Honing in on the Importance of Self-Care & Healthy Habits

Self-care means something different to everyone. From soaking away the day's stress in a steamy bath to enjoying a bracing run at the break of day, there's no set rule that defines what self-care should look like.

In essence, the act of self-care is anything that makes you feel good. It's those little moments throughout the day that ground you and enable you to feel well in body, mind, and soul. It's taking the time to focus on your own personal needs so that you can be the best version of yourself in all areas of life.

While self-care has always been important, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly amplified that importance. In fact, research has found that 84% of the UK population feel there should be a greater focus on self-care following Covid-19, and two thirds of UK citizens are open to or have already increased their investment in wellbeing over the last 12 months.

Engaging in regular self-care is full of health-boosting benefits – and the effects are tangible. For example, taking time for yourself has been proven to:

- Improve physical and psychological health

- Reduce or eliminate anxiety, stress, and depression

- Increase overall happiness

- Help you adapt to changes and setbacks by becoming more resilient

- Encourage the building of strong relationships

So, now that we know why self-care is so vital, let's take a look at some of the many ways you can incorporate self-care into your life to feel the benefits that it can bring…

Make Time for Movement

While some of us may shudder at the thought of slogging it out at the gym, the mental health benefits of regular exercise can't be denied. And you don't need to do a daunting 10k run to experience the positive impact of moving your body to benefit your mind.

[Studies](#) have found that just 15 minutes of running each day can reduce the risk of major depression by 26% while also providing a powerful way to combat anxiety. The effects can be more beneficial than medication, as exercise releases mood-boosting endorphins and helps you focus your mind on the present instead of ruminating on the past or worrying about the future.

You can start gently with a daily walk, swim, or short home workout and gradually increase your stamina over time.

Practise Mindfulness

Another great way to promote self-care is with regular mindfulness. Yoga, meditation, or breathwork are effective (and free!) tools that can help you process and detach from difficult situations and encourage the mind to stay present, making it easier to focus on the positive aspects of your life and capture a sense of calm throughout the day.

Create a Serene Sleep Space

The duration and quality of sleep has a huge impact on our general wellbeing. Get enough of it (around 7-8 hours each night for adults), and you'll see your mood, energy, and brain function increase with almost immediate effect. This will help you tackle your day with a clear head and a sense of emotional and mental resilience that is hard to achieve when you're running on empty.

Ensure your sleep space is calm, clean, and comfortable and try to switch off your electronic devices at least an hour before bedtime. If you struggle to drift off, why not try listening to a guided meditation or a relaxing piece of music to help you disconnect from your day and make the prospect of sleep more peaceful?

Eat a Healthy, Balanced Diet

In order to truly thrive, our bodies need the right amount of vitamins and nutrients through a well-balanced, nutritious diet. This helps us to replenish our vital reserves and gives us extra fortitude to cope with life's little challenges.

To achieve this, the NHS recommends eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day while basing meals on higher fibre starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice, or pasta. It is also recommended to consume dairy or dairy alternatives, beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, and other protein sources on a daily basis.

Schedule Moments for Self-Care

Just as we plan when we'll make lunch and run errands, we also need to schedule self-care into our daily routines, too. Identify any areas of your day that could be used for acts of self-care and be sure to stick to them. Set boundaries with those around you so that they are aware these moments are for you to focus on your wellness. Whether you want to take half an hour in the morning to meditate or ten minutes in the evening to focus on skincare, it's important to set this time aside so it becomes part of your daily routine.

The key takeaway is to create a self-care strategy that works for you. However that looks and how much time you devote to it is entirely personal, just make sure you're creating moments that make a difference to your mental and physical wellbeing – every single day.

If your employer offers Vivup's Employee Assistance Programme, there are lots of useful resources and downloadable workbooks to help you discover new ways to manage your wellbeing. You can also access a 24-hour telephone helpline for responsive, confidential and totally independent advice should you or a colleague need mental health support.

Sources

[The UK needs to focus more on self-care says 84% of consumers | Hearst](#)

[The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise - HelpGuide.org](#)

[How and Why to Practice Self-care - Mental Health First Aid](#)

[Eating a balanced diet - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](#)