

## Structured Self-Care

### Instructions:

- 1. Look through the list, cross out anything that does not interest you at all, draw a line through it.**
- 2. Go through the list a second time and cross everything off that would NOT come easy and natural to you. Remember doing self-care activities should not be adding stress. Also, write anything that comes to mind that is not included in this list (This list is merely a reference, ideas).**
- 3. Of the activities that have not been crossed out choose one to start. Schedule when you are going to do this activity. Remember self-care activities can be short activities.**

### Relaxation:

- what person/place/thing is the most relaxing for you
- playing guitar/piano or another instrument (improvisation, writing songs or playing something familiar)
- exercise as a relaxation or outlet for stress
- playing phone games, board games or card games
- video (console) gaming, 'mind-numbing' or 'time-passing' games (Tetris, mahjong, Minecraft) are preferable to intense games (i.e. FPS, strategy, racing, etc.)
- breathing exercises (square breathing: draw breath for 5 counts, hold breath for 5 counts, expel breath for 5 counts, then wait for 5 counts).
- expressions of gratitude
- losing yourself briefly in serving others (baking cookies to deliver, listening to or visiting someone in need, writing 'thank you' or 'thinking about you' cards or notes)
- short meditation break - taking 2-3 minutes to look out at nature and offer a prayer of gratitude
- praying for relief/peace/calm feeling
- soaking your feet
- changing your clothes when you get home from work/school
- occasional naps
- making lists (tasks, ideas, etc.)
- thought journal (to record thoughts/prompts/ideas/etc.)
- going to chiropractor or therapeutic massage or physical therapy or self-massage (muscle roller)
- appropriate forms of touch/contact
- sketching (artistic/doodling)
- sketching (designing/blueprints/plans)
- coloring/watercolor/paint
- other 'customized' creative outlets
- social time - hanging out with friends - activities/games/activities/party games/movies/eating out
- writing (free-writing, brainstorming, developing a story with characters/scenes/themes that interest you)
- writing ('throw away journal' as a place to 'dump' details/stressors/frustrations/anger/hurt/etc.)
- music (listening to variety of music dependent on mood)
- progressive muscle relaxation (email script)
- guided imagery/guided meditation (email audio file) listen to a dialogue of someone painting a mental picture of a peaceful, soothing, quiet, calm setting; you close your eyes and relax into the

description

- identify a pleasant fantasy or some topic that interests you that you can lose yourself in for 20-30 minutes
- driving or going for a ride in the car, time to be alone with your thoughts
- going for a walk, time to be alone with your thoughts
- identify a calm, quiet, peaceful place to go and sit or reflect (park, by the river, up the canyon, among the trees)
- soothing scent (candle, scent or oil diffuser with lemon, orange, peppermint, cinnamon, etc.)
- soaking in hot bath or shower
- youtube nature soundtracks (rain, thunderstorms, wind, forest sounds, ocean/beach sound)
- fidget device or 'busy-work' activities (activities, devices or hobbies that require little thought but keep your hands busy and provide some brief distraction)
- tactile comfort items or objects ('worry' rock, smooth shell, marble, stress ball)
- occasional brief naps
- comfort foods (snacks/treats/meals/desserts)
- carry some candies/snacks/treats to use as a reprieve when stressed and to lift blood sugar level
- self-rewards or things to look forward to - incentives for progress or reaching small goals
- schedule "cheat" hours or days to allow some appropriate brief respite from unpleasant, but necessary daily tasks, interactions with people or activities
- stop and rest on a park bench and have a snack

### Physical:

- what is your exercise history and preferences?
  - things you've tried that worked or didn't work
  - times that you've tried that have and haven't worked?
- what are your current health/fitness goals?
- workout routine at home (Johnson & Johnson routine, fitness DVD, jump rope, fitness bands) or at gym
  - stretching and core strengthening (stretch routine, reaches, planking, isometrics, yoga, etc.)
  - strength training (free weights, calisthenics, push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, dips)
  - cardio/aerobic (Zumba, running, cycling, basketball, soccer, swimming, circuit training, etc.)
  - martial arts training/forms/kata
- Athletics (team sports/church athletics/community leagues/pick-up games /zone sports/etc.)
- parkour training
- walking, hiking or trail running

### Nutrition:

- what is your current pattern of meals/snacks (when/what/how much?)
- vitamins/supplements?
- Special dietary needs/restrictions?
- health shake or smoothie

### Sleep:

- minimize or manage naps (naps can often disrupt sleep cycle)
- consistent evening ritual
- consistent bedtime (within 10 minutes of a set time)
- process for minimizing/managing distractions to sleep (noises, light, ambient sounds, temperature, etc.)
- environmental sleep aids (oscillating fan or noise generator or soothing sound effects, etc.)
- neurochemical sleep aids (melatonin - 1.5 hrs before bedtime; consult Dr. before taking any sleep

aids)

- develop a sleep script or pleasant fantasy
- minimize snacks after 8-8:30 pm (blood sugar)
- minimize drinking after 6:30pm
- if light sensitive (eye shades or dampened, dark washcloth over eyes)
- if sound sensitive (ear plugs, background noise)
- no exercise or strenuous physical exertion within an hour of bedtime)

### **Spiritual:**

- what is your daily/weekly routine of personal spiritual devotion?
- what does it mean to you to be right before God?
- what is your system of personal accountability - what would it take to feel worthy before God right now?
- staying consistent with morning schedule
- do you have a personal pattern of gospel study/research (scripture study, notebook, cross referencing, etc.)
- set alarm or reminder to establish a routine, so you don't forget or have find a different time each day
- reading gospel texts
- meditation
- take institute classes
- serving others - looking for opportunities to serve others
- credo of personal beliefs / personal mission statement
- increase the amount of spiritual 'food' intake (listen to conference talks on your phone while getting ready or in the car, pre-reading or listen to your PH/RS or Gospel Doctrine lesson ahead of time)

### **Social:**

- Parents?
- Siblings?
- extended family members?
- Close friends?
- re-connecting with distant friends?
- Spouse?
- Companions (past/present)?
- Local ward members/neighbors?
- Bishop?
- teachers/mentors?
- Professional support (i.e. counselor, mentor?)
  
- Increasing your level of assertiveness - willingness to be open/authentic about your feelings/ thoughts/needs/wants, being able to say what needs to be said (even when difficult) appropriately and with sensitivity (BOLD, but not OVERBEARING).

### **Principles of Distress Management / Emotional Regulation:**

#### **Emotional Regulation & Outlets:**

- when trying to manage/process powerful negative emotion, you have 5 basic outlets:
  - **Talking it out**

- Writing it out
- Crying it out
- Laughing
- Acting in out (caution - many healthy and unhealthy ways)
- listing sources of stress and possible solutions
- listing the positive attributes of people who I struggle with (not to excuse or tolerate, but to give the benefit of the doubt)
- journaling - diary or simple account of events
- “throw-away journal” - a 'dumping place' for powerful negative feelings (anger/frustration/annoyance)
- “journal of moments” - capturing great detail about significant, positive experiences/events
- “list of things to live for...” - a running list of words/pictures/ideas/places/things that bring you peace/comfort/pleasure (put these on your phone or tablet for constant access?)

### Intellectual/Cognitive:

#### **Defining Identity & Purpose**

- personal inventory session - future planning and things to work towards in a variety of categories ('My Plan', or your own version) - attributes that you want to develop, characteristics that you want to work on, qualities that you want to see in yourself, accomplishments that would mean a lot to you in the future (break them up into Short/Medium/Long-term goals).
- developing Your CREDO of personal beliefs (these are statements about things/principles that I know to be true, principles/ideals that make up WHO I AM and define WHAT I AM ABOUT)

#### **Identifying/Managing Cognitive Distortions**

- learn to recognize the “mental gymnastics” we use to stay “stuck” in a pattern of inappropriate thinking/behavior
  - Rationalization - things we say to ourselves to excuse, explain or justify our behavior with logical, plausible reasons, even if these are not true or appropriate, in order to make it seem more acceptable
  - Justification - things we say to ourselves to try to prove that the behavior is needed, right or reasonable
  - Minimization - things we say to ourselves to reduce the guilt we feel or make our behavior appear less offensive than it really is
  - Denial - outright lying to ourselves about the extent, seriousness or compulsive nature of our problem
  - Compartmentalization - where we avoid thinking about the problem, pretend it doesn't exist and only use it or 'visit' it when we need to escape or avoid stress, pressure or other unpleasant emotions
- surround yourself with photos and reminders of the things you love or value the most (family, favorite art or gospel images)
- develop list of positive self-statements or 'affirmations' that focus on real strengths and positive traits
- OPTIONAL - identify past and presents sources of guilt/shame and develop outlets for and ways to manage toxic shame and let go of the associated powerful negative emotions
- OPTIONAL - identify a list of negative or critical self-statements and then develop a list of more adaptive statements to challenge and replace them with. Most cognitive distortions fall into one of these areas:

- Self-critical, self-blame, shaming
- Self-comparative

Generally negative or pessimistic

Other- Write down anything that comes to mind that is not on this list...

Self-Care Schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
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