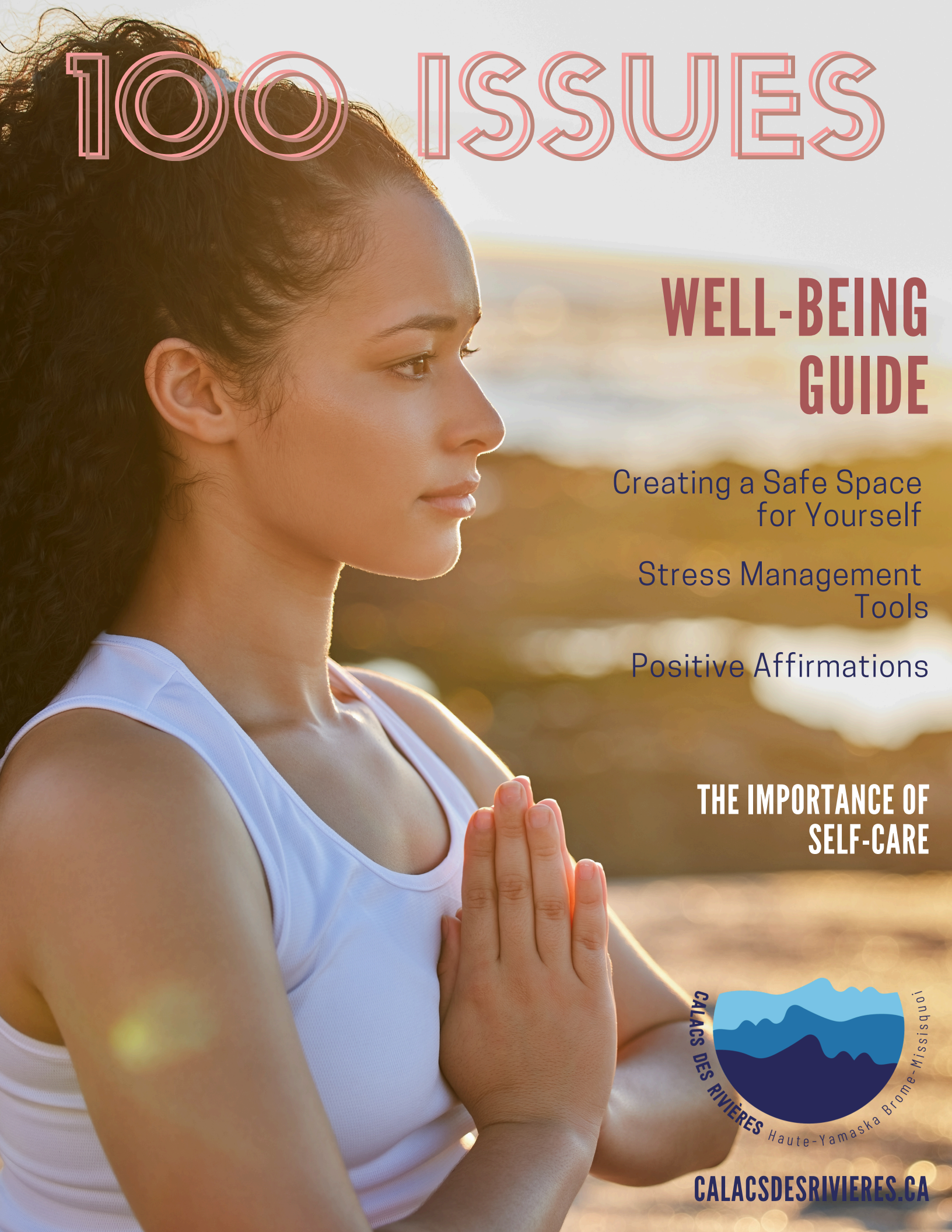

100 ISSUES

WELL-BEING GUIDE

Creating a Safe Space for Yourself

Stress Management Tools

Positive Affirmations

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE

CALACS DES RIVIÈRES Haute-Yamaska Brome-Missisquoi

CALACSDESRIVIERES.CA



A MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

When we think about self-care, we often associate it with tools and strategies to use during difficult times. However, caring for ourselves is important at all times in order to maintain or cultivate a healthier state of mind. In this guide, CALACS has gathered some of its best well-being tips to help you bring more goodness and beauty into your life.

The feminist approach used by CALACS promotes the reclaiming of one's power. This approach is reflected in taking positive actions that contribute to improving one's well-being and condition as a woman.

You are free to decide what this guide means to you. You may use it as a self-care guide, as a tool to help you through difficult moments, or even as a complement to a hygge lifestyle (the pursuit of everyday happiness). Adapt this guide to your own reality and take from it what feels good and helpful to you.

We hope these tools and tips will be helpful and supportive to you.

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Creating a Safe Space for Yourself



Creating a safe space for yourself means setting up a comforting environment, whether real or imagined, where you can retreat safely when you feel overwhelmed by your emotions.

You can enhance this space with a scent, music, or textures that you enjoy. For example, it could include an essential oil diffuser or your favourite soft blanket. During more difficult moments, bringing your attention back to your five senses can help ground you in the present moment and soothe you.

When you feel like you are losing control, you can return to the space you have chosen and take deep breaths until the feeling begins to ease. You can also make a habit of spending time there at least once a day to nurture your well-being, even when you are feeling well. This space can be useful during emotionally intense moments, but also in your everyday life.

In this space, all the conditions needed for introspection are in place. You will be in the best possible mindset to support your mental health by practising the well-being habits and exercises suggested in this guide.

A safe space can look different for everyone. It may be your bed, a comfortable chair, or the corner of a room. If you do not feel safe at home, a spot in your car or a place in nature may also be good options.

I invite you to make a commitment to yourself about this space. Make a promise to yourself that whenever you come here, you will set aside any judgment you may have toward yourself or others.



5 Self-Love Languages towards yourself



If you were asked to name the five people you love most in your life, where would you place yourself? Would you think to include yourself?

Gary Chapman's concept of the five love languages identifies distinct categories of behaviours, gestures, and attitudes that allow us not only to express affection, appreciation, and love, but also to truly feel them. According to the author, we tend to have one or two predominant love languages (languages we are most sensitive to) which help us feel more loved. These languages are often emphasized in interpersonal relationships, but it is important to remember that they can be just as meaningful when directed toward ourselves.

Do you take the time to show yourself love?

We invite you to discover or rediscover the different love languages and the ways they can be directed toward yourself.

Words of Affirmation:

This love language involves using words, spoken or written, to express compliments, gratitude, and appreciation. The goal is to highlight your strengths, accomplishments, efforts, and positive qualities. These affirming words can also reflect the commitment and care you bring to the relationship you have with yourself.

Ways to Practise Words of Affirmation:

- Write yourself small notes with compliments and leave them in places you will see them, such as in your wallet, your lunchbox, or on your mirror.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Keep a list of your achievements.
- Write yourself a love letter.
- Write yourself an email with wishes and words of appreciation for your future self. You can schedule it to be sent at a later date using the website FutureMe.
- Practise positive affirmations (see p. 12).

Gifts:

This love language involves the small gestures and gifts you give yourself. What matters most is the meaning behind them, not the quantity or the cost. Here are some concrete ways to practise this language with yourself:

- Have flowers delivered to yourself.
- Make a list of things you truly want to buy. If needed, create a savings plan,
- Cook your favourite meal or dessert.
- Treat yourself to a reward when you reach one of your goals.
- Allow yourself your favourite indulgence or comfort food during celebrations (your birthday, Christmas, Valentine's Day, etc.).
- Go to the library and borrow that book you were hoping to receive for Christmas.



Quality Time

This love language involves taking time during which you are your own priority, free from distractions or worries. It means giving yourself your full attention in the present moment and fully enjoying it by doing something that feels good and brings you pleasure.

First, make a list of activities you can do throughout your day, depending on the time you have available, whether it's two minutes, an hour, or an entire day.

For a template, you can scan the QR code on page 15.

Ways to Practise Quality Time:

- Set aside free time in your schedule just for yourself, without planning how you will use it.
- Make a list of activities you enjoy or would like to try and aim to do at least one each month.
- Take short breaks throughout your workday to stretch, breathe, walk, etc.
- Practise meditation.

Physical Touch:

This love language includes any gesture of tenderness and affection, whether or not it involves sexuality. You can meet your own need for affection. Here are some concrete ways to practise this language with yourself:

Ways to Practise Physical Touch:

- Cuddle your pet, a stuffed animal, or a loved one.
- Wear comfortable and pleasant clothing.
- Practise self-massage (for tutorials, search "ball massage" or "self-massage" on YouTube).
- Apply body lotion while practising mindfulness.
- Explore "pleasure mapping."
- Masturbate.
- Buy yourself a sex toy.

Acts of Service:

This love language involves taking action for yourself by choice, with kindness and care, rather than out of pressure or obligation. It means finding ways to make your daily life easier and setting aside time for activities that support your well-being, even when they may not feel especially enjoyable (such as housework, meal preparation, or work).

Here are some concrete ways to practise this language with yourself:

- Shift your inner self-talk. Instead of saying "I have to," "I'm forced to," or "I have no choice but to," try saying, "I choose to."
- Set goals for yourself and track your progress using motivation charts or habit trackers (you can search these terms on Pinterest or Google for examples).
- Make your daily tasks more enjoyable: play your favourite music, use an energizing scent (for example, with an essential oil diffuser), or do them with someone you care about.
- Delegate, delegate, DELEGATE. It is a common misconception that you are responsible for everything.
- Ask for help.
- Be kind to yourself and acknowledge everything you have done. It's rare that we truly do "nothing" in a day. Resting is not doing anything; it is meeting a need.



The Benefits of Expressing Emotions

Emotions can be expressed verbally, in writing, or through artistic expression. They can be expressed individually (for yourself) or shared with another person. **Expressing emotions, no matter how it is done, many benefits for mental health.** See pages 8–9 of this guide for artistic activities that support emotional expression.

First, expressing your emotions helps **create some distance between yourself and the emotion.** By creating this distance, you can recognize that your emotions do not define you but rather reflect a part of who you are in the present moment.

Expressing your emotions also helps you **connect more deeply with your needs**. Behind every uncomfortable emotion lies an unmet need. Becoming aware of your needs allows you, first, to recognize and soothe the unpleasant emotions that arise from them, and second, to take action to meet those needs. In other words, understanding the message your emotions are sending allows you to take responsibility for meeting your own needs, rather than leaving it up to chance or to others.

Another benefit of expressing your emotions is that it helps you **become more aware of your judgments and cognitive distortions**. The judgments we make about ourselves, or others are based on interpretations. When you take the time to express the emotions a situation brings up, you become better able to distinguish between observations and judgments.

LWhen shared with others, expressing your emotions can help **prevent and resolve conflicts**. By doing so, you communicate your inner state, your expectations within the relationship, and your emotional availability in the moment. Expressing emotions also allows you to **receive support from others**.

To learn more about ways to take care of yourself through your relationships, see page 14.

Scan the QR code to discover creative ways to connect with your emotions.

Develop your emotional vocabulary by referring to the lists of feelings and needs on the next page.

NON-EXHAUSTIVE LISTS OF FEELINGS AND NEEDS



FEELINGS

Happy
Content
Playful
Curious
Interested
Alert
Calm
Rested
Frustrated
Bothered
Excited
Motivated
Enthusiastic
Peaceful
Relaxed
Afraid
Worried
Sad
Disappointed
Unhappy
Restless
Impatient
Confused
Mixed
Uncertain
Tired
Exhausted
Relieved
Comforted
Tense
Upset
Indifferent
Overwhelmed
Intrigued
Disturbed
Perplexed
Distrustful
Trusting
Moved
Satisfied

NEEDS

Calm
Personal space
Choice
Autonomy
Discovery
Learning
Exploration
Letting go
Hope
Comfort
Clarity
Acceptance
Appreciation
Sharing
Giving
Reciprocity
Creativity
Self-expression
Self-esteem
Sense of self-worth
Confidence
Safety
Honesty
Authenticity
Love
Being cared for
Clarity
Understanding
Harmony
Vitality
Laughter
Beauty
Celebration
Inspiration
Simplicity
Ease
Connection
Closeness
Warmth
Cooperation
Solidarity
Joy
Sense of belonging
Friendship
Rest
Renewal
Alignment
Movement
Exercise
Tenderness
Affection
Gentleness
Play
Pleasure



Creative Journaling





The method of *creative journaling*, developed by Anne-Marie Jobin, is a dynamic approach that combines the strengths of art therapy and creative writing. It is a way of keeping a journal that stimulates the creative process, helps you break out of repetitive thought patterns, and offers practical tools for overcoming blocks.

Creative journaling is a non-traditional form of journaling aimed at overall personal development. It is a self-exploration tool that helps build bridges with your inner world. The emphasis is placed on the process rather than the final product.

THE THREE BASIC LANGUAGES

Writing in its various forms: Spontaneous, non-linear, dialogue, poetry, fictional letters, stories, etc.

Drawing: Spontaneous, doodles, figurative or abstract, close-ups, symbolic shapes, silhouettes, mandalas, etc.

Collage: Spontaneous, using images, photos, textures, shapes, words, etc.



THE FOUNDATIONAL APPROACH

The practice of creative journaling encourages the expression of emotions, sensations, and memories, while also fostering a sense of distance (the observer perspective), which supports the emergence of creative potential, solutions, and sometimes unexpected possibilities.

Whether practised individually or in a group, “safety guidelines” are essential to the learning process. These include kindness (toward yourself and the process), non-judgment (being mindful of self-criticism and interpretations), and freedom (giving yourself the choice to engage in the suggested activities). In any introspective process, having a trusted person can provide valuable support.

Creativity is not only about making art. It also enriches everyday life and provides us with the resources to navigate daily challenges. It simply needs to be nurtured.

Ideas for Creative Journaling Inspired by Nature:



1. Walking in Nature :

Fill a page of your journal with images of places that evoke a sense of well-being for you, such as beaches, forests, or cities. Then, cut out footprints (bare feet, sandals, shoes, etc.) from a sheet of white paper and glue them onto your background landscape. Inside the footprints, write what you would like to bring with you into this landscape, such as taking your time, savouring the moment, friendship, etc.



2. Dialogue with a Landscape :

Do you have questions about your life? A decision to make, or a problem you are facing? Sit with your journal in front of a landscape that you enjoy or that brings you a sense of well-being. Take three deep breaths, then write an imaginary conversation with the landscape. For example, imagine a conversation with a river. If it could speak, what would it say to you?

3. Empty Your Heart Letter :

Pour out your worriers onto a sheet of paper by writing in an intentionally illegible way. Simply write freely, using large strokes to fill a line, then layer the next line over the first, and so on. Fill the entire page. Then, cut out a few cloud shapes from this page and place them onto a page of your journal where you have created a soothing background.



*Written by Chantal Brassard, inspired by the work and theories of Anne-Marie Jobin.

Stress Management Tools[1]

N.U.T.S, The Recipe for Stress



Le stress

Stress is a **biological response** triggered by your brain (through the release of cortisol, adrenaline, and other mechanisms) when it **perceives a threat** (a stressor), in order to help you fight, flee, or freeze. This mechanism, which dates back to prehistoric times, was developed by the brain to protect humans from life-threatening situations.

A **life-threatening situation** is one that puts a person's life in danger. For example, in prehistoric times, being chased by a mammoth was a life-threatening situation. Today, being caught in a fire is another example. Nowadays, we are more often faced with **perceived threats**, which are situations that affect our sense of psychological or emotional safety (for example, the fear of losing your job due to budget cuts).

The problem is that the brain does not clearly distinguish between the threat of a fire and the threat of failing an exam. It reacts in the same way, releases the same hormones, triggers the same mechanisms, and expects you to respond with the same level of energy as if you were being chased by a mammoth.

The Ingredients of Stress

Recent research on stress has identified different components of a situation that may lead the brain to perceive a threat. Each component can be seen as an "ingredient" of stress, and they are grouped under the acronym NUTS. A single situation may include one, several, or all of these ingredients.

N **NOVELTY :** This refers to situations that involve something new (a place, a person, a task, etc.)
Example: Starting a new job.

U **UNPREDICTABILITY :** This refers to situations where you are unable to predict or know what will happen.
Example: Going on a first date.

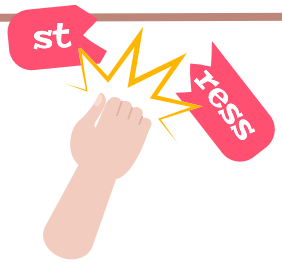
T **THREAT TO THE EGO :** The ego refers to how a person perceives themselves, their sense of identity. It can feel threatened when we fear being judged, criticized, disappointing others, or failing.
Example: Speaking in front of a group.

S **LOW SENSE OF CONTROL :** This refers to situations where you feel you have little or no control over what is happening.
Example: Being stuck in traffic due to an accident and risking being late.



1. *Written by Stéphanie Beaudry, inspired by the work and theories of Sonia Lupien. —Recipe for stress—CESH/CSHS.

Stress Management:



Reducing Stress

Is it realistic to try to eliminate stress from our lives? No … and it's not even desirable!

Our stress response is very useful when we understand it and know how to use it. However, many perceived threats do not actually require a stress response, yet our body activates it anyway. As a result, when this response is neither used nor released but instead builds up, it can lead to unpleasant, even harmful, symptoms.

As you may have noticed, the perception of a perceived threat varies from person to person. This perception is influenced by various factors, such as personality traits, mood, physical or mental health, past experiences, culture, education, and more.

In the long term, the most effective approach is to work on how we perceive threats. This means identifying the situations and their NUTS components that trigger our stress response and developing strategies to put them into perspective. You can find examples of ways to work on your perceptions on the following website: Long-term Stress Management—CESH/CSHS.

Reducing and Managing Stress in the Present Moment

Sometimes, we don't have the time or the desire to understand why we are feeling stressed. At other times, we simply can't identify the source of our stress. However, this does not prevent us from taking action to reduce it. To do so, we need to "trick" our brain by sending it the message that the threat is no longer present, by making it believe that we have fought it off, fled from it, or that it has disappeared. Here are two types of strategies that can help:

- Releasing energy (as if you had just faced a real threat)
- Sending signals of well-being to your brain (through the release of serotonin and dopamine), which can outweigh threat signals (release of cortisol and adrenaline).

Releasing Energy:

Physical activity is not the only way to release energy. Make a list of ways you can release your energy in different situations, depending on the resources available to you. Here are a few examples :

- Fidgeting (using sensory objects)
- Stretching
- Singing at the top of your lungs
- Practising heart coherence breathing
- Drawing
- Shouting
- Dancing
- Hitting a pillow
- Running or walking
- Doing housework or tidying up
- Doing a mentally stimulating activity (puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, etc.)

Sending Signals of Well-Being:

There are different ways to help our brain release well-being hormones. Here are a few ideas:

- Doing an activity you enjoy.
- Petting an animal.
- Hugging someone you love.
- Eating something you enjoy.
- Smelling a pleasant scent.
- Wearing comfortable clothing.
- Listening to an upbeat song.
- Visualizing a place where you feel safe or recalling a moment when you felt safe.
- Following a guided meditation.
- Taking a warm bath or shower (avoid cold water, as it may trigger a stress response)
- Laughing (and anything that makes you laugh, including videos of cats falling, hihi!)

1. *Written by Stéphanie Beaudry, inspired by the work and theories of Sonia Lupien. —Home—CESH/CSHS



Positive Affirmations

If you tend to believe the negative statements you make about yourself, imagine the impact that repeating positive affirmations daily could have. Recent neuroscience research has highlighted the benefits of positive self-suggestion. In fact, the human brain is wired to seek confirmation of the beliefs we feed it. If we choose to send it positive self-suggestions, it becomes more sensitive and attentive to external cues that support those beliefs. Even more, the brain becomes more likely to motivate us to act in ways that bring about these confirming signs. For example, consider the following affirmation: "I am beautiful." If you repeat this affirmation daily, you may unconsciously choose clothes in which you feel beautiful or focus your attention on the parts of your body that you appreciate when you look in the mirror.

"Whatever we plant in our subconscious mind and nourish with repetition and emotion will one day become a reality."
— Earl Nightingale

Your inner dialogue can be your greatest ally … or your worst enemy! Self-deprecating and self-critical thoughts, also known as negative self-talk, are associated with stress and anxiety and can have a direct impact on our future behaviour. As mentioned earlier, the brain constantly seeks to confirm the beliefs we feed it. So, if you send it the message that you are "good-for-nothing" after making a mistake or experiencing failure, it will spend more energy scanning for potential errors than being present or focusing on the task at hand. When it becomes rigid and inflexible, negative self-talk can turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. This occurs when a person initially has a false perception of a situation, which leads to new behaviours that ultimately make that perception come true. If negative self-talk reduces our ability to achieve our goals, it is because its influence on our behaviours and actions is far greater than we might think!



If reading this page has inspired you to give more room for positive affirmations in your daily life, we invite you to scan this QR code for a short introductory exercise.

References:
Cascio, C., Brook O'Donnell, M., Tinney, F., Lieberman, M., Taylor, S., Strecher, V., Falk, E. (2015). Self-affirmation activates brain systemsassociated with self-related processingand reward and is reinforcedby future orientation. Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 11(4), 621–629.
Demailly, A. (2008). De Pygmalionaux prophéties autoréalisatrices. Le Journal des Psychologues, 7 (260), 68-72.

Creating Your Positive Affirmation
(to complete in your creative journal)

1.Write your affirmation in the present tense, using "I". Phrase it as if the desired outcome has already been achieved. Focus on what you want, not on what you want to avoid. Be specific and clear. Example to avoid: "I won't make the mistake of not trusting my intuition."

2.Write it in your journal using your favourite pens and colours.

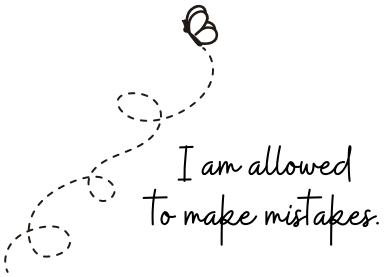
3.Now, imagine yourself a few years from now, fully believing this affirmation. How is your life different? How do you feel? How do you behave?

4.On the same page as your affirmation, paste images and write keywords that reflect your answers to the questions above.

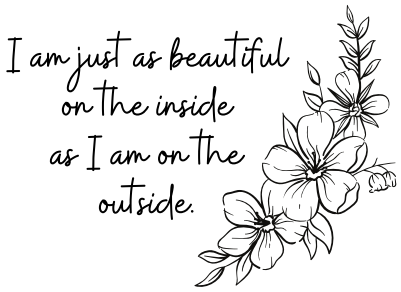
5.Repeat your affirmation daily. If needed, repeat steps 3 and 4 of this exercise.

Tool created by Stéphanie Beaudry for CALACS des Rivières, 2022,

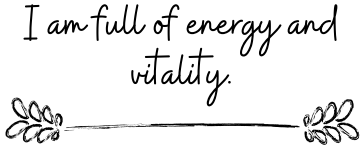
Need inspiration?
Here are a few examples of positive affirmations:

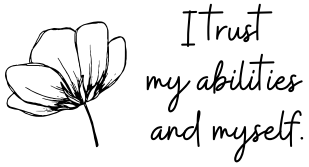


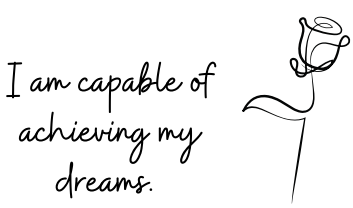


















Taking Care of Yourself Through Interpersonal Relationships

So far, this guide has provided you with tools to take care of yourself individually. However, it is also possible to support your well-being through your relationships with others.

To make the most of your interpersonal relationships, it is important to first identify the **people who make you feel good.** We invite you to scan the QR code at the bottom of the page to access a tool that will help you identify these people and the needs they may fulfill. To begin reflecting on this topic, we invite you to ask yourself the following questions:

- Who do I want to share my achievements and successes with?
- Who can I turn to when I need to express my emotions?
- Who do I feel comfortable sharing my vulnerabilities with?
- Who shares similar interests with me?
- Who can I rely on when I have difficulty managing my daily tasks?
- Who do I have fun with?
- Who encourages me to try new things?
- Who do I feel comfortable being myself with?
- Who do I like to consult when I need to make an important decision?

The Importance of Setting Boundaries

Personal boundaries define the physical, mental, and emotional space between yourself and others. Setting boundaries and respecting those of others are essential for building healthy relationships. It is completely normal not to have the same boundaries with everyone in your life.

How to Take Care of Your Interpersonal Relationships?

- Create opportunities to spend quality time together.
- Take the time to thank others for the support they provide.
- Offer your help when you are available.

Reciprocity is important in relationships. Some people around you may ask for a lot while offering little in return. Over time, this type of relationship can have a negative impact on your well-being. The size of your support network is not what matters most. Quality matters more than quantity.



To Take Your Reflection Further:

Book and Podcast Recommendations





Five Love Languages

Podcast

- *Sexe Oral*, episode "Les 5 langages de l'amour" (2021)

Book

- Gary Chapman, The Five Love Languages (1992)

Expressing Your Emotions

Podcasts

- *Génération Sidechick*, episode "S'engager envers soi-même" (August 2021)
- *Selon une étude*, episode "#12— La fonctiondes émotions" (April 2022)

Book

- *Russ Harris*, The Happiness Trap (2021)

Stress Management

Podcasts

- *Parle-moi de SANTÉ*, episode "28 — Le stress avec Catherine Raymond" (October 2021)
- *Selon une étude*, episode "#5 — Le stress" (January 2022)
- *Sans filtre*, episode "Sonia Lupien sur les effets du stress" (December 2020)

Book

- Sonia Lupien, Par amour du stress (2020 edition)

Positive Affirmations

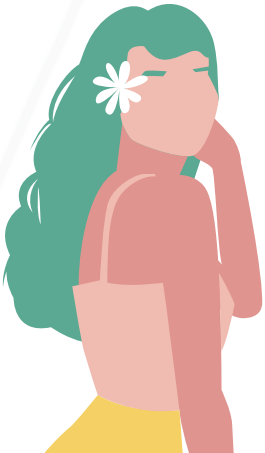
Podcast

- *Génération Sidechick*, episode "It's Time to Feel Good!!" (July 2022)

Interpersonal Relationships

Books

- Fletcher Peacock, *Water the Flowers, Not the Weeds* (2020 edition)
- India Desjardins, *Mister Big ou la glorification des amours toxiques* (2021)
- Sarah-Maude Beauchesne, *Les Fourchettes : une vingtaine complexe et sensuelle* (2020)



Psst!

Scan the QR code to access a template with ideas for self-care activities!



BECOME A MEMBER OF CALACS DES RIVIÈRES

CALACS is a space where people from the community can learn, get informed, and get involved in the fight against sexual violence in all its forms.

CALACS carries out its mission collectively, alongside those who feel concerned about the issue of sexual violence.

Members' involvement is at the heart of the organization. It helps sustain its vitality and contributes to its direction and development.

CALACS exists thanks to the support of its members!



BECOMING A MEMBER MEANS:

- Symbolically supporting CALACS' mission, embracing its values, and being part of a group working toward social change.
- Having the right to vote at the Annual General Meeting.
- Receiving our monthly newsletter.
- Receiving the Cent Issues guide twice a year, in advance.
- Accessing workshops, coffee meetups, and other members-only activities.
- Having the opportunity to get actively involved as an activist on a committee or on the Board of Directors.



To become a member or get involved, you can contact us here:

INFO@CALACSDESRIVIERES.CA

CALACSDESRIVIERES.CA

450 375-3338

Scan this QR code to follow CALACS online!