



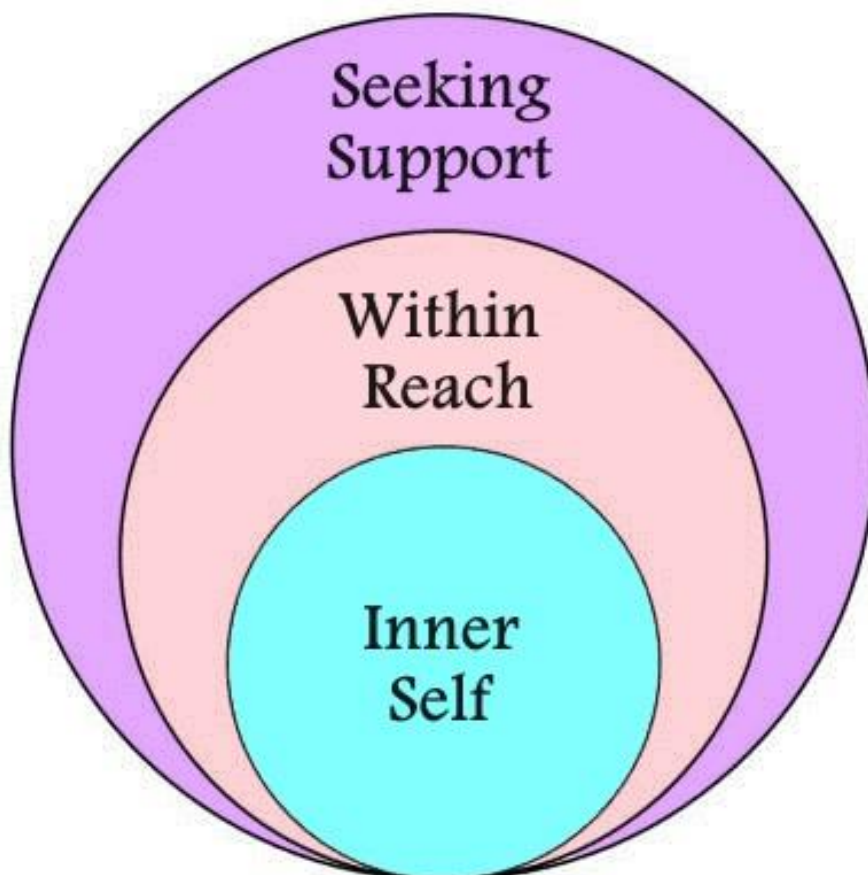
## Sustain

- To undergo, experience, or endure without giving way or yielding.
- To keep (a person, the mind, the spirit, etc.) from giving way, when under trial or affliction.

There is a lot involved when it comes to trauma as often a great deal of patience and persistence is required for the process of healing. One harsh reality is that in spite of trauma, no matter how serious or complex, eventually one goal for moving forward is to be able to **sustain** some level of stability so that growth and recovery can take place. Therefore, the following information is not about looking into the past in an effort to try resolve past trauma. Instead this worksheet is focused on identifying and then implementing a few basic skills and strategies for **sustaining** functioning and moving forward even if it is gradual and slow. Having basic tools to **sustain** some degree of forward momentum, in spite of occasional struggles or setbacks, is essential for long-term progress, strength and resilience.

Review the following list of tools for sustaining yourself through a difficult time period, event or episode. Keep in mind the rule of “quality over quantity” – It is better to try to master a few tools well rather than to try to work on a large amount and not use them well. Therefore when reviewing the following list, **try to pick some tools that you think will work for you. It may be a good idea to include at least one from each section**

### Three Layers for Tools that Help You “Sustain” in Times of Need:





## “Inner Self”

All that you need is just you (your “self”) and your brain to use these tools. No props or equipment needed. Therefore, these tools for sustaining during tough times are readily available as long as you are awake and ready to use them. Some of the tools in this layer include:

**SSM - Self Sustaining Messages** – SSM’s are simply meaningful but true statements we can repeat in our mind to build inner strength especially during times of trial. There are different types of SSM’s (They are similar when compared to one another)

- **Endurance** – Messages you can tell yourself to **hold on** or **hold out**. For example think about the messages you tell yourself to get through it when you are doing something unpleasant you know will end like sitting in the dentist chair. – *“Just a little while longer and I will get through this, don’t let go!”*
- **Reassurance** – Messages designed to **restore confidence** - *“I’ve got the strength to do this, I’ve done it before”- “I’m smart and I’m a survivor”*
- **Refocusing** – Shifting from negative thinking to a more positive and gratitude-based thoughts –

*“I’m stressed, I’m in pain, and I’m anxious; I’m confused and overwhelmed”*

**<<Shifting to more positive thoughts below>>**

*“I’m alive and surviving, the future is going to get better, I have people who care about me and need me, and I’m on the right track”*

- **Rethinking** – This is a “reality check” which involves trying to reframe something that may seem overwhelming or impossible into a more realistic attainable viewpoint.

*“This is the worst day of my life I am never going to get through this”*

**<<Rethinking more realistically then this becomes below>>**

*“This day stinks so far but like other days it will end and I will make it”*

### Other “Inner Self” Tools-

- Prayer – If you are a spiritual person and believe in the power of prayer then this can be an incredibly powerful tool for sustaining you through difficult challenges

**Self-Calming** – There are many ways to self-calm. Here are just a few:

- Breathing
- Meditating/Visualizing about something relaxing like laying on a beach
- Grounding – Using your senses to calm yourself by touching, smelling, listening, etc.
- Focusing on your body – Get out of your head and try to think about relaxing your body little by little



## “Within Reach”

These are also simple tools but still just as effective. “Within reach” tools require more than just thinking and they are probably available most of the time but not always, depending upon your circumstances. This list is pretty self-explanatory so pick a couple that work for you:

- Exercise
- Walking
- Running
- Bathing/Showering
- Reading
- Writing
- Art
- Music
- Nature
- Animals/Pets
- Other? \_\_\_\_\_

## “Seeking Support”

The tools listed here involve other people and may require advanced preparation. As humans we do better when we have a support system that prevents us from isolation, so focusing on some of these tools really is essential. Some examples of support based tools:

- Support Planning In Person – This involves planning ahead of time so that when you can, you have someone who is supportive with you.
- Support Planning – Long Distance – This involves doing what you can to make sure that you have some supportive others available to call or text when you need them
- Technology – There are certain apps and other supports available through your smart phone, tablet or laptop
- Community Supports – Joining a community group can be extremely empowering when it comes to coping and sustaining progress
- Professional Help – Although counselors are not usually available 24/7, being involved in formal therapy is an added way to improve your ability to cope and sustain your way through trials

## **CLOSING REVIEW:**

**What tools did you pick and why?**

**Discuss your plan for sustaining yourself during tough times using your selected tools**