

**TERMINOLOGY MATTERS:  
DECONSTRUCTING  
"SELF-CARE" WHILE  
NOURISHING CULTURALLY  
RELEVANT WELLNESS**

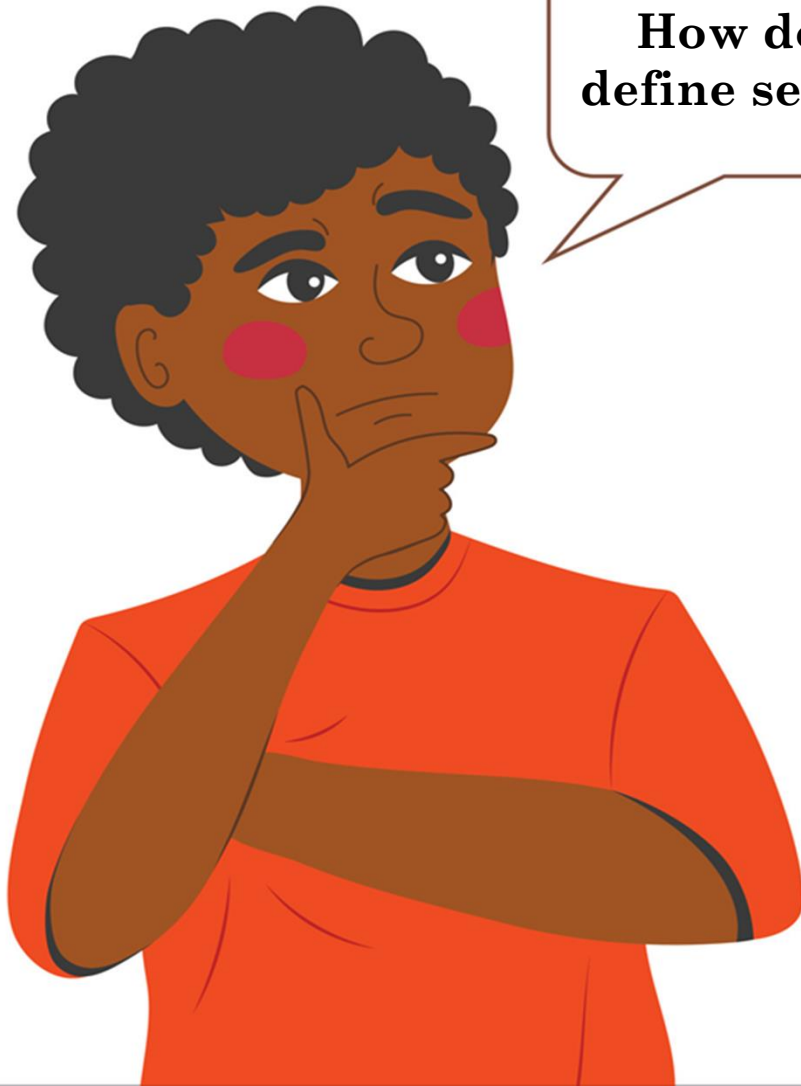
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## OBJECTIVES

- Attendees will explore the cultural implication linked to the philosophy of "self-care".
  - Specifically, attendees will understand how the concept of wellness morphed into self-care and consequently became culturally irrelevant to many.
- Attendees of the session will apply the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies to wellness plans, assessing the cultural relevance of such plans.
- Attendees will create a culturally sensitive wellness plan that could be used for counselors, educators, students, or clients.





**How do you  
define self-care?**

What have other  
self-care trainings  
included?

What do you do for  
self-care?



# WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

- Self-care has been increasingly co-opted by the wellness industry, transforming it into a multi-billion-dollar market.
- Mainstream culture has redefined self-care to include luxury goods, spa treatments, and expensive wellness retreats, often emphasizing individualism and consumerism.

## WHAT WE THINK SELF-CARE LOOKS LIKE:

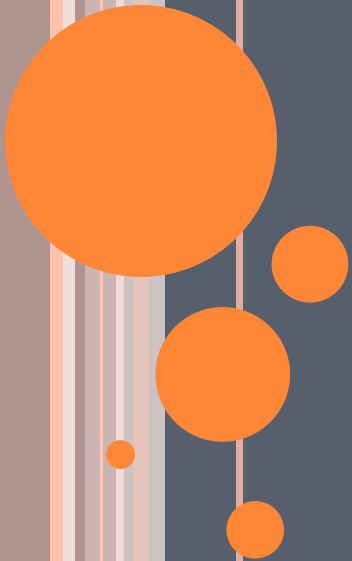
- bubble baths
- massages
- spa days
- yoga

## WHAT SELF-CARE REALLY LOOKS LIKE:

- setting boundaries
- getting proper rest
- trauma healing
- crying
- difficult conversations
- purging negativity
- nourishing your body
- meditation
- learning from triggers
- letting go of attachments



# HISTORY & THE SHIFT



# HISTORIC ROOTS

- Self-care has deep roots in marginalized communities, particularly among people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and activists.
  - Self-care emerged as a means of survival and resistance against systemic oppression
    - providing essential physical and emotional support in the face of societal neglect and violence.
- A radical act of self-preservation and political resistance.
  - For these communities, self-care practices were often simple, accessible, and communal, emphasizing collective well-being and resilience.



## SELF-CARE PRACTICES AS HEALTH PRACTICES

- India: Yoga, meditation, and using herbs and spices in daily life. Ayurveda promotes drinking lemon water, yoga, and thermal baths.
- Sweden: "Lagom" is a concept that promotes a balanced approach to life. Swedes often spend time in nature and engage in outdoor activities, even in the winter. "Fika" is a Swedish coffee and cake break.
- Japan: "Shinrin Yoku" is a Japanese practice called forest bathing.
- Russia: "S Lehkim Parom" is a Russian practice called with light steam.
- England: Prefers an afternoon tea



## THE SHIFT

- The commodification of self-care shifts the focus from its original intent—supporting marginalized individuals in resisting systemic oppression—to promoting personal luxury and aesthetic well-being.
- This shift often ignores the socio-political context and accessibility issues, making self-care practices **less attainable for those who need them most.**
- The shift also led to cultural appropriation.



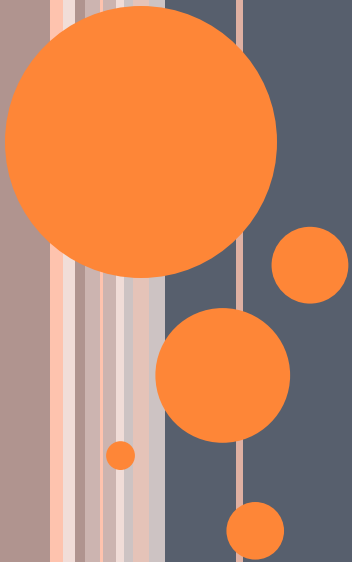


## IMPLICATIONS OF THE SHIFT

- **Exclusivity and Inequality:** The commercialization of self-care creates a divide, making it appear as a privilege available only to those who can afford it, rather than a necessity for everyone.
  - This commercialization often excludes the very communities that pioneered these practices as essential tools for coping with oppression.
- **Dilution of Purpose:** The original, radical intent of self-care as a means of resistance and communal support is diluted by its mainstream portrayal as mere consumer indulgence.
  - This undermines the powerful impact self-care can have on fostering resilience and solidarity within marginalized communities.

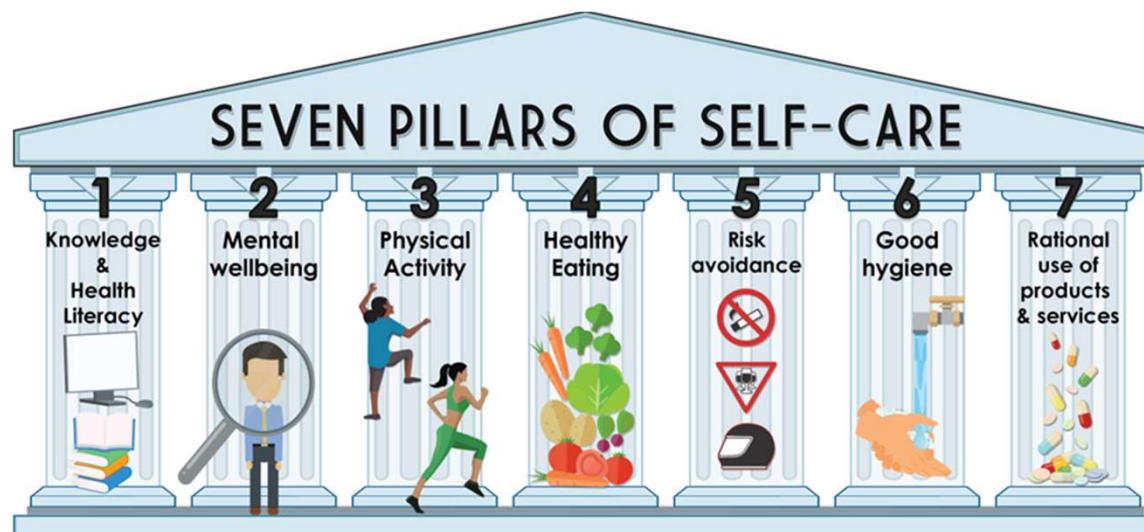


# NOW WHAT: RECONCEPTUALIZING

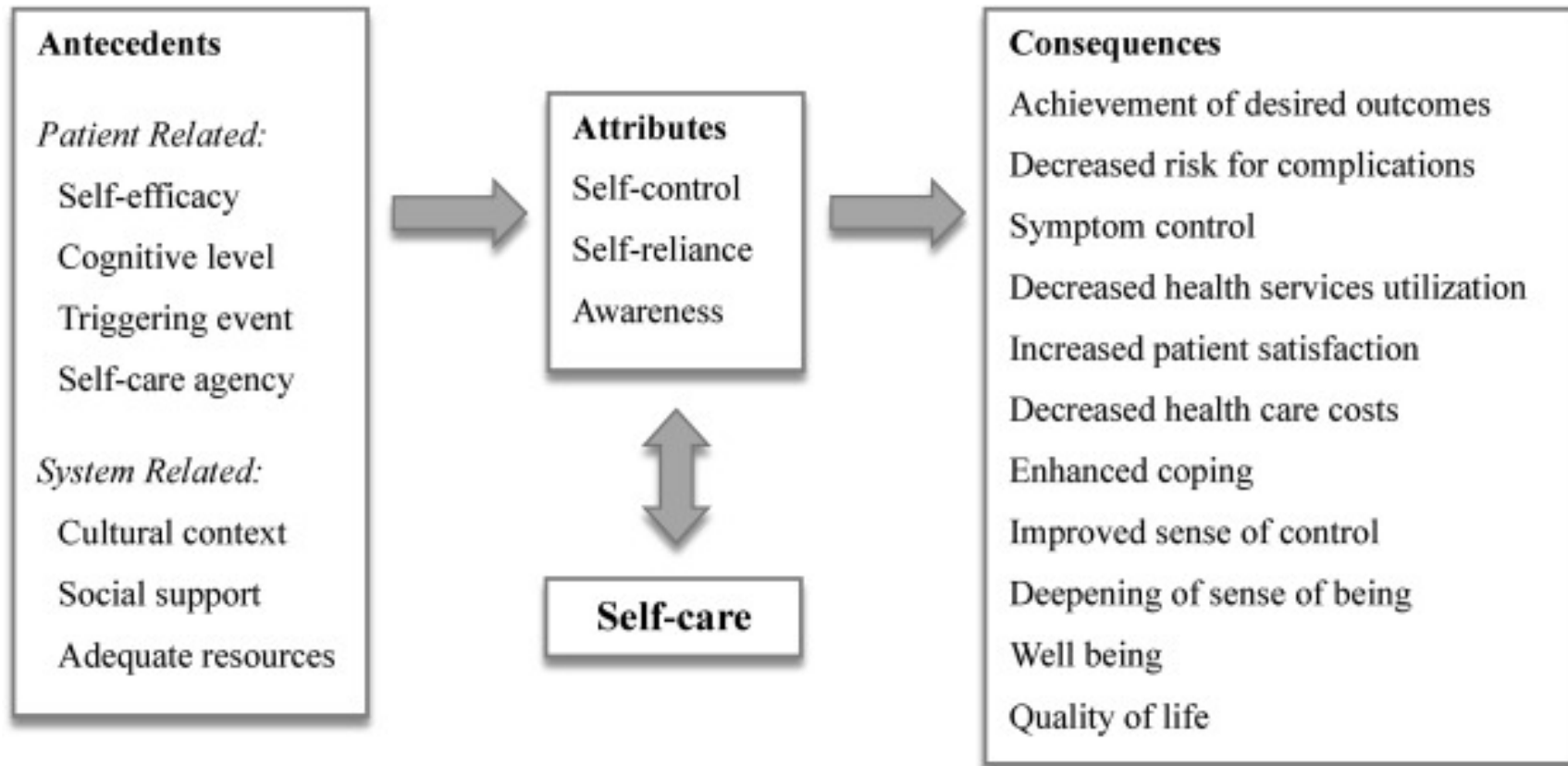


# THEORY

- **Seven Pillars of Self-Care** (Webber et al., 2013)
  - Knowledge and Health Literacy
  - Mental wellbeing, Self-awareness, and Agency
  - Physical Activity
  - Healthy Eating
  - Risk Avoidance
  - Good Hygiene
  - Rational Use of Products and Services

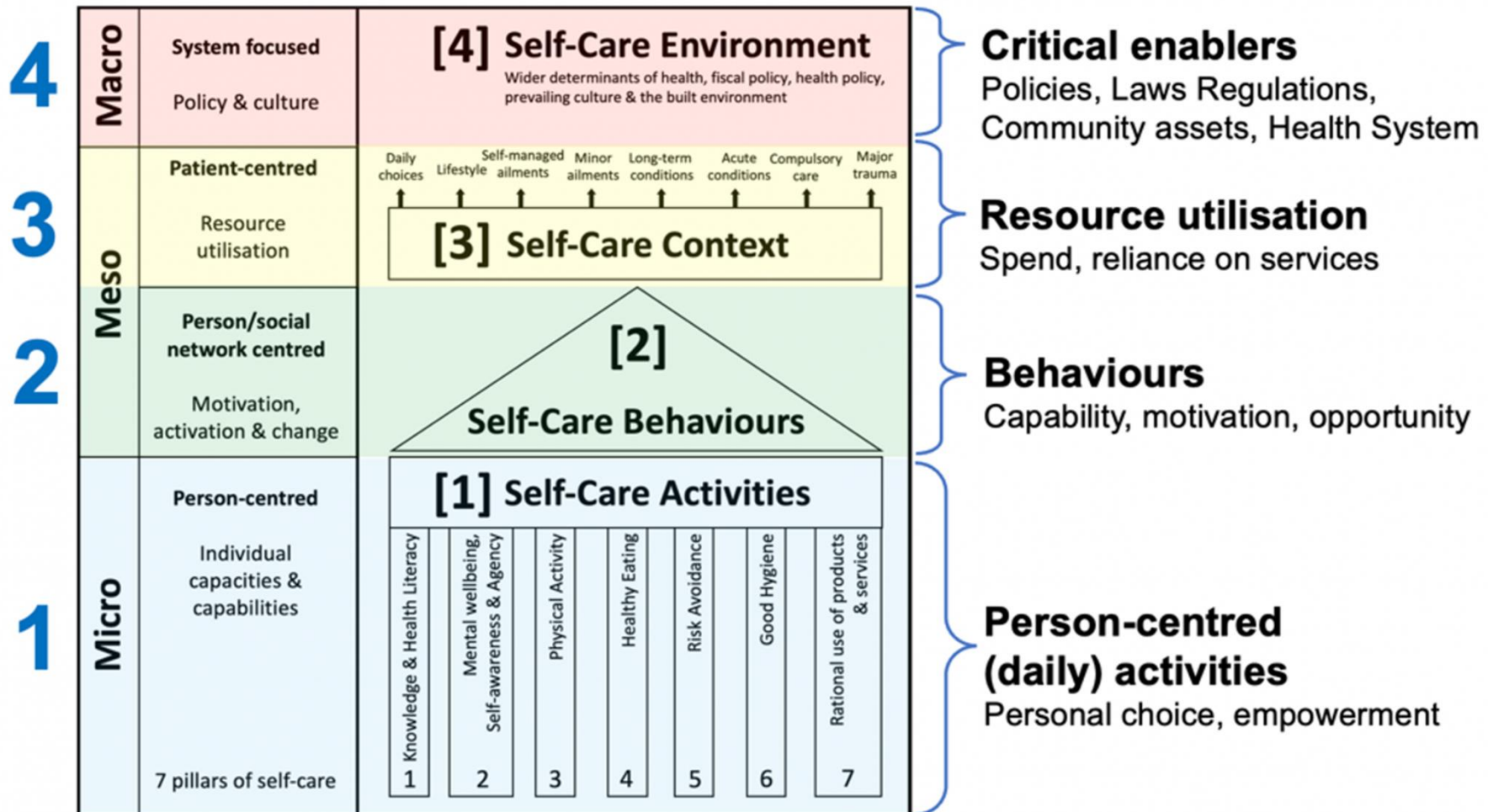


# THEORY:



THEORY: ADAPTED FROM EL OSTA ET AL., 2019

# The Self-Care Matrix





ACTION



## **CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE SELF-CARE**

**MAKING SELF-CARE MORE CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE INVOLVES RECOGNIZING AND HONORING THE DIVERSE CULTURAL ORIGINS AND PRACTICES OF SELF-CARE, ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY, AND FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING**

# ACKNOWLEDGE AND RESPECT

- Being aware of the history
  - Learn about the historical and cultural roots of various self-care practices
- Reducing cultural appropriation through education
  - appropriation often strips these practices (yoga, herbal remedies, etc.) of their cultural and spiritual significance
  - Give credit to cultures and communities that originated the practices
  - Maintain integrity of the traditions and practices
- Holistic and inclusive definitions
  - Broaden the definition of self-care to include diverse practices
  - Wellbeing includes physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, etc.





# LANGUAGE

- REconceptualize self-care
  - Does “self” mean alone or individual?
    - “me time”, time alone, self-help
  - Implications on interdependent /collectivist cultures
  - Responsibility to care for “self” is a Western value
  - Self-management, self-regulation, self-control, self-reliance
- Renaming self-care
  - Nurture, foster, personal care, acceptance
  - Rest, restoration, healing, transformation, holistic, harmony
  - Downtime, ...



# STRATEGIES FOR CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE SELF-CARE

- Promote accessibility
  - Provide affordable and accessible self-care options (free workshops, online resources)
  - Support and promote community-based self-care programs (communal self-care activities)
- Cultural sensitivity and competence
  - Provide cultural competence training for professionals in self-care industry
  - Include culturally relevant self-care practices into wellness programs (traditional healing methods, spiritual practices)



# STRATEGIES FOR CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE SELF-CARE

- Representation and leadership
  - Amplify voices and contributions of people from marginalized communities (feature their expertise)
- Community Engagement
  - Engage with communities to understand their specific needs and preferences for self-care
  - Work with community leaders to co-create initiatives that are culturally relevant
- Ethical marketing
  - Respect and honor the cultural significance of practices and products. Avoid exoticizing and commodifying cultural traditions.
  - Be transparent about the origins of the self care practice



# CULTURAL “COST” OF SELF-CARE

- The Cost of self-care?
  - Emotional cost of it being “required” or adding self-care to a full plate
  - Moral injury from focusing on self rather than the family/cultural unit
    - Guilt
    - Assimilation



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- How does self-care overlap with addiction
- Proactive vs reactive. Prevention vs treatment
- How does self-awareness figure into self-care

When I tell people I'm practicing self care and journaling but I'm really just drinking and listening to Eminem



**SORRY, I CAN'T.**  
**I HAVE**  
*grape therapy*  
**TONIGHT.**



## Reactive Self-Care

Self-care that is done too late, after stress, negative emotions and/or burnout has already occurred.



Oh, you don't have any weaknesses? Excellent, because we really only like to hire people with no self-awareness.



someecards  
user card



## CASE STUDY: COUNSELOR EDUCATION

- Tamika is in a group counseling course and the professor asked the students to share about their self-care activities at the beginning of each class. Each week Tamika feels stressed when it is her time to share. She feels like her self-care is different than her peers and sharing her activities makes her feel otherered even more in her homogeneous class.
- How would you help reduce Tamika's from feeling othered?
- How will you ensure that the course requirements for self-care do not have a negative impact on students?



## CASE STUDY: CLINICAL SETTING

- Jacob is a counselor at an agency with 8 female counselors. The agency emphasizes self-care through “employee fun days”. These are typically events that are not appeal to Jacob (ex. sip and paint event). In addition the counselors often go out for drinks after work as a “self-care” activity. Jacob is in recovery and does not attend these events.
- How can you ensure that the self-care is inclusive?



## CASE STUDY:

- Naomi is on a committee charged with developing a self-care professional development day/activity. She would like to ask local businesses to donate services related to self-care as a door prize. She would also like to create a care package for the counselors. Finally, she is interested in bringing in a speaker to provide education about self-care.
- What recommendations would you have for Naomi?
- What do you think that Naomi should consider when developing the self-care day/activities?





# CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS

## RESPECTFUL (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1997,2001)

- R - Religion/spirituality
- E – Economic/social class background
- S – Sexual Identity
- P – Psychological Maturity
- E – Ethnic/Racial identity
- C – Chronological/lifespan status and changes
- T – Trauma/crisis/threats to wellbeing
- F – Family background and history
- U – Unique physical characteristics
- L – Location of residence language differences

## ADDRESSING

- A – Age & generational influences
- D – Developmental disability
- D – Acquired disability
- R – Religion & Spirituality
- E – Ethnicity/ Race
- S – Sexual orientation
- S – Socio-economic status
- I – Indigenous heritage
- N – Nationality
- G – Gender



# ADDRESSING FRAMEWORK

- Age:
  - Think about when we teach people about self-care.
  - How does it change per generation?
- Disability:
  - Accessible self-care
- Religion:
  - Ways to restore mind, body, soul, using spirituality to reconnect
  - Could be problematic to focus on self rather than the higher power.
- Ethnicity:
  - Culturally relevant, norms, traditions
- Sexual orientation
  - Consider how one takes care of their self if they have to conceal their identity
- Socioeconomic status
  - Methods may differ depending on SES
- Indigenous heritage
  - Indigenous health practices
  - Ways to connect with family, ancestors, community, spirituality, or nature
- Nationality
  - Collectivist vs individualistic, relevant norms, traditions, beliefs
- Gender
  - Not stereotyping based on gender - Hypermasculinity, “metro”, etc.



# DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS



# SELF-CARE CHART

	Physical	Emotional	Social	Spiritual
Goal				
Goal				
Goal				
Goal				
Goal				



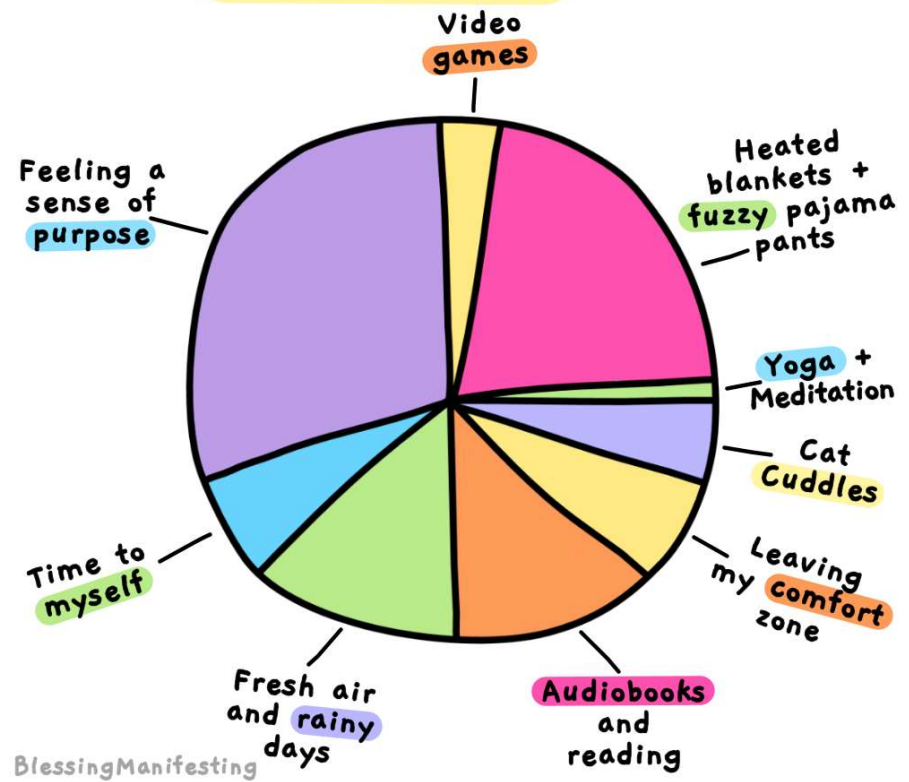
# SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

## Self-Care BINGO



Drink water 	Go for a walk 	Take a bath 	Take a mental health day 	Read a book 
Try a new recipe 	Go to sleep early 	Try a new restaurant 	Set 3 goals 	No social media for a day 
Write a letter to your future self 	Watch a movie 	Declutter your closet 	Buy yourself flowers 	Burn a candle 
Listen to your favorite music artist 	Do something creative 	Create or update your vision board 	Bake a treat 	Plan something fun to look forward to 
Eat your greens 	Get dressed up 	Journal about your day 	meditate on a positive affirmation 	Go to a coffee shop, bookstore or park 

## MY SELF-CARE CIRCLE



## RESOURCES

### ○ Apps for wellness and self-care

- Aloe Bud
- ToDon't
- Calm
- Headspace
- Meditopia



### AI for mental health support

- Wysa
- Woebot
- Youper
- MindDoc

KEEP  
CALM.  
THERE'S  
AN APP  
FOR THAT



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