

move

A GUIDE TO

SELF-CARE

AND

HEALTHY

RELATIONSHIPS

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



consent

\*blocked\*

self-love



mood

boundaries



take a breather

No <3

We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We also pay sincere respect to our Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the impact of colonialism on intergenerational trauma and violence on First Nations People.



Specialist  
Domestic Violence  
& Women's Wellbeing  
Services



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# HELLO!

This booklet was developed by our team to help us talk about information around self-care and healthy relationships in a way that works for you.



Check out the digital version here:  
[www.centreforwomen.org.au/  
resources/young-people](http://www.centreforwomen.org.au/resources/young-people)

Street Art by The Street University, Logan.

Self-care is a general term to describe ways that we intentionally look after our overall health and wellbeing. Self-care can look very different from one person to the next.

It can be as simple as getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and eating nutritious food. Or a self-care practice might include a number of additional elements, such as social connection, spending time in solitude or setting boundaries with self and others.

It's also important to remember that your own self-care practice might look a bit different from day to day to month to month, depending on what is happening in your life at the time.



**WHAT DOES  
SELF-CARE  
MEAN TO  
YOU?**

# TYPES OF SELF-CARE

## PHYSICAL

movement, nutrition, sleep, rest, sexual need

## EMOTIONAL

navigating emotions, stress management, compassion, seeking support

## PERSONAL

hobbies, me-time, knowing yourself, learning new skills

## WORK/SCHOOL

work/school boundaries, time management, taking breaks, professional development

## SOCIAL

connection with others, support system, boundaries, positive social media

## SPIRITUAL

art, music, nature, journaling, beliefs and values, connecting inwardly, gratitude

## SPACE

safety, organised space, pleasant, stimulating environment

## FINANCIAL

having a conscious relationship with money, goal-setting, money management, savings



# WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING FOR YOUR SELF-CARE?

What are some things that you already do to promote your health and wellbeing? Jot them down. You may not realise how the choices you are already making help you with your own self-care.

This could include things like going for a skate, listening to music on your own in your room, or talking with a friend or family member when you're feeling upset.

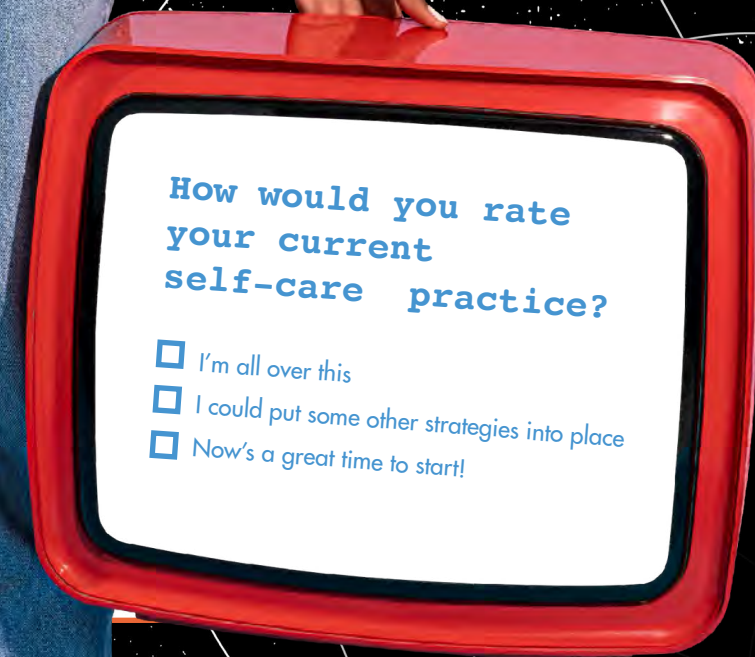


# WHAT ARE SOME OTHER THINGS YOU COULD DO FOR YOUR SELF-CARE?

Are there some things you would like to change?

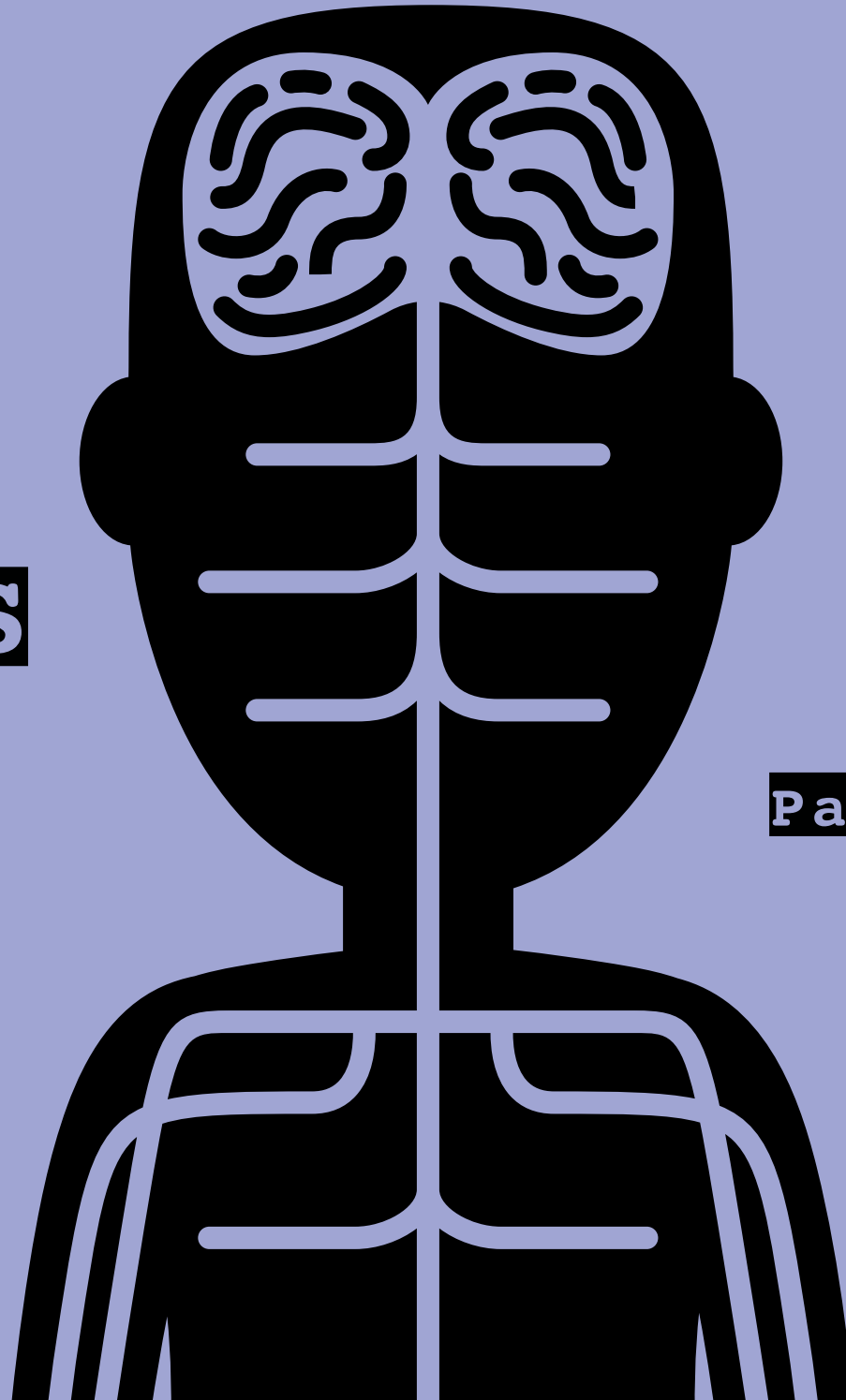
Have a think about things that you might be doing that are not positively contributing to your self-care. This could be things like staying up really late a lot and not getting enough sleep, agreeing to social activities when you don't really want to attend, following pages or people on social media that have a negative impact on your wellbeing.

It can be hard sometimes to break habits, but once you identify what is not helpful, it can bring you a step closer to reaching your wellbeing goals.



# TUNE INTO YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

We all have a nervous system. The nervous system plays an important role in responding to our internal and external environments. It is like a network that communicates messages back and forth from the brain to different parts of the body.



## Sympathetic

The **sympathetic nervous system** triggers when there is a real or perceived threat to our safety. The heart beats faster and blood flow increases to our arms and legs, to prepare us for fight or flight. Adrenaline and cortisol are released to help us act quickly. The thinking brain goes partially or fully offline because the fight or flight response encourages us to act, not think.

## Parasympathetic

(We can't say it either)

The **parasympathetic nervous system** triggers to promote rest and digestion, aka the 'chill-out' system. It helps us to feel calm, cool, connected and to manage small stressors that we come across. When it is activated, our heart rate slows down and digestion increases.



**Did you know that you can activate the parasympathetic nervous system yourself?**

Try singing or humming for a few minutes. Notice what happens!

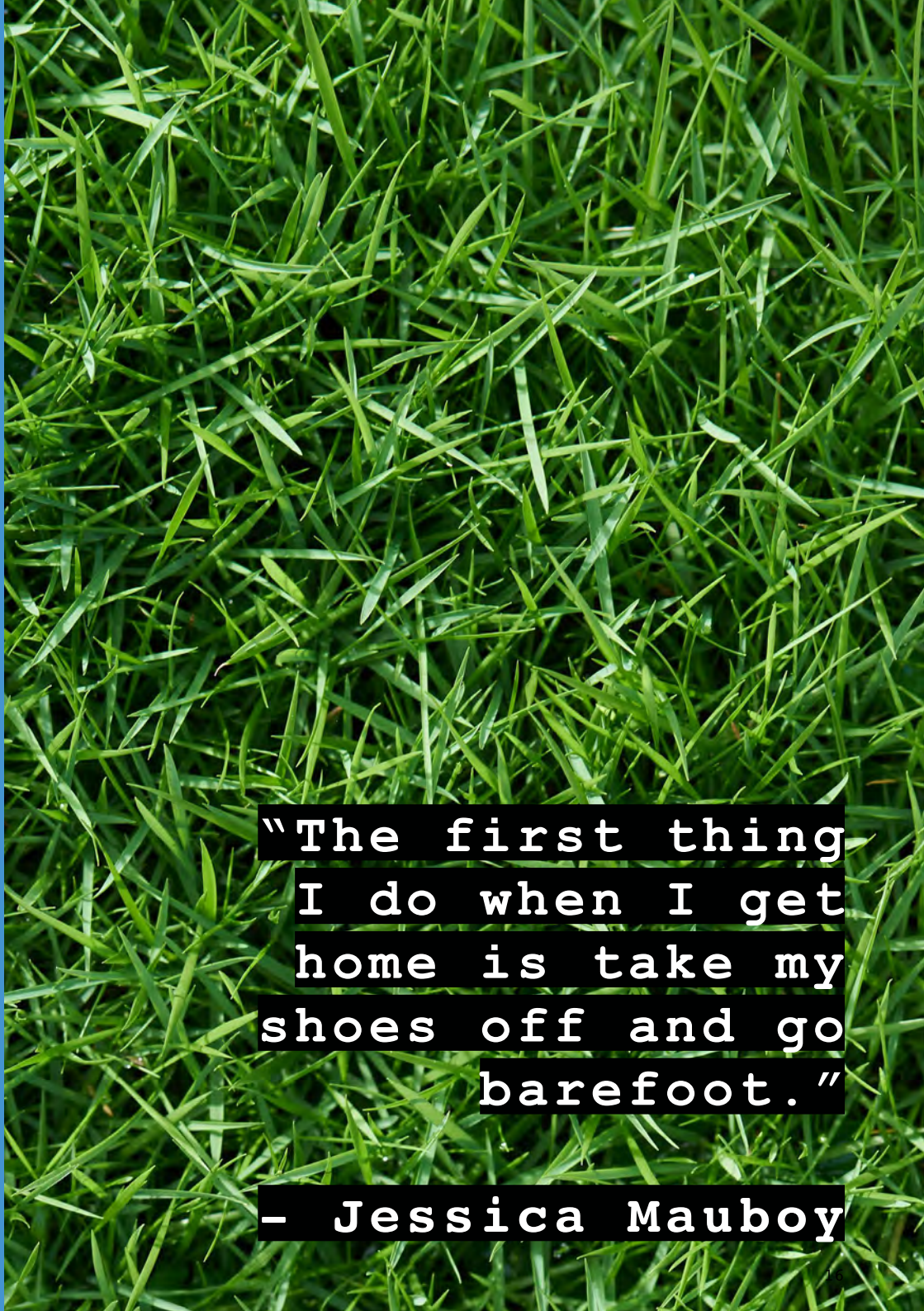
The vagus nerve is an essential part of the parasympathetic nervous system that stretches from your brain all the way down to your neck, chest and stomach. When you activate this nerve, it signals the brain that everything is good and triggers the parasympathetic nervous system to relax you. Singing, humming or gargling can activate the vagus nerve because of its connection to the voice box.



# Barefoot on grass. Tuning into body sensations.

Life can be so busy that at times we may not be aware of how our body feels or the experience of sensations in the body. Spending time connecting with our body is really helpful for us to understand what is happening internally, and so we can do something about how we feel as needed.

- Take off your shoes and socks and stand barefoot on the grass.
- Place your feet about hip-distance apart.
- Rock backwards and forward on your feet and settle when you're ready with the weight evenly distributed through the heel, mid-foot and forefoot.
- You might like to close your eyes, or you can leave them open.
- Take a few slow breaths, inhaling and exhaling.
- Notice any sensations in your feet, without judgment. It's okay to notice and allow any thoughts or emotions that come up as you become aware of sensations. Continue breathing through them.
- If you notice any discomfort, you might like to focus on breathing into these areas and notice what happens.
- Continue this practice with each area of your body.



**"The first thing  
I do when I get  
home is take my  
shoes off and go  
barefoot."**

**- Jessica Mauboy**

# EMOTIONAL REGULATION

We need our sympathetic nervous system to keep us safe! It helps us to act when we may be in danger. However, sometimes it can run on overdrive, signalling to our body that we're not safe when we actually are physically safe. This can be frustrating and we might feel stressed a lot of the time and have difficulty managing emotions because the rational brain is not working well at this time.

When you're a teenager, it's even harder to manage emotions because of the rapid development occurring in the brain during this time, making the experience of emotions more intense.

It's important to remember that all of your emotions are okay to have. We all experience a range of emotions – it makes us human! It's okay to express your emotions as long as it doesn't harm you or someone else, or damage anything.

## Name it to tame it!

Dr Daniel Siegel coined this term, which is about how science has proven that simply naming the emotion we are experiencing can help to calm our sympathetic nervous system. It's a way of putting the brakes on the emotional response. Sharing our emotions with others can also have this effect.



## Separating thoughts & feelings

It is really easy to say that we 'feel' a certain way when actually we are describing a thought instead of a feeling.

When this happens with negative thoughts, it becomes easy to accept this as a fact that we feel this way, rather than being able to recognise that it might be an untrue thought.

### Thoughts are not facts!

An example could be the statement, 'I feel dumb'. The thought is 'I am dumb' and the feelings might be embarrassed or sad.

When we accurately label our emotions, it helps us to manage them.

# BULLET JOURNALLING #1

If you are new to bullet journaling you might not yet know it but a journal can help you improve and create habits by reminding you to stick to them.

It can be used as a habit tracker to track basically everything you want; it can also track your self-care activities.

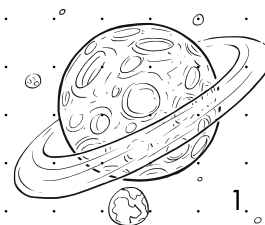
A journal is the best place to track your self-care tasks and there are many ways that you can set up a self-care page.

We spoke about the different types of self-care at the beginning of this booklet physical, emotional, social, spiritual, personal, space, financial and work/school.

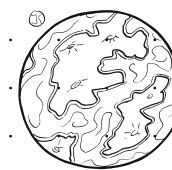
## Mood tracker

- Draw a different planet for each day of the month.
- Write down a few emotions at the bottom of the page and highlight them in different colours.
- Every day, colour in one planet to reflect the emotion or emotions you are feeling. You can definitely use more than one colour!
- At the end of the month look back and see how you went.
- When you do this over a couple of months you can sometimes identify different times when you might be more likely to feel certain negative emotions.
- If you know this in advance, maybe you can prepare for them - schedule in more rest around these times or note to take extra care of yourself.

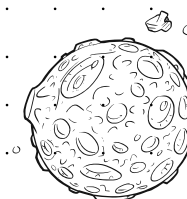
We've started it off for you on the next page. Use the following page to continue the Mood Tracker and look back at how you went at the end of the month.



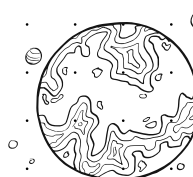
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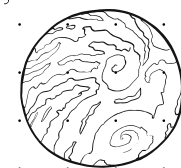
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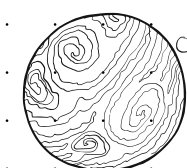
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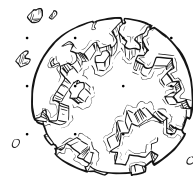
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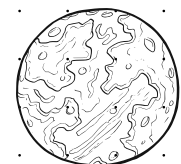
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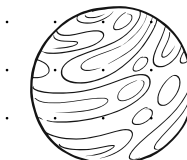
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7.



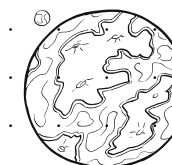
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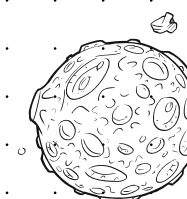
9.



10.



11.



12.

Excited

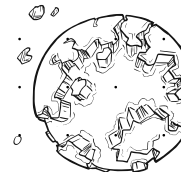
Motivated

Calm/positive

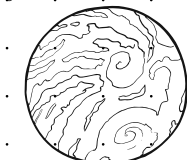
Neutral

Bored

Irritated/grumpy



13.



14.

Stressed/anxious

Sad/upset

# BREATHING FOR WELLBEING

Learning skills to regulate emotion can be really helpful for managing our emotions. Importantly, emotion regulation is about feeling like you can manage your emotions rather than being managed by emotions.

## Brain and Breathe

Our brains are always changing, we do this every day, when you first start doing something new the nerve connection in the brain begins to grow, like branches on a tree. At first the branches are small and thin, it can be hard to use new behaviour in our daily life. But with practice the branches can become stronger and thicker and the new actions we want to incorporate become easier and easier over time.

Breathing actually helps the brain to produce the useful chemicals in the brain that help to grow and strengthen new brain connections. When we are stressed or anxious our breathing can sometimes become shallow or short.

Slowing the breath calms the nervous system, this means you can calm the aggressive or stress response.

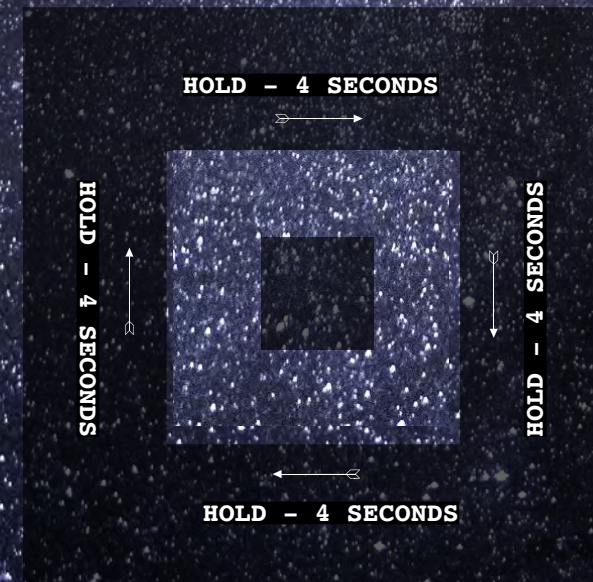
While breathing is an automatic response, breath regulation helps to reduce tension, it helps by providing a single focus of attention, this is the most common way to relax and reduce tension in our bodies.

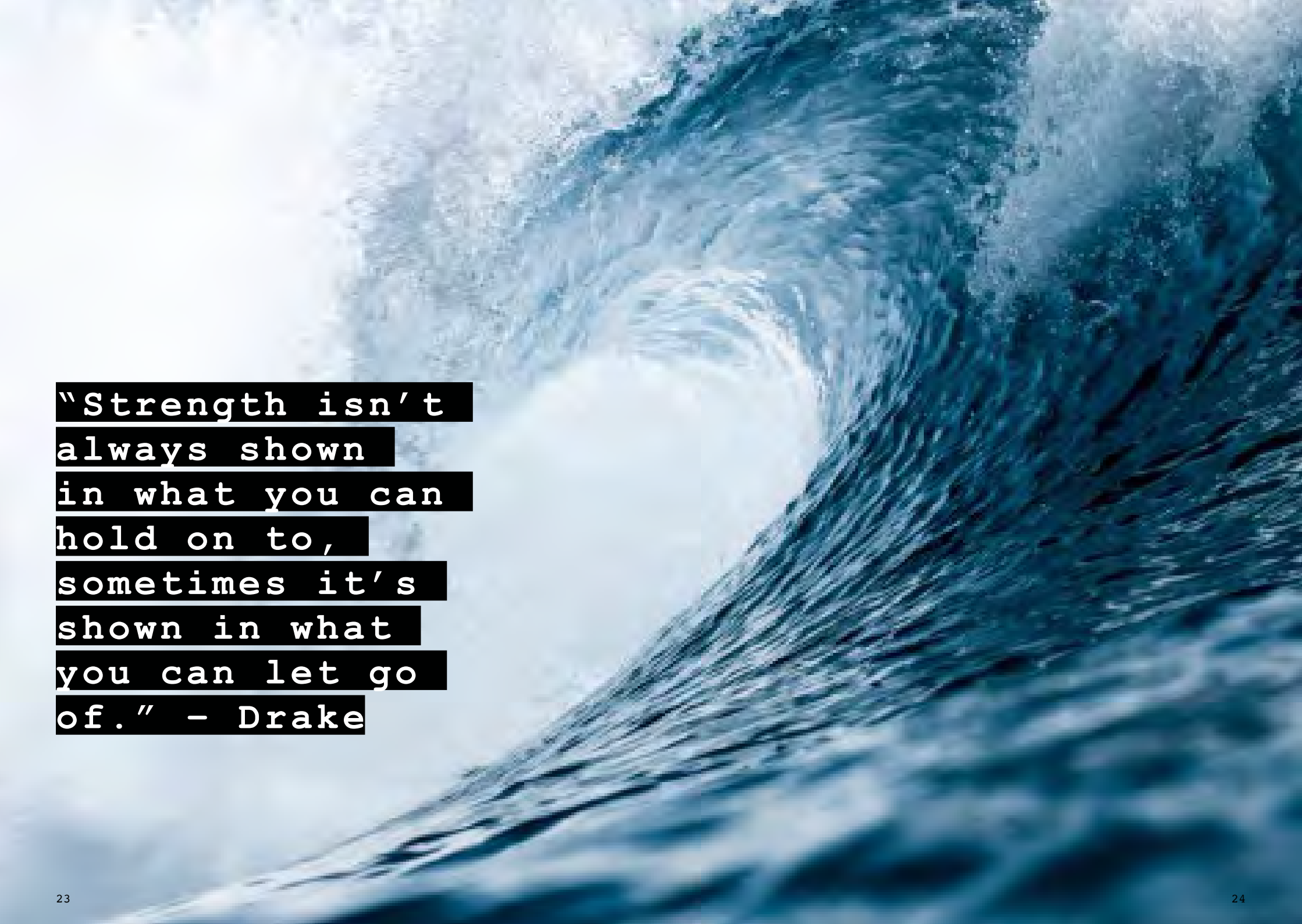
Important to note that for breathing to be most effective it needs to be done through the nose, not the mouth, another tip it's really important you find the right breathing techniques for you.

The next page is an example of a super simple breathing exercise you can use next time you're feeling stressed, angry or tense...

## Box Breathing

1. Inhale for a count of 4
2. Hold your breath for a count of 4
3. Exhale for a count of 4
4. Hold your breath for a count of 4
5. Repeat





"Strength isn't  
always shown  
in what you can  
hold on to,  
sometimes it's  
shown in what  
you can let go  
of." – Drake

## BULLET JOURNALING #2

We spoke about the different types of self-care at the beginning of this booklet physical, emotional, social, spiritual, personal, space, financial and work.

Here's an example of a bullet journal activity based on physical self-care.

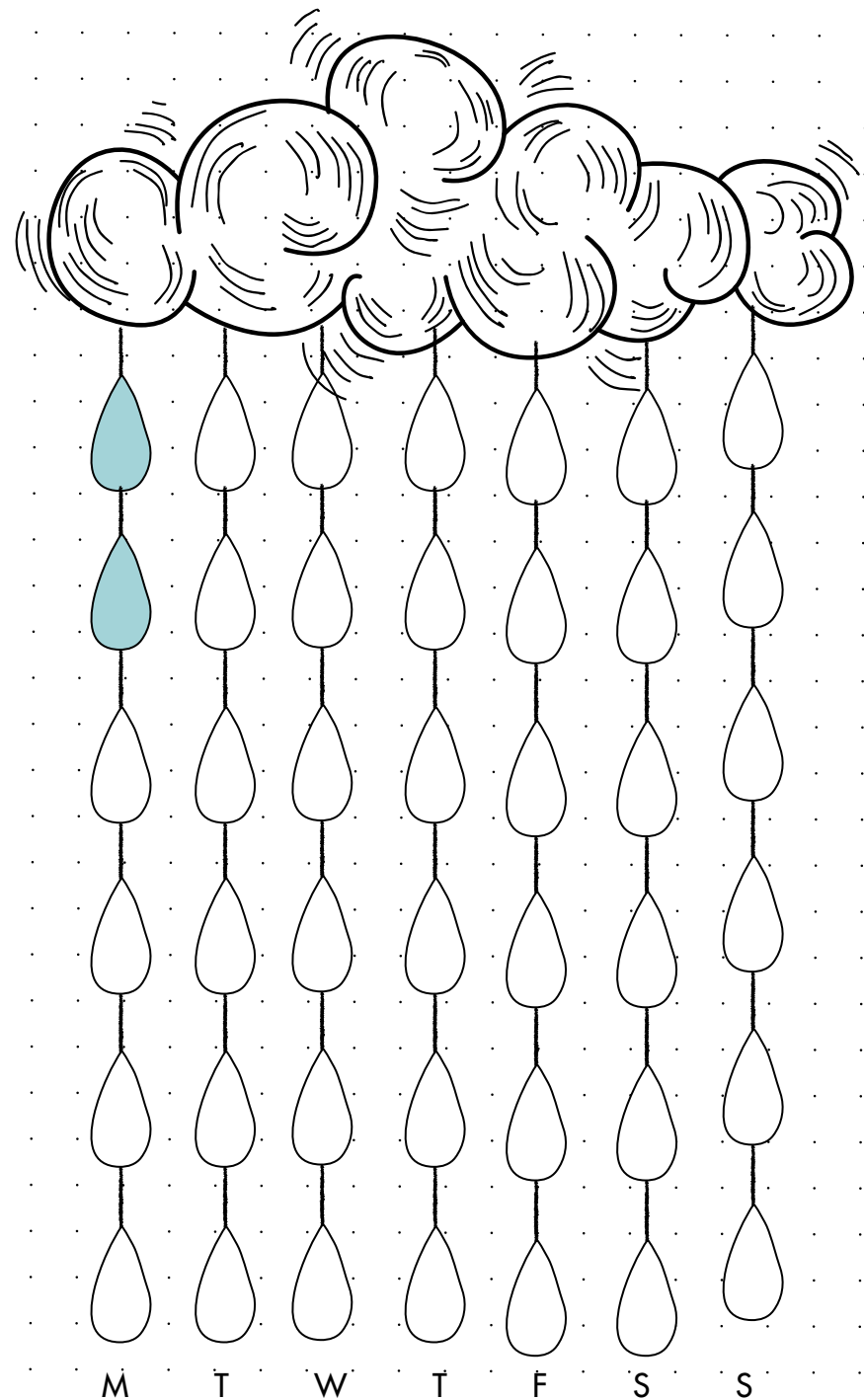
Water is essential to our body and mind. Some of the important things water helps our bodies to do are:

- keep our body temperature in check
- lubricate and cushion your joints, spinal cord, and tissues
- get rid of waste
- maximise physical performance
- moisturise the skin to maintain its texture and appearance.

On average, adults need to drink about 3 liters of water per day. Young men aged 14–18 years need to 1.9 liters (about 7–8 glasses) a day and young women aged 14–18 years 1.6 liters (about 6 glasses).

### Water log

- Draw one drop per cup of water you need to drink each day
- Write the day underneath the string of drops and colour in each drop every time you drink a glass of water.





# MOVEMENT

Exercise is a key component to wellness but moving our bodies is not only about exercise.

Movement helps us to feel good because it releases happy chemicals in our brain called endorphins. Regular exercise/movement reduces stress, improves sleep, calms our nervous system, boosts our mood and reduces our perception of pain.

You might already be involved in a team sport or other form of movement such as dance or martial arts; or you may love swimming, walking or running. Whatever it might be, movement is essential to wellness! It's important to find a form of movement that doesn't feel like a chore.

Perhaps try doing the body scan activity and sensing what your body needs. Movement might take the form of a walk, dancing freely, shaking it out, doing some cartwheels, or simply doing a few gentle stretches.



## TALKING & CONNECTION

Humans are social creatures who thrive off the companionship of others. There is a lot of research which shows the positive impact that community connection has on building and sustaining a positive mental state, as well as evidence which suggests that feeling disconnected and isolated from others can result in poorer health outcomes. Plus, with social distancing regulations still in place, staying connected with the people we love is more important than ever!

Every one of our relationships is unique, and they all provide us with a different type of support. It might be emotional (someone to talk to when you feel sad), practical (someone who helps you complete difficult tasks), informational (someone who gives good advice) or social support (people we feel emotionally connected to).

It's important to put effort into keeping these connections strong, and we can do this by acknowledging and extending appreciation towards those special people in our lives.

## Who are three important people in your life?

What if there are not three people you can think of that provide you with the support you need?

Remember this: friends can be found anywhere!

Engage with activities that you enjoy, connect with your community, be open to meeting new people and starting a conversation, and take your first steps towards building the safe and supportive social network you deserve.

# BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are a healthy, normal and necessary part of self-care. Boundaries help us identify what is important to us as well as what our limits are. Boundaries can be physical or emotional, and can be with others but also include boundaries you set with yourself. Boundaries are not selfish or mean.

Boundaries can look different from one person to the next, so it's important to think about what is right for you. When it comes to setting boundaries, clear communication is the key, with a plan of how to follow up if someone doesn't respect the boundary you have set.

## Some examples of boundaries with others:

- It's okay to say no
- I don't have to fix others
- I don't have to please others
- I have the right to privacy
- It's okay to not want to hug/kiss/touch other people or have them hug/kiss/touch me
- I have the right to request a certain amount of personal space/physical distance from

## Some examples of boundaries with yourself:

- Not answering work emails outside of work hours
- Sticking to your budget
- Keeping a regular bedtime and wake-up time
- Limiting screen time/social media time
- It's okay to say yes to help
- It's okay to stay away from people who are hurtful/increase my stress levels

It can be difficult to start working out boundaries at this time of your life. It can be useful to work out and practice things to say in different situations.

"Sorry I can't this weekend. I'm a massive introvert and I've had a really big week and I really need some time on my own."

"I'm feeling really overwhelmed with the amount of stuff I have going on at the moment. I really just need some time out to chill. I'll be back on board tomorrow"

"I'm really not up for it, it's just not my thing."

Boundaries are also super important when it comes to relationships. Check out page 17 in the Healthy Relationships section for more...

## Respecting other peoples' boundaries

Just as it's important for you to be able to set your own boundaries, it's super important to also respect other's boundaries. Sometimes their boundaries might not make sense to you but it's important to respect someone's wishes if they are not comfortable with a way you are acting towards them.

### Some examples of other peoples' boundaries

- It's OK for them to say no
- They have the right to privacy
- It's OK if they do not want to hug/kiss/touch you
- They have the right to request a certain amount of personal space/physical distance from others
- It's OK for them to have other friends/hobbies other than you
- It's OK for them to change their mind
- It's OK for them to ask for space

Sometimes it can be difficult, embarrassing or upsetting when someone sets a boundary with you. There is no need to feel embarrassed or upset when this happens. By practicing empathy it becomes easier to understand why a boundary might be in place.

Some things you can say if someone sets a boundary with you are:

**OK, that's cool. Catch ya later...**

**OK, no dramas. Thanks for letting me know.**

**Respect that. No pressure! Catch ya at school next week...**

## Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand other people's feelings and see things from their point of view. It's important in lots of different relationships including family, friends, romantic relationships, work situations...

It helps you to build better and more meaningful connections with people. It can also help you to regulate your emotions. It helps you to be good friend or partner and is an important foundation of healthy relationships.

### Someone who has empathy might:

- be a good listener
- pay attention to other people
- offer help and support to other people
- be non-judgmental
- be open about their feelings
- offer physical affection
- respect other's boundaries.

## BULLET JOURNALING # 3

We spoke about the different types of self-care at the beginning of this booklet physical, emotional, social, spiritual, personal, space, financial and work.

Here's a bullet journal activity that you can apply to any of the types of self-care. We've listed a few examples below but you can make up your own depending on what works for you.

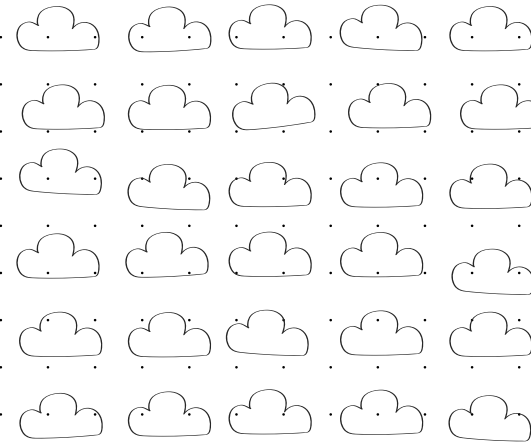
### Habit tracker

- Draw some fun shapes or symbols to represent each day of the month.
- Underneath each one, write one self-care habit you'd like to track.
- Colour in each day you complete this habit.
- At the end of the month, look back on what you spend your time on and see if there are any gaps!

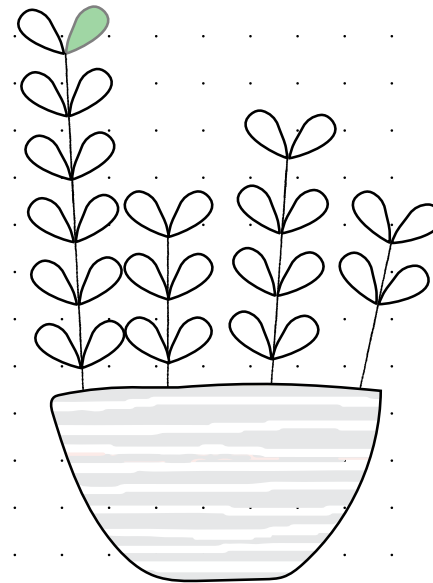
Some other examples you could use are:

Listened to music  
Stopped scrolling and put the phone down  
Organised my space  
Drank 6 cups of water today  
Connected with nature - sat in a park, stared at the clouds etc.  
Got 8 hours sleep  
Ate a healthy dinner

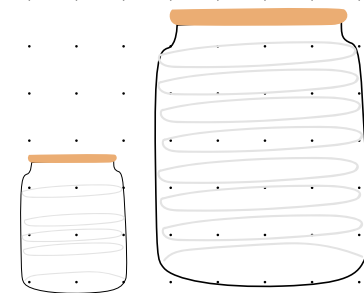
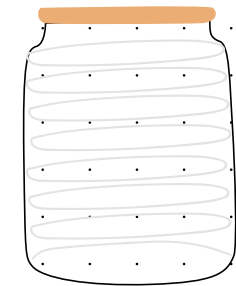
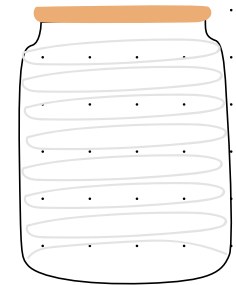
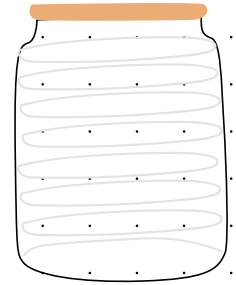
If you've enjoyed these bullet journaling activities, there are lots available online. Just google 'bullet journal ideas'.



said no to something I didn't want to do



made time for connecting



organised my space

# SELF – COMPASSION

Self-compassion is the act of extending love, acceptance and understanding to ourselves. Self-compassion is not the same as self-pity, which can often lead to feelings of disconnection and hopelessness. Instead, self-compassion is the acknowledgment that we will all experience difficulties and make mistakes on our journey to find what makes us happy.

There are three helpful things to remember as we practice self-compassion:

- 1** It is the decision to accept that being imperfect is a part of being human, and we don't need to punish or isolate ourselves from the things that make us happy if we make a mistake,
- 2** it is the decision to speak gently and intentionally to ourselves, and not believe all the negative thoughts we have about ourselves (remember – our thoughts aren't facts!), and
- 3** it is the decision to mindfully observe our painful thoughts and experiences without allowing them to negatively impact, dictate or limit our future.

Sometimes, people can find it easier to show compassion to their loved ones than to themselves.

**This exercise might be helpful for you to practice giving yourself the same kindness and support that you give your family and friends:**

Think back to a time when a friend or family member came to you for support and you were able to help them in a meaningful way. How did you respond to them?

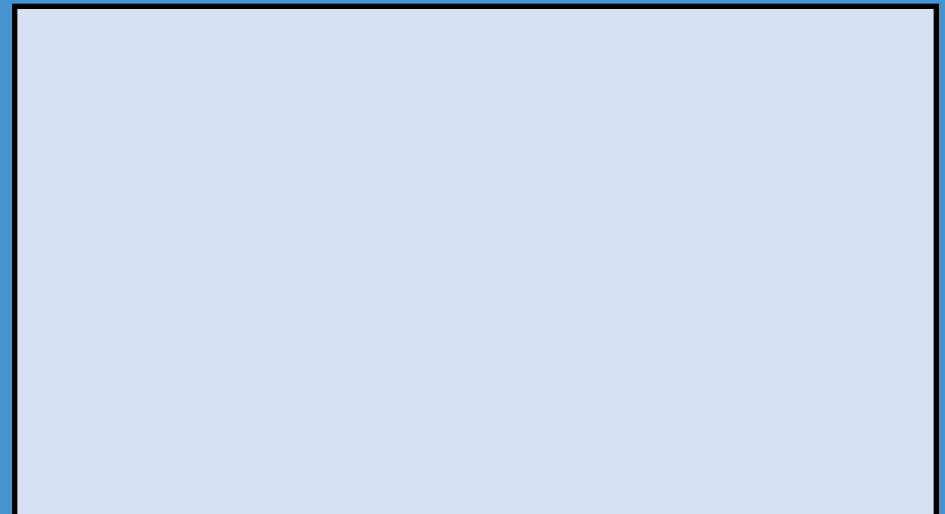
Write down what you said, how you said it, what you did, and what you were able to give to them in their time of need.

Think back to a time when you yourself were struggling. How did you respond to yourself?

Write down what you said to yourself, how you said it, what you did, and what you were able to give yourself during your time of need.

Take notice of the differences in your responses. Which responses were more kind and balanced? Ask yourself why you responded differently.

Write down how you would have responded differently if you had treated yourself with the same kindness that you would show a friend. Plan how you will respond differently to yourself next time.



# SELF-CARE PLAN

How am I feeling today?



Today I am going to incorporate my physical self-care by...

Today I am going to incorporate my emotional self-care by...

Today I am going to incorporate my

\_\_\_\_\_ self-care by..

