

***The  
Little Book  
of  
Self-care***

The **Conflict**  
 **Toolbox**

Welcome to the *Little Book of Self-care*.

Self-care is typically thought of as being actions like eating well, exercising, hiring a cleaner, and so on; or as treats, such as getting a lovely massage, or taking a holiday. Whilst all of these things are very important, there is one area of self-care that has, for the most part, been overlooked. There is something that we can all do right now to support ourselves (as well as others). It doesn't cost anything, it doesn't require specialist training, and it is so simple that many people have no inkling of how powerful it is. 'What is this amazing and powerful tool?' It is the words and language that we use with ourselves, and with others.

Here are a few of my favourite tried and tested tools for self-care. Get in touch if you would like to learn more or ask about any of these tools.

Looking forward to chatting soon.

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## The Genius of Us

People are naturally geniuses. People who do procrastination or depression (non-contentment) really well are geniuses at it. People doing anxiety (non-calm) who have panic attacks are also geniuses at what they are doing. I used to be a genius at food intolerances, and pretty highly skilled at anxiety and at hiding it well, too. We are all geniuses at whatever we are doing to a high level. Therefore, if we can take that ability and commitment, and those skills and apply them to something more useful, that would be pretty awesome, wouldn't it? A great first step forward can be to realise and acknowledge this.

***“We are all doing the best we can with what we have right now.”***

At any given moment, we have access to certain skills, resources, role models, etc. that we have experienced in our lives. Some people have had wonderful role models, development opportunities, and resources; others haven't been so fortunate. Each of us has a unique combination, and it can be useful to take a moment to acknowledge what we have already overcome to be who we are today.

In our calmer moments of flow, we can access all of our most valuable resources; but when we are in times of stress, access to these is severely limited as our neurology focuses its energy into the fight/flight response.

Acknowledging our own (or others') achievements and limitations in any given moment can help us to be more compassionate towards ourselves, and also towards others – to see that we are all beautifully messily human 😊.

## Scarcity v. Fullness of Life

Following on from the *Genius of Us*, take a moment to celebrate how far you've already come, what you've achieved. We often focus so much on the future and what we have yet to achieve (the scarcity of life), that we forget about all the amazing incredible things we've already accomplished (the fullness of life).

You might like to make a list of your achievements in the past 7 days, the past 12 months, and in your life. Start with just 3 things for each time period – you can choose anything. Then, take a step back and celebrate those achievements.

When you think of other things you've achieved, add them to the list, and keep it in a place where you can go and revisit it whenever you're wanting a morale boost – to remember how wonderful you already are 😊.

Similarly, any time you find yourself thinking or talking about how you *don't have enough of* anything (such as time, energy, money), shift your thinking instead to what *you have plenty of*. For example, we all have plenty of time – it is how we prioritise where we invest our energy that makes a difference.

### ***Embracing the fullness of life***

## Neuroplasticity – Focusing on What You Want

We often use intriguing language to describe our hopes, dreams, and desires which can have the opposite intended effect. Have you ever noticed how when you ask some people what they want to change about their life, they answer in the negative? For example, “I don’t want to be in this relationship anymore”, “I don’t want to eat fast food and be ill”, “I don’t want to do this job”.

When we use this kind of language, in order to imagine **not eating fast food and not being ill**, the brain must first imagine **eating fast food and being ill**. When it imagines this, our brain then looks for opportunities in our environment to make this happen, which leads us to do exactly the opposite of what we actually want.

Using this kind of opposites approach is also a bit like going to a restaurant and when the waiter asks for your order, saying “I don’t want the steak”. The waiter asks again, and when your reply is “I definitely don’t want the lamb shanks”, the waiter sighs, “This could take a while!”

The great news is, that when we focus our language on what we really do want, our brain also seeks out opportunities in our environment to make it happen. **Ask yourself these questions:**

-  What do I really want? Be as specific and detailed as you can be, to help your brain to know what to look for.
-  When I have achieved this, what will I see/hear/feel? Make a note of your answers.
-  What am I already doing to achieve this? And what’s the next step? Again be specific and detailed – time, place, etc.

## Language of Authority – Is it Useful?

The language that we use with ourselves and with others has a significant impact on how we feel about ourselves and the things that we do. We have been trained throughout our lives to use words that place a lot of pressure on us, that limit us in our potential, and that leave us feeling disempowered. Classic examples of such words are in the *language of authority*: ‘should/should’ve’, ‘have to/must’, and ‘duty/obligation’. Such language weighs heavily on the shoulders and provides negative motivation through the use of guilt.

The great news is that as we start to replace these *authority* phrases with words that reflect an element of choice, it heightens our sense of empowerment. For example, feel what it feels like to say sentence A to yourself, and then how different it feels to say sentence B to yourself:

**A** – “I really *should* do some exercise today”

**B** – “I’m going to do some exercise today”

**A** – “I *shouldn’t* have done that”

**B** – “I did what I did, and I will do things differently next time”

**A** – “I *have to* find time for myself”

**B** – “I choose to make time for myself, because ...”

**A** – “I *need you to* give me some space”

**B** – “I’m wanting some space and calm (for half an hour), would that be okay with you?”

And as we transform our language our whole physiology follows and we actually feel far more enthusiastic.

This is just a simple overview, but I’m sure you get the picture 😊

## Nonviolent Communication

You may already have heard about Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication, or NVC for short. It's a communication model and a philosophy designed for conversing in a non-judgemental and non-threatening manner, avoiding the use of the language of authority. It has significant uses for conflict resolution, and also for self-care. Here's a brief overview of the model structure:

### 4-Part NVC Communication Strategy

<b><u>Observation:</u></b> <i>(without interpretation)</i>	When	you say ... I see ... 'x' happens.
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<b><u>Feelings:</u></b>	Are you feeling ...? I feel ...
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<b><u>Needs:</u></b>	because/and	you're needing ...? I'm needing ...
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<b><u>Request:</u></b>	Would you like to ...? Would you be willing to ...? Would you be able to ...? I would like to ... <i>(must be a clear message of what you want to happen)</i>
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## 4 Uses of the NVC Communication Strategy

### **1. Self-empathy**

Self-awareness is always the starting point. Checking in with yourself and your triggers. Builds resilience, & plans your action/reaction.

### **2. Empathy for other/s**

The more we empathise with the other party, the safer we feel. Aim to understand the other's perspective (walk in their shoes), and see their humanness. It is not necessary to agree with their perspective, just to see it. This has a deeply calming effect before and during dialogue, provides insights, and creates connection.

### **3. Expressing own needs**

To clearly express yourself so that you are heard, your message is received in the way it was intended, and your needs are able to be met along with others.

### **4. Expressing gratitude**

When someone meets your needs, gratitude is more fulfilling when you can be specific about what they did, how you felt, and what need of yours they met.

If you would like to explore NVC further, there are many YouTube videos and books available on the subject.

## Labels of judgement

What labels do you use on yourself? From time to time, we all tell ourselves statements like:

“I’m an idiot”

“I’m a caring person”

“I’m exhausted”

“I have an illness”

“I’m stressed”

By using the verbs *to be* and *to have* in the present simple tense, we automatically attribute an aspect of permanency to these states. As a consequence, these begin to define who we are (how we see ourselves, and how we project to others); however, they are not the whole picture.

As an alternative, when we use the verb *doing* in the present continuous tense, we instantly shift to an aspect of temporariness for these states instead, allowing more flexibility in who we are.

Experiment with replacing each of the above statements with “I’m doing ...” For example:

“I’m doing stress at the moment.”

“I’m doing caring right now”

Notice how much better and lighter it feels to use ‘doing’ instead – it opens up the potential for change and multidimensionality of our identities.

## Labels – another positive shift

As well as using ‘doing’, we can change the adjectives and nouns that we use to have a more positive focus by using the antonym (opposite meaning) and adding a prefix of *un-* or *non-*. This language shift focuses the brain on how we want to feel or to be, and the physiological shift automatically follows.

For example:

“I’m tired”	=>	“I’m doing non-energetic right now”
“I have an illness”	=>	“I’m doing non-healthy at the mo”
“I’m stressed”	=>	“I’m doing non-calm today”

Have fun being creative with your language 😊.

## Buts out!

Marshall Rosenberg talks about “Never putting your ‘but’ in the face of an angry person” 😊, as it tends to make things worse. When we say things like “I like you, *but* ...”, or “I think that’s great, *but* ...” we negate the stuff that comes before the ‘but’.

I find it much more useful to use, “**And, at the same time ...**” For example, “I like you *and, at the same time*, that behaviour is disrespectful”, or “I think that’s a great idea *and, at the same time*, I’m wondering if you’ve thought about the consequences.”

## Wholehearted living

“Wholehearted living is about engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, *No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough.* It’s going to bed at night thinking, *Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn’t change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.*”

Quote from Brené Brown in *Daring Greatly* (p.10)

### 3 Things to Start and End the Day

To start and end each day on a positive note:

 As you wake up each morning, think of 3 things you’re looking forward to in the day ahead.

 As you go to sleep each night, think of 3 things from your day that you’re grateful for or that you’ve achieved

## Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Nervous System

This is a simple graphic of the Para- and Sympathetic nervous systems, which shows the state of our bodies when we are calm and when we are in 'fight/flight' mode. The more time we spend in the Parasympathetic nervous system (or 'Rest & digest mode'), the more our physiology functions naturally and easily. All the tools in this booklet are designed to help you re-connect deeply with your Parasympathetic nervous system.

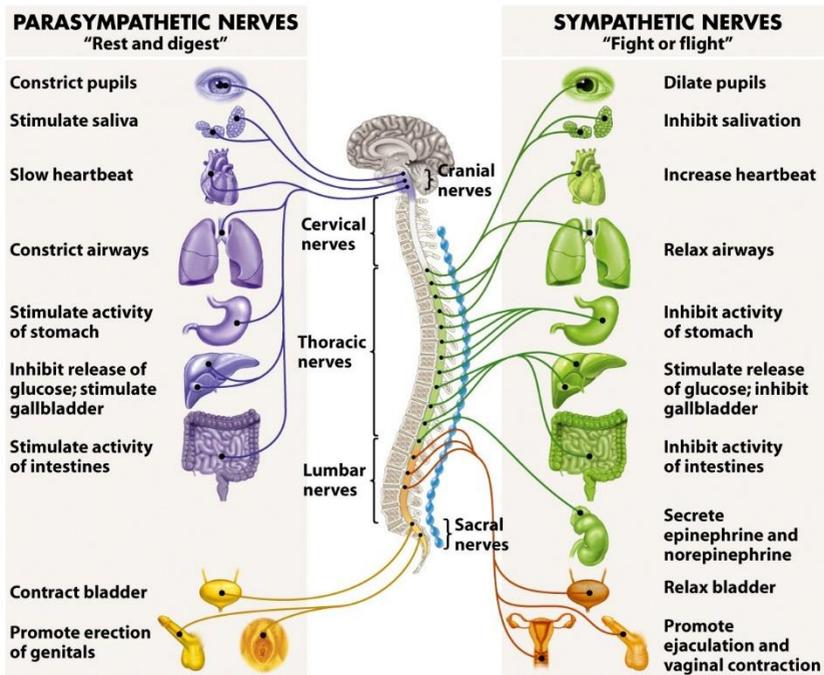
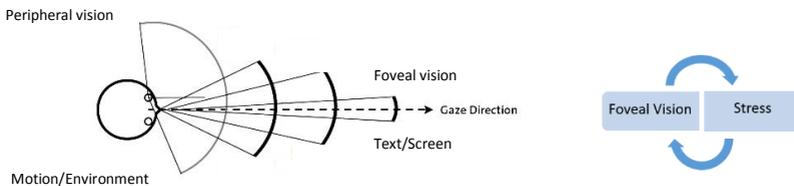


Figure 45-20 Biological Science, 2/e  
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## Peripheral v. Foveal vision

Up until the 1500's, humans used mostly peripheral vision, and only used foveal vision for hunting/fighting/short bursts. Since the invention of the printing press, leading to a proliferation of written material, and more recently ever smaller screen use, humans have been using foveal vision for extended periods of time. This has led to us spend the vast majority of our day in foveal vision, and therefore in the Parasympathetic (fight/flight) nervous system, increasing our levels of anxiety.



Peripheral vision	vs.	Foveal vision
(blurry big picture vision out to the sides)		(sharply focused ahead)
Engages <b>parasympathetic (relaxed state)</b> nervous system		Engages <b>sympathetic (fight/flight)</b> nervous system

### Exercises:

1. Take a spot on the wall slightly below your eye level, focus all your being on it, then take focus out to the sides to take in what else is around, then bring focus back to whatever you were doing (person/task). Important to take regular breaks (every 30-60 mins), and do a focus shift exercise like this.
2. You could also look up and make infinity symbols (lying down number 8) with your eyes, taking them to the edges of peripheral vision. This helps us to get into a great state for learning, for exams, presentations, etc., and therefore enables us to learn more, and retain it better.

## Anchoring Resourceful Memories

This is great if you're wanting an extra boost of confidence or calm (or something else) before an event like giving a presentation or taking an exam.

Take 5 minutes to think back to a time in the past when you felt really calm or confident. Close your eyes, remember the scene, the colours, the sounds, the smells, the feelings of being there – immerse yourself fully in the sensations of that time. You can anchor those sensations of calm or confidence to a word or a gesture (such as bringing your hands together). Then bring those feelings back with you into the present again. You can use the anchored word or gesture to help you access these calm or confident feelings any time you need a boost.

For best results, run through this preparation process several times, each time using exactly the same anchored word or gesture.

If you prefer, you could use someone else as a role model for anchoring a resource. Think of someone you know (can also be a person on the screen or in a book) who has the qualities/ characteristics that you would like more of. Visualise them being exactly the way that you would like to be; then when you feel ready, step into their shoes and feel what it feels like to be this way, doing the things that you want to do with all the resources that you want supporting you. How wonderful does this feel? 😊.

Again, you can anchor this way of being to a word or gesture to give you a boost whenever you need it; and repeating this process strengthens it.

## Further reading

- 🦋 Brené Brown – *Daring Greatly: how the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent and lead*
- 🦋 Marshall Rosenberg – *The Nonviolent Communication Handbook*, and many other titles
- 🦋 Mark Andreas - *Sweet Fruit from the Bitter Tree: 61 stories of creative and compassionate ways out of conflict*
- 🦋 Thomas D’Ansembourg – *Stop Being Nice, Start Being Real*
- 🦋 Phil Parker – *The 10 Questions to Ask for Success*
- 🦋 Romilla Ready & Kate Burton - *Neuro-linguistic Programming for Dummies*
- 🦋 Robert Winston – *The Human Mind*