

Self-care

Takeaways

- If we don't put time and energy into our own well-being, we won't have enough energy to do well at home, at work, or in other areas of our lives that matter to us and to others.
- Self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy.
- Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

For other ideas for healthy practices for your mind, body, surroundings, and relationships, see the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Wellness Toolkits (bit.ly/3v4AaiJ).

"Should the cabin lose pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the overhead area. Please place the mask over your own mouth and nose before assisting others."

If you have ever flown on a plane, you probably have heard these instructions. It's easy to get in the habit of making self-care at the bottom of our priority list. But if we don't put time and energy into our own well-being first, we won't have enough energy to do well at home, at work, or in other areas of our lives that matter to us and that impact others.

About self-care

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact!

Be active

- **Get physical** | Find fitness activities that are fun and enjoyable.

- **Spend time in nature.**

- **Do something fun** | Activities that elicit joy improve our health, mood, and energy.

Relax

- **Schedule it** | Reserve 20 minutes each morning for yourself. Block off one evening a week for a relaxing activity or visit with a friend.
- **Try a relaxing activity** | Deep breathing, yoga, stretching, and meditation reduce stress.
- **Make sleep a priority.**

Find peace

- **Practice gratitude** | Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific.
- **Focus on positivity** | Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected** | Reach out to your friends or family members who can provide support
- **Take a media break** | Media events can be sensationalized. Unplug for part of each day from all your sources of media and news.

Take action (Complete one or more activities as a team)

- A. **GROUP DISCUSSION:** What kind of movement or exercise activities are fun for you? What kinds of relaxing activities have you found helpful for stress reduction?
- B. **GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY:** Think about a self-care practice that you would like to add to your daily routine before/after work or at work. Share and ask for the group to check-in and hold you accountable to your goal.
- C. **DEEP BREATHING PRACTICE:** Deep breathing can increase focus; improve mood, immune function, and circulation; and calm the nervous system. It can be done throughout the day. Lead the group in a short demonstration. There are many types of breathing techniques. Box breathing is one of the easiest ones to learn and to practice. Here are the steps:
 1. Breathe in through your nose while you count to 4 in your head.
 2. Hold your breath for a count of 4.
 3. Exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.
 4. Hold your breath for a count of 4.
 5. Repeat.

