



SELF-CARE GUIDE

Tips and tricks to help you build and maintain a personalized self-care plan.

April 2021





NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

As young people it can be easy to get lost in the chaos of life. Between school, work, responsibilities, and social life it can be hard to find a minute to relax.

As young activists it is especially important to find this time, to recharge and reflect on your own wellness.

COVID-19 has shown me how important it is to maintain a self-care routine in order to be my best self in all aspects of my life. I hope that this guide helps you build your own self-care plan, or gives you ideas to add to your existing one!



Jordain Murphy
April 2021



WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

/ˌselfˈkɛr/
noun

1. Self-Care describes a conscious act that one takes in order to promote their own physical, mental and emotional health.
2. Self-Care is the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.

When it comes to self-care, the acts can be anything that makes you feel recharged. There are five main domains of self-care which include, physical, social, mental, spiritual, and emotional. By purposely making time to do things that cater to these domains, you can be sure that you're taking the best possible care of your mind, body and spirit.



OXYGEN MASK METAPHOR



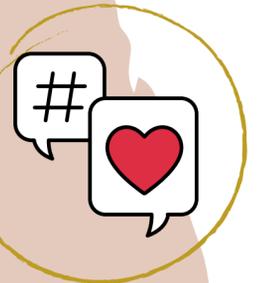
Before every flight, the attendants go through what to do in case of an emergency, “put on your own oxygen mask first before assisting someone else”. They encourage us to help the person next to us, but not until we help ourselves first. We cannot help someone else if we cannot breathe ourselves. This is also true in the case of self-care. We can't give energy to the things that we're passionate about if we don't have the energy to give.

PHYSICAL

- Sleep
- Health Care
- Nutrition
- Touch
- Exercise



SOCIAL



- Support systems
- Boundaries
- Social Media
- Communication
- Relationships



SPIRITUAL

- Connect with your Community
- Journal
- Be in Nature
- Unplug from Technology
- Practice forgiveness
- Focus on values
- Build perspective beyond the daily grind



EMOTIONAL

- Mindfulness
- Personal Time
- Positive Self Talk
- Creativity
- Meditation



MENTAL

- Stress Reduction
- Boundaries
- Cognitive Abilities
- Therapy
- Personal Growth
- Relax

COMMUNITY CARE

Community organizer and researcher, Nakita Valerio describes community care as "people committed to leveraging their privilege to be there for one another in various ways".

As activists, we practice community care every day. We do this by putting our energy into causes that we're passionate about.

Within our organizations we can create community care by ensuring that our environment is one where all members are supported. The Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights is a great example of community care. Through the projects, research and advocacy work that the YCSRR we are providing community care for youth.

"IT'S ABOUT BEING THERE FOR PEOPLE WITHOUT THEM HAVING TO TAKE THE INITIAL FIRST STEP. IT'S ABOUT ADOPTING AN ETHOS OF COMPASSION AND VERY INTENTIONALLY APPLYING THAT" – NAKITA VALERIO



COMMUNITY CARE CAN IMPROVE OUR INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING



SELF-CARE FOR ACTIVISTS

Written by Kim Tran, Find the full article [here](#)

If you're the activist, organizer, or community member who tends to do social justice work all day, every day, but is also exhausted all the time (and potentially unhealthy), this one's for you.

1

Social Media is full of trolls - and you are welcome to disengage at any time. It can't always be your job to go get your brother's friend's cousin who said something misogynistic on your elementary school best friends Facebook wall. Repeat "trolls are not my fault"

2

Treat yourself like you would your bestie who's going through a break-up. Sometimes we fight for things, and we lose. When we lose something, it hurts. Break out the ice cream and Dirty Dancing. Let yourself heal.

3

Consume News Carefully. Be more mindful and intentional about how and when you take in news, too much at the wrong time can be toxic. Consider doing it in the middle of the day, after coffee and well before sleep so you have time to process.

4

Stick to your boundaries. For example, at a party if someone tries talking to you about a heavy topic, consider saying "Hey, it's really good to see you, and I'm so grateful that you trust me with this story, but I'm at capacity for talking about ____ right now. Would you mind if we switched topics?" We all have the right to have fun and enjoy ourselves.

5

Activism Guilt is Real - Give yourself permission to say "no". Sometimes saying no is a radical act of self-care that's as vital to our struggles as the marches, protests and walk-outs in which we participate. Repeat "I have enough. I do enough. I am enough."

The Road to Burn Out

Without a self-care plan we risk burning out. Burn out is a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion. Burnout in one area of your life can spill into others, which is why its important to work on all five components of self-care.

Every day feels stressful and everyday tasks are overwhelming

You feel defeated

Caring about things you're passionate about feels like a waste of energy

You're always tired

It's important to be aware of the differences between stress and burnout. Everyone becomes stressed from time-to-time, however burnout can cause us to permanently lose motivation in the things we love.

One way to ensure that stress does not become burn out, is to create a self-care plan.

STRESS

Putting in too much effort

Feeling emotions more strongly

Feeling hyperactive and anxious

Less energy

Takes a physical toll



VS. BURNOUT

Putting in little to no effort

Distant emotions

Feeling drained and helpless

Less motivation

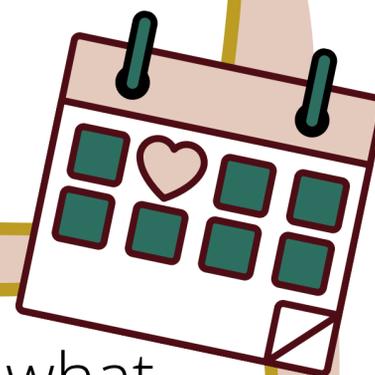
Takes an emotional toll



SELF-CARE PLANS

Step One: Assess your initial self-care level. Think about the activities you do weekly that make you happy and support the 5 areas of self care. You can use this worksheet to help guide you!

Self Care Assessment



Step Two: After you determine what your self-care strengths and areas you need to improve on, you can start building your self-care S.M.A.R.T. goals. S.M.A.R.T. goals will help you structure your goals and keep yourself accountable.

Step Three: Build a plan based on your goals. Make sure that to choose activities that make you happy, and be sure not to overload on activities. Self-care should not be complicated, it should fit into your daily routine.

S.M.A.R.T GOALS

S Specific: Make your goals as specific as possible.

M Measureable: Create a way to measure your progress and reevaluate when necessary.

A Attainable: Make your goals things that are attainable so that you can accomplish them in a certain timeframe.

R Relevant: Your goals should align with your values and long-term overall self-care goals.

T Time Based: Set a realistic end-date for your goals to help keep you motivated.

S.M.A.R.T. goal example:
As of April 15th, I will walk 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week for 3 weeks.

Walking or moving around is a great way to move your body, its free, easy to achieve and this goal is time based.



EXAMPLE SELF-CARE PLAN



PHYSICAL

- Eat breakfast
- Drink water
- Run 5 times/week
- Play with my pets
- Organize my space
- Stretch
- Dance every morning to my favorite playlist
- Take my vitamins and medications daily

EMOTIONAL

- Allow myself space to feel my feelings
- Journal
- Daily affirmations
- Set and maintain healthy boundaries

SOCIAL

- Volunteer
- Follow social media accounts that make me happy
- Work in a coffee shop once a week
- Dinner with friends
- FaceTime Mom

This self-care plan is just an example of what my personal plan looks like! You can find a similar blank plan to build your own here:

[Self-Care Plan Template](#)

SPIRITUAL

- Spend time by the ocean
- Be present
- Mindfully observe nature
- Do one random act of kindness a week

MENTAL

- Practice Spanish on DuoLingo
- Take a screen break for one hour each day
- Make a to-do list and cross off when complete
- Read for 30 minutes every night
- Make my bed every morning

IDEAS FOR YOUR SELF-CARE PLAN

If you're struggling to find activities that will fit into your daily routine, here are some ideas! The fun thing about these activities is they often overlap into different sections of self-care. For example: listening to a podcast while moving your body for 30 minutes can be both physical and mental, two for the price of one!

PHYSICAL

- Go to bed 30 minutes earlier
- Drink water
- Take a walk in nature
- Go to the gym
- Stretch every morning
- Yoga
- Breathe deeply for 2 minutes
- Shower and get dressed even if you aren't going anywhere
- Have a healthy snack
- Play your favorite song and have a dance break throughout the day
- Create a skin care routine
- Take a hot bath or shower
- Organize your space (desk, room, car)
- Cook for yourself from scratch





EMOTIONAL

- Determine what makes you feel emotions, what makes you happy, sad, angry, etc.
- Practice breathing techniques
- Only share positive things on social media
- Repeat positive affirmations
- Journal
- Create an inspirational vision board
- Allow yourself the space to feel your feelings
- Practice positive self talk
- Write a letter to people who have hurt you, then burn the letter and let it go
- Try something creative to express your feelings
- Make a playlist with songs for each mood

MENTAL

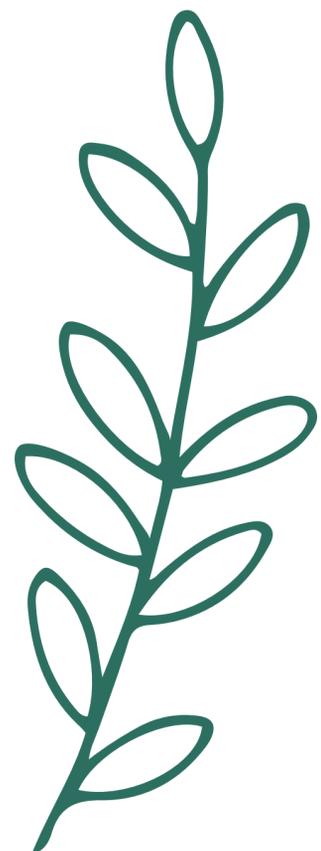
- Take a guilt free nap
- Challenge your negative thinking
- Practice saying "no"
- Unplug from technology every once in a while
- Create a to-do list to help stay organized and clear your mind
- Learn something new
- Read a book
- Change your routine every once in a while
- Celebrate your accomplishments
- Listen to binaural tones to train your brain

SOCIAL

- Schedule a regular phone call with someone you care about
- Host a game night with your friends
- Join a club (book club, fitness group)
- Mail cards to loved ones
- Work/Study in a coffee shop when possible
- Follow positive social media accounts (accounts that make you feel happy and good)
- Send a friend a funny meme
- Be aware of when relationships are no longer serving you, relationships should uplift you, not drain you.

SPIRITUAL

- Secretly do something nice for someone
- Help someone in some way each day (open a door, carry a bag, every small act counts!)
- Pray
- Practice relaxation
- Intentionally find five unexpected beautiful things on your way to work
- Be present in nature
- Attend a Church or spiritual community service
- Connect with the community (volunteer, join a club or group)
- Be mindful



QUICK DAILY SELF-CARE TIPS



20-20-20 Screen Rule:
For every 20 minutes you
spend looking at a screen,
spend 20 seconds looking at
something 20 feet away.

Working at a desk all day? No
worryes! Check out these
"deskercises"

[Deskercise](#)

Have a funny, positive
affirmation in your view.
Behind my computer I have
"Why be moody when you can
shake your booty"

Are you feeling stressed?
Relax your tongue, take a
quick shower, relax your
shoulders.
Close your eyes and take 10
deep breaths.

Let natural light into your
space. Open the window and
breathe the fresh air in
deeply.

Make your bed every
morning!
Making your bed in the
morning helps you set
intentions for the day.
Studies have shown that a
made bed improves focus,
goal-setting skills,
productivity, and lower levels
of stress.



"IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, START OFF BY MAKING YOUR BED. IF YOU MAKE YOUR BED EVERY MORNING, YOU WILL HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THE FIRST TASK OF THE DAY. IT WILL GIVE YOU A SMALL SENSE OF PRIDE, AND IT WILL ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO ANOTHER TASK, AND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER. BY THE END OF THE DAY, THAT ONE TASK COMPLETED WILL HAVE TURNED INTO MANY TASKS COMPLETED. MAKING YOUR BED WILL ALSO REINFORCE THE FACT THAT LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE MATTER. IF YOU CAN'T DO THE LITTLE THINGS RIGHT, YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO DO THE BIG THINGS RIGHT. IF, BY CHANCE, YOU HAVE A MISERABLE DAY, YOU WILL COME HOME TO A BED THATS MADE. THAT YOU MADE. AND A MADE BED GIVES YOU ENCOURAGEMENT THAT TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER"

– WILLIAM H. MCRAVEN

[The Mental Health Benefits of Making Your Bed](#)



PERSONAL CRISIS PLAN

Not every day will be a good mental health day. Sometimes our favorite self-care activity isn't enough, and we need to reach out for help. For these days it's good to have a crisis plan.

I know I'm triggered when I notice:

Safe people I can reach out to:

1.-----
2.-----
3.-----

If you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed, bring your attention back into the moment with this simple grounding exercise.



Look around you. Notice
5 things you can see
4 things you can feel
3 things you can hear
2 things you can smell
1 thing you can taste

Crisis Line in My area:





RESOURCES

[61 Self-Care Tips for Taking Care of You During COVID-19](#)

[Binaural Beats for Meditation](#)

[How to Make a Self-Care Checklist That Actually Works for You](#)

[Local Websites and Crisis Help Lines \(Global\)](#)

[7 Cups: Free Online Support](#)

[119 Journal Prompts](#)

[An Activist-Therapist's 15 Affirmations for Hope Amidst COVID-19](#)

[How Organizations and Leaders Can Support Community Self-Care](#)

