



Self-Care Tools for Survivors

**SUFFOLK
RAPE CRISIS**

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Personal Self-Care
I Will Rise

Personal Self-Care is about falling in love with who you are.

Learn more on pages 32-37

Physical Self-Care
Grounding Ourselves

Physical self-care is about finding a sense of stability and safety in ourselves.

Learn more on pages 6-15

Spiritual Self-Care
Mindfulness

Spiritual self-care is about caring for our mental wellbeing - quietening and calming our minds, uplifting ourselves and finding safety inside us.

Learn more on pages 24-31

Emotional Self-Care
Appreciating Ourselves

Emotional self-care is about caring for our emotional needs - handling, managing, and looking after our thoughts and feelings.

Learn more on pages 16-23



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS SELF CARE?

You have probably already heard the basics: like getting enough sleep; using a bath bomb every now and then; and trying out yoga. But ultimately...

Self-care is about having a deep awareness of your needs and taking gentle steps to fulfil them.

It is taking care of yourself first; making time to do things for yourself; how to genuinely look after yourself.

So, of course, self-care looks different and is going to feel different for each of us, and it will mean different things at different times in our lives.

We give ourselves what we need in the moment, whether we... Nurture. Nourish. Recharge. Love. Be kind. Strengthen. Give Compassion. Soften.

For many of us, the idea of taking care of ourselves can not only be unfamiliar, but unappealing. That is normal! Self-care is still important.

WHY IS SELF-CARE IMPORTANT?

Because the most important relationship is the one we have with ourselves.

When we are unbalanced, self-care anchors us.

When we hurt, self-care can help us heal.

When we are stressed, self-care is calming.

When we are bored, self-care is fun.



THIS BOOK IS A TOOL TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE LIFE ARMED WITH HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF.



IT IS ABOUT YOU, YOU & YOU!



WHAT FORMS DOES SELF-CARE COME IN?

In this book, we will guide you through self-care in the different areas of your life: physical, emotional, spiritual, and personal.

- Our physical self-care chapter explores nourishing our bodies and grounding ourselves in the present.
- Our emotional self-care chapter acknowledges that every emotion is valid.
- Our spiritual self-care chapter works to create a greater sense of our inner-selves.
- Our personal self-care chapter focuses on fun, joy and indulging in the things you like to do, just because.



A NOTE ON USING THIS RESOURCE:

In this book, we offer a variety of self-care activities for each area of your life. We are all different and some of them might resonate, while others might not. If you feel comfortable, give them a try. If it works for you, explore building it into your life, but it is equally important to know what doesn't work for us and what we don't want to build into our self-care.

This tool is not a substitute for professional mental health support. You do not need to face this alone. If you feel that you need support then please visit your GP, visit your local Rape Crisis Centre, or talk to a friend or someone you trust. We have set out this tool in a particular order that we think will be the most helpful for survivors to learn these practices. However, we are all different. It is up to you how you use the tool. Feel free to change the order, or miss out practices.

At any time if the practices feel too challenging then it is okay to stop. You might decide to come back and try the practices again some other time. It's about knowing what's right for you.



SELF CARE

1 GROUNDING OURSELVES

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO PHYSICAL SELF-CARE



WHAT IS 'PHYSICAL SELF-CARE?'

Physical self-care is about finding a sense of stability and safety in ourselves. It is about drinking enough water, eating healthy food, resting and sleeping when we need it, taking a walk and all the things we do to make our bodies run every day. Physical self-care also moves beyond this. It is about exploring how we self-soothe and restabilise. Grounding exercises are simple activities that we can do to help us feel more stable and safer. They aim to distract us by focusing outward on the external world. They work to anchor us in the present. In this chapter, we will offer some ideas, thoughts, and activities on both of these elements of physical self-care.

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES PHYSICALLY

I am going to ...

SLEEPING

Most of us need around seven to nine hours sleep each night. So how do we make that sleep as nourishing as possible?

- Going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day can help us get into a sleep routine.
- Creating our sleeping sanctuary from candles by the bed to a lovely lamp to kind, loving statements to read before bed.
- Using our bed only for sleeping.

EATING

Fuel your body with food that makes you feel nourished and taken care of.

- Try asking yourself "how can I add more vegetables to this meal?".
- Give yourself time to eat when you are hungry, and perhaps try eating slowly and more mindfully
- Eat what makes you feel good – enjoy it. Enjoy the treats!

1

2

3

DRINKING

Drinking enough water can help to keep our bodies hydrated and nourished. We are recommended to drink around three litres a day. So how do we get that much water into our bodies?

- Start each meal with a glass of water before you sit down to enjoy your food.
- Treat yourself to a gorgeous water bottle.
- Try having herbal tea or lemon water to make it a little more interesting.

EXERCISING

Getting your blood flowing is a really impactful way to practice physical self-care. When we move our body, we release endorphins that can help make us feel good.

- Explore taking a walk at lunch time or taking the dog out in the afternoon.
- Have a stretch when you wake up in the morning or before you go to bed.

1 GROUNDING OURSELVES

THINKING ABOUT GROUNDING

SOMETIMES WE FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS. THESE MIGHT LOOK OR FEEL LIKE ANXIETY, PANIC ATTACKS OR FLASHBACKS.

Flashbacks are sudden memories of an episode or episodes from the past. These can be very powerful and intense; they can sometimes feel like you are almost 'reliving' the experience. We can become unable to distinguish between the memory and the present time.

Anxiety, panic attacks and flashbacks are normal responses to trauma. They are your brains way of processing that trauma, and they can feel very real right now.

Sometimes we know why we are feeling this way. Something has reminded us of an experience or emotion that is painful, frightening, dangerous or upsetting. Sometimes we cannot identify what it is. We call these 'triggers'.

A 'trigger' can be a smell, a taste, a sensation, a word or even seeing something that relates to a traumatic event.

Bringing our attention to the present moment can help us feel less overwhelmed. We call this 'grounding'.

We thought about some of the things we already do to ground ourselves and feel safe when we are triggered.

"I press my feet into the floor."

"I look around me – sometimes I make lists of the colours in the room."

"I doodle – it gets the overwhelming feelings out."

"I cry."

Sometimes it can help us if we know what makes us anxious or what our triggers are. If you feel comfortable, take some time to write down how you know when you are feeling anxious or triggered:



How do you support yourself when you are feeling overwhelmed?
How do you ground yourself?



1 GROUNDING OURSELVES

GROUNDING TOOLS

A NOTE FROM US:

We are all different and some of these might resonate, while others might not. If you feel comfortable, give some a try. If it works for you, you can build it into your life, but it is equally important to know what does not work for us and what we do not want to build into our self-care toolkit.



GROUNDING GUIDELINES:

- Can be done any time, any place, anywhere – no one has to know.
- Can be used when you feel overwhelmed, are faced with a trigger or having a flashback.
- We encourage you to keep your eyes open, scan the room and turn the light on.
- Try to stay neutral without judgements.

TRY OUT OUR GROUNDING TOOLS



SAFETY, COPING STATEMENT

Design a kind, safe or coping statement for yourself. Something that you can say to yourself to give you some calm and security.

We have added some examples to get you started...

"I am a good person, going through a hard time. This feeling will pass and I will get through this."

"I got this!"

"My name is _____;
I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in _____ and the date is _____."

Perhaps write it down and store it somewhere so you can have it with you all the time, such as in your purse, and then say it to yourself.

Let's practice...

1 GROUNDING OURSELVES

GROUNDING TOOLS

GROUNDING STONE

We are going to explore objects that make us feel good and safe within ourselves.

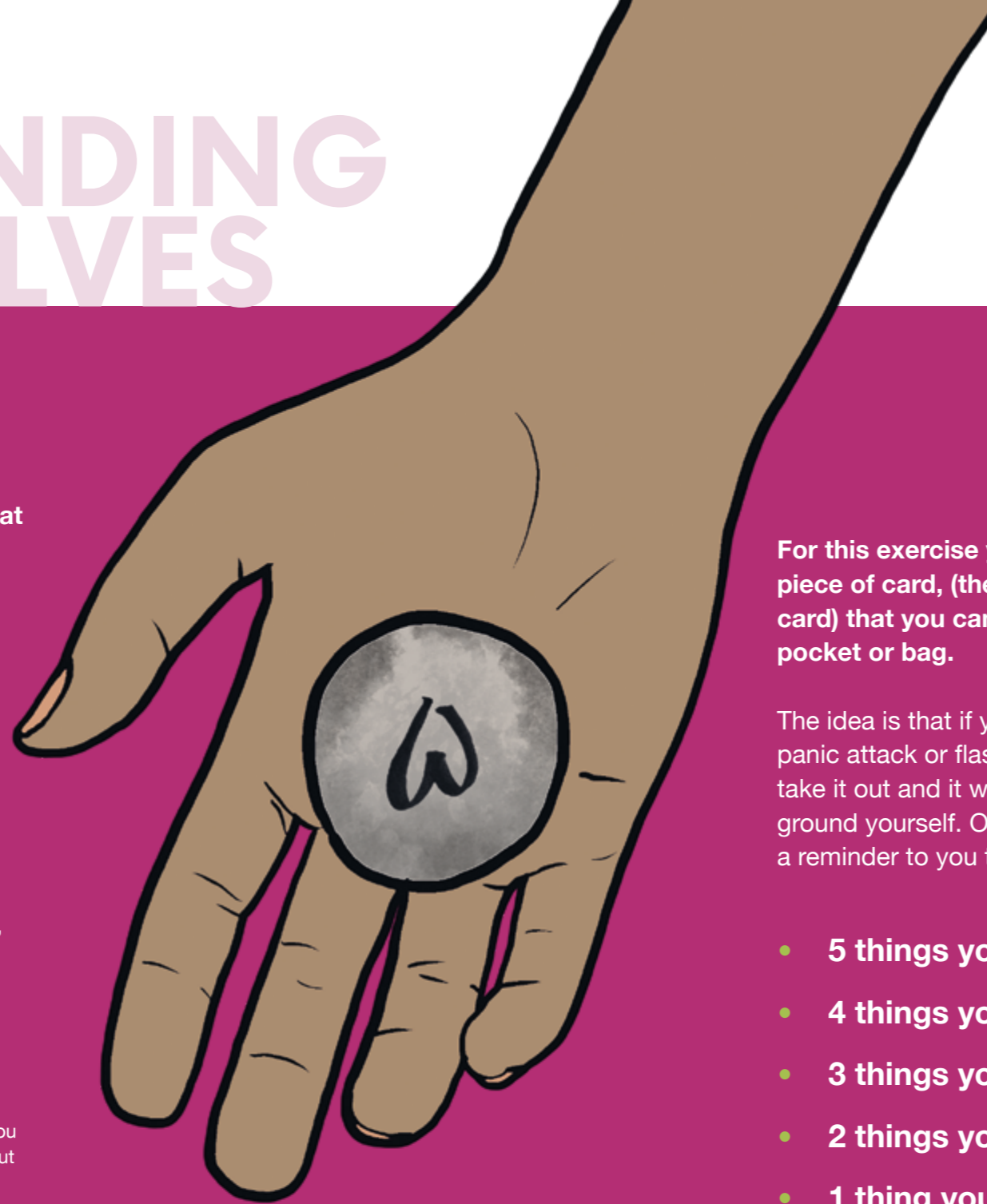
We invite you to take a moment to think about when you felt good and safe within yourself.

Is there an object from that memory? Is there an object for you that represents that feeling?

Perhaps, pick a stone, a shell, a ring, a piece of cloth - anything small you can hold in your hand.

1. Hold that object in your hand.
2. Look at it really closely as though you have never seen it before. How many colours can you see? Is there anything you find interesting about your object, stone or shell?
3. Notice how the object feels. Is it rough or smooth? Is it warm or cool? Does the temperature change as you hold it?
4. Notice how you feel. Remember - there is no right or wrong way to feel!

If you notice that you feel calmer when you are holding your stone or shell, you might find it helpful to carry it with you so that you can pick it up when you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed, you might want to put it beside your bed or in a place that feels safe so that you can hold it whenever you feel triggered.



54321

For this exercise you need a small piece of card, (the size of a bank card) that you can keep in your pocket or bag.

The idea is that if you are having a panic attack or flashback, you can take it out and it will help you to ground yourself. On the card is written a reminder to you to notice:

- 5 things you can see.
- 4 things you can hear.
- 3 things you can touch.
- 2 things you can smell.
- 1 thing you can taste.

54321

We felt the 54321 exercise would be good when you are out and about, if you are in the middle of the city or in a public place. It can help to bring you back to the here and now. You could easily keep the piece of card in your bag or pocket. It also might be helpful to give the card to a friend or partner who can prompt you to notice your senses.

Let's practice...

How did that feel? What bodily sensations did you feel?

A large, empty white rectangular box with a thin green border, intended for the user to write their responses to the practice questions.

1 GROUNDING OURSELVES

GROUNDING TOOLS

HOW TO MAKE YOUR COMFORT BOX:

What is a Comfort Box?

A Comfort Box is essentially an emotional first-aid kit. The idea is to fill it with things that will immediately help calm you down, recharge and pick yourself back up. Your Comfort Box will provide you with all the things you need to feel safe.

STEP ONE

Grab an unused shoe box or something big enough to hold a few items.

STEP TWO

Start to think of items to put in your box. Our advice is to focus on the five senses...

• **Smell** – Think of scents that make you feel calm and centred. i.e. *lavender oil, creams & moisturisers, scented candles, bath bombs.*

Your ideas -



• **Sight** – Choose things that remind you of a special time, how loved you are, what you enjoy. i.e. *photos, pressed flowers, letters, inspirational quotes, a book.*

Your ideas -



• **Taste** – Use your favourite food or treats as a little pick-me-up. i.e. *chocolate, herbal tea snacks, gum.*

Your ideas -



• **Touch** – Grab things you can feel. i.e. *clay/playdough, fluffy socks, crystals, a piece of velvet, a silk top.*

Your ideas -



• **Sound** – Write down things you hear that are relaxing or strengthening. i.e. *favourite songs, the shipping forecast, waves.*

Your ideas -



STEP THREE

Assemble your box.

Organise it in a way that will comfort you the most.

STEP FOUR

Decorate!

For the outside of your box choose your favourite colour, wrapping paper or make a collage of photos, quotes, affirmations etc... For the inside, be creative, colourful, and fun!

STEP FIVE

How to use it?

When finished, put your box somewhere accessible you will not forget. And then when you need it, just open the comfort box and let it do its magic...

PHYSICAL



PHYSICAL



2 APPRECIATING OURSELVES

EMOTIONAL SELF CARE



WHAT IS EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE?

Emotional self-care is about caring for our emotional needs – handling, managing, and looking after our thoughts and feelings.

It is about nurturing our emotions, both acknowledging the difficult feelings we have and working to appreciate the things we know to be true about ourselves to feel content with who we are. In this chapter, we will offer space to explore some of our negative emotions and then work to appreciate the positive qualities we know to be true about ourselves.

A NOTE ON SHAME, GUILT AND BLAME

As survivors, we might feel shame, guilt, and self-blame about what has happened to us.

These are powerful, unpleasant, and self-conscious emotions with a negative view of ourselves. They can leave us with feelings of distress, mistrust, exposure, powerlessness, and worthlessness.

However, shame, guilt and self-blame are relational, they are social emotions which are not created in a vacuum. They exist because of real things we have been told and real responses we have had from others.

- Those who have abused us might have told us negative things about ourselves, from the way we look, to our clothes to our personalities, that make us feel it was our fault or that we do not want to speak to anyone.
- And the way society and media talk about sexual violence often blames our character, our behaviour, our appearance, our decisions for what we have experienced.

So, we are told things about ourselves, and they are reinforced at every level – messages from perpetrators, society, the media - and these beliefs can become instilled in ourselves so that we believe them to be true.

And that can impact on our self-esteem and self-confidence.

IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT. THE ONLY PERSON TO BLAME IS THE PERPETRATOR AND THE INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETAL NORMS THAT REINFORCE THEM.

This table can be used to explore who has contributed to the beliefs we hold about ourselves. We can reflect on what degree our self-esteem has come from others. We can then place the responsibility in creating these beliefs back onto them and begin to release ourselves from the responsibility of carrying the beliefs that belong to others.

What I learned...	from parents/family	from friends/peers	from culture/media	from anyone who abused me
about my mind				
about my body				
about my capabilities				
about being a woman				
about my duty				
about my right to take care of myself				

2 APPRECIATING OURSELVES

EMOTIONAL SELF CARE

WHAT I LEARNED

We know that looking at *'What I Learned'* can be difficult or challenging. So, we invite you to use the *Self-Compassion and Kindness Break* once you are finished, or whenever you need while filling it in.

The self-compassion break was created by Kristin Neff and can be used to give ourselves compassion and kindness when we need it.

This exercise might be used when we are addressing or experiencing a difficult or challenging emotion, or we may choose to practice it afterwards.

1. TO START:

We start by bringing the mind to something mildly challenging or difficult. Do not choose anything overwhelming, and if it feels too much just turn your attention back to your breathing, or anything else that helps you to feel grounded.

2. AWARENESS:

Notice how it feels when you bring this difficulty to mind. See if you can focus on how you are feeling right now rather than on the story or the difficulty. You might say something to yourself like: 'This is unpleasant' or 'This feels difficult'.

3. SHARED HUMANITY:

See if you can remind yourself that everybody experiences difficulties sometimes. It does not mean that there is anything wrong with us! Painful and challenging experiences are part of being human. The details are different for everyone but the emotions we experience are universal. You might say something to yourself like: 'This is part of being human' or 'Everyone feels like this sometimes.'

4. KINDNESS:

See if you can approach yourself with kindness. You might try imagining that you are breathing in golden light or sunshine. You might try speaking to yourself as you would speak to a close friend. You might say something to yourself like: 'It's okay' or 'I am like a friend to myself'

5. TO END:

When you are ready, let go of the practice. You might notice your breath, or the sounds of the room. And if your eyes are closed, you can open them and bring the practice to a close.

The words used in the meditation are just suggestions. Feel free to find phrases that feel right for you.

And then, we can work to appreciate the positive qualities we know to be true about ourselves...



2 APPRECIATING OURSELVES



SELF CONFIDENCE IDEAS

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS:

Affirmations are positive statements that can help you challenge and overcome negative thoughts. When we repeat them often, and believe in them, we can start to know them to be true about ourselves.

We invite you to write down some positive affirmations for yourself.

And then, if you feel comfortable, to stick these up around your home, for example where you brush your teeth or next to your bed and say them to yourself as often as you feel you can.

WHO AM I?

A large white rectangular box with a dark purple border, intended for writing personal affirmations. The box is empty and occupies the central-left portion of the page.

- I am loveable and capable.
- I fully accept and believe in myself, just the way I am.
- I am a unique and special person. There is no one else quite like me.
- I accept all the different parts of myself.
- I love myself the way I am. I don't have to prove myself.
- My feelings and needs are important.
- It's okay to think about what I need.
- It's good for me to take time for myself.
- I have many good qualities.
- I believe in my capabilities and value my skills and talents.
- I trust in my ability to succeed at my goals.
- I am a valuable and important person, worthy of the respect of others.
- Others perceive me as a good and likeable person.
- When other people really get to know me, they like me.
- Other people like to be around me.
- They like to hear what I have to say and know what I think.
- Others recognise that I have a lot to offer.
- I deserve to be supported by those people who care for me.
- I deserve the respect of others.
- I trust and respect myself and am worthy of the respect of others.
- I am optimistic about life. I look forward to and enjoy new challenges.
- I know what my values are and am confident of the decisions I make.
- I easily accept compliments and praise from others.
- I take pride in what I have accomplished and look forward to what I will do.
- I believe in my ability to succeed.
- I don't have to be perfect to be loved.
- The more I love myself, the more I am able to love others.



2 APPRECIATING OURSELVES

POSITIVE QUALITIES

EMOTIONAL

Creativity
Social intelligence
Kindness

Leadership
Fairness
Spirituality

Open-mindedness

Write down three of your positive qualities or strengths:

Write down three of your achievements, things you are proud of:

Write down three you want to give yourself or others have told you about yourself:

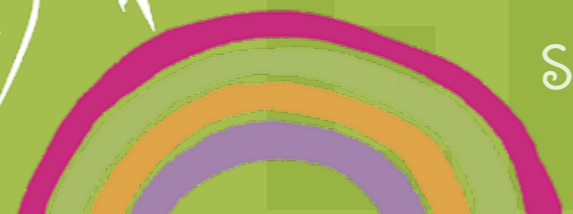
Love of learning
Prudence

Curiosity
Bravery

Persistence
Integrity

Vitality
Love
Modesty
Forgiveness
Self-regulation

Gratitude
Appreciation of beauty
Humour
Hope



3 SPIRITUAL SELF CARE

TAKING CARE OF OUR INNER SELVES: MINDFULNESS

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE?

Spiritual self-care is about caring for our mental wellbeing - quietening and calming our minds, uplifting ourselves and finding safety inside us. It is about connecting with and being in the present moment.

Mindfulness is one way of coming back to and being in the present moment. There are so many definitions and ways we can be mindful, in this chapter, we will offer some of our thoughts on what mindfulness is and ways we can practice it.

JOURNALING:

Perhaps, try free flow writing – a way of checking in with yourself and how you are feeling.

There is only one rule to free flow writing – do not stop writing! Even if you do not know what to say or want to stop, just keep writing.

1. Start by writing the phrase “I am content when ...”.
2. Set a timer (try one minute to start and if you enjoy it you can do it again increasing the time).
3. From when the time starts to when it ends, do not stop writing. Write in whatever form it comes out.
4. When the timer stops, stop writing.

Put the pen down, you have done it! You can choose now to leave what you wrote on the page, or think about it some more, the choice is yours.

SPEND TIME IN NATURE:

Connecting with nature could be anything from going out into the garden; watching a sunrise or sunset; lying on the ground and wiggling your toes in the grass; or going for a walk outside.

DOODLE AN INTENTION:

Take 5 minutes to sit in silence and doodle what you would like to get out of your day - how will you show up for yourself?

Take some big deep breaths, counting in for 5, pausing, then counting out for 5, repeating for 3 or 4 cycles of breath. Then draw or write a word or a sentence that speaks to you, how will you show up for yourself today?

So much about spiritual self-care is being kind to yourself. But how can you incorporate that into your everyday life?

TREAT YOURSELF:

You are inspirational! Take time to acknowledge that to yourself through a treat.

Take yourself for a haircut. Wear those fancy earrings you would normally save for a special occasion. Cook yourself an indulgent meal or eat your favourite chocolate, just because. Make time for a long bath.

You are awesome

You are strong, you are invincible!

Nothing stops you, despite everything you have been, you are a strong, powerful woman!

Your resilience is inspirational!

Your smile is contagious!

I love how creative and caring you are!

3 SPIRITUAL SELF CARE



THINKING ABOUT MINDFULNESS

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

We thought about mindfulness and how we would describe it.

For us, mindfulness is about coming back to and experiencing the present moment in time at its fullest. This can involve appreciating all our senses, it can involve meditation, it might involve physical or mental exercises.

There are lots of definitions of mindfulness:

'Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.' Kabat-Zinn, 1994

Essentially, mindfulness is about being aware of what is happening in the present moment. We spend a lot of time thinking about the past or the future. When we are mindful, we notice what is happening right now.

'Mindfulness is deliberately paying attention to our moment-by-moment experience, with an attitude of friendliness and curiosity.' Mason-John and Groves, 2014

WHY DO WE PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is a way of bringing your mind and body into the same moment.

Mindfulness can be helpful when we are feeling overwhelmed, anxious or triggered, as it helps us to ground ourselves in the present, reduce anxiety and can act as a form of relaxation.

It might help us find a sense of safety and calmness inside ourselves. It can help us be kind to ourselves in difficult times.

It can help us have a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the pleasant things in life.

It can also help us feel more connected to other people and the world around us.

Mindfulness means different things to different people. What does mindfulness mean to you?

How might mindfulness be helpful for you?

3 SPIRITUAL SELF CARE

BREATHING MEDITATION

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES:

Some people find that focusing on their breath can help them to feel more mindful and focus on the present moment. It can help us to let go of thoughts about the past and the future.

Why might being aware of our breath be important? There are lots of times when this might be useful. When we are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or triggered, it can be helpful to stop and take a breath. Sometimes we hold our breath or breathe shallowly without realising, this can make us feel more anxious.

When we become aware of our breathing we can choose to slow down and deepen the breath. And this can help us to feel calmer. When we focus on our breathing and appreciate our breath, we may feel soothed by it.

Find a position that feels comfortable for you.

You may choose to sit on a chair, or you may choose to sit on a cushion on the floor. It is entirely up to you.

You might find it helpful to close your eyes or soften or lower your gaze. This is also up to you.

Ground yourself in whatever way feels right for you.

1. Take a deep inhale and exhale out of the mouth sighing the breath out. Repeat this once or twice, more if it feels good.
2. Now, start to notice your breath, notice how it feels.
3. Bring your hands to thighs.
4. As you inhale, allow the hands to gently raise, perhaps to shoulder height.
5. And, as you exhale, allow them to lower back down to your thighs.
6. Continue breathing in this way, inhaling and exhaling with your hands raising and lowering. Let your breath and movement find its own natural rhythm. You do not have to change it, there is no correct way.

7. Perhaps, begin to notice you are nurturing yourself with each in-breath. Pay particular attention to the inhalation and notice that as you breathe in, you are giving yourself what you need in the moment. You are nurturing yourself with each in-breath. Perhaps, breathe in some other quality that you need: kindness, love, compassion, strength, softness. Breathe in this quality with each inhalation. Perhaps there is a word that rests easily on each in-breath, a word that represents what you need. Or perhaps it is more general - a golden light, a quality of warmth. Allow yourself to really receive something good for yourself with each inhalation.

8. Every time you notice that you are distracted is a magical moment of awareness. See if you can congratulate yourself for noticing and gently bring your attention back to the breath.

9. See if you can welcome each breath, each nourishing breath.

When you are ready, open your eyes if they have been closed, bring your attention to the room around you, and bring the meditation to a close.





BUILDING A SAFE SPACE INSIDE OURSELVES:

We are going to explore building a safe place, an inner sanctuary, locating, and reinforcing what safety looks and feels like inside our bodies.

1. First, pick a place that feels safe and warm for you, this could be real or imaginary. For example: a mountain, beach, tree house, a room adapted to your needs and tastes, a hot air balloon. Anywhere you feel safe and calm. Perhaps take some time to doodle, draw, paint or write what this safe space might look like.
2. Once you have chosen a safe place, find a position that feels comfortable for you. You may choose to sit on a chair, or you may choose to sit on a cushion on the floor. You may choose to lie down on a mat or on your bed. You may choose to do the practice standing up. It is entirely up to you. You might find it helpful to close your eyes or soften or lower your gaze. This is also up to you. Ground yourself in whatever way feels right for you.
3. Focus on that safe place and the feelings you have there...
 - What can you see? What is the light like?
 - What can you smell?
 - What can you hear? It could be birds singing or waves crashing.
 - If you touch things, what does it feel like? Can you feel sand or grass on your feet?
 - How warm or cold does it feel? Is there a breeze?
 - Are you on your own? With people you love? With animals?
4. Take some deep breaths and build a picture of what it looks, feels and sounds like.
5. It is okay if your mind starts to wander, just gently bring it back to the safe place and start to think again about what you can see, what you can feel, what is around you...

When you are ready, rub your hands together to warm them, place them over your eyes and blink your eyes open. Now slowly move your hands away and bring the meditation to a close.

Doodle, paint or write what your safe space might look like ...



4 PERSONAL SELF CARE

I WILL RISE

WHAT IS PERSONAL SELF-CARE?

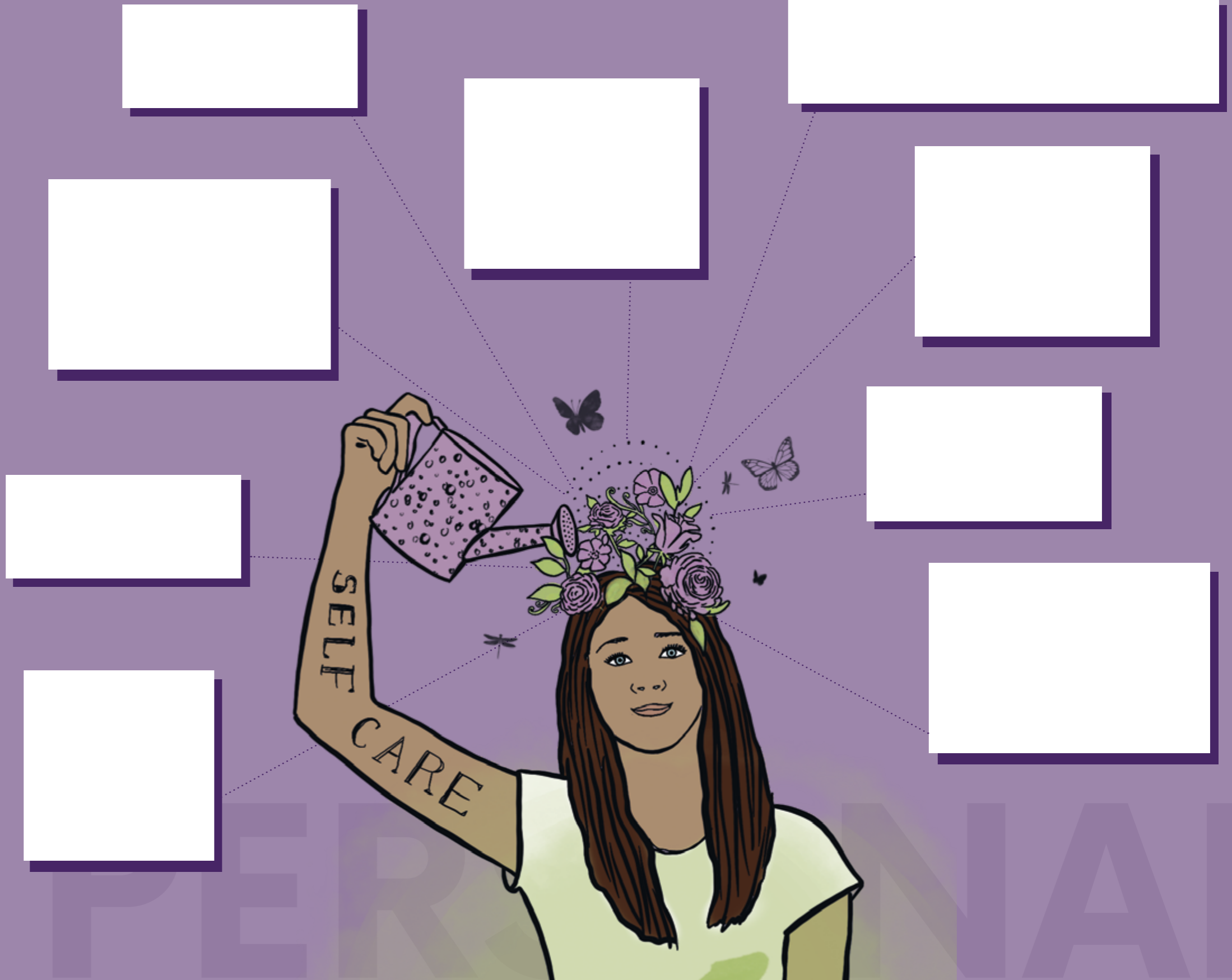
Personal Self-Care is about falling in love with who you are.

It is about discovering the things that bring you joy; it is about knowing and appreciating yourself and what you have in your life; and it is about honouring what you have experienced and where you want to go. In this chapter, we will offer space, exercises and ideas on how to do all of this – we will rise.

TAKING TIME FOR THE THINGS WE ENJOY:

Rising up involves enjoying who we are and what we love!

We welcome you to take time to think about all the things that you like doing: does it involve nature, friends, family, creativity, rest? Write, draw, paint, create them on the page. Perhaps, think about how you can do at least one of the things this week. It does not need to take long, and you can do it alongside others too.



4 PERSONAL SELF CARE



THINKING ABOUT GRATITUDE

GRATITUDE EXERCISE:

WHY IS GRATITUDE IMPORTANT?

Practising gratitude can significantly increase our wellbeing and happiness.

People who practice gratitude feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems. (Emmons, 2008)

Practising gratitude does not mean ignoring the effect that sexual violence has on your life and the fact that you have been through trauma. It can however be a reminder that there is a lot more to you than this experience.

BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE:

- increased happiness and positive mood;
- more satisfaction with life;
- better physical health;
- better sleep;
- less fatigue;
- greater resiliency;
- encourages the development of patience, humility, and wisdom;
- strengthens relationships.

(Greater Good Science Centre, 2018)

Gratitude exercises can be anything from starting to notice things you are grateful for to writing down positive things to saying 'thank you' in a real and meaningful way to writing a letter to someone you are thankful for.

What are three things you are grateful for today or right now in your present experience? Notice the environment around you, that you are taking time for your own wellbeing, the chair underneath you...

- 1
- 2
- 3

What are three things you are grateful for and appreciate about your life? It might be something really small and these things are important too.

- 1
- 2
- 3

Who are people that have had a significant and positive experience on your life? It might be anyone from family and friends to the person that smiled at you in the shop.

- 1
- 2
- 3

4 PERSONAL SELF CARE

KNOWING AND HONOURING YOURSELF:

LOVE LETTER TO YOUR FUTURE SELF:

To finish, we invite you to write a 'Love Letter to Your Future Self' reflecting on where we have been; what we have learnt and where we want to go.

Dear

First of all, I am writing this love letter to you because

I love you. I probably don't say it enough, but it is true.

I acknowledge the struggle(s) that you have experienced

And, that it was never my fault - I am not to blame

You are believed.

And I know I don't hear this enough, but I am proud of you. Here are three amazing achievements I have accomplished recently that have brought me great pride:

1.
2.
3.

We invite you here to add in the reasons you are writing this love letter to yourself.

We invite you here to name anything you want to that you have been through.

We invite you here to add anything you know to be true or perhaps have learnt from this booklet about why it is not your fault

We invite you to use this template or these ideas or topics in some way, but it does not have to follow this exactly, it is whatever feels right for you.

You are strong. You are brave. You are worthy. Here are three amazing things I love about you - three of your strengths:

1.
2.
3.

When other people get to know me, they like me. Other people like to be around me. They like to hear what I have to say and know what I think.

For example... ..

You are loved, respected and supported by others.

Sometimes the world is overwhelming. I get freaked out and that's okay. I have tools I can use to look after myself and make like a little easier

I know there are still things I want to work on, achieve or aim for. Here are three amazing wishes, goals or dreams that I am going to work on and towards and why there are important to me:

1.
2.
3.

With love, Self xxx

We invite you here to add something positive that others say about you.

We invite you here to add three things you have learnt that help and work for you.

WISHING YOU SELF-LOVE, SELF-COMPASSION & HEALING

We hope that this tool has helped you on your journey on self-love, self-compassion, and healing.

"May our self-care needs be so common that it is simply called everyday life"

We wanted to send you some final messages from the Team @ SRC...



You got this!
Survivor

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence it is self-preservation, and that's an act of political warfare."
Audre Lorde

"Self-care means giving yourself permission to pause."
Cecilia Tran

"It is always okay to stumble and fall. Go easy on yourself!"
Survivor

"Be proud of yourself for accessing this tool! You have made a really positive step."
Outreach Worker

"Taking care of myself doesn't mean 'me first' it means 'me too!'"
L.R Knost

"It's more than a bath, it's a transformative experience. You are searching for buoyancy in the soul. And a spring in your step."
Amy Leigh Mercree

"It's not your job to be everything to everyone."
Senior Outreach Worker

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To access further support visit:
www.srchelp.org.uk

To access the SRC Helpline call:
0800 0850 520

To access the Rape Crisis England and Wales
Helpline and/or Live Chat visit:
www.rapecrisis.org.uk