

Keeping the **wheel** turning

Six areas of self-care. Find the flat spoke, and one small way to fill it.

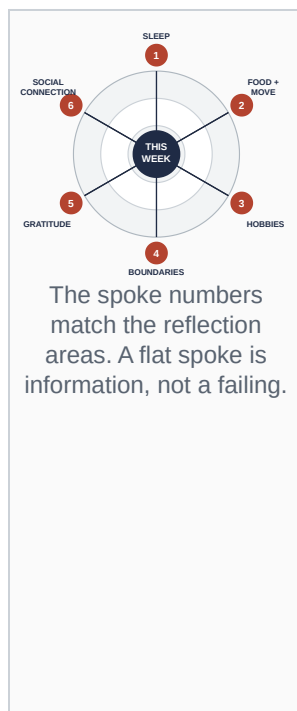
A survival skill, not a luxury.

Self-care is anything you do regularly to reduce stress and look after your physical and mental wellbeing. The wheel breaks it into six areas. Most people are strong in some and flat in others — that is normal, and it is where to start.

Use this in session or on your own. Be honest about how each area looks this week, not how you would like it to look.

1 THE SIX SPOKES Write one line about how each looks for you right now.

Sleep › Food & movement › Hobbies › Boundaries › Gratitude › Connection ↻



1 Sleep

Too little sleep goes with more frequent mental distress; a good night builds emotional resilience. Healthy adults are advised to get 7 to 9 hours.

My sleep this week: _____

2 Food and movement

Exercise releases brain chemicals such as endorphins and serotonin that lift mood. Better-quality diets are consistently linked with lower depression risk.

How I eat and move: _____

3 Hobbies and interests

Painting, knitting, music — time spent on anything you enjoy for its own sake raises mood and lowers stress.

What I do for enjoyment: _____

4 Boundaries

The limits you set to honor your emotional, psychological, and physical needs. A person with solid boundaries can say “no” without feeling the need to apologize.

A “no” I have been avoiding: _____

5 Gratitude

Taking time to notice what you value and appreciate. It is not automatic — it is a choice — and practiced daily it is linked with better mental wellbeing.

Today I am grateful for: _____

6 Social connection

Loving, supportive relationships make us feel appreciated and give a sense of belonging. Too much time alone can leave you feeling lonely and out of touch.

Who I need more time with: _____



Check the bucket, too

Picture stress as water pouring into a bucket — work, relationships, grief, money, health.

Healthy coping (sleep, exercise, socializing, mindfulness) opens a tap and lets water out.

Unhealthy coping (alcohol, drugs, gambling) feels like relief but adds more water. When the bucket overflows, that is burnout.

Optional reflection: Headaches, fatigue, changes in appetite or sleep, feeling detached or cynical, withdrawing, using substances to cope — several of these together are a signal to act, not a verdict. Bring them to session.

One small turn of the flat spoke

You do not have to fix all six areas — or feel motivated — to begin.

Notice

WHICH SPOKE

Look at your six lines on page 1. Which is flattest? Which coping habit is adding water to the bucket instead of draining it?

ASK “Where am I on the stress curve — laid back, at my best, or tipping into anxiety?”

Choose

ONE ACTION

Pick one small thing from that spoke. Same bedtime three nights. A ten-minute walk. One text to a friend. Wellbeing over weight; ten minutes counts.

ASK “What is the smallest version of this I would actually do?”

Protect

THE SPACE

Healthy boundaries make self-care possible: say no without apologizing, and accept no from others. Use an “I” statement if you need to.

SAY “I felt ____ when ____, and I need ____.”

WORKED EXAMPLE

Start with a specific week.

My flattest spoke is sleep: five hours most nights, phone in bed, coffee at 4 p.m. to get through. I keep telling myself I will “catch up on the weekend,” which throws the schedule off further.

A small turn: Phone charges in the kitchen, decaf after 2 p.m., and the same bedtime on three weeknights. I will not try to fix food and exercise at the same time.

2 MY WHEEL, IN A FEW LINES

Use page 1. Fragments are fine; leave blanks if needed.

My flattest spoke is _____

What is filling my bucket right now _____

What drains it (healthy) _____

What I have been reaching for instead _____

One person who could support this _____

A boundary that would protect it _____

3 ONE THING I’LL TRY

Make it small enough to be doable — not impressive.

This week I will _____

For how long, and on which days _____

What might get in the way _____

After a week, I’ll look for _____

Notice what changed in your mood, energy, or sleep, and what you would adjust. The aim is to learn, not to prove yourself.

If you cannot switch off at night

Keep the bedroom quiet, dark, and cool; screens out of the room; caffeine early in the day; dinner about two hours before bed. Try a body scan — notice each part of your body from head down and breathe into any tension — or picture a peaceful place in full detail.

If the same nightmare keeps returning, ask your counselor about image rehearsal. And if the bucket overflows anyway, that is information, not failure — bring the whole sheet to your next session.