



# SELF CARE

Toolkit

# Exercise: Taking Responsibility For Your Own Self Care

## Key Reminders:

- Taking care of your own needs is not selfish. You only believe that it is selfish because of your prior conditioning.
- Putting your own needs first does not mean that you neglect the needs of your loved ones. It simply means that you put your own oxygen mask on first.
- Your self-care is your responsibility. No matter how busy you are, how single-handedly you are managing, or how many children you have to raise, you can still find time to take care of yourself if you put your mind to it.
- When you take care of your own needs first, you will be able to be a genuinely caring and giving person without feeling resentful, or begrudging, or that you are owed something.
- It can feel uncomfortable and even scary to start taking care of your own needs first because it feels so unfamiliar and because you may be afraid that people won't like you or may be upset with you if you are not so accommodating. Eventually, you will realize that nothing bad happens when you take care of yourself and your own needs and occasionally put your own needs first.
- Taking care of yourself helps to make you a better partner, parent or friend.
- You cannot pour from an empty cup, and the best way to lovingly serve and give to others is to take care of your own needs and fill your own cup first.
- Self-love is key.

***Q: Write down the reasons you believe you do not take better care of yourself.***

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***Q: What beliefs do you have about your right to take care of yourself?***

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***Q: List all the ways you deprive yourself of nurturing and support.***

A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for the user to list ways they deprive themselves of nurturing and support.

**Q: How can you start to change that going forward?** Brainstorm some ideas with your therapist and set a date to commit to making these changes.

# Exercise: Become Aware Of Your Needs

**Step One: Rate yourself on a scale of zero to ten on how well you're taking care of your basic needs.**

Zero is not at all and ten means you're doing great.

1. I eat heathy nutritious food in the correct quantities \_\_\_\_\_
2. I drink at least 2 litres of water a day \_\_\_\_\_
3. I go to bed at a reasonable time & get enough restful sleep \_\_\_\_\_
4. I reach out to others when I'm lonely and have people that I can count on \_\_\_\_\_
5. I regularly engage in activities that stimulate my mind, body, and spirit \_\_\_\_\_
6. I spend enough time connecting with myself (or whatever Higher Power you believe in) through prayer, contemplation &/or gratitude \_\_\_\_\_

**Step Two: Make a list of the needs you are currently meeting and how you're meeting them.**

Look for any areas of improvement.

**Step Three: List the needs that have gone unmet and brainstorm ways that you can begin to meet them.**



#### **Step Four: Get in touch with your emotions.**

If you've spent most of your adult life out of touch with your emotions, you may have a hard time even recognising them now.

A powerful way to do that is to check in with yourself several times a day and ask yourself "*What am I feeling right now? Am I feeling sad, angry, afraid or guilty?*" If you're feeling any of these primary uncomfortable emotions, then allow them to bubble up and just allow yourself to feel them.

You don't have to do anything about the feelings that have surfaced. The point of the check-in is to help you to get in touch and stay in touch with your feelings.

#### **Step Five: Make the connection between your emotions and your needs.**

Once you've started getting in touch with your emotions for a day or two, the next step is to start looking for a corresponding need for that emotion. Often, the answer may just be to feel the emotion and then let it fade.

Sometimes, the emotion is a signal that you need to do something. If you're feeling guilty, for example, you may need to apologise. If you're feeling lonely, you may need to connect with someone. This could be asking your spouse for a hug or calling a friend if you feel lonely.

Be on the lookout for answers that don't serve your highest good. For example, "I feel sad, so I need some chocolate cake" or "I feel angry at my child, so I need to shout at him." Instead, tune into your inherent inner wisdom and come up with answer from your wisest self.

# A Red Flag That You're Not Taking Care Of Your Needs.

Do you ever feel resentful or angry at those who do take care of themselves? This is a red flag that you're not meeting your own needs for self-care.

An example would be feeling envious of a friend who always makes time to go to the gym, or feeling resentful of your partner who goes hiking once a week.

- Who are you feeling resentful or envious toward for taking care of their needs and desires?
- What need are they meeting? Is it self-care or relaxation or entertainment?
- How are you neglecting your needs in this area?
- How can you start meeting your needs in this area?

## Exercise: Stop Treating Yourself The Way Your Parents Treated You

If you were neglected or abused as a child, you may still be continuing to treat yourself the same way your parents did without you even realizing it. The following exercise will help make you aware of any similarities between the way you're treating yourself now and the way your parents treated you as a child so that you can start making changes and treating yourself better.

***Q: Make a list of all the ways you neglect and deprive yourself of what you need.***





***Q: Write down every example you can think of regarding how your parents neglected you emotionally and physically.***



Q: Look at both lists and see if there is any connection between the way you're neglecting and treating yourself now and the way you were neglected and treated by your parents.

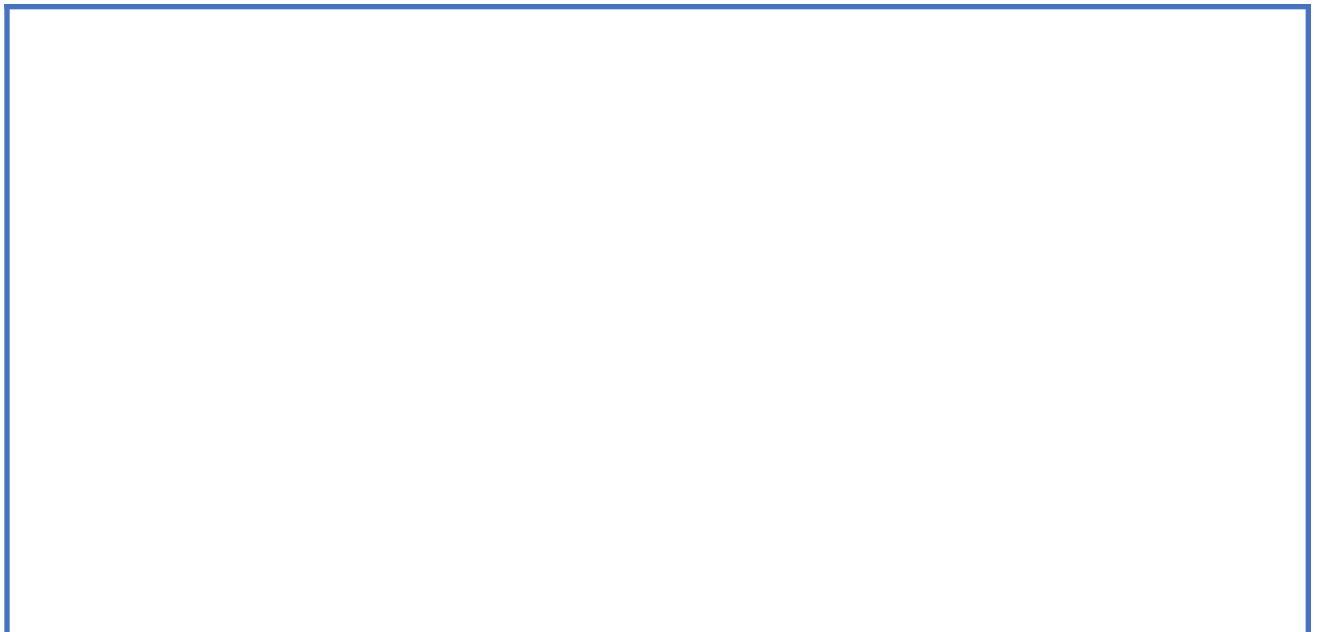
## Exercise: Uncover The Hidden Payoff To Focusing Outside of Yourself

Whilst a biological predisposition and childhood influences have had a huge impact on your need to focus on others at your own expense, another reason you continue with this behavior is because there are some payoffs that you may not even have realised.

Examples:

- It makes me feel good to help someone else.
- People praise me and say kind things about me, and it feels good.
- It's selfish and self-centered to think of yourself so putting others first makes me feel like a giving, loving, caring person.
- It stops me from thinking about myself and how unhappy I am in my marriage/unsatisfied I am with my work.
- I'm very self-critical so focusing on others gives me a break from the negative self-talk.
- I feel worthless and taking care of others helps me to justify my existence.


Q: What am I trying to avoid by focusing on others?



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Q: What do I gain by focusing on others to the exclusion of myself?


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## Exercise: Make A Commitment To Begin Meeting Your Own Needs

Completing all the previous exercises has given you some incredible insight into why you're neglecting your needs and what you can do to start changing that. This final exercise will help you to make that commitment to making self-care a priority going forward.

Q: List all the things you wanted from your parents but didn't receive. For example, maybe you wanted their approval, encouragement or affection but didn't receive it.



Q: List all the ways you can start giving to yourself the things your parents never gave you. For example, if they never encouraged you, write down that you will start encouraging yourself.

Q: Make a commitment to doing one of the things on your list immediately. Write down the self-care task you chose in the space below.

Then tell your therapist about what you did and how that made you feel during your next therapy session and explore how you might maintain this whilst working on the next one.

