



# Self-Care

every connection matters™



In its simplest form, the term 'self-care' refers to our ability as human beings to function effectively in the world, while meeting the multiple challenges of daily life with a sense of energy, vitality, and confidence. Self-care is initiated and maintained by us.

Self-care spans a full range of issues including physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Some conceptualise this construct by considering the dimensions of mind, body, and spirit, or in terms of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

It is referred to as wellness, a healthy balance, resilience, and simply, mental health. It is important to note, though, that no matter how one breaks down the dimensions of self-care, in the end, all of these different aspects are interconnected. Failure to take care of oneself in one realm can lead to consequences in another.

## What isn't Self-Care?

To better understand what self-care is, here are three things it is not:

1. Self-care is not an 'emergency response plan' for when stress becomes overwhelming. Instead, healthy self-care is an intentional way of living by which our values, attitudes, and actions are integrated into our day-to-day routines
2. Self-care is not about acting selfishly. Instead, healthy self-care is about being a worthy steward of the self with which we've been entrusted. It is foolhardy to think we can provide care to others without properly nurturing ourselves
3. Self-care is not about doing more. Instead, healthy self-care is as much about letting go as it is about taking action. It has to do with taking time to be a human being as well as a human doing.

## Personal Self-Care Tips and Ideas

### Physical

- Exercise
- Soak in a bath,
- Get a massage
- Take a course like yoga or Tai Chi
- Sit in the garden
- Change one thing in your diet.

### Emotional

- Deep breath
- Share feelings about an experience
- Listen to music
- Attend a counselling session
- Hug somebody
- Pet your cat or dog
- Call a long-distance friend.

### Mental

- Say an affirmation
- Read a book or magazine
- Make a to-do list
- Write a poem or paint a picture
- Visit a museum or art gallery
- Undertake a hobby
- Make a list of short-term and long-term SMART goals.

### Spiritual

- Connect with nature
- Meditate or pray
- Study with a spiritual teacher
- Do something for your community
- Practise a daily quiet-time routine
- Visualise yourself in a peaceful place
- Study ancient esoteric wisdom teachers
- Practise unconditional love and forgiveness with yourself and others.

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### Self-Care Philosophies

Wellbeing is about feeling good and functioning well. Prioritise these key actions into everyday life.

#### Connect

Connect with the people around you, with family, friends, and neighbours. These are the cornerstones of your life; invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

#### Be Active

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and suits your level of mobility and fitness.

#### Keep Learning

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Learning new things will make you more confident, while being fun to do.

#### Give

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

### What Went Well Exercise

We can often think too much about what goes wrong and not enough about what goes right in our lives. Of course, sometimes it makes sense to analyse bad events so we can learn from them and avoid them in the future; however, people tend to spend more time thinking about what is bad in life than is helpful. Worse, this focus on negative events sets us up for anxiety and depression. One way to keep this from happening is to get better at thinking about and savouring what went well.

For sound evolutionary reasons, most of us are not nearly as good at dwelling on good events as we are at analysing bad events. To overcome our brains' natural catastrophic bent, we need to work on and practice this skill of thinking about what went well.

### Steps to Follow:

1. Every night for the next week, set aside ten minutes before you go to sleep
2. Write down three things that went well today and why they went well. You may use a journal or your computer, but it is important that you have a physical record of what you wrote. The three things need not be earthshaking in importance ('My husband picked up my favourite ice cream for dessert on the way home from work today'), but they can be important ('My sister just gave birth to a healthy baby boy')
3. Next to each positive event, answer the question 'Why did this happen?' For example, if your husband picked up ice cream, write 'because my husband is really thoughtful sometimes', or 'because I remembered to call him from work and remind him to stop by the grocery store'.

Writing about why the positive events in your life happened may seem awkward at first, but please stick with it for one week. It will get easier.

