



What is Self-Care and Why is it Important For You?

—Matthew Glowiak

Self-care may be defined by the term itself—**caring for yourself**. Self-care includes anything you do to keep yourself healthy—**physically, mentally and spiritually**. Although prioritizing self-care may sound like common sense, especially if you're considering longevity, it's often the first thing to go when we find ourselves in challenging situations, whether because of bad health, a financial crisis, job loss, divorce or, in our current situation, the COVID-19 pandemic. This is why it is important to keep it top of mind and not an after-thought, especially when we find ourselves in challenging times.





Why is Self-Care Important?

In a society in which people

are expected to work long hours and pass on vacation days, there is an underlying belief that we must always be productive—which can ultimately take away from opportunities for self-care. But by taking some time out to engage in self-care, you may relieve the pressures of everyday life and reset yourself to get back to a healthy point where productivity is once again maximized. Considering the costs associated with mental health services, lost wages and more, spending some time on yourself may ultimately benefit everyone.

Burning the candle at both ends, so-to-speak, comes with significant consequences, which may include but are not limited to burnout, depression, anxiety, resentment and a whole host of other negative implications.

Engaging in a self-care routine has been clinically proven to reduce or eliminate anxiety and depression, reduce stress, improve concentration, minimize frustration and anger, increase happiness, improve energy, and more.

From a physical health perspective, self-care has been clinically proven to reduce heart disease, stroke and cancer. Spiritually, it may help keep us in tune with our higher power as well as realize our meaning in life.

Considering Obstacles

Perhaps the single most common reason people give for not participating in self-care is due to a lack of time. While many of us have a lot going on, it's imperative that we take time out every day for ourselves, even if minimally. Another great thing about self-care is that it does not have to cost a thing. And you can even accomplish it in the convenience of your own home. These perks are especially beneficial during the current COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing regulations.

Remember that self-care is all about you. What works for one person may not work for another, but that's the beauty of a self-care routine. Perhaps some suggestions you have heard in the past did not work. Please do not be discouraged. You are encouraged to continue searching until you find the best fit. The catch, though, is that it must be done both intentionally and consistently to have maximum impact. Even if you only have 5-minute increments spread throughout the day to engage in self-care, that is certainly better than nothing. Over time, you may significantly enhance your overall health and wellbeing. Even if you are just beginning, there are results that may be realized almost immediately.



How to Take Care of Yourself: Building a Personalized Self-Care Plan

When focusing on how to build your self-care plan, it may help to consider the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 8 dimensions of wellness ([SAMHSA pdf source](#).) Though developed by substance abuse professionals, these dimensions conceptualize the domains of wellness that make all of us whole. These dimensions include:



The eight dimensions, if kept in healthy balance, generally predict higher levels of wellness.

For all of us, though, there is continued work to be done. Life is dynamic, and so are our dimensions of wellness. During challenging times, we may rely on our strong points to help carry us through. When too many dimensions are compromised, we may find ourselves struggling and find it difficult to handle things we easily could have in the past.

Each of our plans will look different, but here are some suggestions to consider among each of the eight domains. Feel free to modify, replace, or consider your own as you go along. Remember, this is about you.

Emotional—Talk to someone, reflect, journal, read, do something artistic, listen to music, work out, take a walk, watch something that suits the mood (or does the opposite and changes it), cry it out, hug someone, cuddle, laugh, take a nap.

Environmental—Take a walk somewhere nice, breathe in fresh air, enjoy the sun, enjoy the night sky, avoid littering, pick up litter, reduce waste, use reusable products, recycle, clean your house, redesign a room.

Financial—Develop a practical financial plan, open a savings account, start saving (even if \$1 per day), try saving even more if you are already saving, invest, cut back on unnecessary purchases, consider where you can cut corners, avoid credit cards, ask for a raise.

Intellectual—Read, listen to audio-books, watch documentaries, complete puzzles, be mindful of the world around you, become curious, try something new, tap into your creative/artistic side, take a class, complete a program, graduate.

Occupational—Learn a trade, get your degree, train for a promotion, accept the promotion, put together your resume, polish your resume, apply for your dream job, take on a task you enjoy, open your own business.

Physical—Work out daily, take a walk, eat healthy, get your annual checkup, see the dentist, take medications as prescribed, avoid drugs and alcohol, get 7-9 hours of sleep, see the physician when you do not feel well.

Social—Meet up with friends and family, keep in contact with old friends, volunteer, go out, have fun, engage in healthy social media use, [exude positivity](#), utilize technology when distance is a factor, have a big laugh.

Spiritual—Meditate, pray, reflect, engage in yoga, visit a meaningful site, do right by others, [be mindful](#), consider your higher purpose and meaning, look to your higher power for support, love one another, help those in need.

Self-care is an important activity to do every day. Doing so will lead toward a better balance among your dimensions of wellness and lead toward improved overall health and wellness.

Life is precious, and it is meant to be enjoyed.