

# Self-Care

Brought to you by **The Gender Institute for Teaching and Advocacy**  
Research and Production by Lena Grout

## What is self-care?

Self-care is activities and practices we engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and enhance our well-being.

### Why do we do it?

- To meet our basic needs
- To feel good inside and out
- To maintain a healthy relationship with ourselves
- To know our worth
- To manage stress
- To enhance our self-knowledge
- To have healthy connections with others
- To just be
- To cut down self-cruelty
- To engage in political warfare

*“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.”*

**-Audre Lorde**

## What does self-care look like?

\***Disclaimer:** self-care looks different for everyone!

### Quick and easy!

- Nice, warm bubble bath
- Face masks
- Buying your favorite beverage
- “treat yo self”
- Take a trip
- Get a massage
- Buy a new outfit
- Go to the gym
- Watch your favorite show/movie
- Pet an animal
- Drink some water
- Put on fuzzy socks
- Take a nap
- Put on lotion
- Masturbate
- Take a walk
- Make a to-do list
- Take a couple of nice, long deep breaths

### A little more effort...

- Calling someone you love
- Keeping a journal
- Cleaning your room/house
- Finding a space where you feel safe
- Exercising
- Practicing mindfulness
- Telling someone that you’re having a hard time
- Cooking a meal for yourself

### Difficult!

- Saying “no”
- Creating boundaries
- Forgiving someone or yourself
- Reaching out to a therapist
- Avoiding alcohol, drugs, etc.
- Changing your sleep schedule
- Being kind to yourself
- Finding the positive
- Prioritizing your needs

# Journaling for Self-Care

## Write down to-do lists!

For example:

- Laundry
- Homework
- Call Grandma
- Dishes
- Nap

\*include moments of self-care!

## Keep a log of your gratitude!

For example:

- **December 2<sup>nd</sup>**: a dog sat on my lap today!
- **December 6<sup>th</sup>**: I said no to going out and stayed in instead
- **December 15<sup>th</sup>**: my favorite movie was on TV

## Keep a list of what self-care strategies work best for you!

For example:

- Meditation
- Playing video games
- Drinking tea
- Window shopping
- Knitting
- Mashed potatoes
- Horror movies

## Word vomit!

For example:

Take some time to physically write down what you're feeling and thinking. It doesn't have to be neat, organized, or even coherent. It helps to reflect on your inner feelings. Sometimes, you'll be surprised to realize how you're really feeling about that weird conversation you had with that person the other day, or how actually affected you are by the stress of an assignment deadline. You are your own therapist here and this session is in your control.

## Other things you can put in your journal!

- Leave yourself notes of: things to do, affirmation, reminders, helpful facts, etc.
- Doodles
- Memories

# Helpful Techniques

## 5-4-3-2-1

Recommended by Javonne Archibeque

Found: [www.therapistsb.com/blog](http://www.therapistsb.com/blog), by Jordan Killebren

5	Acknowledge 5 things you see around you. Think them, say them out loud – whatever feels right.
4	Acknowledge 4 things you can touch around you. They can be on your body or whatever is in reach.
3	Acknowledge 3 things you can hear. Externally. Music, car noises, animal outside...
2	Acknowledge 2 things you can smell. You may have to seek something out!
1	Acknowledge 1 thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like? Gum, coffee, etc.?

## Spoon Theory

Recommended by Ikaika Gleisberg

Found: [www.butyoudontlooksick.com](http://www.butyoudontlooksick.com), by Christine Miserandino

“Spoons” symbolize the reduced amount of mental and physical energy available for activities of living and productive tasks that can result from disability or chronic or mental illness.

Your spoons are limited!! It takes careful planning and consideration to ration out your spoons throughout the day, week, month...

It’s important to not spread yourself too thin. Listen to your mind and body. Listen to your needs. Don’t give away too many of your spoons.

## Mindful Breathing

Recommended by Lena Grout

Found: [www.verywellmind.com](http://www.verywellmind.com)

- **Diaphragmic breathing:** pay attention to the pace and depth of your breath. Be mindful of the work your body does to breathe deeply. Put your hand over your diaphragm to feel your breath.
- **Counted breathing:** inhale to a count of 4. Wait for a count of 7. Exhale to a count of 8. Repeat. Slow down and count. Feel the tension release in your body.

# Decolonized Self Care

Brought to you by **Netty Rodriguez**

Hi! I'm Netty. This is my favorite quote about decolonization by **Tina Curiel-Allen**:

*"Decolonizing is about reclaiming what was taken and honoring what we still have."*

## What does "decolonized" mean?

With colonization came centuries of erasure, of harm, of genocide, and a way of being that required many people indigenous to their lands to abandon traditions, ritual, family, and community. It also introduced a divide-and-conquer narrative – quite literally, separation. These are all things that require healing from. Thus, we decolonize.

## Why does self-care need to be decolonized?

The self-care movement, as we've come to know it, is not accessible to everyone. The "treat yourself" narrative is often paired with an attempt to sell you a product. It has also been seen as a recent movement, one that was both discovered and invented in the West. This narrative fails to consider the healing work, self-care, and wellness that many communities have been practicing for a long time and excludes many people, like my mami, who sees self-care as "leisure we cannot afford."

## In Practice...

Healing these splits and fragments can often feel selfish, counter intuitive, and scary. Decolonizing self-care starts with having an open and honest conversation about what self-care is and who it's for. It also starts with redefining self-care practices by honoring our identities, tradition, ancestries, and desires to understand and embrace ourselves as whole, in our body-mind spirits.

## My Self-Care Practices

- When I cook/bake, I am able to work with my hands, get dirty, and most of all, reflect and process. I get to indulge in the aromas that remind me of where I came from, that connect me to my ancestry.
- Over time, I have been able to carefully craft my own space, both physically and mentally. A place to retreat that feeds you. In your mind, the options are limitless!

## How does the Gender Institute Practice Self-Care?

### Soj (they/them)

"I take long soaks in too hot baths, spend time with my family, and make stuff... like knitting, sewing, or crocheting!"

### Javonne (she/her)

"I use the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique. It has really helped me when I feel my thoughts getting out of control."

\*see page 3 for more info!

### Lena (she/her)

"I make lists to organize my thoughts and needs. I give myself space to say no and create boundaries. I express myself creatively by drawing or crafting."

### Nick (they/them)

"Play time is really important to me. I try to find ways to play in just about everything I do. If I feel like I'm losing my mind, I stop, I breathe, I usually sit, I smile to myself. It's centering to intentionally 'do nothing.'"

### Vanessa (she/her)

"I take time for myself to read psychological thrillers, take really hot baths, and ride the light rail."

### Nastasia (they/them)

"Learning new songs and singing songs that fit my mood. I'll take the time to look up a good recipe or throw something great together in the kitchen, which increases my mindfulness about what I'm eating. Bringing myself back to my body and giving myself loving attention I've missed out on for years helps me connect intimately with myself and others."

### Kat (they/them)

"Hanging out with my dog, Jupiter!"

### Ikaika (they/them)

"I set firm boundaries and carefully measure my capacity. Sometimes saying "no" to social engagements or other taxing activities can be empowering. When I can't leave a space and feel stress creeping in, I close my eyes, place my hand on my chest, and take slow breaths until I can only feel my heartbeat."

## Some More Helpful Resources

- The app **Headspace**
  - Listen to guided meditations
  - Specific meditations: sleep, mindfulness, relationships, etc.
  - Available for free download on Apple App Store and Google Play (in app purchases)
  - **\*\*COVID-19 UPDATE:** content available for free!\*\*
- Look into the book **Pleasure Activism** and its author **adrienne maree brown**
  - [@adriennemareebrown](https://twitter.com/adriennemareebrown)
  - [www.adriennemareebrown.net](http://www.adriennemareebrown.net)
  - **Pleasure activism** = a politics of healing and happiness that explodes the dour myth that changing the world in just another form of work
- **The Trevor Project's** Self-Care During the Holidays
  - Check in on loved ones and friendships who are affirming of your identity
  - Make a self-care plan
  - Practice talking about your identity to a friend before visiting your family
  - Remember that you deserve love and support
  - Keep a few resources at hand that you can turn to for support
    - For a list of these resources, visit [www.thetrevorproject.org/2015/12/17/self-care-during-the-holiday-season/](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/2015/12/17/self-care-during-the-holiday-season/)
- **Pete Walker's** 13 Steps for Managing Flashbacks
  - [www.pete-walker.com/13stepsmanageflashbacks.htm](http://www.pete-walker.com/13stepsmanageflashbacks.htm)
  - Also check out: his explanation of complex PTSD and the somewhat linear progression of recovery
- Another self-care zine! (it helped guide this little guy along!)
  - **Hell Yeah Self Care**, by Meg-John Barker
  - Found on [www.rewriting-the-rules.com](http://www.rewriting-the-rules.com) in PDF form!
- Instagram pages on self-care
  - Dr. Nicole LePera's posts on Instagram - [@the.holistic.psychologist](https://www.instagram.com/the.holistic.psychologist)
    - Identifies trauma and how to resolve feelings of trauma through self-care practices and internal dialogue and mantras
  - [@selfcareisforeveryone](https://www.instagram.com/selfcareisforeveryone)
    - Helpful reminders to choose self-care over self-harm
    - Adorable posts daily to help those who need help in self-care
    - Also visit: [www.selfcareisforeveryone.com](http://www.selfcareisforeveryone.com)
  - [@ the open space](https://www.instagram.com/theopenpace)
    - Written posts about personal, mental, and physical wellness in the first person
  - [@selfcaresessions](https://www.instagram.com/selfcaresessions)
    - Reminders of ways of self-care that are easy to forget
  - [@bodyposipanda](https://www.instagram.com/bodyposipanda)
    - The personal journey of Megan Jayne Crabbe through inclusive self-love and care

## On-Campus Resources

### **MSU Denver Counseling Center**

(303) 615-9988

Tivoli 651

### **The LGBTQ Student Resource Center**

(303) 615-0515

Tivoli 213

### **Phoenix Center at Auraria**

(303) 556-CALL (2255)

Tivoli 227

### **Health Center at Auraria**

(303) 615-9999

Plaza 150

### **The Gender Institute for Teaching and Advocacy**

(303) 615-2052

Boulder Creek 132