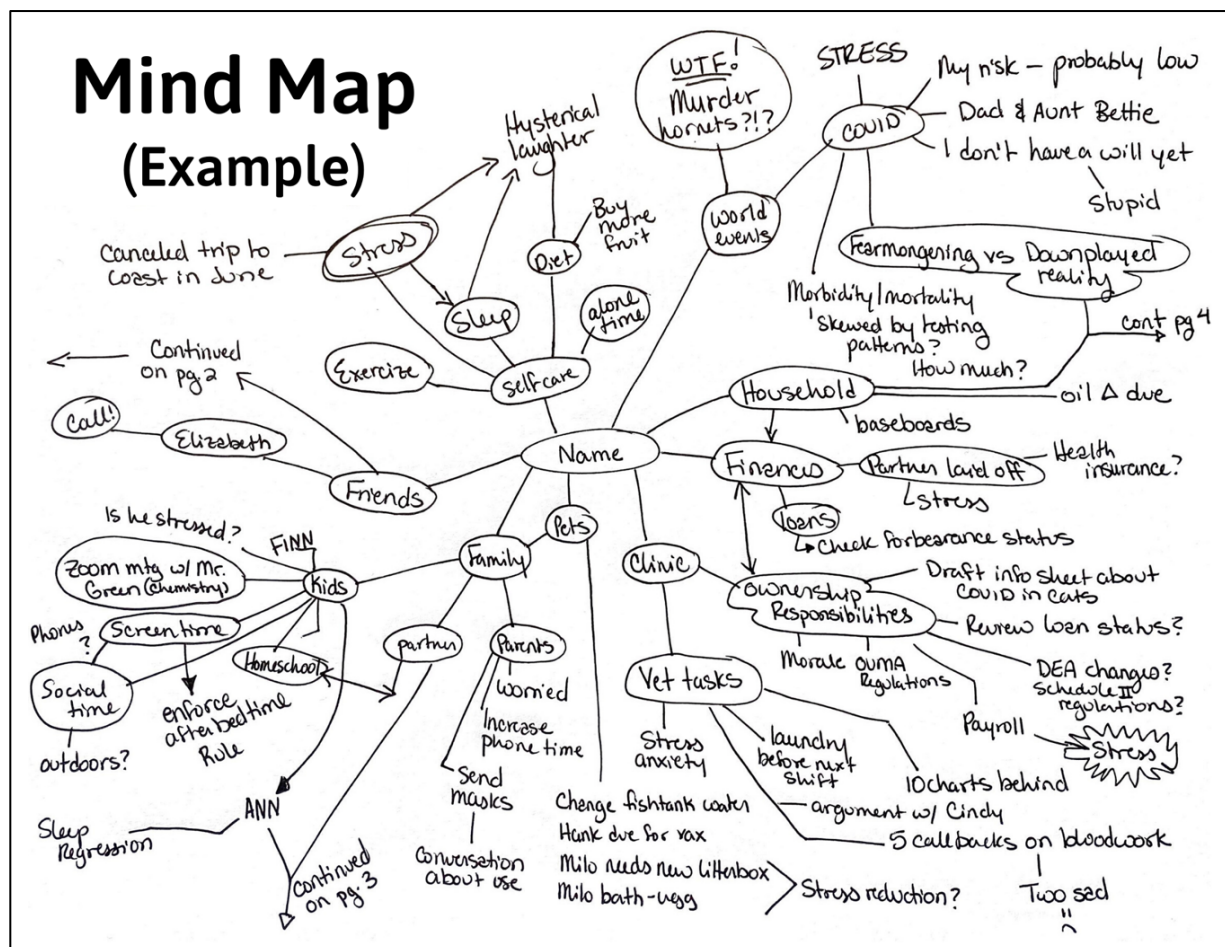


Create a Mind Map

Materials: Pen or marker (no pencils/no erasing) and either a large piece of paper (butcher paper works nicely), poster board, a large cardboard box, or if none of these are available, a stack of paper.

Step 1: Create A Mind Map

1. Creation of this type of Mind Map is a fast, furious, messy, non-artistic process. For the first step, don't bother with different colors and don't try to plan out the finished product before you start. Seriously.
2. Write your name in a little circle in the middle of your page.
3. Start by writing down big categories of concern in a ring around your starting point.
 - a. Common categories include: Work, household, kids, partner, **self-care (required category)**, pets, friends, family, world events, finances, etc.
4. From each of these bubbles, continue to sub-categorize until all the points of focus in your brain are down on paper. Some items may end up in more than one place and that's ok. It is not meant to be organized or artistic. After all, if your brainscape was organized, this exercise wouldn't be necessary.
5. It can be helpful to set a timer for 10-15 minutes to keep the focus on free association & recording rather than assessment and problem solving.
6. When everything has been poured onto the page (or pages), I recommend taking a break to breathe. This is an ideal point to complete the Guided Body Scan, as your brain will be at its quietest.
7. Feel free to leave Step 2 until tomorrow.



Step 2: Evaluate Your Mind Map

At this time, if the chaos of your Mind Map is distressing, you may redraw/convert to a more organized format (i.e. An outline format). Next, categorize each item or cluster on your mind map according to the following:

1. Urgent & Essential - points of required focus & immediate action (Urgent = within in the next 36 hours)
 - a. What items on your map REQUIRE immediate deliberate action on your part?
 - b. These are generally items with hard deadlines or are otherwise time-dependent
 - c. Examples: Pay bills, cancel trip, Aunt Betty welfare check, laundry scrubs for shift
2. Non-Urgent but Essential - points of required focus & action, usually within the next week or month
 - a. What items require action, but are not urgent?
 - b. These items generally benefit from a more methodical planning approach
 - c. Do not underestimate the possibility of delegation in this category!
 - d. Examples: Change oil in car, research student loan forbearance options, homeschool plan
3. Non-Urgent & Non-Essential – Points that do not deserve your time and effort
 - a. When you are in a state of overwhelm, items in this category need to be set aside for later
 - b. This category is usually filled up with two types of items
 - i. Tasks that we spend our time on despite their relative unimportance *in a time of stress*
 - 1) Example: Cleaning the baseboards (save until after self-care has leveled up)
 - ii. Tasks that are put here in error, that are incorrectly evaluated as non-essential/urgent
 - 1) Example: Enough sleep, 'me' time, time connecting with family
 - 2) In a lifetime, can you really afford for these items to be non-essential?
 - c. Go back and take a second look at your essential items to make sure they are indeed ESSENTIAL
4. Involuntary Stress Points where no change or control is possible (*Stay tuned for podcast on this subject*)
 - a. What items on your list cause distress but are out of your control?
 - b. Example: Partner has been laid off or has been asked to reduce their hours
 - c. Example: Your parent's approach to shelter in place. (No, you don't have control. If you expressed your concern in an articulate manner once, and were heard, you have reached the extent of your ability to influence their behavior.)
5. Involuntary Stress Points where change or control IS possible
 - a. This category benefits most from creative problem solving on your part as well as recognition that complete control may not be possible
 - b. There are frequently opportunities for improved self-care in this category
 - c. Examples: You haven't been exercising because your gym is closed, or you haven't spoken to your best friend recently because your weekly coffee date is off.
6. Voluntary Stress Points
 - a. What distressing items do you voluntarily engage in?
 - b. It is important to recognize these as voluntary!
 - c. Examples:
 - i. Compulsively checking death tallies multiple times a day or right before bed
 - ii. Engaging with ill-informed Facebook posts
 - iii. Allowing children to visit a relative despite misgivings

Once you have reviewed your Mind Map with these categories in mind, you have an opportunity to target those items you can influence or control in order based on urgency. Do keep in mind that methodically managing a to-do list, despite the essential or urgent nature of the items on that list, is often not enough to overcome overwhelm. Spending resources effectively is a start, but you also need to renew those resources. This is why we categorize self-care items as essential.