



Make a not-to-do list

You've probably heard about the power of saying no and the importance of setting healthy boundaries in your personal life and at work. A well-intentioned to-do list can be a great way to get organized and manage stress. But have you ever thought of creating a not-to-do list?

Making your own not-to-do list can help you identify what drains your mind, body and spirit. Here's a worksheet to get you started.

Fill in each of the boxes with things, activities and/or people that frequently:

Do not make me feel seen, supported, heard or safe:

Make me feel overwhelmed, agitated, anxious and/or stressed out:

Make me feel undervalued:

Make me feel obligated:

Waste my time, drain my energy or I simply do not enjoy:

Put me in a bad mood:

Cost too much time and/or money:

Now, reread your list on the reverse page. Circle five things you can choose not to do anymore. Write them below.

I am not going to:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

Next, use those five statements and give yourself an affirmation as to what you can or will do instead and why.

Instead, I will:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

For example:

<p>I am not going to spend time with _____. It's OK to turn down an invitation.</p> <p>I am not going to agree to travel home for the holidays next year. It's too expensive and stressful.</p>	<p>Instead, I will use that time to exercise, which makes me feel good and is good for me.</p> <p>Instead, I will arrange another time to visit my parents, such as after the holiday rush when tickets are cheaper.</p>
---	--

Sources:

National Institute of Mental Health, "Caring for your Mental Health." <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health> Accessed January 19, 2023

Harvard Business Review, "Why we continue to rely on (and love) to-do lists." <https://hbr.org/2022/01/why-we-continue-to-rely-on-and-love-to-do-lists> Accessed January 19, 2023

HelpGuide, "Setting Healthy Boundaries in Relationships." <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/setting-healthy-boundaries-in-relationships.htm> Accessed January 19, 2023

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, "8 Tips on Setting Boundaries for Your Mental Health." <https://www.dbsalliance.org/support/young-adults/8-tips-on-setting-boundaries-for-your-mental-health/> Accessed January 19, 2023

Written by eM Life Instructor Andrea Lieberstein, MPH, RDN, RYT

This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. This program is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. Consult with your clinician for specific health care needs, treatment or medication. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against Optum or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g., employer or health plan). This program and its components may not be available in all states or for all group sizes and are subject to change. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.