

# *The Self-Tending Kit*

## A GENTLE GUIDE TO SUPPORTING YOURSELF WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED



**How to build a self-compassion container & coping plan  
tailored to your nervous system.**

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# Introduction

## WHAT IS A SELF-TENDING KIT?

Sometimes, everything feels “too much”—too loud, too fast, too meh... just TOO MUCH!



Whether you're navigating trauma, neurodivergence, burnout, grief, or just the weight of the world... (which let's be so for real, who isn't?)—you **deserve support that meets you exactly where you are.**

A self-tending kit is like an **emotional first-aid box**. It's a collection of objects and coping tools that help you remember what soothes you when everything feels hard.



It's not about fixing yourself—it's about caring for yourself with gentleness and presence.



## THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU TO



- Build a personalized kit of sensory and emotional tools.
- Identify coping strategies that actually work for you.
- Sort tools based on energy level—because our capabilities aren't the same every day.
- Create a ritual you can return to whenever you need care.

Use what works. Leave what doesn't. There's no perfect version of this. **Most importantly, be gentle with yourself!**



# Thinking about your Kit

## LET'S TAKE A MINDFUL PAUSE...



You're doing something really kind for yourself.

Be proud of yourself for that.



It's also understandable if you're feeling overwhelmed or like this is too hard.

That's ok.

Think of this as a living project. It doesn't need to be done in one day. Fuck, it doesn't need to be done **EVER**. You can revisit this over and over again and adapt it as you need to.

This is entirely for you and your needs. If it isn't working. That's ok.

Think about what isn't working and why it isn't working. Use that information to adjust and try something different. Repeat.



Now, as discomforting as this next statement is, it's true...

This is a lifelong process. It will **never be perfect**, but...

This is your opportunity to show yourself with the kindness and care you've always wanted and deserved. That is **absolutely more than enough!**



# Guiding Principles for your Kit

HERE ARE SOME PROMPTS YOU CAN  
USE TO GUIDE YOUR PROCESS

**What helps me feel safer?**

**What sensory input brings me back to my body  
when I feel far away?**

**What do I crave when I'm shutting down — or spiraling?**

# The Ever Elusive... "What do I Need" Question...

## A GENTLE WARNING BEFORE WE CONTINUE...

Ok. I'm likely about to overwhelm you with too much information, but hear me out...



This information is here to help you tend to yourself more effectively.

Now, please don't get me wrong... there is no "right" or "perfect" way to self-tend, but sometimes we try activities that don't actually meet the need underneath.



This does not mean it's a failure. It's part of the learning process, and more than likely, you're here reading this because no one taught you how to tend to your own needs.

That's not your fault, and I hope you're proud of yourself for making it this far.



I'm discussing these concepts - like needs, feelings, and types of rest - so that you can have the information and use it as a tool to listen to yourself more closely and get more clarity about what you really need.



You don't need to memorize these concepts or use everything.

Again, take what resonates with you. Leave what doesn't.

You can come back and visit this information any time you need. It's a lifelong, living practice - not a checklist.



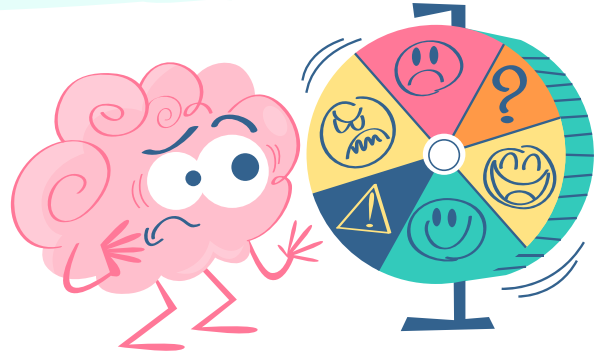
# Tools for Tending to your Emotions, Energy, & Needs...

## FEELINGS WHEEL

### Naming the Feeling

Sometimes, we just feel “bleh” and we don’t know why.

So, why bother naming the feeling? Can’t you just do something nice for yourself and feel better? Maybe. But, sometimes that “something” doesn’t really help- because it’s not meeting the need under the feeling.



Naming your feelings can help you get clearer on what’s really going on. It invites curiosity, compassion, and a better sense of what kind of support might actually help.

A feelings wheel can offer a starting point when you’re not sure what words to use. I’ve included a QR code linking you to a feelings wheel to use.



### Tap into curiosity...

- What’s the closest word for how I feel right now?
- If I zoomed in on this feeling, would it shift or become more specific?
- What might this feeling be trying to tell me?



# Tools for Tending to your Emotions, Energy, & Needs...

## NEEDS LIST

### Understanding What You're Really Needing

Sometimes, we try things to feel better- and they almost help, but not quite. Often, it's because they're not actually addressing what we need.



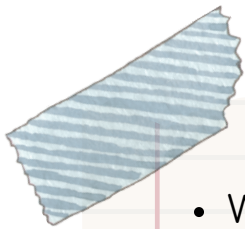
When we can name our unmet needs, we're better able to tend to ourselves with intention. That's where a needs list can be useful. It helps translate your feelings into actionable support, especially when you're unsure of what's missing.

The Needs List from Nonviolent Communication includes a wide range of **Universal Human Needs**- things like connection, safety, autonomy and meaning. I've included a QR code linking to the list.



### Tap into understanding...

- What needs of mine might be going unmet right now?
- Have I been trying to meet this need in a way that doesn't really work for me?
- How might I support myself with more care or intention in this area?



# Tools for Tending to your Emotions, Energy, & Needs...

## 7 TYPES OF REST

### Rest Isn't Only Sleep

Feeling exhausted, but unsure why rest doesn't help? You might not need more rest- you might need a different kind.

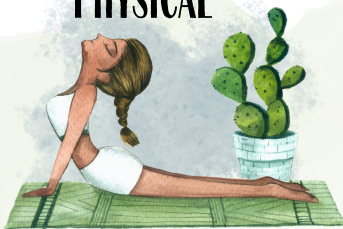


The concept of the 7 Types of rest (by Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith) expands rest into categories beyond physical. Emotional, mental, creative, sensory, social, and spiritual rest all play a role in how replenished we feel.

Exploring this model might help you choose tools or activities that replenish the specific part of you that's depleted. I've linked a short resource to walk you through each type of rest.



#### PHYSICAL



#### CREATIVE



#### SENSORY



#### MENTAL



#### SPIRITUAL



#### EMOTIONAL



#### SOCIAL



# Tools for Tending to your Emotions, Energy, & Needs...

## 7 TYPES OF REST

### Passive vs. Active Rest

Not all rest means doing nothing.  
Sometimes rest is passive- like sleep,  
napping, lying down.



Other times, it's active- like going for a quiet walk, painting, or journaling.



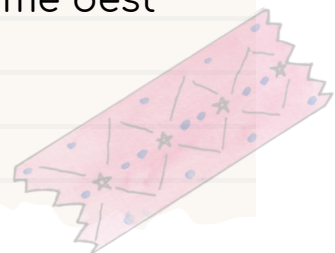
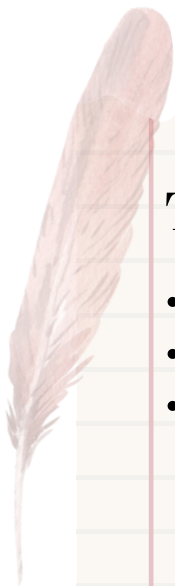
Active rest restores you through gentle,  
intentional activity.

Passive rest restores you through stillness  
and disengagement.

Both are valid. Both are needed. Sometimes your body needs to curl up and disappear. Sometimes it needs gentle movement or soft tenderness. Rest doesn't have to look a certain way to count.

### Tap into intuition...

- What kind of tired am I?
- Is the way I've been resting actually helping?
- Which type of rest might support me best right now?




## Building your Self-Tending Kit

## Step 1: Choose Your Container

Your kit can be anything: a box, a bag, a basket, or just a shelf.  
What matters most is that it feels like yours.

Pick something that feels inviting. Think about where you'll use it most (bedroom, office, car, etc.).

Examples:

- Woven basket
  - Decorative box or chest
  - Transparent bin (if you want to see what's inside)
  - Backpack or tote (if you want it to be mobile)
  - Bookshelf cube with bins
- 
- A decorative illustration of a light blue wooden shelf. On the shelf are three potted plants: a small brown pot with a green plant, a larger white pot with a green plant, and a small brown pot with a green plant. A green vine with heart-shaped leaves hangs down from the right side of the shelf. The background is a light beige color with faint, stylized illustrations of plants and a wooden structure.



Ask yourself:

- Do I want to see everything or keep it out of sight?
- Does it need to be portable or stationary?

Optional sub-kit idea: a travel-sized version for your bag or car.



# Building your Self-Tending Kit

## Step 2: Gather Your Items

Now, let's gather what you need.

Here are some basic ideas for what you might include, organized by senses (I'll list more on the next pages):



### SCENT

Essential oil roller; Herbal tea bag (even just to smell); Incense cone; Candle; A favorite perfume sample.



### SOUND

Noise-canceling headphones; QR code linking to a calming playlist; A tiny bell or sound bowl; A voice memo from yourself or a loved one.



### TASTE

Peppermints; Ginger chews; Gum; Dark chocolate square; Tangy candy; calming tea packet.



### TOUCH

Soft textures (Plushie, Blanket, Fuzzy Socks); Smooth Stone; Crystal; Fidget; Stress Ball; Hand Lotion.



### SIGHT

Affirmation cards; Art that feels calming; Photo(s) of things or people that feel safe; Printed quote or poem; Small coloring book or sticker sheet.



# Tools for Tending to your Emotions, Energy, & Needs...

## Step 2: Gather Your Items

Here are some additional categories that you can consider: energy levels; activities for body, mind, heart, and spirit; specific feelings, needs, and types of rest (see above pages if you don't know what that means) And, if all that feels too overwhelming, just go through the list, circle a few you want to try, and go with that!

As you're organizing your kit, remember that our energy isn't the same every day. You may want to organize your kit with "sub kits" based on energy levels (ie- rate activities as a 1-5 (5 being the most energy) and have a level 1 kit, level 2 kit, etc...)

Here are more ideas based on different categories:



### MENTAL / EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- Printouts or laminated coping tools (breathing techniques, grounding exercises, mantras, affirmations)
- QR codes linking to soothing music or playlists
- Meditation or breathing videos
- Favorite therapy videos or TikToks
- A private message from your "well" self to your "not well" self
- Small folder or envelope to hold:
  - Therapy homework
  - Journal prompts
  - Index cards with affirming truths or reminders
  - A list of people you can text



# Tools for Tending to your Emotions, Energy, & Needs...

## Step 2: Gather Your Items

### SENSORY + EMOTIONAL COMFORT

- Go outside and put your feet in the grass
- Take a mindfulness walk and take pictures of the beauty you find
- Make a mandala using what you find in nature
- Watch the sun rise/set, go stargazing, look at the moon.
- Turn off the lights, light candles, & use noise canceling headphones with a favorite playlist or meditation.

### CREATIVE EXPRESSION & REFLECTION



- Small notebook and pen
- Coloring pages or blank paper
- Watercolor tin, colored pencils, or markers
- Small knitting or crocheting project with all supplies
- A printout that says "Permission to pause" or "You're safe enough to feel this"

### SPIRITUAL OR SYMBOLIC ITEMS

- Small candle or LED tea light
- A card with a quote or poem that grounds you
- Symbolic token: an acorn, feather, or something tied to your identity or strength
- Tarot or oracle card you resonate with
- A small object to represent each element (earth, air, fire, water)



# Building Your Self-Tending Kit



## Step 3: Assign a Location

Ask yourself:

- Where do I usually feel most overwhelmed?
- Where would I reach for support?

Ideas:

- Next to your bed
- A frequently visited closet, living room, or creative space
- In your car or travel bag
- On a visible shelf as a visual invitation
- Inside a cabinet but labeled clearly

You might even have multiple kits: one for home, one for travel, one that lives near your art desk, etc.

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## Step 4 (Optional): Ritualize it

Create a cue card on the lid or top of the kit with a loving question like:

- What do I need right now?
- What's one gentle way I can tend to myself today?
- What's the next kindest thing I can do for myself right now?

Add a short "how to use me" card with steps like:

1. Pause
2. Breathe
3. Choose one item
4. Stay with it for 90 seconds
5. Repeat if needed



*hey there!*

## **I'm Jamie Kriel**

**LICENSED PROFESSIONAL  
COUNSELOR**

I'm a therapist and creative who loves helping people find healing and rest in ways that feel natural, realistic, and kind to themselves. When not working, you can find me painting, listening to music, or spending time with my wife and four cats.

If you found this guide helpful, please share it with someone who could use a little more rest and healing in their life. Rest isn't selfish - it's essential. The more we give ourselves permission to recharge, the more we have to give to the people and projects that matter most.