

MISSION POSSIBLE: MENTAL HEALTH

Essential Self-Care Tools

Life can be stressful, and your body and mind can't go nonstop without any breaks. You may focus on work or school, your family, or other commitments and forget you need to take care of yourself, too. This can weaken your mental health and lead to burnout.

You don't want your phone to run out of battery when you need to use it. Similarly, when your mental or physical energy runs low, you need to plug into your personal power sources.

By building self-care activities into your life, you give your mind and body the break they need to recharge—to help you be the best self you can be.

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

This can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, increase your energy, boost self-confidence, and improve overall happiness.



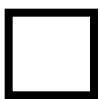
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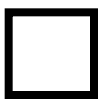


Mental Health Toolbox: Tool #6

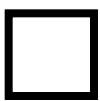
Find self-care habits, routines, or strategies to add to your mental health toolbox, so you are prepared and can use it in stressful situations.



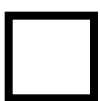
Try to do something you enjoy every day. That might mean dancing, watching a favorite TV show, working in the garden, painting or reading.



Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated. A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Pay attention to your intake of caffeine and alcohol and how they affect your mood and well-being—for some, decreasing caffeine and alcohol consumption can be helpful.



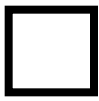
Make sleep a priority. Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep.



Set goals and priorities. Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say “no” to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to appreciate what you have accomplished at the end of the day.

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Focus on positivity. Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.



Take breaks away from the screen. Try setting a timer on your phone and getting up to stretch or walk away from the computer every 30 minutes.



Manage your schedule. Try to avoid taking on more than you can handle. Know your limitations and be sure to build in time for the things that are most important to you. Saying “no” can be a kind of self-care.



Take a mental health day when you feel burnt out.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

Write down any additional self-care habits or routines.

50 Ways To Practice Self-Care

You might have heard about the importance of self-care, but sometimes it can be hard to put self-care into practice. Self-care isn't always pampering yourself (although it can include pampering). It can also be about doing things that will benefit you now and in the future.

Here are 50 ideas of how you can incorporate self-care into your daily routine.

Relaxation, mindfulness, and mental health

1. Put your phone on "airplane mode" or "do not disturb" so you do not receive notifications for an hour.
2. Try a [meditation practice](#).
3. Start a journal to check in with how you are feeling on a daily or weekly basis.
4. Start a [gratitude practice](#).
5. Take time for small, simple pleasures, like gazing at the night sky.
6. Have an "unplug" day, where you do not use electronics or devices like the TV and your smartphone, and indulge in books or other analogue pleasures.
7. Be kind to yourself. Speak to yourself as you would a friend or a loved one. Don't say negative things about yourself or your body.

Physical health

8. Run yourself a bath, and take some time to enjoy it.
9. Set yourself a bedtime and stick to it. A better [sleep routine](#) will make a world of difference!
10. Get regular exercise. If you're not sure where to start, search for at-home, no-equipment workout videos on YouTube, or put on your shoes and go for a walk around your neighborhood.
11. Invest in a pedometer or step counter, or turn the step counter function on your phone on, so that at the end of each day you can see how active you were. You might be surprised by how many steps you take without making extra effort!
12. Make sure you stay hydrated. Carry a bottle of water with you wherever you go.
13. Try a soothing at-home face mask.
14. Stretch your muscles. You might not realize how much tension you hold in your shoulders, neck, and jaw.
15. Go for a walk in the mornings or evenings.

Work

16. Take your vacation days—even if you just use them to relax at home! It's important to take time away from work to avoid burnout.
17. Make your workspace a nice place to be, whether it's at home or in the office. Add a nice plant or a framed picture of friends or family to your desk.

18. Use your lunch hour to take a walk, listen to a podcast, or engage in another activity you enjoy.
19. Turn off your work phone and email notifications when you're done with your working day and on the weekends.
20. Update your resume. This can remind yourself how much you've grown in your current role, and remind yourself to be proud of your professional accomplishments.

Hobbies

21. Find a podcast or check out a library book on a topic you think you would enjoy.
22. Pick up an old hobby that you stopped doing because life got too busy.
23. Learn a new skill with an online YouTube tutorial.
24. Listen to music that cheers you up and energizes you.
25. Unfollow social media accounts that make you feel worse about yourself. Subscribe to positive feeds, and follow hashtags of things that interest you and will bring you comfort.
26. Spend some time making your home look the way you want it to. If you're not sure how to make your vision happen, look at Pinterest to get inspired.
27. Make a list of TV shows, movies, music artists, etc. friends and family have recommended and make a plan for experiencing them.
28. If you liked a piece of art, do a little research and see if the artist has produced something else you might like. You might find a new favorite movie, book, or song!
29. Explore your neighborhood and try businesses you haven't before.
30. Find your favorite restaurant on Yelp and write them a positive review. It's a great way to support a local business without spending money, and it feels good to do something nice for someone else.
31. Think about the activities you loved doing as a kid. See if those activities would be available to try again as an adult.

Food

32. Eat mindfully. Eat slowly, and check in with your body throughout the meal to see if you're full.
33. Learn to cook your favorite meals. If you're feeling ambitious, you might try to re-create your favorite takeout order or meal at a restaurant.
34. Find healthy foods that you like. This way you can eat things that are good for you and feel like a treat.
35. Start a tea ritual. Pick a type of tea that relaxes you and make an appointment with yourself each day to make and drink it.
36. Bake a dessert from scratch. If you have more portions than you can handle, bring them to a friend or neighbor as a treat!
37. Stock your refrigerator with healthy snacks and vegetables, so you're not tempted to eat unhealthy foods when you're hungry.

Friends and family

38. Reach out to a friend you haven't spoken with in a while.
39. Research a trip or activity you'd like to do and start planning for it. If it's something a friend has mentioned, ask them to go with you.
40. Organize a group game night. You might try a pub quiz or an online virtual game like House Party.
41. If you're feeling lonely, make a list of all the people you're grateful to have in your life. It'll remind you that you're not alone, and there are people who care for you!
42. Take time to play with your pet. The bonus? The pets love it too!
43. When someone says something nice about you, write it down in a notebook. You'll be able to revisit the compliments as the page fills up.

Do something for "Future You"

44. Do that task you've been dreading, like washing delicates, organizing receipts for your taxes, or cleaning a bathroom. Think of it as ticking off a long-standing to-do item.
45. Consider planting an herb garden. Watching something that you've planted grow can feel very gratifying, plus, you'll have herbs for cooking!
46. Book out slots of "me" time in your calendar to keep an hour free for yourself to relax and recharge.
47. Put an energetic song on and tell yourself, "I will clean up my room just as long as this song is playing." Having something pleasant to distract you will help make the chore more tolerable.
48. Brush and floss your teeth every day. Dental work later in life can be painful and expensive!
49. Clear out clutter—toss or donate old clothes, books, or other things that are cluttering your space and mind.
50. Start a "Fun Fund." Every month, put aside \$25 toward an indulgent treat that you will enjoy.

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