



**'It is not selfish to refill your own cup so that you can pour into others.
It is not just a luxury, it is essential'**

A self care activity is something which makes you feel good. It might help you to feel rested and relaxed or it might make you feel positive and energised. We are all different in what works for us as we are all individuals.

Prioritising self care means you will focus on how to protect your time, energy and emotional needs.

What are the activities I currently do to take good care of myself? How regularly do I do them (be honest with yourself)?

I believe that every single one of us needs to learn how to take good care of ourselves and constantly and consistently make this happen in our daily lives. This keeps us feeling happy and healthy and maintains a resilience against problems like anxiety, negative thinking and ill health.

Here are some of the warning signs that indicate your need to drastically increase your self care:

- * Feeling that the weight of the world is on your shoulders
- * You feel run down or are frequently unwell
- * You cry a lot or burst into tears at unexpected times or places
- * You are frequently complaining about the things you have to do
- * You fantasise about running away to a desert island
- * You notice you are feeling more anxious/ worrying more/ comfort eating/ sleeping poorly.

What are the reasons you use for not engaging in self care? (eg, 'I dont have time', 'I feel guilty'). How can these reasons be addressed or what do I need to remind myself of? You may find that you have to acknowledge these thoughts or beliefs and act despite them.

Self care is not self indulgence. Self care is self respect.

What if anything stops you from asking for help? (e.g. ‘it’s easier to do it myself’, ‘I don’t want to appear like I can’t cope’, ‘I have to be a good girl’). Asking for help to assist in our self care can be one of the most effective ways to make progress. Think about who you can ask for help from to relieve some of your tasks or responsibilities. You are likely to find it will make you more productive and the quality of what you do will improve. Refusing to ever ask for help will only keep you stuck.

Try to be aware of any complaints you make in your day to day life. Noticing what you complain about is hugely helpful in knowing what needs to change. Perhaps you could begin to change the messages you are giving to yourself.

When you notice yourself making a complaint, try to identify what you are really saying (eg, ‘I never have time to do what I want to do’ often means ‘I don’t make time for my needs’). Note down your thoughts here.

An empty lantern provides no light. Self care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly.

**Where in my life do I feel deprived? Try to be specific.
(eg, I need more time on my own, I miss being creative)**

What do I want more of in my life? (eg, Quality time with my partner, laughter, fresh air, quiet)

What do I want less of in my life? (eg, rushing, bad news, checking emails, negative friendships)

Letting go of toxic people is not selfish, it is self care

Considering your answers to the above questions, it is now time to create two lists. One list is a list of things you commit to yourself that you will no longer do in order prioritise your self care. The other list is for your absolute main priorities that will become non negotiable. Your main focus will be to make sure your energy is focused on these main things.

My ‘I no longer’ list

(eg, check my emails after 7pm, rush, watch the news, think about work when i’m not working)

My ‘Absolute Yes’ list

(eg, spend time with my family, get fresh air, exercise, spend time reading, fulfilling my work goals)

From now on, you can use these lists to help you make decisions based on self care. If an activity doesn't fit into your ‘absolute yes’ list, perhaps it needs to be a NO...

‘When you say yes to others make sure you are not saying no to yourself’
- Paulo Coehlo

What are the high stress points in your day? (eg, the morning meeting at work, leaving the house in the morning, speaking to a family member on the phone)

What small things could you do to counteract these stress points either before or after they occur? (eg, purposefully take deep breaths, do a visualisation exercise, get some fresh air, take a break).

I created 'QuickCalm' to help reduce your stress levels throughout the day by proving short exercises and audios to guide you. Find out more at www.quickcalm.co.uk.

When we are not purposefully focusing on self care, often finding a bit of time in the day means we jump straight onto social media or slump in front of the TV. Both might give our brain a little rest but they don't really re-charge us and this time could be used so much better.

Make a list of all the self care activities that feel good for you

Use this list to refer back to whenever you find yourself with a little bit of time. You could put a copy of your list on your fridge or next to your bed where it is easily accessible.

Schedule!

Be intentional about your self care by planning it into your week. Don't allow it to simply be that thing you do if you get chance when all your other jobs are done. Think about what activities on your list you could fit into your plan for tomorrow, the rest of the month, the rest of the week. If you have a stressful event coming up, plan some extra self care in around it.

Self Care First Aid Kit

When something difficult or challenging happens in our lives, so often we stop doing the things we need the most. At these times, we should increase our self care to really protect and take care of ourselves rather than let it go entirely. Think about the following questions and use these as a plan when you need to take care of yourself a little more than normal.

Who are the people in my life I can turn to?

Who do I need to avoid?

What things can I do to look after myself?

What is my best healthy distraction?

What responsibilities and commitments do I need to let go of?

At first you will need to sit with some uncomfortable feelings like guilt, anxiety and fear of being judged as you are challenging beliefs that you have held for a long time. Part of self care is about getting comfortable with putting your needs first and having to let people down sometimes.

Important Points

- * Setting boundaries is healthy and necessary.
- * Be direct about what you want and need from others - they can't read your mind.
- * You deserve to make pleasure in your life a priority.
- * Make sure technology is working for you - set boundaries around it so it doesn't have control of you.
- * Get to know what you need to function at your best (eg regular quiet time) and make sure it is fitted into your life.
- * Self Care is a constant dance - keep reminding yourself and readjusting your plans to accommodate your self care.

You can't hate yourself happy.
You can't criticise yourself thin.
You can't shame yourself worthy.
Real change begins with self love and self care.
- Jessica Ortner

