

Words about Wellness

UNC DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

Making Self-Care Work For You

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When most people think of self-care, they think of meditation, candles, and spa days. But real self-care is more than treating yourself to a spa day or taking a yearly vacation.

Real self-care means doing things you may not want to do and making choices that make you feel uncomfortable. By changing the way you think about self-care, you can make incremental and meaningful shifts that bring you greater peace, energy, and joy. In doing so, you can experience for yourself what research clearly shows: investments in your well-being can actually enhance all areas of your life.

Here are a few self-care strategies to help you get there:

Re-define self-care: Being told to meditate, take long baths, or exercise are well intentioned, but only you can determine what your mind, body, and spirit need to thrive.

Maybe that's an episode of reality TV, cooking a nutritious meal at the end of the day, or finding a therapist to support you. Or maybe you're someone who needs to mute a text chain or Facebook account that is causing you angst.

To figure out what you need, start by noticing when you feel invigorated and when you feel drained. Look for patterns. What makes you feel good? What makes you feel overwhelmed and anxious? Now begin creating your own understanding of what self-care looks like to you.

Set boundaries: Protecting your limits is a vital part of self-care. You know the importance of taking lunch breaks, vacation, and not answering emails outside of work; but have you ever wondered what would happen if you simply said **NO**? No to another work committee, hosting another baby shower, or the laundry list of things and people that are clawing for your time and attention?

Setting this particular boundary is hard, but if saying yes imposes on your self-care... then you need to reflect on the art of saying NO! By saying no to more responsibilities, you are saying **YES** to yourself. You are also giving yourself time and space to reflect on those opportunities that you want to say yes to.

Ask for help: We are conditioned to believe that asking for help is an indication of weakness. Allow me to dispel this myth. There is great strength and wisdom in recognizing when assistance is needed and seeking it out. This is true for both our personal and professional lives.

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