

Two Sides of the Same Coin

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Self-care has continued to flood our mainstream media outlets. We talk about the importance of self-care surrounding the association of taking care of one's own mental health; however, as we continue to work towards a culture of prevention versus solely intervention, we need to explore ways in which self-care is not just an individual practice. That is, while self-care can sustain us, the concept of community care can help us thrive.

Instead of "What can I do for myself?" consider "What communities (systems) of support am I part of—and how do they support me back?"

5 CURRENCIES OF COMMUNITY CARE

1. BELONGING

Belonging can be viewed as psychological safety. It reduces stress responses and protects against depression and anxiety; having spaces where you feel accepted without needing to perform or mask.

2. EXPRESSION

Expression is a form of safe communication. It is ultimately the ability to express thoughts, emotions, and struggles openly. Unexpressed emotion increases stress, anxiety, and rumination.

3. RECIPROCALITY

Reciprocity is this idea that support flows both ways—you give and receive. This concept of mutual support is backed by research and shows helping others improves your own mental health, not just receiving help.

4. GUIDANCE

Guidance is this concept of access to insight, advice, and perspective from those around you; that is, holding shared wisdom and perspective. This matters because self-directed thinking is biased and limited—community expands perspective.

5. CONSISTENCY

Consistency refers not only to accountability but this idea of ongoing connection; better described as regular, reliable interaction—not just support in crisis. Mental health is maintained through consistency, not occasional effort.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **BELONGING** makes expression possible
- **EXPRESSION** deepens reciprocity
- **RECIPROCALITY** strengthens belonging
- **GUIDANCE** improves outcomes
- **CONSISTENCY** holds everything in place

TRADITIONAL SELF-CARE says: "Regulate yourself independently."

COMMUNITY CARE says: "Regulation is co-created through relationships."

Sustainable mental health isn't built in isolation—it's maintained through reciprocal, structured connection. The quality of your mental health is shaped not just by your habits—but by the **QUALITY OF YOUR CONNECTIONS**.