



10 WAYS
TO PUT MORE
SELF-CARE
PRACTICE INTO
YOUR LIFE

NOW

Appropriate self-care is essential to your happiness and success. I believe putting self-care first is the secret to making each moment more abundant. The demands of work and a busy family life can quickly put most people into overwhelm. That's when they simply can't see how to make their own self-care needs a top priority. The busy demands of society can take a toll on our health and take over our lives if we don't put our own needs first at regular intervals.

Self-care involves nurturing and honoring yourself as a worthy and deserving human being. Everyone who loves, cares, and depends on you also needs you to take care of yourself. Allowing them to help you care for yourself in some way is a positive solution for everyone.

For example, your need for nutritious food is more important than your desire for a quick fix of cheese fries on your way to some other commitment. This is a good time for you to allow a friend or family member to cook a healthy meal for you. Sometimes you may forget that self-care isn't always about fun and indulgence, and it certainly isn't about neglecting your basic needs to eat well.

Self-care is about putting your needs first to ensure optimum health and happiness in all areas of your life. To do this, it's important to educate yourself about facts, question your own biases, and become more mindful about your needs versus your wants. Habits play a major role here.

If you really want to increase your productivity while also taking care of yourself, you're in luck because taking care of yourself will result in having a much happier and healthier NOW than if you left it all up to chance. To put more self-care practice into your life, use the following ten ideas to get started. *Make them your own!*

Wake Up 30 Minutes Earlier Each Day

Sleep is important to your overall health. It's also part of providing yourself with additional self-care, so don't sacrifice any of your sleep to do this. Instead, plan to go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Remember you need at least 7 hours of sleep at night. To help you wake up earlier, try the following suggestions:

Eat Light at Night – Eat your heavy meals at breakfast and lunch. Lunch is better for your main meal because you have all afternoon for digestion processing and that will help you to sleep. Try not to eat anything two to three hours before bed. Eat your lightest meal for dinner to avoid overtaxing your digestion when you're trying to sleep. Your body will work on healing while you sleep if it doesn't have to deal with digesting food all night. This means you'll be hungrier in the morning. Fasting in the evening puts your body in Ketosis which will help burn fat instead of muscle and you will be hungry and ready for a healthy breakfast when you wake up.

Change Your Bedtime Routine – While you want to get up early to give yourself more time and avoid rushing, you don't want to lose sleep. Start with the minimum of 7 to 8 hours to see how you feel. Adjust the time after a few weeks if you still feel tired. Go to bed earlier, stop eating earlier, turn off notifications. Also, turn off blue lights, such as the lights from energy-efficient lightbulbs and many electronic devices. Create your own personal night and morning routines that can soon become healthy, automatic habits for beginning and ending each day.

- **Set Your Alarm Clock** – While it's the dream of most to wake up naturally, you may not be able to do that when you first start training your brain to get up earlier. So, set your alarm clock and put it where you're forced to stand up to turn it off. Once you stand up to turn it off, don't get back in the bed!
- **Leave Your Bedroom** – If you are sleepy in the morning, don't stay in your bedroom. Instead, get up, get ready and get out of the bedroom so you can begin your day. Once you're up, don't be tempted to lie down on the sofa or get too comfortable anywhere. You have something important to do. **NOW** is your time!
- **Get Some Sunshine** – Sunshine affects your circadian rhythm and will help you stay awake and feel more energetic. You don't have to go out in the morning, but sometime during the day, before 11 am, get outside for about 10 to 30 minutes of sunshine to help your brain know when it's time to be up and when it's time to go to sleep.
- **Give Yourself an Enjoyable Task First** – If you look forward to something, it's easier to get up. For you, that may be sitting with a cup of hot coffee, or spending time working in your garden, meditating, or doing yoga. The choice is up to you, but the task should be pleasurable and something that motivates you.
- **Celebrate Your Successes** – It becomes easier to get up earlier when it is planned. When you accomplish impactful tasks and see that your emotional state is improving you will feed your own power source. You're getting more done with less stress. Celebrate and reward yourself for your accomplishments.
- **Give Yourself a Break** – You may feel out of sorts for a few weeks as you embark on your new morning schedule. It takes time to normalize getting to sleep earlier, and it takes time to get used to doing something new. Your body's internal clock also takes time to reset so give it time and be kind to yourself and it will happen.

The benefits of getting up earlier include having more time to focus on your own needs, giving yourself more time in the morning to avoid rushing, which means less anxiety. Getting up earlier gives you a good, organized, productive start on your day. If you are often rushing around in the morning without direction, consider giving yourself more time as a form of self-care to avoid adding stress to your life.

Always Take a Lunch Break

Your body needs regular nutrition to function properly, and your brain needs breaks every now and then to help process the information you collected over time. The best way to ensure you work at your optimum is to feed yourself a healthy diet and take the time to enjoy it too. Eating is not simply good for you. It's also pleasurable to you. The benefits of taking a lunch break include:

- **Fewer Body Aches** – Working takes a toll on your body and mind. Most people cannot focus solely on work for more than 90 minutes, and by the time lunchtime arrives, you've been focusing less effectively for the last four or five hours.

Are you worried about damage to your neck, spine, wrists, or legs because you spent so much time hunched over a desk? Take your lunch break to eat and move around to decrease the likelihood that there will be physical or health problems.

- **Less Fatigue** – Fatigue is caused by lack of rest, poor nutrition, dehydration, and many other issues that can all be alleviated or at least greatly reduced by simply taking your lunch break and eating a nutritious meal at that time while also putting yourself in a new setting that will wake up your brain again.
- **More Motivation** – Taking a lunch break is also an effective way to motivate yourself to getting your work or other tasks done before lunch. It's nice to look forward to and break up your day. Knowing that you're going to leave the work behind and enjoy a nice lunch, a walk, and something different during that time is encouraging. Plus, when you get back to work, your brain will be awake, and you'll feel invigorated to finish out the day.
- **Reduced Stress** – Dehydration, poor nutrition, and not providing for your true needs are responsible for a lot of stress and anxiety in your life. So, if you want to reduce your stress, giving your body and mind what it needs is imperative.
- **Enhanced Creativity** – When you're well-fed and rested, your creativity will explode. If you think you're doing an excellent job NOW, imagine how well you'll do when working at your best.
- **Better Health** – When you provide your mind and body with what it needs to be healthy, you'll become healthier. You need to eat nourishing foods and take breaks regularly to be at your best. When you know what you need to help you be at your best, experience better health, and take actions to achieve it, the rewards are immense.
- **More Joy** – When you treat yourself as well as you would your own child or your pet, the truth is, you're going to be happier and more joyful. Because life is about more than work and productivity, it's also about enjoying your **NOW** and consistent lunch breaks.

Remember:

Your lunch break is one of the ways for you to care for yourself. Consider the fact you would never force your child or pet to skip their mealtime to get more work done – would you? Why would you expect yourself to perform at your best while starving your body and mind of nutrition and enjoyment?

Take The Long Way to Reach Your Destination

One easy and effective way to de-stress and provide a little extra self-care when you're overworked and rushed is to be less productive and do things the old way, or at least differently—for example, walking instead of driving, or using public transportation instead of driving your car, or skipping assistance in favor of getting exercise using the stairs are a few suggestions to help you stay in the **NOW**.

- **Awaken Different Areas of Your Brain** – When you change up how you do things, you'll wake up your brain so that you are a lot sharper when you get back to work. For example, the new sights and sounds trigger new thoughts and change how your brain is working.
- **Give Yourself a Little Rest** – Taking a new way to get to your destination, whether on foot or in your vehicle, will give you time to get in a little rest before you embark on your next task, making you much more likely to be accurate.
- **Get Some Exercise** – One reason to take an unusual way to work or even just around the office by skipping the elevator will give you a little extra exercise which will wake up your mind and body and get it ready for the next tasks you need to do.

Taking a few extra minutes to go the scenic way to your destination, whether that's just taking the stairs at your office to attend a meeting instead of the elevator or driving a new way to work, isn't as important as just doing something different to give yourself a few extra minutes alone to care for yourself.

Call One Family Member Each Day

Family and a healthy social life are good for you. The more stable and meaningful your relationships are, the less stress you'll experience. In addition, your life will feel more balanced. Sadly, busy lives often prevent people from interacting with loved ones more.

Your family can help you find joy in life. They also provide you with multiple reasons for selecting the choices you make and taking the specific actions. Keeping contact with your family regularly will benefit you in numerous ways. Check out more of the benefits below.

- **Experience Less Stress** – Anxiety is often experienced because you feel utterly alone in your life. Work, bills, problems, and other things can be overwhelming. Even if you're organized and efficient, you still need strong family relationships to help and remind you that you are strong, you aren't alone because they are there to help you.
- **Live Longer** – Studies show that people who have close relationships with family members live longer than people who have few or unhealthy relationships. When you show your family and friends that you care about them by calling, even if for a few minutes, and you build stronger connections that will result in better health for you all.
- **Experience Improved Health** – Strong relationships with friends and family help you become a healthier person mentally and physically. There is something about human nature that requires relationships with good people to help with blood pressure and heart health.
- **Improve Your Relationships** – Friendships don't continue without interaction. Family relationships become strained without interaction. Making the time to talk to them regularly will improve your relationships and make them much stronger.

One reason you are here is to spend time with your family and family friends. The whole reason to earn a living at all is to enjoy the rest of your life with your family. If you can't spend time with

them regularly, what's the point of anything? The good news is you can add one 15-minute call a day to your calendar and change everything about your life and relationships.

Practice Breathing Exercises

A simple but enormously effective way to care for yourself is to breathe correctly. That may seem odd since you breathe unconsciously every day. However, some people tend to breathe shallowly, rather than deeply or fully.

Faye Elizabeth of Your Mindful Breath states...

“The easiest self-regulation tool to help you feel calmer and more relaxed is to practice taking full and deep breaths from the belly. Breathing correctly activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for helping you feel calmer and more relaxed. Furthermore, this deep breathing results in reduced stress, improved focus, and concentration can reduce your heart rate, blood pressure, and even chronic pain.”

The benefits of mindful breathing are clear, and you may be familiar with or felt some of the benefits listed here.

- Reduced Body Stress
- More Mental Clarity
- Increased Ability to Focus
- More Creativity
- Lower Heart Rate
- Lower Blood Pressure
- Reduced Depression
- Reduced Chronic Pain
- Regulated Emotional Response

To get started with breathing exercises, take some time to learn the right way to breathe. It might seem incredulous to you, but most people don't breathe correctly due to developing unhealthy habits such as holding your breath unconsciously. In fact, it would not be shocking to learn that you're holding your breath a little right now as you read this. So that's it, let it out.

Try it right now. Breathe in deeply through your nose, fill your lungs with the air so that your diaphragm expands as you inhale. Hold it in gently for a count of four. Then pucker your lips to blow the breath out of your mouth slowly to a count of four. Feel better?

By adding breathwork to your daily self-care activities, you'll experience all these benefits and more. In addition, research suggests that some types of breathwork can also help you lose weight and improve cardiovascular function.

Pay it Forward by Volunteering

As you know, expressing gratitude benefits you and makes life more enjoyable. Volunteering will enable you to feel more gratitude while also spreading benefits to your community, which will circle back and positively affect you, thus increasing your gratitude even more. Volunteering really is a win-win for you in every single way.

- **Improves Self-Esteem** – When you do good in the world, you automatically feel good about yourself. So even if you are regularly riddled with a low self-image, it feels so good to do good that it will override your bad thoughts.
- **Spreads Joy** – When you volunteer, not only will you feel more joy yourself, but so will those you help. Each of you will go out into the world separate from this event and spread more joy due to your improved attitude and countenance.
- **Builds Relationships** – Volunteering is a wonderful way to strengthen your personal relationships by doing the work with a friend or a family member. It can be your special thing to do with them, and it'll be so much more enjoyable and meaningful than doing something more frivolous.
- **Improves Your Health** – The joy you feel, and the increased self-esteem will go a long way toward helping you make better choices during the rest of your life. You'll find yourself doing better because you simply feel better.
- **Builds Acceptance** – Connecting with your community members is an important way to improve your mental health and your wellbeing. Humans tend to crave connection with others. Even if you are an introvert, you want to feel like you belong to a community, and assisting your community is the best way to feel as if you are accepted and belong.
- **It's Fun** – Finally, if you pick the right tasks to do as a volunteer for an organization you believe in around people you have a lot in common with, you're going to have a fun time. Having more fun is always beneficial to your self-care, especially when the fun is helpful.

Volunteering is supposed to be a selfless act that you do because you want to help others. However, the truth is that you'll get just as many or more benefits from volunteering as the people you want to help. For this reason, volunteering is a fabulous way to care for yourself and give back to your community. First, consider your overall life goals, principles, morals, and values to find volunteering options. Then, find a like-minded organization with the same values you have and commit a few hours a month.

Dedicate One Day Per Month to Do Absolutely Nothing

Don't freak out about scheduling in a monthly "do nothing" day. It doesn't really mean you "do nothing" all day. However, if you want to stare at a wall all day, that's fine. However, that phrase means you keep one day open, at least once a month, where you enter nothing on your schedule so that you can be spontaneous and live freely in the moment you are in throughout

the entire day. That's what I call LIVING IN THE NOW and it is THE SECRET TO MAKING EACH DAY YOUR BEST!

- **Blank Out One Day a Month** – An effective self-care action is to schedule everything – even your bath time. Taking the time to purposefully keep one day in your month free of any need to do anything will require thought and planning, so you don't get off track for the rest of your goals.
- **Let Go of The Stress** – When you wake up on “nothing day” don't look at your calendar for tomorrow or do any type of future planning or past reflection. Instead, use that day to be mindful about today and only today, allowing yourself to reduce your stress level.
- **Don't Allow Guilt to Enter the Picture** – It's likely when you first try this, you're going to feel guilty. Someone must cook dinner, clean the kitchen, and do all the stuff, right? Unbelievably if you step back, other people will step forward eventually. Today is a good day to enjoy a prepared salad and fruit from the supermarket or dine out.
- **Be Mindful** – Try to stay in the moment as you go through your do-nothing day. For example, if you're spending the day cuddling in bed, enjoy every moment of it and try to cement each moment into your memories.

This is not the day you schedule your massage, doctor's appointment, or novel writing. It is the day that you schedule nothing to do. When you wake up that morning, take your time getting out of bed. Watch a movie or spend time doing whatever you want. Regardless of what you don't do you'll feel better, and your joy will increase because you've put your wants and needs first.

Spend More Time Outdoors

Spending time outdoors allows you to absorb sunshine and fresh air, which is essential to your health. In addition, being in nature helps to lower your blood pressure, reduce stress, and improves your overall well-being. So, if you're serious about self-care, make it a top priority to get outside as often as possible or at least sit in front of a sunny window for a while.

Naturally, your outdoor time will be limited by where you live and the weather. However, even people who live in cold or hot climates can benefit from spending a few minutes outdoors when properly attired and hydrated. If you need some ideas of what and how you can spend time outdoors, look at the suggestions below to see what you can incorporate into your self-care practices.

- **Enjoy the Sunrise and Sunset** – Waking up with the sun and watching the sunset helps your brain keep track of day and night, increasing the quality of your nightly sleep. Also, watching a beautiful sunrise and sunset is good motivation to make it happen.
- **Walk Outside 20 Minutes Per Day** – You need about 150 minutes per week of moderately paced movement to stay healthy, so you may as well do it outside. Walking outside 20 minutes a day will ensure your vitamin D levels remain high, and your body will thank you for the movement.
- **Go for an Outdoor Swim** – If you don't really want to walk or run or it's just too hot for you, consider going for a swim in an outdoor lap pool. You'll get the benefits of the sunshine on more of your body, and you'll also get the added benefit of the exercise.
- **Take Up Gardening** – Growing your own food is enormously beneficial to the planet, your diet, and it gets you outside more than 20 minutes a day which is the minimum you need to benefit from sunshine each day.
- **Go Barefoot** – Ground yourself in nature by taking off your socks and shoes. Walk in the grass, sand, or stomp through a mud puddle. It feels great and may even bring back a few great memories. Just to remember to bring a towel. Afterwards, you'll feel relaxed and more energetic the rest of the day.
- **Enjoy The Rain** – Even if it's raining, going outside is beneficial. If you live in a dry place, you may not realize that people who live in a rainy place go outside even if it's raining, because that's normal for them. Don't let rain keep you from getting out unless it's a dangerous storm. Just wear the right raingear.
- **Enjoy The Wildlife** – Each season brings changes to the wildlife in your location. This means, if you spend time outdoors in every season, you can watch how the animals and their habits change. You may even want to take pictures or videos of the wildlife. Depending on the type of animals in your area, you may want to take a small pair of binoculars or pen and paper to take notes.

Outdoor activities are natural de-stressors that lower your cortisol levels, as well as reduce your heart rate and blood pressure. Sunshine also provides essential Vitamin D, which aids in reducing chronic pain and improving health outcomes if you get sick.

Partner With Someone Who Is Upbeat and Positive

If you need help on your self-care quest, consider finding someone or a group of like-minded people with whom you can work to help build motivation. It usually helps to find people to partner with who are upbeat and positive because it's easier to be motivated by positivity than negativity.

- **Make it Formal** – To make accountability really work with someone, even if they're your sister or friend, is to formalize your agreement so that you both know what you're going to work on together. So, for example, if you need someone to call you to find out if you walked 30 minutes today, that should be mentioned in your agreement.

- **Have a Plan** – Set up a plan that defines how you'll communicate and when with your partner. You can set up a social media group or a project management space to privately discuss and track your work together, or you can agree to call each other at a certain time each day to check-in. I belong to a running motivational group on Facebook and people write in and comment about what they are doing all the time.
- **Define the Parameters** – From the first day, determine what types of things you'll work on together. For example, eight areas of life need your self-care attention. Write them all down and define how you'll help each other in every area, whether physical, mental, emotional self-care, or something else.
- **Eliminate Time Wasters** – Sometimes working with others can take more time than it's worth. It doesn't mean you don't want to help or spend time with your accountability partner. However, you need to fit more things into your life than that one thing. So, make sure you set up your team-work time to focus on the purpose instead of on socializing. You can socialize afterwards, of course, but it's important to achieve your team-work goal first.
- **Track and Tweak** – As you work together with your partner to provide accountability and motivation to each other in your self-care pursuits, have a monthly meeting designed to track what's working and what's not and tweak the actions you take going forward to focus on what works.

Remember you and your self-care partner are a team. You want to choose someone who helps you to be accountable and in turn, you help them to be accountable. If you don't already have someone in your life who can act as your accountability partner, you can find one online in a health or coaching group. Ensure that the person you work with has similar values, principles, and shares the same goals.

Start Your Day with Something That Promotes Positivity

If the moment that you open your eyes you're bombarded with negativity and rush about, it can be exceedingly difficult to be motivated to do anything. What you do to motivate yourself in the morning may be different from what works for others, so you may need to try other ideas to find just the right one. Here are a few ideas to start your day on a positive note.

Turn Up the Music – Listening to upbeat and positive music is a time-honored way to get up and get going each day. You can even set your alarm clock up to start playing your most favorite positive upbeat music sure to get you out of bed.

Listen To a Podcast – If there is a podcast you love that makes you feel happy and motivated, start listening to it first thing in the morning so that you'll become more motivated the rest of the day.

Read Positive Information – Open some positive books that make you feel good and optimistic. You can read any book you like, including your religious texts, philosophy, and more if reading it makes you feel good and doesn't make you sleepy. But, of course, if it does, you can always listen to your books t

Get Your Blood Pumping – Another way to start your day off positively is to move more and get your blood pumping. Getting oxygen flowing at a higher rate through your bloodstream will wake you up, providing energy to keep you going all day.

Breathe – Another way to get oxygen to your brain so you can wake up and feel positive is to try various breathing exercises. First, try standing up in a power pose of your choosing with your chest held up so your lungs can fill with air. Next, inhale slowly through your nose deeply and blow the air slowly through your mouth, blowing out all the stress and negativity with it.

Check-In with Your Motivation Partner – Use the time to call your motivational partner. You can get your earbuds in and go on a 20-minute walk while talking to your partner about your success from yesterday and your plans for today.

When you know you're going to wake up to positivity, you are much more likely to go to bed with less anxiety. You're also more likely to fall asleep faster and get up without struggling to open your eyes or staggering across the room.

Prioritizing your self-care is essential if you want to live your most fulfilling life possible. It may seem impossible NOW. However, the power to start caring for yourself is well within your grasp and control.

You always have the power to choose.

You are worthy of being first on the self-care list just as much as anyone else. Get started NOW by adding one new self-care practice that helps you to focus more on LIVING IN THE NOW. It's THE SECRET TO MAKING EACH DAY YOUR BEST!

PJ Zito

www.ZitoProHealth.com