



Developing a Better Understanding

PRACTICING SELF-CARE

In times of stress, taking care of oneself may be one of the most important things you can do. If you are in recovery, it will help you maintain your recovery, and continue your journey forward. If you are a health care professional, taking care of yourself first is critical in allowing you to take care of others.

Stress can affect both your mental and physical health and impact your overall day-to-day living. Small things can become big things, the ability to be flexible and adapt to change and difficult times may become more difficult. Emotional wellness is about being mindful, and being able to handle life's day-to-day challenges, and having the resilience and coping ability to bounce back from difficulties.

Self-care is about prioritizing your wellness. It is defined as prioritizing care for oneself in order to achieve, maintain, or promote optimal health and well-being. It means that you take the time to care for yourself, reduce stress by doing things to improve or maintain your physical and mental health, enjoy your day-to-day activities, manage stress, and increase your overall energy.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health the following are some tips to help you get started with self-care:

- **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Also, limit caffeinated beverages such as soft drinks or coffee.
- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy such as journaling.
- **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 be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.
- **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down at night or replay them in your mind.
- **Focus on positivity.** Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to your friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.

"Self-care is the number one solution to helping somebody else. If you are being good to yourself and your body and your psyche, that serves other people better, because you will grow strong enough to lift someone else up."

~Mary Lambert

“Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”

~Eleanor Brown



Through self-care you can begin to look at yourself and see what is working and what isn't. In a sense, it can be a time to “clean house” by getting rid of negative thinking and actions that contribute to your stress and anxiety. It allows you to take time for YOU to get the rest, relaxation, and exercise that you need to feel good. It also allows you to begin making meaningful and mindful changes in the ways you think and act, allowing you to focus on the positive.

Mindfulness is one way many people try to reduce stress and stay connected to the here and now, and not focus on the “what ifs”. Mindfulness is about living in the present and engaging with those around you. It is also about accepting others and situations for what they are, and letting go of what you can't control. Mindfulness also allows you to be more patient with your own feelings, and trust that you know best what you need to take care of your personal wellness.

Practicing the Serenity Prayer can be one of the easiest and most impactful ways of practicing mindfulness at any given moment of need.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and
the wisdom to know the difference.*

Laugh

Maybe one of the most underrated, and least talked about ways to relieve stress and ease anxiety is to laugh more. Laughter is strong medicine. Laughter triggers healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter also allows you to feel good and often to see things in a different light. Laughter can help you remain optimistic, relax, and recharge. So, if you do nothing else after reading this one-pager, find a way to go have some fun and laugh.

Sources: Mayo Clinic
National Institute of Mental Health

National Institutes of Health

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