

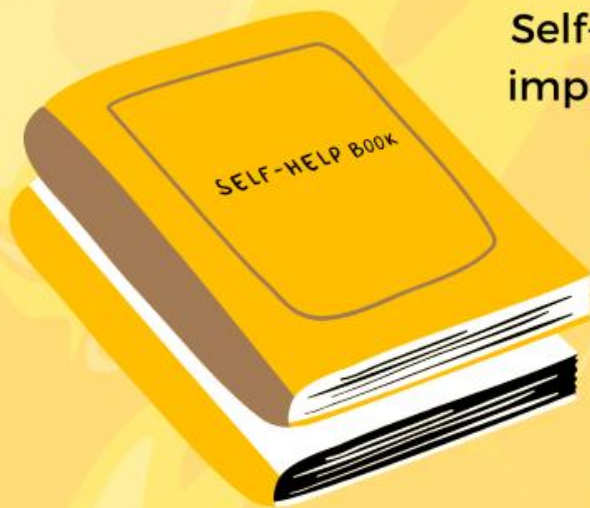
SELF CARE
IS A
PRIORITY AND
Necessity
NOT A
LUXURY



SELF CARE BOOKLET

How do you define self-care?

Self-care is the practice of individuals looking after their own health using the knowledge and information available to them. It is a decision-making process that empowers individuals to look after their own health efficiently and conveniently, in collaboration with health and social care professionals as needed.



Self-care looks different for everyone, and it is important to find what you need and enjoy. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. In addition, although self-care is not a cure for mental illnesses, understanding what causes or triggers your mild symptoms and what coping techniques work for you can help manage your mental health.

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health.



When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

Self-Care Practices to Try



Prioritise Your Health Before You're Sick

Sometimes self-care is doing the things you don't want to do but know are beneficial to your well-being, like going to therapy or the dentist. People so easily neglect their mental and physical health, especially in stressful periods of their lives. But arguably, this is when you should value your wellbeing the most. Stop waiting for yourself to get sick before you care about your health. Make your wellness a priority by being proactive and preventative.

Be More Positive

Another good self-care practice is to realign your way of thinking and to keep a positive attitude. If you struggle with negative thoughts, try keeping a gratitude log. A gratitude log can help stave off negative energy, by guiding you to find something to be thankful for—even on rainy days. An affirmation log is another excellent tool you can use to fight negativity. Stop telling yourself what you can't do and write down what you can and will. Proclaim your goals and your mantras confidently and remind yourself of them every day, and soon, you'll believe in them.

Make Time for Your Passions

You don't need a degree in Psychology to know that doing something you love can improve your mood and health. Hobbies bring us joy and allow us to redirect negative energy. They help us "unwind" and relax. People so often lose themselves in their work or school work, forgetting to take time to explore their passions and interests. Maybe you've always wanted to learn a new language or how to draw, but the timing just never seemed right. But instead of waiting around for a hypothetical time that may never come, why not just start now?

SLEEP AND MENTAL HEALTH

How does sleep relate to mental health?

There's a close relationship between sleep and mental health. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep, and poor sleep can have a negative impact on your mental health.

"Poor sleep leads to worrying. Worrying leads to poor sleep. Worrying about sleep is like your mind trying to fight itself. That's a horrible place to be."

You might:

- find it hard to fall asleep, stay asleep or wake up earlier than you'd like to (also known as insomnia – find out more on the NHS website)
- have problems that disturb your sleep, such as panic attacks, flashbacks, nightmares or psychosis
- find it hard to wake up or get out of bed
- often feel tired or sleepy – this could be because you're not sleeping enough, not getting good quality sleep or because of health problems
- sleep a lot – which could include sleeping at times when you want, or need, to be awake.

Mental health conditions can disrupt sleep, and lack of sleep can affect mental health. This multifaceted relationship makes for complex connections between sleep and psychiatric disorders, but it also means that treatment for both issues can go hand-in-hand. Steps to improve sleep may even form part of a preventive mental health.

Every individual's situation is different, so the optimal treatment for mental health and sleep problems depends on the person. Because these conditions can have a major impact on quality of life, it's important to receive proper care, which entails working with a trained health professional.

These page's include some tips and suggestions for improving your sleep.

Only try what you feel comfortable with, and try not to put too much pressure on yourself. If something isn't working for you, you can try something else, or come back to it another time.

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

It could help to establish a regular sleeping routine or habits. You might need to try different things before you find what works for you.

You could try going to bed and waking up at around the same time every day. Or it might help to go to bed only once you feel ready to sleep, but still get up around the same time.

THINK ABOUT SCREENS

Using screens in the evening, including on tablets and mobile phones, can negatively affect your sleep.

It can help to think about when and how you use screens. For example, you could try:

- avoiding screens an hour or two before bed
- cutting down on screen time before you try to sleep
- avoiding stimulating activities, such as playing games
- using a blue light filter, night mode or dark mode

RELAX BEFORE YOU TRY TO SLEEP

You may find a relaxation routine can help you prepare for sleep. These are some ideas you could try.

Do something calming

For example, this could be listening to relaxing music or having a bath.

Breathing exercises

See the NHS UK and Mental Health Foundation websites for ones you can try.

Muscle relaxation

Consciously tense and relax your muscles, one after the other, starting with your toes and working up your body until you reach the top of your head.

Visualisation

Picture a scene or landscape that has pleasant memories for you, or that you imagine would be a calming or peaceful place to be.

Meditation

Some people find it helps to try meditation techniques, like mindfulness. You could learn these at a class or from self-help guides.



FILL IN A SLEEP DIARY

You may find it difficult to work out what's affecting your sleep. A sleep diary involves recording information about your sleep habits to help you understand your sleep problem and what's affecting it.

If you want to, you can show your sleep diary to healthcare professionals to help explain what problems you're having. For example, you could take it with you to a doctor's appointment.

A SLEEP DIARY COULD INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- what time you go to bed and what time you get up
- total number of hours of sleep, or a rough idea if you're not sure
- overall quality of sleep, ranked 1–5
- how many times you wake up in the night, how long you're awake and what you do while you're awake
- whether you have nightmares, night terrors or sleep paralysis, or have sleepwalked during the night
- whether you sleep during the day and for how long
- any medication you're taking, including the dose and what time you take it
- the amount of caffeine, alcohol or nicotine you have
- the amount of physical activity you do
- what you eat and drink
- your general feelings and moods, including any anxious or repetitive thoughts.

FIND SUPPORT FOR CONNECTED ISSUES

If you're experiencing other issues alongside sleep problems, such as money worries or addiction to recreational drugs or alcohol, getting support for these things can help with your sleep problems too.

Some medication, including psychiatric medication, can affect your sleep. If you're taking any type of medication and having problems with your sleep, talk to your doctor or a pharmacist.

SUPPORT DURING THE NIGHT

If you're awake and you need support with difficult feelings or worries, here are some options that are available 24/7.

- To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact Samaritans – call 116 123 (free from any phone) or email jo@samaritans.org.
- If you live in Wales, you can call the Community Advice and Listening Line (C.A.L.L.) on 0800 132 737 (open 24/7) or you can text 'help' followed by a question to 81066.



DESK YOGA



CAT COW

INHALE
To arch
back...



10 Seconds

EXHALE
To round
spine...



10 Seconds
2x

Why is Desk yoga good?

Physical and Mental Health Improves

We know that yoga reduces stress, improves focus and improves energy. According to the Mayo Clinic, office yoga can also help manage chronic health conditions. Insomnia, high blood pressure, and even depression can improve with regular yoga.

NECK STRETCH

Gently pull head
to each side



10Sec



10 sec 2x

SEATED SPINAL TWIST

[move
shoulders
down!]



10seconds



10seconds
2x

Improves muscle tone and strength

According to a 2021 review, chair yoga can help older adults develop and maintain muscle strength. Researchers also found that chair-based exercise improves upper- and lower-body function

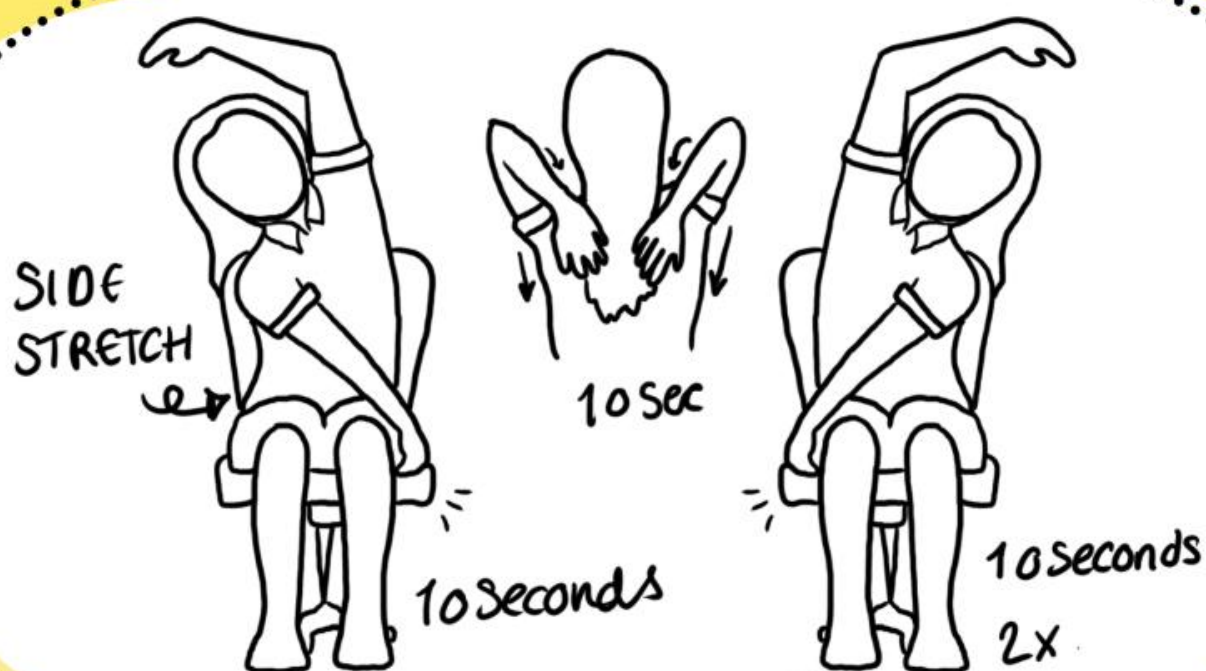
DESK YOGA

How often should you stretch at your desk?

It is recommended that a person break for 5-10 minutes for every hour spent at a workstation. If possible, it is ideal to stand up and walk for this time (e.g., work tasks that involve standing, walking, or at minimum, a change of body position). If not possible then doing these stretches at your desk will help to increase blood flow and help stop stiffness and cramps.



Mental Health Charter





HOW TO HOST A WALKING MEETING

Benefits from walking meetings

Walking improves productivity, boosts energy levels, and enhances general well-being by incorporating regular movement and fresh air. Additionally, the space of the outdoors increases brain function which can help stimulate creativity, innovation, and memory. These meetings can be used to educate, inform, problem solve, socialize, make decisions and resolve conflict. These are a few of the many things that can be accomplished during a walking meeting!

Tips for organizing a walking meeting

1. Ask permission and give notice when possible – not everyone will be prepared the day of the meeting! Ask them ahead of time so they can prepare, bring proper shoes, and/or so they can say “maybe next time”.
2. Host the meeting at the same time you have originally scheduled and keep it the same length of time.
3. Come to the meeting prepared – a walking meeting should be productive just like a sit down meeting.
 - Bring a small notebook and pen to take notes or utilize your technology.
 - Make sure you have a way to track time. Keep meeting on track and on time.
 - Prepare an agenda and think through items that will work well with walking, ie brainstorming, problem solving, etc.
4. Make accommodations for those who want to join but might be hesitant to walk for various reasons. Adjustments could include frequent stops, shorter walks, the use of benches, or adjustments in speed!
5. Plan your route – this can include stops along the way to jot down notes, a destination, and length! You can find walking routes by [clicking here](#).
6. Be conscious of weather – if the weather is not cooperative (as typical of Iowa weather) bring the meeting back to its original format, consider an indoor walk, and/or anticipate outdoor gear – boots, sunscreen, umbrella, jacket, etc.

Self soothing is something a lot of people struggle with. Try this 5 senses technique the next time you feel overwhelmed, stressed or anxious.



LOOK ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Find 5 interesting objects you can see from where you're sat or stood and describe them to yourself in detail. What material it's made from? What colour is it?



TOUCH

Find 4 interesting objects and either pick them up and examine the texture or visualise yourself holding them. What do the texture remind you off? Is it heavy? Does it feel satisfying to hold?



LISTEN

Find 3 unique noises around you and identify what could be making those noises. Is it a machine? Maybe you can hear a colleague having a conversation, try to figure out who's voice it is.



SMELL

Find 2 things close to you that you can smell. Maybe it's some food or a drink, or a unique material that might have an odd smell to it. Try to describe to yourself what the smell reminds you of.



TASTE

Find one thing you could taste. Whether it's a piece of food or a drink close by or visualise something good you would like to taste. Really focus on the flavours that are coming to you.



OFFICE MEDITATION SESSION

Benefits of meditation

Meditation and mindfulness can improve work performance, personal relationships, and health. In an average 9-to-5 work day, just 5 minutes of deep breathing, reflection, and tension release can work to decrease stress levels and increase overall productivity.

How to Start Meditating at Work

There are things you can do to start a meditation practice at work. Here's how:

- Get comfy: Sit or lie down on the floor or stay in your desk chair if it's supportive.
- Close your eyes.
- Breathe deeply in a rhythmic pattern.
- While you're breathing deeply, turn your focus on each breath.
- As you become more experienced, you'll find that your mind will be less distracted and able to focus on each breath.
- Start with five minutes of meditation at first and try to build up to 20 minutes daily, increasing by time increments that are workable for you. Of course, if five minutes is what works for you, that's perfect, too!

SELF SOOTHING TIPS



PRACTICE SELF KINDNESS

Repeat kind, compassionate phrases to yourself. Say it either aloud or in your head, as many times as you need.

- I'm having a rough time, but I'll make it through.
- I'm strong, and I can move through this pain.
- I'm trying hard, and I'm doing my best.

LIST FAVORITES

List three favorite things in several different categories, such as foods, trees, songs, movies, books, places, and so on.



PLAN AN ACTIVITY

This might be something you do alone or with a friend or loved one. Think of what you'll do and when. Maybe you'll go to dinner, take a walk on the beach, see a movie you've been looking forward to, or visit a museum. Focus on the details, such as what you'll wear, when you'll go, and how you'll get there.

LISTEN TO MUSIC

Put on your favorite song, but pretend you're listening to it for the first time. Focus on the melody and lyrics (if there are any). Does the song give you chills or create any other physical sensations? Pay attention to the parts that stand out most to you.



ADDITIONAL TIPS

Grounding yourself isn't always easy. It may take some time before the techniques work well for you, but don't give up on them.

How to get the most out of these techniques:

- Practice. It can help to practice grounding even when you aren't dissociating or experiencing distress. If you get used to an exercise before you need to use it, it may take less effort when you want to use it to cope in the moment.
- Start early. Try doing a grounding exercise when you first start to feel bad. Don't wait for distress to reach a level that's harder to handle. If the technique doesn't work at first, try to stick with it for a bit before moving on to another.
- Check in with yourself. Before and after a grounding exercise, rate your distress as a number between 1 and 10. What level is your distress when you begin? How much did it number between 1 and 10. What level is your distress when you begin? How much did it decrease after the exercise? This can help you get a better idea of whether a particular technique is working for you.

HELPLINES



Samaritans.

To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

You can call 116 123 (free from any phone), email jo@samaritans.org or visit some branches in person. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm-11pm every day).

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK.

Offers a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK on 0800 689 5652 (open 24/7).

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).

You can call the CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm-midnight every day) if you are struggling and need to talk. Or if you prefer not to speak on the phone, you could try the CALM webchat service.

Shout.

If you would prefer not to talk but want some mental health support, you could text SHOUT to 85258. Shout offers a confidential 24/7 text service providing support if you are in crisis and need immediate help.

Papyrus HOPELINEUK.

If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call Papyrus HOPELINEUK on 0800 068 4141 (weekdays 10am-10pm, weekends 2pm-10pm and bank holidays 2pm-10pm), email pat@papyrus-uk.org or text 07786 209 697.

Helplines Partnership.

For more options, visit the Helplines Partnership website for a directory of UK helplines.