

“The SMERF Daily Checklist”

Introduction: Research indicates that one of the first tools people need in a crisis is a sense of structure. When life is in chaos, our brain craves order. When there is a broadly predictable structure, the mind calms down, and gets to the tasks of the day.

The SMERF Daily Checklist is a quick and simple way to help you become focused and clear on what your day should look like. It doesn't take long, and you'll find it a very useful habit!

Spiritual

- Spend dedicated time (time that is not while you're doing something else) just for God and you: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:9)

Mental

- Make intentional decisions using rational thought. Every morning, write down (more brain-effective than typing on a keyboard) “I will make rational decisions today.” Remind yourself that in a crisis, you can think clearly.

Emotional

- Focus daily on whatever distressful emotion you might be feeling at this time (for example, anxiety, stress, sadness or anger). Instead of trying to dismiss the emotion, ask yourself, “Why?” Why might I be feeling this, and what might it be telling me?
For example, it might be time to open up instead of trusting no one, or setting a boundary you need to set, or possibly admitting a loss and letting it go. Respect your emotions and they'll help you every day.

Relational

- Have at least one conversation (it can be as brief as a text) in which you express something vulnerable about yourself, and elicit another to be vulnerable with you. Instead of staying on the positive all of the time, be courageous and admit that life, relationships and work can have their challenges. Help the other person to feel safe to be “real” with you as well.

Functional

- Set up, and stick to, a broad daily structure. We need some sense of predictability: This includes family time (together and alone), sleep, work, meals, working out, friend time, church, hobbies, entertainment and serving others. Even if it feels unnecessary, your brain will thank you!

Conclusion

- Every day, get away a bit and cover these. You should quickly notice lower anxiety and stress, and increased energy, focus and positivity.