



Self Care - What is it, why is it important, and how do I do it?

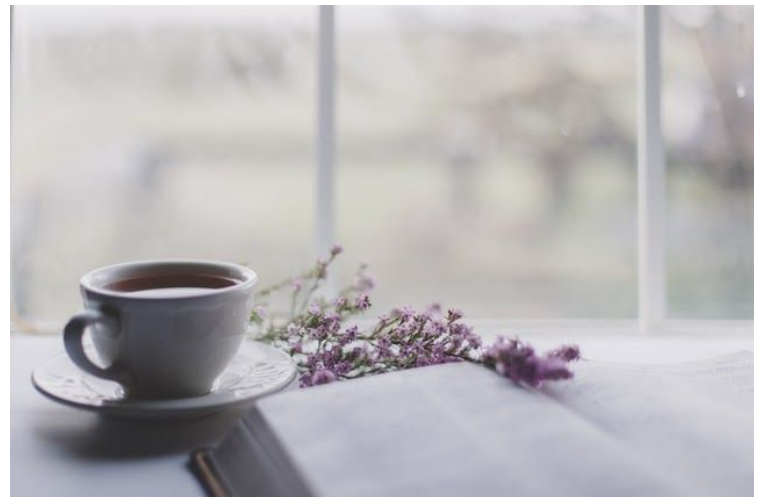
You may have heard the term 'self care' quite a bit, and wondered what exactly it means and why it is so important. This tip sheet will clear things up for you and point you in the direction to get started!

What is self care? It is essentially any act you take to look after your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual bodies. We live in such fast paced, demanding lives that it's so easy to get caught up in

the daily demands that we forget to give ourselves some much needed care, attention and love.

Why is it important? If we don't look after our needs, it can have a negative impact on all areas of our lives. We can begin to feel low, tired, and struggle with necessary tasks. It can also hinder how we care for others - for example, if we have neglected our need for rest, we can become short tempered and irritable, which in turn we may unintentionally take out on others and neglect their needs.

How do I practice self care? Firstly, it's a good idea to start by asking yourself 'what do I need?' , 'how am I feeling?' and 'what can I do to release tension and find joy?' It's about finding a sense of balance, which is the basis of holistic health by working to achieve and maintain a balance between mind, body and soul. Self care can also be an act of mindfulness, such as expressing yourself through a creative outlet such as art, music and dance. Mindfulness is about being in the moment, using all your senses to focus on the task you are doing, but in a relaxed state - it's a form of active meditation.



For some people, it can be difficult to take time to themselves. Feelings such as guilt and anxiety (I should be doing x, y or z) can prevent them from engaging in any act of self care, which ultimately will throw off the balance of mind, body and spirit. If you find you begin to feel such ways, start by doing small acts of self care, such as 15 minutes reading, and know that it is ok to have

time to yourself, that you matter and are always worthy of acts of self kindness and care. When you feel ready to, build upon this for longer periods of time, such as an hour a day to have time to yourself to do something for you. Self care can be practiced without really noticing as it can be quite simple to meet your basic needs. Preparing fresh healthy meals is an act of self care as you're nourishing your body, giving it the energy it needs. Having an early night is an act of self care as you recognised your energy was low and you needed to recharge. Even your catch up with a friend over a coffee is an act of self care, as you're lifting your spirits by socialising with someone you care about and treating yourself to a coffee.

During these activities, be as present as you can, and enjoy the moment. Try to at least set aside an hour a week where your focus is on you, where you look forward to an activity that soothes your mind, body and spirit, that leaves you feeling calm and recharged after as your needs have been met.

Some ideas to get started

- Feeling stressed/tired? Try having a salt/bubble bath / meditating / exercising
- Feeling low energy? Try cooking a nutritious meal / watch a film / sleep
- Feeling lonely? Call or meet a friend / visit a library/coffee shop / have a walk and connect to nature / volunteer
- Feeling overwhelmed? Try writing it in your journal / change of scenery / nature walk / read
- Other activities to try - reading, writing, playing music, dance, sport, baking, cooking, gardening, beauty therapies, clearing out clutter and organising, scrapbooking, joining a club, learning a new hobby.....