Understanding what stress is:

There are so many different parts of our lives that we must juggle. With so many parts, we are bound to be faced with some challenges, big and small. These challenges come from home, school, friends, families or other environmental factors. That is a lot of parts of our lives we must manage and ensure are running smoothly for us. The sense of having little or no control is always distressful – and that’s what stress is all about. When we are having difficulties managing all life’s challenges, it is important to then focus on our self-care.

Understanding what self-care is:

Self-care is knowing what you need to do to respect yourself, knowing what your limits are, knowing what your boundaries are and not crossing them. And letting yourself be you. Self-care is about giving ourselves relief.

How we experience stress and how we take care of ourselves is different for everyone. There is no cookie cutter formula for caring for yourself. One form of self-care, like listening to music while doing a puzzle, may work for me when I am feeling stressed, but singing loudly in a hot shower may work for you when you are stressed.
Just as there are so many parts of our lives that can cause us stress, there are many parts of ourselves we care for. Let us make taking care of ourselves as easy as possible. Come up with as many self-care activities (or coping skills) for the seven different categories below. This is your self-care map, so add or remove any categories.

- Emotional
- Mental
- Physical
- Pleasure
- Sensory
- Social
- Spiritual

The idea of separating self-care activities into different categories is that if you know the type of self-care support you are looking for or not looking for, it may be easier to browse through the self-care ideas you came up with.

For each category, write some coping skills that you know work for you and some that you may have never tried and want to experiment with. The next time you are faced with a challenge and your go-to coping skill is to jump in the shower and sing at the top of your lungs, but that coping skill does not seem to be making you feel any better, go through your category list and see what pops out for you based on what you need in that moment.

Contact Umbrella: If you have any questions or concerns about a relationship that you are in, an advocate would be more than happy to hear from you. Contact us in Caledonia & S. Essex counties at (802)748-8645 and in Orleans & N. Essex counties at (802)334-0148 or email an advocate at Advocate@umbrellanek.org