

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

EXCLUSIVE



SELF
♥
CARE

Self-Care Toolkit

THE WELLNESS AND LEARNING INITIATIVES

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Wellness & Learning
Initiatives



What is mine vs. What is yours

Part A



There is no “self” without the establishment of a boundary – what is mine vs. what is yours. When we are unable to define this, it can leave us feeling resentful, depleted, and invalidated. This can include areas of self, friendship, romantic, family and work relationships. As we expand our awareness, it is crucial that we locate ourselves in our experiences in order to create and sustain healthy relationships in our lives.

These are some boundary-types we interact with – **In which area do you find it difficult to establish your boundaries and why?**

- **PHYSICAL** - Includes your need for physical space, comfort with touch, or your physical needs such as needing to eat food, rest, and drink water.
- **SEXUAL** – Includes consent, respect, agreement, understanding of preferences and desires, right to privacy.
- **EMOTIONAL** – Includes validating the emotions of yourself and others, respecting emotional bandwidth.
- **FINANCIAL/MATERIAL** – Includes things like money, cars, jewelry, clothing, home, furniture, etc.
- **TIME** – The usage and management of one's time, access to it, important at home / work / in social sphere.
- **INTELLECTUAL** – Includes our thoughts, ideas, and in general our curiosity.



What is mine vs. What is yours

Part B



Communication is key to the establishment of healthy boundaries –

What communication style do you typically opt for, and why?

(without the judgement)

- **PASSIVE** – This communication style opts for the suppression of your needs, in order to make space for someone else's needs.
- **AGGRESSIVE** – This communication style opts to highlight your needs, without taking in the other person's needs.
- **ASSERTIVE** – [The sweet spot!] this communication style opts to highlight your needs, while also taking in the needs of the other individual within the relationship. Space for your needs and the other's to be heard and validated. Be clear and concise, no need to overexplain your boundary.
- **NON-VERBAL** – Pay attention to what the body might be saying, rather than ONLY the words that are being spoken – what is my body communicating that my mouth isn't or vice-versa?



Making Time for You



We all look at self-care from our personal lens and our own personal experiences of what was introduced to us and what we see as beneficial to maintaining balance.

What is self-care?

Simply, it is how we take care of ourselves.

It is the **ACTIVE** and **INTENTIONAL** pursuit of activities, choices, lifestyles that lead to a state of **HOLISTIC** health and balance.

Why does self-care matter?

People often think that taking time for themselves in the middle of busy times seems indulgent however looking after your well-being will help you be productive and care for others. **Self-care is not selfish. Self-care is the act of taking care of yourself.** Establishing self-care habits is an important part of living a healthy and happy life.

Self-care helps to prevent burnout.

Excessive or prolonged stress can lead to a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion, often referred to as burnout. Burnout reduces productivity and can lead to physical or mental concerns. By incorporating self-care activities into your regular routine, you give your body and mind time to rest, reset, and rejuvenate, so you can avoid or reduce the symptoms of burnout.

Self-care helps relationships.

Self-care helps you to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself and others. Doing things that make you feel physically and mentally good boosts your confidence and self-esteem. When you feel good, you are happier and better able to maintain positive relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. By practicing self-care, you also demonstrate to the people around you that you know how to set healthy, functional boundaries, which sets a great example and helps to align their expectations of you.

Self-care makes you more effective.

When you take time for yourself, and give your body the food, rest, and activity it needs, you will have more energy to meet the demands of daily life. Much like refueling your car, self-care activities refuel your body and mind. Bringing more balance to your daily routine will help you be more productive and more resilient to stressors.



Self-Care Plan

This is for you.



When it comes to self-care plans, there is no one-size-fits-all option. We all have different needs, strengths, and limitations. The following four-step process will help you to build a plan that is just right for you.

Step 1: Evaluate your coping skills

How we cope changes as we develop and experience new things. It is important to understand our coping strategies at any given moment and take the much-needed time to reevaluate our go-to strategies to determine their effectiveness.

Coping strategies can be positive/healthy/helpful, for example, tapping into your social support network, or negative/unhealthy/hurtful, such as turning to alcohol or drugs. If you find yourself lashing out or reaching for a cigarette instead of taking a deep breath and refocusing during periods of frustration, it may be time to re-evaluate your go-to coping skills.

Coping strategies are ways of responding to stress when dealing with real-life problems. But even without specific strategies, coping is something that we all do when we implement specific skills to overcome adversity. We all possess coping skills, whether we implement them consciously or not.

Step 2: Identify you self-care needs

We are all faced with unique challenges and no two people have the same self-care needs.

Take a moment to consider what you value and need in your everyday life (daily self-care needs) versus what you value and need in the event of a crisis (emergency self-care needs). Remember that self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs, and it is important to consider all dimensions of wellness.

Daily self-care

What are you doing to support your overall well-being on a day-to-day basis? Do you engage in self-care practices now? Are you more active in some areas of self-care than others?



Self-Care Plan

This is for you.



Emergency Self-Care

When you are faced with a crisis, you likely will not have time to create a coping strategy. Take time to develop a plan (in advance) so it is there when you need it.

Step 3: Identify barriers and areas needing improvement

It is important for each of us to identify our specific barriers to personal growth and /or self-care opportunities and address them before creating an overall plan. Minimizing or eliminating these barriers up front, will make the creation and implementation of a personal plan much easier. If ignored, these potential barriers can undermine the hard work we put into being successful and become a much larger problem in the future impacting our overall wellbeing.

Acknowledging a potential barrier and exploring all possible resources are fundamental to overcoming personal barriers. Understanding that you are not alone is also important because it provides the strength needed to take on the barrier.

Reflect

Reflect on the existing coping strategies and self-care tools you have outlined in the previous activities. What is working? What is not working? Keep the helpful tools and remove the stuff that does not help you.

Examine

Are there barriers to maintaining your self-care? Examine how you can address these barriers. Start taking steps toward incorporating new strategies and tools that will benefit your health and well-being.

Replace

Work on reducing, and then eliminating, negative coping strategies. If you find yourself using negative strategies, then begin by choosing one action you feel is most harmful and identify a positive strategy to replace it. Positive coping skills are an important part of your self-care toolkit.



Self-Care Plan

This is for you.



Step 4: Create your personal self-care plan

Once you have determined your personal needs and strategy, write it down. Your self-care plan can be as simple or complex as you need it to be. You may choose to keep a detailed plan at home and carry a simplified version in your wallet, or on your phone.

Next steps

It is important that your plan resonates for you and that you put it into action starting now!

Take a moment to reread the self-care habits you wrote down. Select one of the habits you would like to begin practicing and complete the sentences below.

Today, I commit to taking a weekly yoga class. I want to do this because I want to improve my flexibility, learn a new skill, and have some time for myself each week. I will accomplish this by finding and enrolling in a free or low-cost class and by easing up on my commitments and asking for help from others.

Today, I commit to ...

I want to do this because ...

I will accomplish this by...

**“Taking care of yourself doesn’t mean me first,
it means me too”**

~ L.R. Knost ~.



Evaluate Your Current Coping Skills

Six common coping skills to get you started



Thought Challenging

Challenging thoughts involves recognizing, confronting, and disputing unhelpful thinking patterns - or automatic thoughts that pop up.

- E.g. Finding evidence and facts that disprove negative thoughts.

Releasing Emotions

Healthy emotional release can include any activity that provides an outlet for your feelings.

- E.g. Going for a long walk; smashing playdoh, ripping up paper.

Practicing Self-Love

Showing compassion to oneself through activities that comfort, relax, or invigorate you. Exercising self-compassion and -kindness through nurturing, healing activities.

- E.g. Taking a long, hot bath.

Distracting

Positive distraction involves engaging in any healthy activity that takes your mind off negative and difficult experiences.

- E.g. Reading an interesting book or magazine.

Tapping into your best self

Tapping into your best self is about implementing your core character strengths or acting positively in accordance with your personal values.

- E.g. Helping in your local community.

Grounding

Centering yourself in the present, or grounding, is focusing your mind on what you experience in the moment, calming you and giving you perspective

- E.g. Meditation, yoga, or engage in a mindful activity.

For Additional Tips



Wellness Wheel

Dimensions of Wellness



Wellness Wheel: Aspects of who we are

The Wellness Wheel is a model that aligns with Indigenous traditional practices, which view individuals holistically. It recognizes that wellness is about being in a state of balance with the physical, emotional, academic/career, social, creative, spiritual, environmental, financial, and intellectual aspects of our lives.

The Wellness Wheel can help us identify what might be causing us stress and understand what aspects might be falling in and out of balance in our lives.



First, identify your current practices for each of dimensions.

Second, identify practices you would try for each dimension.

Emergency Self-Care

What tools are helpful vs Harmful



Relaxation/Staying Calm

Which activities help you to relax (e.g. deep breathing, taking a walk)? Which activities make you more agitated or frustrated (e.g. yelling, swearing, or drinking)?

- Identify which activities are helpful - What to do
- Identify which activities are harmful - What not to do

Self-Talk

Helpful self-talk may include, "I am safe/I can do this." Harmful self-talk may include, "I can't handle this/I knew this would happen/I deserve this."

- Identify which activities are helpful - What to do
- Identify which activities are harmful - What not to do

Social Support

Which family members and friends can you reach out to for help or support? Which people should you avoid during times of stress? Be honest about who helps and who drains your energy.

- Identify which activities are helpful - What to do
- Identify which activities are harmful - What not to do

Mood

Which activities support a positive mood (e.g. listening to uplifting music, enjoying the sunshine)? What should you avoid when times get tough (e.g. staying in bed all day, avoiding social activities)?

- Identify which activities are helpful - What to do
- Identify which activities are harmful - What not to do

Resilience

What, or who, helps you to get through difficult times? What helps you bounce back? What or who feeds negativity for you?

- Identify which activities are helpful - What to do
- Identify which activities are harmful - What not to do

Self-Soothing

With your FIVE Senses



Self-Soothing is a tool to take care of yourself, feel more at ease, to slow down, and take a pause. Doing something nice and caring for yourself can help you get to a calmer or balanced state of mind. When self-soothing, think of all your five senses, and try to make yourself feel better by stimulating them in pleasing ways. We can't always take care of all our senses, so mindfully chose what will work in the moment.

VISION

What do you find calming and enjoyable visually? Here are some examples: nature, fish tank, fireplace, clothes spinning in the dryer, favorite picture. What are three things you enjoy looking at?

HEARING

What do you like to listen to? Do you find nature sounds enjoyable, the sound of children playing, great music? Name three sounds that you enjoy?

SMELL

Do you have a perfume or cologne that you enjoy? Aromatherapy, fresh cookies, candles, fresh air, old books? Name three scents that help you feel calm?

TOUCH

A soft blanket, warm bath, massage, scarf, lotion, petting an animal. What three things physically feel good to you?

TASTE

A favorite mint candy, chewing gum, flavoured water, herbal tea, coffee. Identify three small things you could use to stimulate your taste buds.

Mindfulness Techniques



EATING

Pick a small piece of food (piece of chocolate, almond, rice cake, scoop of peanut butter). Take the object beneath your nose and carefully notice the smell of it. Bring the object to one ear and squeeze it, roll it, listen for any sound coming from it. Begin to slowly bring the object to your mouth, noticing that the arm knows exactly where to go and perhaps noticing your mouth watering. Gently place the object in your mouth, or take one bite if it is larger than one bite- size, but do not chew yet. Feel it on your tongue: its weight, temperature, size, texture. Explore the sensations of it in your mouth. When you are ready, intentionally bite into it . Does it go automatically to one side of the mouth? Notice when the taste releases. Slowly, slowly chew, noticing the change in consistency, until you are conscious of the impulse to swallow. Sense the food moving down to your throat and into your stomach.

WALKING

Notice your body as you stand in stillness. Feeling the connection of the body to the ground, or the floor. Becoming aware of your surroundings, taking in any sights, smells, tastes, sounds or other sensations. Notice any thoughts or emotions and let them be. Notice your arms by your sides or if you prefer, hold your right hand in your left hand at the front, or clasp your hands at your back. Notice your breath, moving in and out of your body. No need to change it; just let it be. Now shift your weight to the left leg and begin to lift your right foot up. Move it forward, place it back down on the ground. Mindfully shift the weight the right leg and begin to lift the left foot up, move it forward, place it back down on the ground.

And continue with this walking... walking mindfully, walking slowly, and paying attention to the sensations on the soles of your feet. As each part of the sole, from heel to toe, touches the ground. Lifting, moving, placing. One step at a time. That suits your body and your balance. As you move forward, notice your body, notice your head sitting on your shoulders, your arms & hands, your torso, your legs, moving you forward, step by step. Notice any thoughts that arise and let them be. Returning your focus to the sensation of walking. Lifting, moving, placing. Notice your breath. Has it moved into a rhythm; a rhythm that fits with your pace of walking, step by step



Mindfulness Techniques



Body Scan

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, making sure that you do not have any constriction. Loosen any tight clothing. Starting with your feet, pay attention to the physical feelings in them: any pain, discomfort, coolness, warmth, tension, tightness. Simply pay attention to the physical feelings and sensations. Don't judge them as good or bad, don't try to change them, just be aware of them. Slowly allow your awareness to drift up from your feet to your lower legs, again simply paying attention to any physical sensations in that part of your body.

Then slowly let your awareness drift further up your body, doing the same gentle noticing for all of the parts of your body – your upper legs, hips, buttocks, pelvic region, stomach, chest, your lower back, upper back, fingers and hands, lower arms, upper arms, shoulders, neck, your head, forehead, temples, face – eyes, cheeks, nose, mouth, jaw line. Then let your awareness drift gently and slowly back down your body, noticing any other places where there is pain, discomfort or tension and simply noticing this, until your awareness settles back at your feet. Commence doing this exercise just for 5 minutes. It can be done sitting down in a chair or lying in bed. Over time, don't worry about how long it takes – just allow yourself to pay attention to the sensations in your body. If, while doing this exercise, thoughts intrude, that's okay – just notice the thoughts, notice yourself noticing the thoughts and gently guide your awareness back to your body. You can also focus on a color while walking (like looking for the color orange), you can hold a rock instead of tasting a food and use the same idea of texture, weight, rolling it around your hand etc.



**FREE Guided
Body Scan
Meditation**

Breathing Techniques

To help with stress management



The Belly Breath

1. Find a comfortable position
2. Close your eyes or leave them open focusing on a spot on the floor
3. Focus on your breath
4. As you breathe in allow your abdominal muscles to rise
5. As you breathe in allow your abdominal muscles to fall
6. On the in breath count 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
7. On the out breath count 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

Mantra Breathing

1. Find a comfortable position
2. Close your eyes or leave them open focusing on a spot on the floor
3. Continue abdominal breathing
4. On the in- breath repeat the words " I am"
5. On the out breath repeat the words

Heart Zone Breathing

1. Place your hand over your heart
2. Feel your heart beating within your chest
3. Activate a positive emotion by thinking of a person or pet that is easy to love and for whom you feel gratitude
4. Let that feeling expand inside your heart
5. Create a slide show in your minds eye of all the wonderful events in your life that have brought you joy.

Audio Meditations

These free guided meditations will help you get started.
Find guided meditations for sleep, stress, anxiety, depression, cultivating mindfulness, and more.

<https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/audio-meditations.htm>