

The SOLUTION *source*

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre Newsletter
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor on behalf of Thunder Bay Counselling Centre

For You & Your Family

Summer 2015

Taking Care of Yourself

Our Summer 2015 issue will focus on self-care. What do we mean when we talk about self-care?

Self-care includes any intentional actions you take to care for your physical, mental and emotional health. Good self-care is a challenge for many people. It is an important part of any healing process. It is also crucial for maintaining everyday health. Self-care is unique for everyone. Below are some ideas to get you started in developing your own self care plan. It can be overwhelming to consider taking on many new things. It may be helpful to start with a couple of ideas and build on that.

(RAINN.org)



The Solution Source | Summer 2015 | Vol XIX No.2 ISSN#1481-2568

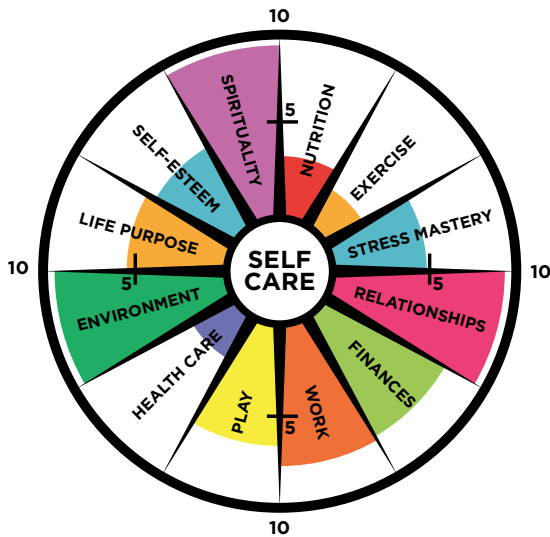


Timmins Family Counselling Centre
Centre de counselling familial de Timmins

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There are many aspects to a good self-care plan. (see the Self Care Wheel Diagram). We will focus on three facets of self-care but please remember all the sections of the wheel are important: Emotional, Physical and Spiritual.



Emotional

“Mental or emotional health refers to your overall psychological well-being. It includes the way you feel about yourself, the quality of your relationships, and your ability to manage your feelings and deal with difficulties.

Good mental health isn't just the absence of mental health problems. Being mentally or emotionally healthy is much more than being free of depression, anxiety, or other psychological issues. Rather than the absence of mental illness, mental and emotional health refers to the presence of positive characteristics. Similarly, not feeling bad is not the same as feeling good. While some people may not have negative feelings, they still need to do things that make them feel positive in order to achieve mental and emotional health.

People who are mentally and emotionally healthy have:

- A sense of contentment.
- A zest for living and the ability to laugh and have fun.
- The ability to deal with stress and bounce back from adversity.
- A sense of meaning and purpose, in both their activities and their relationships.
- The flexibility to learn new things and adapt to change.
- A balance between work and play, rest and activity, etc.
- The ability to build and maintain fulfilling relationships.
- Self-confidence and high self-esteem.

These positive characteristics of mental and emotional health allow you to participate in life to the fullest extent possible through productive, meaningful activities and strong relationships. These positive characteristics also help you cope when faced with life's challenges and stresses.

Being emotionally and mentally healthy doesn't mean never going through bad times or experiencing emotional problems. We all go through disappointments, loss, and change. And while these are normal parts of life, they can still cause sadness, anxiety, and stress.

The difference is that people with good emotional health have an ability to bounce back from adversity, trauma, and stress. This ability is called resilience. People who are emotionally and mentally healthy have the tools for coping with difficult situations and maintaining a positive outlook. They remain focused, flexible, and creative in bad times as well as good.

One of the key factors in resilience is the ability to balance stress and your emotions. The capacity to recognize your emotions and express them appropriately helps you avoid getting stuck in depression, anxiety, or other negative mood states. Another key factor is having a strong support network. Having trusted people you can turn to for encouragement and support will boost your resilience in tough times.

(www.helpguide.org)

Spiritual

How do we take care of ourselves spiritually? Spiritual self-care is the activity we engage in to find and nurture a sense of connection to a Higher Power and meaning for our lives. Just as it is essential to nurture your body with food, it is necessary to nurture your soul with spirit.

How might we feed our spirit and connection to a higher power?

MEDITATION

There are many different types of meditation. We will focus on Mindfulness but if mindfulness does not fit for you, just know that you have choices. A simple online search will provide you with the benefits of each different style of meditation.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The practice of mindfulness is transformational. Those who practice consistently report:

- A greater sense of well-being
- The development of an 'observing self' that gives a larger perspective on thoughts and emotions
- Insight into patterns of thought and behaviour, and the freedom to choose options other than habitual, reactive patterns.
- The ability to stay with experience, to recognize its impermanence and have hope for the future
- Healing from disconnection from self (body, heart, and mind)
- Fuller acceptance of life as it is - suffering and all
- Greater capacity for joy, as a result of living in the present moment rather than the past or the future

Here is an example of a very simple mindfulness meditation:

JUST A MINUTE MEDITATION

- 1 Quiet your body and get comfortable, relaxing your body as much as you can. Close your eyes, if you wish, or simply soften your gaze and focus on the floor in front of you. This is a minute to completely rest.
- 2 Take this minute to simply breathe naturally, at whatever pace and depth your breath is moving at the moment. Place your attention consciously on each breath, following it from beginning to end of the cycle of inhaling and exhaling. Allow your breathing to pause a bit at the end of the exhalation, and allow your breath to begin the inhalation on its own. You might choose to count the breaths to help focus your attention.
- 3 If your mind wanders, simply bring it back to counting your breaths or sensing the movement of the breath in your body.

(The Chemistry of Joy Workbook)

PRAYER

Prayer can be a form of religious practice, may be either individual or communal and take place in public or in private. It may involve the use of words, song or complete silence. When language is used, prayer may take the form of a hymn, incantation, formal creedal statement, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person. There are different forms of prayer such as petitionary prayer, prayers of supplication, thanksgiving, and praise. Prayer may be directed towards a deity, spirit, deceased person, or lofty idea, for the purpose of worshipping, requesting guidance, requesting assistance, confessing transgressions (sins) or to express one's thoughts and emotions. Thus, people pray for many reasons such as personal benefit or for the sake of others.

Some anthropologists believe that the earliest intelligent modern humans practiced a form of prayer. Today, most major religions involve prayer in one way or another; some ritualize the act of prayer, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practiced spontaneously by anyone at any time.

(Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

Here is an example of an often used prayer

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;

Courage to change the things I can;

And the wisdom to know the difference.

(Reinhold Niebuhr)

CONTEMPLATION

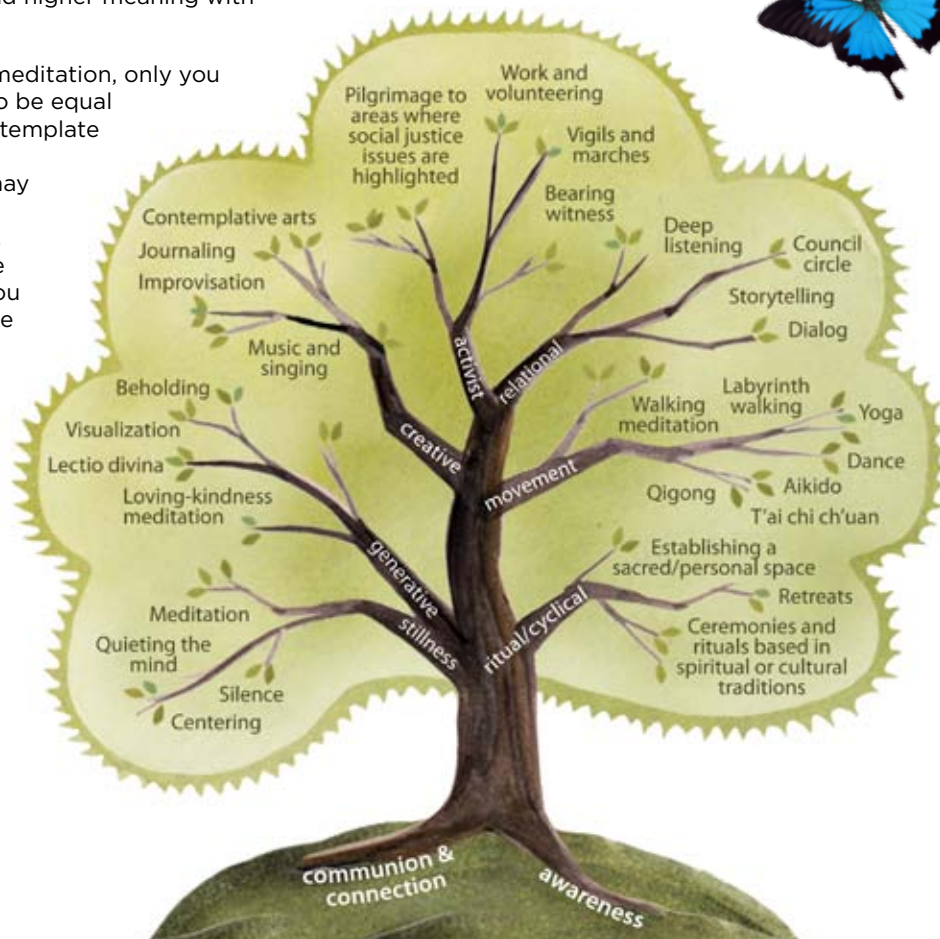
Another suggestion to enhance your spiritual self-care is contemplation. When we contemplate, we review an event or a question and we study it with our minds and hearts. It is a way to help us to find higher meaning with the daily events of life.

When you contemplate, it is like meditation, only you invite your mind and your heart to be equal and active partners. You may contemplate especially difficult or challenging events in your daily life. Or, you may contemplate the especially easy things that happened in your day. Through contemplation you invite the truth of your heart to show you a deeper meaning to the mundane events of life.

(www.desert-alchemy.com)

YOU WILL FIND TO THE RIGHT A DIAGRAM OF THE TREE OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES:

The Tree illustrates some of the contemplative practices currently in use in secular organizational and academic settings.



Physical

There are many aspects to physical well-being. But if you are looking at self-care from a holistic and balanced perspective then you need to consider body, mind and spirit.

How can we take care of ourselves physically?

NUTRITION

What are you fuelling your body with? Your body is like your vehicle, if you do not put the proper gas in it, your car will simply not run. Your body will not function for very long without a well-balanced diet. There are many resources to access excellent information about proper nutrition. Healthy eating means consuming the right quantities of food from all food groups. What are the food groups?

- Whole grains
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Proteins
- Legumes
- Dairy
- Fats and Sugars

EXERCISE

It's not news that for good health we need to be mobile. But what is challenging is finding the time when you have a busy life. Are there ways you can squeeze in movement without going to the gym?

Why not try:

- Walking to work
- Avoiding taking the elevator
- Dancing
- Swimming
- Biking
- Hiking
- Yoga
- Paddle boating
- Jump rope (remember how much fun that was)
- Rollerblading
- Gardening

With many of us spending large portions at our desk on a computer we are sitting more than ever. There are many studies that link poor health, including increased back issues to sitting. So during the day, health care professionals are encouraging workers to get away from the desk as much as possible by walking and stretching whenever possible.

There are also stand up desks and working sites that help reduce sitting.

SLEEP

The average number of hours of required sleep is seven to eight (but it can be unique to the individual). There have been a myriad of studies that indicate the negative impact that insufficient sleep has on our physical, mental and spiritual health. What do you feel like the night after you have woken up in the wee hours and have not been able to get back to sleep?

Here are a few tips that may lead to a better sleep:

- Get enough physical exercise during waking hours
- Limit your use of caffeine and other stimulants
- Have a sleep ritual that includes activities to quiet your mind and slow down (for example...a warm bath, reading, soft music, meditation)
- Have a sleep schedule where you go to bed the same time each night and get out of bed the same time each morning. Your brain reacts more favourably to routine
- Avoid going to bed on a full stomach
- Limit how much you have to drink prior to bedtime
- Alcohol seems to help people relax to get to sleep but it is often disruptive once you get to sleep causing early awakening

Helping people is
what we're all about.



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