



U.S. Public Health Service

N-PAC TIP OF THE MONTH



July 2021

Self-Care for Nurses

Self-Care: What is it?

The World Health Organization (WHO) states self-care is “what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness”. Self-care should exist in every nurse’s toolkit.

Why should I engage in Self-Care?

Nurses dedicate themselves daily and wholeheartedly to caring for others. The importance of allowing space to care for ourselves is often overlooked. Take a moment to reflect, how do you “fill your cup”? Really... stop right now, reflect. If you were able to name a few self-care practices, do you regularly engage in these activities? The age-old adage, “You can’t pour from an empty cup” applies to this caring group of professionals. Nurses spend many hours per week focused on others, often neglecting self-care, resulting in an “empty cup” so to speak.

TAKE CARE



OF YOURSELF

Impacts of Neglecting Self-Care

Overlooking self-care can impact our lives daily and have long lasting effects. Are you experiencing musculoskeletal pain, depression, or chronic stress or fatigue? Some of this symptomology can be attributed to avoiding, forgetting, or failing to give yourself the time to practice self-care. Research indicates that chronic stress “can lead to hyperglycemia, hyperinsulinemia, arteriosclerosis, hypertension, and decreased immune system response” (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22261652/>).

Ready to Self-Care?

When starting or continuing your self-care journey: physical, mental, and emotional considerations:

Area of Focus	Tips	5-minutes or less
<p>Physical: The CDC recommends “at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity per week”. Another consideration often overlooked is nutrition. As grandma used to say, “you are what you eat.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk during your lunch break Take a gym class Set a regular bed and wake up time Take a nap Plan meals ahead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take the stairs Stand while you chart Have a dance party Plank for 30 seconds Prioritize healthy food choices/snacks
<p>Mental: Self-awareness, mindfulness and learning should continue throughout your nursing career. Keeping the mind sharp fosters confidence. Awareness gives us space to realize when we could benefit from taking a step back.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a class Listen to a podcast Read a book Play a game Teach a new nurse Keep a journal Connect with friends and family Make time to self-reflect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice meditation Unplug from social media Color Take Deep Breaths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try the 2:1 breathing technique: inhale for a count of 1,2,3,4, then exhale for a count of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8. Do this for 3-5 rounds.
<p>Emotional: Caring for others is emotional. It is imperative that nurses have support and space to process difficult emotions. Unprocessed emotions can build and ultimately impact work performance and home life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief difficult cases at work Find a new hobby, be creative Let yourself feel all the emotions Call a friend Plan a vacation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smile, cry, laugh Say words of affirmation, give gratitude Listen to music Appreciate nature Watch an uplifting video

Additional Resources:

[TEDx Talks: Beyond the Cliff/ Laura van Dernoot Lipsky](#)

[Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for the Self While Caring for Others](#) by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk

[Calm:](#) An app to begin your meditation journey

[Mindful:](#) mindfulness content, training, courses, and directories.

[APHA:](#) working-psychologist self-care

[CDC:](#) Coping with Stress during the COVID-19 Pandemic for healthcare personnel.

[CDC:](#) Self-Care tips

[Self-Care Tips:](#) That take 5 minutes or less.

Point of contact: CDR Vetter, LCDR Kullman, CDR Rasmussen, LCDR Schmidt, LCDR Cancam

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TO REQUEST A MENTOR

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