

Practising Self-Care

Self-care is an important part of staying well. Many of us have multiple responsibilities to juggle, whether these are work responsibilities or family to care for. Ultimately, we can't provide support to others if we're not doing well ourselves, so even if your main goal is to support others, you need to be looking after yourself as well.

Self-care is the active process of acknowledging and tending to your needs. Many of us subconsciously turn to short-term coping mechanisms naturally when we're stressed or anxious, but this process is imperfect: sometimes we don't recognize that we're stressed or anxious, and sometimes we do something that isn't helpful in the long run.

How do I practise self-care?

There are two steps to self-care:

1. Acknowledging your feelings when you have them

Look at the list of symptoms, and see if you recognize any of them in yourself. Over time, you'll get better at identifying the symptoms you're experiencing.

2. Knowing about and practising the coping mechanisms that help

Different symptoms tend to need different coping mechanisms. For example, if you're feeling panicky and your heart is racing, you might benefit from a relaxation or grounding exercise. If you're finding yourself feeling tired, you might need to invest in preventative measures such as eating nutritious foods, staying active, and [getting adequate rest](#).

Try to incorporate the preventative practices into your daily routine. You don't have to do everything at once. You might find that, over time, one of your coping mechanisms becomes less effective, and you need to try something else. It's important not to be too rigid about what you do to cope – just do whatever works for you.

When it comes to self-care, the more strategies we have in our toolkit, the better.



Keeping boundaries

Stress is a common response when we are stretched beyond our normal capabilities. A key part of self-care is recognizing what your limits are in what you can do, and making every attempt possible not to do more. This means, for example, taking regular breaks – even if you don't feel like you need them right now. In some cases, it might mean having a conversation with a family member or partner about the responsibilities you have and if anything can be different. These are not easy conversations to have – but they can be essential to your ability to continue giving the support you give.

<https://guideposts.org.uk/wellbeing/managing-stress-anxiety/>

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