Nurturing vs. Depleting Activities

Some of the things we do each day can be thought of as **nurturing activities**.

These cheer us up, give us energy, improve our well-being, and help us to better manage stress.

Other activities can be self-defeating, only adding to or perpetuating our low mood,

For example:

- *Eating healthy, regular meals*
- *Engaging in our hobbies*
- *Getting enough sleep*, or
- *Spending quality time with friends.*

These **depleting activities** sap our energy, increase our stress levels, and take away from our happiness.

Examples might include:

- *Repetitive work-related tasks*
- *Taking care of others*
- *Ruminating or dwelling on the past*, or
- *Reading the news.*

When managing symptoms of stress, depression, and anxiety, it can be easy to forget about the self-nurturing activities that often help us feel better.

Reflecting on which category our daily activities fall into can help us take steps to restore a healthy balance.

With more nurturing activities in our lives, we can better deal with life's difficulties when they do arise since we are operating from a place of better mental wellbeing overall.
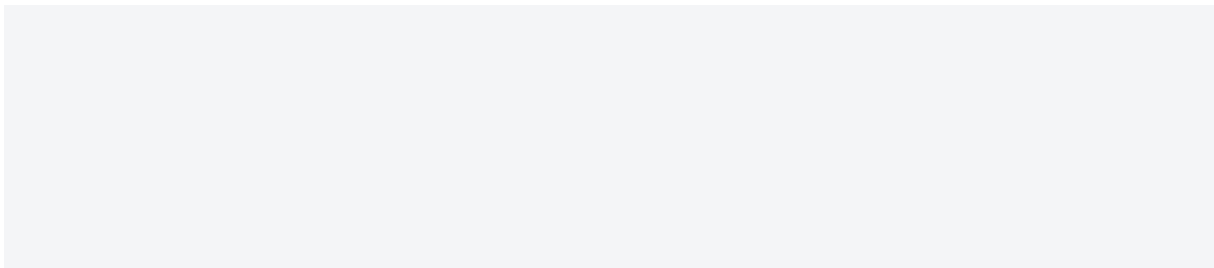
Instructions:

1. In the left-hand column below, write down your daily activities, beginning from when you wake up to the last thing before you fall asleep. You'll find two examples provided to help.

2. When you're done, put a tick in the second or third columns beside it, depending on whether the activity is *Nurturing* or *Depleting*. If it helps, you can assign more than one tick to each item - e.g. one Nurturing activity may outweigh several Depleting activities.

3. Total the activities or your ticks in the final row of the table to get an overall idea of your current balance each day. How can you introduce more balance into your routine?

Activity	Nurturing	Depleting

Activity	Nurturing	Depleting
Total		

Letter of Self-compassion

We are often too hard on ourselves. This can be reflected in the emotions we experience and the guilt, shame, and fear regarding how we feel.

Writing a letter of self-compassion can prompt us to be more forgiving and refocus our thinking on being more accepting, caring, and supportive to ourselves and others.

Describe an event that happened today when you felt your emotions were out of control or unwelcome:
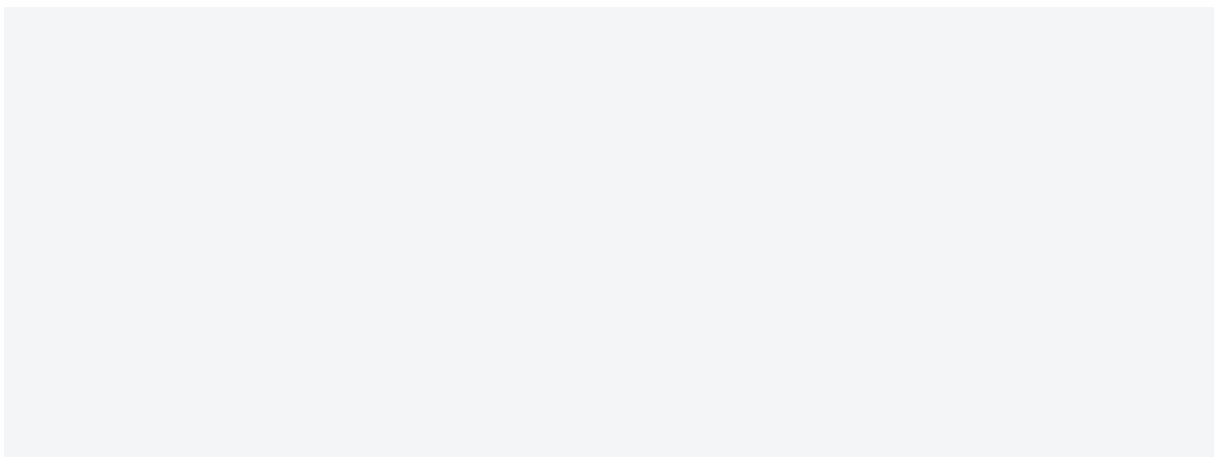
Now, write a brief letter to yourself.

Write the letter with a message of forgiveness and acceptance for who you are and the emotions you experience.

Write as though you were talking to a close friend, and show your compassion (for example, *I am sad that you felt so angry today, that must have been distressing*).

Write down whatever thoughts come into your head. No one needs to read it. You are safe to be open regarding your feelings.

Read back what you have written. Recognize that all of us have emotions we wish we could avoid, but that we can see them as separate from who we are and share them with others – showing our vulnerable side.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton

Self-Care Check-In

Engaging in self-care is one of the most important steps in maintaining a strong sense of self and a high degree of mental wellness. However, while self-care has some shared tenets, it looks different for every individual.

This check-in functions as a quick way to see where more attention is needed to ensure you are meeting your self-care needs. Start by rating each of the self-care domains and then, writing what you have to do in order to meet your needs.
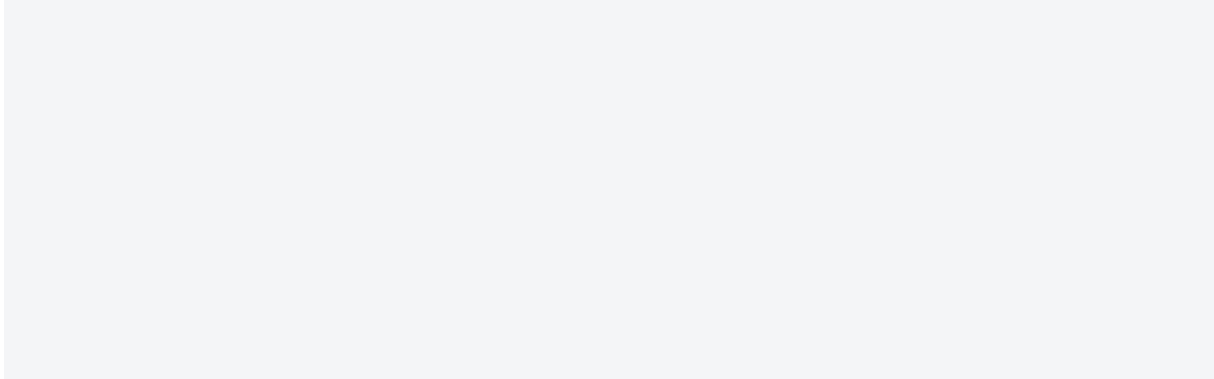
Self-Care Areas	Rating	What can I do to meet this need?
Quality time with Family		
Time Alone		
Opportunities to engage in pleasurable activities		
Friendships		
Relaxation and Peace		
Emotional Health		
Physical Health		

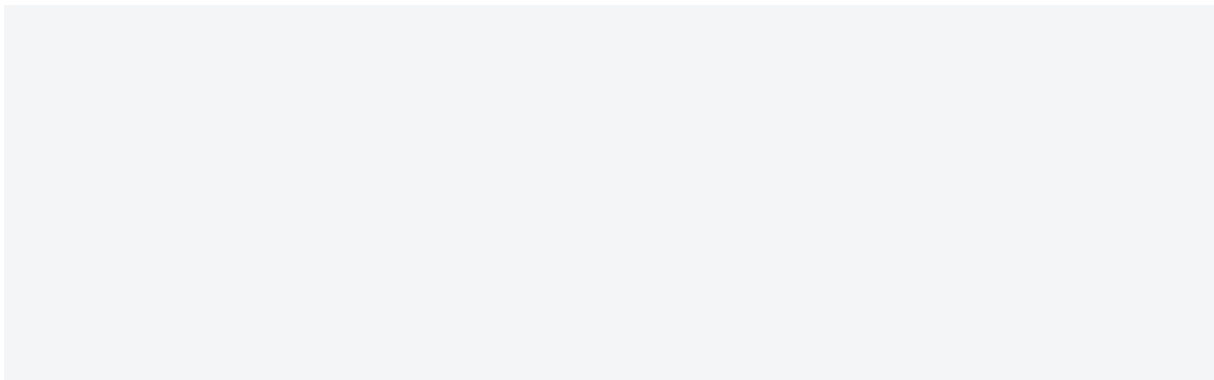| Self-Care Areas	Rating	What can I do to meet this need?
Organization and Structure		
Being Challenged		
Feeling Valued and Loved		

Self Care Bank	
Going for a Walk	Having a Snack
Meditating	Taking a Drink of Water
Listening to Music	Starting a new course
Decluttering your Closet	Reading a book about a hobby you want to try
Watching your favorite television show	Having coffee with a good friend
Doing Yoga	Calling a friend
Other:	

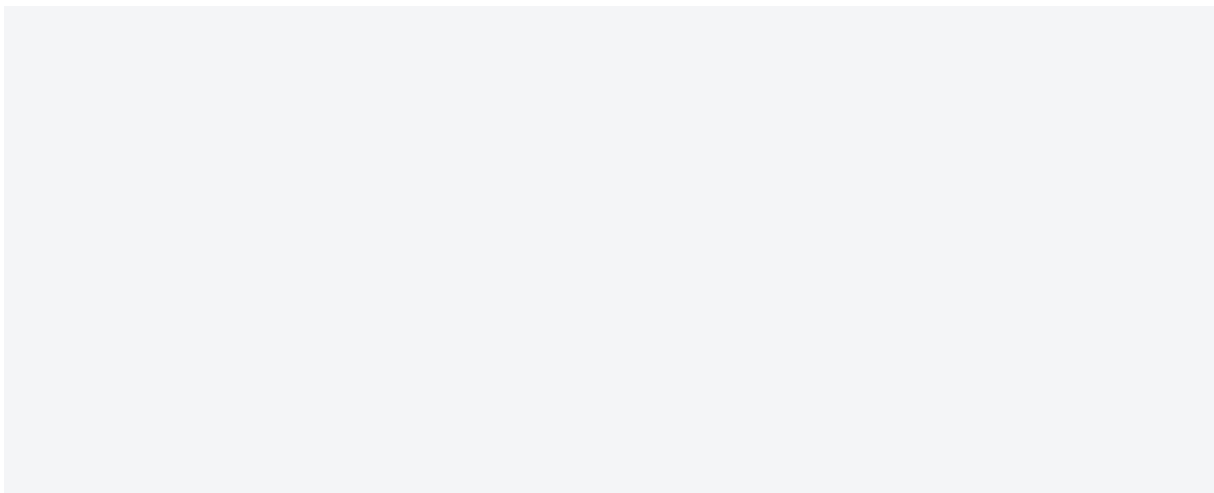**Reflection Questions**

1. What patterns do you notice (if any) from your responses?

2. Is there anything general you think you can do to facilitate self-care?

3. What steps can you take to prevent burnout in the future?

Gabriella Lancia, PhD

Self-Care Checkup

Self-care activities help us enhance our well-being and maintain good mental health.

They can include habitual, routine activities such as eating well and getting regular exercise, which often get neglected during particularly difficult or stressful periods in our lives.

Becoming aware of how often, or how well, we practice self-care activities can help us identify areas we are neglecting and improve upon them for better mental health.

Instructions

This *Self-Care Checkup* can help you consider the frequency and quality of your self-care in five important life domains:

- **Emotional**
- **Physical**
- **Social**
- **Professional;** and
- **Spiritual self-care.**

Using the key provided below, rate how well, or how frequently, you believe that you engage in each activity between your therapy sessions.

It's important to remember the list is not exhaustive - some activities may not appeal to you at all, or you may feel that others are missing.

If you think of ideas that you'd like to add to the list, use the spaces provided.

1	*I rarely do this*	*I don't do this well*
2	*I sometimes do this*	*I'm average at doing this*
3	*I do this often*	*I do this very well*
☐	*I'd like to do this more often*	*I'd like to become better at this*

Emotional Self-Care

1 2 3 ☐	Enjoying hobbies	
1 2 3 ☐	'Unplugging' from technology (e.g. email, social media)	
1 2 3 ☐	Expressing emotions and feelings (e.g. talking, journaling)	
1 2 3 ☐	Appreciating own talents, accomplishments, and strengths	
1 2 3 ☐	Taking days off/rest days from responsibilities	
1 2 3 ☐	Learning about or exploring new things (e.g. hobbies, foreign languages)	
1 2 3 ☐	Practicing self-nurturing activities (e.g. long bath, gentle walk)	
1 2 3 ☐	Laughing about things	
1 2 3 ☐	Taking a holiday, escape, or mini-break	
1 2 3 ☐	General emotional self-care	
1 2 3 ☐		

Physical Self-Care

1 2 3 ☐	Attending health upkeep appointments (e.g. dental or GP checkups)	
1 2 3 ☐	Resting when unwell	
1 2 3 ☐	Drinking enough water	
1 2 3 ☐	Getting sufficient sleep	
1 2 3 ☐	Enjoying group exercise (e.g. gym classes, hobbies)	
1 2 3 ☐	Eating regular meals	
1 2 3 ☐	Exercising out of doors	
1 2 3 ☐	Maintaining good hygiene	
1 2 3 ☐	Eating a healthy diet	
1 2 3 ☐	General physical self-care	
1 2 3 ☐		

Social Self-Care

1 2 3 ☐	Making time for friends or family	
1 2 3 ☐	Staying in contact with distant connections (e.g. Skype, Facetime)	
1 2 3 ☐	Engaging in mentally stimulating discussions	
1 2 3 ☐	Being intimate/romantic with partner	
1 2 3 ☐	Asking for help when you require it	
1 2 3 ☐	Doing fun activities with others/ enjoyable group activities	
1 2 3 ☐	Spending quiet private time with partner	
1 2 3 ☐	Making new friends/talking to new people	
1 2 3 ☐	Overall social self-care	
1 2 3 ☐		

Professional Self-Care

1 2 3 ☐	Seeking support when it's required at work	
1 2 3 ☐	Maintaining a comfortable or pleasant work environment	
1 2 3 ☐	Socializing or bonding with co-workers	
1 2 3 ☐	Balancing work and leisure activities	
1 2 3 ☐	Accepting stimulating/interesting new tasks or projects	
1 2 3 ☐	Taking lunch breaks/regular work breaks	
1 2 3 ☐	Turning down unnecessary/ unreasonable tasks	
1 2 3 ☐	Pursuing further professional development opportunities	
1 2 3 ☐	Seeking recognition/promotion/reward where deserved	
1 2 3 ☐	General professional self-care	
1 2 3 ☐		

	Spiritual Self-Care	
1 2 3 ☐	Enjoying outdoor/nature time	
1 2 3 ☐	Volunteering for charity/community	
1 2 3 ☐	Religious practice	
1 2 3 ☐	Practicing gratitude	
1 2 3 ☐	Meditating	
1 2 3 ☐	Allocating quiet time for reflection	
1 2 3 ☐	Applying personal strengths, talents, or values	
1 2 3 ☐	Appreciating beauty (e.g. music, art, literature)	
1 2 3 ☐	General spiritual self-care	
1 2 3 ☐		