

The Neuroscience of self-care and how breaks improve focus!

Introduction

Self-care is tremendously important for improving your quality of life. According to the National Library of Medicine, one of the largest American databases for scientific literature, Self-care can play a role in elevating your mental health (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024). By mental health, that includes aspects such as your emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Therefore, self-care influences your mindset, behavior, and your actions. It's important to note that breaks are included in self-care. In fact, breaks play an essential part in self care.

Importance of Breaks

According to Marquette Today, it's crucial to understand that self-care is not a selfish act, but rather something you should prioritize in order to live a healthy life. Self-care "helps reduce stress, improve mood, boost self-esteem and enhance overall mental resilience" (Goods, 2024). This suggests that self-care can help alleviate feelings of being burned out. Thus, doing self-care activities like taking a break can make a positive impact on your life. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill further reinforces the positive effects of breaks, explaining that it's important to take breaks, because as you push yourself harder and harder, your brain spends so much cognitive energy that you eventually lose focus (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2024). Consequently, this implies that in order for you to continue being productive, you have to recharge your energy by taking breaks! Taking a break can relax your state of mind and

body. It's better to take breaks and stay productive, than working for prolonged periods of time while feeling exhausted the entire time.

Self-Care Activities

There are a ton of fun self-care activities you can do alone or with your friends to destress! For example, Guarnotta and Gomez, two psychology experts, said you can calm and freshen yourself by meditating, doing yoga, or reconnecting with nature (Guarnotta & Gomez 2023). Those ideas are really good for balancing your state of mind, especially after a long session of studying or working. Furthermore, as stated by Mental Health America, you can do more socially-based activities, such as going shopping with friends, playing with a pet, or just talk to someone (Mental Health America n.d.). Reconnecting with family and friends can help you kick back and have fun! However, stated by The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, there are some activities that you shouldn't do, because they can overload your brain with negative emotions. That includes activities such as scrolling through social media or surfing the internet (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2024). Scrolling through social media can actually be bad for your mental health, because it's addicting. As a result, you may end up scrolling on end and then end up feeling bad for being unproductive with your time use. Therefore, you should do self-care activities that focus on you and help elevate your feelings.

Conclusion

Breaks are essential! They're essential for your lifestyle, they're essential for your work life, and they're essential for your mental health! Even if you're really busy, even taking a 5 minute break can make a difference. Prioritize your mental health.

References

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