

# Self-Care

Self-care is essential for maintaining physical, mental and emotional well-being. It involves taking deliberate actions to nurture and prioritise your own health and happiness. Self-care looks different for everyone as it can encompass a wide range of activities that make you feel relaxed, rejuvenated and fulfilled. Some common examples include: physical self-care, emotional self-care, social self-care, mental self-care and spiritual self-care.

## Physical Self-Care

This involves activities that promote physical health such as exercising regularly, eating nutritious foods, getting enough sleep, practising good hygiene and attending regular medical check-ups. There is a strong connection between your body and your mind. When your body is healthy you will think and feel better too.

### Physical exercise

Walking 20 to 30 mins per day. Going to the gym 3 times per week. Good for the cardiovascular system. Boosts mood and immune system.

### Eating a balanced diet

A balanced diet includes wholegrains, vegetables, fruit and protein. Processed foods contain a lot of fat and sugar. Eat less processed food and eat more wholefoods, fruit and raw vegetables.

### Getting enough sleep

7 to 9 hours per night

Some questions to assess your physical self-care:

Are you getting adequate sleep?

Is your diet fuelling your body well?

Are you getting enough exercise?

Are you taking charge of your health?

## Social Self-Care

Good relationships are important for your mental well-being. Social connection is hard-wired into our brain. We need connection with others. Our relationships significantly influence our well-being. Connections can be just as important to physical and mental health as exercise and healthy eating. Research has shown that the psychological and physical health benefits of social contact are so great that they can even outweigh the harmful effects of other risk factors and boost life expectancy. Social self-care involves nurturing relationships and building a support network. This can include spending quality time with friends and family, joining social groups or clubs, volunteering in your community, or seeking out professional networking opportunities.

To assess your social self-care, consider:

Are you getting enough face-to-face time with your friends?

What are you doing to nurture your relationships with friends and family?

Do you attend any groups or clubs?

## Mental Self-Care

Mental self-care involves stimulating your mind and maintaining cognitive health. This can include reading, learning new skills or hobbies, engaging in creative activities like writing or painting, solving puzzles or brain teasers, or seeking out intellectual conversations.

#### **Learning new skills**

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental well-being by boosting self-confidence and giving you a sense of purpose.

Learn about a subject that fascinates you.

Read books. Watch movies or documentaries that inspire you.

Sign up for a course.

Here are a couple of questions to consider when you think about your mental self-care:

Are you making enough time for activities that mentally stimulate you?

Are you doing proactive things to help you stay mentally healthy?

#### **Emotional Self-Care**

Emotional self-care focuses on managing stress, processing emotions and fostering resilience. This can include activities like journaling, practising mindfulness or meditation, seeking therapy or counselling, spending time with loved ones, or engaging in hobbies that bring joy.

##### **Connecting with people**

Talking with people and sharing your feelings.

##### **Mindfulness**

Being in the present, cultivating self-awareness, less reactive, more responsive.

##### **Practise gratitude**

Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Write a gratitude list.

##### **Focus on positivity**

Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.

##### **Give to others**

Be kind to people, be helpful, be of service, volunteer.

##### **Counselling and Psychotherapy**

Counselling and psychotherapy are good for addressing mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, PTSD, stress, grief, trauma, relationship issues and addictions. Talking therapies provide a safe confidential space to understand and process emotions, gain insight, challenge negative thinking patterns, learn healthy coping skills, and live a more satisfying and meaningful life.

Do you have healthy ways to process your emotions?

Do you incorporate activities into your life that help you feel recharged?

Could you benefit from therapy?

#### **Spiritual Self-Care**

Research shows that a lifestyle including religion or spirituality is generally a healthier lifestyle. Nurturing your spirit, however, doesn't have to involve religion. It can involve anything that helps you develop a deeper sense of meaning, understanding, or connection with the universe.

Spending time in nature

Meditation (relaxation, opens up intuition)

Mindfulness ( being in the present and cultivating awareness)

Find a spiritual path that works for you personally

As you consider your spiritual life, ask yourself:

Are you engaging in spiritual practices that you find fulfilling?

### **Why Is Self-Care Important?**

Having an effective self-care routine has been shown to have a number of important health benefits. Some of these include:

Reduction of anxiety and depression

Reduction of stress

More resilience

Improves happiness

Increases energy

Reduces burnout

Strengthens interpersonal relationships

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