

## Self-Care: Emotional Guide - activity -

Prepared by Root Cuthbertson 2020  
Based on an article by Katherine Hurst 2018

*This **Self-Care: Emotional guide** is one of six in this Self-Care series, the other five are: **Self Care: Physical & Sensory, Nature, Mental, Social and Worldview guide.***

### Self-Care: An Introduction

Most people benefit from at least some kind of self-care, although individuals may prefer different kinds. Not all kinds of self-care are for everyone.

Self-care is about cultivating personal resilience, knowing when an individual's inner resources are getting low and it's time to replenish. Self-care is also about the integration of compassion, in individuals and in groups, to prevent burnout. Individuals and groups can prioritise self-care in order to bring more good energy to anything they do, including group activities.

### What Self-Care is Not

Self-care is not the same as anything that feels good. Modern societies offer many 'quick-fix' temptations based on unhealthy coping mechanisms that are potentially destructive or harmful long-term: things like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, overeating, gambling, or excessive risk-taking. These provide temporary relief at best, and are not long-term solutions, or foundations of self-care.

### Avoiding Self-Care

Someone might avoid self-care for many reasons. Typically, these are based on a personal history where self-care was not encouraged. In addition, the cultural norms in most modern societies tend to favour attributes such as strength, youth, vitality and conversely care or rest can be seen as a form of weakness. This can result in beliefs such as:

- people in general do not deserve or need self-care, so neither does any specific individual.
- there will be bad consequences for self-care.
- my important relationships will be affected in a negative way.
- it involves too many difficult transactions, and isn't worth it.
- it may help other people, but it is not suitable for me.
- self-care has an 'expensive' cost in money or time, so it is best kept to a minimum.

Self-care practices are good for us! Exercise, creativity, rest, touch, social connection, time in nature (to name some examples) have long-term benefits on all levels: physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and for worldview.

## Self-Care: Emotional

Ideally, an Inner Transition will involve reframing human emotions and emotional self-care. This is a larger topic covered in a number of separate Inner Transition guides. While the forms that emotional self-care practices take may vary across cultures, normalising emotions is an important first step for any Inner Transition process.

Emotional self-care practices can help individuals increase empathy, both for themselves and for others (see [Empathy & Compassion guide](#)), which researcher Brené Brown links to a number of benefits. Individuals can learn to respond to emotions, rather than react to them; approaching emotions as common human experiences, recognising that they exist, naming them, allowing them to arise, express, and diminish. Emotional hygiene, a concept credited to the Dalai Lama, suggests that regularly releasing difficult emotions can prevent them from becoming toxic. The practices mentioned here are only a beginning: emotional self-care can involve many more.

***A note about preventing harm to self, others, and damage to property.*** Some of the self-care practices mentioned here may involve strong emotions like anger, grief, or fear. Engaging with these emotions may involve activities which increase an individual's sense of risk, or involve actual risk of harm. Please aim to prevent harm by only engaging with potentially harmful activities up to a certain point: your own 'growthful' edge. Please have an awareness that beyond a certain point, continuing with such activities may become harmful to yourself, others, or damaging to property.

## Self-Care Benefits: Emotional

- **increased self-esteem** – quieting inner critics and self-doubts, reducing negative self-talk.
- **increased emotional literacy** – naming emotions as they arise.
- **increased empathy** – caring and thus acting in a good way.
- **good emotional hygiene** – preventing toxicity, numbing, dissociation, or burnout.

## Activities

1+ minutes to **smile at yourself** in the mirror. This simple practice can boost self-esteem, contradict negative self-talk, and activate mirror neurons which can cause a positive cascade effect, leading to more smiling and happiness. Children smile about 20 times more each day than adults; what if you smiled more?

5+ minutes to **sing along** with a song that helps you connect with your emotions. Allow yourself to fully express the song's emotions: playful, sad, angry, suggestive, empowering, etc. Bonus: share the sing-along with a friend or two who relates to the song as much as you do.

8+ minutes to give yourself messages that **enhance your self-esteem** and contradict negative self-talk. Try reminders on your phone, or written notes in your room that say things like: you are worthy, beautiful, deserving, capable, confident, lovable, etc. Be sensitive in your approach to emotions like remorse, regret, or unforgiveability. Bonus: ask a few close friends to help by sending you reminders.

8+ minutes to make a **list of emotions** to increase your emotional literacy. Put it where you'll see it often, like in your kitchen or bathroom. Can you come up with new emotions? or combinations of emotions?

10+ minutes to **laugh out loud**, either from old memories, funny videos, or simply as an exercise. Laughter also has physical and mental benefits, relating to the production of catecholamines and endorphins. Bonus challenge: try laughing out loud, for no reason, for 10 minutes.

20+ minutes for **moving anger**, with an awareness of preventing harm. Try pulling weeds, splitting wood, beating a rug, dancing your rage, screaming into a pillow, smashing junk, punching a punching bag, or other physical activities. Anger is a normal and common emotion that can find a positive outlet in physical movement. Expressing anger in a good way is beneficial for emotional hygiene.

30+ minutes to **do something fun** you haven't done in a long time, with an awareness of preventing harm. Try an activity from your youth or childhood that brings back positive memories, and allow any emotions that may arise: gleeful, surprising, or bittersweet. Bonus: share your fun with someone younger.

30+ minutes for **grief-tending**, weekly or monthly. A regular grief-tending practice is beneficial for emotional hygiene, releasing emotions that can become toxic if they get stuck and build up. Grief can relate to any kind of loss, not only the deaths of loved ones. There are no prescribed shapes grief must take: it can be loud or quiet, big or small, individual or collective. Try whatever allows your tears to flow, with an awareness of preventing harm.

60+ minutes to seek **emotional support**. This could be through a friend or family member you know well and trust and/or if you have available resources, you could try one or more sessions with a good counselor, coach, mentor or therapist. Sometimes there are also free counselling services in your area, so ask around to see if they exist.

1+ days to renew your **sense of adventure**. With some guidance to prevent harm, adventures can empower you to take appropriate risks and face uncertainties. Try something that engages your curiosity and takes you to the edge of your comfort zone. Overcoming the challenges of an adventure can increase self-esteem, sense of identity, gratitude, and appreciation.

## Related Inner Transition Resources

Self-Care: Physical and Sensory  
Self-Care: Nature  
Self-Care: Mental  
Self-Care: Social  
Self-Care: Worldview

Empathy & Compassion guide

## References Self-care: Emotional

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