

Four Week Self-Care Challenge



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The term “self-care” has been thrown around a lot in recent years, and it often feels like being offered a band-aid for a severed limb. We aren’t suggesting that a bubble bath will cure all the world’s ills, not by a long shot (though, if you like baths, it might help you feel a little better). We are talking about practical self-care that truly prioritizes your mental health and wellness.

Taking care of yourself doesn’t have to be expensive or take a lot of time. It just means prioritizing yourself and your needs. It means letting go of things/people that drain your time and energy and adding ones that fill you up. This might look like taking a few minutes each day to check in with yourself and see how you are feeling. It might look like setting boundaries between work and home. It could look like jotting down three things you are grateful for before going to bed.

Some self-care activities we recommend:

- **Move your body.** You don’t need to take up marathon running, but carving out time each week to move your body in a way that feels good to you is a great way to take care of yourself and give yourself a little boost of mental wellness. It could be stretching or yoga, walking around your neighborhood, taking a hike, lifting weights, or just dancing around your kitchen for a few minutes.
- **Me time.** Nope, we don’t mean a spa day or laying on the couch eating bonbons (though, if that is practical for you and brings you joy, do it). Find activities that make you happy – that you do just for the pure enjoyment of doing them. This might mean taking up a new hobby or resuming an old one. Or it might look like taking time each day to go on a walk or practice meditation. The important thing is that you consciously prioritize activities that help you recharge your emotional batteries.
- **Say no.** What you say no to is just as important as what you say yes to. If it drains your time, energy, or joy to do (and isn’t a necessity like going to the dentist or showing up for work), just say no. It feels difficult at first, but once you start saying no to things that drain your bucket, you’ll find that it gets easier. By saying no to something, you allow more space in your life for the people and activities that fill your bucket with joy.
- **Start a to-done list.** It is easy to let your to do list run you down. It seems to grow and grow with no end in sight. To counter that, we recommend taking a few moments before bed to write a daily “to-done” list where you record everything you finished or worked on that day. Record everything– big or small. From “ate lunch,” to “wrote 3 paragraphs of my Master’s Thesis.” Seeing a concrete recognition of all that you do in a day will provide you with a sense of accomplishment that your to do list won’t!
- **Affirm yourself.** Positive affirmations can help you move from focusing on your perceived inadequacies and failures to focusing on your strengths and abilities. Repeating your affirmations regularly will help your brain begin to take them as fact. Positive affirmations can boost your confidence and motivation. Creating your own affirmations (rather than using ones written by someone else) helps them to stick. We recommend spending 3-5 minutes a day, repeating your affirmations to yourself (about 10 times each affirmation).
- **Sleep.** Really. An increase in depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions has been linked to a lack of sleep. Sleep plays a significant role in brain health and, in addition to emotional and mental health, it facilitates better thinking, learning and memory. Try setting yourself a bedtime that allows you to get 8 hours of sleep (or as close to it as possible). It may mean saying no to things (see point 1) or prioritizing your rest over other tasks.
- **Single-tasking.** When was the last time you closed all the tabs except for one on your mental browser? Focusing on one task at a time can decrease your stress levels. It likely won’t be possible to single-task while your workday is in full swing, but we encourage you to try to single-task whenever possible. Single-tasking lowers your stress and helps you get tasks done in less time and with greater accuracy.

Take the self-care challenge for four weeks to see if you notice a difference in how you feel mentally, emotionally, and physically. Perhaps extend the challenge and continue to make YOU a priority!

-The 4 Week Self-Care Challenge-

Week 1

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<p>Movement: Select at least 2 days this week to move your body (for at least 20 min) in a way that feels good to you. Note what you did and how you felt before and after.</p>							
<p>Me time: Try something new this week (e.g., learning a new skill or hobby, trying a food you've never had). What will you try?</p>							
<p>Say no: What are some things that are draining your bucket that you can let go of this week?</p>							
<p>To-done: What is something (not work-related) you've been wanting to do but have been putting off? Write a goal to accomplish it.</p>							
<p>Affirmations: Create a list of affirmations to repeat to yourself daily</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I love myself for who I am. ● I grow in strength with every forward step I take. ● I am capable and strong. ● I live in the present and am confident of the future. 							
<p>Create your own affirmations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● ● ● 						

-The 4 Week Self-Care Challenge-

Week 1

You've reached the end of your first week! Congratulations! Please take a moment to 1) pat yourself on the back for taking such good care of yourself and 2) reflect on how this week went and look toward the next week.

<p>What brought you joy this week? Take a moment to relive the experience by writing about it in detail.</p>	
<p>What brought you down or drained your energy this week? How might you deal with a similar situation in the future?</p>	
<p>What activities and/or people made you feel your best this week?</p>	
<p>How do you feel right now?</p>	
<p>What goals or intentions do you want to set going into next week?</p>	

-The 4 Week Self-Care Challenge-

Week 2

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<p>Movement: Select at least 2 days this week to move your body (for at least 20 min) in a way that feels good to you. Note what you did and how you felt before and after.</p>							
<p>Me time: Try something new this week (e.g., learning a new skill or hobby, trying a food you've never had). What will you try?</p>							
<p>Say no: What are some things that are draining your bucket that you can let go of this week?</p>							
<p>To-done: What is something (not work-related) you've been wanting to do but have been putting off? Write a goal to accomplish it.</p>							
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-The 4 Week Self-Care Challenge-

Week 2

You've reached the end of your second week! Congratulations! Please take a moment to 1) pat yourself on the back for getting to the halfway mark AND for taking such good care of yourself, and 2) reflect on how this week went and look toward the following week.

What are some positives in your life right now?	
Did anything (big or small) not go your way this week? If so, what did you learn from the experience?	
What activities or people (or both!) made you feel your best this week?	
How do you feel right now?	
What goals or intentions do you want to set going into next week?	

-The 4 Week Self-Care Challenge-

Week 3

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<p>Movement: Select at least 2 days this week to move your body (for at least 20 min) in a way that feels good to you. Note what you did and how you felt before and after.</p>							
<p>Me time: Try something new this week (e.g., learning a new skill or hobby, trying a food you've never had). What will you try?</p>							
<p>Say no: What are some things that are draining your bucket that you can let go of this week?</p>							
<p>To-done: What is something (not work-related) you've been wanting to do but have been putting off? Write a goal to accomplish it.</p>							
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Week 3

You've reached the end of your third week! Congratulations! Please take a moment to 1) pat yourself on the back for taking such good care of yourself and 2) reflect on how this week went and look toward the following week.

<p>What do you love about yourself? <i>(if this question is difficult for you, try asking friends and family what they love about you and list those things here. Then make an effort to internalize and feel all that goodness about yourself)</i></p>	
<p>What scares you? How is that fear holding you back?</p>	
<p>What do you feel thankful for this week? List 3-4 things, big or small.</p>	
<p>How do you feel right now?</p>	
<p>What goals or intentions do you want to set going into next week?</p>	

-The 4 Week Self-Care Challenge-

Week 4

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<p>Movement: Select at least 2 days this week to move your body (for at least 20 min) in a way that feels good to you. Note what you did and how you felt before and after.</p>							
<p>Me time: Try something new this week (e.g., learning a new skill or hobby, trying a food you've never had). What will you try?</p>							
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Week 4

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE CHALLENGE!

We hope you feel energized and renewed and have started to establish some healthy self-care routines for yourself. Please take a moment to reflect on the last four weeks.

What made you the happiest over the past four weeks? When did you feel the most at peace or joyful?	
What was the most challenging thing to do over the last four weeks? What did you learn from it? How might you deal with this difficulty going forward?	
What changes did you make during the challenge that you plan to keep as you move forward?	
Generally speaking, how did you feel when you started the challenge? How do you feel now? What, if anything, changed?	
What goals or intentions do you want to set going into next week?	