

## DEVELOPING YOUR EMERGENCY SELF-CARE PLAN

### Why do I need one?

It is very hard to think of what to do for yourself when things get tough. It is best to have a plan ready for when you need it.

### What should be in it?

You need to address **3 areas**: what to do, what to think, and what to avoid.

### WHAT TO DO

1. **Make a list of what you can do when you are stressed or upset that will be good for you.**

#### What will help me relax?

For example:

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| a) Breathing         | e) Exercise         |
| b) Muscle relaxation | f) Talking a walk   |
| c) Music             | g) Watching a movie |
| d) Reading for fun   |                     |

#### What do I like to do when I'm in a good mood?

List all the things you like to do so you remember what they are when you need to think of something to do.

#### What can I do that will help me throughout the day?

- |                                               |                          |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Avoid too much caffeine if feeling anxious | c) Watch my thoughts     |
| b) Remember to breathe                        | d) Avoid negative people |
|                                               | e) Stay in the moment    |

#### Other

What else do YOU need to do that is specific to YOU?

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**2. Make a list of people you can contact if you need support or distraction.**

- a) Best friend, other friends, sibling, parent, grandparent, other relative, therapist, priest etc.
- b) Divide the list of people into categories by asking yourself the following questions:
  - Who can I call if I am feeling depressed or anxious?
  - Who can I call if I am lonely?
  - Who will come over to be with me if I need company?
  - Who will listen?
  - Who will encourage me to get out of the house and do something fun?
  - Who will remind me to follow my self-care plan?
  - Other

**3. Next, make a list of positive things to say to yourself when you are giving yourself a hard time.**

Examples of negative self-talk:

- a) "I got a B- on my review; that proves that I shouldn't be in this role."  
*CHANGE to:*  
"That is a good grade. I will work on getting an even better one."
- b) "I do not understand this theory; I am so dumb."  
*CHANGE to:*  
"A lot of people are having a problem with this material. Maybe we could start a study group to help each other."
- c) "I can't get all this work done. I should just leave."  
*CHANGE to:*  
"I will develop a schedule so that I can get this all done." "I can check with other employees for ideas." "

You get it. Try to think about what you would say to a colleague with the same struggles and apply it to yourself.

**4. Next, make a list of who and what to avoid when you are having a hard time.**

Examples of people to avoid:

- a) My partner broke up with me. I will not call my sister as she always hated him. She'll be happy he's gone.

- b) I didn't get my job done on time and I'm worried about what will happen. I will not call my manager. He is a stickler for doing things in advance so that they are never late. He'll just give me a hard time.
- c) I am discouraged about my progress at work. I won't call my best friend because she'll just tell me not to worry about it and to quit the job if it's such a hassle.

You get this too. Not everyone can be supportive or helpful with every situation. Go to the ones who can be supportive about the specific issue you are dealing with.

**Examples of things to avoid:**

- a) Staying in the house all day.
- b) Staying in bed all day.
- c) Leaving the curtains shut – let the light in.
- d) Listening to sad music.
- e) Drinking too much alcohol.

Write this plan on a 3x5 card. Keep it in your purse/wallet (and on your phone if you can). Look at it often. Add any good ideas to it whenever you can. USE IT!

Adapted from article by Elaine S. Rinfrette, PhD, LCSW-R

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