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*Supporting Survivors of Abuse & Sexual Trauma*

# *Welcome to Our Self-Care Workshop*



## *Goals of the Self-Care Workshop*

*To better understand how self-care impacts our lives.*

*To be able to identify the various areas of self-care in our lives.*

*To give ourselves permission to take care of ourselves after trauma.*

### *Benefits of Support Groups*

*Support group participation is one way in which survivors have been shown to experience increased support and a decrease in feelings of isolation, stigma, and shame. Furthermore, support groups have been found to be a very promising service for survivors, helping to connect survivors with social support and a safe and confidential space to move forward in their healing processes (e.g., Leech & Littlefield, 2011). There are many potential benefits of participating in healing groups. The following list highlights some of these benefits:*

- 1. Sharing information*
- 2. Expressing emotions in a safe space*
- 3. Learning new coping strategies*
- 4. Finding hope*
- 5. Experiencing validation and normalization of feelings, experiences, and trauma responses*
- 6. Giving and receiving support*
- 7. Building or expanding one's support network*
- 8. Identifying with others*
- 9. Experiencing compassion and empowerment*
- 10. Increasing self-esteem*
- 11. Feeling less alone, lonely, or isolated*
- 12. May reduce distress, depression and anxiety*

## *Self-Care*

### *What is Self-Care?*

*Self-care is taking deliberate steps to do things and think things that give yourself chances to improve you by taking care of your needs physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It is any activity we do intentionally for this reason.*

### *What are the Benefits of Self-Care?*

*Self-care gives you the best chance to help you manage in positive ways which allow you to improve your journey of recovery. Self-care also helps you to focus better in many situations. Self-care can improve*

*blood pressure*

*reduce anxiety*

*improve physical and mental energy*

*improve coping skills.*

### *What are Examples of Self-Care?*

*There are many examples of self-care you will look at in this learning unit. Some commonly known examples of self-care impact all aspects of your life, such as getting sufficient sleep, eating balanced meals, getting physical exercise, and meditation or relaxation. Self-care is recognizing when you are doing more than you are used to handling and working on figuring out what can be done to slow down. Another example of self-care is finding a way to decompress throughout your day through mini-breaks like getting a drink of water away from your desk or room you are in. Even making an intentional short call to reach out to a friend.*

### *Why Should I Work on Self-Care?*

*The journey of recovery from trauma requires a lot of hard work, and to make it as easy as possible, it is needed to help you cope during the difficult times. Self-care is needed to help with regeneration of the whole self - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.*

## *Types of Self-Care*

### *Physical Self-Care*

*Some common types of physical self-care may or may not be easy. Depending upon your health and your body, you may need to make adaptations to your plans. No matter what, you should clear any new physical activity/exercise with your physician.*

### *Benefits of Exercise & Movement*

*Helps to strengthen your heart, lungs & muscles*

*Reduces blood pressure*

*Improves sleep*

*Assists in regulating digestion*

### *Exercise & Movement*

*Based on your physician's clearance, there are several activities that increase movement. Intentional exercise such as calisthenics, aerobics (chair aerobics is available if standing is difficult or impossible), sit-ups, walking, swimming, yoga and more.*

*Go for a run.*

*Dance.*

*Stretch.*

*Go for a bike ride.*

*Swim, play sports, or other fun physical activities.*

*Lift weights.*

*Exercise or go to the gym.*

*Practice martial arts.*

*Walk your dogs.*

### ***Pleasure***

*A great way to take care of yourself when you're coping with stress is to engage in a pleasurable activity. Try one of these ideas.*

*Take yourself out to eat.*

*Be a tourist in your own city.*

*Garden.*

*Watch a movie.*

*Make art. Do a craft project.*

*Journal.*

*Go for a photo walk.*

*Wear clothes you enjoy and like.*

*Take day trips or mini-vacations.*

*Take a break from technology.*

*Laugh*

### ***Sleep Hygiene***

*Sleep experts suggest that the average individual needs 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night for optimal rest and sleep. The National Sleep Foundation Scientists have broken it down more.*

*Younger adults (18-25) need 7-9 hours of sleep*

*Adults (26-64) remains at 7-9 hours of sleep*

*Older Adults (65+) need 7-8 hours of sleep.*

### ***Tips for getting a good night's sleep (From the National Sleep Foundation)***

*Stick to a sleep schedule, even on weekends*

*Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual*

*Exercise daily*

*Evaluate your bedroom to ensure ideal temperature, sound and light*

*Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows*

*Beware of hidden sleep stealers like alcohol and caffeine*

*Turn off electronics before bed*

*They provide a great sleep diary to track for 1-2 weeks and talk to your physician about it.*

*<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/SleepDiaryv6.pdf>*

### ***Benefits of Sleep Hygiene***

*Adequate sleep reduces stress hormones*

*Improves our immune system*

*Increases appetite*

*Decreases blood pressure*

*Improves Cardiovascular health*

*Decreases the risk of obesity, heart disease and infections*

*Releases hormones that help to repair cells and control the body's use of energy*

### ***Nutrition***

*It is important to see your physician or dietitian/nutritionist to determine the best eating plan possible based on your particular health needs. For a survivor who is diabetic, needing to improve weight gain or weight loss, or needing to maintain or build on certain aspects such as someone needing to build muscles, each group of individuals have special nutrients to add or avoid. This includes survivors who are struggling with eating disorders.*

*Choose My Plate.gov offers a great starting place.*

*<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/vegetables-nutrients-health> Many hospitals offer help for diabetics or can refer you to a nutritionist who is able to help with your eating needs.*

### ***Benefits of Balance Nutrition***

*Eating sufficient nutrition helps to prevent illness*

*Helps to reduce cardiovascular disease*

*Lowers high cholesterol*

*Reduces high blood pressure*

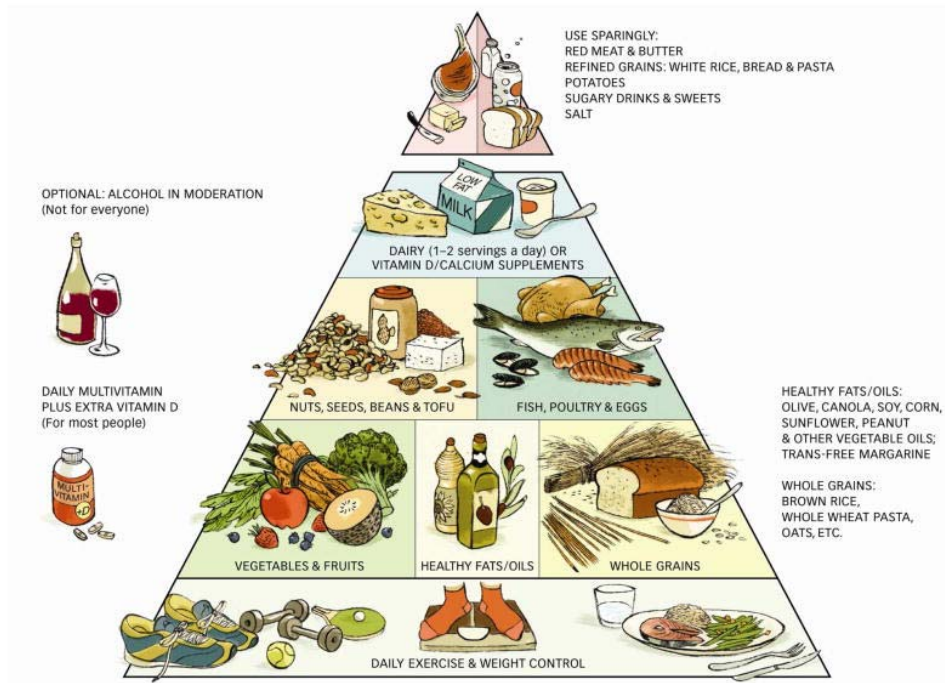
*Improves well-being*

*Improves ability to fight off illness*

*Improves ability to recover from injury or illness*

*Increases energy levels*

*Here is the Healthy Eating Pyramid from Harvard College. It may be shared for educational and non-commercial uses with proper notification.*



Copyright © 2008. For more information about *The Healthy Eating Pyramid*, please see *The Nutrition Source*, Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health, <http://www.thenutritionsource.org>, and *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*, by Walter C. Willett, M.D. and Patrick J. Skerrett (2005), Free Press/Simon & Schuster Inc.



## *Emotional Self-Care*

*Emotional self-care is taking time to understand what is going on internally. It's validating there are different aspects of you and the emotions that you have - there are no good or bad feelings. There are many things we can do for emotional self-care.*

*Accept your feelings. They're all OK. Really.*

*Write your feelings down. Here's a list of feeling words.*

*Cry when you need to.*

*Laugh when you can. (Try laughter yoga.)*

*Practice self-compassion.*

*Be honest with yourself, your limitations and your needs.*

*Decrease stress in your life.*

*Feel proud of yourself and verbalize that aloud.*

*Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships and places.*

*Practice mindfulness.*

*Practice self-compassion.*

*Read or reread favorite books and review favorite movies.*

*Stay in contact with important people in your life.*

*Spend time with others whose company you enjoy.*

## *Affirmations*

*It's easy to beat yourself up over many things. To take care of you, it's important to give yourself some kindness. That can be in the form of affirmations for example, "I am okay." Or "I can do this." It seems to be easy to say things that downplay your skills or that are critical of you. There are a significant number of them to create or to draw from things that you do like about you whether you believe them or maybe someone told you them and you are putting down what they said.*

*It's difficult to change things without first changing the accompanying thought. To work on change your thinking about you, practice saying these in your quiet time. When creating these affirmations, focus on the present, not the past or the future so much. Visualize that the affirmation is true, even if you don't believe it is true yet.*

*Since we know the negative thoughts repeated lead us to believe those things about us, it is good news that repeating positive thoughts will bring belief in these affirmations as well. If you find you believe even one or two, you are on the right direction for sure! Here are a few to get started, but please choose to create healthy ones for yourself.*

*I was victimized, but I am a survivor.*

*I am awesome, right now, just as I am.*

*I am a worthwhile person.*

*I can trust myself to make healthier decisions for me now that I'm not longer involved in the trauma I experienced.*

*I am capable of loving.*

*I am loveable.*

*I am intelligent.*

*I am able to learn.*

*I am still loveable when I make mistakes.*

*I'm learning to take care of myself and will continue to do so.*

*It is okay to have fun and play.*

*I am not a failure when I make mistakes.*

*I am not alone in this journey of healing.*

*I am resourceful to have survived through the trauma I went through and to have made it this far!*

*God loves me no matter what (My higher power loves me no matter what).*

*I am allowed to say "No."*

*"No." is a complete sentence.*

*I deserve to be treated with respect.*

*I am okay to ask for help - it doesn't make me weak.*

*I am safe today - it is not happening today.*

*I am strong, courageous and brave.*

*I can choose to educate myself about healing from my trauma.*

*I choose to walk through this journey of healing.*

*I am taking back my life from my abuser/assailant.*

*I am strong, courageous and brave.*

*I can heal.*

*I will heal.*

*I am capable.*

*As long as I live, I have hope.*

*I can share as much or as little as I need with whomever I want or need.*

*I can trust again with time and effort.*

*I am a good, worthwhile, imperfect human.*

*I deserve self-respect.*

*I did what I had to do to survive. There is no shame in that.*

*I have the right to enjoy what I can enjoy without shame.*

*I am in the daily process of healing.*

*I have inside me a message of hope for others needing hope.*

*I am innocent, even when I don't feel like it.*

*I am courageous.*

*I have the courage to act even though I feel afraid.*

*One day, one step at a time.*

*It gets better.*

*I am in the process of healing.*

*I have the right to my feelings, and to experience them.*

*I have the right to say no to touch.*

*It was the right thing to tell about my trauma, even though I may have been told not to tell.*

*It wasn't my fault - I didn't cause it, even if he/she said I did.*

*I will not assume responsibility or accept blame for any of the abuse perpetrated on me.*

*I will be gentle with myself.*

*My ability to feel is a blessing.*

*It is okay to be sad and grieve for my childhood.*

*I love my precious inner child.*

*I was innocent, not seductive.*

*I give myself credit for being courageous.*

*I am resourceful.*

*I am strong and capable.*

*I can do whatever I set my mind to do.*

*I have the courage to see myself filled with strength and confidence.*

*Add your own Affirmations!*

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### ***Relational Self-Care***

*Connecting with others is an important part of self-care. This is connection that is addition to the computer and texting. The purpose for taking good care of our relationships is that not doing so can greatly increase isolation and depression. Some self-care activities that can be beneficial or help in this process are:*

*Go on a lunch date with a good friend.*

*Calling a friend on the phone.*

*Participating in a book club.*

*Joining a support group.*

*Set healthy boundaries*

*Smiling more*

*Meeting new people*

*Nurturing your relationships*

*Compliment others more (and yourself)*

*Admit your wrongs with someone*

*It can also mean remembering that others go through similar experiences and difficulties as we do.*

### ***Spiritual Self-Care***

*Spiritual self-care isn't about doctrines or theology, but about finding quiet time to connect with God (your higher power). It is when we are actively engaging with God and searching for that connection with Him.*

### ***Meditation and Prayer***

*Regular use of time to relax and to engage in focusing your mind in something relaxing or focused that increases strength or quiet in your spirit. Some research shows that spending time in prayer or meditation over a period of time impacts changes in the brain and an improvement in mood.*

*This is continuing to be researched due to the positive responses to understand the impact has on the brain. Meditation and prayer are about sitting quietly for a time of focus on the silence and regenerating what is inside of your heart and soul.*

### ***Walking***

*Allowing yourself time to be in nature through walking or hiking can help you to connect with your higher power or God. It helps to disconnect from the business of the day that can be stressful and tensing. This also allows us to heal and be in connect with all of our senses. Being in nature for a good amount of time can have a positive impact on you.*

*Getting in touch with your values—what really matters—is a sure way to cope with stress and foster a calm mind. Activities that people define as spiritual are very personal. Here are a few ideas.*

*Attend church.*

*Read poetry or inspiring quotes.*

*Light a candle.*



*Meditate.*

*Write in a journal.*

*Spend time in nature.*

*Pray.*

*List five things you're grateful for.*

*Be open to the non-material aspects of your life.*

*Celebrate milestones with rituals and steps that are meaningful to you.*

*Go to a place of worship.*

*Identify what is meaningful in your life and notice it's place in your life.*

*Cherish your optimism and hope.*

*Express gratitude.*

### ***Spiritual Affirmations***

*Spiritual affirmations are about the relationship with God or your higher power, rather than self-driven. Some examples of Spiritual Affirmations are:*

*I am a divine expression of a loving God,*

*I surrender to God - He is always with me.*

*God's love is working through me now and always.*

*God is with me always.*

*I open my mind and heart to the perfect love of God.*

*I delight in the grace of God.*

*I am created in God's image.*

*I am a child of God, who loves me beyond my imagination.*

*God is seeking me, even when it feels he is far away.*

*I choose to accept the peace God brings.*

*I choose to believe God loves me.*

*God has chosen to bless me.*

### ***Biblical Affirmations***

*Christ has set me free to experience true freedom (Gal 5:1)*

*God is my refuge, strength and help in times of trouble (Ps 46:1)*

*I am complete in Christ (Col 2:10)*

*My hope is in the Lord. (Ps 40:7)*

*God's divine power gives me everything I need for life. (2 Peter 1:3)*

*It is through Jesus Christ that I truly live. (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

*God is my stronghold in times of trouble. (Ps 9:9)*

*I am a child of God. (1 John 3:1)*

*I am walking humbly with my God (Micah 6:8)*

*Because I place my hope in the Lord my strength is renewed. (Isaiah 40:31)*

*The cross of Christ is my power. (1 Corinthians 1:17)*

*My God meets all my needs. (Philippians 4:19)*

*The love that God has lavished on me is great. (1 John 3:1)*

*I live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 12:7)*

*Because I seek the Lord with all my heart, I lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:10)*

*God pours out his love into my heart by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:5)*

*Add your own Spiritual Affirmations!*

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## ***Mental Self-Care***

*Mental self-care is paying attention to the thoughts you have, and trying to evaluate what is really going on inside. You are able to manage the thoughts, but the feelings that run within the mind ebb and flow and aren't really based in fact. This is also doing things that stimulate your mind such as research, audio or visual activities or visual activities.*

*Examples of mental self-care are focusing your attention on this moment – not the past or future*

### *Practicing patience*

*Learning about something that increases our brain power, such as reading on something you are interested in or passionate about.*

*Become personally aware of how your self-care activities are in your life right now and what you can do to improve them.*

*You can also give yourself a boost by doing a task that you've been avoiding or challenging your brain in a novel way. This can also boost self-confidence.*

*Clean out a junk drawer or a closet.*

*Take action (one small step) on something you've been avoiding.*

*Try a new activity.*

*Drive to a new place.*

*Make a list.*

*Immerse yourself in a crossword puzzle.*

*Do a word search.*

*Read something on a topic you wouldn't normally.*

*Be curious.*

*Be okay leaving work at home.*

*Do something at which you are not an expert at, or try something new.*

*Engage your intelligence in a new area (art, history, theatre, science, etc.)*

*Say "no" to extra responsibilities.*

*Stay present-focused.*

*Write in a journal.*

*Minimize life stresses.*

*Notice your inner experience - listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes & feelings.*

*Practice receiving from others.*

*Make time for self-reflection.*

## **Sensory**

*When you feel stressed and need a calm mind, try focusing on the sensations around you—sights, smells, sounds, tastes, touch. This will help you focus on the present moment, giving you a break from your worries.*

*Breathe in fresh air.*

*Snuggle under a cozy blanket.*

*Listen to running water.*

*Sit outdoors by a fire pit, watching the flames and listening to the night sounds.*

*Take a hot shower or a warm bath.*

*Get a massage.*

*Cuddle with a pet.*

*Pay attention to your breathing.*

*Burn a scented candle.*

*Wiggle your bare feet in overgrown grass.*

*Stare up at the sky.*

*Lie down where the afternoon sun streams in a window.*

*Listen to music.*

## *Pleasure*

*A great way to take care of yourself when you're coping with stress is to engage in a pleasurable activity. Try one of these ideas.*

*Take yourself out to eat.*

*Be a tourist in your own city.*

*Garden.*

*Watch a movie.*

*Make art. Do a craft project.*

*Journal.*

*Walk your dogs.*

*Go for a photo walk.*

## *Activities*

*Play a game*

*Paint your nails*

*Take a walk*

*Have a favorite drink such as tea or hot chocolate*

*Watch a movie*

*Take photos*

*Make a collage*

*Read a book*

*Plant something*

*Visit an animal shelter or zoo*

*Listen to nature and sounds around you*

*Stretch or walk*

*Laugh (jokes, dry bar comedy can help)*

*Write a letter*

*Listen to an audio book*

*Take a relaxing bath or shower*

*Color*

*Call a friend*

*Read a magazine*

*Get a massage*

*Write a list of things you are thankful for*

*Dress up just because*

*Learn how to sew, crochet or make jewelry*

*Step away from the computer*

*Do something nice for someone anonymously*

*Prepare a meal that you wouldn't normally prepare*

*Swing on a swing*

*Dance (or make up one)*

*Learn how to make a video*

*Send a postcard or letter to someone*

*Search out a topic on the internet that you're interested in*



## *Coping Skills*

*After trauma, many survivors struggle with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), dissociation, self-doubt, anxiety, fear and many other intense emotions. The next portion of this workshop deals with a variety of exercises and resources to help when dealing with intense emotions.*

### *Triggers*

*Triggers are external events or circumstances that may produce very uncomfortable emotional or psychiatric symptoms. Recognizing them allows you to be able to cope with them. The external circumstance that triggers could be a person, place, things, smell, the recall of a touch, etc. The trigger can bring up memories and flashbacks, dissociation or other symptoms. They can take you back to the place of the trauma in your mind, as if it is happening right now. They can create sensations in your body or could even leave you feeling numb. What do you do with the triggers then?*

*Start to look at what they are, when they occur and how to manage them after they occur. If you can identify where the trigger is coming from, you are most likely then able to recognize it and reach out to change how you respond in the future. Of course, those changes take practice, but that is doable. As you are beginning to recognize what is triggering you, you can attempt to help yourself resolve the trigger sooner and can choose constructive responses rather than reacting in negative responses.*

*To help you do that, take a look at things that can be triggering and what you can do with them. Ask yourself these questions:*

*What about the question, comment or story triggered you?*

*How did you respond initially?*

*What would you like to do or believe instead?*

*Be compassionate and patient with yourself, as you would with someone else in your situation.*

*So, let's talk about a variety of skills necessary to help you take back your life when you are triggered, when facing a great intensity of emotions, or whatever your trigger looks like.*

### **Containment**

*Containment is one way you can manage disruptive thoughts, feelings, situations and triggers that may lead to flashbacks, self-harm, dissociation and more. Containment is also a way you can use to store positive thoughts and feelings that can be drawn upon in difficult times.*

#### *The Purposes of Containment*

*Prevention of feeling overwhelmed*

*Increase your ability to cope with stressors*

*Decrease dissociative episodes*

*Prevent potentially dangerous behaviors*

*Allows you to be and feel more in control of your thoughts and emotions*

*Containment is a temporary method to manage until an appropriate time to deal with it. For example, processing a flashback before bed wouldn't be a great time to do so. Containing it to process it with your therapist the next day or in a couple days would be a better option.*

*Containment requires daily practice while starting on lesser stressors so that you don't have to figure it out on intense feelings. Note however, this is not the same as stuffing to avoid it. Containment is a short-term way to deal with something at a better time.*

*Here's what you can do for containment.*

*Visualize putting the difficult thought, feeling, situation or trigger into an actual box, bottle, jar, a desk drawer, a passworded file, or so on. When you are ready to take it to your therapist, take it from that place you chose and deal with it in that safe place.*

*Journal what is in your mind and then put it aside.*

*Use distraction skills*

*Use self-talk and affirmations.*

### ***Distractions You Might Try***

*Bake something*

*Be creative with something*

*Bite into a lemon to use the sour taste to force you into the here and now.*

*Call someone*

*Squish a stress ball*

*Suck on a piece of hard candy*

*Take a deep breath*

*Take a shower (hot or cold)*

*Take time to recover - be gentle with you*

*Try to identify the trigger so you can address it specifically if you don't already know what it is*

*Try to avoid blaming yourself for what you did or did not do during the trauma*

*Try to move your arms and legs instead of staying in that dissociated place*

*Try to remind yourself the worst is over because the trauma was about the worst that it could get*

*Use positive affirmations*

*Use a lot of self-talk - remind yourself that you are safe now.*

*Use visualization to regroup and focus on something besides the triggers.*

*Use your creative skills - draw, write, scribble, and so on*

*Wear something all the time that is from the current time only, not from the past, and then touch it and remind yourself it's in the present.*

*Wrap up in a blanket, mimicking someone holding you tight and safe*

*Find a physical activity to participate in*

*Focus on the here and now the best you can - perhaps with tv or a movie*

*Have a supportive person remind you it is a memory and is not happening right now*

*Add a list of things you can do for distraction that aren't here on this list*

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## *Grounding*

*Grounding is a set of strategies to detach from emotional pain. It works by focusing on the external world rather than the internal. Grounding is beneficial because when you are overwhelmed with emotional pain, you need a way to detach. This allows you to avoid hurting yourself and you can gain control over your inside feelings.*

*Many trauma survivors struggle with either feeling too much or too little. We see this with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and addiction frequently. Grounding provides a middle ground with this - consciousness of reality and being able to tolerate the experience in the here and now.*

### ***What You Need to Know***

*Grounding can be done any time or place without anyone else needing to know.*

*Use it when faced with a flashback, cravings, dissociation or when your emotional pain hits 6 (in a 0-10 scale).*

*Keep your eyes open, scan the room and turn on lights to stay in touch with the present.*

*Rate your mood before and after to test whether it worked even a small amount.*

*Avoid talking or writing about negative feelings at this time as you want to distract from them, not move toward them.*

*Stay neutral - no judgments of your feelings or of yourself - there is no good or bad.*

*Focus on the present, not the past or future.*

*Grounding is not the same as relaxation. Grounding is an active skill and is intended to help extreme negative feelings.*

### ***Mental Grounding***

*Describe your environment in detail.*

*Count or say the alphabet slowly and deliberately.*

*Call your therapist.*

*Create a “safe place” in your mind, and then utilize it when triggered.*

*Do age progression - if you feel 9 years old, slowly tell yourself you are 10, then you are 11, then you are 12, until you reach your current age.*

*Describe an activity that you do on a regular basis in extensive detail (such as doing your dishes or taking your kids to school).*

*Give yourself permission to focus on one thing at a time*

*Listen to a tape of affirmations*

*Picture you caring about someone or something right now*

*Pray aloud so you can hear your voice*

*Read something aloud, such as a book or poetry*

*Remember the words to a favorite song*

*Say a safety statement aloud so you can hear your own voice*

*Say a coping statement (“I can handle this.” or “This feeling will pass.”)*

*Sing along with your favorite song*

*Think about a safe place for you (bedroom, the park, the library, etc.)*

*Think of your favorites (colors, movies, books, flowers, cars, etc.)*

*Use humor (Dry Bar Comedy offer clean comedy)*

*Visualize a stop sign*

### ***Physical Grounding - Senses Grounding***

*Carry or wear a grounding object with you (a small irregular or colorful stone, a necklace with a trinket, etc.).*

*Dance.*

*Draw, paint, work with clay or other physical touch experiences*

*Eat something slowly and describe its flavor, texture, smell, describing it aloud.*

*Find a physical activity to participate in.*

*Focus on your breathing - repeat a favorite word on your inhale.*

*Grab your chair, couch, bed or table as tight as you can.*

*Hold a frozen orange in your hand until you can feel it at all, then switch hands.*

*Hold on to something cold like a bag of vegetables or an ice cube.*

*Keep a small container of Play-Doh available to smell and manipulate.*

*Play with your jewelry.*

*Push or grind your feet into the floor until you can feel them.*



*Run cool or warm water over your hands.*

*Stretch.*

*Touch things around you - feel and describe the texture, color, smell, etc.*

*Walk slowly, paying attention to how you are taking your steps.*

*Wash your face with cool or warm water.*

*Add a list of things you can do for grounding that aren't here on this list*

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### ***Safe Place Visualization***

*Safe Place visualization enables you to nurture and soothe while practicing effective control over your feelings and thoughts. It utilizes the survivor's natural talent for dissociation. It is a choice to experience internal stimuli that are safe, soothing and nurturing over internal stimuli that is unsafe and traumatic.*

*To create this, you need to incorporate all of your senses - Sight, Hearing, Smell, Touch and Taste*

*These senses incorporated into the safe placed tied with visualizing a place that is safe and soothing for you will help you to better visualize that place for you.*

***Here is an example of a safe place visualization.***

*It is a warm day and I can feel the sun shining down warming my arms in my short sleeves. I am relaxing on the bank of the small river where there is no one around except the animals and birds in nature. I stretch out a bit, and lay down, allowing my feet to be in the edge of the river where I can feel the water lapping at my feet. I can feel the grass beneath me, soft and warm. I hear the breeze blowing the leaves in the trees around me. I take a deep breath in and then slowly relax it. As I do, I notice the beautiful smell of the flowers in the bush to my right. It smells beautiful and has luscious looking berries on it. I slowly get up and go over to the bush where I pull off a berry and taste it. I note the tease between the sweet and tartness of the berry. It tickles my tongue as I eat it. It is quite a nice refreshment. I pull out the chair I brought to sit in, where I pull out my fishing rod and sit on the side of the river to do some fishing. I want to catch a fish to have it for dinner. I love being in nature - it's so calming and relaxing. I feel like I could stay here forever - safe, secure, and protected by nature.*

*You can create your own safe place visualization based on your favorite places and things, whether real or imagined. It can be longer or can be shorter. As long as you are able to calm yourself by going into this place in your mind.*

### *What If Grounding Doesn't Work So Well?*

*As with anything you are working on learning, you need to practice it when you're not in distress. This way it will be more of a response to move into the grounding rather than having to think from scratch*

*Don't give up, no matter what*

*Enlist someone you trust to help you or remind you to use your grounding skills*

*Look at what type of grounding exercises work better for you - physical or mental*

*Make up your own grounding exercises*

*Prepare where you will need them - home, work, in your car, and so on. Have a list available in those places that you can use and work on*

*To help grounding work better, try it for an extended amount of time. Try 30 minutes instead of 10 minutes to allow yourself time to relax more*

### *Creating a Resource Toolkit*

*One of the things easy to assemble is a Resource Toolkit or an Emergency Toolkit. Taking a Pencil box or a small tote, you can put in things that help you to distract, ground, and your affirmations. Other items include pen, paper, deck of cards, a perfume, glue stick, colored pencils, a puzzle book, or whatever else you might find helpful when you are needing help with flashbacks, negative feelings, urges for negative activities, etc. Anything that would help you can go in there as room allows. They don't necessarily have to be the things listed here.*

*Have you created your Resource or Crisis Toolkit? If so, what have you put in it to help you through the tough times?*

## *Questions for Consideration*

### *Benefits of Support Groups Questions*

*What benefits do you think in addition to these above that you would gain from having support groups and/or workshops to participate in?*

*How would these benefits impact your life at this time?*

*If you have participated in support groups before, what benefits have you found for yourself?*

### *Distraction Questions*

*What issues besides your trauma do you find yourself dealing with that distractions may be beneficial for?*

*How long have you been dealing with these other issues and do you have any thoughts about how to address them?*

*Are you currently working on these with a professional? If so, what suggestions have they made to assist you in coping?*

### *Affirmations Questions*

*What affirmations stand out to you that you would be willing to use for yourself and your recovery?*

*Please make out at least 5 affirmation cards (using index cards is fine) that you might work on believing (even if they don't feel true now). What struggles or successes do you notice as you're doing this?*

*Of these affirmations that you wrote, which affirmation do you believe the most (even if that may be minimal or none at all?)*

### **Wrap Up**

*Learning to care for yourself and grounding are ongoing tools that you will continue to practice and learn as you work through your journey of healing. If one works and one doesn't that's okay. Some skills work for one person while a different skill works for another.*

*When trying these skills, give yourself a fair chance to allow them to work. Try them more than one time, as if you are learning to play a musical instrument. It takes time to remember where you place your fingers for the music to flow. It will also take time to remember the skills and learning to experience them more frequently than not.*

*Remember, you are not alone. You have the ability to continue to grow and heal. As long as you continue to take any step forward, you are continuing to heal. There are no failures in recovery, there are trials and errors, and learning experiences from those.*

*May you take gentle care of you as you continue on your journey of healing.*

*Some Content Taken From*

*Seven Types of Self-Care Activities for Coping with Stress*

*The Healthy Eating Pyramid*

*Laughter is the Best Medicine*







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**People/Places to Call**

Now let's come up with as many people and places you can call to talk if you are needing support or help—even if just to make plans to go out for a coffee, a movie, or to visit. There isn't a need to tell them details of what is going on if you don't want to. Just plan to be around people. Include supportive friends, therapist, physicians, acquaintances, with a target of reaching at least 15 contacts.

If you are feeling suicidal, you may contact one of the following crisis centers.  
US Phone: 800-SUICIDE (784-2433)  
For Deaf or Hard of Hearing: 800-799-4889  
US Online Chat: [www.imalive.org](http://www.imalive.org)  
US Phone or Online Chat: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
International: [www.befrienders.org](http://www.befrienders.org) (Note that you can find your country at the top right of the web page.)

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**Self-Assessment**

See this list of questions to help you complete a self-assessment of your self-care awareness.

What are signs that I am doing okay managing?

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What are the early warning signs that I am not doing okay and may need help if I'm not able to manage these signs?

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What can I do to help myself as well as what can other do to help me during this time?

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What does not help that I've tried before, more than one time?

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I know I need to get help when...

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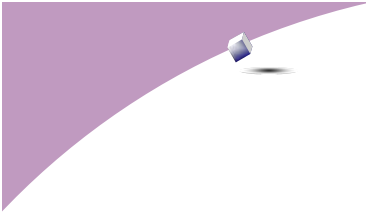
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### Crisis Picture

What does it look like when I am in crisis and need intervention or help?

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When I am in a crisis, what helps me most?

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How do I decide when to reach out when I'm in crisis?

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What stops me from reaching out for help when in crisis?

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How do I decide when it's time to try something different?

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For the Worst Days—Reasons to Hold On and Push Through

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