



# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Parenting During COVID-19 and Into a "New Normal"

Robyn B. Bratica, Ph.D., NCSP, LEP

While we are waiting for to join, please take a moment to answer a few questions on a piece of paper or in a computer document:

1. What do you consider to be “self-care”?
2. Do you practice self-care regularly?
3. What barriers exist to your ability to regularly participate in self-care?

Welcome!



# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

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# Agenda

Understanding of stress

Impact of COVID-19 on caregiver stress levels and burnout

Understanding of self-care

Methods of practicing self-care

01

Understand  
different  
types of stress

02

Recognize  
the impact of  
chronic stress

03

Understand  
what is  
meant by  
self-care

04

Know multiple  
strategies for  
practicing  
self-care

# Learning Objectives

# ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Parent-Practitioner

# Stress

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life.

A small amount of stress can be good, motivating you to perform well.

Our bodies are well equipped to handle stress in small doses, but when that stress becomes long-term or chronic, it can have serious effects on your body.

# Types of Stress

## Acute Stress

- A dramatic physiological and psychological reaction to a specific event

## Chronic Stress

- A consistent sense of feeling pressured and overwhelmed over a long period of time



# Impact of Stress on the Brain



# Physical/Somatic Reactions to Stress

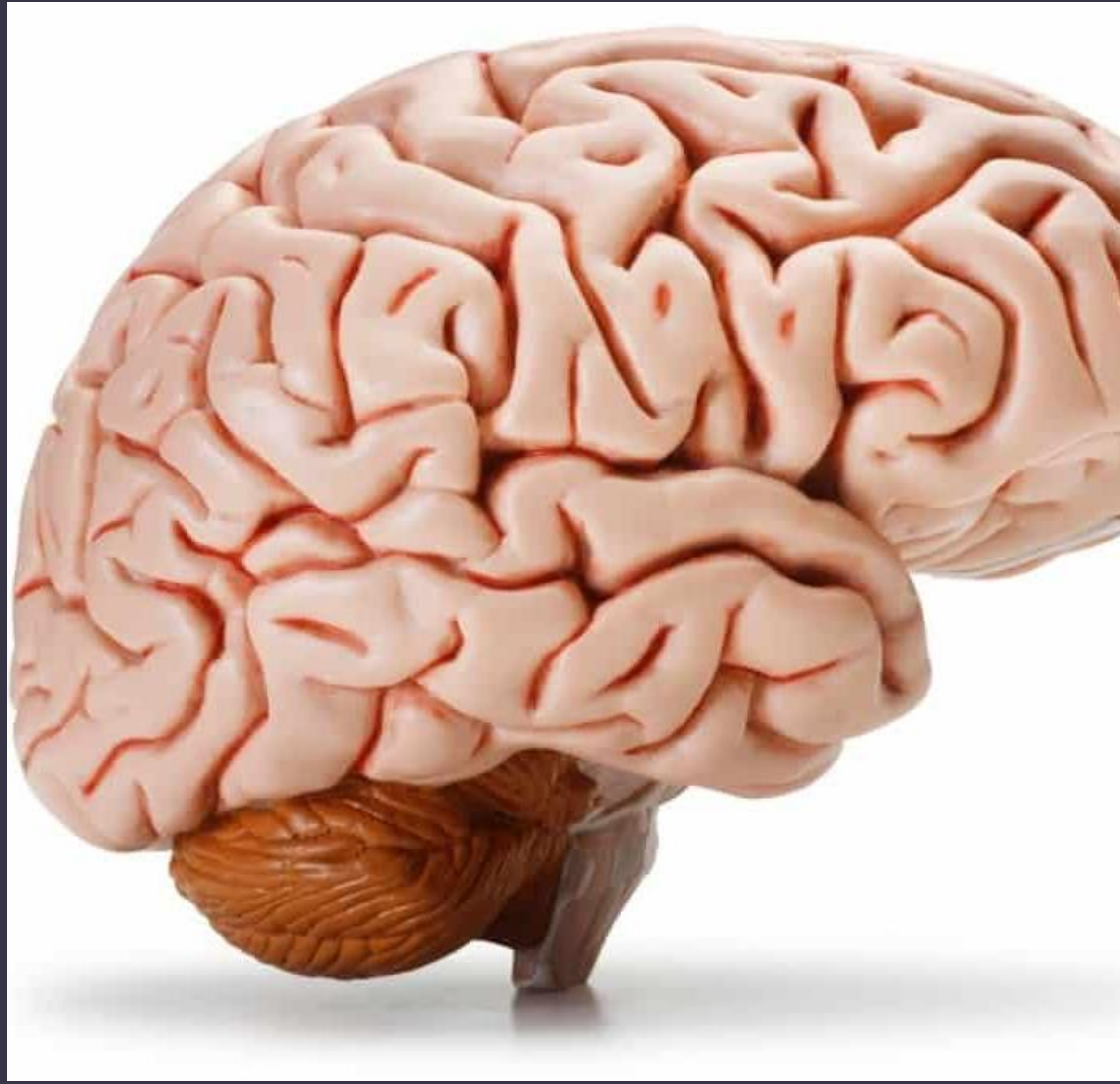
Difficulty sleeping and eating

Chronic fatigue and exhaustion

Headaches

Stomachaches

Muscle Tension



# Psychological Impact of Prolonged Exposure to Stress

- Being subjected to prolonged, severe, unpredictable stress may cause one to:
  - Experience hyper-arousal or hypo-arousal
  - Be in a constant state of fight, flight, or freeze
  - Engage less in planning and problem solving
  - Relate cautiously
  - Be hyper-vigilant:
    - to risks
    - to being wronged
  - Be highly reactive
  - Lack motivation and focus



BRAIN  
AND  
BODY'S  
RESPONSE  
TO FEAR

# What Chronic Stress May Look Like: Mood

Irritability

Anger

Restlessness

Anxious

Feeling  
Overwhelmed

Sadness/Depression

Overeating  
or  
Undereating

Angry  
Outbursts

Drug or  
Alcohol  
Misuse

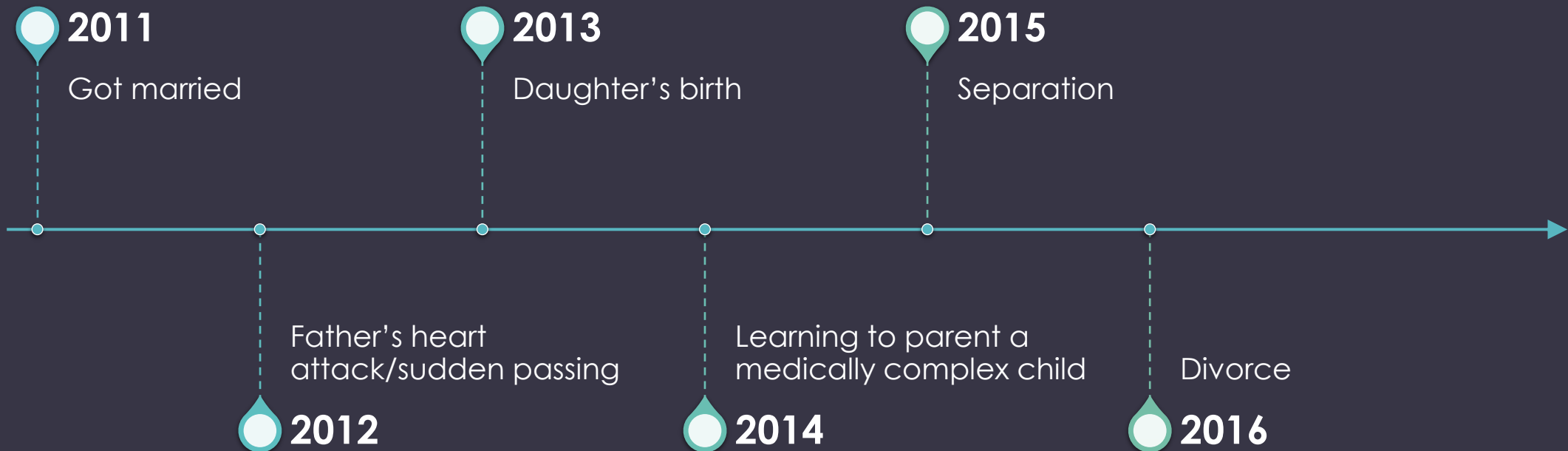
Tobacco  
Use

Social  
Withdrawal

Exercising  
Less Often

What  
Chronic  
Stress May  
Look Like:  
Behavior

# A Timeline of My Story





# RESILIENCE

Key Question: When faced with adversity, why do different individuals have different outcomes?





# PARENTING DURING COVID-19

# Common Losses Adults Face during COVID-19

Social  
connections

Losing the way  
we carry out  
our daily lives

Questioning our  
assumptions of  
safety and  
security

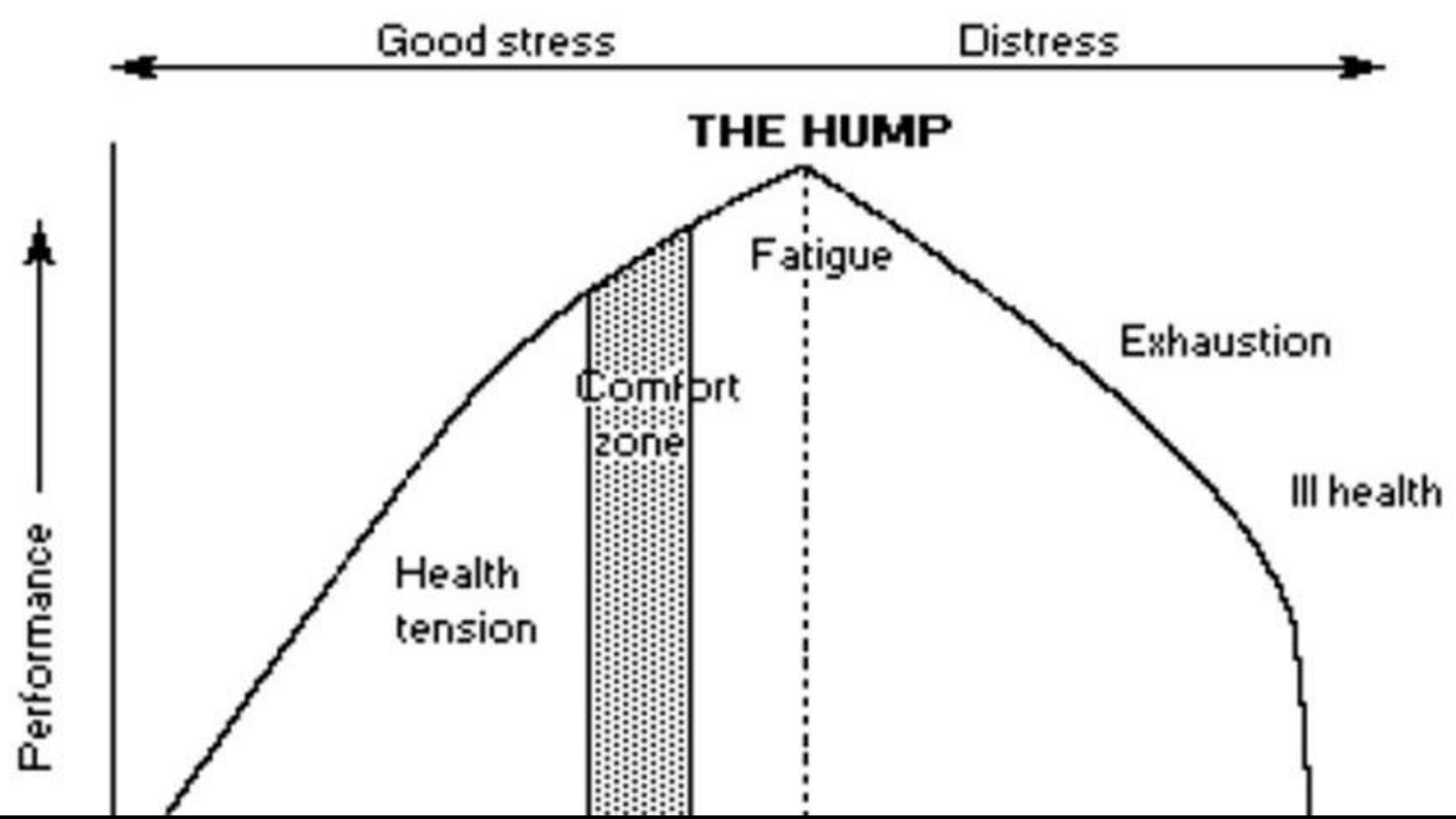
Losing trust in  
our systems


Compassionate  
grief

Anticipatory  
grief

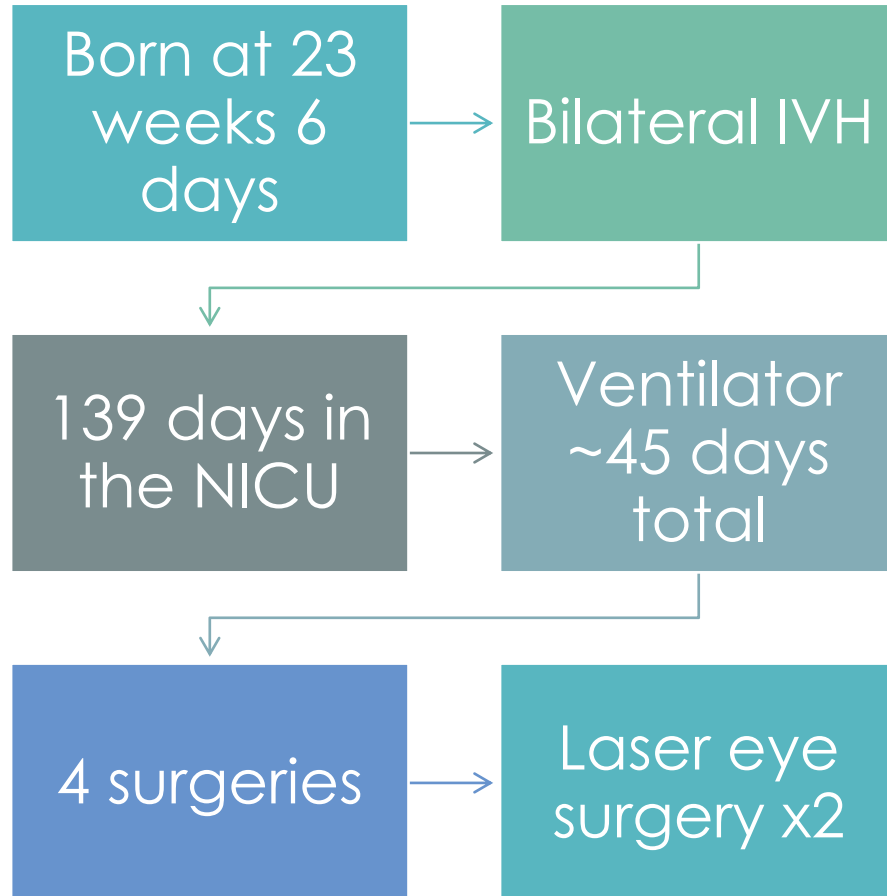
“A natural instinct for parents and other caregiving adults is to put their personal needs aside in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in their care. It is extremely important, though, for caregivers to monitor their own reactions and take care of their own needs, because failure to do so can result in stress and burnout. This is particularly true for crisis situations in which normal support systems and routines have been severely disrupted and for which recovery will take a long time” (NASP, 2017).

## Avoiding Burnout





“(DI)STRESS RESULTS WHEN ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS ARE GREATER THAN AN INDIVIDUAL’S PERCEIVED ABILITY TO MEET THOSE DEMANDS.”



# My Story: The NICU



IN TIMES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS,  
HOW ARE SOME PEOPLE RESILIENT?

# Steps to Resilience

Emotional  
awareness  
and control

Impulse  
control

Realistic  
optimism

Flexible  
thinking

Self-  
efficacy

Empathy

Reaching  
out



# Explanatory Style

When Something “Bad” Happens

<b>Pessimistic</b>	<b>Optimistic</b>
Permanent	Temporary
Pervasive	Specific
Personal	External

When Something “Good” Happens

<b>Optimistic</b>	<b>Pessimistic</b>
Permanent	Temporary
Pervasive	Specific
Personal	External

# An Added Factor: Parent Guilt

I'm not enough

I'm not doing the right  
thing

I'm scared of "messing  
up" my kid(s)



# SELF-CARE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

# Revisiting the Welcome

What do you consider to be “self-care”?



Do you practice self-care regularly?



What barriers exist to your ability to regularly participate in self-care?

# Self-Care

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health.

Self-care looks different for everyone, and it is important to find what you need and enjoy.

# Self-Care

Attend

Attend to your physical self-care.

Care

Care for your emotional health.

Maintain

Maintain social connections and focus on social care.

# Physical Self-Care



Eat and drink



Exercise



Sleep

# Desk Yoga

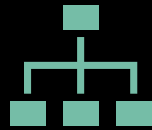




# Care for Your Emotional Health



Time management and  
prioritization



Know your limitations



Finding optimism

Set  
schedules


Work  
space

Create a  
Routine  
and  
Structure

## If I'm feeling

## Then I'll

Overwhelmed	➤➤➤➔	Go for a walk around the block
Sad	➤➤➤➔	Give myself 20 minutes to feel it
Grief	➤➤➤➔	Create a new ritual
Anxious	➤➤➤➔	Take some deep breathes and stretch my body
Lonely	➤➤➤➔	Call someone I love to say hi
Frustrated	➤➤➤➔	Do a quick mindfulness practice (Headspace is a great app)
Inadequate	➤➤➤➔	Remind myself of my strengths

  
@lisaoliveratherapy

# SELF-CARE EXAMPLE

If-Then List

# Mindful March 2022

MONDAY



TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

1 Set an intention to live with awareness and kindness

2 Notice three things you find beautiful in the outside world

3 Start today by appreciating your body and that you're alive

4 Notice how you speak to yourself and choose to use kind words

5 Bring to mind people you care about and send love to them

6 Have a 'no plans' day and notice how that feels

7 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day

8 Eat mindfully. Appreciate the taste, texture and smell of your food

9 Take a full breath in and out before you reply to others

10 Get outside and notice how the weather feels on your face

11 Stay fully present while drinking your cup of tea or coffee

12 Listen deeply to someone and really hear what they are saying

13 Pause to watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today

14 Find ways to enjoy any chores or tasks that you do

15 Stop. Breathe. Notice. Repeat regularly

16 Get really absorbed with an interesting or creative activity

17 Look around and spot three things you find unusual or pleasant

18 If you find yourself rushing, make an effort to slow down

19 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are

20 Focus on what makes you and others happy today  
dayofhappiness.net

21 Listen to a piece of music without doing anything else

22 Notice something that is going well, even if today feels difficult

23 Tune into your feelings, without judging or trying to change them

24 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do

25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted

26 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today

27 Cultivate a feeling of loving-kindness towards others today

28 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible

29 Choose a different route today and see what you notice

30 Mentally scan your body and notice what it is feeling

31 Discover the joy in the simple things of life



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together

# Self-Care Example

Self-Care Calendar  
Actionforhappiness.org



## 5 MIN SELF-CARE

### checklist



- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS  | <input type="checkbox"/> BRUSH YOUR HAIR   | <input type="checkbox"/> DO SOME STRETCHES      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DRINK A GLASS OF WATER  | <input type="checkbox"/> GRAB A FACE MASK  | <input type="checkbox"/> TAKE A QUICK SHOWER    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WRITE DOWN 7 THINGS YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR   | <input type="checkbox"/> FIND FUNNY VIDEOS WITH CUTE ALPACAS   | <input type="checkbox"/> SPEND 5 MIN ORGANISING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LIGHT A CANDLE   | <input type="checkbox"/> LISTEN TO YOUR FAVOURITE SONG   | <input type="checkbox"/> WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MAKE YOURSELF A WARM DRINK   | <input type="checkbox"/> DANCE LIKE CRAZY  | <input type="checkbox"/> TEXT A FRIEND          |

# SELF-CARE EXAMPLE

Self-Care Checklist  
[Ecowarrierprincess.net](http://Ecowarrierprincess.net)



# Finding Joy

- Mindfulness
- Nature
- Acts of Kindness

# Temporary Vs. Enduring Self-Care



## Temporary Self-Care

Positive feelings wane after activities end



## Enduring Self-Care

Change the physical structure of the brain

# Enduring Self-Care: Mindfulness

## Formal

- Meditation

## Informal

- Focused attention to everyday tasks





# GUIDED MEDITATION

[Guided Meditation](#)

# Maintain Social Connections and Focus on Social Care



# Maintain Social Connections and Focus on Social Care

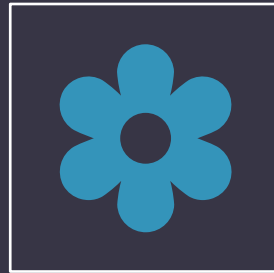
- Small activity
  - Write down on a piece of paper the five most important people, places, and things in your life
  - Now, introduce yourself to someone else, without mentioning any of the things on the paper



# My Story: Coming Out the Other Side



Exercise



Nature



Mindfulness

Ran my first  
ultra-marathon

2016

Obtained a job  
in higher  
education

2018

Ran my first 100  
miler

2020

# My Story: The Timeline Continued

# Resources

- National Association of School Psychologists. (2017). Care for the caregiver: guidelines for administrators and crisis teams. [handout]. Bethesda, MD: Author
- National Association of School Psychologists. (2017). Care for the caregiver: tips for families and educators [handout]. Bethesda, MD: Author.
- <https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/farmstress/how-stress-affects-brain-and-body/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wn4QDOkVglo>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwvctN3Uejg>