

# Health tip: Self-care

## Invest in yourself



## What is self-care?

The National Institute of Mental Health defines self-care as taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical and mental health. These acts can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy.<sup>1</sup>

## The 8 key investments to self-care

Below are the 8 “R”s or investments of self-care. Choose one or more that resonate with you for prioritizing your self-care goals:

- 1 Rest** – Sleep is often low on the priority list when we have busy schedules. However, getting adequate sleep may help enhance your current well-being and productivity and protect your future health. Having a sleep schedule, avoiding large meals, nicotine and caffeine, and engaging in relaxing activities before bed may help improve sleep quality.<sup>2</sup>
- 2 Recharge** – Take mental and physical breaks to avoid burnout. Learning to recognize when stress is building is crucial. When this occurs, take time to breathe, go for a walk, and practice mindfulness exercises. You may also benefit from using your time away from work to enhance your well-being and work performance.<sup>3</sup>
- 3 Refuel** – Caring for your physical well-being includes fueling your body adequately. Eating balanced meals and snacks at regular intervals and avoiding energy drainers such as foods and beverages that are highly processed with added sugars may help keep you more energized and efficient throughout the workday.<sup>4</sup>

- 4 Reframe** – The way we view potential stress has a major effect on how we experience it. The physical responses to stress are triggered by both real and perceived stressors. Intentionally restructuring perceived stressors into more positive situations may help lower the stress response. As an example, try viewing a stressful project as a learning opportunity to enhance a new skill set. Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts by reframing them into more positive thoughts.<sup>5</sup>
- 5 Relax** – Scheduling regular time for relaxing activities such as mindfulness, nature walks, deep breathing, exercise, massage, reading or calming hobbies may boost your emotional and psychological well-being.<sup>3</sup>
- 6 Relationships** – Positive social habits can help you build support systems and stay healthier mentally and physically. Carve time for actual phone calls instead of text messages or emails, engage in recreational sports or group exercise, and schedule sit-down meals with friends and family. Create calendar space for healthy social engagements with important relationships in your life.<sup>6</sup>
- 7 Recreation** – Moving more and sitting less may have major health benefits. Regular exercise boosts mood and energy, lowers stress response and may help with managing weight and lowering disease risk. Try moving more naturally and creating more “play” with your exercise – in other words, find something you enjoy doing and schedule it regularly into your weeks.<sup>7</sup>
- 8 Routine** – Select one or more areas of self care that resonate with you and create a successful routine. Plan ahead with achievable goals, ask for support, track your progress and be patient as you adjust to new healthier habits.<sup>8</sup>



Sources:

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