

CHAPTER 4

SELF-CARE

"There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self."

—Aldous Huxley

Self-care is a holistic process that we all need in order to foster presence, engagement, wellness, and self-love. Self-care is not a singular skill. Instead, self-care includes a wide variety of tasks tailored to meet your diverse needs. Although there may be similarities between self-care strategies, self-care is subjective and tends to vary from person to person. Common dimensions of self-care include physical, creative, spiritual, natural, social, and personal. Examples of self-care activities include getting adequate sleep, practicing mindfulness, taking part in hobbies, and meditation.

Offentimes, self-care is easier said than done. Nevertheless, it is important to give yourself the ability to reflect on and tend to your wellness. Neglecting your personal needs can cause you to suffer from deterioration in wellness and self-love. For example, you may notice increases in anxiety, distractibility, anger, and fatigue. You may also experience decreases in sleep, relationship satisfaction, self-esteem, empathy, and compassion. Ongoing exposure to stress without proper self-care can put you at risk for serious consequences such as depression and heart disease.

Therefore, self-care is a continuous process of proactively considering and tending to your needs and maintaining your wellness. As a preventative measure, self-care helps you to consider and implement strategies prior to being faced with challenges. As a coping skill, self-care helps you to recognize when a new need calls for your attention. As an ongoing process, self-care helps you to develop resilience and compassion for yourself in your overall journey of self-love.

Self-care can be tricky. It is easy to forget to take care of yourself, particularly before your loved ones. When you are low on energy and short on time, you may be especially likely to give up your own needs for the sake of someone else. Over time this can be dangerous. Also, when caring for others, it is helpful to demonstrate the importance of taking care of yourself to set an example and deter them from self-neglect as well.

If someone you know is stranded on the side of the road because their car ran out of gas, do you empty your gas tank for them? Instead, you would likely use what you have to help that person get gas for their tank. Although kind, giving up all of your gas to help someone else creates a new problem altogether. The more effective way would be to fill your tank so you can better help someone fill theirs.

FILL YOUR CUP

How do you fill your self-care cup? Provide three examples below.

1.

2.

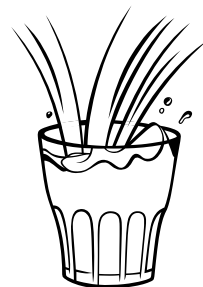
3.

Let's take this a little deeper. Why do you turn to these methods?

1.

2.

3.



When you follow through with these examples, how do you feel?

When you lack the time or energy to follow through with these examples, do you notice a difference?

YOUR WELLNESS

To expand your self-care strategies, it will be helpful to take a step back and understand your overall wellness. Wellness is a multidimensional concept of health. Self-care encompasses the methods that you utilize to support and maintain your wellness. The definition of wellness may vary from person to person. Just as self-care is subjective, wellness is often subjective as well.

How do you define wellness?

Did your definition include physical well-being? That is a common response. But it is important to realize that wellness is often more complex, as it includes several essential dimensions. If wellness relates to our bodies, then thoughts and feelings are worthwhile to consider, since what affects our health goes beyond the body. Do you feel your best when you set aside time for your loved ones? Do you feel healthy when you are mindful of your nutrition? Or perhaps you feel happiest when you dedicate a portion of your energy to a higher power.

YOUR WELLNESS DOMAINS

Are any of these common areas of wellness important for your well-being? Circle the ones that resonate with you.

Career	Friendship	Mental
Community	Gender	Nature
Creative	Intellectual	Nutrition
Cultural	Interpersonal and Intrapersonal	Physical
Educational	Relationships	Sexual
Emotional	Leisure	Social
Family	Life Planning	Spiritual
Financial	Love	Work

Write all of your wellness domains here. Including the domains circled on the previous page may be helpful. However, it is your wellness. Add in your own wellness categories. Choose words that resonate with you.

Using the words you brainstormed above, divide your wellness into five to eight categories. Having a clear understanding of your wellness domains will help you to foster your well-being.