



Self-care is a commonly used phrase that validates us in doing whatever we want to achieve instant gratification, even if it isn't serving us long term. We often confuse material or external substance as self-care. Self-care is not a hedonistic blowing off of steam, but a commitment you make to yourself to nurture your body, mind, and spirit. It is not indulgence, but reflection, awareness, and commitment. I could eat chocolate cake every day and call it self-care – but would that be serving my body long term? I could buy all my favorite clothes, and call it self-care, but will this lead to my financial well-being? I could numb all of my stressful thoughts or unpleasant emotions with substance, but would that be an experience of my wholeness?

I have learned that authentic self-care requires that I dig a little deeper. Genuine self-care requires that we stay aware and be honest with ourselves about what is really nurturing. Honest reflection is essential. Sometimes this honesty in self-reflection can be difficult, even painful as we toss off old perceptions or patterns that are not supporting our wholeness. We can't stop at bubble baths, wine, and chocolate. Authentic self-care requires that we stay true to finding what serves our completeness.

Think of how you would treat a small child, or a dear friend that you cherish. Self-care is showing up to yourself in the same way that you show up for someone that you love.

The next couple activities will help us reflect on true self-care.

### Self-care is:

- Not selfish
- Essential and non-negotiable
- Makes it possible to care for others
- Individualized—it doesn't always look like a particular thing
- It makes you feel alive
- It connects you to your body
- It helps you connect with the best version of yourself
- It's recognizing when you are out of alignment and working to find your way back to balance
- It can be real and uneventful
- It can cost nothing, or be as extravagant as you want
- It's anything that makes you feel whole

## Self-Care Assessment

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton.

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more of in your life.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

- 3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this
- ? = This never occurred to me

### Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity
- Take time to be sexual - with myself, with a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes I like
- Take vacations
- Other:

### Mental Self-Care

- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet
- Make time for self-reflection
- Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- Have my own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which I am not expert or in charge
- Attend to minimizing stress in my life
- Engage my intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art show, sports event, theatre
- Be curious

- \_\_\_\_\_ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

### **Emotional Self-Care**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stay in contact with important people in my life
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- \_\_\_\_\_ Love myself
- \_\_\_\_\_ Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- \_\_\_\_\_ Allow myself to cry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Find things that make me laugh
- \_\_\_\_\_ Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

### **Spiritual Self-Care**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Make time for reflection
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spend time in nature
- \_\_\_\_\_ Find a spiritual connection or community
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be open to inspiration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cherish my optimism and hope
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- \_\_\_\_\_ Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be open to not knowing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meditate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pray
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have experiences of awe
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contribute to causes in which I believe
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, or music
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

### **Relationship Self-Care**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule regular activities with my children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make time to see friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call, check on, or see my relatives
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spend time with my companion animals
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stay in contact with faraway friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send holiday cards
- \_\_\_\_\_ Allow others to do things for me
- \_\_\_\_\_ Enlarge my social circle
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask for help when I need it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

**Workplace or Professional Self-Care**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take time to chat with co-workers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make quiet time to complete tasks
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- \_\_\_\_\_ Set limits with clients and colleagues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"
- \_\_\_\_\_ Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get regular supervision or consultation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have a peer support group
- \_\_\_\_\_ (If relevant) Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest

**Overall Balance**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
- \_\_\_\_\_ Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

**Other Areas of Self-Care that are Relevant to You**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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[http://www.ballarat.edu.au/aasp/student/sds/self\\_care\\_assess.shtml](http://www.ballarat.edu.au/aasp/student/sds/self_care_assess.shtml) and adapted by Lisa D. Butler, Ph.D.)