

HEALTH HUB
NOVEMBER 2024



Living an
Emotionally
Healthy Life





Living an Emotionally Healthy Life

HOW ENVY, GRATITUDE, AND EMPATHY CAN BUILD EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN YOUR LIFE

Did you know that your emotions are strongly connected with your well-being? Emotional wellness is the ability to manage stress and adapt to change effectively ([National Institutes of Health \[NIH\], 2022](#)). People who are emotionally well tend to have stronger resilience, fewer negative emotions, and quicker rebound from obstacles and adversities.

Experiencing positive emotions can trigger the reward pathways in the brain; however, on the other hand, negative emotions can activate the parts of the brain that ignite feelings of fear and anxiety ([NIH, 2015](#)).

People may tend to think that emotions come and go like the weather, but you have some power to control your emotions. Taking the time to truly acknowledge and work toward conscientiously living an emotionally well life can enhance overall well-being and increase resilience ([NIH, 2015](#)). Now that's just the tip of the iceberg, so let's take a deep dive on developing a positive mindset and the interplay between envy, gratitude, and empathy and ideas on how you can improve your emotional health.



Written by:
Jaclyn Miller, MPH, CHES

Jaclyn is one of the newest health educators on the Healthy Lifestyles team! She has a Master of Public Health from Utah State University and is a Certified Health Education Specialist.

Her approach to health focuses on a holistic balance across the dimensions of wellness. She is passionate about helping people live a long, fulfilling life.

She spends her free time juggling life with a busy toddler, going to group fitness classes at the gym, and doing DIY home projects.

Envy

Envy is a complex emotion with the potential to significantly impact your mental health and relationships. Feeling envious happens when you perceive a lack in yourself compared to someone else. You may feel like you're missing out on someone else's great quality, achievement, or possession, leading you to want what they have—or even wish they didn't have it at all (Parrott & Smith, 1993). These feelings can strain interpersonal dynamics and influence your behavior toward the person you envy. Additionally, envy tends to intensify when someone else's accomplishments hit close to home and matter a lot to you or resonate deeply with your own sense

of identity (Lin et al., 2018).

Social Media Comparisons

Have you ever been on social media and found yourself wishing for someone else's life with their amazing vacations and beautiful pictures? Social media amplifies feelings of envy, particularly in today's digital age. The comparison trap is a common issue many people face on social media. When you compare your everyday realities to the filtered, idealized snapshots of others, it's easy to forget that these are often the highlights and not the full life story. Social media posts that display impeccably elaborate depictions of people's lives may cause feelings of

envy to arise. Viewing these posts and photos may cause people to assess and compare their own lives to the perfect posts. Remember that it's impossible for social media to exhibit the whole story. This "highlight reel" effect can distort your self-image, create unrealistic expectations, and lead to feelings of inadequacy or envy (Pera, 2018; Lin et al., 2018). Evaluating your social media habits can be a powerful tool for improving your emotional well-being. Recognize how certain posts may trigger envy so you can work toward regaining control over your emotional responses (Lin et al., 2018).

TIPS FOR A BETTER ONLINE EXPERIENCE FREE OF ENVY

Unfollow Negative Accounts

Remove accounts from your feeds that trigger feelings of inadequacy or envy.

Follow Positivity

Choose to follow positive accounts that inspire, motivate, and uplift you.

Actively Engage

Limit screen time throughout the day to times where you can truly focus on the media instead of passively consuming content.

Remind Yourself of Reality

Social media is often the "highlight reel", not the full picture of someone's life.

Practice Gratitude

Reflect on your own achievements and what you are thankful for in your life.

Forgive Yourself

Acknowledge mistakes, learn from them, and move on without lingering guilt.





Gratitude

Experiencing gratitude is closely linked to overall well-being—physical, mental, and psychological (Ferenczi et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2010). Gratitude often arises from receiving help and involves recognizing and appreciating the positive aspects of your life, yourself, your surroundings, and those around you (Wood et al., 2010; Klein, 1957). Practicing gratitude shifts focus from what you lack to appreciating what you have, which can enhance life satisfaction (Ferenczi et al., 2021).

“GRATITUDE CAN TRANSFORM COMMON DAYS INTO THANKSGIVINGS, TURN ROUTINE JOBS INTO JOY, AND CHANGE ORDINARY OPPORTUNITIES INTO BLESSINGS.

William Arthur Ward

PRACTICES TO CULTIVATE DAILY GRATITUDE AND IMPROVE OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION

Transform Negative Thoughts

Challenge and reframe negative thinking into positive perspectives.

Keep a Gratitude Journal

Write down three to five things you're grateful for everyday—big or small. Reflect on positive experiences and relationships.

Thank You Notes

Write notes to express your appreciation to others. Use a [Healthy Lifestyles Kudos Card](#) to recognize a coworker who has gone above and beyond!

Acknowledge Others

Recognize contributions and efforts of those around you.

Practice Mindfulness

Take time for mindful moments — either on your own or with Healthy Lifestyles! Being present can help you tune into your emotions and enhance your emotional awareness.

Engage in Spirituality

Participate in religious or spiritual activities, as they are associated with higher gratitude and well-being.





Empathy

Empathy is crucial for forming deeper connections with others. Empathy is the ability to understand others and their mental and emotional states. In a time when digital communication often replaces face-to-face interactions, purposefully practicing empathy can counteract a decline in this essential skill. Quality social interactions are vital towards cultivating empathy. Meaningful conversations and understanding different perspectives strengthen social bonds and improve emotional health (Sanchez, 2021).

Increasing empathy can enhance your connections with others and improve your emotional well-being. By incorporating these practices into your daily life, you can strengthen your empathetic abilities and create deeper, more meaningful connections with those around you.



EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP EMPATHY AND IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

Limit Digital Communication

Whenever possible, opt for face-to-face interactions or phone calls instead of texting, as this can enhance emotional connections.

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Encourage others to share more about their feelings and experiences, which can deepen your understanding and empathy.

Practice Gratitude

Recognizing the positive in your life can enhance your overall emotional state, making it easier to connect empathetically with others.

Put Yourself in Others' Shoes

Try to imagine how others feel in their situations. Consider their background, emotions, and challenges.

Actively Listen

Focus on truly hearing what others are saying without interrupting. Show that you value their perspectives.

Engage in Conversations

Have meaningful discussions with diverse groups of people. This helps you understand different viewpoints and experiences.

Volunteer

Engage with communities in need. This can provide insight into different life experiences and promote compassionate understanding.





Resilience

By recognizing and addressing these emotions—envy, gratitude, and empathy—you can improve your well-being and increase your emotional resilience. It's all about finding balance and actively shaping your experiences, both online and offline. Embracing practices that foster gratitude and empathy, while eliminating envy and managing your social media

consumption, can lead to a more fulfilling and emotionally healthy life. Focus on embracing the positivity and keep practicing! Pick a few of the skills from each of the three lists in this article and put them into practice for a couple weeks to live a healthier, more emotionally resilient life. If you are interested in learning more about developing your healthiest

emotional self, check out this Emotional Wellness Toolkit from the NIH about how to build resilience, reduce stress, be mindful, get quality sleep, cope with loss, and strengthen social connections ([NIH, 2022](#)). And, as always, Salt Lake County offers the [VEST Employee Assistance Program](#) with mental health resources available to help you.

