



# A guide to self-care and mental health

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# What you can expect to find

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1. Hello!

2. The importance of mental health

3. What self care is and it's relationship with mental health

4. How to know when you're in need of self care

5. Self care assessment

6. Creating a self care plan

7. When to seek professional help

8. My practice details



# HELLO LOVELY!

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Thank you for showing an interest in this ebook  
and in the work that I do.  
You're here, because in some way or another you'd like to  
improve the way in which  
you're caring for yourself and loving yourself.  
It's time to come home to you  
and all the parts of yourself that make you  
a wonderful and lovely human.



Welcome to my practice,  
I'm Kelly!

I'm a registered counsellor  
and I provide counselling sessions  
both online and in-person  
in the area of Plumstead.

## Meet Amy!

Amy is a psychology graduate  
who works alongside me (Kelly)  
to bring you the mental health support  
that you need!



**It is our heart to help facilitate your healing  
process, no matter what that may look like.  
You have infinite power within yourself to heal  
from the hurt you carry and live in the  
freedom you were designed for.**



# THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

## What is Mental Health?

Mental health is integral to living a healthy and balanced life. Your mental health and wellbeing, impacts on how you feel, think and behave each day. Your mental health can determine how you handle stressful situations, relate to other people and the choices you make.

## Why is Mental Health important?

It affects so many areas of your well-being, making it of utmost importance to take care of yourself mentally, just as much as physically.

Mental health affects physical health, they are not as separate as you might think, your mind and body is connected. Many mental ailments can cause stress which lowers the immune system, eventually causing you to be more prone to other sicknesses.

Mental health is something that affects every single one of us. Having open discussions around mental health is how we break the stigma and allow ourselves and others to get the help and support that's needed!

**You are not alone. It is possible to feel okay again.**

But what does mental health mean, or even look like?



Brace yourself, for a little history lesson:

Dr Bill Hettler birthed the concept of a model known as  
The Wellness Wheel.

He believes human beings can live better and healthier lives if they paid attention to and intentionally pursued a balance in these various aspects of life. In order to improve your overall quality of life, it's important to nurture each aspect of your life as part of your daily life.

He lists these as being the different aspects of our lives:



It may be useful to do your own research and explore what each of these aspects comprises.

For the purpose of this book and exercise, this wellness wheel will be used as a reference point to think about your own self-care in a practical way and develop a plan to nurture the various aspects of your life.

# WHAT IS SELF CARE

The concept of “self-care” has become more popular and spoken of in recent years. But what does self-care actually mean to YOU? Think about it.

If I were to ask you, “what do you do to look after yourself?”, what would your answer be?

In essence, self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health.

Clinical psychologist, Agnes Wainman describes self care as being, “something that refuels us, rather than takes from us.”

Although it is a concept that most of us are familiar with, we can so easily overlook it and prioritize “life’s demands” over our own wellbeing.

Caring for yourself and your wellbeing is imperative to enjoy your relationship with yourself and others. It improves your overall quality of life and the quality of your relationships. It’s important to know what YOU need to be healthy so that you can take care of yourself and show up for others too.

Self-care is not one size fits all. What works for the next person, may not be suitable or practical to you - and that’s okay.

Remember, the goal is to be healthy and whole, not perfect.

Our hope for this book is to help you to start thinking about the ways you could show yourself the kindness and compassion that you’re deeply yearning to.



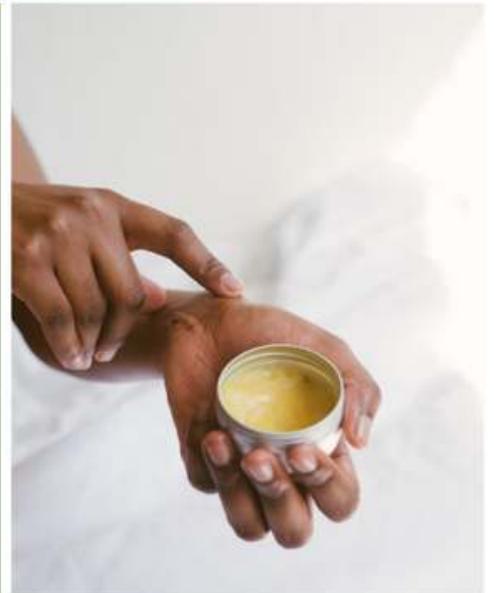
# HOW TO IDENTIFY WHEN YOU'RE IN NEED OF SELF-CARE



It is important to equally recognise the things that empties your cup and leaves you feeling depleted, as well as knowing how to boost it. Noting these and looking for warning signs can help you to identify when it's time to show yourself some extra TLC.

Some of these things might be:

- not eating well
- spending time with people who have a negative impact on your self-esteem
- spending too much time on social media
- negative self-talk
- feeling stressed frequently
- sleeping less or more than usual
- struggling to perform everyday tasks



If these signs keep recurring, that it's time to implement some extra self-care.

The following activity will help you to reflect on your relationship with yourself and your ability to care for and fulfill what you need throughout various areas of your life.



# ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT SELF CARE HABITS

This activity is a self-reflective tool to assess your current efforts towards self-care so that you can determine which areas you'd like to take care of yourself better and get a better understanding of healthy habits that you already have in place.

The more honest you are, the better you will understand yourself.

What you need to do:

After this page, there will be a series of self care tasks/habits that have been broken up into each category of the wellness wheel.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

3 = I do this well and often

2 = I do this occasionally

1 = I barely do this

0 = I never do this

? = I haven't thought about this before



## PHYSICAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Eating regularly (3 meals a day)
- \_\_\_ Eating healthy
- \_\_\_ Exercise
- \_\_\_ Get regular medical care for prevention
- \_\_\_ Get medical care when needed
- \_\_\_ Take time off when sick
- \_\_\_ Get massages
- \_\_\_ Drink water
- \_\_\_ Dance, swim, walk, run, sing or some other fun physical activity
- \_\_\_ Get enough sleep
- \_\_\_ Wear clothes I like
- \_\_\_ Take holidays or time off
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Take day trips or mini-holidays
- \_\_\_ Make time away from email, cellphone or the internet
- \_\_\_ Spending time in nature
- \_\_\_ Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- \_\_\_ Have my own personal therapy
- \_\_\_ Write in a journal
- \_\_\_ Read literature that's unrelated to work
- \_\_\_ Having a hobby
- \_\_\_ Having time to be creative
- \_\_\_ Actively work on minimising stress in my life
- \_\_\_ Saying no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- \_\_\_ Having a clean and tidy space
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## EMOTIONAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- \_\_\_ Stay in contact with important people in my life
- \_\_\_ Give myself affirmations and/or compliment myself
- \_\_\_ Love myself
- \_\_\_ Developing healthy coping skills
- \_\_\_ Reread my favourite books, or rewatch my favourite movies or series
- \_\_\_ Allow myself to cry and feel emotions as they arise
- \_\_\_ Working through grief and/or other uncomfortable feelings in my life
- \_\_\_ Playing or doing something for fun/entertainment
- \_\_\_ Find things that make me laugh
- \_\_\_ Identify activities, places and people that bring me comfort and make an effort to actively participate in them
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## SPIRITUAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Make time for reflection
- \_\_\_ Spend time in nature
- \_\_\_ Find a spiritual connection or community
- \_\_\_ Be open to inspiration
- \_\_\_ Cherish my optimism and hope
- \_\_\_ Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- \_\_\_ Be open to not knowing
- \_\_\_ Identify what is meaningful to me and notice it's place in my life
- \_\_\_ Finding purpose and meaning
- \_\_\_ Meditate/Pray
- \_\_\_ Contribute to causes I believe in
- \_\_\_ Read inspirational books, or listen to inspirational talks or music
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## SOCIAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse
- \_\_\_ Schedule regular activities with my family
- \_\_\_ Make time to see friends
- \_\_\_ Spend time with my pets
- \_\_\_ Stay in contact with faraway friends
- \_\_\_ Make time to reply to personal emails and letters
- \_\_\_ Allow others to do things for me
- \_\_\_ Ask for help when I need it
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## OCCUPATIONAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Taking a break during the work day  
(i.e. lunch or tea break)
- \_\_\_ Take time to chat with co-workers
- \_\_\_ Time management on work tasks and activities
- \_\_\_ Setting personal goals for myself
- \_\_\_ Make quiet time to complete tasks
- \_\_\_ Identify projects or tasks that are exciting or rewarding
- \_\_\_ Setting boundaries with colleagues or clients
- \_\_\_ Balancing your workload so that no day or part of the work day becomes overwhelming
- \_\_\_ Arrange work-space so that it's comfortable and comforting
- \_\_\_ Negotiate and speak up about my needs (i.e. benefits, time off, a raise)
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## FINANCIAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ I understand my personal financial position
- \_\_\_ I ask for financial advice from others I trust
- \_\_\_ I have a financial budget in place
- \_\_\_ I follow my budget well
- \_\_\_ Paying bills
- \_\_\_ I am able to set realistic financial goals for myself
- \_\_\_ I spend responsibly
- \_\_\_ I actively save towards my retirement/emergency fund
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## ENVIRONMENTAL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ I make my bed each morning
- \_\_\_ I generally live in a tidy and organised space
- \_\_\_ I generally work in a tidy space
- \_\_\_ Mindfulness about the global environment
- \_\_\_ Mindfulness about litter and how I contribute to the greater environment
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## OVERALL SELF CARE

- \_\_\_ Balance within my work-life or work day
- \_\_\_ Balance between work, family, friends, play and rest

Look at your own scoring and your own responses.

Are there some areas of your life where you are more active in taking care of yourself, while there are others that you have not given much thought or time to?

Based on your own reflections and internal dialogue, you can now determine the areas of your life that you'd like to actively and intentionally show yourself some more love and compassion.

In the next section, we will explore how you can go about planning to take care of the aspects of your life that require more attention.

# creating your own self-care plan

Now that you have an idea of your own self care habits and routine, and have an idea of recognising that you're in need of self-care, now it is time to explore, what do you do for YOUR self care.

## How can I fill my cup?

Based on the Wellness Wheel's aspects of life, think about what works for YOU with regards to these different areas of your life.

What are the things that will make YOU feel good (outside of anyone else's opinion).

Writing down the activities/strategies you could use in these various aspects takes the concept of self care from being an idea to being an active plan and part of your daily routine.

Let's think about it:

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## **CARING FOR MY SOCIAL NEEDS**

Having a good network of friends and loved ones for support can play a big role in our overall well being. Loneliness and isolation can breed feelings of despair and mental illness, whereas sharing some burdens with a close friend can reduce stress and even bring about a possible solution.

Some ways to improve your social self care can include planning to spend time with family or friends, walking regularly with a friend, contacting someone who you've lost touch with.

List the ways in which you will care for your social needs:

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## **CARING FOR MY WORK NEEDS**

Ask yourself, why do you do what you do in terms of your career. What purpose or fulfillment do you find in your work? In most cases, the majority of us spend most of our days at work and it's important to find enjoyment and purpose in the work that we do. Some examples could include: evaluating your goals for your career, or taking a course within your field to improve your knowledge. List the ways in which you will care for your professional needs:

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## CARING FOR MY FINANCIAL NEEDS

This can be a tough one to think about especially with the effects of the coronavirus on the economy, however it is important that you think about this area of your life and find ways to improve YOUR financial well being.

Some examples could include: creating a budget and sticking to it, paying off your debt, or cutting out wasteful expenses. List the ways in which you will care for your financial needs:

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## CARING FOR MY ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS

Caring for the environment around us, will not only make changes on a global scale, but it helps us to live in spaces that are conducive for health and well being. Within your own immediate environment, you can make small changes to improve your quality of life. Some examples could include: getting rid of clutter, tidying up your room space, or your workspace, spending time in nature. List the ways in which you will care for your environmental needs:

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Now that you've got your plan thought out, the last step is to implement it into your daily life.

Schedule your self-care activities and be specific about what you want to incorporate into your life.

Write them in your calendar and honour this commitment that you're making to yourself. Remember, you are worthy of self-care.

It's entirely possible to have self-care without the aforementioned plan in place - the plan is merely to get you thinking about your current habits and reflect on areas you would like to improve within your own life.

Self-care is about making sure that you are healthy, and this plan is a tool for you to use to help you look after yourself, and not to set you up for failure. Don't beat yourself up if you slip because self-care is a process and work in progress.

The next time you take 10 minutes for yourself, make sure to compliment yourself for it and celebrate your wins (no matter how small they may seem)!

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# WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

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Everyone experiences distress in varying degrees during their lives. It is sometimes caused by loss of a loved one, financial issues, professional or relationship setbacks, among other reasons. Sometimes, we're able to bounce back eventually, whereas other times we may need a little extra help or support to do so.

And that's okay.

Maybe you're noticing that your "cup is empty" or there are certain negative patterns in your life that you can't break. Maybe you're in a space of feeling sad, angry or not like yourself.

## REMINDER

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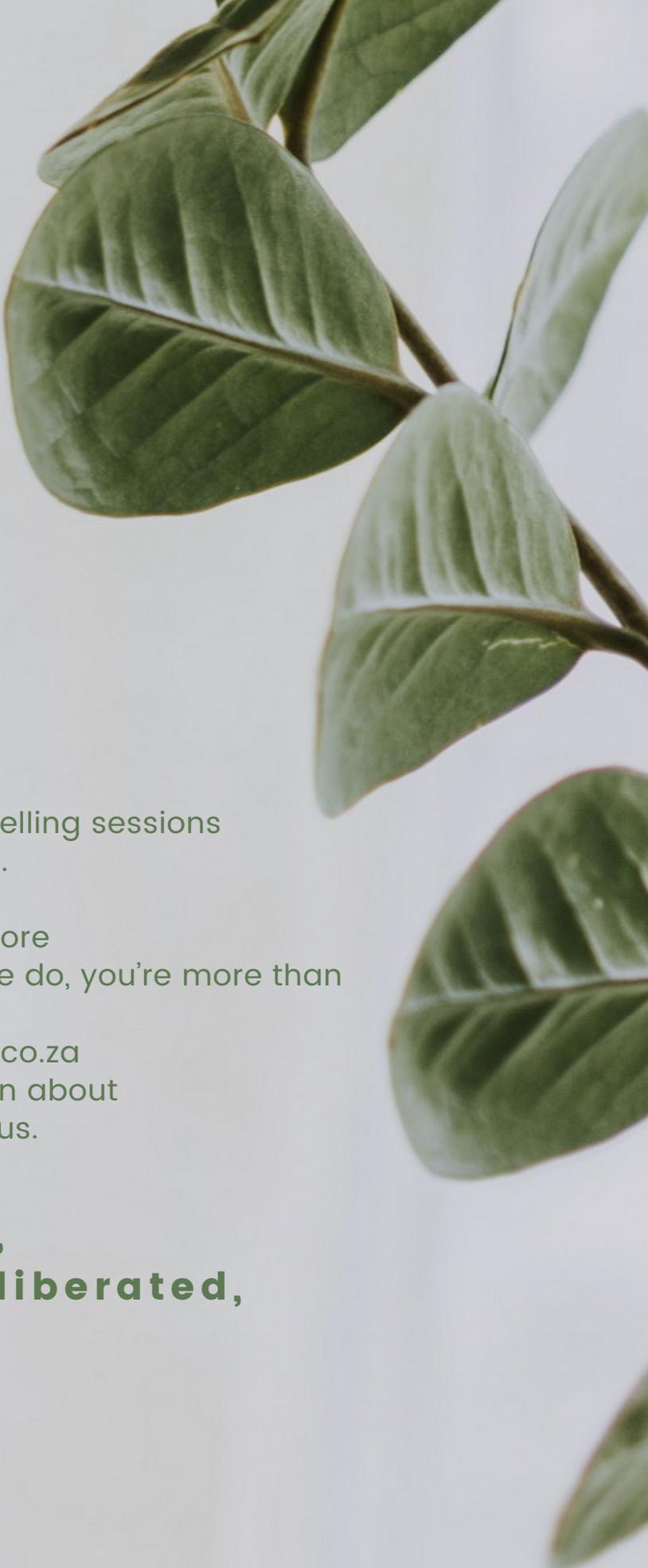
YOU ARE NOT  
ALONE,  
YOU DO NOT  
HAVE TO  
SUFFER IN  
SILENCE.

IF YOU ARE  
HAVING A  
TOUGH TIME,  
PLEASE DO  
NOT  
HESITATE TO  
REACH OUT.

Crying more easily, getting agitated with others quickly, feeling hopeless, eating or sleeping patterns changed, withdrawing from family or friends and avoiding activities you once loved, are all signs you might need some extra help.

Therapy provides you with a safe, non-judgmental space to talk about your experiences, explore your options and/or develop the life and emotional skills you need to handle life's challenges. Reaching out is not a sign of weakness, but rather a significant step towards self-care. The sooner you seek help, the better.

It is important to note that the relationship between yourself and your therapist is a very big and important part of your therapeutic process. The relationship itself is where much of the healing work takes place, therefore it's important to find a therapist/ counsellor that fits with you - you don't have to stay with the first one you see.



## PRACTICE DETAILS

We currently offer individual counselling sessions for short term therapeutic support.

If you're interested in finding out more about the practice and the work we do, you're more than welcome to drop us, an email at [info@therapywithkelly.co.za](mailto:info@therapywithkelly.co.za) and we will forward you information about what to expect when working with us.

**here's to a healthier,  
more authentic and liberated,  
you!**

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