



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS MONTH

#EachMindMatters

Making time to focus on your well-being isn't always easy. Self-care isn't about being selfish or getting a reward -- it is a critical part of maintaining our well-being.

As the concept of self-care has gained traction in popular culture, it is often presented as “treating yourself” or a way to blow off steam when life becomes too much. But real self-care is about building habits that support our health and well-being. As author Brianna Wiest says: “Self-care should not be something we resort to because we are so absolutely exhausted that we need some reprieve from our own relentless internal pressure. True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don't need to regularly escape from.”

Instead of being a single event we indulge in when we're already feeling burned out, real self-care is a thoughtful practice that builds well-being over time. For folks who like a more structured approach, or people who are experiencing mental health challenges or those living with chronic health conditions, a more comprehensive self-care planning approach may be helpful. In this case, you might want to try [Wellness Recovery Action Planning](#), developed by Dr. Mary Ellen Copeland.

Maintaining your wellbeing through regular self-care prevents burnout, reduces the negative effects of stress, and helps you refocus – and it doesn't have to cost a thing. This week, try one of these tips to build your self-care practice and express your wellbeing:

- Practice mindfulness. A good place to start is to consciously shift your awareness to the smallest moments of joy we experience. Research has found that small moments of positivity, the little things that make us happy throughout the day, can accumulate over time. Try taking a moment at the end or beginning of every day to reflect on a situation or small moment that brought you a little joy or engaged your senses.
- Start a garden. Mindfully tending plants or gardening outdoors can have a positive effect on mental well-being. Planting flowers can leave a beautiful visual reminder of that connection and message of hope. Tending plants and pulling weeds are great ways to get outside and support your mental and physical health.
- Try the Power of “No.” Remember that self-care isn't always adding something to your life but subtracting something can be powerful too. Lessen your to-do list by letting go of an expectation of yourself or turn down an invitation that feels draining. Learning to say “no thanks” can be a powerful self-care tool.

Find these resources and more tips on self-care in the [Each Mind Matters May Activation Kit](#) and in these Each Mind Matters infographics: [Steps to Self-Care](#) and [Tips for Self-Care During COVID-19](#) (now available in [California's threshold languages](#)).

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Stay tuned for next week's topic: "Each Mind Matters: Express Encouragement"