

SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TOO! AND HOW TO DO IT!



PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Often during times of uncertainty or struggle as a parent, we place all of our focus on our children to protect them from the harshness of our current realities. While this is often a good thing to do for our children, we tend to forget to care for ourselves and ensure that our needs are being met. Self-care is incredibly important for parents, as well as for children. Remembering to do it – and how to do it – will help ease some of the stressors that you and your family are currently facing.



WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

- Self-care is simply ensuring that your needs are being met and that you are also being taken care of.
- Self-care can include things such as reading a book, spending time outdoors at your leisure, having a coffee, and simply relaxing. Self-care can also be day to day tasks that ensure our well-being like taking a shower, taking medication, and going to appointments.
- When you as a parent meet your own self-care needs, you will be more able to handle the needs of others and often provide a higher level of focus for those you most care about.
- Self-care is essential for our physical and mental well-being, especially in trying times.

First, identify what forms of self-care work for you

- There are many examples of self-care out in the world, and sometimes it can feel overwhelming.
- Many times, as parents, we do not always have the luxury of time to engage in large self-care tasks.
- Therefore, it is important to acknowledge which self-care aspects you are already doing in your daily life, such as taking medication, hygiene, eating well, etc.
- Followed by looking at some more timely self-care aspects, such as reading a book, taking a class, mediation, etc. and identifying which feel good for you.

NOTE:

Remember that self-care is not something to feel guilty for. In order for us to take care of those around us, it is also important to take care of ourselves. With that in mind, self-care can be as simple as taking one minute to breathe, or as complex as taking a trip. There is no right or wrong way to do self-care.

IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE ENGAGING IN SELF-CARE...

Step 1: Identify the problem

- Often during times of hardship, it is very easy to forget to care for oneself and put all the effort into ensuring those around you are not suffering. Feeling burnt-out is a tell-tale sign of not fulfilling our self-care needs.
- Other signs of not fulfilling our own self-care needs can be harder to spot depending on the circumstances. But things to look for are abnormal levels of stress, agitation, depression and anxieties (very situationally dependent and vary from person to person depending on their coping abilities).

Step 2: Addressing the issue

- Now that you are more aware of your lack of self-care, it is time to address it. This can be accomplished in a near-infinite number of ways and is completely dependent on each individual.
- Some basic ways to help regroup, regroup, and care for oneself is through activities such as art, baking, walks in nature, alone time, spa time, etc.
- It can be incredibly difficult to draw your attention away from caring for those who you love most and who also need care in difficult situations. However, being able to identify and properly address when your own self-care needs are not being fulfilled will benefit those who you care for. You will also be better able to handle their struggles if your needs are met.

Step 3: Maintain your self-care moving forward

- Much like identifying and addressing the issue, maintaining your self-care requires a conscious effort from you. It is important for our own mental and physical health that we ensure our needs are being met and we give our bodies and minds the chance to decompress through a proper self-care regime.
- Allowing ourselves to relax as often as we feel necessary is difficult at first as the needs of those we care most about often trump our own. But over time, it becomes easier to identify and address our own needs should we put forward the conscious effort.

Step 4: Seek Additional outside help

- Should you struggle with any of the previous steps or struggle to meet your own self-care needs, there are resources available in numerous different locations, such as on the Young Caregivers Association website, or organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association.
- Reaching out in times of struggle can be difficult but incredibly beneficial to yourself and those you care most about.

To learn more about how you can help provide support to a young caregiver, visit [YoungCaregivers.ca/KnowledgeCentre](https://www.YoungCaregivers.ca/KnowledgeCentre)