**BACKGROUND:** Holistic nursing practice at its best requires the professional nurse to integrate self-care and personal development activities into all aspects of life. To be effective in practice, nurses who work closely with trauma survivors must consistently tend to their own well-being.

A growing body of evidence suggests that there are connections between creativity, art, and health. Significant psychological benefits have been associated with artistic endeavors and are attributed to increases in production of neurotransmitters and release of endorphins thought to occur as byproducts of the creative process. When used as a therapeutic or self-care strategy, creative activities have been shown to positively influence psychological and emotional health indicators.

**CONTEXT:** Within the context of this presentation, creative expression is synonymous with crafting. While not recognized as a professional form of therapy, crafting can be therapeutic in that it produces a phenomenon known as “flow.” Flow is that moment in time when you are so completely absorbed in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. Crafting triggers the flow response.

The effects of flow are similar to those produced by meditation. Similarly, repetitive hand movements associated with crafting activities produce physiological changes commonly referred to as the relaxation response. The effect, likened to that of meditation, yoga, or tai chi, brings about physical relaxation and energizing thoughts.

**CREATION OF THE ART:** In my role as a professional RN over the course of a two-year project, crafting in a variety of forms was used as a self-care strategy while facilitating a weekly group activity for women who had experienced violence. Purposeful and consistent engagement in creative endeavors outside of the group experience were used on a weekly basis. Activities such as crochet, creation of mosaics, and bottle art were found to induce “flow” or a relaxation response that buffered the potential harmful effects of vicarious trauma. Many of the creative expressions generated during this time have been gifted to other women, including nurses who also work with traumatized women. Several items were donated to community agencies that provide shelter and support services to abused women and children for use in their annual fundraising auction.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Crafting as a therapeutic endeavor is a useful self-care tool. Most crafting projects are relatively inexpensive and require little or no specialized training. Nurses who regularly engage in creative activities in the form of crafting can use this strategy as a self-care measure to protect and nurture their well-being.