

Self-Care Vision Board

Compassion

Exercise

60 min.

Client or group

No

Self-care activities are those things we do to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Countless research findings demonstrate the importance of one's ability to attend to and meet personal needs. For instance, self-care has been found to increase empathy, immunologic functioning, and has been associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression (Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008).

Self-care is sometimes mistaken for selfishness, however, according to Mills, Wand, and Fraser (2015), self-care allows people to take better care of others. These authors argue that it is a lack of self-care during times of distress that has a negative effect on one's ability to provide care and compassion to others. Because self-care ensures that we have taken care of our needs, we operate from a state of inner balance, which renders us better equipped to meet others' needs.

While self-care may sound simple enough, it is often difficult to execute. One of the most common reasons for people not engaging in regular self-care is that they "don't have time". Fortunately, there are many different self-care practices one can do, and none of them are especially time-consuming or require a lot of planning. Once self-care becomes a part of everyday life, it is likely that people will become more and more protective of that time and wonder how they ever managed without it.

Doing kind and caring things for ourselves, particularly when we are struggling, can help us to cope and move through difficult emotional experiences. Self-care activities can be sensory, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social. The idea with initiating self-care and integrating it into everyday life is to find out what feels good to you—something that you genuinely enjoy doing, and that fits with your lifestyle and your values.

This exercise involves creating a self-care vision board. A vision board is a visual representation of a particular concept using images, illustrations and/or words. The aim of the exercise is to help clients increase self-care and self-compassion in a creative way.



Author

This tool was created by Hugo Alberts (PhD).



Goal

This tool aims to help clients increase self-care and self-compassion in a creative way. It involves a playful and intuitive search for potential self-care activities that, when completed, can serve as a visual reminder and motivator.



Advice

- Some practical advice for clients includes: Use pen and paper to make drawings; Use scissors to cut pictures and texts from hardcopy magazines and glue them together on a piece of paper; Use apps, like Bloom (<http://appcrawlr.com/ios/bloom-2>) or Corkulous Pro (<http://appcrawlr.com/ios/corkulous-pro>); Use Powerpoint or Keynote to build a presentation with images, photos, and text.
- Exposure to the vision board can serve as a prime or reminder. Therefore, suggest to your client to place the vision board in a visible spot (e.g., on the refrigerator or office desk). Note that some clients may consider their board a private source of inspiration. If this is the case, they should think of a place that limits who can view their work. The point is that your client's vision board should be accessible to him/her, and should not be placed where he/ she will fall out of the habit of looking at it.
- When creating the vision board, it is important to enjoy the process and work intuitively. Rather than creating the vision board in a rational mode (a lot of thinking and internally debating), it often works best to just go with the flow: select images or texts that feel good or appropriate, without overthinking it. Prioritizing can always be done afterward.
- After clients have created their vision boards, ask them if they would like to discuss the vision board together in a session. Allowing clients to share their vision boards with the practitioner can not only enhance the therapeutic alliance but can also create a fruitful starting point for behavioural change. Questions that can be discussed during this reflection include: Can you explain to me what we are looking at? How was it to create this board? What did you experience while making it? What did you learn from this exercise? What kind of goals can be formulated based on your vision board? Which self-care activity would you like to initiate first?
- Although this exercise may be done at the very beginning of an intervention, it may also be valuable to do it at the end of an intervention because self-care continues to enhance wellbeing once the intervention is over. In this way, the vision board can serve as a reminder for staying on course or as a buffer against relapse.



Suggested Readings

Schure, M. B., Christopher, J., & Christopher, S. (2008). Mind-body medicine and the art of self-care: teaching mindfulness to counseling students through yoga, meditation, and qigong. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 86*(1), 47-56.

Mills, J., Wand, T., & Fraser, J. A. (2015). On self-compassion and self-care in nursing: Selfish or essential for compassionate care?. *International journal of nursing studies, 52*(4), 791-793.



Self-Care Vision Board

Instructions

This exercise involves creating a self-care vision board. A vision board is a visual representation of a particular concept using images, illustrations and/or words. Thus, a self-care vision board is a collection of images and words that reflect ideas for self-care. Self-care activities are those things we do to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Follow the following three steps to create your self-care vision board.

Step 1: Brainstorm self-care activities

Come up with a list of as many potential self-care activities as possible. Be bold and creative, allowing yourself to consider new and different potential activities. Only include activities that you would genuinely enjoy doing and that fit with your lifestyle and your values. Refer to Appendix A for inspiration.

Step 2: Collect images for your vision board

Find positive images that correspond with your chosen self-care activities. Look for images that resonate with you, and inspire you. You might like to use the internet, magazines, and photographs as potential sources. Use photos of activities that you can do to take better care of yourself and your needs.

Step 3: Collect words for your vision board

You can decide to keep your vision board completely visual or to add words and phrases to it. The words and phrases you choose should reflect or relate to your chosen self-care activities. You might like to cut words out of magazines or print them from the internet. Choose words and fonts that resonate with you and inspire you.

Step 4: Put your vision board together

Once you have gathered your images and inspiring phrases, get creative with your arrangement.

Appendix A. Examples of self-care activities

Emotional self-Care

- Learn to say “no.”
- Intentionally schedule “me time” on your calendar or planner.
- Reward yourself for completing small tasks.
- Use online tutorials to learn something new.
- Develop a relaxing evening ritual.
- Allow yourself to feel and express all of your feelings (in a safe and appropriate environment).
- Try some mindful exercises to help bring you into the present moment.
- Try some adult coloring as a form of anxiety and/or stress release.
- Remind yourself of the good stuff in life by writing a list of things you’re grateful to have.
- Take a moment to allow your feelings to be present without judging them.
- Stop being your harshest critic. Allow yourself to make mistakes.

Physical Self-care

- Do some stretching exercises.
- Take a walk.
- Drink more water.
- Exhaust yourself physically. Do whatever helps you feel fatigued.
- Get a massage.
- Go out and spend 10 minutes under the sun.
- Go for a bike ride to nowhere in particular.
- Go hiking, camping, or backpacking and spend some time in nature.
- Go to bed early.

Social self-care

- Avoid toxic people.
- Ask for help. Let people know you need some help.
- Call a trusted friend or family member and talk things out.
- Choose who you spend your time with today. Spend time with people who are enthusiastic and positive.
- Intentionally reconnect with someone you’ve lost touch with or have unresolved conflict with.
- Join a support group for people who are going through what you’re going through
- Schedule a regular date night with your significant other.
- Take a road trip with your siblings.



Spiritual self-care

- Make time for meditation in your day.
- Do a 10-minute body scan technique to check in with each part of your body.
- Do something nice for someone in secret.
- Donate money to a charity of your choosing.
- Help someone in some way.
- Find an opportunity to use your strengths, the things that energize you, more often.