



## **Wednesday Workshop: Supporting Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence**

### **Podcast Transcript**

#### **Episode 5: May 20, 2020**

#### **Self-Care and Emotional Safety Planning**

Presented by Marissa, Adult Domestic Violence Advocate, and Teresa, Dual Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Counselor

**Marissa:** Hello and welcome to The Women's Center's Wednesday Workshop podcast intended for survivors of domestic and sexual violence as a time to learn and grow in order to move beyond their trauma. Each session will feature instruction on a healing topic. A few weeks ago you heard us talk about safety plans, and how they are important in ensuring physical safety. But we also want to recognize how crucial safety plans are to our emotional well-being and overall mental health. This week, our topic is self-care and emotional safety planning.

We are your hosts, my name is Marissa, I'm the Adult Domestic Violence Advocate here with The Women's Center.

**Teresa:** I'm Teresa, and I'm the Dual Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Counselor here. We will get started by talking about some common threads that as survivors we all can talk about. As Marissa mentioned, we're going to be focusing on self-care and emotional safety planning.

Across the board, as survivors, taking care of yourselves or taking care and supporting a loved one who is a survivor, it's really crucial to relearn what safety is for you and what that looks like for your healing now. This is going to be an individualized experience depending on where you're at in that process. If you are just at the beginning stages of recognizing what you went through wasn't okay, or "What I went through was unhealthy or abusive behavior", or if you have already left an abuser and you are actively working at healing those parts of trauma. Everyone as a survivor has this common thread of needing to take care of themselves, needing to fill their cups up again. Everyone's experience looks so different when we're talking about experiencing trauma and abuse, and there are very few common threads that exist between all survivors, but they need to

practice that self-care and to take care of your emotional safety are two of them. Despite where we're at in our healing, we're able to address and assess what we need to do that fills us up, and what we are engaging in kind of drains us or who we're talking to drains us.

**Marissa:** Self-care is any activity big or small that we do to take care of our overall well-being. It isn't always easy or convenient. It isn't always as luxurious as we may hear about. You know, with bubble bath shopping trips. It can be that, but it can also be the harder stuff too, like allowing ourselves to cry it out or do something that we may need to do but not necessarily want to do. The thing with self-care is that we must make a conscious effort to make it a part of our daily life, and practice it consistently even when we're not in a low space. The really cool thing about self-care is, it can pick us up when we're feeling down but it can also be a really strong preventive measure to, you know, keep us on track and feeling okay.

**Teresa:** There are multiple different types of self-care that you can engage in. We're going to walk through the four or five different types of self-care that you can try on and practice for yourself.

The first one we're going to talk about is sensory self-care. This is essentially when you are trying to calm your mind through the different senses. Some ideas of this could look like wearing a cozy sweatshirt of yours that is soft and fuzzy and it makes you feel warm and fuzzy. It could be smelling fresh air, or just getting outside, feeling the cold air right now. This could also look like taking a bath or shower too. Spending time with your pets, lighting a candle or listening to music. Especially all of these ones right now, when we're talking about self-care and trying to practice it, whether we are living with an abuser or we are at home a lot more due to Covid-19. Sensory self-care is a really great one that you can engage in pretty much every day if you would choose to do so. I know one that is really simple, if you're a coffee or tea drinker in the morning, even just smelling the coffee brewing or holding a warm mug. Those are ways that you can take care of yourself in a really small way.

The other type of self-care that we're going to talk about too is emotional self-care. This is when you are engaging fully with your emotions. This can be really easy to only address and/or work through positive emotions like happiness or when we're feeling really good and grounded. But it's just as important like Marissa had mentioned, to recognize when we're struggling or to recognize when we're feeling difficult emotions like sadness and we need to cry, or we're experiencing anger. It might be really difficult to allow ourselves to have those emotions take up just as much space and to bring them into the room and to look at them. But this is essentially a really big part of taking care of yourself, is honoring those things easy and hard that come up for you, and then figuring out ways that you can work through it. Some ideas to work on emotional self-

care could look like journaling about your feelings. This could be a simple check in at the end of the day, “I am feeling blank”, or “today I was really feeling grounded”, or “today I really struggled and here's why”. This could also look like spending time with your family or friends that you feel like you can be yourself around. Right now, if we can't see family or friends or support systems that made us feel grounded, that made us feel taken care of, give them a call if you can, if it's safe to do so. Or even think about sending them a letter. I don't think there's anyone that doesn't enjoy getting a piece of mail delivered to them. It's a really good way to just kind of process what it is that you're experiencing, or you know, to say “hey I really appreciate you” and “I appreciate having you in my life”.

Another thing too that you can do to take care of your emotional self care, is seeing an advocate, a counselor or a therapist. Right now if you aren't able to keep appointments with advocates or counselors or therapists that you might have you know usually had, give them a call. Give a hotline a call, give some of those warm lines a call. That's why they're there right now. Having that non-judgmental space for you to kind of lay out what those emotions are that you're experiencing is a really crucial thing, and you deserve to take up that space when it's easy and when it's hard as well.

**Marissa:** To continue on with more types of self-care, let's talk about spiritual self-care. What I mean by that is getting in touch with your values and what matters to you. That doesn't necessarily mean you know, practicing a religion. This is all about finding out what matters to you and what you build your value systems upon. Some ways to practice some of that spiritual self-care is to practice meditation, reading some poetry, something that really speaks to you, means something to you. This can also look like taking a walk and reflecting on your surroundings. I feel like taking a walk checks a lot of these boxes all at once which is really cool. Some other examples of spiritual self-care are gratitude journaling, so that's writing down things that you are grateful or thankful for, and also tapping into some of some of your creativity. That could look like creating art, singing, dancing, you know anything that gets those creative juices flowing, those gears turning, makes you feel good about something that you're creating.

Another example of self-care is physical self-care. That's taking care of your body. That is just as important as taking care of your mind and emotions. They really are interconnected. It doesn't have to be as drastic as going for a run, taking a marathon, or practicing yoga. This is all about finding what feels comfortable for you and adjusting and adapting. It also looks like saying yes and no when you need to. Practicing some of those boundaries. Some examples of that physical self-care are, taking a walk again. Could also look like running or biking if that is something that you're into. It can also look like yoga, but it can also look like getting enough sleep or taking a nap when you

need to, or drinking water. Just the act of listening to your body is a really strong form of physical self care and it's something that really, really does help.

**Teresa:** Another type of self-care that we wanted to talk about is social self-care. This is really crucial right now, especially when a lot of our social systems or our support networks, maybe we are feeling a little bit more isolated to them right now. Essentially, social self-care is connecting and reconnecting with people that are safe to you. This is really important whether we are in the middle of a pandemic like we are now, or whether we are just experiencing a lot of stress at home or in our relationships. This really helps us remind us that we aren't alone and that we have people that are willing and able to support us, whether we are having a good day or whether we're having a hard day. A good question to ask yourself, and this is something that never really steers you wrong, thinking about who fills you up? If you think about a conversation that you're having with your support network, are there people that make you feel really full and energized and seen and heard? and then are there other people that you feel like drain you after you're done with that conversation you just gotta sit down and take a break or you feel like you weren't seen in that? Those are some really good ways to determine who is some good social self-care that I can call or talk to. Some ideas for this right now, especially in the middle of Covid-19, is to maybe make some plans with a friend to meet up with them virtually. Whether that is an app where you are video chatting, or if it is even just scheduling a phone call right now. I know a lot of folks are choosing to have a check in with friends and family members once a week right now at the same time the kind of practice that consistency and establish a new routine for themselves, and to make sure that they're still staying connected with their support systems. That's a really great way that you can engage in some social self-care right now.

Also, could look like writing a letter email to someone too. Or even joining a support group. This is definitely still valid right now in the time that we are living in. There are a ton of different formats that different support groups are turning to, or even just going online and you know engaging in a podcast like this. This is the way that you are taking care of yourself as well. And lastly signing up for a class or maybe choosing to learn a new hobby that you always wanted to. We've got a lot more time on our hands and a lot more time at home and if it's safe to do so, you know find a way for you to engage that part of your brain. If there is a hobby like knitting you've wanted to take up for awhile, maybe now's the time to try that out.

Our support networks can look like friends, family and our community. And especially if these are your networks that have been isolated due to abuse that you've endured, or due to the isolation factor that you might have endured from the abuse. It's really important to think about ways right now that we can re-engage with them, or creative ways to re-engage socially even when we are socially distancing from people.

**Marissa:** What you might need to fill yourself up or decompress really is individualized as we had illustrated beforehand. That said, there are few tips that all survivors, really all folks, can utilize to practice on their self-care in a way that feels good for them.

The first thing being using some positive affirmations. That's challenging the negative self-talk, voice of the inner critic that we might have learned from an abuser or from social messages around us. We want to challenge those with positive thoughts about ourselves. Something I find particularly helpful is when I feel like apologizing for existing or making a mistake, I try to thank myself or thank, let's say, another person I was interacting with for having patience, or you know whatever sort of matches up. It's sort of that practice of gratitude as well as you know, trying to challenge that negative self-talk. I find that particularly helpful.

Another good tip would be finding an outlet to move your body. Tapping into that physical self-care that we were talking about beforehand. Trauma sits not just in our emotions and brains, but it also sits in our bodies too. I know when folks get really stressed or they're feeling a trigger related to trauma, sometimes that can manifest as some physical pain. So, finding a way to physically release those intense emotions when they arise can be really, really helpful. Utilizing creativity is really important as well, especially when we may not be able to process through words. You may be able to release those feelings through different creative activities. Again, making art, music, dancing, writing. And again, I know I said this in the last podcast. Do it even if you don't think you're very good at it. It's fun regardless, you're letting something out. I guarantee you you're going to feel just a little bit better after practicing that little bit of creativity.

The next important really important tip, and it's something I feel a lot of us overlook, is paying attention to our breathing. A lot of us assume that that's just automatic, and in some cases obviously it is, but sometimes we really need to breathe intentionally and focus on her breath to ground us or bring us back to the present. Triggers, flashbacks and thoughts of abuse may send us into a fight, flight or freeze response. And especially in those moments, it's important to take a moment to practice mindful breathing and/or meditation if that's something you're into, to totally rewire our natural reactions. Those reactions are attempting to keep us safe because we feel like we are in physical danger at that time, and when we're not in physical danger when we're maybe just experiencing a trigger or flashback we can really calm ourselves down by focusing on our breath. Trying to bring that down to a more normal state. Lastly, it's really important to try to find support. It is more than okay to ask for help and to receive it. You are worthy, you're not being a burden by asking for help, you know support is something we all need. And again, you deserve to take up space and you deserve to have folks in your corner who are invested in your well-being too.

**Teresa:** How do we break this down, knowing that there are so many different ways that as survivors you can take care of yourself? And especially right now, experiencing a lot of added stressors from the pandemic, how do we actually implement this into our lives? It's important to take self-care in small little chunks. Because when we tend to look at it as a whole, it can seem super overwhelming. We might step back and say: "Well I'm not practicing these different areas of self-care in my life and how do I even begin to implement those things?" Take it in smaller, more manageable pieces. Essentially, taking it just one day at a time. I know a really good tip that has worked for a lot of different folks, has been mapping out on a Sunday night what you want to practice that week. So, it is just taking 10 to 15 minutes on a Sunday and say, okay, maybe my goal this week is to practice more physical self-care. And maybe something I want to establish is making sure I'm getting enough sleep. Especially now, we're going through a lot every single day and that takes a toll on us both emotionally and physically. So maybe that goal is to get 6 to 8 hours of sleep a night. But what plan can we implement in order to try to get to that goal? Thinking about what you need to do in order to get to bed, in order to get that 6 to 8 hours of sleep, based on when you need to wake up. Are there things that you need to do prior to going to bed that help you tap into that relaxation? Maybe that is taking a shower before bed, and then putting some essential oils in a diffuser. Or maybe that is journaling before bed. Creating some time and routine for yourself to meet that goal and to plan that out.

It's also important to hold yourself accountable for some of those self-care goals that you might want to set for yourself. A really easy way to do that is, is going to be making a list. I know I am such a visual person and I find having lists or things to check off, or even just like a calendar in front of me where I can, you know, look at "okay here is my plan and here's what I got to do" can be really helpful in holding ourselves accountable for different self-care goals right now. Track those different days that you might have achieved that goal of sleeping more, track when you haven't as well. It's okay. Just because you are setting a goal, doesn't mean it's going to be something that you achieve right away. This is going to be something that takes a little bit of time, and it's okay.

Again, just take it one day at a time and give yourself some leeway there. Ultimately, note how you felt too when you're practicing some of this self-care. Notice the change in, maybe your focus or the emotions that you're experiencing when you're just planning out that time for yourself. Or when you're making that effort to take care of yourself. And notice maybe how much more grounded or less stressed out you felt setting a goal and holding yourself accountable. Really just take it into some small manageable chunks moving forward.

**Marissa:** It's also really important to try to think about a time when you felt balanced or grounded, if you're currently having a hard time envisioning self-care. I feel like that is especially important when you're trying to devise that sort of goal and plan that you want to set out for yourself. Especially right now, we may not be able to count within the last few days or weeks where we felt totally balanced or grounded right now. Taking some time to really think about what that feeling was like the last time we felt grounded or balanced, and then yourself questions to determine what that looks like, sort of investigate it. See what aspects you can pull into your current life or your current situation.

To again, highlight some of that physical self-care, those questions can look like: "How was I sleeping? Did I have a ritual or pattern that made me feel rested?" You know, that can really help if we've noticed ourselves fall out of a habit that really worked. We can pinpoint what that was and try to find a way to include it back into our routine. Other questions we can ask ourselves are: What made us feel healthy, or strong? What activities made us feel more energized? Did we do a couple of stretches in the morning, and did that sort of fall off of our self-care routine at some point and we just didn't notice? Is there an opportunity to kind of pull that back in? Were there other certain routines that you would utilize to start the day off or wind yourself down at night? Again, how do we forge a path to bring those back into our lives? These are all really important questions to ask especially if we're feeling a little bit stuck at the start of this plan making process.

**Teresa:** To kind of expand on what Marissa was talking about, about asking yourself some of those questions if you are struggling with how I am practicing self-care. When we're talking about looking at emotional self-care, you can ask yourself some questions to determine what maybe has worked for you in the past, or what could work for you right now. Asking yourself questions like, what fun or leisure activities did I enjoy or look forward to prior to this? Most of us have things that we've done to relax us or to take care of ourselves or things that we really enjoy doing. Those might be things right now that we can't just do, just due to the different things that are set in place such as social distancing. But still, write it down, take a look at what brought you some joy prior to that. Asking yourself a question of, were there any relaxation activities that were a part of your schedule already that you were engaging in? Did you have a relaxation ritual of writing in your journal every night before you went to bed? Or did you have a relaxation ritual such as taking a walk in the morning to get you kind of relaxed and grounded for the day? Just taking a peek at some of those things.

Asking yourself to who you spend some time with that you felt safe, supported, or heard and seen around. This is going to be really crucial too, around that question that I mentioned earlier about who fills you up versus who drains you. Thinking about people

that you feel safe around first and foremost and then supported by it's going to be a really great path to kind of lead you down, as far as who you will go to to practice that emotional self-care. And lastly, asking yourself about where you spent your time. Maybe there was a place that you felt comfortable and grounded. That might have been a park close by to you, or you know, maybe there's a certain path that you hiked down that made you feel really connected to nature. Thinking about places that you've gone prior to staying at home a bit more, and then places right now that you might be interacting with that make you feel safe and grounded. Whether that is a room in your home or whether that is a safe place from that safe place exercise that we talked about in a podcast last week. Is there a place that you can go to that makes you feel comfortable? That makes you feel relaxed?

**Marissa:** I feel like a lot of these questions can really help inform what our overall self-care plan is. Right now, we're looking at how we fit these pieces together in our total self-care puzzle. It's really important to make those achievable, realistic goals for ourselves to practice self-care. And to write it down too, and to address any barriers that might be in the way of that. Even though we're spending more time at home we might not be in the head space to get 5 or 10 different tasks done, or pick up a new hobby and master it, learn a new language, things like that. If that feels realistic for you, by all means go ahead, right on.

If you if you've been feeling yourself being particularly exhausted, and I think we've sort of figured out how this is affecting us or we at least can figure out where energy is at, we can use that to to figure out what goals actually feel achievable for us. It's important to ask ourselves, what do we need to do to take care of those different domains of self-care? What did you enjoy doing? What did you enjoy doing in the past? If you're not sure, what piques your interest? It can be really helpful to share your self-care plan with a friend or family member that helps hold you accountable, it might even get you a little bit excited about the goals you set out for yourself. You share with them a new hobby you might be looking into, they sort of cheer you on, that feels really good. With that though something really important to consider is allowing your plan to change. Especially right now where one day we might have all of the energy, and the next day getting out of bed might be the hardest thing we do.

Our self-care plan is meant to be a guide that adapts to our lives, as you or the circumstances you're going through change. A prime example of that, we don't necessarily know when the current restrictions are going to loosen. When we make our self-care plan now, we genuinely might not know what that looks like in a month or two and that's okay. Along with those realistic goals, having some flexible goals too, general things can really help. Find a template that works for you. Teresa is going to be talking about a template that we find pretty helpful, we're going to also post a couple of

examples on our website. There are so many different ways to write out what we want to do for self-care. It could be a list, it could be a visual representation, could be a drawing, could be an essay if that's what you're into. Whatever makes the most sense for you, it's what's going to work and we're totally in support for that.

**Teresa:** So, like Marissa had mentioned, there are multiple ways that you can make that template for yourself, make a self-care plan for yourself. The one that we are going to be talking about right now is going to be the self-care wheel. This is a really great template to look at if you are a visual person or if you just want an easy way to kind of jot down some brief ideas of practice different domains of self-care. A blank template of this will be posted right below our podcast that you can print off, or even just take a look at to give you an idea of looking at the different ways that you could practice some self-care.

If we take a look at the self-care wheel, we have different spokes of it that you can fill out or just jot down some ideas of what might work for you. There are different aspects to it. That's going to look like a physical spoke of that wheel, psychological spoke, emotional spoke, spiritual spoke, a personal spoke and then a professional spoke. All of these different parts of the wheel you can take a look at it and fill in as you want, but just to give you some brief ideas of what different self-care activities you might want to put in there.

We've talked about that physical self-care piece quite a bit. So that's going to look like making sure you're getting enough sleep, or eating healthy, drinking enough water, and taking that walk, or taking some time off from using your cell phone. If you move through the self-care wheel into the psychological part, this is going to look like practicing some self-reflection. Whether that is through journaling, whether that is reading a book, listening to this podcast, or even act asking for and receiving some help when you need it.

Moving towards the emotional part of the wheel, that is going to be where we are practicing some self-love or maybe some self-compassion. We might have a funny movie that we really like to watch. It makes us feel taken care of or helps you feel good about yourself. That also could look like too, telling yourself "you are good enough" or "you are strong". Whatever mantra might ground you or make you feel comfortable and relaxed. The spiritual part of self-care, like Marissa had kind of gone into, is going to be looking at different ways that you can reflect. That could be something as simple as going out into nature if that makes you feel connected. This could also look like meditation, singing, dancing, practicing some yoga.

The personal part of self-care is going to be talking about learning who you are and figuring out what you want in life. Whether that is short or long-term. This could look like grabbing a virtual coffee with a friend right now, or you know talking to a friend over the phone while you are going for a walk. This could look like writing, writing poetry, or writing a journal entry. Or even just spending some time with your family however it's safe to do so right now.

The professional part of self-care too. If we think about you now, taking some time to set some boundaries for ourselves. Especially right now, some ideas of practicing some professional self-care might be looking like creating some new routines for yourself at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day to make sure those boundaries are being upheld. This also looks like you know connecting with your co-workers, connecting with some colleagues and you know, allowing yourself to to have some social interaction in that professional realm. And too, it's also okay to learn to say no if you are feeling over stressed out and feel like you need to take some time for yourself. All these are just suggestions of what you could put into your wheel.

Everyone is going to have different needs in different parts of the wheel, maybe they want to address right now, and maybe some of these different spokes aren't as applicable to what you are currently going through. But I know I really respond to anything visual, so this is a good one that I like looking at. And you can put it somewhere in your house if it is a good reminder of you know, "Hey, I need to practice some of that emotional self-care here today" or you know what, "I put down in physical self-care I was going to take a couple more walks this week". It's a good visual to have hanging around your house just to do a quick check in. So that is one option for you to practice in order to kind of determine a nice self-care plan for yourself.

**Marissa:** Totally. I can totally attest to that. Back in the day when we were still in our offices, I had my personal self-care wheel hanging up on my wall, and it it was really helpful to look at that and figure out, you know, what I what I need some sort of set those intentions for myself so looking forward to eventually being around more often. One of these days right?

So to switch gears a little bit, let's talk a little bit about safety planning. I will give a brief refresher. If you tuned into our safety planning and relationships podcast this first part is definitely going to be a little bit of a repeat.

But just for the record, a safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that addresses ways to stay safe regardless of where you are in let's a relationship or healing. This looks like safety while you're in the relationship, if or while you're preparing to leave, and this also encompasses safety after you may have left an abusive relationship. Safety looks and

means something different each survivor, and that's guided by our internal compass that helps us steer in the safest direction. It's also known as our gut feeling too. While of course physical safety is really important to address, emotional safety is just as crucial. It helps us honor emotions that arise, helps us accept them, and it also helps us determine how to make the best decisions we can to take care of ourselves.

It's also really important to note that safety planning is not static. It's meant to be re-assessed, it's meant to be reviewed and modified as our relationships and as we ourselves change. Again, overall safety planning can encompass physical safety, emotional safety, and also address specific and also address specific facets of abusive relationships that may and impact our safety. Such as, maybe when a partner is using, or safety while there's a protective order or a restraining order in place. It also looks different depending on where we're at in a relationship, if we're currently there, if we're planning on leaving or again after we have left. So true is that for physical safety planning, and it's also true for emotional safety planning too. We need to address those emotional needs no matter where we're at in that relationship.

**Teresa:** Emotional safety is going to look at developing a way to take care of and honor every feeling that you're experiencing. This is something that might sound really easy to practice when we're feeling good and grounded and we're feeling relaxed. But practicing emotional safety when we're feeling triggered, or when we're having hard days is just as important.

Essentially emotional safety, it feels like accepting yourself and all of those emotions that come up for you. We are all human and we are going to have good days, we're going to have hard days too, and just honoring every single emotion that arises for you and looking at it head on and saying, "what can I do to, to, work through this is?" is a great way to look at emotional safety.

When we are talking about an emotional safety plan, a good one will have different things that address things such as triggers. Everyone's got certain triggers that give them a certain emotional response, and everyone reacts and responds little differently to those triggers. But a good safety plan will address what those specific triggers are, what those reactions that you might have had in the past to them could be. When you look at that then, and your safety plan, you're able to better identify what some healthy coping skills you could utilize to work through those triggers could be. That also might look like practicing some relaxation techniques or identifying different relaxation techniques that have worked for you in the past. This is a great opportunity to maybe practice some of those grounding skills that we talked about in previous podcasts too, to look at if this is something you can implement to practice that emotional safety.

And lastly, a good emotional safety plan will also address different support systems that you can reach out to you if you are experiencing triggers. If you feel like you're coping skills that you're using aren't working to your advantage at that time. Is there a safe person, a safe friend, a hotline that you can call? Really identifying those things. So, Marissa's going to walk through specifically different parts of emotional safety plans. And this is something that we are going to have a blank template for as well on our website, right below here, so if you are more of a list person or like writing it out, this is a great resource for you to engage addresses that visuals health care plan.

**Marissa:** To get us started on that path of emotional safety planning. Let's really start looking inward and, and, figure out what we might need. So first off, let's recognize the reactions that we may have to triggers. That's really breaking them down. What happens to your thinking? What happens to your body when you start to feel a trigger creeping up? Is your cue your heart rate escalating a little bit? Do you feel warm when you start to experience a trigger?

Again, it looks different for everybody, so taking that time to figure out what your individual cues are can be really important to identify when you're starting to have that stress response or that trauma response. And to echo Teresa, identifying that support network too. So, who's a person that you can talk to? What are some hotlines you can utilize? It might even be helpful to sort of breakdown you might be able to get out of a conversation with a specific person. For instance, do you have a support person that just really gets it with the advice piece of things. And do you have somebody who is just really good at distracting you? Or helping you tap into a different coping skill? If you know that, it can be helpful to figure out who to reach out to when you need that space, when you need that time to think through things.

It's also okay to use to emphasize what you need. If you need to be up front, and say, "you know what, I have no idea what to do, I need you to help me figure this out". Or you know if you know the advice is the last thing you want and you just want to let it all out and vent, and then be distracted from it, it's okay to vocalize that. Again, through all of this you are not being burdensome for asking for help. It's a big step, it's a show of strength, and you deserve that space to identify what you need. Another thing to look at, is creating safety both internally and externally.

So, what can you do independently to help make you feel safe? What can you do while you're with others, whether that's engaging with them or not? Are there little small things that you can do, like and play with a fidget toy, or use some of those cognitive grounding tools that we have mentioned in previous podcasts where you're listing off everything of a certain category in your mind. Do any of those make you feel safer? It's also important to identify restful activities as well. Is there something that just really

puts you in a good calm mood? Is it laying down on the couch? Is it taking a nap? Is that listening to music? What helps bring you down, especially when you're feeling a little bit more escalated or in that trauma or stress reaction.

Another thing to sort of ponder, is what daily routines or activities help you promote structure? Chaos is definitely a natural thing to feel especially now when we really don't know what's next, or we really don't know what even our own long-term plans look like. But that said, you know what can help us feel grounded and within a structure in the specific moment that we're dealing with, in the specific day that we were looking at? What helps us feel more in that routine? It's also important to become aware of some of those emotional triggers. And sort of figure out what coping skills you can use to counteract them, or what positive self-talk can help when the negative feelings creep up. And by emotional triggers I mean things that make you feel less than worthy, or particularly down or something that just makes you feel like you are again, less than.

And what are some community resources that you can utilize to heal? Is there a specific counselor or advocate that you work with? Is there a hotline that when you call them they just get it? Are you able to remain in touch with your therapist or engage in a support group at this time? What are some of those community resources that are safe, supportive, and accessible when you need them?

**Teresa:** This may seem really foreign or exhausting to think about right now, or consider trying to implement in your life. And that's okay if this is feeling in a very, very overwhelming, it's understandable. This might be totally new information, and allowing ourselves that space to feel every emotion that comes up might be something different than what we allowed ourselves to do.

Ultimately take a look and recognize maybe where this is coming from. If it is feeling overwhelming, if it is feeling scary. We might have those internalized messages of not being worthy of that self-love or taking the time to practice self-care for ourselves or that emotional safety piece. An abuser might have instilled in us we are not worthy of that space, we are not worthy of feeling safe within ourselves or with others. Really recognize that maybe some of those initial responses to practicing time for yourself might come from that place of whether directly or indirectly hearing that we weren't worthy of taking up that time, that space. We know that that is so not true. Everyone deserves to have safety, to have self-love, self-care. And it's really crucial to just give yourself that time to start from the bottom up. This doesn't have to be all or nothing, and this definitely does not happen overnight either. Our needs need to be met first in order to move through healing, and in order to maybe practice some more layered parts of self-care.

There is a tool I talk about a lot with folks called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It talks about starting at the bottom of this pyramid, addressing these really basic things that we need to have met in order to, to, move to another level. If we are looking at taking care of ourselves initially, first through food, water and sleep. Making sure that we are getting enough of those things, or making sure that those needs are met prior to thinking about, maybe then after we experience, “okay I have secure, food I have secure water, and I’m able to get enough rest”, maybe then I can start looking at them emotional safety piece or I can look at am I physically safe in my environment that I’m in now? Once you kind of address those two things and you can look at the relationships in your life. Who is safe? Who is unsafe for me? Who fills me up versus who drains me? And from there, you can look at self-esteem, and you know some of the achievements or goals that you have for yourself. And then move towards the top part of the pyramid called self-actualization where we are looking at our personal potential or our creative endeavors that we might engage in. This isn't something that needs to be really, really, big, we don't need to move you know all the way through that initially overnight. This could be as simple as just drinking more water throughout the day right now.

If things are stressful at home, if you are still living with an abuser, if you are just really struggling with the added stressors of Covid-19. There are small self-care practices that you can engage in, that are showing yourself that you're worthy of taking up that space. So again, just being patient with yourself and recognizing where it's coming from can be a really important part to just honor those emotions that are rising for you.

**Marissa:** And to sort of wrap the topic of emotional safety planning up, we wanted to present a few tips and tricks that can be really helpful in establishing this emotional safety and creating your plan. Again, trying to seek out supportive people in whatever means you can. Family, friends, community. Especially right now trying to figure out which channels you can reach out to them through. Whether that's a phone call, snail mail, video chatting. Whatever way you can still feel that support.

Also identifying and working towards those achievable goals, while using your support systems to keep you accountable. Really Important stuff. Also, important to create a peaceful space for yourself if you can. So that could look like a room in your home, a comfy chair, a park that you enjoy going to, it can be as simple as leaving a smell or a piece of clothing that makes you feel relaxed. We might not get that pure silence, that pure peaceful space 100% of the time. If there's any way that we can install that sense of calm within ourselves that really does make a huge difference.

This next point is really one of the most important pieces of emotional safety. Reminding yourself of your value. It's never been your fault that abuse occurred, and you did not deserve that abuse. Where you're at right now, you do deserve to take up

space, you're allowed to have your thoughts and feelings not only heard but valued. You're allowed to feel that way about yourself too. It's not conceded to, to, look at yourself and feel good about who you are, what your values are. That's a great thing and that's something that we should really cherish and champion. And again, remember, that you do deserve to be kind to yourself and you deserve to practice self-care in small ways. It doesn't have to be grandiose like a huge shopping trip or a 5-hour bubble bath, those things are great but that is not everyone's self-care journey. Similar to meditation, a lot of folks love that, a lot of folks don't. That's okay! The key piece here is practicing self-care in small ways because those really do add up and also practicing self-care in ways that make sense to you.

**Teresa:** It might not be easy to put ourselves in our needs first, but ultimately, you deserve to take up that space. You are worthy of taking up space whether you are having a good day, an easy day, or a hard day. And again, just to echo what Marissa and I have been talking about, it's really, really crucial to be patient while you're being kind to yourself. Because this might be a totally new experience for you. This might be the first time in your life where you are really practicing that self-care and putting yourself and your needs first before you put the needs of a partner or friend before yours. Ultimately taking care of yourself and recreating safety within yourself is a part of healing that you deserve. You deserve to feel safe, you deserve to feel valued and heard, and more than anything you deserve to take up that space.

**Marissa:** Alongside the resources we mentioned, we will be including alongside this podcast on our website, we did want to highlight a couple of other resources that can really help get your self-care and emotional safety planning goals started.

The hotline.org, they have a bunch of articles on pretty much every facet of healing possible. They have an article titled five powerful self-care tips for abuse and trauma survivors. They also have a whole page dedicated to emotional safety planning too. It's really amazing resources, really great things to utilize.

There's also this crisis text line geared towards self-care called Self-Care Day which can be found at [www.selfcaresday.com](http://www.selfcaresday.com). Really great resource as well.

**Teresa:** Thank you for joining us to learn more about Self-Care and Emotional Safety planning. Our next session will be about how to set boundaries, where we'll dive into setting boundaries both for yourself and with people around you.

If you would like to talk with an advocate about your own experience, please call our 24-hour hotline at 262.542.3828. Learn more about The Women's Center at [www.twcwaukesha.org](http://www.twcwaukesha.org). Thank you and be well.