TUJALI

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR CREATIVES TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR MIND, BODY AND HEART.

ARTIST RESOURCES

MADE FOR
CREATIVES
BY CREATIVES.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3
WHAT DOES CARE MEAN TO YOU?... 4
PICK + MIX — BUILDING YOUR TOOLKIT 4

BODY | MWILI

EXERCISE & MOVEMENT 5
BREATHING 6
BODY SCAN, TAPPING AND MAPPING 7
SLEEP 8
FOOD & WATER 9

MIND | AKILI

JOURNALLING 10
VISUALISATION AND MEDITATION 12
AFFIRMATIONS 13
COLOURING & DRAWING 13
REFLECTION & VALUES 14
AGENCY & CONTROL 15

HEART | MOYO

SOCIAL CONNECTION 17
NATURE CONNECTION 18
HOBBIES 19
MUSIC 19
SPIRITUAL CONNECTION 20
A FEW THINGS WORTH ACKNOWLEDGING 21
PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES 21
COLLABORATORS 22

INTRODUCTION

Being a creative in Nairobi is not easy.

The hustle is real. Recent research showed that psychological distress experienced by music and arts workers is higher than the general population. There's a constant pressure to perform, to produce, to show up, even when you're running on empty. And too often, taking care of yourself gets pushed to the bottom of the list.

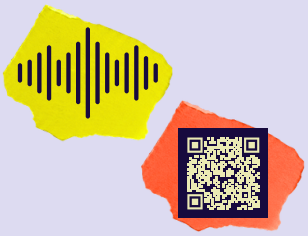
Long before "self-care" became a trend, our communities practised it: through connection, through rhythm, through rest. Care shows up in how we gather, how we check-in on each other and how we create together. There are a lot of resources out there, but somehow they don't speak to us. So we, a group of creatives, practitioners and organisations who know this creative life from the inside, made this. Together. Because Tujali, to care, is already part of how we show up.

Free, practical, simple. These are tools for your body, your mind, your heart: things used by people like you. Not a cure. Not therapy. Just honest ideas and exercises that have helped us, your community, when we've been finding things tough...

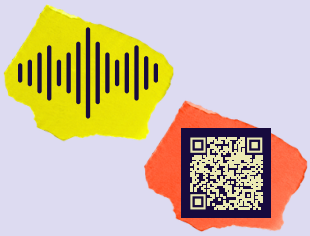
This is a starting point. Take what helps. Go as deep as you want. Leave the rest.

WELCOME TO TUJALI.

AUDIO RECORDING #1 : "INTRODUCTION"



AUDIO RECORDING #2 : "ANCESTRAL HEALING"



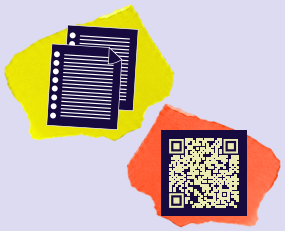
WHAT DOES CARE MEAN TO YOU?

In many African traditions this is not even a question: care is simply how we exist together. Ubuntu means I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. Before we can take care of ourselves, our communities and our spaces better, it's worth asking: what does care actually mean to you?

Unajijali vipi?

'Circles of Care' by Gravitropia, is an exercise to help you think through exactly that. It helps us all think about how we take care of ourselves, our communities and our spaces.

Work through it here: **WORKSHEET #1 : "CIRCLES OF CARE"**



PICK + MIX — BUILDING YOUR TOOLKIT

These tools aren't prescriptions. They're possibilities. Mix and match, dip in and out, there's no wrong way to use this.

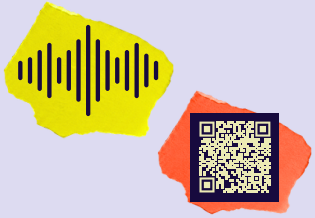
If you're not sure where to start, think about where you are right now. Recovering from an intense project? Preparing for a performance or a big presentation? Sleeping poorly? Feeling disconnected from yourself or your community? Start there.

Pick what resonates.

"Chaguo ni lako"

And be patient with yourself. Building a practice takes time: trying something once and not feeling a difference doesn't mean it isn't working. One small thing, regularly, is worth more than ten things tried once.

AUDIO RECORDING #3 : "INTRODUCTION TO PICK+MIX"



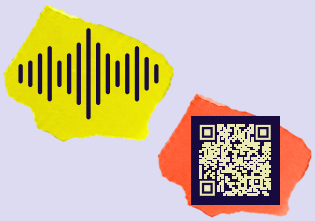
BODY | MWILI

Late nights, back-to-back gigs, hours on your feet or hunched over a laptop. We often forget the body's wellbeing until it forces us to stop. Part of this is the nature of creative work - the adrenaline of performing, the dopamine high when an event or project comes together, and the crash that can follow. These are real, physiological responses.

These tools are about taking care of your body before we burn out: small, practical things that have helped us give our bodies a little of what we need, feel more present and more like ourselves.

"Mwili wako ni nyumba yako"

AUDIO RECORDING #4 :
"BODY | MWILI"



EXERCISE & MOVEMENT

Moving your body affects your mental state. This is something most of us have experienced, even if sometimes we forget. This doesn't have to mean a gym membership or a 5k run. The goal is simply daily movement. Before, during or after a big project, it can be one of the best ways to bring you back to yourself.

A few things you could try:

Dance to a song you love — five minutes counts
Walk to the end of the road and back
Star jumps when you wake up
Free home workout apps — beginner-friendly, no equipment needed (e.g. www.darebee.com)

Start small. Something is always better than nothing.

"Haba na haba hujaza kibaba"

BREATHING

Breath helps you prepare, perform and recover. Here's how to use it more intentionally. Your breath is always with you, and paying attention to it is one of the quickest ways to notice how you feel and regulate yourself. A few intentional breaths can slow a racing mind, ease tension in the body, and bring you back to yourself in the middle of a difficult moment. No equipment, no cost, no experience needed.

These work best with guided audio: we've recorded a few for you to try.

Pre-performance "Kujitayarisha"
For before a performance, presentation or big moment, to calm your nerves and get grounded.

AUDIO RECORDING #5: "BREATHING EXERCISE: TO CALM YOUR NERVES AND GET FOCUSED - BOX BREATH"

Slow it Down "Kujituliza"
For after a performance or a big moment, to release and unwind

AUDIO RECORDING #6: "BREATHING EXERCISE: TO REGULATE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AND RELAX YOUR MIND AND BODY - 478 BREATH"

AUDIO RECORDING #7: "BREATHING EXERCISE: TO WIND DOWN AND COME BACK TO YOURSELF - WIND DOWN WITH KALIMBA"

AUDIO RECORDING #8: "BREATHING EXERCISE: TO WIND DOWN AND COME BACK TO YOURSELF - WIND DOWN WITHOUT KALIMBA"

Fire Breath "Kukuchangamsha"
For focus, energy and alertness when you're feeling tired

AUDIO RECORDING #9: "BREATHING EXERCISE: PICK-ME-UP - FIRE BREATH"

Wake Me Up "Kukuamsha"
For a pick-me up, when your energy is low and you need to show up

AUDIO RECORDING #10: "BREATHING EXERCISE: PICK-ME-UP - WAKE UP"

BODY SCAN, TAPPING AND MAPPING

A body scan is a simple practice of moving your attention slowly through the body, from head to feet, or feet to head. You notice what's there without trying to fix or judge it. Tension, warmth, numbness, stress.

It can be done in stillness, or with gentle movement: wiggling toes, tensing and releasing muscle groups.

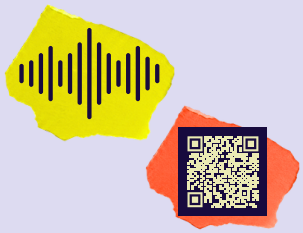
Tapping is a related practice: gently tapping specific points on the body while breathing and bringing attention to how you're feeling.

These practices are helpful when you feel anxious, stressed or triggered as they bring your body back to balance. They work best with guided audio and we've recorded a few for you to try.

STILL BODY SCAN

For when you need to slow down your mind, relax your body stress and sleep easily.

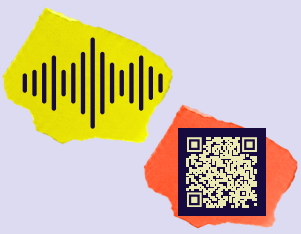
AUDIO RECORDING #11 :
"GUIDED STILL BODY SCAN"



TAPPING

For when you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed or wound up

AUDIO RECORDING #12 :
"GUIDED TAPPING EXERCISE"

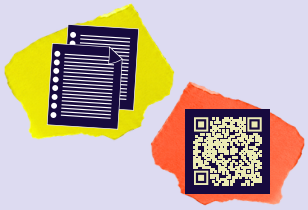


BODY MAPPING

For when you want to understand what you're carrying and where...

Take the worksheet or draw an outline of your body and use different colours to mark where you feel different emotions, tension or pain. You don't have to use words - this is about paying attention and noticing how you feel.

WORKSHEET #2 :
"BODY MAPPING"



SLEEP

Sleep affects everything including your mood, your focus, your resilience. And for creatives working irregular hours and late nights this can mean your sleep suffers.

When you're struggling with energy, improving your sleep can help.

You don't need a perfect routine. But here are a few things to think about:

- Try to wake up and go to sleep at the same time each day
- Wind down from screens before bed
- Keep your sleeping space as cool, dark and quiet as you can
- Watch what disrupts sleep — caffeine, alcohol
- Try a guided meditation to relax
- Avoid or minimise naps, or keep them short
- Read a book in bed to fall asleep

These aren't rules. They're starting points. See what shifts when you try one or two things.

"Haya siyo masharti. Ni mahali pa kuanzia tu"

FOOD & WATER

"Unachokula na kunywa kinatuadhiri tofauti, Mwilini akilini na rohoni"

What we eat and drink affects how we feel.

"Drink 8 glasses of water every day." You've probably heard this advice before, but the brain is 75% water. Even mild dehydration can make you feel foggy, low, or anxious. Drink more than you need!

What you eat also directly affects your brain chemistry. Blood sugar spikes and crashes from heavily processed food or skipping meals can feel like anxiety, low mood or exhaustion. Thinking about food can also be fun! Here are a few simple tips to get you started:

- Carry water wherever you go
- Bring food from home
- Reach for fruit before something processed
- Millet or sorghum ugali is a healthy swap for maize flour
- Try not to skip meals

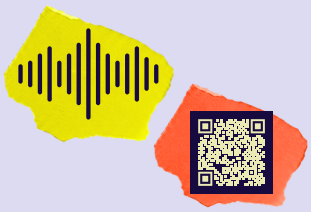
Beyond that, pay attention. Notice how you feel after meals. Bloated, tired, energetic? Here is an Instagram account worth following!

MIND | AKILI

The creative mind is always on. Processing, comparing, worrying about what's next before your current project is over. And underneath all of that noise, the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and whether we're enough can build our self esteem or bring us down.

These tools are about learning to work with your mind rather than against it. To notice what's running, and slowly find some peace and quiet.

AUDIO RECORDING #13 :
MIND | AKILI



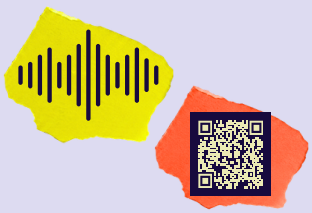
JOURNALLING

Writing is one of the simplest ways to process what's going on inside. It doesn't have to be long or literary, just honest. A few sentences at the end of the day, or whenever you need to untangle something are enough. If writing doesn't feel natural, voice notes work just as well. The point is the process, not the format.

Not sure where to start?

- Pick one of these and write or speak to it for three minutes:
- What do I want right now?
- How am I feeling, and what might be driving it?
- What went well today — even something small?
- What am I grateful for, even in the middle of a difficult period?
- What am I telling myself about this situation — and would I say that to a friend?
- Does this situation have to continue being this way?
- What am I learning from this situation?

AUDIO RECORDING #14 :
JOURNALLING



RAIN - FOR WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING DIFFICULT...

A structured approach that works as a written entry, a voice note, or a quiet internal check-in.

R — Recognise: What am I feeling right now?
A — Allow: Let it be there, without fighting it.
I — Investigate: Why am I feeling this? What's underneath it?
N — Nurture: What do I need right now? How do I care for myself in this moment?

A DAILY PRACTICE:

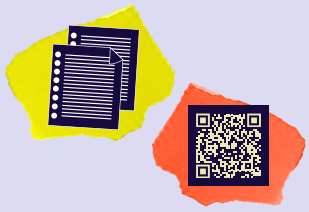
Three-question reflection — great right before sleep

- What am I grateful for today, even something small?
- What was a challenge I faced and what did I learn?
- What am I most proud of myself from today?

A TO-DO LIST:

Just writing a to-do list - working out what matters today - can really help when you feel overwhelmed. Start with writing down three things you can prioritise today.

WORKSHEET #3 :
"HABA NA HABA - LITTLE BY LITTLE"



VISUALISATION AND MEDITATION

If the word meditation puts you off, that's understandable. Really it is just about paying attention. Stillness, presence, noticing how you feel right now. You've probably done versions of this already.

We've recorded a few just for you - pick what feels right for you today:

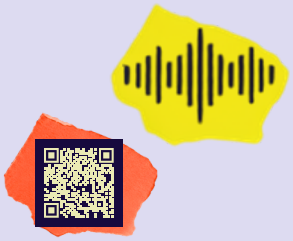
Start your Day Right
For the beginning of the day, before everything begins.

AUDIO RECORDING #15: "GUIDED MEDITATION: START YOUR DAY RIGHT"

Protect your Energy
For when you're in a crowded place and need to create boundaries.

AUDIO RECORDING #16: "GUIDED VISUALISATION: ENERGETIC EGG VISUALISATION"

A Place to Rest
For when you need to feel safe and secure.



AUDIO RECORDING #17: "GUIDED VISUALISATION: A SAFE SPACE"

AFFIRMATIONS

We can all be really hard on ourselves. We wouldn't dream of speaking to a friend the way we talk to ourselves sometimes. Affirmations are a simple way to change the record: short phrases, repeated with intention, that remind you of what's actually true about yourself.

A FEW AFFIRMATIONS TO TRY:

- I am allowed to rest
- I am enough as I am today
- I can take this one step at a time
- I am allowed to take up space
- This is hard, and I am still here

LULU KITOLOLO'S AFFIRMATION CARDS

Kenyan artist and illustrator Lulu Kitololo has spent years creating resources supporting creatives to thrive. Her free affirmation cards are a great place to start, they are available to download as part of her Creative Resource Library.

RECORD YOUR OWN

When you're feeling great about yourself, record a voice note. Tell yourself what's going well. Don't hold back. Because when you're in a hard moment and someone else's reassurance doesn't land, your own voice is the one you can trust.

COLOURING & DRAWING

Sometimes the mind just needs something simple to focus on. Colouring and drawing are quiet, absorbing practices and no experience is needed. This kind of focused, gentle activity where your hands are busy and your mind gets a break is a form of rest.

You can find this same rhythm in other things too: crocheting, playing an instrument, gardening, cleaning, fixing something around the house. Anything repetitive and hands-on can have the same calming effect.

LABDI'S COLOURING SHEETS

Kenyan artist and musician Labdi has created a set of colouring sheets made for moments exactly like this.

REFLECTION & VALUES

"Tujiangalie"

Sometimes it helps to step back and look at the bigger picture. Not just how you're feeling today, but what actually matters to you: the kind of person you want to be and the life you want to build.

Here are a couple of simple tools that can help you do that:

VALUES

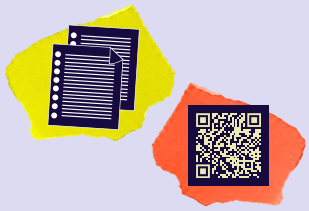
What are your values? Freedom, creativity, family, honesty, security, and so on. Here is a worksheet to help you get clear on what's actually driving you, and whether you're living in line with it.

Reflecting on where you are right now.

Draw a circle divided into segments: work, finances, health, wellbeing, relationships, family, friends, community, creativity, personal growth, fun, home, activism. Score each one out of 10. It gives you a visual picture of what is going well or not in your life based on your own assessment and offers clarity on which areas of your life you may want to practise more care.

→ You can access a free and interactive version at wheeloflife.io

WORKSHEET #4 :
"VALUES CHECKLIST"



VISION BOARD

When trying to connect with what you are building and what you want your life to look like, creating a vision board can be a really great tool. Collect images, words and colours that represent where you want to be — not just professionally, but as a person. It doesn't have to be neat or finished. The process of choosing is the point.

AGENCY & CONTROL

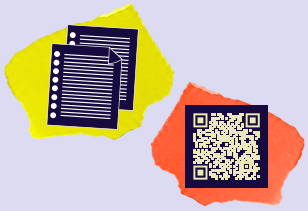
You can't control everything, and trying to can be exhausting. Sometimes it helps to focus on what you actually have agency over. Making small changes in those areas, rather than spending energy on what's beyond your reach, can shift how you feel considerably.

"Badilisha unachoweza tu."

CIRCLES OF CONTROL

This is a simple tool for working out what is in our control and the things we have agency over.

WORKSHEET #5 :
"CIRCLES OF CONTROL"



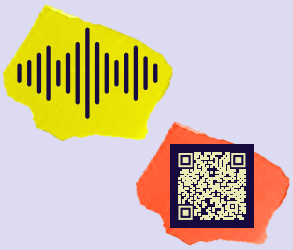
HEART | MOYO

When we are feeling down, we don't have to do it alone. But reaching out isn't always easy. There can be a lot of stigma around mental health: in families, in communities, in the creative world itself. Many of us have grown up with the expectation that we just suck it up. And in a scene where everyone looks like they're doing well on the surface, it can be hard to see that others are struggling too.

Taking care of your heart, your relationships, your sense of connection, your inner world, is just as important as taking care of your body and mind. These tools are about opening up to community, to nature, to the parts of yourself that exist outside of work.

"Hauko pekee yako."

AUDIO RECORDING #18 :
"HEART / MOYO"



SOCIAL CONNECTION

Sometimes the most powerful thing for your mental health is simply not being alone.

Human connection: real connection, not a like on Instagram or a scroll through someone's highlights, can shift how you feel considerably.

It doesn't have to be a deep conversation. Even a short call, exchange or shared activity such as a walk or bite to eat with:

- A trusted friend or partner
- A family member
- A peer, a colleague, or someone in your world
- A neighbour

The key is being intentional. When things get hard, connection is often the first thing we pull back from, but it's usually what we need most.

"Mtu ni watu."

YOUR CIRCLES

This is a really simple practice:

Think of or write down 1–3 specific people who are important or feel safe to you in the following categories:

- Family (close or extended)
- Friends (past or present)
- Colleagues
- People in your neighbourhood or local area

Try to reach out to one of them today and spend a little time with them, physically or virtually, purely with the intention of connecting with them.

NATURE CONNECTION

Spending time in nature is one of the best ways humans have found to restore and replenish themselves. Spend time outdoors, walk barefoot if it is safe to do so, sit by water or under a tree. Even brief exposure to nature has a huge effect on your stress and mood.

In a concrete jungle like Nairobi, this can feel hard. But nature is closer than it sometimes seems...

If you're in the city:

- Notice the sky: clouds are always moving, always different
- Find a tree, a patch of grass, a plant on your windowsill: something living
- Walk somewhere you wouldn't normally: a different street, a quieter route
- Sit outside, even for ten minutes

If you can get there, a few places worth knowing about:

- Karura Forest
- City Park
- Nairobi Arboretum
- Uhuru Park
- Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary
- Michuki Park
- Stony Athi

We've also created a couple of audios to help you make this connection. You can also try:

Nature Connection - Part 1

Even in the busiest and most built up parts of our city, we can still connect with nature.

AUDIO RECORDING #19:
"NATURE CONNECTION - PART 1"

Nature Connection - Part 2

When you can find some green space...

AUDIO RECORDING #20:
""NATURE CONNECTION - PART 2"

HOBBIES

What do you actually enjoy doing? Outside of work, outside of the bar or night club, outside of familial obligations. What brings you joy?

Not everything you do needs to produce something. Hobbies are just about pleasure: no output, no audience, no hustle.

They fill you up rather than switching you off. If you've lost touch with what you do just for enjoyment, that's worth noticing. It might be time to find your way back to it.

Here are a few things you might love:

- Drawing, sketching or painting
- Cooking something new
- Reading for pleasure
- Gardening or growing something
- Photography just for yourself
- Weaving, beading, crochet
- Board games or playing cards with friends
- Writing that has nothing to do with work
- Hiking and taking walks

MUSIC

Music is not just beats, lyrics and melodies. It's healing vibrations, affirming words, soul medicine. And you can use the power of music to soothe your soul, lift your spirit, or connect more deeply with yourself. All through intentional curation and active listening.

Sometimes, singing, humming or playing an instrument (be it a drum or a kalimba) is the easiest way to experience this music magic.

While there's a lot of noise out there, there's also a lot of beautiful and calming music online. LaMusicJunkie has curated a soulful spiritual African playlist for you. The best part is it's open, so you can add your favourite tunes too!

A SHARED PLAYLIST

LaMusicJunkie has created a calming African music playlist - but it's open, we want it to grow. So feel free to add!

→ You can listen and add to the Tujali playlist here

SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

For many of us, faith is one of the most powerful things there is. A feeling that there is something bigger than the current moment, that your life has direction and purpose, matters deeply to how we cope with difficult times.

It might come through community, through creativity, through time in nature. Where you find spiritual connection will be unique to you...

Finding this connection within or outside of traditional religion can quiet a restless mind. Tuning into nature or your own sense of self can provide an emotional anchor - sometimes revealing the pressure of daily stress, lowering anxiety, and reminding us that we are never truly isolated or alone.

Change is the only permanent thing in life: please remember that this too shall pass.

"Baada ya dhiki, faraja."

A FEW THINGS WORTH ACKNOWLEDGING

These resources are practical, but we know that using them isn't always simple. A few things worth being honest about:

- Not everything works in the same way for everyone. We are all unique and therefore our needs in different moments and how we attend to these needs are as unique as we are. You may find some of these tools helpful, some ineffective or maybe even harmful, even if harm was not the intent. Hence the need to care for ourselves, the people around us and our spaces.
- Knowing when something is beyond self-help matters too. These tools are a starting point, not a substitute for professional support when you really need it.
- The comparison trap is real. Social media, seeing peers succeed, imposter syndrome: creative careers can quietly erode your sense of worth. Notice this in your life before reacting to it.
- The post-performance crash is real too. The high of a great event followed by not knowing what is next. That vulnerability is normal.
- Asking for help can feel like a risk. Like it might cost you work, or change how people see you. It shouldn't, and naming that is the first step.
- Irregular income and the feast-and-famine cycle make it hard to prioritise anything beyond the next gig, including yourself. But you can do it. Because when you are well, you can create better.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

These tools can support your wellbeing, but they aren't a substitute for professional help. If you need more support, please reach out to a qualified professional. We've put together a list of affordable and free options:

Access a list of professional resources here:

COLLABORATORS

The British Academy

DUARA

LaMusicJunkie

people's palace projects
Queen Mary University of London

Daré Renhanga

SANTURI EAST AFRICA

Sisi

MESHWORKS

ZAHABU