

# HOW TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF: SIMPLE STEPS BACKED BY SCIENCE

It is hard to have a good day if you don't feel good about who you are. But when it feels impossible to face the day, remember that feeling better about yourself is a process, and you deserve grace and compassion.

## Make little choices for big impact

When everything feels beyond your control, noticing what you can influence is important for your well-being. Research shows that when you feel like you're doing something because you want to, you feel better. Small things, like deciding where to go for lunch or how you'll do your hair, can give you a sense of control that can make you feel a little better when things are hard.

For instance, you may not think much about your daily clothing choices, but research shows they can be powerful in shaping how you feel about yourself. The colors, textures, or styles that you choose can help you feel more comfortable and confident as you go about your day, and can even help you perform better at work. You can also use what you wear to show the causes you care about, helping you tell the world around you who you are and what matters to you.

## Help others for your health

One way to help yourself feel better is by helping others. Research shows that social behaviors like helping a friend, volunteering in your community, or giving to a cause you care about can trigger the release of oxytocin in your brain. Oxytocin is a chemical messenger that helps you feel good and is sometimes called "the love hormone." It also lowers stress, reduces pain, and is good for your heart. Helping others reminds us that we are caring, that we aren't alone, and that we have the power to make things better.

### Simple steps

#### Complete the following sentences:

When I wear \_\_\_\_\_  
(specific outfit/accessory/article of clothing/hairstyle), I feel comfortable and safe.

When I wear \_\_\_\_\_  
(specific outfit/accessory/article of clothing/hairstyle), I feel in charge.

When I wear \_\_\_\_\_  
(specific outfit/accessory/article of clothing/hairstyle), I feel most like myself.

### Simple steps

Practice a random act of kindness, such as holding a door open for someone, giving a sincere compliment (or a positive online review), or checking in on an elderly neighbor.

Consider giving to MHA, volunteering with a Mental Health America affiliate in your area, or getting involved with another local community organization.

## Flip the script on negative self-talk

On tough days, you might notice that you're being extra hard on yourself. But beating yourself up when things aren't going your way usually makes things worse. Instead of being mean to yourself, try talking to yourself the same way you would talk to a friend who is struggling. Be kind and patient.

Research shows that people who were kind to themselves were less likely to avoid their problems and more likely to do things to make themselves happy, leading to fewer depressive symptoms. Additional research shows that self-compassion can also help reduce stress and anxiety.

**Even small changes can be hard sometimes, so be patient with yourself as you take these simple steps. Every time you choose to be kind or express who you really are, you are building the strength to handle whatever comes your way.**

### Simple steps

If you find it hard to be kind to yourself, try MHA's Changing Thoughts tool to help you reframe negative thinking.

Check out these affirmations for more good days and to remind yourself of your power.

**If having good days feels hard, know that help is available and that you are not alone.**

**Check on your mental health with a free, quick, anonymous test at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org).**

**Explore additional resources and tools for more good days at [mhanational.org/may](https://mhanational.org/may).**