

The background of the cover is a light-colored wooden surface with a vertical grain. In the top left corner, there is a cluster of dried, brown leaves. Below them, a white book is partially visible. In the center, a white card with rounded corners holds a small, dried plant with green and brown buds. The title text is overlaid on a grey rectangular area on the left side of the cover.

THE MODERN GUIDE TO SELF-CARE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krysteena Stephens is a licensed therapist residing in Boise, Idaho. She is the sole owner and operator of her own therapy practice and serves her clientele through both in-person sessions and via telehealth within the state of Idaho. She graduated with an MA in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Marriage & Family therapy in 2012 and has been practicing in a variety of settings since that time. Krysteena works with individuals, couples, and families with an intention of reducing distress and conflict by improving relationships and building self-confidence. By providing support, validation, and thoughtful questioning, Krysteena aims to assist individuals in finding their own version of stability and happiness. Though Krysteena has worked with individuals from all walks of life, she particularly enjoys helping individuals and couples interested in relationship-building, enhancing communication, improving family interactions, or desiring assistance with life transitions

As a marriage & family therapist, Krysteena views people in the context of their relationships and believes that what we learned from our family of origin can predict how we will act or respond in our relationships -- whether they are friendships, work relationships, or romantic relationships. Krysteena strongly believes that therapy is for anyone who is interested in creating a healthy life and she enjoys assisting people in uncovering their strengths and facing their concerns with confidence.

In her free time, Krysteena loves spending time outdoors and enjoys hiking, gardening, camping, and backpacking. She also maintains a yoga and meditation practice, enjoys DIY projects for her home, and loves experimenting with food and creating healthy meals.



INTRODUCTION

The concept of self-care presented in this workbook may be different than what you have previously learned. The type of self-care I discuss in this workbook involves living life with an intention toward incorporating thoughts and feelings that nourish you. It involves exploring parts of yourself that you may not be completely familiar with, and using the knowledge you gain to create a more fulfilling life. Though this type of self-care can include both thoughts and activities, it does not need to include both. Hot bubble baths, long walks, and going to the gym are all great ways to implement self-care, though they are not the only ways to implement self-care. Throughout this book, you will learn modern ways to care for yourself that includes understanding your past and creating a healthy future. Self-care is more than a mud mask, it's about healing inner wounds and becoming your truest self.

Let's be honest, we lead busy lives! The thought of finding an additional hour per day to devote to a new activity can feel more daunting than nourishing at times. So, what exactly does it mean to practice self-care as an intention? How do we live a life that is nourishing without making a drastic change in our day-to-day responsibilities?

The goal of this workbook is to help answer these question through a series of brief worksheets with journal prompts, Q&A's and more. This workbook is all about implementing change through intentional thought processes, awareness in yourself, and a focus on living a life filled with joy and fulfillment. The chapters you are about to read are inspired by common themes I discuss with individuals nearly every day in my therapy practice. Chapters and exercises are succinct and solution-focused. This is not an in-depth look at the meaning of life and will probably not answer the question of, "should I stay in my relationship?" or "is now the time to switch careers?" However, this workbook is a starting point in moving toward an answer to those bigger life questions.

This workbook is intended to help you learn more about your unique needs, your desires for your life, and your personal values while helping you have greater respect for yourself, awareness of your thoughts and actions, and experience more meaningful connections with others. Please note that this workbook is not a substitute for actual therapy. If, after completing this workbook you find yourself wanting to go deeper on any of the topics, then finding a therapist is the next recommended step.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS WORKBOOK:

Each chapter will contain a brief introduction on the theme for that chapter ("Nourishing Yourself," "Identity," and "Relationships") and several exercises to assist in exploring that theme in your life. There are instructions for each exercise and space to write your answers directly on to the page. When you are ready to work on an exercise, you will need to print out the pages and answer the questions in the space provided. You may find that your thoughts and perceptions take up more space than what is provided, and that's OK! It may be helpful to have a blank notebook or journal with you while completing each exercise, should you want to elaborate on any of the questions. Though you do not need to complete each chapter in order, it is recommended to complete the exercises in each chapter in order as each exercise tends to build off the previous exercise.

It is my hope that the following information and exercises will provide you with education and realistic tools to help you cultivate more enjoyment and fulfillment in your day to day life. The goal of this workbook is to assist you in building confidence and providing greater assurance that you are living a life best suited for you. If you are someone who desires to learn more about yourself and wants to live a meaningful life, then this workbook is for you. Enjoy!

Disclaimer: This workbook was created by Krysteena Stephens, LPC, LAMFT, owner of Tree City Wellness, LLC. If you enjoy this workbook, the best way to compliment the author is to recommend it to others for purchase or leave a review. Please be kind and do not duplicate, share pages, sell, or claim ownership of any of the pages within this workbook. This workbook is to be used for education and entertainment only and is not intended to diagnose or treat any mental health conditions. This workbook is not a substitute for therapy with a licensed mental health professional.

A woman is shown from behind, kneeling on a dark, textured floor. She is in a yoga pose with her hands pressed together above her head, fingers pointing upwards. She is wearing a reddish-orange sports bra and grey leggings. Her hair is tied up in a bun, and she has a white headband. To her left is a potted snake plant with green and yellow variegated leaves. To her right is a small black incense burner with a few sticks of incense. The background is a dark, textured wall. The overall mood is calm and focused.

CHAPTER 1: NOURISHING YOURSELF

TUNING IN TO YOU

NOURISHING YOURSELF

In nearly all of my first sessions with new clients I ask the question: "What do you do for yourself?" Some people are able to answer this question relatively easily. They respond with, "I'm in a book club that meets once per month," or "I like to mountain bike on Saturdays." Though many others are stumped by this question. They think, "I have a full-time job and two children. I haven't been to the gym in months, and it took me 2 years of thinking about going to therapy before actually committing because finding an extra hour per week for sessions seemed impossible." What scenario can you relate more to?

The phrase self-care is trending in our society. We are well aware that doing things for ourselves is important, and now we have cosmetic, fitness, and clothing brands telling us how to do it. We start to think, "If I can dedicate 30 minutes to physical activity 3 days per week I will feel so much better about myself and have more confidence in myself." Or perhaps, "I'm going to cut out all processed sugars in my diet and lose weight!" Though both options may be good ideas, many people will find that they are all-in with this new behavior for several weeks, then suddenly fall out of the new behavior. Eventually, the self-care behavior sneaks off the priority list because your child joins a new sport or your boss asks you to take on a new project at work. How do we stay consistent with keeping our needs at the top of our priority list amidst a busy life? If we know self-care is important, why is it so hard to incorporate it in to our lives on a regular basis?

Throughout this book, you will become familiar with a new definition of self-care that is often discussed in the therapy world, though is not often reiterated through ads on television or social media. Self-care is anything - literally anything - that inspires a feeling of nourishment or fulfillment for your life and involves a mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical component. Self-care as an intention works just as well as self-care as a physical activity. Reading this workbook can be considered self-care. Walking to work and taking a moment to notice the color of the sky or smell a beautiful flower can be considered self-care. Learning more about yourself is self-care. When you think of self-care in this context, does it expand the options of how to incorporate self-care activities in your life? I hope so.

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When asking the question of "what do you do for yourself," one client responded with, "I really like to take my time walking through Target. I feel like I am always in such a rush that I haven't allowed myself that pleasure in a long time." A different client said that he uses a short break in his workday to sit in his car, set a timer for 5 minutes, and listen to relaxing music before going back to his office. Another client enjoys listening to an audiobook while cleaning the house, while another likes to write affirmations on a sticky note to place on her bathroom mirror. That way, whenever she is in the bathroom she can easily remind herself of all the wonderful qualities she possesses.

In order to add a greater feeling of fulfillment in your life, you first need to know what fills your feel-good cup. In the pages that follow, I provide exercises intended to help you uncover this idea and put a realistic, nourishing self-care plan in to action. As you go through the exercises, it is important to focus on ***tuning in to you***. How do you feel while engaging in the exercise? How do you feel after completing the exercise? Is the exercise something that resonates with you or creates an interest in learning about further? Is the time allotted for the self-care idea realistic to incorporate in your daily or weekly life? The more realistic you can be with yourself, the greater the potential of sticking to a new routine or thought process.

If you know that you are someone who goes all-in then falls all-out of a new habit, then start smaller. Additionally, try asking someone to hold you accountable to this new habit like a friend, colleague, or partner. Talk to others about what you are doing and why. Make this part of the new YOU; A new lifestyle devoted to acknowledging your needs as a priority in addition to the one-hundred other responsibilities you tend to every day. Cultivating nourishment and fulfillment is a lifestyle change, not a quick fix, and there may be bumps along the road. Most importantly, have patience with yourself - you're growing in to a new you!

CHAPTER 1: NOURISHING YOURSELF

EXERCISE 1: FINDING YOUR VERSION OF SELF-CARE

Do you ever find yourself going through the events of your day then all of the sudden notice a little endorphin boost of and a feeling of happiness or contentment run through your body? Maybe it was something planned like a workout class -- or perhaps it was an unexpected smile from someone, a funny thought that crossed your mind, a tasty bite of food, 5 minutes of silence, or a gentle touch from a loved one. It could also be the feeling of the warmth from the sun, a beautiful flower, or the feeling of your feet touching bare grass. What was that *thing* that promoted a momentary feeling of joy for you? Of all the people and places and things that you come across in life, what sparks something in you? We don't always notice these tiny moments. In fact, we may rarely notice them, or we notice and quickly forget them to move on to the next thing.

Over the next couple of days, practice *tuning in to you*, and search for these little moments of joy, peace or contentment. Write down everything you experience below:

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EXERCISE 1: FINDING YOUR VERSION SELF-CARE

Review your written list on the previous page, pick two or three moments that you wrote down, and answer the following:

1. What were you doing just before the moment occurred?

2. What did you do just after the moment occurred?

3. Was anyone with you or were you by yourself?

4. Was there anything else unique or special about this day? For example, were you traveling, was it the weekend, were you attending an event, etc? Or was it a fairly average day for you?

5. Is there a theme among the moments you wrote down? For example, was it around the same time of day, in a similar location, around the same person/people, etc? If so, what is the theme?

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EXERCISE 1: FINDING YOUR VERSION OF SELF-CARE

In your responses, are you noticing any themes in regards to what brings you joy? How do you recharge? What helps you feel content? How do you cultivate a those feelings? What truly brings you happiness in your day-to-day life?

Based on your responses above, circle all of the words below that bring you a feeling of joy or "fills your cup":

social events	physical activity	listening
time with family	arts and/or culture	learning something new
being in nature	time alone	using your hands
fantasy/imagination	meeting people	talking
looking at something	food or drink related	involving music
physical touch	relaxing/meditative	productive
teaching something	cleaning/organizing	creative
involving technology	time with pets/animals	dancing/physical expression
laughter/humor	involves smell(s)	child-like or with children
nostalgic	thoughtful	quiet

Other: _____

Now that we know a little more about what fills your cup, think about how you can incorporate ONE similar type of moment in to your life MORE? Write down ideas below.

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EXERCISE 2: PRACTICING SELF-LOVE

A huge component of nourishing yourself involves loving yourself. If you don't like to spend time in your own company, how can you really enjoy all the benefits that a lifestyle with you as a priority can bring? Self-love is a life-long journey and one that is not easily learned... at first. However, once you acquire a good foundation and incorporate the practice of self-love in to your regular routine, the road becomes much smoother.

The next set of exercises involves activities intended to shift your focus toward greater gratitude and appreciation of yourself and encourage positive self-talk. If you find, at any point, that your negative voice is overpowering your ability to find a positive response to any question, then make something up! Sometimes positive self-talk starts with a rough idea that may be difficult for us to believe about our self. If we have spent the majority of our lives telling ourselves a negative story about who we are, it can be challenging to turn the story around in to something we actually believe. In the case of recreating our self-love story, ***practice makes progress, not perfection.*** By writing something down - anything down - and putting a thought out there, we are opening the door to a new way of thinking.

In the questions that follow, do not leave any spot blank. I encourage you to really push yourself, even if the thought that comes to your head is challenging for you to believe at first. If you find benefit from completing the following exercise, it can easily be replicated in journal format and may be a beneficial to incorporate into your daily self-care plan.

CHAPTER 1: NOURISHING YOURSELF

EXERCISE 2: PRACTICING SELF-LOVE

DAY 1:

- 3 THINGS THAT MADE ME FEEL PROUD TODAY:
- 2 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF:
- 1 THOUGHTFUL THING I DID FOR SOMEONE ELSE:

DAY 2:

- 2 REASONS WHY I AM A PERSON WORTH KNOWING:
- 2 OF MY PERSONAL STRENGTHS:
- 1 WAY I SHOWED EMPATHY TODAY:

DAY 3:

- 1 NEW THING I TRIED TODAY:
- 2 PEOPLE THAT SUPPORT ME:
- 3 THINGS I AM WORKING ON FOR MYSELF:

DAY 4:

- 2 WAYS I CONTRIBUTE TO MY JOB OR FAMILY:
- 1 SKILL I HAVE BEEN LEARNING RECENTLY:
- 2 MOMENTS WHEN I SMILED TODAY:

DAY 5:

- 3 WAYS I SHOWED MYSELF COMPASSION/LOVE TODAY:
- 2 THINGS I LOVE ABOUT MY LIFE:
- 1 PERSON I SUPPORT:

CHAPTER 1: NOURISHING YOURSELF

EXERCISE 2: PRACTICING SELF-LOVE

DAY 6:

- 1 THING I DID TODAY THAT WAS FUN:
- 2 POSITIVE THOUGHTS I HAD TODAY:
- 1 PERSON WHO I CHEERED UP TODAY:

DAY 7:

- 1 THING I LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF TODAY:
- 2 EXCITING MOMENTS I EXPERIENCED LATELY:
- 3 THINGS THAT MAKE ME FEEL CONFIDENT:

Congratulations! You completed a week of gratitude journaling! What was this experience like for you? Were some questions easy to answer and others more difficult? Why or why not?

If you found any benefit to gratitude journaling, I encourage you to continue practicing and make it a part of your regular routine. There are many resources on the internet devoted to gratitude journaling if you prefer daily prompts opposed to free writing.

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EXERCISE 3: AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are positive phrases intended to challenge our way of thinking in order to reframe negative thoughts to positive thoughts. They are a simple way to encourage us to use more adaptable, positive thinking patterns. Sometimes our brains can hyper-focus on negative messages that result in feelings of low self-worth. By adding in positive affirmations, we reduce the power of the negative messages and they appear less in our thoughts.

Affirmations can help boost our self-esteem and reduce feelings related to anxiety or depression. In order for affirmations to be the most effective, there are a few things to consider when creating an affirmation:

1. They are written positively and in the present tense.

Ex: Instead of "I am glad I no longer lazy,"
say ***"I am confident I can do hard things."***

2. They are related to things in your life that are important to you and your personal values (See Chapter 2 for more information on identifying values).

Ex: ***"I grow strong and resilient every day,"*** (if strength and resiliency are important to you). For example, If your job is not an important element of your life, you would not want to say, "I am a good employee and I contribute to my job."

3. They highlight strengths that you have and/or would like to increase.

Ex: ***"I am creative, loving, and kind,"*** or ***"I am a good mother, partner, and friend."***

Creating affirmations for yourself may feel odd at first. After all, most of us are not conditioned to give ourselves praise regularly. However, over time and with practice, they will become easier and more natural to incorporate in your life. They will begin to create a new story of a more confident, content, adaptable, and positive you. On the next page, you will have a chance to practice creating your own affirmations.

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EXERCISE 3: AFFIRMATIONS

Below is a list of possible affirmation topics that you may want to explore. These are merely suggestions and examples to help you get started. Choose an area if it is relevant to you or skip it if it is not. Remember - an effective affirmation is one that connects to your core values and that is important to YOU. Aim to create at least 5 affirmations.

Positive Affirmations:

Ex: "I am happy and content with my life."

Affirmations for Self-Image:

Ex: "I am confident with my body that nourishes me."

Affirmations for Decision-Making:

Ex: "I am intentional and thoughtful in my decision-making for myself and my family."

Affirmations for Feelings of Anxiety:

Ex: "I am in control of how my thoughts effect me."

Affirmations for Feelings of Depression:

Ex: "I believe in myself and am making progress toward my goals every day."

Affirmations Related to a Job/Career:

Ex: "I am good at what I do and am proud of the hard work I put in to it."

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EXERCISE 3: AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations Related to Family:

Ex: "I show up as the best partner/parent/child I can be and that is good enough."

Affirmations for a Life Event or Transition:

Ex: "I am resilient and grow through every challenge."

Affirmations for Relaxation:

Ex: "I am calm, relaxed, safe, and completely at ease."

Affirmations for Fear:

Ex: "I am strong, powerful, and brave."

Affirmations for School:

Ex: "I enjoy learning and can accomplish whatever I put my mind to."

Other Affirmations:

Once you have written down a handful of affirmations, write them in a journal that you keep on your nightstand or post up with sticky-notes in various locations throughout your home or office. You can also write them in your phone and set a reminder to read them at least once per day or say them out loud to yourself when you're stuck at a red light in your car. Whatever way you decide to incorporate these affirmations in to your life, make sure you are consistently revisiting them as a reminder of all the amazing parts of you!

CHAPTER 1: NOURISHING YOURSELF

IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, AND FEELINGS

Emotions are an intricate and complex component of all of our lives. In our society we, unfortunately, do not place enough emphasis on understanding and managing our emotions in a healthy way. Emotions are often accompanied by automatic thoughts, which then result in the awareness and expression of a feeling.

We begin to feel and express emotions immediately as newborns, such as when we cry as we first experience the cold, unfamiliar world outside of our mothers womb. It then takes several years before our brain develops the capacity to begin to understand what emotions truly are and how to manage our feelings. As children, through watching and learning from others (primarily our caregivers), we begin to understand what to do with our emotions when they surface. For example, we may learn to express our feelings or hide them. We may learn to label feelings and accept them, or we may learn to avoid acknowledging them altogether. The brain is a complex organ and the intricacies in the anatomy of each person's brain are unique. Though there is still much to learn, we do know a few things about how emotions, thoughts, and feelings play a role in our brain.

Place your hand in a fist with your thumb against your palm, and wrap your other four fingers over your thumb. Pretend that this fist is your brain: Your thumb is the amygdala, a component of the limbic system where you process emotions and store memories. The other four fingers create the cortex of the brain where most of your thinking and planning occur. Your fingernails represent the prefrontal cortex, or what I like to call the "yield" section of your brain. The prefrontal cortex has the ability to slow down the automatic emotional alarms that your amygdala fires off. It can then break down and process the message from the alarm and decide how to appropriately proceed. If your amygdala sends a message that says "there is a serious threat and we need to act now!" while your prefrontal cortex, responds with, "that is not a real-threat, it's just stress from sitting in traffic," it can dictate how your concurrent thoughts and feelings are expressed. For example, if your prefrontal cortex is well-developed, you may take a deep breath and shift your focus back to the podcast you were listening to while you wait out the traffic. If your prefrontal cortex is not well-developed (because of past experience/childhood, trauma, brain injury, or a number of other factors) you may yell, cry, start sweating, swear, hit your steering wheel, yell at the car next to you, ruminate on negative

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thoughts, or any other number of emotionally reactive responses.

When a person feels emotionally dysregulated, it is typically the messages firing from their amygdala that are the culprit. Most people do not have a naturally well-developed prefrontal cortex; it is similar to a muscle that needs to be trained to endure greater and greater loads. The prefrontal cortex is one of the last parts of our brain to fully mature, a concept that explains why children and teens tend to show greater impulsivity, less ability to think about situations in a rational way, difficulty planning for the future, and express larger displays of their emotions. Their brain simply does not have the capacity to operate successfully at these higher levels of functioning yet. Furthermore, as a child, if a person lived in an environment where it was difficult to feel safe and supported, their brain learned to use its alarm system (the amygdala) more often and it overpowered the need to further develop the prefrontal cortex. You may have also heard of this concept as activation of our "fight or flight" system in our brain and the hypersensitive, overactive system can travel with us in to adulthood.

Though it may seem daunting, it is entirely possible to grow and expand the neural networks in your prefrontal cortex in order to become more in control of the automatic thoughts and emotions that fire (and sometimes misfire). The brain is like a muscle that requires training. Practicing both preventative skills as well as in-the-moment skills are important to better understanding and managing our thoughts and feelings in our everyday lives. Becoming skilled at emotional regulation is a way to practice self-care as it can increase feelings of happiness, contentment, and stability. It also contributes to greater feelings of confidence and more successful relationships with others. Awareness of our emotions, thoughts, and feelings is a beneficial skill for anyone's mental health toolbox.

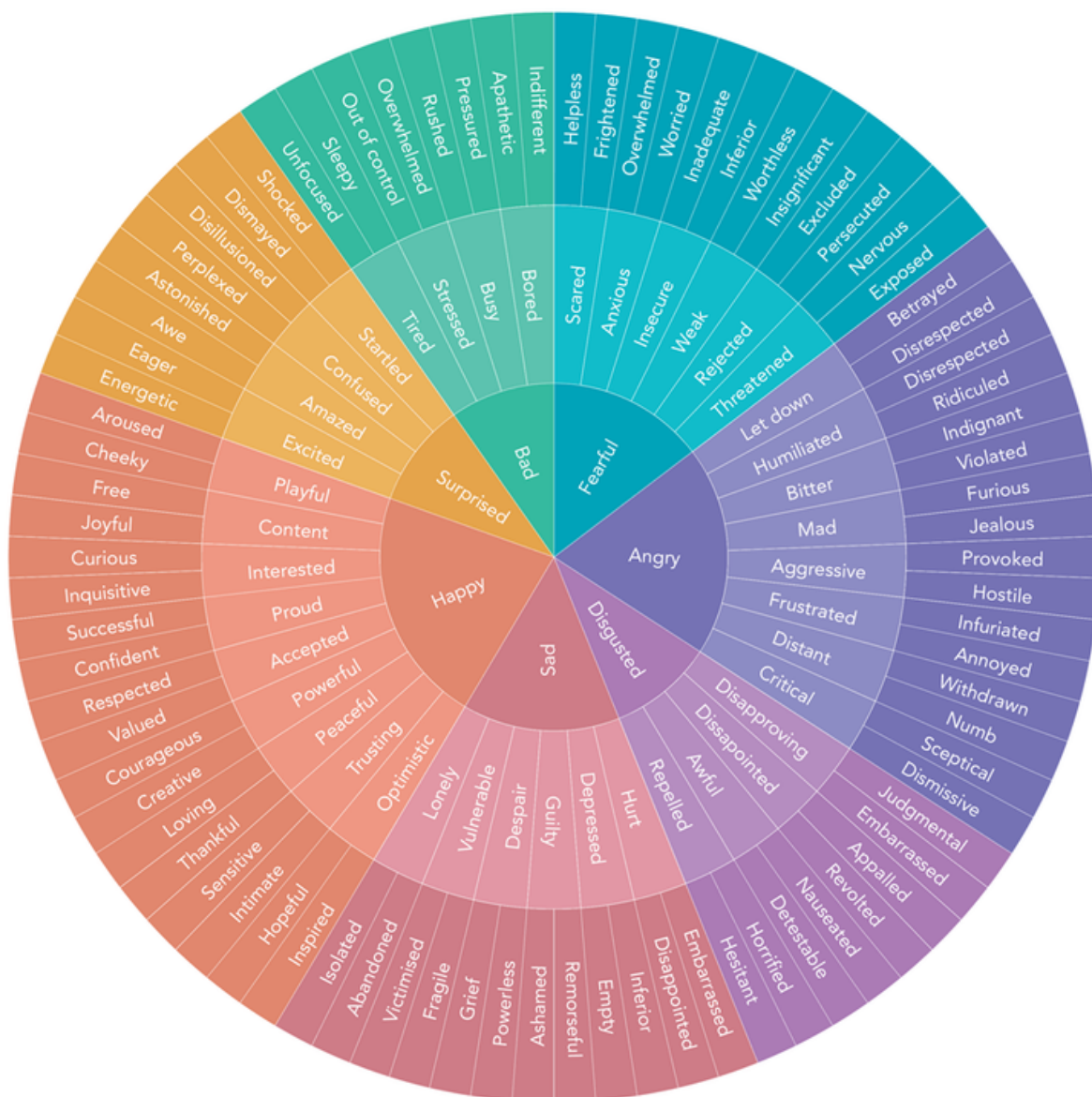
The next set of exercises will teach you to first focus on growing increased awareness of your emotions and the thoughts that often accompany emotions. Then, you will learn and practice skills intended to manage your thoughts and feelings in order to feel more in control of how they impact your life. By incorporating emotional awareness and emotional regulation as a normal part of your routine, you may begin to feel more balanced, more calm, more at ease, and better equipped to handle the many unpredictable stressors of everyday life.

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EXERCISE 4: MOOD DIARY

Aim to answer the questions and fill in the boxes on the next page at least once per day for at least one week (you can also track your mood more than once per day if you like). You may want to reference the feeling wheel below if you are having trouble coming up with a mood/feeling on any given day.

At this point, try not to do anything with the mood or thoughts that you identify. Do not judge yourself, do not try to change it, do not analyze it -- simply write it down and acknowledge what you are feeling and thinking each day. If you notice that one day this exercise seems simple and the next day it feels challenging, that's ok. Notice those feelings and redirect your attention back toward completing the task.



1. Willcox G. The Feeling Wheel: A Tool for Expanding Awareness of Emotions and Increasing Spontaneity and Intimacy. Transactional Analysis Journal. 1982;12(4):274-276. doi:10.1177/036215378201200411

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EXERCISE 4: MOOD DIARY

DAY, DATE, TIME	MOOD/ FEELING	SITUATION/EVENT (anyone or anything contribute to mood?)	ANY ASSOCIATED THOUGHTS WITH EMOTION/MOOD?
<i>Ex: Fri 1/1/21 5:35pm</i>	<i>stressed</i>	<i>was assigned a new project at work today</i>	<i>"Can I complete this on time? Will I do a good job at it?"</i>

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EXERCISE 5: PRACTICING EXPANSION

Expansion involves making room for and sitting with difficult feelings. It encourages acceptance of emotions rather than finding things to distract yourself or get rid of the emotion. When you try to use tactics to avoid, distract, or get rid of painful or difficult feelings, they tend to hang around longer and resurface in the future. If you can acknowledge, expand, and accept your emotions, they will only stay for a brief time then float by without sticking with you.

Over the next few days, when you notice a difficult feeling surface, document it in the mood diary below, then write down what tactics you may typically use to get rid of or *defuse* the feeling. Then, instead of defusing, try to practice expansion by sitting with the feeling and practice removing any judgement you may have toward the feeling. ***Use the "Expansion and Acceptance Guide" on the next page for assistance.***

DAY, DATE, TIME	UNPLEASANT EMOTION	HOW I TRIED TO AVOID, ESCAPE, OR DISTRACT FROM EMOTION	HOW I TRIED TO EXPAND AND ACCEPT THE UNPLEASANT EMOTION
Ex: Fri 1/1/21 5:35pm	Loneliness	wanted to drink, blame myself, overanalyze, start an argument	set a timer for 5 minutes, practiced deep breathing, told myself it was ok to feel lonely right now

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EXPANSION AND ACCEPTANCE GUIDE

- **Find the feeling in your body:** Perform a body scan and identify where you feel tension, stress, pain, discomfort, or anything else. Imagine the feeling sitting in this part of your body and notice what it does. Does it shift or squirm? Is it light or heavy? Does it have a shape or structure? Focus on the image of the feeling in your body while taking slow, deep breaths.
- **Get curious with your feelings:** Imagine the feeling as something you want to know more about. Ask it questions. Where is it from? Why is it visiting you? What does it look like? Be as creative as you can, though try to keep the questions detached from yourself. For example, if you ask guilt why it is visiting you, do not answer with, "because I am a horrible person." Try to think of something less-personal such as, "guilt is just passing through town today."
- **Be present with your breath:** Set a timer for 5 - 10 minutes and close your eyes. Practice taking long, deep, slow breaths and focus on each breath flowing in and out of your body. You will likely also notice thoughts surfacing during this exercise. When you notice a thought, acknowledge the thought, then turn your attention back toward your breath. Redirect as many times as you need to during this exercise. Do not judge yourself if you struggle to stay focused on your breath. ***Practice makes progress, not perfection.***
- **Imagine spending quality time with your feeling:** Imagine sitting together on a park bench, listening to the birds sing; Imagine walking together on the beach; Imagine sharing a meal together. Imagine becoming friends. Again, be as creative as you want with this exercise.
- **Color your feeling:** Use whatever medium you like - paint, pen, crayon, marker, paper, canvas, etc., and draw your feeling. Notice what color or colors you use, notice the shape and size of your feeling. You do not need to be an artist or to even draw something that 'makes sense.' This is all about you and your expression of your feelings.
- **Repeat a feeling mantra:** Remind yourself of what you are feeling and that it is ok to feel it. For example, "I feel sad and I accept that I feel sad because it is ok to feel sad." Come up with your own mantra that works for you, then repeat it out loud, repeat it in your mind, or write it down over and over on paper.
- **Imagine making physical space in your body for the feeling:** Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Imagine the feeling resting in your abdomen. With each breath, imagine increasing the space around the feeling in your body. Picture your lungs and ribs expanding with each inhale, allowing more and more space. Know that the feeling will never take up more space than what your body can provide. Practice this for 10-15 breaths.

A minimalist interior scene. In the center, a light-colored wooden stool with three legs holds a black pot of a lush green ivy plant. Above the stool, a modern pendant light with a wooden, dome-shaped shade hangs from a thin cord. To the right, a large, empty, light-colored wooden frame leans against a plain white wall. The floor is made of light-colored wood planks. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and natural.

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY

WHO AM I, REALLY ?

IDENTITY

Imagine yourself as a blank slate: There are no restrictions, no barriers, and no limits to what you can become. Who are you? How would you describe yourself? What do you stand for or believe in? What or who do you connect with? What areas of your life are emphasized? How do you want others to see you? How do you want to see yourself?

The concept of identity contains parts of the self that are both inherent and acquired. There are aspects about a person's identity that cannot be changed such as race, where a person is born, and biological family members. There are other parts of identity that are more fluid, including what language(s) a person speaks, where a person chooses to live, religious beliefs and practices, culture, gender expression, career, and others. A multitude of changeable parts can make understanding the wholeness of one's identity quite challenging.

Issues with identity are at the heart of many psychological concerns and may lead to depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship issues, and many other concerns. Understanding who we are is of the utmost importance for good mental health, yet understanding all of the parts of our identity is nearly impossible. How exactly do we define such a broad concept that lies within the deepest part of who we are? Uncovering our true identity is akin to putting together pieces of a puzzle. It may initially look like a scattered mess of odd shapes and colors, but as each piece snaps satisfyingly together, a clear picture begins to form. When the picture emerges, it evokes a sense of wholeness and confidence that we desire to share with the world.

When a new individual enters into my therapy practice, I first work toward understanding their story: the narrative of their life that has shaped them up to this point. I gather information through a series of questions presented on an intake form, then seek further clarification through an in-person interview, which occurs during the first few sessions in my office. These first few information-gathering sessions help uncover the question of: "who is this person and how do we

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY

create goals for therapy that align with what they want out of life?" Together, we identify individual strengths, likes and dislikes, areas of growth, areas where they feel stuck, and how they present to the world.

The following section is intended to replicate this process in a do-it-yourself kind of way. You will be asked to identify both the inherent and acquired parts of your identity. Through a series of additional exercises, you will be encouraged to further analyze parts of yourself in an effort to understand your identity on a deeper level. Ideally, through these exercises you will obtain a clearer picture of who you are and whether you are living your life in accordance with who you want to be. While you are completing the exercises remember to check in with yourself often. Ask yourself questions such as, "Did I know this about myself? Are there any inconsistencies with who I think I am and how I present to others? Do my answers feel authentic and genuine? Is there a part of me where I desire to dig deeper and learn more? How does self-esteem play a role in my thoughts and perception of who I am?"

It is important to try not to become stuck on any one part of the following exercises. In order to keep responses as authentic as possible, try to go with your gut feeling and answer questions relatively quickly. If you find yourself stuck on a question or exercise for an extended period of time, take it as a sign to take a break in the exercise and return to it later. It may also help to pause for a moment, close your eyes, and take 4 or 5 deep breaths to re-center yourself before continuing. There are no wrong answers! This is all about you and what is true for you and your life. Answer honestly and most importantly - have fun!

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EXERCISE 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR STORY

Answer the questions below related to your inherent and acquired identity traits. Identify how relevant or important this information related to your identity is to you using the following scale:

When thinking about your identity, how relevant is this piece of information about your identity to you? **Write your number in the boxes on the right-hand column.**

1 = not relevant at all **2** = somewhat irrelevant **3** = neutral/unsure **4** = somewhat relevant **5** = very relevant

Where were you born?	
Who are your parents?	
Do you have any siblings?	
Highest grade completed/degree awarded?	
Primary language(s) spoken at home?	
Race/ethnicity?	
Where do you live now?	
Do you identify with a religion or spirituality? Are you currently practicing or non-practicing?	
Who lives in your house with you?	
What do you do for work?	
Marital/Partner status?	
Gender identity?	
Sexual orientation?	
Are you a member of any clubs/groups/organizations either social, spiritual, academic, vocational, or other?	
Do you have any mental health or physical health diagnoses?	

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY

EXERCISE 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR STORY

Are there any mental health or physical health diagnosis in your family?	
Have you ever struggled with addiction or dependence on drugs or alcohol ?	
Does anyone in your family struggle with addiction/dependency issues?	
Do you have any military experience either for yourself or with a close family member?	
Do you have many friends, few friends, acquaintances, or other?	
Do you have any legal concerns either currently or in your history?	
Are your parents still together? Divorced? Remarried? Other?	
Who do you consider your close family? This can be biological or non biological.	

Look back and review your answers again. Pay particular attention to the numbers you wrote down in the right hand column.

Answer the next set of questions based on your responses and numbered ratings. Remember - there are no right or wrong answers here, only your perceptions.

1. Were any of the questions difficult for you to answer? If so, which ones and why?

2. In reviewing your scores placed in the right-hand column: Were any of the scores lower or higher than what you expected? If so, which ones and why?

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY

EXERCISE 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR STORY

3. Would you like for any of the scores to be lower or higher than what you wrote down?
4. Notice your highest scoring questions: What parts of your identity are the most relevant to you?
5. If you were to ask your friends and/or family, would they agree that the highest scored parts of your identity are most important to you? Why or why not?
6. Are there parts of your identity that you feel the need to hide? If so, explain why?
7. Is there a part of your identity that you feel a lack of control in and wish you could change? If so, explain why?
8. When you were a child, how did you imagine yourself as an adult? Does your life today match up with who you thought you would be? How do you feel about that? Write your thoughts below.
9. Is there a part of your identity that was not listed on the previous pages that is important to you? Describe:

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EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFYING PERSONAL VALUES

We all have a personal value system within us. We place greater emphasis on certain areas of our lives because they are more meaningful and thus more important to us. Typically, if we feel dissatisfied somewhere in our life, it often means we are not living fully in line with that value. Assessing and understanding our values can help us feel more aligned and balanced in life. Understanding our personal values can also aid in how we prioritize areas of our life, help us choose a partner, guide us in how we raise our children, assist in choosing a career path, and much more.

In the second column below, write a few words or phrases that describe what the listed value means to you. Is it relevant or not relevant (if it is not relevant, you can skip it and move on to the next box)? What is your ideal situation for that area of your life? What do you want to cultivate for yourself in regards to the value area?

In the third column, rate how important that value is to you, with 0 being not at all important and 10 being very important. It's OK to have several boxes with the same number. In the 4th column, rate how effectively you are currently living by that value right now in your life.

Value / Area of Life	Key words or phrases about this value and why it is important or meaningful to you	How important? 0-10	How Effectively Living? 0-10
Career / Education			
Personal Growth / Development			
Health / Well-being			
Home / Family			
Romantic Relationships			
Social Supports			

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EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFYING PERSONAL VALUES

Value / Area of Life	Key words or phrases about this value and why it is important or meaningful to you	How important? 0-10	How Effectively Living? 0-10
Community			
Finances			
Spirituality / Religion			
Culture			
Leisure / Self-care			
Creativity / Self-Expression			

Review your responses and pay particular attention to columns 3 and 4. Are there any values that you are not living in line with? Is there an area of your life that you have been neglecting that is actually meaningful to you? Is there anything that you need to re-prioritize in your life? In what ways can you make adjustments so that you are living more in line with your personal values? Write out your thoughts below:

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EXERCISE 3: LOOKING DEEPER

The next exercise requires some creativity and imagination. When completing this exercise, focus on taking your internal guard down and following whatever comes to mind. If you are having trouble completing any part of the exercise, try taking a moment to close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in attempt to ground yourself. It may also help to be in a quiet area without disruption. Once you feel like you are in a calm, open state of mind, come back to the exercise and continue.

Review the following 8 photos and pick one that stands out to you the most. It may be the photo you enjoy the most or feel the most connected to. You may immediately feel as if the photo has some significance in your life or no significance at all - just pick whatever image stands out for you. Remember - there is no right or wrong answer here. It is all about your perception and what your subconscious brain is attracted to in this moment in time.

Do not look ahead until you have solidified a choice for your photo!

When you are ready, begin to view the next page and the 8 photos that follow.

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CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY



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CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY



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EXERCISE 3: LOOKING DEEPER

Have you chosen a photo? If so, you may continue on to the questions below. If not, revisit the photos and find the one that stands out to you the most before reading the questions below.

1. Close your eyes for a moment and recreate an image of the photo you chose in your mind. Once you have a clear view of the photo image in your mind, imagine you are located somewhere within the photo.

Where do you see yourself in the photo that you chose? Write it down in detail below:

2. Close your eyes again for a moment and continue to imagine yourself somewhere within the photo. Can you hear anything? Smell anything? Feel anything? Taste anything? Can you see anything in more detail than what the photo provides? Write down any sensations that you notice in detail:

3. Close your eyes and bring up the image in your mind again. Are you alone or is someone with you? How do you feel either being by yourself or within the company of another(s)?

4. Take a moment to ask yourself why this particular photo stood out to you. Did it spark a certain feeling when you looked at it? Did it bring up a memory? Does it remind you of somewhere or someone? Was there a component of the photo that you liked or disliked? Describe:

5. Think about your answers to the previous exercise in relation to your identity and scaling parts of your identity that are most and least relevant to you. Do your reflections from this exercise relate to any of your responses or scores in the previous exercises? Comment on whether you notice any relation or not below:

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EXERCISE 4: CREATING THE FUTURE YOU

Imagine it is 10 years from now and you are at a party with all of your closest family and friends. Someone close to you in your life (you choose who this person is) is going to give a speech about you and your accomplishment(s).

Your accomplishment(s) can be anything. It may be an award, a project, career achievement, transition in to a new life stage, a hobby, an adventure -- the sky is the limit in what you consider an accomplishment.

If it helps, feel free to take a few moments to close your eyes and imagine all of the details of this scene. Create an environment in your mind where you feel supported, loved, and cherished. The attendees are here to celebrate you and only you for the amazing person that you are. When you feel ready, answer the questions below.

In 10 years, what do you wish for the person giving the speech to say about you? Write down their speech below:

In reviewing their speech, how does it make you feel? Is any part of the speech true for your life right now? Does this future life seem attainable? If it does not seem attainable, what is one small step you can take toward creating the ideal future you?

A romantic couple is silhouetted against a large window. The man, on the left, is wearing a dark t-shirt and has his arms around the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing a dark top and light-colored shorts, with her hand resting on the man's shoulder. They are looking at each other in a close embrace. Outside the window, a cityscape with several high-rise buildings is visible under a clear blue sky. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is intimate and affectionate.

CHAPTER 3: RELATIONSHIPS

WHY WE LIVE TO LOVE

RELATIONSHIPS

Humans are highly social beings and relationships of all types have long been the cornerstone of human life. The history of the human species highlights large groups of people living and congregating together, where each person fell in to a role to contribute toward the total functioning of their community. Until just a few generations ago, it was common practice for immediate and extended families to live either in the same home or very near to one another. Families would work together, engage with each other's households, participate in childcare, share rooms together, cook together, and support each other on a variety of other levels. In today's modern Western world we have become incredibly mobile and independent. Young adults move away from their parents to attend college, while others move for job opportunities or other financial incentives. People may also move locations simply because they want to -- they may believe another environment to be more appealing to their interests or their values and how they desire to live their life.

Though there are several positive aspects of the increased mobility we now have access to, including the ability to continue to communicate with friends and loved ones via technology, it is important to note that the basic human need for community support and connection does not disappear. We still require a community of people to assist in meeting all of our needs. Friends, family, colleagues, peers, and romantic partners may all serve a different purpose in successfully filling up our social supports cup. However, what tends to happen is a reduction in community supports and an increased emphasis on support from our romantic partner. This often turns in to an expectation for our partner alone to meet **all of these needs** -- a request that is often quite challenging.

The idea of our romantic partners being our "everything" is engrained in our brains through several sources, though the most prominent is the portrayal of relationships in the media: film, television, music, books, or magazines, and these messages are reiterated throughout society. Open any popular magazine and you're bound to find an article related to finding "The One." Dating apps such as Tinder

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and Hinge have a reported 50+ million users worldwide. We watch movies about relationships, we listen to songs about relationships, and we read books about relationships, though with all of this information on love inundating our world, there are very few sources teaching us how to have healthy relationships. Furthermore, the information we consume from these sources rarely highlight the importance of healthy friendships in addition to healthy romantic relationships. Though the idea of our partner fulfilling all of our needs may sound nice, it is not a realistic request to ask from someone. Think about it: we are asking for our romantic partner to be our lover, our best friend, our partner-in-crime, our co-parent, our motivator, our rock, or our reason for living -- those are a lot of roles for one person to play! The truth is, we are all human and we cannot be everything to everyone all of the time.

Much of the work I perform with couples in my therapy practice is aimed toward understanding each person's relationship patterns and how they contribute to the relationship to either support a healthy connection or hinder it. Sometimes that means pulling people slightly away from each other in order to learn how to successfully come back together. The idea of pulling away may seem somewhat foreign to what you are accustomed to. However, as you hopefully have learned through the exercises in previous chapters, there is much power to be gained in truly understanding and caring for yourself as a part of the basic foundation of your life. By understanding and caring for yourself, you will be able to show up fully for others, including your partner and other family members.

The exercises that follow are derived from well researched relationship-based theories including Attachment Theory, Emotionally-Focused Couples Therapy, and the Gottman's Method of relationships. If the following exercises resonate with you, I encourage you to explore the "Resources" section for further study on these theories. The following exercises may be completed either individually or with a partner. If you are single, think about a previous relationship in order to answer the questions.

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EXERCISE 1: ATTACHMENT STYLES

The term attachment in psychology was coined in the late 1950's by a psychoanalyst named John Bowlby. He discovered this theory by primarily studying the interactions between babies and their caregivers (most often the mothers) and noticing the subtle cues that babies and caregivers gave to each other. When we are born, we are solely dependent on someone to care for us and we look to that person for all of our needs: food, shelter, comfort, love, warmth, safety, protection, and more. He was interested in how in-tune the mothers were with their young babies; Did they comfort their child when they needed comforting while also giving their child space when they needed it? Did they hover over their child and prevent them from exploring their new world? Was there any abuse or trauma? Or did they ignore their child's cries for attention and affection altogether? Bowlby believed that these initial moments in a person's life could dictate how they respond to relationships throughout the child's future.

In the years that followed, other research developed to expand the idea of attachment theory to adult romantic relationships. Three primary insecure attachment styles were developed: anxious attachment, disorganized attachment, and avoidant attachment. Today, attachment theory has become the foundation of several other theories that assist in explaining and treating concerns related to all types of relationships, response to traumatic events, and some mental health diagnosis. Though those initial moments in life are still critical in regards to an individual's development, we have learned that attachment styles are somewhat malleable and can adjust over time, primarily through psychological treatment, awareness, and engaging in healthier relationships than the ones we were raised in (if that is the case for you).

The following exercise further explain the three primary attachment styles in order for you to notice any similarities or traits you hold within yourself. Understanding your attachment style can assist in noticing and changing unhealthy patterns and triggers in your relationships while moving you closer to having a secure attachment style.

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EXERCISE 1: IDENTIFYING YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE

ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT

- Desires a lot of closeness in the relationship
- Fears of rejection/insecurities/jealousy
- Unfulfilled when not in a relationship
- Plays games to keep their partners attention (waiting to call/text, pursuing then ignoring)
- Difficulty expressing emotions clearly, expects partner to mind-read
- Overly preoccupied with the relationship

AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

- Greatly values independence
- Emphasizes rigid boundaries
- Uses physical and emotional distancing strategies
- Holds an unrealistic view of relationships (may constantly ponder if "something better is out there")
- Tends to avoid conflict
- Shuts down or walks away instead of sharing feelings

DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

- Includes traits from both anxious and avoidant attachment styles
- Typically experienced abuse and/or other traumas in childhood
- Feels fearful of getting close to others, particularly in romantic relationships, though still wants relationships
- Distrusts that any person can meet their needs
- Views partners as unpredictable and anticipates rejection

SECURE ATTACHMENT

- Communicates needs and feelings effectively
- Seeks compromise during conflict
- Unafraid of commitment or dependency on another person
- Desires closeness and security with partners
- Reliable and consistent
- Has a flexible view of relationships. Knows that relationships take work and are not perfect.

Review the primary traits in each of the boxes. Do you notice any similarities with how you tend to feel/respond in relationships? Having a secure attachment style is ideal - though individuals with other attachment styles can also have healthy relationships as long as they understand and acknowledge (and work toward changing) the maladaptive patterns that their attachment style holds. **Write your attachment style below:**

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EXERCISE 2: ATTACHMENT BELIEFS

The following exercise will encourage you to further explore your attachment style and assist in determining how it may have developed and how it may show up in your current relationship(s).

Answer the following questions by using a number 1-10, with 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "very much."

1. I feel confident that others will accept me for who I am: _____
2. I consider myself someone who is worthy of love and support: _____
3. I feel comfortable with my emotions and sharing them with others: _____
4. I feel comfortable asking others for help or sharing my needs: _____
5. I feel like my loved ones will be there for me if I need them: _____
6. I can be comfortable with conflict with others when necessary: _____
7. I think people are generally trustworthy: _____
8. I feel comfortable giving support and love to others: _____
9. I feel comfortable letting loved ones get close to me: _____
10. I feel comfortable with the idea of committing myself to a romantic partner: _____

Review your answers to the above questions, then review the traits of the attachment styles again on the previous page. Do your numbers align with the traits of the attachment style you chose for yourself? How so? Write your response and any thoughts below:

CHAPTER 3: RELATIONSHIPS

EXERCISE 2: ATTACHMENT BELIEFS

Answer the following questions as they pertain to your view of relationships as a child. We typically develop our attachment styles through watching, learning, and interacting in relationships within our family of origin, then these interactions continue to repeat in our friendships, family, and romantic relationships as we grow.

1. Who in your family comforted you when you were upset, sad, or frustrated as a child? How did they comfort you? If no one comforted you, how did you comfort yourself?
2. Could you consistently go to this person for comfort and support? Or did you go to one person for some need(s) and another person for different need(s)?
3. What did you learn about asking for comfort and support through the interactions with that person or person(s)? If you had to comfort yourself, what did that teach you?
4. Did you ever feel rejected by someone you thought you could go to for support as a child? Explain:
5. If you could describe your parents relationship with 3 adjectives, what would they be?
6. What did you learn about relationships by watching your parents relationship as a child?
7. What beliefs about relationships that you learned in childhood are still with you today?
8. How have your relationships within your family of origin shaped your belief that you can *expect or not expect* others to be attentive to your needs? How does this impact your current romantic relationship(s) or friendship(s)?

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EXERCISE 3: TRACKING EMOTIONS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Understanding your attachment style can also help you understand your triggers to conflict in relationships. For example, if you were raised by a parent who ignored you when you cried for attention as a child, you may feel triggered if your partner walks away from you during a heated discussion as an adult. The following exercise will assist in further identifying the root of some of your triggers and begin to teach you how to manage them.

1. What messages did you receive as a child about experiencing and expressing emotions? Were some emotions ok to express but not others?
2. What happened when you expressed emotions that were considered unacceptable (if any)? How did you feel about yourself when this happened?
3. How do you approach your current partner when you want to talk about something difficult? How do they typically respond?
4. Do any of the messages you learned about expressing your emotions during childhood show up during conflict with your partner? Describe:
5. Do you have a difficult time regulating your emotions when you are in a heated discussion? If so, do you tend to want to "work it out" right away or do you feel overwhelmed and walk away? How does your partner respond when you do this?
6. What other emotions come up for you during conflict, particularly when you and your partner respond in this way? (ex: insecurities, fear of failure, guilt, feeling like a burden, feeling unheard, feeling unloved, etc?)
7. When you think about your responses to the above questions, is there a negative story that you have created about yourself that show up during these experiences (ex: "I am too much to handle," "I am unworthy of love," "I am too sensitive," "I cannot handle my feelings," etc) ?

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EXERCISE 4: PRACTICING A TIME-OUT

When a conversation becomes too heated and we feel overly triggered, we tend to say and do things to protect ourselves in that moment. We may throw verbal daggers at the other person if we feel hurt, because we want them to feel hurt as well. This is the point in conflict where we tend to say and do things that we do not truly mean or later regret.

The key to healthy communication in all types of relationships is to learn to stop yourself before you get to the "heated" point and either find a way to quickly calm yourself or take a time-out. If you are just starting this exercise, it is often best to begin with taking a time-out the moment you start to feel heated. Make sure you and your partner have an agreement in place that you are taking a time out with the intention of cooling down and plan to resume the conversation later. ***It is important that you do not take a time-out to avoid the conflict.*** You must agree to return to the conversation at a later time (in a couple of hours, the next day, in two days, etc) when you both are feeling more calm.

What is the very first thing you notice in your body when you start to feel heated or triggered in conflict? (ex: sweaty palms, increased heart rate, ruminating thoughts, stomach pain, etc)

Do you notice what comes next? Sometimes we think our "zero to sixty" happens in an instant, but if we really break it down, there are usually several steps between feeling calm and reaching the heated point. Describe this process for you:

If you have difficulty identifying the steps that lead up to feeling heated during conflict (I also sometimes refer to this moment as "the point of no return"), I encourage you to review Chapter 1 and practice the exercises relating to emotional awareness and self-regulating. Preventative approaches are often the best approaches to managing conflict successfully.

The goal of taking a time out is to get your mind off the topic at hand so you can calm yourself down effectively. Thinking about the conflict over and over or venting to a friend to discuss the conflict are not helpful in this case so try to think of other options that encourage you to redirect your thoughts.

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EXERCISE 4: PRACTICING A TIME-OUT

When you need to take a time-out, what is your plan for calming yourself down? Is there a location in your home that you can retreat to for a while on your own? What helps you feel relaxed? Write down a few ideas on how you can self-regulate during conflict below:

The practice of taking a time-out and self-regulating (opposed to stewing about the conflict or wanting to discuss the problem right now) can be a very difficult process. If you find parts of this exercise difficult, know that it is completely normal. This is a skill that takes practice and improves more and more with time.

What do you notice come up for yourself when either thinking about taking a time-out or physically practicing a time-out? Describe what this experience is like for you:

What is a realistic amount of time for you to self-regulate and return to discuss the topic in a more calm, relaxed state? In other words, how long does it take for your body and mind to calm down when feeling heated? This can vary from person to person. For some it takes an hour, and for others it takes several days. By practicing skills such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and other forms of self-regulating (see: Chapter 1) you can begin to reduce the amount of time that it takes to go from a heated state to a calm state.

How much time do you need in order to feel completely calm when you feel heated? Be sure to share this information with your partner when discussing time-outs so they can have realistic expectations of when you both can return to the topic at hand.

CONCLUSION

This workbook was created in order to provide psychoeducational ways to incorporate self-care into your daily routine. In completing this workbook, you have ideally learned more about yourself and uncovered possible solutions to live a more fulfilling life. By exploring themes such as self-nourishment, identity, and relationships, you are developing a framework to continue to grow off of, and when it comes to personal growth - the sky is the limit!

We all are deserving of living a life of joy and fulfillment, though at times we forget our worth and tend to brush our needs to the side. It can be hard taking care of ourselves, despite knowing that taking care of ourselves is good for us. We become consumed by the needs of others or the immense responsibilities of life. If we get caught in this cycle (which we all inevitably do at some point), we forget about our needs, our wants, our desires, and what is important in helping us thrive in life. There is serious truth in the notion that caring for yourself allows you to show up fully for others. Filling your nourishment cup can help you become a better friend, partner, coworker, parent, and family member; And don't we deserve to show up wholeheartedly for ourselves and our loved ones? I believe so.

In becoming more aware of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors you can have more control over them and thus hold more power in creating a life you truly love. Learning to accept all parts of yourself is also a powerful tool in the practice of self-care. Once you have more awareness of your thoughts and feelings, you can learn to be more accepting of your thoughts and feelings. You can allow them to come and go with ease, opposed to trying to cope with internal emotional turbulence that our thoughts and feelings sometimes bring.

It is my hope that by completing this workbook you have found a way to make a regular self-care routine realistic and that you feel more confident living a life of intention. Remember - self-care doesn't need to be something big and monumental! Learning about yourself is considered self-care, as well as anything that you incorporate for yourself that has a mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical component. If you find yourself wanting to dig deeper on this topic, I again

CONCLUSION

encourage you to seek out a therapist in your area who will support and guide you on your journey toward self-love and/or review the "Resources" section of this workbook. Make the decision to continue the commitment to yourself and keeping yourself as a priority -- you deserve it!



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