

Practicing Self-Care While Advocating: Supportive Tips for Survivors and Their Allies

Prepared by the Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre

Eliminating gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) requires long-term, ongoing advocacy, and this advocacy is often led by those who have experienced GBSV. To help support survivors and their allies we have put together this list of tips and resources for practicing self-care while advocating.

Before An Event

- **Dress Comfortably:** Whether indoor, outdoor, or both, dress in practical, weather-appropriate clothing that you know is unlikely to cause blisters or discomfort.
- **Check-In:** Let people know where you'll be, how they can keep in touch with you, and share your check-in plan. Work with other advocates to create a safety plan for during the event.
- **Consider Your Boundaries:** Protests can be highly activating environments. Reflect on what your boundaries will be and create a plan for how you will take care of yourself during and after the event. You could discuss and develop this plan with a trusted support person.
- **Pack Your Bag:** This could include your phone, food, water, medications (if needed), mask, sanitizer, and/or tissues. Consider adding tools for self-care.
- **Know Your Rights:** Review any necessary laws or policies.¹

During An Event

- **Support Yourself and Others:** Regularly touch base with fellow advocates, organizers, and event participants. Try to always travel with a partner and stay near your fellow advocates. If you see another advocate being isolated, bring others towards them to check-in.
- **Body Language:** Use assertive body language, keep your head up, and stay aware of your surroundings, including new and/or unknown persons.
- **Self-Care in the Moment:**
 - Take 3 deep breaths, noting each inhale and exhale.
 - Protests often involve a lot of sensory stimulation, such as sudden and unexpected loud noises or shouting. Consider bringing headphones or earplugs.²
 - Use [grounding exercises](#), such as describing an object in detail.
 - Give yourself permission to leave.
- **Photos/Videos:** Obtain consent and do not post images where others are identifiable on social media without consent.

¹ For more information on your legal rights, see Canadian Civil Liberties Association Tip Sheet "[Know Your Rights Guide to Protesting](#)". For information on Student Rights, review your schools [Student Code of Conduct](#).

² Be mindful that you still need to be able to respond to emergency. Consider a buddy-system where your partner can alert you if there is an emergency.

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After-Care

- **Your Body:** Protests can be very intense, and your body has likely released stress hormones that impact your ability to relax, sleep, and feel safe, particularly if the event (re)activated personal or vicarious trauma.¹ Practicing self-care can help restore a sense of balance.
 - Consider having a shower or bath and changing into comfy clothes.²
 - Stay hydrated and nourish your body.³
 - Do at least five minutes of mindfulness and/or grounding activities, such as yoga, deep breathing, or guided meditation.³
- **Social Media:** Once home, try to avoid social media and/or engaging with current events or media that overlap with GBSV for at least a few hours. ⁴If you can, de-screen and unplug.⁵
- **Connect to Sources of Support:** You are not alone. Whether it's to decompress, celebrate a successful event, or get additional support, there are confidential, non-judgemental, and survivor-centred supports available to you.

On-Campus Supports

- [Tri-Campus Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre](#)
- [UTSG Health & Wellness Centre](#)
- [UTM Health & Counselling Centre](#)
- [UTSC Health & Wellness Centre](#)
- [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#)
- Find more information on tri-campus supports [here](#)

Off-Campus Supports

- [24/7 Crisis Support Lines](#)
- [Toronto-Area GBSV Counselling Resources](#)
- [Toronto-Area Legal Resources](#)

Additional Resources

- The Womxn Project "[Protest & Self Care Guide](#)"
- TherapistAid.com's "[Grounding Techniques](#)"
- Ineffable Living's "[Top 4 Steps to Practice PTSD Mindfulness Exercises \(Safely\)](#)"
- Canadian Civil Liberties Association Tip Sheet "[Know Your Rights Guide to Protesting](#)"

Endnotes

- 1 Jocelyn. (2019). *Protest & Self Care Guide*. The Womxn Project: Educate-Art-Act. <https://thewomxnproject.org/protest-and-self-care-guidelines/>
- 2 Nasir, I. (May 23). *Balancing Self-Care and Social Activism*. <https://www.israanasir.com/articles/activism-selfcare>
- 3 Sgobba, C. (2020). *How to Take Care of Your Body After a Day of Protesting*. Self.com. <https://www.self.com/story/self-care-after-protesting>
- 4 Sgobba, C. (2020). *How to Take Care of Your Body After a Day of Protesting*. Self.com. <https://www.self.com/story/self-care-after-protesting>
- 5 Jocelyn. (2019). *Protest & Self Care Guide*. The Womxn Project: Educate-Art-Act. <https://thewomxnproject.org/protest-and-self-care-guidelines/>
- 5 Nasir, I. (May 23). *Balancing Self-Care and Social Activism*. <https://www.israanasir.com/articles/activism-selfcare>

³ For more tips, see Christa Sgobba's article "[How to Take Care of Your Body After a Day of Protesting](#)."