

The Stress Relief Guide

for **Gender, Sexuality, and Romantic Minorities**



By: H. Maxwell Schmid

Who is the author?

Are you even real? I've never heard of you.

Hi everyone!

I am *real*, in fact. At least, I think. :D My name's Hope/Max. I go by either depending on my *headspace*.

My involvement in the GSRM community has been consistent for the past 3 years as I engage in my local resource center. In fact, I have taught a Stress Relief for Activists and Minorities class at my University and I also have taught Yoga for Gender Non-Conforming Peeps.

I'm the founder of Warrior's Pose which is a holistic health based initiative aimed towards activists and GSRM.

I have a *passion* for nutrition, exercise, holistic health, and coaching people about how to integrate sexual/intimacy health into their lives. (So many of us think about what we're eating and how much we're moving, but don't often consider the *sexual* aspect of health).

I hope you find this book simple and useful!

Be well and stay strong,
H. Maxwell

What is this book?

No seriously, for real. Get to the point.

- An easy, *fun* to read guide
- Provides ideas to *decrease stress*
- Includes *activities* you can complete
- A good read for those who identify as a *GSRM* (Gender, Sexuality, Romantic Minority)
- *Rainbows!* <3

What is this book not?

- NOT designed to treat, cure, or prevent any physical or psychological illness

Contents

We don't like contents. Contents is an odd word. You're gonna have to look through to see what is contained in this activity book and guide.

Chapter 1

F**king Breathe

If you're reading this, chances are you're probably a *human*.

If you're a human, chances are you probably *need to breathe*.

If you're reading this as someone from the GSRM community, chances are you find yourself in *challenging situations* which makes it hard to calm down, feel accepted, or be understood. All of that stress adds up and affects our breathing.

Breathing obviously is a good thing. Deeper breathing can help decrease cortisol (stress) levels. And did you ever notice that awesome feeling you get after you take a really, really big breath and then push it all out? I know I do!

F**king Breathe: The Activity

Activity: sit comfortably, in whatever position you desire. On the floor, on your couch, on your bed, at the library, at the dentist, wherever! Now, breathe.

That's it.

...okay, no it's not! Focus on your breath. What this means really is just to take note of the different characteristics of your breath. Are you breathing quickly? Shallowly? Deeply? Are your breaths long? Do they wobble to and froe? Don't just it. Just being aware of our breath helps us to relax.

Make note of these characteristics here:

Long _____

Shallow _____

Short _____

Deep _____

Stomach puffs out _____

Chest puffs out _____

Other notes:

Chapter 2

Get to Know Your Bad**s Self!

A big part of stress relief that many people don't fully grasp is getting to know oneself.

For those who vary in their gender, sexuality, or romantic structure, getting to know yourself can be an even bigger challenge. I know many who question themselves and their identities, or who have been told all their lives that they are something different than what they feel – or that what they do is wrong.

First, know that you are **awesome**. You are amazing! The fact that you are reading this means you have not been defeated.

Second, society sucks. A lot. Like most of the time. So when it comes to our personality or our preferences, let's take what society says with a grain of salt.

Getting to Know Yourself: The Challenge

I won't say this is an activity as much as it is a challenge. Why? Because most people dread doing this! But this is, in fact, so necessary to relax.

The challenge: find a mirror. If you don't like mirrors, that's fine; form a mirror in your head! Next, step in front of that mirror (whether actually physically or mentally). Now, see yourself. Look at all the fine little details. The curves, the straight lines, the zigzags.

If you feel comfortable, start saying things out loud that you enjoy about yourself. It can be something physical like your wonderful smile, or maybe it's something like your confidence.

Here's space for a list, write everything you can think of! (Write on the back when you run out of space).

Getting to Know Yourself: The Challenge Part 2

Aha! You weren't expecting a part 2, were you?!

Getting to know yourself goes deeper than just our characteristics that we love and enjoy. We are made out of lots of experiences. We can think about what shapes our understanding of who we are including our gender/sexuality/romantic identities.

The challenge: Think about your life chronologically; write down adjectives that come to mind or pop out with each significant event or person or influence in your life. (Here's an example: One important event when I was young was picking pumpkins with my family. The adjective that comes to mind is "silly" because I remember giggling and laughing a lot when we saw funny shaped pumpkins – I still laugh when I see funny shaped pumpkins!).

Getting to Know Yourself: Gender

Circle all the following that resonates with you when you consider your own Gender. Write ones in that aren't here!

dresses

NON-BINARY

headspace

Female

Somewhere-in-between

Male

identity

expression

suits

masculine

feminine

androgynous

Getting to Know Yourself: Sexuality

Circle all the following that resonates with you when you consider your own Sexuality. Write ones in that aren't here!

Pansexual

abstinent

bisexual

FLUID

homosexual

demiexual

heterosexual

ASEXUAL

complicated

uninterested

totally-into-it

Getting to Know Yourself: Romance

“Intimacy is all about the bond between 2 people. Most people associate intimacy with sex, but sex is more of a side effect.” –Brittney Still, Intimacy Coach

Circle all the following that resonates with you when you consider your own Romantic identity. Write ones in that aren't here!

polyamorous

monogamous

open

sologamous

hopeless-romantic

Netflix-and-chill

Non-monogamous

Best friends

AROMANTIC

date night

flowers

Chapter 3

Get to Know Your Bad**s Kith

Kith? What is this word? What does it mean?

Kith, unlike kin – which is your blood family - is your **chosen family**. Your chosen family can include people from your blood family who support you as well as those who are close friends and who you consider as those who have your back. These are your People.

Having a network of supportive people is important for stress relief. Especially knowing who they are and being able to identify them easily so that when you run into a problem that might cause stress, you can give them a call!

Additionally, a great way to relieve stress is to simply spend time in good company. Being able to have a relaxed space where there is no pressure is important – we can vent, if our kith has the energy to listen, and we can even do activities to relieve stress with our kith like group yoga or meditation! Maybe your meditation is just “Netflix-and-chill”.

Get to Know Your Kith: The Activity

Who is in your kith? Who are just friends? Who are acquaintances?

Kith

Friends

Acquaintances

Get to Know Your Kith: Characteristics

What do you admire about the people in your kith?
Check the boxes next to the qualities you recognize
in your close friends! Add ones you don't see here.

Compassionate	_____	Happy	_____		
Realistic	_____	Optimistic	_____	Pessimistic	_____
Serious	_____	Down to Earth	_____		
Funny	_____	Spiritual	_____	Skeptical	_____
Fashionable	_____	Friendly	_____		

Think about the qualities you checked or added
above... **how many of those characteristics do you
also possess? How many of them compliment you
well?** Did you know that you're **awesome**? The more
you surround yourself with people who lift you up,
the better you'll feel and the more people you can
help too!

Get to Know Your Kith: The Activity Part 2

Think of one person in your kith who you really appreciate. Gratitude is important to decrease tension because it reminds us that we have wonderful people in our lives.

Write a letter to this person below thanking them for playing an instrumental goal in your life. Feel free to share this with them after!

Chapter 4

Move Your Butt

This may seem as cliché as the first chapter where I told you that breathing is, in fact, good for you. Well, it turns out that **MOVING is also good** for you! It helps us fight stress in really positive ways. It helps us affirm ourselves because we can easily track our progress (distance, miles, what weight you're lifting, etc). *Isn't that great news?*

For some, **moving can be incredibly difficult**. For those of the GSRM community, it can be even more difficult! Why? Because so many fitness classes and gyms will, even if unintentionally, “reek of” (for lack of a better term) *gender norms and heteronormativity*. I know I’ve certainly come in contact with it.

The good news is, there are spaces in the health and fitness world for you! And, my biggest piece of advice is that if there isn’t anything in your immediate surroundings, *try starting your own group*. A walking group, a running buddy, someone to go to the gym with. It helps in general, but I’ve noticed it also helps me affirm my identity to have others who understand me around.

Chapter 4

Move Your Butt Continued

Here's my own personal story...

I went to find a personal trainer because I got really into health/wellness. I found the right nutrition system for me with a supportive LGBTQ community. I was leading yoga classes for gender non-conforming peeps. But I wanted to take my development to the next level.

When I spoke to the person in charge of organizing personal trainers about my gender identity, they did a double take. They stumbled over their words. They looked lost. *It wasn't their fault.* They simply didn't know. They had never come into contact with this type of gender diversity.

The story ends well because this person then tried very hard to understand and to use my preferred pronouns! Sometimes we need to take chances and be understanding in these situations.

Move Your Butt: The Activity

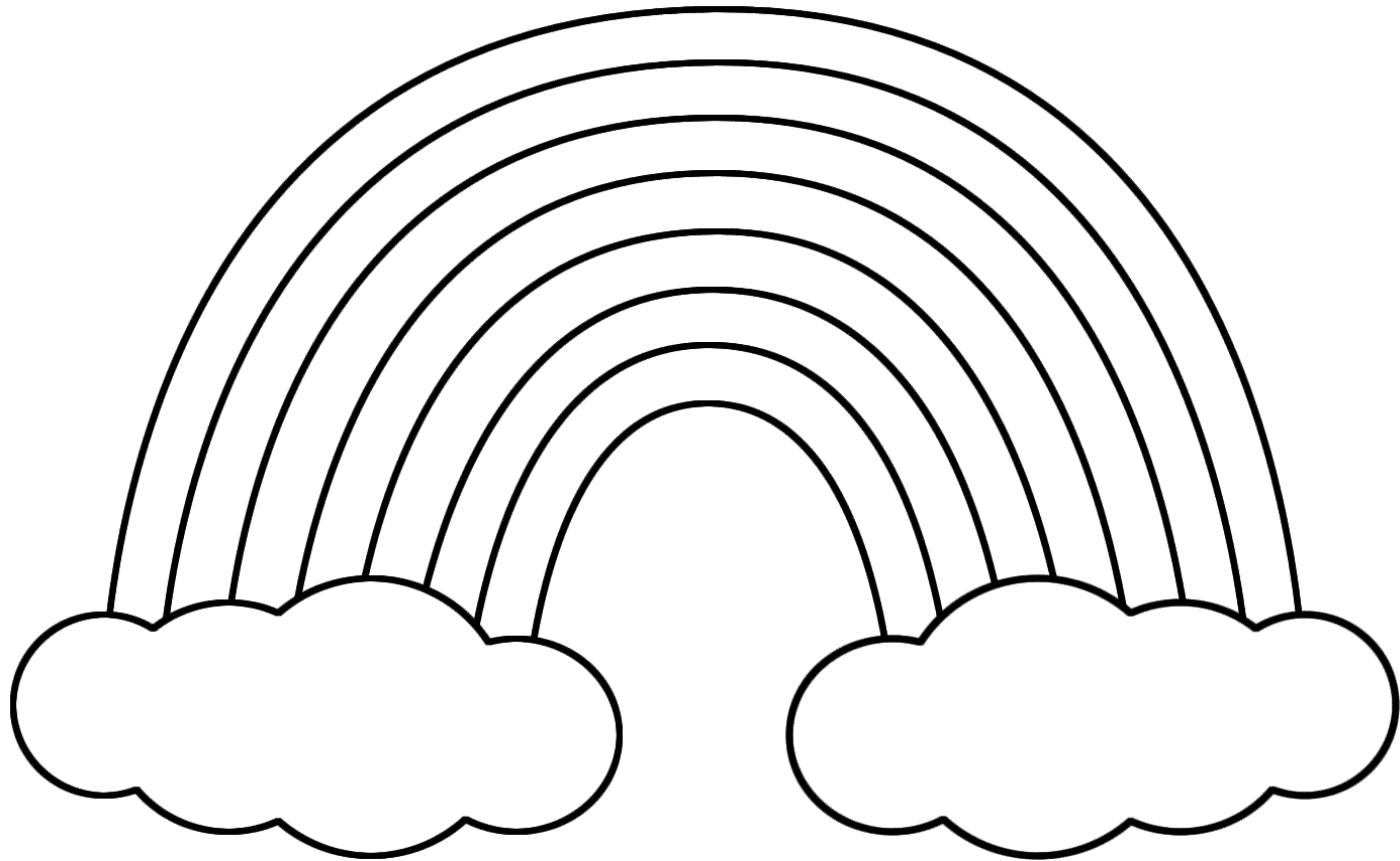
Challenge yourself to a realistic health/wellness goal. Is it to walk 50,000 steps this week? What about to run a mile tomorrow? Is it to go to that yoga class on Wednesday? Make it in the near future and make it something measurable.

Write down your goal here!

When you've completed your goal, come back here and write about your experience! What did you like about it? What didn't you like? Will you continue with this activity?

RANDOM RAINBOW!

This page is entirely random! I hope it brightens your day. Now that you've thought about moving. Why not color in this rainbow? Did you know coloring helps calm the mind and decrease anxiety?



Chapter 5

Try New Things and Take Risks

I've told you to breathe, I've told you to get to know yourself and your kith, I've told you to move and exercise, and all those things are great. Those alone have helped me calm myself, especially in the face of societal norms and pressures that confront us everyday because of our gender, sexuality, or romantic preferences.

However, I wouldn't have found the amazing peace of mind and the ability to manage great amounts of stress if I didn't **think outside the box or go outside my comfort zone**. I want to encourage you to try new things. Take risks. It's okay. (Half of you are like, "How is going outside of my comfort zone going to relieve stress?!"")

So many people come to me and say, "I wanted to go to that class on essential oils, but I don't want people to think I'm weird." or "I wanted to try out new things in my relationship, but I was afraid my partner would judge me." or "I wanted to go out to this nice restaurant, but none of my partners were free and I didn't want to go alone."

By holding back, you're creating yourself more stress. If you let yourself try new things, you'll have clarity of mind in what you like or what works and what doesn't!

Go. You have permission. Explore!

Trying New Things: The Challenge

Activity: Circle 3 new things you'll try this year!

Go to a new restaurant
by yourself

Introduce something
new to your relationship

Take a painting class

Learn some tai chi

Lead a class
on something
you enjoy

Drink a new type of tea

Try a new food

Write a friend a thank you card

Hike
somewhere
new

Learn to play an instrument

Start your
own business

Go to a yoga class

Buy yourself flowers

Meditate

The End

This was my first activity book I've ever created so thanks for reading and interacting with it! I hope to do many more and even more comprehensive ones in the future.

This might be the end to this book, but this is not the end.

Please feel free to like my page "Warrior's Pose" on Facebook and visit the website if you would like to follow my blog: www.warriorsepose.org

Should you need to contact me, please do so at warriorsepose@gmail.com! There you can also request one on one stress relief classes, individual or group yoga classes, and many other wonderful things <3

Resources

Warrior's Pose – www.warriorsepose.org

Brittney Still, Intimacy Coach – www.brittneystill.com

GLBT National Help Center - <http://www.glbthotline.org/>

Feel free to build your own list of resources here too!