

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT



As the holidays approach and we reflect upon our lives we become more aware of various triggers that can bring on strong emotions. These triggers can include past trauma, loss of a loved one, financial strain, illness, the ongoing pandemic, and the demands of caring for your family. When we become aware of how these triggers are impacting our mental health, it is important to find ways to care for ourselves so we can in turn care for others. One way to manage the effects of stress, depression, and frustration is self-care.

What is Self-Care?

Self-care is the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, during periods of stress. It is important to recognize when we are in danger of burn out and take a step back to allow ourselves to recharge our physical and emotional battery. Not everything that feels good is considered self-care. Some people utilize unhealthy ways of coping such as drugs, alcohol, risky behavior and overeating. These practices offer temporary relief and can make us feel guilt, anger, and self-resentment later.

Positive coping strategies help to release uncomfortable emotions in a way that is not damaging to ourselves or to others. Self-care allows us to manage and release stress by doing things we enjoy.

What are the Benefits of Self-Care?

1. Helps us learn more about what we need and want
2. Distracts us in a positive direction
3. Can aid physical health (getting more sleep, exercise, eating well)
4. Helps counteract the negative effects of stress
5. Prevents burnout

Types of Self-Care

1. Emotional

It is important for us to allow ourselves to feel our emotions; we often run from or resist tough emotions such as anger or sadness. However, it is better to lean into those feelings and move on.

Emotional Self-Care Examples

- Surround yourself with supportive people
- Seek out therapy
- Allow yourself to cry when you need to
- Keep a journal and be honest about how you are feeling
- Express gratitude

2. Social

This can look different depending on how much you like to socialize, however, connecting with others is necessary for happiness. It can help combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. Social self-care is about picking the activities you want to do with the people you want to be with, not just doing what others want to please them. Especially during the holidays, it is important not to take on too much and to set up healthy boundaries around family gatherings and celebrations.

Social Self-Care Examples

- Set up a date with a friend
- Reconnect with people you haven't talked to in a while
- Join a club on a topic you enjoy
- Start a conversation with someone new
- Join a support group
- Write a letter to a friend that lives far away

3. Spiritual

Spiritual self-care is about getting in touch with your values and what really matters to you. Self-care tips for depression often stress that developing a sense of purpose is vital to your recovery. Below are some examples that can help you with this.

Spiritual Self-Care Examples

- Practice meditation and/or mindfulness
- Lean into creative practices such as writing, art, or anything you enjoy
- Attend a religious service
- Engage in prayer
- Start a gratitude journal
- Say affirmations or listen to motivational speeches
- Make a list of things that make you feel alive and try to imagine how to incorporate those things into your life more

4. Physical

Physical activity over time can help to make us feel better both physically and mentally.

Physical Self-Care Examples

- Dance!
- Go for a run
- Exercise
- Practice yoga
- Go for a walk
- Ride a bicycle
- Learn a new sport

Additionally:

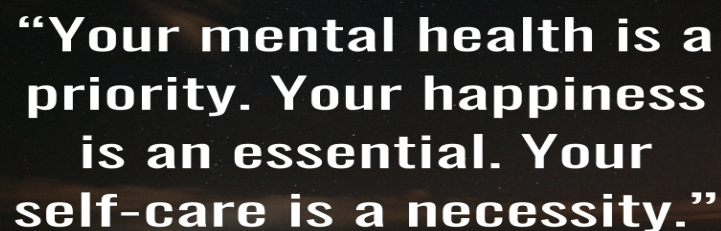
- Take naps when you need to, if you have the opportunity.
- Get enough sleep at night as often as possible (7-9 hours).
- Say no to others when you're too tired to engage in an activity.

5. Sensory

This type of self-care utilizes your senses to help calm you down. It is about being mindful of the present moments. This type of self-care can use one or multiple senses.

Sensory Self-Care examples

- Getting a massage
- Using a weighted blanket
- Relaxing and listening to music
- Walking on the warm sand
- Savoring a preferred piece of candy
- Using essential oils



“Your mental health is a priority. Your happiness is an essential. Your self-care is a necessity.”

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