

Taking care of myself

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Self-neglect and having an uncaring attitude towards yourself are very common results of stress or feeling low – and this in turn contributes to further low mood and low self-worth.

Building a programme of self-caring habits can interrupt this vicious downward spiral. Using constructive self-soothing strategies is a vital skill for dealing with stress and other difficult feelings, like anxiety and anger.

1. My self-soothing strategies

Read the 'Taking care of yourself' page and write down some ideas for your own self-soothing strategies related to all of your senses:

Sense	Examples	My list of things to try
Sight/ surroundings	<i>Tidy room with plant and soothing colours, pictures of friends or nature scenes, getting out into nature, funny or light-hearted TV/movies</i>	
Touch	<i>Pampering washing ritual, stroking a pet, massage, hugs, (self-respectful) sexual activity, snuggling up in a warm duvet</i>	
Hearing	<i>Playlist of uplifting and/or energetic music, sitting near the sea/moving water, recordings of natural sounds, meditation or relaxation tapes, favourite radio programmes, comedy, using earplugs (if you are being disturbed by unwanted noise)</i>	
Smell	<i>Having clean clothes and bed linen, aromatherapy or incense in your room, fresh flowers or getting out to smell sea air or other natural smells, choosing a new deodorant/ perfume/ aftershave</i>	
Taste	<i>Try new tastes, cook healthy tasty food instead of bland processed food, treat yourself with small amounts of dark chocolate or ripe fruit or other sweet tastes, savour your food/ eat mindfully</i>	

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2. Self-care in the mornings

First thing in the morning is often a particularly difficult time when your mood is low. If you are finding it difficult to get out of bed in the morning then making yourself a clear, self-caring plan for the first half hour of the day can help you start the day as well as possible. Try to set yourself the target of getting up out of bed within 10 minutes of waking up.

Example:

When I wake up ___ I will get up straight away if I can, or else have the alarm set to give myself one 10-minute snooze if I want one and then get up.

Straight after getting out of bed I will ___ put on the light or open the curtain and take a few deep, relaxing breaths

Then I will prepare myself for the day in a self-caring way by ___ having a shower and getting dressed and eating something nutritious for breakfast

If I am finding this difficult to do ___ I will be kind to myself and recognise how hard it is to do this when I am feeling so low. I will encourage myself to try anyway, because I know it will make me feel better in the long run. If it is a particularly difficult day I will let myself go back to bed for half an hour before trying again.

My morning plan:

When I wake up _____

Straight after getting out of bed I will _____

Then I will prepare myself for the day in a caring way by _____

If I am finding this difficult to do I will _____



“I have learnt to respect myself. This began in action rather than an inner conviction, and through this became something I actually believed in. Initially I made myself physically take care of myself, and keep myself safe, and this grew into an awareness that I was actually worth taking care of.” – Mina



3. Making a soothing 'home space'

Consider:

Is your room a place a welcoming, comfortable place to be? Does it offer you a soothing place to rest and re-charge, as well as an environment conducive to study and concentration? Some aspects of this might be outside your control, but what can you do to improve your home environment and make it a less depressing place to be?

Write down five simple things you can do to make your room a more pleasant environment in the form of a set of intentions.

Write down the easiest step first on the list and give yourself a target for when you will achieve it. Ideas for the list include: put up posters of natural scenery or beautiful art, get a plant, put up photographs of family and friends to remind you of your support network and photographs of yourself having a good time to remind you that depression doesn't always have to win, tidy up and give yourself a system for keeping things tidy, wash your bed linen.

My intention statement:

I will improve my home environment in the following ways:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

If this feels daunting I will ask _____ to help me.

4. Next steps

Build on these basic self-care strategies by reading the 'Focusing outward' and 'Getting going' pages, and planning how to tackle the lethargy and withdrawal of depression by including more purposeful and enjoyable activities in your life step by step.

