

# DOMAINS OF MINDFUL SELF-CARE

Research shows that daily self-care practices can enhance physiological stability and support emotional regulation, which in turns helps us cope with periods of heightened stress. The list below, adapted from the Mindful Self-Care Scale created by Catherine P. Cook-Cottone and published in her book, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, outlines the 11 Domains of Mindful Self-Care. Take a look and jot down a few ways that you or your patients can practice self-care this week.



## 1 GENERAL ITEMS

There is no one single self-care strategy that alone can help you or your patient manifest well-being. Furthermore, for some individuals, one beloved hobby or leisure pursuit can be more effective than working to engage in a variety of self-care strategies (Norcross & Guy, 2007). Some examples of General Items might include planning self-care or exploring new ways to bring self-care into your life - including reading this article!

## 2 NUTRITION/HYDRATION

Nutrition and hydration are critical aspects of self-care. A healthy body responds to the unavoidable stress in life better than an unhealthy body. Fuel your body with at least 6-8 glasses of water per day, a variety of nutritious foods, and when possible, avoid skipping meals.



## 3 EXERCISE

Exercise reduces stress by releasing endorphins into the bloodstream, decreasing muscle tension and increasing alpha-wave activity; improves strength and flexibility; lessens fatigue; increases resting metabolism; rids your body of toxins; improves blood flow to the brain; and reduces risk for those with stress-related medical conditions.



## 4 SELF-SOOTHING

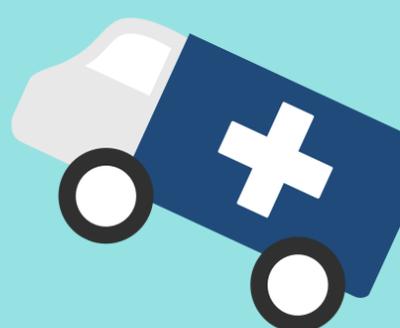
Self-soothing is a positive, healthy response to feeling stress, distress, or an intense emotional reaction. Self-soothing includes relaxation techniques, deep breathing, and pursuit of stimuli or activities that are calming and relaxing. Take a moment to engage in some of these self-soothing techniques:

- Physical relaxation activities such as going for a walk, yoga, or taking a bath
- Creative relaxation activities such as painting, writing, playing an instrument, or singing
- Tactile or touch-based experiences, like petting an animal, cuddling a soft blanket, or floating in a pool



## 5 SELF-AWARENESS/MINDFULNESS

Self-awareness and mindfulness are fundamental and unique features of mindful self-care. These self-care practices include formal and informal mindful and yogic practices (e.g., mindful awareness, yoga practice, and meditation). One way to incorporate this self-care domain into your life is to take time each day to acknowledge things for which you are grateful.



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## REST

The rest domain of self-care includes getting enough sleep, taking restful breaks from current activity, and planning time to rest and restore into your schedule. Start by taking a break from electronics, which is relevant to nearly everyone.



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## RELATIONSHIPS

Supportive relationships enhance well-being. In this unprecedented period of social isolation, it can be difficult to connect with people who nurture you. Take time to identify those who you feel sustain and support you, and plan time to connect with them. This may take the form of text, email, or video chat, but the self-care benefit of this interaction remains - even if it is from a safe distance.



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## PHYSICAL AND MEDICAL

The physical and medical domain of self-care refers to maintenance of medical and dental care, practicing daily hygiene, adherence to medical advice (e.g., taking prescribed medicines or vitamins and brushing teeth), and avoiding substance abuse.



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## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Most approaches to self-care focus on changing the behaviors of the individual, but it is important not to overlook addressing environmental factors as well. These are micro-stressors that can aggregate, chipping away at resiliency and the ability to cope. Some self-care responses to environmental factors may include:

- Maintaining a manageable schedule
- Avoiding taking on too many requests or demands
- Creating/maintaining a comfortable and pleasing living environment
- Wearing suitable clothing for the weather (ie, carrying an umbrella in the rain, or keeping a sweater in a chilly office)



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## SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion entails “treating oneself with kindness, recognizing one's shared humanity, and being mindful when considering negative aspects of oneself” (Neff, 2011, p. 1). You can practice self-compassion by engaging in supportive and comforting self-talk (e.g., "My effort is valuable and meaningful"), giving yourself permission to feel your feelings, and remembering that failure and challenge are part of the human experience.



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## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Spirituality involves inspiration from something greater than yourself, and can be sourced from a sense of mission, purpose, and value as well as from religion. Volunteering for a cause you care about or spending time in a spiritual place such as a church, meditation room, or nature can all help to cultivate your own spiritual practice.



Adapted from *Mindfulness and Yoga for Regulation: A primer for Mental Health Professionals*

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