

Simple Self-Care Tips for All Souls

(Adapted from the “Use Your Muse! - Practical and Playful Strategies to Cultivate Creativity” Session at 2016 AATE in Boston by *Melissa Bergstrom, Alyssa Franklin, Kristy Lenuzza, & Lindsay Weitkamp*)



Photo by [Alessandro Ranzo](#) on [Unsplash](#)

- **Get outside!** Take a walk around your neighborhood. Try to only focus on the sights, smells, and sounds that come across your path. Take off your shoes, feel the earth under your bare feet.
- **Go to a public space and observe passerby.** Write down bits of overheard conversations that are intriguing & save for later to inspire future projects (for your artwork, a short story, script, etc).
- **Spend time with a pet.** Petting your cat or dog helps to lower blood pressure and cortisol (stress hormones) levels.
- **Mindfully eat a meal.** No TV, no internet, no phone... Just you and your food. Focus on the sensations of eating.

- **Drink plenty of water** and non-caffeinated beverages, such as herbal teas.
- **Get your full 8 hours of sleep!** Your creativity (and mind/body) will thank you for it!
- **BREATHE.** The Long Exhale (breathe in for 4 count, hold for 2 count, exhale for 6 counts). Breathing triggers the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to shut off our “fight or flight” response and shift us into “rest and digest” setting again.
- **Use a sensory observation game to stay in the NOW:** Also a good way to trigger the parasympathetic nervous system, and can be used in instances of overwhelm or anxiety. Take three deep breaths, and then identify three sounds you can hear, three things you can see, and three things you can feel. Continue to breathe throughout and do a few rounds of this, or as many as it takes to start feeling more grounded. This is also a good sensory acting exercise for students!
- **Recite a “Loving-Kindness” Meditation to yourself:**
 - *May I be filled with loving kindness. May I be at comfort and at ease.*
May I be as happy and healthy as possible. May I know peace.
- **Move!** Yoga, Zumba, Kickboxing... whatever! Ease anxiety and stress, while boosting your creativity.
- **Keep a small notebook with you wherever you go.** This includes by your bedside and by the shower (stealthy culprits for those “strokes of genius” times!) You can journal, make a gratitude list, or record daily things you feel proud of.
- **Take a class to further your artistic education and experience.** This could be directly connected to your theatre practice, such as a scene study class, or be in a different creative arena, like ceramics.
- **See some art.** This may sound obvious, but it’s easy to go a long time without seeing something new and inspiring when you have a full schedule. Take a trip, see a local university production or scene study night, film screening, photography exhibit, or volunteer to be an usher at a nearby theatre and see the show for free. Netflix, National Theatre Live, Broadway.com are all digital options with a fairly wide selection of performances as well, and many art museums now offer a wide array of digital collections to browse online for free.
- **Ask yourself what your childhood self would like to do for fun.** Read a favorite book from that time? A beloved movie? Listen to an old favorite song or album?

- **Join (or start) a “support group” with people who share similar interests.** This can be in person or virtually. Share the recent joys and challenges of your work and play with each other, decide on group assignments or projects, and/or create a space in which to share and reflect on work.
- **Seek out a creative mentor and connect with them regularly.** This could be a former professor, manager, director, and the arrangement need not be formal. All that matters is that you have someone whom you feel you can reach out for occasional supports, advice, and feedback.
- **Tidy your space.** Clutter can be a creative block for some people.
- **Change your space where you work and play.** Experiment with a new space every week for a month and see how it affects your writing, brainstorming, etc.
- **Cook or bake.** Chopping vegetables, whisking, and kneading homemade bread are all repetitive activities that actually help to your brain to settle, freeing it up for unexpected creative solutions.
- **Play “Best case, worst case, most likely case scenario” game:** Whatever worry is causing your anxiety, think through the best, worst, and most likely case scenarios. What can you learn from each outcome?
- **Don’t be afraid to get outside your area of creativity to recharge and discover something new!** If you are a playwright, take a dance class. If you are a director, try sketching with colored pencils, just for fun. Switch it up!
- **Host a meal or book club** with a discussion of creativity as the focus. Continue this conversation.
- **Leave unscheduled time in your day, even if it’s just five minutes.** Use this time to look out the window, doodle, or do a quick check in with yourself and your body. Questions to ask yourself: What do I need right now? Am I thirsty? Am I hungry? Do I need sleep? A hot shower? Unscheduled time? Connection with a friend?