



# The 10 Pillars of Self-Care



This list is a compact reminder of all the things you can do for yourself to regenerate, improve your mood, drive and performance, and prevent relapses. When under load, these 10 columns can stabilize and prevent a break-in.

**Instructions:** Place this sheet next to the corresponding worksheet and write down for each of the 10 points individually and as concretely as possible what is important to you in each case, what is already going well, what you want to pay attention to, what you want to develop. Allow yourself 30-60 minutes to come up with convincing solutions for you. Take the worksheet out again and again and add to it as necessary.

## 1. Structure (good daily structure including self-care and real end of day)

regular meals & bedtime, rest & activity phases bring emotional stability.

E.g. always on Fridays prepare the weekly plan for the following week and include points 2, 3 and 4. What is the work structure regarding breaks, overtime, interruptions, ...? Do not overstrain yourself: Compensate for stress with planned recovery. Less is more.

"work-life-balance" with a real end of work: draw clear boundaries between work & leisure & sleep.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<b>Breakfast</b>						
1.						
<b>Lunch</b>						
2.						
<b>Dinner</b>						
3.						

## 2. Social contacts & social competence (e.g. saying no)

Family, friends, acquaintances, associations, self-help group, ... Maintain contacts consciously, especially if you cannot always be an entertaining contemporary. If you are depressed: explain to others what is going on and give them tips on how to deal with you. Clarify private and professional conflicts or set yourself apart in a friendly manner. Practice social skills (see "non-violent communication" on Wikipedia). Setting priorities & "saying no" (overcoming fear of rejection).

## 3. Sports & exercise (to feel comfortable in your body)

together with others, otherwise also alone. E.g. (club) sports that you used to enjoy doing or always wanted to do. Sweating 3x30min per week helps as well as antidepressants. The benefits: Sport reduces stress, improves mood & sleep, protects from depression, reduces worries, helps to feel good in the body and can facilitate social contacts.

## 4. Beautiful things & pleasure (hobbies, fun, enjoyment, food, relaxation & nature)

Hobbies, leisure activities alone and with others, being creative, enjoying (with all 5 senses), humour, Art, music, silence, intimacy/eroticism (possibly with a focus on proximity rather than pleasure), gardening, cuddling (maybe also with pets), anticipation of a long-term planned vacation, relaxation (how&where?), learning a relaxation method & daily practice, entertainment, cinema, theatre, concerts. Cultivating daily gratitude (despite all problems). Cooking & healthy food: "You are what you eat". Also very important: spending time in nature.

## 5. Meaning & purpose (living according to values)

Doing good to others, supporting others, teaching others, "giving oneself away" (to a healthy, meaningful extent without "sacrificing oneself"), becoming aware of one's own values and living by them, voluntary (social/political/ecological) commitment, spirituality/religion, exchange with like-minded people on these topics. Do something so that life does not feel meaningless.

## 6. Sleep

Sleep disorders are an important early warning sign, see "19 tips for healthy sleep".



## 7. Distance from worries & brooding (serenity: mindfulness with thoughts & feelings)

a) **Feeling instead of worrying:** worries are often an attempt to solve or avoid a feeling (e.g. fear) with the mind. Worries as "blocked" self-calming in order to mentally "remove" feelings. Instead, it would be helpful to face the feeling in the body with confidence, to allow it to happen and to breathe. Daily practice (e.g. in mindfulness/ self-consciousness) helps to develop more trust.

b) **"Don't believe everything you think":** recognise exaggerated worries and unhelpful brooding as a natural but useless automatism and let go. Depression is a brooding disorder. Give the automatic "brooding and worrying programme" a silly name (e.g. Kopfkaspar or Quatschi) and repeatedly divert attention from the "nonsense" and consciously direct it to what is meaningful at the moment: "Away from what feeds, towards what feeds". Spend less time in the head cinema, instead focus on the here&now. Stop brooding (imagine a red stop sign, for example). Practise changing perspectives, e.g. internalising idioms ("Nothing is eaten as hot as it is cooked").

c) **Setting up planning time** ("worry quarter hour"): Write down worries directly and postpone them to a daily, fixed time for strategically sensible planning (instead of circling worries): Already with a concrete next step further worries become unnecessary.

d) **"Self-care instead of self-pity":** Again and again leaving the helplessly passive role of victim & taking on a relaxed role as designer: "If you're not well, you should take good care of yourself".

## 8. Acting on deeper intentions (Avoid avoiding)

Overcoming the 'inner bastard' in order to successfully pursue one's own values and goals: e.g. making a weekly fixed "appointment with oneself". To 'submit' to the self-made weekly plan. Do things immediately instead of postponing them: "Just Do It" as a motto for self-care independent of motivation. Instead of the 'pleasure in the moment', keep in mind the *long-term* benefits/damages. Focus on the anticipation of the result. Create self-rewards. "Stimulus control" (e.g. don't buy unhealthy food so as not to be tempted to eat it when you are in a bad mood). Making self-commitments, e.g. by making firm appointments with others, getting a dog. "acting on your deeper intentions makes you beautiful!" (it promotes self-confidence, satisfaction with oneself, healthy eating and regular exercise). Seeing your doctor/dentist in time & regularly. See also "Collegial Coaching" to support each other to reach goals.

## 9. Self-knowledge (understanding the trigger; see questions below)

Understand how the break-in occurred and what problems need to be addressed. In particular, understand where "open flanks" were within yourself and what contributes to a self's failure to get back on track more quickly: How do I put myself under pressure? What exaggerated expectations and concerns do I have?

Questioning unfavourable attitudes/convictions. Get to know yourself so well that you develop more understanding for yourself & know how to knit and how to deal with yourself. Understanding that you can't always get out of your skin: What are my red buttons and what do I do when they are pressed?

Psychotherapy, writing a diary/reflecting on experiences, getting feedback from others, mindfulness exercises, etc. can help here.

Further questions for self-reflection: What are early warning signs for a relapse? What exactly will I do if I feel worse again? Which of my habits are unhealthy, which ones do I want to break? (Smoking, frustration, TV/Internet, brooding, worries, ...) Can I manage on my own or do I need support from family, friends, therapists or medication?

## 10. Self-compassion & (Self-)acceptance (good contact with oneself & one's feelings)

Guided meditations on self-compassion help you to be a good friend to yourself. Practice saying the following sentences in front of the mirror: "I want to treat myself & my feelings as friendly as I do other people close to me. I want to accept my body exactly as it is & take good care of it (with sports, stretching, body care & a healthy diet). I want to show myself that I like myself and that I am worth it by actively taking good care of myself. I want to practice in small steps to accept and allow unpleasant feelings.

I want to accept that I do not only have strengths and that weaknesses are human and allowed.

I forgive myself self-criticism. I do not want to put myself under pressure - I don't "have to" do anything. I accept that I have not yet reached all goals and I am happy that I am already on a good path. I accept my weaknesses because I am already working on them and getting angry does not help. I understand that old, self-esteem-damaging basic convictions (inner critic: "You are worth nothing", inner driver: "You have to function", etc.) used to have a function - but are not true, just because they repeat themselves in my head again and again. Instead, I patiently practice replacing the outdated automatic thoughts with new, more beautiful beliefs.

Acceptance means giving up resistance. I want to stop wasting my energy fighting against reality and rather use my energy to change what I can influence.



# My personal self-care

## Worksheet on the 10 pillars of self-care



1. **Structure:** What do I want to pay special attention to in my daily structure & weekly planning? When do I get off work? What do I do then?
  
2. **Social contacts & Social competence:** Who is important to me? How often do I want to meet whom? What do I want to learn in contact with others?
  
3. **Sports & Exercise:** When & how often do I want to do which sport with whom?
  
4. **Pleasure:** Which of the above mentioned points do I want to maintain or develop? How?
  
5. **Meaning & Purpose:** What is important to me? Do I want to devote more time to it?
  
6. **Sleep:** What do I want to pay attention to?



**7. Worries & Brooding:** How do I want to deal with worries, brooding & the feelings behind them?

**8. Acting on deeper intentions:** How do I want to overcome habits?

**9. Self-knowledge:** strengths & weaknesses: What should I look out for in myself?

**10. Self-compassion & Self-acceptance:** How do I practice acceptance & self-compassion?

**11. Other:** What else is important to me?



# My Weekly Schedule



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
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