



Quick Guide to Looking after yourself

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately to take care of our mental, emotional and physical health. Good self-care is key to improving our mood and reducing anxiety.

Taking care of yourself means keeping your stress from taking over so you can function at full capacity. When you are functioning well, you are able to support people around you. There are no set rules for this, but it's about taking some time out to focus on yourself and what you enjoy. Sometimes it will involve dealing with the bigger issues that challenge us.

Self-care will be different for everyone but here are a few ideas of some things you can do to look after yourself:

Look after your wellbeing

The 5 ways to wellbeing are a set of evidence-based actions which promote positive wellbeing...

Connect

Connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.

Give

Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.

Be active

You don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.

Keep learning

Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?

Take notice

Be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness 'mindfulness'. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Food and drink

In order for our bodies to perform well they need fuel. Imagine a car without petrol – you won't get very far! Try to eat the rainbow and have regular meals and remember to keep well hydrated. Drinking plenty of water helps to keep you alert and energised.

List what you enjoy

Sometimes we have that little slot of time for ourselves, but we forget what we enjoy doing. Keep a list and every time you think of something you love doing jot it down!

Plan a holiday or a day out

Engross yourself in the planning and allow yourself to dream big. Look at lots of pictures and imagine the sights and sounds you will encounter. Sometimes planning a trip can be a therapeutic as the trip itself as it allows us to drift off to a different place in our imagination. If you really want to get into it, you might want to cook some foods from the place you are planning to go to and play music or watch films associated with it.

Get your headphones out

Using headphones can be really helpful in blocking out the distracting background noises and allows you to submerge yourself into the music you're listening to and give yourself some space and relaxation.

Keep a journal

Use this in any way you choose. Plan, dream, off load, remember, draw – it means something different to us all.

Learn to recognise your early warning signs

Knowing when life is getting too much and taking some time out can help prevent you from slipping into a difficult place. By checking in with yourself every once in a while, and noticing when things are starting to go wrong means you are better able to invest a little time and attention in yourself before you end up falling into your dark place.

Be thankful

Finding things to be thankful for not only reminds us of all the good things we have in our lives it also helps us to look at situations in a more positive light. If you record these things in a journal or in a jar you can refer back to them in the future. At the end of the day find three things you are thankful for, even if it is something very small, it all contributes maintaining positive wellbeing.

Keep physically well

Looking after your physical health is as important as looking after your mental health. If you are unwell make sure you get the correct treatment where necessary and involve the relevant professionals where appropriate.

Call on a friend

Having a chat with a good friend, getting the burdens of life off your chest and 'putting the world to rights' is sometimes exactly what is needed to refresh and restore you.

Design a beautiful day

Think of all the things you love – food and drink, places to visit, people to be with, the environment around you – and plan out what would be your perfect day. Then find a time when you can live this day. If a whole day feels too ambitious, design a beautiful afternoon or a beautiful hour!

Be self-indulgent

This isn't selfish, it's about investing in yourself, recognising what you enjoy and making it happen.

Look after your basic needs

Sometimes we need to go back to basics and ensure we are meeting our fundamental needs of food, drink, sleep, relaxation and bathing. This may seem obvious but it's not uncommon to be so focused on everyone else that even these basic needs are hard to achieve.

Relax

Practice some relaxation techniques. This could range from a formal relaxation exercise (there are plenty to choose from online), meditation, mindfulness or simply a warm bath or a cup of tea and some peaceful music.



