



We have different parts of our wellness wheel: occupation, spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, environmental, and social. These are different things that we have in order to feel fulfilled.

Ideally we want to feel full in all of these areas. In reality, some are always more full, and others are less full—even empty. We can use this guide to identify what areas of our life are neglected and need more attention, what areas are fine, and perhaps other areas that are over full, causing an imbalance. For example, if we are very busy in our jobs and social life, we might not have enough time to exercise, meditate, or read new books.

Identify things that make you feel wiped out. One thing that takes the stuffing out of me is not being able to talk to my family. When I can't talk to them for a long time.

Identify things that uplift you. Is it taking walks, working out, cooking or something else?

Self-care is helping ourselves get through every moment, whether it's a bad, good, or indifferent. We need to manage our energy level because you can't pour from an empty cup. Without having our reserves full, we won't be able to fully help the children in our care.

Anger management tools, like a pocket wrist exerciser or hacky sac stress ball to squeeze, a pocket-sized journal and pen, or a pocket-sized book of favorite meditations, prayers, readings or a particular piece of music on your phone that helps calm you when you're angry are essential, because, anger happens.

Creative thinking is important. The brain is like a muscle in that it can be exercised, developed and trained. Just as you build your muscles by weightlifting, running or aerobics, you can build your creative thinking muscles by doing regular creative thinking exercise. A woman I know subscribes to a service that gives her one brain teaser a day in her email.

Another thing that's super important in terms of our caregivers self care is room for grief. There is often a lot of stress and grief in kinship families. Find ways that are comfortable to you and fit within your values and culture to acknowledge and express grief. We have a special corner in our home with a bench, photos, candles and other items that helps us to reflect, pray and grieve when we need that moment.

Laugh, breathe, play and relax. I cannot over emphasize the value of laughter and play in reducing stress, building attachment and healing from trauma. Do something every day. Wear your pajamas for dinner, have a water balloon fight, blow bubbles, make faces, laugh, giggle, chuckle, smile.

Reach up and reach out. Don't do this alone. Find your support system, whether it's in your community of faith, a support group of other kinship caregivers, or another outlet. Be sure you have a group of people in your corner, and be willing to reach out to them when you need support. This not only helps you, but it is a great role modeling for your children.

## Resources

New Mexico State Parks: [emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/](http://emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/)

NM Kids: [newmexicokids.org](http://newmexicokids.org)

Public Libraries: [abqlibrary.org/hours-locations](http://abqlibrary.org/hours-locations)

Internet Essentials: [xfinity.com/support/articles/comcast-broadband-opportunity-program](http://xfinity.com/support/articles/comcast-broadband-opportunity-program)

Zoo and botanical gardens: [cabq.gov/artsculture/biopark/](http://cabq.gov/artsculture/biopark/)

Moving Arts Dance & Drama Classes: [movingartsespanola.org](http://movingartsespanola.org)

Santa Fe Trails & Museums: [santafenm.gov/ideas\\_and\\_things\\_to\\_do](http://santafenm.gov/ideas_and_things_to_do)

SHARE New Mexico manages New Mexico's largest, most up-to-date and comprehensive resource directory that provides convenient access to reliable data on New Mexico community health resources, social services, initiatives and counties. [sharenm.org](http://sharenm.org)