

## Creating a Care Plan



Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, act, make choices, and relate to others.

Although there are many things that impact mental health that are beyond our control (for instance, genetics, accidents, traumatic events, etc.), there are also many things that everyone can do to help maintain their mental health, and to support treatment and recovery if they have a mental illness.

**A CARE PLAN is an intervention tool that is created by you and designed to help you engage the practices and resources that help you stay healthy. This might include your favorite self-care activities, important reminders, and ways to activate your self-care community.**

**Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.**

This guide will take you through the steps of creating a Care Plan for yourself. If you get stuck or would like help coming up with ideas for your Care Plan, reach out to people who might be able to serve as a sounding board, reality check, or brainstorming partner (i.e., Counselor/Therapist, Wellness Resource Center staff, Chaplain/Faith Leader, trusted family and friends, etc.). You can also find additional resources and ideas for self-care on the [Wellness Resource Center website](#).



A Care Plan is only useful and successful if you use it. Refer to your Care Plan every day to ensure that you're engaging the practices and resources that help you stay healthy. If you find that something in your Care Plan is not working for you, then revise it!

## Reflect

Taking time to reflect on your own habits and coping skills is an important first step in developing a Self-Care Plan.

Coping strategies are things that we do to deal with stress, uncomfortable emotions, or life problems. Unhealthy coping strategies tend to feel good in the moment, but have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies lead to long-lasting positive outcomes, even if they might not provide instant relief or gratification. Here are a few examples of Healthy and Unhealthy coping strategies.

### Healthy Coping Strategies

- Be physically active
- Eat regular (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner) healthy meals
- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Spend time with nature
- Say “no” to extra responsibilities
- Follow/practice spiritual beliefs
- Engage in creatively (i.e., draw, paint, sing, write a song, cook a new meal)

### Unhealthy Coping Strategies

- Yelling
- Overeating
- Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol
- Smoking
- Taking drugs
- Biting fingernails
- Skipping meals
- Isolate/withdraw from supportive or enjoyable social relationships
- Live a sedentary lifestyle
- Focus on everything that is not going well
- Try to “do it all”

**Positive healthy coping skills are an important part of your self-care toolkit.** If you find yourself using unhealthy strategies, work on reducing and then eliminating those strategies. Begin by choosing one action/strategy that you feel is most harmful and identify a healthy strategy to replace it. If you need help identifying alternatives, there are some ideas on the next page.

### Unhealthy Strategies I find myself using:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Alternative Strategies that I will try to use instead:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Develop a Daily Self-Care Plan

Engaging in regular self-care is essential for establishing and maintaining wellbeing. Take some time to consider what daily practices support your over-all wellbeing (as opposed to the kinds of self-care you might need in the event of a crisis). Keep in mind that just as you are a multi-dimensional whole person, self-care includes all of you—Physical, Emotional, Spiritual, Socio-Cultural, Environmental, Intellectual, and Career/Financial.

Use the table below (and on the next page) to identify the daily self-care practices and strategies that can support your wellbeing.

<b>Area of Self-Care</b>	<b>Current Practices</b> List the self-care habits you are using now to manage stress and stay healthy.	<b>Practices to Try</b> List the self-care habits you would like to use, but are not currently practicing.	<b>Obstacles to practicing self-care</b> Identify the obstacles keeping you from practicing these habits.	<b>Potential solutions to obstacles</b> What solutions can you identify to address the obstacles you listed?
<b>Physical</b> (i.e., get enough sleep; exercise; eat healthy; take a walk; dance; turn off your cell phone and pay attention to the physical sensations you experience; enjoy a cup of tea; listen to music)				
<b>Emotional/Psychological</b> (i.e., engage in positive activities, express how you feel; laugh; play; practice self-compassion; journal; engage in a daily gratitude practice; affirmations; take time to reflect and notice how you're feeling)				
<b>Spiritual</b> (i.e., take time for self-reflection; spend time in nature; find spiritual community; meditate; dance; pray; take yoga; volunteer to help others; foster self-forgiveness)				
<b>Socio-Cultural</b> (i.e., learn to say no; spend time with people who make you feel good; model healthy, respectful interpersonal relationships; stand up for yourself and for others around you; volunteer for a social justice cause)				

**Daily Self-Care Plan (continued)**

<b>Area of Self-Care</b>	<b>Current Practices</b> List the self-care habits you are using now to manage stress and stay healthy.	<b>Practices to Try</b> List the self-care habits you would like to use, but are not currently practicing.	<b>Obstacles to practicing self-care</b> Identify the obstacles keeping you from practicing these habits.	<b>Potential solutions to obstacles</b> What solutions can you identify to address the obstacles you listed?
<b>Environmental</b> (i.e., go into nature; feel your feet on the grass; watch the sunset)				
<b>Intellectual</b> (i.e., read a book; try something new; teach someone how to do something you enjoy; engage in a spirited debate)				
<b>Career/Financial</b> (i.e., save money for the future; practice a skill that might help you in your chosen career; reflect on what activities give you a sense of purpose and then do that)				

**Select one of the self-care practices that you would like to begin practicing and complete the sentences below:**

Today I commit to . . .

I want to do this because . . .

I will accomplish this by . . .

## Develop an Emergency Self-Care Plan

Take time to develop a plan in advance so that you don't have to scramble to come up with useful coping strategies when you're facing a crisis.

Emergency Self-Care Tools	Helpful Self-Care and Coping Strategies (What To Do)	Harmful/Unhealthy Coping Strategies (What To Avoid)
<p><b>Self-Soothing/Relaxation/Staying Calm</b>            What activities do you find soothing or relaxing?            (i.e., deep breathing, taking a walk, taking a shower, self-massage, feeling the sun on your face)            What activities make you feel more agitated or frustrated? (i.e., yelling, drinking)</p>		
<p><b>Self-Talk</b>            Helpful self-talk might include "I am safe." "I can handle this."            Harmful self-talk might include unhelpful patterns of thinking (i.e., catastrophizing, overgeneralizing, polarized thinking, etc.), and might sound like "I can't handle this." "I deserve this."</p>		
<p><b>Social Support</b>            Reflect on who you find helpful in times of crisis and who leaves you feeling exhausted. Which family and friends can you reach out to for support? Which people should you avoid?</p>		
<p><b>Mood</b>            What activities help you shift your mood from negative to positive? (i.e., listening to uplifting music, enjoying time outside)</p>		
<p><b>Resilience</b>            What or who has helped you get through difficult times?            What or who tends to amplify negativity for you?</p>		

**In times of crisis, accessing Professional Resources might also be important.**

**Colorado College 24/7 crisis resources:**

- CC Counseling Center and Psychological Services: 719-389-6093;
  - Press 2 to access crisis and support services after hours and on weekends.
- Sexual Assault Response Coordinator: 719-227-8101;
  - The Advocate On-Call can be accessed after hours and on weekends at 719-602-0960.

**If you have an off-campus therapist, write their crisis on-call number and other important information here:**

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**Crisis Lines:**

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (TALK)
- RAINN (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network) Hotline: 800-656-4673 (HOPE)
- Trevor LGBTQ+ LifeLine: 866-488-7386
- Trans LifeLine: 877-565-8860
- Eating Disorder Association Help: 800-931-2237
- National Drug HelpLine: 1-844-289-0879

**Crisis Text Lines:**

- ULifeLine Crisis Text Line: 741741 – text “START” for help with
- National Crisis Services for Students of Color: 741741 – text “STEVE”
- Trevor LGBTQ+ LifeLine Text Line: 678678 – text “START”