

Self-Care for Wellness and Productivity

The most important aspect of healthcare is how you look after your mind and body on a day-to-day basis. Much of the time we are so focused on work or our to do lists that we neglect care of ourselves. This is an easy fix. Self-care is an investment. We must invest in ourselves to be our best, brightest selves.

This is a list of suggestions to improve self-care. When you read this list, you may have the thought that you already know these things are good for you. That's a good start, but many people know what to do and yet fail to do it. The important questions are "am I doing this?" and "does it work for me?". Don't knock it until you've tried it. You may have thoughts like "I don't deserve this" or "I don't have time for this", but research has shown that self-care improves our self-esteem and therefore our efficiency. Based on this fact, some progressive workplaces have implemented mandatory self-care practices (such as the ones below) for their employees, and in some jails in Scandinavia prisoners are offered massage, reflexology and aroma therapy. Many of these suggestions focus on the body. There are self-care techniques that focus on the mind (such as meditation, affirmations, reading) but many of us have overstimulated minds, and using self-care techniques that focus on the body offer us an opportunity to take a break from thought, do something physical and get grounded. Techniques that focus on the body are just as effective for restoring and re-energizing the mind. Use these when feeling overwhelmed, to recharge while working towards a deadline, or on a regular basis to improve the quality of your relationship to yourself. Each of these techniques are gender-neutral: They work just as well for men as they do for women.

You can experiment using one or two of these during the day; you can mix and match, or stack multiple of these back-to-back. Try them all and see what works for you. For a challenge, try a different one each day for a week, or try doing them all in one day. The more the better. Use the Daily Activity Checklist to monitor your progress and see what works for you. If you like, share this sheet and the Checklist with your co-workers or family and challenge them to do the same.

Laugh/smile for half an hour

Watch or listen to a stand-up comedy show/your favourite sit-com/a funny movie/animal videos on you tube.

Eat/drink something healthy

If you don't always, try once a day to eat a meal or snack that is nutritious. Green smoothies/juices are the easiest way to tick this box; make one yourself if you can, or order one at a juice bar.

Perform a hard reset on your body

The perfect grounding exercise halfway through a workday. Lie down with your eyes covered for half an hour. You can use an eye mask and earplugs, or listen to a piece of music/play some nature sounds. Try to ensure you won't be interrupted; set an alarm if you need to. Focus on breathing deeply; allow yourself to sleep if you wish.

Increase awareness of your needs

Examine the attached list of needs and note any that you feel are not being met. Spend five minutes brainstorming ways you could meet that need. Focus on ways to meet the need that suit you, are enjoyable and practical (realistic).

Do a Self-Compassion exercise

Cultivating self-compassion helps compensate for negative self-talk, which most of us have a lot of. Check out self-compassion.org for a list of free self-compassion tips, exercises, meditations, and grounding exercises.

Exercise

This is different for everyone, but there are lots of simple options: Yoga, stretching, powerwalking, dancing. If you're not sure where to start, check out *AllblancTV* on YouTube for follow-along at home exercises/stretching/dancing. Follow along for 10-20 mins.

Get outside

Take a walk or jog, a sunbake or read a book outside. Even for five minutes. UV rays on your skin and eyes stimulate neurotransmitters essential for healthy brain function. This helps us feel better, think more clearly and maintain healthy circadian rhythm.

Use a face peel/mask combined with a self-face-massage

If you experience shoulder/neck pain or stiffness, you can also massage these areas. Massage is a powerful restorative practice we can do to ourselves. Perfect for people who spend a lot of time working at desks.

Get some essential oils and have an aromatherapy bath or use a diffuser

Scents stimulate a very deep part of our brain so the effect of smells is powerful. Different oils can be used for relaxation, stimulation, clarity and emotional regulation. Have a couple on hand; you can sniff them straight from the bottle if you don't have time to stop.

Do something tactile

This is a powerful mood booster. As animals we evolved to use our hands to meet all of our basic needs, so manipulating the world around us using our hands promotes a sense of well being. It doesn't matter what it is: Drying dishes, writing, colouring in, pruning, rubix cube. Spend 15 minutes doing something non-work related.

Teach yourself something new

Learning can be fun, and it is very good for your brain. Take the first step towards something you've always wanted to learn today, and spend five minutes each day working towards it. Origami? Buy origami paper and check YouTube. Learn a language? Sign up for a free Duolingo account and learn your first 3 words. New recipe? Find one online and get the ingredients. DIY craft project? Research instructions online and buy what you need. Tai-Chi/yoga/meditation? See if there's a class near you. Many gyms/rec centres offer yoga and martial arts; Google your local *IMS (Insight Meditation Society)* for a listing of peer-led groups that meet regularly to meditate together. Joining a group will help keep you accountable and help you meet people. Many people learn to meditate by joining a group, so the groups are generally welcoming of newcomers and happy to help.

Consume something inspiring

There are many inspirational religious and spiritually-based YouTube videos. If you have such an inclination, check some out. If not, try to track down an inspiring book (ask a librarian). Or think of a famous person/historical figure you find inspiring and get their biography. Or browse the self-help section for other inspiring options.

List of Needs

Community	Autonomy	Integrity	Nurturance	Spirituality
Acceptance	Dreams	Authenticity	Exercise	Art
Appreciation	Goals	Creativity	Fun	Beauty
Closeness	Plans	Meaning	Laughter	Harmony
Consideration	Values	Self-worth	Play	Inspiration
Empathy			Protection	Order
Honesty			Rest	Peace
Reassurance			Touch	
Support				
Trust				