

Self-Care Manual for Women

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Acknowledgments

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AMINA - The Muslim Women's Resource Centre (MWRC)

Leading specialists in working with minority ethnic and Muslim women, Amina is an award winning organisation, recognised by minority ethnic communities within Scotland for its pioneering work. Having invested in this area where there was previously a gap in services in Scotland, Amina is the national hub for gaining access to, and consulting with, Muslim women across Scotland; and for initiating and tailoring services to meet the needs of these women.

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Section One: The journey into self-care

“Every act of self-care is a powerful declaration: I am on my side, I am on my side, each day I am more and more on my own side.” ~ Susan Weiss Berry

Introduction

Welcome to our self-care manual designed to support you in establishing and maintaining an approach to self-care that fits with your unique life circumstances, strengths, challenges and needs.

This manual is for all women. However, it has been developed with the following audiences in mind:

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women
- women who have experienced trauma and/or domestic abuse
- women who would like to become group facilitators

Our aim is that the concepts and recommendations contained within this manual are clear, simple and easily-applicable, regardless of whether you are working through the manual on your own, or you are facilitating a group workshop.

When it comes to self-care there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. This manual is intended as a step-by-step guide that will help you to establish an approach that best suits you. This is the start of something new - something personal, positive and important. Even more than that the journey of self-care is intended to be pleasurable, fun and rewarding!

For group facilitators, this manual is designed to enable you to confidently and effectively facilitate a workshop on self-care for women. The final chapter of the manual is specifically for those who wish to become facilitators. It provides a sample overview of the agenda to run a self-care workshop, including exercises, timings and resources required.

“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.” ~ Maya Angelou



What is self-care?

Self-care (self-kair) n. the practice of activities that are necessary to sustain life and health, normally initiated and carried out by the individual for him- or herself.

Self-care refers to the activities and practices that we do deliberately on a regular basis to maintain and enhance our own health and wellbeing.

We are talking about more than just the occasional cup of tea or neck rub (lovely though that is!). Self-care is about getting in touch with yourself - your wants, needs, passions - and prioritising time for yourself to make those things happen. It is also about becoming aware of your emotions, and the stress and pressure in your life that may be causing you to feel unwell, whether that be physically, mentally or emotionally.

“An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly.” ~ Unknown

We may believe that taking care of ourselves is an indulgence. An important first step in this journey of self-care is to recognise and acknowledge that looking after ourselves is an important part of living a happy and healthy life; and when you are feeling well, this impacts on everyone around you, especially your family, friends and children.

“Self-care is not selfish (its a gift to all concerned). You cannot serve from an empty vessel.” ~ Eleanor Brownn

Self-care is particularly important when we are responsible for taking care of others. Reflect on your own life, are you seen as the main support within your family and community? And are you responsible for taking care of the needs of everyone around you? Within this setting, you may feel as if taking care of yourself is selfish and is taking time away from others. You may even feel guilt or shame about looking after yourself.

However, the reality is that taking care of your health on many different levels (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, relational) is essential. You are no good to anybody else when you neglect your needs and become depleted of energy or unwell.

How do I use this manual?

Our intention with this manual is to guide you through a step-by-step process that will change your approach to taking care of yourself. If we consider self-care as a journey, this manual is intended as the “tour guide” and “map” that will support you in getting from A (where you are now) to B (where you want to be).

To get the most from the manual, we recommend that you work through it section by section from beginning to end. However, you may also find it useful to dip in and out, referring to sections that are most relevant to your needs at any particular time.

It is important to point out that focusing on yourself and your needs may feel uncomfortable at times, particularly if self-care is something completely new to you. That said, the information and ideas contained within this manual are designed to be accessible and applicable to everyone.

Please remember to be kind to yourself as you work through this manual! This is about self-care so if you find it difficult, particularly at first, to make changes, don't give up or give yourself a hard time. Yes, make time for you and try new things but, more importantly, be gentle and understanding with yourself when you need to be.

Remember when life gets busy, self-care is normally the first thing we sacrifice. We fall into the false belief that taking time for ourselves during busy times is indulgent. But the reverse is true. When we are too busy to take care of ourselves is when we need self-care the most!

What to pack for your self-care journey?

To get the most out of using this manual, we recommend that you also consider:

- **Your intention** - knowing why you are embarking on this journey of self-care is essential to fully committing to the process and achieving successful results.

As a group facilitator, it is important to understand why you are embarking on your own self-care, as well as why you would like to support other women through the process. Having this level of clarity enhances your motivation, inspiration, focus and commitment, both to your own self-care and to the work you are doing to support others. In addition, you can share your own 'why' with the women you are working with. This demonstrates your openness and vulnerability, and may help the group to connect more easily and fully to their own reasons for embarking on this journey.

- **A quiet, comfortable and safe space** - in your home or the local library where you can take time to yourself while completing this manual for reflection and action.

As a group facilitator having this space is essential both for your own self-care process, and in particular, for the times in between the sessions when you are facilitating a workshop. During the workshop you are using a lot of energy to create a safe, comfortable space and facilitate the experience for others. You may also be taking on a lot of the difficulties and issues the women share with you. In order to centre your energy and take care of yourself, you need to take time alone for reflection.

- **A symbol of self-care** - a small item (ideally that fits in your bag or pocket) that makes you feel really good about yourself (this can be a piece of jewellery, or a photo). Carrying this with you will remind you of your commitment to yourself and your own self-care.

Group facilitators - you can use these symbols during the workshop to generate conversation and discussion.

What are the benefits of self-care?

The result of making time for self-care is that you can expect to feel less stressed, more relaxed and have an improved sense of balance and contentment in your daily life and relationships. You will also be more able to identify what is negatively impacting you – for example, bad or unhealthy relationships, high levels of stress and anxiety or body pain you have been ignoring.

Research shows that self-care has the following impact:

- **It enhances your relationships (with yourself and others):** taking care of your health on different levels (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, relational) boosts your confidence and self-esteem. This, in turn, helps you to feel happier and maintain more positive relationships with others, including your family, friends and co-workers. It also sets a great example to others, especially children and young adults, and allows them to do the same.
- **It makes you more effective and productive:** contrary to what you may think, taking time for yourself and giving your body the food, rest and activity it needs, actually gives you more energy to meet the commitments and demands of your daily life.
- **It helps prevent burnout:** excessive or long periods of stress can lead to a state of exhaustion (mental, physical and emotional) known as burnout. When you reach this state your energy becomes low, and you become less effective and productive. Ultimately, you may become ill (physically or mentally ill or both). Introducing self-care activities into your regular routine makes you more resilient to the stress around you. It gives your mind and body time to rest, reset and renew. This enables you to reduce the likelihood of reaching burnout, and helps manage the symptoms should you reach this state. In the next section we will take a closer look at how to recognise burnout and how to manage and reduce the symptoms.

“Nothing can dim the light which shines from within.” ~ Maya Angelou

What is burnout?

burnout (n.) exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration.

The term “burnout” refers to what happens when we are exposed to severe or prolonged periods of stress. Please note that extreme or prolonged periods of stress do not only refer to traumatic life events or situations, it can also be the result of constant demands on your time without a break for yourself.

When we reach or get close to the state of burnout we can feel its impact on different levels. It may effect our physical health, our mental health and/or our emotional health. Here are a few of the main areas of symptoms:

1. Exhaustion:

- feeling extremely tired, drained of energy
- experiencing low mood and a sense of being unable to cope
- experiencing sleeping difficulties
- experiencing stomach or bowel problems

2. Alienation:

- feeling cynical and frustrated about your situation and/or about the people around you (work colleagues, family members)
- feeling numb about the people around you and/or your environment
- distancing yourself from those around you
- withdrawing from activities you once enjoyed

3. Reduced performance:

- feeling very negative with no motivation to do things you normally enjoy
- finding them extremely difficult
- finding it hard to concentrate
- feeling listless and lacking creativity

If you would like more information about the symptoms of burnout, you may be interested in “The Burnout Cycle” by psychologists, Herbert Freudenberger and Gail North. This cycle involves 12 recognisable phases that people go through when experiencing burnout. You can find this in **Appendix 1**.

Why is it important to understand burnout and its symptoms? Well, because the symptoms are like warning signs. They warn us that something is wrong. This is the first step. The second step is to choose to make small changes in our lives that will help reduce the stress we are experiencing, and build our resilience to deal with challenges. Even the smallest action can bring positive change to our sense of wellbeing.

If you recognise any of these warning signs in yourself, what can you do about it? It is time to start implementing some simple “emergency” self-care techniques. The following section provides a few simple techniques that can make a big difference.

Emergency self-care techniques

These emergency self-care techniques can be used in the moment to immediately reduce feelings of stress, fear, anxiety, anger or other emotional pain.

Fingerholds to manage emotions

The following practice offers a simple way to work with emotions by holding each finger. It can be done at any place or any time in our daily life - whenever we experience difficult or challenging situations, whenever we feel tears, anger or anxiety arise, we can hold our fingers to bring a sense of peace, focus and calm.

The practice can also be used just before going to sleep to release the problems of the day and bring a sense of deep peace to the body and mind. You can do this practice for yourself or for another person. For example, fingerholds are very helpful for young children who are upset, and for any person who is very fearful, anxious, sick or dying.

The practice was developed by the international network, Capacitar International .

The theory behind this technique:

- Feelings and emotions are like waves of energy moving through the body and mind.
- We have channels of energy running through each of our fingers.
- These energy channels are connected with an organ system in the body, which in turn relates to a specific emotion.
- When we experience strong or overwhelming feelings, energy can become blocked or repressed. This may lead to pain or congestion in the body.
- By holding each finger while breathing deeply, we can bring emotional and physical release and healing.

How to use the finger-holding technique:

- Hold the finger of one hand with the opposite hand for anywhere from two to five minutes. You can work with all five fingers or with the finger related to the particular emotion you are experiencing at that time - see Figure 1: Fingers and Associated Emotions.
- Breathe in deeply while you acknowledge the strong feelings you are holding inside. For example, on an inhale breath, you may say silently to yourself: "breathing in I feel anger" or "breathing in I feel fearful".
- Breathe out slowly and let those feelings go. Imagine those feelings draining out of your finger and into the earth. For example, on the exhale breath, you may say silently: "breathing out I release anger" or "breathing out I let go of fear".
- Breathe in a sense of harmony, strength and healing.
- Breathe out slowly releasing past feelings and problems.

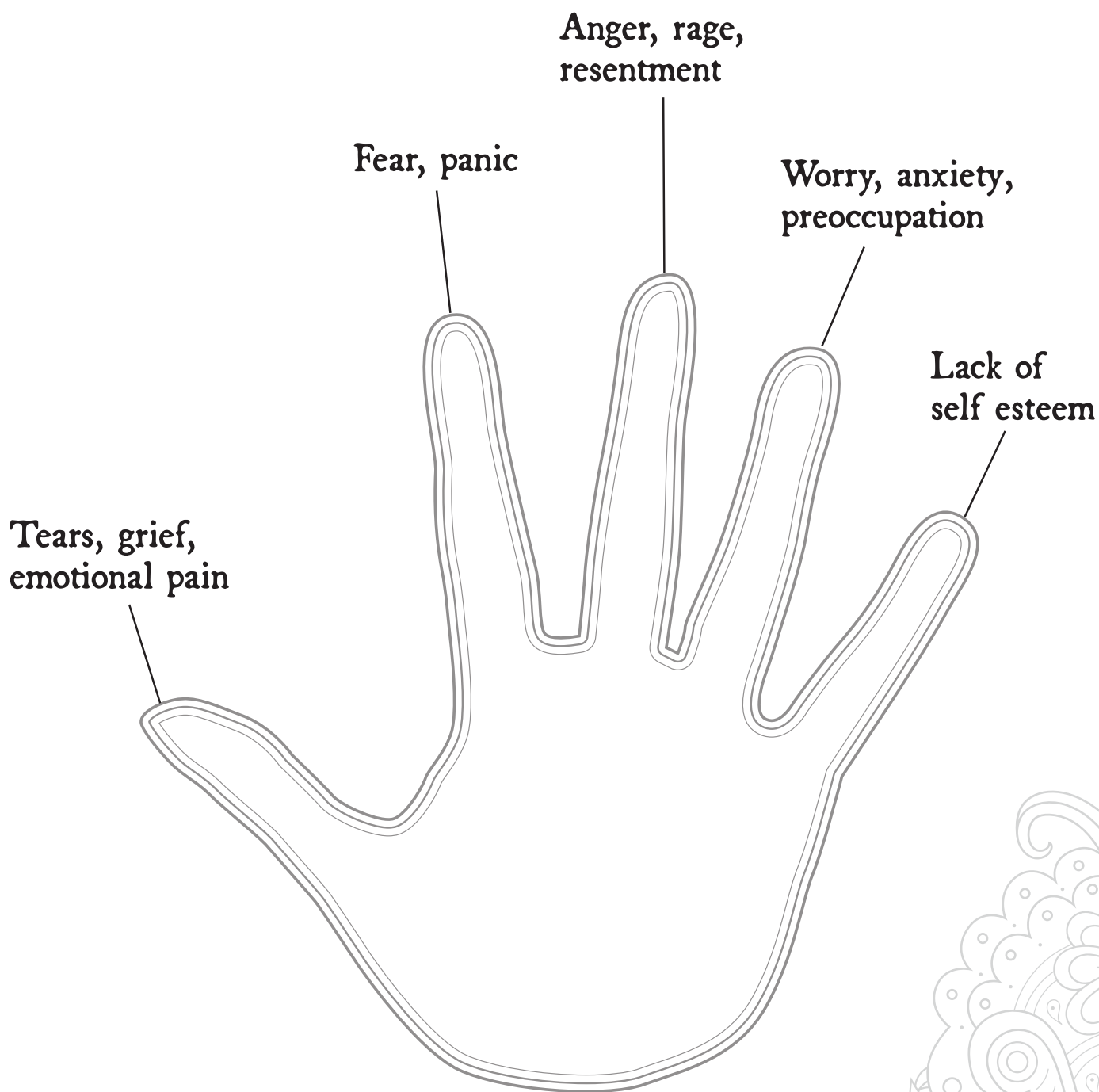


Figure 1:

Fingers and Associated Emotions

Ref: Capacitar International

Breathing techniques

A key technique used to counter anxiety is to focus on the breath. When you are calm, breathing tends to be smooth and rhythmic. In contrast, during anxious or fearful moments, our breathing can become disturbed. It may become quick and sharp or rigid and restricted, or you might even hold your breath or feel like you can't take a full breath.

A key technique for reducing anxiety is to focus on the breath and to learn to take deeper, more satisfying breaths. A great way of learning to improve your inhalation and take deeper breaths is to focus on your exhalation.

If you practice the following breathing technique when you feel calm, the more practiced you will become and you will be more likely to be able to access it during moments of stress and anxiety.

The theory behind this technique:

- The breath is the one automatic function of the body that you can also control consciously.
- Consciously slowing breathing during a period of stress helps to reduce feelings of anxiety.
- Controlling the breath is the first step to calming down an overactive stress response in the body.

How to use the technique:

With all breathing exercises you should not feel any shortness of breath or discomfort while you lengthen your exhalation. If you do, immediately return to your normal rate of breathing.

Crocodile Breathing (Makrasana) - do this for six to ten minutes:

How to set up your body (see Figure 2):

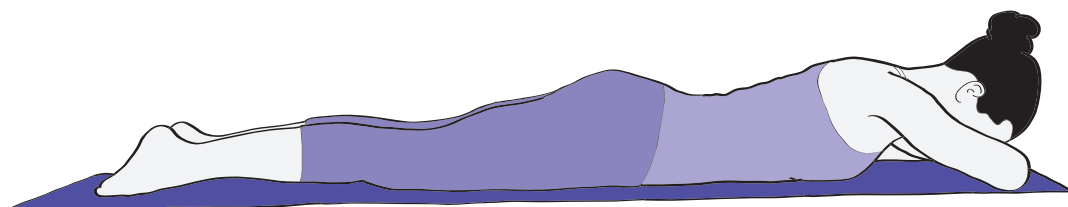
- Lie on your front with your legs a comfortable distance apart.
- Turn your toes in or out, whichever is more comfortable.
- Fold your arms, placing each hand on the opposite elbow.
- Rest your forehead on your forearms.

Five-step approach to Crocodile Breathing:

1. Bring your awareness to your breath as it flows out and in. As your breath flows out, feel how your breath empties and how the exhalation cleanses and releases tension. As your breath flows in, feel how your breath fills you and how the inhalation nourishes you and restores fresh energy. Continue watching the flow of your breath - feeling it empty and then fill you again.
2. While you're feeling the flow of your breath, gently soften your belly, allowing the abdomen to relax.
3. As you inhale, notice your abdomen gently expand, and as you exhale notice your abdomen slowly contract.
4. When you come to the end of your inhalation, simply relax and exhale. In the same way, when you come to the end of your exhalation, simply relax and inhale. Let each breath flow slowly and smoothly into the next, without conscious pause.
5. Observe the smooth and unbroken flow of your breathing. Like a wheel turning over and over, the breath flows out and in, and you are the witness of your own breath.

Figure 2:

Crocodile Breathing
Makrasana



The three “P”s

Pleasure

Proactive

Present.

When you are going through a particularly stressful moment in your life, there are three simple steps you can take to help yourself. We have connected each step to the letter ‘P’ to make it easy to remember. The three Ps are: Pleasure, Proactive, Present.

1. Do something that gives you pleasure

Knowing what gives you pleasure and doing it every day is an essential element of self-care. It can be something simple, such as enjoying a morning cup of tea or a short walk in the local park, anything that makes you feel good. During challenging times, prioritise this moment in your day and focus on the feelings of pleasure that it gives you.

2. Be proactive

When you are experiencing challenges, it is common to feel powerless and out-of-control. Taking action, no matter how small, can help restore your sense of personal control. For example, calling the doctor to make an appointment for a check-up, arranging to meet a friend for a cup of tea or getting your hair cut.

3. Be present

Being present means being aware of what is happening right now. You can do this by pausing to take ten deep breaths, or you can try the breathing exercise on page 8 or the mindfulness exercise on page 13. Being present helps you to be more aware of the small pleasures and beauties of the world around you, and takes your mind off worries about the past or the future.

Your self-care journey: the steps

What does it mean to live a balanced life?

You might have heard a lot of people talk about the importance of living life in 'balance'. But what does that actually mean? And is it a realistic goal?

Being in 'balance' refers to having an overall sense of wellbeing. In other words, feeling comfortable, healthy and happy. In our opinion, balance is different for everyone and what you need to feel balanced is constantly changing. Therefore, finding and maintaining balance is a daily practice.

“My heart is at ease knowing that what was meant for me will never miss me, and that what misses me was never meant for me.” ~ Imam Shafi

The key is to make time to check in with yourself on a regular basis and find out what you need. Then adjust accordingly. An ideal time to do this is first thing in the morning or last thing at night before you go to sleep, but really you can do it at any point throughout your day, week or month.



Here is one way you can pause and check in with yourself:

- Find a quiet place where you can be still and undisturbed.
- Take three deep slow breaths.
- Notice sensations in the body.
- Ask yourself internally: “how am I right now?” and “what do I need?”
- Keep breathing deeply as you listen to the response from your inner voice. You might like to write down your thoughts in a journal or you may prefer to simply make an internal note in your mind.
- Decide on any action you need to take for yourself.

Another way to assess how balanced you currently are in the different areas of your life is to complete the Self-care Self Assessment in **Appendix 2**. This questionnaire covers the five foundations of wellbeing (described in the next section of this manual), and can give you an idea of your current strengths and areas for focus where self-care strategies could enhance your overall sense of health and wellbeing.

Five foundations of wellbeing

There are five key areas of wellbeing that we will refer to in this manual. We call them the “foundations” because just like the foundations of a building, these areas of our lives support and sustain our overall sense of health and wellbeing. If one of the foundations is weak, it will affect the whole building. In other words, for you to stay healthy on all levels, you must take care of the different areas of your life, keep them in regular check and assess when a particular area needs strengthened.

“The Prophet (pbuh) said: “Two blessings which many people do not make the most of: good health and spare time.” ~ (Al-Bukhaari, 6412)

Let’s take a look at the five foundations. They are all interconnected so making a change in one area will have a positive impact on the other areas. For example, there is a strong connection between the body and mind, so when you improve your physical health, you will automatically experience greater mental and emotional wellbeing.



Body

Physical wellbeing - how you take care of your body and manage your energy. Making sure you get enough rest, that you eat and drink well and move your body regularly are key considerations.



Mind

Mental wellbeing - how you are feeling and how well you can cope with daily life. Stimulating your mind with new things and expressing your creativity, and balancing that with letting your mind switch off and rest.



Heart

Emotional wellbeing - how you understand, manage and release your emotions. Ensuring that you spend time with people and things that nourish and support you, and finding ways to express your emotions in a safe and comfortable way (including laughter and tears) give you a great boost in this area.



Spirit

Spiritual wellbeing - how you experience and integrate meaning and purpose in your life through a sense of being connected with self, others, art, prayer, music, literature, nature or a “power greater than yourself”. This can be associated with following a particular religion, faith or spiritual practice, such as Islam, Christianity or Hinduism.



Work

Relational wellbeing - the work you are doing in the world (whether paid or not), how you relate to the people around you at work, and your quality of life outside work. Setting boundaries on the amount of work you are doing, seeking support when you need it and making your working environment comfortable and enjoyable are important aspects to consider.

Self-care techniques and strategies

Let's now take a look at some simple self-care techniques that can enhance your overall sense of wellbeing.



“Do something every day that is loving toward your body and gives you the opportunity to enjoy the sensations of your body.” ~ Golda Poretsky

Get enough sleep - when you have trouble sleeping or disturbed sleep, any negative feelings you have will be exaggerated, and you may find yourself being more irritable and less confident. It might work for you to take a nap during the day (perhaps while young children or elderly relatives are also sleeping). Some tips for a better night's sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day - even at weekends. This creates a natural rhythm for your body.
- Practice a bedtime ritual to wind down (e.g. switching off all electronic devices and taking a warm bath, drinking a warm milky drink, or reading a book).
- Exercise daily and avoid caffeine, or nicotine just before bed.

Treat yourself to good food - eating a well-balanced diet at regular times with plenty of water and vegetables will help you to feel healthy and happy. You could treat yourself to a healthy home cooked meal that will make you feel good. Sit down and allow yourself time to enjoy each bite. Increasing the amount of water you drink each day, and reducing coffee, tea and fizzy drinks that contain caffeine is also recommended for enhancing your overall wellbeing.

Move your body - finding an activity that you can do each day that gets your body moving is a great boost for your energy, confidence and mood, particularly if you exercise outdoors. Exercise releases 'feel-good' hormones that can help improve your mood. This doesn't have to mean joining a gym, it could be taking a gentle walk, yoga, gardening, dancing (Bollywood or belly dance!) or any other activity you enjoy.

Relax - it is essential to make time to relax, even if you don't feel under stress. It is important to remember that relaxation time is different from recreational time. There are many ways to build relaxation into your day - it could be taking a 5 or 10 minute break to look out of the window, having a bath, or even going for a walk in nature. You could also try learning a relaxation technique, such as breathing exercises (page 8), yoga (Appendix 3) or meditation (page 13). Or try out an alternative therapy, such as massage, acupuncture or reflexology.

Others (come up with your own ideas, or speak to someone you know who is a good example in this area):



“Seek the ones who never stop caring, who break down your walls, and help you come back to yourself.” ~ Yasmin Mogahed

Mindfulness - find ways of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing exercises or yoga. These sorts of activities have been shown to help people become more aware of their thoughts and feelings, so that instead of being overwhelmed, they find it easier to manage them. Here is an example of a walking meditation you can easily incorporate into your daily life (even while taking the children to school!). You could invite your children to do this with you and each share what you notice. We have also included some yoga postures you can try (in Appendix 3) and breathing exercises to calm the mind on page 8.

Walking meditation

Start by turning off your phone and connecting to your senses as you walk.

- **SEEING:** what can you see around you? e.g. trees, flowers, cars, insects, people...
- **HEARING:** what can you hear? e.g. bird song, rustle of wind in the trees, children playing, car engines...
- **FEELING:** what can you feel? e.g. sun, wind or rain on your face, your feet on the pavement...
- **SMELLING:** what can you smell? e.g. freshly cut grass, somebody's perfume...
- **TASTING:** what can you taste? e.g. rain drops, or your morning cup of tea...
- **TACTILE SENSATION:** become aware of your body, notice how you are feeling right now, e.g. perhaps getting warmer, or aware of your breath or heartbeat...

Journalling - writing your thoughts, feelings and emotions down is a great way of clearing your mind of its busyness and releasing the stresses of everyday life. It takes all the confusion from your head and gets it on paper (this can also help you get a better night's sleep).

Talk about the way you feel - find someone you know and trust to talk through how you are feeling. Often your friends or family can offer practical help or advice, or simply give you a different perspective on things. Even if they can't help, feeling that there is someone to listen and understand you really makes a difference.

Set yourself a new challenge - taking up a new hobby or learning something new will stimulate your mind in a positive and active way. Make sure you pick something you can realistically fit in to your life. Hobbies can become stressful if they become another thing to squeeze into an already busy day.

Others (come up with your own ideas, or speak to someone you know who is a good example in this area):



“When the beauty of the sun finally touches you... you forget the bitterness of the storm.” ~ Yasmin Mogahed

Join a club, community group - this can be a great way of building and maintaining good, healthy relationships with people (other than your family). It can help reduce feelings of isolation, anxiety or loneliness. Spending time around positive and supportive people with shared interests, helps you feel more positive yourself and improves your confidence.

Do something you enjoy - making time to do things you love helps you stay well. This could be anything from cooking, going out with friends or doing something creative, such as DIY, drawing or sewing. You may prefer to spend time with animals or children, read a book you love, watch a favourite film, or put on clothes and make-up that make you feel confident. Whatever it is for you, expressing yourself positively in this way can help you manage your emotions (including difficult emotions).

Identify mood triggers - keeping track of your moods in a journal can be really helpful in managing your mood and emotions. For example, you may realise that eating certain foods, seeing a certain person or particular seasons of the year have a positive or negative effect on your mood. Even if you can't change the situation, being aware means you can take steps to avoid or manage the things you know have a negative impact on you.

Learn to accept yourself - a key step in self-care is to learn to accept yourself. When you value yourself, you are more likely to have positive relationships with others and find it easier to cope during difficult times. Here are a few tips:

- Let go of comparing yourself to other people (this might mean stop using FaceBook or other social media where it can be easy to think everyone else's lives are perfect).
- Remind yourself that you are doing your best - take the pressure off yourself to be perfect!
- Write down and remind yourself every day of your positive qualities and things you are good at (if you are not sure, ask a close friend or family member who you trust to tell you the positive qualities they see in you and the things they think you're good at).
- Browse books or websites for words of inspiration or quotes that are meaningful and encouraging to you. Write them down and look at them daily.
- Spend time with people who love, support and encourage you.
- Attend women's workshops or friendship groups to connect with other women who understand and support you.

Others (come up with your own ideas, or speak to someone you know who is a good example in this area):



“True wealth is the wealth of the soul.” ~ Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)

Volunteer for a cause close to your heart - volunteering for a cause that is meaningful to you, can help you feel better about yourself and your ability to play an active part in society. Be aware of not taking on too much additional responsibility in your life. If your weekly schedule is already full, then perhaps now isn't the right time for this.

Pray - prayer allows us to feel a greater sense of connectedness to God, self and others. Some studies have shown that prayers for others helps offset the negative physical symptoms of stress.

Make a gratitude list - find a quiet space and with your journal in front of you, write down 20 things you are grateful for, or things that make you happy. Let your mind wander, and write down anything that gives you pleasure (e.g. the smell of freshly cut grass, the sounds of kids playing, or drinking tea with friends). When you have your list, you can work on noticing and appreciating those things in your life (e.g. pausing to enjoy the smell of tea brewing in the morning or taking delight in the laughter of your children).

Others (come up with your own ideas, or speak to someone you know who is a good example in this area):



“Courage is a habit, a virtue. You get it by courageous acts. It’s like you learn to swim by swimming. You learn courage by couraging.” ~ Mary Daly

Take regular breaks - whether you are taking care of others (young children, or other family members) or you are in voluntary or paid employment, it is essential to take regular rest breaks (even two minutes to look out a window) and at least a 20-minute lunch break. This is proven to increase your productivity, concentration, energy and creativity - so you have a lot to gain!

Ask for help when you need it - this is particularly important when you are experiencing a challenging time, or are unwell. Be assertive with what you need and ask others (colleagues, managers, or close friends and family members) to help you complete the tasks you need to do, or to allow you to take a break from your usual responsibilities. For example, taking time off work or getting help with day-to-day tasks, such as cleaning or childcare.

Say no - although it sounds simple, this can be one of the most challenging self-care strategies of all, especially for women! Very often we say “yes” for fear of disappointing or hurting others, and we are used to focusing on keeping others happy and not enough on our own needs. Pleasing everyone around you takes a lot of time! Is there one thing you could say no to now? Sometimes you have to say no to others to say yes to yourself. If saying no seems an impossible thing to do, you could start by setting clear expectations about getting tasks done. For example, saying yes and being clear about when you will realistically be able to do the task, or saying yes and being clear that this means you won’t be able to do the other tasks on your list.

Others (come up with your own ideas, or speak to someone you know who is a good example in this area):








Self-reflection exercise

STOP / START / CONTINUE

Now let's take a moment to reflect on the five foundations. How is your wellbeing in relation to each area? To help you reflect on this you may want to complete the Self-care Self Assessment in Appendix 2. Once you have done that, find a quiet space and consider:

1. Things that aren't working for you that you want to stop doing. This could be coping strategies that are no longer serving you (e.g. eating unhealthy or sugary food as comfort, going to bed late or always saying "yes" to everything) or unnecessary activities that are taking up too much time.
2. Self-care techniques and activities you want to start doing. You may draw inspiration from the suggestions in this manual, or ideas from friends, or you may have some ideas of your own.
3. Things you currently do well in this area and want to continue doing. It's important to recognise and acknowledge the things you already do that really help you! Noting these down will remind you of how important they are to continue.

Remember you don't need to focus on all areas at once. There may be one area of wellbeing that is most important to you right now. Use this table to keep a record of your reflections and the commitments you are making to your own self-care.

My self-care strategies			
	Things I will STOP doing...	Things I will START doing...	Things I will CONTINUE doing...
Mind 			
Body 			
Heart 			
Spirit 			
Work 			

Your self-care plan






It is clear from what we have covered so far that when it comes to developing a self-care plan, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The most effective and sustainable self-care plan will be one that suits your individual circumstances. The simpler and more realistic it is, the more likely you are to put it into action, even during times of 'emergency'.

Doing small but regular actions is recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).
Abu Hurayrah recorded:

The Prophet, (pbuh), was asked: 'Which deed is most beloved to Allah?' He said, 'The one that is done regularly, even if it is little.' (Source: Bukhari)



Once you've determined your personal needs and strategies, write them down. This strengthens your commitment to change and increases the likelihood that you will stick to your plan. It may help to keep a copy of your plan somewhere in your home where you will see it each day, or carry a copy of it with you in your bag, purse or on your phone. Here is an example of how your self-care plan might look:

Mind 	Body 	Heart 	Spirit 	Work 
Add your favourite practices for each area...				

My top three positive coping strategies

Record three strategies you want to get into the habit of using...

Making change stick

When you decide to make a change in your life, no matter how small, it can be challenging to make the change stick. So often we begin with good intentions, but then other priorities get in the way or other people in our lives need our support. We deprioritise our self-care and go back to old habits and ways of coping that are unhelpful, or sometimes even harmful. We might even feel worse than we did before because somehow we feel like we've failed or let ourselves down.

There is no easy way around this. However, one thing you can do, is to identify the things that will help you make change and the things that may get in your way. You can then plan strategies to help you overcome any hurdles.



Once you have your self-care plan and are clear on any changes you want to make, take a moment to reflect and complete the table below:

	Change 1	Change 2	Change 3
What is going to help you make this change?			
What might get in your way?			
What will you do to overcome this challenge when it arises?			
Whose support do you need?			
What other resources might you need?			

Self-care tips for facilitators

To give your best as a self-care facilitator, it is essential to manage your own self-care by preparing and taking care of yourself on all levels before, during and after running a workshop. Here are some useful self-care tips for facilitators:

Before:

- finalise venue/course/travel preparation details (get help with this if you need it!)
- prepare your agenda (if you are co-facilitating meet up with your co-facilitator to go through the agenda together)
- be well-rested in the days running up to the workshop
- practice the breathing and yoga techniques in this manual before teaching them
- complete the Self-care Self Assessment - this will allow you to share real, timely examples of how you manage your own self-care. Being authentic and sharing openly and vulnerably as a facilitator helps create the right environment for the women participating in the workshop to do the same.

During:

- give yourself plenty of time to arrive and get set up
- have your agenda prepared, but be ready to be flexible and use your creativity to adapt to the needs of the group
- the workshop may be emotionally intense, so take time at the start and end of each day to settle yourself and focus your energy (meditation, journalling, time in nature, using essential oils, taking a shower, having a bath, etc.)
- ensure you get good sleep
- eat well
- drink plenty of water

After:

- debrief the workshop experience with another person (e.g. your co-facilitator or another person you trust)
- keep the day after the workshop clear for you to rest - avoid scheduling any work meetings or important tasks, if possible book yourself a massage or some other self-care technique.

Sample self-care workshop outline

The following agenda is offered to give you a starting point for designing your self-care workshop. It can be a useful reference point in helping you create an agenda that will best serve the unique needs of the group you are working with.

This outline gives an example of what it would look like to run a full, one-day workshop for women. However you may choose to facilitate your self-care sessions as shorter blocks spaced out over several weeks. The advantage of this is that it gives the women time in between sessions to try things out and experience what it is like to make changes to their self-care. While still being able to draw on your support and the support of the group.

The timings for each activity are intended as a rough guide. Depending on the size of the group you are working with, the activities may take more or less time. Remember it is always better to have too many activities prepared rather than too little. Being “over-prepared” in this way can reduce any stress you may feel as the group facilitator. It is easier to cut activities out on the day, rather than have to make up an activity on the spot because you have time left.

As well as the activities suggested in the sample outline, you can also draw inspiration from all of the suggested self-care strategies, self-reflection exercises, breathing and yoga techniques contained in this manual to create alternative, additional self-care sessions for the groups of women you are working with.

When you are setting up the room, make it as comfortable and welcoming as possible. For example, make sure you have comfortable seating, yoga mats and blankets. Make sure the room is warm. Play relaxing, peaceful music while the women are arriving and during breaks. If you have an oil vaporiser or oil spray, you may use some calming essential oils, such as lavender or rose, to give the room a pleasant scent and promote relaxation. During coffee breaks and lunches, remind the women that these workshops are part of their self-care. Don't let them help tidy and clean up!

Sample self-care workshop outline

Time	Session content	Session objectives	Resources required	Time estimate
1030	Arrival and Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark the beginning of the work together. • Help the women feel present in the workshop and able to leave behind worries, stresses and strains of the world outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea candles and lighter or matches • Flip chart and pens • Quote of the day 	15 min

Session detail

Lighting Candles (2 min)

- Invite each person to light a candle and place it in the centre of the room as a way of arriving and bringing their energy into the space.

Grounding Exercise (10 min)

- Invite the women to find a comfortable seated position.
- Guide them to bring their attention to:
 - The body: the parts of the body resting on the floor, the sensations in the body, areas of comfort or discomfort, openness or tightness. Not trying to change or relax anything, simply noticing sensations.
 - Their thoughts: any recurring thoughts, thoughts of what has come before in their day or what is coming after, thoughts or feelings about the workshop. Without judging or analysing the thoughts, simply being aware of the mind.
 - Their breath: noticing the flow of air through the nostrils, perhaps coolness of the breath on the inhale and slight warmth on the exhale. Noticing how the breath moves the physical body, starting with awareness of how the breath moves in the chest, the abdomen, and then broadening that awareness out to the rest of the body, noticing movement with the inhale and exhale in other parts of the body, e.g. the shoulders, the pelvis.
- Ask them to reflect on whether there is anything that might stop them from being present for the session - any worries, concerns, discomforts. As they bring these things to mind, use the exhale breath out through the mouth to release their concerns. As they do so, to bring their hands, palms down, onto the floor, sending their worries and concerns back to the earth. Letting the ground absorb anything that may hold them back from being present. Repeat this three times.
- Invite them to bring their awareness back to their breath - letting the body return to its natural breathing rhythm. Ask them to use the breath to find out how they feel now. Remind them there is no right or wrong answer. Just awareness of the present moment.
- Invite them to blink their eyes open and come back into the room.

Quote of the Day (3 min)

- Now is a good time to introduce yourself as the facilitator. You can share a little bit about yourself, your own self-care journey, why you are passionate about self-care, why you believe it is important to you and to the group.
- Select an inspirational quote and have it written on a flipchart. Use one of your favourite quotes or one from this manual.
- Read the quote out to the group - or ask one of the women to read it out.
- Ask the women to share their reactions / thoughts / feelings about this quote.
- Invite them to write up any favourite quotes of their own on the flipchart throughout the day.

Sample self-care workshop outline

Time	Session content	Session objectives	Resources required	Time estimate
1045	Introduction, expectations and overview of workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the women to the facilitators and to each other. • Create a sense of safety and trust by establishing clear boundaries and expectations. • Establish a starting point for the work together. • Give the women an opportunity to bring their feelings into the open space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small, soft ball • Post-it notes • Pens / pencils • Flipchart 	35 min

Session detail

Ball game (10 min)

- This is meant to be a fun and light-hearted exercise designed to get everyone talking and the energy moving. Keep it light!
- The idea is to throw the ball around the group in order to learn each person's name.
- Step one: when each person catches the ball they say their name. Let the ball go round the group a few times to ensure each person says their name at least once.
- Step two: when you throw the ball to someone else in the group you say their name. This activity can start slow, then you can speed it up to make it more challenging and make the group laugh!

Setting ground rules (5 min)

- Engage the group on a set of agreed ground rules. Record these on the flipchart and keep them visible in the room throughout the session. Example ground rules: good listening, confidentiality, time keeping, no mobile phones.

One word to describe your life (20 min)

- Give each person one post-it note and something to write with.
- Individual work: get them to write one word on the post-it note that best describes how they feel right now.
- Pair work: get them to share their word and why they chose it with the person sitting next to them. Tell them to listen carefully to their partner because the next task is to introduce that person to the rest of the group by sharing the word they chose to describe how they feel.
- Group work: each person introduces their partner to the whole group.
- Facilitator sticks all the post-it notes onto a flipchart. Keep the flipchart visible for the rest of the session.



1120 Coffee break
10 minutes

Sample self-care workshop outline

Time	Session content	Session objectives	Resources required	Time estimate
1130	Introduction to self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present an overview of self-care. • Identify and discuss the techniques and strategies that participants are currently using to take care of themselves. • Support participants in identifying areas of their wellbeing that need focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart • Post-it notes • Pens / pencils 	60 min

Session detail

Introduce the concept of self-care (10 min)

- Ask the women to think about what self-care means to them? Get two or three people to share their thoughts and discuss with the whole group. This gets their ideas in the room and illustrates that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach.
- Share more with the group about self-care, you can refer to the information at the beginning of this manual about what self-care is and the five foundations of wellbeing.

Complete Self-care Self Assessment (50 min)

- Individual work (10 min): give the group a copy of the Self-care Self Assessment questionnaire and ask them to sit quietly as they complete it. You can play relaxing background music if it feels appropriate.
- Small group work (10 min): invite them to share reflections on how they have responded in small groups (either 2 or 3 people per small group depending on the size of the whole group). Reinforce the fact that no judgements are made about how they responded, and that everyone is different in terms of what they need and how they approach self-care.
- Whole group work (30 min): invite each person to share one statement from the questionnaire which they do "always" and which they felt was a self-care strength, and one statement where they answered "never" or "rarely" and which they felt they could integrate into their approach to self-care. The facilitator records all the responses on a flipchart noting where the statement sits under the five areas (Mind, Body, Heart, Spirit, Work). Look for common themes to reflect back to the group and discuss. For example, has everyone shared a strength related to "Mind" and very few related to "Body". Is there a common theme around the area that the women would like to strengthen? Discuss what this might mean. How can they learn from each other and from how they have responded.



1230 **Lunch**
60 minutes

Sample self-care workshop outline

Time	Session content	Session objectives	Resources required	Time estimate
1330	Wellness exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a sense of wellbeing and relaxation. Reinforce the idea that self-care can be simple, easy and inexpensive. 		10 min
Session detail				
<p>Circle massage (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite the group to stand up in a circle and turn to the right. Move closer into the circle so that each person can comfortably reach the back of the person next to them. Ask the women to give the person in front of them a massage. They must first ask the permission of the person to do this, and ask for feedback as they begin on whether their touch is too strong or too light. Keep it simple - you can suggest that they massage the trapezius muscles and the upper back. After a few minutes ask everyone to turn to the left and repeat. As a facilitator make sure everyone is comfortable to participate in this activity - some may prefer to observe. Participants should be free to make choices that are right for them and in no way feel pressured to participate in any activity. <p>Other options for this session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice the Finger Holding technique in this manual. Discuss how the women feel as a result, or anything else they notice about the impact of this technique. Repeat the grounding exercise from the morning session. Practice two or three yoga poses as a group. See Appendix 3. For an outgoing group, it may be possible to invite them to share a favourite dance move or other movement with the group. 				

Sample self-care workshop outline

Time	Session content	Session objectives	Resources required	Time estimate
1340	Self-care techniques and gift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a range of simple, useful self-care strategies. • Identify self-care strategies for ourselves and each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-it notes • Pens 	40 min

Session detail

The River (30 min)

- Ask each person to write down six self-care strategies they currently use. One strategy per post-it note.
- Tell them that each post-it note represents a stone. Once everyone has finished writing out their strategies, invite them to set down all of their stones in the shape of an imaginary flowing river. Wait until everyone has placed their 'stones' (strategies) along the length of the river.
- Ask each participant to enter the river and step on the stones that they connect with and feel are important for their self-care. They can step on stones other than the ones they wrote themselves.
- As each woman steps on a stone, ask her to share with the group why she stopped there. Remind the group that while one person is speaking it is important to listen deeply. Keep comments for later.
- Debrief this exercise with the whole group. Ask the women: what did they learn from this exercise? Do they have any more ideas for their self-care?
- If time, refer the women to note down ideas and reflections in a journal or in the relevant sections of this manual.

Ref: Integrated Security - The Manual, Jane Barry

My self-care gift to you (10 min)

- Invite each woman to select one self-care strategy for the person sitting to their left.
- They can choose from the post-its used in 'The River' exercise, or come up with another idea of their own. It should be something that they feel would be most beneficial for this person based on what they have learned about them during today's session.
- As they give the written post-it to the person on their left, ask them to share with the whole group why they have selected this strategy for that individual.

Time	Session content	Session objectives	Resources required	Time estimate
1420	Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close the workshop with an acknowledgement of the steps the women have taken today on their self-care journey. 		10 min

Session detail

Check-out

- Ask each woman to share one word that describes how they feel now at the end of the day.
- As they share their word invite them to blow out one of the candles as a sign of closure on the session.

Ongoing support

- If appropriate, you could suggest that the women stay in touch with each other over the next few weeks as a way of staying committed to their self-care and as support for each other.
- Encourage the women to use this manual as follow-up to the workshop. To complete the self-reflection exercises and write down their self-care plan.

Appendix 1: The Burnout Cycle

The burnout cycle has been divided into 12 stages by psychologists Herbert Freudenberger and Gail North. It is important to point out that not everyone will experience all 12 stages in order. Some people may experience one or more stages at a time, or miss out stages. Understanding the cycle of burnout can be a useful way of recognising the signs that something is wrong either for yourself or others.

Stage of Burnout	Symptoms
Compulsion to Prove Oneself	This refers to excessive ambition and an obsession to prove yourself. It often affects those who are enthusiastic about their work and willing to accept responsibility at any time.
Working Harder	In this stage, the feelings from the first stage are exaggerated. To meet personal high expectations, you take on more than you can handle. You find it difficult or impossible to switch off and believe you have to do everything on your own.
Neglecting Your Needs	Due to the amount of work you have taken on, you have no time for anything else other than work. You neglect important daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, spending time with others (including loved ones). During this stage your lifestyle becomes unhealthy and first small errors can start to occur.
Displacement of Conflict	You experience more conflicts, such as forgotten appointments, lateness, etc. You dismiss any problems, yet you may start to feel threatened, panicky and jittery. The first signs of physical symptoms may appear in this stage.
Revision of Values	During this stage, the way you perceive things changes and your values become skewed. You dismiss friends and family, see your hobbies as irrelevant. Work is your only focus.
Denial of Emerging Problems	Problems emerge but you deny them. You start to become intolerant, perceiving collaborators as stupid, lazy, demanding, or undisciplined. Social contact becomes harder. You view problems as caused by time pressure and work, not because of life changes.
Withdrawal	In this stage, you reduce social contact to a minimum and become isolated. Your family and friends are seen as a burden rather than a support system. As relief from stress, you seek other means of gratification (sometimes alcohol/ drugs).
Obvious Behavioural Changes	In this stage your family and friends become concerned. At this point, nothing matters to you. Lifestyle and behaviour changes are obvious and apparent.
Depersonalization (Confusion of Identity)	In this stage you feel a loss of contact with yourself. You neither see yourself nor others as valuable, and no longer perceive your own needs. You may start neglecting your own health even more, and begin seeing life as meaningless.
Inner Emptiness	You feel empty inside - useless, anxious and tired. To overcome this, you seek other activities, which are sometimes exaggerated. For example, overeating, sex, alcohol, or drugs.
Depression	This is an increase of the previous stage. You feel lost and unsure, exhausted, hopeless. The future feels bleak and dark.
Burnout Syndrome	This final stage can include total mental and physical collapse. The situation becomes an emergency. It is time for full medical attention.

Appendix 2: Self-care Self Assessment

This is adapted from the Self-care Assessment developed by Norton, 1996 (*Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization*. Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP).

Use this assessment to give yourself a clear picture of where you are doing well, and where you could start to focus your energy to improve in relation to self-care.

Find a quiet space. Turn off your phone and get comfortable. Do not over-think your responses. Be honest. There are no right or wrongs. Your responses will give you a clearer idea of what is working for you now and where you have the potential to develop and enhance your self-care strategies.

In each area you are presented with a list of statements. Read each statement and assess how often you include that activity in your life using the following scale:

5 = Always **4** = Very often **3** = Sometimes **2** = Rarely **1** = Never



BODY - physical wellbeing

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)					
I eat healthily					
I get regular medical check ups					
I get massages					
I exercise regularly (e.g. dance, swim, walk, run, etc.)					
I take time to be sexual with myself or my partner					
I get enough sleep					
I take holidays (i.e. one full week or more throughout the year)					
I take time away from electronic devices (e.g. telephone, TV, computer, etc.)					
I take day trips or weekend breaks					



MIND - psychological wellbeing

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I take time to be alone					
I have my own psychotherapy or counselling when needed					
I write in a journal					
I read things that are unrelated to work					
I take time to notice my inner experience (i.e. my thoughts, feelings, judgements, beliefs, attitudes)					
I say "no" to extra responsibilities					
I ask for help when I need it					
I allow others to help me					
I take time to engage my mind in different ways (e.g. visit museums and galleries, go to sporting events, cinema, theatre, etc.)					
I make time to try new things (e.g. learning something new, cooking a different meal, rediscovering an old interest, etc.)					



HEART - emotional wellbeing

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I spend time with people whose company I enjoy					
I spend time with children					
I spend time with animals (pets)					
I stay in contact with important people in my life					
I give myself praise and/or positive affirmations					
I allow myself to cry					
I find things that make me laugh					
I find positive outlets to express any anger and/or outrage (e.g. social action, letters, donations, protest marches, etc.)					
I find ways to express my creativity (e.g. writing, painting, sewing, drawing, playing an instrument, dancing etc.)					
I take time to read favourite books and/or watch films I love					



SPIRIT - spiritual wellbeing

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I make time for reflection					
I spend time in nature					
I know what is meaningful to me in life					
I make space in my life for the things that are meaningful					
I find ways to connect to "that which is greater than myself" (e.g. through prayer, meditation, singing, dancing, etc.)					
I make time to read and/or listen to things that inspire me (e.g. music, talks, books, etc.)					
I make time to connect to the wider community (e.g. join a community group, volunteer, etc.)					
I take time to notice and appreciate the beauty of life around me					
I take time to engage my mind in different ways (e.g. visit museums and galleries, go to sporting events, cinema, theatre, etc.)					
I make time to try new things (e.g. learning something new, cooking a different meal, rediscovering an old interest, etc.)					



WORK - relational wellbeing

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I take regular breaks during the work day					
I take time to chat to co-workers					
I make quiet time to complete tasks					
I identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding					
I set limits with clients / co-workers (and/or with family members I take care of)					
I balance my workload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"					
I arrange my workspace so it is comfortable and comforting					
I get regular supervision and/or consultation					
I negotiate for my needs (e.g. benefits, pay raise, etc.)					
I ask for support from my manager and/or co-workers when needed					

Appendix 3: Yoga Poses to Relieve Anxiety

Cross-Legged Twist (Parsvasukhasana)

- Begin in a simple cross-legged posture with a cushion or folded blanket underneath your hips to lift your pelvis off the floor.
- Place both hands on your knees, palms down.
- Inhale lengthen the low ribs away from the waist, lifting and lengthening the torso.
- Exhale twist to the left, bringing your right hand to your left knee and your left hand behind your back.
- Stay for a 4 to 10 deep breaths.
- Inhale back to centre, both hands back on your knees.
- Repeat - this time twisting to the right.

Figure 3:

Cross-legged twist



Standing Side Stretches

Stage one:

- Stand with your feet slightly wider than hips' width apart, hands on your hips, and gently tip the pelvis from side to side.
- Feel the stretch down through the inner thighs.

Stage two - deepening the stretch through the torso as you bend more deeply to each side:

- As you bend to the right, lower your right hand towards the right knee, bring your left arm up and over your head, allowing the weight of the arm to increase the stretch a bit more.
- Repeat on the left side.
- Move from side to side with the breath: inhale to lengthen the torso upwards, exhale bend to one side, and repeat a few times.
- Once you have repeated a few times, hold on each side for 4 to 10 deep breaths.

Figure 4:

Standing Side Stretches



Tree Pose (Vrksasana)

- Start standing with your right side near a wall and one of the fingers of your right hand touching the wall.
- Find a fixed point on the floor to focus on to support your balance.
- Bend your left leg and bring your left heel to the inside of your right ankle.
- Stay here or lift the left foot to press against the inner right calf muscle or inner right thigh. Do NOT press the foot into the knee joint.
- As you press the foot into the right leg, press the leg back into the foot.
- As you find your balance, begin to take your finger away from the wall - knowing you can put it back at any moment!
- As much as possible, keep your hips square to the front, allowing your hips and knees to open.

Figure 5:

Tree pose

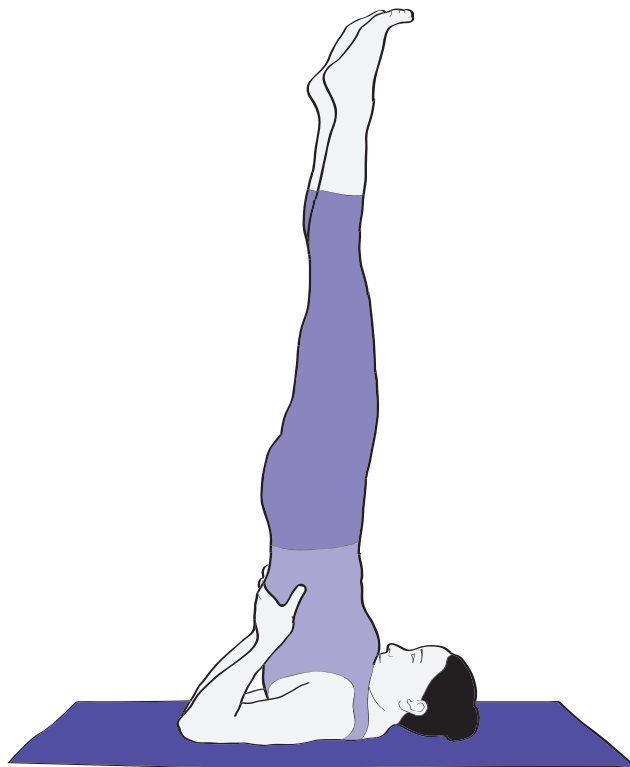


Supported Shoulderstand (Salamba Sarvangasana)

- Set up for the pose by placing a folded blanket near a wall for your shoulders to rest on.
- Come into the pose by sitting on the floor facing the wall with your hips as close to the wall as possible / comfortable. Arms by your sides, palms up.
- Raise your legs onto the wall, bend your knees, and press the soles of your feet onto the wall. Feet are active.
- Using the feet to bear your weight, inhale press your back into the floor.
- Exhale lengthen your tailbone towards the wall as you lift the pelvis and come up onto your shoulders. Your feet stay on the wall, your weight is resting on your feet and the backs of your shoulders. Your head and neck should be soft and bearing no weight. You can bend your elbows and bring your hands to your lower back.
- In this version of Shoulderstand, your torso is not completely vertical, it is tilted 15 to 20 degrees.
- Breathe deeply - stay for approximately 30 seconds. As you build strength, slowly work up to holding for 90 seconds.
- To come out of the pose, bring your arms back by your sides. Exhale slowly lower the pelvis to the floor, lowering first the upper back, then mid back, then low back, then pelvis.

Figure 6:

Shoulderstand

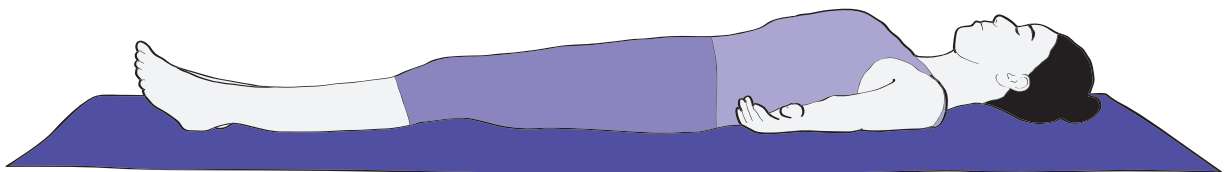


Deep Relaxation Pose (Savasana)

- Set up by placing a folded blanket or cushion underneath your head to support your head and neck.
- Put on socks, additional layers, and a blanket over the body as body temperature will go down as you allow the body to relax.
- Lie back with your head on the blanket, so your chin tilts slightly towards your chest. This allows the thinking mind to relax.
- Let your legs be slightly apart and your feet splay out to the sides.
- Rest your arms by your sides, palms up.
- If you have lower back issues, place a support under knees (e.g. bolster or rolled up blanket).
- When comfortable begin to observe your breath.
- If it is very difficult to connect to a sense of relaxation, you could try listening to some soothing, relaxing music or a guided yoga nidra while you lie in this relaxation pose.

Figure 7:

Relaxation pose



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