

SELF CARE

FOR PARENTS WHO CARE

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SELF CARE FOR PARENTS WHO CARE

- How to find the time, energy and resources to “take care of yourself”
- Creating (and implementing) a self care plan for support, strength and joy
- Accessing and connecting with a supportive community

THE BUBBLE BATH OF SELF CARE

- STUFF-driven “care”
- Bubble bath
- New things that pamper the body (oils, makeup, hair, neck pillows, clothes)
- Time out, alone



MAINSTREAM CAPITALIST CULTURE VS DISABILITY JUSTICE & THE SOCIAL MODEL

MAINSTREAM CAPITALIST CULTURE

- Worth is defined by ability to work a job
- Disability seen as an “other,” something different
- Disability seen as broken, in need of fixing, to meet the (productivity) needs of the culture
- We must be independent
- We should do what those at the top (usually white men) want

DISABILITY JUSTICE AND SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

- Wholeness and inherent worth are recognized
- Disability seen as a natural part of the human experience
- Culture needs to shift; not the person
- We are interdependent
- We should be guided by our hearts, connected to our spirits, and led by our community “nothing about us without us”



OUR CHILDREN, FROM THE SOCIAL/JUSTICE MODEL OF DISABILITY

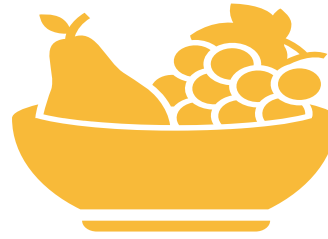
Are here to learn, grow, thrive
and enjoy their lives

Have the right to an education
and to the creation of a life of
their choosing

Don't have anything wrong with
them

DO need to be understood

8 PILLARS OF SELF CARE OR 8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS



1. **Physical Self-Care:** caring for your body's physical needs.

Think: sleep, nutritious food, physical exercise, medical care.



3. **Mental/Intellectual Self-Care:** Stimulating the mind and strengthening growth mindset.

Think: reading, puzzles, learning, boundaries with media, creativity.



2. **Emotional Self-Care:** being present with and caring for your feelings.

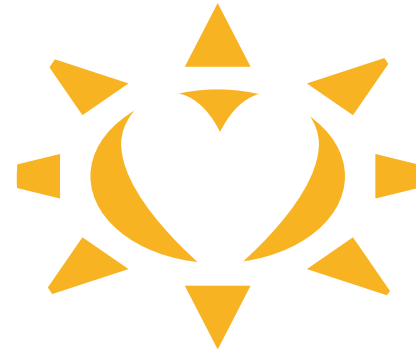
Think: journaling, therapy, crying, naming your feelings, allowing joy.



4. **Social Self-Care:** Nurturing nourishing relationships and releasing draining ones.

Think: texting a friend, setting boundaries, asking for help, meaningful connection, community.

8 PILLARS OF SELF CARE OR 8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS



5. Spiritual Self-Care:
Connecting to something
greater—whatever that
means for you.

Think: prayer, meditation,
nature walks, rituals, awe,
wonder, meaning.



7. Environmental Self-Care:
Tending to the spaces you live
and move through.

Think: decluttering, adding
beauty, safety, nature, cozy
corners.



6. Professional/Occupational Self-
Care: Creating balance and integrity
in your work life.

Think: taking breaks, saying no, skill
development, purpose, manageable
goals.



8. Financial Self-Care: Bringing
peace and clarity to your
relationship with money.

Think: budgeting, saving, planning,
spending intentionally, getting
support.

THE 8 PILLARS & US

What does that
self care and
wellness look
like with the
presence of
disability in our
lives?



8 PILLARS, STANDARD VERSION

- **Physical Self-Care:** caring for your body's physical needs. *Think:* sleep, nutritious food, physical exercise, medical care.
- **2. Emotional Self-Care:** being present with and caring for your feelings. *Think:* journaling, therapy, crying, naming your feelings, allowing joy.

8 PILLARS, DISABILITY VERSION

- Protect your sleep – micro-rests during the day
- Make it easy: rotate 3 go-to dinners or smoothies, easy but nourishing foods
- Speak kindly to your body – its always listening (and so is your child)
- Grieving – it's okay to grieve and still be deeply in love with your child
- Confronting our own ableism is an important part of our hard self-care

8 PILLARS, STANDARD VERSION

- **3. Mental/Intellectual Self-Care:** Stimulating the mind and strengthening growth mindset. *Think:* reading, puzzles, learning, boundaries with media, creativity.
- **4. Social Self-Care:** Nurturing nourishing relationships and releasing draining ones. *Think:* texting a friend, setting boundaries, asking for help, meaningful connection.

8 PILLARS, DISABILITY VERSION

- Create social media accounts that either teach you something that makes you happy/grounded, connect you with disability or intersecting community– or will make you laugh. Cut everything else out
- Take time to learn more about your child's disability
- Connect with cross-disability community as well as adults who have the same disability as your child. Remember: adults with the disability are the experts. Learn from them.
- Connect in real life with disability community, and the intersections
- Set hard boundaries with ableist/toxic people in your world

8 PILLARS, STANDARD VERSION

- 5. Spiritual Self-Care: Connecting to something greater—whatever that means for you. Think: prayer, meditation, nature walks, rituals, awe, wonder, meaning.
- 6. Professional/Occupational Self-Care: Creating balance and integrity in your work life. Think: taking breaks, saying no, skill development, purpose, manageable goals.

8 PILLARS, DISABILITY VERSION

- **Pray, speak, ask:** Whether to God, the universe, your ancestors, or your higher self—ask to be guided, held, strengthened
- **Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT “Tapping”) and Affirmations**
- **Appreciation Lists Pivoting Positive List**
- **Utilize technology:** taptic watches for reminders to *breathe; heart math*
- **Let go of hustle culture:** Your worth is not measured by output. Some days, showing up is the success.
- **Say no without guilt:** “I’m at capacity” is a full sentence. Your time is finite, and your energy sacred.
- **Protect transitions:** Build in buffer time before and after work tasks so your nervous system can settle.
- **Microbreaks matter:** A few deep breaths, a stretch, a step outside
- **Celebrate what you *did* do:** Make a “done” list

8 PILLARS, STANDARD VERSION

- 7. Environmental Self-Care: Tending to the spaces you live and move through. Think: decluttering, adding beauty, safety, nature, cozy corners.
- 8. Financial Self-Care: Bringing peace and clarity to your relationship with money. Think: budgeting, saving, planning, spending intentionally, getting support.

8 PILLARS, DISABILITY VERSION

- Create sensory-safe spots:** A cozy chair with a weighted blanket, dim light, or white noise can be a sanctuary for both you and your child.
- **Layer the environment gently:** Soften lighting, bring in soft textures, and avoid visual overload—especially helpful for neurodivergent children.
 - **Create buffer zones:** For children who need emotional regulation, having a calm-down space (with sensory tools) is powerful self-care for both of you.
 - **ABLE Accounts. Special Needs Trusts. SSI for your child? Acorns accounts.**
 - **Figure out discounts, scholarships, sliding scales. You are advocating, not begging.**

LET'S PRACTICE!



Physical
Emotional
Mental/Intellectual
Social

Spiritual
Environmental
Financial
Occupational

Date:

Today's Appreciation/Gratitude List:

Today's Positive Aspects List:

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Today's Appreciation/Gratitude Intentions List:

Today I really appreciate:

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Today's Just for Fun

How will I have FUN today?!

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Today's Go Outside

When do I plan to step outdoors and acknowledge Source and all of nature?

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Today's Meditation or Relaxation

How will I plan to meditate or relax today?

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An affirmation for today or a positive visualization:

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Done List

Write out everything you have actually DONE today (or for a given project/task). This exercise focuses on the simple stuff, and allows us to recognize all that we actually do!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



Date:

Today's Appreciation/Gratitude List:

Today's Positive Aspects List:

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Today's Appreciation/Gratitude Intentions List:

Today I really appreciate:

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Today's Go Outside

When do I plan to step outdoors and acknowledge Source and all of nature?

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Today's Meditation or Relaxation

How will I plan to meditate or relax today?

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An affirmation for today or a positive visualization:

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REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- Disability Justice: 10 Principles of Disability Justice by Sins Invalid: <https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/>
- Models of Disability: <https://www.meriahnichols.com/what-are-the-medical-social-and-moral-models-of-disability/>
- Downloads: Appreciation Lists, Wellness maps and more: <https://www.meriahnichols.com/spin-2025/>
- Heart Math: an emotional regulation and stress reduction system that teaches people how to shift into a heart-coherent state—a state where your heart, brain, and nervous system are in harmony: <https://www.heartmath.org/>
- Emotional Freedom Technique: aka “Tapping”: a practice that combines elements of acupressure, talk therapy and affirmations, helping to release emotional blocks and calm the nervous system: <https://eftinternational.org/discover-eft-tapping/free-eft-manual/>
- ABLE: <https://www.ablenrc.org/>
- Disability groups on FB: <https://www.meriahnichols.com/disability-groups-on-facebook/>