

Caring for yourself is vitally important. While it sounds like common sense, it is often an afterthought, or we feel we don't have time, or that it is selfish. However, it is not selfish; it is vital to your overall health and well-being. Taking a little time for yourself can be lifesaving. It involves incorporating coping strategies to deal with stress and NOT just meeting your needs.

Why is it SO important?

Self-care helps you cope better with daily stressors and improve emotional, mental and physical health. It has been clinically shown to;

- Reduce or eliminate anxiety, depression, burnout, reduce stress, improve concentration, minimize frustration and anger, increase happiness, improve energy,
- Reduce heart disease, stroke and cancer.
- Fosters resilience
- Increase life expectancy

Self-Care What is it and What can I do?

Self-care includes everything related to staying physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. This can be as simple as eating and sleeping well, hiking, hanging with friends, seeing your health practitioners for regular checkups, or even taking the time to understand the health information you need to make appropriate decisions about your health and well-being.

First, be creative and dedicated. Carve out a time each day. It can be 5 minutes to start and increase as you become comfortable with it. It can be simple or elaborate. Set out the intention and purpose of what you are engaging in. Truly the list of self-care options is endless. Here are a few starting ideas.

- Anything you do for yourself that feels nourishing. It can be relaxing, calming, intellectual, spiritual, physical, practical or something you need to get done.
- Create a cozy space in your home where you can relax, read, or enjoy a book.
- Be aware of your emotional state. Knowing what a calm state feels like and when stress is pushing you outside your tolerance level. Self-care can significantly help increase your window of tolerated stress. (See Stress and the Window of Tolerance)
- Checking in with yourself and asking how you are doing and what your body needs
- Talk with someone, meet with friends or family.
- Volunteer or help someone you know
- Do something artistic, draw, paint, create, journal.
- Listen to music or dance around the house.
- Work out, walk, run, hike.
- Watch your favourite show or movie.
- Laugh or cry, a good ugly cry or belly laugh can make you feel better.
- Hug someone, cuddle with your pets
- Take a nap, get a good night's sleep (see the sleep tip sheet)

Self-Care

- Say no to additional responsibilities, commitments, or events you don't want to do
- Eat healthily and drink enough water.
- Get your annual checkup and see your dentist.
- Meditate, pray, reflect, engage in yoga, visit meaningful places, be mindful, consider your higher purpose and meaning
- Manage or learn about stress
- Learn how to set healthy boundaries

Creating a Plan for Obstacles

There will be times you come up against obstacles. It has been found that if you create a plan for overcoming these obstacles it greatly improves the odds of overcoming the obstacle. Here are some ideas to help some of the bigger ones.

- No time
 - Purposefully carve out / schedule time each day in your daily schedule. It can be as little as a few minutes or a day.
 - Don't start HUGE. You are better off slowly building self-care into your daily practices than starting too BIG and becoming overwhelmed and stopping.
 - Build it into your daily routine (Example – moving the body when you wake up in the morning, wiggling your toes, and fingers)
 - Be curious, are you putting everyone else's needs before your own? Like they say in the safety speech on airplanes, you have to put your oxygen mask on first to be able to help others.
- Need to be perfect or believe you don't need or deserve it
 - Give yourself a little self-compassion. You will mess up, but that is ok. Begin the next day again.
- It is too expensive.
 - While a lavish trip to the spa sounds like great self-care for many, the truth is taking a walk around your neighbourhood can have the same effects. Find budget-friendly ways to relax, and if your dream is to spend a lavish day at the spa, create a saving plan OR, better yet, plan a spa day at your own home with your friends!

My Self-Care Plan

| Self-Care Idea | Day / Time | Obstacle | Plan |
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