

Kelty Youth
Ambassador Program:
Guidebook on Self-Care
Co-created with youth and
young adults in British
Columbia

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Acknowledgements:

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Disclaimer:

This guidebook on self-care is intended to provide information and inspiration to people looking to adopt more self-care practices in their day-to-day lives. The guide was written by youth and young people across BC who took part in the 2017-18 Kelty Youth Ambassadors Program, and contains their creative, original content on self-care that varies from blog posts, poetry, photographs and vlogs. The guide is not intended as a substitute for the advice of an appropriate health care professional and no person may rely upon any information contained in the Guide for any reason whatsoever. If professional advice is required, the services of a competent and qualified professional should be sought. Decision-making in a specific context remains the responsibility of attending professionals. Nothing contained in the Guide should in any way be construed as being either official or unofficial policy of British Columbia Mental Health Society Branch, Children's & Women Health Centre of British Columbia Branch or Provincial Health Services Authority (together the "Societies"). The Societies assume no responsibility or liability arising from any error in or omission of information or from the use of any information, link, contact, opinion or advice provided in the Guide.

The Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

BC Children's Hospital's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre is a provincial resource centre that provides mental health and substance use information, resources, and peer support to children, youth and their families from across BC. We also provide our services to people of all ages with eating disorders. All of our services are free of charge, and you can reach us over the phone, in person, or through email.

We offer:

- Information and resources on a wide range of mental health and substance use issues affecting children and youth
- Peer support from youth and parent peer support workers, who all have lived experience with mental health challenges, either themselves or in their families
- Resources and peer support for individuals of any age with an eating disorder or a disordered eating concern
- Options for support and treatment in BC
- Help navigating the mental health system
- Free education events for parents, as well as school and health professionals, including the [Pinwheel Education Series](#)
- An [online catalogue](#) with a variety of materials available to order or download for use in your communications within your organizations, schools, newsletters, or communities.
- Tips for self-help and prevention

Information, help, and peer support are provided by staff, and parent and youth peer support workers who work at the Kelty Centre through a partnership with [FamilySmart™](#) ([Parents in Residence](#) and [Youth in Residence](#)).

How to reach us:

- Phone: 604-875-2084 or toll-free from anywhere in BC: 1-800-665-1822
- In Person: BC Children's Hospital, Mental Health Building #85, 4500 Oak Street Street, Vancouver, BC, Room P3-302 (3rd Floor)
- Email: keltycentre@cw.bc.ca

Hours of Operation

We are open Monday to Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You can contact us anytime during these hours!



FamilySmart® Youth and Parent in Residence provide peer support, mentoring, system navigation and access to information, resources, networks and education for:

- Youth or young adult with lived experience of mental health and/or substance use challenges
- Families and caregivers parenting children, youth or young adults with mental health and/or substance use challenges
- Systems and service providers; to assist in building knowledge, skills and capacity in working well together with youth, young adults and families to enhance mental health outcomes.

Youth in Residence have their own lived experience of mental health and/or substance use challenges.





The Kelty Youth Ambassador Program

What is the Kelty Youth Ambassador Program?

The Kelty Youth Ambassador Program is a group of BC youth and young adults that volunteer their time and engage in promoting mental health and well-being amongst their friends, families, peers and communities.

Youth who are involved with the KYA Program have the opportunity to share ideas and connect with other like-minded youth throughout the year, and to get involved promoting mental health and well-being.

All youth between the ages of 17-25 who live in BC are welcome to participate.

If you have any questions about the program, please email keltyambassador@gmail.com.

What is the KYA Self-Care Project?

This year, the youth ambassadors focused on self-care as their annual project, and created blog posts, photo collages, poetry, and other creative forms of expression to illustrate how self-care takes shape in their lives, and how it helps them maintain their mental wellness. On the Kelty blog and social media channels, we featured their submissions in a series dedicated to self-care. This guidebook is a compilation of their submissions, in the form of an e-book meant for readers to better understand how to implement self-care in their day-to-day lives.



Why Self-Care?

Self-care refers to...“the actions that an individual might take in order to reach optimal physical and mental health” (GoodTherapy.Org).

Simply put, it refers to taking time to do something for yourself that you enjoy.

Self-care is a tool we can all benefit from and utilize to prevent burnout or emotional overwhelm. There are misconceptions that self-care takes too much time, is for the ‘weak,’ and is based on materialistic products (i.e., skincare, shopping, and other goods).

This resource debunks these misconceptions and is a guide for how you can implement self-care. There are blog posts, images, and videos created by the Kelty Youth Ambassadors on how they practice self-care and what it means to them. Self-care has subjective significance and can help us be our highest, best and most authentic version of ourselves.

What Self-Care Means to Our Youth

Emotional Hygiene- Self-Care

Good self-care, especially in relation to our mental health, is not something that is innate. It is something that we develop through trial and error. Self-care strategies vary for everyone, and can also change throughout an individual's lifespan. It is important to note that self-care is not damage control, but it is a prevention strategy! Self-care is just as necessary when things are good, as when they are bad. It is something you need to practice every single day, just like brushing your teeth. Emotional hygiene is as important as physical hygiene, and it is imperative to find what works for you- it is never too late!

There are decent tips out there: get sleep, exercise, drink water, eat healthy, be grateful and so on. However, it is not so simple. While these are great guidelines, building your emotional first aid kit needs to be a personal reflection. It is sitting down in a quiet moment, and asking yourself "how can I treat myself better?" "what makes me feel good?" and "who can I reach out to for help, if needed?". Just as there is no universal antidote to all diseases, there is no all-in-one antidote to healthy emotional hygiene. One thing that is important is patience. Patience to give yourself the time you need to figure it out, to find out what works FOR YOU! Make yourself a care package, imaginary or real, and use it on a daily basis. Restock it every night before you sleep. Additionally, another important habit is the act of introspection. The process of examining your own mental processes, noticing trends, and then acting on them accordingly puts you in the moment- it allows you to act immediately and be in control.

Arguably, the most important part of self-care is knowing who you can reach out to for support. Just as we know to call "911" in emergencies, we need to know who we can call when we are struggling. Whether that is a parent, sibling, a friend, or trusted mentor, you need to have someone on your side. Further, take time out to find out how you can reach a professional for help. Talk to counsellors and/or doctors at your school/university/work and find out your options. Students often have great benefits and access to therapy at reduced charges, and it is worth taking advantage of. Getting help does not mean you're weak, or damaged, it means that you are taking responsibility for your life, and getting the best possible support you can.

Aastha



Self Care is Empowering

Learning to practice self care can be a challenging mission. It was a concept I myself struggled with for many years. It's not that I didn't think it was a great idea for everyone else, but the problem was that I didn't value myself enough to feel worthy of care or compassion from anyone.

For a long time, I was one of those people that put everyone else first, and unfortunately this was reinforced and encouraged by the culture surrounding me, even when it was clearly detrimental to my own health and well being. I was praised for my "selflessness" which reinforced in my mind that to care for myself would be selfish. It took many years of hard work to unlearn this false idea that in order to be a good and unselfish person, I always had to put myself last, that I always had to minimize my own needs and bend to the needs and desires of others.

I know now that not only is caring for yourself not a selfish act, it can be an incredible act of courage. Learning to put my own needs first, and to properly care for myself has provided me with a much more balanced view of the world and given me the ability to help people in a much more effective way, without putting myself in damaging situations.

Self care does not have to be overly complicated or expensive; some of the things that I find are most important to me as far as self care include performing basic personal hygiene, resting my body and getting enough sleep, having a routine to follow that incorporates some form of fun physical activity throughout the week, spending time with my family (including my pets), spending time in nature, attending my scheduled therapy sessions, properly taking the medications I am prescribed and setting aside some time each week to engage in an activity that I love, be it knitting, reading, attending a dance class, lighting an apple cinnamon scented candle or re-watching one of my favourite movies.

Self-care is so important and such a valuable skill to learn. Find what works for you and know that whatever you are going through you are never alone. It is okay to need help and to ask for it. I certainly did.



- Akayla



“A Sleepless Dream”

By Ashkan

In the black of night,
Thoughts race beyond your might,
Hauntings of past mistakes while regrets unfold,
To smoother potential with confidence struck cold.

Where is this directionless road I must follow?
When destination is unbound, questions begin to linger.
My worth is infinite, but my scale reads “hollow”.
Every act needs more energy, and people point their finger.

Alas, this is not I you see before you.
But, only a broken piece of a whole.
Vibrant worlds and ideas encompass my life too.

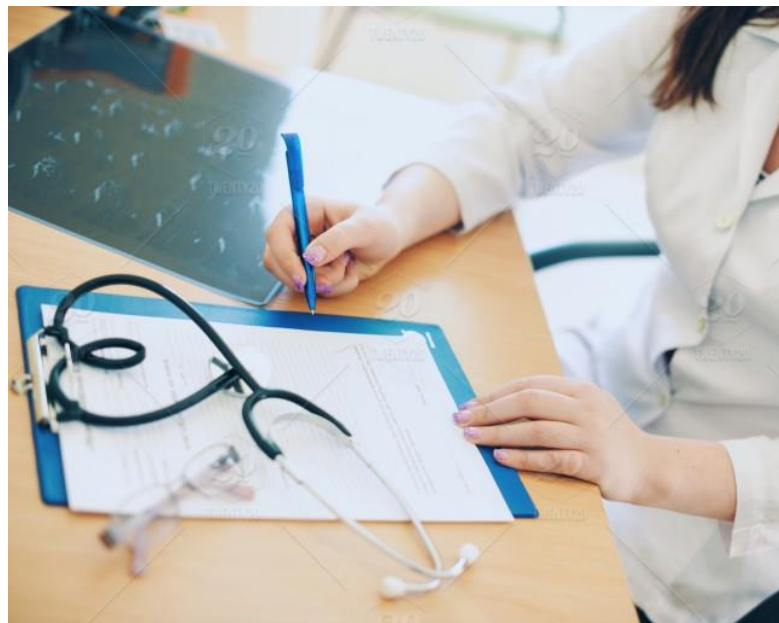
To shine bright, my true self, in the world is my goal.

To see each other more clearly is a step we must take,

To ensure tolerance and acceptance for all.

So, please attempt to clear the stigma for our sake.

Through our writings, we echo this call.



“Not The Doctor’s Orders”

By Ashkan

Patient: “A lack of insulin is my concern.”

Doctor: “Well, a shot to the abdomen you must take for sure.”

Patient: “What about a lack of vitamins? My body ain’t working so nice.”

Doctor: “The building blocks of the body! A pill should suffice.”

Patient: “Doc, I don’t think I can go on; the will is lacking.”

Doctor: “Oh pull yourself by the bootstraps, boy. There’s no time for slacking.”

Patient: “This advice does no good. I’ve heard it all!”

“Without professional help, I will surely fall.”

“Are dopamine and serotonin just to be forgotten?”

“The building blocks of the mind have become as weak as cotton.”

“Medicinal help, modern science would advise.”

“Time for society and the common man to take up facts and abide.”





The Caress in We
By Bar

I felt the waves
ever slowly, creeping,
each more powerful than the last.
Clutching my abdomen
breathes shallow, fiery.
The pupils, dark underbellies of ponds
the horizon stretching
to impending doom.

The ground beneath my hands
so many possibilities –
Oh, but how I wish I could feel.
Would one take for granted?
The roughness, the bite of a splinter
If only the monster more subdued,
could one navigate around the particle?
Fortunately, such a formidable pest frightens me not,
for my calloused fingers
I can finally bring to light.
The years of picking, uninvited injury,

in this moment my desperation and self-loathing sloughed off
for finding myself in this paralyzed state
a splinter
no match for me,
this painful procedure exacerbated not.

But this breath is not the last
I remind my fear.
For last it does not.
And now it is gone.

And I am not alone,
for in this suffering
we stand together.
The checking, the worrying, the picking, the panic, the memories
the echoes of your toils, we hear
we stand together – we share.

And I am not alone,
one chants.

Through this fight, this winding journey,
One may choose, I implore, to navigate the seemingly impenetrable,
the convoluted system,
but one's own mind – how?
gazing to the signature orange bottles
with their white caps.

A pristine venture
One of healing from within;
a caressing warmth
of the sun on my cheeks
my bare scalp,
as I walk the rooted path
leading nowhere in particular
to the curious birds above.

I bid good afternoon to my fellow feathery friends
For in a journey of growth and tranquility

one must reach out
to their nurturing beloved
person, animal, place, or thing
us, and you
together.

My Self-Care Journey

Since I was younger, I found that I was never the best at telling others about what's going on in my life. As this has always been my personality, I never thought I could change it which led to some issues when I was a teenager and really needed to talk to someone about everything that was happening to me. The year I turned fifteen was probably the year where I really needed to let myself be vulnerable around others as it was the year that my grandmother passed away. I still couldn't get myself to talk about my loss, but it became so hard for me that I told one person. The rest of my friends found out about my grandmother's passing through my sisters' and mom's social media posts and because I didn't talk about it, my friends didn't ask about it. The friend that I told tried her best to listen and I really appreciated her being there and checking up on me. It was probably my best decision that year to tell her about my grandma. I realized then, that in my best interest and for my own mental health, I had to break down the walls I built up and let myself be vulnerable so that others could help me heal.

It was also during that time that I took another step in my self-care journey through the discovery of my love for music. The lyrics of the songs I was listening to at the time, were probably what helped me the most; they were the words I never had the courage to say. It was comforting to see that other people had the same experiences as me and they were able to overcome those difficult times. The fact that the artists were vulnerable enough to write about their experiences and make those experiences into beautiful melodies was not only comforting, but it was inspirational. It was because of this, that I began to learn how to play instruments myself and now my instruments have become another part of my self-care journey. Just being able to play my keyboard or pluck the strings of my guitar help put me at ease when my anxiety rises.

I have come a long way from that year I turned fifteen. I have gotten better at letting myself be vulnerable and looking for others for support. My love for music hasn't changed since then and neither has its healing effects. I still have bad days every now and then but with the tools that I've gathered and am still gathering along my journey, I know that I can get through those days and live a happier and healthier life.

- Anonymous

A Self-Care Vlog

By Brittany

Watch the video through this link: <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/blog/2018/03/self-care-vlog>



Dealing with the Stress of School

Whether it be social, academic, or emotional pressures, school can be a drain on one's mental health. Therefore, it is important to have a 'safety net' of sorts, for when things get too overwhelming. I know personally, school can be a regular cause of stress, and so I'm here to share what I consider valuable self-care techniques.

Talk to your teachers. Teachers are human too, and most of them will understand the pressures you are going through. If you're feeling overwhelmed by an abundance of deadlines, or just need a few extra days, chances are at least some of them will be inclined to help you. In doing so, you'll be able to find a better balance amongst your course load, and help your own mental health at the same time.

Write it down. If something is stressing you out – say a test score, or a grade in a certain course – I find it helpful to pinpoint the specific root of your stress, and evaluate what it will mean in the long term. Will one test score affect you in say, in five years? Chances are, the answer is no. I find this helps me in understanding that the pressure is not permanent, and will go away in time.

Don't be afraid to drop a class. I know personally, I've had to drop classes when I feel they will become too much of a stressor for me. Whether that be academically or for other reasons, don't feel bad about needing to drop a course for the sake of your mental health. If you need it, you can take it at a time when you feel more comfortable, and if it's not required, you may not feel inclined to do it at all. Regardless, make sure your mental health comes before one course!

Have one thing that you enjoy. Whether it be one friend that you love talking with, one class you adore, or a club you partake in that fills your heart up, it's important to have one thing that you can't wait to do every day. For example, I know that regardless of any other sources of stress, I'll always have my favorite English or History class to look forward to. This can help in easing stress long-term, or throughout any given day.

Of course, that these are only my means of coping with stress, and everyone has their own way of dealing with their own mental health. Remember that a letter grade does not define your self-worth, and to always put your own health and wellbeing first!

- Markus





Photo collage by Michelle



What Does Self-Care Look Like to You?

- Mikaela

Self-care has been sort of a buzzword lately, with bloggers and vloggers detailing how they practice self-care through sleep routines, skin-care, and bubble-baths. But did you know that's not all self-care can be?

Self-care refers to actions one might take to further improve their physical and mental health. Self-care can be divided into five main categories: physical self-care, lifestyle, mental/emotional self-care, support from people, and spiritual self-care. Self-care can be anything from making sure to drink enough water to practicing positive self-talk to meditation to painting to talking with a therapist.

Interested in what other youth and young adults do to practice self-care, I asked a simple question: when you think of self-care, what comes to mind? Below are some responses I received. (Names changed to keep anonymity.)

Kyle – “Pancakes.”

Joshua – “Watching TV shows and escaping reality a bit.”

Alisha – “Doing things to de-stress like mindfulness, journal reflections, walks, and bubble-baths. Also taking care of your body.”

Alex – “Eating breakfast and getting eight hours of sleep every night.”

Jessica – “Cleaning my room, taking a bath or shower, trimming and painting my nails, cleansing my face and doing skin-care stuff.”

Charlotte – “Treating yourself like you would with others, with respect and love. Not tearing yourself down when something doesn't go right, and trying to stay happy.”

Sasha – “Asking for help when you need it.”

Claire – “I think of both taking care of yourself physically such as actually eating instead of skipping meals, hydrating often, and getting sleep. But also, mentally and emotionally by stopping yourself from bottling up your emotions, by asking and accepting help, and by having time set aside just for you.”

Simon – “Taking a long shower, buying a beverage after a long exam, and sleeping ten hours everyday to wake up fresh.”

Penny – “Doing what satisfies your pleasures in the most optimally healthiest way possible.”

Tyra – “When I get a chance to get my hair cut and coloured. When I can either go shopping for my favourite make-up, or do face cleanses and masks. When I get massages, or take long bubble-baths. When I’m doing those things, I feel at peace and I feel no stress both mentally and physically and that moment is when I’m the happiest.”

Henry – “Working on yourself, and having good self-esteem and confidence. Just focusing on yourself and not caring about what other people think.”

Pauline – “Self-care is my respect for my own needs, and desires. A right I owe myself. How I indulge in it varies from time to time – usually taking time off, watching football, a spa date, eating, singing, hanging out with friends. Sometimes just letting myself be is also a version.”

Riley – “Just doing what’s best for you rather than for others in the grand scheme of things. It sounds selfish, but often that is what self-care is, and its often normal because we do it to make ourselves happy.”

Frigga – “It’s being mindful of what you need to be healthy, whatever that looks like for you. It’s being in tune with how you feel and acting accordingly to make whatever is out of sync better or stable.”

Chris - “Self-care to me would be something like... akin to soul searching, I guess? It's not the right comparison but it's all I can think of. To me, self-care is prioritizing the importance of maintaining a healthy mental, physical, and emotional state of well-being. In ways of painting, to jogging, to meditating. Whatever works for the person I suppose. I guess to me self-care would be just as blatant as the idea's name itself. One would need to care for their self in a way that's beneficial to their well-being overall.”

Zara - “Cutting out toxic people from your life without feeling bad about it.”

What does self-care look like to you?



**A Self-Care Video
By Reshmi**

Watch the video through this link: <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/blog/2018/02/self-care-video>





SELF-CARE

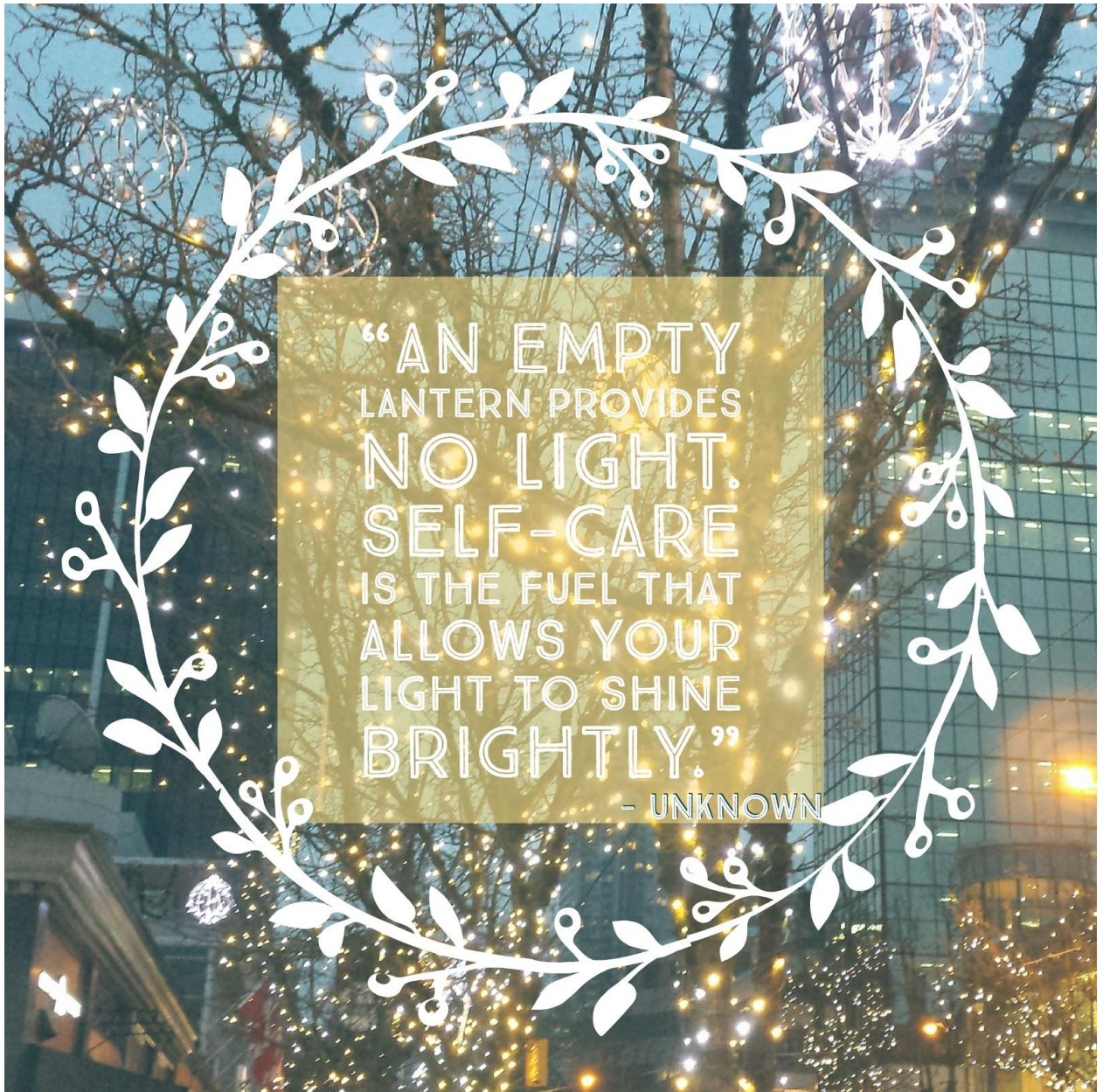
**“THE ACTIONS
THAT AN INDIVIDUAL
MIGHT TAKE IN ORDER TO REACH
OPTIMAL **PHYSICAL**
AND **MENTAL** HEALTH”**





WHAT DOES SELF-CARE MEAN TO YOU?







Graphics created by Shantelle

Is breathing a luxury or necessity?

By Simran

We have all had those days when we are running around, trying our best to take care of everyone else. We've made more commitments in a day than time itself can allow, breathing seems like a luxury but we know we will get through it – we have to.

Why is it that we find ourselves in situations that are both physically and mentally draining? The answer to this is a simple phrase we were raised to believe.

Put others before yourself.

Due to this belief, we put ourselves last as it would be arrogant or self centred to do otherwise. But are we truly able to help others if we cannot be the best version of ourselves?

Often times we can't hear our inner voice, since we are too busy attending to the needs of those we care about. If we were to take a step back, we would realize that the help and support we are providing others is of no use. This is where the idea of self care comes in. Although we want to be there for others, we need to come to the realization that we need energy to do so.

When we focus on ourselves, we and the people we care for are better served. With everyone being taken care of, life seems brighter and every breath comes along easier.

Self care is a necessity to life, but what does look like? How do we achieve this?

There is no set way achieve self care. Everyone's needs differ depending on the day. What matters is that we take the time to care of ourselves.

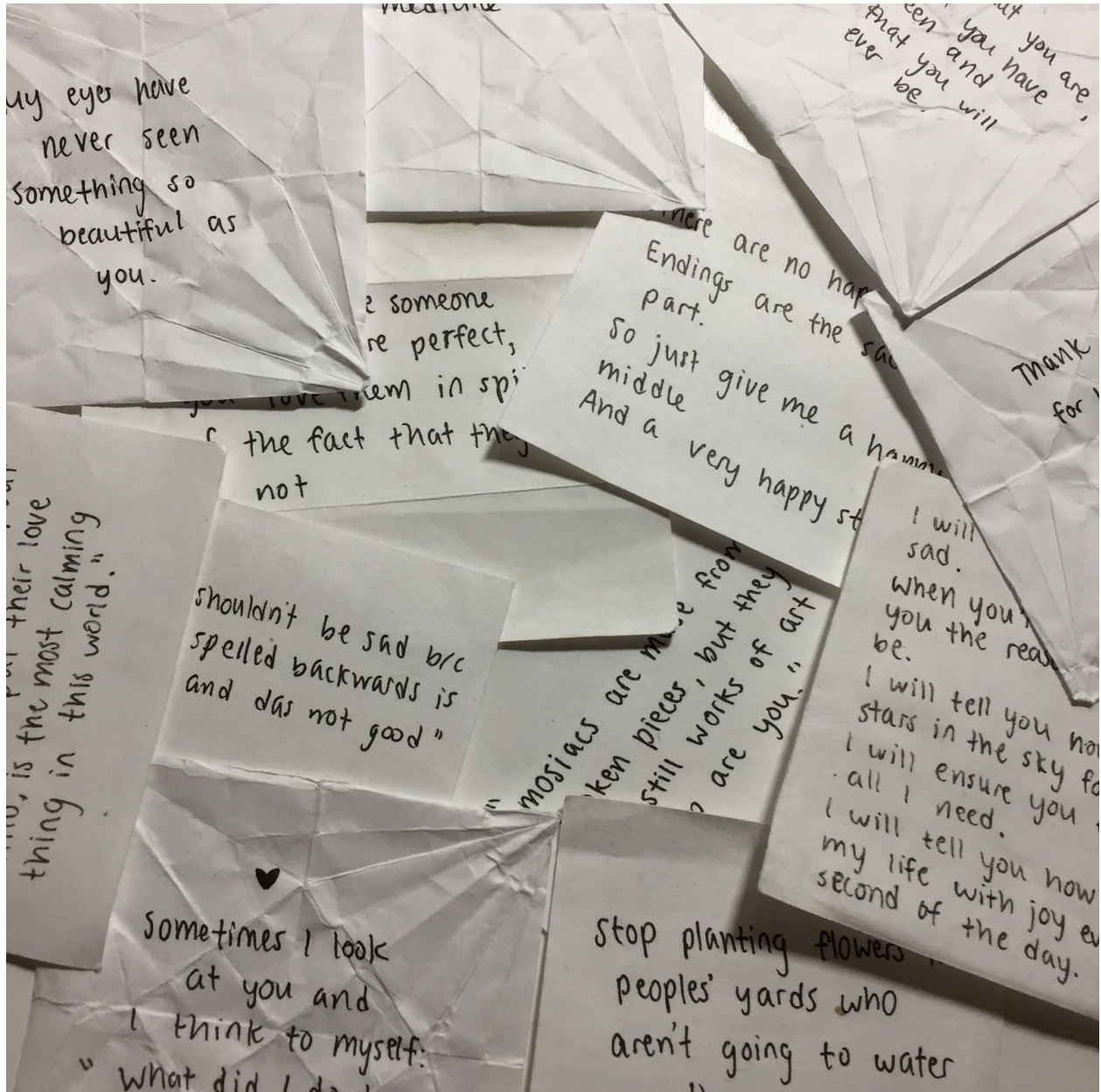
As a third year university student, my idea of self care is constantly evolving. A few ways I take care of myself include going to bed early, taking study breaks to go for outdoor walks, watching a movie, listening to music, going for a run, or enjoying the company of loved ones.

The concept of self care, along with its execution is rather easy. But in order to do so, you need to make time which means having to say to no.

No. It's one syllable, yet one of the most difficult words to say to someone. I myself am guilty this, instead of saying no I respond with a yes while internally reassuring myself it's fine, I will make time. If you say yes knowing that you cannot uphold the responsibility, your commitment is pointless.

The impact of saying no when it's necessary tends to lead to a positive outcome. It comes down to the basic principle of self care. By saying no, you are acknowledging that you need to take care of yourself which will positively impact those around you.

Practising self care I am able to freely commit to and enjoy each moment of my life that I would otherwise have neglected since I would be too occupied caring for someone else.



Self-Care: Just Another Cliché Story by Vy

In 2014, I was involuntarily hospitalized due to the death of my grandfather which impacted me to a great extent as I saw him as the father figure who has raised me for as long as I can remember. It was ironically on the day in which we were supposed to celebrate a baby shower. It was late evening and as I was calling him out of his room and he had collapsed. I was scared senseless and blamed myself for it, for not doing something.

I felt alone, hopeless and pushed away everyone I cared about.

In my duration of my stay, I've learnt to cope with my grief. With the help of the nurses and amazing doctors, I've began opening up once more to the people whom I have cared about in the past. Reaching out to another person, to me, takes a lot of courage and in my opinion, is self-care because you're taking care of yourself by reaching out to people who may be able to help you. I would have never built the courage to talk to them about what I've been through and how traumatized I was due to the incident.

I've learnt to value those who helped me through the rough patch and eventually eased some of my pain. As time passes, I started developing hobbies in which I fell out of such as long (and sometimes silent) phone calls with someone, excerpts and going on long walks surrounded by nature. I especially love walks in a natural environment as it eases my thoughts which may be happening in the moment and makes me value life a little bit more every single time. Nature is beauty in its' purest form as it has not been altered in anyway. There's such a diversity of organisms and together they all seem to belong.

Self-care is such a crucial step into being healthy because my body will need its' breaks due to maybe the overwhelmed moment I've just encountered, the amount of academics I may have or a serious situation I may have had to face.

Self-care to me is listening to what my body thinks what's right for me in that moment and something which doesn't cause me to resist it. Once I have cared for myself and listened to my body, I found it so much easier to focus on the things I needed to get done. As cliché as it sounds, it gets better.

In the moment, it may feel like there may be nothing to live for but think of it like this, if you're rock bottom, you can only rise up from there. Show those who thought so low of yourself that you're worth it, show yourself that you're worth it.

The below poem is about the need to maintain self-care by writing poetry.

By Mikaela

- Spoken Word -

Its three am

And its like I'm the Black Death's victim

Being plagued by unspoken words

Not thinking straight

A fork in between my cerebellum

Which way do I take?

Do I follow my creative side and write sweet nothings

All night until day breaks and my eyes,

Crusted with rhymes,

Realize the day has started without me?

Or do I follow my logical side

And accept the comforted hold

That we call sleep?

But no

There aren't two sides to a brain

No two disconnected neutrons

Just a collective

Mind

Without accepting my lust for verses

The sleep will not be a comfortable hold

But instead

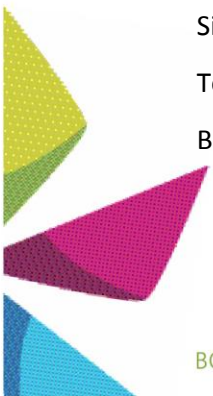
A nightmare

Filled with my monsters
And sharpened #2 pencils
And I
I will wake the next morning
Either an empty shell of apathy,
Or a vessel of fighting emotions
Too cowardly,
Yet too brave
To surrender with the white flag I call
Peace
So with this in mind
Knowing what may become of me
In the sweet early glow of another day,
I put pen to paper
Because I know
My demons will grow

The below poem is about the self-care involved with unplugging from social media and technology.

By Mikaela

- Tech Savvy -
My socks are wet with contempt
From the salty shores of Poseidon
Sirens lead sailors from treacherous waters
To rocky islands
But as time goes on



Gods and goddesses dissipated
Replaced by tech-hungry humans
Seeking a refuge from bytes and bots
They come to Atlantis' bones
To rid themselves of their carnivore-craving
For likes, tweets, taps and tones
Syringes of self-absorption
Shooting up the meth of mainstream medias
But once you emerge yourself
In the world-wide-wilderness
And take off your tech tourniquet
You'll feel the blood in your veins flow again
Like the streams that occupy the island
So sit your little bottom down
I take it you have much experience with that
Unplug your headphones,
Become setting-savvy,
And listen to the bird-sung symphony
That you've been ignoring
For so long.



We hope this book provided you with some inspiration to practice self-care in your daily lives. This guidebook is dedicated to the Kelty Youth Ambassadors of 2017-18, who dedicated their time, energy, and passion to make this project come to life.

