

## PRACTICE SELF CARE: WRITING ABOUT DIFFICULT EVENTS

1. **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.** Make a list of ways to comfort yourself when your writing triggers difficult feelings and you need to take a break. On the list should be simple activities that bring you pleasure. (See Side B) A good method of approaching this list is to think about the 5 senses and ways to indulge each of them. Try to be “mindful” or present when performing each of the activities rather than thinking about the past or future. If your attention wanders and you begin ruminating (which is normal), gently bring your attention back to your senses.
  - a. Sight – watch a funny video; buy yourself flower(s); look at photographs you like
  - b. Sound – listen to music; take a walk and pay attention to the sounds you hear
  - c. Smell – put clean sheets on your bed; burn incense; light a scented candle
  - d. Touch – use a stress toy; pet an animal; hug someone; take a warm bath
  - e. Taste – eat a favourite food or meal
2. **DEVELOP A ROUTINE.** Many people find consistency to be comforting and helpful. Develop a writing routine and stick to it. Write in the same place at the same time. Light a candle, say a mantra. Do what works.
3. **SET UP A SUPPORT SYSTEM.** Writing is hard at the best of times. Make a list of people you can turn to for support when you need it. These are people who will listen to you and encourage you to keep writing. They won’t judge you for writing or try to convince you to stop.
4. **SOLICIT GENTLE FEEDBACK.** If you wish to receive critical feedback on your work, wait until you are ready. Carefully choose a trusted reader. Ask specific questions. Listen. Takes notes. Practise self-care if you receive feedback that’s difficult to hear. Take some time away from the work before returning to it.
5. **KEEP A RECORD.** Keep a journal to briefly record the ways that you take care of yourself while writing. Just record the essential information in point form: what you wrote about, how many pages, and what you did to feel better afterwards. This way you will have a record that you can refer to later of what helped you to process difficult emotions. (This practice was recommended by Louise De Salvo in *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives*.)



