

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE TOOLKIT



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Welcome to the Soar with Self-Care Toolkit!

This collection of practical ideas and positive strategies is designed to support you on your self-care journey. You can use this toolkit by yourself or share it with colleagues, friends, and family to explore self-care together. By trying an assortment of strategies—and encouraging each other along the way—you and your community can mindfully steer away from a life on auto-pilot and even avoid severe burnout.

The key to self-care and improving your overall sense of wellbeing has three components:

1. Refueling yourself to feel revitalized
2. Having a structure in place to support your wellbeing
3. Establishing boundaries to commit to and protect that time for yourself

The simple yet powerful exercises throughout these pages can help you commit to these self-care components by filling up your mental and emotional tank. Self-care isn't about simply checking off a box; it's about regularly replenishing yourself. This means one person's self-care journey will look different than another person's. We encourage you to make self-care your own.

While not a substitute for a therapist or medical treatment, these self-care tools can jump-start your self-care practice. You can set aside 15 minutes a day, devote one day a week, or dip into your toolkit whenever you're feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed. Move at your own pace.

The toolkit's motivational quotes, insightful reflections, and gentle suggestions give you the gift of a calm mind, a peaceful heart, and a strong body. Make yourself a priority with:

- A holistic approach to self-care that encompasses emotional health, being kind to your body, nurturing your mind, and enhancing your spirit.
- Bite-sized self-care, such as taking a 5-minute walk or allowing yourself a burst of uncontrolled laughter. You don't need a huge time commitment to begin a journey of self-love.
- Proven, research-based techniques, such as taking a moment for gratitude or mindfulness. Exercises rooted in evidence-based therapy methods help to establish good habits.
- Expert guidance and resources. Don't just take our word for it—we drive you right to specialists and authorities whose passion is to help people stay centered.
- Our hope is that, as you move through this toolkit, you'll receive the self-care lessons and tips with courage and self-compassion. This can be your first step on an invigorating path of renewal.
- Here's to your unique self-care journey!

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE: Growth Mindset



“ Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass.... It’s about learning to dance in the rain.” —Vivian Greene

What Is Growth Mindset?

Psychologist Carol Dweck has described two tendencies by which people tend to view themselves and their capacities. She refers to one as a fixed mindset and the other as a growth mindset. In a fixed mindset, we see ourselves as having set strengths and weaknesses that change little over time. In a growth mindset, we see ourselves as capable of significant change and improvement through consistent effort and engagement with life challenges.

Her research shows that those who live by a growth mindset are more likely to put in the effort that results in greater success and achievement. If we hope to grow in our practice of self-care and wellness, a growth mindset is essential.



TRY IT OUT:

Try this exercise from PositivePsychology.com: [Adopt-A-Growth-Mindset.pdf \(positivepsychology.com\)](https://www.positivepsychology.com/adopt-a-growth-mindset/) Replace fixed mindset thinking about self-care with growth mindset thinking.

| Replace this fixed mindset thinking with . . . | Growth mindset thinking |
|--|---|
| Avoid challenge | Embrace challenge |
| Be defensive and give up easily | Persist despite setbacks |
| Effort is worthless and fruitless | Effort is the path to mastery |
| Ignore all negative feedback | Learn from all criticism |
| I hate exercise and I’m no good at sports | I can find an activity I can enjoy |
| I’m too impatient to relax or meditate | |
| I’m afraid of saying “no” or setting limits | |
| Add your own below | Create a growth mindset turnaround |
| | |
| | |

Learn more about growth mindset:

[Growth mindset resources — articles, films and posts about Dweck’s work \(growthmindsetinstitute.org\)](https://www.growthmindsetinstitute.org/)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Emotional Intelligence



“ Anyone can be angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy.” —*Aristotle*

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to monitor and regulate one’s own and others’ emotions and to use emotions to facilitate one’s thoughts and actions (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). It is composed of four attributes: (1) self-management, (2) self-awareness, (3) social awareness, and (4) relationship management.

Emotional intelligence has been linked to positive outcomes, including

Better physical and mental health

Better social relationships

Improved academic and workplace success



TRY IT OUT:

Opposite Action: Doing the behavior opposite to the emotion you are feeling will help to change the emotion. For example, if you are feeling sad, you may want to withdraw from friends. The opposite would be visiting and communicating with friends.

Check the Facts: Strong emotions can lead us to “make mountains out of molehills” with overblown consequences. Ask yourself the following: (1) What triggered my emotion? (2) What interpretations or assumptions am I making about the event? (3) Does my emotion and its intensity match the *facts* of the situation? Or does it just match my assumptions of the situation?

Promote the Positive: Practice doing small positive activities every day, and make a point of acknowledging the good parts of an experience. Adding positive experiences builds over time and can have a large impact on your life satisfaction.

Learn more about emotional intelligence: [Emotional Intelligence Toolkit — HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org/emotional-intelligence-toolkit)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Learned Optimism



“ The optimist sees the rose and not its thorns. The pessimist stares at the thorns, oblivious to the rose.”

—Khalil Gibran

What Is Optimism?

Optimism is an attitude that reflects the degree to which people hold overall favorable expectations for their future. Higher levels of optimism have been found to support better feelings of wellbeing in difficult times. Optimists are more likely to cope actively with challenges rather than try to avoid problems. Optimists tend to take better care of their health and have greater social, academic, and career success. They also tend to have more successful relationships.

Optimism is also an outlook that can be nurtured and developed, and as with all worthwhile skills, optimism requires practice!

Explanatory Style

Research by Martin Seligman, Ph.D., has revealed that the way we explain successes and adversities has a major impact on our level of optimism or pessimism.

Example: Passed over for a promotion

EXPLANATORY STYLE: OPTIMISTIC

External: The other person was a super strong candidate and due for a promotion.

Temporary: I'll have another opportunity soon.

Specific: I missed out on this one, but I've had many successes over the years.

EXPLANATORY STYLE: PESSIMISTIC

Personal: I'm a failure. I just can't win.

Permanent: I'll never get ahead.

Pervasive: I get overlooked everywhere I work.

While the optimistic explanatory style holds open the hope of future success, the pessimistic style promotes feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

TRY IT OUT:

Think about a challenging situation in your life. Develop an explanation using the optimistic style and notice how it affects your feelings about yourself, your motivation, and the challenge itself.

Learn more about learned optimism:

[Learned Optimism: Is Martin Seligman's Glass Half Full? \(positivepsychology.com\)](https://www.positivepsychology.com)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Social Engagement and Support



“But over and over, over these 75 years, our study has shown that the people who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships, with family, with friends, with community.” —Dr. Robert Waldinger, Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development

Strong social connections have been associated with

- 50% increased chance of longevity,
- A stronger immune system and a faster recovery from disease,
- Lower levels of depression and anxiety,
- Higher self-esteem,
- Greater empathy toward others,
- Increased trust and cooperation, and
- A positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

The benefits of social engagement include feeling more connected to people and oneself.

This can be nurtured by

- Giving, sharing, supporting, and doing acts of kindness for others;
- Practicing self-care—if you are happy within, you are more likely to feel connected and reach out to others; and
- Asking for help—others are willing to help but assume we do not need any when we do not ask.



TRY IT OUT:

- Have a conversation with family members and friends—face to face, if possible—without electronic distractions. Share your genuine thoughts and feelings and be a good listener.
- Plan a shared fun activity with family or friends, such as a lunch date or bike ride.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as a book club, hiking, painting, or wood carving.
- Volunteer at a school, library, hospital, or place of worship.

Learn more about social engagement: Over nearly 80 years, Harvard study has been showing [how to live a healthy and happy life](#) – Harvard Gazette

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE: Boundaries in Relationships



“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.”
—Brené Brown

“Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships. A person who always keeps others at a distance (whether emotionally, physically, or otherwise) is said to have rigid boundaries. Alternatively, someone who tends to get too involved with others has porous boundaries.” [Therapist Aid, What are Personal Boundaries, 2016](#)

Tips for Setting Healthy Boundaries

- Be clear, calm, firm, respectful, and as brief as possible.
- Remind yourself that you have a right to self-care.
- Spend time with people who respect your boundaries. Eliminate toxic people from your life.

| BOUNDARIES CAN HELP US . . . | WE MAY NEED TO WORK THROUGH . . . |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Practice self-care and self-respect | Fear of rejection and abandonment |
| Communicate needs in a relationship | Fear of confrontation |
| Make time and space for positive interactions | Discomfort saying “no” |
| Set effective limits | Safety concerns |

TRY IT OUT:

The next time you’re not feeling up to an activity with a friend, try saying . . .

1. I have another commitment.
2. I wish I were able to.
3. I’m afraid I can’t.
4. I don’t have the bandwidth for that right now.
5. I’m honored you asked me, but I simply can’t.
6. Thanks for thinking of me.

Learn more about setting boundaries:

[How to Set Healthy Boundaries: 10 Examples + PDF Worksheets \(positivepsychology.com\)](#)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Mindfulness and Self-Care



“ Every time we become aware of a thought, as opposed to being lost in a thought, we experience that opening of the mind. ” —Joseph Goldstein

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness has been defined as “awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” (by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts). Another description from the Headspace app compares mindfulness to quietly watching traffic going by from the side of the road, rather than being stuck in the middle of the road dodging the oncoming vehicles.

The practice of mindfulness gives us the ability to be aware of what is going on within ourselves and around us in the present, without getting swept up in negative judgments, emotional upheaval, and negative moods. This can be extremely helpful in a time marked by health risks and uncertainty, political division, 24-hour polarized news cycles, and relentless electronic demands for our attention.

| Qualities Developed by Mindfulness Techniques | Benefits of Mindfulness |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Intention to cultivate awareness | Improved mental wellness |
| Attention to what is occurring in the present | Reduced pain |
| Attitude that is accepting, curious, and kind | Improved overall health and wellbeing |
| | Improved cognitive performance |



TRY IT OUT*:

- 1. Take a seat.** Find a place to sit that feels calm and quiet to you.
- 2. Set a time limit.** If you are just beginning, it can help to choose a brief time, such as 5 or 10 minutes.
- 3. Notice your body.** Any posture is okay, just make sure you are stable and in a position you can stay in for a while.
- 4. Feel your breath.** Follow the sensations of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.
- 5. Notice when your mind has wandered.** When you notice your mind has wandered to other things, simply bring it back to your breath.
- 6. Be kind to your wandering mind.** Do not judge yourself for the content of your thoughts or for your mind wandering. Just bring it back to your breath.

*Adapted from Mindful Staff, December 12, 2018, “How to practice mindfulness,” available at <https://www.mindful.org/how-to-practice-mindfulness/>

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Self-Compassion



“ ‘You have peace,’ the old woman said, ‘when you make it with yourself.’ ” —*Mitch Albom*

More About Self-Compassion

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a tremendous source of pain and struggle. Unfortunately, people can become self-critical when they notice their own struggles or fail to meet expectations of themselves that they would rarely or never demand of others.

Self-compassion is the intentional fostering of an attitude of kindness toward ourselves when we are struggling or in pain. It encourages us to acknowledge these feelings and ask, “How can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?”

Three Elements of Self-Compassion

| SELF-KINDNESS VS. SELF-JUDGMENT | COMMON HUMANITY VS. ISOLATION | MINDFULNESS VS. OVER-IDENTIFICATION |
|--|--|---|
| Accepting difficulties as a part of life with sympathy and kindness, which leads to greater emotional calmness | Recognizing that all humans are imperfect and struggle connects us all, rather than feeling isolated with problems that happen to “me alone” | Balancing awareness of our struggles and that of others, while not focusing on and getting attached to negativity |

Take care of the caregiver! Working in a caregiving profession (and being a caregiver of a family member) means you need to take time to recharge your batteries to be able to give to others and enjoy your own life. Listening to music, taking an exercise class, hanging out with friends, or getting a massage are good examples of self-care.



TRY IT OUT:

- Remind yourself that you’re human and doing the best you can.
- Remind yourself that many people in this same difficult situation would respond similarly.
- Say to yourself what you would say to a good friend who was in the same situation.

Take a look at these pieces by Dr. Kristin Neff for extra clarity on self-compassion:

Exercises and Guided Meditations:
[Self-Compassion Exercises by Dr. Kristin Neff](#)

Self-Compassion Scale for Clinical Purposes:
[Self-Compassion Scales | Kristin Neff](#)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

The Relaxation Response



“ We will be more successful in all our endeavors if we can let go of the habit of running all the time and take little pauses to relax and re-center ourselves. And we’ll also have a lot more joy in living.” —*Thich Nhat Hanh*

What Is the Relaxation Response?

The relaxation response refers to the natural state our body and mind enter when we rest and feel safe. It allows us to recover from the wearing effects of anxiety brought on by chronic stress, which is prevalent in our fast-paced, always-on society.



TRY IT OUT: Helpful Techniques

DEEP BREATHING: Sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently.

TRY IT OUT: Slowly inhale, drawing your breath down into your abdomen as if you’re filling your belly like a balloon. Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds, and then breathe out slowly for 5 to 10 seconds. Continue the breathing process until you feel calm.

IMAGERY: Our brain’s ability to create physical and emotional reactions based entirely on our thoughts. Anyone who has pictured a favorite dish close to dinner time and noticed their mouth watering has had this experience.

TRY IT OUT: Choose a time when you’re not likely to be disturbed for a while. Think of a place that’s calm and peaceful for you. Create a feeling of really being there by engaging all your senses in experiencing this calm, peaceful place. Continue enjoying the image until you feel relaxed, or for as long as you care to.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION: Helps us to release tension from the body and signals the brain to begin the calming process.

TRY IT OUT: Tighten and release your muscles, starting with your feet and working your way up through your legs, torso, arms, hands, neck, and head. Hold the tension in your muscles for 5 seconds and notice the feeling when they relax.

Learn more about the relaxation response: Home Page — [Benson-Henry Institute \(bensonhenryinstitute.org\)](https://www.bensonhenryinstitute.org)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Stress Management



“ Stress is like spice—in the right proportion it enhances the flavor of a dish. Too little produces a bland, dull meal; too much may choke you. ” —Donald Tubesing, Ph.D., M.Div.

This quote captures the dual impact of stress in our lives, rather than the usual focus on its negative impact on our health and wellbeing when stress is excessive. We are at our best when the stress in our lives is just beyond our current capacity, which is what helps us grow smarter, stronger, and more resilient. When your stress level exceeds your ability to cope, you need to restore the balance by reducing the stressors, or increasing your ability to cope, or both.



TRY IT OUT: Think about a situation you have been stressing over. Try one of these four approaches and see how you can reduce the stress, increase your coping ability, or both!

AVOID

Plan ahead, rearrange your surroundings.

Examples: Learn to say “no” and delegate. Find a less heavily traveled route to work. Pack lunch and avoid the cafeteria line. Distance from people who annoy you.

ALTER

Change your situation.

Examples: Respectfully ask others to change their behavior and be willing to do the same. Communicate your feelings openly. State limits in advance.

ACCEPT

At times, we can only accept things as they are.

Examples: Talk to a supportive friend. Decide to forgive rather than stew in anger. Practice positive self-talk. Learn from your mistakes.

ADAPT

Change your standards or expectations.

Examples: Redefine success and stop striving for perfection. Stop gloomy thoughts that promote negativity. Look at the situation from a new perspective. Decide you can handle a challenge.

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Complete the Stress Response Cycle



“ Training gives us an outlet for suppressed energies created by stress and thus tones the spirit just as exercise conditions the body.” —Arnold Schwarzenegger

What Is the Stress Response Cycle?

We are born equipped with a wonderful system for responding to danger and living to tell the tale. This system evolved to deal with physical threats such as coming face to face with a lion. We have two primary reactions to a threat: fight or flight. Every system in our body is enlisted in the effort to survive. This can leave us feeling drained, but also thrilled, relieved, and glad to be alive! This completes the stress response cycle and restores our body to a balanced state.

Modern-day stressors, such as an argument with a coworker, can trigger the same threat response. However, in these situations, there typically is no thrill, relief, or gratitude to be alive once the stressor is gone. Our bodies are left stuck in the middle of the stress response cycle, without the release provided from the physical exertion of fleeing or fighting off the threat.

When you're stressed out by the pandemic, work demands, family issues, or worries about the future, how can you complete the stress cycle and restore balance in your body?



TRY IT OUT:

Choose and practice one of the options listed below—or any activity that releases tension and promotes feelings of safety. Modern stress is constant, so practice regularly!

- 1. Get Active:** Movement signals to your body that it's safe—run, dance, swim, walk, etc.
- 2. Have a Good Cry:** It's a natural way to release tension, leaving you feeling relieved and ready to move on.
- 3. Express Yourself Creatively:** Making something for the pleasure of doing so allows your body to process feelings and restore a sense of safety.
- 4. Use Your Imagination:** We can experience feelings of satisfaction, thrill, or gratitude to be alive after seeing a good movie or reading a book in which our imagination completes an intense journey.
- 5. Get Some Belly Laughter:** Uncontrolled, open-mouthed, ridiculous laughter that leaves you exhausted can complete the stress response cycle.
- 6. Nurture Connection:** Connecting with people, animals, nature, the divine, or something else can make you feel safe in your connection as part of a larger world.
- 7. Have a Good Night's Sleep:** While you sleep, your brain solves problems from the day and completes unfinished business, especially during REM.

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Walking



“ Walking is man’s best medicine.” —Hippocrates

The Importance of Walking

The research on the health benefits of walking supports the opinion Hippocrates expressed long ago. We now know that the simple practice of regular brisk walking for about 150 minutes per week can reduce rates of death from all causes, improve anxiety and depression, improve cardiovascular health, lower blood pressure, improve cognitive function, reduce insomnia, and delay the onset of arthritis-related disability, among other benefits.

No expensive gym memberships or funky-smelling locker rooms, no complicated workout routines to memorize—a good pair of sneakers or walking shoes is all the equipment you need. As an added benefit, you get to enjoy the great outdoors, which also promotes wellness! In cold or rainy weather, walking at a shopping mall can be an excellent choice, as well.

Walking with friends can be a great social activity, and the support can help you stay motivated. Many people also enjoy walking meetings with work colleagues and find they generate more creative solutions that way.



TRY IT OUT:

1. Talk with your doctor if you have serious health issues or if you’re older than 40 and have been inactive recently.
2. Aim to walk at least 5 days a week.
3. Start out warming up with a 5-minute, slower-paced walk.
4. Start at a comfortable pace, then gradually pick up speed until you’re walking briskly. You should be breathing hard but still be able to carry on a conversation.
5. Take an incremental approach, adding 2 minutes to your walking time each day.
6. In addition to walking, add strength training exercises such as push-ups, planks, and squats to your routine.

[Get walking with this 12-week walking schedule — Mayo Clinic](#)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Playfulness and Wellbeing



“ We don’t stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing. ” —George Bernard Shaw

THE BENEFITS OF PLAY

RELIEVE STRESS: Play is fun and can trigger the release of endorphins, the body’s natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of wellbeing and can even temporarily relieve pain.

IMPROVE BRAIN FUNCTION: Playing chess, completing puzzles, or pursuing other fun activities that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function. The social interaction of playing with family and friends can also help ward off stress and depression.

STIMULATE THE MIND AND BOOST CREATIVITY: Young children often learn best when they are playing—a principle that applies to adults, as well. You’ll learn a new task better when it’s fun and you’re in a relaxed and playful mood. Play can also stimulate your imagination, helping you adapt and solve problems.

IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS AND YOUR CONNECTIONS TO OTHERS: Sharing laughter and fun can foster empathy, compassion, trust, and intimacy with others. Play doesn’t have to include a specific activity; it can also be a state of mind. Developing a playful attitude can help you loosen up in stressful situations, break the ice with strangers, make new friends, and form new business relationships.

KEEP YOU FEELING YOUNG AND ENERGETIC: Play can boost your vitality and even improve your resistance to disease, helping you function at your best.

TRY IT OUT:

Host a regular game night with friends and family (Zoom games count! [26 Best Zoom Games to Play — Easy and Actually Fun Zoom Games \(cosmopolitan.com\)](#)).

- Arrange nights out with work colleagues.
- Schedule time in a park or at the beach to throw a frisbee or play volleyball.
- Play with children.
- Play with a pet.
- Surround yourself with playful people—they’ll support your efforts to play and have fun.
- Joke with strangers at a bus stop or in a checkout line.
- Invest in art supplies and get creative.

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE: Using Nature for a Healthy Mind and Body



“ [The beauty of the park] should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquility and rest to the mind.”

—Frederick Law Olmsted, 1870, on the purpose of the creation of Central Park in New York City

The idea that time spent in natural environments is good for us is something we tend to know intuitively. After all, we are part of nature. For many years, science has been proving this intuition to be correct. Among other benefits, time spent in nature has been shown to

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Boost the immune system | Reduce stress | Increase ability to focus, even in children with ADHD |
| Lower blood pressure | Improve mood, sleep, and energy level | Accelerate recovery from surgery or illness |

The Japanese have developed a practice called shinrin-yoku, or “forest bathing,” to maximize the health benefits of nature. The aim of forest bathing is to slow down and become immersed in the natural environment. It helps to tune in to the smells, textures, tastes, sounds, and sights of the forest. You are encouraged to have a “here and now” orientation—more like a meditation than a hike.

The [Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs](#) is a great resource if you would like to learn more or sign up to experience a guided forest therapy walk.



TRY IT OUT:

Try forest bathing in any outdoor space. Take your time and open your senses. Feel the breeze on your skin and the sun on your face, notice the scent in the air and the chirping of the birds, feel the bark of a tree on your fingers, and examine the shapes of the leaves. Let nature elicit your own healing response.

Learn more: This 2014 article in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health reviews 20 years of research on the health benefits of natural environments: [Green Perspectives For Public Health: A Narrative Review on the Physiological Effects of Experiencing Outdoor Nature \(web-site-files.com\)](#)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Sleep and Health



“ A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor’s book.” —Irish proverb

Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. 1 out of 3 adults don’t get enough sleep!

| MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF SUFFICIENT SLEEP | PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF SUFFICIENT SLEEP |
|--|---|
| More creativity and productivity | Healthy growth and development for kids |
| Improved mood and energy | Better ability to build muscle |
| Better brain function, alertness, decision-making, focus, learning, memory, reasoning, and problem solving | Improved immunity and less risk for chronic disease |



TRY IT OUT:

- Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7–8 hours of sleep.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing. Keep the room at a comfortable, cool temperature.
- Limit exposure to bright light in the evenings.
- Use your bed only for sleep and intimacy.
- If you don’t fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed. Go do a quiet activity without a lot of light exposure. It is especially important to not get on electronics.

Learn more about sleep and health: [Do You Get Enough Sleep? | CDC](#)

SOAR WITH SELF-CARE:

Lifestyle and Wellbeing



“ We were never designed for the sedentary, indoor, sleep-deprived, socially isolated, fast-food-laden, frenetic pace of modern life.” —*Stephen Ilardi, Ph.D.*

Rates of clinical depression, anxiety disorders, and suicide have risen dramatically in developed nations for many years. The usual treatment approaches of medication and/or psychotherapy have not been sufficient to slow the trend. Meanwhile, research on tribes that continue to practice a hunter-gatherer lifestyle reveal very positive mental health along with little or no cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes. Wonder what they're doing differently?



TRY IT OUT:

| | |
|---|--|
| Activity | Do some moderate aerobic activity for 35–40 minutes at least 3 days per week. Brisk walking, biking, running, basketball, gardening, or dancing are good options. |
| Solution focus | Rather than worry, identify solutions and act right away. Also try calling a friend, writing thoughts down in a journal, or doing something pleasant. |
| Lean protein, fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and omega-3 fatty acids | These dietary choices have been shown to have anti-depressant and anti-inflammatory properties. They may help dopamine and serotonin circuits in our brains function more efficiently. |
| Light exposure | Get at least 30 minutes of bright light exposure daily from the sun or from a light box designed to emit the same amount of light. |
| Social support | Connect with family and friends for entertainment, comfort, safety, and support. Sharing your struggles can help them understand and help. |
| Sleep hygiene | We need 7–9 hours of sleep on a consistent schedule. We need to unplug and create a calming routine. |
| Spirituality | Religious and spiritual involvement contributes to less anxiety, depression, and substance misuse, better psychological and marital wellbeing, and longer life span. |
| Altruism | Service to others enhances wellbeing, joy, and generosity. It benefits physical and mental health and may extend the life span. |

SELF-CARE TOOLKIT

EXPLORE HOW TO ADD SELF-CARE TO YOUR ROUTINE.

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