**Exercise 1: How would you treat a friend?**

***overview***How do you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when he or she is suffering? This exercise walks you through it. ***Steps*  
  
Please take out a sheet of paper and answer the following questions:**

1. First, think about times when a close friend feels bad about him or herself or is struggling in some way.   
   How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you are at your best)?   
   Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.
2. Now think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling.   
   How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations?   
   Please write down what you typically do  
   what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.
3. Did you notice a difference?   
   If so, ask yourself What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?
4. Please write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you’re suffering.

**Exercise 2: Supportive Touch**

**overview**In this exercise, you will learn how to activate your parasympathetic nervous system by using supportive touch to help you feel calm, cared for, and safe.

**steps *Hand-on-Heart***

1. When you notice you are under stress, take 2-3 deep, satisfying breaths.
2. Gently place your hand over your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand.   
   If you wish, place both hands on your chest, noticing the difference between one and two hands.
3. Feel the touch of your hand on your chest.   
   If you wish, you could make small circles with your hand on your chest.
4. Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
5. Linger with the feeling for as long as you like.

Note:  
  
Some people feel uneasy putting a hand over the heart. Feel free to explore where on your body a gentle touch is soothing. Some other possibilities are:

* One hand on your cheek
* Cradling your face in your hands
* Gently stroking your arms
* Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
* Gently rubbing your chest, or using circular movements
* Hand on your abdomen
* One hand on your abdomen and one over heart
* Cupping one hand in the other in your lap

# Exercise 3: Taking care of the caregiver

**Overview**  
This exercise will allow you to keep your heart open and help you care for and nurture yourself at the same time you are caring for and nurturing others.  
  
  
**Intro:**   
  
If you work in a care-giving profession (and that certainly includes being a family member!), you will need to recharge your batteries, so you have enough energy available to give to others.   
  
  
**tips**  
Permit yourself to meet your own needs, recognizing that this will not only enhance your quality of life, it will also enhance your ability to be there for those that rely on you.   
For instance, you might listen to relaxing music, take a yoga class, hang out with a friend for an evening, or get a massage.

Of course, sometimes our time is limited, and we are not able to take care of ourselves as much as we would like.   
When you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed when with the person you are caring for, you might try giving yourself soothing words of  
support for example:  
“I know this is hard right now, and it’s only natural you’re feeling so stressed. I’m here for you”.   
Or else you might try using soothing touch or the self-compassion break.   
This will allow you to keep your heart open, and help you care for and nurture yourself at the same time you are caring for and nurturing others.