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SELF-SOOTHING CHEATSHEET

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Startups are like roller coasters. Some days you feel like you are on top of the world and some days you feel like you are an inch from failure. And some days you feel like both.

And yet it is your job as a leader to manage your emotions effectively through the ups and downs.

How do you do that? We suggest that you create a “Self-Soothing Toolkit.”

Your Toolkit is basically your user manual for staying calm (or regaining composure) in the face of stress, anxiety and fear. Use it to slow down, clear your mind, quell emotions and regain control.

Here are 5 suggestions for self-soothing. Test out what works for you and put it in your Toolkit for easy access.

1. MUSIC - LISTEN TO YOUR "CHILL MIX"

This, of course, means you need to create a "Chill Mix" on whatever streaming service you use. You may already have some favorite mellow beats that you can collect into a playlist. If not, most services now offer playlists curated by mood. In addition, we suggest trying out music that has been created to specifically release certain chemicals in the brain to counteract stress and anxiety.

Here are three suggestions:

[Happiness Frequency](#) - Serotonin, Dopamine and Endorphin Release Music

[Meditation Music](#) - Relaxation and Stress Relief

[Anti-Anxiety Music](#) - Stops Over-thinking, Worry and Stress

2. MOVEMENT - STEP OUT OF THE OFFICE AND GET SOME FRESH AIR

When you feel negative emotions beginning to build, one of the most effective things you can do is get up from your desk and walk around. If you can get outside to breath fresh air - even better.

Regular exercise is also key to managing emotions. Yoga, in particular, is excellent for your mental health. Yoga centers us by helping us relax and focus on the present. It also helps us recognize where we hold tension and knots of energy and then helps us break them down.

3. MINDFULNESS - DO BREATHWORK

Nasal breathing naturally slows your heart and calms your nervous system. We suggest visualizing the most beautiful, scenic place you have ever visited. It can be the top of a snow-capped mountain or a beach on your favorite island. Hold this place in your mind while you run through a 16-count breathing exercise. Inhale for 4 breaths, hold for 4 breaths, exhale 4 breaths, hold for 4 breaths.

4. MEDITATION - SPEND SOME TIME IN A MEDITATION APP

Meditation helps us create space to notice and process our thoughts and feelings without judgement. According to the Mayo Clinic, benefits of meditation on emotional well-being include:

- Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations
- Building skills to manage your stress
- Increasing self-awareness
- Focusing on the present
- Reducing negative emotions
- Increasing imagination and creativity
- Increasing patience and tolerance

Technology has made starting, and sticking to, a meditation practice easier than ever. Below are our Top 3 Meditation Apps. Each offers a free version so you can test them out and choose the one that best suits you. We suggest developing a morning practice of at least 10 minutes. Note: these apps also provide shorter meditations to be used “on-demand” when you need to quickly calm your mind and body.

- [Calm](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Stop, Breath and Think](#)

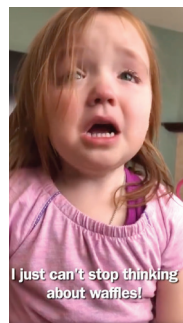
5. MOOD-SHIFTING CONTENT - WATCH THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SMILE OR LAUGH

This may sound too basic to mention, but smiling and laughing are quick and easy ways to shift your mood. By releasing serotonin and endorphins, they can relieve stress, fear, pain, and conflict. Just like with your Chill Music Mix, we suggest having this content curated and bookmarked for easy access when you feel negative thoughts and emotions taking over. Here are some fun suggestions:

ANIMALS



KIDS



DANCING



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While your Toolkit is meant for “on-demand” self-soothing, there are a number of ongoing practices that can help improve your ability to manage your emotions. The first is self-care. Sleeping well, eating well and moving well should be top priorities, as each greatly impacts your overall emotional state. For more on self-care and optimizing your performance, check out our [Peak Performance Cheatsheet](#).

Making time for consistent reflection is also impactful. We suggest daily or weekly journaling, as research has found that it helps process emotions and improves self-awareness. Developing a daily gratitude habit is another easy way to positively impact your mood and mindset. Lastly, and perhaps obviously, we recommend working with a coach. Coaching is a great way to expedite identifying, understanding and managing your emotions and strengthening your overall Emotional Intelligence.