

QUICK TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD MAINTAIN SELF-CARE



PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

While it may be difficult during trying times to prioritize self-care for yourself, it can be even more difficult to convince a child who is struggling to prioritize self-care. Supporting a child in maintaining self-care is incredibly important as it allows the child to alleviate stressors of the mind and body. Self-care allows us to regroup and regroup when we face difficult times.



WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

- Self-care is simply ensuring that your needs are being met and that you are allowing yourself and your child to relax and decompress.
- Self-care can include things such as reading a favourite book, going to the park to play, spending time with loved ones, doing art and so many other things.
- As well as the aspects mentioned above, self-care also includes the little things such as showering, maintaining healthy eating and activities like brushing teeth/hair.
- Encouraging a child to maintain self-care is critical as it will allow the child to develop healthy long-lasting skills that help with coping and ensuring physical and mental health.

Step 1: Identify or assist the child in identifying the problem

- Depending on the age group of the child, the level of awareness of their self-care can vary drastically; older children and teens are more likely to grasp the concept of self-care but are equally as likely to neglect their self-care during times of struggle, stress or difficulty.
- Supporting a child to identify their self-care needs can be difficult but is essential for their well-being.
- Helping a child identify that they are stressed and neglecting their self-care can assist them in developing routines, better their mental and physical health and teach them lifelong coping skills.
- Signs of a child not fulfilling their self-care needs could be things like unkempt hair, lack of normal hygiene, anxious or depressed behaviour, visibly stressed or agitated behaviours and so many other things. Being able to identify these signs will allow you to support the child in moving on to the next step.

Step 2: Addressing the issue

- Although we may be unable to eliminate the source of the stressor, we can assist the child and allow them to relax through their self-care routines.
- The self-care habits that we can support and instill in the child can be used to cope with stressors moving forward in the child's life.
- Helping the child see that they are stressed and not maintaining good hygiene or self-care is the first step, approaching the situation delicately is essential to not upset the individual when they are already overwhelmed or stressed.
- Depending on the age group of the child, helping them pick activities that you already know are enjoyed can be a benefit. For example, if the child loves to create art, those types of artistic activities can be a great source of self-care.

- It can be incredibly difficult to encourage a child who is hyper-focused on the situations that are causing the stress to see that they are not maintaining their self-care. Gentle reminders and encouragement can go a long way towards getting through to them.

Step 3: Helping them maintain their self-care moving forward

- Much like identifying and addressing the issue, maintaining the child's self-care requires a conscious effort from both yourself and the child.
- It is imperative for the child's mental and physical health that their self-care is being met, as this will allow them to decompress, relax and build valuable coping skills.
- Ensuring that the child is meeting their self-care needs is a skill that can benefit them for the entirety of their lives as it will allow them to deal with stressors in a much healthier way.
- Keeping a vigilant eye on the signs of a lack of self-care from the child is one of the most essential and critical aspects of helping a child maintain self-care.

Step 4: Seek additional outside help

- Should you struggle with any of the above steps or in getting through to the child there is always exterior assistance available, such as through programs like Powerhouse.
- Reaching out in times of struggle can be incredibly difficult but can be very beneficial to set up healthy coping and self-care routines.

To learn more about how you can help provide support to a young caregiver, visit YoungCaregivers.ca/KnowledgeCentre