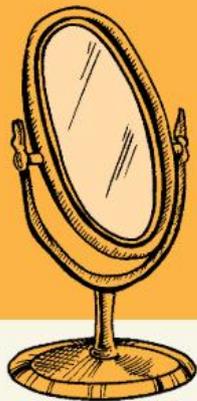




SELF-CARE

CARDS FOR HOME & WORK

Digital Version



St Luke's
Innovative
Resources

DEVELOPMENT & WRITING

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Welcome to the
Digital Version of



SELF-CARE

CARDS FOR HOME & WORK

St Luke's Innovative Resources is delighted to bring you the interactive, versatile, digital version of this conversation-building resource, first published as a hard copy card set packaged in a polypropylene box.

You can:

- swipe through the digital cards, one at a time
- swipe through a row of thumbnail images at the bottom of the screen
- bookmark/tag images
- write, scribble or draw on the digital cards—you may want to circle a relevant statement or scribble notes as a card is discussed
- add and drag notes anywhere on the images
- highlight, draw and write in multiple colours
- take a screen shot and access the image in your photo gallery
- send the image to the person you are working with so they have a copy
- print the image and mail it to the person so they have a hard copy
- save the image in your files as a record of your conversation.

How can I use this digital tool remotely with groups or individuals?

If you are running groups or meetings using Skype, Zoom or other similar video conferencing tools, you can use our digital cards and tools in a number of different ways.

A good place to start is to give the group or person some time to get to know the cards:

- The facilitator can share their screen, and scroll through the images so everyone can see.
- Point out the different features of the card set including the types of images, the format of the words (if any), the suits (if relevant) and any other unique features.
- Show them some of the features such as the scribble and text tools.

Deliberate Selection

- As you scroll through the cards, invite the person or group to pick cards that jump out at them for any reason. Perhaps it is the image that catches their attention. Perhaps it is a word or a question, or some other quality of the card. It may be a card they are curious about, or would find most helpful to focus on, or think is very important, or it may be a card that matches something they are thinking about or experiencing at the moment, or even a card that expresses something they have never thought about before.
- As the facilitator, you may wish to choose one or two cards to prompt an activity or discussion.

Random Selection

An alternate way of getting activities started is to select images randomly, for example:

- Ask each person to close their eyes and randomly say, 'Stop!' as the facilitator swipes through the images.
- Or ask each person to choose a number between 1 and X (X being the number of cards in the set). This is the number of their randomly selected card.
- Or use the timer on your phone set to a chosen interval—5 seconds, 10 seconds, etc. Stop on the image that is on screen when the timer dings.

Many videoconferencing tools allow you to put people into groups using 'breakout' rooms. So you may want to invite two or more people to discuss what a particular card means to them, and then come back to the whole group.



Some questions for reflection and conversation

Whether you use a deliberate or random selection method, you can then build the conversation by inviting each person to read or comment on their card, if they wish.

Facilitators can then ask individuals or groups questions like:

- What does this card mean to you?
- Have you thought about the topic on the card before?
- On a scale of 1-10 how important is this to you?
- Can you think of a time when this card was particularly relevant? What happened?
- When this is happening, what is the effect?
- When this is not happening, what is the effect?
- Do you know anyone who is really good at this?
- What do they do?
- What is one simple thing you could do today or tomorrow that would make a difference?
- How will you notice the effects? (Some people ask for feedback, and others prefer to notice carefully how it feels inside themselves and what the effect is on others.)



In the booklet written especially for the card set you have chosen, you will find a lot more information. It includes the purpose of this card set, its origins and practice base, things you should take into consideration before using the cards, and many creative ideas for using the cards. Please adapt the suggestions to the digital environment.

**Don't hesitate to call us for support
in using this digital resource.**



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Project manager & editor: Karen Bedford

St Luke's Innovative Resources acknowledges the Jaara people of Dja Dja Wurrung country, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our premises are located and where our resources are developed and published. We pay our respects to the elders—past, present and future—for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and other First Nations peoples. We must remember that underneath this earth, upon which we so firmly stand, this is, was and always will be, the traditional land of First Nations peoples.

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WELCOME

Welcome to *Self-Care Cards for Home & Work*.

The very nature of the term 'self-care' implies caring for oneself. How do we learn to do that well? What factors should we consider? How can those who support others—such as social workers, counsellors, teachers, mentors, carers, support workers, health and allied health professionals—support their our own wellbeing at home and at work? And what role should human service organisations play in encouraging self-care through their policies, processes and culture?

Self-Care Cards for Home & Work are designed to create reflection and conversations about self-care. This beautifully-illustrated resource encourages the art of 'noticing'; noticing how we are doing, what we are feeling, what our body is telling us, what our own insights—and those of colleagues, clients, friends and family—are revealing about what's working well and what we could do differently to support self-care at work and at home.

'Self-care should be seen by human service practitioners and organisations alike as a fundamental part of the job, and not just an optional add-on.'



ABOUT SELF-CARE

Why is self-care important in human service settings?

Human service workers, or people in the 'helping' professions, juggle a number of potential challenges everyday including high workloads, vicarious trauma and emotional exhaustion. Jobs that involve working with people who are facing difficult and distressing circumstances can exacerbate the usual stressors of any workplace. If left unchecked, stress can build up and ultimately contribute to mental and physical health issues including anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, addictions and burnout.

Those who work in human services are usually drawn to these professions because they are dedicated to supporting others to create positive change. Human service professionals sometimes have a tendency to focus their attention on the needs of others to the detriment of their own wellbeing. While the ability to focus on others is a great strength, it can also have a shadow side. Sometimes it means that people don't take the time necessary to 'refill the tank', and we all know where this leads. A depleted worker is one with less flexibility, less resilience, and less capacity to think through challenges. Stress makes problems seem more intractable and can undermine a person's ability to be positive and solution-focussed. This impacts on the practitioner's capacity to provide an effective service to others while balancing their own wellbeing.

In addition, expectations around record-keeping and reporting are increasing and becoming more complex. The result is that people often feel they have less time to focus on self-care. However, the reality is that if individuals and organisations don't invest time, energy and attention in self-care, pressure can build up, making illness and burn out very real possibilities.

This impacts the overall functioning of the organisation with increased sick days and staff turnover, low morale, and worse outcomes for people accessing services. Stress takes a heavy toll on individuals, and often their colleagues and loved ones as well.

This is why self-care should be seen as a fundamental part of human service work with conversations, planning and reviews taking place regularly.

Whose responsibility is self-care?

The responsibility for self-care is shared between the practitioner and the organisation. While self-care is often seen primarily as an individual concern, organisations and businesses also have a responsibility to create supportive environments through their practices, policies, and culture.

If the organisation doesn't actively value and prioritise self-care it is likely to be viewed by staff as a low priority against the highly complex and broad ranging tasks a human service worker deals with every day. It is very difficult for a single practitioner to advocate for self-care practices in a culture that doesn't value them; they are likely to be seen as a 'weak link', a 'whinger', or a 'time-waster'. Equally, if a practitioner doesn't prioritise their own self-care, there isn't a lot that an organisation can do to support them.

Self-care should be seen by practitioners and organisations alike as a fundamental part of the job, and not just an optional add-on.

What are some features of a 'strengths approach' to self-care?

Strengths-based self-care focuses on exploring strengths, exceptions to problems, and the practitioner's existing resources. It is solution-focused rather than deficit-focused. A strengths approach to self-care acknowledges the practitioner's expertise and prior experience, and builds on this.

A strengths approach to self-care prioritises shared responsibility for self-care and shared learning about it. The practitioner, their supervisor, team and organisation would have processes and procedures in place to ensure that regular conversations about self-care took place. This might include the co-creation of self-care plans, reflection in supervision about what the practitioner finds most helpful in managing stress, and what their ideal picture of well-supported self-care looks like.

Because the strength approach values the sharing of power—or ‘power-with’ as it is known—steps would be taken to address power imbalances and the impact that ‘power-over’ practices can have on people.

A powerful feature of strengths-based practice in action is what is known as ‘parallel practice’. This term was coined by Wayne McCashen in the late 1990s and refers to using the same framework of practice with clients as is used with practitioners and throughout the organisation. This means that if practitioners are using the *Self-Care Cards* to explore their own self-care, they would use the same process—and excitingly, they can use the same resource—with clients, and within the organisation.

Another core principle of the strengths approach is valuing the importance of personal agency within any change process. Therefore, using these cards in a strengths-based way would include supporting clients to be in charge of making their own choices and plans for self-care in ways that best suit them.

Self-care is not just something that human service workers and organisations must consider, nor is it just for those who access services, but it is a unifying, shared priority for everyone.

Working in a strengths-based way can help reduce stress levels by enhancing a worker’s sense of satisfaction, meaning and purpose. Many strengths-based practitioners report that having a focus on strengths and solutions rather than problems inspires them to feel more positive about the work they do. They find that people are more likely to reach a resolution to issues because they feel respected, included in decision-making and in charge of their own change process.



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

The *Self-Care Cards for Home & Work* present a broad spectrum of topics and questions together with powerful, evocative images for exploring self-care in our personal and professional lives.

What does this resource consist of?

This resource consists of 50 full-colour cards and this booklet housed in a laminated cardboard box. The front of each card features a single word naming a key topic relating to self-care, and an image with a bird theme. On the back of each card are two questions relating to the topic. That is a total of 50 topics and 100 questions to help spark conversations about self-care. This booklet includes background information about self-care in human service settings and suggestions for using the cards privately, or with others.

How were the key words on the cards chosen?

The list of key words for the cards underwent many drafts. The first draft emerged out of a meeting between Hannah Macauley from the mental health team at Anglicare Victoria and Karen Bedford from Innovative Resources. Colleagues, Andrew Shirres and Sue King-Smith then joined the development team. During the year of development, the team returned again and again to a couple of guiding questions: What are the key things a person might want to focus on in relation to self-care at home and at work? Is there a card that they could readily use to do that?

Another criteria for the key words was that they should be simple and easily understood—and yet also intriguing and thought-provoking, especially when combined with the images. We wanted to create something fresh, useful and aesthetically pleasing to provide an alternative to the plethora of evaluation forms with check boxes that seem to be common when it comes to self-care resources. With this in mind, the key words ended up being a mix of nouns (for example: comfort, breath, boundaries, pain, time) and active verbs or ‘imperatives’ (such as: celebrate, move, relax, speak up).

Why are there questions on the back of the cards?

On the back of each card you will find two questions designed to help start a conversation about the topic of the card. These questions also underwent many drafts. Of course, there are many good questions you could ask about the topic, and these are simply two possibilities. They are not necessarily the 'best' or the 'right' questions to ask. The questions have been placed on the back of the cards because we wanted people to be free to have their own responses to the image and key word on the front, without the questions being too directive. But if a prompt is wanted, then the cards can be turned over and the questions on the back used as a starting point for the conversation.

The questions cover a variety of styles and solution-focussed techniques, such as making a list, naming a next step, finding an 'exception' to the problem, connecting with others, and so on.

Do I have to use all the cards?

Feel free to use a selection of cards instead of the whole pack. There are 50 cards in the set and this number can be overwhelming or impractical for the space available. Facilitators may also want to leave out particular cards if they feel they may not be appropriate to use with a specific person or group at the time. A small selection or even one card can be a very effective starting point.



What are the five 'polarity cards'?

A simple option for selecting a small number of cards is to pick out the five polarity cards. They are easy to find because they have black backgrounds and feature a pair of words with opposite meanings, facing in opposite directions. You can rotate the polarity cards so that the word you want to bring into focus is the right way up. You can use these cards on their own or combine them with other cards.

The five polarity cards are:

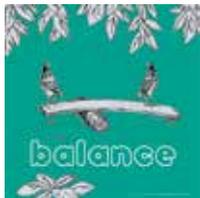
- Different/Same
- Giving/Receiving
- Inside/Outside
- Home/Work
- More/Less



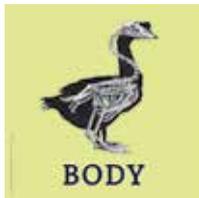
The 'Ideas' section of this booklet contains lots more suggestions for using the cards—including the polarity cards.

ALL FIFTY CARDS: THUMBNAILS AND QUESTIONS

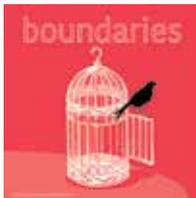
Here are all fifty cards in the set, together with the two questions found on the back of each card.



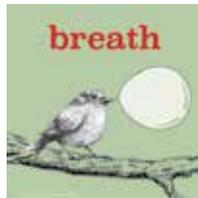
1. **Balance**
What helps you maintain or regain balance?
What is one thing you could give more weight to?



2. **Body**
What body signals tell you you're under pressure?
What helps your body feel strong and well?



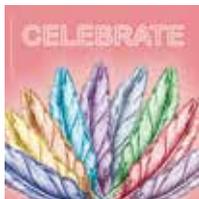
3. **Boundaries**
How do you maintain your boundaries?
How do you know when you're 'crossing the line'?



4. **Breath**
How is your breath connected to your emotions?
Can you 'breathe easy' at home or at work?



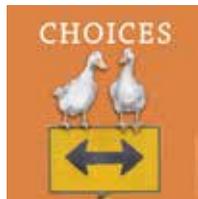
5. **Burn out**
How do you know when you're close to burn out?
Who or what can help when you're overloaded?



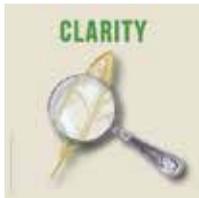
6. **Celebrate**
What is worth celebrating?
What are you most proud of?



7. **Change**
Is there something you would like to change?
What is a big change you have made?



8. **Choices**
How do you decide what to do?
What choice could you make right now?



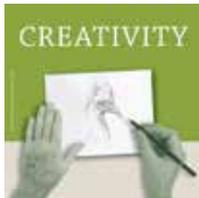
9. **Clarity**

What are you clear about?
What do you need to know?



10. **Comfort**

What brings you comfort?
How do you know when you're outside your comfort zone?



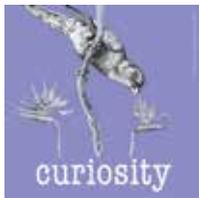
11. **Creativity**

How do you express your creativity?
How might you 'think outside the square' about a situation?



12. **Culture**

What would you like others to know about your culture?
How do workplace cultures affect wellbeing?



13. **Curiosity**

What would you like to know?
What if you approached each day with curiosity?



14. **Direction**

What have you always wanted to do?
Where would you like to be in five years' time?



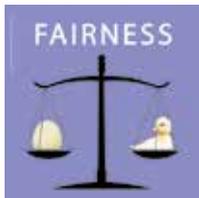
15. **Drink**

What do you drink on a typical day?
Which drinks help and which ones don't?



16. **Energy**

Who or what energises you at work and at home?
How do you re-fuel when you're 'running on empty'?



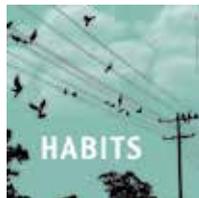
17. **Fairness**
How important is fairness to wellbeing?
How do you respond when you believe something is unfair?



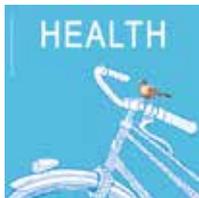
18. **Feelings**
Do others know how you're feeling right now?
How do you care for yourself when emotions are strong?



19. **Food**
What role does food play in your life?
Would you like to change your eating habits?



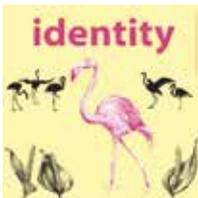
20. **Habits**
Which habits serve you well?
Is there a new routine you'd like to try?



21. **Health**
What one thing could you do for your health today?
How can workplaces support wellbeing?



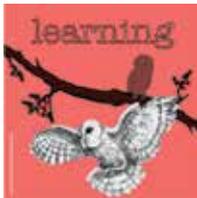
22. **Help**
What would you find helpful right now?
What are some ways you help others?



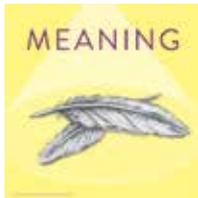
23. **Identity**
What do you want others to know about you?
Do you feel accepted for who you are?



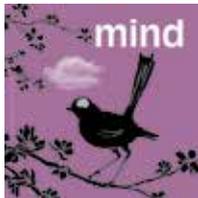
24. **Last straw**
Is there too much 'on your plate'?
Can you say no?



25. **Learning**
How do you learn best?
What would you like to learn more about?



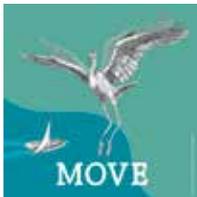
26. **Meaning**
What gives your life meaning?
Where do your values and beliefs come from?



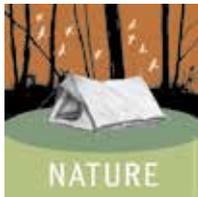
27. **Mind**
What's on your mind at the moment?
How do you calm your mind?



28. **Money**
Do you worry about money?
What are your spending priorities?



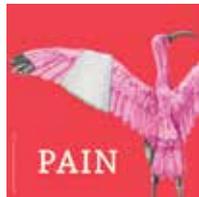
29. **Move**
What is your favourite form of exercise?
How could you build more movement into your day?



30. **Nature**
How important is spending time in nature for you?
What is your favourite outdoor place?



31. **Next Step**
What is your next step?
Who or what can help you move forward?



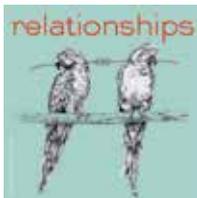
32. **Pain**
What hurts the most?
How do you manage physical or emotional pain?



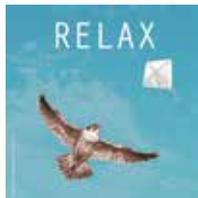
33. **Play**
How do you have fun?
How could you bring more playfulness into your life?



34. **Reflect**
Do you reflect on what you do?
Do you need more time to reflect?



35. **Relationships**
What makes a respectful relationship?
Which relationships are most important to you?



36. **Relax**
How do you like to relax?
What helps you let go of stress?



37. **Resolve**
Is there a resolution you'd like to make?
How could you make peace with something that is bothering you?



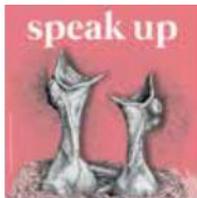
38. **Safe**
Do you feel safe?
What helps you feel safe?



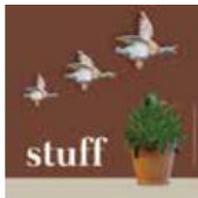
39. **Sleep**
Do you get enough sleep?
What helps you rest?



40. **Space**
Is there enough space in your life?
Would you like to make changes to your home or work spaces?



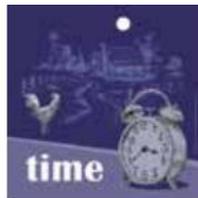
- 41. Speak up**
Is there something you need to say?
What are some different ways of speaking up?



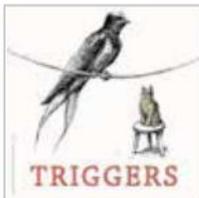
- 42. Stuff**
Do you have everything you need?
Do you need everything you have?



- 43. Support**
I feel supported when ...
What supports should workplaces provide?



- 44. Time**
How well do you manage your time?
It's time I ...



- 45. Triggers**
What are your triggers of stress or anxiety?
I know it's time to act when ...

The Five Polarity Cards

1. Different/Same
2. Giving/Receiving
3. Inside/Outside
4. Home/Work
5. More/Less



The 'Ideas' section of this booklet contains lots of suggestions for using the cards—including the polarity cards.

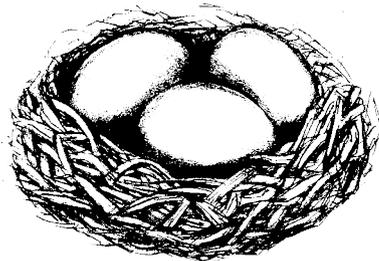
TAKING CARE: WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER BEFORE I BEGIN?

While there are no set rules for using these cards and no specific training is required, it is always important to take care whenever an activity or resource is used. Even a light-hearted image or activity can cause strong emotions to surface. Unexpected feelings, memories and reactions can easily arise when people are reflecting on their wellbeing and other matters that are important to them at work or at home. We humans are especially vulnerable when trauma is present, or when we are under stress. And we never really know what others may be experiencing. For these reasons, it is important to consider the following before using the cards with others:

- *Your own reaction to the cards:* It's good to experiment with the cards yourself first. What did you notice when you used them? Which ones worked best for you? What memories, feelings or stories emerged?
- *Your knowledge of the cards:* Are all the cards appropriate? Should any be left out? Which questions on the back of the cards did you find most useful?
- *Your knowledge of those using the cards:* Consider the literacy levels and cultural background of the people using the cards. Are the key words, images and questions on the back of the cards mentally, emotionally, culturally and developmentally appropriate?
- *The safety of the setting—especially in groups:* Do you believe you have created a safe space for people to talk openly and honestly? Is there likely to be respect in the group? Is the timing right? Are there any 'elephants in the room' to be aware of before embarking on a self-care conversation with a group? How will people be supported if the cards elicit strong emotions? How will people's privacy, confidentiality and dignity be respected? How will you ensure that everyone gets a turn to speak, but that they can 'pass' if they wish?

‘Unexpected feelings, memories and reactions can easily arise when people are reflecting on their wellbeing and other matters that may be important to them at work or at home.’

- *Valuing people’s own interpretations:* The images and key words will mean different things to different people, and there are no right and wrong interpretations of a card. Have you thought about how to support people’s own interpretation while keeping the door open to considering other possibilities?
- *Plan B:* Sometimes an activity simply doesn’t work, even when great care is taken. Be prepared to adjust it or abandon it altogether and go to Plan B.
- *Evaluation and follow up:* What do you think constitutes ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ use of the cards? How will you find out what worked for participants? Is any follow-up needed with the individual or group?



IDEAS FOR USING THE CARDS

These *Self-Care Cards* can be used by anyone, however they were designed especially for human service workers such as social workers, psychologists, counsellors, teachers, coaches, community workers, foster carers, and health professionals. This is because for those who support others, self-care is critical. We cannot support others sustainably if we do not know how to support ourselves.

In this section of the booklet you will find lots of ideas for using the cards in professional and private settings, with individuals and groups. Feel free to use or adapt any of the suggestions. Many people say that once they took the plunge with one or two simple activities, other creative ideas for using the cards occurred to them very naturally. The idea is just to get started!

While there are countless possible ideas for using the cards, they all fall into two broad methods—deliberate selection or random choice.

Deliberate selection

This method involves spreading the cards out on a table, inviting participants to look them over and select cards based on a question such as the following:

- Pick a card that jumps out at you for some reason.
- Pick your favourite illustration.
- Pick a card that has an activity you would like to try.

The *Self-Care Cards* are double-sided—the front features an illustration and a key word (or topic) and the back features two questions designed to help prompt the conversation. We recommend that people to select cards based on the front, as they will be responding to a strong visual cue, and a single, bold, key word.

Spreading the cards out on the floor (illustration side facing up) is also an option. People get a bird's eye view of all the cards, and they can walk around them or follow a path of cards. (Make sure people are able to bend down safely if you want them to pick up a card.) Equally, the cards can be displayed on a wall, window or noticeboard.

Random choice

Random selection includes activities such as shuffling and dealing, playing games that involve hiding and finding cards, lucky dips, selecting a card from a fan or stack of cards, and so on.

Time and again people see significance in ‘their’ randomly-picked card. And they tend to relax when an element of playfulness enters the room, so random selection can work really well as an ice-breaker, or for those ‘stuck’ moments.

The Nest: personal reflection about self-care

The *Self-Care Cards* are a useful tool to support your personal reflection about wellbeing at home and work. Spread the cards out illustration side up, and ask yourself questions such as:

- Thinking about my self-care, which 3-6 cards catch my attention most today? Why?
- What does each of these cards mean to me?
- How does each of these cards relate to my self-care at work and at home?
- On a scale of 1—5, where 1 is not doing well and 5 is doing very well, how am I doing in relation to each of these cards?
- Is there an event, story or circumstance that comes to mind regarding these cards?
- Is there someone I should inform, or someone whose assistance I should seek, regarding my self-care in any of these areas?
- What am I already doing that helps? What have I done in the past that could help now? What new thing could I try?
- Use the cards to create a self-care plan. You may wish to begin by identifying your ‘picture of the future’ in each of these areas. What will it look like at home and at work when each of these areas is going well?
- What is one step I could take today, tomorrow, and next week, to improve my self-care in each of these areas?
- Looking at the whole set of cards, which cards reflect strengths or behaviours that are particularly important to my self-care at this time in my life?

- Choose cards that represent things that help me to 'stay afloat'. Using the questions on the back of the cards as a starting point, how can I further amplify the self-care activities I already know and love?
- Is there a card that represents something that was important to me once but is less so now?
- Which cards reflect areas I find challenging at the moment?
- Each day of the week, pick a card (deliberately or randomly) to reflect upon or write about in your journal. You may wish to place the card on your desk, travel with it in your bag, put it on your fridge, or share it with your family. You may wish to create a collage, write a poem or short story using the card as an inspiration. Look for opportunities to practise self-care in relation to your 'card of the day'.
- Use the questions on the back of the cards as a starting point for your reflection, journaling or artwork.
- What other questions would you like to consider in relation to this card?
- Can you identify one or two key understandings, insights or decisions that arose out of your reflection about self-care?
- How will this affect your life at work and at home? Is there something you will change?

If you are considering using the cards with others, your own experience will give you some valuable pointers. You may want to ask yourself questions like:

- Did I enjoy using the cards?
- What did I find most useful about them?
- What part did the artwork play?
- Were the questions on the back of the cards useful?
- Which card or activity had the greatest impact?
- Were there any surprises?
- Has my own experience suggested anything I should consider when using the cards with others?

All of the above suggestions for personal reflection can be used for self-care conversations with clients, groups, teams or organisations as well.

The Aviary: self-care and organisations

Here are some ideas for using the cards to spark reflection and conversation about self-care in human service professions such as social work, education, health, counselling, wellbeing and coaching:

- Choose cards to help you describe why self-care is important in human service settings.
- Choose cards that describe common self-care challenges faced by people working in the 'helping' professions.
- Choose cards to speak about ways your organisation supports self-care. (Consider the role supervisors, team leaders and other organisational supports such as safety policies, good team-building processes, induction, training, de-briefing and so on.)
- Which cards show aspects of self-care your organisation or service does well?
- Which cards show aspects of self-care you would like your organisation or service to focus on more?
- What are the signs that self-care is a valued part of organisational culture? Choose cards to discuss this.
- Find the polarity cards 'more/less' and 'same/different' (with black backgrounds). Place them beside other cards to discuss what you would like to see more of/less of in your organisation, and what you would like to be same/different to support self-care.
- Is there a card that represents a self-care challenge you are currently facing at work, or that you can see on the horizon?
- Who in the organisation can help with this? What processes does the organisation have to address it?
- Can you choose cards for ways your service could support clients to engage with their own self-care?

Ideas for job interviews or inductions:

- Which card says something about the most important thing we should know about you so you can be successful in your role?
- How have you managed your self-care in past roles?
- How do you manage your self-care while at work? Outside of work?
- Which cards represent self-care challenges you have faced in the past?
- How did you navigate these challenges?
- Can you choose 3 cards to describe what organisational supports helped you most at the time?
- What could you share with other workers about self-care? With the whole organisation?
- Who are your 'self-care heroes'? Who inspires you most with how they do self-care? Here is a creative and fun idea for exploring this: If you were to erect a statue to someone you admire for the way they enact self-care, which cards would be placed around the base?

Riding the Thermals: self-care goals and plans

Here are some additional questions for focussing on your own or other people's goals, plans and next steps regarding self-care, including clients:

- Which cards represent areas of self-care you would like to develop more? In what setting—home or work? Why?
- Who inspires you most with how they 'do' one or more of these aspects of self-care? (The person may be someone you know now, someone from your past, a high-profile figure you don't know personally, or even a fictional character.)
- Can you 'copy' what they do in some way?
- Who is an appropriate person in your life now to help you develop self-care in the areas you identified? This could be a person at work such as a colleague or supervisor, or someone in your personal life.
- How will you know when you are doing well in these areas?
- What will you and others notice?

- What will be the key milestones and steps towards your self-care goals? Are there cards that can represent these?
- What is one step you could take this week towards developing these aspects of self-care?
- Think of an upcoming event such as a project, a job application, a team challenge, a family celebration. Which 3 cards represent qualities or strengths that can support you, your family, your work team or organisation at this time?
- Can you create your own card that represents a key self-care goal in your life? What image would you choose? What key word? What 2 questions about this goal would you want to place on the back of the card?
- What do you imagine you will be doing, thinking and feeling when you achieve this goal?
- Can you choose cards you think are important features of a good self-care plan for someone working in human services? What are some of the main features you would expect to see? For example, would it focus on people's strengths, stories, possibilities and hopes for the future? Would it look at power imbalances that may be impacting on people? Would it look at whether people, rather than the situation or organisational structure, were being framed as the problem?
- Think about creating a simple self-care plan. Choose cards to indicate key aspects of the plan, for example, self-care in relation to the body, the mind, relationships, and exercise.
- Choose cards for other aspects of self-care you would want to include in your plan.
- Can you arrange them in order of priority? Which ones can you do straight away? Which ones may take longer?
- Can you create a timeframe for your self-care plan?
- Place a 'polarity card' next to each card in your self-care plan. (The polarity cards are the ones with the black background, featuring a pair of words with opposite meanings, facing different directions.) You can rotate the polarity cards according to which word you want to bring into focus. Use them to help you consider each aspect of your self-care plan from different points of view. For example, what does that aspect look like at home/work? What would be same/different? How do you see yourself giving/receiving that aspect of self-care? And so on.

Flying the Coop: self-care during transitions and change

Whether it is a teenager leaving home, a client or family transitioning from support, loved ones moving away, there are many occasions when we either fly the coop or those around us do. Times of transition such as separation, marriage, a new job, pregnancy, changing schools or moving house, can be full of creative potential, but they can also be times of uncertainty and vulnerability. They are times when paying special attention to self-care is crucial.

- Thinking of a time when you were going through a significant change in your life, can you pick cards for aspects of your self-care that came under pressure or even ‘fell by the wayside’ altogether?
- Can you choose one or more cards for what helped you make it through that time?
- Which cards represent strengths or behaviours you have found helpful in other difficult times?
- When you want to change, how do you do it? Is there a card that represents a quality you draw on to help you or the circumstances change?

Ruffled Feathers: self-care during conflict

Disagreements and differences are inevitable and can be energising and healthy. Robust discussion and opposing perspectives stretch us and create a diverse and rich learning environment. However, when this descends into conflict at home or at work, few circumstances are as challenging. If the conflict is disrespectful or protracted, it can have a devastating effect on wellbeing.

- Pick 3 cards to describe the impact conflict can have on people.
- Pick cards for self-care strategies that help you stay well when conflict is taking place.
- Thinking of a conflict that you were able to resolve, can you pick cards to describe what helped you during and afterwards?
- Select the Safe card. Do you feel safe at home and at work?
- If not, select the Next Step card. What steps can you take immediately to be safe?

- Select the Help card. Who or what could help you to be safe?
- Select the Resolve card. Does something need resolving at home or at work?
- Can you pick cards for what might help peace or resolution come about?
- Select the Learning card. Is there a learning you can take away from this situation?
- For work conflict, what supports does the organisation have that could help resolve the situation (mediation services, supervision conversations, complaint procedures and so on)?

Bird's Eye View: inviting feedback from clients

What better way to create effective services than to receive feedback from the people who access those services? Many of the ideas already suggested in the sections above can easily be used for inviting clients' input before, during and after working with you. Here are a few more questions you could ask clients to elicit their feedback:

- Can you choose cards for what you could teach me or this organisation about self-care?
- Which cards represent why we are working with you?
- Which cards would you like to see more of? Today? In your life? In others? In us?
- Which cards represent your thoughts? Your actions? Your feelings? Your body?
- Which cards represent how you would like things to be?
- Which cards represent your strengths or things you have done in the past that helped?
- If our service turned out to be useful to you, which cards would show how?
- Which cards represent 'being well' or 'things going well' to you?
- Can you choose a card you would like to concentrate on each day until I see you next?
- Can you choose a card that you would like to concentrate on today, tonight? When you wake up tomorrow?
- If you could write a book about your time working with our service, which cards could illustrate it?
- Is there a card you wish our service would do more of?

- Is there a card you wish the world would do more of?
- Is there a card that expresses what our service could do differently?
- Is there a card that represents the most useful thing that happened during our work together?

Flying in Formation: self-care in supervision and teams

In the context of supervision within human service professions, self-care is often considered as an agenda item relating to 'support'. The templates that many organisations provide to guide supervision conversations often have a text box that can be filled in, or they may include a sentence that is intended to act as a prompt for conversations on self-care. Frequently, these prompts are found somewhere near the bottom of the template, which can make prioritising these important conversations difficult.

Equally, annual reviews sometimes have a component that relates to self-care, but which can be superseded or diminished in favour of measurable performance targets. Self-care plans, when they exist, often consist of another set of text boxes that a worker is encouraged to fill-in outside of a supervision session.

While these processes may have value, self-care conversations and strategies can be enhanced, developed, given priority, and importantly, normalised, by using a conversation-building resource like *Self-Care Cards* for Home and Work. Here are some ideas:

- Spread the cards out on a table before the supervision conversation commences.
- Both supervisor and practitioner can then choose cards that represent how they care for themselves.
- Or they can choose cards that represent particular challenges they are facing.
- When completing a self-care plan or annual review, cards can be chosen that not only articulate a worker's responsibility for self-care but that also highlight those areas for which the agency shares responsibility. (Please see 'Riding the Thermals' for ideas about creating a self-care plan.)
- Equally, they may prompt challenging but necessary conversations about what either party may have noticed, but which may otherwise go unsaid.

- Both the supervisor and supervisee can choose a card that represents something they admire about each other's self-care practices.
- The practitioner can choose cards for what they have learnt from clients about self-care and how they are supporting clients to create their own self-care plans.
- Near the end of a session a supervisor might ask, 'Before our next supervision session, why don't we each choose three cards that say something about our self-care strategies and challenges, bring them in, and compare them?'

Conversations about self-care, for good reason, are often held behind closed doors. While confidentiality and privacy can help ensure a person's safety, colleagues will often be the first to recognise the warning signs of impending burn out in a fellow team member. Additionally, colleagues understand the stressors involved in the workplace and can validate the experience of others. They are often the first to provide opportunities to de-brief or offer consolation and encouragement.

The *Self-Care Cards* can be used for team-building exercises as part of a formal team-building day or as impromptu activities instigated by anyone in the team on any day. The cards can bring into focus questions like: What can we learn from each other about self-care? What are our self-care strengths? What are our self-care needs? And very simply on a daily basis: How are you doing today? (RUOK?) It is important discuss and agree on how to ensure that conversations held on planning days are revisited throughout the year. Some ways to do this could include visual cues or lists in the office, or a standing agenda item at team meetings or during supervision. Here are some possible questions for teams about self-care:

- Can you choose cards that represent various ways you see people in the team taking care of themselves?
- Can you choose cards that represent ways you see team members looking after each other?
- Can you select a card that identifies an area of self-care you think your role or team needs right now?
- Which 3 cards represent qualities you are able to bring to the team?
- Which cards represent self-care strengths your team already does well?

- Can you choose 2 or 3 cards to help you describe to the rest of the team what you think self-care is?
- From the outside, what would other teams say we excel at? From the outside, what would other teams say we need to work on?
- Which cards represent self-care strengths the team previously excelled at but may not be prominent now? Would you like to see the team re-focus on these strengths?
- Which cards represent other self-care strengths you would like to see your team focus on?
- Is there a card that represents something you or your team struggles with from time to time?
- On a scale of 1-5, where 5 is critical, how important is this aspect of self-care to you right now?
- Is there another card that represents a first step that could be taken today or tomorrow to begin addressing this?
- Thinking of an important project, select cards that represent aspects of self-care that will be supportive at various stages of the project.
- How will these self-care strengths support the wellbeing of the team and the success of the project?
- Can you choose cards to talk about how others in the team might recognise signs of stress in you? (These signs may be in your environment—such as an uncharacteristically messy desk, in your behaviour—such as being irritable, or in your body language—such as hunched posture.)
- What permissions, if any, do you want to give others in relation to supporting you appropriately?
- As a simple way to establish a culture of self-care in a team, a card can be chosen per day, either deliberately or randomly, by a rotating list of team members. The chosen card can be displayed as a self-care reminder for everyone.

North or South: using the polarity cards

The five polarity cards have black backgrounds and feature a pair of words with opposite meanings, facing in opposite directions. You can rotate the polarity cards so that the word you want to bring into focus is the right way up. The five polarity cards are:

1. Different/Same
2. Giving/Receiving
3. Inside/Outside
4. Home/Work
5. More/Less

Some simple questions for using these cards include:

- What would you like to do differently at home?
- What would you like to do the same at home?
- What would you like to do more of/less of?
- What self-care things do you like to do inside/outside?

You could even combine the polarity cards to promote discussion:

- What self-care action could you do inside when at work?
- What self-care action could you do outside when at work?
- What would you like to do more of/less of at home/work?

You can place the polarity cards alongside any other card in the set to add even more layers to the conversation, for example:

- Select the Space card, and then place each of the polarity cards one at a time next to it.
- What is your work space like at home and at work?
- Do you have enough space at home or at work?
- What would you like to be the same or different about your space at work and at home?
- How do you see yourself giving or receiving space at home and at work?
- Do you want more or less space in your life?

Pigeon Pairs: linking two cards

While the polarity cards feature two opposite words on the same card, different cards can also be paired as opposites, for example:

- Body/Mind
- Food/Drink
- Burn Out/Creativity
- Energy/Burn out
- Feelings/Mind (Thoughts)
- Habits/Change.

Other cards can be paired, not as opposites, but because the person using the cards sees a connection between them, for example:

- Safe and Sleep
- Fairness and Speaking Up
- Space and Stuff
- Last Straw and Burn Out
- Clarity and Choices
- Direction and Clarity
- Habits and Health
- Nature and Space
- Direction and Next Step.

Pairing cards (either deliberately or randomly) can be a source of fruitful conversation and activities, for example:

- Can you share a story about a time when each of these was a priority?
- Is one of these cards more natural to you for self-care than the other?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you decided to change from one of these cards to its opposite?
- How did you know it was time to focus on the other priority?

- Thinking about your self-care at present, are both of these cards useful to you now, or does one of them stand out in particular?
- Starting today, if you were to 'do' more self-care in each of these areas, what would you and others notice?
- If you were to pick animals (not birds) to illustrate each of these cards, what would they be?
- Pick pairs of cards for self-care areas that you think support each other.
- Pick a card that says something about what you most want in your life right now. What other card would you choose to help you achieve that goal?
- Thinking of a challenge in your life, which two (or more) cards do you think will work best together to help you take care of yourself as you face the challenge?

Birds of a Feather: using the cards with other resources

Conversations about self-care can be enriched by using the cards in combination with other tools you may already have.

Next Steps is a set of photographs of everyday activities or objects designed to help people identify small, do-able steps they can take this afternoon, tomorrow or next week. When our mental health is under pressure, the most important self-care step for today could be to take a shower, phone a friend, wash the dishes, or make the bed. By pairing these photographs with selected *Self-Care Cards*, very concrete and practical self-care actions can be highlighted.

Growing Well is a set of cards and/or tear-off sheets used to monitor our mental health. Using a visual scale of a seed growing into a tree, people can measure how they are doing with specific areas of self-care over time.

The Scaling Kit web-based app is a set of digitally-interactive scaling masters with a scribble tool for drawing on the image and a drop-down box for typing notes. When used alongside the *Self Care Cards*, main points of the conversation can be saved for records, or shared via email, and wellbeing can be measured over time.

Paper Works is another set of simple visual metaphors to enrich conversations about self-care. Simple line drawings of images such as a welcome mat, a taxi and a boot, suggest fundamental self-care questions such as, 'What do you want to welcome into your life?' 'Where are you heading?' and 'What do you want to give the boot to?'

When thinking about the self-care of those caring for children, consider combining the *Self-Care Cards* with *Strength Cards for Kids*, *Baby Strengths* or *Positive Parenting*. *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* is also a great source of fun, self-soothing, resilience strategies for children.



THE CREATORS

The artists

The design for the *Self-Care Cards* is the work of Melissa and Steve Proposch from *Trouble* magazine. *Trouble* is an independent monthly art magazine that began in 2004 and is now published regularly in a digital format at: troublemag.com.

Each of the fifty cards features a bird illustration. The bird metaphor arose while the designers were searching for a key thematic element for the cards. Birds not only offer a myriad of different species, embedded meanings and symbolism, but they are also universal in nature. They align to feelings of beauty, peace, positivity and the environment, all of which adds to their appeal as a valuable source of inspiration in these cards.

Based on the design provided by Melissa and Steve, Andrew Shirres created many of the drawings featured in the cards—from birds to boxes, nests, feathers, eggs, branches, trees, and even a tent, a bed, a see saw and more—a total of over 50 hand-drawn illustrations, primarily in pencil, pen and ink, gouache and watercolour.

Mat Jones was responsible for the design of the booklet, a number of the drawings, and layout and graphic treatment of the cards according to Melissa and Steve's designs.

The development team

Karen Bedford is the managing editor at Innovative Resources with a background in writing, publishing, education, counselling and group facilitation.

Hannah Macauley is a community mental health clinician who supports people to understand their own individual stress through the personality tool Myers Briggs Type Indicator: www.hannahmacauley.com

Andrew Shirres is the practice development coach and senior trainer at Innovative Resources with a background in mental health services management and fine art.

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The publisher

St Luke's Innovative Resources is part of Anglicare Victoria, a community services organisation providing child, youth and family services in Victoria and New South Wales, Australia.

We publish card sets, stickers, books, and digital and tactile materials to enrich conversations about feelings, strengths, relationships, values and goals. Our resources are for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, ability or age. They are used by counsellors, educators, social workers, mentors, managers and parents.

We also offer 'strengths approach' training and 'tools' workshops, both online and in-person with a facilitator. We specialise in tailoring training to the needs of your organisation.

www.innovativeresources.org

The development team, the artists, and the publisher warmly thank the many people who offered feedback and suggestions along the way.



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT (in Australia)

Beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Depression and anxiety information
and support service.

1300 22 4636

www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Headspace

www.headspace.org.au

National youth mental health foundation
for young Australians.

Lifeline

www.lifeline.org.au

13 11 14

Access to crisis support, suicide prevention
and mental health support services.

mindhealthconnect

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Access to mental health care services,
online programs and resources.

SELF-CARE

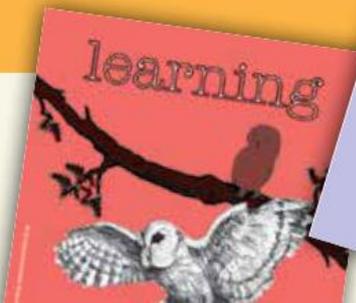
CARDS FOR HOME & WORK

**To support others well,
we must take care of ourselves.**

- What are your triggers of stress?
- Do you feel safe at work and at home?
- Is an unresolved issue affecting you?
- How do you maintain your boundaries?
- What can you do to take care of yourself today?

This beautifully-illustrated resource will spark reflection and conversation about self-care. Each card names a key theme such as habits, relationships, health, identity, balance, safety, support—and includes two questions to help get the conversation started.

Drawing on the diverse world of birds, each card is an original work of art designed to inspire, surprise and delight—qualities that, in themselves, enhance self-care.



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