

# Emergency Self-Care Worksheet

Why do I need to do this? It is very hard to think of what to do for yourself when things are difficult. When our emotions are dysregulated or when we've experienced immense stress or unexpected stress, our brain is struggling. By having a plan created ahead of time, you can turn to this distress. Consider these three general areas when deciding what should be in your emergency self-care plan: what to do, what to think, and what to avoid.

## 1. Make a list of what you can do when you are upset that will be good for you.

- a. What will help me relax?
  - Breathing, muscle relaxation, music, reading for fun, watching a movie, exercising, taking a walk
- b. What do I like to do when I'm in a good mood?
  - List all the things you like to do so you remember what they are when you need to think of something to do.
- c. What can I do that will help me throughout the day?
  - Avoid too much caffeine if feeling anxious, remember to breathe, watch my thoughts, practice meditation or mindfulness
- d. Other: What unique things work for you?

## 2. Make a list of people you can contact if you need support or distraction.

- a. For example, your best friend, other friends, sibling, parent, grandparent, other relative, therapist, priest/minister/rabbi/imam, etc.
- b. Divide the list of people into categories by asking yourself the following questions:
  - Who can I call if I am feeling depressed or anxious?
  - Who can I call if I am lonely?
  - Who will come over to be with me if I need company?
  - Who will listen?
  - Who will encourage me to get out of the house and do something fun?
  - Who will remind me to follow my self-care plan?

## 3. Next, make a list of positive things to say to yourself when you are giving yourself a hard time.

- a. Think about the way in which you speak to yourself in situation and then think about how you speak to a friend, loved one, 5<sup>th</sup> grader if they came to you about a situation.

Examples of changing negative self-talk into positive self-talk:

- "I got a B- on the paper; that proves that I shouldn't be in graduate school." CHANGE to: "That is a good grade. I will work on getting a better one."
- "I do not understand research methods, I am so dumb." CHANGE to: "A lot of students are having a problem with this course. Maybe we should start a study group to help each other."

**4. Next, make a list of who and what to avoid when you are having a hard time.**

- a. Not everyone can be supportive or helpful with every situation. Go to the ones who can be supportive about the specific issues you are dealing with.
- b. Example of people to avoid:
  - My partner broke up with me. I will not call my sister as she always hated them. She'll be happy their gone.
  - I didn't get my assignment in on time and I'm worried about my grade. I will not call my dad. He is a stickler for doing things in advance so that they are never late. He'll just give me a hard time.
  - I am discouraged about my grades. I won't call my best friend because she'll just tell me not to worry about it and to quit school if it's such a hassle.
- c. Examples of things to avoid:
  - I should not stay in the house all day.
  - I should not stay in bed all day.
  - I should open the shades and let the light in.
  - I should not listen to sad music.
  - I should not drink too much alcohol.

**5. Write out your plan and put it somewhere close, this will help you use the plan.**

- a. You can make a 3x5" card, make a note in your phone, create a poster for your room.
- b. Put this plan somewhere where you will see it often.
- c. Modify your lists as you discover what works and what does not work.
- d. Use the emergency self-care plan as you need it!

*Overview of creating an Emergency Self-Care Plan*

1. Make a list of what you can do when you are upset that will be good for you.
2. Make a list of people you can contact if you need support or distraction.
3. Make a list of positive things to say to yourself when you are giving yourself a hard time.
4. Make a list of who and what to avoid when you are having a hard time.
5. Write out your plan and put it somewhere close, this will help you use the plan.

Source: Elaine S. Rinfrette, PhD, LCSW-R, modified by Jenny Ortiz, 2018.