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# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: SELF-CARE

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Massages and bubble baths are wonderful; however, self-care goes beyond self-pampering. True self-care involves an intentional focus on our personal needs, interests, and goals. When life starts to feel like too much, oftentimes our personal needs are the first to be ignored. Good self-care acts as a preventative measure for feelings of overwhelm which can lead to stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue. Those feelings are usually signs that we are lacking self-care. We must make time for ourselves, on purpose, to maintain balance in our lives.

Our needs can be physical (getting more sleep), emotional (expressing your feelings), professional (setting boundaries at work), spiritual (starting a prayer or meditation practice), and relational (connecting with loved ones). Focusing on these areas is so important, because when we don't, our relationships, job performance, and mental health may suffer.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2022), implementing self-care practices can have major mental and physical impacts, such as more energy, less stress, and decreased risk of getting sick. It is necessary to view self-care as an essential part of our routine and incorporate it into our weekly schedules.

## Self-Care Tips:

1. **Identify.** What is a non-negotiable practice for you? What do you need more or less of in your life? What brings you joy? Find what activities increase your feelings of balance and fulfillment. Sign-up to try new things on purpose to help you discover what those things are.
2. **Plan.** Ensure that your self-care practices are a part of your regular routine and not things that are done sporadically or only in crisis mode. For example, schedule 15 minutes of yoga or gratitude journaling every morning before work or bed. Put it on your calendar.
3. **Repeat.** Life is busy and it's easy to get thrown off a routine. Find creative ways to stick to your self-care practices as best you can by creating reminders on your phone or recruiting a friend to do them with you. View your self-care as essential as brushing your teeth every day.

## Common Self-Care Practices:

Exercising, spending time in nature, practicing mindfulness (meditation, yoga, deep breathing), alone time, socializing with friends/family, playing with pets, going to therapy, creating (painting, writing, music).



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