

Mental Health Resource Guide

Here
| with
Kristin



Hi, I'm Kristin.

Talking about mental health is truly my passion. It's woven into the fabric of who I am! My journey towards healing from anxiety, depression, CPTSD, codependency, and anxious attachment began over 10 years ago following a divorce. It took leaving a challenging marriage for me to realize I'd endured emotional abuse for most of my life. When I left my marriage, I felt like I had avoided the worst parts of abuse.



The walls I put up to protect myself made me feel tough and invincible, as if I hadn't been hurt at all. But soon I realized these walls were blocking me from forming healthy relationships. I had to learn how to put down the defense mechanisms and coping strategies that were no longer serving me and find new ways to deal with my emotions, and let vulnerability open the door to more joy and closeness.

I have been able to process most of my trauma and now lead a resilient, healthy, and joyful life. I'm truly happier now more than ever and continue to get more out of life.

While I've worked with a few therapists over the years, the most significant changes in my life came from practices I undertook on my own. With over 25 years of experience as a professional nurse and nurse educator, I've developed the skills to effectively share my knowledge with you. My aim is to share what I've learned with you, so you too can experience less suffering.

I hope that by sharing my experiences and insights, you'll find moments of happiness and hope in your own journey. Remember that healing is a unique and personal process, and it's okay to take it one step at a time. I'm wishing you all the best as you continue to explore, grow, and find joy in your life.

Kristin

Health Insurance Advice:

How to get the most out of your insurance.

Find out your coverage: The easiest way to know your coverage is to call the number on the back of your insurance, Medicare or Medicaid card and ask a customer service representative. Ask if therapy is covered under your plan.

Find a provider that your insurance will cover: Again, call the number on the back of your card and ask for a list of therapists in your area. They can typically either text or email you a list.

Case Management Services: Some insurance companies will provide a case manager or care advocate for their members.

Can I get penalized or have higher insurance premiums if I access mental health care?

Due to the Affordable Health Care Act and other protections, insurers cannot increase premiums or deny coverage for mental health treatment.

However, if someone applies for life, disability, or long-term care insurance, their mental health history could be considered in underwriting decisions, potentially affecting premiums or eligibility.



Free or Low-cost Therapy



EAP: Employee Assistance Programs:

If you are employed, reach out to your Human Resources department to find out if you have access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). Often an EAP program will provide several free therapy sessions with a new mental health issue.

College/school counseling offices:

Many colleges offer counseling services that utilize graduate students in training, which helps reduce costs for both the institution and the students seeking help.

These counseling centers provide an excellent opportunity for graduate students to gain practical experience under the supervision of licensed professionals. The services offered are often free or provided at a lower cost compared to private therapy, making mental health support more accessible to the student body. This approach ensures that students can receive the care they need while also contributing to the educational development of future mental health professionals.

Online therapy: Research has found no significant difference between online therapy and in person therapy. [Is Online Therapy a Promising Option? | Psychology Today](#). Linked here is an article that reviews several of the top online therapy options with pros and cons for each: [Online Therapy Sites Reviews - Full List For 2025](#)

Group Therapy: Group therapy is another option to get more affordable therapy. They cost significantly less than one-on-one treatment and provide an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others in your group. Here is an article comparing some of the best options: [10 Best Online Group Therapy Platforms of 2025](#)

The Foundations of Mental Health: Sleep, Nutrition, and Movement

I have learned over the years that taking care of my body must be the base priority to ward off anxiety or depression. It is even more important during times of healing from past trauma.

The foundations of mental health are rooted in the principles of healthy sleep, balanced nutrition, and regular physical activity. Each of these components is vital in maintaining and promoting overall mental wellness.

Sleep

Sleep is extremely important for mental health. The National Institute of Mental Health says that not getting enough sleep can negatively impact your mood, thinking, and emotions. If you don't get enough sleep for a long time, it can lead to issues like depression, anxiety, and even psychosis.



To get good sleep, it's a good idea to keep a consistent sleep schedule and make your sleeping environment cozy to protect your mental well-being.

Studies have shown that aiming for about 8 hours of sleep each night is great for your mental health. The National Sleep Foundation found that people who get this amount of sleep tend to think better, feel happier, and handle their emotions more easily compared to those who sleep less. Getting enough sleep helps your brain sort out memories, fix neural connections, and balance chemicals that deal with stress and happiness.

Tips for Getting Good Sleep

Maintaining healthy sleep habits is crucial for mental health. Here are some tips to help ensure a restful night:

- Establish a routine: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps regulate your body's internal clock.

- Create a relaxing bedtime ritual: Engage in calming activities before bed, such as reading, listening to soothing music, or practicing gentle stretching or yoga.
- Limit exposure to screens: Avoid electronics like phones, computers, and TVs at least an hour before bedtime. The blue light emitted by these devices can interfere with your ability to fall asleep.
- Keep your sleeping environment comfortable: Ensure your bedroom is dark, quiet, and cool. Consider using blackout curtains, earplugs, or a white noise machine if necessary.
- Watch your diet: Avoid large meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime. These can disrupt your sleep cycle.
- Stay active: Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep. However, avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
- Manage stress: Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or progressive muscle relaxation to calm your mind before bed.

[Achieving Your Goals with Positive Sleep Health - National Sleep Foundation](#)

Nutrition



Nutrition plays a huge role in how we feel mentally. Studies show that nutrient-rich foods like fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean proteins are great for supporting brain function. Omega-3 fatty acids, which you can find in fish and flaxseeds, help reduce symptoms of depression and boost cognitive function. [Omega-3 fatty acids for mood disorders - Harvard Health](#)

Eating healthy doesn't have to be expensive. With a bit of planning, you can make smart choices while sticking to a budget. Whole, unprocessed foods are generally cheaper and better for you. Buying in bulk, especially things like grains, beans, and frozen veggies, can save money. Seasonal produce is usually a good deal and tastes better too. Plan meals around sales and discounts. Making larger batches of food and using leftovers can cut

down on waste and ensure you've got healthy options ready to go. Focusing on affordable, nutrient-rich foods helps you stay healthy without overspending.

Superfoods for Brain Function

Certain superfoods have been proven to enhance brain function and support mental health:

- Blueberries: Rich in antioxidants that protect the brain from oxidative stress and improve memory.
- Leafy greens like spinach and kale: Contain high levels of vitamins and minerals, including folate, which is essential for cognitive health.
- Nuts and seeds particularly walnuts and flaxseeds: Excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids that support brain structure and function.
- Avocados: Provide healthy fats that contribute to brain health and improve blood flow.
- Turmeric (with its active compound curcumin): Has anti-inflammatory properties that benefit brain health and may help reduce symptoms of depression.
- Dark chocolate: Contains flavonoids that enhance cognitive function and stimulate the production of endorphins.

Incorporating these superfoods into your diet can provide a natural boost to brain function and overall mental well-being.

[Foods linked to better brainpower - Harvard Health](#)

Movement

Regular physical activity is key to good mental health. Exercise boosts mood and reduces stress by releasing endorphins, the feel-good chemicals in the brain. Plus, it helps you sleep better, increases your energy, and promotes relaxation. Walking, yoga, and strength training are great options to help manage anxiety and depression.



If you have movement limitations, don't worry. Chair yoga, stretching, and resistance exercises can be tailored to fit your needs. Practices like deep breathing can move energy within the body and provide a workout. Focusing on what you can do and fitting these activities into your daily routine can help you feel empowered and boost your overall mental health. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/physical-activity-helps-reduce-depression-symptoms>



Singing:

Singing can do wonders to lift your mood and ease anxiety. Here are some ways it helps:

- **Happy Chemicals:** Singing releases feel-good chemicals like endorphins and oxytocin. These chemicals help reduce stress and anxiety, and oxytocin also helps you feel more connected and less lonely.
- **Mindfulness:** When you sing, you need to focus on the moment, which can distract you from stressful thoughts and help you relax.
- **Social Benefits:** Singing in a group can make you feel part of a community, which is great for combating loneliness and boosting your mood.
- **Physical Perks:** Singing lowers stress hormones and can improve your overall mood.

So, give singing a try, it might be just what you need to feel better!

[How Music Bonds Us Together | Greater Good](#)

Adding good sleep habits, eating well, and keeping active regularly can really help boost your mental health. These healthy habits not only make you more mentally strong but also improve your overall quality of life.

Journaling:

Journaling offers numerous benefits for mental health. It provides a safe space to express thoughts and emotions, helping to reduce stress and anxiety. By writing down your feelings, you can gain clarity and perspective on your experiences, which can lead to better problem-solving and decision-making.



Journaling also promotes self-reflection and self-awareness, allowing you to identify patterns in your thoughts and behaviors. This can be particularly helpful in managing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Additionally, the act of writing can be therapeutic, offering a sense of release and relief. Overall, journaling is a powerful tool for enhancing emotional well-being and fostering personal growth.

[Thriving Together Series: The Mental Health Benefits of Journaling - Center for the Advancement of Well-Being](#)

Journaling can be as simple as writing down thoughts as they come into your mind. It doesn't have to be clean, neat or organized.

Journaling prompts to get you started:

- Daily reflection: What are three things that went well today? How did they make you feel?
- Gratitude: List five things you are grateful for today and explain why.
- Emotional check-In: How are you feeling right now? What emotions are you experiencing, and why?
- Somatic check-in: Scan your body and write down what physical sensations you notice. Look for tension, relaxation, temperature differences, etc. Reflect on your emotions connected to these feelings.
- Self-Compassion: Write a letter to yourself offering kindness and understanding about a recent mistake or difficult situation.

- Kind thoughts: identify kind thoughts for yourself to set an intention for how you want to treat yourself. Examples include I am worthy of love and respect. I deserve hope and peace. I am enough, just as I am.
- Personal growth: Reflect on a recent experience that taught you something valuable. What did you learn, and how can you apply it in the future?

Books

I'm sharing the titles of some of the books that have had a major impact on my life. Each of these centers on a different area of my mental illness.

Books are a great way to get insightful information from psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists without an appointment. It is also a good way to dive deep into a particular issue or pain point.

Links to Online Bookstores:

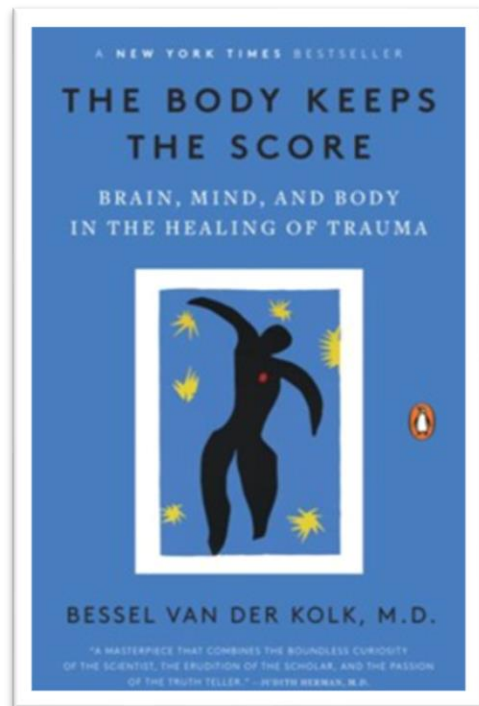
Here are links to ethical online bookstores where you can find new and used books.

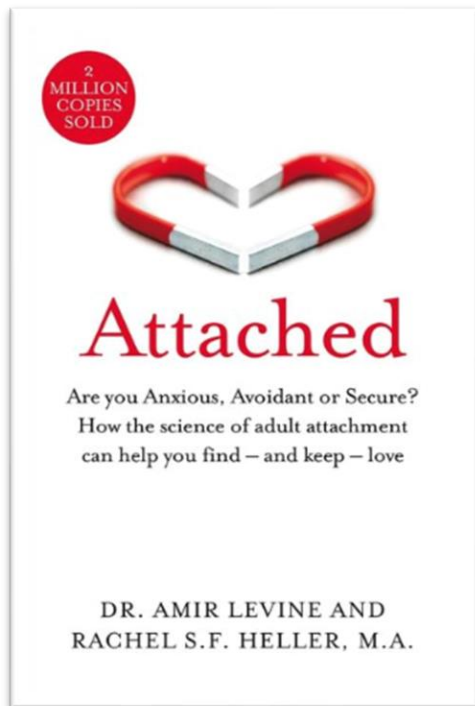
- [New & Used Books | Buy Cheap Books Online at ThriftBooks](#)
- [Buy New & Used Books Online | Better World Books](#)

Books that I have Read and Recommend

The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk (PTSD). *The Body Keeps the Score* explains how trauma affects both the mind and body. Traumatic experiences can disconnect the mind from the body. The book shows how traumatic experiences can lead to lasting mental and physical health problems.

It discusses new methods for healing, based on brain science and psychology, and highlights the need to use these advances in trauma treatment. This book gave me new ideas of how to process the emotions and energy in my body tied to my PTSD, and It gave me some focus to know what to do about it.





Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How it can Help by Amir Levine, Rachel S.F. Heller. (Attachment Styles)

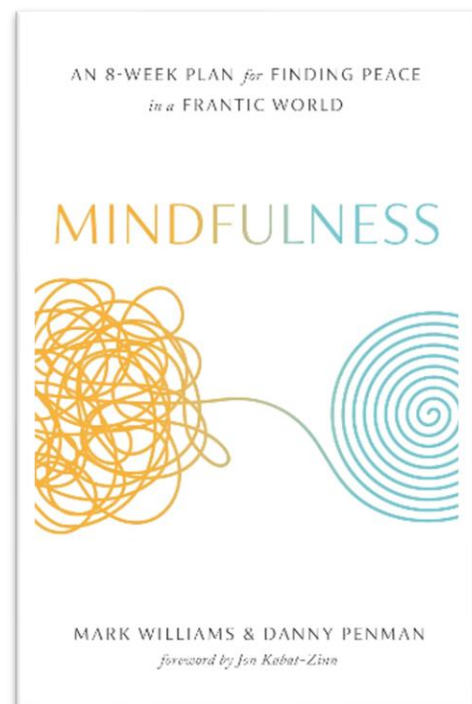
Attached is a book that explores the science of attachment theory and its impact on relationships and personal happiness. The book introduces three attachment styles: anxious, avoidant and secure, and provides advice for understanding and maintaining healthy relationships.

Reading this book gave me an understanding of my anxious attachment style. It helped me better understand my motives and why I was behaving the way I was in relationships. Understanding my relationship patterns empowered me to change the behaviors that weren't serving me.

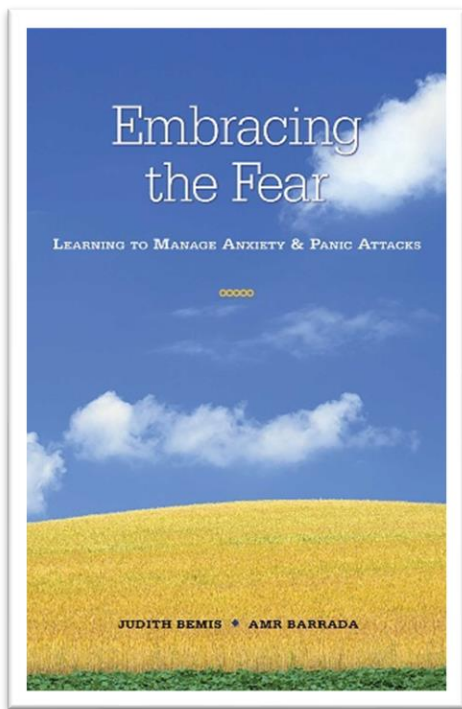
Mindfulness by Mark Williams and Danny Penman (Good for Everything)

Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World by Mark Williams and Danny Penman (Mindfulness) offers a practical guide to incorporate mindfulness into daily life. The book is structured as an eight-week program and provides scientific insights and exercises designed to help readers manage stress, anxiety, and depression.

Williams and Penman explain the concept of mindfulness, emphasizing its benefits for mental well-being and overall health. Through simple practices such as meditation, breathing exercises, and mindful movement, readers can cultivate a greater sense of presence and tranquility. This book



is valuable for anyone seeking to enhance their emotional resilience and live a more balanced, peaceful life.



***Embracing the Fear by Judith Bemis and Amr Barrada
(Anxiety and Panic Attacks)***

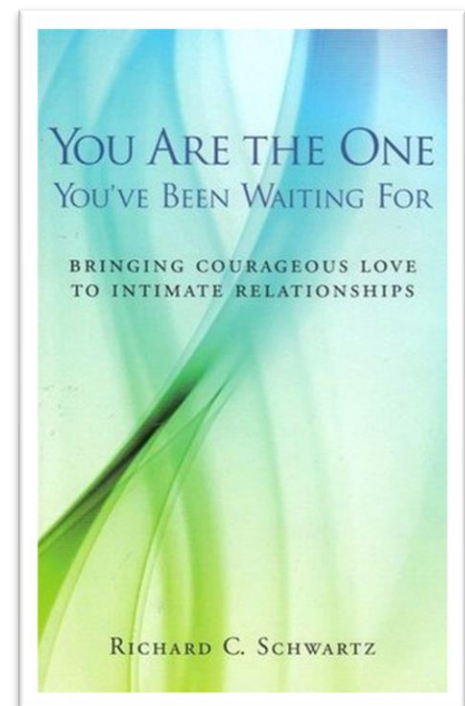
Embracing the Fear is a great read about dealing with anxiety and panic attacks. The book talks about where these issues come from and how they show up in our lives, giving readers both an understanding and practical advice on handling them.

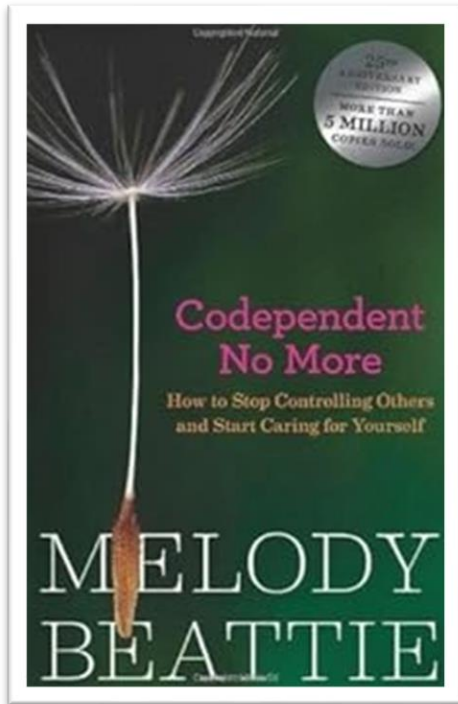
Bemis and Barrada share useful techniques for facing and overcoming fear, highlighting the importance of accepting and being kind to ourselves during the healing process. With personal stories and expert tips, this book is a helpful guide for anyone looking to take control of their anxiety.

***You Are the One You've Been Waiting for by Richard Schwartz
(Internal Family Systems: Parts Work)***

You Are the One You've Been Waiting For by Richard Schwartz dives into the concept of Internal Family Systems (IFS), which is all about understanding and healing different parts of yourself. Schwartz explains how we all have different "parts" inside us, like the Inner Critic or the Vulnerable Child, and how these parts can sometimes clash or cause us pain.

The book offers practical advice on how to communicate with these parts and integrate them harmoniously. Schwartz emphasizes self-compassion and understanding as key elements in this healing process. It's a great read for anyone looking to explore their inner world and improve their emotional well-being.





Codependent no more: Melody Beattie ***(Codependence)***

Codependent No More by Melody Beattie is a must-read if you're looking to understand and break free from codependency. Beattie lays out how people get stuck in relying too much on others for their happiness and self-worth, which can lead to some unhealthy relationship habits.

Through real-life stories, helpful exercises, and kind advice, she guides readers to spot the signs of codependency and start making changes. This book is great for anyone who wants to feel more independent and have healthier relationships.

Community:

Connecting with people who share similar experiences is incredibly valuable for healing your mental health issues. This is one of the reasons I'm sharing my stories on YouTube. I want people to know they aren't alone in their suffering. Community helps individuals feel understood and less alone, providing a sense of belonging that can be deeply therapeutic. Sharing stories and coping strategies with peers can foster mutual support and inspire hope. For those who feel isolated, joining a support group or online community is an excellent alternative. It offers a safe space to express emotions, gain encouragement, and build relationships, all of which are essential for recovery and well-being.

NAMI:

NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Click here: [About NAMI | NAMI](#) NAMI

Go to the bottom of the home page, find this box, and click the dropdown box to find your state. There are support groups in most states in the US.



Anxiety and Depression Association of America:

Click Here: [ADAA Online Support Group | Anxiety and Depression Association of America, ADAA](#)

ADAA has created free online peer-to-peer communities for people suffering from mental health disorders to be able to find support, share their stories and connect with others who have had similar experiences. These communities are free, friendly, safe and supportive places for individuals and their families to share information and experiences. As a member you can connect with other people experiencing anxiety and depression-related disorders.

HeyPeers

HeyPeers provides a platform where multiple organizations offer a wide range of support groups. Many groups are offered free by non-profits. There are also free peer chat rooms led by trained peer supporters to talk with other people with similar experiences.

Click Here: [Online Support Groups | HeyPeers](#)

Videos

Watching videos on YouTube about mental health topics can be incredibly valuable. It's a relaxed way to gain insights, hear stories from others who are on similar journeys, and learn practical tips for managing various aspects of mental well-being. Whether you're exploring mindfulness techniques, understanding anxiety better, or discovering new coping strategies, these videos provide accessible and relatable content that can make a real difference in your daily life.

Here are a couple of my favorite channels to check out. Both channels deal with a wide variety of mental health issues.:

Therapy in a Nutshell: [Therapy in a Nutshell](#)



The Holistic Psychologist: [The Holistic Psychologist](#)



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a great way to start healing from mental health issues. It's all about paying attention to what's happening right now without judging. This can really help with stress, anxiety, and depression by breaking the habit of worrying about the future or dwelling on the past.



One of the best things about mindfulness is how it helps you connect better with yourself. When you practice regularly, you get to know your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, which helps you handle distress with more calmness and clarity. Plus, research shows it can change your brain to improve emotional regulation, boost self-awareness, and foster a sense of peace.

[Mindfulness for Your Health | NIH News in Health](#)

Mindfulness Activities:

Mindfulness activities like meditation, breathing exercises, and mindful movement can be easy to fit into your daily routine. They help you adopt a more compassionate and

accepting mindset, which is key for healing. When you start observing your experiences without harsh judgment, you build a kinder and more supportive relationship with yourself. You can find content about any of the mindfulness activities listed here. Type the terms listed below in the search field and start exploring and experimenting to find what works for you.

Meditation Options to Try:

- Guided Meditations: Headspace or Calm apps offer guided sessions.
- Silent Meditation: Sit quietly for 10-20 minutes, focusing on your breath.
- Body Scan Meditation: Progressively focus on different parts of your body to relax.

Breathing Exercises to Try:

- Deep Breathing: Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a few seconds, then exhale slowly.
- Box Breathing: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and relax different muscle groups while focusing on your breathing.

Mindful Movement Options:

- Yoga: Practice poses and breathing to enhance body awareness and relaxation.
- Walking Meditation: Walk slowly and focus on the sensations in your feet and surroundings.
- Tai Chi: Engage in slow, flowing movements that promote balance and mental calm.

In a nutshell, mindfulness is empowering. It helps you take control of your mental well-being, building resilience and promoting a balanced, calm state of mind. Whether you do it through structured sessions or just mindful moments throughout your day, it's key to healing from mental health issues.

Podcasts:

Podcasts are a fantastic way to delve into the world of mental health. They offer accessible and relatable content that can be listened to anytime, anywhere. Whether featuring expert interviews, personal stories, or practical advice, podcasts can enlighten listeners on various mental health topics. It's like having a supportive friend in your ear, providing insights and strategies to enhance your well-being. Podcasts have truly changed my life for the better. Here are a couple of my favorites:



04/03/2024 · S2, E296 · 48 MIN

Abby & Amanda's IFS Therapy Sessions with Richard Schwartz: Why We Do What We Don't Want to Do
[We Can Do Hard Things](#)

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[Abby & Amanda's IFS Therapy Se... - We Can Do Hard Things - Apple Podcasts](#)



12/10/2019 · S1, E91 · 50 MIN

How Did You Create The Internal Family Systems Model And How Does It Work? with Dr. Richard Schwartz
[Getting Better with Jonathan Van Ness](#)

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[How Did You Create The Interna... - Getting Better with Jonathan Van Ness - Apple Podcasts](#)

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Even trying one or two of the things on the list has great potential to improve your life. I wish you all the best on your journey towards wellness and resilience. Remember, every mindful moment counts, and each step you take brings you closer to a balanced, calm state of mind. Take care and be well!

Kristin