

Vulnerability Factor Tracker



Vulnerability factors increase the likelihood of developing or worsening our mental health symptoms. Have you ever noticed that you can become easily annoyed when you don't sleep well or feel 'hangry' when you haven't eaten all day? This is a vulnerability factor and you can see how it worsens our mental health symptoms.

When you keep track of your own vulnerability factors, you begin to notice patterns. For example, you may realize that three nights of poor sleep lead to more anxious thoughts, or that skipping meals makes you more reactive in conversations. Tracking helps you catch these early warning signs before symptoms escalate.

Use the worksheet to identify and monitor your own vulnerability factors over the next few weeks. Check in with yourself daily or weekly and note what factors were present. As you reflect, consider:

- Which factors show up most often?
- How do they affect your mood, energy, or relationships?
- What coping strategies can you try to reduce their impact?

Note: It is important to talk to a medical professional (i.e. doctor, registered dietitian, etc.) before you make changes to your diet, exercise, or medication/vitamin routine.

Food

Eat 3 meals a day

Optional: 2-3 snacks

Eat a protein packed (30g) breakfast - before coffee

Limit heavy meals at night

Incorporate balanced whole foods: fruits, vegetables, protein, fat, and carbohydrates.

Limit additional sugar, processed foods, and artificial dyes.

Sleep

Men: sleep anywhere between 7-8 hours per night

Women: sleep anywhere between 8-10 hours per night

No electronics before bed

Sleep around the same time each night - even on weekends

No caffeine 3-7 hours before bed

Practice mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation before bed

Take a warm shower

Exercise

Exercise 10-20 minutes (if beginner), 4-5 times per week then increase to 30-60 minutes 5 times per week (include cardio, strength training, and flexibility)

Physical movement (walking) can count as exercise

Medications/Vitamins

Take medications at the same time each day

Take medications/vitamins as prescribed and per bloodwork - don't just guess

Set an alarm as a reminder

Water

Drink $\frac{1}{2}$ of your body weight in ounces: EX: if you weight 150 lbs then drink around 75 oz (about 9 cups)

Add natural flavors if you get bored of plain water

Add electrolytes for maximum hydration (and flavor) - my favorite is Redmond Re-Lyte (mixed berry)

Substances

Limit substance use through baby steps (if you use regularly)

Coffee/Caffeine, Nicotine, Alcohol, or other illegal (or legal) drugs count toward substances

Physical Illness or Injury

Let your body rest when you're sick or injured

Get routine blood work done, preferably from a functional medicine doctor (they run more tests than your normal doctor)

Women: take note of where you're at in your menstrual cycle (Menstrual, Follicular, Ovulation, and Luteal).



Have any questions?

Reach out at stephanie@smdtherapy.com