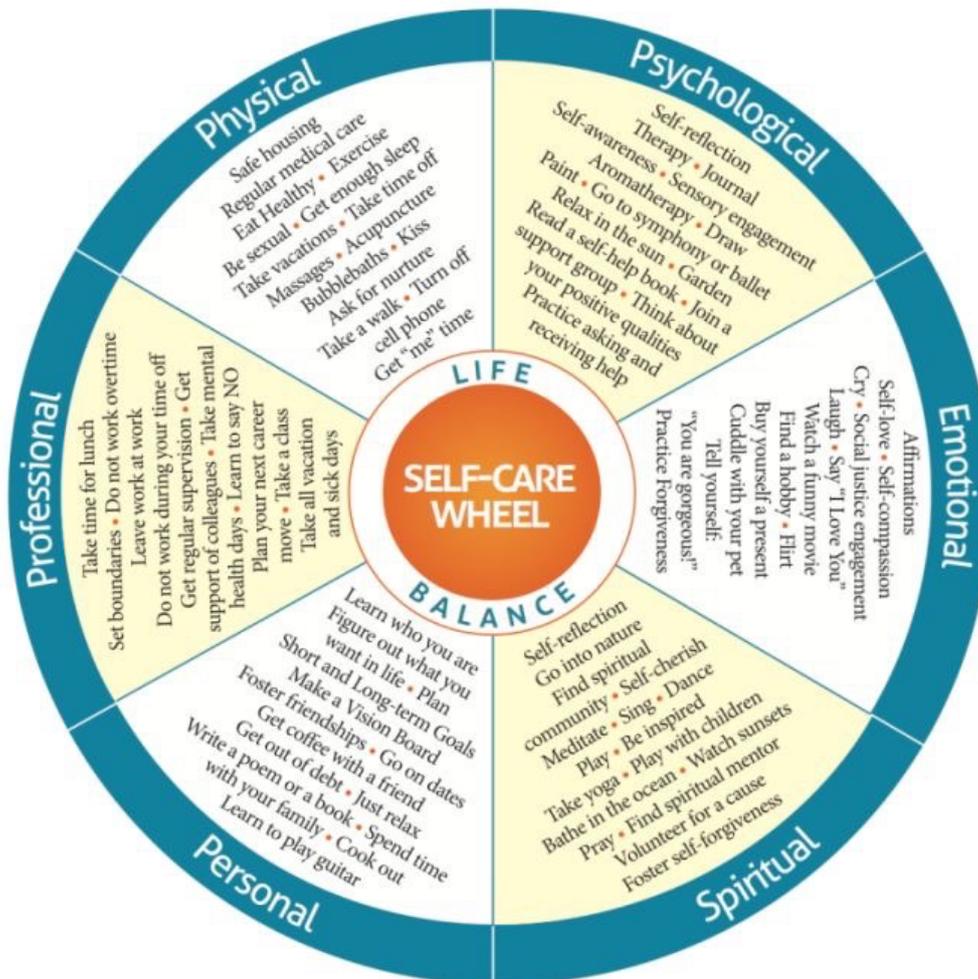




# SELF-CARE WHEEL



This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from "Self-Care Assessment Worksheet" from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013).

Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide.

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# 18 Ways to Build Mental Wellness

Tips to boost happiness and keep stress and anxiety levels low.



Tree of Happiness, Denis Barsukov, 2002, oil on canvas  
Source: CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons

**1. Exercise.** Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. Anything that you enjoy and gets your heart pumping will do wonders for your mental health.

**2. Eat healthily.** Limit simple sugars and processed foods and eat more fruits, veggies, and healthy fats, like avocados, nuts, and olive oils. Make sure you are getting enough water.

If you struggle with anxiety, eat several small meals or snacks rather than just a few big meals, as drastic changes in blood sugar can make you feel more nervous.

**3. Avoid mind-altering substances.** Limit caffeine and alcohol and avoid illicit drugs.

While people respond differently, in general, these substances alter the way your mind works and can increase anxiety and depression. These effects can build up over the long term, so even if you don't feel an immediate increase in anxiety and depression when you use these substances, they may still be impacting your mood.

**4. Prioritize sleep.** Practice good sleep hygiene and aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night. If you have trouble sleeping, see your doctor.

There are also workbooks and self-help strategies that can help improve your sleep. Apps such as CALM.

**5. Build an internal locus of control.**



People who see themselves in control responsibility for things that happen in your day-to-day life and focusing **only on the things you can control**.

**6. Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness can reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain. Building mindfulness can be as simple as repeatedly bringing yourself back to the present throughout the day. You can also consider starting a formal meditation practice centred on mindfulness, where you focus on bringing your attention back to your breath or another anchor. App like HEADSPACE.

**7. Pray or meditate.** Connecting with something bigger than yourself can help protect your mental health. You do not have to be religious to benefit from the positive effects of prayer or meditation.

**8. Unload.** Is there something that you can ask for help with? Can you decrease your responsibilities in some way? Work on setting boundaries at work and at home.

**9. Surround yourself with positivity.** Limit your exposure to toxic people and things, if possible. If you use social media, make sure that it is a positive experience, and only follow people who boost your mood or add value to your life in some way.

**10. Practice gratitude.** Gratitude can help lower stress, depression, and anxiety. This works especially well if you write it down.

Try writing down three things every night that you are grateful for. These can be tiny things, like the feeling of soft bed sheets or the warmth of a sunny day.

**11. Connect with others.** Isolation is both a cause and a symptom of mental illness. Join a group of like-minded people or try a new hobby or experience. Engage with others daily, even if you just call someone you haven't spoken to in a while. 7 interactions a day rule.

**12. Give.** Do something for someone else. Give a compliment, offer to help a family member, phone someone. Do something to broaden your perspective and focus on someone else's needs.

**13. Set one small goal every day.** The point of this is not to increase your productivity or accomplish an incredible feat. Instead, you want to work on building up your confidence by making a small promise to yourself and keeping it



## Prioritise Relationships

Keep a die on your desk and roll it first thing in the morning  
You must do as it says - no second roll

-  Spend lunch today in the playground
-  Do some work in the main staffroom
-  View an area of the school you don't visit regularly
-  Spend lunch with a different staff group
-  Walk outside the gate and have a conversation with someone in your neighbourhood
-  Spend recess in the playground

Create your own relationship priorities and add a new one each term



*Michael's Leadership Provocations*

**14. Challenge negative thoughts.** Thoughts are not facts. You can challenge a thought by asking yourself two questions: "Is it true?" and "Will believing it help me become a better version of myself?" If the answer to either of these is no, ditch it, and choose to believe the alternative.

**15. Fake it 'til you make it.** We often think of our thoughts and feelings as guiding our behaviors, but the reverse can be true as well. Act the way you want to feel by forcing yourself to smile, standing up tall, and dressing in a way that makes you feel confident; you may start to feel better from the outside in.

**16. Use affirmations and reminders.** Set a reminder or alarm to go off on your phone with an uplifting quote. Change your computer passwords to an inspiring word. Put post-it notes up to encourage yourself.

**17. Practice self-compassion.** Work on forgiving yourself and acknowledging that you are doing your best at any given moment. Speak to yourself as you would a friend or loved one.

**18. Know when to get help.** It is never wrong to seek professional help from your doctor or a counsellor/mentor. You should seek help right away if you cannot function or fulfill obligations, have a history of serious mental illness, or if you have tried to improve on your own without success.

Many mental illnesses are brought on by biology that may not change despite good self-care. It doesn't mean that you are a failure; it just means you need a little help.

# REASONS FOR ADMISSION

## 1864 TO 1889

INTEMPERANCE & BUSINESS TROUBLE  
KICKED IN THE HEAD BY A HORSE  
HEREDITARY PREDISPOSITION  
ILL TREATMENT BY HUSBAND  
IMAGINARY FEMALE TROUBLE  
HYSTERIA  
IMMORAL LIFE  
IMPRISONMENT  
JEALOUSY AND RELIGION  
LAZINESS  
MARRIAGE OF SON  
MASTURBATION & SYPHILIS  
MASTURBATION FOR 30 YEARS  
MEDICINE TO PREVENT CONCEPTION  
MENSTRUAL DERANGED  
NEURAL EXCITEMENT  
**NOVEL READING**  
OPIUM HABIT  
OVER ACTION OF THE MIND  
OVER STUDY OF RELIGION  
OVER TAXING MENTAL POWERS  
PARENTS WERE COUSINS  
PERIODICAL FITS.  
TOBACCO & MASTURBATION  
POLITICAL EXCITEMENT  
POLITICS  
RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM  
FEVER AND LOSS OF LAW SUIT  
FITS AND DESERTION OF HUSBAND  
ASTHMA  
BAD COMPANY  
BAD HABITS & POLITICAL EXCITEMENT  
BAD WHISKEY  
BLOODY FLUX  
BRAIN FEVER  
BUSINESS NERVES  
CARBONIC ACID GAS  
CONGESTION OF BRAIN  
DEATH OF SONS IN WAR  
DECOYED INTO THE ARMY  
DERANGED MASTURBATION  
DESERTION BY HUSBAND  
DISSOLUTE HABITS  
DOMESTIC AFFLICTION  
DOMESTIC TROUBLE  
DROPSY  
EGOTISM  
EPILEPTIC FITS  
EXCESSIVE SEXUAL ABUSE  
EXCITEMENT AS OFFICER  
EXPOSURE AND HEREDITARY  
EXPOSURE AND QUACKERY  
EXPOSURE IN ARMY  
FEVER AND JEALOUSY  
FIGHTING FIRE  
SUPPRESSED MASTURBATION  
SUPPRESSION OF MENSES  
THE WAR  
TIME OF LIFE  
UTERINE DERANGEMENT  
VENEREAL EXCESSES  
VICIOUS VICES  
WOMEN TROUBLE  
SUPERSTITION  
SHOOTING OF DAUGHTER  
SMALL POX  
SNUFF EATING FOR 2 YEARS  
SPINAL IRRITATION  
GATHERING IN THE HEAD  
GREEDINESS  
GRIEF  
GUNSHOT WOUND  
HARD STUDY  
RUMOR OF HUSBAND MURDER  
SALVATION ARMY  
SCARLATINA  
SEDUCTION & DISAPPOINTMENT  
SELF ABUSE  
SEXUAL ABUSE & STIMULANTS  
SEXUAL DERANGEMENT  
FALSE CONFINEMENT  
FEEBLENESS OF INTELLECT  
FELL FROM HORSE IN WAR  
FEMALE DISEASE  
DISSIPATION OF NERVES

## **WHY AM I SO TIRED ALL THE TIME?**

For those who can relate to this experience, a frustrating and a familiar refrain arises: “Why am I so tired all the time?” The truth is, with more than a third of us not getting enough sleep, you’re not the only person wondering aloud over their third caffeinated beverage of the day.

Outside of an underlying medical condition, such as narcolepsy or sleep apnea, most cases of the daytime doldrums are a direct result of simply not getting enough rest at night.

A growing body of scientific research suggests that, in adults, executive function is deeply diminished when you’re tired. Your ability to complete tasks and remain goal-oriented might well be hampered, and episodes of forgetfulness might well increase, so don’t be surprised if brain fog means you can’t remember something you heard or read. There could also be a knock-on effect on your self-control as you opt for the easy snack, rather than cooking the healthy meal. These are common side effects of not enough quality sleep, as well as increased irritability and poor decision making.

What’s the solution? Better sleep hygiene.

### **Sleep Hygiene and How It Can Make You Feel Less Tired**

What’s that you say? You’ve heard of dental hygiene, but not sleep hygiene? Establishing healthy habits around sleep is just as important as brushing and flossing your teeth twice a day. Sleep hygiene is a form of mind-body maintenance that sets you up for a restful night of sleep, meaning you feel less fatigued throughout the day.

There are many paths to better sleep hygiene, but one of the first steps you can take is setting and sticking to a schedule – going to bed and waking up at the same time. This means that your body clock becomes attuned to when you rise, and when you turn in.

Then it’s about making your environment more conducive to better rest. A comfortable mattress is the “bedrock” of sound sleep. If you share a bed with a partner, is it roomy enough to accommodate the two of you? If not, could you try a larger bed? The same goes for reviewing older mattresses, uncomfortable pillows, and bedsheets that make you too hot or cold. When you think of the hours spent sleeping and how much poor sleep can affect you the next day, these things are always worth investing in.

Light, temperature, and sound can disrupt slumber, so be sure the room is dark, cool, and insulated from noise. Black-out curtains can take care of obtrusive light, but if you're like most people, sound insulating a room from noise isn't within your monthly budget. Earplugs can drown out unwanted sound or listening to sleep music can create a relaxing atmosphere that transports you to a deeper sleep.

You can also consider a warm bath, reading a book, or light stretching – all are good pre-sleep exercises that help prepare you for bedtime by signaling to your brain that sleep is coming. There are a host of activities you can do to promote better sleep hygiene and once you start implementing them, you'll wonder why you hadn't established these routines sooner.

Working on improved sleep hygiene is a good place to start. However, there are other factors that might be contributing to your sluggishness:

### **Stress and Sleep**

Stress weighs heavily on the body in many ways, but one symptom of stress is fatigue. When you experience chronic stress, your amygdala – a small almond-shaped structure nestled in the underside of the brain – enlarges itself and produces cortisol and adrenaline – evolutionarily necessary hormones in the flight-or-fight response.

A small amount of these hormones is nothing to fret over, but if released in large quantities or too often, they have adverse effects on your health; causing headaches, chronic pain, frequent sickness, loss or increase in appetite, and disrupt sleep, leading to restlessness.

Everyone experiences stress differently, but if it is affecting your ability to sleep, worry not – there are ways to manage stress, and meditation is one of those avenues.

Meditation helps to prepare the mind for a quality night's sleep. It simultaneously calms body and mind, and is a great way to unwind and lull yourself into the land of nod. Because a rested mind improves the prospects of a restful night's sleep.

By better managing stress through meditation, you're giving yourself an opportunity to step out of your head a little bit just before bed, rather than have your head hit the pillow and find that your mind is overrun with thoughts.

And if you have any doubts about whether meditation can manage your stress, there's scientific evidence that suggests a meditation practice works

to reprogram the brain. Meditation shrinks the size of the amygdala – that almond-shaped structure in your brain responsible for all those stress hormones – bringing it back to a more baseline level and reducing feelings of stress.

If stress is keeping you up at night, consider a meditation practice to manage that stress throughout the day, so you're set up for a relaxing evening. You can also find a nightly meditation that puts your mind and body at ease before lights out. The Headspace app has exercises that are aimed at both reducing stress and improving your sleep.

### **Sleep and Depression**

The connection between fatigue and depression is well documented. Being depressed can lead to a lack of energy to do even simple tasks, but it can also lead to insomnia, complicating your mental and physical health even further.

Feeling tired is only one symptom in a larger array of depression-related signs, so if you suspect you're always tired because of depression, it's best to speak to a mental health professional to determine if depression is the source. If so, there are a blend of treatment options that can alleviate some of these symptoms, and possibly even the depression itself.

There are still ongoing studies around treatment options for depression, and each varies widely, but one prong in the fight against depression is mindfulness through meditation. Although it's not possible to simply shake off depression or feelings of depression, it is possible that meditation can help ease those feelings.

### **Winding down**

Finding the answer to the question, "Why am I tired all the time?" can be a difficult journey, as there is a myriad of possibilities for chronic fatigue. But acknowledging something is amiss with your mind and body is a good first step towards correcting it.

If you're new to meditation, Headspace is a good place to start. In addition to beginner meditation practices, there are plenty of exercises tailored to your specific needs that could put you on the path towards increased mindfulness. And of course, Headspace has an entire section of

resources dedicated solely to sleep, that could help get you back to sleeping like a baby by night and feeling like a functioning, well-rested adult by day.