

Date _____

This packet will help you to:

- ✚ Assess how you currently take care of yourself emotionally, physically and psychologically
 - ✚ Identify strategies, healthy and not healthy, that you currently utilize towards helping yourself through an emotionally challenging time
 - ✚ Create a concrete written plan of strategies that you can utilize during an emotionally challenging time (or actually anytime).
- Take good care, Irene Greene



I. TAKING CARE OF MYSELF

A. My overall self-care assessment:

Assess how you have been doing, over the past two weeks, with regards to the following examples of self-care. Star those areas that you do a pretty good job attending to. Checkmark those areas where you could use improvement. Some of the items may not work for you or match your needs; that's okay; use what fits. Make comments in the margins as needed. Make a follow-up plan with yourself, your therapist or a friend to explore your answers and changes you would like to make. *(These items represent a collection of self-care and well-being ideas and it is unlikely that they match everyone's situation.)*

General self-care:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep hydrated | <input type="checkbox"/> Medication management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slow down | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy personal hygiene |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Take intentional time away from electronics, social media, texting, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manage my anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Care for home, yard, car, bike, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take bathroom breaks when needed (verses put it off) | <input type="checkbox"/> Money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take stretch breaks | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take vacation breaks or at least a reasonable amount of time-off from working, studying, projects, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intentionally focus to be present with what I am doing and where I am | <input type="checkbox"/> Alone time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intentionally focus on my physical body sensations | <input type="checkbox"/> Build and access a support system of friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical and dental check-ups | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learn about new ideas, places, people, things | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritually |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathe deeply and slowly | <input type="checkbox"/> Family of origin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend intentional time alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Partner(s)/Romantic relationship(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor alcohol, drug, tobacco, caffeine intake | <input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Children |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Inter-personal insight and self-care:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Positive self-talk (i.e., talk to myself like I would to my friend or a child) | <input type="checkbox"/> thoughts respectfully |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accept that I have a right to take care of myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask directly for my needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accept that I have a responsibility to take care of myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" when no is what is honestly true for me (verses saying "yes" when I really don't mean it) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make choices knowing that my self-care doesn't mean that I carelessly need to ignore other people's needs or feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Accept people's support, help and kindness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try to tell others honestly what I feel and think | <input type="checkbox"/> Access support from friends, partner, service providers, family, co-workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convey my perspective, feelings and | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer support and help to others |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Show up for people |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Treat others respectfully |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Take responsibility for my behavior |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Apologize when it is warranted |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something kind each day for myself |

- Do something kind each day for another
- Actively listen to partner, friends, family, co-workers, etc.
- Try to see a situation or disagreement from another's perspective
- Give myself wiggle room for making mistakes
- Give others wiggle room for making mistakes
- Forgive myself
- Forgive others or let it go
- Am vulnerable with others
- Treat myself with compassion and understanding verses put myself down
- Treat people with compassion and

Emotional and psychological insight and self-care:

- Intentionally focus on identifying my emotions
- Identify and feel my feelings
- Think positively about my life
- Think positively about myself
- Think positively about my body
- Check in with myself about how I am doing

Personal and spiritual insight and self-care:

- Convey genuine gratitude
- I am being the person who I want to be in the world
- Make choices that are consistent with my personal values.
- Make choices that make me feel proud of myself
- Acknowledge what's going right

- Accept what I can change
- Accept what I cannot change

understanding verses "put-down" judgment

- Treat myself as equal to others and them equal to me
- Accept reality that I am not responsible for another's feelings
- Accept reality that I am only responsible for my actions, not for another's reactions
- Accept reality that another is not responsible for my feelings
- Accept reality that another is only responsible for their actions, not for my reactions
- Other:

- Understand how my past impacts my present
- Actively work to heal past hurts, traumas and experiences
- Figure out what I actually can do about my past or the current situation, do that as best as I can, and then let it go
- Positive self-talk
- Other:

- Make choices that are in my best interest
- Treat myself respectfully
- Working to change behaviors and attitudes that are inconsistent with who I want to be
- Let go of negative beliefs about myself
- Learn from my mistakes
- Forgive myself
- Accept the reality of my past

- Make choices to do what I can do
- Other:

What grade do you give yourself for your overall self-care?

B. Personal values as a tool towards self-care:

1. Do your values reinforce the importance of you taking care of yourself emotionally, psychologically and physically?
2. If so, how will you more actively make your commitment to your self-care congruent with your personal values? And vice versa?

C. Making a positive self-care change:

1. What is one item on any of the above lists that you will realistically work on changing or improving? Just one item. Even a “small one”.
2. What do you need to do to make this change? How are you going to make it happen?
3. Who can you share your plan with – so that they can support you?

II. MY RESOURCES & STRATEGIES

A. Make a list of your personal strengths: “Strengths I have that help me when I am having a difficult time...”:

My personal strengths: (i.e., creative, determined, resourceful, am willing to ask for help, want to get better, etc.)	What I will do to help me remember to rely on these strengths: (i.e., keep this list in my phone; designate a place to keep specific helpful items, etc.)

B. Make a list of your Support people & Other resources: Make a list of people and places to call for support, to leave a check-in message, and/or to visit. Be proactive about your support people list; give them a head’s up that you would like to contact them if you are in an emotional jam; tell them what you might like from them; and make sure it is okay with them. They can’t “fix” you or your pain or stress or “make” you feel better. (That wouldn’t be helpful to you, even if they could.) They can listen to you, support you; hang out with you, etc. This pre-planning with them will make it easier for you to call them when you are feeling bad.

1. These are my support people. List the specific ways they can be helpful to you.

2. Crisis lines I may call. Check off options below and add others as you see fit.

In the event of an emotional or psychological emergency:

- Contact MN Warmline: M-Sat 5-10pm 651.288.0400 / 877.404.3190 / Text: "Support" to 85511
- Hennepin County COPE--Community Outreach for (Adult) Psychiatric Emergencies: 612-596-1223: 24/7 outreach to adults in Hennepin County
- Call 911
- Go to the nearest Emergency Department or contact:
- The National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE or (1-800-656-4673)
- Or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or (1-800-273-8255)
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

C. Make a list of your current helpful and unhelpful strategies for managing intense feelings:

1. My healthy coping strategies and choices: List in each box a "healthy" action that you often or sometimes do to help you "stay grounded," "get grounded" and "soothe" yourself (i.e., call a friend, listen to music, journal, exercise, clean)

2. My unhealthy coping strategies and choices: List in each box an "unhealthy" action that you often or sometimes do in reaction to you not feeling grounded. "When I am feeling hard or intense feelings or don't want to feel hard or intense feelings, I sometimes make these unhealthy choices to avoid, distract, escape, deny my feelings and/or my body..." (i.e., drink, cut, do dangerous things, make myself throw up, over eat, under eat, sleep, dissociate, over exercise, do things against my values)

1. I am open to talking in therapy about why I do these helpful and unhelpful coping strategies: Yes No Maybe
 Explain:

2. *Fears and concerns I have in talking about my unhealthy coping strategies:*

3. *Are these fears and concerns based in my projections of how the other(s) will react or actual real experiences with them?*

III. STRATEGIES to HELP ME MAKE MY ACTUAL SELF-CARE PLAN

Following are some healthy strategies to help you manage your feelings and calm yourself down.

It is important that you understand and practice these strategies before you are in the midst of a difficult emotional time.

- ✚ Some of them require you to strategize in writing. Some require physical practice.
- ✚ If there are concepts or activities that you do not understand or are having difficulty believing will work for you, please talk about them with your therapist so that they can be modified for you and better understood.
- ✚ There are a lot of ideas, which can feel overwhelming. So, if it helps, just pick a couple and focus on building your comfort level by practicing them (or commit to using the ones that already work for you). Modify them for yourself.

Understanding and practice of these strategies will help you build the trust and confidence in yourself that you are capable and willing to take care of yourself. It is much easier to put these strategies into action when you are feeling bad if you have already emotionally and physically had practice with them.

A. Create “My Pleasant Alternatives List”

Proactively create a list of positive and healthy activities.

Identify activities in these four categories:

- a) Quiet activities to do alone (i.e., read, journal, color, do a project, listen to music, play guitar)
- b) Quiet activities to do with others (i.e., watch a movie, read to each other, play cards)
- c) Lively activities to do alone (i.e., bike ride, dance, do an errand, go for a walk, cook)
- d) Lively activities to do with others (i.e., do a project, go to a club, do an errand, go for a walk, cook)

Make these lists when you are feeling good and remember to use it when you aren't feeling so good.

Why do this strategy? You will have a pre-made list of healthy options to access when you need some ideas of what to do, esp. if you are in an emotionally hard place and not thinking clearly enough to come up with constructive ideas.

Quiet Activities To do alone	Quiet Activities To do with others

4. What self-care steps can I do right now to help me feel safer or get safer?

2. Getting Grounded: Strategies to managing my feelings and calming myself down:

a. "Dragon Breaths" Breathing Exercise:

Why do this strategy? Taking consistent deep breaths slows our body down. It eases the physical sensations caused by anxiety and big feelings. Our bodies cannot simultaneously physiologically be in an anxious state while we are also doing deep breathing. Also, breathing helps focus us on something productive in the here and now. It helps us to get present in the moment. Adding the positive self-talk can be reassuring, empowering and orienting.

- Practice this strategy when you are not upset so that you can more easily call upon it when you are upset.
- Breathe very deeply three times calmly and slowly. Do three sets of three.
- Hold it for 5 seconds and then release it slowly for 7 seconds. (Exhale takes longer than the inhale.)
- Repeat as needed.
- As you breathe, repeat these (or similar) words: *"I have the capability to calm myself down. I can do this. I will take one deep breath at a time. I am okay. Right now, I am here. I am really okay. I am just having some big feelings. I am okay."*
- Get clarity and understanding about these self-talk options so that you can more easily work on believing them.

Focus on your breathing:

- Dragon breaths: breathe slowly and deeply.
- Use your breathing as an anchor to the present
- Use your breathing to slow yourself down

b. Move around and hydrate:

Why do this strategy? Somatically, physically moving our bodies to a new location can create a fresh perspective, which activates different energy in our brains and our bodies and our minds. Moving one's body and actually moving from one physical location to another room or going for a short walk outdoors can help with reconnecting with oneself. Do so with the intention to get more accurately in your body and more realistically grounded in your actual environment.

Drinking cold water intentionally helps our body "wake up", helps us focus on something else, and something that we associate with being helpful and calming, and counters dehydration, which interferes with physical and emotional functioning.

3. Getting grounded in the actual moments of being triggered

If you are *feeling* overwhelmed, triggered, anxious or afraid:

Tips to GET YOURSELF GROUNDED TO YOUR LIFE TODAY:

With strong intentional effort, bring yourself back into the present surroundings and focus on safely returning to your strong solid adult body:

a. Mind your Senses: Focus on your physical surroundings

1. There is much research that supports the helpfulness of focusing on our five main senses when we are trying to get grounded: sight, taste, touch, sound, smell. This focusing helps to get us back to ourselves in a more solid way and in real time. Keep asking yourself about your senses and answer in as detailed ways as you can:
 - i. *What do I hear? I hear the cars passing and the cardinal outside my window.*
 - ii. *What do I smell? I smell my morning coffee and the orange peels.*
 - iii. *What do I see? I see the three green plants and the blue walls.*
 - iv. *What do I feel? I feel the chair underneath my bottom and my warm cheeks.*
 - v. *What do I taste? I taste toothpaste on my lips.*
2. Put your feet on the floor. Feel your feet as they solidly support your whole body solidly on the floor.
3. Focus on the actual surroundings of your life in this moment. Note the solid items around you (i.e., furniture in your home, trees outside the window, building or tree next to you). Emulate a feeling of their grounded-ness and solidness.

b. Talk positively with yourself:

- You are "talking yourself off the ledge" of emotional upset.
- **Soothe yourself** with positive self-talk
- Talk with yourself slowly, gently and calmly (like you would to a good friend or upset child)
- Share accurate information about what your circumstances actually are.

- Be aware of any thoughts that may try to make you "indulge" the upsetness
- Don't let those thoughts detour your intention and goal to be present and real and calmer.

- Note that those unhelpful thoughts are there and bring your focus back to what is real and true.

1. Check the statements below that are ones that you can see yourself using for yourself:

Examples of grounding self-talk:

- I can calm myself down.*
- I am okay.*
- I am being triggered. I am having a memory. It is not actually happening right now.*
- Right now I am actually okay – even if I don't FEEL okay.*
- I am physically safe.*
- Though, I may not feel emotionally safe or grounded, I am actually emotionally and physically safe right now.*
- I realize that the emotional intensity I feel right now may not match the actual reality of my current circumstances.*
- I know that I am able to help myself to feel more grounded (even if I don't feel like I am able).*
- I am a strong capable adult.*
- I will utilize the skills and strategies that I have learned.*

- The past is done. I can't change it. The future is out of my control and I am not certain of what could happen.*
- I am working to discern what I do actually have control over and what I do not.*
- I am really only in control of what I say and what I do right now in this moment.*
- Accepting what choices I can make is empowering. Accepting what choices and outcomes I cannot control is empowering.*
- I cannot solve or take care of everything or everyone right now.*
- I am not able to think clear-headedly because I am ruminating in worry, fear or anxiety.*
- Right now, when I am upset, is not the time to make any big decisions. Making a decision in an emotional crisis is not a healthy idea.*
- So right now I need to get myself to be present in this moment: which is all I really have anyways.*
- I am much more than my current worries. I am not my feeling of anxiety or pain or fear. I am not my past.*
- I am working to accept that I can live and fully exist in the present; in the reality of my life this moment*

2. What are additional statements that have meaning to you and would help you feel more grounded?

4. Ask yourself: “Am I doing every activity I possibly can do right now to help myself to actually **be grounded** so that I can **feel** more grounded?” (Review your earlier list: i.e., breathe, hydrate, eat, rest, exercise, etc.)

See my website for more resources and tools about managing feelings: www.irenegreene.com Go to the resources page