

**NURTURING SELF-CARE**  
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*What is it? What is your stress survival program? What is your self-care plan?*

Whether one is a survivor of trauma, suffers from panic and anxiety, or is dealing with every day stress – self-care is an essential survival tool. Each of us must develop ways to tune in to our body's needs. Start with simple things. When you are tired, rest. When you have to go to the bathroom, go. When you feel like crying, allow yourself to cry.

Personal wellness requires personal attention and self-discipline. From childhood, adults have been taught to take care of others and as a result, our own self-care has often been demoted to the bottom of our list. Therefore, we need to take personal responsibility to nurture and to provide disciplined self-care.

Making ourselves a priority can be uncomfortable, especially learning to set boundaries within relationships. Balancing work and time with our families and friends can be a real challenge. Practice saying “No.”, or “I will get back to you.”, when others make requests that you feel are disrupting your personal or work life. Many people have been taught to be all giving by watching the modelling of their parents and grandparents; and do not want to be seen as selfish. The end result can be an overwhelmed feeling of exhaustion.

The conflict between being selfish or selfless can create a great deal of worry and anxiety for those who worry about what others think of them. Part of the answer is to relinquish one's need for approval, and the other part of the answer is to learn to set personal boundaries respectfully. As parents and adult role models, we can begin modelling for the younger generation and our peers the wisdom of self-care by saying: “The next 30 minutes are for me”.

Sometimes we believe that it is just easier to do it ourselves if we want it done to our own standards. Those of who are Type A personalities and are driven towards perfection can suffer from worrying about making mistakes or things not proceeding in just the right way. The end result can be frustration and rushing to accomplish yet more.

The truth is that we have no control over anything or anyone but our own behaviour. Acceptance of this is the path toward freedom from personal suffering.

As children, one's developmental needs may or may not have been met. However, now as adults it is our own responsibility to set healthy boundaries in order to nurture and heal ourselves. Some may choose to do this personal work on their own; while, others may choose the support of a therapist or counsellor. If

you choose to pursue counselling, it is important to take the time to interview the counsellor and to determine that the counsellor of your choice is a good match for you. Ask questions about the therapist's area of expertise, their experience, and educational foundation. Discuss with them their ethics about confidentiality.

*What does a self-care plan look like? How does it work?*

What do you enjoy doing that is nurturing? Make a list. Keep your plan handy. Take it out in times of stress or when you are in need of some nurturing self-care. Choose one thing. Do it!

*Now what?*

Take care of yourself; it is your responsibility. Remember, you are worth it!

## **Your Self-Care Plan**

*Here are some ideas that others have used:*

Remember to breathe  
Listen to a relaxation tape  
Read a book  
Play an instrument  
Make a cup of tea  
Have a massage  
Play with a pet  
Go to the beach  
Play with a child  
Keep a journal  
Get cozy in a blanket  
Cuddle with a stuffed animal  
Dim the lights  
Light a candle or incense

Add soothing music  
Ask a roommate for support  
Be with nature  
Notice the clouds and trees  
Listen to the birds  
Take time for YOURSELF  
Read the Women's Comfort Book  
Repeat a daily affirmation  
Exercise – do something physical  
Take a walk  
Take a bubble bath  
Call a Crisis Line (Redial if BUSY)  
Create and Read Your Phone List for Hard Times