

## Self-Care Isn't Selfish—It's Self Preservation

When you think of self-care, what do you think? Perhaps bubble baths, a session in the sauna, time with friends, or even going to counseling comes to mind. The term and its concepts have become popularized since the pandemic. This is great! ...Right? Well, it depends on what it looks like for you personally and if you're actually participating in something that better your life and your sense of self, or if you're begrudgingly throwing on a facemask, getting a pedicure once a month, or resentfully eating a salad you don't like and calling it "self-care". Most of what we're told is self-care are just acute stress relief techniques. No stress-relieving activity will be effective if we don't have a sound, regular practice of profoundly nurturing self-care.

So, if it's not bubble baths and deep breathing when you're overwhelmed, what is it? Self-care is a connection between your mind, body and spirit; to participate in good, healthy self-care, we must learn to maximize our caring efforts toward these three pieces of ourselves. **The goal of self-care isn't just to relax, but to eliminate potential future disease, create emotional resilience, preserve our overall well-being, and strengthen the pillars of our authentic selves.** We are told self-care is *so necessary*, but you may have also received another message that anything more than the bare minimum is selfish and inconvenient. This simply isn't true- in fact, we must do so much more than the bare minimum to live a meaningful, joyful, and balanced lifestyle. Self-care isn't selfish-- it's a multidimensional, purposeful, and essential practice.

Let's look at some non-typical ideas that you might consider. Try one or all of these to invest in your mental, physical, and spiritual bank.



## Mental & Emotional Self-Care

When we have poor mental health, we cannot thrive in any other way. If we feel constantly emotionally drained or like our brains are always on overdrive, we are often unable to function well in daily life.

1. Attending regular therapy sessions can help you get a fresh perspective and have a place to talk about those innermost feelings or see a doctor for mental health treatment if you need it.
2. Try meditating or practicing quiet reflections daily or practicing weekly time doing something quiet that you enjoy to refresh your mind and get a break from the norm.
3. Practice different ways of keeping your mind sharp (i.e., puzzles, Sudoku, reading) to promote positive brain health.
4. Weekly socialization or face-to-face time with friends helps to fuel and feed our innate desire for connection.
5. Practice self-compassion for healthy inner dialogue- it helps us be graceful to ourselves, especially in times of stress.

## Physical Self-Care

We know why this one is important, but how can we do something different than the norm of “exercise and eat healthy”? Here are some ideas.

1. Replace “healthy” with “balanced”. Healthy food is good, but enjoying your food, fueling your body, and having intentional mealtime with loved ones is equally important.
2. Rest well, including taking a nap if you’re tired, and ensuring you’re getting a good, quality night of sleep.
3. Use sick days if you don’t feel well. If you don’t rest your body when you’re sick, you’re reinforcing the idea that your physical well-being matters less!
4. Move your body. Maybe “exercise” isn’t your thing, but if you work remotely or at a desk, make sure you’re getting up and walking around, or moving your body with purpose every day.
5. Make those appointments you’ve been avoiding- doctor, dentist, and others. Schedule them, attend them, and do the follow-ups!

## Spiritual Self-Care

We don’t just have a brain and a body, but we have a spirit, too. Without a healthy and thriving spirit, joy is much harder to come by and burn-out is easy to find.

1. Journaling is a great, private place to come up with new ideas, review your emotions, set goals, and look back on what you’ve accomplished.
2. Find a higher power. This can be anything outside of yourself! Love, community, religious concepts, etc. can help us see the greater good and find purpose.
3. Get outside! Even when it’s cold, the sun and nature have powerful rejuvenating effects on our spirit.

4. Get involved in your local community. When we donate our time to a cause that matters to us, we find a deep sense of belonging, fellowship, and care for others. In turn, we're more likely to care well for ourselves.
5. Find a hobby that occupies your mind and hands and spend time doing it weekly! We all need time in our lives doing something we love that brings us joy. From working on cars to painting, having a hobby gives us a sense of peace, and gives us a break in our thoughts. Bonus points if its non-screen related!

Last, but certainly not least- use those PTO and vacation days. They exist for a reason, and they are there to help you regain your balance when you need it. Take the trip you've been thinking about or spend some quality time having a staycation, finish a project around the house you've been putting off, or just do whatever brings you joy on those extra days you have left. Wasted or unused PTO emphasizes the idea that you don't have time or the need for self-care, when really, we all should be taking as much time as we can to nourish ourselves.

As difficult as it can be to step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life to care for yourself— consider the alternative! What would it be like if you put in no effort to your mind, body and spirit? Self-care will look different for everyone, but it must be taken seriously, and we need to practice recognizing when our minds and bodies are out of sync so that we can reinforce our methods of self-care or add new ones.

Need a boost in getting started? Ulliance can help. Call us to get connected with a counselor or a coach, or even help finding local community resources. We're here to help you along the journey!

**For more information, tools, resources, or app information, call your  
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for you & your family.**

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