

Charting Your Energy

Veteran Tool for the “Recharge” Area of Self-Care

Instructions:

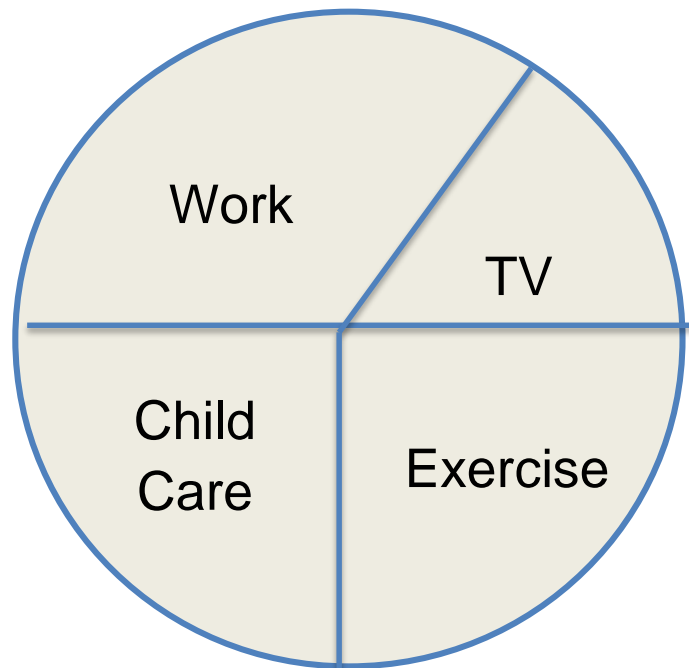
Before beginning this exercise, take a few moments to think about how much energy you have right now. This might be the first time in a while that you have had a chance to pause. Tune into your body. What do you sense? Tune into your thoughts? What is on your mind? What feelings are you having? Are your neck and shoulders tight? Is it hard to keep your eyes open? What is your breath like?

Your mind will start to judge what you notice. Try to let those judgments fall away. Notice what your energy level is like without having to think about how it should be.

This is an opportunity to tune into the parts of your life that you give energy to.

For this exercise, you are going to make a pie chart. If the circle is all the energy you have for the day, how would you divide it up based on what things take your energy? How much of your daily energy goes to your work? To other people? To taking care of yourself? To worrying?

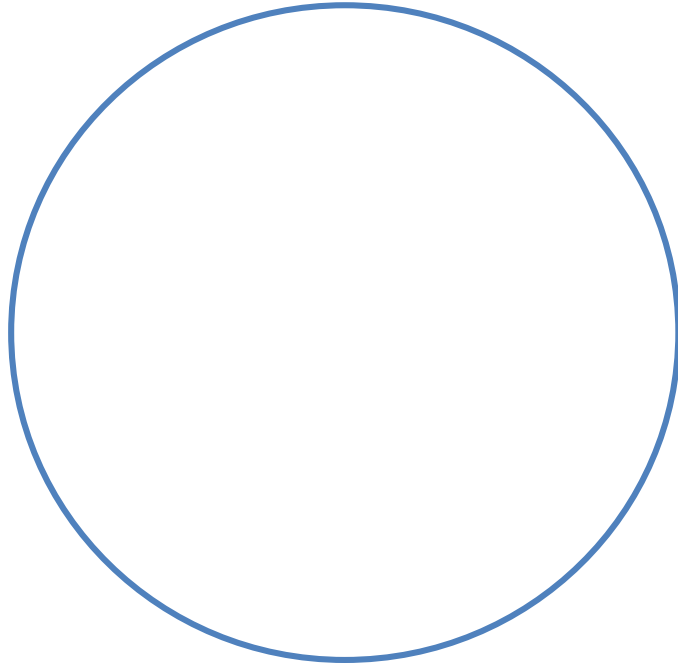
As you divide up the pie, label each slice. Here is an example:



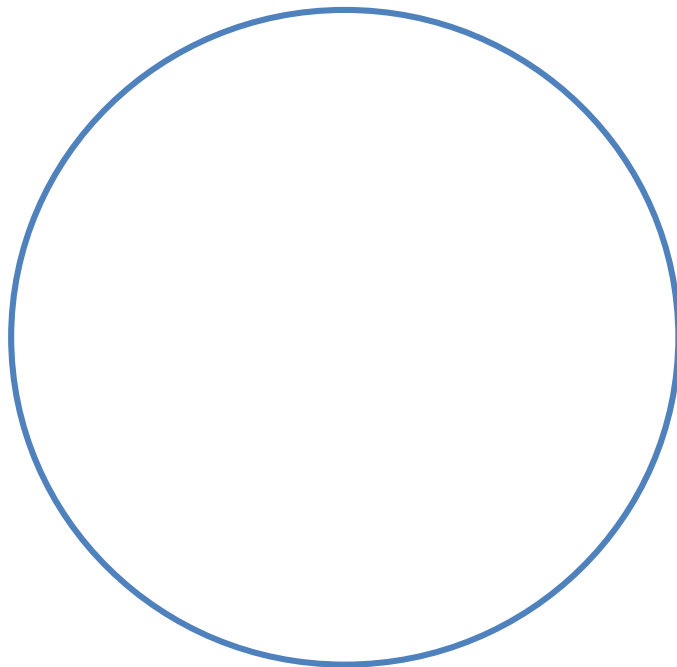
Trust your body to guide you with this. For example, you might start by labeling work as taking up half of the circle, but then notice a feeling in your chest or belly that tells you it is more like 70%.

Just notice what comes up.

Now fill in your circle. Where goes your energy go?



Now, ask yourself what parts of your life give you energy. What fills you up? What gives you energy. When you notice that you feel good, like things are flowing smoothly, or you are excited, that tells you your energy is in a good place. In the next circle, make a pic chart with all the experiences that recharge you. It could be time with people you care about, or working in your garden, or having a good meal.



Once you are done, answer these questions:

- 1) What did you notice when you filled out the two circles? What surprised you? What didn't surprise you?
- 2) As you completed the first circle, did you want things to be different? If so, how? What can you do as part of your Personal Health Plan, to change things? What things do you want to keep the same? Can you tell from the sizes of the different slices what matters most to you?
- 3) What about the second circle? Anything you would change? Keep the same? Were there any things that showed up in both your circles?
- 4) Can the whole circle – how much energy you can hold – be bigger? If so, how can you make your total amount of energy grow?

This handout was written for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) by Vincent Minichiello, MD, family physician and Integrative Health consultant, University of Wisconsin Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. The handout was reviewed and edited by Veterans and VHA subject matter experts.