

# Mapping Your Communities

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As helpers, we share a unique experience – caring for other people’s physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual well-being. But the very thing that’s often the source of our stress can also restore and revive us. In other words, caring for others can be our medicine.

But who are the “others” that we’re taking care of? Most of us probably think about our clients and patients, which is absolutely true. But “others” can also include our peers, our colleagues, and our communities of practice. We nurture our wellness by giving and receiving care within these relationships, and they contribute to our sense of belonging within a collective identity or group.

By expanding our notion of self-care to include our broader relational context, we can counter some of the ways it is commonly presented.

**This mapping activity will help you brainstorm and gather your thoughts about community and collective care.**

- 1 Write your name in the centre of the blank space provided on the other side of this handout.
- 2 From your name, draw out lines. At the end of each line, write down one aspect of your identity (gender, faith, cultural, sexual, racial, occupational, leisure, etc.). There’s no right or wrong identifier, just write some words to help you consider your identity. You can include hobbies or activities you participate in as well (knitter, climber, dancer, baker, runner, etc.). Draw out as many lines as you’d like, one for each identifier.
- 3 Use whatever colors or symbols you want to indicate if this is a community you feel supported in, if it’s challenging for you, or if it’s one you haven’t engaged with. For instance, maybe you’re a runner but have never connected with fellow runners.
- 4 Once you’re done, take a minute to notice how you’re feeling emotionally and physically. You don’t need to do anything with what you notice – just pay mindful, curious attention to what you’re feeling.
- 5 Now look back at your map. Where do you sense belonging? Which communities do you care for, and which ones care for you?
- 6 If none jump out at you, notice if you feel drawn towards a particular community or if you feel a desire to engage with any of them. If so, what’s the first step you’d consider taking?
- 7 If you’d like, note the date that you completed this map. Consider redoing this exercise every few months or even a year down the road. Or perhaps revisit this same map to see what’s changed and what hasn’t.

## My Community Map