

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A Monthly Newsletter from Atlantic Behavioral Health

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Self-Care: A Practical Investment in Your Health



Self-care is sometimes mistaken for being selfish - a spa day, a quiet afternoon or an occasional break from a busy schedule. While those things can certainly be part of self-care, the concept is much broader. True self-care means taking intentional steps to protect and improve your physical, emotional and mental well-being.

For many people, however, self-care is one of the first things to disappear when life becomes demanding. Work, family responsibilities, caregiving, health concerns and everyday obligations can leave little time for yourself. Over time, consistently putting our own needs last can contribute to stress, exhaustion and reduced quality of life.

The good news is that self-care doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. Small, consistent choices can make a meaningful difference.

Start With the Basics

Some of the most effective forms of self-care are also the simplest:

- Getting adequate sleep
- Eating nutritious foods
- Getting regular, physical activity
- Keeping up with routine medical care



Sleep Hygiene

Sleep is particularly important. A regular sleep schedule and a relaxing bedtime routine can help support mood, concentration, immune function and cardiovascular health. Keeping the room dark and slightly cooler can help slow your heart rate and respiration and finishing dinner and snacks 2.5 hours before bedtime can help your body ease into sleep.

Nutrition

Eating nutritious food every four to five hours is the fuel your body needs to maintain stable blood sugars and give you the energy to do the work that you love and enjoy your family, friends and hobbies. When we are distracted, it is easy to forget to eat, which can make it harder to tolerate stress, think logically and be your best self.

Physical Activity

Many people associate physical activity with a rigorous routine of going to the gym. The gym can certainly be helpful, but a rigorous schedule can be difficult to maintain and lead to discouragement. Something as simple as a 30-minute daily walk can benefit both physical and emotional well-being.

Healthcare

Prioritizing time for routine checkups, recommended screenings, dental care and taking prescribed medications as directed are ways of caring for yourself before a health problem becomes more serious.

Make Room for Mental and Emotional Health

Self-care isn't only about the body. Emotional health deserves attention as well.

Stress is a normal part of life, but chronic stress can take a toll. Making time to decompress can help. Deep breathing, meditation, journaling, listening to music, spending time outdoors or simply sitting quietly for a few minutes can provide an opportunity to reset. It is also important to recognize when you need additional support. Talking with a trusted friend, family member, therapist or healthcare professional isn't a sign of weakness. Seeking help is itself an important form of self-care.

Set Healthy Boundaries

Learning to say "no" can be difficult, particularly for people who are accustomed to taking care of everyone else. Yet constantly saying yes can leave us overwhelmed and depleted.

Healthy boundaries help protect time and energy. This might mean declining unnecessary commitments, limiting interruptions during personal time or communicating clearly about what you can and cannot reasonably take on.

Setting boundaries doesn't mean you don't care about other people. It means recognizing that your own well-being matters, too.

Don't Forget Enjoyment

Self-care shouldn't become just another task on an already busy to-do list. Instead, be available for activities that bring you genuine joy and help you recharge. Read a book, tend a garden, cook a favorite meal, listen to music, spend time with a pet, enjoy a hobby, watch a favorite movie or take a walk in a place you love.

Small moments of pleasure can have a big impact on your overall well-being.

Practice Self-Care Without Guilt

One of the biggest obstacles to self-care is the belief that taking time for yourself is selfish. It isn't.

You cannot always control how busy life becomes, but you can make choices that help preserve your health and resilience. Caring for yourself can make it easier to meet your responsibilities, maintain relationships, manage stress and respond to challenges.

The goal isn't perfection. Some days, self-care may mean exercising for 30 minutes and preparing a healthy meal. On another day, it may simply mean getting enough sleep or taking your medication.

Small Steps Add Up

Self-care doesn't require a complete lifestyle transformation. Start with one manageable change.

- Go to bed 30 minutes earlier.
- Take a short walk. Drink more water.
- Schedule a medical appointment you've been postponing.
- Turn off your phone for a few minutes.
- Call someone you care about.
- Give yourself permission to rest.

Ultimately, self-care is not about escaping life's responsibilities. It is about recognizing that your health is one of those responsibilities. By making your physical, emotional and mental well-being a regular priority, you are investing in your ability to live a healthier, more balanced and productive life.

If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else:

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988

The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQIA+ Youth: 1-866-488-7386

Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 and Press 1

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) 24/7 Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

Dial 211: 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs and in times of crisis

ADDICTION RESOURCES

SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and [Spanish](#))

[Also visit the online treatment locator. Call: 1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](#)

Alcoholics Anonymous - [Northern New Jersey AA - Meeting Finder \(nnjaa.org\)](#)

Narcotics Anonymous - [NA Meetings in NJ \(narcoticsanonymousnj.org\)](#)

NJ Self Help Clearinghouse 800-367-6274 - [FIND A GROUP | NJSHGCH \(njgroups.org\)](#)

Atlantic Behavioral Health

ACCESS Center:

888-247-1400

**Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention Services
24/7 Hotlines:**

Atlantic Health Chilton Medical Center: 973-831-507

Atlantic Health Hackettstown Medical Center: 908-454-5141

Atlantic Health Morristown Medical Center: 973-540-0100

Atlantic Health Overlook Medical Center: 908-522-3586

Atlantic Health Newton Medical Center: 973-383-0973

Website: www.atlantichealth.org