

## THIS IS REALLY STRESSFUL! WORKSHEET



Suffocating from worry, fear, anger, resentment, or stress will not help you help someone else. You need “oxygen” *continuously* to be the best support possible for your partner. We recommend that you spend time *each week* doing something that makes you feel good, relaxed, content, and soothed—something you want to do as opposed to something you think you should do.

How will you contribute to your own self-care this week? Consider your health (nutrition, sleep, exercise) as well as what nourishes you intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. In case it’s been so long since you’ve entertained the notion of doing what you’d like to do that you’ve forgotten, we’ve included a list of possibilities at the end of this worksheet.

**Step 1:** Identify areas of your life that need attention, where a change would help you feel less stressed or improve the overall quality of your life. The following questions may help you think about this:

- How do you feel about your intellectual wellbeing? (Have you felt cut off or disengaged from matters that used to interest you? When was the last time you learned something new? Had a discussion about something other than your partner’s problems?)
- How do you feel about your physical health? (How are you sleeping? When was the last time you exercised? Have you found yourself eating poorly? When was the last time you had a check-up?)
- How do you feel about your emotional wellbeing? (Have you been more emotionally reactive lately (short fuse, quick to cry etc.)? Do you find that you are feeling numb, shut down, angry? Are you doing or saying things that don’t match who you want to be?)
- How do you feel about your own use of substances? (We’re not saying that using any substances on your part is necessarily problematic for your partner, but it will have an impact—along with everything else you do. Practically, your partner may feel permitted or even invited by the presence and availability of substances. Emotionally, even as peers, you model for each other how feelings are managed: how you pick yourself up, knock yourself out, handle the pressure, or blow off steam. Would change on your part help support change on his part?)

**Step 2:** Pick an area (from above) and brainstorm possible solutions: what you'd like to accomplish related to your self-care and why it would help you build the resiliency you need to help your partner.

What I would like to accomplish...	Why it would help me...
<i>I would like to sleep through the night.</i>	<i>It would help me feel less irritable in the morning, when we often fight.</i>
<i>I would like to find the time to read a good book.</i>	<i>It would help me take a break and feel less resentful about spending all my time worrying about my partner.</i>
<b>Your ideas:</b>	

**Steps 3 & 4:** Select (e.g., by process of elimination or because they jump out at you) two solutions and convert them into doable goals (remember: keep them brief, simple, positive, specific and measurable, reasonable and achievable, in your control, and involving skills you already have or are learning). Set two self-care goals for the coming week. We recommend at least one of them be something that's entirely enjoyable to you.

To improve my self-care, this week I will: \_\_\_\_\_

*Example: I will go for a run 2 times this week to blow off steam and feel more tired when I go to bed. This will help me sleep better.*

To increase joy in my life, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

*Example: I will go to the bookstore on my way home from work and buy a new book. Then I will stop doing chores at 10:00 and get lost in my book.*

**Step 4:** Identify obstacles that could interfere with your “goals of the week.”

Obstacles to Practicing this Goal	Coping Skills for Handling Obstacles
<i>It's hard to find time to go for a run.</i>	<i>Plan out the week and schedule time for runs around other activities. Commit to it like an appointment.</i>
<i>I'm too worried to sit and read. I get distracted.</i>	<i>Take deep breaths and give myself permission to start small. If I can read for 15 minutes, that's better than no break at all.</i>

There are many ways to tend to your mind, body, heart, and soul. We include this by-no-means complete list to help you brainstorm your way to better self-care.

- Visit with a friend (face-to-face, on the phone, by email, etc.).
- Cook your favorite meal.
- Go out to eat your favorite meal or eat a “comfort food” that you find soothing.
- Take a class in a topic that interests you.
- Let yourself space out and watch TV.
- Go to a movie.
- Watch hilarious videos on YouTube.
- Get a manicure, pedicure, or massage.
- Go for a walk or run. Let yourself take in the sounds and smells. Try to be present.
- Go for a hike (even in the city). Walk somewhere you have never been before. Take in the “newness” of your surroundings.
- Engage in a sport (either alone or with people) that you enjoy (swimming, golf, biking, tennis, yoga, basketball, bowling...).

- Do an activity that gets your adrenaline pumping (rock climbing, skydiving, roller coasters, horseback riding, and karaoke singing).
- Take a nap; let yourself doze off.
- Sincerely compliment or appreciate another person. (This could be a stranger.)
- Play cards; do brain teasers, crosswords, word games.
- Listen to music you enjoy.
- Get a haircut.
- Help someone out.
- Take your dog for a walk; play with a pet.
- Sit outside and watch the clouds for ten minutes; sit in a park and watch the birds and squirrels.
- Watch a live sporting event or go hear some live music.
- Visit an exhibit at a museum or wander around a gallery.
- Go for a drive.
- Lift weights, take a class at the gym, and hire a trainer for a few sessions.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Go to a bookstore or magazine store. Read something for pleasure.
- Go to services at your usual place of worship.
- Go to services not at your usual place of worship.
- Give time to a hobby you enjoy (photography, knitting, gardening, cooking, painting...).
- Meditate; download a guided mindfulness training.
- Buy your favorite flowers; don't forget to smell them.
- Re-read a favorite book, poem, or article. Sit and flip through a magazine.
- Draw a picture, doodle.
- Spend an hour window-shopping; visit a flea market.
- Drink a cup of tea or coffee while doing nothing else.
- Volunteer for an afternoon or evening.
- Take a bath, light your favorite candle.
- Write yourself a nice note that you can read again and again.
- Make a photo album.
- Do a puzzle.
- Take a day trip; plan a trip.
- Play an instrument, learn a new song.

- Dress in your favorite outfit; buy yourself something you have wanted to wear.
- Visit your favorite coffee shop.
- Buy yourself an ice cream cone.
- Notice! At the end of each day for a week (or a month), jot down three things you enjoyed today (noticing really helps).

For more ideas and a thorough self-care assessment, see the self-care chapters of our book, *Beyond Addiction*, especially the “You Are Here” exercise.