

A Guide to Mindful Self-Care

Why is self-care important?

We acknowledge our humanity—our great strengths, and needs when we can focus our attention to our own self-care. Self-care can take the form of big and small acts. It can be as simple as making yourself a good cup of tea,

- Sit here for a minute and allow your thoughts to settle for a minute...Contemplate your strengths—what are the strengths you see in yourself, heard from others about yourself, or just know that you operate out of.
- Identify your strengths. Go ahead and list them—the ones you have heard from others, the ones you know about yourself, and the ones you are growing.



My strengths are:

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In our society, the messages of hurry, hustle, and harm are perpetuated when we neglect our need for basic physical, emotional, and soul-based needs.

- Sit here for another minute, let your thoughts shift into thinking about the messages you have received about hurry, hustle, or harm that kept you in neglect of your needs.
- Write out these statements, identify where they came from:



Acknowledge any harm or hits you have taken as a result of these messages. Try and mindfully put these limiting messages aside. Now, release them when you're ready, so you can start afresh. If helpful, picture these messages attached like branches of a tree, and as the wind blows, your messages release into the sky.

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We also care for ourselves so we can continue to do the hard work of caring for others. Self-care should not just be for ourselves, but it should flow into the love, purpose, and connection.

Now that you have re-connected with your strengths, and have started to release the harmful messages that keeps you from your agency to engage in healthy habits and actions.

Pause here once more, and give yourself some time to allow your body to rest. Take three deep, full breaths, and at each exhale, sigh it out. In your sighing, visualize any of the things that feel heavy. Release thoughts of those things one-by-one. Do as much of this as you can until you feel you've released it all.

Notice any tightness in your body, any sensations, or thoughts you struggle with. Be gentle with yourself in this moment. Notice, then release them. Try to transition your thoughts into a gentle peace, a gentle state of being, a comfort with where you are right in the here-and-now.

Self-care often means that we are transitioning to a healthier state.

Think of a metaphor for the results you will see when you have set a rhythm for your self-care. Are you the egg waiting to hatch, knowing that a new life will emerge as you get into a rhythm of self-care? Or, are you like a seed planted in rich soil, filled with the nutrients of your self-care moments, that will bear fruit in time...

Use this space below to make a simple or elaborate drawing—whatever you wish! Describe the drawing to someone who can keep you accountable to this agreement to engage in your self-care.

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Now, I'm not a big fan of lists. Lists can bring guilt or set direction. Sometimes, reading through lists can be mindless, other times they can be enlightening. What follows are a few lists of self-care ideas. Take them or leave them. Again, I'm not a huge fan. If self-care to you is just simply sitting on your bed, eating an apple, and staring out my window, I am WITH you! That's my favorite self-care past-time 😊

If, however, you find that you do well with lists, and they keep you motivated, I have started a few that tackle key areas of your life that will show-up with results: less burnout, less numbness, more emotional capacity, and flexibility.

Here are some ideas of **physical self-care**. Check the ones you do regularly and highlight the ones you want to grow into!

- Getting at least 8 hours of sleep
- Seeing my doctor for a check-up or to address an issue I am having
- Seeing my dentist for a check-up or to address an issue I am having
- Exercising so that my heart pumps a bit and I break a little sweat a
- When I notice I am stressed: running, weight training, yoga, hiking, walking, swimming or other exercise (please write in): _____
- Staying hydrated by drinking water
- Limiting my sugar and salt intake
- Eating nutritious meals without rushing
- Taking my vitamins and/or supplements my doctor recommends
- Taking my medication that my doctor recommends
- Eating healthy snacks
- Limiting my fast food intake as much as possible
- Slowing down to eat more mindfully
- Making sure my daily schedule has some space to engage in these regularly
- Planning out vacations for myself for the year that will give me rest
- Getting regular massages
- Here are 3 other ideas that are not listed here that I engage in, or know I need to do:

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Self-care always requires us to recognize the emotional load we are carrying. In times of stress, we feel better when we engage with more, not less of these actions below. Set aside in your calendar time to organize yourself so you can plan ahead to enjoy these activities, and schedule these into your calendar so you do not neglect your self care. Set up a calendar reminder for these activities so you can make an agreement to yourself that you will make space for them.

Here are some ideas of **emotional self-care**. Check the ones you do regularly and highlight the ones you want to grow into!

- Practice mindfulness for 5-10 minutes at least twice a week, or more
- Process my thoughts and feelings in a journal
- See my therapist regularly
- Reflect on my therapy sessions afterward
- See my psychiatrist or prescribing doctor regularly
- Follow-up with doctor's recommendations
- Take my medication to help address my mental health needs, according to doctor's instructions
- Talk about my feelings with a trusted friend, family member, or colleague
- Set boundaries to protect my peace
- Say no to tasks that are over-and above what I am able to do (you might want to set a say-no policy for a period of time—a month, or a few months—so you can re-evaluate your commitments at a later time, after a period of rest)
- Stay sober
- Set aside time to allow my thoughts to settle while in mindfulness
- Use body scan to get in touch with my body's reactions to help me identify my emotions
- Use a feelings wheel to identify and communicate to others about my feelings:
<https://feelingswheel.com/>
- Disconnect from social media when I am noticing anxiety or depression rise up into self-judgment
- Use vacation time emotional restoration
- Find time to play and engage in joyful activities
- Here are 3 other ideas that are not listed here that I engage in, or know I need to do:

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We are built for healthy connection. Our neurons mirror others, our hearts begin to beat at the same rhythm as others. It is really important that we connect with people who are aligned in values, and are authentic in their care for you, and vice-versa.

Here are some ideas of **social self-care**. Check the ones you do regularly and highlight the ones you want to grow into!

- Texting a friend with a short but sweet message, especially if they haven't heard from you for awhile. Something like, "Hey, I know I haven't been in touch for awhile, but I just wanted to let you know I was thinking of you, and would love to reconnect when you are available." If they are down, invite them to something easy: movie, coffee/tea, a short hike/walk together.
- Sending a birthday card with a written message of connection
- Making small talk during local outings with the barista, people in line at the grocery store, the receptionist, wait-staff etc. Research shows that these loose-connections increase our endorphins and lift our mood.
- Make plans for a shared meal with someone you are trying to get to know better.
- Join a local meet-up or social group
- Have coffee at a local coffee shop to be around others
- Asking a trusted person for their help on a task
- Checking in on a sick loved one or friend
- Inviting an acquaintance to watch a game, new show, or just for tea/coffee
- Asking a trusted friend to catch a performance, music event, visit a museum, or other artistic interest in your city
- Volunteering to drive a friend you know who needs a ride to and from the airport
- Cooking or baking a treat for a friend and dropping it off with their consent
- Talking to your neighbor, who seems friendly

