

Dictionary.com defines self-care as the "care of the self without medical or other professional consultation." Or as a Canadian care-giving organization defines it on their website: "Self-care is care provided 'for you, by you.' It's about identifying your own needs and taking steps to meet them. It is taking the time to do some of the activities that nurture you. Self care is about taking proper care of yourself and treating yourself as kindly as you treat others." (Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre, Canada) Although the concept is simple in theory, it is not easy to carry out consistently. Good self-care is key to:

- Better health
- Improved mood
- Reduced anxiety
- Good relationships with oneself and others

"Self-care isn't a selfish act either. It is not only about considering our needs; it is rather about knowing what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves, being subsequently, able to take care of others as well. That is, if I don't take enough care of myself, I won't be in the place to give to my loved ones either." (Raphailia Michael, MA; PsychCentral). And as described by Life Mastery Coach Jane, on her website Habits of Wellbeing, "it is about looking after yourself, so you can then give your best and provide value to the world by living your purpose and sharing your gifts."

1. Tips for success gleaned from multiple sources should include:
2. Be sure to incorporate what brings you joy. Too many of us, when life gets hard, stop doing the very things that feed us emotionally and spiritually.
3. Try lots of different methods. What works for your friends and family members may not be what is best for you.
4. Self-care needs to be scheduled. If it's not on your calendar, it won't happen
5. Awareness of how you are doing physically, emotionally and spiritually requires practice and constant attention. Too many of us wait until we are in crisis before we take the time to care for ourselves.

Although self-care needs to be individualized, here are some common areas from which everyone can benefit:

- Be able to say "no" and set boundaries. Let go of things and commitments that don't serve your life as you now envision it.
- Promote a nutritious, healthy diet (seek the advice of one of HRH's registered dietitians for more information).
- Get enough sleep. Adults usually need 7-10 hours of sleep each night depending on age (seek assistance from your doctor if you are having ongoing difficulty sleeping).
- Exercise is medicine. Our bodies were designed for movement. However, depending on your current health and medical issues, you may need help in determining what specific type of exercise is best for you (consult with your physician or physical therapist for help with this).
- Follow-up with recommended medical care. Again, if it's not on your calendar it won't happen.
- Practice relaxation exercises and/or meditation consistently. We now know that if you're human, you need at least 20 minutes of calming per day in order to become and remain healthy. Consistently having calming in your life activates your body's natural immune and healing mechanisms. (Benson, H, 2010)
- Spend enough time with your family and support network. Doing this not only lengthens your life, but improves your resiliency when difficult things happen.
- Spend at least 3 times/week gratitude journaling. Being on the lookout every day for events and people for which you can be grateful improves our brain chemistry, changes our brain structure, elevates our mood, and gives us more empathy for others.

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/self-care?s=t>

Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre; <http://www.fgwrc.ca/uploads/ck/files/Resources/Factsheets/FactSheetSelfCare.pdf>

Raphailia Michael, PsychCentral, 2016; <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2016/08/10/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>.

Benson H. The Relaxation Revolution. New York, New York: 2010.

Jane, 2017; <https://www.habitsforwellbeing.com/what-is-self-care/>