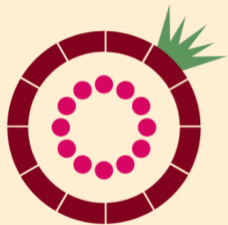


# Self-Care Review



Christina Baird  
equipping you to be wise

[www.breadandpomegranates.com](http://www.breadandpomegranates.com)

Perhaps what you need to work on most  
is your relationship  
to the self part of self-care not the care part.



# Introduction

Care. I am sure that you are wonderfully good at care, after all it is your purpose, you are dedicated to caring for others. So much care and compassion flows from you, to your family, to your clients, to your friends and neighbours. But does the same level of care flow inwards towards yourself, with the same regularity and dedication?

I am sure that you know all about self-care, it is encouraged and talked about in most of our work-places, you might even tell others about their need for self-care. Self-care is much easier to talk about than to do though isn't it? Self-care is often portrayed as a list of actions, this makes it look easy, which we know it is not always. Part of the problem is that we think self-care should be exciting and glamorous when actually those things that are best for us like eating right and exercising are boring and hard work.

Self-care is essential and boring, but I know that you are good at caring so what makes it difficult must lie with the 'self' piece of self-care not the care part. The base for caring for yourself well in the face of the emotional demands of your work, is establishing a compassionate and caring attitude towards yourself. It comes from the stance of believing that your needs are just as important as your clients, family, friends and neighbours, and acting on that belief. The ability to do self-care well is rooted in your own ideas and beliefs about your self-worth and value. Learning to develop your self-compassion takes self-care from a task on an already overloaded task list to an attitude towards yourself that infuses your day, week and month. Treating ourselves with compassion includes the ability to be kind to ourselves, the ability to stop, to recognise our own needs, see them as valid and important and to meet those needs.

Self-compassion is an attitude or stance we take towards ourselves, how we are (flaws, mistakes and all) and what we experience. Neff and Germer (2019) describe self-compassion has having three components - self kindness, common humanity and mindfulness or acceptance. It is helpful to think of self-kindness as the ability to talk to ourselves, and treat ourselves as we would talk to and treat a good friend (or even a client). An important part of this kind talk is acknowledging when we are upset and comforting ourselves in the middle of our struggle, or in the face of the mistakes we make. Common humanity is being able to take a larger view of suffering, and remaining aware of the suffering of others. This means that we don't feel alone in our distress, like we are the only one who suffers with these experiences. Acceptance and/or mindfulness is the ability to be aware of our feelings and to accept them for how they are, to accept that it is ok to be upset, or sad or angry, that it's ok to struggle.

Self-care birthed in an attitude of self-compassion is being attentive to your own needs. It changes self-care from saying "I must go for a run on Friday" to asking yourself how you are right now and being intentional in your response. Continually acknowledging, valuing, being attentive towards and accepting all your needs and taking action to meet those needs. Being able to tend to ourselves is a protective factor as we care for others and manage the complex demands of our caring professions.



take care,  
Christina



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How do you define self-care, for yourself and in your life?

What thoughts, feelings, resistances or reactions does this definition stir up in you?

Think back to the beginning of the year...

What were your plans, hopes or aspirations for self-care this year?

What have you achieved in self-care action? What has been challenging to implement?





Consider those times when you found it harder to implement your self-care. What triggered that struggle? What circumstances contribute to making it easy or difficult to implement self-care?

What shows up for you when you say “I am worthy of care”?

What ideals from your culture shape how you see your needs in relation to others' needs?

What do you believe about talking about your needs? What patterns of getting needs met do you observe in the people around you? What patterns of getting your needs met do you fall into?





Do you find it easy or difficult to value your own needs?

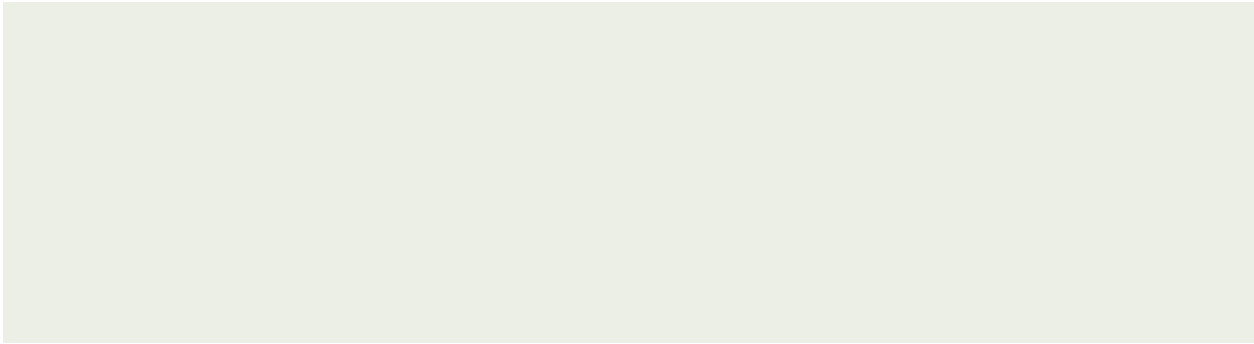
How much attention do you pay to your own needs? Which of your needs do you tend to ignore during a work-day (eg: lunch break, drinking water, sunshine).

Have you ever practiced self-compassion? What do you notice about your inner self-talk, is it kind or critical?

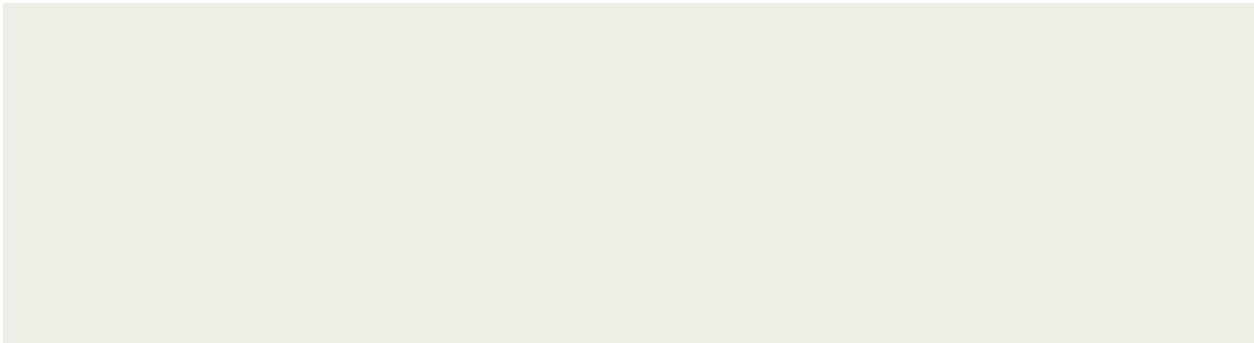
What are your values or how do you ideally want to treat yourself?



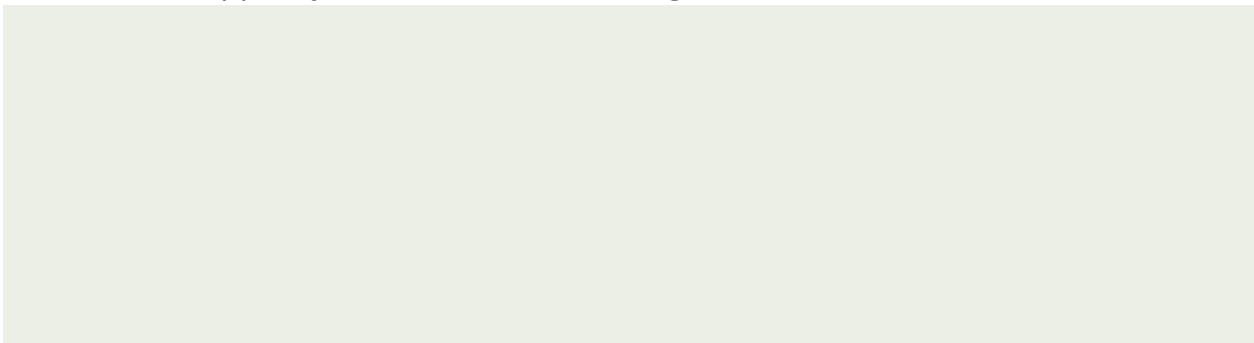
How could these values help you attend to your own needs?



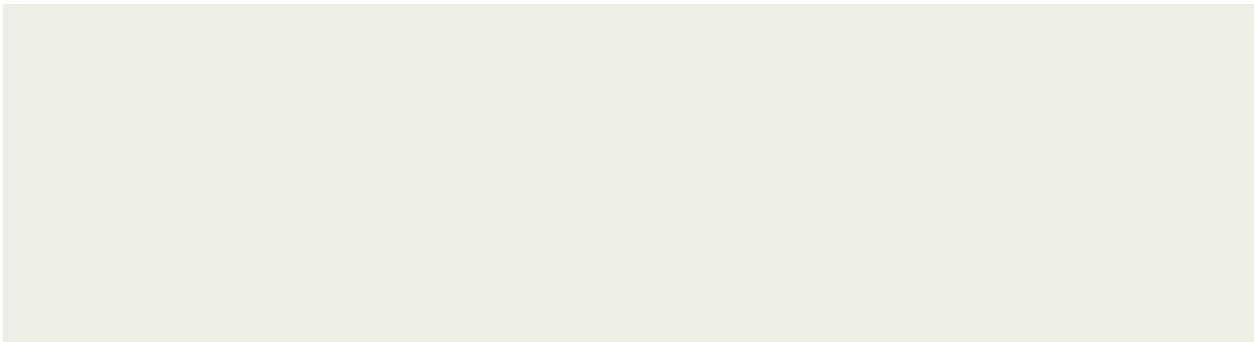
What changes do you want to make to your attitude to yourself and your needs?



Who could support you to make these changes?



Do you have self-care practices at different levels and frequencies? (e.g. hourly, daily, weekly, monthly)





# Self-Care Ideas

## When your body is signally it needs care

### Daily

- Drink water
- Stretch every hour
- Prepare breakfast the night before
- Go to bed by 10pm
- Have device free time for 2 hours before sleep
- Replace caffeine with herbal tea
- Jump on the trampoline
- Strengthening exercises

### Weekly

- Ensure your computer table or chair provides good posture and support.
- Go for a long walk/run
- Buy more fruit and vegetables
- Take an exercise class
- Take a bath
- Massage your feet

## When your work/activities feel fatiguing

### Daily

- Pause at the end of the day to acknowledge what you have achieved
- Distinguish work time from rest time in some way, particularly if you work from home. (eg: shut the door, shutdown the computer).
- Find ways to generate a tangible sense of accomplishment (this could be through arts, crafts or online learning).
- Create transitions (this could be as short as time to do some deep breathing) between work and parenting/caregiving if you are doing both.
- Allow yourself to feel the emotions that your work elicits in you, accept them as a normal part of the work.
- Talk about your feelings with colleagues/trusted others.

### Weekly

- Make an effort to create rituals that distinguish the weekend from the week.
- Reflect at the end of the week on your successes and struggles.
- Review your expectations - are they realistic?



- Review what is working, and keep tweaking until you get the balance you desire and need.
- Learn to live well with all the not done things on your to-do list.

### When you notice relational needs

#### Daily

- Schedule a call/coffee with another adult.
- Prioritize a short time with your partner each day, to reconnect.
- Use noise cancelling headphones if you need some alone or quiet time.
- Notice and name your kids strengths when you see them using them.
- Talk to someone not about work or chores.
- Connect with your workmates over more than just work.

#### Weekly

- Reflect on who makes you feel most supported, call them weekly.
- Organize activities just for fun (why don't adults get to do scavenger hunts?).
- Tell 3 people you appreciate them and why.
- Make an effort to notice what is going well with your relationships.
- Make regular catch ups with important friends so that you don't have to have the stress or organising them (eg: the first Sunday of the month is brunch together).

### When you notice emotional needs.

#### Daily

- Give yourself a little space each day to tune into your feelings.
- Journal about what you are feeling, explore the feeling and become curious about it.
- Express your feelings through art or other creative arts.
- Take moments to relax your body and mind briefly and regularly.

#### Weekly

- Identify safe people that you can talk to about how you feel.
- Use mindfulness or relaxation techniques.
- Sing along to a playlist that expresses how you feel.
- Be kind to yourself and others when emotions burst out.
- Make space to allow grieving over the world or lost friends and family or other losses that you have experienced.



## When your thoughts or motivation need tending

### Daily

- Schedule daily rewards, a cup of coffee, a piece of chocolate, a walk in the garden.
- Start a gratitude (or moments of joy) journal.
- Find a mantra or saying that inspires you and stick it to your computer or mirror.
- Take it slow and savour the small things (the rain on a leaf, a cobweb, a sunset).
- Limit your social media and news intake.

### Weekly

- Create things to look forward to.
- Be alert to the mind messages that may be influencing your mood. Be wary of catastrophising, comparing or limiting thinking, and the impact these are having on you.
- Develop and nurture an inner coach to combat some of your inner critics.
- Write a list of your strengths.
- Do a random act of kindness for someone else.
- Do an act of kindness for yourself.

## When your spirit needs tending

### Daily

- Place your bare feet on the ground.
- Identify one guiding value for each day (eg: kindness, joy, authenticity).
- If you can't get out in nature, find some photos or videos that bring nature to you.
- Pick flowers.
- Read a few sentences of an inspirational book each day.
- Breathe.
- Walk or eat or washes dishes mindfully.

### Weekly

- Include rituals and meaningful traditions in your life.
- Connect with a small group who have similar beliefs.
- Schedule time for meditation/prayer/connection with a higher power.
- Create - allow the ideas to flow through you.
- Journal your questions or doubts about the world, your beliefs and who you need to be in this situation.
- Create an altar or sacred space at home





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022 5604117

[christina@breadandpomegranates.com](mailto:christina@breadandpomegranates.com)

[www.breadandpomegranates.com](http://www.breadandpomegranates.com)