

8 Tips for (real) Self-Care

Self-care, by definition, includes “activities required for personal care, such as eating, dressing, or grooming, that can be managed by an individual without the assistance of others.”* While the practice of self-care has been around for centuries, it has evolved with social and health norms and trends. In modern times, it is understood to include non-material and routine behaviors, activities, and skills used to take care of oneself. However, when the term ‘self-care’ is consistently over-used in today’s media, and can be found saturating a host of marketing efforts nationwide, the concept becomes vague at best.

Prior to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, practicing self-care could be seen as a challenge amidst the rigors of everyday life. But when pandemic quarantine restrictions drastically changed our lives, schedules, and routines, the term once again went through an exaggerated identity crisis. Quarantine-related social media posts of indulging in meditation, skin care, and exercise routines tout “#selfcare” in abundance.

However, according to mental health experts, true self-care has become more important than ever. Dr. Lauren Fisher, clinical psychologist, says, “Many individuals are finding their emotional and physical health in a depleted state due to the chronic and significant stressors as a result of the pandemic. This is an excellent time for individuals to support their overall health through daily intentional self-care.”

According to Fisher, self-care is aligned with the 8 Dimensions of Wellness.** Those dimensions are highlighted in the tips below, along with ideas of how you can incorporate self-care routines in your daily life:

- **Physical**
Taking care of your physical needs is imperative to support not only your physical health, but your overall well-being. While this means daily exercise (even if just 20 minutes), it also includes preventive health measures such as regular health and wellness checkups, consistent sleep routines (7-9 hours a night), healthy diets, and only a moderate use of alcohol.
- **Intellectual**
Try to stimulate your mind in a new way every day by learning something new. Take a break from social media and technology, and engage in or read about non-work activities; try to learn new skills such as painting, knitting, cooking or gardening.
- **Emotional**
Emotions can often overwhelm us, especially the negative ones like sadness or anger. It’s important to acknowledge all of your emotions, work to understand where they come from, and do something constructive with them. This can include enjoying a happy moment, taking a walk for reflection, listening to a song that feels appropriate in the moment, talking to someone, or taking a nap. Changing the negative narrative in your mind can also help work through perceived failures or setbacks. Reframe a negative experience by asking yourself what you learned and what you would change in the future. This can help remove the negative emotion and help you move past the experience.
- **Social**
Even if you feel you are “anti-social,” we all need some form of a social connection on a daily basis. Big or small, intimate or casual, social networks can include family, partners, friends, co-workers, social groups, etc... These connections help us see and relate to a deeper part of

ourselves, to help us understand who is there to help us, and who we can be there to help support. Take inventory of your social networks, and think about ways you can expand them or use them more.

- **Spiritual**

Spiritual wellness refers to the non-physical or emotional part of our being. Although it can be, spirituality does not necessarily need to subscribe to a religious belief. It is a broader concept of how we feel connected to other people, nature, the world, a higher power and/or purpose. Through spirituality, we develop our sense of compassion, empathy, and happiness in general. Prayer, meditation, acts of service, and even activities such as yoga, can all help you develop and find a sense of spiritual wellness.

- **Vocational**

Vocational (or occupational) wellness focuses on making use of your professional skills while maintaining personal satisfaction and feeling enriched. Using your skills in a meaningful and rewarding way contributes greatly to everyday and personal satisfaction. By learning a new trade, pitching a new idea, applying for a dream job, or opening a new business, you can work toward vocational well-being.

- **Financial**

Financial insecurity can cause a great deal of everyday stress, and financial planning can seem daunting to many. But, by taking charge of your finances and developing a practical plan based on your resources, you can alleviate that stress. Evaluate your earnings, spending, and debt. Make a plan; it should include saving (more), spending less, and/or asking for a raise if appropriate.

- **Environmental**

Your environment(s) may have more of an impact on your wellness than you realize. Look around the spaces where you spend a lot of your time. Tidy and clean spaces are much more calming than those full of clutter. Being in a space that you can be proud of can bring you peace. Enjoy outdoor environments, take walks somewhere where you enjoy the scenery, and the fresh air, the sun, or night sky. Being outside can reduce anger and stress, improve your mood, and make you more relaxed.

Fisher summarizes, “We absolutely are capable of learning to take better care of ourselves, one choice at a time. The best thing you can do is to tune into yourself every day and evaluate what you need most at that time. Quality self-care usually leads to feelings of calm, happiness, connection, and a sense of peace or stability. If your action does not yield that outcome, you may want to scratch that from your self-care regimen.”

Sources

*American Psychological Association. [APA Dictionary of Psychology](#). Last accessed February 22, 2021

**Substance and Mental Health Services Administration. [Creating a Healthier Life: A Step-By-Step Guide to Wellness](#). Last accessed February 22, 2021.

Del Ray Psych & Wellness. [The Survival Value of Self-Care in a Stressful World](#)

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