

Self-Care:

Self-care is an essential part of staying healthy. We all face unique stressors everyday; school, family, friends, athletics, work, etc. The list goes on and on and is unique to each and every one of us. How we manage these stressors often determines our physical and emotional health. Identifying barriers to managing stress is one way of improving your ability to cope with these stressors.

Developing and practicing self care strategies with a self care plan is important for your mind, body and spirit. Your ability to be effective in your relationships, education and future occupation depends on your self care strategies.

During this time of change, we tend to miss our routines. We miss our friends, school, sports and the idea of "normal life." Self-care is incredibly important in maintaining balance in our lives.



You cannot *drink*
from an empty cup.

FILL YOURSELF UP. YOU'RE WORTH IT.

Below are some important tools and resources for developing your own self-care strategies:

Self-Care Plans:

This personal plan created by the American Academy of Pediatrics is designed for teens to identify causes of stress and develop a plan for managing stressors

in everyday life. This tool provides information about stress as well as a realistic tool for teens to fill out. Click on the link to find more information.

[Just for Teens: A Personal Plan for Managing Stress](#)

Mental Health

During stressful times, thoughts and feelings can become overwhelming and unmanageable. Irrational and uncomfortable thoughts may prohibit us from moving forward or finding motivation to complete small tasks or projects. We can detach from relationships and find little meaning in our lives. Sometimes, stress takes on a new meaning. Depression and anxiety are common mental health issues that many teens face. Assessing the severity of these issues will help determine the course of care.

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme forms they can be harmful.

Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

Catastrophizing: Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt

awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward."

Magical Thinking: The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. "I am a

good person—bad things shouldn't happen to me."

Personalization: The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."

Jumping to Conclusions: Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

Mind Reading: Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."

Fortune Telling: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

Disqualifying the Positive: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

"Should" Statements: The belief that things should be a certain way. "I should always be friendly."

All-or-Nothing Thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as "always", "never", or "every". "I *never* do a good enough job on anything."

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Grounding Techniques

After a trauma, it's normal to experience flashbacks, anxiety, and other uncomfortable symptoms. **Grounding techniques** help control these symptoms by turning attention away from thoughts, memories, or worries, and refocusing on the present moment.

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object.

What are 5 things you can see? Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.

What are 4 things you can feel? Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.

What are 3 things you can hear? Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.

What are 2 things you can smell? Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.

What is 1 thing you can taste? Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

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Body Awareness

The body awareness technique will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

1. Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet.
3. Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Pay attention to the sensations in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.
4. Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat this 10 times.
5. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
6. Rub your palms together briskly. Notice and sound and the feeling of warmth.
7. Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
8. Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.

Mental Exercises

Use mental exercises to take your mind off uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. They are discreet and easy to use at nearly any time or place. Experiment to see which work best for you.

- Name all the objects you see.
- Describe the steps in performing an activity you know how to do well. For example, how to shoot a basketball, prepare your favorite meal, or tie a knot.
- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Pick up an object and describe it in detail. Describe its color, texture, size, weight, scent, and any other qualities you notice.
- Spell your full name, and the names of three other people, backwards.
- Name all your family members, their ages, and one of their favorite activities.
- Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Practice for at least a few minutes.
- Think of an object and "draw" it in your mind, or in the air with your finger. Try drawing your home, a vehicle, or an animal.

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Meditation

Meditation is a great way to develop stress management techniques. It changes both the function and structure of the brain to support self-control. It is commonly used to decrease depression and anxiety, promote self-awareness, and improve memory and concentration. There are a number of social media applications available to teens.

Below are youtube videos that will lead you through a guided meditation.

[13 Minute Body Scan Meditation](#)

[Deepak Chopra's 3 Minutes Meditation](#)

[1 Minute Mini Meditation](#)

Mobile Apps

[Breathr](#): Free for Apple and Android mobile devices!

[Stop, Breathe, and Think](#): Web and mobile app for youth, with meditations for mindfulness and compassion.

[Calm.com](#): Free website and mobile app with guided meditation and relaxation exercises.

[Insight Timer](#): Free mobile app with virtual “bells” to time and support your meditations, and access to lots of guided meditations by many different meditation teachers (including Dr. Vo).

[Plum Village: Zen Meditation](#). Free app for iOS, loaded with beautiful meditations and teachings in the Plum Village / Thich Nhat Hanh tradition.

[MindShift](#): Free mobile app for teens developed by AnxietyBC, with mindfulness and other coping skills for anxiety.

[Smiling Mind](#): Free mobile mindfulness app for young people, from Australia.

[Headspace](#): “Meditation made simple.” This app has a free introductory period, after which it requires a paid subscription to continue to use.

Exercise & Nutrition

What are the emotional benefits of exercise?

Exercise helps to improve stress and overall mood. Our bodies release stress hormones as our stress level increases, which may trigger our “fight or flight mode.” Stress also triggers increased heart rate, trouble breathing, and sweating. Exercise can help decrease overall stress levels. Exercise also has been shown to improve mood by increasing endorphins.

Exercise can also increase confidence. Setting, working on, and achieving a set of goals helps build a sense of personal accomplishment. This is why many “couch to 5K” programs work, as they build slowly on small goals. With each accomplishment, you can continue to work on building larger goals. It feels great to accomplish something new.

Exercise also improves quality of sleep. Sufficient sleep is connected to quality of life and overall health. Because exercise reduces anxiety, depression, and stress, it can also lead to improved sleep quality. The quality of your sleep will improve, and the quality of your workouts will improve as well.

Below are workout videos you can do at home!

[Yoga for Teens \(20 Minutes\)](#)

[30 Minute Beginner Workout](#)

[20 Minute Interval Run Workout](#)

80+ SELF CARE ACTIVITIES FOR TEENS

Kiddie Matters-Coaching Kids For Success

1. Listen to music
2. Take a shower
3. Talk to a friend
4. Watch a movie
5. Read a book
6. Go for a walk
7. Ride your bike
8. Exercise
9. Play with your pet
10. Stretch your muscles
11. Do yoga
12. Meditate or pray
13. Talk to a friend on the phone
14. Go the park with a friend*
15. Go to the mall*
16. Get a hair cut*
17. Take a nap
18. Plan an outing with friends*
19. Go for a jog
20. Write in a journal
21. Invite a friend to your house*
22. Go for a swim*
23. Go for a hike*
24. Try a new activity
25. Play board games
26. Play card games
27. Play a video game
28. Cook with your parent
29. Go to the spa with a parent
30. Go outside and watch the birds and other animals
31. Make a list of things you like about you
32. Go to the library
33. Write a poem/short story
34. Learn a new language
35. Sing your favorite songs
36. Write a song
37. Learn to play an instrument
38. Make a funny video
39. Draw or paint a picture
40. Make a list of your accomplishments
41. Make a bucket list
42. Write a letter to your future self
43. Make a list of things you're good at
44. Work outside in nature
45. Plant a garden*
46. Make a scrapbook
47. Trim your nails
48. Visit a museum*
49. Eat your favorite dessert
50. Take photos of nature
51. Make a playlist of your favorite songs
52. Do a puzzle
53. Play with a sibling
54. Go to the bookstore *
55. Google information about a different culture
56. Watch funny cat videos
57. Read a comic
58. Go outside and watch the clouds
59. Make a playlist of funny movies
60. Turn up the music and dance
61. Make a list of people you look up to and why
62. Practice deep breathing exercises
63. Walk barefoot in grass
64. Read an inspirational book
65. Write in a gratitude journal
66. Do an arts and craft activity
67. Start an art journal
68. Have a good laugh
69. Practice progressive muscle relaxation
70. Volunteer in your community*
71. Draw or color Zentangles
72. Draw or color Mandalas
73. Unplug and spend time in nature
74. Go stargazing
75. Make a fairy garden
76. Look at family photo albums
77. Read inspiring quotes
78. Listen to running water
79. Snuggle under a cozy blanket
80. Fly a kite
81. Write a love letter to yourself
82. Make jewelry
83. Blow bubbles and be silly
84. Give yourself a self-massage
85. Daydream

***Ask for your parent's permission**