

Spiritual Wellness Workbook for the **Trans Community**

A guide from Norton Healthcare Pastoral Care



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In the Norton Healthcare family, we practice respect for every person, especially one another’s beliefs and practices. We hope for everyone to have — or find — a sense of meaning and purpose, or existential truth. We offer this workbook for the transgender members of our community. If you are trans, we hope the information in this workbook will help to ground, guide and settle you.

GENDER-EXPANSIVE FAITH

Regardless of what faith you identify with, one overarching theme is present in all: Above all else — love yourself, love your neighbor, love God.

What can a healthy expression of religion look like?

Consider the thoughts and encouragements in this **meditation** from Richard Rohr with the Center for Action and Contemplation about discovering sacred depth in your identity.

If you are a trans person of faith with a Christian background, you may be looking for gender-positive examples of scriptures to help guide you in your faith formation. **Here is an excellent resource** from the Human Rights Campaign: “What Does the Bible Say About Transgender People?”

Religion may be best expressed in this simple truth:

“I need a God who is bigger and more nimble and mysterious than what I could understand and contrive. Otherwise it can feel like I am worshipping nothing more than my own ability to understand the divine.”

-Nadia Bolz-Weber in her book “Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint”

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality means different things for everyone. At its core, it is a connection to something that gives you strength, direction and purpose. Your spirituality helps you form your values and also can help guide you through life's troubles.

Spirituality is expressed and strengthened in a variety of ways that are unique to each person. Here are just a few examples:

- Loving and serving others
- Believing in a higher power
- Prayer, meditation, mindfulness exercises
- Connecting with a faith or friend group
- Attending a support group
- Experiences with nature, gardening, animal care
- Art, singing, music, crafting, acting
- Reading, writing, journaling
- Movement, yoga, exercise, dancing



SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

Spiritual wellness is expressed differently for every person, but it results in a sense of peace and helps us live with our values and actions integrated with meaning and purpose.

A growing body of research includes spiritual well-being as an important contributor to good health outcomes. These are some of the benefits of spiritual wellness:

- Lower stress: Spiritual/religious practices such as prayer, meditation and mindfulness exercises can help manage stress, as well as lower heart rate and blood pressure.
- Focusing your mind: By making time to pray, walk, listen to music, write in a journal, meditate, or simply taking a moment to breathe, you can learn to quiet your mind and focus more clearly in the moment.
- Fostering connection: Practicing gratitude and forgiveness with yourself may help you open the door to becoming more compassionate and empathetic with the people and world around you.
- Increased empathy: Everyone experiences pain and difficult circumstances sometimes, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. Improving your spiritual foundation will give you the resilience to find perspective, to be courageous, to ask for help or to persevere.

SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

Are you struggling with your ideas about God or a Higher Power?

How often are you distressed about your sense of meaning and purpose in life?

Is your gender identity a source of conflict with those closest to you?

Are you healing from a traumatic experience with a church or religion?

Do you sometimes feel trapped by a pervasive religious culture?

Do you identify as an atheist, agnostic or have never had a religious experience, but still feel personally disconnected?

Any of these situations can be a barrier to spiritual wellness, peace and happiness.

If you are looking to gain more insight about spiritual struggle, you may find it helpful to **read this article** on the Bowling Green State University website. Even though it is not focused on gender identity, the article may help you identify and name your own sense of conflict, if any. The information it presents may lead you to a deeper search for tools and resources to encourage and strengthen you in your journey of wellness.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

All of us deal with the big questions in life that give us a foundation to build on. This assessment is a tool for you to reflect on how you are doing in the spiritual aspects of your life.

Read each statement carefully and respond using the following scale:

1 – Almost always 2 – Sometimes 3 – Very seldom or never

- I describe myself as spiritual or religious.
- I engage in thinking about the ultimate questions of life, such as “Who am I?” or “What is my purpose?”
- When I feel lost, my spiritual beliefs and values give me direction.
- I feel like I have a purpose in life.
- Life is meaningful for me.
- I can speak comfortably about my personal values and beliefs.
- I am consistently striving to grow spiritually/religiously.
- I like to learn about others’ beliefs and values.
- I have a strong sense of hope.
- I use my thoughts and attitudes in life-affirming ways.
- I have a clear sense of being connected to a higher power.
- There is a relationship between my values and my daily actions.

This assessment is an exercise for your own reflection. Continue to wonder, celebrate or be curious about your responses.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH IN LOUISVILLE



All Peoples — A Unitarian Universalist Congregation
4936 Brownsboro Road
Louisville, KY 40222
(502) 425-6943
AllPeoplesUU.com

Central Presbyterian Church
318 W. Kentucky St.
Louisville, KY 40203
(502) 587-6935
CentralChurchKY.org

Crescent Hill Baptist Church
2800 Frankfort Ave.
Louisville, KY 40206
(502) 896-4425
CHBCKY.org

Douglass Boulevard Christian Church
2005 Douglass Blvd.
Louisville, KY 40205
(502) 452-2629
DouglassBlvdCC.com

Faith Community Church United Church of Christ
14001 Shelbyville Road
Louisville, KY 40245
(502) 244-2704
UCC.org/Church/Faith-Community-Church-UCC

First Lutheran Church
417 E. Broadway
Louisville, KY 40202
(502) 584-4926
TheWelcomePlace.com

Grace Immanuel United Church of Christ
1612 Story Ave.
Louisville, KY 40206
(502) 587-6190
GraceImmanuelUCC.org

Highland Baptist Church
1101 Cherokee Road
Louisville, KY 40204
(502) 451-3735
HBCLouisville.org

Highland Presbyterian Church
1011 Cherokee Road
Louisville, KY 40204
(502) 451-2910
HPCLouisville.org

Metropolitan Community Church of Louisville
(502) 587-6225
(Meets at Saint Andrew United Church of Christ)
LouisvilleMCC.org

Saint Andrew United Church of Christ
2608 Browns Lane
Louisville, KY 40220
(502) 452-1777
SaintAndrewUCC.org

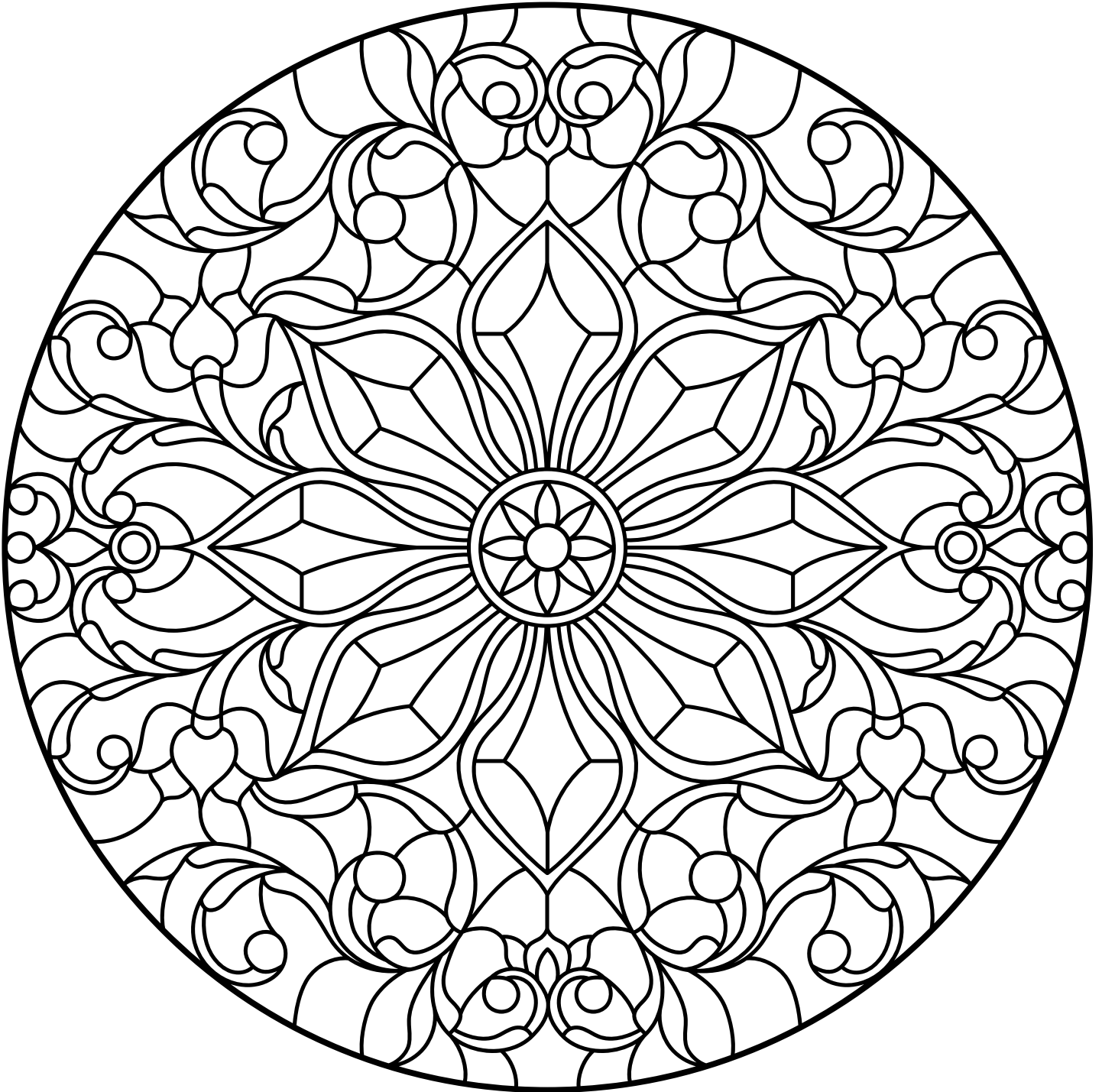
Springdale Presbyterian Church
7812 Brownsboro Road
Louisville, KY 40241
(502) 425-1760
SpringdaleChurch.org

The Temple — Congregation Adath Israel
Brith Shalom
5101 U.S. Highway 42
Louisville, KY 40241
(502) 423-1818
TheTempleLouKY.org

UofL Interfaith Center
2201 S. First St. Walk
Louisville, KY 40208
(502) 852-6598

COLOR YOUR STRESS AWAY

Complete the coloring activity below. Simple acts such as coloring can help set the mind at ease in a way that is similar to meditation.



CONTROL EXERCISE

Experiencing some degree of stress is an inevitable part of life. Still, too much stress can be detrimental to your spiritual health, along with other aspects of wellness. This exercise is designed to help you differentiate between the things you can control and those you cannot control. Stress over things that are out of your control can be unhealthy.

Add your notes to the template below and then reflect on how you can direct your focus to relieve stress.



USING A LABYRINTH FOR INNER RENEWAL

Labyrinths, in various designs, date back many thousands of years. They recently have been rediscovered and used to create a peaceful and meditative experience.

While it might look like a maze, it is not. A maze has many paths, dead ends and wrong turns. With a labyrinth, there is only one path, with no wrong turns, no dead ends. You simply follow the path to the center and return the same way.

The path is narrow enough that you need to focus, but because you don't have to think about which way to turn, your mind is free to relax and become clear. The labyrinth brings forth an opportunity for prayer, clarity, stress reduction and meditation.

Norton Healthcare has an indoor walkable labyrinth that is surrounded by beautiful stained-glass art. It is located on our downtown campus:

Norton Cancer Institute – Downtown
Meditation Room, first floor
676 S. Floyd St.
Louisville, KY 40202
Open Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Other labyrinths are available near downtown Louisville:

First Unitarian Church
809 S. Fourth St.
Louisville, KY 40203
(502) 585-5110
It is located in an enclosed space.
Call for availability.

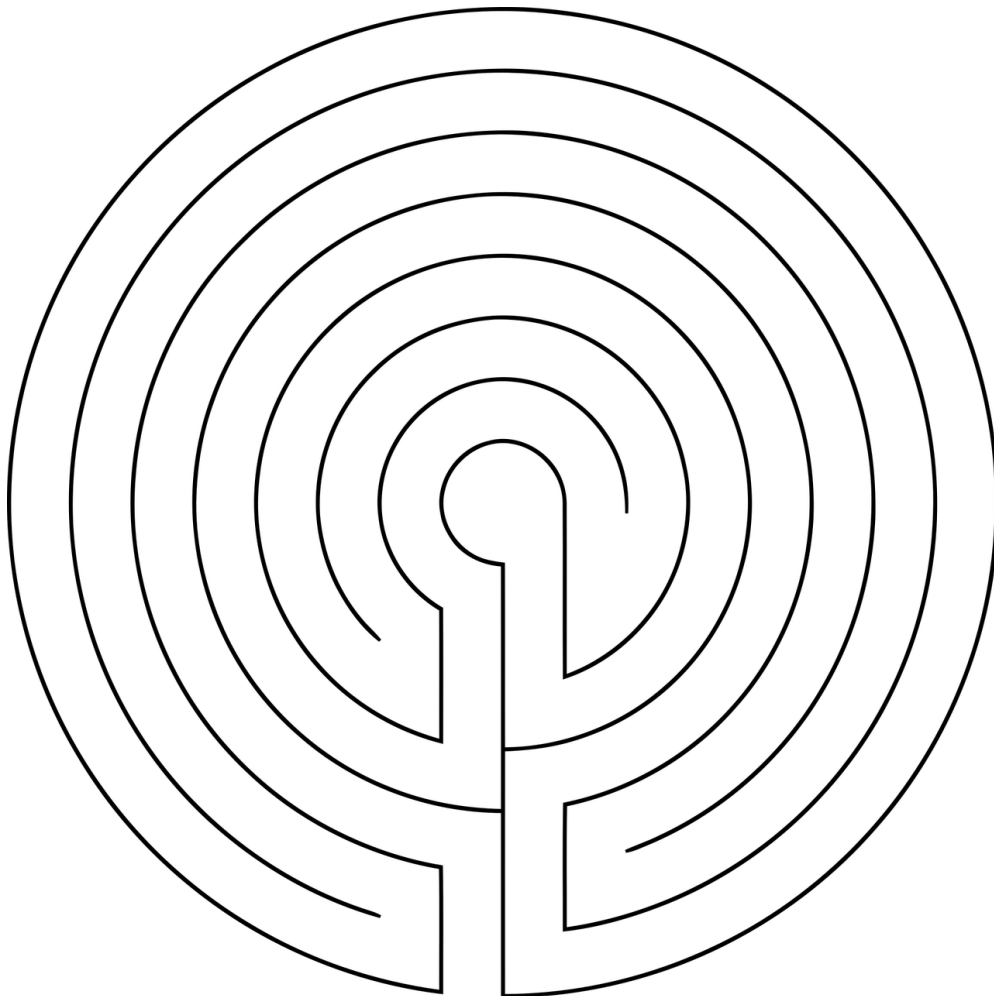
Louisville Seminary
1044 Alta Vista Road
Louisville, KY 40205
This outdoor labyrinth is always open. It is located just inside the main gate.

YOUR LABYRINTH JOURNEY

A few things to keep in mind when walking a labyrinth:

- Follow your own pace and listen to what your body wants to do.
- Use the “three R’s” if you are feeling burdened or stressed as you come to the labyrinth: **Release** the problem as you go in, **receive** what you need in the center and **return** to the world less stressed.
- The labyrinth is a metaphor of life, with its twists and turns. What about your “walk” is like your life? What can you learn?

The labyrinth below can be “walked” with a stylus, pen or even your finger.



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GRATITUDE EXERCISE



Write down three things you love about yourself and why.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STOP SIGN MINDFULNESS EXERCISE



Here's a short practice you can weave into your day when you feel overwhelmed. It can take less than a minute and is known to reduce stress!

Stop what you're doing.

Take a breath.

Observe your choices, body and emotions.

Proceed.

JOURNALING

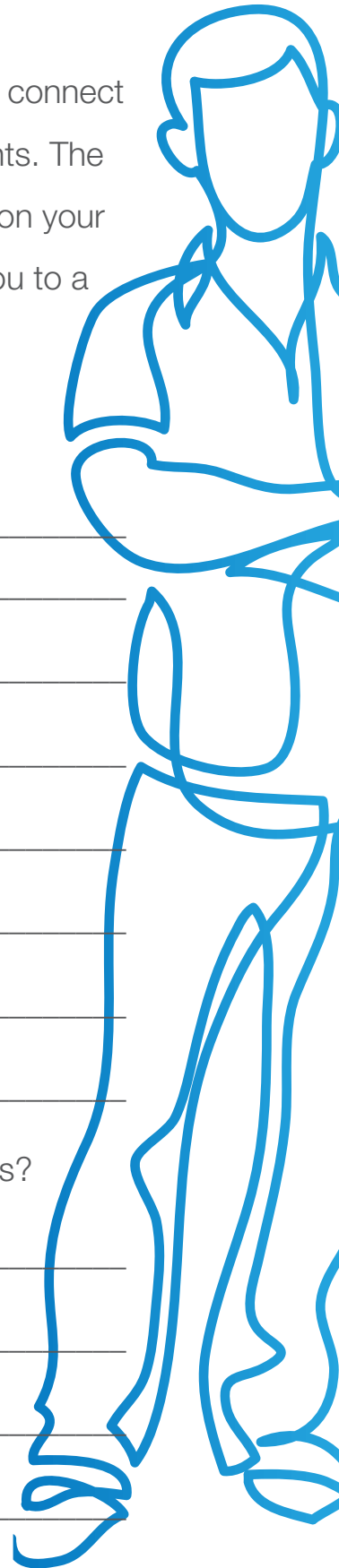
Journaling can be a meaningful spiritual practice, allowing you to connect with your deeper self through prompts or just writing your thoughts. The next few pages contain prompts for journaling. Feel free to write on your own or contemplate the prompts and let your discoveries lead you to a deeper understanding of yourself and what is important.

Journal prompts with a focus on self-discovery

What do I really love about my life? _____

When am I the happiest? _____

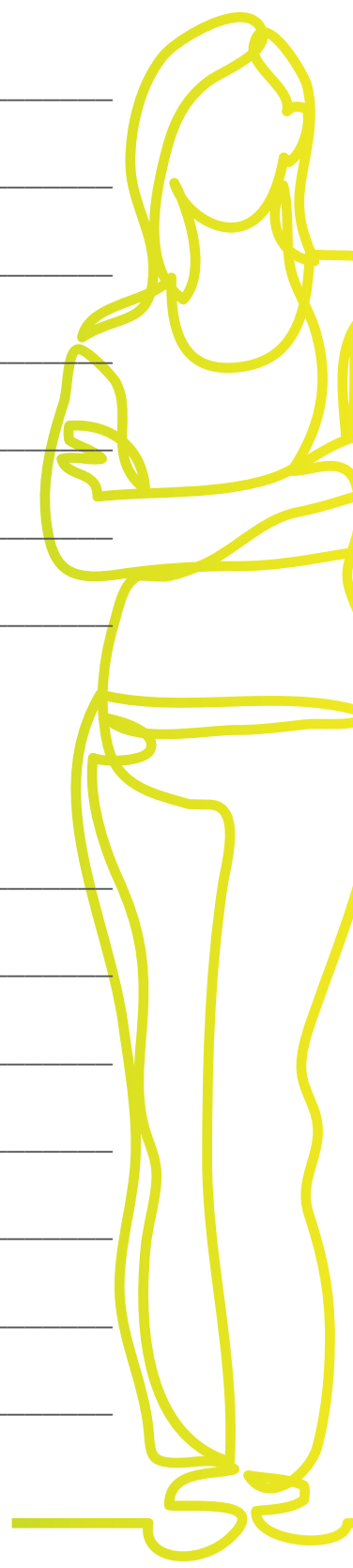
How do I prioritize my wellness in times of high volume and stress?



Journal prompts with a focus on self-care

What soothes and calms me?

When do I feel the most at peace?

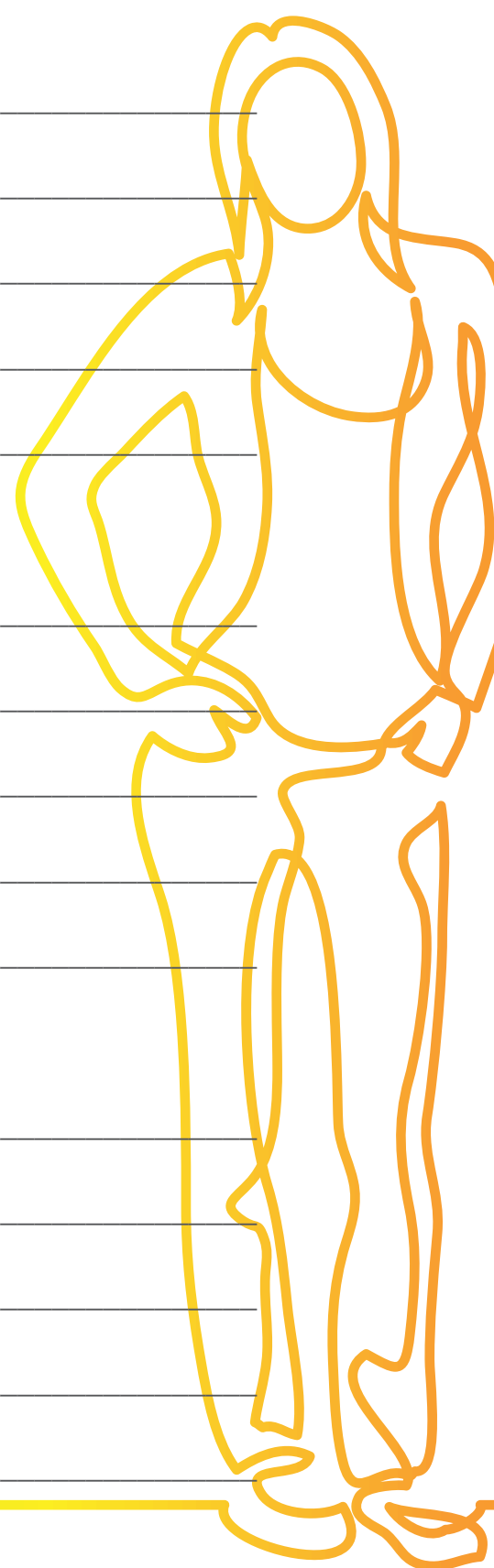


Journal prompts for a daily check-in

How am I feeling today?

How would I like to feel today?

What can I do to get to the feeling I want for today?



CONCLUSION

If nothing else, remember: You are seen, you are heard, and the hard work and sacrifices you are making during your life are highly valued.

We ARE in this together.

Gratefully and sincerely,

Your friends at Norton Healthcare

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