

## **Remembering the importance of self-care**

We have all been bombarded with communication surrounding the Coronavirus, and information regarding making preparations to manage the epidemic, but very little of this has emphasised the importance of self-care. What kind of toll has the Coronavirus chaos taken on your self-care practices? Are you feeling stressed, run-down, or overwhelmed? This may be an indication that you need to re-prioritise your self-care.

Some of us may have existing self-care routines that we have temporarily forgotten or pushed to the side, whilst some of us may not be familiar with self-care (and the importance of establishing regular self-care habits). We hope that this article provides a reminder for how important it is to re-prioritise self-care during this challenging time.

Self-care is a behaviour, designed to improve our wellbeing by reducing stress and restoring health. Self-care looks different for everyone – what might be a good self-care routine for me may not be a good fit for you. Here are some tips on where to start. This information has been adapted from the following website, [www.psychologytoday.com/](http://www.psychologytoday.com/).

### **1. Sleep**

Sleep can have a huge effect on how you feel both emotionally and physically. Not getting enough sleep can even cause major health issues. But stress and other distractions can wreak havoc on our sleep. Making changes to our nightly routines can help to improve our sleep (e.g. don't eat or drink foods with caffeine or sugar before bed as these will keep you awake, exercise during the day to earn your sleep, take time to relax before bedtime, remove technological distractions from your bedroom, and ensure that your room is dark for early morning sleep).

### **2. Eating**

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. Eating healthily will promote good brain functioning, including short-term memory. We are also more likely to maintain a positive mood (e.g. we won't be 'hangry').

### **3. Exercise**

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.

Of course, it might be hard to go to the gym every day, so try to incorporate other exercises, such as walking, tennis, or yoga, which you may be able to fit into your schedule more easily. The most important thing is to create a routine that works for you.

#### **4. Saying NO, so that you can say YES to 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 co-workers 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 empowered, and you'll have more time for your self-care.

#### **5. Self-care getaways**

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 a different part of the state 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. You can still follow social distancing whilst doing these – get creative!

#### **6. Get outside**

Spending time outside can help you reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and be more mindful. 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 hiking or walking, while you are outside.

#### **7. Get organised**

Getting organised 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 organised. This can help you to prioritise self-care.

#### **8. Schedule your self-care time (and guard that time)**

It can be hard for us all to find extra time. But it's extremely important to plan regular self-care time. Get in touch with what works best for your self-care, and schedule it regularly. Whether you decide you want to go for a long walk, take a hot bath, or enjoy a good movie with friends, taking self-care time is imperative. Look for small ways you can incorporate it into everyday life; for example, you might wake up 15 minutes earlier to sit with a cup of tea and practice deep breathing before the chaos of the day begins, or you might take a walk around the block on your lunch break. The more you can work self-care time into your schedule, the better you'll be able to grow, enjoy your life, and thrive.



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