

Thortify: The Art of Self Care

# Ground Yourself

A creative approach to self care



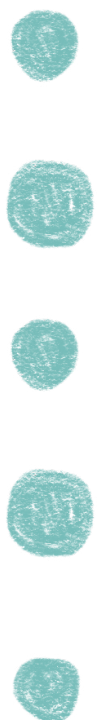


## How To Use This Workbook

We believe self care and creativity go hand in hand so our workbooks combine art with deeper personal development.

This workbook is full of activities to explore in your own time. You can work through the activities from front to back, or dip in and out focusing on the activities that speak to you.

Our workbooks can be used alone, with a friend or a trusted therapist.



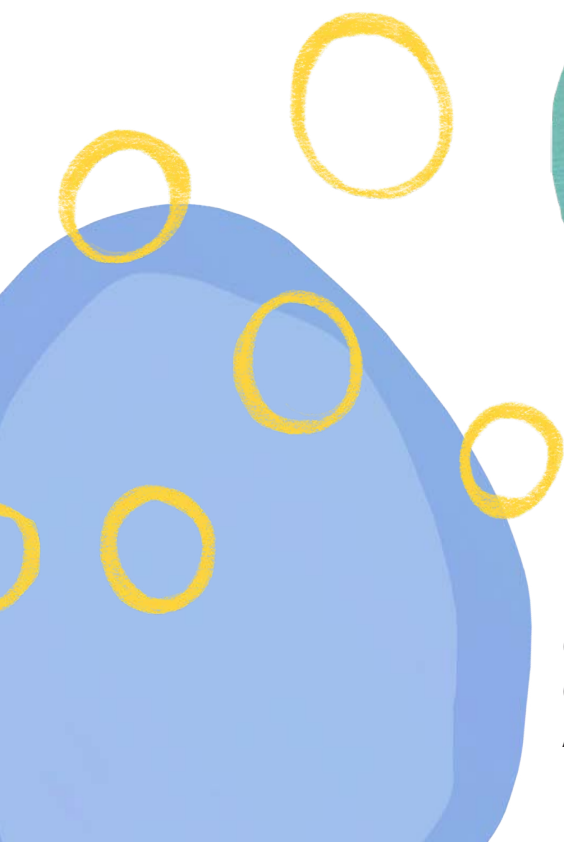
## About Social Theory

Our workbooks are underpinned by social theory.

Theories are a set of ideas that help us to understand or explain something.

They can be a foundation upon which we build our own story.

This workbook is based on Folkman and Lazarus' transactional theory of stress and coping (1984).



*Ground Yourself* is produced as part of *The Art of Self Care* project, brought to you by Thortify and funded by Arts Council England.





# Hello, You!

We hope our Ground Yourself workbook helps you on your journey towards a new world of creative self care.

With built in activities, exercises and plenty of space to explore, our workbooks are designed to guide you through deeper self care practices whilst also supporting you to discover your artistic flair.

Lovingly developed by a team of professional artists, designers, social workers and educators, our workbooks introduce different social theories and guide you through how to use them.

There is plenty more information on our website if you would like to find out more about *The Art of Self Care*:  
[www.thortify.co.uk](http://www.thortify.co.uk)



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## Introduction

Most people experience some degree of stress in their lives, which can be manageable at low levels. When we are exposed to high levels of stress or we are stressed for a long time, the results can wreak havoc on our physical and mental health.

It can be scary when you think something can harm you, or make things more difficult. Learning how to cope with those feelings can help you to feel more confident about your ability to manage difficult situations.

Social scientists Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman explored the subject of stress and coping in 1984<sup>1</sup>. They looked at the different ways we cope with stress, including emotion focused coping (making yourself feel better) and problem focused strategies (dealing with the issue at hand).

Our *Ground Yourself* workbook encourages both styles of coping through creative activities, helping you to feel better while figuring out how to deal with the big stuff.

<sup>1</sup>. Lazarus, R.S. and Folkman, S., 1984. Stress, appraisal, and coping. Springer publishing company.



# Grounding Totems

*Be inspired*

Artist Tracey Meek explored Lazarus and Folkman's 1984 theory of 'Stress, appraisal and coping' by looking at physical objects that can bring us comfort during moments of worry or stress.

Tracey's work was inspired by the tall wooden carvings called 'Totem Poles' created by First Nation communities and indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Totem poles are wooden posts carved with symbols or figures that show the ancestry, cultural beliefs and history of different kinship groups and communities.

Here are some images of Tracey's wonderful artworks:



We have called these small and delicate objects 'Grounding Totems'. They are special objects that can be held in the palm of the hand, played with, or shaken like an instrument to hear soothing sounds.



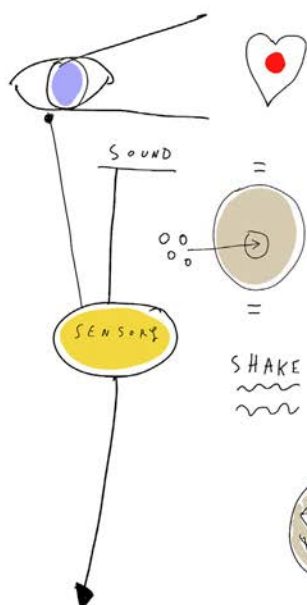
# LAZARUS COPING THEORY



## A Creative Insight

### SERIES OF (CALMING OBJECTS

---  
Fit neatly in  
the PALM of your  
HAND



SMELL

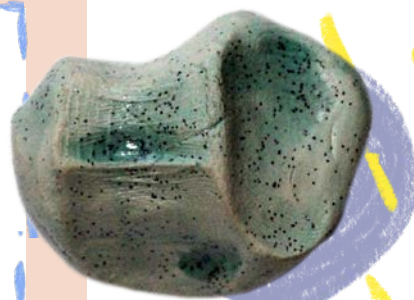


BRING you  
back to EARTH

TOUCH

Memorise bumps and changes  
in Texture. Like lines on  
A FACE.

Tracey Meek.



"Tangible objects  
can ground us and bring  
us back to our own safe space.  
I began to explore this with clay,  
possibly the most tangible material. The  
feeling of it in my hand reminds me of  
making mud pies as a child, the wonderful  
imaginative play that would unfold was  
almost like stepping into another world.  
These objects replicate this feeling,  
textures and physical markings provide a  
braille like map to mindfulness, a compass  
of sorts." - Tracey Meek

# Grounding Ritual

Have a go!

The prompts below can help you think more deeply about your senses. They can be used as inspiration for a grounding ritual or for your own Grounding Totem like Tracey's on pages 6 and 7.




## Sight

What can you see right now? What colours stand out to you? What shapes are you enjoying looking at? What sights soothe you? You could create a soothing space to look at using plants, decorations, inspiring pictures or home made art.



## Smell

Which smells are comforting to you? Do you like the smell of cake, cookies or other sweet treats? Or do you prefer the smell of something savoury? Which smells relax you? Can you think of any rejuvenating scents? Maybe mint, lemon or eucalyptus? Try using an essential oil dotted on the back of your hand to turn to when feeling wobbly. Breathe it in deeply.



## Hearing

Do you have a favourite song or instrument? What sounds do you find calming? Do you enjoy repetitive sounds, a specific style of music or even silence? Create your own soothing playlist or experiment with listening to \*white noise\*. White noise is a continuous sound that doesn't have a rhythm or pattern. For example, the sound of a washing machine. White noise can sometimes help people to relax.



## Taste

What are your preferred foods, flavours and tastes? Do you have any comfort foods? What is your favourite recipe? Do you have any comforting memories associated with particular foods? Try keeping a food diary to find out which foods make you feel nourished and healthy.



## Touch

Have you considered texture, sensation and touch? What soothes and comforts you? Are you drawn to natural or man made textures? Do you like to fiddle and fidget? Do you prefer smooth or rough surfaces? Add a few mindful moments to your day by giving yourself a mini hand massage. Try paying close attention to your fingertips and think about how each movement feels.



Explore your senses using the prompts provided



Did you know we have other senses too?

**Proprioception** - the perception of body awareness; where our body is in time and space.

**Equilibrioception** - our internal sense of balance.

**Interoception** - noticing our internal feelings and emotions, for example, hunger.

# Check In:

Draw what you feel







Sit quietly and focus on your breathing until you feel calm.  
Keep bringing your focus back onto your breathing.

When you feel ready, start to focus your mind on each different area of your body, thinking about how it feels.  
Are there any aches, pains or other sensations?

Try to describe the sensation to yourself. Does it feel heavy, cold, sharp, squiggly or something else?

You can use this template to draw the different sensations you are feeling. Use colour and shapes to help you. Think about which colours and shapes best represent the different sensations you are feeling and where they are felt most strongly.

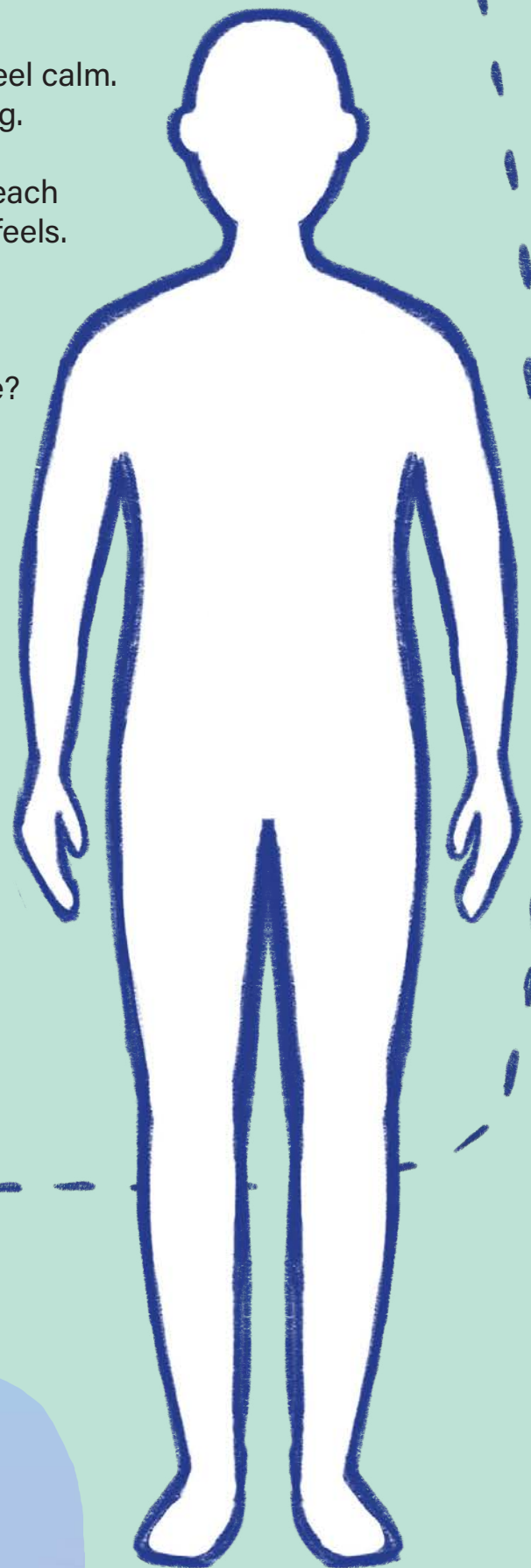
## Example Key

-  - Cold
-  - Tense
-  - Relaxed
-  - Aching
-  - Warm
-  -

## Tell someone how you feel

If you don't feel comfortable talking to anyone,  
try writing it here.

How are you feeling?





# Mindful Body Scan

## *Release the tension*

A body scan is a mindful technique that allows you to focus on different parts of your body, one at a time, tensing and then relaxing each muscle in turn.

### **Instructions**

1. Start by sitting comfortably with your feet flat on the ground.
2. Take 5 deep breaths. Breath in through your nose, focusing on the breath as it fills up your chest. Exhale out through your mouth. Try to breathe in and out for the same count, for example 1,2,3,4,5 in and 1,2,3,4,5 out.
3. Starting close to the ground, focus on how your feet feel against the floor. Imagine the floor pushing upwards into your feet. Wiggle or squeeze your toes, focusing on how each movement feels. Practice tensing and relaxing. Notice how it feels to let go of the tension.
4. Slowly move your attention up your body, focusing on each area one at a time. Remember to breathe throughout. Flex your ankles, bend your knees, wobble your thighs, tighten your tummy, stretch out your chest, shake your shoulders, extend your arms, clench your hands, relax your brow and scalp, and finally, smile. Enjoy the feeling of calm as any tension leaves your body.

If you like, take a look back at your drawing on Page 10.  
Are there any new feelings, emotions or sensations you would like to draw? Has anything changed?

# Grounding Tips, Tricks and Ideas

Find what works for you

Grounding techniques help us to feel better by distracting us from uncomfortable feelings and helping us to focus on the present moment. Grounding is useful for managing anxiety, stress and feelings of overwhelm in the moment. These exercises can be used anywhere, whether you are in a busy waiting room, on public transport or preparing for an exam, or an interview.

## Seek Out The Detail

Pay extra attention to the things around you and look for the small things you may not have noticed before. Look between the objects you can see, and into the shadows. Count repetitive items. Spot the differences. Count the corners. Seek out the colours, textures and individual sounds. The more you practice, the more control you will have over your attention in times of worry.

## Take Note

*5 things you can see*

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

*4 things you can hear*

- 
- 
- 
- 

*3 things you can feel*

- 
- 
- 

*2 things you can smell*

- 
- 

*1 thing you can taste*

- 

**breathe**

## Cut Out and Keep it Close

Cut out this card and carry it with you as a reminder that it's okay to take a little break when you need to. Breathe in to the count of five, hold for a moment and then exhale slowly. Repeat until you feel refreshed.





### Count Yourself Calm

If you are on the bus or train on the way to a nerve wracking interview or appointment, count the number of seats on one side, and then the other. Add them up and then calculate the number of people that could sit on the bus or carriage at any one time. Ask yourself, how many people have glasses? How many people have long hair? How many people are wearing something yellow? How many people get on and off the bus? Can you keep a running total as you go? Can you guess how many people will get on at the next stop?

### Be Creative With Your Clothing

When deciding what to wear, think about adding something soothing to your outfit. A soft scarf or sweater that makes you feel comforted, or a piece of jewellery you can twiddle. You could also pop something soft or smooth into your pocket, such as a found pebble, conker or a grounding totem (see pages 6 - 7).



### Collect Inspiration

Nurture your creativity by carrying a little notebook with you and using the space to record any thoughts or ideas that you have throughout the day. You could take notes, make quick sketches or collect interesting leaflets and magazine cut-outs to explore in your own time. Find out how to make your own Self Care Scrapbook or art journal on page 22.



# Happy Place

Build your own personal sanctuary

Spend a little time thinking of the different things that you need to feel safe, relaxed and comfortable.

Now you can think creatively about what your happy place might look like. Try not to worry about rules or logic here, this is your happy place. If the sound of the sea is relaxing to you, but you also like walking in the woods and enjoy eating strawberries, why not merge these ideas and imagine your own personal ocean forest with an endless supply of juicy, ripe strawberries.

**Write your initial ideas down here:**

**Draw your creative ideas here:**



## **Bonus activity**

Use different materials to paint, collage or build your happy place.

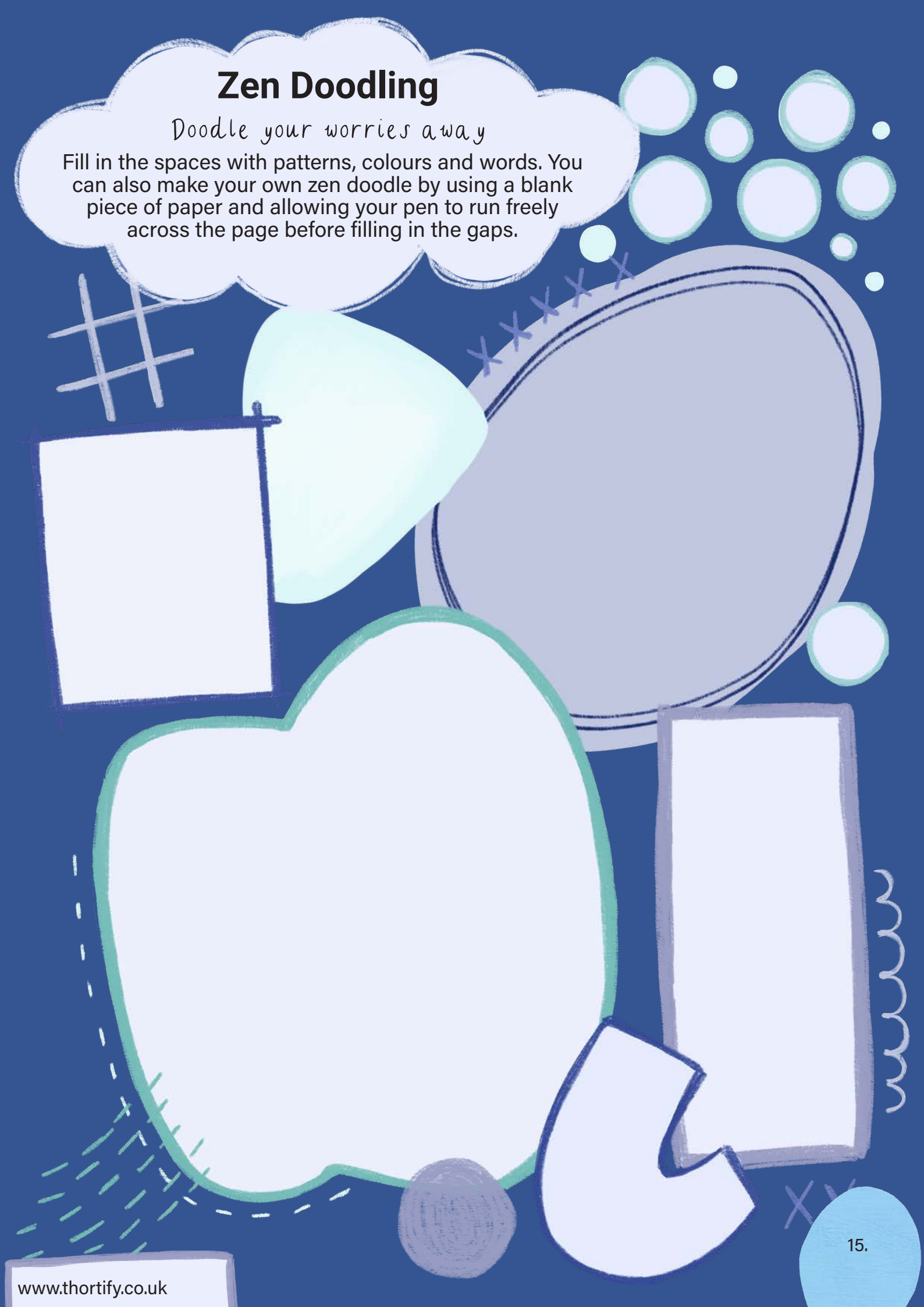
Once you have imagined your own happy place, you can choose to spend time there whenever you want. Redecorate and mix things up as often as you need to.



# Zen Doodling

*Doodle your worries away*

Fill in the spaces with patterns, colours and words. You can also make your own zen doodle by using a blank piece of paper and allowing your pen to run freely across the page before filling in the gaps.



# Your Circle

Visualise your support network

Sometimes we get so caught up in our worries that we feel alone, which can make things seem more overwhelming. Use this activity to explore the different relationships in your life and what they mean to you.



1. Write your name in the centre of the circle.
2. Write the names of the people you are closest to in the second circle. These can be the people you confide in, or the people you can talk to when you are worried about something.
3. In the third circle, write the names of people that you can turn to but aren't as close to you as those in the inner circle. These can be friends and family that you see occasionally or those that live further away.
4. In the fourth circle, write in the services and organisations that are there to support you. These can include doctors, schools, helplines, charities and support groups.



# Creative Thinking

Figure things out

This activity helps you to work through any problems you may be facing and find solutions using different styles of thinking. This technique can help you to put things into perspective and make things feel more manageable. Firstly, write down exactly what the problem is as simply as you can.

**What's the problem?**

**How much is this problem bothering you?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 - It's a bit of a nuisance  
5 - I'm thinking about it a lot  
10 - I'm really worried about it

Now we know what is causing you bother, we can start planning for how to fix it.

Use this space to write down as many solutions as you can. Don't feel that you need to stay within the boundaries of logic here: if winning the lottery would help, write it down! Keep going until you can't think of any more. Try to think as creatively as you can, as this will help you to think in different ways.

*Write down 3 ideas:*

--	--	--

*And 3 more...*

--	--	--

*Can you get another 3?*

--	--	--

Now you have as many possible solutions as you can, you can start to pick out which ones are realistic and which will be the easiest for you to try.

Choose the three most effective and realistic solutions, and write them here:

**I could...**

1.

2.

3.

Now you have identified three possible solutions, it's time to think about what else might help you to achieve them.

- Is there anyone you can talk to about your solutions?
- Do you know anyone who has been through a similar thing?
- Can you find any resources to help you?
- What would make you feel more confident about taking the next step?

**Things that might help...**

**How do you feel about the problem now?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- 1 - It's feeling a lot easier to manage  
5 - I have some ideas to solve the problem  
10 - I'm still very worried

Hopefully, things are feeling a little easier now and the problem doesn't seem quite as big as it did before.

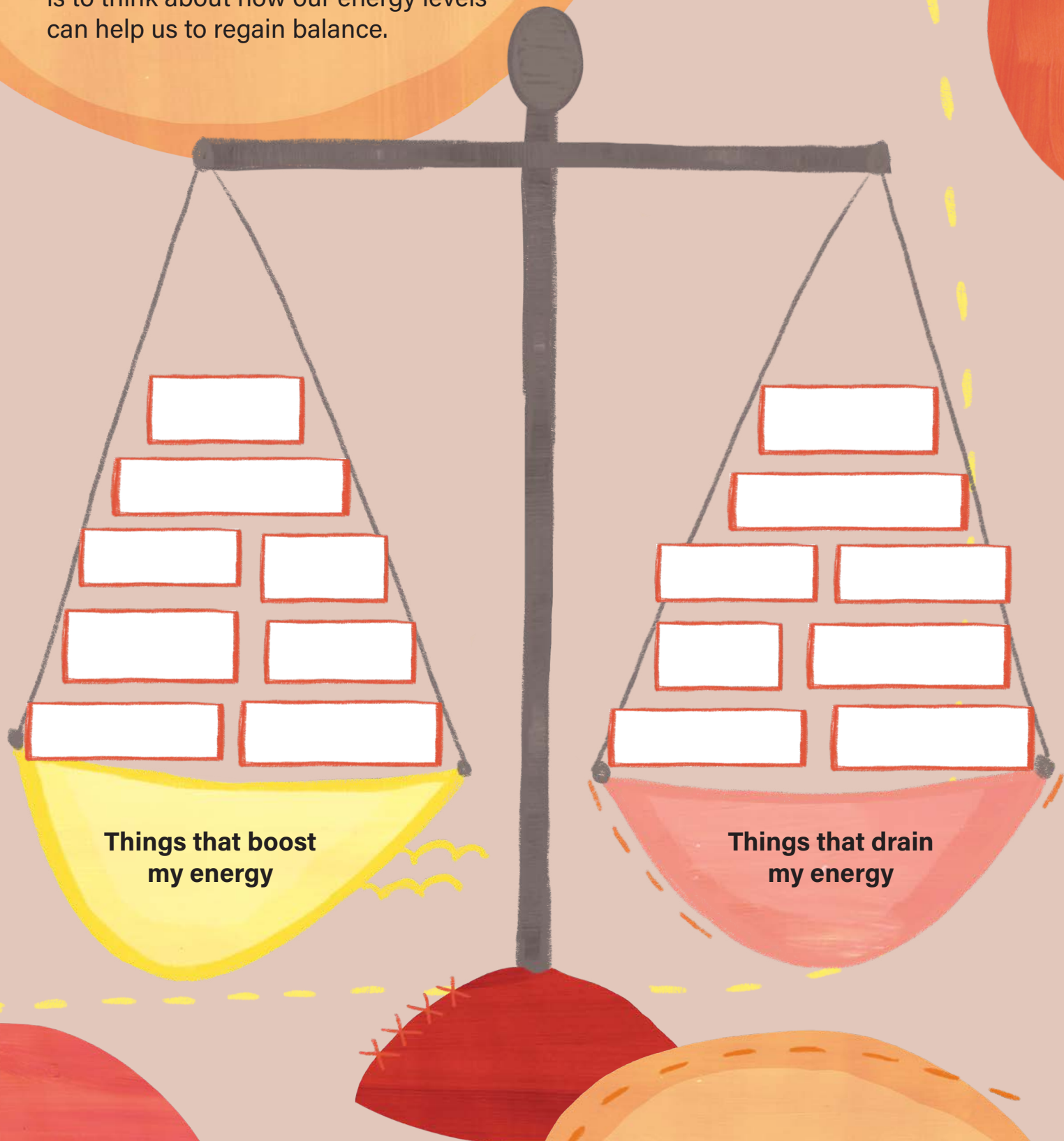
If the problem is still worrying you, you could try waiting a few days and then doing this activity again to see if you can think of anything else. If the problem is urgent, remember that it is okay to ask for help. You could try speaking to someone from your inner circle or reaching out to one of the services in your outer circle for advice.



# Self Care Scales

## *Finding your balance*

Stress happens when the demands placed on us outweigh our ability to cope (or we think they do). One way to help manage stress is to think about how our energy levels can help us to regain balance.



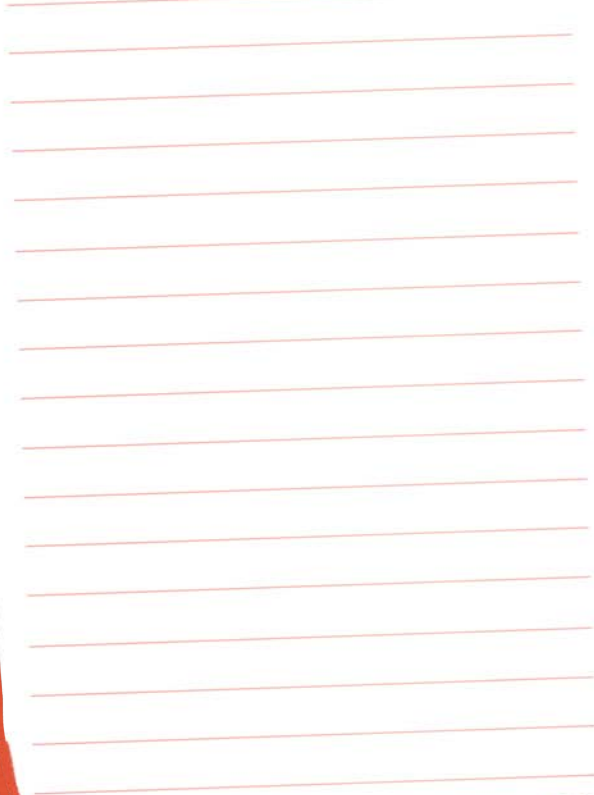
The more stress you experience, the more self care is needed to find balance.

# Could Do List

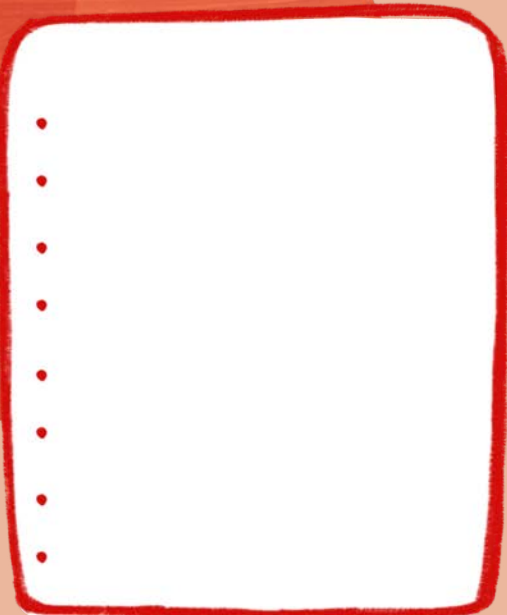
## Friendly List Making

Write down all the exciting things you could do. Much more friendly than a 'to do' list, there are no 'shoulds' here. A could do list takes away pressure and allows you to think creatively about things you could do, if you want to.

**When I feel motivated, I could...**



**When I'm feeling tired, I could...**





## Self Care Jar

What does your self care look like?

Your self care is as unique and special as you are. Use this space to write down all the different activities that help you to feel relaxed. Then carefully cut them out, put them into a jar and dip into it whenever you need.

Remember, self care is very personal and looks different for everyone. Take some time to discover what works for you.

Decorate your jar and use this to remind yourself to take a little time just for you.



Make your own Grounding Totem

Plan in some Self Care time

Self Care Jar

# Self Care Scrapbook

## Start an art journal

Art journaling is a creative alternative to keeping a written diary. You can use art to record your feelings, thoughts, memories, wishes, hopes and dreams. Start your own Self Care Scrapbook and use the following ideas to help you fill it up:

1. Use a notebook, sketchbook or make your own by folding sheets of paper inside a cardboard cover and fastening it together with an elastic band or ribbon.
2. Try different types of paper to add texture and intrigue.
3. Explore different mediums and art styles; collage, painting, drawing.

Don't be afraid to try new things out. Your sketchbook is a private space for creative play, use the pages to find your flow.

Feel free to visit our website [www.thortify.co.uk](http://www.thortify.co.uk) for creative inspiration. If you use social media, you can share your scrapbook adventures with the Thortify community by using the following hashtags **#selfcarescrapbook** **#theartofselfcare**

Calm	Happy Place		Warmth	
	Meditate	Reflect	Healing	
Touch	Soothe		Melody	Waves
Clarity	Safety	Growth	Paint	
	Rest	Control	Comfort	
Ground		Freedom		
		Joy	Sleep	Earth
Nourish	Security	Balance	Breathe	
Contentment		Soft		



# Space for Thinking

Collect your thoughts

Use this space for writing down your thoughts, ideas or for free writing. If you are feeling overwhelmed, you can also use this space to write down the things that are bothering you, leaving you with a clearer mind.





## About Thortify

Thortify synchronises art with social theory and harnesses everyday creativity, to promote empowered self care and build creative confidence.

We create spaces for reflection and art-making.  
We work to tackle stigmas surrounding mental health.

Our unique cross-sector team enables us to bring ambitious projects to life and is made up of artists, social workers, designers, creative producers and educators.

See **[www.thortify.co.uk](http://www.thortify.co.uk)** for more creative activities and inspiration.

Other workbooks in The Art of Self Care series:

*Reflective Journaling*

*Self Care Workbook*



Artworks by Tracey Meek (2022)

Designed by Evie Warren (2022)

