



TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Self-Care Practices

Have you heard the saying, “You can’t pour from an empty cup”? Many of us put our needs on the back burner and use our energy doing for others. But taking care of ourselves is what allows us to care for our families, friends, and neighbors.

Feeling overwhelmed is a sign that stress and anxiety are high. Stress and anxiety often drain our energy. Think of it as a battery that needs to be recharged.



Signs that you are overwhelmed may include:

- exhaustion or fatigue
- loss of focus
- excessive worrying
- irritability
- negative thoughts
- physical signs such as upset stomach, frequent headaches, or muscle aches

“Self-care is not selfish; it is necessary and should be a priority!”

When your battery is low, you may lack energy, have trouble carrying out daily life activities, and even experience low self-esteem. You may also struggle to care for others, such as your

children. It is very difficult to help others when you are not taking care of yourself.

Practicing self-care is like recharging your battery. This will help increase your energy levels and overall well-being. Your health and wellness will improve when you practice self-care.

What Is Self-Care?

Self-care includes taking practical steps to improve your well-being and achieve good health. It involves knowing how to take better care of yourself, making time for yourself, deciding when to seek professional help, setting boundaries and goals, focusing on priorities, and becoming more aware of your overall well-being.

Why Is Self-Care Important?

It is natural for disruption and uncertainty to lead to anxiety and stress. There are many sources of distress, including:

- disruptions to daily routines
- separation from family, friends, or coworkers
- uncertainty, fear, and worry
- financial insecurity
- feeling a loss of power or control

It is unhealthy to push down the distress you experience. Instead, deal with stress, anger, anxiety, and fear by practicing self-care. Research shows that engaging in self-care practices helps you be kinder to yourself, restores your energy, and gives you both short-term and long-term benefits. Self-care is not selfish; it is necessary and should be a priority!

Engaging in self-care practices can:

- reduce your risk of illness
- lower your stress and anxiety
- increase your energy and confidence

Different Types of Self-Care

There are multiple forms of self-care. Each is briefly described here, along with some examples of ways to practice each type.



Physical self-care involves activities that improve your physical health.

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Schedule routine health screenings such as physicals and dental hygiene exams.
- Set a consistent and sufficient sleep schedule.
- Engage in 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days per week.
- Drink plenty of water each day (eight glasses).



Mental self-care involves activities that stimulate your mind or intellect.

- Read a book.
- Write in a journal.
- Talk with a counselor.
- Draw, paint, or color.
- Complete a puzzle.
- Learn a new skill.
- Practice mindfulness.



Emotional self-care involves activities that help you connect, process, and reflect on a full range of emotions.

- Practice forgiveness with yourself when you make a mistake.
- Be aware of your emotions and how they affect your relationships.
- Practice gratitude.
- Join a support group.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Go for a walk.
- Practice self-compassion.
- Watch the sunrise or sunset.



Relational or social self-care involves activities that nurture and deepen relationships with people in your life.

- Invest in relationships that are uplifting.
- Spend time talking to your friends and family, even over the phone or video-chat.
- Find ways to be involved in your community.
- Cook with your family.
- Make a card or write a letter to someone you appreciate.
- Make time for important people in your life.
- Monitor your technology use.
- Ask for help when you need it.



Spiritual self-care involves activities that nurture your spirit and allow you to think bigger than yourself.

- Meditate.
- Reflect in a journal.
- Pray.
- Volunteer to give back to others.
- Join a spiritual community or group.
- Talk with a friend about your spirituality.
- Listen to spiritual music.
- Spend time in nature.



Workplace/professional self-care involves having clear professional boundaries, sharing your strengths and gifts, and living your purpose.

- Set boundaries at work (say “no” when appropriate).
- Eat a nourishing lunch at work.
- Take mental health days when needed.
- Get to know your coworkers.
- Leave work at work.
- Attend professional development workshops and trainings.

Self-Care Plan

It is helpful to develop a self-care plan. Reflect on things you are already doing in your life to practice self-care. Then, identify new ways you can engage in self-care to better your health.

It is a good idea to write these down and put them somewhere you can see them regularly. This will remind you to engage in your self-care practices. Use this chart to make your self-care plan.

	What are you currently doing?	What are your goals for the future?
Physical		
Mental		
Emotional		
Relational		
Spiritual		
Professional		
What might get in the way?		
What negative strategies do you need to avoid?		
If you implement these plans, how do you think you will feel? What improvements do you expect to see in your life?		



Remember to charge your own battery!

Resources

Self-Care Check-In: A Guided Journal to Build Healthy Habits and Devote Time to You by GG Renee Hill

This guided journal is packed with research-based techniques to help manage stress. It includes actionable journal prompts and inspiring quotes to guide you through thoughtful reflection, goal-setting, decision-making, and active planning to incorporate self-care into your life.

The Self-Care Solution: A Year of Becoming Happier, Healthier, and Fitter – One Month at a Time by Dr. Jennifer Ashton

This book presents a year-long plan to improve your emotional and physical health, by making just one change each month. It offers guidance from top experts, easy-to-follow advice and tips, and Dr. Ashton's observations and insights for developing self-care habits.

Holistic Self-Care Guided Journal: Nurture Yourself, Expand Your Mind, Embrace Who You Are by Carley Schweet

This guided journal is full of writing prompts, assessments, meditations, goal-setting, affirmations, and more. It presents evidence-based self-care strategies to help you build positive habits and practice mindfulness.

References

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Creating a healthier life: A step-by-step guide to wellness. <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Creating-a-Healthier-Life-/SMA16-4958>

Visit tips.extension.msstate.edu for additional parenting resources.

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