


Apprentice
Series

Day Crafting

The Self-care Workbook



**Active rest
and wellbeing for
everyday flourishing**

By **Bruce Stanley**

- Pairing deep work with effective rest
- Improving self-care mindset and processing stress
- Wellbeing of mind and body for today and the future
- *See inside for more ...*

Day Crafting The Self-care Workbook

Active rest and wellbeing for everyday flourishing

By **Bruce Stanley**

Also available:

Day Crafting – The Introductory Workbook is the first book from the Apprentice Series and is a prerequisite for *this* workbook.

Day Crafting: The Body-clock Workbook

Day Crafting: The Productivity Workbook

Coming soon:

Day Crafting: The Change Workbook

The Self-care Workbook

Crafting involves intentionally focusing on each step of the process; an attention to detail that leads to a well-formed product. Crafted self-care allows you to refine each aspect of your wellbeing, from physical to mental health. In this shaping, you're ensuring that each action, each task, is deliberately made with your best days in mind.

In your Day Crafting workshop, self-care takes on a nuanced dimension. This workbook moves beyond the familiar territories of sleep, exercise, rest and nutrition to the intricate layers of emotions, thought processes, purpose and identity. Each moment of mindfulness, each healthy meal and restful night's sleep are the materials from which you craft your wellbeing.

The workbook contains exercises to manage stress, make self-care retreats and develop automatic habits. Throughout, there's an emphasis on striking a balance between intentional self-care improvements with periods of just being so that self-care doesn't turn into one more to-do list. It explores designing for both your immediate self-care needs and for your years to come – being kind to future you.

How does this workbook fit into the Apprentice Series? For comparison, the Body-clock Workbook looks at the day (and energy) as a whole and explores *when* we schedule work and rest. The Productivity Workbook zooms in on what we do with the part of the day we call work (paid or unpaid) and this Self-care Workbook covers rest, maintenance and a wide range of ideas relating to health and wellbeing.

By honing your tool-set, you enable yourself to craft better quality days enriched with resilience and health.



Shall we start?

Let's get warmed up. We will give our thinking about self-care a short stretch, starting with some simple enquiries.



What is the role of self-care in the *balance* of your days? How do you know when you need more? When and why do you change what you do? How do you know when you've done enough? Are you working on this because you have a problem around self-care to solve? How will you know when you've solved it?



The questions get more interesting ...

What does self-care mean to your elephant or rider? What does your self-care look like when other people are looking? Is your self-care made up of occasional isolated activities, a bit of 'me' time here and there? Is it fitted in as an afterthought, or is it much more systematic? Does it lean towards automatic habits or more conscious rituals? How can you improve or automate your self-care? Do you wait until you have a problem that needs fixing? Does someone else take over, as parents do for children? If you make some changes, what should you do more of and what should you do less of? What are your daily to-dos?

Boundaries and limitations

In your definition of self-care, where is the edge of *yourself*? Does *you* mean *you*, or does your sense of yourself extend to other things you're interconnected with, such as family, community, your 'tribe' and even the natural world?

And are you clear about the *limitations* of the care you can provide yourself? Some needs are *only* met in Connection with others or even with professional or expert help.

This warm-up is hopefully stretching your thinking. It is helping you clarify *your* definition of self-care.

Positively essential

Self-care should not be viewed as an indulgence or something you only do if you have time. Nor is it something that should be reserved as a reward only to be enjoyed once you've carried out other responsibilities. You don't need to prove the legitimacy of your need, nor worry too much about what is socially acceptable. And self-care isn't selfish.

I like the *positive* psychology emphasis: that self-care is enabling. If you see your purpose as being of service to others and being able to thrive and give your best, then *you* need to help and support yourself to do that. Day Crafting is about the skilled use of time, which involves designing days to give balance, but it is also about working out how to show up *with the energy required* to do the work or make the Connections.

The tasks in your day (and avoiding burnout) might absolutely depend on the effectiveness of your self-care.



Top five positive reasons for developing your self-care?

1

2

3

4

5

Mindset development as Day Crafting practice

If the previous page resonates with you, how does the *knowledge*, *ability* and *motivation* development map onto what you know about Day Crafting practice from the Introductory Workbook? Firstly, your motivation to learn and change happens when you've selected the problem to solve. The exercise on the previous page helps you relate these to your mindset. Then, within the daily rhythm of **design**, **craft** and **review**, you're looking for simple experiments to solve those problems.

At the **design** stage, when setting intentions regarding self-care and Preparing ahead of the day, you're choosing and defining what to do and when to do it – this involves *knowledge* and *motivation*. You use your *motivation* and *ability* to **craft** and live the day. At the **review** stage, you're thinking about the day's outcomes and observing if you are adhering (see below) to the self-care elements of your blueprint. Regarding new self-care practices, you're noticing if your *motivation* and *ability* were high enough and completing the learning circle by applying the learning to the design thinking ahead of the next day. This is deliberate and reflective practice. A critical question during the *review stage* is being able to tell if you've met your self-care needs. To know if it's worked.



How do you know when your self-care is enough?

If these last few pages feel **heavy** and **serious**, I promise this workbook will contain many of the lighter, joyous and delightful elements of self-care you may be here for.

Adherence

This is our *ability* and *motivation* to follow a course of remedial or preventative actions that either we have chosen, or a healthcare professional has recommended.

Most adults struggle with adherence, mainly when the self-care actions required are difficult, painful or complicated.

A way forward is to redesign (in dialogue with any professionals involved) the action so that it comes within your *knowledge*, *ability* or *motivation* levels – or raise one or more of those levels to match the challenge of the action.

The reason our practice system sets defaults

It is hardly surprising that self-care in certain circumstances is hard to master. Each day we have self-care tasks to accomplish that are easy to leave on default because doing anything else means using energy the elephant wants to preserve. *A wise Day Crafting skill is to know how much to attempt beyond the defaults.* Setting small, achievable steps is good practice.



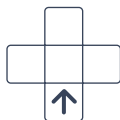
Each day we have to negotiate a decision flow with as little conscious effort expended as possible. It might look like this.



This, *above*, is a problem. Our elephants don't like the cognitive effort (and aren't much interested in any self-care beyond survival anyway). Our riders can be aspirational about future self-care and wellbeing ideas, but the push to default to the easiest habitual activities is hard to overcome – but that is a familiar problem if you've developed your practice through the Introductory Workbook. We will explore many tools, tactics and elephant training ideas throughout this workbook.

We need a better system than this, a balanced combination of **easy-to-stick-with** and **effective-and-enhancing**.

Craft maintenance first



If in doubt ... if you don't have time for anything else, craft maintenance first. It's a way of prioritising the core basics of self-care and it is the first part of maximising your **energy** for QIL and QAB. Purpose is the second part of that energy dynamic. If maintenance is *energy in*, then purpose *focuses* (and Filters) that energy to maximise its use.

With better energy...

1. ... you can accomplish whatever you need to do in the day to a higher skill level, whether physical, cognitive or emotional craftwork. One thing denoting master craftspeople is their economy and efficiency of effort; they can do more with less.
2. ... you (your rider) can manage your elephant more easily. Your elephant can function quite well on limited energy, so to be more integrated and make wiser decisions, you need to give the advantage to the rider. Related to this is the link between mood, emotion and energy. For most of us, with tiredness comes our personal collection of less helpful traits like irritability, rash decision making and grumpiness.
3. ... you have some energy spare to divert from your habitual defaults. If you tackle a complex or erratic day, break a long-standing bad habit, or even go on an adventure, energy in reserve will help.
4. ... you can make better estimations and think more accurately about the future, which is vital for taming busyness. Preparation is a core design thinking activity undertaken primarily by your rider, who operates under several biases that better cognitive energy helps overcome.
5. ... you can stay more healthy and avoid illness. Your motivation to exercise and put effort into maintaining healthy self-care habits and rituals will be higher.

Here are some example maintenance tasks. You're probably doing a lot of them already, but if not, you can use this list to **tick which you want to consider more**. You might even begin to track new habits in the coming weeks.

- Best sleep possible
- Exercise, being active, cardiovascular fitness
- Good nutritious diet
- Effective rest
- Drinking enough water
- Closing the stress response cycle (page 68)
- Attentive Connection with friends and loved ones
- Getting fresh air
- Natural sunlight
- Remembering to take prescribed medication
- Avoiding unnecessary illness through good hygiene
- Looking after your teeth
- Stretching more often
- Looking after your eyes
- Making time for delight, awe, enchantment, transcendence
- Listening to your deeper moods, emotions and thoughts
- Being still, doing nothing, time in solitude
- Standing up, moving more often
- Meditating
- Being outside in nature more often
- Dancing, Playing, laughing
- Sharing physical affection
- Doing more activities mindfully
- Treating and rewarding yourself
- Improving the environment around you
- Developing your purpose and intentions



Rest fuels work

Rest and leisure span both QAB and QIL; they are things we *do* and *experience* internally. Because *work* (paid or unpaid) gets so much of our attention and planning, it is easy for us to let *rest* happen and not give it much scrutiny, but that is to dramatically underestimate the importance of rest in our overall energy balance. Here's a striking illustration.

You might have heard of the heroic 10,000 hours it takes craftspeople of many disciplines to achieve mastery. This (fairly spurious) figure was based on the deliberate practice habits of professional musicians. You don't often hear about the *12,500 hours of effective rest* (not including sleep) necessary to fuel the 10,000 hours of work.



For every hour of high-quality deep work in your day, you need an hour of effective rest.

It's interesting to notice the pattern that emerges when comparing the daily schedules of many writers, artists, composers and scientists (read *Daily Rituals* by *Mason Curry*). Their deep work fits into a very productive three or four hours each day (with a bit of *shallow work* here and there) and matches rigorously protected rest and leisure. They knew the latter fuelled the former (and often provided the aha Moments vital to their creativity).

The exercise opposite is intended to be Playful. It highlights the difference in the attitudes and intentions we bring to our work versus our rest. I expect you've encountered a job description relating to work, but **what might your job description be for your rest time?** Remember that, done well, your rest is where you will be, besides other things, getting the energy back you need for your productivity.

Who am I when I'm not at work?

What is your rest, leisure or your *not-at-work* identity? Some of us put so much intention and expectation into our career identities that we don't know who we are at the weekend and asking ourselves *What do I want to do?* comes with a helping of existential dread. Some



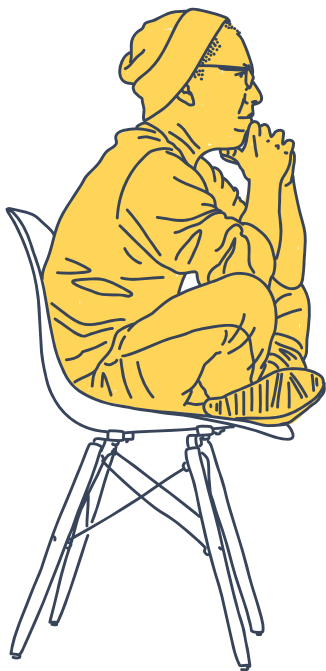
find free time much harder to enjoy than work time. **Perhaps this is your self-care challenge** and regarding rest, you're actually at 1 (page 18). If that's the case, break the challenge down into knowledge, ability or motivation development steps.

- Reading is the most popular rest activity. Not for you or not enough? Okay, move on ...
- Research shows that Connection (with others or/and with nature) is very effective. Get outside with a friend.
- Add in some exercise. (Not necessarily skateboarding.)
- Add in some structure that makes sticking at it easier. A good solution here is to join a group of some kind – the others will encourage you to keep coming.
- Get inspiration from your friends. What do they do to rest?
- Make your rest time productive if that's what works for you. Build a model railway or start a hobby or craft that develops skill and results in a product or artefact.
- Join a community choir.
- Volunteer.

Finding out who you are when you're not at work could actually be a lot of fun.

Clock time: is when we structure blocks of tasks to the clock. The task might not be completed, but we move on to the next one because the clock says so.

Event time: is task oriented; we move on to the next task or activity when we've completed the first task or because we feel like it.



QIL and self-awareness

How do we get balanced insights about the quality of our inner life? It is easier to be objective about the topics in the previous section (we can quantify our breaks, exercise and nutrition). It is harder to be objective about our inner lives because our inner gaze is skewed with subjectivity, bias and often, negativity. To practice self-care in our QIL, we first need to develop **self-awareness**. This doesn't mean self-absorption, rumination, recrimination, over-thinking or even, the

seemingly positive, *self-esteem*, each of which takes us away from the judgement-free *reality* we need as a neutral starting point free from external comparisons. *Here's the self-awareness challenge:*

Effective self-awareness means, firstly, that you can notice *that you have* a QIL problem that you can observe with a degree of compassionate objectivity. At times, this may be close to impossible. Secondly, you may try to understand what is causing the problem. It is hard to do this with detachment, especially if you're experiencing hot emotions or more chronic QIL issues in your mindset, psychology or mental health. Then all you need to do is find some effective tools and interventions you have the knowledge, ability and motivation to use – again, not easy.

My argument is that it is much harder than most of us think to have a balanced self-awareness from which we can make wise decisions; we can't see our biases and we are used to being unkind to ourselves. Balanced self-awareness will include a degree of acceptance of our imperfections and tolerance of our inner chatter. Wise self-awareness might include giving ourselves less of a hard time, noticing moods, stress and emotions earlier and knowing how to manage them. It might involve learning when to take remedial action and when to ask for help.

The **default mode network (DMN)** is a network of interacting brain regions active when our mind is not focused on the outside world, often called mind wandering or daydreaming. It's engaged during passive rest and self-referential thought when you're involved in mental time travel, considering others' perspectives and reflecting on yourself.

Where is your attention?

A valuable tool to use when developing self-awareness is to observe what state your mind is in. It's not about looking for problems but noticing *what is* – ideally, without judgement. This observation is similar to the Design Objectives related conscious enquiry (page 23) and the energy-related *affective circumplex* in the Introductory Workbook.

Most people are in the DMN (above) more often than they'd imagine. It is vital for creativity and problem-solving, but at times, it can be a problematic place to be with thoughts seemingly captured by past events, future worries or self-recrimination.

We start, not by judging ourselves but by observing, kindly.

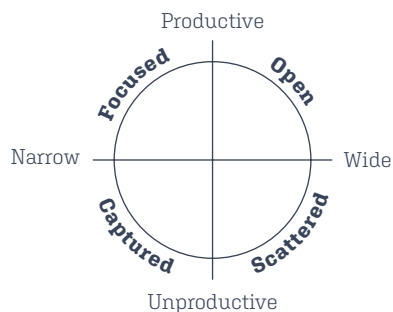


Tool: Observing Attention

When I'm mindful, I want to notice where my attention is, so I can accept my mind's state and gently refocus it if necessary.

What is it:

This model helps you notice where your attention is. It might be *focused* on one thing or *open* to many things in a positive or productive state. In a negative or unproductive state, it may be *captured* by one thing or *scattered*, unable to focus.



Use it to:

Once you're familiar with these states, you can use this tool to observe or notice where your attention is and as a basis for improving your attention or for developing mindfulness.

If you feel like you want to try retelling or reframing your past, here are three gentle exercises to experiment with.



Three Good Things Exercise

1. Think about a past day that you perceive as negative.
2. Write down three good things that came out of that day. They could be lessons learned, strengths discovered, or positive changes due to the events.
3. Reflect on these positive outcomes and how they have contributed to who you are today.

Reframing Exercise

1. Write down a brief description of a past event that you perceive as negative.
2. Identify any negative thoughts or beliefs you have about this event.
3. Challenge these negative thoughts. Are they accurate? Are they helpful?
4. Write down a more positive or neutral way of thinking about the event. How can you view this event in a way that is more beneficial or empowering?

The Perspective Shift Exercise

1. Write down a brief description of a past day that you perceive as negative.
2. Imagine you are an objective observer of this day, like a journalist or historian. Write down how this observer might describe the day. Try to focus on facts and avoid emotional language.
3. Reflect on the differences between your original description and the observer's description. What new insights or perspectives does this exercise provide?

The Body-clock Workbook includes a section on creating **Remarkable Days** which complements the idea here. "The **positive story** you can tell about your life will in part be made up of extraordinary Moments of pride, experience and accomplishment: first times, beautiful places, challenges overcome, deep flow – all rich in sensory detail and Connection."

Developing positive QIL

Self-care of your QIL is not just about fixing what's wrong, it is also about *creating* subjective wellbeing, happiness and flourishing. Alleviating the causes of negative QIL gets us, at best, to *neutral*. How can we create *positive* QIL? The good news is that you can work on creating positive QIL without having fixed all the causes of negative QIL. **Some people put most of their efforts into this strategy.**



Positive QIL is much more than chirpy emotions and having a bounce in your step. Here's a more comprehensive definition.

- **Positive emotion:** Experiencing positive moods and emotions like happiness, joy, gratitude, love and inspiration.
- **Sensory pleasure:** In-the-Moment sensations enhanced through attention and savouring.
- **Engagement:** Being deeply involved in activities that use your skills, leading to a sense of flow or complete absorption in the task (and often a forgetting of emotion) (page 67).
- **Connection:** Having positive, healthy relationships and social Connections. Also Connection to nature.
- **Purpose:** Having a sense of meaning or direction in life; being part of and contributing to something larger than yourself.
- **Meaningful Progress:** Productivity, achievement, and mastery of things for their own sake; striving to better yourself.
- **Fitness:** From exercise to NEAT (page 36), this includes physical health, energy, and vitality. Physical activity has been linked to mood, identity and psychological wellbeing.

Positive QIL, while experienced mentally, is influenced by the other design objectives. Maintenance harmonised with your body-clock enhances mood and energy. For some people, purpose is fundamental, and a good day might not include intense positive emotions typically associated with happiness (this is also true of flow states). Lastly, Moments rich in sensory pleasure, although passing, should never be dismissed as hedonism.

What is the Day Crafting action? Knowing your specific recipe for positive QIL, setting intentions and designing blueprints to include more opportunities for it.



Your strategy for positive QIL will be unique, and there are many evidence-based interventions to try. I've chosen the following one because it's incredibly adaptable and draws on your self-awareness. The *free* **VIA Character Strengths Survey** gives you a personalised psychological profile

of your Strengths that you can use in many aspects of your Day Crafting (which is why Strengths are one of the six methods).

A simple place to start is to use your Signature Strengths (the top results from the survey) more often in your days. Strengths help you align your intentions more authentically and they are often present in activities that you find engaging and fulfilling. They help you choose activities that are purposeful as well as help you enhance sensory pleasure and Connection.

After you've taken the survey, you'll find some examples (on page 73) that link Strengths to each element in the definition for positive QIL from the previous page.

Tool: Signature Strengths



In just about any context of my day (tasks, relationships, roles, rest, hobbies etc) I want to use my Strengths, so I can achieve the best outcomes using what I do best and conserve energy by working with the Strengths I am skilled with.

What is it:

Your Signature Strengths will be a handful between three and five selected from the top eight. It is up to you to consider which you feel most represents your core identity and purpose. The default choice would be the top five from your results.

Use it to:

Use these as a guide as you Prepare projects and blueprints to experience more positive emotions, relationships and achievements. The more you use your Strengths, the more they can boost your wellbeing, capacity for daily Meaningful Progress and resilience for life's challenges.

Take the 15-20 minute test here, visit this website:

daycrafting.pro.viasurvey.org

Automate your self-care

Your self-care shouldn't become an arduous to-do list – quite the opposite. I'm encouraging you to work out the *least* effort and Preparation you need to do to improve your self-care. If that is achieved, you can hopefully enjoy the benefits of more energy, less stress, greater purpose and longer, independent health. There is work to do, but it is in Preparation, and blueprints are a way of reusing designs for days. We must include just enough to improve our defaults, remain reactive to changing self-care needs and give ourselves the best chance to adhere to the more challenging self-care tasks.

Why design blueprints in advance? Why Prepare? It's because Preparation is really where self-discipline lies. If you leave decisions about what to do next, to the Moment itself, especially if you are tired or stressed, your rider can be quickly overruled by your elephant. An extreme example of Preparation and blueprint design for me is scheduling, which isn't my default preference, but when I started Day Crafting, the first experiments I ran with tightly scheduled days were for rest days. The results were astonishing, making the days far more restorative. Preparation brings the benefit of removing choices and reducing decision fatigue.

Some automations

- **Set up routines:** Set up some patterns for the critical elements (sleep, meal times, exercise, active rest) and stick to the same times. Work with your body-clock.
- **Use reminders:** Use your diary to repeat activities and block out time in advance automatically. Set up notifications for new habits and measure your progress in ways that motivate daily Meaningful Progress (Intro Workbook Page 52).
- **Passive tracking:** Use digital technology, e.g. a smart watch + phone, to give you trends on an astonishing array of actionable metrics to inform self-care improvements.
- **Subscribe:** Consider automatic subscriptions to meal plans (or treats, fine foods etc) or treatments, including massage, coaching, or spiritual direction. Or apps that offer self-care, self-development or even workouts.

Use the exercise opposite to think about the automatic self-care habits you already have or could add (start simple) using ideas in the workbook so far as inspiration.

Morning self-care routines. Every day (ish) I could ...



Some ideas: Quick stretch. Sunlight exposure. First coffee *after* 90mins. Mindful breakfast. Listen to podcasts while doing chores. Drink infused water. Ride your bike to work. Outdoor meetings. Take an eye-exercise break. Dance while tidying up. Walk during lunch. Mindful gardening. Stand and stretch every hour.

Afternoon self-care routines

Nap. Connect with a friend. Herbal tea. Take the stairs rather than the lift. Play and laugh with the kids or friends. Make time for Connection. Use a standing desk. Meditation. Workout. Shut-down ritual to end work. Exercise snacking. Harvest some fresh ingredients to cook with. Slow down, stop rushing.

Evening self-care routines

Family dinner with no screens or devices. Active leisure. Cook a new recipe or bulk cook future lunches or dinners. Creative hobby. Watch a good movie. Dance party while cooking dinner. Stretching before bed. Laugh. Sing with a choir. Review the day in your Design Notes. Perfect your bedtime ritual.

Celebrations, rewards and treats

You can put all sorts of self-care activities into your blueprints. They don't all need to be remedial or preventative. You can make time for everything that boosts your energy, purpose and quality of life. Some of these are very effective at strengthening identity change and helping reinforce healthy habits and behaviour.

What are regular examples of flourishing, enjoyment, Connection and the good life in your blueprints?



Including these things can be challenging if your mindset or baseline mood isn't naturally what's called *positive affect*. I am temperamentally like this, but I've long since learned not to listen to my inner Labourer but to be Architect and Mystic – even when I don't feel like it. One example is to include each of the following ideas into my blueprints – along with other positive practices like social Connection, Play and active rest.

Celebration

What it is: An in-the-Moment, instant reaction.

Examples: A celebratory shout, a fist-pump, jumping up and down, ringing a bell, a red X on a wall chart.

Use it for reinforcing positive behavioural changes and promoting a positive mindset.

Reward

What it is: A future inducement, something reserved for a later time, requiring effort or merit.

Examples: A bottle of bubbly, a prize, a special experience, recognition, something to treat your senses.

Use it for boosting motivation and ongoing practice, serving as an incentive to tackle difficult tasks.

Treat

What it is: An unexpected or unearned gift, present, or service. Something to lift your mood.

Examples: A surprise sensory pleasure like a special meal or a bouquet of flowers, an act of kindness or generosity.

Use it for enjoying a positive experience without earning it in any way.

- Which of these do you enjoy the most?
- Are you better at one of these?
- Which of these helps motivate your QAB?
- Which one boosts your QIL?

How often are your days as they could be?

Day Crafting is a set of practices and tools to help you make a good life one day at a time.

For makers of refreshing days

“Bruce provides a great deal of theory and detail, but the workbook quickly puts the theory into practice, allowing you to learn through experience. Day Crafting your self-care will give back so much more than it takes from you. I live with disability and chronic illness, but thanks to the Day Crafting process, I have learned to value self-care and craft the best of each day. I prioritise my wellbeing and the tasks needed to look after myself. I no longer feel guilty for resting.”



Emma Major

Artist, poet and pioneer minister

#Self-care
#Wellbeing

#ActiveRest
#Health



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