



RISE Center at UCLA
Heal. Connect. Thrive

Self-Care Tips

Looking after yourself is essential to living a happy and healthy life. This guide emphasizes the importance of deliberately and regularly engaging in activities and practices to maintain and enhance our health and well-being. Inside you will find advice, examples, and outlines for building a self-care plan to improve your quality of life.



Resilience in Your Student Experience (RISE)
Lu Valle Commons, B-01
rise@caps.ucla.edu
[@RISECenterUCLA](https://www.instagram.com/RISECenterUCLA)

Adapted from Homewood Health's *Self-Care Starter Kit*

Why does Self-Care matter?

When life gets busy, self-care is the first thing we sacrifice. People often think that taking time for themselves in the middle of busy times seems indulgent, but looking after your well-being will help you be productive and care for others. *Self-care is not selfish.*

Self-care helps to prevent burnout. Excessive or prolonged stress can lead to a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion, often referred to as burnout. Burnout reduces productivity, zaps your energy, and can lead to physical or mental concerns. By incorporating self-care activities into your regular routine, like going for a walk or socializing with friends, you give your body and mind time to rest, reset, and rejuvenate, so you can avoid or reduce the symptoms of burnout.

Self-care helps relationships. Self-care helps you to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself and others. Doing things that make you feel physically and mentally good boosts your confidence and self-esteem. When you feel good, you are happier and better able to maintain positive relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. By practicing self-care, you also demonstrate to the people around you that you know how to set healthy, functional boundaries, which manages what is expected and demanded of you.

Self-care makes you more effective. When you take time for yourself, and give your body the food, rest, and activity it needs, you will actually have more energy to meet the demands of daily life. Much like refueling the engine of your car, self-care activities refuel your body and mind. Bringing more balance to your daily routine will help you be more productive and more resilient to stressors.

How do I build a Self-Care plan?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to self care. We all have different needs, strengths, and limitations. The following four-step process will help you to build a plan that's just right for you.

1: Evaluate your coping skills

Examining how you typically deal with life's demands is essential to constructing a healthy lifestyle. When faced with challenges, we can use either positive coping strategies or negative coping strategies. Below are a few examples of each. Which strategies do you use?

Positive

- Deep breathing
- Stretching
- Meditation
- Listening to music
- Exercising
- Reading
- Going for a walk
- Taking a bath
- Socializing with friends
- Sitting outside and relaxing
- Engaging in a hobby
- Reaching out to campus resources

Negative

- Yelling
- Acting aggressively
- Overeating
- Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol
- Smoking
- Pacing
- Biting your fingernails
- Taking drugs
- Skipping meals
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Dangerous driving
- Excessive spending

Be honest when evaluating your current behaviours. If you find yourself lashing out or turning to substances in times of stress, it could be beneficial to your overall wellbeing to re-evaluate your go-to coping skills.

2: Identify your daily self-care needs

Take a moment to consider what you value and need in your everyday life (*daily self-care needs*) versus what you value and need in the event of a crisis (*emergency self-care needs*). Remember that self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs: consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial, and workplace well-being.

What are you doing to support your overall well-being on a day-to-day basis? Are you more active in some areas of self-care than others? You can use the table below to help determine which areas may need more support.

area of self-care	current practices	practices to try
Physical (e.g. eat regular and healthy meals, good sleep habits, regular exercise, medical check-ups, etc.)		
Emotional (e.g. engage in positive activities, acknowledge my own accomplishments, express emotions in a healthy way, etc.)		
Spiritual (e.g. read inspirational literature, self-reflect, meditate, spend time in nature, explore spiritual connections, etc.)		
Professional (e.g. pursue meaningful work, maintain work-life balance, positive relationships with co-workers, time management skills, etc.)		
Social (e.g. healthy relationships, make time for family/friends, schedule dates with partner/spouse, ask for support from family and friends, etc.)		
Financial (e.g. understand how finances impact your quality of life, create a budget or financial plan, seek guidance, etc.)		
Psychological (e.g. take time for yourself, disconnect from electronics, journal, access RISE, CAPS, or counseling, etc.)		

3: Identify your emergency self-care needs

When you are faced with a crisis, you likely won't have time to create a coping strategy. Take time to develop a plan in advance so it's there when you need it. Try completing the following table to help identify your unique self-care needs during times of distress.

emergency self-care tools	helpful: what to do	harmful: what to avoid
<p>Relaxation/Staying Calm Which activities help you to relax (e.g. deep breathing, taking a walk)? Which activities make you more agitated or frustrated (e.g. yelling, swearing, or drinking)?</p>		
<p>Self-Talk Helpful self-talk may include, "I am safe/I can do this." Harmful self-talk may include, "I can't handle this/I knew this would happen/I deserve this."</p>		
<p>Social Support Which family members and friends can you reach out to for help or support? Which people should you avoid during times of stress? Be honest about who helps and who zaps your energy.</p>		
<p>Mood Which activities support a positive mood (e.g. listening to uplifting music, enjoying sunshine)? What should you avoid in tough times (e.g. staying in bed all day, avoiding social activities)?</p>		
<p>Resilience What, or who, helps you to get through difficult times? What helps you bounce back? Conversely, what or who feeds negativity for you?</p>		

4: Barriers and areas for improvement

Reflect

Reflect on the existing coping strategies and self-care tools you have outlined in the previous activities. What's working? What isn't working? Keep the helpful tools, and ditch the stuff that doesn't help you.

Examine

Are there barriers to maintaining your self-care? Examine how you can address these barriers and reach out to people or resources that can help you in overcoming them.

Replace

Work on reducing, and then eliminating, negative coping strategies. If you find yourself using negative strategies, begin by choosing one action you feel is most harmful and identify a positive strategy to replace it.

5: Create your self-care plan

Once you've determined your personal needs and strategy, write it down. Your self-care plan can be as simple or complex as you need it to be. You may choose to include it in your calendar app, start a bullet journal, or a simple list of self-care activities in a google doc so you can access it anywhere.

Need help brainstorming Self-Care activities? Try any from the list below!

- Journaling
- Volunteer for a cause
- Make a gratitude list
- Take a break for fresh air
- Meditate (on your own or guided)
- Cuddle with pets
- Treat yourself to a nice meal
- Take a nap in the Sculpture Garden
- Listen to music
- Make a feel good playlist
- Practice yoga
- Photography
- Go for a hike
- Go to the Westwood Farmers Market
- Go to a group fitness program at Wooden
- Read a book just for pleasure
- Try a new club or hobby
- Call a loved one
- Check out a RISE program
- Get a massage
- Buy yourself a plant or flowers
- Have a movie marathon
- Have a game night
- Dance
- Visit Powell Cat (or his instagram)
- Wear something you feel good in
- Get creative: draw, paint, write a song, or cook a new meal
- Explore the botanical gardens
- Go to the Fowler or the Hammer