Love heals. We need to take care of ourselves before we can begin to take care of others. Loving yourself first is the first step to self-care.

*WHY SELF-CARE MATTERS
It's so important to make sure you take good care of your body, mind, and soul every day, not just when you get sick. Learning how to eat right, reduce stress, exercise regularly, and take a time-out when you need it are touchstones of self-care and can help you stay healthy, happy, and resilient.

WHY DO WE OFTEN FAIL AT SELF-CARE?
Practicing self-care isn't always easy. Most of us are crazy busy, have stressful jobs, or are too consumed with technology to make time for ourselves. Me-time is usually last on the agenda. Worse, we can sometimes feel guilty about taking the time required to take care of ourselves.

10 WAYS TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR SELF-CARE.
1. Make sleep part of your self-care routine.
Sleep can have a huge effect on how you feel both emotionally and physically. Not getting enough can even cause major health issues. But stress and other distractions can wreak havoc on our sleep.

Reducing stress is key. If you have work-related stress, think about the best ways to calm yourself after a hard day or relax more while on the job. You might talk to your employer about lessening your workload or settle a disagreement with a coworker.

Next, make sure your bedroom is the best possible place for you to get good sleep. It should be free of distractions (such as a television, laptop, cellphone, etc.). And make sure you have room-darkening curtains to keep the sun from waking you up too early in the mornings.

2. Take care of yourself by taking care of your gut.
Your gut health can have a significant impact on your health, well-being, and feelings of vitality. The types of foods you eat crucially impact the bacteria that live in your stomach, resulting in a cascade of either positive or negative outcomes.

3. Exercise daily as part of your self-care routine.
We all know exercise is good for us, but do we really know how good it is? Daily exercise can help you both physically and mentally, boosting your mood and reducing stress and anxiety, not to mention helping you shed extra weight.

4. Eat right for self-care.
The food we eat has the potential to either keep us healthy or contribute to weight gain or diseases such as diabetes, but it can also keep our minds working and alert. Eating the right foods can help prevent short term memory loss and inflammation, both of which can have long-term effects on the brain and, in turn, the rest of the body. Some of the most amazing self-care foods include fatty fish, blueberries, nuts, green leafy veggies, and brassicas, like broccoli.

5. Say no to others and say yes to your self-care.

Learning to say no is really hard; many of us feel obligated to say yes when someone asks for our time or energy. However, if you're already stressed or overworked, saying yes to loved ones or coworkers can lead to burnout anxiety, and irritability. It may take a little practice, but once you learn how to politely say no, you'll start to feel more confident and you'll have more time for your self-care.

6. Take a self-care trip.

Taking a self-care trip can make a huge difference in your life. Even if you're not feeling particularly stressed, getting away for a weekend every now and then can help you disconnect, relax and be rejuvenated. These self-care trips don't have to be costly; simply drive to the next town over and see the sights or go camping nearby. The goal is to veer away from your normal schedule and take the time to do something just for yourself.

7. Take a self-care break by getting outside.

Spending time outside can help you reduce stress, lower your blood pressure, and live in the moment. Studies have even shown that getting outside can help reduce fatigue, making it a great way to overcome symptoms of depression or burnout. Getting outside can also help you sleep better at night, especially if you do some physical activity, like gardening hiking, or walking while you are outside.

8. Take care of yourself by getting organized.

Getting organized is often the first step to becoming a healthier you because it allows you to figure out exactly what you need to do to take better care of yourself. A small change, like keeping a planner or a calendar on the fridge, can help you write down all your responsibilities and appointments, while at the same time keeping your life a bit more organized. You can also create an area to keep keys, purses, backpacks, briefcases, and coats, and make sure they're ready to go for the next day.

9. Cook at home to care for yourself.

Many people don't take the time to make themselves meals, preferring instead to stop for fast food or popping a pre-made meal in the microwave. But these "fast" meals aren't usually sufficient when it comes feeding your body with proper foods and nutrients. Even if it's only once a week, consider making a healthy meal for yourself or your whole family.

10. Schedule your self-care time, and guard that time with everything you have.

It can be hard for us all to find extra time. But it's extremely important to plan regular self-care time. Moments alone can help you to ponder the best ways to move forward in your life and keep you grounded. And moments with friends can help you feel more connected and relaxed.*

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