

The Ultimate Self-Care Playbook:

Discover & Nurture Your Centered Self
With Jonathan Van Ness

Jonathan Van Ness — Class Workbook

SKILL
SHARE.

Exercise 1

Listening To Yourself

Instead of zoning out, use this first exercise to tune in to your true feelings, wants, and needs. After getting grounded with the two minute breathing and body scanning break, return to this page and complete the **Above The Line/Below The Line Thoughts** exercise:

1. Draw a horizontal line on your page, or use this worksheet. Above the line is positive self talk, below the line is negative self talk.
2. Write about your meditative experience. What came up for you? What loving or positive thoughts or desires came up? Write those above the line.
3. Was there anything that came up that felt below the line, like fearful thoughts or negative self talk? Write those below the line.

HOT TIP: Getting these initial thoughts down on paper will help set the course for the rest of the class, and your future self-care journey.

Loving Thoughts

Fearful Thoughts

Exercise 2

Releasing Limiting Beliefs

You've identified the fears standing in your way, now speak back to them. Use the **Positive Affirmations** exercise to turn your inner critic into your inner support system:

1. For below the line talk from the previous exercise, think about which part of yourself the fearful or negative thoughts are coming from. What does that worried voice need to hear for reassurance?
2. Write down a positive affirmation or mantra for each below the line thought (for example, for work overwhelm, "I am capable"). Remember to speak in the affirmative, and keep the focus on yourself. That looks like replacing "No one doubts my work" with "I am capable."
3. Speak it out loud. Now do it again, and again tomorrow, and again the day after. Practice self compassion, even though it may feel silly and weird at first.

HOT TIP: Not sure where to start? Try one of Jonathan's favorite mantras: *I am capable. I am enough. I am worthy of love. I am worthy of acceptance. I love myself.*

Exercise 3

Developing Your Routine

What happens when self-care meets real life? The key is setting an intention and writing it down so you can see it. Use the weekly planner below as a jumping off point to create your own **Sustainable Self-Care Calendar**:

1. Think about what brings you joy, and write down 2-5 self-care non-negotiables. Your non-negotiables shouldn't feel like a chore, nor should they feel frivolous. If you're not sure, use a meditative moment to ground down and see what comes up.
2. Look at your schedule for the week, and then write into your planner the days/times you'll fit in your non-negotiables. If you use a digital calendar for work, experiment with using a paper planner for your self-care. The act of writing connects your mind and body to help your priorities stick.

HOT TIP: Flexibility > rigidity! If you don't meet all your goals for the week, no sweat—just reframe “failure” as research for next time. Ask yourself: What happened? What took priority, and why?

Mon

Tues

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat

Sun

Exercise 4

The Joy Of Discovery

As much as self-care is about setting boundaries, it's also about breaking them. This **Creative Writing** exercise is all about facilitating more joy through self-expression, exploration, and curiosity:

1. Set a timer for five minutes (or more), and then think back to the last time you remember feeling unbridled joy, curiosity, or passion. Use the space below to write about it.
2. When was that? What were you doing? What did you feel? You can write about a memory, an activity, a special place, or a feeling you had when you were there. This writing is just for you; there's no wrong answer.
3. Once this memory is out of your head and onto paper, take it as a clue. Find a time in your calendar to reconnect with that memory or activity, whether that means trying something new or revisiting an old favorite.

HOT TIP: If you'd like to write alongside Jonathan, use the timed writing bonus lesson as your five minute timer. Still unsure of what to write about, think back to your childhood self. What did you love as a kid? Use that prompt as a jumping off point.

Exercise 5

Failing and Forgiving

What happens when we mess up? The good news is, by now you have a toolkit of skills to draw on! In this exercise, you'll develop a strategy for facing and embracing failure as you grow your self-care practice. Complete your own **Self-Care Contingency Plan**:

1. Draw a vertical line. On the left list things you fear might get in your way.
2. To the right of the line, come up with your go-to response to each "what if?" moment.
3. Next time you're feeling overwhelmed, consult your list and carve out a moment for self-care. You can update and add to this list forever.

HOT TIP: These might not be right for you, but you can draw inspiration from Jonathan's contingency plans in the box below.

If

Resentment with a person
Resentment with self
Anxiety
Feeling overwhelmed
Feeling selfish

Then

Love and light meditation
Mantra work
Child's pose to cat/cow
Meditation with palms down
Helping my community

A Moment of Celebration

Congratulations, you did it! By working through these exercises and this class, you're already succeeding. You're showing up for yourself so that you can better show up for your loved ones and your community. Self-care is a lifelong journey, and your self-care planner is a tool you can use to navigate all the challenges, changes, and celebrations that come with it. So what next?

Close this chapter by making a **Commitment To Yourself**:

- Commit to using your self-care planner for at least five minutes every morning; or choose a different commitment that makes sense for you.
- Focus on one aspect or exercise at a time (say, for a week, or until it feels right).
- If you fall off, don't beat yourself up. Learn, forgive, and move forward.
- Share your commitment or favorite exercise in the project gallery.

What's your commitment?
