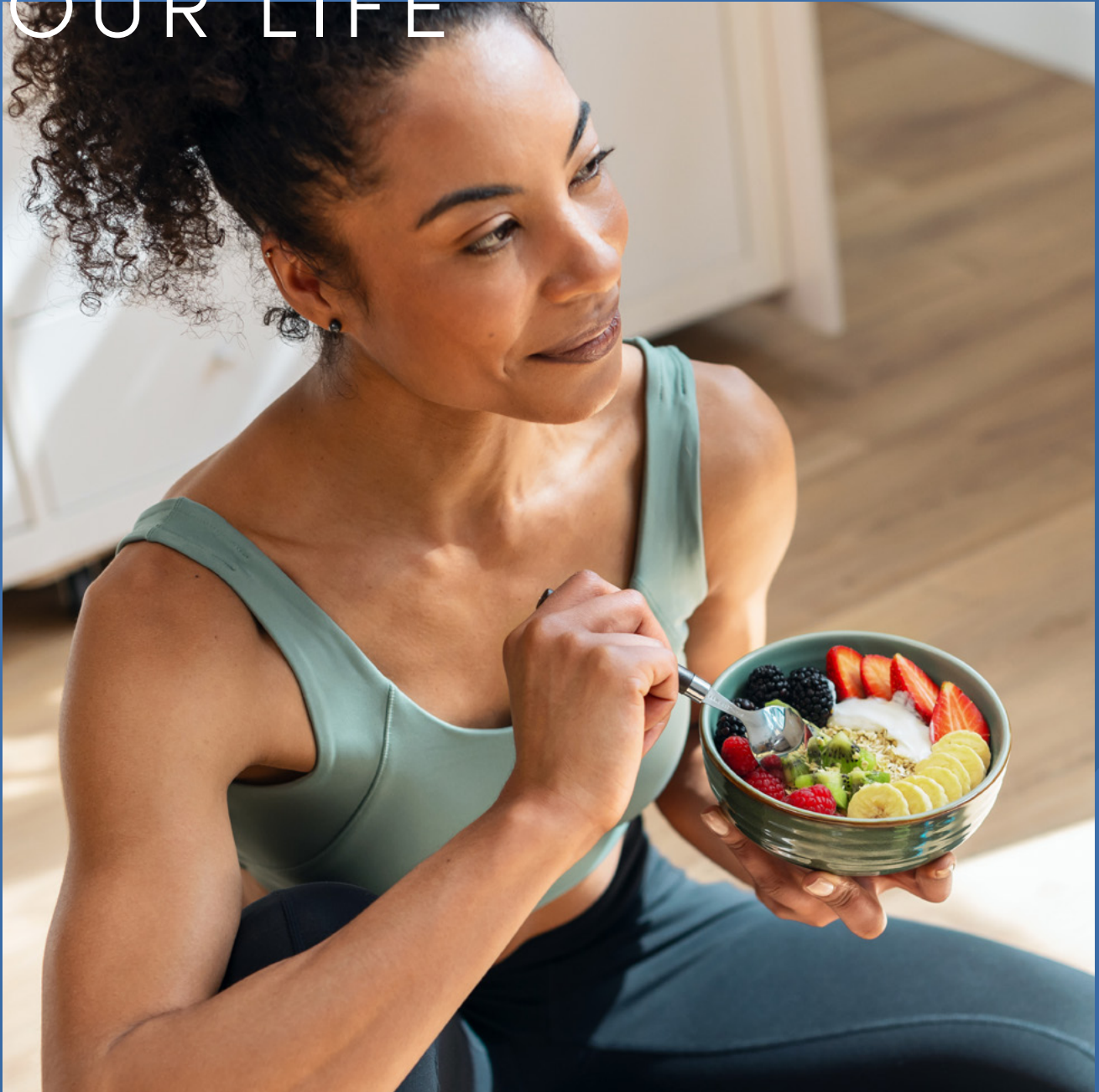


HOW TO INCORPORATE SELF-CARE INTO YOUR LIFE



Learn why self-care matters and how to make it part of your everyday routine. Also get tips on discovering which forms of self-care work best for you.

SUCCESS[®]



Self-care involves making time to take care of yourself in a guilt-free manner.

Methods can range widely, and self-care is different for each person. Ultimately it's a simple concept: Take time to care for your physical, emotional and mental health to achieve a fulfilling life.

Examples of self-care include eating healthy, traveling somewhere new, relaxing at the beach, spending time with a friend or splurging on a massage. The type of self-care doesn't matter as much as the effect: It should help you take care of yourself in a way that combats anxiety, depression and stress.

In this e-book, you'll discover exactly what you need to get started on your self-care journey. This includes tips on how to make self-care part of your everyday routine, as well as the forms of self-care that work best for you.

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WHY SELF-CARE IS FAR FROM SELFISH

Self-care isn't selfish, nor is it a waste of time. The world spins deceptively fast; if you don't check in with yourself on occasion, you might wake up to find yourself in a different place than where you originally intended.

Here are eight reasons you shouldn't feel selfish for pursuing self-care:

1. It molds authenticity.

When you dedicate a few minutes of the day to yourself, you're also allowing yourself to be more authentic. It's a way to get to know yourself better. There is so much more in us than what we see on the surface.

Put in a little extra effort and commit to doing something every day for yourself. It won't take long before you see some parts of yourself you never thought existed. It allows you to determine which parts are authentically yours and which aren't.

2. It's the only way we can take care of others.

You can only help others if you're helping yourself first—physically, mentally and spiritually. As much as we want to think desire and passion are enough, they're not. You need a healthy body and an open mind to function, which aren't present if you're filled with self-doubt.

3. It helps you move from existing to living.

Existing is simply being on this tiny blue dot called Earth. Living, on the other hand, is experiencing everything this tiny blue dot has to offer.

Which are you doing?

Are you going to wait for your retirement before you decide to enjoy life? Before you decide to allot time for yourself? Although we have responsibilities—paying bills, raising children, etc.—we're also responsible for taking care of ourselves.

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4. It helps you find your purpose.

You might have days, weeks or months where you feel down and unsatisfied, like there should be something more. It's your body signaling you to take a leap into the unknown, because your purpose is out there, waiting.

How do you know when you find it? You just do!

Self-care means trusting yourself. It means being willing to go out in the wild or dig deep. It might be scary, but there's really no other way to figure out what you're supposed to do in this world. Practicing self-care and building trust between you and your inner self will help you find purpose in life.

5. Self-care is as empowering as it can be.

It takes a lot of courage to actually show up to me-time every day. Clearly, it's easier to fall into the traps of emails and notifications.

But when you start getting used to setting those things aside and to just focus on you, it becomes easier to connect with your inner self.

6. Motivation roots from it.

How does one stay motivated? There's no one-size-fits-all answer to that. No one can stay motivated forever, and we all have different needs and desires. But some people know how to bounce back from a slump, and others struggle to get unstuck.

The key is self-care. Accepting that you'll never be perfect makes a huge difference. If you acknowledge that you're not perfect, you're allowing mistakes to be your friend. You become motivated to try again or to experience something new because you're not pressuring yourself. You're not expecting perfection.

7. It's the best road to a physically healthier you.

Self-care is not just about your guts and inner self. It's also about your physical self.

One misconception about achieving good physical health is that it's hard. Well, it can be. But not always.

You eat, sleep, drink and walk around. Those are enough. You just have to tweak it a little, one day at a time. Start by adding one new serving of fruit every day. Then add a 15-minute brisk walk.

These might seem small, but they're enough to get you going.

8. It is the perfect reminder that you are worthy.

Acknowledging that you are allowed to be sad, happy or uncomfortable can change your outlook on life. The world isn't going to stop if you get fired.

But it's also not going to laugh at you for crying about it.

Many people don't think validation matters much. Being acquainted with your emotions and giving them space in this world is as important as earning a big paycheck and having good credit. By taking care of yourself, you're building a safer space for these emotions. You're reminding yourself that you are worthy of respect, and most certainly, you (including your strengths and weaknesses) are worthy of a spot in this world.

HOW TO MAKE SELF-CARE PART OF YOUR ROUTINE

Too often, moments of self-care can get interrupted by nonstop thoughts of incomplete tasks. Use the following strategies to make sure you're clearing your plate of the sometimes tedious, but often essential, tasks of managing your life. Doing so will allow you to carve out the space for a sustainable self-care practice that's fully integrated into your days, weeks and everyday life.

Step 1: Make a plan.

Randomly tackling tasks after a long day of work can result in utter chaos. Instead, start by simply creating a plan. First, make a to-do list of everything that really needs to get done (work orders for the landlord, smog-testing your car, sorting mail, etc.).

Next, whip out your planner. Pick a day at lunch to call your doctor, a Saturday to make it to the bank and a whole Sunday to purge your closet. Once it's time to do the task, make sure to really do it. Executing these to-dos likely won't take that long.

Think of how much you can get done in a day at the office. Treat these chores like your job, and you'll be done in no time.

Step 2: Reward.

While the satisfaction of a job well done should suffice, feel free to set a reward. Let it be one you can actually enjoy now that you have nothing hanging over your head. You might be able to clear your mind during yoga class because you won't be stressing about a dozen little things that need to get done.

Plus, giving yourself a reward for hard work is a great way to form healthy habits.

Step 3: Repeat.

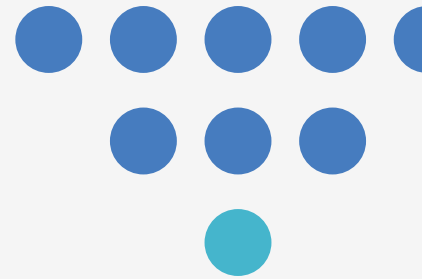
While some tasks will be one-and-done, a lot of them will pop back up again. So make sure to set aside time each week to tackle everything important before it piles up.

Once you know how good it feels to not be stressing about a late credit card bill or that you'll run out of contact lenses, you might even start to look forward to your weekly "adulting" sessions. After you've woven these habits into your everyday routine, you'll find it easier to make time for self-care.

And just as you put a life maintenance task on your calendar (like scheduling a veterinarian appointment) you can also put time for self-care on your calendar. After all, prioritizing your own self-care is just as important.

Add Mindfulness to Your Self-Care With These Meditation Apps

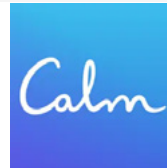
Only a small fraction of adults meditate regularly, despite the health benefits meditative exercises provide. If that sounds familiar, and you're eager to weave the practice into your routine, consider trying one of these budget-friendly (or sometimes free!) meditation apps:



Headspace

Headspace is the best app for meditation overall. It leads you to mindfulness, resilience and, yes, happiness.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)



Calm

Calm holds the crown as the most popular app for meditation, sleep and relaxation. It offers both guided and unguided meditation exercises of varying lengths.

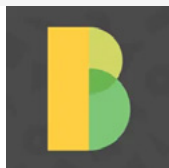
[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)



Balance

After answering some questions each day, the app will select a daily meditation suited to your current needs. The more you use the app, the more it adapts to your individual needs and goals.

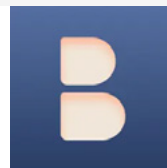
[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)



buddhify

This beginner-friendly app features a color wheel to help you choose your targeted mindfulness sessions intuitively. For instance, you can choose waking up, stress and difficult emotions, work break, walking and many other focused sessions.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)



Breethe

This app provides many tracks, including meditations, hypnotherapy, nature sounds, masterclasses and more. The interface is intuitive, and it features practical tools such as morning alarms and reminders too.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)



Insight Timer

Insight Timer offers a vast library of meditation and music tracks. Plus, some of the world's top mindfulness experts upload more than 80 guided meditations daily.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)

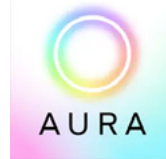
Ten Percent Happier



This app offers new content weekly. Plus, you'll find a library of hundreds of guided meditations arranged by topics such as stress relief and focus.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)

Aura



This well-reviewed app is ideal for your busy schedule. Although some meditative tracks can last through the night, some start at only three minutes long.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)

Meditation by Soothing Pod



Soothing Pod features calming sleep stories, soothing music and nature sounds with accompanying imagery.

[App Store](#)

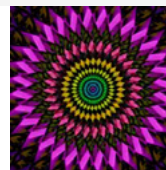
Medito



Created by the nonprofit Medito Foundation, which has dedicated itself to helping others lead happier, lower-stress and more fulfilled lives.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)

Mesmerize



Let the hypnotic images and calming music of Mesmerize guide you to peace and relaxation. Control visual speeds and choose from hypnotic music, white noise, natural sounds and more.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)

Healthy Minds Program



This program was developed by neuroscientist Richard Davidson, Ph.D., through the University of Wisconsin. With its guided meditation lessons, you will gain focus, improve resilience, reduce stress and stay motivated throughout your day.

[App Store](#) & [Google Play](#)



FIND OUT WHAT SELF-CARE LOOKS LIKE FOR YOU

Self-care can sometimes get a bad rap as this fluffy, self-indulgent activity used to market anything from expensive spa days to Netflix and junk food binges. Picture the “treat yo’ self” episode from *Parks and Rec*: Donna and Tom take self-care to bank account-busting extremes, buying luxury goods and indulging in every sense.

Taken this way, self-care fails to attend to root causes and may actually exacerbate stressors like poor finances or physical health. How do you know if your self-care really isn’t? Take stock of how you feel afterward.

If you feel “hungover” from your treat, whether because you feel guilt from overspending or overeating or you feel bad about watching too much reality TV, then maybe this wasn’t the right treat for you. Self-care is personal and situationally dependent.

In its best form, self-care should be responsive to emotional needs. It can be an important tool for battling burnout and increasing a general sense of well-being.

Not surprising, research on self-care emerges in large part from high-stress professions involving enormous amounts of care. Think medicine, counseling, social work. Not only does self-care improve these workers’ quality of life, but it actually increases their ability to do and remain in their jobs.

Practicing self-care well might mean matching the cure to the symptom or to the person. Recent research on social workers, a group at a high risk for burnout, has suggested the need for a more nuanced accounting for who the “self” in self-care actually is. It considers both professional and personal contexts when thinking about burnout and ways to prevent it through self-care.

In other words, we live and work in different contexts, and our emotional and mental states are unique. This means that self-care can and should look different for all of us.

What counts as self-care for one may not be the right fit for another. If you are an introvert who works within a hectic environment, self-care might be quiet time. On the contrary, self-care for extroverts might involve socializing with family and close friends.

To create a more personalized self-care routine, list out which of your needs aren't being met currently. Or, try to identify and abstract the nature of the stressors you're experiencing.

Do you have a bad boss? Perhaps the abstract version of this issue is too much conflict. If this is the case, self-care might involve a soothing activity like yoga, a solo hike or a visit to a botanical garden. Do whatever increases your sense of peace.

Good self-care also means keeping a variety of long-term goals in mind. Especially since common ones like improving finances or physical health may be stressful themselves.

For example, if budgeting or dieting make you anxious, consider leavening your days with treats that are cheap, or free, and healthy. To be well prepared, keep a list of these things near at hand so that you can consult it easily when in need of a boost.

Examples might include watching a favorite TV show, cooking a meal with a friend, calling a loved one or reading a magazine in the tub. Really it's whatever feels restoring or luxurious to you.

In this way, not only have you cared for yourself in the short term, but you've not derailed your long-term goals in such a way that you feel bad about yourself afterward. Self-care needn't mean self-sabotage.

Keep in mind the importance of the combination of challenge and immersion, dubbed "flow" by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. If your career and day-to-day work life don't offer this kind of experience, then perhaps this is a way to tweak self-care to the specifics of our personalities and needs.

Try listing "flow" activities, from the minor (scrapbooking, baking for a friend, painting your nails) to the more labor intensive (tiling a floor, fixing a car, cooking an elaborate feast). In these activities, we are taken out of ourselves and are also adding meaning to our lives through engaging projects. This kind of self-care can cushion us from workplace stress by developing additional facets to our identities.

These kinds of experiments in flow and identity building are a far cry from Tom and Donna's binge-and-bust model of self-care. Still, if the spa is calling and there's room in the budget, do go ahead and "treat yo' self."



EXPLORE EVERYDAY WAYS TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

Sleep, wake up, work. Repeat! This daily grind will have you burning out the next time your alarm goes off. So, how can you make sure you're getting a healthy dose of "me time"?

One idea is to put it on your calendar. That way, it'll have the same weight as your doctor's appointment or an upcoming meeting with your boss. Many self-care tactics don't take up much time, so it's just a matter of remembering to do them too.

Here are ideas for self-care that'll aid your physical and mental well-being:

PHYSICAL

- Do yoga or stretch for 10 minutes.
- Do deep belly breathing.
- Take a brief walk during the day.
- Get more sleep—there are several studies that support this one!
- Get into nature/do something outside.
- Exercise in any way for 20 minutes.
- Take a guilt-free nap.
- Cook yourself a nice meal.
- Wake up naturally once per week without an alarm clock.
- Floss.

MENTAL

- Don't check your email or social media within the first hour of waking.
- Journal about any dream or goal, no matter how unrealistic. Get descriptive.
- Read one chapter of a book or listen to an audiobook.
- Put your phone out of reach for one hour.
- Organize one small part of your home/apartment.
- Watch one funny video and let yourself laugh and recharge.
- Color.
- Take a selfie to keep, not share.
- List three things you appreciate about yourself.
- Write down a mistake and verbally forgive yourself.

EMOTIONAL

- Spend some time with your pet.
- Reconnect with an old friend.
- Light a candle in your favorite scent.
- Write a love letter to yourself.
- Listen to one new uplifting song. Focus on the words, and don't multitask.
- Change your screensaver to something that makes you feel joyful.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Learn one new thing.
- Say no to something you don't want to do.
- Get up to watch the sun rise.

Explore 15 Ways to Treat Yourself

Rewards are often seen as something that follows the completion of a project or goal. However, finding little ways to reward yourself along the way can help keep you motivated and positive. It can also help you avoid burnout or resentment.

Remember that rewards look different for each person. Reflect on the best ways to reward yourself so you know what works specifically for you. Your reward should be a special treat, but not something that will impede your progress. Some people may choose a glass of wine and a movie on the couch, while others decide to try a new workout.

1. **Create a to-do list item, and cross it off your list.** A reward doesn't need to be big to be satisfying. If crossing something off a list makes you smile, then load up your calendar and start crossing things off the list.
2. **Play with your kids or pets.** After a long day, give yourself a mental and physical break by spending 15 minutes with your family members or furry friend. A game of tag with your kids or fetch with your dog can help you relax, get your blood moving and refresh you.
3. **Make a cup of tea.** While coffee is great for waking up, a cup of tea in the afternoon can feel like a treat. Add some cookies or chocolate for an even more delectable experience.
4. **Take a nap.** Few things can feel as glorious as taking a nap in the middle of the day. Resting helps you feel refreshed and get ready for the next obstacle, even if it's only for 20 minutes.
5. **Have a dance break.** Dancing in your kitchen is seriously underrated. Cue up your favorite dance music and boogie down.
6. **Go outside.** Getting into nature can help reset and recharge your brain. Take some time for a walk or find a bench to sit and enjoy the fresh air.
7. **Try a new puzzle or art project.** Tap into your creative side by trying a new puzzle or craft that entices you. If puzzles aren't your thing, try watercolors, sketching, knitting or something else creative that piques your interest.
8. **List all you've accomplished.** Sometimes recognizing your achievements can be challenging. Take a moment to write down all of the progress you've made. Then post the list somewhere you can see it every day (like your bathroom mirror), and congratulate yourself on your achievements.

Reflect on the best ways to reward yourself so you know what works specifically for you.

9. **Take a long bath or shower.** A hot bath, your favorite beverage and a book can be a lovely (and cheap) reward.
10. **Make your bed.** A freshly made bed with clean sheets is a great way to celebrate an accomplishment of any size. If you can, consider buying new bedding that feels luxurious. But even putting clean sheets on your bed and enjoying climbing in after a long day can be highly rewarding.
11. **Try something new.** Treat yourself to a new product, clothing item or accessory you've been eyeing. While you don't want to go overboard, trying something new can be a big boost.
12. **Watch your favorite movie.** Pop a bowl of popcorn and settle in with your favorite movie. It could be a childhood favorite you haven't seen in forever or a more recent film that always cheers you up or inspires you to keep moving forward.
13. **Doodle.** Give yourself some space and time to free draw. You don't have to draw anything formal, but squiggly lines, flowers or whatever you feel like can be a small treat and give you a gateway into brainstorming.
14. **Plan a (mental) trip.** While taking a vacation may not be in the financial cards at the moment, planning your dream trip can be fun and doesn't cost any money. Spend time researching fancy hotels or activities you'd usually never consider in your location of choice and have fun daydreaming.
15. **Do nothing.** Give yourself the reward of doing nothing. Spend five minutes sitting and focusing on your breath.





BOTTOM LINE

Self-care isn't about perfection or tricking yourself. It's an honest internal dialogue, which is where the challenge lies. Most of us aren't accustomed to giving a truthful answer to the "how are you?" questions at the water cooler.

The other hurdle to self-care is that it looks different for everyone. While some may like to go on sunset runs to clear their mind, for others the thought of running causes stress.

Self-care doesn't need to be lavish. Instead, look at it as a way to help you be present in the moment and not however many miles away your mind carries you. Recognize that the present has a sneaky way of recharging you so you're fulfilled for whatever life sends you next.

Above all, prioritize self-care! Make it part of your everyday life—just as important as all the many responsibilities you're required to handle.