WHAT DOES SELF-CARE MEAN TO YOU?

Youth Mental Health Program
Western Australia
Youth Photo Exhibition
Left to Right: Youth Representative Steven, Youth Mental Health Director Warwick, competition winner Aayushi, competition winner Jessica, Youth Mental Health Program Clinical Planner Angela.

Youth Mental Health Photo Competition 2016

In 2015, the Youth Mental Health Program established a Youth Reference Group to help plan, develop and evaluate youth mental health services.

To coincide with Mental Health Week 2016, the Youth Reference Group and the Youth Mental Health Program hosted a youth photo competition to promote mental health awareness.

To enter, young people aged 13-24 submitted a photo that showed what self-care means to them, and up to 100 words describing the photo.

Over forty entries were received and judged by a youth panel.

The photos were exhibited, and winners announced, during Mental Health Week in October 2016.

For more information, contact the Youth Mental Health Program, ph (08) 9287 5700.
“caring for each other helps us care for ourselves.”

Ali, 19 years

Photography is my passion; anytime I feel stressed, taking photos puts a smile on my face. Whenever I see these guys I want to take their photo. I don’t have my family in Australia but they are like big brothers. Their shirts are supporting the Tamil Eelam cricket team, whose players had to leave Sri Lanka to find a safe place to live. When they play cricket, they forget their pain and trauma and photographing them helps me forget mine. Our culture and religion are not the same, but we are like family. Caring for each other helps us care for ourselves.
Danny, 15 years

This is a photo of me, sitting on the edge of a rock, looking over the ocean, at Mindarie Marina. My photo relates to self-care in a unique way. It shows from a first person point of view how I like to spend my spare time to relax and unwind, especially when I am stressed out. Making time to allow myself time to think, and focus on the positive things in my life. The calm steady water is symbolic, and although you can’t hear the smooth sounds of the water rippling, it is very therapeutic and allows me to relax.

"...focus on the positive things in my life."
...letting your mind loose...

Alethea, 14 years

Giving yourself some time off of everything by letting your mind loose and free from stress is one of the greatest factors of self-care. Just relaxing and enjoying being by yourself, engrossed in a hobby like drawing, lets your mind and yourself feel eased and calm.
“...keep our mindsets positive and upbeat...”

Prize Winner - Aayushi, 15 years

My photo depicts what I see self-care and mental health to be. It is nourishing your body with healthy and vibrant foods, listening to positive and soulful music. I have also included drawing as a form of meditation and mindfulness. As our lives are so busy and active it is important for us to get some silence, and keep our mindsets positive and upbeat, hence the quote. The fluffy socks convey the message of home and comfort. No matter where you are, a form of comfort to care for yourself will always be appreciated.
Rye, 18 years

My photo is one of many I set up and took of me and my boyfriend walking along a beach. The footprints represent where I’ve come from and whilst it’s not shown in the photo, it shows me moving forward with my self-care. My boyfriend has become my self-care over the past year, teaching me the importance of being kind and true to myself. He keeps me grounded and safe and reminds me why I need to keep pushing forward to reach my goals. I wouldn’t have made it this far without him.

“...keep pushing forward to reach my goals.”
“...where i go to clear my head...”

Oran, 16 years
This photo represents my passion for the ocean; it is where I go to clear my head and get a fresh perspective on everything. It makes me realise that Mother Nature still has the most power. After taking photos in the ocean or just swimming with mates, I feel grounded when I get back onto land and appreciate the raw power of the ocean. Through taking pictures like this, I hope to spread different perspectives that not everyone may have the opportunity to see. The ocean is so raw.
Jarrod, 14 years

This self-portrait was taken using a tripod with a remote shutter. The photo is of a person taking a walk through the bush while listening to music. The music is helping them to relax, and take their mind off their troubles.

“...taking a walk through the bush...”
“...keep active...”

Taylor, 18 years
This photo shows me in a state downhill race. It relates to self-care as this is my sport that I do to keep active and act as a stress reliever.
“...stop and smell the roses...”

Senuri, 15 years
This photo is entitled “Stop and Smell the Roses”. I believe that in our increasingly busy lives it is essential that we take the time to enjoy the little things, to take a break, to centre ourselves so that we are not overwhelmed by everything happening around us. Taking a little time out of everyday to stop and just breathe, relax and take in the moment helps me take care of my mental and emotional health. This photo reminds me that no matter how busy you are, you always have time to stop and smell the roses.
**Rebecca, 16 years**

I took this photo of my younger cousin as we were running around, during a family picnic at Kings Park. It highlights the importance of educating younger generations on mental health in efforts to destigmatise and rid it of negative connotations. Also encouraging self love and acceptance is extremely vital as it all starts with our children.

“...encouraging self love and acceptance...”
Sivan, 17 years
For me the beach is one of the best places to relax and to enjoy myself. Spending it with good friend benefits that enjoyment and lets your emotions flourish. We used to come home from school every day excited to come back here. It was like a local paradise to us, and it didn’t matter how bad our day was, this place made it all better. It was a place to let go, and it became our second home.

“...a place to let go...”
“...calm and relaxed and at peace...”

Georgia, 17 years
My photo is of me wrapped up in a blanket at the beach. The beach is my favourite place, going there makes me feel so calm and relaxed and at peace. It’s the most amazing feeling, hearing the waves crash and feeling the breeze and dipping my feet in the water whilst watching the sun go down. Nothing compares.
“...telling herself positive things...”

Sophie, 13 years
I think this photo relates to self-care by showing a young girl telling herself positive things instead of bringing herself down, something that I think most kids my age do.
"...spending a bit of time outside..."

Jacinta, 17 years

Self-care at its simplest, is finally working up enough energy after a long draining week to have that replenishing shower. I used the outside setting as a symbol of nature and how spending a bit of time outside your bedroom can really benefit your health. Moreover, a much unnoticed side effect of mental illness for some sufferers is not being able to gather enough energy to shower or even bath, but once they do they feel as though they can conquer the world. It's as simple as pushing yourself to shower at least 3/7 days a week.
**Brianna, 13 years**

My photo relates to self-care because we all have hobbies and one of them can either be reading or writing. Personally I prefer reading because it can take you to places you can hardly imagine but writing, it helps you create reality you can never live in your life. I prefer writing fanfiction.

“...take you to places you can hardly imagine...”
“...helps me to relax...”

Claudia, 15 years
In my photo I have run a bath with a bath bomb, and surrounded with candles, incense and healing crystals. This photo portrays what helps me to relax.
Jamie, 15 years

My photo that is used relates to self-care because I have used the hands to symbolise a heart on the horse and in my life. Horses free me from all the worries in the world and help me to breathe and enjoy myself without any worries. It helps realise I have both my horse and myself to care about.
“a hug can help heal”

Abi, 15 years
A hug can help heal. It says things we can’t always articulate. Self-care is about knowing when we need that hug. It’s about knowing when to ask for help. Tough times are always easier with the support people that love us and they don’t always need to be human.
Aoife, 14 years
Mental health means a lot to me. It’s like a beach because we have those times where life seems like a tsunami. Everything is getting wrecked, being broken. We feel destroyed in our self. We then have to build up the strength and courage to fix what has been broken. Sometimes we can’t do it naturally so we need extra help. Then times start to relax where everything is calm, we think everything is going well. But that can change in a wave. It’s like you’re stuck in a rip, you can’t get out. That’s when life savers come and rescue you. Times may tear us down but we always have the strength to get ourselves out.

“...strength and courage to fix what has been broken.”
"...makes me feel at home."

Indiana, 13 years
This is self-care because the relaxation of the beach is amazing, it makes me feel at home. It is my second home to me. I have chosen to do a photo of the shells being focused and the beach in the background. I think it shows a lot about me because me and my family love going to the beach all the time. It’s my favourite thing to do.
…i love hearing him play."

Jahia, 16 years

My brother and I have been going down to the Fremantle markets ever since I can remember. It's something we do with our Dad and we love hanging out there on a Saturday afternoon, eating yummy food and walking around Freo. My brother always plays the piano at the markets, and although I never tell him, he is really good, and I love hearing him play. I snapped this photo of him on my dad’s phone when the markets had just closed. I love the light and composition of this photo.
Imogen, 18 years

I set this photo up, and had my dad take it because I was the happiest I had been in a long time. I just remember thinking how lucky I was to live in such a beautiful part of Australia. There is not a doctor or psychologist in the world that could have made me feel as healthy and happy as I did in this waterfall. I think engaging in this type of self-care can give a person some of the most important and rewarding experiences of their lives.

“...happiest i had been in a long time.”
“...maintain a healthy lifestyle”

Jerome, 15 years

This is a photo of my twin sister and I in our backyard exercising. My sister is shy and reserved and at times has no confidence. The time we spend together helps us both to maintain a healthy lifestyle without her leaving the surroundings she is comfortable in. Exercising together makes us want to eat well and maintain a healthy lifestyle. We don’t need our parents to spend money for us to be healthy.
Jessica, 22 years

This is a photo of me competing in the weekly Strive athletics competition; this is the top bend of the 200m race. For me health and fitness has always been the way I care for myself. While I am running I’m not thinking about anything else other than the race, it’s like I get to leave everything else behind for that short amount of time and run free. Running especially is a great way for me to clear my mind and keeps me fresh for tasks and challenges that come up in day to day life.

“...keeps me fresh for tasks and challenges that come up in day to day life.”
Laura M, 16 years
Spending time at the beach with friends during sunset, taking a break from life, and having fun at the beach is beneficial for your mental health.

Maisie, 13 years
In my photo the bird has a tail feather missing. To me, self-care means that you don’t all have to look the same. You have to find what makes you happy and what sets you free. The photo reminds me of freedom.

“...find what makes you happy...”
“...taking a break from life...”
Kayla, 22 years

This photo is of my daughter Haylee, she means a lot to me and I love being a mother to daughter. I love being part of a loving family, and I feel safe for being a part of a family that want the best for me.

“...being part of a loving family....”
“...the little joys in life.”

Madeleine, 19 years
Spending time with my son reminds me of the little joys in life.
Cheyenne, 19 years

This is a photograph of Elephant Rocks in Denmark, about 5 hours south of where I live. Contrary to first impressions, I didn’t use this photo to say that the beach is a part of my self-care regime. I struggle daily with the idea of not being able to control everything around me. I find landscape/scenic photography soothing and encouraging because it requires me to step out of my controlling comfort zone and accept things for how they come. It reminds me that sometimes I cannot control the terrain; however I can control my perspective of it.

“...step out of my controlling comfort zone...”
“...spending time in nature away from technology.”

Lydia, 17 years

This photo is of my dog Teddy on my local beach. Teddy is running towards me and at this moment he is in the air, his tongue is out and he looks like he doesn’t have a care in the world. Part of my self-care is spending time in nature away from technology. I love the beach, the sound of the ocean, feeling the sand between my toes, swimming, watching all the happy dogs and people, and soaking in the sun. Looking at Teddy running along the beach always makes me feel happy, calm and puts a smile on my face.
Laura R, 17 years
Dogs are man’s best friend. By walking your dog you are caring for the dog’s body as well as your body. My dog takes as much care for my family as we take for him.

"...walking your dog..."
“...dogs make me smile and happy.”

Taylah, 18 years
My photo is me with my dogs in the car on the way to the dog beach, which is one of my favourite things to do when I am stressed. My dogs and all the other dogs make me smile and happy. The water is pretty and relaxing.
"...feeling the sand slip through my toes."

Shinah, 16 years

I’m fond of going to the beach and feeling the sand slip through my toes. It helps me clear my head. Hearing the waves smash into each other with abstract grace makes me forget about everything and all the minor issues leave my mind.
Prize Winner - Jessica, 21 years

This is a photo I took of my room during my last hospital admission. I think it is important when considering self-care to think of it not only as a preventative mechanism but as a recovery one. It’s incredibly important for my long term wellbeing for me to acknowledge when things are not going so well and when I might need some assistance to get back on track. By taking steps for recovery – steps that are indeed the essence of self-care - when things start to get difficult, prevents what I’m going through from becoming worse and more challenging for me to pull myself out of in the long term.

“...acknowledge when things are not going so well...”
“...still have fun, still be childlike...”
Elle, 15 years
This is a photo of my two best friends, dressing up like we used to when we were younger, running through the crops on our farm. The photo relates to self-care, because as we grow up as teenagers, we stress about our self-image, school work, our bodies, social media. The photo reflects that we can still have fun, still be childlike, have a moment without stress of being a teenager, reconnect with our friends and just being you.

Caitlin, 13 years
My photo shows how peaceful you can be if you look after yourself. The water shows how relaxed the person is and how cleared their mind is. The smoothie represents how she is taking care of her body and not just eating junk food or soft drink all the time, and the flower shows how she is not inside watching TV, she is outside and observing nature. The reason her feet are in the water is because it shows how she’s relaxing and clearing her mind.

“...taking care of her body...”
Krystal, 16 years  
Serina, 14 years  
Joshua, 15 years  
Sylvia, 16 years  
Madison, 13 years

In our photo it represents our friendship and the way we support each other. We pick one another up when someone is feeling down, and do our best to make sure we are happy. We'll always be there for one another, no matter what.

“...always be there for one another, no matter what...”
“...live in the moment...”

James, 14 years

This photograph shows a person with their feet in the air, starring at the blue sky. A person needs to know their surrounds and embrace nature to open up their mind and live in the moment.
Tahlia, 15 years

My photo is of my sister in the ocean jumping in happiness at sunset on our local beach. This shows how you need to get outside in the sunshine and the ocean and find the joys in life.

“...find the joys in life”
“...pure happiness, calm and contentedness.”

_Tori, 17 years_

For as long as I can remember, the ocean and the sea has always instilled in me a sense of calm. When I look at this photo, it also brings back many happy memories of days spent with my family, floating away on the ocean. This photo speaks to me of my senses – the smell, the sound of waves gently lapping the shore or the side of our boat, the blue of the sea, the taste of the salty water - inspires pure happiness, calm and contentedness.
"...surrounded with the beauty of nature..."

Zeba, 15 years
Every once in a while I love to visit this secluded park near my home in order to be surrounded with the beauty of nature and be completely relaxed. Without any construction noises, honking of cars or city life nearby, it's the perfect place to go to take a break from life's worries and think about myself, which is so important for self-care. I love coming here with friends, family or just by myself and take a moment to immerse myself in the amazing greenery found in the park.
Prize Winner - Zane, 17 years

Spending time with nature and watching wildlife makes me feel relaxed and peaceful. Whilst I was watching birds at Brighton Beach, I saw one cheeky bird climbing everywhere and enjoying climbing upside down.

“...spending time with nature...”
Rochelle, 14 years