



# THE SPOUSE OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER (SSO) WELLBEING COURSE

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Resource

Self-Care

Canadian Provider



# What is Self-Care?

Self-care is both a behaviour and a mindset that you can strive to embrace regularly in your life!

Developing this mindset can take time - it's a process of understanding and caring for what your body, mind, and spirit needs.

A self-care mindset can help to improve resiliency and effectively navigate life's stressors. Regular self-care can 'protect' you from the impacts of stress in general.

## "YOU DESERVE TO THRIVE!"

Living a life that is joyous and pleasurable, feeling a sense of accomplishment, cooperating with others, and contributing to the world around you can make the difference between just going through the motions and looking forward to each day.



# About Self-Care

For many people, especially those who currently and/or have historically experienced oppression and discrimination, self-care can be much more than individual acts. Self-care may include advocating for social justice, prioritizing and nurturing community connections, and embracing cultural practices.

Spending time on the *Spouse or Significant Other (SSO) Wellbeing Course* is a form of self-care.

In this resource, we elaborate on the idea of self-care. This includes taking care of your personal needs as well as prioritizing time for your needs, while staying true to your values.





# Self-Care in our Lives is Important

Self-care is **healthy and essential** for optimal functioning.

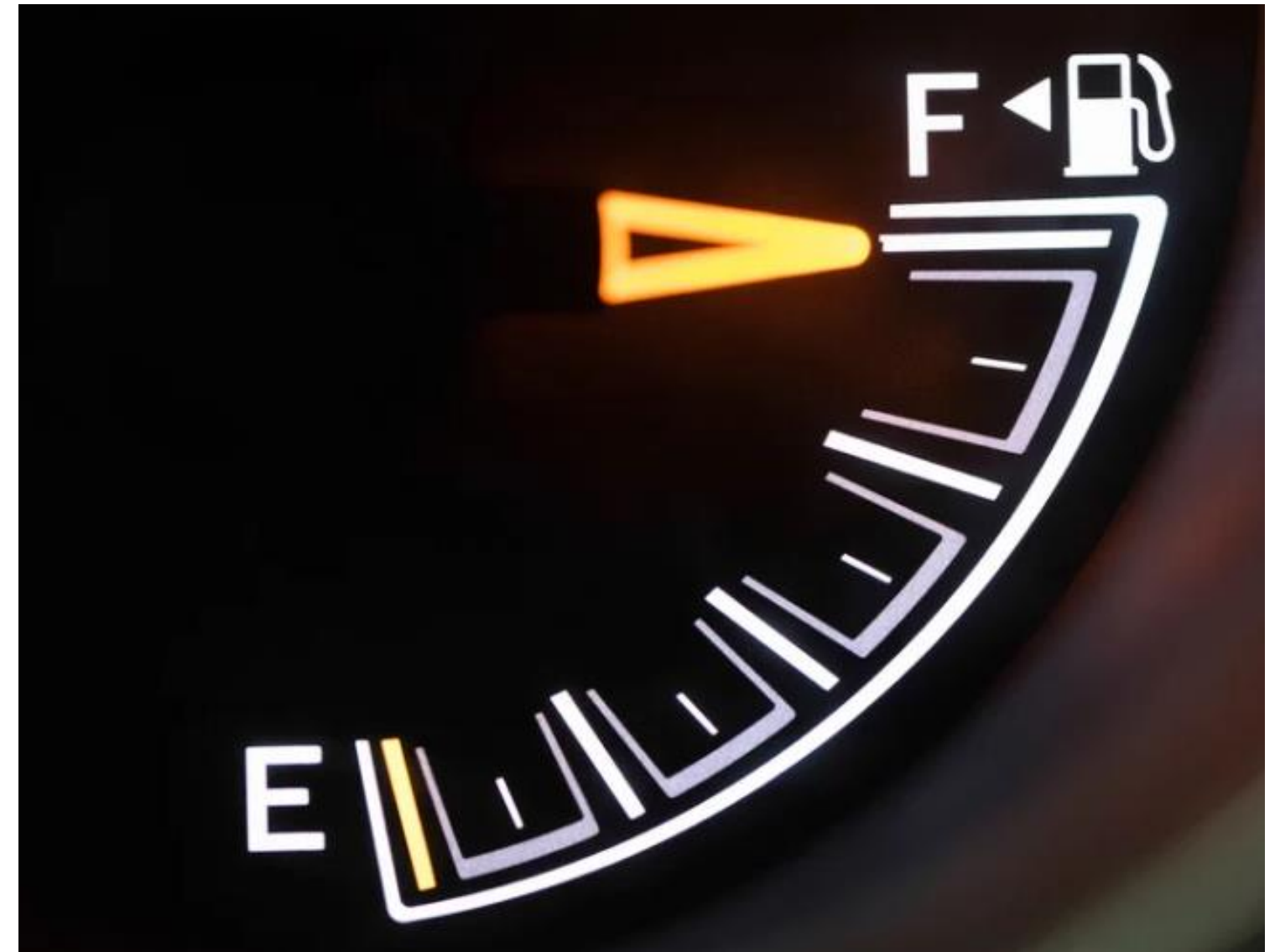
When you take the time to nurture and invest in yourself, the people around you, and the causes you believe in:

- You have more capacity to manage your own stress in a healthier way.
- You function better in your relationships, at work, and in your community.
- Self-care and wellbeing positively impact your physical health.



# Keeping our Self-Care Tank Filled

- Think of self-care needs as a gas tank in a vehicle, adding gas (self-care) to the vehicle regularly keeps it running smoothly.
- Self-care is especially important for families of public safety personnel (PSP). You may feel that you are required to give a lot of yourself to others, often resulting in an “empty tank”.
- If you experience stressors that begin to drain your resources, you have gas in your resiliency tank that can be used until the stressor eases and resuming regular self-care is possible.



# Reflection

What does self-care mean to you?

In what ways do you currently practice self-care (including the small ways)? In the past were there ways that you utilized self-care that perhaps you would like to re-incorporate into your life?





# Debunking Self-Care Myths

Self-care has become a popular and trendy concept today. However, there are misconceptions about what self-care is and is not.

## MYTHS

### **Self-care is expensive.**

Some people think that self-care is about spending money to 'treat' yourself with enjoyable luxurious activities or things. This myth has discouraged some people from prioritizing time for themselves as they assume they need money to make their self-care time count.

### **Self-care is selfish.**

Some people assume that self-care is always about taking time for yourself alone and excluding others - taking a "break". This misconception leads people to have a negative view, and for some, end up feeling guilty about the time they take for themselves, away from spouses, family, children, and friends.

### **Self-care is only about feel-good activities.**

Some people think that self-care is only about treating yourself weekly or monthly to fun or pampering activities. This idea is very limiting to people who do not enjoy these activities. In the media we often see images of such activities when advertising self-care.



## TRUTHS

### **Self-care is not always about spending a lot of money.**

It is more than this. Self-care can include activities that are free, but bring you happiness or joy. This can include taking a walk, listening to music, spending time with friends, or joining a social cause.

### **Self-care is not selfish.**

Self-care is essential and promotes your overall emotional wellbeing. Prioritizing self-care allows you to better care for others and your community. For some, self-care can also include the people around you and feeling connected to your community.

### **Self-care is not always about pampering.**

It is more than that, and also includes other activities that nurture you, nourish your body, mind, and spirit. Self-care is nourishment for your overall wellbeing .

# Perceived Barriers to Self-Care



## **Boundaries**

A lack of healthy boundaries can lead you to feeling out of control, unable to say no to others (pleasing people), and over scheduling yourself in different activities at the expense of your health.

## **Expectations**

Unrealistic expectations of what self-care should be based on societal myths are common. You may believe there are right and wrong ways to practice self-care, which can lead to negative self-judgement and guilt. For example, you may believe that self-care has to be an extra-expensive activity, one that you cannot currently afford, and as a result, self-care becomes a future ideal and not a concrete goal.



## **Lack of Time**

The demands of work responsibilities, family commitments, relationships and other life demands can be all encompassing, leaving you to think that you do not have extra time to dedicate to self-care activities. This is a common struggle that many experience.

## **Guilt**

Practicing self-care means taking time for yourself in order to be a stronger, healthier individual. For many, that can mean taking time away from others, including children, spouses, work, volunteer engagements, friends, and extended family. Guilt is a common feeling that people experience when they are trying to plan and engage in self-care, which prevents self-care from happening.



## **New Habits**

Learning and scheduling new self-care habits can be challenging. We all have changes that we want to make, and even plan to make - but follow through is difficult. It can take time to turn new practices into habits, and many times you may want to give up. Wanting to make a change is often just not enough.





# Reflection

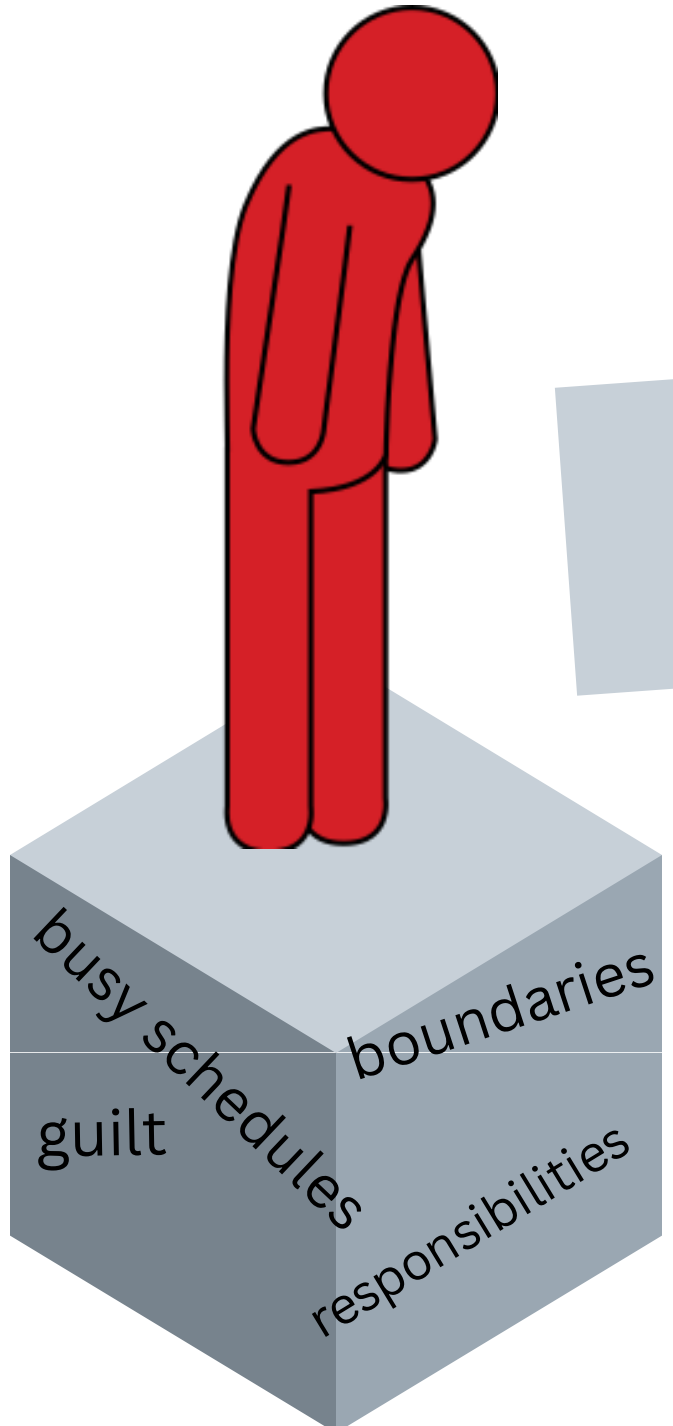
What barriers to self-care do you identify with?

Are there other barriers not listed that impact your ability to engage in self-care?

# Changing YOUR Mindset

Move away from this thinking...

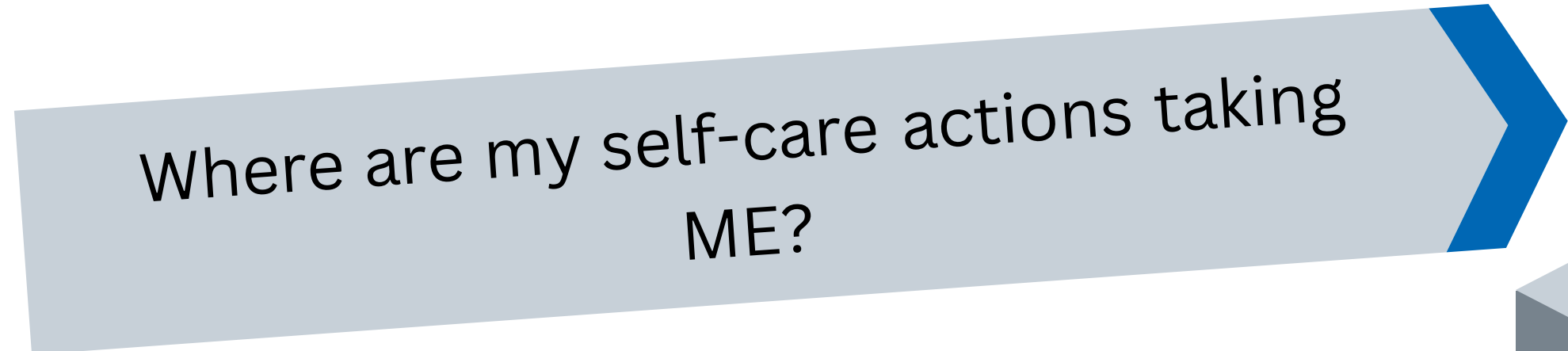
What prevents ME from prioritizing self-care?



...towards this way of thinking!



Start noticing things that feel positive and fit with my values.



# 5 Building Blocks of Self-Care

**You want to thrive, not just survive!**

Many people look to self-care to increase wellbeing, and they're not wrong! Research has shown that overall satisfaction with life, and feeling a sense of purpose and contentment, is vital to flourishing.

Doing this involves five key building blocks, adopted from Martin Seligman's PERMA model.

## Positive Emotions

**What activities contribute to you feeling positive, joyful, or content?**

For many people, learning to fully experience the present moment, be grateful about the past and look with hope towards the future can create space for positive emotions.

## Engagement

**What takes your attention so fully that you lose yourself to the moment?**

Activities that are so enjoyable that you lose track of time can be a positive way to engage in self-care.

## Relationships

**Who do you enjoy spending time with?**

We are social beings meant to connect with others. Relationships can give life purpose and meaning, and lead to positive emotions. Having connections to support you through life's ups and downs is vital.

## Meaning

**What things are meaningful and worthwhile to you?**

For some, belonging to groups and participating in social causes can help with identity and sense of purpose. It is important to feel that you are part of a larger good.

## Accomplishment

**What do you want to achieve and when?**

Accomplishment is the feeling you have when mastering a skill, subject, or task and it can feel really great! These can be small daily tasks or lifelong achievements towards a larger goal.



# How Do I Practice Self-Care?

Practicing self-care does not have to involve elaborate or expensive activities. Daily, small actions can have a significant impact on your overall health and wellbeing. Journaling, volunteering, and watching TV can all be forms of self-care.



Remember to be kind to yourself and treat yourself with the same compassion you would a friend or family member. Be realistic about your expectations.

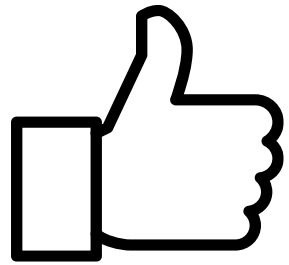
As you work towards a self-care mindset, it can be helpful to think of your values, thoughts and actions, and whether they are bringing you towards the self-care mindset you want, or away from it.

# PERMA Model of Happiness & Wellbeing

**You deserve to have a meaningful life that builds the best version of yourself!**

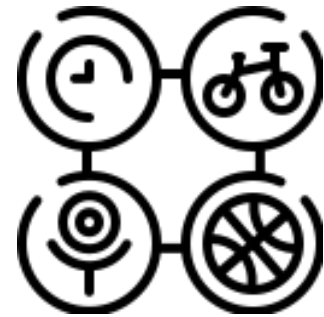
Below you will find some examples of self-care within the five key building block areas that may help you get started in creating your own list. Remember, it is not about the quantity but rather the quality of self-care and how that self-care will impact your wellbeing.

## Positive Emotions



- Experiencing nature
- Reflecting on the joys of the day
- Making plans for things you enjoy
- Journaling about the positives of being a PSP SSO

## Engagement



- Yoga or meditation
- Crafting, painting, carving, drawing
- Being part of a team sport
- Gardening
- Playing an instrument
- Playing a video game
- Developing a new routine for kids

## Relationships



- Catching up with family or friends
- Showing appreciation to others
- Meeting up for coffee
- Connecting with other SSOs in person or online
- Joining online communities

## Meaning



- Practicing spirituality or religion
- Volunteering
- Sharing knowledge with others
- Creating ways for other SSOs to collaborate and share

## Accomplishment



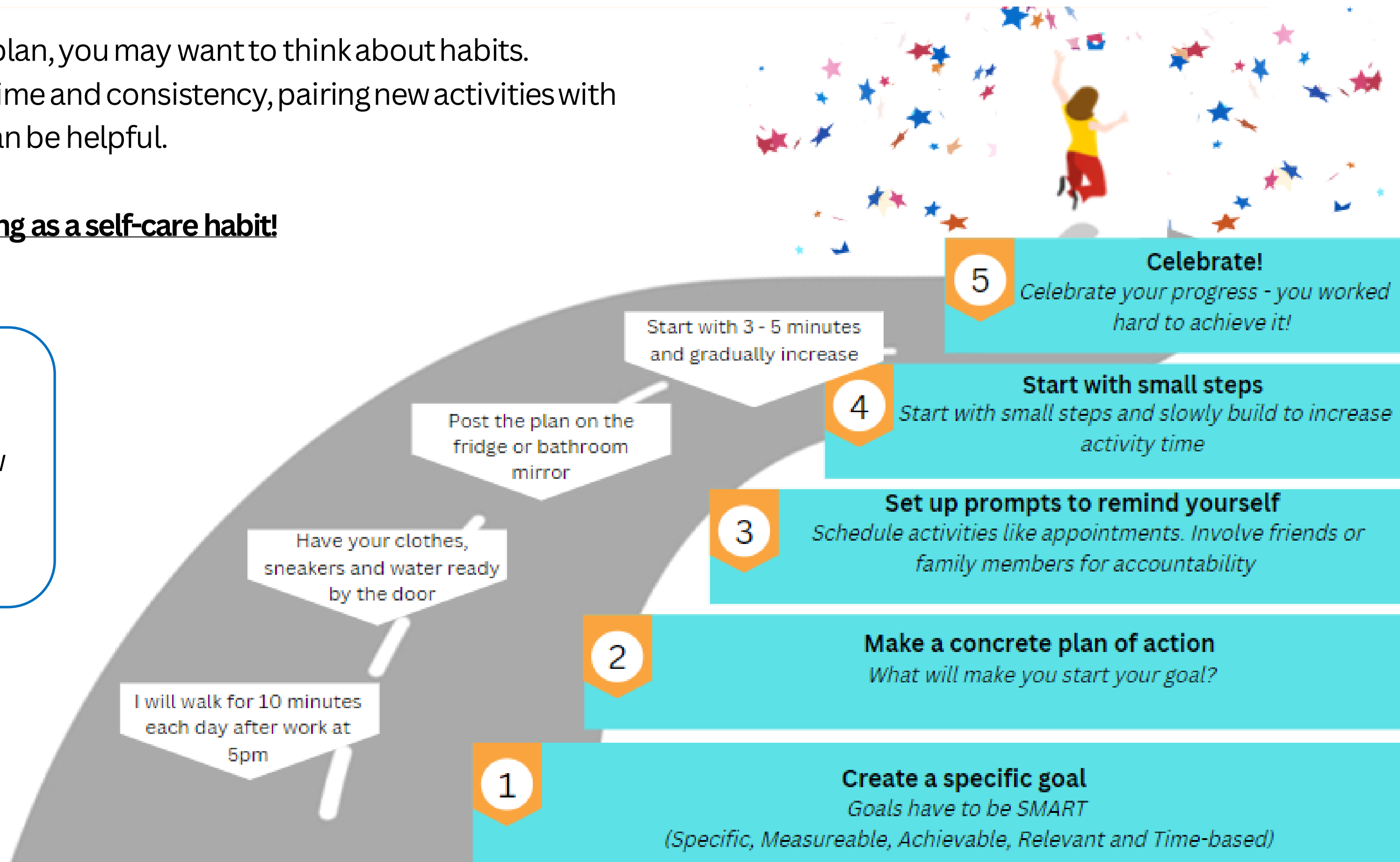
- Taking on a new role/task
- Completing a project
- Learning something new - challenge yourself!
- Taking a course
- Helping a new PSP family

# 5 Steps to Self-Care

To develop your self-care plan, you may want to think about habits. Building new habits takes time and consistency, pairing new activities with activities you already do can be helpful.

**Here is an example of walking as a self-care habit!**

To learn more about the benefits of activity scheduling, please review Lesson 3 of the *SSO Wellbeing Course*.







# Reflection: The ABCs of Self-Care

Now that you have learned about the five steps of building your self-care habit, try to think of ways you can incorporate self-care into your life. Use the ABCs of self-care when going about your day-to-day activities or planning for your week ahead. Reflect on the following three aspects:

**ASSESS your current self-care situation realistically.** *(What are you already doing well, and in what areas might you focus?)*

**BUILD on things.** *(What activities do you already do that you can add to? What skills and interests can naturally lend themselves to new activities?) Be gentle with yourself and allow for setbacks, knowing each is a learning opportunity.*

**COMMIT to ongoing self-care.** *(What do you need to do to get started on self-care activities?) Small manageable actions can add up and build upon each other to become habits.*

# Example of Scheduling Self-Care

Scheduling self-care activities is a great way to get started until this practice becomes a habitual part of your everyday life.

Remember research shows that habits take several weeks of practice to become routine.

- To complete the log, choose a few activities that you would like to focus on.
- Put a mark each day you plan to do that activity. Remember to start slowly!

## WEEKLY SELF-CARE PLAN

WEEK OF: Nov 4

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON THIS WEEK:

	S	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
<b><u>POSITIVE EMOTION:</u></b> <i>Go for a walk</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>ENGAGEMENT:</u></b> <i>Set up a new bedtime routine for kids</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>RELATIONSHIPS:</u></b> <i>Chat online with friends</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>MEANING:</u></b> <i>Practice journaling</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>ACCOMPLISHMENT:</u></b> <i>Make a to-do list for next week</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### HOW DID THE WEEK GO?

*I think the week went great. I was able to go for a walk and find time alone which was nice. I found journaling positive, but I think doing it more regularly would be even more helpful. I'll add it to my self-care plans for next week.*

# Reflection: Scheduling YOUR Self-Care

Remember that self-care is a process, and just like any habit it takes effort and time. Finding the right forms of self-care that you enjoy, and ones that fit with your own needs is important.

Get started today.

- Schedule a few self-care activities into the Weekly Self-Care Log.
- Another option is to incorporate your self-care plan into the Activity Scheduling materials in Lesson 3 of the *SSO Wellbeing Course*. Self-care activities can be included in your daily activity schedule.
- If you find that a specific self-care goal feels overwhelming or anxiety-provoking, take some time to figure out why and if it is the right choice for you right now. None of this is written in stone. It's about finding out what works for you. Additionally, you could use the Graded Exposure skills outlined in Lesson 4 of the *SSO Wellbeing Course*.

## WEEKLY SELF-CARE PLAN

WEEK OF:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON THIS WEEK:

	S	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
<u>POSITIVE EMOTION:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>ENGAGEMENT:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>RELATIONSHIPS:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>MEANING:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>ACCOMPLISHMENT:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

HOW DID THE WEEK GO?





# Reflection

How has your understanding of self-care changed since reading this resource?

In what ways do you think incorporating self-care into your life will impact your overall wellness?



# Summary

## Self-care is...

- ✓ about taking care of your own needs and is not a selfish act, but rather essential for optimal functioning
- ✓ important in order to have the capacity to care for, and be there for, others
- ✓ living a value-driven life that incorporates culture and community
- ✓ about identifying your needs and making time to meet those needs
- ✓ doing the “little things” to care for yourself regularly and increase “protective” factors
- ✓ an investment that leads to increased resiliency and an ability to manage life’s stressors in a healthy way.

We hope this resource on self-care has helped you to gain new knowledge and has supported you on your wellness journey.

**Best wishes!**

**Dr. Heather Hadjistavropoulos and the PSPNET Families Team**



As a PSP Spouse said:

"When I can show up for myself and make sure my self-care is taken care of, I have more room to show up for others."





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