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Introduction to T-MAPs

Transformative Mutual Aid Practices (T-MAPs) are a set of tools that provide space for building a personal “map” of wellness strategies, resilience practices, unique stories, and community resources.

T-MAPs offers the opportunity to connect with yourself and others in tangible ways that contribute to personal and community healing. You can complete a personalized booklet (or “T-MAP”) by yourself or with a group. Your T-MAP becomes a guide for navigating challenging times, returning to what you care about, and communicating with the important people in your life. Some of these questions relate to general wellness strategies and life challenges, and some are aimed specifically at navigating the experiences of emotional distress that get labeled as “mental illness” or crisis. Feel free to answer ones that are relevant to you and skip ones that are outside your experience.

T-MAPs are drawn from our collective wisdom. These tools take into account our social, economic, and political context, and create space for thinking through how our histories and backgrounds shape who we are now. As our political climate becomes more heartless and unstable, we feel the need to weave our own safety nets. T-MAPs can be nourishing to everyone from grassroots social justice activists to woke health care practitioners and Peer Specialists working on the front lines of the mental health system.

Why make a T-MAP?

Writing down stories about our lives helps us understand who we are, how we got here, and how we relate to the world around us. Wellness strategies are things like eating enough food every day and talking to our support people, which help us stay on our path. Resilience practices are things that bring us a feeling of being whole and alive - spending time in nature, singing, hanging out with people we care about - which help us stay grounded. Resources can be things in our local community - like friendly gathering spaces and places where we can watch the stars at night - or our favorite

media, like helpful books and podcasts, or international resources like Madness Radio and The Hearing Voices Network. Articulating these things gives us a resource we can share with the people in our lives to guide our conversations and help us support each other through rough times.

The History of this Tool

T-MAPs was originally born in the early years of The Icarus Project (TIP), a community of people working at the intersection of mental health and social justice. Over the years, TIP has created peer-based mental health support groups, alternative publications and educational resources, and new language outside the conventional “mental illness” paradigm. One tool developed by TIP, which has partly inspired T-MAPs, is called Mad Maps. Mad Maps began as creative and supportive conversations on the Icarus website about strategies for friends and strangers to communicate about how to take better care of each other. Mad Maps has evolved into a set of guides on different topics like intergenerational trauma and madness and oppression.

We have had many other influences in developing T-MAPs, including organizations like Intentional Peer Support and the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community, as well as specific tools like Mary Ellen Copeland’s Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). Some of the ideas around practice and transformation are inspired by the organization generative somatics. While T-MAPs was initially inspired by advanced directives and related recovery tools for planning mental health treatment options in times of crisis, we have turned it into a group practice of mutual aid, imagination, and prefigurative cultural change.

The T-MAPs Name

The acronym T-MAPs stands for Transformative Mutual Aid Practices.

Transformation

We understand that we’re always in a process of **transformation** and growth; we’re not just in a process of “recovery” or going back to some state of health (that we may have never known). As our lives change, it’s helpful to leave tracks for ourselves about where we’ve been and where we want to be going; T-MAPs helps facilitate this process.

Mutual Aid

We also understand that just working on our own “self-care” isn’t enough; we also need **mutual aid**. Most simply, mutual aid is when people help each other. Historically, mutual aid has been a way that people have self organized to create interdependent networks of support. People might help each other with things as basic as growing food and building barns or as abstract as education and mental health support.

Practice

When we think about how personal and community change happens, it’s pretty clear to us that the only way to grow and evolve is to intentionally practice what we want to see happen in our lives. **Practice** might be as simple as not getting on our phone as soon as we wake up in the morning or as intentional and deliberate as a daily sitting meditation practice.

Map-Making Instructions

What do we mean by creating a personal map of stories, wellness strategies, and resources? Just as maps help us find our way when we are lost, this tool-kit is meant to help us navigate our way when we need guidance. Writing down stories about our lives helps us understand who we are and how we got here. Wellness strategies are things like eating enough food every day and talking to our support people, which help us stay on our path. Resilience practices are things that bring us a feeling of being whole and alive - spending time in nature, singing, hanging out with people we care about - which help us stay grounded. Resources can be things in our local community - like friendly gathering spaces and places where we can watch the stars at night - or our favorite media, like helpful books and podcasts, or national resources like The Icarus Project and The Hearing Voices Network.

Grounding

Before you start working on creating your T-MAP, take a few minutes to ground yourself - the more centered you are, the better time you’ll have with this process. If you don’t have a grounding practice already, try feeling your feet on the ground and taking five deep breaths. The T-MAPs workbook is designed to begin with questions that explore who you are and what you care about, and as they go on become more

challenging, digging into what it's like when you're struggling. Eventually, you'll want to answer the following questions thoroughly, but you may start out with notes and evolve your answers over time. **This is a living document. You don't need to do it all at once**, and it can be really helpful to talk over these questions with other people. If they get too challenging, take a break and come back to it. Remember that you are creating a map for you and other people to be able to follow - it's worth taking the time to find the right language that will make sense to you, and that you will be able to share with others.



The purpose of this first section is to help ground us in our strength and resilience before we undertake the T-MAPs process. We want to reframe the conversation so that it's not starting from the premise that we are sick and need fixing; instead, we are reminded of what we are like when we're thriving -- how it feels and how we relate to the world around us. Taking the time to think about these things is generative: this is less a form to fill out where we already know the answers and more a starting point to prompt our imaginations.

How do I feel when I'm most alive?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- I want to look people in the eyes.*
- I feel capable - I can manage my day to day activities.*
- I feel hopeful and excited about the future.*
- I feel like there is a place for me in the world, that I actually belong here.*
- I feel connected to something much larger than myself: history, land, community, spirit.*
- I feel strong in my body*

Describe your experience:

What am I like when I am doing well?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- My Head is Clear – no nagging negative thoughts, not foggy, not agitated*
- Present - Taking pleasure in the simple act of breathing/feeling my feet on the ground.*
- Well Rested – comfortable in my body*
- Social - I want to be around friends and family*
- Organized - I keep it together and get things done*
- Creative - I have new ideas, work on projects*
- I do things I love, and don't just stay home all the time*

Add your own:

What's are the most important things in my life?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Getting along with my family*
- Being able to pay my rent*
- Feeling safe and that the people I care about are safe*
- Maintaining my connection to my imagination*
- Working on projects with other people that can change the world*
- Romantic relationships, dating, or friendships*
- Learning and growing*
- Doing well in areas I care about, like school, activist groups, creative projects, or my workplace*
- Having mentors and being a mentor to others*
- Ability to be generous*
- Solidarity with oppressed people everywhere*

Add your own:

What are some of my strengths?

- I'm a survivor*
- I'm real*
- I'm honest*
- I am good at telling stories*
- I have a big heart*
- I care about the other people in my life*
- I feel things really strong*
- I'm in touch with my emotions*
- I'm creative*
- I take good care of myself*
- I fight for what I believe is right*
- I don't give up*
- I'm kind*
- I take good care of children and animals*
- I know how to ask for help when I need it*
- I'm a strong leader*

Add your own

What's are the values and principles that guide me?

- I'm outraged by the mistreatment of people in the mental health system and I want justice and freedom for all of us*
- I am guided by a strong sense of love for my fellow human beings*
- I believe in taking care of the environment*
- I believe in taking really good care of myself and being an example for others*
- Above all else, compassion*
- The values espoused by my religion*
- Maintaining a connection to my dignity no matter what*
- Being loyal to my family*

- Achieving my full potential*
- Healing*
- Taking the hardships I've lived through and turning them into lessons for others*

- Creating and sharing beauty*

Describe what guides you

How do I treat myself when I'm well?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- I'm in touch with the caring and compassionate part of myself and I am kind to myself.*
- I can see my faults but not beat myself up about them*
- I don't dwell on things I've done that I regret or feel embarrassed about*
- I feed myself good food*
- I make time for doing the things that make me happy*
- I make sure I get enough sleep*
- I take the time to watch the sunset*
- I pay attention to what my body needs (hunger, exhaustion, thirst)*

Add your own:

How do I treat others when I'm well?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- I consider other people's feelings and emotions when I make decisions*
- I'm able to listen well*
- I'm kind and generous*
- I remember things like birthdays and anniversaries, and send people cards or presents*
- I hang out with people - I don't isolate*

- I stay in touch - return texts, phone calls, etc*
- I host things - have people over for dinner, etc*
- I communicate about my needs and set boundaries*

Add your own:

If I imagine that in a year my life is exactly what I want it to be, what would it look like? What would I be doing, thinking, feeling? Where would I be living? Who would I be hanging out with? How would I be spending my days?

Describe your thoughts:



This section is designed to guide us in building our wellness toolkit - to identify what practices and supports help us manage stress, avoid crisis, and stay grounded and healthy. Once we've developed these lists, it is good to return to them on a daily basis and potentially share them with others in our lives. If we notice we're slipping off track, we can return to this toolbox to help us remember how to get back on course.

What are some of the things I do regularly to take good care of myself?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Daily Journaling – Writing down dreams. Recording awake and asleep times*
- Routine – Clear and Delineated Hours For Work/Study/Play; making sure that there are activities and things I'm doing out in the community every day*
- Staying engaged -- Keeping up with hobbies like basketball or music, staying involved in work, school of volunteering*
- Food – designated time for meals or eating meals with my friends or family rather than alone in my room*
- Hours For Work/Study/Play*
- Exercise - at least 3 x week*
- Listening to Music*
- Community -- Check in at regular intervals with friends*
- Meds - if they are helpful to me, take them regularly.*
- Sleep – make a point of going to bed at a time that works for me, and prioritize getting enough sleep every night*

Add your own:

What are some new things I would like to be doing to take good care of myself that I haven't tried yet, or that I would like to be doing more regularly?

What helps me manage stress?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Taking on fewer responsibilities if I feel overwhelmed*
- Taking breaks from things (school, work, family) and going for walks*
- Asking for help*
- Spending time with my friends or other people I feel safe with*
- Focusing on good things happening in my life and resisting the temptation to dwell on difficult things that have happened*

Add your own:

What is some of my favorite music?



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

What are my favorite movies, TV shows, books, podcasts, or websites?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

How does my relationship to substances (alcohol, street drugs, or psychotropic drugs) help or harm me? When and how are they useful, and when are they not?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Taking my emergency psych drugs can reduce my symptoms quickly, but don't necessarily address the root of my problems in the long-term. And the benzos can be addictive - I have to be careful.*
- Antipsychotic drugs sometimes make the voices go away and make me feel calmer*
- Antipsychotic drugs can make me really sluggish and I start gaining weight*
- Sometimes a little pot helps with my anxiety and insomnia, but if I use it too frequently I start to feel spacey and disconnected from life*
- Alcohol can help me feel less socially anxious*
- Too much alcohol can make me more depressed*
- Drugs like speed make me get manic and paranoid - I really just need to avoid them*

Describe your own experience:

What helps if I am feeling drawn to behaviors that might be destructive (e.g. self-harm, abusing drugs or alcohol, isolating)

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Calling someone I trust or reaching out online to folks in my support network*
- Taking a hot shower to ground myself in my body*
- Watching a movie or doing something distracting until the impulse passes*
- Reaching out to my treatment providers*

Add your own:

What helps if I am approaching crisis?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Taking my emergency meds or herbs*
- Reaching out to healing practitioners I trust*

- Prioritizing sleep and stress-reduction above all else*
- Not using the computer after 9 at night*
- Have a pre-bed slowing down ritual: make sleepy tea, put on candles instead of bright lights, read something of a calming nature instead of using the computer, maybe do my centering exercises*
- Get more exercise during the day to wear me out*
- Drink more liquids and eat more healthy meals, with people if necessary*

Add your own

What are my safe places?

- My favorite park or trail*
- A respite center*
- Coffee shop*
- A local site of artistic beauty (mural, museum, or sculpture)*
- My own room*
- My grandparent's house*

Add your own:

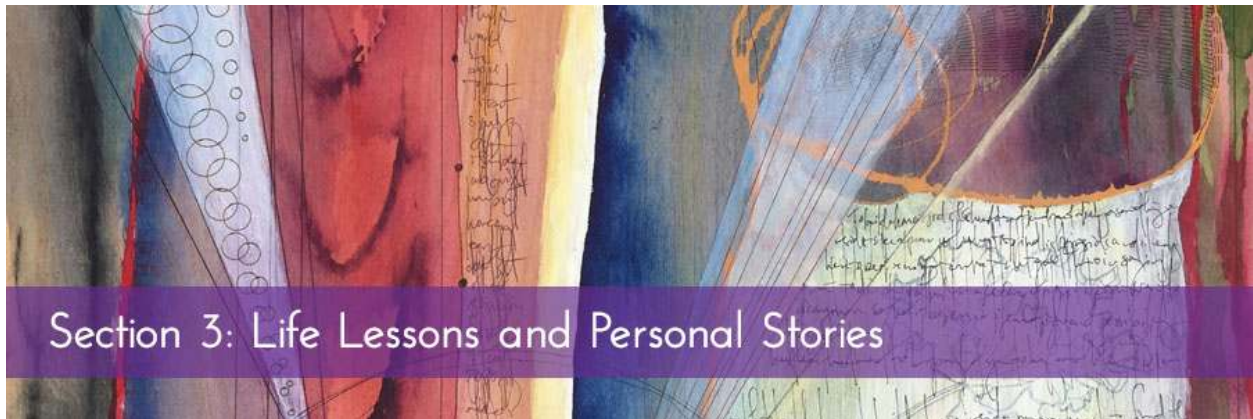
Are there practices from my culture of origin, spiritual tradition, subculture, religion, or family that help me?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Prayer*
- Meditation*
- Ritual*
- Spells and magical practices*
- Reading sacred texts from my tradition*
- Working with sacred objects, having an altar*
- Religious practices or ceremonies*
- Special foods and plants*

- Family traditions and holidays*
- Monday night football*
- Picnics and Potlucks with chosen family*
- Dancing and celebration*

Add your own:



Where we come from and how we tell stories about ourselves is so important. In this section we have a series of questions to help you think about your own personal story and find good language for it. Society has so many expectations and frameworks for understanding your life that might not fit at all, or might fit in some ways but not others. There is an incredible power in creating a personal narrative of your life that fits well for you.

This section has two parts - the first is on understanding your journey with mental health and emotional distress, and the second on social and cultural context as it informs mental health. If you don't identify as someone who's been through intense mental health struggles and and/or the diagnosis process, some of the questions in the first half might not feel like they apply - it's fine to skip them. In the second half of this section, some of these questions might be new to you - you might not have thought a lot about your cultural or class background, for example - and that's ok. Consider these questions a starting point for your explorations.

How I understand my journey with mental health

How do I talk about my own mental health struggles/diagnosis (if relevant)? What language do I use?

- I think about myself as really sensitive*
- I identify with a specific psychiatric diagnosis*
- I think of myself as a survivor*

- I think of myself as struggling with trauma*
- I think of myself as creatively maladjusted*
- I think of myself being a very spiritual person*
- I think of myself as someone struggling to be whole while living under a colonized system that doesn't work for me*
- I know that sometimes a breakdown can be a breakthrough, and that my struggles are part of my transformation*

Add your own:

If I've been through serious crisis, what were some of the early indications that I was struggling? How did it all happen?

- There has always been something different about me*
- The truth is I never really felt like I fit in*
- I stopped being able to concentrate*
- I was always like everyone else and fit in, but then it all changed*
- I couldn't handle hanging out with people anymore*
- I just wanted to get wasted all the time*
- I started having flashbacks and nightmares*
- I felt scared all the time*
- I was hearing things other people weren't*
- I started having really overwhelming panic attacks*

Describe your own:

What are some low points I have experienced or am still dealing with?

- I ended up in a psychiatric hospital*
- I ended up out on the street*
- I wanted to end my life*
- I heard/hear angry voices in my head*
- I couldn't/can't control my thoughts*
- I stopped being able to sleep at all*
- All I could do was sleep*
- I was addicted to_____*
- I lost my job*
- I lost all sense of who I was*
- My family rejected me*
- My partner broke up with me because I was too much for them to handle*

What are some barriers I have had to overcome or still need to overcome to move forward?

- Getting my GED*
- Finishing college*
- Sorting out custody issues with my kid/s*
- Having regular employment*
- Getting out of debt*
- If I've been arrested or been in jail, dealing with personal and legal consequences*
- Finding stable housing*
- Mending relationships*
- Getting sober*

If I have a diagnosis, how do I relate to it? Have I dealt with shame about my struggles and/or diagnosis? Do I accept it? Does it fit?

If I have ongoing experiences, like voices or visions, or extreme states, or unusual beliefs, how do I relate to these experiences?

Are some aspects of them positive? How so? How do I make sense of them in light of who I am and things they might be connected to what I've experienced?

What are some of the most important lessons I've learned along the way?

Understanding how my identity and cultural background affect my mental health

What are the most important aspects to me of my background or identity?

- The place where I'm from*
- Class*
- Race*

- Religion*
- Ethnicity*
- Gender*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sexual Orientation</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Where I go/went to school</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ability/Disability</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Growing up with a single parent</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Being an immigrant</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Being adopted</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Being an American</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The music I listen to</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Being diagnosed with a mental illness</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Growing up urban</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Growing up in the foster care system</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Growing up rural</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>My political affiliations</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Growing up poor</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Being part of a subculture</i> | |

Describe your experiences:

Examples:

- *I'm a mixed race woman who grew up in Queens. My dad was in prison. I was raised by a single mom with good intentions, but she was super overworked and not able to be very present. I felt like I was on my own and didn't have much support. I learned how to be really strong and self-sufficient, but there wasn't any room to have strong emotions. There was a lot of racism around me growing up.*
- *I identify as non-binary when it comes to gender, and come from a conservative, working class family. I never fit in and no one understood me. It's been hard to find work as an adult, because people don't want to hire people with weird gender presentations.*
- *I'm not really sure. I grew up as a white middle-class person and I don't have a strong feeling about my background and identity. I think about myself as pretty typical. No one's ever asked me this question before.*

How are these aspects of my identity part of my strength and resilience?

- I learned how to be self-sufficient*

- My religion gives me values and community*
- I get to be part of a really interesting subculture*
- I'm proud of the struggles my family has gone through to provide for me*
- I'm really open minded because I grew up around so many different kinds of people*
- My mental health challenges give me insight into lots of different ways people struggle*

- Identifying as a survivor makes me feel bad-ass*
- Having a big family makes me feel like I always have someone to turn to*
- Having a small family has forced me to seek out chosen family and support networks*
- My culture's music and traditions get me through hard times*
- I always know I have other people who've struggled like me to look to as examples*

Describe your experiences

Examples:

- *I was raised in a family of really strong women who knew how to get things done. I had a deep connection to my religious upbringing and it gave me a sense of ethics and values.*
- *As an adult, I've become part of queer culture and activist culture, and my community is really empowering and creative and lets me be whoever I want to be.*
- *I am proud of my heritage. My worldview is extremely broad because I grew up in NYC, where there is immense diversity. I am proud of having overcome my schizoaffective disorder with medications, therapeutic modalities and supportive people, and I use my experiences as a strength to help others.*
- *At least several generations back there are people in my family who hear voices and although it can sometimes feel distressing at other times I feel like the voices are a gift and something that connects all of us*

How have my family, class background, and culture of origin affected my experiences with mental health and emotional distress?

- We've never had much money and I usually couldn't afford any kind of treatment*
- Being a first generation immigrant has meant my family doesn't understand my life experience and I've struggled to explain to them what I go through*
- I've dealt with a lot of internalized oppression*
- I've dealt with a lot of external oppression (like racism, sexism, classism, etc.)*
- In my family I was always expected to be a super high-achiever, and all that pressure made me so stressed out*
- I never felt like I fit in with the other kids in school*
- Being gay meant I got bullied all the time*

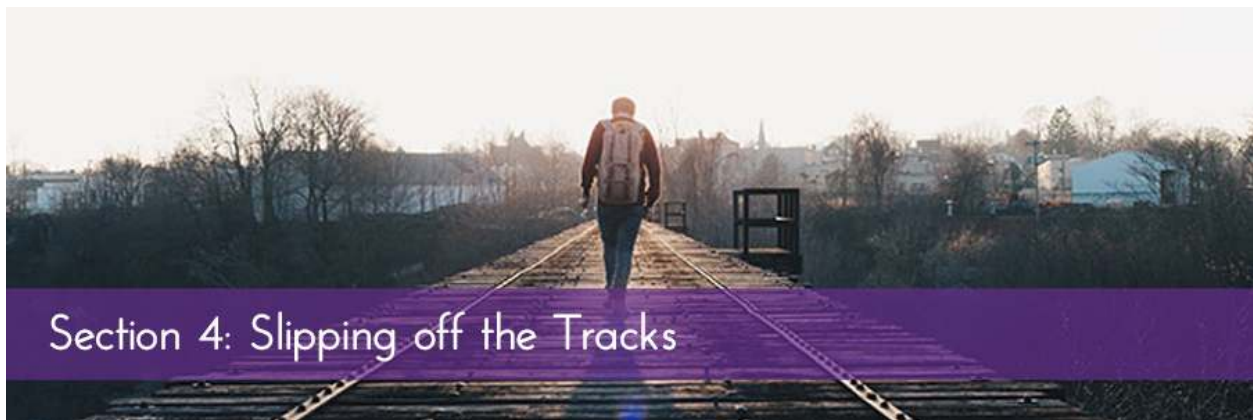
- My family doesn't really think women should go to school or have careers - we're just supposed to care-take people, and that makes me really depressed.*
- Growing up poor meant growing up with constant stress and fear.*
- English is not my first language and this has made me feel isolated and overwhelmed when I try to get by in the mainstream world. People treat me differently and think I'm not as smart.*
- No one in my family has ever gone to college and I can't imagine how I could*
- Because I wanted to be independent and have a really different lifestyle from my family, they just thought I was crazy. Like being gay or dying your hair pink means you're mentally ill.*

Examples:

- *As a first generation American with immigrant parents, I was the first person in my family to graduate high school or attempt college. I had a lot of high expectations put on me, and not a lot of support. My family didn't believe in mental health struggles - they just wanted me to try harder and focus more.*
- *I grew up black and working class and there was no time or money to get any kind of mental health treatment. Mental illness was a white thing. My folks saw therapy as a luxury for rich people. I was on the receiving end of a lot of racism and that contributed to my trauma and anxiety.*
- *In my white upper-middle class world, everyone got therapy. It's just what you did. All the kids were on Prozac.*

- *The voices I hear directly echo past experiences of bullying or abuse related to my gender, race/ethnicity, or the neighborhood I grew up in*
- *I grew up in an abusive household, both my parents had substance abuse issues and for the longest time I really didn't have any support for what I was going through, I didn't even know I was struggling with my mental health.*

Describe your experiences



The point of this section is to map out what is hard for us, what we struggle with, and help us develop the self-knowledge to be able to figure out what to do about it. This section is often the most challenging to fill out because it asks us to think about hard times, but the information we gather is really useful in our journey. Often unresolved things from our past can make us feel unsafe or upset in the present - this is called getting triggered. Sometimes our triggers contain useful information about what needs to heal in us, and what we need to express. If you find yourself getting triggered

or overwhelmed as you complete your map, take a break and do one of the practices in your wellness toolkit. It can also help to do the T-MAPs process with other people and realize you are not alone.

My Stressors

Do my job, school, or finances contribute to my stress?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- My anxiety goes through the roof when I have a lot of deadlines to meet.*
- I get really stressed out trying to keep track of all my homework.*
- My work situation is precarious, and I never know how much money I'll have month to month.*
- I've been unemployed for a long time, and it makes me really depressed.*
- I can get really depressed or hopeless thinking about how I lost my job or got kicked out of school.*

Add your own:

Do my relationships negatively impact my wellness?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- If my parents are overprotective, my depression gets worse and I feel bad about myself*
- My dad disappears sometimes and everything is so much harder when he's gone*
- When people I live with start drinking too much I get scared*
- My anxiety gets a lot worse when I fight with my partner*
- When my family criticizes me a lot it makes my voices worse*
- I get paranoid when co-workers and supervisors are unhappy with my work*
- Break-ups can wreck my mental health right away*

Describe your experience:

What health factors negatively impact my wellness?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Deprivation | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Toxins/Sensitivity | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight Gain from Meds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting Sick | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental fogginess from meds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Medication Withdrawal | <input type="checkbox"/> Lethargy from meds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic Illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Injuries | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blood Sugar Fluctuations | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital Stays | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thyroid Levels | | |

Add your own:

Do stressors related to my cultural background or identity negatively impact my wellness?

Examples:

- *My family members are all immigrants. When members of my family are facing deportation, my anxiety escalates and my mental health issues all get more intense.*
- *I dealt with a lot of homophobia growing up, and the constant threat of violence. Now I deal with a lot of transphobia and often don't feel safe leaving the house, and find myself getting paranoid and hypervigilant.*
- *There's a lot of sexism in my workplace and my family. It's exhausting to be undermined and overlooked, and can get me really depressed.*

- *My voices are related to being bullied in junior high and high school for being queer/Latino/Asian American (etc.) and anything that reminds me of that triggers them*

Describe your own:

Do any traumatic events from my past cause me to get triggered in the present?

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Seeing the police because I've been on the receiving end of police violence*
- Movies that feature sexual assault because I'm a survivor*
- People criticizing or judging me in a way that brings back past experiences of emotional/verbal abuse*
- Seeing people who were around when I had my first break, which was traumatic and I try not to ever think about*
- Being in hospitals because I've dealt with medical trauma*
- Anniversaries of people's deaths*

Describe your own:

Now we're going to ask some questions about what we're like when we're not well.

We get to decide what "not well" means for each of us. There's nothing wrong with having a hard time, but sometimes things feel like more than we can handle. Try to identify what is a "warning sign" for you that danger is ahead, and what is just part of the natural ebb and flow of how you experience life. It can be very useful to have this information so we can share our insights with others.

What it looks like when I'm not doing well:

How I feel when I'm not well:

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Everything seems like too much effort |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disoriented | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to hurt myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suspicious | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scared most of the time | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to hide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm worried about money all the time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mind seems to be spinning out of control | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I stutter when I talk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a lot of nightmares | <input type="checkbox"/> Like I have really thin skin and I'm sensitive to everything around me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like people can read my mind | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel spacey and out of it. Can't concentrate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have intrusive negative thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> I have all kinds of body symptoms - headaches, pains, upset stomach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can't stop thinking about certain things (like climate change and the end of the world) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted and unmotivated | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to sleep all the time | |

Add your own:

The following sections explore warning signs that we are having a rough time and could even be headed for crisis.

We've offered suggestions of different warning signs people might have, but feel free to move these around and make them your own - for example, for one person not sleeping enough might be an early warning sign, and for someone else it's an advanced warning sign. Trust your own intuition and arrange your answers in a way that works for you - at the end of each question, you can always write in your own responses.

Warning Signs that I'm having trouble

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I'm not sleeping enough.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Everyone and everything irritates me</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have no appetite</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have trouble finding my way around and get lost easily</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>My thoughts are really negative most of the time</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Something seems wrong or off about my food</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I'm having paranoid thoughts about people who are close to me and that I normally trust</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have a lot of flashbacks</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I burst into tears all the time</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sense of the world "crawling under my skin"</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I keep seeing signs in things—like the colors of people's shoes on the subway, or hidden messages in billboards</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I see things other people don't see</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I can't get excited about things I usually love</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I get in a lot of fights or arguments</i> |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have real trouble at work, and might get fired</i> |

Add your own:

Advanced Warning Signs that I'm Approaching Crisis

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- I'm not sleeping at all*
- I feel intense hatred towards myself most of the time*
- I feel so paranoid that it's difficult to function*
- I can't get out of bed at all - I have a hard time forcing myself to do really basic things like go to the bathroom or eat*
- I have the sense that I'm a character in a story rather than a real person.*
- I spend most of my time feeling numb or terrified*
- I have lost any sense of what is real and what isn't*
- I cannot stop crying, shaking, or banging my head against things.*
- I find myself completely consumed with particular ideas—for instance that I'm here to save the world, that the Dalai Llama is trying to communicate with me about issues that are vital to world peace, that the world is going to end, that aliens have taken over*

- It's hard to follow what people are saying, and people/family members are telling me that what I'm saying doesn't make sense*
- I find myself frequently wishing I didn't exist.*
- I'm doing research about suicide.*

Add your own:



One of the main benefits of making an T-MAPs document is being able to get clarity on the things that are important to us and being able to share it with other people. In this section, we identify the people, services, and resources that are the most important sources of support for us. This helps us remember where we can turn when things get hard, and who to stay in touch with along the way.

Who are my support people?

Family:

Friends and partners:

Groups or networks:

Examples: support groups, activist group, collectives I'm part of, study groups, etc.

Mental health and healing practitioners:

Examples: Therapist, Acupuncturist, Somatic Coach, Psychiatrist, Herbalist

Mentors:

Example: elder in my community, work supervisor, friend of the family, teacher or professor, spiritual teacher

Support animals:

Do you have any pets or support animals that help keep you calm and soothed? If yes, what ways of interacting with them are most helpful?

Of these people, who am I going to share this map with?

Questions For My Friends/Family to Ask Me if They're Concerned About My Mental Health:

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- How am I feeling overall?*
- Do I feel depressed or hopeless?*
- How is my sleep?*
- How regularly am I eating?*
- Am I exercising?*
- (If I choose to use meds), am I taking my meds regularly?*
- How am I getting along with significant people in my life (partner, roommates, co-workers, etc)*
- How many hours am I spending on screens/plugged into technology in a day?*
- Am I in contact with my support people regularly?*
- When's the last time I did something I really love?*

Add your own:

Things people can do that are supportive:

Check any that apply to you, and write in your answers at the bottom:

- Invite me to do things with them (making food, going for a walk, seeing a movie)*
- Remind me of times in my life when I've been happy*
- Remind me that people love me*
- Help keep me grounded by talking to me about normal mundane things*
- Stay near me so that I feel safer and less alone*
- Take me to _____ [one of my favorite places or a favorite activity]*
- Not freak out or threaten me with hospitalization*
- Not blaming me for not doing well on medications (accusing me of stopping them)*
- Really accepting rather than judging me*
- Leaving me alone if that's what I ask for*

Add your own:

In the past, what kinds of treatment, help, or healing is most supportive when I'm not well?

- Alternative medicine. Type:*
- Support groups*
- Medical care. Type:*
- Mental health treatment. Type:*
- Work-based counseling*
- Folk healing*
- Religious or spiritual counseling*

Add your own:

What are the names and contact info of your preferred providers?

What kind of local community resources are available to support me?

- Sobriety/recovery groups*
- Wellness collectives*
- Spiritual or religious groups*
- Book clubs*
- Sports teams*
- Open mics*
- Dancing*
- Youth organizations*

Add your own:

What kind of online community resources are available to support me?

- Meet-Up Groups*
- Social Media*
- Specific Facebook groups such as:*
- Discussion forums, such as:*
- Blogs:*

Add your own:

What are national or international resources that are helpful to me?

Examples: Organizations like Common Ground, The Icarus Project, the Hearing Voices Network, the Mental Health Empowerment Project, Peer Crisis lines, Alcoholics Anonymous

Describe what helps you:

Conclusion - T-MAPs as a Tool for Mutual Aid

We hope the process of completing your T-MAP has given you new insights into your own story and inspiration to engage in this process with others. This is a living document - you can keep revising it and adding to it as you gain more ideas and visions. While T-MAPs can help you map your individual transformation and growth, we think it's more powerful as a collective practice. T-MAPs is a tool that is designed to be developed in groups, shared with groups, and practiced in groups. Our vision is that T-MAPs and tools like it will play an important role in evolving the ability of creative activist movements and mental health support networks to communicate with each other and build the kinds of stronger, more effective communities and forms of resistance that our current historical moment requires.

By reflecting deeply on our own experiences and developing a stronger connection with ourselves and what's important to us, we can become more comfortable sharing that knowledge; we can learn from each other and more effectively collaborate with one another. By having a better awareness of each other's personal struggles, it's easier to understand our similarities and differences and navigate them with respect, love, and understanding. T-MAPs is really our attempt to help create a concrete framework for mutual aid.

Crisis = Opportunity

Dozens of people's voices are woven into this narrative of this document to help guide you and give you ideas for your own map. We encourage you to add your own voice to the mix and remember you are not alone in your struggles. We hope that it helps you give voice to parts of yourself that can be hard to talk and share with others. Understanding ourselves is what gives us the power to help ourselves and be there for others in community.

Taking the time to articulate basic needs and desires about wellness and support when someone is in a clear head space can make an enormous difference when any kind of crisis emerges. Having others who already know what your needs and desires are can turn crisis into an opportunity for growth and transformation, and for building solidarity and grounded friendship. Understood and articulated, our weaknesses can actually become our strengths.

At the same time, by opening up space to talk about life lessons and personal stories, it can become easier to talk about collective dynamics, and things that are often challenging to talk about in groups, like social power and privilege: larger structures that affect all of us in different ways depending on our social location, like race and class and gender and ability. While there are many ways that our differences can end up separating us, if we can learn to talk about the difference our stories can actually bring us together and raise levels of awareness. T-MAPs is an invitation to a collective practice of transformation and growth. Skillfully facilitated, a group using these questions can evolve to trust and support each other in the hard times on the horizon.

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