

SELF-CARE

NSCAD PEER MENTORS 2021

how to maintain mental wellness and avoid burnout

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care is anything that you do to take care of your physical, mental, and emotional health. Things that...

- help manage stress
- bring you joy
- feel nourishing (physically, spiritually, intellectually)
- help you to function day-to-day
- bring you closer to your goals
- boost your health and wellbeing
- just need to get done

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Self-care is not selfish, and it's not about indulgence and luxury. Self-care is crucial to your ability to function. Self-care:

- **Prevents overload and burnout.** If you push yourself too far without rest, breaks, and self-care, you will get to the point where you just can't take any more and may hit a wall or break down.
- **Reduces the negative effects of stress.** A small amount of stress can be motivating, but too much stress is unhealthy. Self-care helps regulate your stress levels so they don't become too high and overwhelm your ability to function.
- **Helps you refocus.** Oftentimes something that is giving you lots of trouble will be a lot easier when you come back to it after taking a break. Taking breaks for self-care is proven to help performance.

THERE ARE LOTS OF
DIFFERENT
CATEGORIES OF
SELF-CARE

PHYSICAL

taking care of your body

medical checkups

healthy eating

exercise

get enough sleep

get a massage

take a walk

be sexual

take a shower/bath

stretch

PSYCHOLOGICAL

taking care of your mind

journaling

therapy

self-reflection

asking for help

be creative

self-help book

compassionate self-talk

get some sun/fresh air

join a support group

EMOTIONAL

taking care of your heart

self-love

self-compassion

laugh

favourite movie/book

cuddle a pet

practice forgiveness

cry if you need to

say 'I love you'

positive affirmations

SPIRITUAL

taking care of your soul

time in nature

meditate

volunteer

find spiritual community

pray/tarot/etc.

sing

yoga/movement

watch the sunset

spend time with children

PROFESSIONAL

taking care of your career

take a class
set boundaries
make long-term plans
take breaks
find a mentor
network
leave work at work
make friends
take a mental health day

PERSONAL

taking care of YOU

set goals
make friends
vision board
learn to cook
family/chosen family
try new things
travel plans
go on dates
make a budget

THERE ARE ALSO
DIFFERENT KINDS OF
SELF-CARE

EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING

- Strategies that aim to reduce the negative emotions associated with a situation
- Aiming to make ourselves feel better but are not fixing the problem itself
- A good choice for when you have no control or influence over the situation that is causing you stress
- Can also be helpful to decrease your level of stress or stimulation to allow you to more effectively engage in problem-focused coping at a later time
- Examples: going for a run, getting a massage, having a movie night, calling a friend, praying, taking a bubble bath

PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING

- Strategies aim to get to the root of a problem and directly deal with the source of your stress
- Aiming to solve problems themselves
- Generally more helpful for things that are within your power to do something about
- Sometimes you can't engage in the problem solving right away, so emotion-focused coping may be helpful in the short term
- Examples: making necessary phone calls/emails/appointments, gathering information, making pros and cons lists, asking for help, making changes, doing your homework

DO I HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER THIS SITUATION?
(CAN I DO ANYTHING ABOUT MY PROBLEM?)

YES

CAN I DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT
RIGHT NOW?

YES

DO I FEEL UP TO DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT
RIGHT NOW?

YES

NO

NO

EMOTION-FOCUSED
SELF-CARE

PROBLEM-FOCUSED SELF-CARE

EMOTION-FOCUSED SELF-CARE NOW
PROBLEM-FOCUSED SELF-CARE LATER

TEMPORARY SELF-CARE / ENDURING SELF-CARE

- Temporary self-care refers to activities you can do in the moment that will provide a temporary benefit, but not necessarily a long-lasting effect
- Examples: grabbing coffee with a friend, taking a bubble bath, getting takeout and watching a favourite show
- Enduring self-care refers to activities you commit to on a longer-term basis that will have an enduring effect on your wellbeing
- Examples: practicing mindfulness, creating and sticking to a budget, having a gratitude practice, eating healthy
- Both are important!

NEGATIVE VS POSITIVE COPING

- We all learn different coping mechanisms throughout our lives, and some of them may be healthier than others (try not to judge yourself for picking up unhealthy coping mechanisms--we're all just doing the best we can to get by)
- Sometimes we have activities that may feel like 'self-care' but aren't actually very helpful, and may in fact be making things worse. Be gentle and compassionate with yourself, but also be honest about evaluating whether things are helping or hurting.
- It's important to be mindful about things like drug/alcohol use (it's okay to have a couple of drinks, but be intentional about keeping an eye on substance use) or activities that involve spending money (a weekly manicure might make you feel great, but if you can't really afford it that will eventually have a negative effect).
- **Most things are okay in moderation**, the main takeaway is to create healthy boundaries for yourself and reach out for support if you need it.

MAKING A PLAN FOR
SELF-CARE IN YOUR
DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

CREATING SELF-CARE ROUTINES

- Ideally, you want to make self-care a part of your daily life
- This can look like small habits that you do daily
- This can also look like setting aside specific time during your week for a longer/more intensive self-care activity
- Give yourself permission to make self-care a priority
- The amount of time you can devote to self-care will be unique to your situation--whatever amount of time this may be for you, put it into your schedule and treat it with the same importance you would give any of your other appointments and commitments

WELLNESS MAPS/MAKING A PLAN

- Self-care is an important part of how we manage our mental health
- Having a plan in place for what kinds of self-care you might use to manage different emotional states or situations can make it easier to care for yourself when the going gets tough
- Using a wellness map can be a helpful strategy
- When I feel (emotion), I will do (self-care activity). When (situation) happens, I will try (coping strategy).
- Check out our PDF on Self-Monitoring using the Mental Health Continuum Tool (available at nscad.ca/wellness) for more information on wellness maps and self-care planning

WHAT TO DO WHEN SELF-CARE ISN'T WORKING

Sometimes situations in our lives might go beyond what we can effectively manage through self-care and coping strategies. If you are struggling to cope, it may be time to...

- Take a mental health day
- Talk to a counsellor/therapist/doctor
- Reach out to peer support
- Talk to a loved one
- Access a service like Good 2 Talk or 7 Cups (nscad.ca/wellness)
- Call a crisis line if necessary

HOMWORK (IF YOU WANT!)

Some things you can do to implement some of what we've talked about:

- Choose one or two self-care activities that you've never tried before from the lists provided and try them out
- Take a few minutes to create a wellness map/self-care plan
- Print out the flow chart and use it to guide your self-care strategies when stressful situations come up
- Choose one small daily self-care habit you'd like to start and try and stick with it for week
- Try to schedule yourself a day/evening/hour off for self-care
- Check out our Coping Strategies PDFs at nscad.ca/wellness

REMEMBER:
SELF-CARE IS NOT A
LUXURY, IT IS A
NECESSITY & YOU
DESERVE IT!