

New School Year, New Self-Care Routines

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The start of the new school year is always a great time to check-in and see how your routines are serving you. Specifically, are you incorporating a variety of self-care practices into your routine? There are some misconceptions about what self-care really means. Getting a pedicure every four months or numbing yourself by binge watching television is NOT self-care! Self-care is defined as the activities and practices we engage in on a **regular basis** to reduce stress and maintain our well-being.

There are five dimensions of self-care: physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social. It is important to be aware of all five dimensions otherwise you might be spending all of your time focusing one dimension and may be left feeling depleted. Let's discuss the five dimensions and activities we can incorporate into our daily routines.

Physical Self-Care

When we connect with our physical self-care we value and incorporate healthy nutrition, and movement in our life. Physical self-care also refers to our physical safety, physical touch, and sexual needs. If you are an exercise junkie you might be spending all your time in this dimension and may not feel replenished.

- Exercise
- Making out with your partner
- Gardening
- Taking a relaxing bath
- Eating healthy home cooked meals

Intellectual Self-Care

Giving yourself down time, taking on intellectual challenges, getting creative, engaging in stimulating conversations, or continual learning are all part of the intellectual dimension. Learning about this dimension was an important insight for me because I have always enjoyed crafting and creating but I never placed value on these activities. I now understand that spending time crafting is just as important as going for a run.

- Taking a class to learn something new
- Create something
- Listen to a podcast
- Engage in stimulating conversation
- Play a board game night

Spiritual Self-Care

When we tap into our spiritual self-care we feel connected to something greater than ourselves. For some this means connecting with their religious practices and for others it means connecting with nature or other people. Either way we want to strive to live from a place of purpose and create meaning in our life..

- Hiking
- Yoga
- Meditating
- Camping
- Volunteering

Social Self-Care

Whether you are an introvert or an extrovert we are all wired for connection and need social self-care in our lives. We all have the desire to share a common bond and feel a sense of belonging or acceptance. Remember we are trying to strike a balance and cover all five dimensions of self-care in our routines. For extroverts that means we need to make sure not to just stay in social self-care mode and introverts must remember that we all need human connection.

- Join a meet-up or a group
- Host a pot-luck at your house
- Meet for coffee or tea with a friend
- Initiate a new friendship
- Organize a family gathering

Emotional Needs Self-Care

Working to identify, accept, and release our emotions contributes to our emotional wellbeing. To be whole and cultivate healthy relationship we must be aware of our limits and learn to set boundaries. It's challenging to say "no" to others however, often when we say "yes" when we want to say "no" we are left feeling resentful and depleted.

- Set healthy boundaries (which might include saying "no")
- Seeing a therapist
- Practicing a love-kindness meditation
- Sharing with a trusted friend
- Practicing gratitude

Self-care practices are an essential skill to flourish in life. In order to be our best self, we need to create routines that continually fill us up. The emptier the cup the longer it takes to refill it. Set yourself up for success this school year and cultivate routines in all five dimensions of self-care.

Challenge: *Write down the self-care activities that you are doing right now. What dimensions are you missing, or have the least practices? How can you incorporate more activities or practices in those areas?*