



Holiday Season **SELF-CARE GUIDE**

As we head into the holiday season, we want to make sure you have resources and tools on hand in case they are needed.

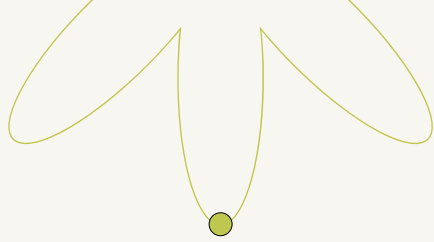
The STAR office will be closed the week of December 21-27 for walk-in services, but our confidential 24-hour crisis line will be available anytime as needed.

We've included a list of other 24-hour support lines, useful grounding techniques and resources.

24-Hour Support Lines

- STAR Crisis Line: (907) 276-7273
- CARELine: (888)-266-4357
- Lifeline: 988 (call or text)
- Resource Line: 211
- AWAIC: (907) 272-0100 (24-hour DV shelter resource and crisis line)





SELF-CARE CHECK-IN

It easy to get busy throughout the day and forget to make sure we are meeting our basic needs. These needs can be easily overlooked, but are so important especially if we are feeling drained.

Am I hydrated?

Refill your water bottle each morning so you have it on hand when needed.

Have I eaten?

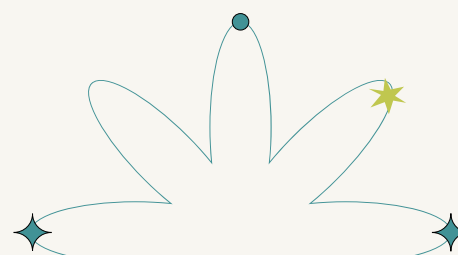
Keep small and easily accessible snacks in your cupboard, bag or glovebox so you have them while on the go or if you don't have the energy to cook. Microwavable meals are just as good as homemade meals, and they reduce a lot of stress and cleanup.

Am I getting enough sleep?

If you are having trouble sleeping at night, try to take rest breaks throughout the day. Find a quiet space and close your eyes for 15 minutes with no distractions, this is not the same as a nap, but it can help your body feel more rested. There are some people who find that listening to Binaural Beats is useful for falling asleep. Check out SleepTube on YouTube for different Binaural Beats videos to choose from.

Have I done anything fun or something I enjoy?

It is important to take time for ourselves, even if it's just taking 15 minutes to make your favorite tea, step outside and get some fresh air.





SETTING BOUNDARIES



Setting boundaries can be difficult for anyone, but it can be especially difficult throughout the holidays. It is okay to put yourself first and not attend every event you are invited to. You do not have to provide an explanation to anyone, you can thank them for inviting you and let them know you are unavailable to attend. If you are at an event or family gathering, it's okay to take a break or to excuse yourself and leave early.

Setting boundaries is a healthy tool to utilize. If you find yourself at an event or family gathering and are feeling overwhelmed, we encourage you to call our crisis line for support.

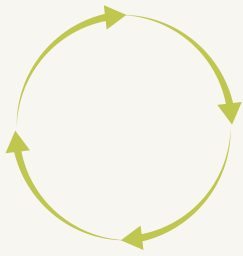
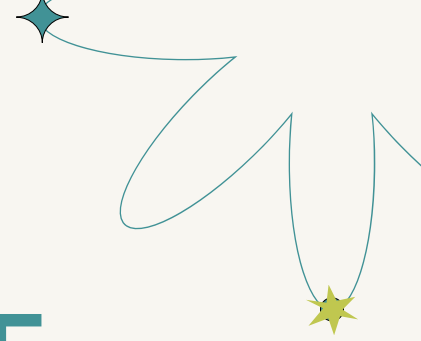


GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

There may be times when you can begin to feel overwhelmed, anxious or stressed. Below are some easy and helpful grounding techniques that can help during these times. These techniques have been shown to help calm the nervous system and reduce the fight or flight response and can be used at any time.

You can practice these grounding techniques even when you are not feeling anxious. By practicing the techniques, it will be easier to use them in the moments when you need them the most. If you begin to feel anxious or overwhelmed, please don't wait to use them. The sooner you utilize the techniques the easier it can be to help manage the emotions and bring your nervous system back to sense of calm.





FOUR-SQUARE BREATHING

Four Square Breathing (Box Breathing) is a very easy relaxation technique that can be used to reduce stress, anxiety, calm the nervous system and help us relax. It can be utilized alone or in a public setting. Some people find it useful to envision a box while they are doing all four steps, each side of the box is one step.

1. Sit upright in a chair with your feet on the floor or laying down comfortably on a bed with your head supported. (If you are in public and cannot sit down, you can do this while standing)
2. Close your eyes, breathe in through your nose and slowly count to four. 1, 2, 3, 4. Feel the air enter into your lungs. (If you are in public and cannot close your eyes keep them open)
3. Hold your breath and count to four slowly (1, 2, 3, 4). Try to focus on this, it should not be uncomfortable. If you cannot get to four it's okay, hold it as long as you comfortably can.
4. Slowly exhale for four seconds (1, 2, 3, 4)
5. Wait four seconds and then...
6. Repeat the steps at least three times or until you begin to feel calm.
7. If you find it hard to hold your breath for four seconds, adjust the count to three seconds and try again. You don't want the breathing to feel stressed, so it's okay to adjust it to meet your needs.





FOCUS ON AN OBJECT

This is a grounding technique that can be done alone or in a public setting. You can either hold an object in your hand or focus on an object that is in the room. If you find this is a useful grounding technique you can carry a small object with you in your pocket to have on hand when needed.

1. Hold the object you have chosen in your hand.
2. Describe the object by asking yourself questions (this can be done out loud or in your head). Is the object small or large? Is it light or heavy? How does the object feel? Is it smooth? Does it have ridges? What color is the object? What is it made out of? Does it move? What does it look like?
3. Repeat these steps slowly, get as detailed as possible. Try to only focus on this object and not what is going on around you.
4. Continue to do this until you feel calm or relaxed enough to stop.

If there is no object for you to hold, you can choose an item on the wall or in the room. Complete the same technique describing the object, try to focus on just that object until you feel calm or relaxed enough to stop.





5, 4, 3, 2 TECHNIQUE

This grounding technique engages four of your senses, helps you redirect your focus and can bring you back to a sense of feeling calm. This technique can be done alone or in public, out loud or in your head.

- 5** Start by listing **Five** things you **See** around you or in the room; people, objects, colors, walls, ground, etc.
- 4** Then you'll list **Four** things you can **Touch** around you; furniture, animals, objects, plants, cups, remote, etc.
- 3** Next you'll list **Three** things you can **Hear** around you; people, music, TV, cars, animals, rain, birds, wind, etc.
- 2** Then you'll list **Two** things you can **Smell**, no matter how strong or mild it is. Candle, rain, laundry detergent, food, coffee, grass, etc.

You can repeat this technique until you feel more focused, relaxed and calm.



EXPRESSIVE WRITING

Expressive writing is not the same as journaling. It is the process of writing all your thoughts, memories, feelings and emotions onto the page as you feel them in the moment. You are not supposed to filter what you write or how you are feeling. It doesn't matter what words you use, if it's well written or spelled correctly.

1. Get a pen and notebook, piece of paper or scrap paper that has room to write. If you do not have paper on hand you can use your computer or notes on your phone.
2. Put pen to paper and write whatever comes to mind without filtering. This can be what you are feeling, what you are thinking, memories, emotions. Just let it out without worrying about how it looks, what you are writing, sentence structure, etc.
3. Once you begin to feel as though you've written it all out and are feeling calm, stop writing.
4. You do not need to keep this, these are not meant to go back and read again. It's meant to process and get rid of. You can throw it away, tear it up, scribble over it, do what you'd like with it, but don't keep it. If you did this process on your phone or computer, delete it after you are done. *If you find that you would like to keep these pages, please keep them separate from your Journal. You do not want these writings to be in the same spot as your journal.



TAPPING TO CALM ANXIETY



Tapping can be a very useful tool to help reduce and calm anxiety. Below is a link to a short YouTube video that shows you the process of Tapping.

<https://youtu.be/085w1xlrGnU?feature=shared>



CONCLUSION

The most important thing of all is to **be kind to yourself** and give yourself the space you need. It is impossible to avoid all stressors and triggers, but we can prepare ahead and have tools in place for when they are needed. Sometimes we will still need extra support, even if we are utilizing self-care, setting boundaries and practicing grounding techniques.

If you find yourself needing extra support or just need someone to talk to, we encourage you to call the STAR crisis line, or any of the 24-hour hotline numbers for extra support as needed.

