

Self-Care Assessment Worksheet

This assessment tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care. Using the scale below, rate the following areas in terms of frequency:

1. It never occurred to me
2. Never
3. Rarely
4. Occasionally
5. Frequently

Physical Self-Care

- ___ eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- ___ eat healthy
- ___ exercise
- ___ get regular medical care for prevention
- ___ get medical care when needed
- ___ take time off when needed
- ___ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some physical activities that is fun
- ___ Take time to be sexual – with yourself, with a partner
- ___ Get enough sleep
- ___ Wear clothes you like
- ___ Take vacations
- ___ Take day trips or mini-vacations
- ___ Make time away from telephone
- ___ Other: _____

Psychological Self-Care

- ___ Make time for self reflection
- ___ Have your own personal counselling
- ___ Write in a journal
- ___ Read something that is unrelated to work
- ___ Do something at which you are not expert
- ___ Decrease stress in your life
- ___ Let others know different aspects of you
- ___ Notice your inner experiences – listen to your thoughts, judgements, beliefs, attitudes and feelings
- ___ Engage your intelligence in a new area (sport event, museum, history exhibit etc)
- ___ Practice receiving from others
- ___ Be curious
- ___ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- ___ Other: _____

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important from people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Love yourself
- Re-read your favourite book, re-watch a favourite movie
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you cry
- Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches and protest
- Play with children
- Other: _____

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time with nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- be open to inspiration
- cherish your optimism and hope
- be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Spend time with your children
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)

Self-Care

Self care can be thought of as the things we do to take care of ourselves and keep ourselves healthy. It also

- Includes your physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being.
- Helps us create balance
- Means identifying your own needs and taking steps towards meeting them.
- Asks you to take proper care of yourself and treat yourself as kindly as you treat others.

You can develop a self-care plan by:

1. Continue to do things that you are already doing that rejuvenate you and positively contribute to your health and quality of life
2. Start doing new activities or accessing services that will enable you to recharge and achieve better balance in your life
3. Stop doing those things which are optional and add to your current responsibilities and stresses, and/or those things for which you can enlist the help of others to lighten your load.

	Continue Doing	Start Doing	Stop Doing
Physical			
Psychological			
Emotional			
Spiritual			



Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and in a non-judgemental way

Mindfulness of Emotions

We often start to learn mindfulness skills by focusing our attention on our breath, our bodies, the environment or activities. Being mindful of emotions helps us to stand back from the emotion, understand it, not to fear it or emotions helps is to stand back from the emotion struggle against it, and it can have the added benefit of reducing the distress (although the aim is to learn to accept the experience, rather than lessen the distress).



Set aside a few minutes when you can be quiet and won't be disturbed.

Start by bringing your attention to your breath. Notice your breathing as you slowly breathe in and out, perhaps imagining you have a balloon in your belly, noticing the sensations in your belly as the balloon inflates on the in-breath, and deflates on the out-breath.

Notice the feelings, and what it feels like.

Name the emotion:

- What is it?
- What word best describes what you are feeling?
 - Angry, sad, anxious, irritated, scared, frustrated, etc.



Accept the emotion. It's a normal body reaction. It can be helpful to understand how it came about – what it was, the set of circumstances that contributed to you feeling this way. Don't condone or judge the emotion. Simply let it move through you without resisting it, struggling against it, or encouraging it.

Investigate the emotion.

- How intensely do you feel it?
- How are you breathing?
- What are you feeling in your body? Where do you feel it?
- What is your posture like when you feel this emotion?
- Where do you notice muscle tension?
- What's your facial expression? What does your face feel like?
- Is anything changing? (nature, posture, intensity)



What thoughts or judgements do you notice? Just notice those thoughts. Allow them to come into your mind and allow them to pass. Anytime that you find that you're engaging with the thoughts – judging them or yourself for having them, believing them, struggling against them, just notice and bring your attention to back to your breathing, and to the physical sensations of the emotion.

If any other emotions come up, if anything changes, simply notice and repeat the steps above. Just notice that the feelings change over time.

As you become more practised, you can use this mindfulness technique when you feel more intense emotion.

Sober Breathing Space

This is an exercise you can do almost anywhere, anytime because it is brief and quite simple. It can be used during a high-risk or stressful situation, if you are upset about something, or when you are experiencing urges or cravings to use. It can help you to step out of auto pilot, become less reactive and more aware and mindful of your response.

A way to remember the steps is the acronym **SOBER**.

S- Stop. When you are in a stressful or risky situation, or even just at random times throughout the day, remember to stop or slow down and check in with what is happening. This is the first step in stepping out of automatic pilot.

O- Observe. Observe the sensations that are happening in your body. Also, observe any emotions, moods or thoughts you are having. Just notice as much as you can about your experience.

B- Breathe. Gather your attention and bring it to your breath.

E- Expand your awareness to include the rest of your body as a whole, your posture and your facial expression, seeing if you can gently hold it all in awareness.

R-Respond (rather than react) mindfully, with awareness of what is truly needed in the situation and how you can best take care of yourself. Whatever is happening in your mind and body, you still have a choice in how you respond.

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 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:

Psychological 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, 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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GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Sleep problems are fairly common. In fact, one in four people experience sleep difficulties, which include trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, early morning waking, sleeping too much, or restless or unsatisfying sleep. Getting a good night's sleep can improve your mental well-being and help you to better manage your anxiety. The good news is that there are things you can do to improve your sleep.



TIP: Sleep problems can be the result of various conditions or medical problems. Therefore, it is important to discuss your sleep problems with your doctor.

To improve your sleep, try some of the following strategies:

Create a Comfortable Sleep Environment. If you want to have a good sleep, it helps to create a comfortable sleep environment. Make sure that you have a supportive mattress and fresh, comfortable bedding. Also, try to ensure that your room is not too hot or cold, minimize noise, and block out light.

Relax. Try doing something to relax your body and mind before going to bed. Try taking a hot bath 90 minutes before you plan to go to bed. Or, try a relaxation exercise (see [Calm Breathing](#) and [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)), meditation, or listening to calming music.

Have a Snack. Although a heavy meal late in the evening can disrupt sleep, a healthy light snack in the evening can improve sleep. Try eating light cheese and crackers, turkey, or bananas, or drink a warm glass of milk. Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods.

Get Physical. People who exercise tend to have more restful sleep. Exercising for at least 30 minutes three times a week can improve your sleep. So, get moving! Go for a walk or a run. The best time to exercise is in the late afternoon or early evening. Exercising in the morning, while good for you, won't help with sleep. Exercising less than two hours before bedtime can actually interfere with sleep.

Set a Bedtime Routine. Having a bedtime routine cues your body that it's time to sleep. So, establish a set routine that you follow every night. For example, have a hot bath, put on your pajamas, brush your teeth, and then listen to soft music and read on the couch until you start to feel sleepy and then go to bed.

Establish a Fixed Awakening Time. Try waking up at the same time every day (even on weekends) no matter how well or how poorly you have slept. This way your body will begin to get used to a regular sleep rhythm.

Sleep Only When Sleepy. Don't force yourself into bed at a particularly time if you're not feeling sleepy. You'll only lie awake in bed, frustrated that you can't sleep.

Just for Sleeping. Your bed should be used strictly for sleeping (sex is the only exception). Try to avoid reading, watching television, working, or studying in bed, because these activities keep your mind active, which gets in the way of sleep.

Get Out of Bed. If you can't fall asleep after 20 to 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something boring (e.g., read the manual on how to program your clock radio, read the sports section of the newspaper if you're not a sports fan) or try relaxing (e.g., meditate, listen to calm music, have a warm de-caffeinated drink). When you start to feel sleepy, try going back to bed. This strategy can feel like you are making things worse, but if you stick with it, it can really help.

Don't Worry. Leave your worries about work, school, health, relationships, etc. out of the bedroom. Try scheduling a "worry time" earlier in the evening to deal with your worries. If you wake up in the middle of the night worrying, try writing down your worries and tell yourself that you will address them in the morning.



TIP: Worrying about not sleeping doesn't help – it just makes it more likely that you won't sleep. Let go of your belief that you have to get eight hours of sleep or you can't function. Stop looking at the clock and stop trying to make yourself fall sleep. It will happen when it happens.

Avoid Caffeine. Avoid consuming caffeine at least four hours before bedtime. This includes coffee, some teas, soft drinks, and chocolate. Caffeine is a stimulant and it can keep you awake.

Avoid Alcohol. Although you may think that alcohol will help you fall asleep, it interferes with sleep later in the evening. So, try to avoid consuming alcohol at least four hours before bed.

Don't Smoke Before Bed. Try to avoid smoking at least four hours before bedtime as it can interfere with a good night's sleep.

Skip the Nap. Naps can interfere with normal sleep cycles. So, if you're having trouble sleeping, avoid taking naps. That way, your body will be more tired when it's bedtime.

Get Some Natural Light. Try to spend some time outdoors or in natural light every day. Getting some sunlight early in the day can be helpful for setting your body's natural wake and sleep cycle.



Keys to Success:

- **Start Small!** Making small changes can have a large impact on your sleep. Don't try to do everything all at once. Instead, pick one or two strategies and try them consistently. When you're ready, try adding a new strategy. The goal is to slowly start increasing behaviours that can help you sleep, while reducing the things that are interfering with your sleep.
- **Be Consistent.** Pick a strategy and use it consistently. Try to do the same thing every night.
- **Be Patient.** These strategies can take time to improve your sleep. In fact, sometimes things can get worse before they get better. Hang in there and stick with it!
- **Chart Your Progress.** Use the [Sleep Diary](#) form to keep track of the strategies you're using and your weekly progress.