



Foundations of trauma-informed, relationship-based practice

An introductory course for everyone

A self-care booklet for course participants

Introduction

Self-care is essential for maintaining physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It involves taking time to nurture yourself through activities that promote relaxation, health, and personal growth. Prioritising self-care helps reduce stress, improve focus and boost overall happiness. By setting aside time for rest, exercise and hobbies, you can recharge and better manage the challenges of daily life.

As part of this course, you will learn about various things which may have an impact upon you. It is important to recognise and be aware of any feelings that you may experience when doing this course – take breaks when you feel you need to and practice self-care.

Self-care takes many different shapes and forms and, like trauma, people will experience it differently. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to practice self-care. It is about finding something that works for you.

Below are some activities, recommended by the NHS and MIND, which you may find helpful in supporting self-care. They are grouped into five categories namely: Connect, Take Notice, Create and Learn, Get Active and Give.

More information and further resources can be found on these websites:

- [NHS five steps to mental well-being](#)
- [Find out more about the five ways to well-being on the MIND website](#)

Connect

Building a network of positive relationships is crucial for anyone supporting or caring for others, including yourself, as you study trauma-informed approaches.

We connect with lots of different people in our lives from family and friends to neighbours, work colleagues, social groups and more.

Creating a relationship map can be a helpful way of exploring your own relationships – it can help you to recognise the value of your connections and friendships with others. You can find more information about creating relationship maps on this website: [Building your support network](#)

Once you have completed your relationship map it may be helpful to place it somewhere prominent so you can remind yourself of the positive support you have and who you can reach out to if you need support.

Take notice

When life is busy it is easy to overlook the present moment but practicing mindfulness can help us to feel 'grounded' and calm.

Mindfulness refers to the act of paying attention to our thoughts, feelings and surroundings. This could include the following:

- Remembering the simple things that give you joy.
- Being curious about the world around you.
- Taking in and savouring beautiful things.
- Noticing changes.

Spending just a few minutes each day being mindful, during a walk for example, can help us feel calmer, more focused and better able to manage our emotions.

Mindfulness exercises can take many different forms, a few of which are described below:

Grounding and focus

Calm your breathing by taking deep breaths in and out. As you do this, identify five objects around you that you can see, four sounds you can hear, three textures you can feel, two smells you can sense or imagine, and one taste you can sense or imagine. Once you have done this, slowly come back to the present and breathe normally. Notice if anything has changed or feels different after completing this.

Breathing focus

Imagine a box or square drawn in front of you (you could draw your own box on paper). Use the sides of the box to guide your breathing, breathe in for a count of four as you trace along one side of the box with your eyes or finger, breathe out for four along the second side, breathe in for four along the third side and then out for four before you reach where you started. Notice if anything has changed or feels different after completing this.

Engaging with music

Taking a break to listen to music that you enjoy can help you to relax, smile and feel energized, and it may leave you feeling refreshed and ready to return to your studies.

Create and learn

Lifelong learning boosts self-esteem. It helps us connect with others and gives us a sense of purpose, while courses such as this one on relationship-based, trauma-informed approaches deepen our understanding.

According to Mind (2017) learning also helps with our ability to cope with stress and gives us a sense of purpose and hope. Go to [MIND Learn](#) for more information.

Using a reflective journal can be a helpful way of recording your learning and noting your thoughts and feelings. It can be done in various creative ways including mind maps, bullet points, images, doodles, collages or any way that works for you. You can find more information about reflective journals on this [reflective writing](#) website.

Drawing or doodling can be another way to calm the mind and slow it down to increase focus and attention. Regularly creating art in this way can relieve stress and anxiety and increase confidence. You can find more information on this [Zentangle](#) website.

Get active

According to the World Health Organisation (2021), being active can help reduce the symptoms of depression and anxiety and improve your overall well-being.

Being active can include various activities such as walking, yoga, swimming, climbing, playing sport or team games.

You can find more information about getting active on this [NHS physical exercise](#) website.

Give

Giving can help us feel connected to others and promote positive feelings in ourselves and others.

Giving can take many different forms including doing something kind for a family member, friend or stranger. Volunteering your time, your words and your presence helps to create meaningful connections with those around you. You can find more information about volunteering opportunities on the [Volunteer Scotland](#) website.

We hope that you have found this guide helpful – but we want to stress that it in no way provides information on all the ways in which you can practise self-care. Self-care is a journey and people find comfort from different things in different ways.



Take care

If you feel affected by anything within this course and would like to speak to someone, information on free helplines that you can contact are listed below:

Helplines:

- [Samaritans](#)
Tel: 116 123
- [Breathing Space](#)
Tel: 0800 83 85 87
- [Mind](#)
Tel: 0300 102 1234
- [NHS Mental Health Services](#)
Tel: 111