MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID Australia

Learn the skills to make a difference.

SELF-CARE WORKBOOK

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SELF-CARE

WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care is a deliberate activity to maintain or improve our physical, emotional or mental health.

It includes acts that revitalise us and give us a sense of pleasure and well-being. It is not those tasks or activities that we dislike but force ourselves to do; it is something that restores us.

It is not selfish. It is looking after ourselves, so we are better able to look after others as need arises.

It excludes strategies that may be described as avoiding stress or pain, such as addictive patterns e.g. alcohol and other drugs, gambling.

SELF-CARE AT WORK

- Balance challenging and difficult work with simpler, more enjoyable tasks
- Take all breaks – resist working lunches or eating at your desk
- Try to eat healthy, balanced meals
- Identify and connect with support networks, especially colleagues who re-energise us
- Take sick leave when you notice increased signs of stress and fatigue
- Check personal boundaries.

SELF-CARE AT HOME

- Engage in regular, moderate exercise
- Spend time on non-work hobbies
- Spend time relaxing; try meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, and just getting some rest
- Take the time to connect socially with family and friends
- Reduce or disable work access – set limits on your availability on the phone, and don't check email after a specific time
- Spend time away from screens of all kinds for at least an hour before bed
- Try to have a regular bedtime and maintain good sleep hygiene.

WHAT SORTS OF ACTIVITIES CAN SELF-CARE INVOLVE?

As the self-care slide is presented, think about which of the suggestions appeal to you. Take a note of them on the self-care plan on page 3.

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ANTICIPATING BARRIERS TO SELF-CARE

What will be the things that stop you from doing the things that restore you?

Think about some of the things that might prevent you from acting on your self-care commitments. These might be external pressures such as family commitments or being asked to do extra work. They may be internal barriers, such as feeling too tired, or feeling 'selfish' for spending time on yourself.

Name two things that you think could get in the way of honouring your self-care commitments and how you can overcome them. *For example, if you are required to do additional work outside of hours, you might put a limit on how many additional hours you can do.*

BARRIERS:

WHAT HABITS DO YOU HAVE THAT MAY IMPEDE YOUR SELF-CARE?

Think through that time of the day when you are most likely to be able to engage in self-care. It may be after dinner. What do you usually do at that time? Do you find yourself cleaning up after others, watching television you're not particularly interested in, or scrolling social media?

You can take action to make some changes, even if not everything is in your control.

Name two habits that you think could get in the way of honouring your self-care commitments and how you can overcome them. *For example, ask kids to tidy their own things, and keeping the request consistent every day, or set limits on your social media use; deciding that you will spend a certain amount of time reading and commenting on your friends and family's updates and then logging out.*

HABITS:

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COMMITTING TO SELF-CARE

Fill out the self-care plan and place it somewhere you will see it often. Tell people you share a home with that you are going to be taking action to engage in self-care regularly and ask that they respect your boundaries at these times, keeping noise to a minimum and not interrupting. Each week consider how closely you were able to follow your plan, and what made it hard. Adjust your plan as needed and keep trying.

MY SELF-CARE PLAN

SELF-CARE IDEAS:

(make a note of these while the slide is up)

WEEK:

MY SELF-CARE COMMITMENT:

(Be specific – what will you do and when?)

REFLECTIONS OF THE WEEK:

(Did you do what you said you would do? If not, what needs to change next week? If so, how did it feel?)