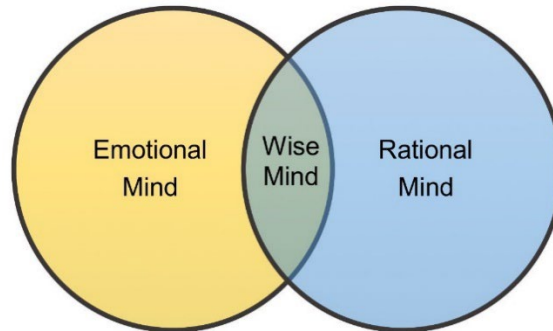


## Wellness Tip

### Wise Mind

All of us come up against dozens of choice points in a day. These choices range from small, rather insignificant ones to large, potentially life-changing ones. When making decisions, it is important to approach the situation with as much wisdom as possible.

Wise Mind is a mindfulness skill from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and can be used to increase the likelihood that you remain balanced and rooted internally. When making decisions from Wise Mind, you'll be more likely to choose an option that is effective in helping you be the person you want to be, building the life you want to live. Below you'll see a diagram of the different states of mind:



When we're in Emotion Mind, our emotions are driving our decisions. When emotions are in the driver's seat we can be a bit impulsive and reactive. It can feel overwhelming or chaotic at times. We can get a bit black & white about things or have trouble seeing nuance. Our decisions are based upon what feels good in the moment.

When we're in Rational Mind (sometimes called Reasonable Mind), logic is driving our decisions. When rationality is in the driver's seat, decisions are based upon what makes sense given the facts and data we've gathered. In Rational Mind we can be analytical, calculating, and approach situations with more objectivity. We think through the consequences of decisions and weigh options with no emotion.

Fully functioning from Emotion Mind can be ineffective because you don't seriously consider the consequences of your actions. Fully functioning from Rational Mind can be ineffective because you don't seriously consider how you feel about a situation. Instead, being grounded in Wise Mind as much as possible can lead to more effective decisions.

Wise Mind encourages you to name, honor, and make space for how you feel about a given situation. It also encourages you to name, honor, and make space for the facts of your reality. *It is the space of both/and.* By integrating both emotion and reason, you can more fully consider what the wisest course of action would be. You are not denying, dismissing, or ignoring aspects of your experience. You are mindful of what is.

Things to know about Wise Mind:

- You have one. It's kind of like the heartbeat – you're not always aware of it, but you can tune in to it if you are still and notice your experience. Some people tend to be more emotion minded. Some tend to be more rational minded. That's okay. If you have a tendency toward Emotion or Rational Mind, you just need to work a bit harder to make contact with its opposite. However, we all benefit from ending up in Wise Mind.
- Your Wise Mind is unique to you. We all have our own histories, dreams, goals, temperaments, personalities, values, etc. Other folks in your life may have thoughts and opinions about what you should do in any given situation. Sure, you can take their thoughts under advisement, but they don't have to live your life. You do. Only your Wise Mind can clarify what would align your decisions with your values and goals.
- Your ability to be more consistently rooted in Wise Mind grows as you practice making contact with it. It's kind of like a little piece of kindling that can grow into a cozy campfire if given enough space, attention, and oxygen.

- It is not always comfortable. Sometimes Wise Mind is a difficult place to be given the complexity of the human experience. At times you may have conflicting values which make Wise Mind choices very hard. That being said, Wise Mind focuses on what is effective for you in the short- and long-term.

You are encouraged to practice getting into Wise Mind before making decisions in your life.

When confronted by a choice, ask yourself:

- What am I experiencing in confronting this choice? [name emotions, name thoughts, name facts]
- What do I feel like doing in this moment? Would I benefit from making more space for my emotions or the facts of the situation?
- Who do I want to be in the world?
- What kind of life do I want to have? In the short-term? In the long-term?
- What do I think would be most helpful and effective in getting me there given the options in front of me?

If Wise Mind is new to you, start small. Use Wise Mind when making decisions about what to eat, how long to spend on social media, etc. From there you can build up to more substantial decisions like what to specialize in, big purchases, etc.

If you would like to talk with someone about choices you are facing, or for any other questions or concerns, feel free to contact the Medical Student Counseling Center to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment:

[osac-mscc@uiowa.edu](mailto:osac-mscc@uiowa.edu) | 319-335-8056 | 1240 MERF

Check out the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips:

<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Remember, life is really hard at times - be gentle with yourself!

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*Pronouns: she/her*