



## 10 Tips for Self-Care

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Taking care of ourselves is important for physical and mental health and well-being. It can be easy to neglect self-care and put ourselves last, especially when we are busy with school, work, family life, housework, and other responsibilities. When we do not engage in self-care, we may notice ourselves feeling extra tired, moody, and even experiencing burnout (feelings of exhaustion, negativity, and emotional numbness, typically related to prolonged high stress levels). Below are some tips on how to better utilize self-care techniques and prioritize your mental and physical well-being:

- Check in with yourself to determine what you need at a given moment. Ask yourself questions such as, “How am I feeling?”, “What do I need right now?”, “What actions can I take to feel better?”, “Am I honoring my boundaries?”. This can give you some insight on what type of self-care activity to engage in and to what extent you have used self-care recently.
- Make a list of self-care activities that nourish your mind, your body, or your soul. For example, your list may include journaling, reading a book, taking a nap, listening to music, moving your body, or even decluttering the house.
- Self-care looks different for everyone. There is no “perfect” or “right” way to do it. During your self-care check-in, you may notice you simply need to relax for a few minutes right now. Other times, you might need some physical activity. Focus on what is best for you at a given moment rather than what others are doing.
- Make self-care a priority. Be proactive. The same way that you need to get to that doctor's appointment, finish that assignment, or cook dinner for the family, you need to prioritize caring for yourself. You might set aside specific days or times, or perhaps dedicate 15 minutes a day to something you enjoy. Find simple ways to build it into your schedule. For example, call a friend on your lunch break or meditate while drinking your morning coffee. If you are “too busy” to engage in self-care, you are likely in need of it.
- Set self-care goals. Always wanted to take up scrapbooking, learn how to play tennis, or watch all of the Marvel movies? Now is your chance. Self-care is the epitome of doing something you genuinely want for yourself. Create realistic and achievable self-care goals. This can help you to incorporate self-care into your life regularly.

- Be assertive and practice saying no to others. Self-care includes setting boundaries. Be sure to set clear work-life boundaries. If you can't take on another task, don't. Prioritizing others' needs over your own is detrimental to your mental and physical health and overall well-being. Oftentimes, people are more efficient and effective when they've taken a break or spent some time caring for themselves. Putting yourself first can decrease symptoms of burnout and even increase your productivity.
- Be aware of common misconceptions surrounding self-care. Often, society tells us myths about self-care, such that it is selfish, time-consuming, must be earned, and only involves specific activities like taking a bubble bath. In reality, none of these are true! Self-care is not selfish, and it can be done in short amounts of time, sometimes only taking a few minutes of the day. There is nothing you need to do to earn your self-care time and it can look however you want according to your needs - whether that is taking a bubble bath or not.
- Give yourself credit. Practicing good hygiene, getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating healthy can all be forms of self-care. Everyday tasks you already engage in can make a difference. Taking care of yourself includes engaging in daily living skills. A good night of sleep, a hot shower, or even a good meal can go a long way.
- Find your own unique outlet based on your strengths. Self-care is meant to be enjoyable. If you find that you are a creative person, your self-care might include painting, gardening, or photography. If you are sporty, it might involve playing soccer or watching football on TV. If you are strategic, it might include mind games and puzzles. Take some time to think about what you're good at and coordinate your strengths with your hobbies.
- Remember that self-care is *not* a "one-and-done" process. Completing a self-care activity once may have some positive impacts on you for that day or even the next few days, but it is important to continue using it to extend the benefits. Self-care is an ongoing, regular activity to incorporate into your life. It is best when used all the time, whether you are feeling good, bad, or anything in-between. This helps train your mind and body to learn the routine and automatically engage in self-care activities when times become more difficult.

***Talk to someone who can help! To find a licensed psychologist near you, use PPA's Psychologist Locator at <https://www.papsy.org/locator>. For information on other mental health topics, go to <https://www.papsy.org>, then "Resources" and then "Public Resources". PPA offers these articles for informational purposes only; they are not a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.***