

MY SELF-CARE PLAN

It's important to take good care of ourselves, including our mental health & wellness. After all, life can be stressful and difficult. Thinking intentionally about how to take care of ourselves makes it more likely we'll do so. In this activity you'll design a plan for how to take good care of yourself when you really need it. You'll start by recognizing stressors in your life, your typical coping methods, signs you need more self-care, and finally by designing a self-care plan.

1. RECOGNIZING STRESSORS IN MY LIFE



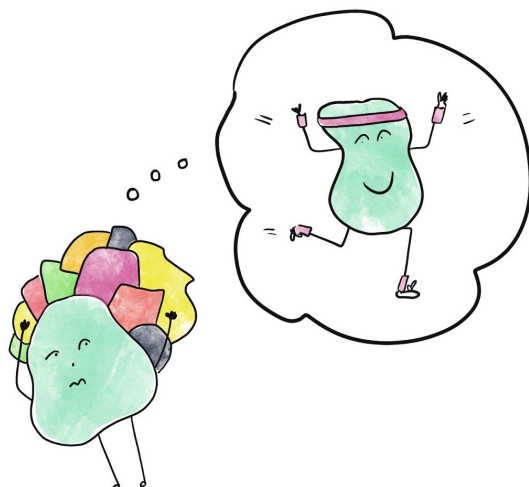
2. RECOGNIZING MY TYPICAL COPING METHODS



3. RECOGNIZING SIGNS I NEED MORE SELF-CARE & SIGNS THAT *OTHERS* COULD RECOGNIZE



4. DESIGNING MY SELF-CARE PLAN





STEP 1: STRESSORS IN MY LIFE

It can be helpful to reflect on our life stressors to recognize their impact on us. After all, college is inherently stressful with its multiple transitions and new challenges. Even positive events can be stressors because they involve change and require adaptation.

What stressors are currently, recently, or regularly in my life?



Health

- Difficulty securing enough, healthy, or dietary-required foods
- Change in eating habits
- Difficulty or changes in sleeping habits
- Changes in alcohol &/or drug use
- Sexual concerns
- Disabilities
- Mental health condition
- Pregnancy
- Major injury or illness

Housing & logistics

- Moving residences
- Other changes in living arrangements
- Having unstable or indefinite housing
- Chronic car or transportation trouble
- Long commutes to work or school

Finances

- New job or a job ending
- Working more than one job
- New or increasing expenses
- Bills that can't be paid
- Credit card debt

Environmental stressors

- Disruptive noise or environmental pollution
- New climate or challenging weather

Family & relationships

- Death of a loved one
- Divorce in family
- A new or the ending of a romantic relationship
- Lack of support for gender- or other identity
- Increased or changing family responsibilities
- Changes in social life
- Conflicts with family, friends, or roommates
- Isolated from community, family, friends, or feeling homesick

- Parenting or caring for dependents
- Homeschooling or overseeing home-learning
- Conflicts on social media
- Change in health of family member
- Relationship violence or coercion

Community

- Serving in a leadership position
- Victim of or witnessing violence or crime
- Interactions with police, legal or criminal justice system
- Microaggression, bias, discrimination, systemic oppression experiences
- Travelling to or living in a new culture
- Having a politicized identity
- Immigration, visa, or legal resident status
- Speaking in a second language
- Facing an unknown future or quickly-changing circumstances (such as a pandemic)

Academics

- First semester in or transfer to a new college
- Increase in course load or difficulty of courses
- Failed course or lower grade than expected
- Missed classes
- Disagreement with instructor
- Being on academic or disciplinary probation
- Recognition for achievement
- Excessive virtual learning
- Impending graduation

Other

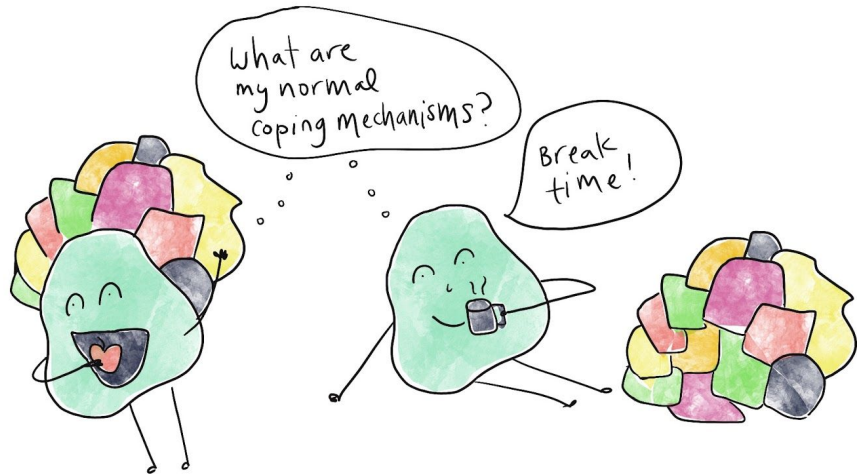
- _____
- _____
- _____

Next step: See the next page -- MY TYPICAL COPING METHODS -- to identify how you've been managing all these stressors.



STEP 2: MY TYPICAL COPING METHODS

We all cope differently with stressors, often without thinking about it. Some methods are generally “positive” because they’re ultimately good for us, some are “negative” because they feel good in the moment but are ultimately unhealthy, and some fall into both categories. It’s helpful to be aware of what we commonly do, be they good &/or bad methods.



When I feel stressed or unwell I tend to...

- Make sure I get enough sleep
- Stay up later than usual or get less sleep
- Eat well, with a focus upon healthy foods
- Eat more, less, less healthy, or severely manage what I eat
- Drink more caffeine (tea, coffee, energy drinks)
- Drink more alcohol
- Vape/use nicotine, weed, or other drugs more
- Take my prescribed medications as directed
- Engage in physical activity (e.g. walks, working out, yoga classes)
- Shop more, impulsively or compulsively
- Practice mindfulness, relaxation, &/or breathing
- Gamble or game online more than usual
- Get outdoors & enjoy nature
- Spend time with friends &/or family
- Avoid people & become withdrawn
- Seek support from people who care about me
- Spend more time on social media
- Engage in religious or spiritual activities
- Skip my usual religious or spiritual activities
- Meet with my therapist regularly
- Skip meetings with my therapist
- Make time to relax (read for fun, play an instrument, go outdoors, do art)
- Avoid working or studying as much as I ought
- Work or study more, to the point of exhaustion
- Spend more time watching things online
- Spend time on a hobby that I enjoy
- Drive faster than I normally would
- Listen to music
- Clean to get a positive sense of accomplishment, but not excessively or compulsively
- Do kind things for others, to make them feel good
- Read/watch self-help or inspirational materials
- Have self-compassion, be kind to myself, & show self-acceptance
- Blame or become critical of myself
- Bottle things up & ignore problems
- Become oversensitive or “overthink” things
- _____
- _____
- _____

Next step: See the next page -- SIGNS I NEED MORE SELF-CARE -- to recognize when you need more self-care.



STEP 3: SIGNS I NEED MORE SELF-CARE

Sometimes life challenges us with new or more stressors and we struggle to maintain a sense of wellbeing.

What are signs that I need to engage in more self-care--that I'm not coping as well as I could--for the stressors I'm experiencing?

- I'm sleeping less
- I'm sleeping more; feeling tired or lethargic
- I'm eating less, more, less healthy, or severely managing what I eat
- I'm drinking more caffeine (tea, coffee, energy drinks)
- I'm drinking more alcohol
- I'm not taking my prescribed medications
- I'm vaping/using nicotine, weed, or other drugs more
- I'm getting headaches more often
- My neck & shoulder muscles hurt
- My heart seems to be racing or pounding, not related to physical exertion
- I'm grinding my teeth at night
- I'm experiencing gastrointestinal problems
- I'm experiencing dry mouth
- I'm feeling sweaty or having sweaty hands, not related to exercise
- I'm experiencing nervous tics
- I'm not getting outside, being active, working out, or exercising as I normally do
- I'm shopping more, impulsively or compulsively
- I'm not practicing my mindfulness, relaxation, &/or breathing
- I'm online gaming or gambling more
- I'm praying more or less
- I want to spend more time with family & friends, but feel too discouraged to actually do it
- I feel exhausted when socializing
- All I want to do is ignore my responsibilities and go out and have fun



- I'm crying easily &/or more
- I'm not smiling much; I'm less silly than usual
- I'm yelling at others or arguing more
- I'm spending more time on social media
- I'm watching lots of Netflix/Prime/Hulu/Youtube
- I'm experiencing sexual problems
- I'm feeling burnout from school or work
- I'm short tempered, impatient &/or angry
- I'm skipping meetings with my therapist
- I feel overwhelmed by my schoolwork
- I feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities
- I'm acting impulsively &/or seem unstable
- I'm feeling bad about myself, future, &/or skills
- I'm feeling anxious &/or experiencing panic attacks
- I feel bored with life
- I'm having a hard time concentrating on anything
- I'm forgetful a lot
- I'm feeling easily irritated
- I'm cleaning excessively or compulsively
- _____
- _____
- _____

Next step: Consider allowing people in your life to help by completing the next page, SIGNS I NEED MORE SELF CARE, THAT OTHERS COULD RECOGNIZE.



OPTIONAL STEP:

SIGNS I NEED MORE SELF-CARE, THAT *OTHERS* COULD RECOGNIZE

Sometimes when we're in the middle of stress it's hard to recognize how we're being impacted and how badly we need help. In these moments it's often other people in our lives who see we're struggling.

What do I do that signals other people close to me that I need to engage in more self-care?

- I often look tired or am falling asleep during the day
- I always seem tired-out or unmotivated
- I'm eating less, more, less healthy, or severely managing what I eat
- I'm drinking more caffeine (tea, coffee, energy drinks)
- I'm drinking more alcohol
- I'm not taking my prescribed psychotropic medications
- I'm vaping/using nicotine, weed, or other drugs more
- I'm not getting outside, being active, working out, or exercising as I normally do
- I'm shopping more, impulsively or compulsively
- I'm not practicing my mindfulness, relaxation, &/or breathing
- I'm online gaming or gambling more
- I complain about being in pain, or look in pain
- I'm not going to church/synagogue/mosque regularly anymore
- I'm withdrawing from others, &/or declining opportunities to socialize that I'd normally love
- I'm crying easily &/or more
- I'm not smiling much; I don't seem as silly or funny as usual
- I'm yelling at others or arguing more
- I'm spending more time on social media
- I'm watching lots of Netflix/Prime/Hulu/Youtube
- I'm not seeming committed to school or work
- I'm short tempered, impatient &/or angry
- I'm skipping meetings with my therapist
- I'm missing school or work deadlines
- I'm acting impulsively &/or seem unstable
- I'm criticizing myself

Next steps:

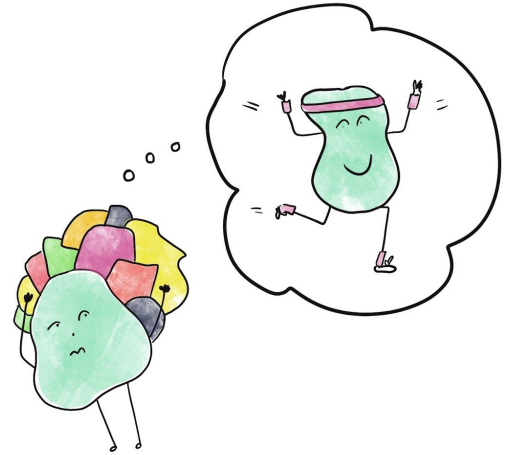
Are there people in your life you trust enough to share this list with? Friends, family, roommates, residential advisors, instructors, or others who care about you and are positioned to notice your behavior? Consider sharing this list with them, and ask them to give you feedback when they see these signs, in order to support your wellness.

Finally, proceed to the next and final step -- *MY SELF-CARE PLAN* -- to specify and commit to ways you're going to care for yourself, in light of what you've learned about yourself.



STEP 4: MY SELF-CARE PLAN

Of all the things I could or typically do to take care of myself, here are the things I *want* to do on a regular basis to feel better, happier, and manage my life and stressors more effectively in order to maintain positive wellbeing:



Physical (activity, exercise, sleep, eating):

Social (activities with others):

Emotional:

Spiritual / religious / mindfulness:

Helpful hints:

If it's difficult to think of things, review the page [MY TYPICAL COPING METHODS](#) for ideas (and pick a few of the positives). Remember to specify how often you'll do each of these things, or your deadline for completing them.