



# Moving On

*Now, it's my life*



**Domestic Violence Refuge  
& Outreach Support Service**

24hr Free and Confidential help is available.  
Someone is available to answer your call  
no matter what time of day or night it is.

Phone: 091 565 985

Email: [waterside@copegalway.ie](mailto:waterside@copegalway.ie)  
[watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie](mailto:watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie)

If you are in danger now, call the Gardai at 999 or 112.

# Foreword

## Well-being advice from women moving on from an abusive relationship

This booklet came out of discussions that a group of women had at their Service User Refuge Forum (SURF) monthly meeting. They talked about the need for self-care, rebuilding self-confidence, and learning to manage what comes with the changes in your life after leaving an abusive relationship whether it is parenting, financial worries, loneliness, self-doubt, low self-esteem, hurt and pain. SURF was set-up by COPE Galway to help women who have experienced domestic abuse, and who have stayed at the Waterside Refuge, or attended the outreach support service.

All the women who are part of SURF have left an abusive relationship and are rebuilding their lives. They felt that they wanted to help other women to start to heal themselves inside and out. They wanted to share their experiences and the tips they learnt along the way.

Hopefully, by reading this booklet, you will know that you are not alone—that other women have gone through similar experiences and are now moving on with their lives.

All the women at SURF have made new friends within the group and have helped each other to heal—not forgetting to always have a laugh at their meetings also.

They hope you will benefit from this guide in some way or another. They hope it offers you useful and meaningful advice on how to care for yourself—physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually in your new life; how to deal with stress, anxiety and worry, and also some advice on parenting for women with children. The circle of hands on the cover, many of the quotes, and pencil drawings are by us—the SURF members—or by our children.

Take Care,  
From the Women of SURF  
November 2014





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I can transform my life one day at a time.





*'Free Hands' Image by a SURF member*

# First Steps Forward

I can do it!



"Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson





## You are free.

After leaving an abusive relationship, you may find that you doubt your ability to mind yourself (and your children), and to make decisions—even simple ones. You are not alone. Many women feel this. It can take time to stop the self-doubts popping-up but it is possible to replace them with your own voice of reason and positive thoughts.

**“Even though I am on my own, I still feel like I need permission or approval for my decisions—afraid that my ex-husband will be annoyed at my decision.” —SURf member**

**“[I] second guess myself because English is my second language and I am a foreigner in Ireland and [was] questioning myself if I could survive on my own...believing what my husband told me—that I would not survive because I am a foreigner.” —SURF member**


A voice inside your head might keep questioning everything you do. It might say things like, ‘You can’t do that’, or ‘You are not smart enough to do that’, ‘You will fail’.

These are voices that are no longer controlling your life. You can leave them behind.

Now you can begin listening to, and trusting your own voice—without interruption.

Building up a sense of well-being has been a big help to women who have been through what you have.

**“[I was] feeling like I would never feel whole again— that the hurt, pain and total disillusionment I felt after leaving the abusive relationship would never go away. But it did, slowly at first; then it grew more and more. I’m not fully whole again but I’m getting there—anyway, you know what? That is O.K. too.” —SURF member**

A close-up photograph of a person wearing a vibrant red, long-sleeved, ribbed shirt. The person is holding a rectangular white sign with both hands in front of their chest. The sign has the handwritten text "I have a voice" in a black, cursive script. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light brown color, suggesting an outdoor setting. The lighting is bright, casting a slight shadow of the sign onto the person's shirt.

*I have a voice*

## What is well-being?

Well-being is a constant state of physical, mental and spiritual health. When you are in a good state of well-being, you can manage your day-to-day life comfortably and without major stress. You feel healthy, strong, confident, happy, and able to work towards your goals in life.





Go slowly at the beginning.  
This is a period of undoing negative thinking patterns that were imposed on you by your abuser.  
This is a time for getting back to your own thinking, and allowing a positive, safe mind to flourish.

*Painting by a child of a SURF member*



## Making a plan

Some women find that making a plan is very helpful. Some find it more realistic to concentrate on just getting through each day, every day, when starting out. No matter what you decide your approach will be, you need to find inspiration early on that will carry you through. Finding a mantra—or a positive affirmation—can be very effective.



*Never, Never, Never, Never, Give Up!*

## Positive Affirmations

Self-esteem is how you consider yourself—how you see yourself and what you believe about yourself. It is hard to feel good when your confidence and self-respect is low.

Positive affirmations are excellent and beneficial tools for improving low self-esteem. They are statements which are encouraging. They redirect negative thoughts and can alter how you feel emotionally.

With positive affirmations, you can lessen the negative chatter, which helps tremendously in improving self-esteem.







Telling yourself positive things, especially at times of distress, will help you to keep your composure and emotional balance so that you can eliminate the noise from the internal negative critic.

Some women put their affirmations up where they will see them every day such as on the fridge or on a mirror.

Try saying these positive affirmations on a daily basis and see the difference that they can make to your life:

- ♥ I am a unique person and a creative individual.
- ♥ I am eager to gain greater self-esteem. I am worthy of it and I am prepared for it.
- ♥ I am confident about life; I always long for and enjoy new challenges.

- ♥ I am actively in control of my life.
- ♥ As I build up my self-esteem, I feel better about myself, my work, my relationships, and every aspect of my life.
- ♥ I take time to get to know myself and I treat myself with respect.
- ♥ I feel valuable even if I am aware that I have made a mistake.
- ♥ I am an action person. I will do what is most important, one thing at a time.
- ♥ I take compliments without doubt and give them readily to others.



*Drawing by a SURF member*



I am an important and valuable human being,  
and I deserve to be respected by others.

## Planning what you want to do in life

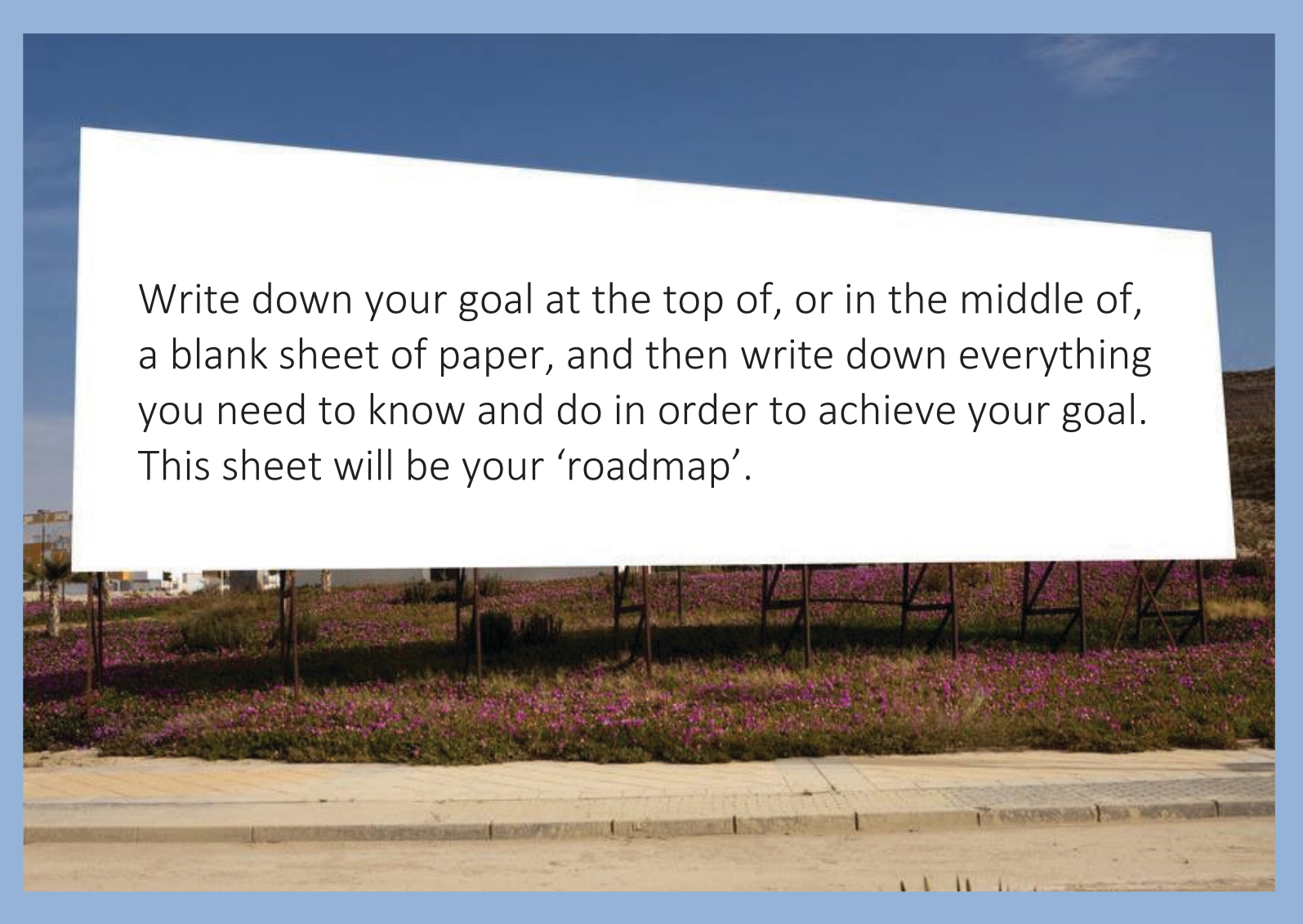
Write out three to five things that you would like to do in your life.

What? Where? When? Why? and Who will or can support you?

1. Mark things you can do immediately with an **A** (within 1 week – a year)
2. Goals that you view as ‘dreams’ that you’d like to fulfil in the distant future with a **B** (1 – 5 years)
3. Goals that will require long term commitment (5 years and over) with a **C**
4. List each goal by how important it is to you.

Put them up somewhere you will see them every day.

“All good improvements that came into my life I welcomed with **OPEN** arms”  
—SURF member

A large white rectangular sign is positioned in the center of the image. The sign contains text in a black, sans-serif font. The background of the image shows a field of purple flowers in the foreground, a concrete sidewalk, and a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The sign is supported by a dark metal frame.

Write down your goal at the top of, or in the middle of, a blank sheet of paper, and then write down everything you need to know and do in order to achieve your goal. This sheet will be your 'roadmap'.

No matter how challenging the goals are, seeing them will be encouraging and keep you focused.

- Are your goals **positive**?  
For example, rather than saying 'Stop being negative' say 'I will acknowledge anything I do that is positive'.
- Do you have what you **need** to achieve your goals?
- Is your goal **consistent** with your values i.e. what is most important to you? Does it belong to you or is it something you think other people want you to do? Are you interested in your goal? If it is boring, you will not want to work for it!
- Are your goals **in balance** i.e. a mixture of goals around career, finances, relationships and having fun? Any imbalance could cause stress in your life.



It isn't fair that you have to restart and rebuild your life after the detriment someone else caused you. It is frustrating, painful and sometimes hard to reconcile the time that has been lost. But you have survived, and have already shown yourself to be courageous, strong and able to change the course of your life. These qualities will sustain you.



*Drawing by a child of a SURF member*

# Developing a Plan

To achieve your goals, you need clear steps on how you are going to reach them. This way, when you feel a bit lost or disheartened, you already have a plan that you can go back to and see what step you need to take next.

So, what is a good plan?

- It is well thought-out and specific
- It has a description of the resources you will need and how you will access them
- It defines each step to be taken, in a linear order
- It says how you will know that you are doing well
- It points out possible distractions, and how you will get back on track
- It suggests the rewards you will use to motivate yourself





## Creating a Picture

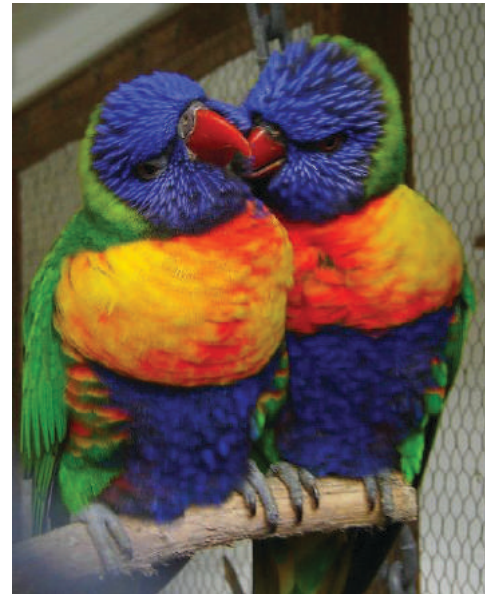
Imagine you have already achieved your goal. What it looks like and how good it feels. Work your way back to the start—how did you do it, step-by-step, to get to this final image?

## Tracking how well you are doing

Ask a close friend to be your support person—someone who will sit with you every few weeks to look at how you are progressing with your goals and plan.

## Remember...

If things aren't going as well as you want, then perhaps you've paced your goals too fast – don't be too hard on yourself! Hard work pays off eventually. You might need to reassess your goal (which is normal) to suit your pace, your needs and resources.



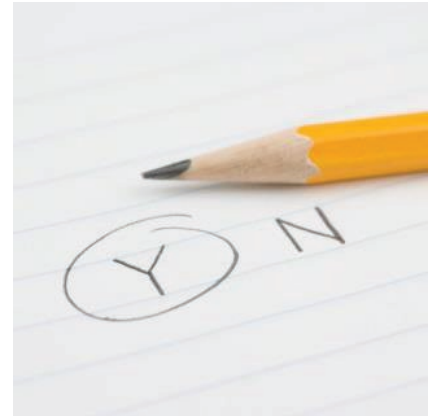
## Healthy Relationships

Setting personal boundaries protects our emotional and psychological well-being.

Many people look at boundaries as walls, but when we establish healthy boundaries it provides a way to distinguish who or what we choose to let in and let out.

It is important to learn about setting healthy boundaries so we can make decisions about what is and what isn't permissible in all of our relationships.

Being kind, but firm, when stating what you need from a relationship, allows the other person to reciprocate.



I am always worthy of genuine respect  
from both myself and others.

## What is a healthy relationship?

- Open and spontaneous communication (speaking and listening)
- Clear boundaries and expectations are expressed with allowance for reasonable flexibility
- Trust of each other; a feeling of security and self-confidence exists for both
- Personal identity, freedom and individual sense of self is encouraged
- Negotiations are fair without power plays, whining, or threats
- Both enjoy doing things for self and each other
- Having fun together is common - healthy humour
- Neither tries to “fix”, change, or control the other
- Feelings and needs are expressed assertively and cleanly
- Each is accepted for their real self
- Both have humility and can let go of “being right”
- Respect for each other and the relationship
- Conflict is dealt with openly—resolution is reached
- Both are open to feedback



- A balance of giving and receiving happens
- Mistakes are accepted as part of being human and they are learned from
- Other meaningful relationships and interests exist without taking away from each other
- Each can enjoy time alone; privacy is respected
- Change, personal growth, and exploration are all encouraged
- Commitment is continuous and consistent
- There is a balance of together and separation
- Each takes responsibility for their own behaviours (no blame or shame)
- You have time to be together (not just parents, providers, etc.)
- A sense of working together as partners exists
- Tenderness and physical affection connect you
- Each of you is realistic about what to expect from the other and the relationship





# Self-care

Looking after  
Yourself

Building confidence  
& self-esteem



How other people act and think often has nothing to do with you,  
but rather with their own perceptions.

You can only take care of yourself

—Judy H. Wright, Parent educator and Author

## Your Bill of Rights

- I have the right to be me. I have the right to say NO.
- I have the right to put myself first.
- I have the right to make mistakes, and to not have to be perfect.
- I have the right to be safe, to be in a non-abusive environment.
- I have the right to love and be loved.
- I have the right to be treated with respect.
- I have the right NOT to be responsible for another adult's behaviour, actions, feelings or problems.
- I have the right to not be liked by everyone.
- I have the right to my own privacy.

- I have the right to be angry and protest if I am treated unfairly or abusively by anyone.
- I have the right to have my own opinions, to express them, and to be taken seriously.
- I have the right to earn and control my own money.
- I have the right to ask questions about anything that affects my life.
- I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings, judgement or any reasons I choose.
- I have the right to grow and change (and that includes changing my mind). I have the right to control my own life and to change it if I am not happy with it.



## Looking After Yourself

When the abuse is finally over and you are away from it, you are likely to experience grief, pain and a deep sense of loss. Your trust has been betrayed; your self-esteem and confidence have been shattered. During this time it is vitally important to take care of yourself, to treat yourself gently and to allow yourself to heal.

Self-care is a learned habit which can be absent when someone finds themselves in a stressful situation. It refers to your ability to take care of your basic daily needs and to attend to your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing even when other people's actions or demands make this difficult.

**“I realised that I had to accept myself and be open to what happened in my life, not be embarrassed or ashamed. I am not the only one that it has happened to”**

**—SURF member**



## Poor self-care can be seen in the following signs:

- Feeling restless, agitated and more tearful
- Eating and/or sleeping more or less than usual
- Using alcohol or other drugs to escape bad feelings
- Lacking in energy and feeling tired all the time
- Finding it hard to cope with everyday things and sometimes getting panic attacks or developing irrational fears and phobias about things or people
- Not wanting to talk to or be with other people
- Not liking yourself or feeling that you don't matter

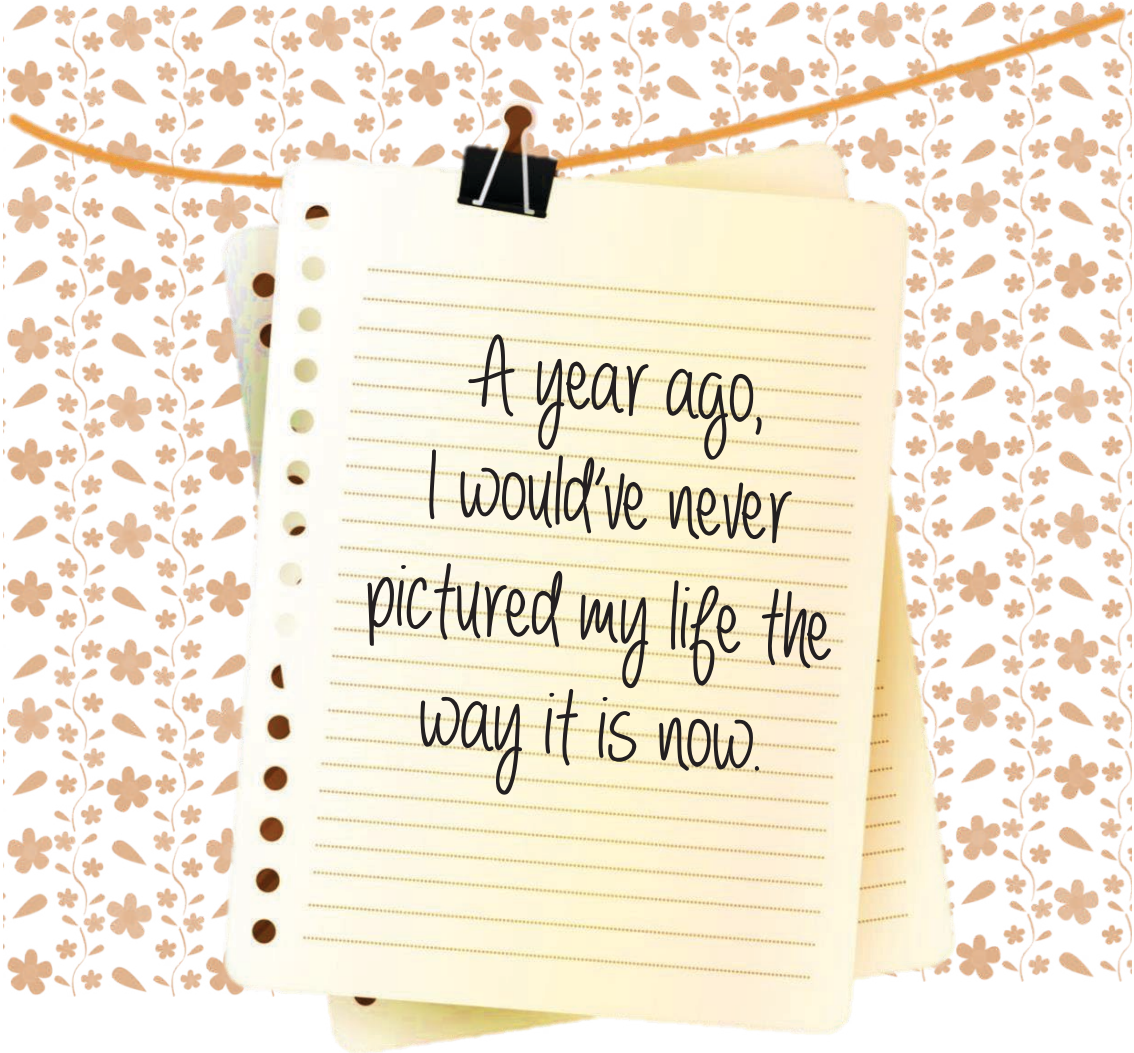


## Good Self-Care

When you regularly take care of your physical, emotional, spiritual and mental needs, you feel strong, confident, relaxed and ready to take on life's daily challenges. You feel good. All aspects of sound self-care work together and support each other.

A balanced routine of self-care needs to be carefully protected. If it is ignored or disregarded regularly, the admirable work you have already spent on yourself will start to unravel.





A year ago,  
I would've never  
pictured my life the  
way it is now.

**“I tried to keep negativity or negative people away as much as I could because I felt it was bringing me down” —SURF member**

For example, if a friend puts pressure on you to stay partying all night—to forget about everything and let loose—and you give-in, your good self-care routine could be disrupted. You may wake-up feeling terrible the next day and just want to stay in bed, not leave the house and cancel any appointments you had. You might feel angry at yourself then for being so irresponsible the night before—not being able to say ‘No’. You may now be feeling low, angry, and anxious and have to catch-up on everything you needed to do today, tomorrow.

Your friend rings that night and asks if you want to go out again—you might say ‘Yes’ so that you can forget about how bad you feel. Instead, you could say, ‘No, I have things to do tomorrow, I am tired’. You made the decision to mind yourself, one day at a time. If you have not taken care of yourself, it is okay—you can always start tomorrow.

# When do you feel at your best?

## Most people feel it when they...

- ...sleep well and wake-up feeling good
- ...eat healthy, nutritious, tasty foods
- ...exercise regularly and get out in the fresh air  
(whether it be going for a walk/ run/ swim/ cycle/  
going to a class/ going to the gym)
- ...talk to other people about what worries them
- ...share good news with other people
- ...spend time with those who are important to them and support them
- ...are aware of what they can do well and what they cannot do as well
- ...make time every day to do something which makes them feel relaxed.



### **A lack of self-care is often associated with low self-esteem.**

Self-esteem refers to how you feel about yourself overall; how much positive regard or self-love you have. Poor self-esteem affects a person's assumptions, interpretations, perceptions, conclusions and beliefs about themselves and leaves them with an irrational and distorted view of themselves as being inadequate, unacceptable, unworthy, unlovable, and/or incompetent. Living with someone that was always putting you down, criticising you, controlling you and being abusive or violent towards you will have sapped your self-esteem and your belief in yourself.

### **How you treat yourself is how you are inviting the world to treat you.**

It's time now to start rebuilding your self-esteem and to work towards self-care and acceptance – all of which takes time. Sometimes a woman has never learned or forgets, over a period of time, how to mind herself as well as she needs to. It is important to realise that you've been through a lot and that poor self-care can have a major impact on your mental and physical health. It is important to devote time to self-care and it is important that you treat yourself just as kindly and thoughtfully as you would anyone else.





A close-up photograph of a bright green ceramic bowl. The bowl is flared at the top and sits on a light-colored surface. The text "Big Bowl of Self-Esteem" is written on the side of the bowl in a bold, black, cursive font. The words "Big Bowl of" are on the top line, and "Self-Esteem" is on the bottom line. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a doorway.

Big Bowl of  
Self-Esteem

Treating yourself regularly does not have to cost much and can be very simple.  
Here are some suggestions:

- Buy a bar of chocolate or a magazine
- Have a warm bath/ shower
- Meet friends and have a meal together
- Have a manicure & pedicure, or a facial
- Watch a movie
- Dress yourself up... *Look good, feel good*
- Exercise—just a walk can change your mood
- Go have a coffee and a chat with a friend



**“I tried even in the worse situation or on my worse days, I tried to make myself laugh or look at a comedy. To think about something funny”** —SURF member

## Characteristics that build good self-esteem

Rewarding  
yourself

Sense of  
humour

Know that  
you can't  
change all  
things

Helping others  
and  
accepting your  
limits

Be a good  
friend to  
yourself

Imagination



*Drawing by a SURF member*

## Build your own self-care plan

You might find it useful to build your own self-care plan. A self-care plan is simply a list to refer to when you're feeling stressed or disheartened. It involves thinking about your well-being and everything that you need to do to ensure that you are looking after your mind, your body and your spirit. It also includes identifying what you want to accomplish in life (or even in the next few months) as well as recognising who are the supportive people in your life that will help you. With the help of the plan you can identify what you're not doing, and perhaps should be doing, to feel better as well as who you can contact to talk to and get support.

# Lucy's Sample Self Care Plan

The self-care plan is divided into four sections, each enclosed in a dashed-line border:

- Mind:** A cloud-shaped box containing the word "Mind". Surrounding it are the words: "MEDITATE", "TAKE LOTS OF BREAKS", "MUSIC", "FUN!", and "LIFE-LONG LEARNING".
- Body:** A heart-shaped box containing the word "Body". Surrounding it are the words: "TEA", "NOURISHING FOOD", "EXERCISE", "EVERYTHING IN MODERATION", and "SLEEP EIGHT HOURS".
- Spirit:** A star-shaped box containing the word "Spirit". Surrounding it are the words: "MEDITATE", "HUMAN CONNECTIONS", "FULFILMENT", "THOUGH USING MY AWESOME SKILLS", and "SELF-REFLECTION".
- Supportive People In My Life:** A rectangular box listing names: "GRETCHEN MOM", "MI VIEJO ALBERTO", "LYNNE CAROLINE", "REED DEBORAH".
- I want to accomplish:** A rectangular box listing goals: "PEACE", "SERENITY", "CONTROL", "HAPPINESS", "GOOD WORK", "BE A GOOD PERSON".

# My Self-Care Plan


**MIND**

**BODY**

**Supportive  
People in  
My Life:**

**SPIRIT**

**I want to be:**



"A well-cultivated mind is like a well-cultivated garden. It has not been neglected and allowed to go to seed. The gardener pulls up weeds and turns them into compost, digs up rocks and makes them into paths and rockeries...

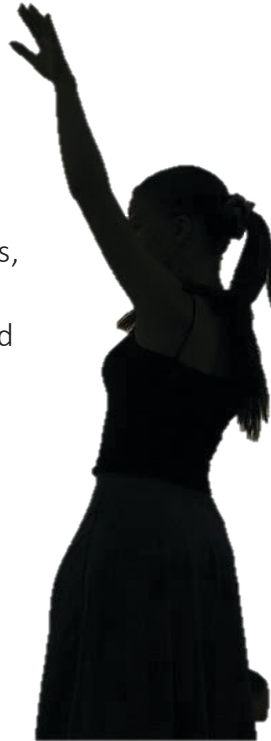
The gardener feeds the plants which are beautiful and fruitful and finds good use for as many different plants as possible. The gardener is always attentive and works hard. Often his or her back aches."

-Thich Nhat Hanh

# Self-Care Suggestions

## Body

- Eat regular, healthy meals
- Exercise regularly: dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing
- Take time out when needed
- Get massages



- Do something that is fun
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take time off—go on a holiday or a daytrip if you can



## Healthy Eating

What you eat is directly related to your overall health and well-being. More and more research is showing that a healthy diet can improve your mood.

Your mood affects how you react to daily life. For example, if you eat a lot of high sugar/ high saturated fats, you will have energy 'highs' and energy 'lows' which is unhealthy for both the body and mind. Slowly releasing carbohydrates such as pasta, rice and bread will counteract the highs and lows.

**Balance protein (nuts, tofu, meat, fish, chicken), carbohydrates (rice, pasta, bread, potatoes), fresh fruit and vegetables and a small amount of dairy.**



## Mind

- Make time for self-reflection
  - Go to counselling
  - Write in a journal
  - Read literature that is relaxing
  - Do something which challenges you
  - Let others know different aspects of you
- Say 'no' to extra responsibilities sometimes
  - Acknowledge inner experiences – thoughts, judgements, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
  - Try something new such as a course, go to the museum, a sports event, or an arts event
  - Practice receiving from others



## Emotional

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Love yourself
- Re-read favourite books, review favourite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Engage in social action e.g. volunteer with a local group, write letters to local politicians, go on marches and protests



## Spiritual

- Spend time with nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and sense of hope
- Be aware of the non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Meditate
- Pray (if you are religious)
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe
- Read inspirational literature, listen to music etc.



## Workplace or Professional Self Care

- Take your allocated breaks during the working day
- Take time to chat with work colleagues
- Take some quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Set limits with your clients and colleagues
- Balance your workload so that no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Seek regular support and supervision from your employer
- Negotiate for your needs



Strive for balance within your life.



Strive for balance between work, family, relationships, play, and rest.



# Handling stress, worry & anxiety

*"Anxiety, after all, can co-exist  
with determination."  
—Seamus Heaney*





*Monika*

The dandelion is a survivor—it is strong and resilient.



## Handling Stress, Worry and Anxiety

**“I tried to find out what was stressing me out the most and deal with it” —SURF member**

The prospect of reclaiming your independent sense of self can be a huge relief, but can also bring with it a lot of anxiety and worrisome thoughts. Sometimes during the recovery period it can seem that things were easier when you were in the abusive relationship. In a lot of ways, recovery from an abusive relationship is like relearning a language that we have forgotten how to speak.

On your own, out of the abusive environment, you might feel uncertain how to navigate your daily world without the isolation and control that was once enforced upon you. Daily tasks and decision-making can be difficult. This can cause frustration, stress, and anxiety that you will never be ‘free’ from the aftermath of the abusive situation.





"I was having a bad day so I rang a support worker in Waterside and she told me not to be too hard on myself, and reminded me that life is full of ups and downs... one day might be down but the next one will be up—it made me feel so much better." -SURF member

## Healthy ways to relax

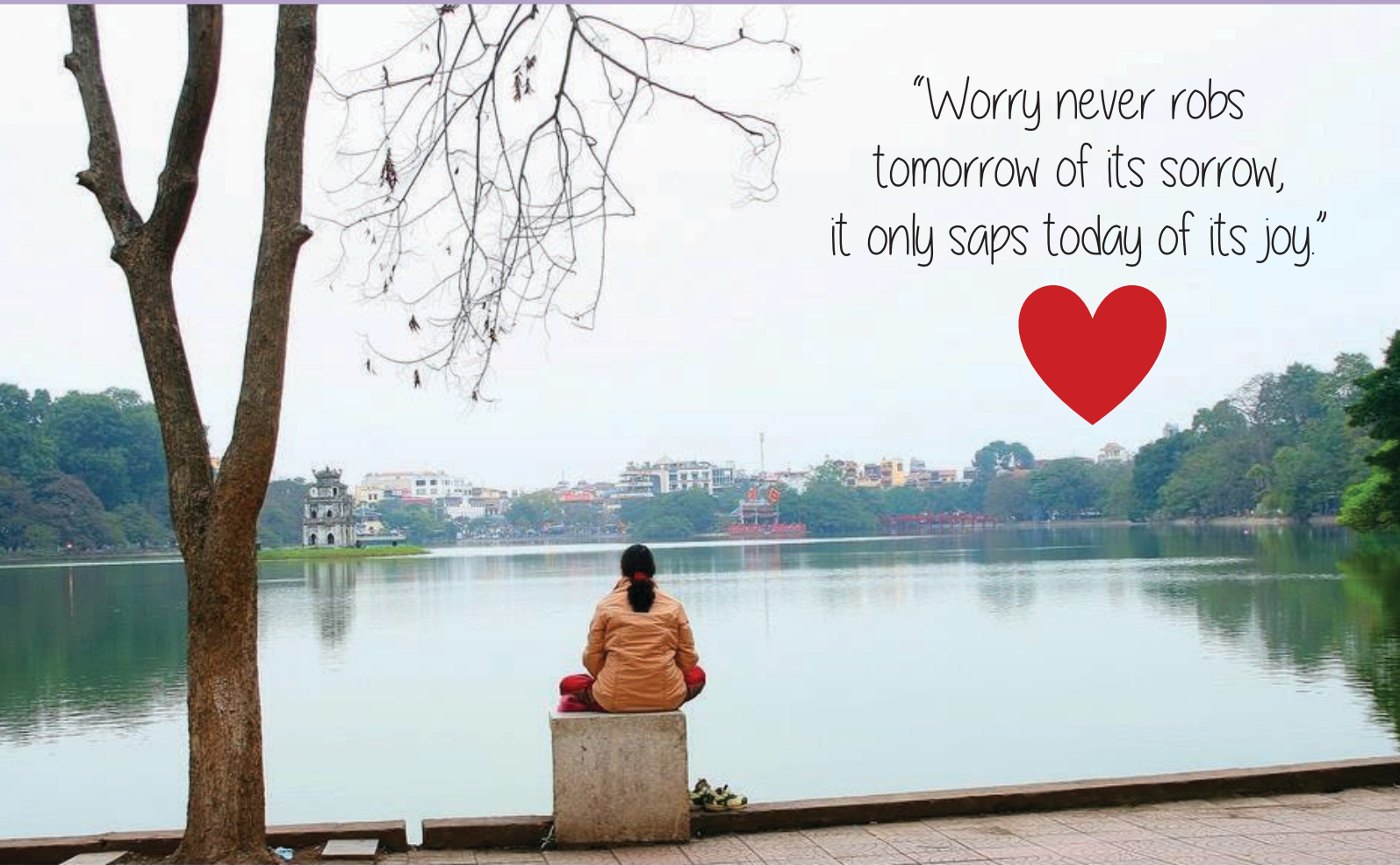
“One day I had an incident with my ex-partner and it transported me back to when I was still in the relationship and I was stunned that it had such an effect on me – all the fears, doubts and lack of self-belief came crashing back... but I rang Waterside and had a chat and realised that I will still have days like that and that’s ok too. I am a work in progress 😊”

—SURF member



When we feel comfortable in the present, the future is less of a worry. Every day is a new day. Before going to sleep, take stuff off your mind by making a list of all the things that are worrying you—then close the notebook until the morning.





“Worry never robs  
tomorrow of its sorrow,  
it only saps today of its joy.”



# Mindfulness

Research has shown that practices such as mindfulness are responsible for cognitive and psychological changes such as improvements in perception and well-being.

## *Take a few quiet moments for yourself*

A few minutes of practice per day can help ease anxiety.  
Let any distracting thoughts float by like clouds.

## *Breathe deeply*

Slowly inhale through your nose, feeling the breath start in your abdomen and work its way to the top of your head. Reverse the process as you exhale through your mouth.





### Counting to 10

If you are in a public place and find yourself irritated or anxious, (and do not want to draw attention to yourself), counting to ten and then backwards in your head is a helpful way to calm down.

### Be present

Slow down. Notice how the air feels on your face when you're walking and how your feet feel hitting the ground. Enjoy the taste of each bite of food.

### Talk to your friend

Share what's going on. Your friends can help you to handle stress. Talk to others -- preferably face to face, or at least on the phone.



### Tune into your body

Mentally scan your body to get a sense of how you are feeling each day. Lie on your back, or sit with your feet on the floor. Start at your toes and work your way up to your scalp, noticing how your body feels.



### Decompress

Place a warm heat wrap around your neck and shoulders for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and relax the muscles in your face, neck, upper chest, and back.

## Laugh out loud

A good laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It lowers cortisol, your body's stress hormone, and boosts brain chemicals called endorphins, which help your mood. Watching your favourite sitcom or DVD, or chatting with someone who makes you smile will help.



## Listen to music

Listening to music can lower anxiety. Create a playlist of songs and let your mind focus on the different sounds or singers in the music.



## Get moving

You don't have to run in order to get a runner's high. All forms of exercise, including yoga and walking, can ease depression and anxiety by helping the brain to release feel-good chemicals and by giving your body a chance to practice dealing with stress.

You can go for a quick walk, take the stairs up and down a few flights, or do some gentle stretching exercises.

## Keep a journal of all the good stuff and one for all for worries

Keep a notebook or journal (one by your bed, one in your bag, and one at work/ college) to help you remember all of the things that are good in your life.



Use these journals to savour good experiences like a sunshine-filled day, and good health. Don't forget to celebrate accomplishments like mastering a new task at work or starting a new hobby. When you start feeling stressed, spend a few minutes looking through your notes to remind yourself what really matters.

## THIS WILL PASS

“We often ask, “What’s wrong?” Doing so, we invite painful seeds of sorrow to come up and manifest. We feel suffering, anger, and depression, and produce more such seeds. We would be much happier if we tried to stay in touch with the healthy, joyful seeds inside of us and around us. We should learn to ask, “What’s not wrong?” and be in touch with that. There are so many elements in the world and within our bodies, feelings, perceptions, and consciousness that are wholesome, refreshing, and healing. If we block ourselves, if we stay in the prison of our sorrow, we will not be in touch with these healing elements.”

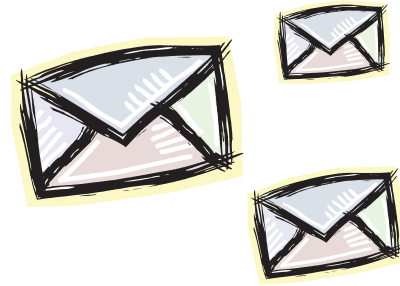
- Thich Nhat Hanh

## Writing Letters

“At a session at Waterside Outreach, it was suggested that I write a letter to my ex-partner [never to be sent]. At first I couldn’t even think of doing it—where to start, what to say—but after a week or so I did write it. It really helped; I wrote down everything I couldn’t say out loud. My anger, my disillusionment, confusion, disappointment, hurt, loss—everything came out. I showed no one the letter—I just held onto it for a while. I then decided to write one to my children and then myself—it really helped me. Then one night, with the fire lighting, and the kids in bed, I burned the letters. It was very therapeutic. I felt it helped and after two years on my own, I wrote them again.

Try it—it’s better to get it all out on paper instead of it going around and around in your head.”

—SURF member



After rain  
there is  
Sun  
Shine





*Drawing by a child of a SURF member*

# Parenting Advice

## Starting parenting again

**“I realised that not every day would be perfect... I would have good days and bad days and that it’s O.K. too.” —SURF member**

Women who are moving on may feel that they are starting all over again. It is a period of transition for both you and your children; you may be feeling confused, angry and experiencing low self-esteem. Children need assurance that what has happened was not their fault and they are not to blame.



*Drawing by a child of a SURF member*

## Some advice

**“Setting family rules [was a help]. I agreed with my children what our family rules would be so we could get along together” —SURF member**

- You cannot do everything perfectly—all you can do is do your best
- Trust your gut
- Have fun with your children—you are all free now

You are all moving on together. Learning with your child how to detect unhealthy relationships and how to keep yourselves safe can be an important part of that process.

“Change is a good thing”  
“As Mam got stronger, we got stronger too”  
- Daughter of a SURF member

*Drawing by a child of a SURF member*





## Talk with your children openly

Becoming more open-minded about talking with your children about your feelings can be helpful.

**“Talking to my children about what is happening as we start a new life together, free of the abuse—telling them what is happening all the time so they are not worrying”**

**—SURF member**

You can lead by example. Show them techniques you have learnt, or are learning, for managing anger, stress and low self-esteem. This can strengthen your bond.

**“[I want to] teach my children when they are old enough to understand what abuse is, so history does not repeat itself”**      **—SURF member**





*Drawing by a SURF member*

## Have a healthy outlet for angry feelings

“I decided a good way to get rid of my stress was to take a cardboard box into a spare room and box the box until it was flat – I felt so much better. I even did it with my children when we were having a bad day - the box was as flat as a pancake and we were all laughing. I have a teenage boy and I got him a punching bag so he could get rid of his stress.”

—SURF member

## Laugh and have fun

“Having fun again with my children, being a bit of a child myself, helped. Something like just dancing in the kitchen to our favourite song, or just laughing and being a family again.” —SURF member

“Crawling on the floor and having fun with my children”—SURF member



## ‘One good thing, one bad thing’

“At dinner time, we decided we would each tell one good thing and one bad thing that happened during our day. We chatted about these. It helped us talk about our day and be there for each other if things weren’t going well. It was a great way for us all to know how we were doing.” —SURF member

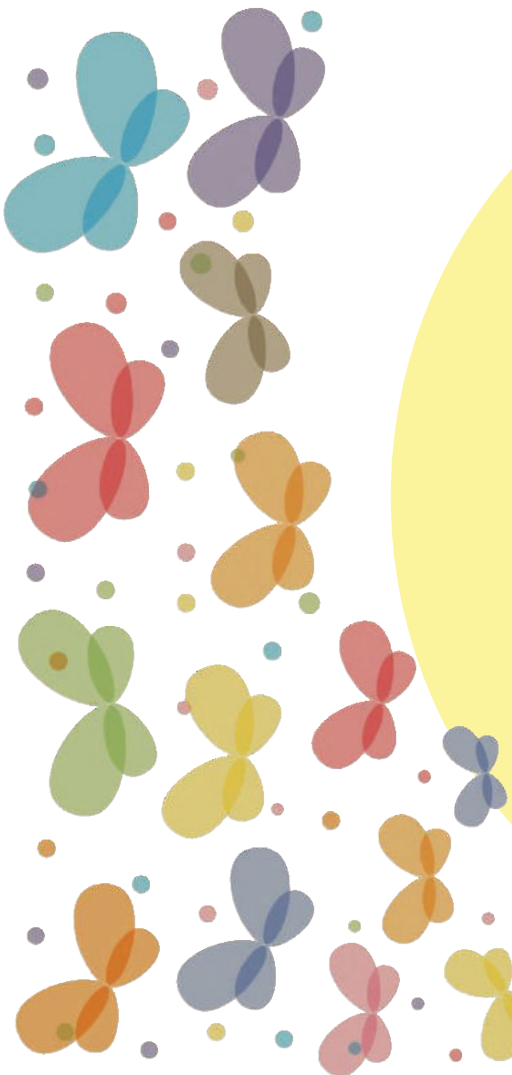
## Clear your mind

“A bit of advice from my point of view is: If you want to keep a feelings journal, keep it to yourself unless you are sad or hurt - then you show someone like your Mom or Nanny”

“I started to write in a notebook or just on a piece of paper, what I was worrying about to clear my head” —SURF member

“After he left, Mom was very upset but I was happy because the house was more peaceful and there was no arguing. After about a month everyone started to grow closer and this was a good thing”

—Daughter of a SURF member

A vertical column of colorful, stylized butterflies and small dots in shades of blue, purple, red, orange, and green, positioned on the left side of the page.

“I found it not easy at first but  
as time passed it got easier.  
I went to get help and the help  
COPE Galway gave me was play  
therapy. It really helped.  
I loved going.

Now there is no shouting in our  
house, no slapping, no broken-in  
doors and now we are safe and  
happier.”

—Daughter of a SURF member



*Drawing by a child of a SURF member*



Supports

Tomorrow is another day!





COPE Galway provide free, confidential support to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Web: [www.copegalway.ie](http://www.copegalway.ie)  
 Call: 091 565 985  
 E-mail: [watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie](mailto:watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie)



 (091) 565 985  
[www.copegalway.ie](http://www.copegalway.ie)  
[watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie](mailto:watersideoutreach@copegalway.ie)

**Moving On**  
 Information to support you

Moving On: Information to Support You, a wallet-sized information leaflet for Galway services, is available from Waterside House.

Contact details for services in your area are available from your local refuge and outreach service.

Contact **SAFE Ireland**  
[www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)  
 090 647 9078

## Entitlements

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Migrant Rights Centre</b><br>01 889 7570<br><a href="http://www.mrci.ie">www.mrci.ie</a> | <b>Money, Advice &amp; Budgeting Service (MABS)</b><br>076 107 2000<br><a href="http://mabs.ie">mabs.ie</a>                           |  |
| <b>Free Legal Aid Clinic (FLAC)</b><br>1890 350 250   | <b>Citizens Information</b><br>076 107 7600<br><a href="http://citizensinformation.ie">citizensinformation.ie</a>                     | <b>Threshold Housing</b><br>1890 334 334<br><a href="http://threshold.ie">threshold.ie</a> |
| <b>Social Welfare</b><br><a href="http://welfare.ie">welfare.ie</a>                         | <b>Public Health Services (HSE)</b><br>1850 24 1850<br><a href="http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list">www.hse.ie/eng/services/list</a> |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Women's Aid</b><br>1800 341 900<br><a href="http://womensaid.ie">womensaid.ie</a>                                 | <b>Samaritans</b><br>116 123<br>1850 609 609<br><a href="http://samaritans.org">samaritans.org</a> |
| <b>AA</b><br>01 842 0700<br>West: 085 224 4063<br><a href="http://alcoholicsanonymous.ie">alcoholicsanonymous.ie</a> | <b>St Vincent de Paul</b><br><a href="http://www.svp.ie">www.svp.ie</a><br>01 83 86 990            |



## Training & Education

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>FETAC + ECDL Courses</b><br>(Education & Training Board)<br><a href="http://www.etb.ie">www.etb.ie</a>   | <b>SOLAS (formerly FÁS)</b><br><b>Further Training &amp; Education</b><br><a href="http://www.solas.ie">www.solas.ie</a> |
| <b>Third Level + Access Courses</b><br><b>Information &amp; Career Guidance</b><br><a href="http://www.careersportal.ie">www.careersportal.ie</a> | <b>National Adult Literacy Agency</b><br><a href="http://www.nala.ie">www.nala.ie</a><br>01 4127900                      |

If you are unsure who to call for information, support and advice, COPE Galway, Waterside House, can help you.  
Tel: 091 565985

**If you are in danger, call 999 or 112 now.**

## Children and Teenagers

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Foroige</b><br>(Big Brother Big Sister; Youth Cafes)<br>01 630 1560<br><a href="http://www.foroige.ie">www.foroige.ie</a> | <b>Childline</b><br>1800 66 66 66<br><a href="http://childline.ie">childline.ie</a>                    |
| <b>Jigsaw (Mental Health)</b><br>01 472 7010<br><a href="http://jigsaw.ie">jigsaw.ie</a>                                     | <b>BeLong To (LGBT Youth)</b><br>01 670 6223<br><a href="http://www.belongto.org">www.belongto.org</a> |
| <b>Tusla (Child and Family Agency)</b><br><a href="http://www.tusla.ie">www.tusla.ie</a>                                     |  |

**Online**  
**Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Women Abuse Survivors as Mothers Resource Pack**  
<http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html>

**Local Involvement**

- Local Community Forum
- Local Resource Centre(s)

### Further Places of interest

- Local Public Library Bulletin board has information about classes, events, workshops etc.
- All galleries and museums are free to enter in Ireland

# Acknowledgements



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## References & Images

Healthy Relationships, pp.21 & 22, based on a list by Kim Leatherdale: [www.kimleatherdale.com/intimacy/checklist-for-a-healthy-relationship/](http://www.kimleatherdale.com/intimacy/checklist-for-a-healthy-relationship/)

'Self-Care' pp.42—48 based on 'Self-Care Assessment Worksheet' from *Transforming the Pain* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996)

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'Moving On: Now, It's My Life' booklet compiled by West Training & Development Ltd., Galway, 2014.



'When we have genuine self-love we can tap into our true goodness, see the gifts we've been given and then experience the joy of sharing them with others.'

Dr. Patrizia Collard, *The Little Book of Mindfulness*



What is needed, emotionally, to move on? 'Strength', 'Freedom', 'Choices', 'Peace', 'Letting Go', 'Be Positive', and 'Healing', expressed in a selection of languages above, were chosen as the most meaningful words for moving on by the women in SURF (Service User Refuge Forum), COPE Galway