



Your Self-Care Menu: Real Care in 5, 15, or 60 Minutes

An explainer and personal self-care menu · Created by Simar Gill Lowther, MACP, RP (CRPO)
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At a glance

- Self-care isn't only bubble baths. It's any action that restores your body, mind, or relationships.
- Planning activities in advance makes it easier to care for yourself when energy is low.
- Regularly doing meaningful and enjoyable activities is a proven way to lift mood.

Why self-care gets skipped

When you're stressed, tired, or low, it's hard to think of what would help, and even harder to start. A "menu" works like a restaurant menu: the options are already chosen. You simply pick one that matches the time and energy you have.

Types of self-care

Type	Examples
Body	Sleep, a walk, stretching, a nourishing meal, water, a shower
Mind	Reading, a puzzle, learning something, a break from screens
Emotional	Journaling, crying, talking about feelings, setting a boundary
Social	Calling a friend, coffee with someone, playing with a pet
Practical	Paying a bill, tidying one area, planning the week
Spiritual / meaning	Prayer, meditation, time in nature, volunteering, gratitude

What the research says

Behavioural activation, which means deliberately scheduling enjoyable and meaningful activities, is an effective treatment for depression (Ekers et al., 2014). Activities that give a sense of pleasure and a sense of accomplishment are both important for mood.

Tool: My Self-Care Menu

Fill in options that genuinely work for you. Keep this somewhere you'll see it.

5 minutes	15 minutes	1 hour

Low-energy options (for hard days)

Three things I can do even when I have almost no energy:

Weekly self-care tracker

Day	What I did	Mood before (0–10)	Mood after (0–10)
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

Strategies to try

- **Schedule it.** Put self-care in your calendar like any other appointment.
- **Mix pleasure and mastery.** Include things you enjoy and things that give a sense of accomplishment.
- **Lower the bar.** A 5-minute walk counts. So does drinking a glass of water.
- **Notice the after-effect.** Track your mood before and after to see what really helps.

Strategies you may not have heard of

These less common, evidence-informed techniques go beyond the usual advice. Try one at a time and notice what works for you.

- **Test your pleasure predictions.** Before an activity, predict how much you'll enjoy it (0–10). Rate it afterward. When mood is low, we often underestimate how much things will help.
- **Take an awe walk.** On a walk, look for things that are vast, beautiful, or surprising. In one study, weekly awe walks increased positive emotions.
- **Practise savouring.** Slow down a good moment: notice it, name it, and stretch it out for a few extra seconds.
- **Stack it.** Attach a small self-care action to something you already do: stretch after brushing your teeth.

Journal prompts

Take your time with these. Write freely; there are no right answers.

What does "taking care of myself" mean to me?

What gets in the way of caring for myself?

What did I enjoy doing as a child that I've stopped doing?

Who in my life models healthy self-care?

When to reach out for support

If nothing feels enjoyable anymore, or you're struggling to do basic self-care, it may be a sign of depression or burnout. A therapist can help you understand what's happening and find your way back.

Insightful Journey Inc. offers therapy in person in Oshawa and virtually across Ontario, in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. Direct billing available.

[Book a free consultation](#) · 647-982-2527 (call, text, or WhatsApp)

In crisis? Call or text 9-8-8, or call 911.

This resource is for education and self-reflection. It is not a diagnostic tool and is not a substitute for professional assessment or care.

References

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