



HOW TO PRACTICE SELF-CARE

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

**For People in recovery from substance use disorders &
Those who actively support the recovery of others**

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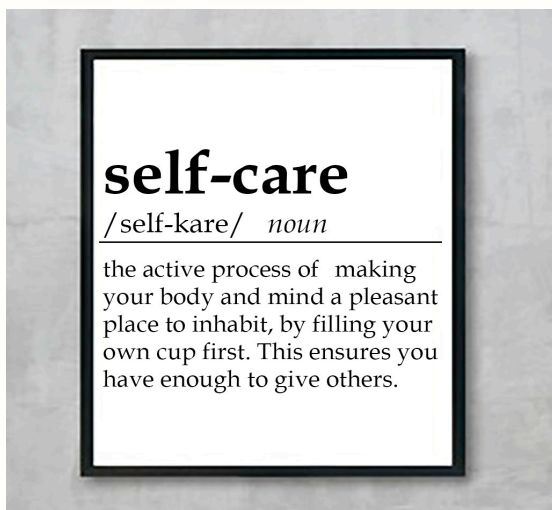
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INTRODUCTION

What is self-care? There are many definitions, but one of the most practical is “the active process of making your body and mind a pleasant place to inhabit by filling your own cup first; self-care ensures that you have enough to give others.”

This toolkit on how to practice self-care is intended to be used as a convenient reminder in support of the need for, and responsibility to engage in daily self-care habits that reduce stress, increase satisfaction, and bolster effectiveness in all areas of one’s life: physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual.

“ **Remember: Self-care is not only a need, but also a responsibility.** ”



Caring for yourself is the foundation of caring for others.



Self-care is often misunderstood as an act of selfishness.

Practicing Self-Care in the Context of Recovery

While self-care is an essential skill for everyone, this toolkit is specifically designed to help three groups of people: those who are in recovery from a substance use disorder, those who are actively supporting the recovery of others, and those who are both in recovery themselves as well as actively supporting the recovery of others.

The approaches within this toolkit are grounded in evidence-based theories and draw upon materials which have been reviewed by internationally recognized experts in both treatment and recovery. Nevertheless, the toolkit is meant to be a down-to-earth, user-friendly resource to be consulted frequently, even daily. After all, both recovery and self-care are life-long journeys of ongoing progress, with none of us ever reaching perfection—we can all always get better at our own self-care!



Self-care and recovery are both life-long journeys of ongoing progress that can involve setbacks.

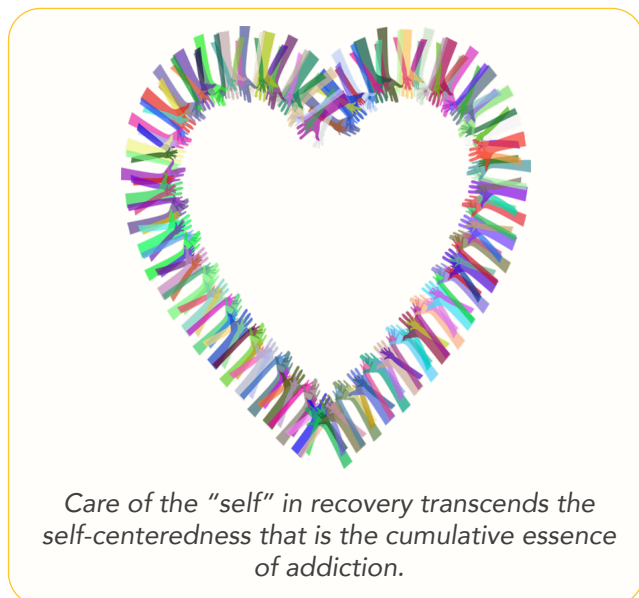
Acts of Self-Care in the Context of Personal Recovery

Acts of self-care constitute one of the daily rituals of recovery. These rituals, which involve efforts to reverse the damage of addiction and establish new health-oriented habits, can also be thought of as acts of self-repair. Care of the “self” in recovery transcends the self-centeredness that is the cumulative essence of addiction.

After years of self-destructive behavior that characterizes the patterns of chronic substance use, acts of self-care may feel unfamiliar, awkward, and even unnatural to those first experiencing the journey of recovery. Ultimately, acts of self-care are based on responsibility not only to one's self, but also to those one considers family and community.

“ **Acts of self-care are building blocks of a return to self-respect** ”

Acts of self-care are building blocks of a return to self-respect and a sense of belonging to the wider community from which so many persons with substance use disorders often feel disconnected.



Self-Care Especially for the Recovery Support Professional

Acts of self-care are essential to being a healthy participant in any relationship, whether it be in a personal capacity or professional one. Acts of self-care are a foundation for a life of service to others. Indeed, all service to support the recovery of others hinges on personal wellness and practicing self-care. That said, maintaining the practice of self-care when one is actively supporting others in recovery is not easy; it often involves juggling competing demands. For example, when one is engaged in helping those who have experienced neglect and

abuse, lines of separation between one's own needs and the needs of others can often become blurred, making decisions complex and confusing. Many people working to support the recovery of others may find themselves drained and resentful, wondering how to detach in a healthy manner from the problems of those they are trying to support. One of the most common problems facing recovery support professionals is how to remain resilient and effective when helping others requires constant exposure to the stories and details of those who have endured serious trauma. Indeed, recovery support professionals have an ethical responsibility to practice self-care as a tool for avoiding secondary trauma as well as to prevent burnout.



Effective Self-Care Must Pervade All Aspects of One's Life

Effective self-care must pervade all aspects of one's life. While there are numerous types of self-care, including physical, psychological, emotional, social, and relational self-care, it is important to examine all areas of one's life to be sure that important aspects of caring for yourself are not being overlooked. For example, adopting a new exercise regimen, or a daily meditation program are can both be very positive steps towards enhanced self-care, but these external steps mean little if

PRACTICING SELF-CARE IN THE CONTEXT OF RECOVERY: WHERE DOES ONE BEGIN?

Undertaking a program of self-care (or helping to support another recovering person's self-care) can sometimes feel overwhelming. Breaking old habits and creating new ones is a long-term process, so be gentle with yourself and give it time.

Where does one begin with developing a self-care plan in the context of recovery when there are so many areas of life to consider? The following are two ideas for moving forward.

management of symptoms. It also means making life precisely what you want it to be. It means living a life to be proud of. It means having a stable home, a healthy lifestyle, meaningful relationships, and making progress towards life goals. It is useful to think of the wide scope of recovery as having four key dimensions: health, home, purpose, and community. These are facets of life that are important to keep in mind when working with oneself and with others in developing self-care habits in the context of recovery.



The first option, from the US Department of Health and Human Services, breaks down the dimensions of recovery into four areas. This option provides a useful way to look at how to develop and implement self-care habits across all areas of one's life. In this way, recovery and self-care can be seen as one.

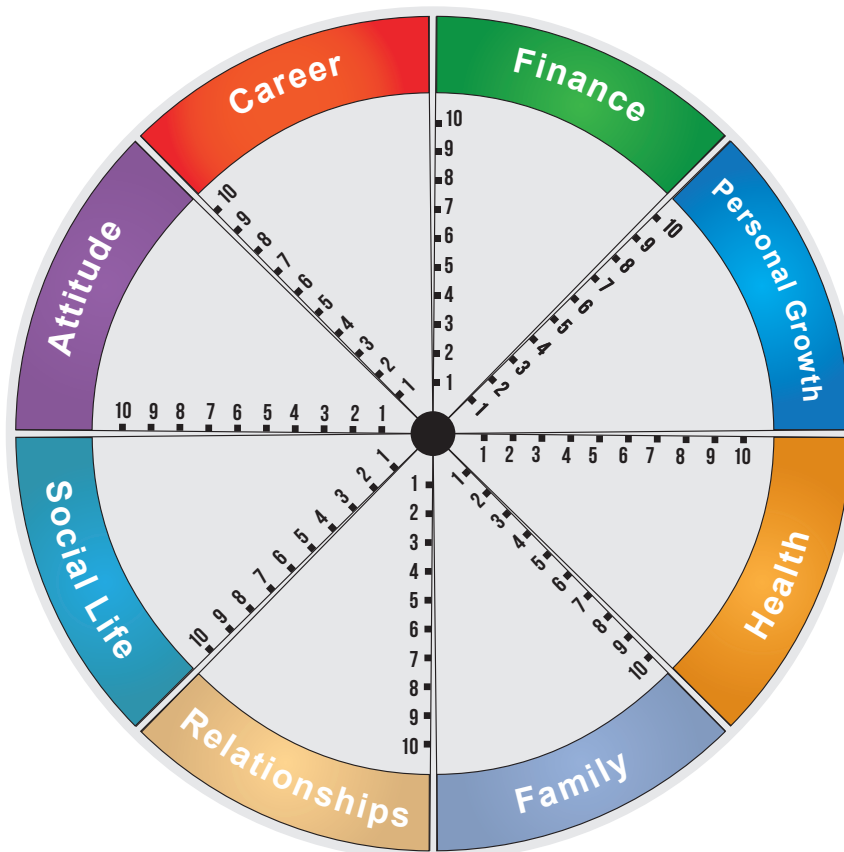
Recovery doesn't only mean the absence of non-prescribed substance use or the

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REMEMBER: When developing self-care plans and priorities, always place recovery as the number one priority. Without it, nothing else in one's life can progress.

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The Wheel of Life and Wellness



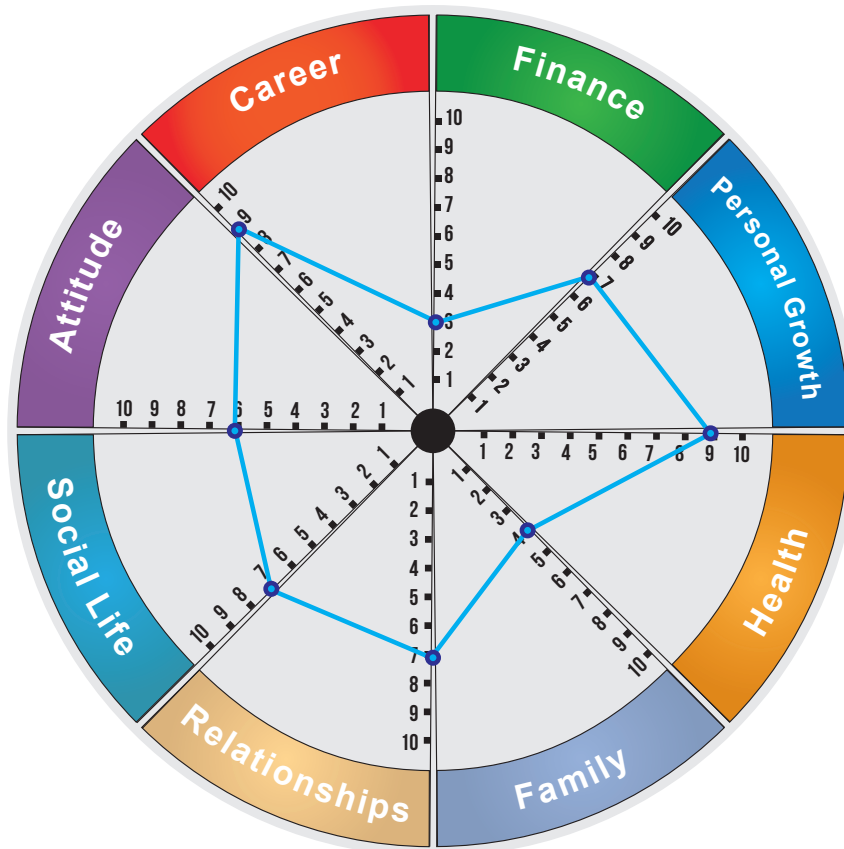
The divisions of the wheel represent the various components of our lives. There are many ways to design the wheel according to an individual's needs.

Another option for undertaking a program of self-care in the context of recovery is the Wheel of Life and Wellness. The divisions of the wheel represent the various components of our lives. There are many ways to design the wheel according to an individual's needs. One suggestion is as follows: finances, friends and family, personal growth, romance, physical environment, career/business, health, fun and recreation. Note that while all the components of the pictured wheel are of equal size--demonstrating balance and harmony---this is not necessarily how they are represented in our actual lives.

■ Draw a picture of your life satisfaction in each life domain

The Wheel of Life and Wellness can help you (or those whose recovery you are helping to support) to assess levels of satisfaction in the

the various aspects of life which may play key roles in self-care planning and management. Note that the center of the wheel is marked as "0" and represents the lowest satisfaction level and the edge of each component is marked as "10" representing the highest level of satisfaction. A person will score their satisfaction levels for each component from 0-10. For example, 0-4 means one is "not satisfied;" 5-7 means "more or less satisfied, but further attention should be sought;" 8-10 means "a high level of satisfaction." Once you (or the person whose recovery you are supporting) has marked each of the components from 0 (total dissatisfaction) to 10 (complete satisfaction), a line is then drawn to connect the marks around the wheel. This will give you and/or the other person a visual representation of how balanced your his/her life is and which areas make you/them happy. This picture will reveal what areas



The lines on your personalized Wheel of Health and Wellness will reveal levels of "life satisfaction" that point to next-step options.

need to be addressed in a recovery plan and/or self-care plan.

- Seeking support to develop self-care goals while always prioritizing recovery

Once you assess the levels of satisfaction within the Wheel of Life and Wellness with a visual representation, the picture will reveal which areas need the most attention. Use this picture to develop effective self-care goals by:

For example, in the example pictured here, family and finances have relatively low levels of satisfaction, whereas health and career rate relatively high in comparison. These levels of satisfaction will help an individual refine their self-care plans and seek specific types of support in taking next steps.

- Identifying urgent concerns
- Exploring the variety of options that might lead to preferred outcomes
- Clearly defining and specifying chosen goal(s)

SELF-CARE TIP SHEETS

The following tip sheets are suggestions for helping people to develop self-care habits and routines that will not only support long-term quality recovery, but also lead to greater life satisfaction and happiness.

Tip Sheet #1: Self-Care and Physical Health

■ Abstain from alcohol, illicit drugs, and non-prescribed medications

Self-Care and managing recovery in the area of physical health means overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms. For those in recovery from substance use disorders, the first and most important step is abstaining from the use of alcohol, illicit drugs, and non-prescribed medications.



Abstaining from alcohol, illicit drugs, and non-prescribed medications is the foundation of recovery.

■ Practice Good Nutrition

- Those with alcohol use disorder (AUD) and substance use disorder (SUD) typically have nutrient deficiencies.
- These nutrient deficiencies may underlie alcoholic heart and bone problems, and mood disorders including anxiety and depression.
- Those with AUD or SUD and poor nutrition may have altered body composition and altered hormonal metabolic functioning.
- Additionally, brain chemicals are stimulated both by food, particularly sweet foods, and by substances,



Eating balanced meals supports recovery and helps you feel good.

with evidence supporting confusion (addiction transfer) when recovering from SUD between cravings for a substance and craving for food.

- Poor nutritional status harms physical and psychological health and can reduce one's capacity to resist substances.

■ Engage in Activities that Raise your Energy Level

Aim for activities that help you stay fit and raise your level of energy to get you through your work and personal commitments.

- Eat plenty of nutritious foods to maintain your energy level
- Don't forget to take lunch breaks
- Go for a walk at lunch-time
- Take your dog for a walk after work
- Use your sick leave
- Get some exercise before/after work regularly
- Develop a regular sleep routine



Regular exercise--even gentle exercise--can boost your energy level throughout the day, improve your overall mood and help you rest at night.

■ Offer Praise and Positive Self-Talk as You Move in New Directions

The practice of healthy self-care habits after a life of self-destructive behavior can feel like an “inner revolution” of change. In most instances, both recovery and self-care paths involve leaving the old lifestyle behind and going in an entirely new direction. So easy does it. Proceed one day or even one minute at a time; offer yourself praise and positive self-talk every step of the way.



After engaging in years of self-destructive habits that are often part of chronic substance use, adopting healthy self-care habits is like a revolution of change. Be kind to yourself and others as new habits are adopted.

“ **REMEMBER:** Physical health is only one aspect of overall health, but it is an important foundation that leads to good habits in other areas of life. For everyone in recovery, progress on the path of self-care means making informed, healthy choices that support physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing.



Examples of Positive Self-Talk to Say More Frequently

1. “I can do this”
2. “I’m fully capable of handling this”
3. “I have so much to offer”
4. “I’m getting better each day”
5. “I have so much to be proud of”
6. “I have control over how I react”
7. “I trust myself to succeed”
8. “I deserve to win”
9. “I’m always improving”
10. “I can overcome this”



Offer yourself (and others) praise and positive self-talk every step of the self-care journey.

Tip Sheet #2: Self-Care and Work/Career

Recovery allows us to participate in productive and meaningful activities, such as a job or school, volunteering, caring for our families, or being creative. These activities give us a sense of purpose and a feeling of usefulness.

For most of us, a job and work/career path are what we do to achieve personal independence, earn income, and offer unique resources to participate in society.

What are some specific ways to practice self-care in the area of work/career?

■ Pay Yourself First, Not Last

If you work a job as most of us do to earn income to pay our bills, one way to practice self-care is to pay yourself first, not last! This means out of every paycheck you earn, take the first few dollars or and save them for you.



You're worth it



A million dollars starts with one penny!

If you need help with a budget and how to structure your finances, seek out money management ideas on line and ask someone you trust for support on taking the next positive step in managing your money affairs.

■ Invest in Yourself and Your Interests

Sometimes our jobs and our interests coincide, but not always. Either way, one can always develop oneself, even when one's work life and career passions do not intersect. For example, if your job and your dream career are not identical, try reading professional journals, attending professional development programs, and taking seminars to develop new skills and expand your interests. Talk to friends, family and colleagues about your ideas and hopes for making a difference. When you risk sharing your interests, passions, and visions for the future with others, you may be surprised where such sharing leads you!



Talk to friends, family and colleagues about your ideas and hopes for making a difference.

■ Engage in Activities that Help in Both your Personal Life and Work/Career Life

Choose activities that help you to feel clear-headed and able to intellectually engage with the professional challenges that are found in your work and personal life. For example:

- Keep a reflective journal
- Seek and engage in external supervision or regularly consult with a more experienced colleague
- Engage with a non-work hobby

■ Seek Balance Between What You Do Versus Who You Are

Find a healthy balance between your professional activities and your personal identity. While you may spend many hours at a job, the job is not who or what you are. Jobs can represent important parts of fulfillment and life satisfaction, but they can also be ways we escape thinking about our problems or even a way to avoid troubles in our various relationships. Be aware of how many hours you work and the tendency to let your job define you as a person.

- Turn off your email and work phone outside of work hours
- Arrive for work on time and leave on time every day
- Make time for relaxation

- Schedule regular hours to engage with positive friends and family
- Talk to your friends about how you are coping with work and life demands



Be aware of how many hours you work and the tendency to let your job define you as a person.

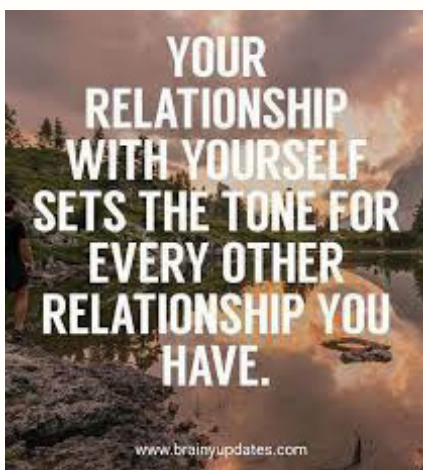
Tip Sheet #3: Self-Care and Relationships

■ Cultivate the most important relationship in your life: the relationship with yourself!

The relationship with yourself is the heart of self-care

- Allow yourself to safely experience your full range of emotions.

- Develop a healthy self-talk mantra: For example, "I am kind, I am good, I am important!"
- Write down one good thing that you did each day: For example: "I went to my 12-step meeting!"
- Take time to enjoy your life: Go to the movies, garden, or take a walk.



The most important relationship in your life is the relationship with yourself!

■ Cultivate and nourish a healthy social support network

- A social support network is different from a support group, though both can be very important and helpful in times of stress.



Having a strong social support network enhances personal resilience!

- There are huge benefits in having a broad network of supportive relationships in your life.
- Research has repeatedly shown that those with positive social support networks have better health, live longer lives, and report greater well-being.
- The support of friends and loved ones can make you more resilient in times of stress, setback, or loss, and their presence can also make the good times immeasurably better.
- In addition to buffering stress, some friends and loved ones can even help you identify when you are stressed or distressed — in some cases they may notice it before you do.



Telling someone how you feel can open the door to friendship and mutual support.

- Practical benefits may include knowing people who can provide you with information, advice, guidance, and assistance. This feature of social support can be comforting and enhance your feelings of security.
- Supportive relationships can also bolster you emotionally when you're feeling lonely, down or overwhelmed.
- Friends and loved ones will listen to your fears, hopes, and dreams, and make you feel seen and understood.
- They can help you think through alternatives and solve problems, distract you from your worries, and provide encouragement.
- All of these benefits help to reduce stress.

■ BEWARE: engaging social media is not the same as interacting with your social support network!



Heavy use of social media can produce feelings of isolation.

A new study by the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania found that teens who use **social media heavily are 3 times as likely to feel socially isolated**. This can cause a teen to feel even more alone than before, leading to lower confidence and motivation to engage in social interactions.

“ **Being on social media actually isolates us from our real-life networks.**

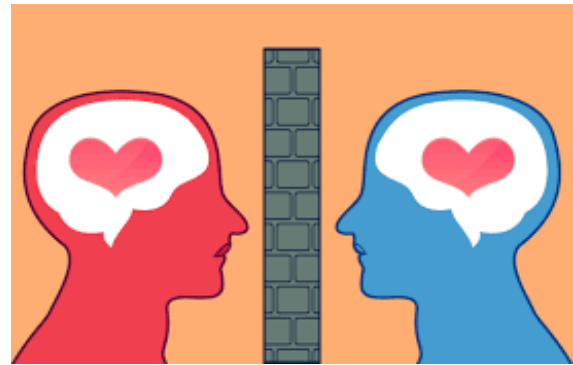
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Social media capitalizes on isolation by “separating” us from friends, then making us want to check on what these friends are doing. Connecting on social media creates more disconnection.

■ **Learn the skill of setting and maintaining healthy boundaries**



Social media can create the illusion of connection with others.



Setting healthy boundaries is challenging for many people, especially those in recovery!

Ways To Set Boundaries

@NEDRATAWWAB

Old Relationships

- Identify what boundaries you would like to set.
- Be direct about your boundaries.
- Don't explain yourself.
- Be consistent with your boundaries.
- Have a conversation with them about your boundaries and consequences for not respecting your boundaries.

New Relationships

- Mention boundaries casually in conversations as you are getting to know people.
- Have an open discussion about boundaries that are important to you.
- Be clear about your expectations.
- In the moment of a boundary violation, state your boundary and let the other person know how you would like to handle the situation in the future.

Setting Boundaries is a learned skill.

Setting healthy boundaries is challenging for many people, especially those in recovery!

Boundaries are:

- firm limits that do not move
- unseen lines that you won't cross
- often undefined physical and emotional distances
- parameters that make you unique
- self-imposed and self-defined

Boundaries require the use of good judgment!

Professional boundaries:

- define effective and appropriate interaction between professionals and the public they serve

“

REMEMBER: Just because we can't see a boundary doesn't mean that it isn't there or that it isn't important. Think about the power of setting healthy boundaries as the ability to know where you end and where another person begins!

”

- exist to protect both the professional and the person being served
- can sometimes be a difficult concept to grasp because it isn't something that we can see

Tip Sheet #4: Self-Care and Spiritual Growth



Self-care isn't only about caring for body and mind, but also one's spirit.

Many people focus the majority of their time on what is happening externally all around them. The pulse and rhythm of their lives is determined exclusively by day-to-day concerns. Spiritual self-care is all about having a sense of perspective beyond the day-to-day of life—it is a different kind of self-care, one that requires looking within. Simply put, spiritual self-care is an inward journey that leads to spiritual growth.



Go within.
Heal within.
Grow within.
Reflect within.
Control within.
Master within.
Love within.
Bless within.
Shine within.

Spiritual self-care is an inward journey that leads to spiritual growth.

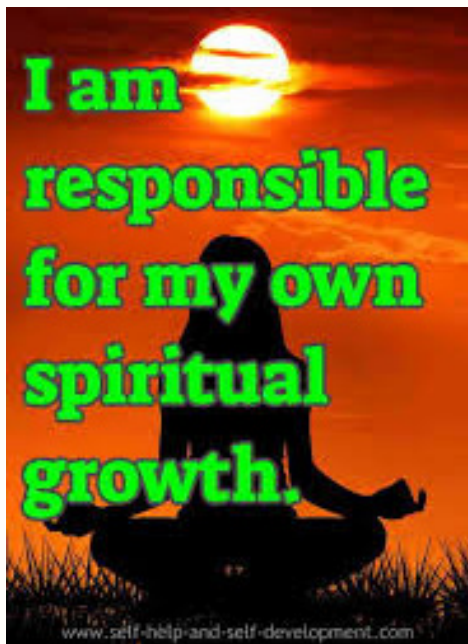
■ Nurture the spiritual principles that guide your growth

Millions of people who have enjoyed a new way of life by attending self-help programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous attribute their recovery to the practice of 12-steps. The 12 steps are not aligned with any religious dogma or tradition, but are rather a reflection of universal spiritual principles and values that underlie the steps: surrender, acceptance, willingness, courage, tolerance, faith, forgiveness, hope, service, and love. These principles provide not only a roadmap for recovery, but also function as guideposts for self-care and growth along spiritual lines. There are an infinite number of ways to nurture such universal spiritual principles, including:

- working the suggested steps of 12-step programs with the help of a sponsor
- attending services of one's particular religious faith or tradition,
- setting aside time regularly for prayer and meditation,
- practicing yoga, and
- keeping a journal of one's reflections on inner life



Spiritual self-care might include keeping a journal of one's reflections on inner life.



Spiritual self-care is an individual responsibility.



Self-care and spiritual growth can consist of ordinary actions and habits.

■ Practice breathing exercises as a source of inner focus and calm

- Deep breathing is free and tricks your body into thinking it is in a calm state (as opposed to the fight-or-flight state). When we are in a state of stress, our bodies are in a "fight or flight" response, meaning it is reacting as if there is a threat present and we either need to stay and fight the threat or run away. When our bodies are in this state, our heart rate rises and our breathing becomes rapid and shallow.
- Deep breathing gives you energy and it can calm you too. The act of breathing deeply helps to deliver nutrient rich oxygen throughout your body. This delivery of oxygen also helps to eliminate waste in the body and helps maintain healthy cells.
- Breathing exercises are useful techniques to have ready when the time comes to deal with anger or simply calm our minds and thoughts. One type of breathing exercise is called belly breathing. Belly breathing does many good things for us AND you can take it anywhere AND it is free.



Belly breathing is free and you can take it anywhere

EXERCISE- BELLY BREATHING:

- Put one hand on your stomach and the other one on your upper chest (see the picture)
- Pay attention to your breathing for about 20-30 seconds
- Take 2-3 very slow but deep breaths to feel your breathing in more detail
- Work up to 5-10 minutes a day
- Can be done sitting or lying down; eyes can be open or closed
- With belly breathing you want the stomach to go out when you inhale in order to fill the lungs fully with air
- Sometimes it is helpful to lie down on the ground so you can see the belly rising and falling with the breath

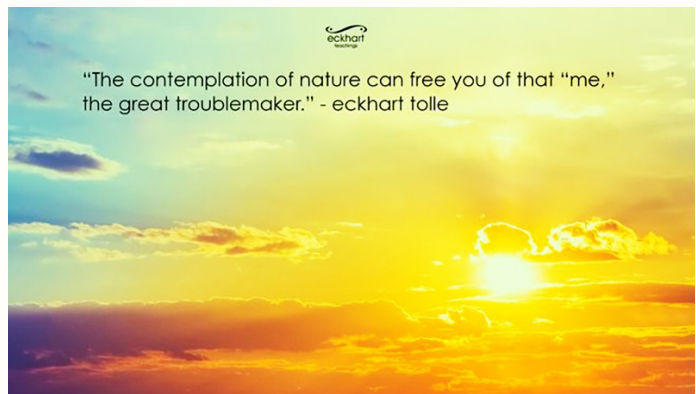
■ Look to nature for renewal and resilience

Spending time in nature is for many people the opening of a door to spiritual connection; it can be the beginning of a meditation practice or a greater spiritual awareness of

how we are interconnected with all living things. For others, it is simply a great way to manage stress. Wherever you would like your time outdoors to lead you, here are a few great ways to get started reconnecting with the natural world around you:



Spending time in nature is for many people the opening of a door to spiritual connection



The contemplation of nature can be freeing!

WAYS TO CONNECT WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

1. Go for a walk or a hike in a green place. Notice the plants, animals, and insects, looking closely at whatever catches your eye. Pay attention to color, texture, shape, motion, sounds.
2. Find a tree in a quiet place and sit beneath it. Bring a blanket or pillow if it helps you to be comfortable. Feel the bark; notice the roots jutting up from the ground. Imagine these strong roots extending deep into the earth, keeping the tree anchored and upright while bringing it vital nutrition and water. Picture the leaves far above you humming with activity as they convert sunlight to energy. Imagine roots growing from your feet, through the earth, keeping you strong and grounded.
3. Bring your lunch or a book outside and sit on a park bench or a picnic

blanket. Soak in the fresh air and natural light while you eat or read (or both).

4. Find a pick-your-own farm and pick fruit straight from the tree. Notice the colors and smells; savor the taste of fruit fresh from nature.
5. Go to a lake, river, stream, ocean, or pond. Listen to the lapping of the water. Look for fish and tiny water bugs. Put your feet in the water and focus on the sensation of cool water against your skin. Imagine the water connecting you with all the water in the world as it ebbs, flows, and nurtures all life.
6. Find a dark spot on a clear night and bring a blanket outside. Give yourself some time for your eyes to adjust to the darkness and watch the moon, stars, and planets. Imagine the vastness of the galaxy that holds you, swirling with stars that made the elements all our bodies are formed from.
7. Visit a nearby garden. Luxuriate in the colors and scents of all the plants. Choose one and notice all the details of its stem, leaves, or flowers. Watch for bumblebees feeding, spreading pollen to keep the garden thriving; listen to their buzzing.
8. Keep flowers or herbs either in your yard or in flower pots inside. Pay attention to the feel of the soil against your fingers as you carefully plant a seed or transplant a seedling. Think about how you are nurturing a tiny living thing as it grows and thrives.
9. Find a special spot outdoors that feels particularly peaceful to you - a specific spot at a park or a beach, or maybe a place in your yard that you can turn into a sanctuary with a chair or hammock. Whenever you go to your place, greet it out loud or silently, thanking it for providing you with this place of peace and wishing it well.
10. Put a bird feeder outside your window or in your yard and watch for visitors. Notice the different colors and birdcalls.
11. Go to a greenhouse or flower shop. Soak in the scent of green growth and a profusion of flowers. Step into the refrigerated section of a flower shop, full of freshly cut blooms.
12. Pay attention to the tiny weeds and wildflowers that spring up in the cracks in sidewalks. Whenever you notice this, think of the tenacity and perseverance of that tiny life to take hold and grow in such a difficult spot. Take a moment to wish it well and reflect on how you might relate to that kind of strength.
13. As you wrap up your time outside, take a moment to get in touch with what's going on inside of you. What is your breathing like? Can you feel your heart beating? What are some of the physical sensations you notice popping up? Are there any particular emotions you notice yourself feeling? Anything that surprises you? You might even take a few notes or mention your observations in a journal. If you continue your practice of reconnecting with the natural world on a regular basis, you may find it illuminating to look back at how your experiences have changed over time - or stayed the same.
14. You might notice that a lot of the items on the list imply nice weather, or at least weather that's warm enough for heading outside for a while. It's true that this kind of deep reconnection with nature often feels easiest in the warmer months, and the rich, new-bursting foliage of spring and summer are

particularly evocative or many of us. However, you can find ways to be deeply present in nature in all but the bitterest of weather. The evergreens that keep their needles throughout the winter serve as reminders of our own enduring strength; snow makes a powerful backdrop to see the perseverance of living things through adverse conditions; rain reminds us of the constant cycling of nature and the power of a good, cleansing cry. In the depths of winter, a good view out a window or a deep breath in a

florist's shop can anchor you once again in your place as an integral part of nature's vivid tapestry. Add these moments into your life as often as you can and you will notice a difference.

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<https://www.brennancmalloneelmhc.com/blog/2018/6/12/12-simple-ways-to-reconnect-and-find-peace-in-nature>



Tiny weeds and flowers that spring up in cracks in sidewalks are a symbol of the resilience we can find in nature and within ourselves.

■ Participate in Community Service

Addiction has often been referred to as a disorder characterized by feelings of profound isolation within oneself and alienation from the surrounding community. Reconnecting with yourself and contributing to the community around you are not only

a part of a quality recovery program, but also healing acts of self-care. The fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous emphasize service as key part of the recovery process. Remember: There is always a way to help others in your own community and in doing so care for yourself.



"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

~ Helen Keller

Community service is a spiritual practice!

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE:

- Gain confidence. Volunteering can help you gain confidence by giving you the chance to try something new and build a real sense of achievement.
- Make a difference. ...
- Meet people. ...
- Be part of a community. ...
- Learn new skills. ...
- Take on a challenge. ...
- Have fun!

Tip Sheet # 5: Self-Care Especially for Recovery Support Professionals

One of the most important challenges of self-care, especially for those who are working as recovery support professionals, concerns vicarious or secondary trauma. But what is it and why is it important to know about?

Vicarious or secondary trauma is defined as "a trauma-related stress reaction and set of symptoms resulting from exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences rather than from exposure directly to a traumatic event."

Studies show an association between trauma and substance use disorders; those working to support the recovery of others may be exposed to another's traumatic experiences by listening to the stories they may share and by relating to them empathetically.

As a recovery support professional, one's responsibility is NEVER to treat trauma, but rather to recognize where it might be present, and if appropriate, refer the person to the treatment team or to those clinically qualified to address trauma.

Your responsibility as a recovery support professional is also to care for yourself by being on the lookout for secondary trauma and preventing it.

■ Be on the lookout for secondary trauma

Recovery support professionals should be aware of the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and the potential emotional effects of working with trauma survivors. Two examples of secondary trauma are:

- avoiding talking or thinking about what the trauma-affected individual(s) have been talking about, almost being numb to it
- being in a persistent arousal state



Watch for symptoms and signs of vicarious or secondary trauma

SYMPTOMS OF SECONDARY TRAUMA

- Reduction in empathy toward individuals
- Psychological distress (distressing emotions, intrusive imagery of individual's trauma, numbing or avoidance, sleep disturbance, headaches, physiological arousal, addictive/compulsive behavior, impaired functioning)
- Cognitive shifts: chronic suspicion, helplessness, loss of control, cynicism, blaming the victim, etc.
- Relational disturbances: distancing/detachment from individual, overidentification with individual, decreased intimacy or trust
- Frame of reference problems: disconnection from one's sense of identity, dramatic change in fundamental beliefs, loss of values or principles, loss of faith, existential despair

SIGNS OF SECONDARY TRAUMA: ERRORS IN JUDGMENT AND MISTAKES

Behavior

- frequent job changes
- tardiness
- free floating anger/irritability
- absenteeism
- irresponsibility
- overwork
- over-eating or under-eating
- startle effect/being jumpy
- difficulty with sleep
- losing sleep over patients

Interpersonal

- staff conflict
- blaming others
- conflictual engagement
- poor relationships
- poor communication
- impatience
- withdrawal and isolation from colleagues

Personal values/beliefs

- dissatisfaction
- negative perception
- loss of interest
- apathy
- blaming others

Job performance suffers:

- low motivation
- increased errors
- decreased quality

Seek clinical supervision to help care for yourself and those with whom you work when you notice vicarious trauma.

■ Use strategies to prevent secondary trauma in your recovery support work

- Engage peer support (personal and professional) to help prevent isolation and improve emotional support
- Seek supervision and consultation to help better understand secondary trauma and your own risk and protective factors, as well as counter-transference reactions with individuals
- Attend training to improve understanding of trauma, trauma-informed care, secondary trauma and other areas, and to increase sense of control and mastery, and reduce hopelessness or helplessness
- Welcome personal psychotherapy or counseling to help with personal trauma and/or substance use histories, and to help to become more self-aware
- Maintain balance between professional

and personal lives to develop positive coping behaviors, and maintain a healthy self-care-oriented lifestyle

- Participate in activities that provide meaning and perspective, including

spiritual practices, volunteer work, meditation, yoga, etc.

Tip Sheet # 6: Creating an Individual Self-Care Plan

This toolkit has outlined various ways to care for yourself in the context of recovery and supporting the recovery of others. Next is a simple exercise for moving forward in the creation of a self-care plan that is unique to you.

The following chart lists the domains of self-care. Note that these are only suggested domains. You may want to revise, add or subtract from the domains to best fit your

circumstances. Then, within each domain, ask yourself: What about my self-care needs to change? What specific actions will I take to change and increase or improve my self-care? For example, in the workplace: maybe you currently eat lunch at your desk and answer emails. As for what could change, one idea might be to take your lunch and eat outside away from your computer.

Domain	What Needs to Change	What I Will Do
Workplace or Professional	Feeling isolated	Set up colleague supervision group
Physical	Eating too much sugar	Bring healthy snacks each day
Psychological		
Emotional		
Spiritual		
Relationships		

This chart is a simple tool for how to start tackling making changes in your self-care habits.

REMEMBER: Each person’s self-care plan is unique to them; it is an individual plan based on the challenges which that particular person faces in the various domains of their life, including recovery.

CONCLUSION

Self-Care: Easy to Talk about, Harder to Do

This toolkit is full of suggestions that are meant to enthuse and stimulate ideas for moving ahead on caring for oneself. But while enthusiasm is terrific, beware of charging ahead with high expectations of yourself and others as you implement such profound changes across all areas of your life.

Remember: the self-care suggestions in this toolkit are suggestions, not commands, demands, or benchmarks you must meet. Go slow and steady. Accept the fact that self-care habits develop first from the inside out; gradually you feel more and more worthy of taking steps to care for your one and only unique self. In time, an attitude of inner self-care will manifest externally.

When life becomes demanding as it always does, self-care is more challenging than ever to practice. A few areas to be aware of are:

- How well do you interact with family members or friends when you are exhausted?
- What happens when you are uncomfortable or in pain?
- How does your work schedule affect your eating schedule?

“ **REMEMBER: Be patient and gentle with yourself as you learn the skill and art of self-care!** ”



Self-care is a journey that has challenges and triumphs. You can do it!

35 Ways to Practice Self-Care

1. Sit in silence and breathe deeply.
2. Go for a walk or run in nature.
3. Do something kind for someone.
4. Create a gratitude list.
5. Write a self-love list of strengths.
6. Write a list of affirmations.
7. Create an empowering morning routine.
8. Create a relaxing evening routine.
9. Allow yourself to feel without judgement.
10. Do something creative.
11. Reconnect with a friend.
12. Listen to a guided meditation.
13. Make a stop-doing list.
14. Turn off social media.
15. Put your phone away.
16. Cuddle with your family or pet.
17. Drink a green juice.
18. Quietly savor a cup of tea.
19. Prepare a healthy plant based meal.
20. Do something courageous.
21. Set a boundary in a tough relationship.
22. Journal or read in bed.
23. Burn incense or a soy candle.
24. Wear your favorite perfume.
25. Treat yourself to something unique on Etsy.
26. Buy plants or flowers for your home.
27. Declutter one area or closet.
28. Sit and visualize your ideal life.
29. Create a vision board.
30. Write down a list of monthly goals.
31. Go to bed early and wake up with the sun.
32. Watch your favorite movie.
33. Start a game night with your family.
34. Learn a new skill.
35. Give up trying to be perfect.

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When you are stuck on your self-care journey, pick one of the following from the list of self-care practices and give it your best. You're worth it!

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- **“Delivering Recovery Support Services:** The Allies Link and Lend Inventive Engaging Support (ALLIES) Model,” developed for the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) under an INL contribution to the Colombo Plan, 2021.
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