

SELF-CARE PRACTICES TO IMPROVE WELL-BEING



Well-being is no longer just about nutrition and exercise. People are beginning to understand that well-being is also made up of mental and emotional aspects of self. In times of change there may be added stress which can be taxing on the physical body and mental strength. It is beneficial to realize when you need to refill or recharge yourself before being depleted, because once in a depleted state it is harder to mentally recover and remain motivated to take good care of ourselves.

Below are self-care tips and tools that you can practice to improve your well-being.

GRATITUDE, JOURNALING, VISUALIZING

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful and the readiness to show appreciation and to return kindness. Expressing gratitude in any form (verbal, silent, or written) is a value-add practice and has been shown to help people feel more positive emotions, improve their health and build strong relationships. It empowers you to attract more of what you want in your life and keeps your mind focused on the positive rather than the negative. Here are a few ways you could express gratitude:

- » Say a kind word - Say thank you or a few kind words to others.
- » Call to say hello - Check in on a loved one to simply say hello and see how they are.
- » Write a letter - Express your gratitude for somebody in a letter or email to them.
- » Devote time each day for gratitude - While getting ready in the morning, during meals with family, or as you are going to bed, commit time every day to practice gratitude.
- » Express gratitude with art - For those that are artistic, you could create a gratitude board or collage with images of people, places or things you most appreciate.

Write down your free flow thoughts. *Journaling* is a form of self-expression that allows you to release emotions and thoughts in a healthy, constructive way. Often times just the act of putting words on paper can be very cathartic to our mindset. Journaling can help you clear your head and make important connections between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Journaling has been found to:

- » Boost your mood.
- » Enhance your sense of well-being.
- » Improve your working memory.
- » Allow your creativity to flourish.

Visualization is a mental technique that uses the imagination, mental images, and the power of the mind and thoughts. You can use visualization techniques when journaling by picturing in your mind these thoughts or emotions literally flying away from your body or swimming in the sea, etc. It is common for people to perform visualization paired with breathing exercises. As you breathe in slowly through your nose, visualize positive energy

filling your body; then as you slowly blow that breath out through your mouth, visualize any negative energy or feelings being blown away from you. Find what works best for you and repeat the same practice regularly. It will eventually become so familiar that you can practice it anywhere.

REST AND TIME IN NATURE

Rest is necessary and giving your body proper sleep is a must for optimal physical and mental performance. Be mindful of the ideal sleep patterns for your body and follow them. Being in nature is very grounding for the body and its physiological systems. It has been found to reduce anger, fear, and stress as well as increase pleasant feelings. Putting your feet on the ground, in the sand, or in the water can help to re-establish and maintain center as well as calm the nervous system. Make it a habit to get outside daily if possible and even bring nature indoors with plants.

BE CAREFUL OF CONSUMPTION

It's not just what we put in the body but what we put in the mind that affects mindset. Limit the amount and the types of social media scrolling, news, and television shows you allow into your awareness. By removing negative noise you create more space for new information and thoughts to arise.

MORNING / NIGHT RITUALS

Positive rituals can give you something to look forward to each day. At the beginning or end of your day, what will bring you the most joy or sense of fulfillment? This can be a question to ask yourself daily, or it can be something that you plan out and set to accomplish each day. For example, if you know that yoga or a walk brings you joy, plan for it the next day and stick to your commitment to yourself. If making a smoothie or your favorite tea/coffee brings you joy, be sure to do it first thing in the morning.

BREAK A PATTERN

Choose a day or two per week where you unplug from what keeps you stuck. For example, is there a certain reaction you have to a loved one's behavior that you wish would be different? Do you find that watching the news make you feel down or anxious? Is social media a big distraction and time zap in your life? There are many distractions in life that keep us from moving forward and progressing toward our goals. Take a step back a few times a week to see what you want to change and then practice changing it. Be sure to write it down so you can be clear with what pattern you are breaking, how you're going about it and the results. You will look back weeks later and be amazed at your growth.

IT'S NOT SELFISH, IT'S SELF-LOVE

Only you know your inner landscape, and being honest with yourself about your needs requires discipline and practice. It is honoring yourself. Some people may see taking time for you first as a selfish act, but that's just not true. It's an act of self-love when you realize that you need to fill yourself up before forging ahead. Rather than continue to run on empty, you can take time to fill yourself up before attempting to serve others. Serving from a state of depletion leads to negative attitudes, mood swings, and a more reactive state. When you take time for you, to do what fills you up and energizes your psyche, you can serve from a place of fulfillment.