

# Mindful Living: A Guide to Wellness by Lighthouse EAP

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## Languishing in 2021

The initial reactions of fear and anxiety to the Covid-19 pandemic have lingered and left many in a state of uncertainty due to an end to the pandemic not being in sight. Even those who are typically resilient are reporting feelings of stagnation, emptiness, lack of motivation, struggle with concentration, a lack of purposefulness, and a sense of just going through the motions. If you have noticed these feelings you may be experiencing languishing. In 2002 sociologist Corey Keys coined the term languishing, defining it as "apathy, a sense of restlessness or feeling unsettled or an overall lack of interest in life or the things that typically bring your joy." Languishing is not the same as depression but left unchecked it can lead to depression and anxiety.

Considering how much the pandemic has changed daily life, it is no surprise that so many individuals are languishing. A lot of activities we have enjoyed with others, such as concerts or sports games have been canceled. As time goes on, we get more and more accustomed to isolation. Often those who are languishing are waiting for the pre-pandemic life to return and until then are just going through the motions of their daily routine with indifference.

Individuals can move from languishing to flourishing through mindfulness and a commitment to self-care. Once you identify the ways languishing has been impacting your life you can set goals to get yourself back on track. Start with small accomplishments such as reading a book, reaching out to a friend you haven't spoken to in a while, completing a puzzle, organizing a closet, or going for a nature hike. By finding simple things to stimulate your brain you can gradually work your way up to finishing a task or reengaging in a hobby. Making a list of items and ordering these from least to greatest amount of energy required to accomplish, can give you a step-by-step guide.



## Importance of Preventative Care

Benjamin Franklin once said that 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'. It can be more effective to stop something from happening in the first place than to repair the damage after it has occurred. Many significant illnesses can be prevented or reduced through preventative care.

### Consider these measures for good preventative health:

- Annual wellness checks.
- Monitoring and controlling blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol.
- Cancer screenings at recommended times.
- Eating healthy.
- Regular physical activity.
- Avoiding excessive drinking, drug use, and nicotine use.

<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/prevent/index.htm>

It is estimated that 60-90% of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints. Utilizing an Employee Assistance Program is another great measure to improve your overall health and wellness goals. One benefit of EAP counseling is that it is truly preventative. With an EAP, you do not need a diagnosis to attend appointments since your insurance is not billed. Therefore, you don't need to wait until your stressors become severe or unmanageable to reap the benefits of supportive, solution-focused, counseling.



### Lighthouse Employee Assistance Program can help you with:

- Resolving personal, family, and/or work problems.
- Developing individual health and wellness goals and working on identifying steps to meet those goals.
- Learning mindfulness techniques like meditation, mindful eating, and other relaxation techniques.
- Linking you to a program to assist with quitting alcohol, drugs, and/or nicotine.
- Budgeting.
- Discovering ways to replace negative coping mechanisms with healthy, positive ones.

Although the mind and body are often viewed as being separate, mental and physical health are actually closely related. Good mental health can positively affect your physical health. In return, poor mental health can negatively affect your physical health. Your mental health plays a huge role in your general well-being. Being in a good mental state can keep you healthy and help prevent serious health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and arthritis.

<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/how-does-mental-health-affect-physical-health>



## Homework

We all have that internal voice that gets in the way of meeting our goals at times. Habits are hard to change and we need to invest a lot of effort and energy into changing a behavior despite that nagging internal message. Take some time over the next week and try and figure out some of your internal messages holding you back. As they come to you make sure you write them down so you can refer to them as often as needed.



### Examples might be something like:

- I don't have the time to exercise.
- What I do won't matter anyway.
- The world is a terrible place.
- No one cares about me.
- I can't do anything right.

The first part of this assignment is simply to recognize what your thinking traps are that get in the way. Once you have them down, the next step is to take time and reflect on why you are feeling this way. Try and be compassionate towards yourself for feeling these things.

Ask yourself if these messages are helpful or not. If you decide these messages aren't helping you reach your goals, take steps to re-frame these thoughts.

### Here are some tips to get you started:

- When the thinking trap comes up, be compassionate towards yourself for having this thought versus getting upset with yourself.
- Either think about or write down the evidence that this thought might not be entirely true.
- Prove your mind wrong by identifying several action steps you could take that go against this thought.
- Be on the lookout for all or nothing thinking patterns that keep you from moving away from these negative thoughts. For instance, thinking about one bad moment of your day while discounting the positives that happened.



### In practice this exercise might look like this:

**Negative thought:** I can never do anything right.

**Self-compassion:** Life is hard sometimes and it stinks that I feel this way about myself. I am going to try and not be so hard on myself.

**Evidence to the contrary:** Last week I submitted all of my college homework on time. I passed my math test.

**Action steps:** Study 20 minutes a day. Apply for 3 jobs this week.

**All or Nothing thinking:** I studied all week and only got a C on my exam. I can't do anything right. Wait a minute that is not true. That was only one grade on one exam and that doesn't mean I can't do anything right. I do a lot of things right including studying all week for the exam and trying really hard.

*Counseling through an EAP can also be a helpful resource for you to work on identifying and changing these thoughts.*

# Health Tip

## Question: What can I do when my weight loss stalls or stops?

**Answer:** It can be very normal to hit a plateau when trying to lose weight, and it can feel very defeating. There are many reasons why this can happen. Sometimes, initial weight loss is mostly water weight, and the effect is short-term. Another challenge is that we often lose some muscle along with fat, and muscle contributes to a higher metabolism rate, so when muscle goes down, so can the metabolism. It can be tempting just to give up and revert back to old ways when not experiencing tangible results.

**Here are a few ideas to overcome the plateau and continue to lose weight.**

**Adding more exercise and/or decreasing calories** can help you lose weight, but don't go below about 1,200 calories. Decreasing calories too much can create more constant hunger, which can cause overeating.

**Reducing alcohol intake** can cut down on empty calories and also decrease likelihood of making poor food choices.

**Finding opportunities to move outside of exercise** can help burn calories such as cleaning, taking the stairs, etc.

**Recording what you eat** can provide an accurate picture of how many calories you are actually taking in and show you where changes could be made.

**Managing stress** can promote weight loss by decreasing the hormone cortisol.

**Upping your water intake** can boost metabolism, and drinking water right before a meal may contribute to eating less.

**Getting more sleep** can also aid in higher metabolism and helps to keep hormones that regulate hunger in balance.

If your approach to get past a weight-loss plateau isn't working, talk with your doctor or a dietitian about other strategies.

### AHA MOMENT

*Sometimes when we slip up on a health goal, it can be tempting to abandon the plan, but we can pick ourselves up after having a slip; all is not lost. It is important not to be hard on yourself and to use the slip as an opportunity to learn from it, grow from it and push the reset button.*

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