourself going over and over them in your head.



– [Dr. Sarah Allen](#)



Mindful Breathing

Focus on the movement of your breath, as you breathe in and out, without trying to change it in any way.

Do this for a few minutes. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your attention back to the breath.



Body Scan

While seated or lying down, focus your attention on one body part at a time.

Notice any physical sensations without judging or reacting to them.

You can start with the soles of your feet and gradually move your awareness upwards towards your head.



Mindful Movement

While moving, pay attention to your breath, body movements, and surroundings.

This exercise can be done during other activities such as stretching or walking.



Mindful Eating

Slow down the experience of eating.

As you eat, pay attention to the sensations of holding, smelling, tasting, chewing, and swallowing.



Grounding through the senses

5: Acknowledge FIVE things you see around you. It could be a pen, a spot on the ceiling, anything in your surroundings.

4: Acknowledge FOUR things you can touch around you. It could be your hair, a pillow, or the ground under your feet.

3: Acknowledge THREE things you hear. This could be any external sound. If you can hear your belly rumbling that counts! Focus on things you can hear outside of your body.

2: Acknowledge TWO things you can smell. Maybe you are in your office and smell pencil, or maybe you are in your bedroom and smell a pillow. If you need to take a brief walk to find a scent you could smell soap in your bathroom, or nature outside.

1: Acknowledge ONE thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like—gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch?



Using the senses to passively control cortisol levels during our daily experiences



Connecting with Sight

- ▶ Stare up at the moon and stars.
- ▶ Notice the colors of the floor beneath you.
- ▶ Look into the eyes of a loved one.
- ▶ Keep a photo you can't look at enough as your computer screen saver.
- ▶ When you're bored in line, look around- what's interesting?



Connecting with Smell

- ▶ Notice the transition to fresh air as you step outside.
- ▶ Breathe in the scent of fallen leaves as you walk in your neighborhood.
- ▶ Note the homey smell of a neighbor's grill.
- ▶ Break out vanilla so your kitchen smells amazing.
- ▶ Notice the smells of ingredients as you cook dinner.



Connecting with Taste

- ▶ Bite into a juicy orange.
- ▶ Enjoy the richness of your coffee.
- ▶ Notice the crunch of carrots.
- ▶ Savor a favorite treat.



Connecting with Touch

- ▶ Pet a dog or cat.
- ▶ Feel a loved one's hand in yours.
- ▶ Take off your shoes and notice the grass or carpet beneath your feet.
- ▶ Notice a cool breeze on your skin.
- ▶ Touch the fabric as you get dressed or shop.



Connecting with Sound

- ▶ Play a song that you haven't listened to since childhood.
- ▶ Tune in to the birds.
- ▶ If you're in a city, listen to the people buzzing past.
- ▶ Pop in your earbuds and play whatever music rejuvenates you.

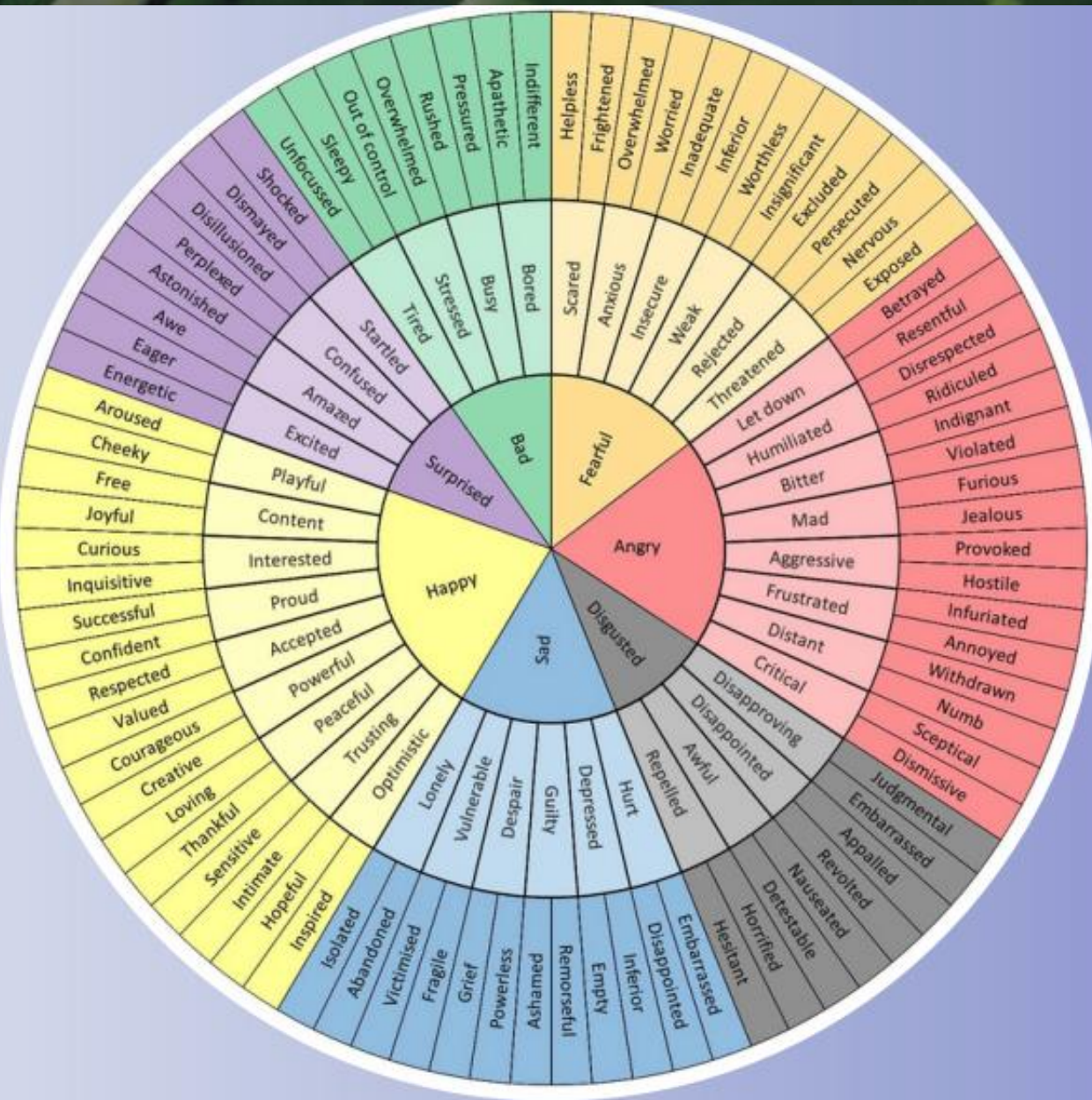


Other Ways to Practice Mindfulness

- Download a mindfulness app, there are several available for smartphones.
- Read a book about mindfulness.
- Take a meditation or yoga class online or check for in-person classes and resources at your local library, community center, or hospital.
- Write 3 things you're grateful for in a journal or gratitude app. Try to list different items everyday.
- Close your eyes and immerse yourself in a happy or calming song. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your attention back to the music.
- Close your eyes and visualize a calming place or happy memory. Focus on the details, using as many senses as you can.
- Journal non-judgementally about your experiences. An Emotion Wheel can be a useful tool to help identify emotions.

Adapted from the University of Washington's "How to Reduce Stress Through Mindfulness" factsheet.





Download for free at
<https://uca.edu/bewell/files/2020/11/Feelings-Wheel-Learn-How-to-Label-Your-Feelings.pdf>



Helpful Tools

- Focusing Meditation to connect with felt sense
 - International Focusing Institute <https://focusing.org/>
- Emotion Wheel: <https://uca.edu/bewell/files/2020/11/Feelings-Wheel-Learn-How-to-Label-Your-Feelings.pdf>
- Want more? Look up “Emotional Intelligence”



Additional Resources

- [UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center](#)
- [Mindfulness Northwest](#)
- [Greater Good Mindfulness Information](#)
- [Emotion Wheels](#)



Discussion:

Considering the information shared today, can mindfulness strategies be useful for you? How?



Thank you!

Casey Saylor, MSW
Older Adult Project Manager

csaylor@mhamd.org

443-901-1550 x213