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Healthy at Home



MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Decreased social contact and negative news can take a toll on mental and emotional health. Self-care is not selfish. Pay attention to your mental and emotional health and equip yourself to boost your resiliency and be there for others in their times of need.

Self-Care for a Healthier, Happier Life



WHY SELF-CARE ISN'T SELFISH

While it might sound contradictory, practicing self-care can actually be one of the most selfless things you can do. When you take time out to for you, it revitalizes your life so you can be the best version of yourself for others. Discover our favorite self-care tips below.

Many are familiar with the increasing pressures of the workplace and life in general, where the work never really ends in our hyper-connected world. This warped balance can leave us feeling burnt-out and unfulfilled. That's why self-care is important. No matter how fancy the term sounds, self-care is critical for our physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

When we neglect self-care, by putting others first all the time, we abandon the practices that make us healthy and happy, and allow us to thrive. If you want to maintain an active, full life, it is important to take a time out each day just for you.

SELF-CARE MEANS PAYING ATTENTION TO AND SUPPORTING YOUR OWN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH. IT IS A BIG PART OF TREATING MANY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS.

FIVE WAYS TO PRACTICE SELF-CARE

- 1. Exercise.** Physical activity reduces stress, boosts mood, elevates energy, exercises your heart and improves circulation, among countless other benefits. When we work out because we love our bodies – rather than as a punishment for eating that extra slice of pizza – it can be a wonderful self-care strategy.
- 2. Practice self-compassion.** Being kind to yourself is the foundation of self-care. Self-compassion means turning off the critical, inner voice and allowing yourself the time for self-care.
- 3. Get enough sleep and eat well.** Nourishing your body with adequate rest and a healthy diet are crucial factors to feeling and functioning at your peak. No one can thrive long-term on minimal sleep nor fast food.
- 4. Calm your mind.** Even if it's just for five minutes each day, engaging in meditation, mindfulness, or yoga practices can help de-stress and revitalize both your body and mind.
- 5. Have a social support network.** While being too social can become taxing, having supportive, social connections help us feel less isolated and they prevent burnout.

You might not be able to engage in all of these practices every day, but if you make self-care a priority and incorporate it in your daily life, you may feel and function better.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS: the better we feel and function, the more we can do for the people and things we care about, and that is a win-win.

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Your Wellness Wheel: Why Balance Is Key to a Healthy Lifestyle



Wellness goals and habits can focus on a variety of lifestyle areas, such as improving sleep quality, managing stress, being more efficient at work, or even becoming involved in your community. Think about your daily routines and habits, then write down what you desire to improve. Remember, even a small change can have a positive impact on both your mental and physical wellbeing. Start slowly by identifying one or two areas of focus. Each dimension needs a healthy balance of attention to work toward living a happy and healthy life.



WHICH AREAS CAN YOU PAY MORE ATTENTION TO?

- 1. Emotional Wellness:** Awareness and acceptance of feelings
- 2. Spiritual Wellness:** A search for meaning and purpose
- 3. Intellectual Wellness:** Recognition of your creativity, knowledge and skills
- 4. Physical Wellness:** Need for physical activity and balanced nutrition
- 5. Environmental Wellness:** Positive awareness and impact on your environment
- 6. Financial Wellness:** Debt reduction, cash flow balance or financial future planning
- 7. Professional Wellness:** Personal achievement and enrichment from your career
- 8. Social Wellness:** Contribution to your community

EXAMPLES FOR WORKING ON THE EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF YOUR WELLNESS WHEEL:

1. Emotional Wellness

- Try 10 minutes of meditation or yoga to take a break when feeling stressed.
- Be positive whenever possible.
- Give and get support by talking with a friend or family member.

2. Spiritual Wellness

- Meditate or pray.
- Evaluate your values that guide your decisions and actions.
- Accept the views of others.

3. Intellectual Wellness

- Read for 20 minutes.
- Find time to work on a creative hobby you enjoy.
- Join a new group or club.

4. Physical Wellness

- Walk at least 30 minutes every day; aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity every week.
- Complete weight/strength training two times a week.
- Try stretching for 10 minutes most days.
- Eat balanced meals with proper portion sizes.
- Aim for at least seven hours of sleep, four days a week.

5. Environmental Wellness

- Walk a local nature trail.
- Have a healthy picnic at a nearby park.
- Keep your home clean and organized.

6. Financial Wellness

- Monitor your spending habits and cut wasteful expenses.

7. Professional Wellness

- Reevaluate your goals for your career.
- Consider taking a course to further your knowledge in your field.
- Keep your workspace organized and efficient.



8. Social Wellness

- Plan time with family and friends to build meaningful relationships.

Try These Positive Stress-Management Techniques



Regardless of age, gender, race and socioeconomic status, stress affects everyone in some degree. Personal, cultural, technological and physical stress can take a toll on your daily routines. However, not all stress is bad. We can experience [eustress](#), or positive stress, which is surprisingly an important part of our overall health! Eustress produces positive feelings of excitement, fulfillment, meaning, satisfaction and even wellbeing. Eustress is good because you feel confident and stimulated by the challenge you experience from the stressor. Examples of eustress include: starting a new job, taking a vacation and having a child. Eustress can motivate us for the short term and even improve performance in the long term. What we need to focus on for stress management is negative stress, which is called **distress**. Unlike eustress, distress can make you feel overwhelmed because your resources (i.e., physical, mental and emotional) are

inadequate to meet the demands you're facing. Examples of distress include injury, illness and unemployment.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE STRESS? THERE ARE BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE TECHNIQUES TO COPE WITH DAILY STRESS. NEGATIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES INCLUDE SMOKING, DRINKING ALCOHOL, AVOIDING THE PROBLEM AND STRESS EATING. POSITIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES ARE LISTED BELOW.

Most days may feel like there is no time to relax or add another task to the ever-growing to-do list. Even so, try to take some time to first identify your stress, then try some positive ways to help alleviate your stress, such as the ones below.

JOURNALING

Writing out your to-do list, thoughts, worries, frustrations, ideas, or even solutions to problems can be very cathartic. There is no wrong way to keep a journal – find a method that works best for you. Some ideas include:

- **ABC To-Do List:** Write out every task that is on your mind. Put an “A” for items that need to be accomplished today, “B” for items that can wait until tomorrow, and “C” for items that can wait a few days.
- **Worry Journal:** Simply write down your thoughts and potential reasons for why you may be feeling a certain way. Journaling serves as an escape or emotional release and forces us to check out on everything else to simply focus on ourselves.



GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Count your blessings and enjoy better health and happiness. Individuals who noted (mentally or physically) grateful thoughts have been shown to be more optimistic about life and upcoming events.

- **Did you know? Gratitude can produce an immediate 10% increase in happiness and 35% reduction in depressive symptoms.** These symptoms can disappear within three to six months, so repeated practice is needed.
- **Try the “At least” expression.** When you’re in a bad situation, try to list at least three things that could/would make the

situation worse. This will hopefully ease the stress of the current situation. An example could be missing a bus by two seconds. The at least statement could be “At least there is another bus coming and I will not be too late to work. Or, it might be “At least it’s not cold out.” Recognizing the positives of your current situation can make it more ideal than what could have happened.

- **Take the good from bad events.** This might include phrases like “This experience has brought me closer to friends/family” or “This bad review kicked me in gear to do better work” or “Finding out this bad news has really helped me make a decision.”
- **Get started on the right foot each day.** When you wake up, before getting out of bed or looking at your phone, try to list three things mentally or physically that you are grateful for. They can be general at first, if you’re having a hard time thinking of things (for example: I am grateful for friends; the availability of food; a safe place to call home, etc.)

EXERCISE

Physically getting up and getting our blood flowing naturally brings stress levels down. Any form of movement is a positive stress-management technique. It is recommended to get at least 150 minutes of moderate activity every week. (Research also shows that the vitamin-D boost from sunlight may elevate your levels of feel-good serotonin- so exercise outside and get some fresh air, if you can!)

- **Cardio** – Find an activity that you love to do. Dancing, bike riding, swimming, walking, skating and jogging are great cardiovascular activities.
- **Weight training** – Bodyweight exercises include pushups, situps, squats and lunges, or you can use dumbbells, kettlebells or weight machines.
- **Recreation** – Joining a sports team or group exercise class can be a fun way to get in exercise as well as socialize with others.

MINDFULNESS/MEDITATION

The main purpose of mindfulness or meditation is to focus on our breath to bring us back to the present moment – not ruminating on past events or worrying about the future. The purpose is not to stop our thoughts – rather to acknowledge that our thoughts are just thoughts.

- You can practice mindfulness or meditations by listening to calming music, podcasts or various meditations recordings. Common meditations are breath awareness, body scans and walking meditations.
- Here's a sample breathing exercise: Sit in a comfortable position, place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a deep breath through your nose and let your belly push your hand out. Repeat up to 10 times, paying attention to your breath the whole time.
- Multiple apps on your phone or resources online are free – research what works best for you!



OTHER POSITIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT IDEAS

- Take time for a hobby you love. What brings you happiness? Crafting, playing music, walking in nature?
- Watch a movie or show.
- Clean – your home, your car, your workstation.
- Talk it out – share your worries with others, such as your family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, health coach – use your support system!
- Create a healthy sleep environment to make sure you are getting seven to eight hours of sleep.
- Take a break – a 10-minute walk can be the reset you need after sitting for a long period of time.
- Get organized with your tasks. Make a structured plan of what needs to get done and how you will manage your time. Set realistic deadlines.

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How to Build Your Emotional Intelligence



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, OR EQ, IS THE AWARENESS OF ONE'S OWN AND OTHER PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS, AS WELL AS THE ABILITY TO MANAGE THEM. EQ INVOLVES BEING ABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND LABEL EMOTIONS ACCURATELY, AND USE THIS INFORMATION TO GUIDE ONE'S ACTIONS OR NAVIGATE SOCIAL SITUATIONS.

EQ is a flexible skill set that can be developed with practice. While some people are inherently more emotionally intelligent than others, many experts believe EQ can be honed.

ASK YOURSELF THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

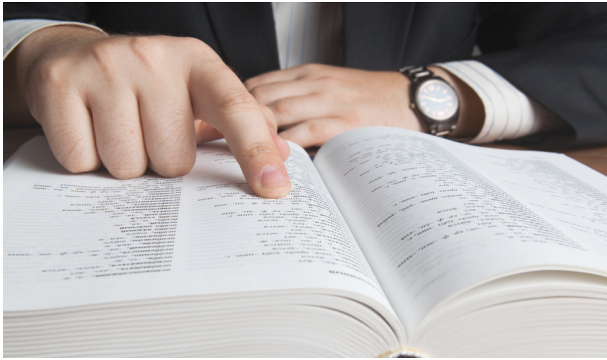
Improving your EQ starts with asking the right questions. This can help you gain valuable insights into what you're feeling. When an emotion arises, ask yourself:

- What am I feeling?
- How is it impacting my decisions and actions?
- What can I do about it?

Likewise, when you're confronted with someone else's emotions, you can ask yourself similar questions to try to determine what's really going on with them rather than reacting immediately. If you need help understanding what others are feeling, ask them.

BUILD YOUR EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

Another way to boost your EQ is to increase your emotional vocabulary. Emotions shouldn't be categorized as simply happy or sad. Just as an artist doesn't merely see blue but also periwinkle, cerulean, navy, indigo, etc., you should be able to recognize variations in your emotions. Instead of saying you're sad, determine if you're lonely, anxious, resentful, envious, etc. Pinpointing exactly what it is you're feeling will help you know how to deal with it. For example, if you're lonely, you can call up a loved one. This is more constructive than dwelling in an emotion you don't know how to address. Additionally, the more you learn to recognize these nuances in yourself, the more you'll be able to recognize them in others.



There are thousands of words to describe feelings in the English language. If you have a limited emotional vocabulary, build it by consulting a dictionary or thesaurus to learn more words that capture what you're feeling. In general, unlabeled emotions can easily be misunderstood, which does not lead to productive coping mechanisms. The more accurate the descriptor, the better the insight it provides into what's really going on and how it needs to be addressed.

MORE TIPS FOR ELEVATING YOUR EQ

- Strengthen your introspection by recognizing your own thoughts, feelings and biases. You may even want to track your emotions throughout the day by noting them in a journal.
- Avoid labeling other perspectives as right or wrong. Instead, seek to understand how they're different than yours and why.
- Be open to constructive criticism so you can learn from it and discover weaknesses.
- Utilize the "pause." Stop and think before speaking or acting. (This is easier said than done.) Practice regulating your emotions by taking a moment to ask how your feelings are driving your behavior before reacting. As you start to understand how your emotions influence your actions, you may start to better understand the behavior of others.
- Accept that perfection isn't realistic.
- Focus on the good in others. Better yet, tell people what you appreciate about them.
- Admit when you're wrong and apologize. It builds humility and authenticity.
- Forgive others.
- Set aside 15 minutes every day to practice mindfulness and introspection. This can promote relaxation and stress management.



BUILDING YOUR BRAIN WITH EQ

As you practice EQ skills, an amazing thing happens in your brain – billions of neural pathways are formed. Your brain builds connections as you learn new skills to boost your efficiency performing them. Neurologists refer to this as plasticity. EQ is based on the brain's ability to communicate between its rational and emotional centers. Practicing EQ skills allows billions of neurons lining the path between the rational and emotional centers of your brain to branch off and reach out to other cells. In fact, a single cell can create up to 15,000 connections with its neighbors. These pathways make it easier to carry out desired behaviors in the future. The more you practice EQ skills, the more your desired actions turn into habits.

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Ready, Set, Meditate!



DID YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A SPIRITUAL GURU OR EVEN HAVE ANY PRIOR EXPERIENCE TO START PRACTICING MEDITATION? MEDITATION IS FOR EVERYBODY. IF YOU CAN SIT STILL FOR A FEW MOMENTS AND BREATHE - YOU CAN MEDITATE. YES, IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE.

Meditation can train the mind just as exercise can train the body. Practicing daily meditation can aid in a plethora of benefits, such as:

- Weight loss
- Improved communication and relationships
- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Addiction management
- Sharpened thinking
- Mastery of emotions

START MEDITATING IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1. To begin, set aside five to 10 minutes.
2. Select a spot where you feel comfortable for a few moments and take a seat. Ensure your spot offers a stable, solid seat so you can sit upright. Make sure your back is not hunched or hanging – straighten, but don't stiffen. If you are seated on the floor, consider crossing your legs in front of you. If you're on a chair or bench, have the bottoms of your feet touch the ground.
3. Allow your hands to rest on the tops of your legs – palms facing either up or down, it's all about what feels comfortable to you. If you so desire, you may close your eyes.



4. Allow yourself to be in this moment. Take in as many deep breaths as necessary. Feel the sensations in your body and allow yourself to relax. Whenever your mind begins to wander (It will – but don't worry!), draw your attention back to your breath. Take as much time as you need for you.
5. When you're ready, open your eyes and continue with your day.

THERE ARE MANY FORMS OF MEDITATION AND THERE'S NO PERFECT PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT. IT'S ALL ABOUT EXPLORING YOUR MIND TO FIND WHICH WORKS BEST FOR YOU, AS EACH PERSON'S MIND WORKS DIFFERENTLY. MEDITATION CAN SEEM SIMPLE, BUT IS NOT NECESSARILY EASY. YOU JUST HAVE TO KEEP PUTTING IN THE WORK AND THE RESULTS WILL FOLLOW.

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Be Here Now



HOW TO INCORPORATE MINDFULNESS INTO YOUR BUSIEST WORKDAYS

Slowing down can be challenging when you are moving full-speed ahead five days a week. We're constantly bombarded with emails, phone calls, text messages and meetings – the list goes on. Consciously taking a moment to center yourself and be present has many benefits. Practicing mindfulness at work can help you stay in the moment and make your workday a little easier to manage.

By definition, mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them – without believing, for instance, that there's a right or wrong way to think or feel in a given moment. "When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune in to what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future," according to the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at the University of California, Berkeley.

Incorporating mindfulness into your lifestyle is one way to stay present. Mindfulness can help you feel appreciation for the little things that go unnoticed daily. Maybe it's the gorgeous pastel sunrise on the way to work or a pleasant conversation with a colleague over a coffee break. When the small moments of the day are relished, every day marks a fresh beginning.

THE BENEFITS OF PRACTICING MINDFULNESS

Studies have shown practicing mindfulness, even after a short amount of time, can usher in a variety of physical, psychological and social benefits. Here are some of these potential benefits of mindfulness:

- Boosts our immune system's ability to fight off illness
- Relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Increases the density of gray matter in our brain regions linked to learning, memory, emotion regulation and empathy
- Enhances focus
- Helps foster compassion and altruism
- Enhances relationships
- Reduces pregnancy-related anxiety, stress and depression in expectant parents
- Lowers blood pressure
- Helps with weight loss
- Improves memory
- Enhances quality of sleep
- Raises tolerance to pain
- Helps us gain focus and insight in all areas of life
- Helps prevent the normal cognitive decline that comes with aging

PATHS TO PRACTICING MINDFULNESS RIGHT NOW

Having a stressful day? You don't have to be lying in a hammock to feel relaxed. Wherever you are, no matter what time of day it is, you can practice mindfulness to get back to your equilibrium.

Here are nine ways you can escape the weekday rush right now:

1. **Take a mental vacation.** Relax your breathing; make it a routine.
2. **Do something you love, such as stepping outside.** It will help you find and enjoy the details in your work when you return.



3. **Stretch and move your muscles.** Your muscles tend to tighten up when you're concentrating. Make sure to move as often as possible to relax your body.
4. **Adjust your posture.** Proper posture helps to counter the effects of stress.
5. **Uni-task.** Try doing one thing at a time; it will reduce stress and help you wrap up your projects efficiently.
6. **Focus on your breath.** Pay close attention to your breathing, especially when you're feeling intense emotions.

7. Pay attention to your surroundings.

Notice – really notice – what you’re sensing in a given moment, i.e., the sights, sounds and smells that ordinarily slip by without reaching your conscious awareness.



8. Be gentle with yourself. Recognize that your thoughts and emotions are fleeting and do not define you. This is an insight that can free you from negative thought patterns.

9. Tune into your body. Focus on your body’s physical sensations, from the water hitting your skin in the shower to the way your body rests in your office chair.

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[Take a Deep Breath](#)

Mindfulness Resources to Explore



THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

The topic of mindfulness seems to be everywhere these days and is becoming more widely accepted as an integral part of whole-person wellbeing. The many benefits of practicing mindfulness include:

- Stress reduction
- Decreased negative rumination
- Enhanced focus
- Improved working memory
- Decreased emotional reactivity
- Increased relationship satisfaction

SHIFTING YOUR FOCUS

Mindfulness is a shift in the way we pay attention. It's a method that helps us move from autopilot mode to being engaged – living and enjoying the present moment. There are three components of living mindfully:

1. Paying attention on purpose
2. Experiencing the present moment
3. Observing thoughts in a nonjudgmental way

You might not realize it, but you've most likely experienced mindfulness already. Check out this [video](#) for a descriptive introduction to the art and practice of mindfulness.



BEING MINDFULL WITH FOOD

[Mindful eating](#) is being aware of what you are eating and trying your best to enjoy the taste, smell and texture of food, treating each meal as an experience.

Here are the seven habits of [mindful eating](#).



PUTTING MINDFULNESS INTO PRACTICE

- Here's a three-minute [breathing meditation](#) you can follow along to.
- Here's a mindful practice that involves a [routine](#) of gentle chair-based stretches.



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