



Levels of Self-Care

Self-care during chronic tough times

Sometimes, tough seasons can go on indefinitely, and the levels of support you need may vary depending on the day. During your infertility journey, you may notice that you have some days that just require a little motivation (anyone else bribe themselves when going to bloodwork?), other days where you need a little extra rest to recover from an emotional setback, and occasional times where you hit a huge wall or meltdown and need additional support. Below, we've created a little template to help you create a simple self-care plan to turn to no matter what kind of day you are having.

The 3 levels of self-care

★ Level 1 - a little motivation

You may be in need of level 1 self-care if you desire a little extra motivation for something you're not looking forward to or even dreading, such as upcoming bloodwork, an upcoming medical appointment, or preparing notes, data and paperwork for a new specialist.

What it looks like: choose a small treat or short activity.

Some self care options to consider:

- Some chocolate after a blood test
- A favorite drink
- Watching a half-hour show during your lunch break
- New stationery supplies that will bring you a little joy as you take notes and store medical files.

★ Level 2 - a little time to recharge

You may be in need of level 2 self-care if you require a longer break to help you regulate your emotions. This might be because your period has started, you've seen a pregnancy or birth announcement, you have just returned from a visit with friends or family with small children, or have such a visit coming up. Level 2 self-care could be beneficial before and/or after a challenging event.

What it looks like: choose a treat, a longer activity, and remove a task from your workload.

Some self-care options to consider:

- Enjoy a treat such as a favorite drink, snack or dessert. Planning ahead will allow you to get something that you'll look forward to but won't go against any dietary restrictions you might be following.
- Set aside time for a longer activity like a movie after dinner, an hour to enjoy a show/book/magazine, a longer walk or run with a good playlist, a session of journaling or crafting.

- Remove a task by ordering takeout for dinner, asking your spouse to cook, booking grocery delivery instead of going to the store, identifying a chore or errand that can wait until another day or next week without causing stress.

★ Level 3 - a major recovery and reset

You may be in need of Level 3 self care if you find yourself unable to function normally throughout the day, you're overreacting to small things, highly irritable or very sad or depressed. This may happen due to a particularly disappointing negative pregnancy test, a very challenging announcement from someone else or multiple triggering events during a short period of time.

What it looks like: we highly recommend taking a full day or half-day off for yourself. This could be over a weekend, or you may find it necessary to take at least a half day sick-day.

Some self-care options to consider:

- Take a guilt-free nap
- Watch a movie or two
- Escape into a good book
- Get out in nature
- Have a favorite takeout meal

Speak to your spouse to give them a head's up regarding any meal prep, errands or chores you may need to delegate or postpone in order to take this necessary time for yourself. If you find your symptoms don't alleviate or they quickly return, you may also want to consider scheduling an appointment with a counselor or doctor to help get you the additional support you need.

Ways to use this resource

- 1) **Planning ahead** - When you know your bloodwork appointment is scheduled for tomorrow, your cycle is due next week or you have a get-together with your friend who has a newborn, use the attached worksheets ahead of time to jot down your self-care plan. When you are able to predict your needs ahead of time and plan your supports accordingly, you may find that your stress levels lower significantly.
- 2) **In the moment** - Sometimes you can't predict when triggers or tough times will come your way. It's not uncommon to occasionally experience a week when you are suddenly caught off-guard by your period, three pregnancy announcements, and an overwhelming number of newborns seated near you at church. If you find yourself emotionally overwhelmed, highly irritable, or feel like shutting down, those may be signs for you to pull out this resource, identify what level of self-care you need, and do something to help yourself.

LEVEL 1 SELF-CARE

A little motivation

Example

Situation I am currently facing or preparing for:

Bloodwork tomorrow

I find this situation challenging because:

It has been painful for me in the past.

Self-care activities I will choose this time (choose 1 treat and/or 1 activity):

✓ A small treat

A piece of chocolate after bloodwork and a fav drink to rehydrate

✓ A short activity

Watch a fun tv show during my breakfast when I get home

Reflection

I found this activity [helped/~~didn't help~~] (delete as appropriate) with the comfort and motivation I needed in this situation because:

It helped because I had something to look forward to and felt like I recognized myself for the hard thing I did.

Next time I will try:

✓ The same activity

Something different:

LEVEL 2 SELF-CARE

A little time to recharge

Example

Situation I am currently facing or preparing for:

My period is due tomorrow

I find this situation challenging because:

I already feel terribly physically and I will also feel sad.

An activity I will eliminate/postpone to make time to recharge (choose 1):

- Take time off work:
- Postpone a work task until tomorrow:
- Reschedule an errand or chore for another day
- Have my spouse assist with: *making dinner and cleaning up*
- Other:

Self-care activities I will choose this time (choose 1 treat and at least 1 activity):

- A small treat
Brownie with some ice cream
- A longer activity
Watch a movie I like after dinner
- Additional treat or activity if needed:

Reflection

I found this activity [helped/~~didn't help~~] (delete as appropriate) with the comfort and motivation I needed in this situation because:

I had a physical break and something comforting to look forward to.

Next time I will try:

- The same activity
- Something different

LEVEL 3 SELF-CARE

Recovery and reset

Example

Situation I am currently facing or preparing for:

There have been 3 birth/pregnancy announcements in the past week and my period is due. I feel like I've shut down and can't get myself to complete basic tasks at home.

I find this situation challenging because:

It feels like everyone is getting pregnant except me and I feel really angry and depressed.

Full day or half day I am choosing for my recovery and reset day:

Half day, tomorrow

Activities I will eliminate/postpone to make time to recover and reset (choose as many as needed):

- Take time off work:
- Postpone a work task until tomorrow: *challenging work projects postponed until next day*
- Reschedule an errand or chore for another day: *laundry postponed until next week*
- Have my spouse assist with: *picking up pizza for dinner, and maybe dessert too :)*
- Other:

Self-care activities I will choose this time (choose as many as you like):

- Treats: *popcorn after lunch while I watch movie*
- Activities: *watch a movie and work on a puzzle. Take some time to read a book afterwards.*

Reflection

I found this activity [~~helped~~/didn't help] (delete as appropriate) with the comfort and motivation I needed in this situation because:

It helped because it took off all external stressors so I could do things that were good for me today and renew my emotional reserves.

Next time I will try:

- The same activity
- Something different

LEVEL 1 SELF-CARE

A little motivation

Your turn

Situation I am currently facing or preparing for:

I find this situation challenging because:

Self-care activities I will choose this time (choose 1 treat and/or 1 activity):

- A small treat

- A short activity

Reflection

I found this activity [helped/didn't help] (delete as appropriate) with the comfort and motivation I needed in this situation because:

Next time I will try:

- The same activity
- Something different

LEVEL 2 SELF-CARE

A little time to recharge

Your turn

Situation I am currently facing/preparing for:

I find this situation challenging because:

An activity I will eliminate/postpone to make time to recharge (choose 1):

- Take time off work:
- Postpone a work task until tomorrow:
- Reschedule an errand or chore for another day:
- Have my spouse assist with:
- Other:

Self-care activities I will choose this time (choose 1 treat and at least 1 activity):

- A small treat

- A longer activity

- Additional treat or activity if needed:

Reflection

I found this activity [helped/didn't help] (delete as appropriate) with the comfort and motivation I needed in this situation because:

Next time I will try:

- The same activity
- Something different

LEVEL 3 SELF-CARE

Recovery and reset

Your turn

Situation I am currently facing or preparing for:

I find this situation challenging because:

Full day or half day I am choosing for my recovery and reset day:

Activities I will eliminate/postpone to make time to recover and reset (choose as many as needed):

- Take time off work:
- Postpone a work task until tomorrow:
- Reschedule an errand or chore for another day:
- Have my spouse assist with:
- Other:

Self-care activities I will choose this time (choose as many as you like):

- Treats:

- Activities:

Reflection

I found this activity [helped/didn't help] (delete as appropriate) with the comfort and motivation I needed in this situation because:

Next time I will try:

- The same activity
- Something different