

SELF-CARE GUIDE





WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

If you've ever been on a plane, you've heard that in an emergency, you should put your own oxygen mask on before attempting to help anyone else. It makes sense, right? You can't do much if you don't take care of yourself first. Enter: Self-Care. According to PsychCentral, "Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health."

Self-care is currently very trendy, and if you search for it on social media you'll see tons of examples of self-care. However, you don't have to plan your self-care around how social media friendly it is. Just because something isn't perfect for Instagram doesn't mean it isn't important for your wellbeing. Self-care should help you recharge, not drain your resources. You may need to try a few things to find what works for you personally, so don't put too much pressure on yourself to do what others are doing. It's an individual preference and your choice.

So why is self-care so important? Self-care is the secret ingredient that allows us to do everything else successfully. It can help improve your mood, lower your stress level, and increase your self-esteem. Self care helps protect you from burnout and if you're a caregiver or an activist, it can help protect you from compassion fatigue.

This guide will walk you through what self-care is, how to practice it, and some techniques and tips to keep in your back pocket for when you need to mix up your self-care routine. We'll go over things like self-soothing, mood tracking, journaling, mindfulness, and more.

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HOW TO GET STARTED



One way to get started thinking seriously about self-care is to take inventory of what you already do for yourself. What are the specific things you do to take care of yourself? This list might include things like:

- Moving your body
- Drinking more water
- Eating when you're hungry
- Getting outside
- Playing with pets
- Getting enough sleep
- Reading for fun
- Doing any hobby
- Making art
- Cooking or baking
- Listening to music
- Meditating
- Journaling
- Playing a sport
- Watching tv or movies
- Taking time off work
- Clearing your space
- Attending therapy
- Asking for help when you need it
- Being gentle with yourself

This list is just the tip of the iceberg, and as you can see, self-care covers a wide range of things. Some of the things you do to care for yourself might not seem super exciting although these may be important building blocks in your routine to care for yourself.

Even if you think you take pretty good care of yourself, you always have the option to find more ways to support and nourish yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. What works for one person won't work for everyone, and your needs can change over time. You can regularly check in with yourself and see what is working and what isn't and adjust as needed.

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USING YOUR 5 SENSES TO SELF SOOTHE

▼ WHAT IS SELF-SOOTHING?

Self-soothing is a stress & anxiety relief technique that uses the stimulation of your five senses to help prevent overload & stay grounded in difficult situations. Using sensory self-soothing helps you to stay grounded and in the moment—it forces you to focus on a single sense and the relief it can provide you in the moment, rather than letting everything around you distract and overwhelm you. The key to sensory self-soothing is to find small, easy and accessible things that provide YOU with a sense of comfort and soothing. They won't be the same for everyone and you might have to do a little trial and error. Take a look at the lists below, and use it as a jumping off point for your own methods.



▼ SMELL

- ★ Use your favorite scented lotion or perfume. Focus on the smell & what it evokes when you use it
- ★ Light a scented candle or burn some incense
- ★ Take a walk outside and notice the fresh smells of grass, trees, flowers, etc.
- ★ Make a fresh pot of coffee, bake cookies, cook a meal you love the smell of—focus on the smell of the freshly made foods



▼ SIGHT

- ★ Look through old favorite photos of friends, family, pets, vacations, etc.
- ★ Take a walk outside and notice the sights around you. What is around you? Trees, flowers, animals, people?
- ★ Light a candle and watch the flame as you breathe deeply
- ★ Watch clouds pass in the sky
- ★ Watch a sunrise or sunset
- ★ Scroll through landscape pictures online



▼ TASTE

- ★ Eat without distraction—put your phone in a different room and focus solely on your meal
- ★ Drink tea—close your eyes and focus only on drinking. How it tastes, how it feels, etc.
- ★ Eat something sweet
- ★ Focus the taste of a mint or hard candy until it completely dissolves



▼ HEARING

- ★ Turn your favorite music on. Close your eyes while you listen to it
- ★ Take a walk outside and notice the sounds of everything around you—is it windy, are there animals, or neighbors making noise?
- ★ Find a guided meditation



▼ TOUCH

- ★ Take a hot bath or shower
- ★ Pet a dog or cat
- ★ Squeeze a pillow
- ★ Change your sheets & feel how they feel fresh on your bed
- ★ Find a sunny spot, sit in it and feel the warmth on your skin
- ★ Focus on the feeling of rubbing lotion into your skin
- ★ Put on soft clothing or cuddle with a blanket

MOOD TRACKING

Keeping track of your mood can help you learn more about yourself, your emotions, and help you understand your own triggers, warning signs, and overall make your emotions feel more in your own control.

If you keep track of your moods, you'll start to notice patterns—good & bad—which can help you make your own wellness plan. When a stress trigger is coming up, what can you do to preemptively give yourself some relief? How can you create more balance in your life in regards to your emotions?

Tracking your mood will help you plan and understand. When you keep a detailed log of your mood and what may have influenced it, you can use it as a tool for your own betterment. You can find your own solutions looking through it. Not only this, but keeping track of your mood & wellness history can help you at doctors visits—maybe you can't remember exactly how something affected you. With the mood log you don't have to try to remember on your own. You'll have your own detailed record of how your physical and mental health have interacted with one another.

Keep a mood log can be as simple as keeping a doc open in your Google account to record how you're feeling every day. It could be a physical journal, or you can use one of the many apps out there—that way it's always on your phone.

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MOOD TRACKING APPS

MOODKIT (\$4.99)

DAYLIO (FREE)

REALLIFECCHANGE (FREE)

THERAPYBUDDY (FREE)

IMOODJOURNAL (\$1.99)

MOODS (FREE)

MOODTRACK DIARY (FREE)

MYMOODTRACKER (\$9.99)



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POSITIVE SELF TALK

The way you talk to yourself matters. If you are constantly talking to yourself in a negative way, eventually you will begin to believe the negativity. One huge part of self-care is how you feel. If you're constantly bringing yourself down, you will probably have a hard time feeling good about yourself.

It can be hard to break the habit of talking down to yourself. You probably do it without noticing, which can make it hard to stop the behavior in its tracks. One way you can actively practice positive self-talk is by using affirmations. Affirmations are anything we tell ourselves. Affirmations can be positive or negative. You may be using negative affirmations already without realizing it, in fact. If you tell yourself things like, "You're not good enough," or "You don't have enough", then you are already using affirmations. The trick is to use them positively.

According to Psychology Today, "An affirmation can work, because it has the ability to program your mind into believing the stated concept." So basically, affirmations can help you retrain your mind to focus on the positive instead of on the negative.

Affirmations can also help you to notice the patterns of your thoughts. If you are making the time to consciously say nice things to yourself, you will probably end up noticing the not so nice things you say to yourself unconsciously. You can gently remind yourself to get back on track when you have a negative thought just by repeating an affirmation to yourself.

Affirmations are fairly straightforward - just pick your affirmation and say it to yourself repeatedly. You may find it beneficial to make it part of your daily routine. For example, you can get in the habit of saying your affirmations to yourself after you brush your teeth in the morning or at night (or both!). Building a new habit around an old habit can help make sure you don't forget! When you're saying your affirmations to yourself, you may find it helpful to look in a mirror, so you feel like you're talking to yourself. Try to take a few deep breaths first, and stand (or sit) up as straight as you can. Give yourself a smile! It will probably feel really weird at first, and that's okay. As you give it more practice, it will come more naturally to you.

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AFFIRMATIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

- I matter.
- I am enough.
- I am doing my best
- It's only a thought, and a thought can be changed. [Louise Hay]
- I am in the process of positive change. [Louise Hay]
- My day begins and ends with gratitude. [Louise Hay]
- I forgive myself.
- I deeply and fully love and accept myself.
- I am very thankful for all the love in my life. I find it everywhere. [Louise Hay]
- I trust and listen to my intuition.
- I am willing to ask for help when I need it. [Louise Hay]
- It is okay to not be perfect - I am happy the way that I am right at this moment.
- The tools I need to succeed are in my possession.
- I'm getting stronger every day.
- I am who I want to be.
- I have the power to change my story.
- I have confidence in my skills.
- I deserve to feel happy, healthy, and loved.
- I have the courage to say no.
- My confidence knows no limits.
- Even outside my comfort zone, I will be comfortable in my own skin.
- I choose hope over fear.
- I believe in me.
- I will not take other people's negativity personally.
- I accept myself unconditionally.
- I choose to be happy and love myself today
- I am free from worry and at peace with who I am..
- I know what I'm doing. I will be okay.
- It's easy for me to tune out the negative.
- My feelings are just as valid as anyone else's.
- I am a good person who deserves good things.
- My intelligence and wisdom grows every day.
- It is okay for me to make mistakes, I can adapt.
- I am on the best path for me.
- I am loveable and loved.
- My life is fortunate and special to me.
- Today, no person, place, or thing can irritate or annoy me. I choose to be at peace. [Louise Hay]
- I have my own abundance, comparisons are unnecessary.
- I will stop apologizing for being myself.
- I am grateful for the things that I have.
- I am focused, persistent, and will never quit.
- I can easily create a life that I love.
- Loving others is easy when I love and accept myself. [Louise Hay]
- The more I give, the more I will receive.
- I am safe. I trust life and I trust in myself.
- Life is full of love and I find it everywhere I go.
- I balance my life between work, rest, and play. [Louise Hay]
- Every day is filled with new ideas and new possibilities.
- I control my day; I will not let my day control me.
- My success is inevitable.

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JOURNALING



Journaling can be a great way to get in touch with your thoughts and process your feelings. Journaling can help you manage feelings of stress, lower your level of anxiety, and cope with depression. Writing can help you work through your problems, identify negative thought patterns, track symptoms and figure out triggers.

The nice thing about journaling is that there is no wrong way to do it. You don't need anything fancy either - any paper and writing instrument will do. There are also journaling apps available on your phone and computer if you're not into analog journaling.

You don't have to be writing anything profound, you can just start with something simple like listing three things that happened to you or three things you're grateful for. You can build from there and write more if it feels good for you, or you can jump right in.

If you're ready to journal but you have no idea what in the world you should be writing about, you're not alone. Here are some prompts to help get you started. You can return to these prompts as often as you need to, so you can check in regularly if you want to.

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JOURNAL PROMPTS

- What are you thankful for?
- What made you smile today?
- If you could tell your younger self anything, what would it be?
- Who are three people that you admire, and why?
- My idea of a perfect day is...
- What would your teenage self love about you now?
- Ten things that bring me joy are...
- Choose a picture from a happy time in your life. Describe what was happening, how you were feeling, etc.
- Today my mantra is...
- I am the best version of myself when I...
- Write yourself a “thank you” note
- My “good mood” songs are:
- When I think of my happy place I see...
- Describe your favorite meal. What feelings does it bring up for you?
- Write about someone who inspires you again.



GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

An important part of self care is reflecting on your overall mental health & wellness. What are ways you can care for yourself when your mental health isn't at its peak? If you're dealing with overwhelming anxiety you might not be able to focus on affirmations or journaling. But one type of self-care you can try when this happens is grounding techniques.

Grounding techniques are exactly what they sound like—a way for you to center and ground yourself back to your present environment when your emotions feel like they are spiraling out of control. Its intention is to bring you back into your body & your surroundings when you're feeling trapped by your thoughts.

What are some grounding techniques?



▼ THE 5-4-3-2-1 TECHNIQUE

This technique is all about bringing your focus back to your five senses. It goes like this: When you're feeling overwhelmed, close your eyes. Breathe in for three seconds, and out for three seconds. Then open your eyes and notice:

- ★ 5 things you can see
- ★ 4 things you can feel
- ★ 3 things you can hear
- ★ 2 things you can smell
- ★ 1 thing you can taste



▼ THE 4-7-8 BREATHING PATTERN

4-7-8 is a breathing pattern based on an ancient yoga practice called pranayama, which means “breath control.” To get the most out of it, it's best to find a quiet spot or comfortable place, but the 4-7-8 breathing pattern can be used anywhere.

Exhale completely before starting. Then:

- ★ Breathe in deeply for four seconds
- ★ Hold your breath in for seven seconds
- ★ Release your breath, making an audible whooshing sound for eight seconds.
- ★ Repeat this pattern for four full cycles



▼ FOCUS ON YOUR FEET

Another way to ground yourself is to focus on the way your body is connected to its surroundings. Either sitting or standing, take time to focus on the very bottoms of your feet. What do you feel? How do you feel? Notice any and all sensations connected to the bottoms of your feet for one minute.

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A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows the silhouette of a person standing on a boat, looking out at the ocean during sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The person's arm is resting on the boat's railing.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness & meditation are great ways to practice self care. You can do it in small batches—no need to overwhelm yourself by trying to master it all at once. Even if you have a million things on your plate, try to give yourself five minutes a day to close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and do your best to clear your thoughts.

If you don't have five minutes to dedicate to mindfulness, work it into things you already do every day! Find small moments throughout the day to be truly mindful. Things like:

★ When you brush your teeth, try not to let your mind wander. Focus only on the movement of your toothbrush, the way it feels, how your senses are all reacting to the process.

★ When you eat, notice what you're eating. How does it taste? What does it look like? What do you smell?

★ In line at the grocery store (or any line), focus on where you are. Who is around you? What is happening with all 5 of your senses?

ONE LAST THING

Remember, there is no “right” way to do self-care. The techniques described in this ebook are a great starting point for developing a self-care practice. You don’t have to jump in and do all of these at once, or at all. Mix and match, and find out what works for you. It can be overwhelming to try a lot of new things at once, so we recommend trying one new thing at a time. Self-care should be personal for you! If you feel something is working for you, then that’s great. You don’t need to do what everyone else is doing.

For further resources, check out our Pinterest board dedicated to self-care.

If you would like further support in your self-care journey, we’d love to help you. At Holistic Consultation we are dedicated to treating the whole person in a welcoming, safe and supportive environment.

We recognize and emphasize the importance of human relationships so that all people can feel connected and live meaningful lives. We believe strongly in the power of authenticity, vulnerability and understanding.

We are the practice that accepts you for who you are on all levels, have a commitment to a shared sense of responsibility to the greater good and firmly believe that every person deserves to feel connected and understood on a core level.

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