BEING A MIGRANT WOMAN
A DOUBLE CHALLENGE



Cofinanciado por la Unión Europea

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE INCLUSIÓN, SEGURIDAD SOCIAL Y MIGRACIONES
SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO DE MIGRACIONES
DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE GESTIÓN MIGRATORIA

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As a woman, you face not only the difficulties of being far from your country, but also the barriers and inequalities that come with being a woman. Often, this combination can make you feel more tired, insecure, or invisible.

In this Guide, you will find simple advice and exercises to help you look after yourself and feel better when dealing with difficult challenges such as discrimination or acts of hatred. For example, if a neighbour insults you or you are refused a job simply because of who you are.

It is important to remember that you have the right to be well and the strength to achieve it. Every small step counts.



1. How to care for your self-esteem

Feeling good about yourself is very important, especially when you face many challenges. Sometimes the messages you receive make you feel as though you are not good enough, but you must not forget that you have great value.

What you can do to work on your self-esteem:

- **Recognise who you are and what you have been through.** Write down all the good things and achievements in your life, even if they seem small. Example: “I am brave for coming to another country alone”, “I take care of my family”, “I learn every day”.
- **Speak to yourself kindly.** Replace harsh phrases like “I can’t” with gentler ones like “I’m doing the best I can” or “I deserve to take care of myself”.
- **Care for your body as an act of love.** Rest, enjoy a nice meal, take a bath, or dance to your favourite song.
- **Set boundaries.** Practise saying “no” when something does not feel right, even if it is just in front of the mirror.
- **Seek support.** Talk to someone who will listen and support you without judgement.



2. How to manage anxiety and fear

Feeling afraid or anxious is normal when you do not feel safe whether on the street, at work, or at home. Here are some steps to help you calm down and take care of yourself.

What you can do:

- **Breathe deeply and slowly.** When you feel anxious, try breathing in to the count of 4, and out to the count of 6. Repeat it several times.
- **Find a safe place.** Look for a spot where you feel calm, even if it is just a corner of your home or a nearby park.
- **Do something you enjoy.** Listen to music, paint, cook, or take a short walk to distract yourself and calm your mind.
- **Talk about how you feel.** Do not keep fear to yourself. Sharing it makes it smaller.
- **Stay present.** When frightening thoughts arise, ground yourself by noticing five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.



3. How to say "no" and set boundaries without guilt

Saying "no" and setting limits is a way of caring for yourself. Even if you sometimes feel guilty, it is essential for your wellbeing.

What to do:

- **Acknowledge your right to say "no".** No one should make you feel guilty for looking after yourself.
- **Practise saying "no" out loud.** You can do this in front of the mirror: "I can't", "I don't want to", "I'd rather not".
- **Use short, clear phrases.** You do not have to explain yourself too much. For example: "Sorry, I can't help you right now."
- **Remember that setting limits benefits both you and those around you.**
- **If guilt arises, take a deep breath and remind yourself that caring for yourself also helps you care for others.**

If someone does not respect your boundaries or makes you feel unsafe, seek support and do not face the situation alone.



4. How to express yourself without fear

Talking about your feelings and thoughts is important for your emotional health, even if it can sometimes feel difficult.

What to do:

- **Start with people who make you feel safe.** This could be a friend, a neighbour, or someone you trust.
- **Use statements that talk about you, not about others.** For example: "I feel...", "For me, it's important...".
- **Practise writing down what you want to say.** This helps you organise your thoughts and gain confidence.
- **If someone interrupts you or minimises your feelings, remember that your feelings are valid.**
- **Look for groups or spaces where you can share without fear.**

5. How to cope with migration grief

Being far from your country, family, and traditions can cause sadness and a sense of emptiness. This is called migration grief.

What to do:

- **Allow yourself to feel sadness.** Do not hold back your emotions. It is okay to cry or miss home.
- **Remember what you left behind with affection.** Think about the people, places, and moments that are important to you.
- **Make space for new experiences.** Try to find activities, friends, or places that make you feel good in this new country.

- **Maintain your traditions.** Keeping your customs or celebrating special dates can help you stay connected.
- **Seek support to talk about your story and your grief.** Sharing eases the weight.

6. How to rewrite your story from a place of empowerment

You are the author of your life. Even if you have lived through difficult experiences, you can choose to tell your story from a place of strength and courage.

What to do:

- **Write a letter to yourself.** Reflect on what you have lived through, the struggles you have faced, and the achievements you have made.
- **Highlight your strengths.** Recall times when you were brave, creative, or strong.
- **Visualise the future you want.** Imagine how you want to feel and what you want to achieve.
- **Repeat empowering phrases every day.** For example: "I am brave", "I can overcome whatever comes my way".
- **Remember that you have the right to be well and to decide over your own life.**

In **our PRODEM programme** (*Protection and Rights of Migrants against Xenophobic and Racist Hate Crimes*), we work on all these aspects in depth through workshops on different topics, mutual support groups (MSG), and personalised psychological care.



Ask for more information without fear. We are here for you!

General e-mail

prevencion@ymca.es



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