

PRACTISING SELF CARE

What is Self-Care?

Self-care is important to maintaining a healthy relationship with yourself. It means doing things to take care of our minds, bodies, and souls by engaging in activities that promote well-being and reduce stress. Doing so enhances our ability to live fully, vibrantly, and effectively.

Why is Self-Care important?

We lead increasingly busy lives, and it can be easy to forget to put yourself first, especially if you have multiple responsibilities and other people to care for. But looking after yourself will make you feel better, and the better you feel, the better you will be in all areas of your life - from work to relationships. The practice of self-care also reminds both you and others that your needs are valid and a priority.

What are the benefits of self-care?

Practicing self-care provides many benefits across physical and mental health. It also supports your relationships with others and your wellbeing at work. Although it's not always easy to make time for yourself, remember that even small acts can make a big difference!

Self-care can improve your physical health.

A big part of self-care is committing to looking after your body and becoming more attuned with its needs. Whether it's brushing your teeth, exercising more or getting enough sleep each night, part of any programme of self-care should focus on looking after your physical health.

Self-care can reduce stress and anxiety.

Making time for relaxing activities, such as taking a warm bath, listening to music or practicing yoga or meditation, is another common theme of self-care. Any activity that makes you feel more relaxed can help to reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety and to lift your mood.

Self-care can boost your self-esteem.

As well as helping to calm your nerves, taking time to relax and look after yourself can have a positive impact on the way you see yourself: treating yourself with kindness can make you look upon yourself more kindly. Studies have found that people with higher self-esteem find it easier to deal with setbacks and are more likely to achieve goals of self-improvement.

Self-care protects your mental health.

Making changes to prioritise self-care can help to manage mental health issues and might even prevent them from getting worse. Of course, self-care is not a substitute for professional help, and you shouldn't feel you have to tackle your problems alone. If your mental health is suffering, you should always talk to someone.

Self-care can lead to better relationships.

It makes sense if you think about it: the happier and healthier you are, the more you can give to a relationship. This is especially important if you are a parent or carer. It can be so easy to put someone else's needs first, but you must look after your own health too.

Self-care doesn't have to involve a huge time commitment and it doesn't have to cost the earth. It could be taking a bath, relaxing with a good book, taking a walk outside or eating your favourite food. It's about making a commitment to putting yourself first, **even just for a while!**

So, whether you try an activity per day, or perhaps just a few a month, try to make some time for yourself and enjoy nourishing your body and mind.

Here are some ideas to get started...

<p>Pick up a book and read before bed. It gives you a break from technology (which can disrupt sleep), and helps to reduce stress.</p>	<p>Try something new and take up a new hobby. It can help to give you a sense of accomplishment, and supports your overall wellbeing.</p>	<p>Practice active listening. This involves listening with our full undivided attention, rather than simply waiting to respond.</p>
<p>Have a social media detox and disconnect from your phone. It will allow you to have more time to yourself without being distracted.</p>	<p>Make a positivity box out of items that bring you happiness. You can then revisit this box to help boost your mood on days that feel challenging.</p>	<p>Try using a 'snackivity' approach to fit in physical exercise. Short bursts can mean it's easier to achieve the recommended 150 minutes of weekly exercise.</p>
<p>Take a moment to check-in on others. Do you know someone who may be feeling lonely? Or who is going through a tough time?</p>	<p>Adopt a positive affirmation that you can say at the start of each day. It can help to boost self-esteem and reduce negative thoughts.</p>	<p>Indulge in a hot bath to relax your body. The heat can help to soothe muscles and reduce inflammation.</p>
<p>Plan something to look forward to in future. It provides us with positive anticipation, which helps us to feel more energised and motivated.</p>	<p>Create a personal playlist of songs that have meaning to you. Music releases pleasure hormones, which in turn can help reduce stress.</p>	<p>Do something that pushes you out of your comfort zone. Challenging yourself can help you to grow confidence and develop your resilience.</p>
<p>Invest in a house plant for your home or desk. They can help to reduce stress, blood pressure and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.</p>	<p>Try yoga, whether you attend a local class or use an online video. It can help to improve flexibility, increase muscle strength and calm the mind.</p>	<p>Try using the Pomodoro method to get through today's tasks. Short sprints can improve efficiency and help you to avoid distractions.</p>
<p>Drink more water to help get into the habit of keeping hydrated. It can help to prevent infections and keep our organs functioning well.</p>	<p>Carry out a random act of kindness to make a positive difference to someone's day. It can help to improve self-esteem and our sense of belonging.</p>	<p>Take some time to de-clutter a room in your home. It can help to relieve anxiety and promote a sense of tranquillity.</p>

Support Networks and useful websites:

- [Mind Charity](#)
- [Young Minds](#)
- [Carers Trust](#)
- [Self-Care Forum](#)

