

DNA Surprise?

Self-care is crucial for everyone, and it can be especially helpful for anyone who has experienced a shock. The impacts from a DNA surprise can have lasting effects on your physical and mental health. Robust self-care habits are essential for long-term management of your healing process.

Everyone heals at their own pace. There is no right or wrong way to cope. The most important thing is to find healthy things that work for you and to be patient with yourself. What we feel changes over time and a life event like a graduation, illness, the birth of a child, death of a family member, or finding a new sibling may cause us to need to reprocess our feelings. Remember to check in with yourself from time-to-time.

- **Learn about DNA surprises.** Read books or articles or listen to podcasts about adoption, assisted reproduction, and NPEs. Learning about these topics can help you understand what you're going through and identify different coping tools.
- **Join a support group.** Talking to others with similar experiences can be helpful. There are many online support groups available, try them all. Find your fit. What you need may change over time.
- **Seek a therapist.** If you're struggling to cope, it's important to seek professional help. An MPE-competent therapist can help you develop coping mechanisms and work through your experience.
- **Volunteer your time or do advocacy work.** Assisting others can give you a sense of purpose and help you feel good about yourself.

**You've got this. With time and effort,
you can incorporate this new information
into your narrative and live a fulfilling life.**

Remember, you are not alone!



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Self Care Tips

Acknowledge Where You Are Emotionally

1

If you're feeling sad, angry, relieved, or confused—that's okay. There's no right way to feel and ALL your feelings are valid. Take time to cry, to talk, to write, to do art, to walk... to express your feelings in healthy ways.

Normalize What You're Feeling

2

Talk or journal about your "new normal." Talk with your significant other, friends, parents, in a support group, with a mentor, coach, or therapist... Write a letter to someone, you don't have to send it.

Prioritize Taking Care of You

3

It's okay to focus on you. Be kind to yourself. Limit who you see, lengths of stay, and topics of conversation as you need. Identify ways to take care of yourself and make it happen (time with your best friend, a bath, a walk, cooking, reading a book, doing your special hobby, etc). Schedule "you" time.

It's Okay to Say No Thank You

4

It's okay to say "no," even if you've said "yes." Sometimes being with family or going to the party is not what's best for you. Focus on today and not how it was last year or what it could be like next week.

Create Personal Boundaries

5

Boundaries are guidelines, limits, and expectations you set to let others know what you are and are not comfortable with. Start by writing down one boundary with one person or activity and add to your list as you feel comfortable and safe.

Lean Into Positive Internal Dialogue

6

We can only manage our own thoughts and reactions. Work on developing positive self talk to help shift your perspective and interactions. Identify possible triggers and avoid these situations.

We All Need to Feel Like We Belong

7

Embrace your truth, choices, values, and feelings and implement what this means to you. Think of at least one way you belong and find a way to express your belongingness, even if only in a journal.

Keep It Simple & Let Go of the Polish

8

Everyone struggles with keeping a polished veneer and it is almost impossible to do during stressful times. We are usually trying to hold so many things together, so try to keep it simple while you process your feelings. Remember to ask for help and plan ahead—and that sometimes less is more.

