

Self-Care After Trauma



About Us

The **After Trauma Empowerment Network (ATEN)** is a community based non-profit organization that works to empower individuals, families and communities affected by trauma/violence/abuse to live an empowered life to reach their fullest potential.

ATEN provides services and programs, including free one-on-one confidential, trauma-informed counselling, emotional support to trauma survivors and their family and friends, group counselling, presentations, Police/court support and accompaniment, and community awareness raising events.

ATEN services, supports and programs are available to all genders in a safe and compassionate space.

Mandate/Mission

To empower and improve the quality of life of individuals, families and communities affected by trauma by providing trauma-informed counselling, support, intervention, education and resources.

Vision

To improve the lives, well-being and functioning of individuals, families and communities affected by trauma so we can live in a world where individuals, families and communities affected by trauma live an empowered life to reach their fullest potential.

Contact Us

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Self-Care: Recovery

Healing and recovery can mean different things for different people. You will probably have ups and downs, you may feel frustrated for not recovering as quickly as others think you should.

General things to keep in mind as you as you begin to recover:

- It is very important for you to remember that the trauma in no way was your fault, that you did not cause it to happen, and you did what you had to do to survive.
- Be patient. Everyone goes through the healing process at their own pace.
- Believe in your strengths, admire your courage, and have hope for the future. Remind yourself of these.
- You are not alone.
- Help is available to you.
- You have the right to receive assistance from people who will believe you and help you heal.
- Don't just try to "forget" about the traumatic event.
- Seek medical attention when you need it. Do not put it off.
- Distance yourself from anyone who makes you feel negative, drains your energy, or asks too much of you.
- Be gentle with yourself – allow yourself more time to complete tasks, more time to rest, and be kind and patient with yourself.

Know that sometimes it's okay not to feel okay.

6 Dimensions of Self-care

- Physical
- Mental
- Social
- Spiritual
- Intellectual/Psychological
- Occupational/Professional



Self-Care

Self-care has been defined as “the right and responsibility to take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual well-being” (Salvucci, 2001). Self-care may also be thought of as anything that contributes to our emotional, spiritual, physical, and/or social rejuvenation, enabling us to create balance and wellness in our lives.

- Exercise (a short walk counts!) – getting your body moving can help restore your body after trauma.
- Give yourself permission to feel whatever emotions come up for you (allow yourself to cry).
- Be careful – avoid tasks that take a lot of intense concentration as your ability to focus immediately after a trauma can be impaired.
- Limit your caffeine and alcohol consumption. While both may initially appear to soothe you, caffeine can increase agitation and alcohol acts as a depressant.
- Review what you have learned about stress, trauma, and healthy coping – remind yourself that what you are feeling is normal.
- You have the right to decide who can touch your body.
- Talk about your feelings with people you trust and feel safe with. This includes friends, family members, counsellors, health professionals, or connect with survivors of sexualized violence. Social support can make you feel less isolated and more connected.
- Do things you enjoy – watch a silly movie, reading, or visiting a beautiful park.
- Don’t avoid thinking about the trauma
- Write about your experience and feelings.
- Practice stress reduction and relaxation activities, such as yoga, stretching, guided meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and other mindfulness activities.
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule and try to get plenty of rest. If you are tired, nap. It’s okay, you are healing.
- Eat regular, balanced meals and snacks.
- Schedule and adjust your routine immediately following a trauma to include more time with support people and less time alone.

Self-Care Assessment

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization. Norton.

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

- 3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this ? = This never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- ___ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- ___ Eat healthily
- ___ Exercise
- ___ Get regular medical care for prevention
- ___ Get medical care when needed
- ___ Take time off when sick
- ___ Get massages
- ___ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity
- ___ Get enough sleep
- ___ Wear clothes I like
- ___ Take vacations
- ___ Other

Psychological Self-Care

- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet Make time for self-reflection
- Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- Have my own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which I am not expert or in charge
- Attend to minimizing stress in my life
- Engage my intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art show, sports event, theatre
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in my life
- Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- Love myself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Allow myself to cry
- Find things that make me laugh
- Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- Other:

**You
Matter**

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which I believe
- Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music
- Other:

**Practice
Kindness &
Patience with
Yourself**

Relationship Self-Care

- Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse
- Schedule regular activities with my children
- Make time to see friends
- Call, check on, or see my relatives
- Spend time with my companion animals
- Stay in contact with faraway friends
- Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send holiday cards
- Allow others to do things for me
- Enlarge my social circle
- Ask for help when I need it
- Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- Other:

School/Workplace or Professional Self-Care

- Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Set limits with clients and colleagues
- Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group
- (If relevant) Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest

Overall Balance

- Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
- Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest