The Practice of Everyday Self-Care

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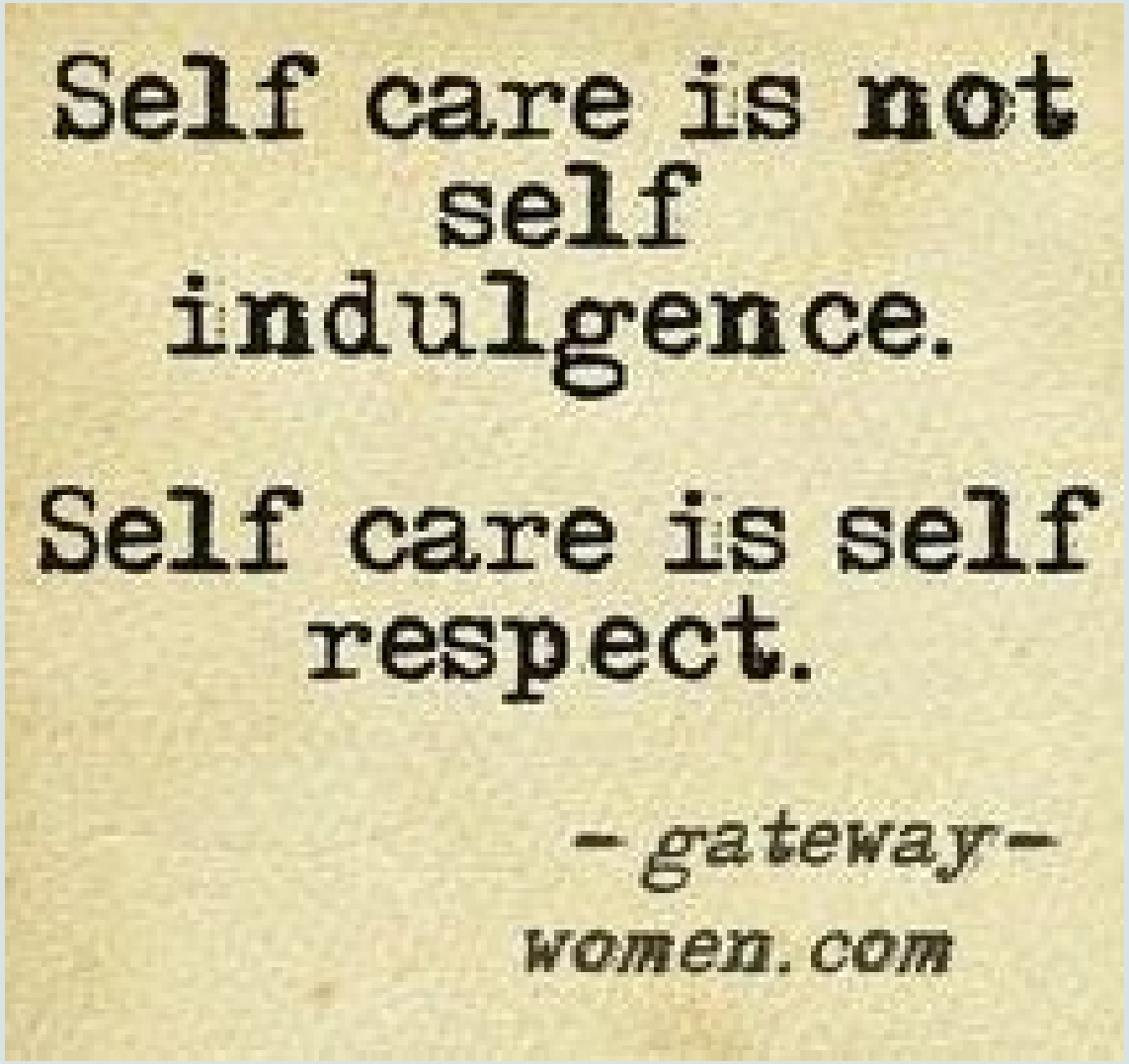
Overview

- Defining Self-Care
- Self-Care Types
- Positive vs. Negative Self-Care
- Self-Care Planning



Defining Self-Care

Definitions

1. **Self-Care**
   - *“Something that refuels us, rather than takes from us.”* ~ Dr. Agnes Weinman
   - The practice of taking action to preserve or improve one’s own health.
   - The practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own well-being and happiness during periods of stress.
   - The ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.
2. **Self-Care Practices**
   - Any action taken to improve one’s mental, physical or emotional well-being.
   - Routines/Strategies utilized to relax and counteract effects of stress, burnout, etc.
   - Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.

Defining Barriers to Self-Care (not exhaustive)

1. **Low self-worth** – Are you self-critical? Do you see this as a priority for yourself?
2. **Feeling guilty** – Does self-care feel selfish to you? What have you been taught?
3. **Time constraints** – Too busy to walk or eat healthily, for example?
4. **Lack of understanding as to what self-care is and is not** – Does it seem silly?
5. **Workplace culture might have a disparate philosophy on self-care** – Stigma?
6. **Lack of planning – proactive vs. reactive** – Do you wait when you're sick?
7. **Making change is NOT easy…and that is normal** – Set in your ways? Scared?

Defining Reasons for Self-Care

1. **Short Term Benefits**
    a. Reduced Stress Levels
    b. Increasing Self Worth
    c. Feelings of Belonging
2. **Long Term Benefits**
    a. Better management of disease and chronic illness
    b. Can prevents future physical ailments
    c. Can improve job and life satisfaction
    d. Can improve sleep
    e. Reduces burnout & chronic stress
    f. Overall improvement of life and well-being
    g. Increase energy
3. **Too much stress is just unhealthy**
    a. Stress activates the ***Sympathetic Nervous System***, which sends messages to brain telling us we are in danger and must fight, flee (flight), freeze or fawn
    b. When we are frequently stressed – when stress becomes chronic – we remain alert, and it becomes increasingly difficult to relax
    c. Stress places us at higher risk of depression, anxiety, heart issues and plethora of other health issues
    d. Self-Care activates the ***Parasympathetic Nervous System***, which allows us to relax and counteract long-term stress effects
    e. Self-Care moderates stress responses, reduce inflammation, improve physical and mental health

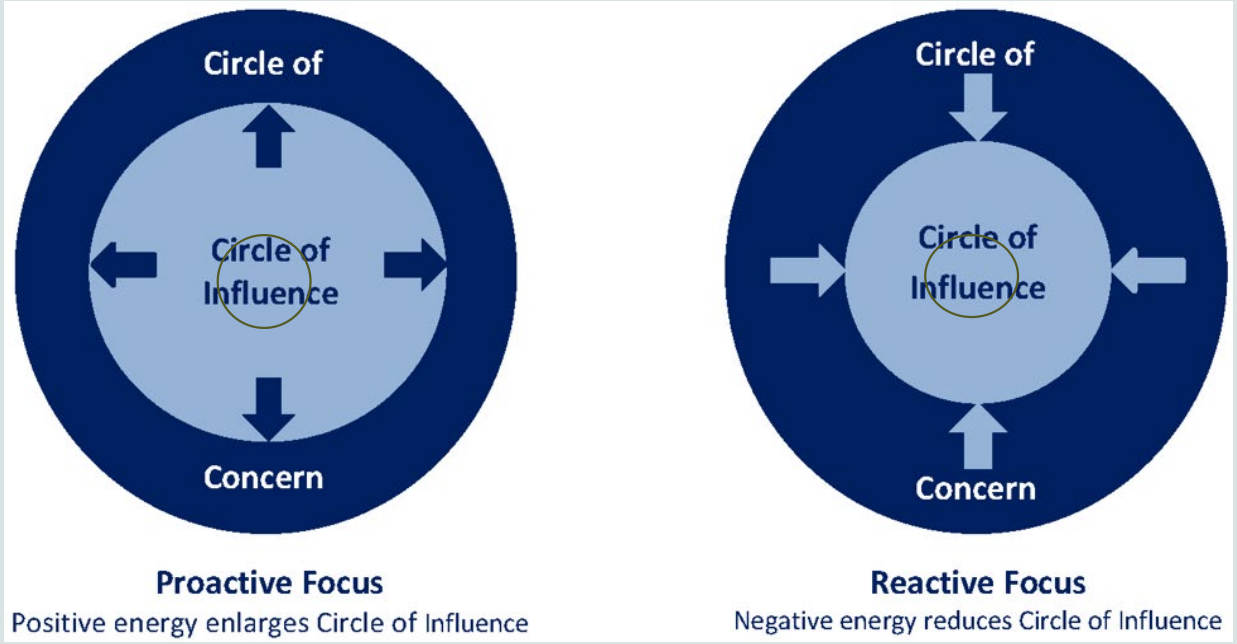
Understanding the Circles W/O Going in Circles I

The **Circle of Concern** includes the wide range of concerns you have in the world, your work and life – including health, family, finances, the economy, national debt etc.

- Everything you include inside the circle is a concern and matters to you and everything outside the circle is of little or no concern to you.

The **Circle of Influence** includes the things that concern you AND that you can do something about.

- For example – you may be worried about the economy or climate change or coronavirus (i.e. circle of concern), however what can you do about it (i.e. your circle of influence)?



The **Circle of Control** – the smallest circle & inside both circles – only covers the things you can actually control…really…that is it.

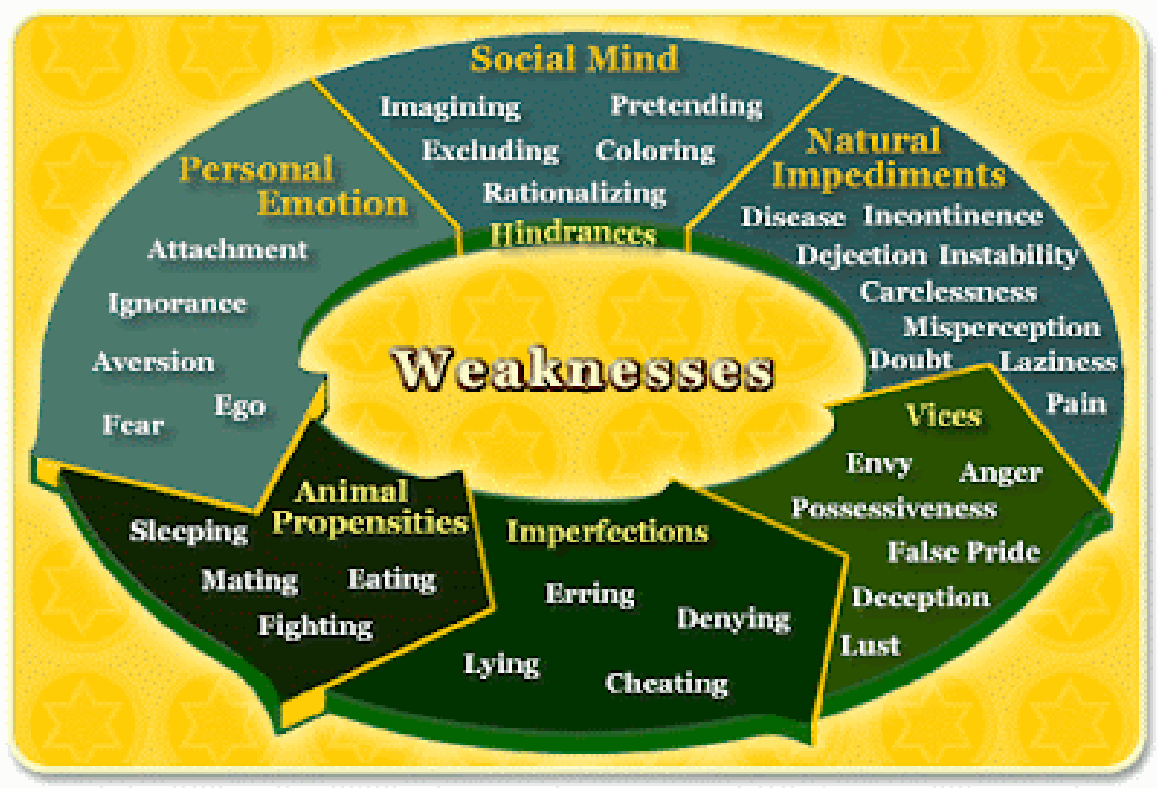
Understanding the Circles W/O Going in Circles II

Proactive people focus their efforts on their Circles of Influence & Control, which is the area over which we have control and we can act upon.

- They work on the things they can do something about: health, children, business, or work.
- When you act on your Circle of Influence you are able to reduce stress levels and increase happiness, because you can initiate and influence change.

Reactive people focus their efforts in the Circle of Concern--things over which they have little or no control: the national debt, terrorism, or the weather.

- Reactive people tend to neglect those issues that are under their control and influence.
- Their focus is elsewhere and their Circle of Influence shrinks.



Positive vs. Negative Self-Care

Ways We Practice Self-Care

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

- Some standards: Yoga, meditation, reiki, massage, jogging, walking, journaling
- Sleeping enough, healthy eating, mindfulness
- Socializing / Connect with others
- Spending time away from children & other people ***under your care***
- Spend time in nature
- Writing/Journaling

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

- Alcohol and other drug use/abuse
- Eating/Drinking/Sleeping too much
- Smartphone/Computer use/abuse
- Staying in bed and/or remaining sedentary*
- Too much time alone/Isolation
- Zoning Out and/or TV/VG binging
- Retail/Spending “Therapy” or any type of financial self-abuse
- Not asking for help (+/- pride)

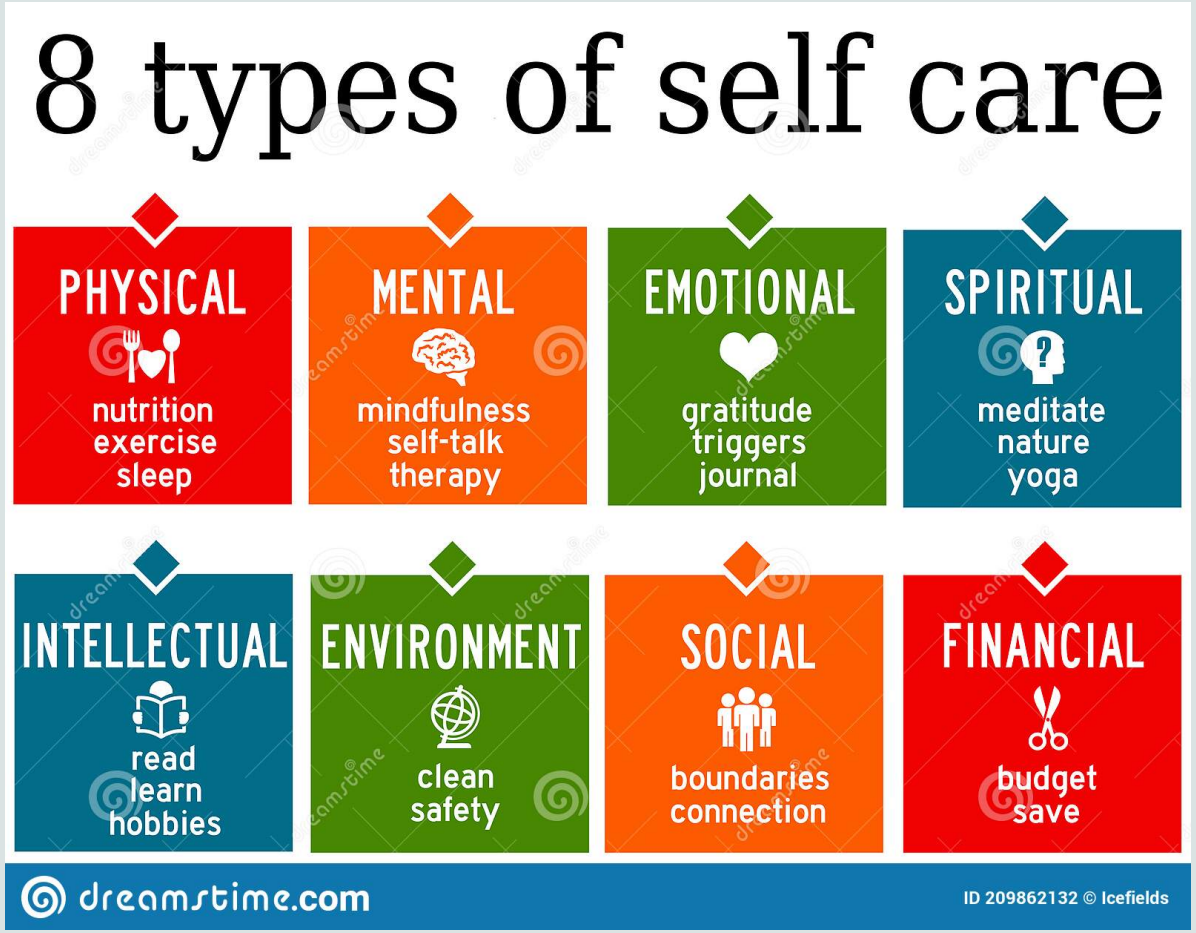
Healthy Self-Care...

IS

- Prioritizing one's physical and mental health
- Adopting healthy lifestyle habits that can be maintained long-term
- Strength and an indicator of self-awareness
- Following treatment plans for existing conditions accordingly
- Part of overall & essential to physical and mental healthcare
- For everyone/anyone of any age
- Unique to each person (one size does NOT fit all)
- Essential to physical and mental health

IS NOT

- A sign of weakness
- Only emotional care
- Only for women
- Excluding singles or childless persons
- Something to keep quiet or experience shame
- The same for everyone
- Selfish
- Self-Indulgent/Childish/Immature



Self-Care Types

Self-Care Types I (3 of 8)

PHYSICAL

- Activities you do that improve the well-being of your physical health
- **Examples:** Taking a walk during lunch breaks, sleeping eight hours a day, staying hydrated, Manage eating habits, etc.

MENTAL

- Managing mental health and – if applicable, managing MH challenges properly
- Self managing MH challenged while going through treatment
- **Examples:** Take psych meds as directed, meet with therapist/prescriber, talk with someone you trust.

INTELLECTUAL

- Any activity the stimulates your mind or your intellect.
- Learning and/or hobbies can keep the brain elastic and adaptable. Problem solving and reasoning can improve.
- **Examples:** Reading a book, solving a puzzle, playing chess, going to a museum

Self-Care Types II (6 of 8)

SPIRITUAL

- Activities that nurtures your spirit and allows you to think bigger than yourself. Spiritual self care does not have to be religious, although for some it is.
- **Examples:** Meditation, yoga, going to a place of worship, be in nature, dedicate time for self-reflection, etc.

EMOTIONAL

- Activities that help you connect, process, and reflect on a full range of emotions.
- Learn to say NO and like it.
- Maintaining healthy boundaries AND connections
- Find things that make you laugh
- **Examples:** Seeing a therapist, writing in a journal, creating art, playing music etc., indulge in comedy

SOCIAL

- Activities that nurtures and deepens the relationships with people in your life.
- Research has shown that different forms of relationships, whether they be romantic, platonic, or familial, can all benefit overall health and well-being.
- **Examples:** Brunch with friends, going on a date, making time / be available to call a loved one regularly, etc.

Self-Care Types III (8 of 8, plus a bonus)

FINANCIAL

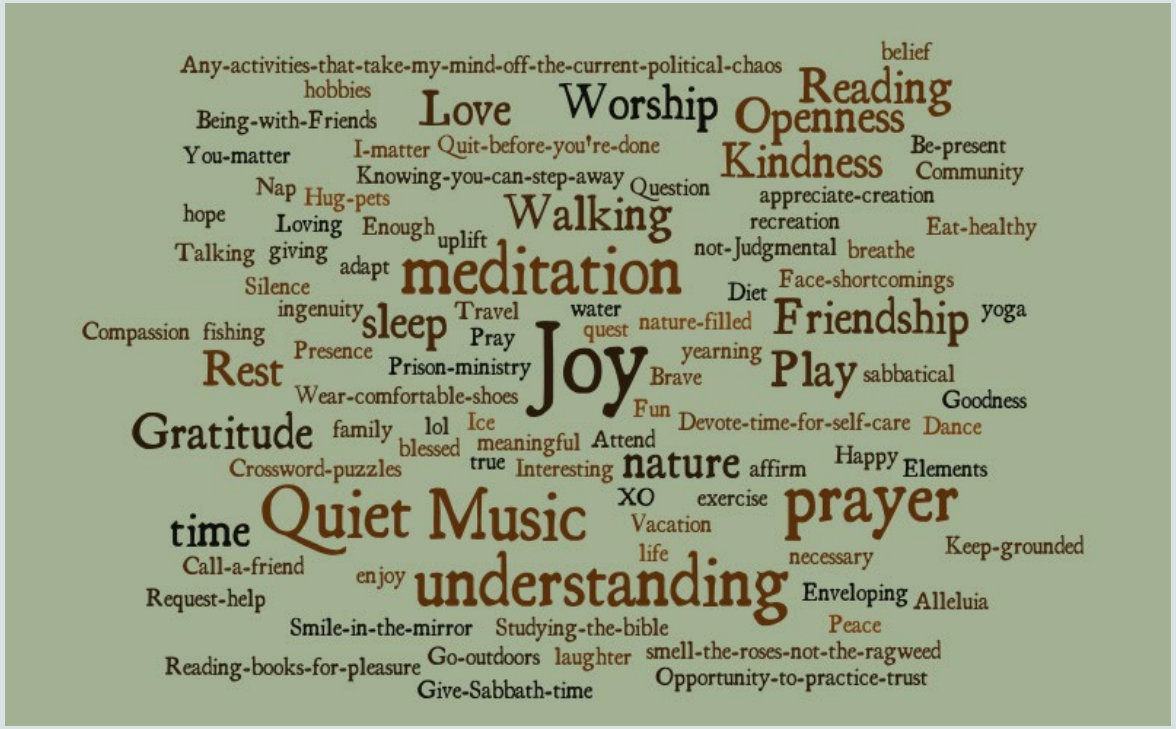
- Pay bills on time, if possible
- Try not to use money to self-soothe. Do NOT recommend retail “therapy.”
- Stay away from “lifestyle porn.”
- **Examples:** Save money, create budget, consult with financial professional/planner and/or app, listen to money podcasts, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Work & home space should be conducive to clear thinking, working and living.
- Take care of your physical spaces
- **Examples:** Declutter and/or Organize, clean your home/room/office, organize your closet, hire an organizer

PRACTICAL *(BONUS)*

- Tasks you complete that fulfill core aspects of your life in order to prevent future stressful situations.
- Time management
- **Examples:** Assess your situation and know when you need to change it (leave or stay put), Cutting yourself off if you foresee negative consequences



Self-Care Planning

Self-Care Planning I – Meaning and Purpose

1. **Develop a workable and practical self-care plan.**
2. **What is a self-care plan?**
    - **A set of daily activities that contribute and improve our internal and external well-being**
    - **A good plan is part of a lifelong journey that is unique to each person**
3. **Overall purposes of having a self-care plan?**
    - **Taking time out of each day to care for ourselves helps us live healthier, happier and more resilient lives**
    - **Nourishes mind, body and soul/spirit**
    - **A good plan…**
        - ***can prevent falling into bad habits***
        - ***equip you with healthy coping skills that help you manage stress and challenging life event***

Self-Care Planning II – Reasons

1. **Improves mental health and well-being**
    - **A set of daily activities that contribute and improve our internal and external well-being**
    - **A good plan is part of a lifelong journey that is unique to each person**
2. **Manages stress and anxiety**
    - **Taking time out of each day to care for ourselves helps us live healthier, happier and more resilient lives**
3. **Prevents illness**
4. **Maximizes productivity**
5. **Enhances personal relationships**

Self-Care Planning III – Key Aspects

1. **Physical**
    - The physical aspect of self-care involves making lifestyle choices that help you stay fit, healthy, and energized.
2. **Mental**
    - This is about taking good care of your thoughts and feelings. Your inner dialog or self-talk play a big role in how you perceive yourself and the rest of the world.
    - Also involves training your mind to stay sharp. A sharp mind makes you more capable of dealing with stress and navigating big life changes.
3. **Emotional**
    - This focuses on bringing awareness to our emotional needs by becoming conscious of our feelings. This awareness allows us to process our feelings in a healthy way — focusing on the positive emotions and managing the negative ones.
    - This helps you respond rather than react to life's challenges. Responding means you're measured and thoughtful when you approach a situation. Reacting, on the other hand, is an immediate emotional response that usually results in a negative outcome.
4. **Professional**
    - Any activity that helps you thrive in the workplace while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Self-Care Planning IV – Creating a Plan

1. **Take a look at your current habits**
   - Observe where you are right now…What do you do or how do you manage your stressors?
   - Take an honest inventory of your coping strategies
2. **Identify your needs**
   - Think about what you value the most in your daily life.
   - Make a list of your physical, mental, emotional and professional needs. A good plan considers all key aspects!
3. **Write down practices that support your needs**
   - Now it's time to decide what self-care activities will help you meet your needs.
   - Write down the self-care practices that you plan to do daily and those you'll only do once in a while.
4. **Fit them into your schedule -** This is the tough part. Implementation. Find pockets of time
5. **Remove barriers -** Begin by reducing and then removing harmful coping habits. Pick the most detrimental one and replace it with a self-care practice instead.

Summary

~ The many benefits of self-care involve better work and social relationships, a reduction in chronic disease risk or symptoms, and an improved quality of life

~ Practicing self-care on a regular basis can bring about both short- and long-term benefits that lead to improved well-being and an improved health status

~ A self-care plan takes time and consistency to work.

~ Keep your plan simple and choose the self-care activities you love. Doing things that bring you joy is the key to sticking to your routine.

~ Your self-care plan can also be as flexible as you need it to be. You'll have your good days and your bad days. Don't be too hard on yourself when things don't go as planned. You can always have a fresh start.

~ Give yourself the kindness you deserve and build your own self-care plan today.

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Thank you

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