SELF-CARE KIT

One step toward feeling *better.*

AN INITIATIVE OF:

CALGARY counselling centre

counselling ALBERTA

NDSD NATIONAL DEPRESSION SCREENING DAY

BROUGHT TO YOU IN PART BY

Stikeman Elliott

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YOUR FIRST STEP IN SELF-CARE

Taking time to check in with yourself is an important step. This toolkit is here to help, with practical tips and resources from the counsellors at Calgary Counselling Centre and Counselling Alberta to support your mental well-being.

Not every strategy will work for everyone—and that's okay. Explore what feels helpful, take what you need, and remember that even small steps can make a difference.

We all have good days and difficult days, but if you're struggling, know that you don't have to face these challenges alone.

We're here to help, with no waitlist and no financial barriers. You can register for counselling through Counselling Alberta online at counsellingalberta.com or by phone at 833.827.4230, or with Calgary Counselling Centre at calgarycounselling.com or by phone at 833.827.4229. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you need to speak with someone outside these hours, call:

IN CALGARY

The Distress Centre's 24-hour crisis line: 403.266.4357

IN ALBERTA

Call 811 or go to informalberta.ca for information or resources in your area

What do you need *right now?*

Pick what feels most relevant today. You can always come back and explore the rest of the kit later.

TROUBLE SLEEPING
Sleep tips and wind-down routines.

Go to page 7

FEELING STRESSED OR ANXIOUS
Coping strategies for the moment.

Go to page 10

FEELING LOW OR UNMOTIVATED
Self-esteem and positive self-talk.

Go to page 12

WORRIED ABOUT MONEY
Steps toward financial well-being.

Go to page 23

JUST EXPLORING
Read the kit from the beginning.

Go to page 5

Photo by Jared Sych.

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

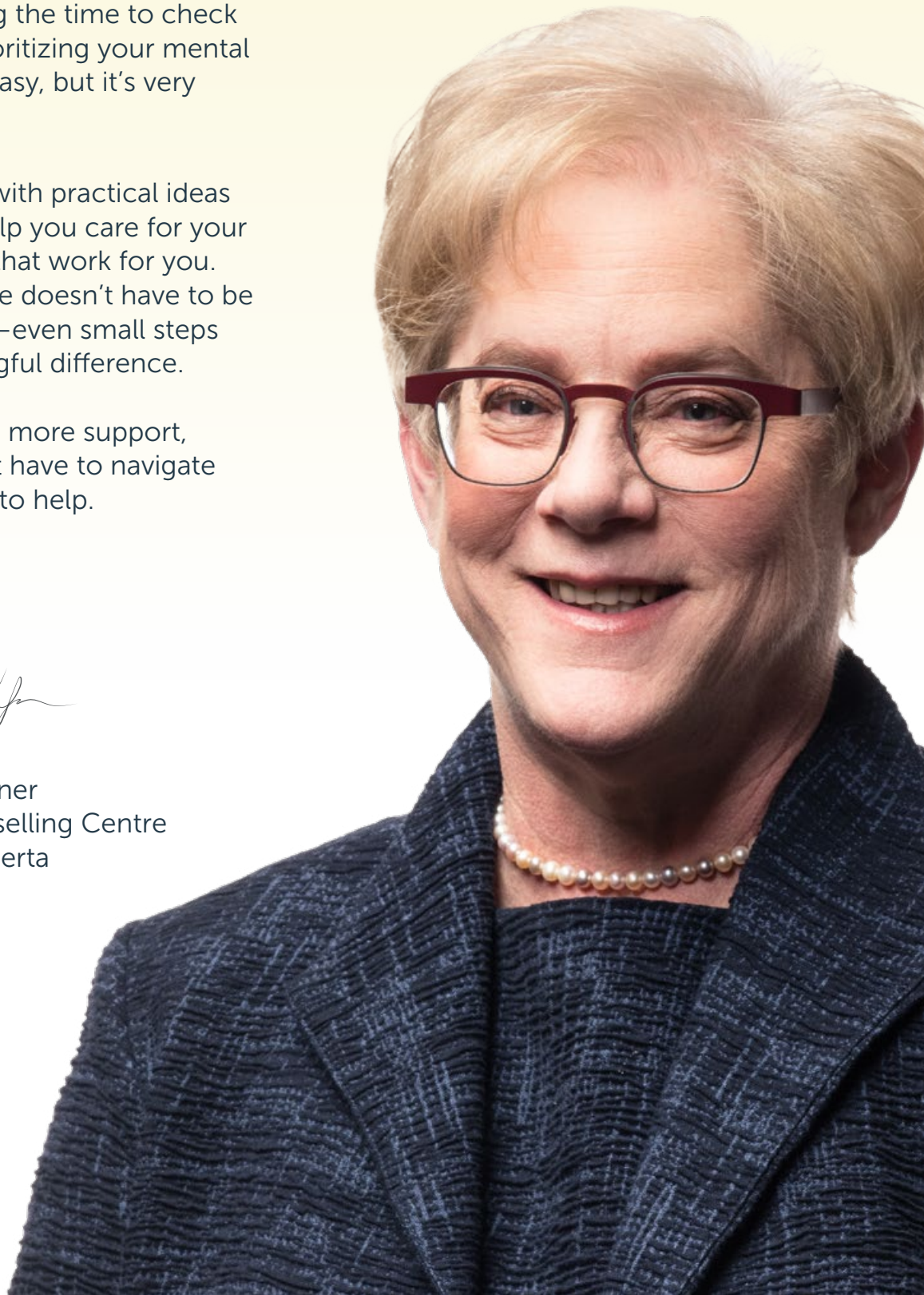
Thank you for taking the time to check in with yourself. Prioritizing your mental health isn't always easy, but it's very important.

This toolkit is filled with practical ideas and resources to help you care for your well-being in ways that work for you. Remember, self-care doesn't have to be big or complicated—even small steps can make a meaningful difference.

If you find you need more support, know that you don't have to navigate it alone. We're here to help.

Take good care,

Robbie Babins-Wagner
CEO, Calgary Counselling Centre
and Counselling Alberta



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

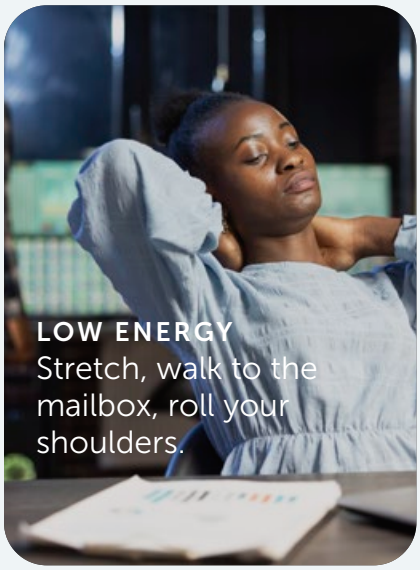
Movement is one of the most effective ways to support your mental health. Whether it's a walk around the block, a yoga class, dancing in your kitchen, or a workout at the gym, any movement counts.

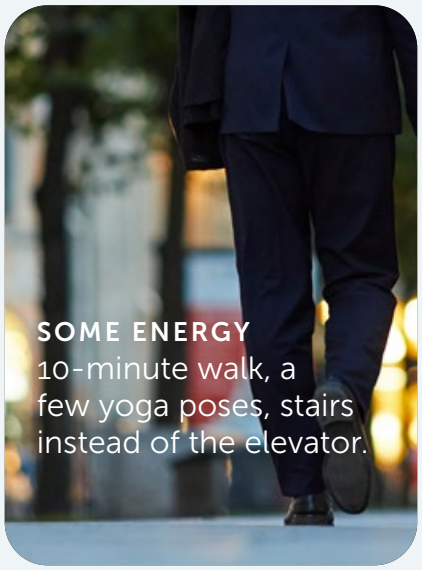
Physical activity releases endorphins—your body's natural "feel-good" chemicals—which can help:

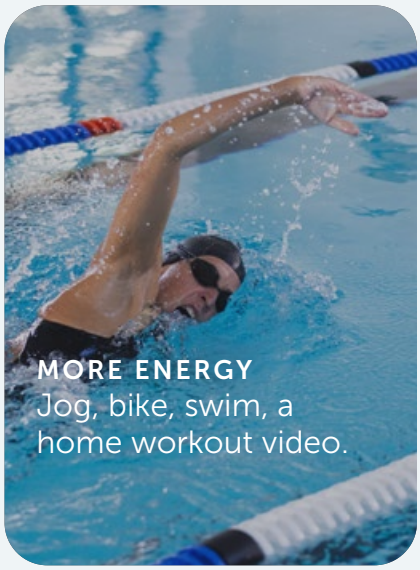
- Boost your mood
- Increase energy
- Improve focus and concentration
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Support better sleep

Listen to the Living Fully podcast episode, "**How exercise shapes your well-being**"

PICK A STARTING POINT







GETTING A BETTER SLEEP

Getting a good night's sleep is so important for our minds and bodies, especially when we're dealing with stress.

Here are some tips to help you get a better sleep:

- Put your phone away 60 to 90 minutes before you want to go to sleep.
- Try a calming wind-down activity, like reading a book or taking a warm bath.
- No caffeine or alcohol 6 to 8 hours before bed.
- Make sure your room is dark and cool.

Small habits, repeated consistently, make the biggest difference over time.

KNOW YOUR NEED
Adults: 7 to 9 hours.
Teens: 8 to 10 hours.
Kids: 9 to 11 hours.

KEEP IT CONSISTENT
Same bed and wake time, even on weekends.

NAP WISELY
20 minutes or less, ideally between 1:00 and 3:00 pm.

CAN'T FALL ASLEEP?

If you're still awake after about 20 minutes, get up. Read or do something calm and quiet in low light, then go back to bed when you feel drowsy.

Learn more about sleep and mental health.

FOOD AND YOUR WELL-BEING

Eating a balanced diet is key for both our physical and mental well-being. Here's how a healthy balanced diet can make a difference:

MOOD & FOCUS

Eating well gives your brain what it needs to think clearly and keep an even mood

ENERGY

Balanced meals give your body steady fuel to get through the day.

SELF-CARE, NOT SELF-JUDGEMENT

Nourishing yourself is an act of care, not a rule to follow

SMALL STARTING POINTS

- Keep water nearby and sip through the day.
- Try not to skip meals — if you're not that hungry, even a small snack helps.
- Notice how different foods make you feel. That awareness, more than any rule, is what helps you eat in a way that works for you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Check out Canada's food guide.

Read our blog post, "**The basics of mindful eating**".

Listen to the Living Fully podcast episode, "**Exploring the link between food and mental health**".

MAKING TIME FOR YOU

We all get wrapped up in our daily grind, juggling work, family and friends, and never-ending to-do lists. It's easy to put everyone and everything else first, but remember, taking care of yourself is just as important!

Self-care means doing things that nourish your emotional, mental, and physical well-being, so you can be at your best for you and others. This worksheet is here to help you make time for yourself and discover the most meaningful ways to spend that time.

PERMISSION SLIP

I, _____ , give myself permission to spend _____ minutes on _____ , without guilt, without apologizing, and without needing anyone else's approval.

_____ _____

SIGNED DATE

Stuck on what to fill in? Try: A walk. Ten quiet minutes with tea. Closing the laptop early. Saying no to something.

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

Making mindfulness and meditation part of your routine can lead to significant mental health benefits! Mindfulness is all about being present in the moment, noticing your thoughts and feelings without judgment. It can help you see things from a new angle, making you more aware of yourself and others. This awareness can lower stress and anxiety, improve sleep, enhance our compassion for others, and bring a sense of calm.

Learn more about the benefits of practicing mindfulness.

PICK A TECHNIQUE TO TRY

FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH
Notice each inhale and exhale, or count as you breathe.

2 to 5 minutes

MINDFUL WALKING
Notice what you see, hear, and feel as you walk.

5 to 10 minutes

BODY SCAN
Move your attention slowly from head to toe.

5 minutes

MUSCLE RELAXATION
Tense then release each muscle group, toes to head.

5 minutes

Remember: It can take time for the benefits of meditation to show up in your life. Include meditation in your daily routine and see the changes it can make!

BUILDING UP YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is all about valuing yourself, no matter what others think. By building healthy self-esteem, you'll gain confidence and feel more empowered to take care of yourself and work towards your goals. Self-esteem also helps you bounce back from challenges or difficult times you may face in life.

Here are some tips to improve your self-esteem — use the space provided to try them out:

PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Training your brain to spot what's going well, even in small ways, makes it easier to see over time. What's one thing going right today?

Today, I'm grateful for...

POSITIVE REMINDERS

A phrase you can return to on hard days, one that reminds you your worth isn't up for debate. What would you want to hear?

I have value just by being...

PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Train your brain to be kind and compassionate to yourself. Switch negative phrases into positive ones. For example, instead of *"I never get anything right,"* say, *"I'm still figuring this out."*

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Humans thrive on connection, which is why engaging with your friends, family, and community is so important. List three ways you will connect with people this week. For example: Call a friend. Have dinner with family. Walk your dog with a neighbour.

Listen to the Living Fully podcast episode, "The building blocks towards healthy self-esteem"

Read our blog post "How to build up your self-esteem"

PRACTICING POSITIVE SELF-TALK

We all have an inner voice, and sometimes it can be far more critical of us than we would ever be of someone else. The good news is that voice can be trained. Below are a few examples of common negative thoughts and gentler ways to reframe them. Use the blank rows to write your own.

NEGATIVE PHRASES	POSITIVE PHRASES
"I should be further along by now."	"I'm exactly where I am, and that's allowed to be enough."
"If I make a mistake, people will think less of me."	"Everyone makes mistakes. It doesn't erase what I'm good at."
"I always mess things up."	"I've gotten plenty of things right too, even if they're easier to forget"
"I have to be perfect or it doesn't count."	"Done and imperfect is still progress."

TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY

While some stress is normal, it can become too much to handle at times. That's why it's important to have coping strategies to keep stress in check. Here are some tips to deal with stress and worry.

TRY THIS NOW: GROUNDING
Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

MOVE AND REST
Move your body daily. Sleep 7 to 9 hours.

WATCH WHAT YOU TAKE IN
Go easy on caffeine and alcohol. Limit news and social media.

SHAPE YOUR DAY
Start with something energizing. Schedule self-care time.

CALM YOUR MIND
A few minutes of meditation. Try a positive affirmation.

LEAN ON CONNECTION
Reach out to a friend or family member. Get involved in your community.

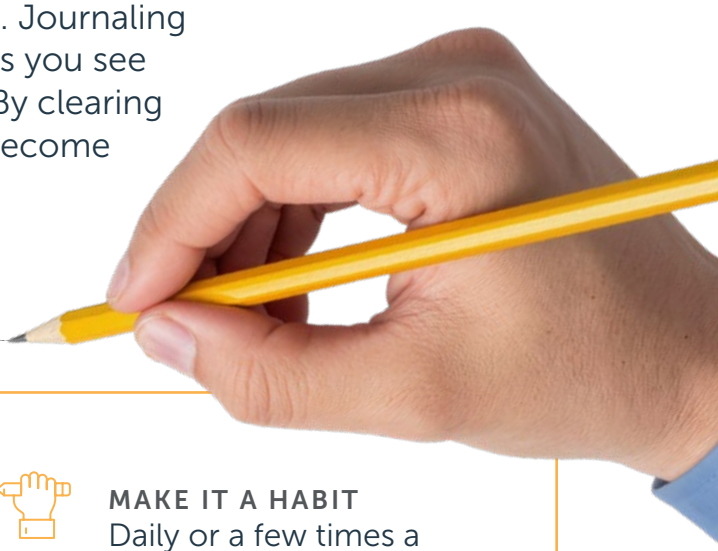
GET SOME CLARITY
Sort worries by what you can and can't control. Write down your thoughts. Notice what you're grateful for.

Listen to the podcast episode, "Worry vs. anxiety: how to tell the difference"

Read our blog posts about anxiety.

JOURNALING

Writing down your thoughts, feelings, and concerns can help clear your mind, and put things into perspective. Journaling can help you gain clarity and meet your goals, as you see where you've been and where you want to go. By clearing your mind and reducing your anxiety, you can become more focused on your goals.



GUIDELINES FOR BETTER JOURNALING

FIND A SPOT TO WRITE
Somewhere you feel comfortable and safe to write, whether that's a room at home, a park bench, or a quiet café.

MAKE IT A HABIT
Daily or a few times a week, find a rhythm that works for you and stick with it.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHARE
Remember, your journal is your private sanctuary — be open and honest without judgment or shame.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT
After journaling, take time to think about what you wrote. Reflecting helps you see your thoughts and feelings from a new perspective.

REMOVE DISTRACTIONS
Turn your phone off and stay away from the TV. Try to become completely immersed in your writing.

LET GO OF PERFECTION
You don't need perfect grammar or neat handwriting. Messy pages, crossed-out lines, half-finished sentences—they all still count.

WRITING PROMPTS

Not sure where to start? Below are some journal prompts to help you. Read them over and pick the prompts that resonate with you. Keep this list for reference to use whenever you feel stuck or don't know what to write about.

FOR CHECKING IN WITH YOURSELF

- What am I feeling right now, without judging or trying to change it?
- What has been taking up the most space in my mind lately?
- What do I need today?— rest? Connection?

FOR LETTING GO OF PRESSURE

- What am I trying to control right now?
- What does "good enough" look like today?
- Where in my life could I make a little more room for rest and enjoyment?

FOR RECOGNIZING YOUR OWN GROWTH

- What have I handled recently that I'm proud of, even if I didn't handle it perfectly?
- In what ways have I changed over the past year?
- What am I learning about myself lately?

FOR PRACTICING SELF-COMPASSION

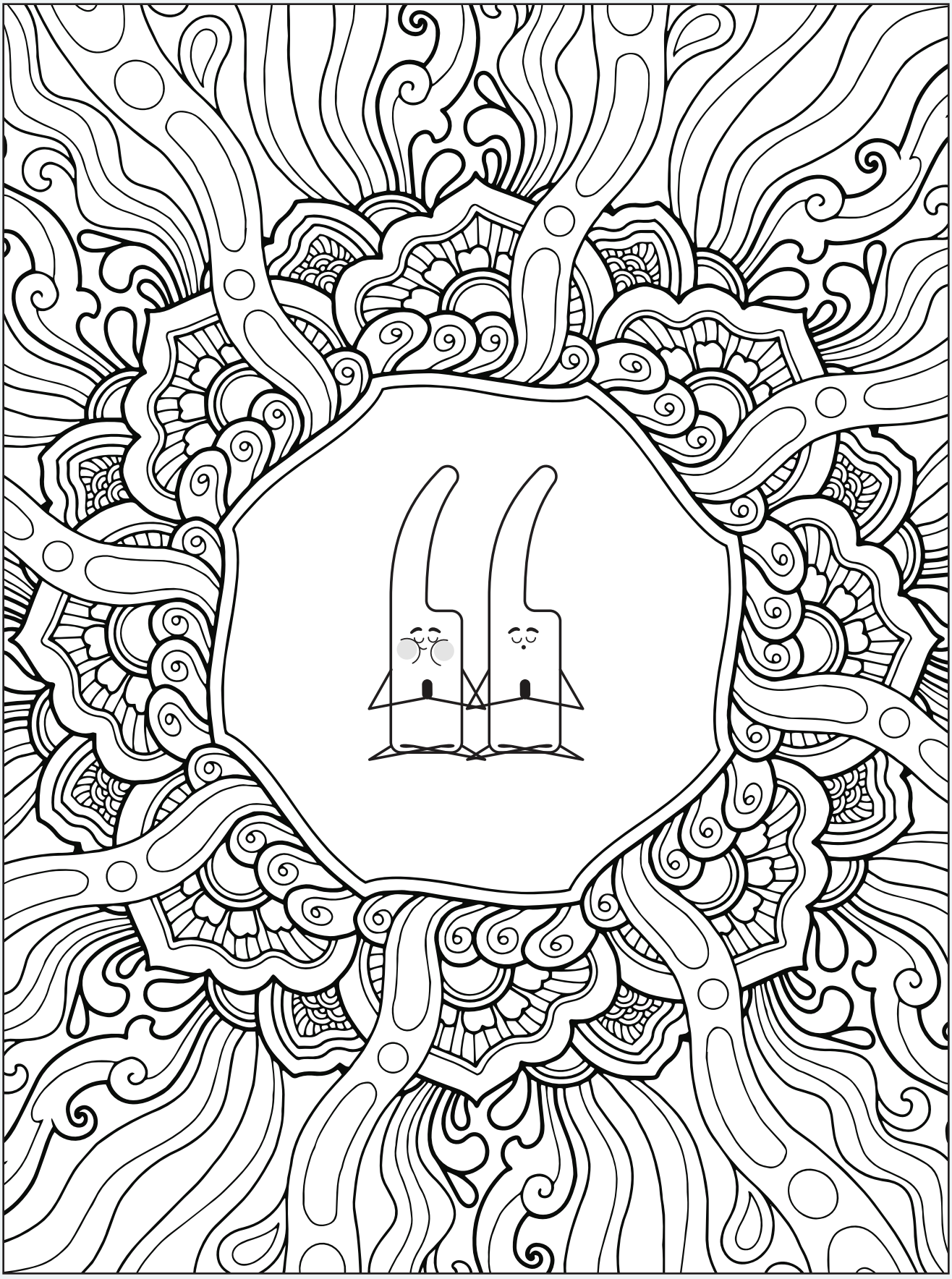
- If someone I cared about were going through what I'm going through, what would I say to them?
- What am I being hard on myself about right now? What might a kinder response sound like?
- What expectations am I holding myself to? Are they realistic?

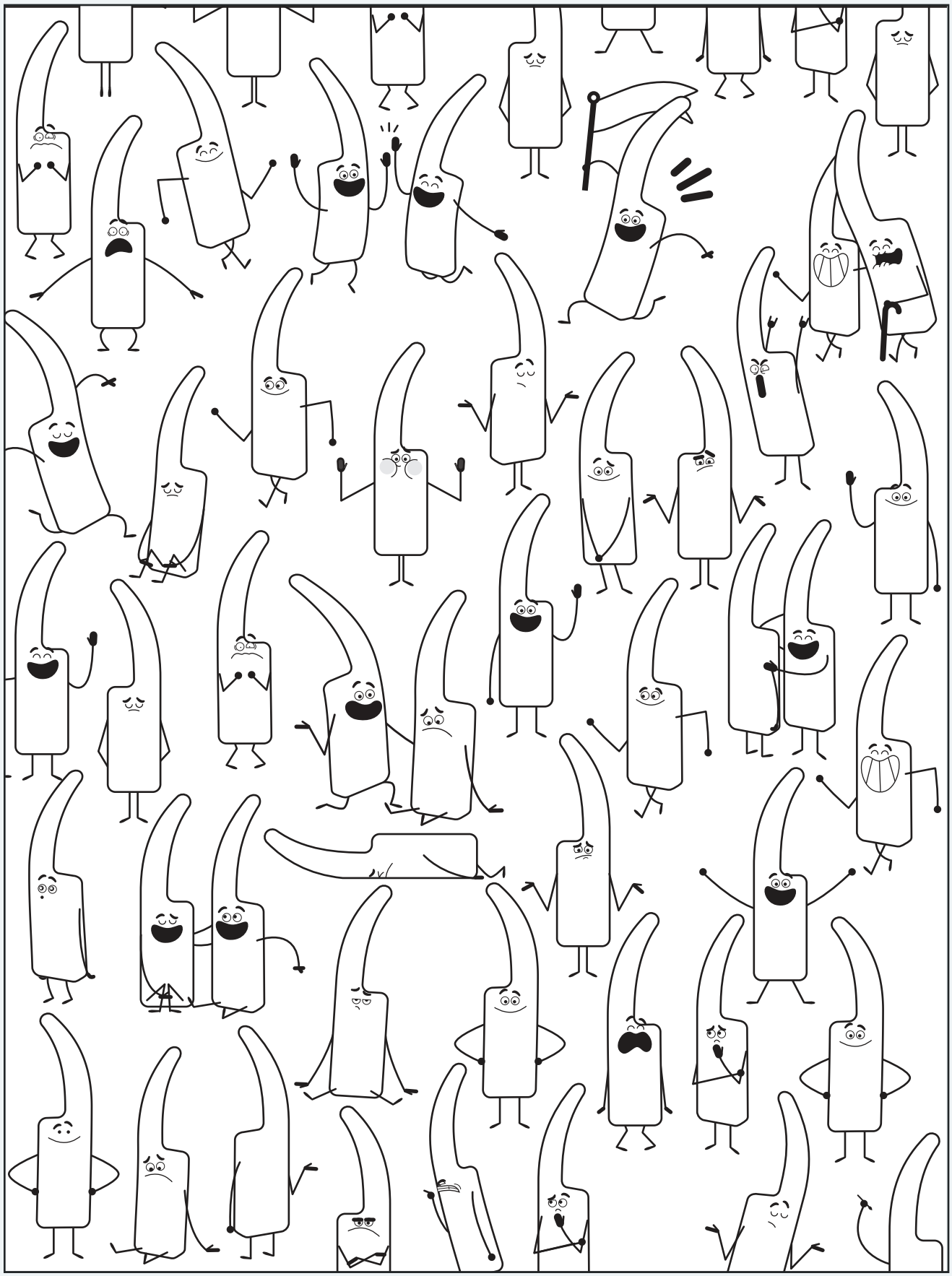
COLOURING AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

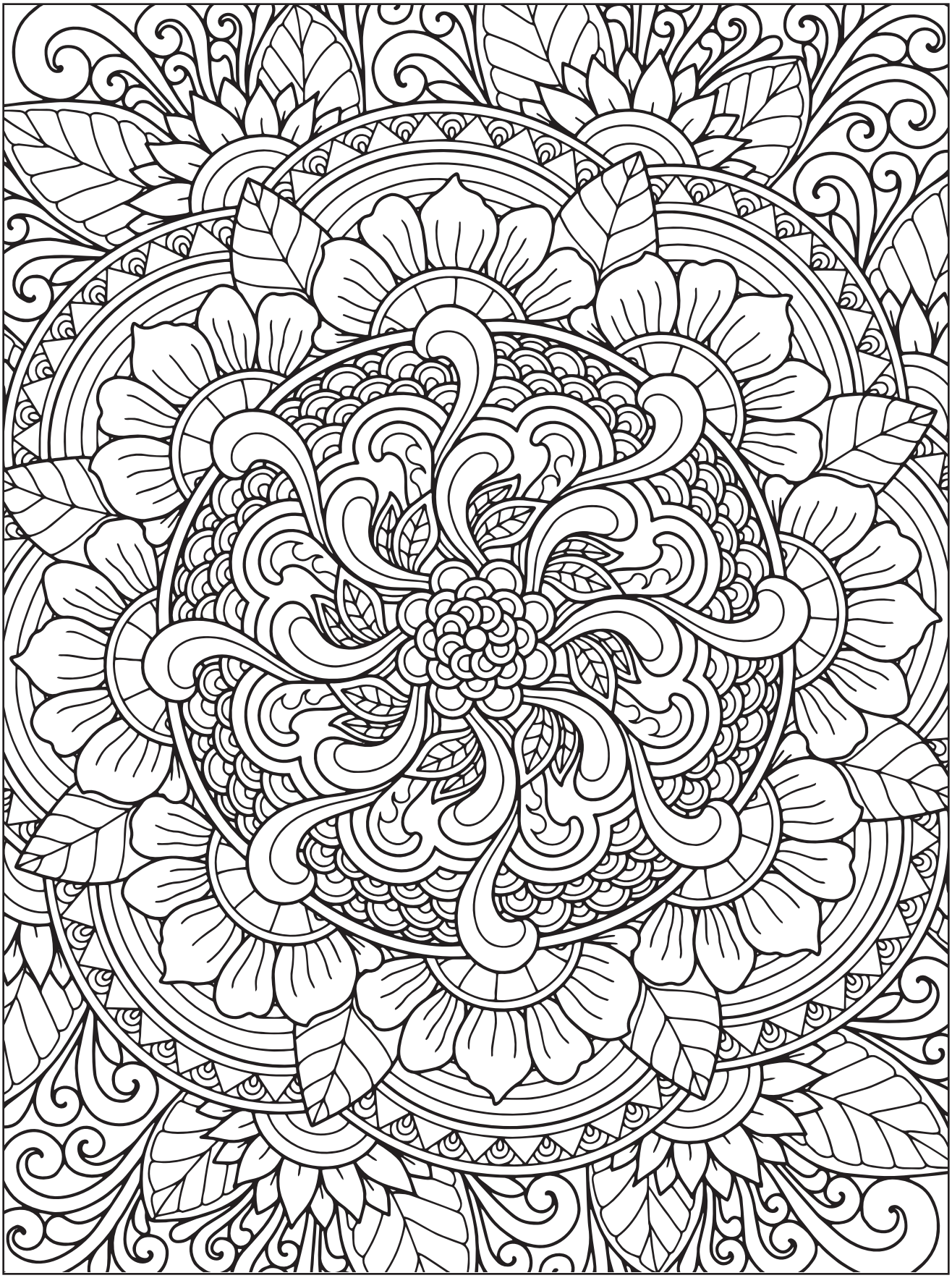
Colouring isn't just for kids. It's a small, low-effort way to quiet a busy mind — no talent required, just a page and some colour. To get the most out of this activity, try to limit your distractions. Colour your heart out and let yourself get lost in the experience.

Here are some pages for you to try this activity.

INSTRUCTIONS You can print the following colouring pages by clicking the printer icon — or by clicking on the "File" menu, then the "Print..." option — then selecting pages 20–22, then clicking "print".







ACHIEVING FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

Money worries can weigh heavily on your mind. Our friends at **Momentum** — a Calgary-based organization that helps people living on low incomes — have shared some helpful advice and resources to help you manage your finances:

Step *one:* Create a clear vision

Before making changes, take some time to understand where you are now.

TRY TO STAY CALM

Financial stress can make it harder to think clearly and make decisions. Give yourself time to consider your options and make a plan.

RECOGNIZE WHAT'S WORKING

Think about the things you're already doing well, whether that's paying a bill on time, sticking to a grocery budget or keeping track of your spending.

CONSIDER THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU

Your resources aren't only financial. Support from people, organizations and community services can also help you manage financial stress.

Step *two:* Understand your financial responsibilities

When money feels overwhelming, getting a clear picture of your expenses can make things more manageable.

ORGANIZE YOUR ESSENTIAL EXPENSES AND BILLS

Start with necessities such as housing, food and utilities, then prioritize what needs to be paid first, what can wait and which debts have higher interest rates. Keep track of due dates so you can plan ahead, even if you can't pay the full amount right away.

REVIEW YOUR SPENDING

Look at recent bank statements to understand where your money is going and where you may be able to make changes.

CREATE A BUDGET

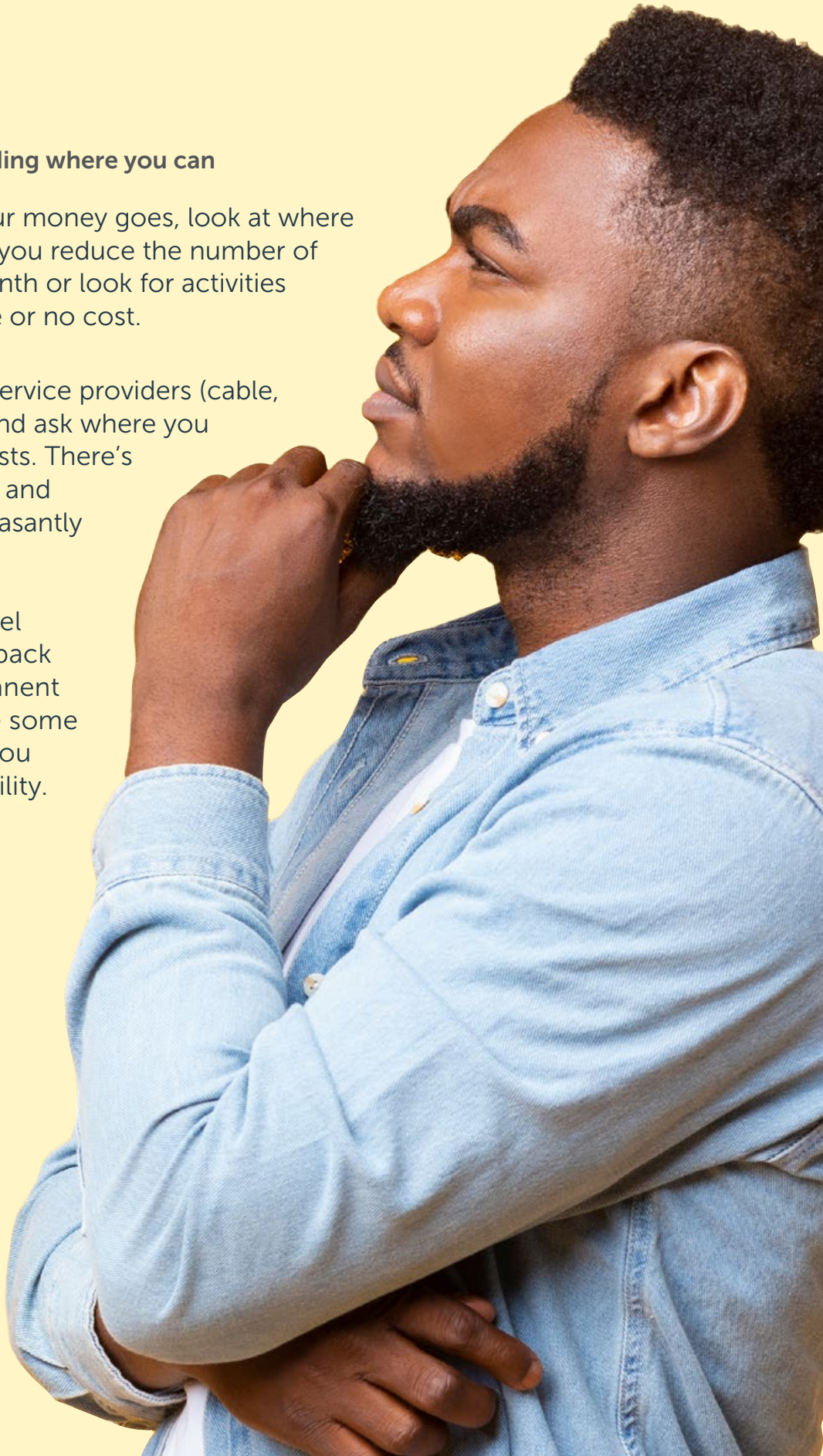
A simple budget can help you prioritize expenses and plan how to use the money you have available.

Step *three:* Reduce spending where you can

After reviewing where your money goes, look at where you can cut back. Maybe you reduce the number of times you eat out in a month or look for activities you can do that have little or no cost.

Consider talking to your service providers (cable, internet, insurance etc.) and ask where you may be able to reduce costs. There's nothing to lose by asking, and sometimes we can be pleasantly surprised.

Make the changes that feel realistic for you. Cutting back doesn't have to be permanent — it can be a way to ease some financial pressure while you work toward greater stability.



RESOURCES TO HELP YOU BETTER MANAGE AND SAVE YOUR MONEY

Momentum offers free programs and resources to help you build your financial knowledge and skills:

START WITH A BUDGET

Take a free, 45-minute on-demand course about tracking expenses, reducing spending and building savings.

LEARN ABOUT CREDIT

How it works, how to build it, and how credit scores are calculated through a free, 60-minute on-demand course.

ATTEND A MONEY MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Explore in-person and virtual workshops covering topics such as banking, budgeting, credit and consumerism.

BUILD YOUR SAVINGS

Momentum's matched savings programs can help eligible participants grow their savings while working toward financial goals. Youth also have a savings program just for them.

READ OUR BLOG POST

What to do when money stress feels overwhelming.

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Anyone can learn the skills to feel better,
one step at a time.

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No waitlist. No financial barriers. Unparalleled client results.

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