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# EMBRACING WELLNESS AND SELF-CARE

"Do you not know that your  
bodies are temples of the  
Holy Spirit, who is in you,  
whom you have received from  
God? You are not your own;  
you were bought at a price."

— 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

## Introduction

**S**tep into your salon, not just as a stylist ready to craft beautiful looks, but as someone grounded in health, resilience, and purpose. Picture the energy and passion you'd bring to every interaction, knowing you've invested in your own well-being. Self-care in hairstyling isn't just about managing stress; it's about redefining what it means to be successful, creative, and fulfilled.

This chapter is an invitation to embrace a new narrative, one where self-care is not a luxury, but a foundation of your artistry and career longevity. We'll explore how caring for your body, mind, and emotions enhances your professional life, protecting you from burnout and enriching your ability to connect with clients. When you embody wellness, you don't just show up for your clients—you inspire and uplift them.

Together, we'll walk through strategies to support your physical health, manage the emotional demands of the job, and build a supportive network that reinforces your commitment to self-care. Prepare to experience the transformative power of nurturing your body, mind, and spirit. Let's dive in and create a self-care routine that powers your journey to a fulfilling and sustainable career in hairstyling.

## Personal Anecdote: The Day I Almost Quit

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Three years into my freelance journey, I found myself in the emergency room with severe lower back pain that had been building for months. As I lay on that cold hospital bed, unable to stand without shooting pain, I realized I'd been so focused on building my business that I'd completely neglected my own well-being. The doctor's words hit me like a wake-up call: "If you don't change how you're treating your body, you'll be forced to change careers."

That night, staring at the ceiling of my apartment, I made a choice. I could either continue down the path of physical deterioration and burnout, or I could learn to care for myself with the same dedication I showed my clients. The next morning, I bought my first ergonomic stool, scheduled a massage, and blocked out lunch breaks in my calendar for the first time ever. Six months later, not only was my back pain gone, but I was more creative, energetic, and present with my clients than I'd ever been. That emergency room visit taught me that self-care isn't selfish—it's essential for serving others at the highest level.

**Key Insight:** Taking care of yourself isn't taking away from your clients; it's preparing yourself to give them your very best.

## I. Fortifying the Temple: Physical Self-Care Strategies

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Hairstyling is a physically demanding profession. Long hours on your feet, repetitive motions, and awkward postures can lead to muscle strain, joint pain, and even chronic injuries. Protecting your physical health is not just beneficial—it's essential for a sustainable career. This section delves into strategies to optimize your workspace ergonomics, incorporate therapeutic stretching and strengthening routines, and prioritize nutrition for sustained energy and recovery.

### 1.A. Ergonomic Workspace Optimization

Hairstyling requires precision and prolonged periods of concentration, often resulting in repetitive motions that can strain the body. Optimizing your workspace ergonomics is a critical step in preventing physical ailments and ensuring long-term health.

Consider an ergonomic assessment of your workspace, identifying specific areas for improvement. Adjustable equipment, such as cutting stools, anti-fatigue mats, ergonomic shears, and appropriate lighting, can make a significant difference in your comfort and productivity. For further guidance, consulting an occupational therapist may provide a tailored plan for improved physical comfort and longevity.

### **Real-Life Example: Jen Atkin, Celebrity Hair-stylist**

**Challenge:** As one of the most sought-after celebrity hairstylists working with A-list clients like Kim Kardashian and Chrissy Teigen, Jen Atkin faced the intense demands of a high-pressure career that included long working hours, constant travel, and the physical demands of hairstyling.

**Solution:** Atkin developed a comprehensive wellness routine that includes starting every morning with tea, writing in a Five-Minute Journal, and practicing meditation using Hoffman Process guided meditations. She emphasizes structure and routine as key elements of her self-care practice, viewing wellness as essential to maintaining her creativity and professional performance.

**Outcome:** Through her commitment to wellness practices, Atkin has successfully built a global hair care brand (Ouai) while maintaining her position as a top celebrity stylist. Her approach to wellness has become part of her professional brand, and she frequently shares self-care tips with her audience and industry peers.

**Lessons Learned:** Implementing consistent daily wellness practices, even simple ones like journaling and meditation, can help manage the physical and mental demands of a high-pressure hairstyling career while maintaining creativity and professional excellence.

## 1.B. Building Physical Strength and Flexibility

Regular exercise, particularly activities that strengthen your core and improve flexibility, can significantly reduce the risk of work-related injuries. Research shows that nearly half of hairdressers experience knee and foot pain (49.5%), followed by lower back pain (39.8%) and upper back pain (38.8%). Incorporating yoga, pilates, or targeted stretching routines can help counteract the physical demands of long working hours.

## 1.C. Nutrition for Sustained Energy

Working in a salon environment can be dehydrating, especially when using heat tools or working in hot conditions. Proper nutrition and hydration are essential for maintaining energy levels throughout long shifts. Focus on balanced meals that provide sustained energy and avoid relying on caffeine or sugar for quick fixes that lead to energy crashes.

# II. Nurturing Mental and Emotional Well-being

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## 2.A. Mindfulness and Stress Management

The emotional demands of working closely with clients, managing schedules, and maintaining creative output can lead to mental fatigue. Developing mindfulness practices helps manage stress and maintain emotional equilibrium throughout demanding workdays.

## 2.B. Setting Professional Boundaries

Learning to set healthy boundaries with clients and in your schedule is crucial for preventing burnout. This includes managing client expectations, scheduling appropriate breaks, and maintaining work-life balance.

## 2.C. Engaging in Creative Renewal Activities

Creativity thrives when it's nourished. To maintain inspiration and avoid burnout, make time for creative renewal. This could mean attending a hair show, taking a workshop, or collaborating with other artists. Creativity also flourishes through interests outside of hairstyling, such as hobbies, travel, or spending time in nature.

Creative renewal involves seeking activities that allow you to step outside your comfort zone, bringing fresh perspectives back to your work.

## Actionable Steps

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1. **Find an Online Forum:** Join hairstyling forums or communities on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn, actively engaging with members to share knowledge and support. Participating in discussions, asking questions, and offering advice can enrich your professional network.

2. **Create a Mastermind Group:** Start a small, confidential group where stylists set goals, share expertise, and hold one another accountable for their professional growth. Regular mastermind sessions can provide structured support and collective problem-solving.
3. **Attend Webinars and Virtual Events:** Participate in online industry events to gain fresh ideas, stay connected to global trends, and expand your professional network. Webinars and virtual conferences often feature experts sharing the latest techniques and business strategies.
4. **Engage in Online Challenges:** Join hairstyling challenges or competitions hosted online to test your skills, gain exposure, and connect with other stylists. These challenges can push you to innovate and showcase your talent to a broader audience.
5. **Leverage Social Media Groups:** Participate in closed social media groups dedicated to hairstyling professionals. These groups can be a valuable source of inspiration, advice, and support from peers and industry veterans.

### 3.C. Engaging in Collaborative Projects and Events

Collaborating with other creatives—makeup artists, photographers, designers—offers an exciting way to expand your skills, portfolio, and client base. These partnerships not only broaden your horizons but can also help you feel re-energized and creatively fulfilled. Engaging in collaborative events fosters community bonds, connects you with potential clients, and positions you as an active contributor to the beauty industry.



## Actionable Steps:

- **Propose a Collaboration:** Reach out to other local artists to work on projects together, such as photoshoots, fashion shows, or styled events. Collaborations can lead to mutual referrals and showcase your combined talents to a wider audience.
- **Volunteer at Community Events:** Offer your hair-styling skills at charity events or fundraisers, connecting with your community in meaningful ways and expanding your client base. Volunteering not only gives back but also enhances your reputation as a community-oriented professional.
- **Organize a Creative Workshop:** Plan and lead workshops to share your expertise, connect with fellow creatives, and build your reputation as a thought leader in hairstyling. Workshops can also generate additional income and attract potential clients interested in learning from you.
- **Participate in Pop-Up Salons:** Engage in pop-up salon events to offer your services in unique settings, such as fashion shows, bridal expos, or local festivals. These events can increase your visibility and attract clients who might not visit your regular salon.
- **Collaborate on Educational Content:** Team up with other professionals to create educational content like video tutorials, blog posts, or online courses. Sharing knowledge not only establishes your authority but also provides value to your audience and potential clients.

### III. Nurturing the Creative Community: Social Support Systems

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Building and nurturing a support system is an essential part of any hairstylist's journey. Your peers, mentors, and local creative community serve as anchors, providing encouragement, inspiration, and practical support. Engaging with a network can help you stay motivated, learn from others, and strengthen your professional impact.

#### 3.A. Building Local Peer Networks and Alliances

Creating strong, local connections brings a sense of community and shared purpose. Engaging with hairstyling associations or groups can lead to valuable friendships, opportunities, and resources, supporting you in a fast-paced and competitive industry. Whether you're participating in regular meetings, creating a mastermind group, or partnering with other salons, these connections foster mutual support and resilience.

#### 3.B. Participating in Online Forums and Masterminds

In today's digital age, connecting with hairstylists and industry leaders around the world can be transformative. Online forums and mastermind groups offer the flexibility to learn from others, stay current on trends, and gain insights from diverse perspectives. Masterminds, in particular, are excellent for peer-to-peer learning and structured growth, helping stylists advance professionally and personally.

## V. Minimum Viable Self-Care: Where to Begin

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If you're feeling overwhelmed by the comprehensive self-care practices described in this chapter, start with this simplified approach. The "Minimum Viable Self-Care" framework focuses on high-impact, low-effort interventions that can fit into even the busiest schedule.

### Essential Daily Practices (5-15 minutes total)

1. **Morning Hydration (1 minute):** Drink a full glass of water before your first client to jumpstart metabolism and hydration.
2. **Three Deep Breaths (30 seconds):** Before each client, take three deep breaths to center yourself and reset your mental state.
3. **Micro-Stretches (2 minutes):** Perform the five quick stretches mentioned earlier at least once during your workday to prevent physical strain.
4. **Healthy Snack (2 minutes):** Keep a nutritious, pre-prepared snack on hand for quick energy without the crash from sugary alternatives.
5. **Evening Wind-Down (5 minutes):** Spend five minutes before bed without screens, allowing your mind to process the day and prepare for restorative sleep.

### Wellness Implementation Ladder

This progressive approach helps you build a sustainable self-care routine over time rather than trying to adopt everything at once:

Stage	Focus Area	Simple Action	Time Invest-ment
Founda- tion	Hydration & Movement	Water bottle at station, basic stretches	5 min/day
Building	+ Nutrition & Boundaries	Meal prep once weekly, set work hours	+15 min/day
Strengthening	+ Mental Well-being	Daily mindfulness practice, peer connection	+15 min/day
Thriving	+ Creative Renewal	Monthly creative project, quarterly education	+30 min/day

Remember: Even implementing just the Foundation stage will yield significant benefits for your well-being and career longevity. The goal is progress, not perfection.

## Healthcare Resources for Freelancers

As a freelance hairstylist, securing affordable healthcare can be challenging. Consider these resources:

- **Professional Associations:** Organizations like the Professional Beauty Association (PBA) and Associated Hair Professionals (AHP) offer access to group health insurance plans with more competitive rates than individual policies.
- **Healthcare Sharing Ministries:** For those comfortable with faith-based options, programs like Medi-Share or Christian Healthcare Ministries can provide cost-sharing alternatives to traditional insurance.

- **Freelancers Union:** Joining the Freelancers Union gives access to their healthcare marketplace with plans specifically designed for independent workers.
- **Local Chamber of Commerce:** Many chambers offer group health insurance options to member businesses, including sole proprietors.
- **Health Insurance Marketplace:** The government-run marketplace at Healthcare.gov may provide subsidized plans based on your income level.

Investing in preventive care through regular checkups and addressing physical issues early can save substantial costs and prevent career-threatening injuries in the long run.

### Key Takeaways

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1. Self-care is essential for preventing burnout, sustaining creativity, and building a fulfilling career in hairstyling.
2. Physical health matters: Optimize your workspace ergonomically, build strength, and prioritize balanced nutrition to maintain stamina.
3. Mindfulness and boundaries protect mental and emotional well-being, helping stylists manage stress, stay grounded, and maintain healthy client relationships.
4. Community support: Building connections within the hairstyling industry fosters growth, inspiration, and professional opportunities.
5. Self-care is a commitment to yourself and your career, creating a positive impact on clients, colleagues, and the industry at large.

## Endnotes

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1. U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "Ergonomics in the Workplace," 2020, accessed March 8, 2025, <https://www.osha.gov/ergonomics> (<https://www.osha.gov/ergonomics>).
2. Jen Atkin, "Glamour Columnist and Hair Stylist to the Stars Jen Atkin Shares Her Self-Care Tips," Hoffman Institute, accessed July 21, 2025, <https://www.hoffmaninstitute.org/glamour-columnist-and-hair-stylist-to-the-stars-jen-atkin-shares-her-self-care-tips-to-get-us-through-lockdown/> (<https://www.hoffmaninstitute.org/glamour-columnist-and-hair-stylist-to-the-stars-jen-atkin-shares-her-self-care-tips-to-get-us-through-lockdown/>).
3. National Center for Biotechnology Information, "Work-related musculoskeletal disorders and associated risk factors among urban metropolitan hairdressers in India," PMC, accessed July 21, 2025, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7883474/> (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7883474/>).
4. Healthline, "Quick Self-Care Tips," 2021, accessed March 8, 2025, <https://www.healthline.com> (<https://www.healthline.com>).
5. Freelancers Union, "Health Insurance Options for Freelancers," 2023, accessed March 8, 2025, <https://www.freelancersunion.org> (<https://www.freelancersunion.org>).



## Chapter Quiz

**1. The chapter's "The Day My Body Said 'No More'" story illustrates what critical wellness lesson?**

- A) Physical symptoms can be ignored if you're passionate about your work
- B) Preventive self-care and listening to your body's signals are essential to longevity in the beauty industry
- C) Wellness is a luxury you can't afford as a freelancer
- D) Pain and exhaustion are just part of the job

**2. According to Jordan's Wellness Journey case study, what was the transformative shift?**

- A) Quitting the industry
- B) Integrating physical wellness practices (ergonomics, exercise, breaks) into daily work routines
- C) Working fewer hours but with no other changes
- D) Hiring an assistant

**3. The chapter emphasizes mental and emotional self-care for hairstylists. Which practice is recommended?**

- A) Suppressing emotions to maintain professionalism
- B) Establishing boundaries, seeking support, and processing emotional labor intentionally
- C) Treating your salon chair as a therapy session for your personal issues
- D) Avoiding all client emotional interactions



**4. What does the chapter identify as essential to creating sustainable self-care practices?**

- A)** Expensive spa treatments and luxury retreats
- B)** Waiting until you're burnt out to address self-care
- C)** Building self-care into your daily routine, making it non-negotiable, and customizing it to your needs
- D)** Self-care is selfish when you have clients to serve

For answers, see the Quiz Key in the backmatter.



## Chapter Worksheet

### Reflection Questions:

Take time to consider how this chapter's concepts apply to your own experience and practice.

- 1. Assess your current physical wellness: How is your posture, energy level, and physical health? Identify 3 specific changes you can make to protect your body (e.g., ergonomic tools, stretching routine, scheduled breaks).**

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- 2. Evaluate your mental and emotional wellness. What drains you emotionally in your work? What practices help you recharge? Create a realistic mental health self-care plan.**

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**3. Design your "Sanctuary Moments": Identify 3-5 small, daily practices that ground and restore you (e.g., morning ritual, midday walk, end-of-day decompression). How will you protect these?**

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**4. Set your wellness boundaries: What will you say "no" to in order to say "yes" to your health? Write 2-3 specific boundaries you'll implement this month.**

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Inspirational quote: Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle.

## Chapter VII Closing