



SELF-CARE DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has presented every one of us with stress, worries, fears and concerns. We are faced with the prospect of our loved ones becoming ill, financial concerns and business challenges.

Many of us are now working from home and isolating, or practicing social distancing- this presents new challenges in not being able to engage in normal activities, getting used to home-working, isolation, balancing work with responsibilities as parents or carers and home-schooling children.

To cope with the challenges we face individually, to be resilient and to bounce back after this crisis is over, we must all prioritise self-care. Self-care needs to be part of daily living for all of us- it is absolutely fundamental to resilience

“Self-care is a part of daily living. It is the care taken by individuals towards their own health and well-being, and includes the care extended to their children, family, friends and others in neighbourhoods and local communities. Self-Care includes the actions individuals and carers take for themselves, their children, their families and others to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health”

UK Department of Health 2005

Self-care isn't just a one-time deal or a big statement - it is consistently practicing small habits, which together help to make sure you're at your optimum—physically, mentally and emotionally. There are some key areas to focus on, even while in isolation, socially distancing or working from home - the body, the mind, the soul and connection.

SELF-CARE THE BODY

If you want to stay healthy, you need to take care of your body. When you care for your body, you'll feel better psychologically too.

Physical self-care includes how much sleep you're getting, the physical activity you are doing, and how you're fueling your body. Managing existing health conditions and taking medication as prescribed are also part of good physical self-care.

When it comes to caring for your body, you could consider the following questions:

- Am I taking charge of my health?
- Am I eating for wellness?
- Am I getting good quality sleep?
- Am I getting enough exercise?

Here are some ideas that could incorporate in to your self-care practice, to take care of your body:

- Plan simple healthy meals for the week
- Be still. Pick somewhere peaceful, and be quiet for a few minutes.
- Go for a walk outdoors every day – get some vitamin D
- Take a power nap. Ten to twenty minutes can rejuvenate and leave you ready for action.
- Do some daily stretches or a short yoga practice
- Have a good laugh – laughter is a great release and stress reliever
- Give your body a daily treat – like a long soak in the bath
- Put on your favourite song and dance around the kitchen

SELF-CARE THE MIND

Your thoughts and the things that occupy your mind, have a significant impact on your psychological well-being.

Practicing mental self-care means doing the things that help you to stay mentally healthy.

Gratitude, acceptance and self-compassion are fundamental to mental and emotional health and resilience. Mental self-care could also include doing things that keep your mind active, learning a new skill, reading books, doing puzzles, or listening to music.

Here are a few questions to consider when you think about your mental self-care:

- Am I doing proactive things to help me to stay mentally healthy?
- Am I making time for stimulating activities that I enjoy?

Here are some ideas that could incorporate in to your self-care practice, to take care of your mind:

- Make sure you still have a routine to your days
- Celebrate the small wins and share them with your colleagues
- Take regular breaks – and move around
- Have a digital detox – try putting a curfew on devices
- Keep a gratitude diary
- Set time aside for 'me time' to do something just for you
- Try a simple mindfulness practice

SELF-CARE THE SOUL

For many people, observing religious or spiritual beliefs and practices contributes to overall health and happiness. Caring for and nurturing your soul, however, doesn't have to involve religion. Spiritual self-care is important for many and it can involve anything that helps you develop a deeper sense of belonging, meaning, or connection with the universe - whether you enjoy breath work, meditation or attending a place of worship.

As you consider how you can care for your spiritual well-being, ask yourself:

- Am I engaging in spiritual practices that I find fulfilling?
- What questions would I like answers to?

Here are some ideas that you could incorporate in to your self-care practice, to take care of your soul:

- Check in with your feelings. Sit quietly and just be with what you're feeling.
- Think about what you're good at, and find an opportunity for it today.
- Have a date with yourself. Do something that nourishes you.
- Ask for help- it doesn't have to be big, but reach out.
- Choose who you spend time with today - even if it is remotely
- Give a colleague positive feedback
- Write down 3 things you are grateful for



SELF-CARE CONNECTION

Human beings are hard-wired for connection- and it is absolutely key to self-care. Close connections are essential for well-being but it takes time and energy to nurture close relationships with others- and when we are stressed and under pressure, we sometimes neglect to invest in our relationships.

Here are a few questions to consider when you think about your social self-care and connections:

- How am I nurturing my relationships with friends and family?
- How can I spend time with my friends and family while isolating or practicing social distancing?
- How can I lead the way in maintaining connection with my colleagues?

Here are some ideas that could incorporate in to your self-care practice, to take care of your relationships and need for connection:

- Write a list of the people you feel most connected to
- Have regular 'phone dates' or video calls with friends and family
- Agree with colleagues how you will stay connected with each other
- Be proactive in arranging one to one time
- Ask for what you need - and encourage others to do the same
- Have an end of week call with your team / line manager
- If you are feeling isolated - talk to someone about how you feel

We are certainly facing very difficult times, with many different and unforeseen challenges. I hope that you find this guide to self-care helpful as you navigate your way through the coming weeks and months.

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