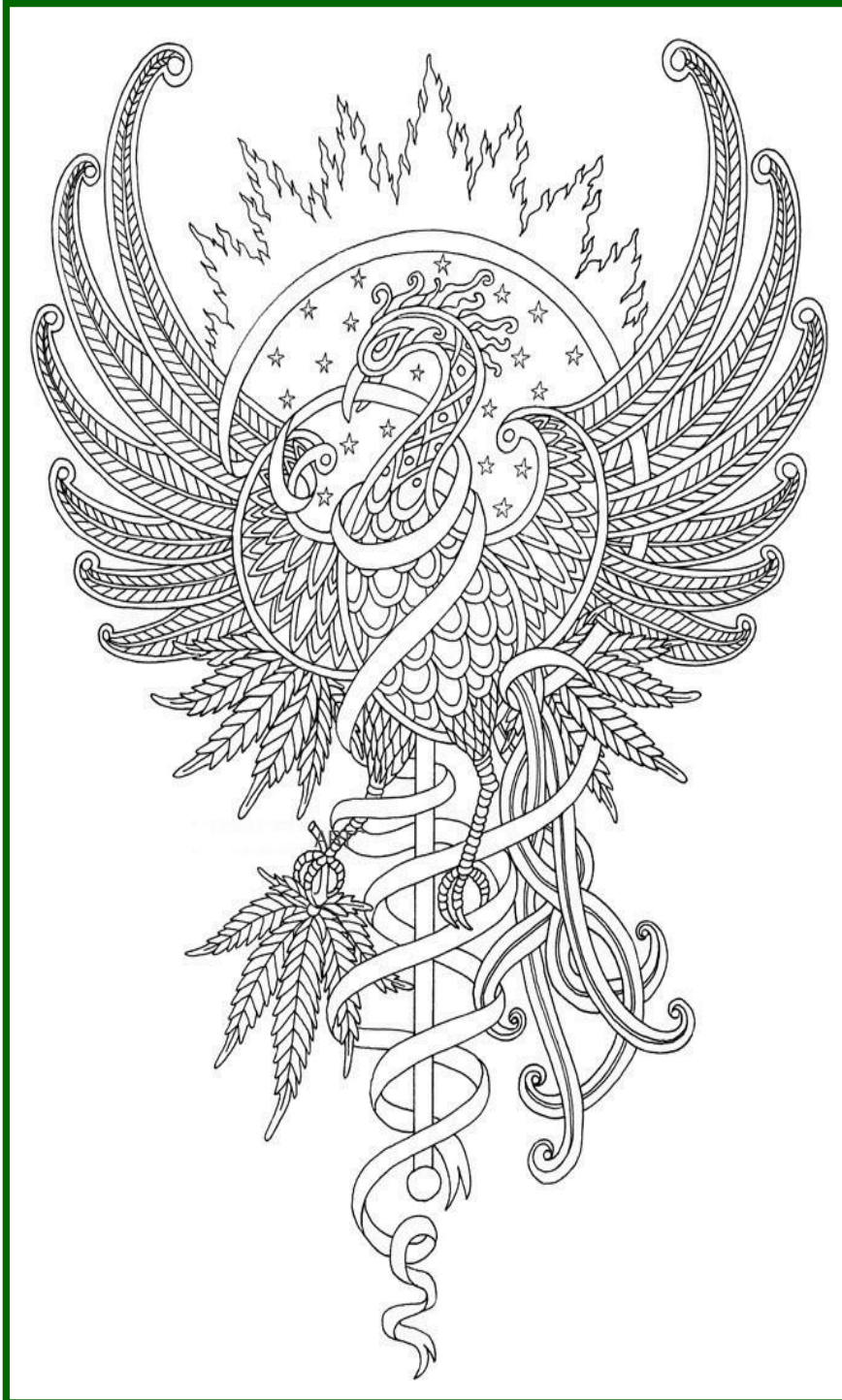


Self-Care Booklet

A Journey to Finding Your Inner Strength

NOVA
Northern Virginia
Community College

The Office of Wellness
and Mental Health



Dear Reader,

The purpose of this booklet is to help you better understand the importance of self-care and to encourage you to reflect on your behaviors and attitudes which may have great impact on your health and overall well-being. We encourage you to contact the Office of Wellness and Mental Health (OWMH) if you have any questions about the contents of this booklet.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with their emotional, physical and mental well-being, remember OWMH wants to support you in any way that we can. For free services, contact us anytime!

Your OWMH team

Email wellness@nvcc.edu for assistance.

All Services are free!

*Quotes in this booklet are taken from
Don't Ever Give Up Your Dreams,
a collection of poems edited by Susan Polis Schutz

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How NOVA's OWMH Can Help

Northern Virginia Community College's Office of Wellness and Mental Health is committed to provide information and referrals to anyone impacted by sexual assault, dating/partner violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.

All information is available to students, faculty, staff, and family members of any gender regardless of age, ability, race/ethnicity or sexual orientation at **NO COST**.

Free Services Available

- Assistance in reporting the incident
- Accompaniment to court, hospital, school & police meetings
- Referrals to free or low-cost community resources, including psychological, medical & legal services

"You are a... worthy and loveable person.
Appreciate that about yourself.
No one has ever been, or ever will be,
quite like you.
You are an individual, an original,
and all those things
that make you uniquely you
are deserving of love and praise."
- Peter A. McWilliams



What is Self-Care?

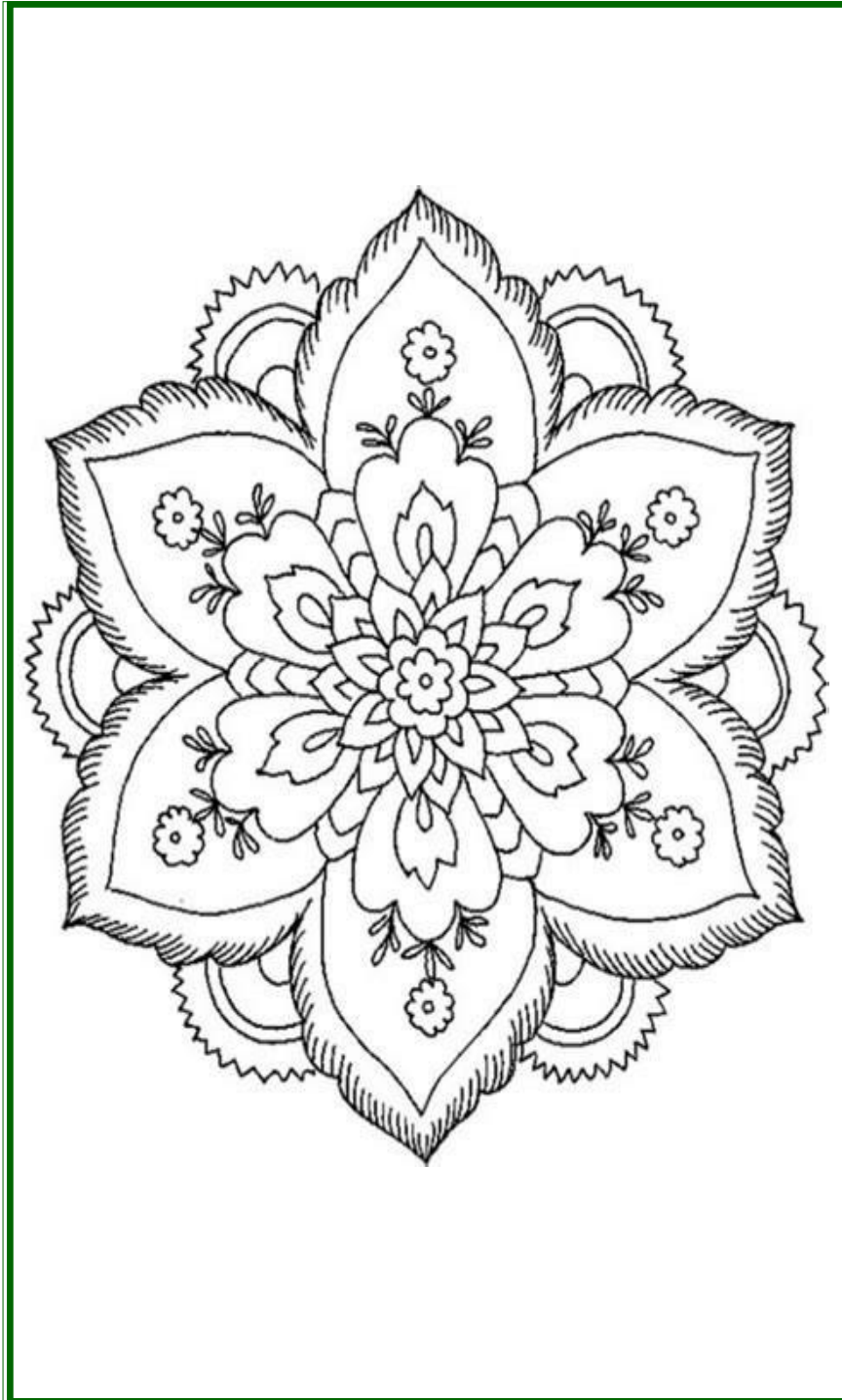
Self-care involves supporting yourself in ways big and small, from honoring your emotions, to being gentle in the demands you place on yourself, to allowing others to assist you in times of need.

Imagine that you were helping a loved one to recover from an injury, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual. You would make sure they were getting enough rest and had nourishing food to eat. You would encourage them to do the things that make them feel better, be it exercise, socializing, or activities they enjoy. You would take the time to listen to what they were experiencing and to what they needed. You would discourage them from putting too much pressure or stress on themselves to feel better right away. Most of us instinctively know how to care for others, but forget to apply those same skills towards ourselves. Give yourself the gift of attention, time and compassion.

Types of Self-Care

- Physical self-care
- Emotional and Psychological self-care
- Social self-care
- Spiritual self-care

"It may take time and hard work
You may become frustrated and at times you'll feel like giving up
Sometimes you may even wonder if it's really worth it
I know you'll make it, if you try"
- Amanda Pierce



Why do I need Self-Care?

Self-care is just as important as your work or your education. Being overloaded with work can add to your stress and slow you down. Self-care helps to keep you positive and energetic. It gives you time to reflect on yourself and to consider what may enhance your overall wellness.

Benefits of Self-Care

- Helps you understand your needs and limits
- Makes you more productive
- Helps relieve stress
- Boosts immune system
- Gives time to reflect on life
- Helps to create healthy boundaries and relationships

"But, no matter how scared you are
of making a mistake
or how discouraged you may become,
Never give up...
because if you don't try and
if you don't go after what you
want in life,
it won't come to you,
and you'll be forced to accept
things that you know could be better"
- Amanda Pierce



Physical Self-Care

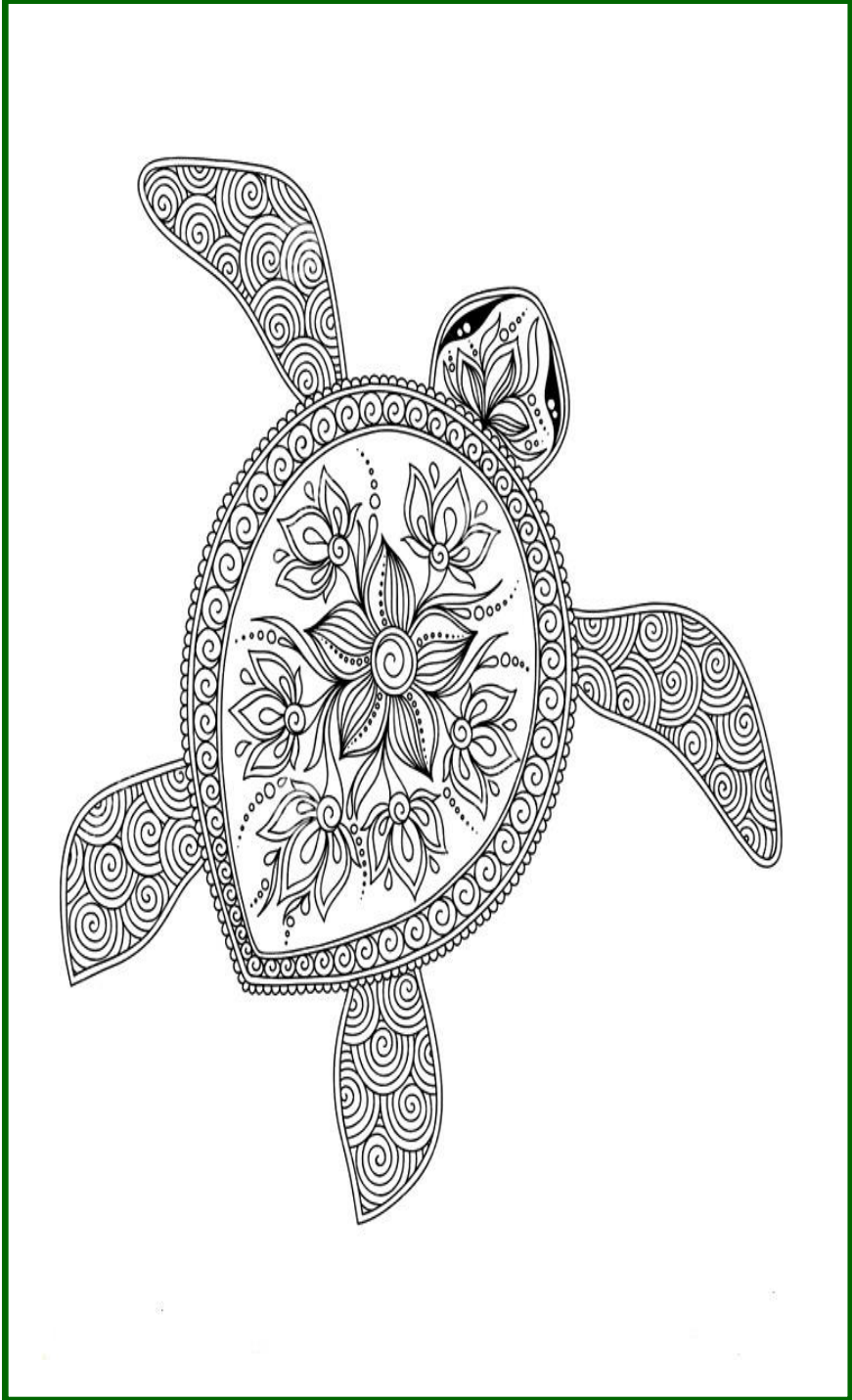
Because emotional and physical health are interconnected, it is important to pay attention to both. Emotional distress can negatively impact physical health and caring for your physical health can increase your coping skills and resiliency.

We have all heard these recommendations — *Get enough sleep. Drink plenty of water. Exercise. Eat well.* These are more important than ever in times of great stress. **Lack of sleep** can hinder you from thinking clearly and can make it harder for you to manage your thoughts and emotions. **Exercise** promotes chemicals in the brain that improve your mood, help you to relax and reduces anxiety and depressed mood. And incorporating fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains into your diet can actually help improve your mood.

Other ways to care for the body

- Practice good hygiene to reduce the risk of illness and improve the way you see yourself
- Have regular medical check-ups
- Avoid drugs, alcohol and cigarette smoking
- Dress in clothes that make you feel good about yourself

"You have the powers you never dreamed of.
You can do things you never thought you could do.
There are no limitations in what you can do...
Don't think you cannot. Think you can."
- Darwin P. Kingsley



Emotional & Psychological Self-Care

The process of communicating, whether verbally or in writing, promotes the healing process and allows us to step back and make sense of our experience. Whether a friend or family member, a support group, or a crisis line, keep a list of contacts you can reach out to when you feel overwhelmed.

At times, it is difficult to know what you are feeling and you may be overcome with strong emotions. Maybe this has led you to keep things inside, hidden from others. If you're not quite ready to share with anyone, try writing it in a journal as it can be easier to express strong emotions and thoughts that you are not yet ready to share out loud. You may also consider working with a therapist who can help you gain insight into your experience, and can provide a safe space to work through your emotions.

Ways to care for your emotional & mental health

- Make an effort to replace negative thoughts with positive ones
- Contact a 24-hour crisis hotline/text line
- Practice deep calming breaths when you find yourself becoming overwhelmed
- Keep a go-to list of things you enjoy, such as upbeat music, reading, comedy videos, dancing etc...

"Don't waste precious time worrying about what you should have done...
But rather, focus your attention on what you are doing now, and what you
want to do in the future. Don't concentrate on only mistakes that
might have been made, but learn from them."

- Debbie Avery



Social Self-Care

Spending time with the people you enjoy can make a positive difference in your well-being.

Ways to care for your social health

- Become active in a club or group
- Call or write to friends and family
- Volunteer in your community to create new support networks
- Accept invitations from friends to hang out
- Turn off the TV/computer and interact with people
- Learn a new hobby and find others who share your interests

Spiritual Self-Care

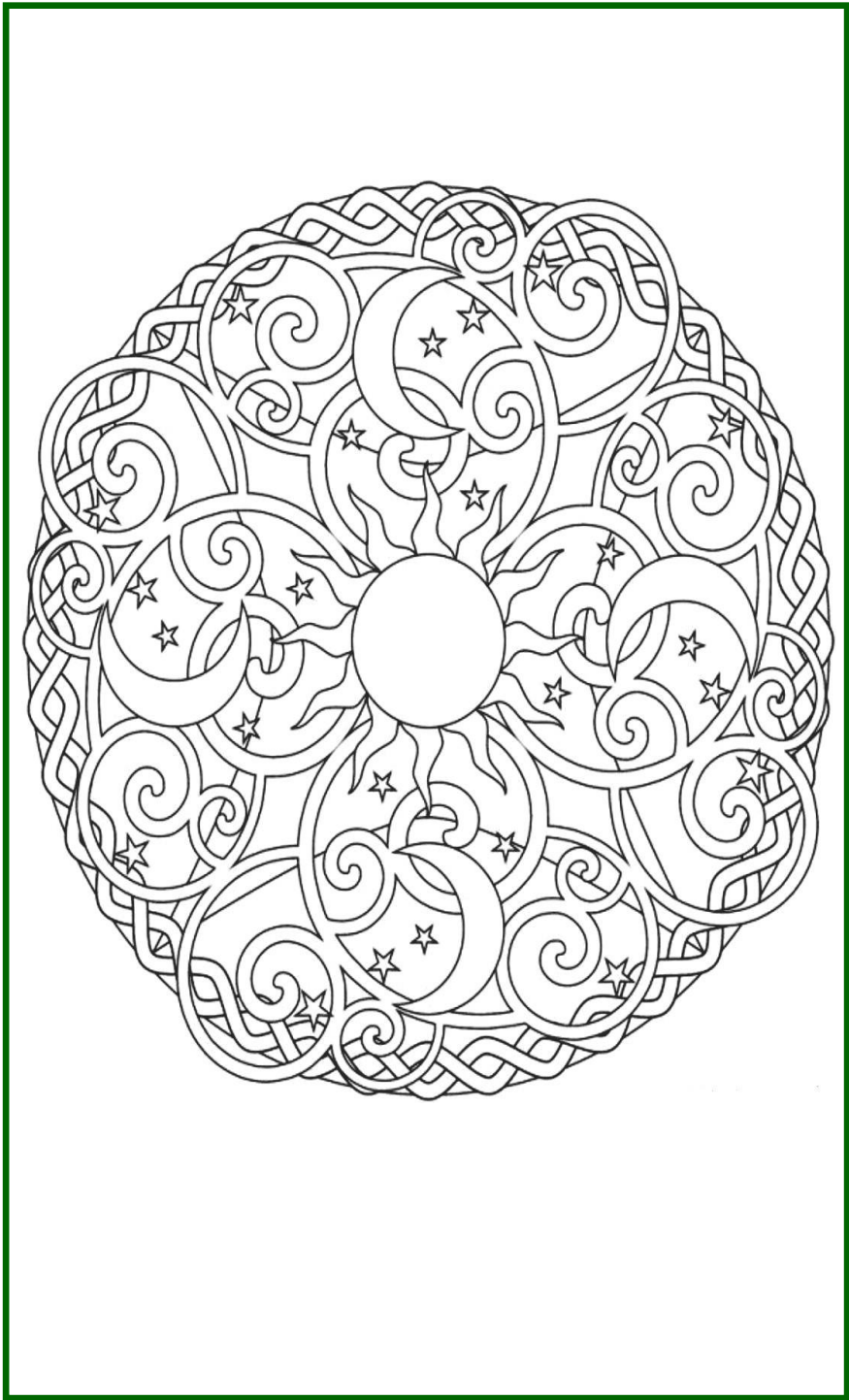
You do not have to be religious in order to practice spirituality. Spiritual self-care is about having faith and finding meaning and purpose in your life.

Ways to care for your spiritual health

- Listen to free guided meditation podcasts from <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>
- Keep a gratitude journal, including things big and small
- Be creative through photography, poetry, music or illustrations
- Go out for long walks in a peaceful setting
- Join yoga classes which engages both the mind and body

"The strength you need deep within will rise to the surface...
and bring your transformation
call upon your forces, display your courage, accept the change
and believe in your right to have it"

- Diane Westlake



Managing Stress

Stress can have a direct impact on your ability to function properly and your overall health. It can stop you from accomplishing many goals in life. Learning how to cope with stress may improve your lifestyle and increase your chances for success. Try setting small weekly goals to better manage your time. As you start to cross off the tasks on your to-do list, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment which will help reduce stress.

Other ways to manage stress

- Take a break from your phone, tablet and computer
- Go for a brisk walk in fresh air to reduce stress hormones
- Learn to say "no" firmly and politely so you're not overwhelmed
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Watch relaxing videos and listen to calming music
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, they can increase stress
- Eat healthy and on time
- Drink plenty of water
- Stop doing mentally demanding work a few hours before bed
- Try repeating a positive word or mantra for peace and calm
- On your to-do list, include time to relax!

"We have to cry sometimes
before we can smile.
We have to hurt
before we can be strong.
But if you keep on working
and believing,
you'll have victory in the end"
- Ann Davies

Assessing Lifestyle Behaviors

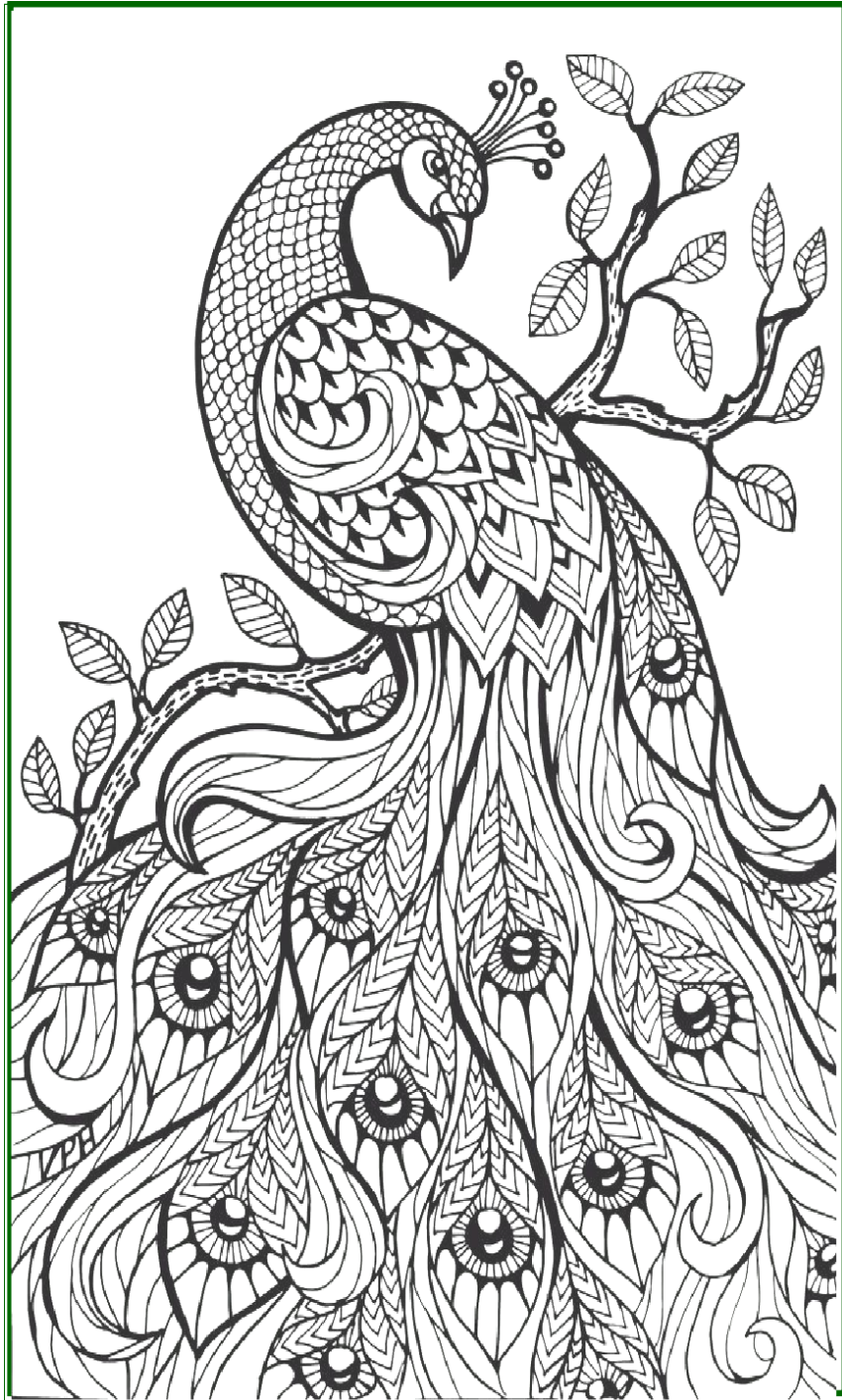
Read each statement below and place a check mark under the column that best describes how often you engage in the following behaviors. Consider contacting OWMH to discuss your responses.	N e v e r	S o m e t a m e s	O f t e n	A l w a y s
I take time out of my busy schedule for myself and the people I love.				
I can express my emotions properly & seek help when I have difficulty coping with stress.				
I take responsibility for my attitudes and behaviors and do not blame others.				
I exercise every day for at least 30 minutes to maintain a healthy life.				
I balance my calorie intake and my BMI is within the range for my age.				
I get the required amount of sleep every night and do not tire myself out.				
I write in my journal every day for at least 15 minutes.				
I remind myself every day that I am important and it is okay to make mistakes in life.				
I walk outside to appreciate nature.				

Social Media, the Internet & Self-Care

Social media and the internet can be useful tools to connect with others and readily access information. Despite their convenience, be aware of the potential for abuse that can accompany these networks. This can cause you to feel stressed out and have a negative view on society. Here are some ways to reduce their harmful impact on you.

- Set daily limits for how long and what time of day you're online
- On Facebook, hide certain friends from your feed so you don't have to see their negative posts
- Turn off notifications for social media apps
- Spend time going out with friends or family
- Replace social media & internet time with exercising
- Seek out humorous, relaxing or positive videos and news online
- Avoid engaging in online arguments. They are never worth your time, energy or emotions.

“Find happiness in nature
in the beauty of a mountain
in the serenity of the sea
Find happiness in friendship
in the fun of doing things together
in the sharing and understanding
Find happiness in your family
in the stability of knowing that someone cares
in the strength of love and honesty
Find happiness in yourself
in your mind and body
in your values and achievements
Find happiness in everything you do”
- Susan Polis Schutz



Supportive Services

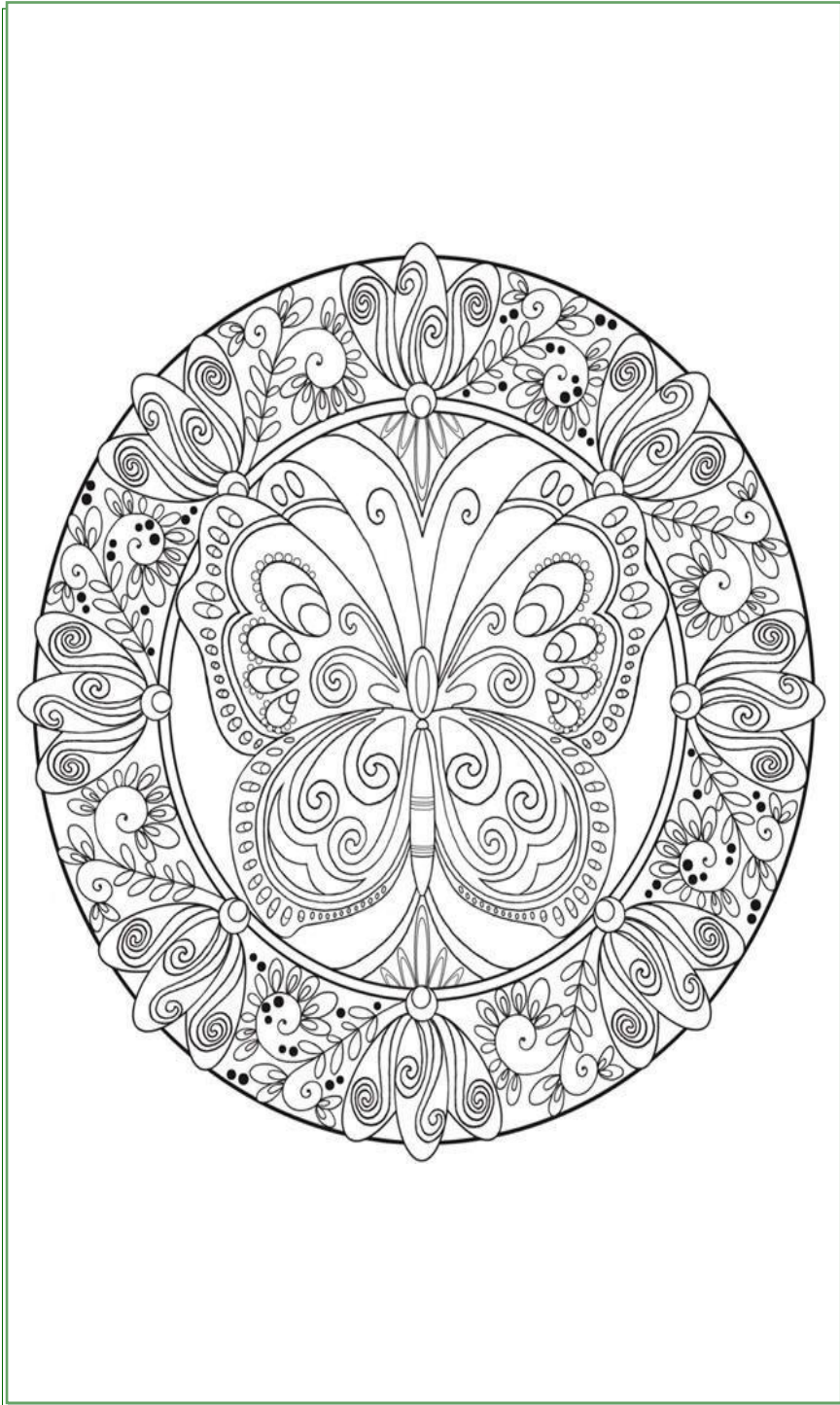
Supportive services can be a great option for you as you move forward in your healing process. Supportive services are set up to help anyone in need and you do not need to be in crisis to make good use of them. If you are having difficulty coping with stress, don't hesitate, seek help now.

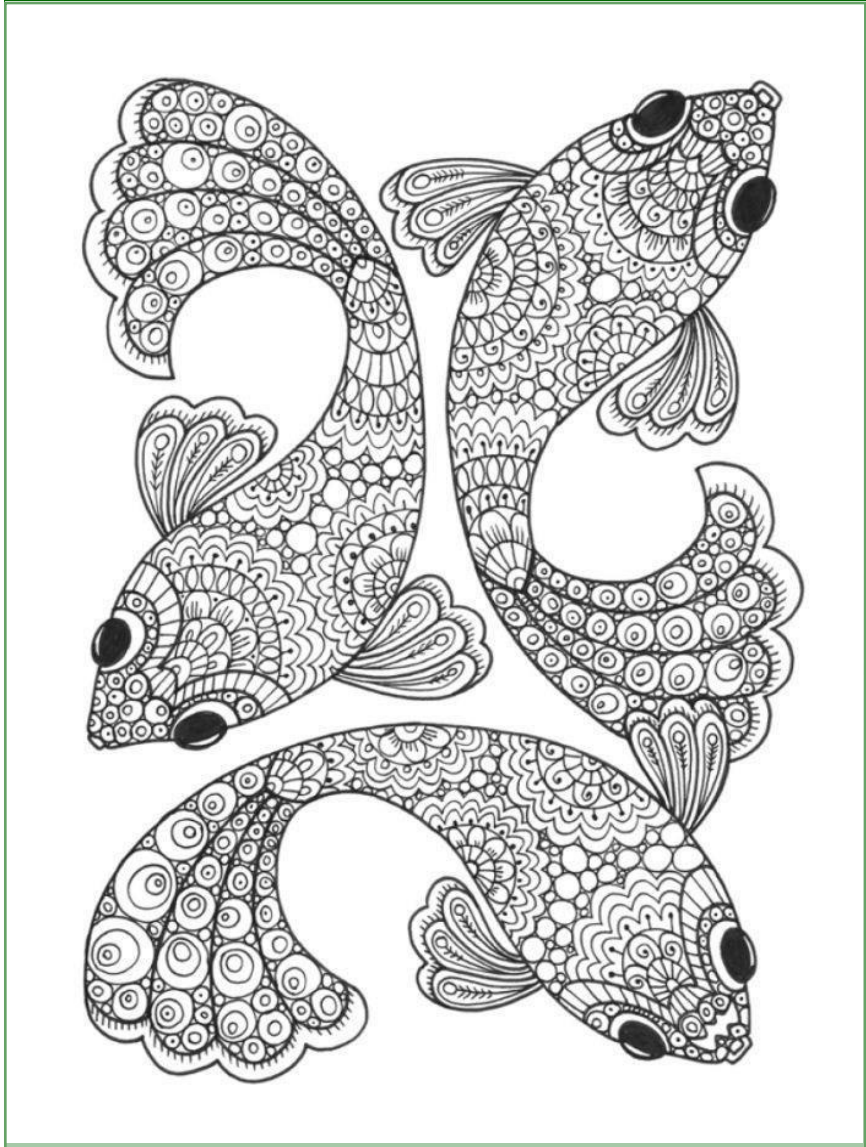
OWMH's mission is to address the issues of sexual assault, stalking, and dating/partner violence by providing information and referrals to anyone in the NOVA community and that includes you.

We are available to help and support you in the safest way possible, including referrals to other community agencies that maybe helpful in your journey to recovery.

Take your time and remember to treat your body with love. Every small achievement you make is important and worthy of praise. And if you are having difficulty coping with stress, reach out for help.

"We cannot listen to what others want us to do
We must listen to ourselves...
Only we know and only we can do what is right for us...
You will need to overcome many obstacles
You will need to go against the better judgment of many people
and you will need to bypass their prejudices
But you can have whatever you want if you try hard enough
So start right now and you will live a life
designed by you and for you and you will love your life"
- Susan Polis Schutz





Reference

Schutz, Susan (1983). *Don't Ever Give Up Your Dreams: A Collection of Poems*.
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