Grounding Strategies: Making My Own Self-Care Plan by Irene Greene MSED

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:

- Keep hydrated
- Slow down
- Have fun
- Manage my anxiety
- Take bathroom breaks when needed (verses put it off)
- Take stretch breaks
- Take vacation breaks or at least a reasonable amount of time-off from working, studying, projects, etc.
- Intentionally focus to be present with what I am doing and where I am
- Intentionally focus on my physical body sensations
- Medical and dental check-ups
- Learn about new ideas, places, people, things
- Breathe deeply and slowly
- Spend intentional time alone
- Monitor alcohol, drug, tobacco, caffeine intake

Medication management
Healthy personal hygiene
Take intentional time away from electronics, social media, texting, etc.
Care for home, yard, car, bike, etc.
Money
Sleep
Eat healthily
Alone time
Build and access a support system of friends
Sexuality
Spiritually
Family of origin
Partner(s)/Romantic relationship(s)
Hobbies
Children
Volunteering
Other:

Inter-personal insight and self-care:

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

© Irene Greene MSED - Greene Growth & Training LCC | “Enhancing personal, relationship, professional and community change for the socially conscious” | Psychotherapist, Relationship Coach & Educator | Suite 203 / 2100 1st Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55404 | 612.874.6442
www.irenegreene.com | Facebook
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

Understand 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:

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

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:

Understand 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:

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

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…”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My personal strengths: (i.e., creative, determined, resourceful, am willing to ask for help, want to get better, etc.)</th>
<th>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.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhealthy Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quiet Activities To do alone</th>
<th>Quiet Activities To do with others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grounding Strategies: Making My Own Self-Care Plan by Irene Greene MSED

Lively Activities To do alone

Lively Activities To do with others

B. Trigger management: How to Stop Seeing Today Through the Lens of Past Trauma:

How often do you feel afraid? How many of these times are you actually in harm’s way? Do you know the difference?

Learn to accurately gage when you are and are not not in actual physical danger - so that you do not unnecessarily exist in fear.

There are situations when feelings of fear and actions of caution or defensiveness are certainly warranted. In these situations we need to take reasonable and wise precautionary steps to protect ourselves and do what we can do to keep ourselves safe, i.e., whether that means ending a conversation when someone is getting mean or making sure all of the doors are locked.

There are also times, esp. for someone who has been traumatized, abandoned or emotionally, physically and/or sexually abused, when they may feel afraid because they are having a Post-Traumatic Stress reaction (PTSD) but they are not actually and truly in danger. A PTSD reaction is happening when the current situation is feeling similar to traumatic events in their past - but the actual situation they are in right then doesn’t warrant those feelings or to that degree. The traumatic or abusive past still feels like it is actively happening or could happen again at any time or your body is remembering what the trauma felt like – physically and emotionally and “sensorial.”

1. Tips to learn to discern “real time” fear from “past PTSD” fear: Explore the following questions when you are feeling safe and/or in a place that you know to be safe (i.e., your therapist’s office or with a trusted friend). You will then, because you are not feeling so afraid or triggered, be more able to use your wisdom to help you understand these concepts. Hopefully, then, you will be able to more accurately assess situations and react appropriately versus live in the present through an unnecessary lens of fear, hyper-vigilance and suspicion - that comes from real trauma of the past.

a. How often in your day do you feel afraid? (Check all that may apply.)
   i. __ All of the time
   ii. __ When I have an actual reason to
      __ most of the time __ never ___ I am not sure

b. How often is this fear you feel actually warranted? (Check all that may apply.)
   i. __ All of the time
   ii. __ I do have an actual reason to
      __ most of the time __ never ___ I am not sure

c. If you say you “feel” unsafe, does that mean you are feeling physically unsafe or emotionally unsafe? Do you know the difference?

d. To help you build discernment as to whether or not your fear is based in “real time” or from “past PTSD”: (See Getting Grounded for more details.)
   i. Breathe deeply and slowly. Repeat 9 times.
   ii. Get grounded in your environment and in your body.
   iii. Connect with your surroundings in a sensory way.
   iv. Give yourself positive factual reassurance: Remind yourself you are okay. You will figure this out.
   v. As you get a little calmer, ask yourself questions:
      1. Is this fear “real time” fear or “PTSD” fear?
      2. What is the evidence that I have in the here and now that this is real time fear or PTSD fear?
      3. Am I being triggered to a past experience(s)?
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 solidity.

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