The Wise Woman’s Guide

to getting organized and following your dreams...
...or at least, getting through this week!

SafePlace
Ending Sexual & Domestic Violence
The Wise Woman’s Guide

to getting organized and following your dreams...
...or at least, getting through this week!

Developed by
Sandra Molinari
Life Skills Coordinator, SafePlace

P.O. Box 19454 | Austin, TX 78760
24-hour Hotline: 512.267SAFE (7233) or
512.927.9616 TTY for the Deaf community
www.SafePlace.org
# Table of Contents

- **Introduction** ................................................. 4
- **Section 1 - Personal Vision** ................................. 5
- **Section 2 - Goal-setting** .................................... 12
- **Section 3 - Getting Organized** ......................... 19
- **Section 4 - Coping with Crisis** ....................... 22
- **In Closing** .................................................. 28
- **Resources** .................................................. 29
- **Evaluation** .................................................. 30
- **My Notes** .................................................... 31
Introduction

Do you ever feel stuck, frustrated, not sure which direction to head in?

Are you sometimes scared because you’re in a new place, a new situation, and don’t know what to do next?

Well... you’re not alone!
Sometimes, life just gets overwhelming – especially if you are facing major life changes or crises, such as homelessness, violence, separation/divorce, etc.

The good news is:

YOU WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS!

The Wise Woman’s Guide is a workbook that will provide you with tools to help you regroup and focus in order to leave crisis and chaos behind, and move forward with your desires, goals and needs, whatever they may be...
1 baby step at a time.

This workbook will take you on a journey through:

• Designing the life you want, now and in the future.
• Figuring out how to get from A to B -- and knowing where to begin!
• Getting organized so you can get from A to B with fewer gray hairs.
• Coping with crises that come up along the way...

And last but certainly not least...

• Nurturing and caring for yourself in the process.

In fact, at the end of each section of this workbook, we’ll invite you to celebrate the good feelings and small successes of the day: it’s really important to give yourself permission to do something good for YOURSELF every day.

Now, before you get started....

Please note: While this workbook was designed to take you from visioning to goal-setting and getting organized, in a sort of step-by-step way, you may want to take a “sneak peek” before you start with section 1 – you might find information or exercises that are helpful to you right now.

For example, the crisis planning sheets and stress busters can be very helpful as you work through the vision and goals sections. You will also find a list of helpful resources (both print and online) at the end of this workbook.

Most importantly, this is your workbook – use it in any way that works for you!

Take notes... Give yourself permission to doodle or scribble in the blank space or in the margins, if that makes you happy... There is also a blank page at the end of the workbook for your notes, thoughts, and questions.
Section 1 - Personal Vision

My life, My dreams, My choices

Ever feel like you’ve lost touch with your dreams, aspirations and goals of earlier years?

Sometimes we get so caught up in our busy lives – or are dragged down by harsh and trying life experiences - that we lose ourselves... and awaken years later to realize we’ve strayed far from the path we’d set out on.

Or maybe you’re just starting to find out who you are and what path you want to take.

That’s OK too.

Today is a new day!

Today is not yesterday, nor tomorrow. It can be a new beginning, if you choose. YOU decide. It’s YOUR life.

“PERSONAL VISION” is about what a person wants their life to look like and is based on their dreams, desires and values. Defining your personal vision allows you to live more purposefully, set clearer goals, and achieve them – it puts YOU in the driver’s seat.

Now, finding out what you want in and from life may be challenging at first, even seem a bit scary; no worries! We invite you to take baby steps in that direction.

On the next page is a worksheet that can help get you started on defining your Personal Vision.
Before you begin, sit for a minute. Relax. Take some deep breaths. You might also look at “EXERCISES that encourage thinking outside the box” on pages 9-10.

We recommend you dedicate some time to sit down and consider your responses. It may feel challenging at first, but there are no “right” or “wrong” answers here. You might start the worksheet, then choose to pause and leave some for a later time. That’s fine. Take it slow...

Who am I?
(For example: I’m a woman, I’m a mom, I’m a Texan, I’m sometimes impatient with people, I like to swim, etc.)

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What is important to me?
(For example: feeling respected, my kids, being safe, having a nice place to live, family, etc...)  

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What do I really want in my life at this time? Why?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Where do I see myself in a week, a month, 6 months, a year...? What would that look like?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
My Personal Vision

In the space below, draw and/or write images, words, or symbols that represent where YOU see yourself in the future (that could be in 1 week, 1 month, 6 months, 1 year… 3 years, whatever you can currently ENVISION).

[You can also choose to do the creative activity explained on the next page.]

For now, don’t worry about how you’ll get there …

This exercise may feel uncomfortable…or make you feel sad or angry. That’s natural; feelings come up! Give yourself permission to feel whatever you’re feeling. And always remember to BREATHE … and smile.

** Focus on the positive things you want in your life. **
VISION BOARDS

If you enjoyed the exercise on the previous page, you'll really love making your own VISION BOARD, which will help guide and inspire you when you feel you've lost focus, or things aren't going "as planned".

You create your very own vision board by placing on a large sheet of paper images, words, and/or symbols that represent YOUR vision of the life YOU desire. All you need is paper or poster board (you choose the color!), markers, pens, crayons, magazines to cut out pictures and words, scissors, and glue or tape.

There are no other instructions: just let your imagination guide you! Whatever your vision board ends up looking like is fine - because you've designed it based on YOUR personal vision.

Some questions to guide you:

Where do you see yourself in the future, be it near or far?

What do you wish for yourself (and your family)?

What environment do you see yourself living in?

What colors surround you?

Who are the people around you?

How do you see yourself?

It's a good idea to place your vision board in an area where you'll see it each day: in your bedroom, bathroom, on the fridge, desk, etc. Then you can ask yourself daily: Which choices will I make today, based on my personal vision?

For example:
If your personal vision includes a great new job in the near future, looking at your vision board (with its pictures of your ideal work environment and the things you'll be able to do and have thanks to the extra income) will likely give you that extra boost each day, especially on days when you might be feeling discouraged and just wanting to choose to stay on the couch or go on a shopping spree.
While using this workbook it may be helpful to think “outside the box.” The trouble with being boxed in, is everything starts to look the same. Something looks very different if you are seeing it right up close, or far away, or down looking up, or up looking down. Here are some exercises to play with to loosen up and see outside the box. Allow yourself to try something new! When you take a look at the following suggestions and decide to try a few of them, pay attention to which ones seem to be soothing/comforting, and which may be more activating/exciting. Different people will have different responses to the exercises.

It’s important to be aware of your response:
Do I feel more grounded and centered or less so?

Work with the exercises that help you feel just a little bit safer and more secure.

**Music: I’ve got the rhythm in me.**

Yes, really, check it out in your body! Can you feel the vibration of music in the body? Put on some music and hum along. Or just remember a song to hum or make one up. Where do you feel the vibration of the music in your body? Maybe it’s in your lips, throat, chest? Hum for a while and then just rest and notice how you feel in your body. Then hum a little more and see if it feels different. Or just hum any way you like. You may be surprised at such a simple thing helping you to feel more alert and relaxed at the same time.

**See the World**

Use your eyes to take in as much as possible. Let your eyes feel relaxed and soft. Slowly, move your head to the right and notice as much detail as possible. Just let your eyes rest there and enjoy whatever it is you see. Take in the shapes, colors, textures, patterns. Then turn your head the other direction. Again find whatever your eyes might like to rest upon. Softly let the light and color come in. Notice if it’s more comfortable to look one direction or the other. You might have to slowly move your vision from one side to the other to decide which is more comfortable. Whichever side is best, go ahead and just let your eyes rest there for a minute. Notice if your vision seems any different, colors brighter, vision sharper.

**Be silly! Why let kids have all the fun?!**

Make some funny faces. Drop your lower jaw and move it up and down like a fish. Make horse lips sounds – put your lips together and blow. Sometimes you just have to let loose, right?
Make some figure eights.

Draw some figure eights on their side so there is a one loop on the right and one loop on the left. Trace over it as many times as you like. You can do this with paper and pen or you can do it with your finger in the palm of your hand. Use your finger to try drawing the sideways figure eight on your leg or arm. See which you like best. Walk the sideways figure eight pattern on the carpet. Stand up and do the figure eight pattern with your hips. What's that like?

Relax yourself, give yourself a hug.

Use a shawl or blanket and put it around both your shoulders. Feel the material. Now gently pull it closer until you feel just the right amount of pressure. How's that? If you notice too much pressure is not comfortable, relax it till it's just the perfect amount for you. Most people like a gentle, steady hold kind of pressure.

Grounding and Centering

If you're sitting in a chair notice all the points of contact between you and the chair. Feel the chair holding you, feel your back against the back of the chair, the chair underneath your whole body, just like the chair is offering some supportive holding of your body. What do you notice? Do you like your feet on the ground or do you like to sit cross-legged? Notice what it's like to ever so slightly move a hip or an arm or a shoulder to make your body feel even and level. Experiment with ways to be just a little more comfortable in your chair. It's fine to keep eyes open, or to close them while you do this. What you find the easiest and most comfortable is the best way to do it.

Effortless Breathing

There are lots of good exercises for breathing techniques. Here's one that is meant to be effortless. Pay attention to the breath coming in. And then the breath moving out. Each breath has its own rhythm, some are deeper than others, some come faster. Let each breath do what it wants to do without trying to shift the rhythm or pattern. It's your breath. Let it do what it will. It's interesting and enough just to see what your breath does. Notice that after the breath comes in, there is a small pause. After the pause, the breath goes back out. Another pause. What's it like to focus on noticing the pauses between the inhale and exhale. What's it like just to pay attention to the breath? You work so hard, give yourself a break and take it easy.
**Words of Wisdom and Enlightenment**

Understand that the right to choose your own path is a sacred privilege. Use it. Dwell in possibility.

- Oprah Winfrey

If you don’t like something change it; if you can’t change it, change the way you think about it.

- Mary Engelbreit

We can always choose to perceive things differently. You can focus on what’s wrong in your life, or you can focus on what’s right.

- Marianne Williamson

The only limitation in your life is the limitation of your own thinking.

- James A. Ray

Today you are you! That is truer than true! There is no one alive who is you-er than you!

- Dr. Seuss

**MY COMMITMENT TO ME**

And now, we invite you to celebrate the good feelings and small successes of the day or hour: it’s really important that you be willing to do something good for YOURSELF each and every day – several times a day is even better! Now, good feelings can be new to you, and sometimes scary – that’s OK.

Just give it a try.

For example:
- ✓ Today I put a smile on my son’s face by playing outside with him. (It made me feel so special and happy!).
- ✓ One thing I am doing to feel good today is taking a 10-minute walk outside.
- ✓ I commit to spending at least 15 minutes relaxing in a quiet place (no kids, no TV, no phone).

Today, I _________________________________. (celebrate the GOOD feelings)

One thing I am doing to feel good today is _________________________________.

Today, I commit to _________________________________.
Section 2 - Goal-Setting

Whose life is it anyway?

Congratulations!

You’ve taken the bold step to begin to define your very own Personal Vision: your dreams, desires, and vision for your life. Maybe you already have your vision board posted where you can see it each day, and it brings a smile to your face each time you look at it. Wonderful!

Now, HOW in the world do you move from your current situation to that other, more desirable place you’ve envisioned? Well, focusing on your vision board, dreaming, praying, meditating, etc. are all great things, but they alone will not move you much closer to your desired place.

Now it’s time to take ACTION!

This section will provide you some tools and tips for translating your personal vision into concrete, clear goals and then help you take steps toward achieving those goals.

Before you get started, we invite you consider this: when we strive to make changes in our lives, there are always going to be good and not-so-good days. If it’s not a good day, the most helpful response is probably just to let go of what you didn’t do (or did “wrong”) and focus on making your next right choice. Eventually positives will outweigh negatives.

Remember: change takes time!

And so, it’s really important to remember to celebrate the good feelings that come up throughout the day, for example, when you look at your vision board. There are also some simple head and neck exercises on page 18 that might help you focus on the task ahead (setting clear goals).
**The ABC’s of Goal-setting**

**WHY set goals?**

To feel more optimistic, motivated, and energized.
To more easily and effectively get from point A to point B.
To leave chaos behind and feel more calm and focused.

**WHAT KINDS of goals?**

We can set goals in all areas of our lives: personal fulfillment, relationships, family, work, school, health, etc. The key to remember is: your goals need to revolve around things you can actually control/influence.

For example:

- “I will get out of bed each morning and take a shower,” or “I’ll begin a daily exercise routine” are indeed goals that we have control over and therefore can work to achieve.
- “My goal is for people to treat me with more respect” cannot be your goal, since you have no power over how others act and behave. But, your goal might be to begin to let go of what others think of you, and work on your self-confidence.

**WHOSE goals?**

When you set goals, they should be YOURS: not those set for you by your partner, mother, boss, social worker, etc. Remember, this is YOUR life and you deserve to make your own choices about what your life looks like.

**Why these PARTICULAR goals?**

Why are you are setting certain goals? What’s the payoff, what’s the benefit to be gained? You’ve already defined your personal vision… now you get to break it down into goals. The more motivated you are, the more likely you are to succeed in achieving your goals.

For example:

- Myeshia’s goal is to improve her computer skills by taking a 12-week class, so that she can advance in her job and increase her income, thus creating more prosperity for her family in the short term. Myeshia has thought through the benefits of her choice and is truly motivated.
- Anna’s goal is to go back to school and study nursing, because her parents have convinced her she’ll eventually make a good living and never be out of a job. Anna doesn’t like hospital settings, struggles with math and science, and will need to take out an expensive loan to pay for her schooling, but she thinks her parents know best. How motivated and energized is Anna likely to be, if she studies nursing?
Why is it that we sometimes set such great goals, only to lose steam, get frustrated, and give up within a few weeks, or even days? Often, it’s because we aren’t being realistic and/or we don’t plan well enough.

Here are some tips to help you define goals that you’ll be more likely to achieve:

- Make sure your goals are based on reality. (“I want to win the lottery” is not realistic, nor do you have any control over it.)
- Be prepared to support your goals through energy and effort.
- Make sure your goals are S.M.A.R.T. (as described below)

**S.M.A.R.T. Goals**
are easier to achieve

**S**pecific
**M**easurable
**A**ttainable
**R**elevant
**T**imely

For example:
Karen’s goal is “to learn computer skills.” Is this a S.M.A.R.T. goal?

- Is it Specific? … What does “learn computer skills” mean exactly?
- Is it Measurable? … How will Karen know if she’s met her goal?
- Is it Attainable? … Is there a resource in the community where she can take classes, or can someone teach her? Does she have time to dedicate to this?
- Is it Relevant? … What’s Karen’s motivation for learning computer skills? Will it help her in school, in the workplace, etc.?
- Is it Timely? … By when does she want to meet this goal?

This goal might be S.M.A.R.T.-er if Karen worded it this way instead:
“My goal is to complete the 12-hour Fundamentals of MS Word class at ABC School by the end of the year.”
Goal-setting:
Where do I start?

The questions below will help you to think through your motivation for setting your goal, but also to think about strengths and resources that will help you stay energized and optimistic along the way.

My GOAL: ____________________________________

Make sure your goal is S.M.A.R.T.:
- Is it Specific?
- Is it Measurable?
- Is it Attainable? (can you really do this?)
- Is it Relevant?
- Is it Timely?

I want to achieve this goal because ____________________________________________
(What motivates you? What benefits are to be gained? What losses are to be avoided?)

The possible obstacles to achieving my goal are: ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

The possible solutions to these obstacles are: ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

My strengths and resources are: ______________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

I can call on these outside reinforcements (people or things) to support me in reaching my goal: _________
_________________________________________________________________________________

I’ll know I’ve been successful when (What has changed or improved?) _______________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

I will reward myself for accomplishing steps along the way by _______________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
My GOAL ACTION PLAN

It's recommended that we WRITE DOWN our goals: this allows us to feel more committed, and it helps us to track our progress as we go.

Now, let’s SIMPLIFY the goal setting process by breaking it down: at the bottom of the page you can break your goal down into bite-size pieces: the easier and smaller the steps, the less overwhelming it will all be.

For example:
Annette’s goal is to clean her kitchen today before her friends come over for lunch.

Some steps might include:

1. Put all dirty dishes and pots and pans in the sink.
2. Throw away any old food, put the rest in the fridge or cupboards.
3. Wipe down the counter tops.
4. Pick up any trash off the floor.
5. Wash the dirty dishes in the sink (or place in the dishwasher).
6. Sweep the floor.
7. Take out the trash.

Now it’s your turn.

My GOAL: _____________________________

STEPS to achieving my goal:
(Depending on your particular goal, there may be fewer or more steps involved.)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Note: Some people find it helpful to attach a “deadline” to each step, to keep them on track. You can always adjust those dates as you go.
Now that you’ve written down your Action Plan, you’re ready to go. How??

Just start with the 1st step.

Don’t panic if something sets you back – it probably will. That’s life.
No worries. Remember that CHANGE TAKES TIME.
Just pick up again where you left off!

Always keep your VISION BOARD close at hand – it will help you to re-focus and recharge and put a smile back on your face.

Remember that you’re not alone: seek the support you need from others.

List your cheerleaders here: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

(These are the people who support you, your choices and the goals you’ve set.)

Recognize that you are a resilient and capable woman who has already achieved many goals in her life…

And you’re a survivor!

Reward yourself when you accomplish your goal, or even one of the steps.

Celebrate your successes!

Then move on to the next goal… or the next step.

MY COMMITMENT TO ME

Today, I ________________________________________________________________________________________________, (celebrate the GOOD feelings)

One thing I am doing to feel good today is ________________________________________________________________________________________________.

Today, I commit to ________________________________________________________________________________________________.

Wise Woman’s Guide
Head and Neck Exercises
to help you focus

Gently move your head from side to side, first to one side, then to the other side.
Gently move your head forward & backward.
Open your jaw, just to the place of resistance, very gently. Then close your jaw.
Make funny faces, including squeezing your eyes open & shut.
Swallow, then make a little sound--any sound.
Make a little cough.
Listen for a sound nearby and listen for a sound in the distance.
Notice any warmth, tingling, flow or vibration sensation from head to throat.

Words of Wisdom & Enlightenment

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

- Maria Robinson

With every experience, you alone are painting your own canvas, thought by thought, choice by choice.

- Oprah Winfrey

Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

If you advance confidently in the direction of your dreams, and endeavor to live the life you have imagined, you will meet with unexpected success.

- Henry David Thoreau
Section 3 - Getting Organized

So I will remain focused and motivated

Let’s recap what you’ve accomplished so far:

You’ve created your very own Vision Board (section 1), written down your goals and designed a clear plan for following through with them step by step (section 2), and made some commitments to nurture yourself and try to feel GOOD each day.

Great job!

Now, let’s look at organizing ourselves and our lives a bit so that we can focus our energy and time on our Personal Vision: those dreams and goals we have set out. In this section, you will get some tools and tips for getting organized around YOUR priorities.

First off, let’s be clear: We can’t really “manage time”!

There are in fact only 24 hours in the day...

What we CAN do is organize ourselves and decide what we do with the time that we have. You want to begin by being crystal clear about your priorities, and where you’re headed: it’s a good idea to refer back to your VISION BOARD and the exercises from section 1.

Note: Stress is often caused by having worked all day long on other people’s priorities and goals and not having enough time to focus on your own priorities and goals!

Remember SELF-CARE:
When you feel frustrated, stressed out, or angry, you can choose to take a short break and breathe, walk away from a person or situation, or do something that’s calming to you.
#1: PRIORITIZE

- Choose the 1 or 2 areas you’re going to focus on during this time in your life. What’s important to you right now? Is it finding a job? An apartment? Enrolling in school? Attending to your physical and/or mental health? Strengthening your relationship with your kids?

- Learn to recognize the difference between the important, the urgent and the unnecessary. It may seem that everything is urgent, and must be acted on first, but this is not necessarily so. With good planning and prioritizing, urgent situations will become less and less frequent. Focus your time and energy on that which is IMPORTANT to you.

#2: Create a TIME PLAN

- Helpful tools include: day planner/organizer, calendar, phone, etc.

- Write down appointments/meetings immediately as they come up.

#3: Make LISTS

Spend 5-10 minutes at the end of each day (or first thing in the morning) preparing a “to do” list for the next day. Tasks will come from your Goal Action Plans, along with new tasks generated during that day. Evaluate each item on your list as to its importance and urgency, and eliminate the unnecessary. Keep it short! (no more than 5-6 items)

More Organizing & Time “Management” Tips

- Keep a spiral notebook with all your notes in one place. Keep a master list of contact numbers for the important people and resources in your life.

- Find your peak time: do you have more energy in the morning, afternoon, or at night? When possible, complete important tasks at your peak time.

- Procrastination is often caused by facing a project that seems too big or overwhelming. Break down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable ones.

- Do 1 thing at a time. Multi-tasking is overrated! In fact, it means nothing gets your full attention and you’ll probably spend more time in the long run.

- Learn to set boundaries and say “NO” to anything that is not in your best interest and in line with your priorities. This can be one of the most empowering things you ever do!

- Make time for YOURSELF!! You deserve it, and it will help you stay calmer and think more clearly. A little goes a long way!

- Be realistic: accept the fact that you cannot do everything in one day.

- Remember to BREATHE and smile!
Words of Wisdom & Enlightenment

It’s not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy about?

- Henry David Thoreau

One worthwhile task carried to a successful conclusion is worth half-a-hundred half-finished tasks.

- Malcolm S. Forbes

You will never “find” time for anything. If you want time, you must make it.

- Charles Bruxton

**MY COMMITMENT TO ME:**

Today, I ___________________________ . (celebrate the GOOD feelings)

One thing I am doing to feel good today is _____________________________.

Today, I commit to _____________________________.
Section 4 - Coping with Crisis

Life is full of surprises, isn’t it? Sometimes, no matter how well things are going or how organized we are, crises happen and threaten to wreak havoc with our lives. Well, we can manage how we cope with those significant events in our lives.

And while some crises cannot be avoided, there is such a thing as preventing a “problem” from turning into a “crisis.” For instance, your babysitter suddenly becoming unavailable due to illness is a problem, but if you don’t have a “plan B” for childcare, you may risk losing your job, which would likely qualify as a crisis.

This section will provide you some tools and tips for coping with crisis, and offer suggestions for reducing the likelihood of similar crises occurring in the future.

What is a crisis?

A crisis is an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person’s life, a turning point for better or for worse. Crises usually involve health, personal safety, children, employment, housing, transportation, friends or relatives, finances, etc.

Crises tend to be hard to handle because we often aren’t prepared and/or we are too upset to think clearly. However, crises also allow us to grow and change, if we can learn to cope with them effectively.

Some questions you might ask yourself:

• What makes a situation a crisis for me?
• How do crises interfere with my life?
• Can I see a pattern of similar crises in my life? (Are they primarily financial, health, family, etc. ?)
• How do I usually cope with crisis... or not?
Coping with crises is hard, especially when they occur at times in our lives when we’re already dealing with change, transition, and/or trauma.

Let’s remember that we have choices in life: we can choose to cope with a crisis and get through it as best we can, then learn from it, or we can bury our head in the sand, just give in, and let life ‘take over.’ Guess which is the healthier choice (for body and mind)? Which is the one that will help us in the long run?

Here are some things to consider when a crisis strikes:

• **AM I BREATHING?!!**
  (there are easy breathing exercises and other stress busters on the next page)

• **WHAT DECISION NEEDS TO BE MADE?**
  What’s the immediate crisis at hand? What are my options?

• **WHAT’S THE BEST OPTION AT THIS TIME, AND WHAT RESOURCES DO I NEED TO ACCESS?**

• **WHAT ARE MY RESOURCES?**
  Ask for help! - Look at the “Crisis Planning Worksheet” on page 26 for resource areas that you might tap into, especially if you have planned ahead (we’ll get to that shortly).

• **WHO CAN I TALK TO?**
  Who can help, or at least listen, while I get things off my chest? Who can support me in making good decisions while everything feels so chaotic?

• **WHAT CAN I LEARN from this crisis situation?...**
  to be better equipped to cope next time something similar happens.
Breathwork

Breath is the source of life, bringing fresh energy into the tissues and cells to nourish the body, mind and the whole person. When we breathe out, accumulated stress and toxins are released. Breathing through a stressful time is an effective way to let go of the tension that accumulates in the body. A few long deep breaths at a difficult moment can completely change the way we handle a situation. Breathwork combined with images of light or nature can promote feelings of peace, calm and focus.

Deep breathing exercise:
Sit comfortably supported and close your eyes (if you like). Take a deep breath and center yourself, letting go of all worries and thoughts. Place your hands on your abdomen (belly), inhale deeply through your nose and imagine the air moving down through the body into your center within your abdomen. Imagine that your abdomen fills with air as if it were a balloon. Hold your breath for a few seconds and then exhale slowly through your mouth, contracting the muscles of your abdomen, letting go of all the tension in your body. Continue this deep abdominal breathing for a few minutes. If thoughts come into your mind, gently release them, returning to the image of the air moving in and out of your body.

Adapted from: www.capacitar.org

Get outdoors for a little break

Nature is a great resource for healing and grounding. Breathe in earth energy, breathe out stress and tension. Even 5 minutes on a balcony or terrace can be rejuvenating.
** Drink plenty of water and eat small, nutritious snacks
Hunger and dehydration, even before you’re aware of them, can provoke aggressiveness and exacerbate feelings of anxiety and stress.

Exercise

No need to run a marathon, just maybe take a stroll in the morning or evening. Exercise relieves stress in several ways. Give it a try!

Laugh

When we laugh, the autonomic nervous system mellows out and the heart is allowed to relax. And it’s just fun to laugh. And having fun is its own stress buster! Watch a comedy, look for comedians on the Internet, read some jokes, check out comedy radio on 102.7 FM.
Can you “plan” for a crisis?

Although you cannot foresee most crises occurring, being prepared for crisis situations helps make them easier to cope with and less traumatic.

For example:
Having a backup childcare plan may save you your job (and avoid a crisis) if your babysitter is suddenly unavailable; having money saved up may help you maintain your housing (and avoid a crisis) and/or keep your car if you suddenly lose your job.

Below are common issues that come up in a crisis, and examples of possible options from which to choose.

Add your own or make your own plan on the next page! (You could put together a simple “crisis planning” folder that would include important phone numbers and your crisis planning worksheets.)

**Childcare**
Possible options: Friends, relatives, all-night childcare, neighbors, ________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

**Transportation**
Friends, family, rental car, bus, taxi, ________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

**Finances**
Savings, part-time work, loan from friend, credit card, call creditors and work something out, __________
___________________________________________________________________________________

**Housing – safe places**
Friends, family, shelter, motel, ________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

**Support network and community resources**
Friends, family, church, community agencies, food banks, ________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

**Health**
Primary care physician, community clinic, emergency room, ________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
**My CRISIS PLANNING worksheet**

**Potential Crisis:** (Example: Car breaks down, costs $300 to fix; I need reliable transportation to work each day.)

__________________________
write your potential crisis above

Reminder: Just do 1 step at a time, breathe, and be easy on yourself.

My plan for CHILDCARE: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My plan for TRANSPORTATION: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My plan for MONEY: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My plan for HOUSING: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My plan for HEALTH: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My plan for SUPPORT and community RESOURCES: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My plan for taking CARE of MYSELF: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Congratulations!

You’ve thought ahead and (hopefully) lessened the negative impact of a future crisis situation. And you’ve picked up some stress-releasing tools. All this will help to you cope better and remain calmer during a crisis, so you can soon get back on track with your life, your vision, goals and plans.

Words of Wisdom & Enlightenment

Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass...it's about learning how to dance in the rain.

- Vivian Greene

If you can’t fly, run. If you can’t run, walk. If you can’t walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving.

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fall.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

MY COMMITMENT TO ME:

Today, I ______________________________________________________________. (celebrate the GOOD feelings)

One thing I am doing to feel good today is ______________________________________________________________.

Today, I commit to ______________________________________________________________.
In closing...

We invite you to thank yourself for taking the time to HONOR, LOVE, and be PATIENT with yourself as you move on with your life, on the path of healing, self-confidence and happiness.

The path is generally not a straight one; rather, you may move forward, then zigzag a bit, fall back, and head forward again. And so we encourage you to continue to take baby steps, smile, celebrate the good feelings and never forget that YOU ARE A UNIQUE HUMAN BEING worthy of (self)respect, (self) love, great health, peace of mind, safety, and an abundance of joy and well-being.

The Woman in the Glass
Dale Wimbrow

When you get what you want as you struggle for self
And the world makes you queen for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what that woman has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or husband
Who's judgment upon you must pass;
The person whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

She's the person to please, never mind all the rest,
For she's with you clear up to the end.
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the woman in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life,
And get pats on your back as you pass.
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the woman in the glass.
**Books**

- Hay, Louise. (2003). *You can Heal your Life*.
- Jeffers, Susan. (2007). *Feel the Fear... And Do It Anyway*.

**Online Resources**

- Finer Minds: Personal growth videos, articles, links to resources - [www.finerminds.com](http://www.finerminds.com)
- The Fly Lady: Offers a system for organizing and managing a home, based on the concept of daily routines and a focus on small, time- and space-limited tasks. - [www.flylady.net](http://www.flylady.net)
- Google “Guided Meditation”: for various guided meditations you can do to relax and de-stress.

_SafePlace welcomes your feedback, comments and questions: you may send an e-mail to info@SafePlace.org and include Wise Woman’s Guide in the title or body of the e-mail - or you may complete the Evaluation on the next page and return it to SafePlace or e-mail it to the address above._
EVALUATION

What was most helpful about this workbook?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

What was least helpful about this workbook?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

What do you think needs to be changed?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Is there any information that wasn’t in the workbook, that you think needs to be added?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

What do you think about the pictures that we used?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Do you prefer having the pictures in color?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Would you prefer having certain words in other colors?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Please share any other feedback or suggestions you may have.
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
The Wise Woman’s Guide
to getting organized and following your dreams...
...or at least, getting through this week!

Developed by
Sandra Molinari
Life Skills Coordinator, SafePlace