

Self-Care Workbook



CSUMB Self-Care Workbook

A Partnership with:

**Service Learning Institute,
Health and Wellness Services,
and Wellness RAFT**

Authors' Note

This workbook was co-created by Dr. Jennifer Lovell and Dr. Christine Valdez, grounded in our commitment to mental wellness, emotional resilience, and sustainable practices for students. Drawing from our backgrounds in psychology, mental health, and higher education, we designed this resource to be both practical and compassionate. It reflects our belief that caring for ourselves is essential to caring for others—and our hope is that it supports you in doing just that.

Self-Care at Cal State Monterey Bay



At Cal State Monterey Bay (CSUMB), we recognize that caring for yourself is a powerful and necessary act. **Self-care** is the intentional practice of nourishing your body, mind, heart, and spirit. Self-care contributes to **self-love**, which is radical acceptance of who you are and your value as a person. Self-care practices reflect where you come from and what you need to thrive.

In the pages ahead, you will find tools to help you reflect on your needs, build supportive routines, and create a self-care plan that grows with you. Whether your care practices are rooted in cultural traditions, creativity, or quiet rest, this guide is here to support your personal and educational journey.

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[*Campus Resources Specific for Each Domain of Wellness](#) (Tab 2 of Doc)

Grounding Principles of Self-Care

Self-care is more than a personal choice – it's a **shared value and a community expectation**. As Otters, we believe in caring for ourselves so we can better support others, and **rafting together** through the waves of college life. Practicing self-care is how we live into our **Otter values** of community care, social responsibility, and learning as a lifelong journey.

Community Care: The Wellness Raft

The **Wellness Raft** is CSUMB's model for whole-student wellness. It reminds us that staying afloat and thriving requires a network of care – not just one practice or approach. To care for others, we also need to care for ourselves.

Just like sea otters link arms to stay connected and safe, we rely on community care and self-care to support our wellness. Sometimes we also need professional care (e.g., a counselor/therapist) to support our needs.

Wellness comes from building a strong, connected support system that enhances your life across **eight dimensions of wellness**: emotional, physical, social, spiritual, occupational, intellectual, environmental, and financial. You may focus more on one dimension depending on your semester, life situation, or goals. The key is to stay aware of how they work together and to reach for your raft when things feel out of balance. Learn more: csumb.edu/wellness-raft. To connect self-care strategies and resources with each domain of wellness, explore the [Campus Resources Tab](#).

Social Responsibility, Service, and Self-Care

Our Cal State Monterey Bay vision and mission emphasize social responsibility and civic engagement. These values inspire us to engage in service and advocacy, whether it's supporting family as a caregiver, mentoring peers on campus, participating in service learning, or standing up for social justice.

Engaging in **service is a powerful way to contribute to our communities and can also be a form of self-care**. Research indicates that helping others is associated with increased life satisfaction and reduced depression. This phenomenon (sometimes referred to as the "**helper's high**") suggests that acts of kindness release feel-good chemicals in the brain, promoting happiness and reducing stress. Choosing service activities that align with your interests and wellness needs – such as working outdoors or supporting causes you care about – can amplify these benefits. This approach reflects the spirit of **#CSUMBserves** – an affirmation that **otters care for their communities and themselves**.

Serving others and our environment is deeply meaningful – and **when grounded in self-care**, service becomes a **sustainable expression of social responsibility and love**. Service and community engagement allow you to contribute to a better world while also nurturing your own sense of purpose and connection.

Preventing Compassion Fatigue While Serving Others

While service is rewarding, it's essential to recognize the emotional demands it can place on individuals. Those involved in caregiving, social justice activism, and support roles may experience secondary trauma or compassion fatigue. **Compassion fatigue** refers to the emotional and physical toll of caring for others – especially in roles where you're exposed to others' pain. Compassion fatigue can lead to decreased motivation, emotional numbness, and a sense of helplessness if not addressed. To sustain your wellness and ability to serve others effectively, it's crucial to:

- **Engage in regular self-care:** Prioritize your self-care plan.
 - Example: "I've blocked out 5 minutes in the morning to engage in deep breathing; I feel better when I start my day this way."
- **Set boundaries:** Know your limits and communicate them clearly.
 - Example: "I would love to help with the event, but that week I am prioritizing midterms. Can I participate in the next event?"
- **Reflect and adjust:** Take time to rest, process your experiences, and debrief with others. Adjust your workload and environment in ways that can better support your wellness.

- Example: "I've noticed I'm feeling really drained, I'm going to start scheduling a break between commitments to rest."
- **Seek support:** Connect with peers, mentors, or professionals.
 - Example: "Would it be possible to set up a meeting with you to debrief about the incident that happened today?"

By taking care of yourself, you increase your capacity to support others without compromising your own health. Of note, psychologist Dr. Barbara Fredrickson found that maintaining a **3-to-1 ratio of positive to negative emotions** is key to emotional resilience. This means that for every difficult or draining experience, intentionally seeking out multiple moments of joy, connection, or calm can help restore balance and prevent burnout. Positive practices like laughter, gratitude, being in nature, or connecting with a friend can help you sustain your energy in service and advocacy work (e.g., Fredrickson, 2009; [Robinson, 2020](#)).

Self-Care is a Lifelong Journey

Self-care looks different for everyone, and it's not something you "finish." It's a **lifelong practice of tuning in to your needs and responding with compassion and intention**. Self-care will look different at various points of the semester.

Self-care is not about spending money or having extra time – it's about making intentional choices to support your wellness. You do not need expensive products, trendy routines, or hours of free time to care for yourself. What matters most is that your self-care is sustainable and responsive to who you are. As a student, you are navigating many roles – balancing family, work, school, and personal growth. In the midst of supporting others and meeting deadlines, it's essential to make space to care for yourself and to recharge.



Now that you have reviewed the grounding principles of self-care, the following sections include some guidelines and tools for creating a self-care plan.

Creating Your Self-Care Plan

Establish Healthy Ways of Thinking

Coping thoughts can be a powerful way to manage overwhelming emotions and maintain cognitive equilibrium. They are statements that remind you of your strength, your past success, and some commonly held truths. Below, check or highlight the coping thoughts that you consider powerful and motivating, or create your own:

- ___ Mistakes happen, nobody's perfect.
- ___ This situation won't last forever.
- ___ I've already survived other painful experiences, and I will survive this.
- ___ My feelings are like a wave that comes and goes.
- ___ My feelings make me uncomfortable right now, but I can accept them.
- ___ I can be anxious and still deal with the situation.
- ___ I'm strong enough to handle what's happening to me right now.
- ___ This is an opportunity for me to learn.
- ___ My anxiety/fear/sadness won't kill me; it just doesn't feel good right now.
- ___ I'm strong and I can deal with this.
- ___ _____
- ___ _____

Develop Sustainable Habits

Everyday choices – like taking a stretch break or reaching out to a friend – can make a big difference in your overall wellness. Strong social connections help us cope with challenges, manage stress, and contribute to a sense of belonging.

Take a moment to reflect:

- What are you currently doing to support your well-being on a daily or weekly basis?
- Are there areas where you feel strong and consistent in your self-care?
- Are there other areas where you could use more support or intention?

The table below is designed to help you check in with yourself across eight dimensions of wellness. **Use this as a tool to notice patterns and set priorities. After brainstorming here, you will use your answers to create a self-care plan** that feels manageable and meaningful for your life right now. *You are in control of this process, and so only fill out what makes sense to you.* You are also welcome to consult with others (e.g., family, friend, therapist) as you reflect on self-care practices. **Explore this [list of campus resources](#) supporting each domain of wellness.**

Reflect and brainstorm using this framework...

Area of Self-Care	Current Practices	Practices to Try
Emotional (e.g. journaling, practicing gratitude, expressing emotions effectively, communicating needs)	Write your response...	Write your response...
Physical (e.g. drinking water, eating nourishing meals, practicing good sleep habits, exercising)		
Social (e.g. texting a loved one, planning a meal with friends, scheduling a date with partner/spouse, saying “hi” to colleagues)		
Spiritual (e.g., reading inspirational literature, reflecting, spending time in nature, meditating, participating in cultural or faith-based practices)		

Area of Self-Care	Current Practices	Practices to Try
Professional/ Occupational (e.g., maintaining work-life balance, practicing time management skills, aligning work with your values)		
Intellectual (e.g., reading for pleasure, watching a documentary, getting out of your comfort zone, trying a new hobby)		
Environmental (e.g., tidying your space, working outdoors, recycling, adding a calming item to your work area)		
Financial (e.g., reviewing your spending, creating a budget or financial plan, saying “no” to an unnecessary purchase)		

Emergency Self-Care

When you are in a tough moment, it's hard to think clearly. Planning ahead can help you get through. Use the table below to identify some **key strategies to use and to avoid when you're feeling overwhelmed**, anxious, or in crisis. Check the examples that apply to you – or add your own strategies. These are just examples, and you are encouraged to personalize your plan with what works best for you.

Category	What Helps Me (Check All That Apply)	What to Avoid (Check All That Apply)
Calming Myself	☐ Deep breathing ☐ Taking a walk ☐ Cold water ☐ Grounding exercise ☐ Stretching	☐ Yelling ☐ Isolating ☐ Swearing ☐ Drinking/substance use ☐ Overcommitting
Self-Talk	☐ "I've handled hard things before" ☐ "I'm not alone" ☐ "This will pass"	☐ "I'm a failure" ☐ "This always happens" ☐ "I deserve this"
Support System	☐ Text a friend ☐ Call a family member ☐ Message a peer mentor ☐ Seek support from a counselor/ therapist	☐ Talking to people who cause stress ☐ Venting to someone who won't listen
Lifting My Mood	☐ Listening to music ☐ Getting outside ☐ Watching a funny video ☐ Drawing or doodling	☐ Staying in bed all day ☐ Doom scrolling for hours ☐ Avoiding everyone ☐ Using alcohol/drugs
Building Strength	☐ Looking at old notes/cards ☐ Spiritual practice ☐ Remembering past wins	☐ Comparing myself to others ☐ Talking to draining people ☐ Skipping routines

Your Self-Care Plan

Now that you have reflected on your daily habits and your current needs, it's time to bring everything together.

As you build a meaningful self-care plan, it helps to set **SMART goals**:

- **S**pecific – clearly define what you want to do
- **M**easurable – include a way to track your progress
- **A**chievable – be realistic about your time and capacity
- **R**elevant – connect your goal to your values or needs
- **T**ime-bound – set a timeframe for when you want to achieve it

For example: “I will take a 15-minute walk after lunch three days a week for the next month” is a SMART goal. ([Mayo Clinic, n.d.](#); [Yale University, n.d.](#))

Your self-care plan does not need to be big or perfect. What matters most is that it is doable, responsive to your current needs, and grounded in the person you are today. **This plan should be revised and updated regularly.** *To keep it manageable, select 2-5 goals total (either all in the same domain or across domains).* If you already have self-care as part of your daily routine, then consider choosing at least one new practice to try.

My Self-Care Plan

In the present plan, I will focus on enhancing the following domain(s) of wellness (circle/highlight all that apply): Emotional • Physical • Social • Spiritual • Occupational • Intellectual • Environmental • Financial	
Domain	<u>SMART</u> Goal(s)
<i>e.g., Emotional</i>	<i>e.g., This semester, I will write in my gratitude journal before bed, at least four days per week.</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	

Based on your emergency self-care reflections, write a brief **grounding mantra** or **coping thought** (a sentence you can repeat to ground yourself when things feel overwhelming):

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Examples: "Breathe in calm, breathe out tension"; "Progress, not perfection"; "I'm allowed to pause and care for myself"; "Right now, I will focus on what I can control"; "I am enough, even when I'm struggling"

Campus Resources for Wellness

Campus Wellness Resources

CSUMB's **Health & Wellness Services** and **Wellness Raft** strive to assist members of the CSUMB community in achieving and maintaining **holistic wellness**. This linked [Holistic Wellness guide](#) highlights actions and resources for student mental health and wellbeing, and the Student Crisis Response ([Holistic Wellness and Student Crisis Response Accessible Format](#)).

Note: This resource page is intended to be viewed digitally (rather than printed). Links and resources will be updated annually to reflect current campus resources:

<https://csumb.edu/academics/hands-on-learning/service-learning/service-and-care/>

Overarching Wellness Resources

Here are some resources and support services separated by wellness domain:

- The [Personal Growth & Counseling Center](#) (PGCC) provides crisis intervention, mental health screenings, counseling, consultation, educational outreach programs, support programs, and referrals to local mental health providers.
- The Wellness Raft website includes a list of [resources for students](#).

Student Resources By Wellness Domain

Mental/Emotional Wellness



- CSUMB's Personal Growth and Counseling Center provides services (overarching wellness, see above) and access to [local mental health resources](#).
- **Calming Corner** - a quiet space where students can go to unwind and relax. Located in the [Student Accessibility and Disability Center](#), Building 80, Room 104. The space includes low lighting, zen gardening, sand play, coloring, fidget toys, beanless bag chairs, and more.
- [Otter Care training](#), Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), and Question, Persuade, and Response (QPR) promote emotional well-being, encourage help-seeking behavior, and strengthen resilience by fostering connectedness throughout the campus community.
- The [Campus Advocate](#) is a confidential sexual assault and sexual harassment advocate from Monterey County Rape Crisis Center. The Campus Advocate supports students with matters related to sexual assault, domestic/interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

Physical Wellness



- The [Campus Health Center](#) (CHC) provides urgent, primary, and ancillary care (including occupational medicine), as well as referral services.
- The [Health Promotion and Education](#) provides campus-wide health promotion activities, training, health education materials, and referrals for campus and community resources.
- [Exercise is Medicine on Campus](#) offers a variety of physical activity events and programs for the CSUMB community.
- The [Otter Sports Center/Aquatics Center](#) is open to CSUMB students for individual workouts and modified activities

- The [Basic Needs Hub](#) supports students' physical wellness by ensuring access to nutritious food, hygiene supplies, and other essentials.

Social Wellness



- Consider joining student [clubs or organizations](#) to connect with others who share similar interests.
- [MyRaft](#) is CSUMB's student engagement platform. Not only can you use this to register for events, but also to join CSUMB's many student organizations, connect with resources, and interact socially with other students on the feed and through chat.
- The [Otter Cross Cultural Center \(OC3\)](#) is a vibrant hub that fosters social wellness by offering an inclusive study space, cultural events, identity-affirming workshops, student organization support, and advocacy training.
- The [Student Affinity Centers](#) foster a sense of belonging, empowerment, and advocacy. These are inclusive spaces where students can explore their identities, engage in meaningful dialogue, and access resources that support their personal and academic success.

Spiritual Wellness



- CSUMB [Campus Chaplaincy](#) provides pastoral care to students, faculty, and staff regardless of religious tradition or denomination. They are a resource for interfaith-interdenominational services and support faith-related clubs, programs, and events at CSUMB.
 - There is a Meditation and Praying Room in the OSU, 3rd Floor, Room 317.
- CSUMB is located next to [Fort Ord National Monument](#), which is a great place to connect with nature via hiking or mountain biking.
- Find outdoor adventures and activities via [CSUMB's Recreation and Adventure Education](#) programming. Recreation inspires

transformative change, promotes well-being, and is committed to student growth and success through outdoor activities and other opportunities.

Occupational/Academic Wellness



- [Student Disability and Accessibility Center \(SDAC\)](#) promotes the empowerment, wellness, and full integration of students with disabilities into campus life and the campus community.
- The [Cooperative Learning Center \(CLC\)](#) is a free peer-led tutoring and academic coaching hub that supports students across disciplines to foster academic confidence, organization, and holistic learning well-being
- The [Career Development Office](#) guides major and career exploration, resume and interview preparation, internship/job searches, and professional networking to build confidence and real-world preparedness early in your academic journey.
- The CSUMB [College Corps Fellowship](#) helps students build strong professional and peer networks that enhance students' social connectedness, community engagement, and leadership skills.

Intellectual Wellness



- The [National Coalition Building Institute](#) is a non-profit leadership training organization that works to eliminate prejudice and intergroup conflict in communities throughout the world. NCBI provides diversity workshops, training, and resources for enhancing reflection and understanding of diversity.
- The [Library](#) provides research assistance, information literacy instruction, and access to diverse academic resources across disciplines. The library includes a family-friendly study room and lactation room, plus an assistive technology room for students with disabilities. Special themed book exhibits are always fun to explore!

- The Library [Makerspace](#) is a free, hands-on creative space where students can explore, build, and de-stress using tools like 3D printers, art supplies, and sewing machines.

Environmental Wellness



- Study or relax outdoors – look at CSUMB's [Nature Rx map](#) which provides links to various campus spots and outdoor wellness events to support emotional and environmental wellness.
- CSUMB's [Service Learning Institute](#) partners with many community sites that work toward sustainability and environmental justice in Monterey County. Some examples include Habitat Stewardship Project, Big Sur Land Trust, and many others.
- Consider visiting local thrift stores (e.g., [student artists](#) have used Last Chance Mercantile) to find ways to make your space/dorm feel fun and meaningful. You could also consider exploring your creativity and creating/repurposing.
- Practice mindfulness skills with PGCC counselors during the [Outdoor Stress Management Workshop Series](#).

Financial Wellness



- Center for Student Success: [Financial Literacy](#), [Financial Literacy Workshop](#)
- Second Year Experience - [Financial Literacy & Resources](#)
- [Financial Aid](#): CSUMB offers appointments with Financial Aid Counselors to help students understand the processes and where to find scholarships.
- Undoc-Success Center: [Self-Care and Financial Literacy Workshops](#)