



SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

*A RESOURCE FOR TRAUMA SURVIVORS
AND FAMILIES*

2025

trauma survivors
network
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WHAT IS SELF CARE?

Self-care is the practice of taking steps to maintain or improve your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It's about paying attention to your needs and making intentional choices that help you stay healthy, balanced, and resilient. Self care is not selfish. It's a necessity. When you care for yourself, you are better able to support your injured loved one, handle challenges, and be the advocate they need.

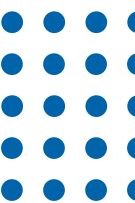


Self-care is different for everyone. Some types of self care are listed below:

- Physical self-care: Eating nourishing foods, getting enough sleep, exercising, staying hydrated, and attending medical check-ups.
- Emotional self-care: Allowing yourself to feel and express emotions, practicing self-compassion, setting boundaries, and engaging in activities that bring joy.
- Mental self-care: Taking breaks, reducing stress, practicing mindfulness, reading, journaling, or pursuing hobbies that stimulate your mind.
- Social self-care: Maintaining healthy relationships, spending time with supportive people, and asking for help when needed.
- Spiritual self-care (if meaningful to you): Practicing faith, meditation, spending time in nature, or engaging in activities that give you a sense of purpose.

When did you realize prioritizing self-care was necessary?

Not too long after the accident. In fact while I was still in the hospital I was diagnosed with PTSD and my wife was reaching out and trying to find a therapist that could see me. Once I was home (about a month later) I knew I couldn't do it all on my own and would need help and would need to practice self care at some point. After meeting with a therapist and was taught different coping skills, I truly realized how important prioritizing daily self care would be. ~Allan, Survivor



BREATHING EXERCISES



Breathing exercises are a simple form of self-care. Breathing exercises can calm your body and mind and help you feel centered. It activates your bodies relaxation response which can lower cortisol, increase oxygen to the brain for better concentration, can lower your heart rate, and calm racing thoughts or overwhelming feelings.

Deep Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)

- Sit or lie down comfortably
- Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly
- Inhale slowly through your nose, letting your belly rise
- Exhale slowly through your mouth, letting your belly fall
- Repeat for a few minutes

Box Breathing (4-4-4-4 Method)

- Inhale for 4 counts
- Hold for 4 counts
- Exhale for 4 counts
- Hold again for 4 counts
- Repeat 4-5 cycles

4-7-8 Breathing

- Inhale deeply through your nose for 4 counts
- Hold your breath for 7 counts
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 counts
- Do this up to 4 times

Every day participate in something that makes you sit in the present for a set period, like meditation, mindfulness, or prayer. Your mind will likely be racing between the past (“what ifs” and the way things were before) and the future (how are things going to be from this point forward). It will take a conscious effort to stay grounded in the moment, but it will help. ~Kay, Mother

GROUNDING EXERCISES



Grounding is a self-care technique that helps you reconnect to the present moment, especially when you're feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed. It's about "coming back down to earth" by focusing on your body, your breath, or your surroundings. Instead of getting stuck in racing thoughts or intense feelings, grounding shifts your attention to something real and immediate—like what you see, hear, or feel right now.

Grounding can be used as a rest tool that help you regain control of your body and mind. It can help you create space between you and your emotions. After using grounding exercise, you will feel more steady, safe, and in control.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Method

This uses your senses to anchor you in the "here and now."

5 things you can see

- Look around and notice five objects or details (e.g., a pen, a window, the color of the wall).

4 things you can feel

- Notice four things you can physically touch (e.g., your feet on the floor, the texture of your clothes, your chair).

3 things you can hear

- Listen for three distinct sounds (e.g., birds outside, a fan, your own breathing).

2 things you can smell

- Notice two scents around you (e.g., coffee, fresh air, soap).
- If you can't smell anything, name two scents you like.

1 thing you can taste

- Focus on one taste in your mouth (gum, toothpaste, coffee) or imagine a favorite flavor.

GROUNDING EXERCISES



Body Scan

1. Find a comfortable position — sit or stand with your feet flat on the ground.
2. Take a slow breath in and out.
3. Bring your attention to your body, starting from your head down to your toes.
 - Notice how your head feels (heavy, light, tense, relaxed).
 - Move your focus to your shoulders, arms, and hands.
 - Notice your chest rising and falling as you breathe.
 - Feel your back against the chair or the way you're standing.
 - Shift your focus to your legs, then your feet on the floor.
4. As you notice each area, quietly name it to yourself. For example: "Shoulders... hands... chest... feet."
5. End by pressing your feet firmly into the ground and reminding yourself:
 - "I am here. I am safe. I am in this moment."

The Object Focus

1. Choose an object near you.
 - It could be a pen, a mug, a piece of jewelry, or anything you can hold.
2. Hold it in your hand and really focus on it.
 - Notice its color, shape, weight, and texture.
 - Ask yourself: Is it smooth or rough? Heavy or light? Warm or cool?
3. Engage all your senses.
 - Look closely at tiny details you normally overlook.
 - Notice how it feels when you move it in your hand.
 - If safe, notice if it has a smell or even a taste.
4. Stay with the object for 1-2 minutes.
 - Keep bringing your mind back to the object if it starts to wander.
5. Finish by taking a slow, deep breath and reminding yourself:
 - "I am grounded. I am present."

JOURNALING



Journaling is a safe, private space to process your emotions and feelings. It can reduce stress and help you manage your thoughts. Journaling helps you slow down and be present in your life.

Have a journal so when you have your thoughts you write them down. Ask questions if you're not sure about something. Be honest with yourself and others. Your life will never be the same again. You can't move forward without understanding your mental health and without asking questions when something doesn't feel right. -Marcello, Survivor

Forms of Journaling for Self-Care

1. Gratitude Journaling

- Write down 3–5 things you're thankful for each day.
- Helps shift focus toward positivity and appreciation.

2. Reflective Journaling

- Write about your daily experiences, thoughts, or feelings.
- Encourages self-awareness and emotional processing.

3. Stream-of-Consciousness (Free Writing)

- Write nonstop for a set time (e.g., 5–10 minutes) without worrying about grammar or structure.
- Helps release mental clutter and uncover hidden feelings.

4. Bullet Journaling

- Combine journaling with task lists, trackers, and goal-setting in a creative, organized format.
- Reduces overwhelm and supports productivity alongside self-care.

5. Prompted Journaling

- Use guided questions (e.g., “What do I need right now?” or “What’s one thing I can let go of today?”).
- Helps dig deeper into emotions or explore personal growth.

6. Art or Visual Journaling

- Incorporate doodles, collages, or drawings along with words.
- Great for people who express themselves more visually than verbally.

SELF-CARE ACTIVITY LIST



GET MOVING

- Take a walk or get fresh air
- Have a dance break
- Stretch your body
- Try an exercise or sitting exercise video



What self-care worked best for you during the different stages of recovery?

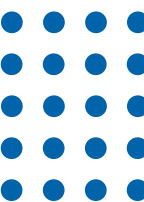
I met with a therapist. And was taught different coping skills. The best self care I can recommend are: the AURA app, there are plenty of different options that will help others, from meditation to inspiring stories and other things. Using the AURA app daily and also using the TAPPING technique are the best self care tools I recommend. Lastly, spending time in prayer and at our Catholic Church. They leave our church open daily, and I would and still do spend time there in prayer and time with the Lord. ~Allan, survivor



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Stay hydrated!
- Have a nutritious snack or meal
- Let go of things that aren't essential
- Stock up on your favorite beverages or snacks
- Stay rested by taking a nap or sleeping in

Show yourself grace. This is not a television show and there is no correct reaction, feeling, or response. Make sure you let yourself be vulnerable sometimes. Allow yourself to mourn what was lost. Death is not the only thing worthy of grieving. ~Kay, Mother



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY LIST



STAY ENGAGED

- Find a hobby that can travel with you such as crocheting, drawing, or reading
- Find a positive podcast for listening
- Call or message with friends and family
- Learn a new card game
- Find an activity that keeps you connected, like a book group or craft group
- Join a support group like the TSN Support Groups

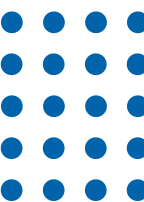


Traumas, trauma. Survivors Network. Support group. because, I'll be honest with you. after I went to my first meeting, I was hooked. Because here I was in a room full of people and let me tell my story. Where as I have never been able to tell my story before. - Allen, Survivor.



FIND SENSORY SOOTHERS

- Find scents that bring you comfort, like scented chapstick, an herb sachet, scented candle, or essential oils
- Create a playlist of good mood music, nature music, or ASMR audio
- Download a favorite podcast
- Find sunglasses or tinted sunglasses
- Use noise-cancelling headphones or ear plugs
- Pack a weighted blanket or weighted lap pad
- Carry gum, mints, or hard candies with a taste you can focus on



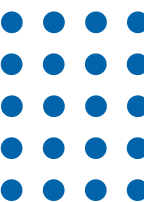
ADVICE FROM SURVIVORS

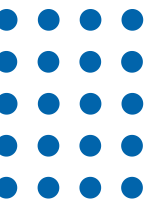


Just know you're not alone. And it's ok to feel down or discouraged. We have all felt that way. Try to stay positive and grateful you are still here, and take it one day at a time. Or as my priest says, "sometimes it's one minute at a time". Small steps and it's ok to ask for help. And not just the survivor but family members as well, they too should ask for help. The journey can be challenging and can be difficult but you will get there and remember you are a survivor! ~Allan, Survivor

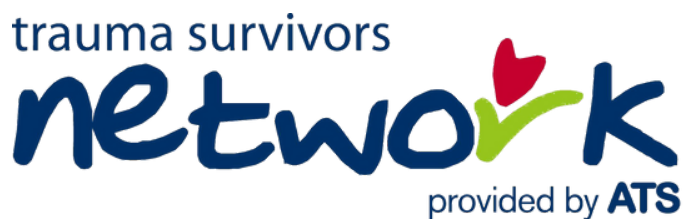
I never heard the term self-care until my parents got me hooked up with a psychologist around 1984, two years after my injury. She diagnosed me with post-traumatic stress and anxiety, which would be post-traumatic stress disorder today. She taught me breathing techniques and going in to talk with her was a great help. I highly recommend therapy. A trauma focused therapist. And that's how you look them up. Trauma focused. - Allen, Survivor

One last thing has it gets longer in your recovery, you may feel like you're getting better, But keep in mind that there is secondary trauma that could trigger you during your recovery. If that does happen, please ask for help. You don't want to go backwards. It's ok to have a bad day but try not to have consecutive bad days. - Marcello, Survivor





SELF-CARE IS NOT SELFISH



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