SELF-CARE: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Introduction

Self-care is progressively more on the radar of writers and thinkers of the self-help scene. What might once have been considered self-indulgent or non-productive is now understood to be one of the most constructive things that you can possibly do.

Without self-care, it's impossible to take care of other people the way you want to. That's because self-care is essential to enjoying your most optimal levels of energy and confidence. Once you've taken care of yourself the way you need to for your health and well-being, you will be able to accomplish all your other goals.

What is Self-Care?

It seems simple. Self-care, of course, is taking care of yourself. But it's all too easy to think we're taking care of ourselves when we're really not doing nearly enough to let ourselves know that we've loved and valued.

Self-care can encompass a wide variety of mindsets and practices, and the ones that are most effective tend to vary from person to person. In this book, you'll learn about the wide variety of options that you have to choose from. Sometimes the thing that we most need is right there in front of our noses but we don't notice them. In fact, that can be the exact reason why we don't see them for the value they offer.

To practice self-care, we must know the art of self-compassion. Western cultures tend to encourage people to be so hard on themselves that it becomes profoundly counterproductive. We beat ourselves up, thinking that this will help us be better in the future. If you were brought up with very critical or harsh parents, you might have a damaging propensity towards this.

Here's what you must remember: it's impossible to do any better than your best. That's right, knowing you're doing your best is enough. The key is to have strong self-awarenesss, so that you're able to know what your best is and when you're reaching that level. You also must know how to be kind to yourself and rev yourself up again when you realize that you haven't been making your best effort.

Mindfulness and living in the present moment are paramount parts of self-care. Even if you just made a mistake a few minutes ago, there's nothing you can do to change what happened. Of course, you can (and should) do whatever you can to fix the consequences of your actions. But you can't go any further than that. Every moment of life is precious. Don’t waste it on useless regrets.

There is such a dizzying array of options for ways to practice self-care, it's useful to put them into four simple categories. Katherine Hurst in her article, "What is Self-Care and Why is Self-Care Important?", lists them:

- **Emotional**: Emotional self-care is when you do things that help you engage with your emotions in a deeper way. With this type of self-care, you acknowledge your emotions and embrace them, never beating yourself up for how you feel. Just a few examples of things you can do for emotional self-care include writing in a journal, allowing yourself to cry if you feel you need to, and singing along to an emotionally meaningful song.

- **Sensory**: Sensory self-care is the practice of things involving the senses (sound, smell, touch, and sight) that soothe you and give you a feeling of well-being. A few examples of this include touching and holding something soft, enjoying aromatherapy with essential oils in a diffuser, and enjoying a bite of delicious chocolate cake. Physical: Physical self-care involves activity that improves your physical health and well-being. This generally encompasses all forms of exercise, especially ones that you enjoy and find relaxing. You could dance to some fantastic music, go for a walk with your dog, go cycling in a beautiful place, or do yoga.
- **Spiritual**: You can practice spiritual self-care whether or not you're religious or even consider yourself at all a spiritual person. Spiritual self-care simply means developing self-awareness and better understanding what your values and priorities really are. Some examples of spiritual self-care include doing meditation, reading or writing poetry or painting a picture, and going for a nature walk.
- **Social**: There is also social self-care. A few examples of social self-care include deciding not to socialize with people who make you feel uncomfortable in some way, contacting a friend you haven't talked to in a while, and joining a group or class that focuses on one of your interests.

Why is Self-Care Important?

Self-care is an essential part of well-being. You cannot be your best self and be able to take care of others as you'd like without taking care of yourself first.

Self-care helps you remain calm in the face of life's many inevitable sources of stress and anxiety. It helps you stay centered, and makes you feel empowered enough to feel that you can take on anything and come out okay at the other end.

In other words, self-care is essential for confidence and self-belief. It's also a fundamental component of self-awareness, which in turn helps to foster these things. If you want to take control of yourself in the most important ways, you need to take the time everyday for practicing meaningful and impactful self-care.

There are innumerable benefits to the regular practice of self-care. Some of those include:

- **Stronger self-esteem and confidence**: Practicing self-care makes you fully understand, even in your subconscious, that you are a good person and worthy of being taken care of and being happy. The fact that you have intrinsic value as a human being becomes stronger and better able to withstand the stresses of life and hostility from others. You'll be less likely to take part in negative self-talk, something that is extremely damaging to self-concept and mental well-being.
- **Improved productivity**: Self-care strengthens you in every area of life, and the fact that taking care of yourself makes you more willing to say no when you can't or don't want to do something, means that you'll free up more time to get work done and be productive in the areas that are most important in your life.
- **Boosted physical health**: Improved physical health and greater resistance to disease are known benefits of better self-care. It's the fact that self-care reduces anxiety levels and the impact on stress on your mind and body that makes it beneficial to health and physical well-being.
- **Enhanced self-awareness and self-knowledge**: Taking the time out of your day will give you the time to get to know yourself and understand your own mindset and interests.

- **The ability to give more to others**: When you take care of yourself, you'll have the excellent mental and physical well-being needed to give all you can to other people. If you don't take care of yourself, you simply won't have as much to give as you'd like.

Ways to Practice Self-Care: An Introduction

As discussed earlier, there are myriad ways to practice self-care. No matter what your personality or what you enjoy, you will be able to find and decide on many different things that you can do to take care of your own well-being in a deep and meaningful way.

Just a few of the self-care approaches we'll discuss in this chapter include: improving the quality and quantity of your sleep, optimizing your nutrition and exercise routine; pampering for physical and mental well-being; hobbies; establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries; growing self-awareness, and strengthening your imagination to improve your self-care.

Self-Care and Sleep

Did you know that sleep is a form of self-care? Yes, it is. And it's arguably the most important one. Without deep and restful sleep for at least eight hours a night (this is believed to vary among people, but eight hours is the general consensus), it's impossible to maintain good health and feel your best self.

If you're like many of us and have an overwhelmingly busy and hectic life, sleep is probably something you don't pay much attention to. Perhaps you feel that you get enough sleep, or at least as much sleep as you possibly can, but are you ensuring a good quality of sleep?

You're probably not getting a good quality of sleep if you get eight hours of sleep but still feel groggy or tired the next day. And if you feel even tired than you expected you would after five or six hours, a poor quality of sleep is probably making a bad situation even worse.

There are many steps that you can take to try to achieve a better quality of sleep:

- Create a sleep schedule and stick to it: Don't underestimate how much creating a sleep schedule will help with the quality and even the quantity of your sleep each night. A sleep schedule that you stick to will help your body get into the rhythm that you need, so that you don't have difficulty getting to sleep at night (and getting up in the morning at your habitual time). Don’t be too hard on yourself if it takes you a bit of time to get a helpful sleep schedule established. You may have to work towards it incrementally. Just don't give up! You can do it with enough determination. You deserve high-quality sleep.
- Get enough exercise during the day: For obvious reasons, getting the exercise you need during the day will make it easier to sleep at night. You'll burn off excess energy, meaning that you won't feel the need to get up and get active when you're trying to nod off.
- Spend time winding down in the evening: There's a strong temptation to keep on working and doing active things all the way to get time. We all love to be productive. But remember that if you don't give yourself enough time to wind down at night before you want to go to sleep, you'll have more difficulty drifting off.
- Manage any anxiety: Anxiety is a problem that can keep you up at night. Finding effective ways to manage anxiety, such as meditation both at intervals during the day and in the evening, will

make it easier to get to sleep when you want to. It should also make your sleep more restful and increase the likelihood of pleasant dreams.

- Try to avoid naps if you can, especially late in the day: If you take naps during the day, it will be more difficult to get to sleep at your scheduled time. On occasion, you can treat yourself to a little bit of a nap (if you really feel you need to), but be prepared for the greater difficulty you'll probably have getting to sleep that night. To compensate, you can do extra meditation, get more exercise, and spend more time winding down in the evening.
- Make sure to have a comfortable mattress and pillows of a height you prefer: If your sleep surface isn't comfortable and soothing, it's almost certainly affecting your sleep in a negative way. Invest in a more comfortable mattress and pillows that help you drift off into dreamland.
- Create a bedtime ritual to help you relax: Whether it's sipping camomile tea, reading a book by one of your favorite authors (a physical book is better than a tablet, as you want to avoid screen glare in the evening as much as possible), or doing some special bedtime meditation, a bedtime ritual will help you get better quality sleep. You can make your bedtime routine have several components, including pampering rituals such as a bubble bath or beauty treatment.
- Adjust the temperature of your bedroom: Most people sleep best in temperatures of between 60 and 67-degrees Fahrenheit.
- Avoid smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol in the evening: If you smoke, you need to quit as soon as possible. But in the meantime, if you insist on having a cigarette, don't do so in the evening. It could keep you awake at night. It's best to avoid alcohol as much as possible, too.
- Avoid large meals late in the evening: Your body will have a hard time getting into a sound sleeping state if it's still processing a heavy meal. This is why you should eat dinner several hours before you plan to go to bed.

Nutrition and Exercise in Self-Care

Eating healthfully and getting all the exercise you need are fundamental elements of good self-care. Healthy eating is essential to maintain not only good health overall but a healthy weight, which in turn is an important factor in physical health and mental well-being. Getting enough of the right foods also helps short-term memory loss and problems such as inflammation. Inflammation negatively impacts every part of the body, including the brain.

When planning a healthy diet, keep in mind the importance of taking care of your gut. Gut health is crucial to strong overall health. To improve the well-being of this part of your body, you need to make sure you're getting enough of the good bacteria you need to fight bad bacteria in your body. Think about starting a probiotic supplement, as well. If you have any existing health problems or you're on medication, make sure to talk to your doctor before starting on any course of supplements.

When you have enough beneficial nutrients in your diet, you will enjoy a more balanced and peaceful mood, less effect from stress, and better health overall. In order to improve your diet, it's essential that you improve your relationship to food. Many of us have a less than optimal relationship in this area. Make sure that you're not eating for emotional reasons and that you eat mindfully. Mindful eating is the key.

When planning your diet, ensure that it's balanced and that you're enjoying foods from all the major food groups. Get as many vegetables, grains, and healthy fats as you can. Remember, your food is your fuel. It provides the energy that you need to take care of yourself in other ways and to feel good in your daily life.

A great first step with designing a nutritious diet is to get lots of color in your diet. With vegetables, it's well-known that the more color a food has, the more nutrients it's likely to offer. Vegetables with vivid colors tend to have more vitamins that boost the immune system and fight inflammation, as well as vital antioxidants and minerals. Eating colorful foods can also cheer you up! And we could all use more of that.

Having enough omega-3 fatty acids in your diet is another key to wellness. Healthy fats, omega-3 fatty acids are found in avocado, fish, nuts, and olive oil. Foods that are rich in this nutrient will have benefits such as reduction in inflammation, more optimal cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, and stronger brain health. If you have any problems with anxiety or depression, you will also find these foods helpful in this area.

Regular Meals are Important

To maintain optimal mood and functioning, it's best to eat regularly throughout the day. Skipping meals may lead to a low level of energy and the tendency to eat excessively when you do get around to having a snack.

It's best to eat regular meals and if you feel hungry in between, have a snack that includes lean protein, fiber from carbohydrates, and healthy fats. Don't forget the fiber from carbohydrates component, as this will make you feel full and less likely to overeat.

How the 80/20 Mindset Can Help You

Have you ever heard of the 80/20 mindset? This popular concept has been applied to a wide variety of life areas, and it's something that you can use in eating and nutrition, as well.

The 80/20 mindset, also referred to as the Pareto Principle, was developed by an Italian economist and philosopher called Vilfredo Federico Damaso Pareto. While it has traditionally been primarily applied to business and economics, it can be used in nutrition, too.

For example, many people are following what they refer to as an 80/20 diet. An 80/20 diet is much more sustainable than other kinds of diets. That's because it's not really a diet! It's simply a very healthy way of eating that you can keep up your entire life. With this approach, 80% of the calories you get each day come from whole, clean foods. The other 20% of your calories can come from perhaps more frivolous items. Keep in mind, though, that you always need to keep things balanced and ensure that you watch your portions.

With the 80/20 approach to nutrition, you can still enjoy some of the things that you enjoy but maybe feel a little guilty about. It's all about moderation.

Self-Care and Pampering

Don’t underestimate how much better a bit of mindful pampering can make you feel! The kinds of pampering that will be suit you depend on your preferences. Are you a skincare enthusiast? Maybe take some time to do a moisturizing mask.

Remember, you must stay mindful as you do your self-care. This is essential, as you need to really enjoy and appreciate it in order for it fully benefit you. Below are some ideas for things you can do to pamper yourself as a means of self-care.

- Use a replenishing face mask: Masks, including sheet masks and traditional cream masks, are growing in popularity. Especially with the influence of K-beauty, masks have become part of the beauty repertoire of more and more women around the world. Take part in this fun trend and start using a mask a few times a week or at least once on the weekend. The time you spend wearing the mask will be one in which you center yourself and feel beautiful!
- Do a soothing hand mask: Did you know you can also use a mask on your hands? There are pre-prepared hand masks available on the market. These often involve two thin gloves that are saturated with a nourishing fluid. You could also do a makeshift hand mask but slathering your hands in a rich cream and then putting on white cotton gloves before you go to bed at night. You'll wake up with wonderfully nourished hands.
- Get beautiful locks with a hair mask: You could use an overnight hair mask as a method of self-care. Often, the instructions involve putting the mask on your hair at night and then washing it out in the morning. When you do this, make sure that you'll definitely have time to wash your hair before you get going for the day.
- Groom and paint your nails: Taking out some time on an afternoon to do a manicure. You could even try some nail art if you're up for a challenge.
- Take time out for a pedicure: A pedicure is something else you could try. You don't have to go a nail salon to do this. A do-it-yourself pedicure is still relaxing and a way to take time out for yourself.
- Enjoy the benefits of aromatherapy: Think about investing in an ultrasonic diffuser. You will put essential oils in this, allowing you to enjoy the soothing scents that will set a more peaceful ambiance in your home.
- Soak in a bubble bath: This is one of the simplest yet most effective ways of relaxing. Try to take a bubble bath every evening a stronger sense of serenity and well-being.

Self-Care and Boundaries

Firm boundaries are important in good self-care. One aspect of having boundaries is to learn to say no when you need to. For example, if you're feeling very stressed and overwhelmed with things you already need to do and someone asks you to do something else, you must feel empowered to say no if you need to.

Letting yourself be overwhelmed by too many obligations can cause a multitude of issues that can impact your mental and physical well-being. In other words, sound self-care is impossible without some understanding of boundaries and how to enforce them. Learn to be assertive and always true to yourself.

One of the reasons why boundaries are so necessary is that they help you create a stronger sense of self and identity. If you don't have boundaries, you will have trouble consistently recognizing where your identity ends and another person's begins. This is very distressing and will keep you in a constant state of uncertainty and flux that is detrimental to your mental well-being and health.

Boundaries also create a feeing of emotional safety. They make sure that people know how they should behave in a relationship. Knowing what is acceptable and the reverse creates a better sense of harmony and you won't feel like you're somehow unsafe.

If you tend to be co-dependent or are around people who are, you probably have trouble setting the boundaries you need for good self-care. There are several reasons why you might have this tendency. Understanding the roots of issue will put you in a better position to address it.

Perhaps your parents wouldn't let you be assertive or advocate for your own needs when you were a child. Another possibility is that there were no boundaries within your family, and you became accustomed to that kind of dysfunctional situation. Children who are conditioned to see themselves as caretakers often also end up with issues revolving around co-dependency.

Setting boundaries will benefit not only you but all the people around you, as well. With boundaries, you will have the time and emotional space to properly address your own needs. Once that is done, you will be able to take care of others like you would like.

Maintaining the boundaries you need are an essential part of self-compassion. And self-compassion, in turn, is necessary to self-care. Remember never to think that you have to be perfect. No human being is perfect, and all you can do is your best.

Having better boundaries will also help you feel a stronger sense of connection to the people you care about while ensuring that you remain a priority and do all the self-care that you need. In other to define boundaries, you must get in touch with your gut instinct and intuition and ask yourself:

1. What are my rights?
2. What are my values?

The boundaries that you decide on are a personal choice and the specific boundaries you set for each relationship will vary. You will also need to be prepared to let yourself grow and your boundaries develop accordingly over the course of your life.

When deciding on your rights, keep in mind how important the following should be:

- the right to be treated in a respectful way
- the right to recognize my needs are just as important of those of others
- the right to refuse to meet unreasonable expectations that others might have of me
- the right to accept and forgive myself for my failures and mistakes
- the right to say no without feeling a sense of guilt

Self-Care and Hobbies

Do you have any hobbies? If so, make more time each day or at least a few times a week to take part in them. If you don't really have any hobbies to speak of, it's time to get some! Or at least one. A hobby is a

fantastic way of fostering mindfulness and making you understand that every moment of your day is valuable and you have the right to spend time on things you enjoy.

There's a dizzying array of hobbies that you can explore and enjoy. Here's a list of just some of them below.

- Reading: Not only is reading a wonderful way to spend a relaxing afternoon, it is educational. You can combine your need for a hobby with your wish to learn and explore other people's perspectives. You can also listen to audio books.
- Journaling: Journaling is a popular hobby that gives you time for thought and reflection on your day-to-day life and goals. Writing in a journal gives you the opportunity to develop your self-awareness.
- Gardening: Gardening is famous for being a tranquil and satisfying hobby. Let's face it, if you have a garden, the work has to be done anyway. Why not make it into a hobby and make your garden and yard the most beautiful in the neighborhood. And when you look at all the results of your labour in the spring and summer, you will enjoy a real sense of accomplishment. Gardening is also a great activity because it gives you more time outside.
- Puzzles: Doing a puzzle, such as a jig-saw puzzle, can take up a substantial amount of time and will flex your mental muscles. Crossword puzzles are also very challenging. They will help to improve your vocabulary.
- Adult coloring books: The trend for adult coloring exploded a few years ago and it's still wildly popular. This hobby is intensely calming and you can even buy high-quality color books that will let you frame your work after you're done. Invest in some artist-quality colored pencils, too.
- Makeup and skincare: Learning about and using makeup and skincare is another fun past-time.
- Scrapbooking: If you love crafting and documenting family history, this is the perfect hobby for you. You'll just have to buy some basic materials to get started. Scrapbooking something that the whole family, including young kids, can enjoy.
- Dancing: Dancing is a popular hobby for those who love to learn, interact with others, and get lots of exercise. The exercise, both physical and mental, that you'll enjoy with dancing is a great approach to self-care.

Having a hobby is a great way of sending yourself the message that you, your needs, and your well-being matters! Even if you know this rationally, you need to send your subconscious this message on a consistent basis. This is what you will be doing when you practice and enjoy your hobby. Also, the elements of your hobby that contribute to health, whether physical, mental, or emotional, will also act as elements of self-care. So for example, if dancing is your hobby, you are doing physical self-care as well as mental and emotional, and even spiritual. You are benefiting yourself in a holistic way. And you deserve it.

Self-Care and Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is something that you'll need to achieve if you want to enjoy the best of self-care's benefits. In order to take care of yourself and respect your own needs, you must truly know yourself. Self-awareness involves having a keen understanding of all aspects of your personality. This includes your emotions, your motivations, your beliefs and thoughts, and your strengths and weaknesses. It's an all-encompassing understanding of who you are and how you operate as an individual.

With strong self-awareness, you not only have an intricate understanding of yourself but are better able to understand other people and see how they probably perceive you. You're better able to deal with interactions and handle them for general fairness and your advantage.

If you're like many people, you probably assume that you already have a pretty good sense of self-awareness. If you're also like most people, though, you actually don't. With the extraordinarily fast-paced nature of today's world, self-awareness is becoming an even rarer commodity than it was in the past. To achieve it, you must not be afraid to be a little bit different and give yourself the time you need for reflection and contemplation. Reflection and contemplation are essential if you're to get in touch with your higher self and develop the objectivity needed to achieve an advanced level of self-awareness.

One of the benefits of self-awareness is the fact that you'll gain keener insights and more accurate interpretations of not only yourself but everything else in life. You'll find yourself becoming one of those perceptive people that you've always envied, the people who seem to see things and have opinions that are always ahead of the curve.

You will also have greater emotional intelligence. It's been established that emotional intelligence is a key factor in career and personal success. Many researchers, in fact, believe that it's equally important to, or even more important than, traditional intellectual intelligence.

When you're self-aware, you have the tools necessary to create the life you've always wanted. It's the first step in making that kind of progress. You will have a detailed understanding of your personality and how it can help you move forward. The emotions and thoughts that are propelling you will come to the fore, and you'll have a greater ability to be able to change them for the better to suit your goals. It's key to positive personal development.

Ways to Become More Self-Aware

The first step you can take towards greater self-awareness is to strive to see yourself in a more objective way. This can be tricky, as the natural human tendency is to view oneself with subjective eyes. But being more objective when doing self-evaluation will be invaluable in helping you improve how you feel, think, and function. And this, in turn, will be instrumental in making you more successful and aiding you in carving out the life that you want for the future.

You can begin this process by reflecting quietly and then writing down what you perceive to be the things that you're good at right now and what you need to improve in. Remember, don't fall into the potentially destructive trap of comparing yourselves to others in this exercise. This is often extremely counterproductive.

Consider accomplishments you've made in your life of which you're truly proud. Think a bit about your years growing up, too, examining what it was that brought you feelings of happiness at that point in your life. Have you changed in this regard? Do different things make you happy now? And if they do, what are they? Consider what the reasons for these changes might be.

Once you've done all this, you can ask some people who you truly trust have your self-interest at heart what they feel your greatest strengths and weaknesses are. Keep in mind that every human being's opinions are somewhat subjective and somewhat based on their personality and upbringing, but you can still keep them in consideration and use them in your general evaluation.

Writing in a journal is another fantastic way to improve in your self-awareness. Just putting your thoughts and feelings down on paper is a process that will help you get to know yourself better and more clearly understand what you need to do to improve your self-awareness and be true to yourself, carving out the life that you want.

If you have a leadership position of any kind in work or life in general, take time to reflect on how the people you lead see you as a leader and what they might think of your leadership skills. Imagine yourself in their place and how you would feel about your style of leadership on a daily basis. Is there anything that you think you should change? Ask the people you lead for their opinions on this matter, as well.

Another way to improve your self-awareness is to record your plans, goals, and priorities in writing. You could do this in your journal or you could create a special notebook devoted to this task. Don't underestimate how intensive the goal-setting process can really be. Give yourself the time to really think about it. It's best to do this part of the process after you've done the other self-awareness exercises we've set out above.

To help you achieve your goals in both the short and long-terms, try doing affirmations. When doing affirmations to help you in your goal-setting and achievement work, focus on using and creating ones that make you feel confident and move forward through obstacles. Also do affirmations that help you focus on all the tasks you need to do, as you do them. A few examples of affirmations you could use include:

- I am a courageous person and I have a full well of confidence.
- I am fascinated by all the tasks that I need to do to achieve my goals.
- I will be attentive and observant all through the day.
- I can concentrate and focus on what I have to do whenever I need to.
- I choose to focus on productivity and a positive mindset. I reject negativity.
- I have a clear and focused mindset.
- I am energetic and determined.
- I am committed to achieving my goals. I deserve it!
- I am a do-er and I will never give up on my goals.

Consider Taking Personality and Psychometric Tests

Some people find it helpful to take personality and psychometric tests in their quest to become more self-aware. Know, however, that these tools do have limits, especially when you're taking a test of even somewhat uncertain origin and not taken under the guidance of a professional. So take things with a grain of salt, but know that it's possible you could find quite a bit of information that you can harness in your journey through these means.

Mindfulness and Self-Awareness

One of the best ways to grow in self-awareness is to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is something that you can get better at by adopting certain mindsets in your daily life. Mindfulness is the practice of living in the present moment rather than being stuck in the past or trying to live or worry about the future.

It's only when you're centered in the present moment that you have the mental and spiritual space to be able to get to know yourself. As you practice mindfulness, you will gradually get to know your own

mind and emotions better. You will also gain a better appreciation of who you are as an individual in the process.

To become more mindful, try daily meditation and joyful activities that encourage being fully present. This could include spending time in nature or with animals, a hobby such as adult coloring or knitting, or solitary exercise.

Mindfulness and self-awareness are crucial to the development and flourishing of your spiritual side. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, you don't have to be what many consider to be a specifically "spiritual" person to take care of your spiritual well-being, and you certainly don't have to be religious. It's the things that make you feel more complete and joyful as a human being that will do the trick.

There is a plethora of mindfulness exercises that you can try. Let's go over a few of them below:

- Practice daily meditation. Or if you can't find time to meditate daily, at least do it every second day or a few times a week. There are many different ways that you can meditate, ranging from more formal methods (such as yoga) to more casual means. You can start by just trying to cultivate a more meditative mindset in your daily life. Try some meditation recordings, such as ones that you can find on YouTube. You'll find them much more helpful than you probably imagine if you've never tried meditation before. Specifically look for meditation exercises labelled "mindfulness meditation."
- Try getting up earlier than normal. Getting up earlier than you have to will give you a chance to mindfully enjoy the peacefulness of the early morning and time to do more things that you enjoy. The early morning is an especially great time for meditation and yoga.
- Read more inspirational content. There's so much negativity in the media and social media right now that it's easy to feel down. That's why you need to actively seek out inspirational content that will help you feel more inspired and positive in your life.
- Try doing family meditation. You can help the other members of your family become more mindful by encouraging them to take part in family meditation. Look for family meditation exercises online. You could also just have all of you take part in the same mindfulness meditation exercise together. This will help to improve family harmony and even communication. It's well worth the effort.
- Create a mindful ritual out of things that you do every day anyway. For example, you could create a ritual around your coffee or tea. Mindfully preparing and creating a hot cup of coffee will help set you up for the day or the hours before you. If you choose chamomile or another type of relaxing herbal tea, you can also do this at night as a bedtime ritual that will help give you a deeper and more restful sleep.
- Try some decluttering. You'll be amazed at how much it will improve your mindfulness to simply declutter a space. It's not only the process that will accomplish this but the very experience of being in a decluttered space. One way of doing this is to clear your desk. It will help your focus and make you feel more confident and able to deal with all the challenges ahead.
- Enjoy some music. Taking a break with some music at certain points of the day will help you feel more relaxed and mindful. Try to choose music that you find fosters mindfulness and you'll feel better and more focused for hours after.
- Strive for a state of flow. A state of flow will help you be more mindful and productive throughout the day.

- Find and recite some positive affirmations every day. Don't underestimate how powerful and impactful positive affirmations can be when you use them frequently. You can find positive affirmations that will suit your needs online. You can also write your own if you would like. Just make sure to do research on how to write useful positive affirmations. The positive affirmations that you use should fit what your personal needs and goals.
- Recognize your moods. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you have to pretend negative moods simply aren't happening. If you're feeling down, objectively recognize your feelings and then take steps to rectify the situation. For example, you could do something that you know from experience lifts your mood and puts you in a more positive frame of mind. This could be doing positive affirmations, meditating, listening to some music you love, or doing something else that makes you feel at peace and joyful.
- Exercise mindfully. Mindful exercise, such as going for a meditative walk, will help you become more mindful. Exercise also helps to boost endorphins, the "feel good" chemicals in the brain. Exercise will also help you feel better in the long-term, because you'll enjoy better health, both physical and mental. Remember that health is a holistic concept.
- Try to appreciate things more. A sense of gratitude will immediately help you feel more positive. When you recognize the element of your life for which you should be grateful,

Spiritual Self-Care

Methods of spiritual self-care are things that you do to nourish your soul and spiritual side. Regardless of whether you have any religious or generally spiritual beliefs, you have a spiritual side and it must be attended to if you want to enjoy a sense of inner peace and well-being.

But what is the broadest definition of spirituality? Spirituality can be anything that you find to be personally meaningful and that infuses you and your life with a sense of the sacred. This might only be felt by you, and that's okay! That's all that matters. Spiritual self-care is an entirely personal practice.

Practicing spiritual self-care helps us fulfill our need for happiness, connection, and purpose. Find and decide on spiritual self-care practices. These are rituals that you feel fosters a greater connection to your true or inner self. This is who you really are. When you get in touch with your true self, it simply feels right. You feel a connection to the divine.

When you fulfill your spirit, you become much stronger and skilled in the areas of introspection and clarity of mind. You will also enjoy a profound feeling of comfort in your daily life. This, for obvious reasons, has health benefits for both the mind and body.

When you decide to do spiritual self-care, you quiet your mind and this gives you the space you need in your life to start feeling and getting in touch with your true self and what your spirit truly wants. The practice of spiritual self-care will improve the experience of many area of your life. These include:

- Your relationship with yourself
- Your feeling of connection with the rest of the world and with the people around you
- Clarity of mind and purpose
- The feeling of inner peace and meaning
- The feeling of universality and oneness

Let's go over some practices you can try for spiritual self-care. The most important thing to do is give things a try and find the practices that work best for you, making you feel a stronger connection to something bigger than all of us and greater meaning in your life.

- Let go of things that distress you. As we discussed earlier, mindfulness is essential. There's no point in wasting time in the past, feeling regret about things that you can't change. Instead, focus on things that you can do in the present moment to make your life and the lives of those around you better.
- Enjoy the sound of silence. Learn to enjoy being silent and existing in an entirely peaceful state. Silence is rich with meaning and you'll be able to perceive that if you give yourself a chance.
- Practice contemplation. Connected to silence is the concept of contemplation. Give yourself time for contemplation, including meditation, in order to get in touch with your true self and your sense of the universe.
- Try yoga or T'ai Chi. Yoga, T'ai Chi, or another similar disciplined practice that involves the use of meditation and contemplation will benefit you exponentially.
- Try using mantras. Do some research to find positive mantras that you can use or write some of your own. You can use these mantras every day during your meditative practice.
- Read uplifting content. Try to find some optimistic books that make you feel more centered and peaceful.
- Practice non-judgment. You'll be amazed at how at peace and connected to spirit that you feel when you practice non-judgment. Hold back from making assumptions about people and try to put yourself in their shoes.
- Spend more time in the natural world. Spending time in natural spaces is another method of spiritual self-care.
- Practice gratitude: Recognizing the things in your life for which you can be grateful is a very significant method of spiritual self-care. If you need to, write a list of all the things that can inspire a sense of gratitude. If you have trouble doing this at first, try to imagine yourself in the shoes of someone less fortunate than you and imagine what part of your life they would say that they wish they could have. Don't take anything in your life for granted.
- Make connections with other people who have a similar spiritual mindset. Trying to create a community of people who have similar spiritual insights as you will help you feel a greater sense of connection not only to others but the universe as a whole.

Start Out With Little Things

We've reached the end of our exploration of what self-care is, how you can practice it, and why you need to do so in order to have the best possible life. Perhaps you're feeling a bit overwhelmed, though, not certain of where to start first. Skim through this chapter again, writing down the things that most resonate with you and trying them first. You could also start out by trying little things in your daily life and then working up to more from there. Just a few examples of the many little things that you can do as first steps include:

- Admire the passing clouds. Yes, it can be something as simple and seemingly inconsequential as this! Look out the window and watch the clouds as they pass, and take some time to enjoy the silence and contemplate your connection to the universe.
- Write down compliments people give you. Whenever someone compliments you on something you've accomplished or even something you think "superficial" like your outfit or hair, write it down. You could even keep a special notebook for this.
- Do something small to improve your home that you've been putting off. This will help you feel empowered and improve the space in which you live.
- Start working on creating a beneficial habit. Begin the process of setting a habit that will help set you up for greater success in your life.
- Do mini-meditation. You can take a few moments in the day to deep breathe, create a positive mindset, and get in touch with your inner being.

Best of luck with your self-care journey!

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