

# Kowhai Programme

Support for families, whānau & carers

## Self Care An Essential Tool for Health and Wellbeing

Making a priority of your physical and psychological health creates a foundation for wellness, and replenishes the resources you need to extend compassion to others.

There are several analogies for the need to prioritise self-care. Choose one that resonates, and use it as a daily reminder that this is essential.

**Every airline safety briefing talks about putting on your own oxygen mask first.** There is a reason for that – If you don't take care of yourself you may well fall over before you can help those who need it. Worse, you may then be in the way of someone else trying to help.

**You cannot pour from an empty cup.** If you allow your own self to be drained dry, there will be nothing left, no

energy, no compassion, and no ability to continue to support another person, no matter how much you wish to do so.

**A car does not run on an empty tank.** Simply put, if you do not fuel up the car then you cannot carry anybody anywhere. No fuel, no go. You will simply stop still and this may well be (is likely to be?) at the worst possible time and place.

**And finally, you don't let your electronic devices run down flat.** You charge them up before they get to that point, or they are no use to anyone. So if you won't do that to your phone, your tablet, your computer, why would you do it to yourself?



**Reduce Stress:** There is plenty of sound evidence to suggest that most self-care activities reduce stress, which amongst other things, help your body strengthen its immune system. Self-care will also help quieten your inner critic, bringing you greater peace, and more self-worth.

Introducing many small, nourishing habits into your daily routine will gradually bring long term rewards for your mind, body, and soul. By looking after yourself you will last longer in caring for your loved one. You will have a better relationship with them as there will be less burnout and less stress. You will manage caring at home for longer – and you will feel better doing so. Less stress means less resentment, and you may find you are more able to simply enjoy being together.

**Saying No:** Can be very difficult for many people. It sometimes needs practice. But learning to say No to anything that stretches your resources, be it physical,

emotional or psychological, is a powerful tool that enables you to preserve your energy for what matters the most to you. Practice saying No at home, or with a friend, and build your ability to use it when you need it.

**Self-care means different things for different people.** Finding what works for you is key.

Spend time doing something that feeds your soul. Reading a book, visiting a gallery, going to a religious service, attending a talk, walking or sitting in the bush. Think about what brings you the most peace and find ways to build it into your life.

Self-care can be built in increments. Taking ten minutes to fully appreciate a good cup of tea or coffee; ten minutes in your garden without your phone; walk around the block and smile at each person you see. Be in the moment and simply savour it.

## Some ideas to get you started

### Breathe to relax

Use this technique – Inhale for 4 seconds, Hold for 7 seconds, Exhale for 8 seconds.

### Call a friend

As social creatures, we need connection to be happy. If you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed out, call a good friend—chances are, they'll help you find something to laugh about and focus on the bigger picture.

### Walk around the block

We're proponents of exercise because of what it does for your body and mind. But when you don't have time to hit the gym or get sweaty, a simple five-minute stroll in the fresh air can be a wonderful way to relax.

### Use essential oils

Whether you add them to your shower, mix them with lotion or simply take a whiff when stress starts to build, using essential oils is a great way to relax. Scents like lavender, rose or ylang ylang are particularly calming.

### Listen to your favorite song

Make a playlist of a few go-to songs that instantly calm you, whether they be pop songs or slow piano music. Listening to music that you like is a super easy way to relax and unwind.

### Take a coloring break

Adult coloring books are all the rage these days, and for good reason—they help you de-stress and let your mind wander, something we rarely let ourselves do after the age of 5. The truth is, of all the ways to relax, unstructured creative time can be the most effective. You're not striving to achieve any sort of "result;" you're just playing.

