



A guide to self-care



Life in Mind

What is self-care?

Self-care refers to activities that support and enhance our physical, emotional, social and mental health, and overall wellbeing. It is an ongoing commitment to look after ourselves through helpful practices and actions that protect us during periods of stress.

Paying attention to what is happening to us physically, socially and emotionally helps to identify when something is impacting us. It is important to take time out when we need it to reduce feelings of stress and protect our mental health and wellbeing.

When should you practice self-care?

Self-care differs for everyone and isn't just in response to stress or challenges. It is about participating in activities that improve our mental and emotional wellbeing on a day-to-day basis. This helps to limit a negative outcome that may develop in response to the stressor and promote positive effects through enhancing our wellbeing.

Self-care is not an 'emergency response plan' to be activated when stress becomes overwhelming. Instead, it is an intentional way of living by our values, attitudes and actions and integrating them into our day-to-day routines.



Ways to practice self-care

Self-care can be considered within the following domains. It is important to identify activities and behaviours that work for us as individuals and will be most beneficial for our own personal wellbeing.

Here are some examples of activities that might inspire your own.



Physical

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating nutritious foods and a balanced diet
- Moving the body, e.g. stretching, walking, playing sport, gardening



Relationships and connecting with others

- Spending time with family and friends
- Joining a group or taking part in community activities
- Recognising when help from others is needed and reaching out for support



Work

- Communicating with supervisors to ensure workload is manageable
- Implementing organisational or time management practices or tools
- Taking regular breaks and allocating time outside of work for enjoyable activities



Thoughts and emotions

- Being self-aware and practising mindful reflection, e.g. journaling, mindfulness
- Using gratitude to focus on positive emotions
- Understanding that negative emotions are normal and can be worked through, but recognising when support may be needed to manage them



Spirituality

- Taking time for regular spiritual practice
- Meditating
- Spending time in nature
- Connecting with places that help to feel calm and safe

How can self-care be incorporated into our lives?

Incorporate self-care by identifying activities and behaviours that will benefit our wellbeing and that we can practically implement. A ‘self-care action plan’ can be a valuable tool and reminder to incorporate self-care activities into our lives.

My self-care action plan				
Self-care domain	My self-care goal	What do I need to achieve this goal?	How can I achieve this goal?	How did achieving this self-care goal make me feel?
 Physical	<i>Example: Attend a gym class once a week</i>	<i>Example: Scheduled time to go when I don't have other commitments</i>	<i>Example: Organise for partner to pick up kids on a Tuesday. Pack change of clothes and go straight after work.</i>	<i>Example: Energised and calm</i>
 Relationships				
 Work				
 Thoughts and emotions				
 Spirituality				

Self-care apps



Mobile phone applications can be useful tools for self-care. The following apps have been tested and shown to improve aspects of mental health and wellbeing:

- **MoodGYM:** a free, structured five-module course covering information, assessments, self-help skills and exercises.
- **MyCompass:** a free resource with a focus on building resilience and good mental health providing tips and exercises to maintain good mental health.
- **Sleep Ninja:** a free, evidence-based smartphone app to help young people develop healthy sleep habits and improve sleep quality.
- **HeadGear:** designed with a male audience in mind, but suitable for all adults, this app guides users through daily activities to support mental fitness and resilience.
- **Smiling Mind:** a free mindfulness app that has been shown to help manage stress, resilience, anxiety and depression, and improve general health and wellbeing.

**Everymind encourages the use of apps that have been tested and are evidence-based, however does not endorse one app over another.*

Support services

There are a number of 24/7 support services available by phone with further information and resources listed online. Talking to a family member, a friend, your doctor or one of the many 24/7 services available can make all the difference.

Adult

Lifeline: 13 11 14 | Text 0477 131 114
lifeline.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au
Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
beyondblue.org.au/forums
MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978
mensline.org.au
Standby Support After Suicide:
1300 727 247

Youth

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
kidshelpline.com.au
headspace: 1800 650 890
headspace.org.au
ReachOut: Reachout.com

Other

Head to Health: mental health portal
headtohealth.gov.au
Life in Mind: suicide prevention portal
lifeinmind.org.au
SANE: 1800 187 263 | saneforums.org

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: 13YARN.org.au | 13 92 76
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex: 1800 184 527 | qlife.org.au
Culturally and linguistically diverse: embracementalhealth.org.au

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