



# TOOLS TO THRIVE

A discussion about mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health within the black community, in coordination with Mental Health Awareness Month

Dr. Bridgette Chase, LMFT, LPC, MAC, SAP



## Dr. Bridgette Chase, LPC, LMFT, MAC, SAP

A native of Statesville, North Carolina, Bridgette Chase received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Accounting from Livingstone College in Salisbury, N.C. Dr. Chase continued her academic pursuits, obtaining a Master of Arts in Counseling with a specialty in Family and Mental Health Counseling from the University of the District of Columbia in 1996. In this same year, Dr. Chase secured her license as a Professional Counselor and was certified in 2001 as an Addiction Counselor. In 2009 Dr. Chase secured her licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the American Counseling Association, and the American Association of Christian Counselors. Dr. Chase completed her doctoral degree majoring in Counseling Psychology at Argosy University.

Dr. Chase is a dedicated counselor, administrator, program developer, and entrepreneur. She has more than twenty years of experience in the clinical discipline, including crisis, substance abuse, family, and individual counseling. For seven years, Ms. Chase worked in the juvenile justice system and residential treatment facilities with dually diagnosed adolescents. She has extensive knowledge and experience with case management and diagnostic/treatment procedures. Diversified in her abilities, she also designs, markets, and directs service programs in the community and church.

Dr. Chase is an active member of the Greater Mt. Calvary Holy Church, pastored by Bishop Alfred A. and Co-Pastor Susie C. Owens where she taught Christian Counseling in the church's Calvary Bible Institute for five years and served for three as its Director of Counseling Services. During her tenure, she both developed and instituted its first Clinical Christian Counseling Center. Dr. Chase has also developed and instituted numerous workshops for members of the church, staff, and community, including "Clarifying the Need for Forgiveness," "Managing and Understanding Anger," "Boundaries," and "Making Peace with Your Past."

In 1997, Dr. Chase founded Open Door Ministries, Inc., a non-profit 501C organization and private practice that specialize in faith-based counseling, training, and consulting. Additionally, as the founder & CEO of the School of Professional Counseling, Inc., and a for-profit organization established in 2000, Dr. Chase developed a model Lay Counseling Training Program. This program teaches counseling skills from a Christian perspective to both secular and Christian communities. It currently operates as a one-year, non-degree program offering certification in Lay Counseling. Dr. Chase hopes to mature this program into an accredited two-year associate degree program in Christian Counseling and offer continuing education credits to licensed clinical professionals interested in Christian-based workshops and trainings. In 2008 Chase Consulting LLC was organized to compete for governmental contracts, and to provide consultation to new non-profits and organizations.

In 2020, Dr. Chase founded Chase Counseling and Consulting Services (CCCS) is a community-based organization located in Washington, DC that provides clinical counseling to families, individuals, groups, and faith-based organizations in the metropolitan area. CCCS offers diagnostic assessments, marriage and family therapy, substance-use-disorder counseling (SUD), Christian counseling, and career and transitional counseling and currently serves over 100 clients. Additionally, CCCS provides clinical supervision, clinical training, and continuing education (CE) credits.

Chase Consulting LLC is dedicated to the “Care of Souls: Nurture, Support, Healing and Restoration”. Dr. Chase is committed to serving and advocating for the underserved population in Washington DC and surrounding areas.

In keeping with this theme, Dr. Chase travels doing consultant work, training churches, and birthing lay ministries that focus on counseling both in the community and church. Dr. Chase’s future includes the launch of a behavioral health clinic, residential facility for adolescent, adult females, and homeless Veterans. Dr. Chase is currently working on the outline for her first book, she constantly shares with others how excited she is regarding the word and the work our God has given her.



# TAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF

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There are always a handful of roles that each of us are juggling. If you are a parent, a student, an employee, a caretaker, someone struggling with a mental health concern, or are just feeling overwhelmed with the responsibilities of day-to-day life, the idea of taking time for yourself may seem unimaginable. Sometimes it can be difficult to even take basic care of ourselves - but there are small things that can be done to make self-care and taking time for ourselves a little bit easier.

## TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF



**Accept yourself as you are.** Remember that you are running your own race. Try not to compare your life and what it looks like right now to anyone else's. When you start comparing yourself to others, it's easy to feel inadequate, which makes it hard to even take the very first step in self-care. Instead, try your best to accept the person that you are and where you are in life right now.



**Focus on the basics.** Sometimes being an adult is not easy and it can feel impossible to get even the littlest things done. Taking time for yourself doesn't necessarily mean treating yourself to special things. One of the most important things you can do is focus on steps to ensure you're living a healthy lifestyle. Showering and brushing your teeth every day, eating nutrient-rich food, moving your body, and getting good sleep are all building blocks of good self-care.



**Find what makes you happy.** If you're caught up in taking care of all of your responsibilities — rather than taking care of yourself — you may not even really know what kind of self-care you need. What works for someone else may not work for you. Take time to think about what things you can do to make yourself feel happy or accomplished and include them in building the self-care routine that makes the most sense for you, your schedule, and your health overall.



**Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is one of the best ways to make the most out of any amount of time that you do have to care for yourself. Take a few slow, deep breaths, focus on each of your senses, and try to be fully present in whatever you're doing. Not only does mindfulness reduce stress, it also has the power to help you slow down and really take care of yourself — even in the midst of all of life's challenges and responsibilities.



**Make small goals.** Unfortunately, taking time for yourself doesn't just happen overnight, so try to be patient. Instead of putting pressure on yourself to immediately have the perfect self-care routine established, set small goals that you want to accomplish for yourself. Focus on small, daily tasks like wanting to take a 15-minute walk outside each day, or journaling for 10 minutes every night — rather than a complete overhaul of your life, all at once.



**Set some boundaries.** Sometimes, the only way to really be able to make time for self-care is to lessen the amount of time or energy that you are giving away to other people. Having the sometimes tough conversations with people that set boundaries around your time, your emotions, your things, your other relationships, your health, and your opinions can give you an opportunity to devote more time and effort to yourself and your own mental health.



**Remember that you are not alone.** Everyone struggles to take time for themselves, so try not to get down on yourself for not having everything perfectly balanced all of the time. As circumstances change, you'll probably have to rethink your routines and how you use your time many times throughout your life. There will always be people that understand where you're coming from and are willing to help. Ask your friends and family for help when you need to take some time for your mental health. They may even be able to offer you some guidance on how they manage self-care and take time for their own well-being.

## FAST FACTS



On average, people only spend 15 minutes a day on health-related self-care.<sup>1</sup>



Self-care is proven to reduce stress and anxiety levels while increasing self-compassion.<sup>2</sup>



Of people who took a depression screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, 73% felt tired or said that they had very little energy at least half of the time or nearly every day.<sup>3</sup>

## What's On Your Mind?

Take a quick, free, anonymous self-assessment:



[bit.ly/TestYourMood](https://bit.ly/TestYourMood)

*Local resources can help.*

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Narberg, H., Paneth, Y., Saxe, H., Johnston, T. P., & Sahasrabudhe, A. (2017). The impact of stress on body function: A review. *ISCIJ Journal*, 10, 1857-1872. <https://doi.org/10.17179/isci2017-490>  
<sup>2</sup>Shapiro, S., Brown, K., & Biegel, G. (2007). Teaching Self-Care to Caregivers: Effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on the Mental Health of Therapists in Training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 1(2), 105-115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1931-3918.1.2.105>  
<sup>3</sup>Proprietary data. [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org), 2020.

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# PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE

When we have a lot on our plates or we are facing mental health challenges, it can feel easy to push our own needs to the side. However, making time for ourselves is essential to our overall well-being. Use this worksheet to help you better understand what is holding you back from taking time for yourself and your needs.

## WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER, BUT YOU CANNOT SEEM TO DO?

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Write out some thoughts and expectations that are preventing you from doing the self-care that you need. Don't worry about whether these thoughts or expectations are true. Instead, write down anything that comes to mind.

### THOUGHTS

Examples: I don't have time; my needs don't matter

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### EXPECTATIONS

Examples: I should be better at \_\_\_; I would do \_\_\_ if it helped me

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pick one thought or expectation from either list above and re-write it here.

### THOUGHT OR EXPECTATION

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Focusing in on this specific thought or expectation, answer the following questions.

**WHERE DOES THIS THOUGHT, OR EXPECTATION COME FROM? WHO SETS IT?**

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**HOW DOES IT GET IN THE WAY OF TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF?**

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Now that you have answered the questions above, rewrite this thought so that it supports you and your self-care needs.

### NEW THOUGHT OR EXPECTATION

Examples: If I do \_\_\_ I may feel better; It is ok to take time for myself

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While we only worked through one thought, we can use this process to evaluate how our negative thoughts and expectations prevent us from taking care of ourselves regularly. On a separate sheet of paper, follow these same steps with the other thoughts and expectations you listed in the first set of boxes.



# PROCESSING BIG CHANGES

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Change is a guaranteed part of life. It's something everyone experiences at one point or another — good or bad. Sometimes that change happens in big ways when we aren't expecting it or aren't prepared for it. These types of situations can make navigating your path forward really difficult. By providing yourself with tools for processing change, you can adapt more easily.

## TIPS FOR PROCESSING CHANGE



**Focus on what you can control.** One of the hardest things about big change is how helpless it can often make you feel. At some point, you'll probably have to accept the change that you're experiencing and then focus on what you can control within that. For example, you can control how you react to situations, how you start each day, or how nice you are to yourself and others. It can be comforting to know that there are still things that you have control over, even when other things are changing.



**Write out your feelings on paper.** When you're processing big changes, your brain may feel like it's constantly racing. It's easy to feel overwhelmed with all of the things you're feeling and thinking. Instead of holding it all in your mind, allow yourself to release it. Writing things down is one of the best ways to do that. Start a journal—jot down a quick list of your thoughts and feelings or write a letter to yourself or someone else. Just get it all out onto paper.



**Keep up your self-care where you can.** When so much of your life feels different and overwhelming, it's tempting to want to stay in bed or on the sofa and avoid what's bothering you. However, it's important to keep up your normal habits as much as possible, especially when it comes to protecting your mental health. The changes you're facing may mean a totally different routine, but incorporating the small, familiar self-care habits that you know work for you — even if it's something simple like showering or taking a walk after dinner — can give you the mental clarity to process the big changes.



**Find support.** With any change that you're facing right now, there's a good chance that someone else has felt the exact same way that you're feeling too. Depending on what you're struggling with, you may be able to talk to friends or family about it, find an online support group, or open up to a mental health professional. Whoever it ends up being that you turn to, having someone who can listen and provide support can help you through any transition you're working through.



**Tune into the good.** No matter what kind of change has come into your life, there is most likely some grief that coincides with processing it. Even a seemingly good change like getting a new job can have you grieving the day-to-day interactions you had with coworkers where you used to work. Let yourself grieve, but also try not to get stuck spiraling into the fear, anguish, and negativity that those changes may bring. Instead, try and retrain your brain to think of the positives in your life by doing things like practicing gratitude, focusing on the small things that bring you joy, or reframing challenges as opportunities.



**Make plans.** It's okay if you aren't an incredibly organized person, but when you're processing big changes, it can be helpful to focus on planning. You don't have to stick to your plan perfectly; just starting small with what your day or week is going to look like can help get rid of that uncertainty that comes with change.



**Think of your strength.** Big changes tend to challenge and test you, but it's likely that you'll grow from all of the things that you're facing. Remind yourself as often as possible that you are strong and capable and can make it through whatever challenges you're facing (and that you've made it through some tough changes in the past). Maybe even say it out loud to yourself to really let it sink in. With each passing day, you're building resilience.

### Sources

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Manczak, E., Skarrett, K., Gabriel, L., Ryan, K., & Langewiesche, S. (2018). Family Support: A Possible Buffer Against Disruptive Events for Individuals With and Without Resilient Depression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 32(7), 926–935. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000451>  
Holahan, C., Moos, R., Holahan, C., Brennan, R., & Schuck, K. (2005). Stress Generation, Avoidance Coping, and Depressive Symptoms: A 10-Year Model. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(4), 658–666. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.4.658>

## FAST FACTS



People that journaled about significant events reported more satisfaction with their lives and better mental health over those that did not.<sup>1</sup>



Strong social support from family members following significant life events seriously lessens depression symptoms in teens and has a lasting positive effect in dealing with life changes.<sup>2</sup>



Adults who avoid problems struggle more with depression later on than those who actively approach problems with coping strategies.<sup>3</sup>

## What's On Your Mind?

Take a quick, free, anonymous self-assessment:



[bit.ly/TestYourMood](https://bit.ly/TestYourMood)

Local resources can help.

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# DEALING WITH CHANGE

Change, both good and bad, is an inevitable part of life. By taking time to think through the change you're facing, you can work to make both the change and the emotions around the change more manageable. Use this worksheet as a tool to process an existing or upcoming change that you are facing.

**DESCRIBE THE BIG CHANGE YOU ARE FACING AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR LIFE.**

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**LIST OUT ANY EMOTIONS THAT COME UP WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THIS CHANGE.**

*For a list of emotions, visit <http://bit.ly/emotionsundemeath>*

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**WHAT WORRIES YOU ABOUT THE CHANGE?**

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**WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR WORRIES AROUND THIS CHANGE?**

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**WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT THIS BIG CHANGE OR WHAT POSITIVE THINGS CAN COME FROM THIS CHANGE?**

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**WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO INCREASE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THIS CHANGE?**

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**WRITE DOWN ANY SKILLS, ACTIVITIES, OR STRENGTHS THAT HAVE HELPED YOU COPE WITH CHANGE IN THE PAST.**

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**WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS, RESOURCES, OR SITUATIONS THAT EXIST TODAY THAT HELP YOU FEEL MORE CONFIDENT THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE OK FOLLOWING THIS CHANGE?**

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# ADAPTING AFTER TRAUMA AND STRESS

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We all face trauma, adversity, and other stresses throughout our lives. When people think of trauma, they often think of things like abuse, terrorism, or catastrophic events (big 'T' trauma). Trauma can also be caused by events that may be less obvious but can still overwhelm your capacity to cope, like frequent arguing at home or losing your job (little 't' trauma). Trauma of any kind can be hard on your mental health but working on becoming more resilient can help you feel more at ease.

## TIPS FOR HEALING



**Process your thoughts.** During and after experiencing trauma, it's common to go into survival mode and not have energy to wrap your head around what happened. It may feel safest to bury painful feelings and avoid confronting them, but acknowledging what happened and how it has impacted you is an important part of healing. When you feel ready, take time to think about how you've been affected (and be proud of yourself for pushing through).



**Connect with people.** The pain of trauma can lead some people to isolate themselves, but having a support system is a crucial part of wellbeing. Emotional support helps us to feel less alone or overwhelmed by what's going on or has happened in our lives. Talking to someone who has gone through a similar experience or someone who cares about you can be validating - and help you feel more able to overcome the challenges you're facing.



**Don't compare your experience to others.** We often question our own thoughts or experiences, and you may convince yourself that what you experienced wasn't a big deal because "others have it worse." Everyone experiences trauma differently, and no one trauma is "worse" than another. If it hurt you, then it hurt you - and your feelings and experiences are valid.



**Take care of your body.** Stress and trauma impact your body and physical health just as much as your mind. Listening to your body and giving it what it needs will help you heal. This includes eating a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and exercising regularly. Moving your body is especially helpful in trauma healing<sup>1</sup> - aim to do it every day, even if it's only a few minutes of stretching.



**Know it will take time.** There is no set timeline for how you "should" heal. Remove the pressure of needing to bounce back quickly and focus on taking it one step at a time. Remember: recovery isn't linear, and it's normal to have bad days and setbacks. It doesn't mean you're failing - it's just part of the process.



**Give yourself grace.** Dealing with trauma and stress is no easy feat, but it's still common to get frustrated with yourself and what can sometimes be a slow recovery process. Try to catch when you hold yourself to unreasonable standards - instead of angrily asking yourself "why am I acting like this?!", think about how impressive it is that you keep going, despite what you have faced.



**Don't feel ashamed to ask for help.** It's easy to compare how you're feeling to how you assume others who have been through similar experiences are feeling, and you may get down on yourself because it seems like everyone else is doing just fine. What others experience and how they cope doesn't matter in your journey - if you feel like you need (or want) help, it's important to get that as soon as you can.

## FAST FACTS

#2

Among people who took a screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020, past trauma was the second most reported cause for mental distress among screeners after loneliness.<sup>2</sup>

3x

People who have been through trauma are 3 times more likely to experience depression.<sup>3</sup>

53%

Of people who took a screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) in 2020 who scored with moderate to severe symptoms, over half (53%) reported past trauma as one of the three main contributors to their mental health problems.<sup>4</sup>

## What's On Your Mind?

Take a quick, free, anonymous self-assessment:



[bit.ly/TestYourMood](https://bit.ly/TestYourMood)

Local resources can help.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Ivan de Kemp, M. M., Schaffers, M., Hatzmann, J., Erick, C., Cuijpers, P., & Beek, P. J. (2019). Body- and Movement-Oriented Interventions for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 32*(6), 967-976. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22495>

<sup>2</sup>Proprietary data. [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org), 2020.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30194500#resultsummarystatistics.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Proprietary data. [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org), 2020.

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# PROCESSING TRAUMA AND STRESS

After a traumatic experience, it can be helpful to get your thoughts outside of your head. Writing down your experiences can help you gain perspective about your situation and help to reduce how distressing they are. Use the lines below to jot down anything that comes to mind related to your traumatic experiences.

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When you've experienced multiple traumatic experiences, or carried trauma for a long time, it can shape the way you see yourself, the world, and others. These changes in beliefs are there to protect you from future harm, even when threats are gone. They can change the way you relate to others, whether or how you take risks, or how you feel positively about yourself.

**HOW HAVE YOUR TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES SHAPED THE WAY YOU SEE:**

**YOURSELF?**

**OTHERS?**

**THE WORLD?**

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Reflecting on your writing experience above, do you notice how your body has changed in response to your feelings? Use the space below to identify the feelings you experience while reflecting on your story and draw lines to the corresponding area of your body where you experience that emotion.

**FEELINGS**

**FEELINGS**

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## MAIN TAKE AWAYS

- Focus on your strengths
- Minimize exposure to news/media when needed
- Surround yourself with a nurturing support system
- Set small reachable goals in pursuit of larger goals
- Practice self-care
- If you have setbacks, do not beat yourself up
- Exercise gratitude
- Seek peace



THANK YOU!