

SELF-CARE CAN GET YOU ACROSS THE FINISH LINE

April 14, 2021

The mental, emotional, and physical toll of the COVID-19 pandemic is real, especially for working women. After one year of lockdowns, homeschooling, working from home, event restrictions, case statistics, and vaccine rollouts, most working women are close to breaking. The burdens of caring for family members and carrying on with an unchanging workload has given many of us an added level of stress that may be wreaking havoc with our health in more ways than one. The end will come, but we don't know when or if things will ever really go back to the life we used to know. For some of us, it may feel as if we are running our own twisted version of an evil marathon.

One of the recommended ways to deal with long-term stress is self-care activities. Self-care is a bit like an aid station at a running race – I have run a handful of half marathons and 5k races throughout my life and one thing I know for sure is you simply have to visit the aid stations along the way to endure to the end of a long race. Although it may seem indulgent to take a little time to care for yourself, it is vital that women especially take time for themselves to endure the race of caring for others around them. There are many aspects of self-care that go far beyond just physical self-care, including mental, social, intellectual, and financial self-care.



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There are some easy & quick ways to reset and recharge so you can cross the COVID finish line.

Physical Self-Care

While taking care of our bodies is a large part of self-care, it doesn't always have to involve bubble baths or vigorous exercise. Below are a few simple methods of physical self-care.

- Sleep – 7-9 hours is recommended for adults.
- Break a sweat every day: Stretching -- Play a sport – Walking – Lift weights
- Eat healthy food (fruits and veggies, unrefined foods)
- Stay hydrated
- Move to music you love
- Take care of your skin: wash your face, use sunscreen, and use moisturizer
- Go outside—get some sunlight on your skin
- Look in a mirror and love your body as it is right now, without judgment

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Intellectual Self-Care

Intellectual self-care involves nourishing and challenging your mind, learning new skills, and expanding your knowledge. This may be the most overlooked aspect of self-care, since we tend to stop growing and learning as stress levels soar.

- Get to know yourself and spend time alone
- Relax and allow yourself to do nothing (a tech time out...no cellphones allowed!)
- Go through emails, delete trash, and unsubscribe from unwanted email lists (get rid of the email noise)
- Read, listen to, or watch a documentary about an educational topic you are interested in
- Focus on your own needs and goals instead of comparing yourself to others
- Create something artistic or play an instrument
- Listen to music you love
- Bake a yummy treat
- Take a nap

Emotional Self-Care

Emotional self-care is about becoming more in tune with our emotions, being mindful in the present moment, understanding and managing behavioral triggers, and not bottling up feelings inside.

- Maintaining boundaries with people and tasks
- Meditate
- Cultivate emotional maturity
- Write down your feelings or keep a gratitude journal
- Exhibit compassion (especially for yourself)
- Cuddle or hug your significant other
- Play with your pet
- Take a break from social media
- Allow yourself to feel your feelings instead of running from them or distracting yourself
- Visit with a friend
- Get your hair done

Spiritual Self-Care

Spiritual self-care doesn't always have to be about religion, although it may be for some people. It's about nourishing your inner soul, finding inner peace, and finding purpose and meaning in life.

- Meditation
- Practice yoga
- Donating to charity
- Spending time in nature
- Reading scripture or inspirational books
- Practice gratitude with a gratitude journal
- Forgiveness
- Random (or purposeful) acts of kindness
- Connect with others that have similar spiritual mindset



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Social Self-Care

In the last year since we have been isolated from one another, it has become so apparent how important a social connection is to human beings. This connection can look different for introverts and extroverts. Find a way to connect that makes you feel invigorated, not drained.

- Spending time with loved ones
- Reconnecting with an old friend
- Join an online class
- Start a morning walking group with neighbors or friends
- Volunteer at a school or nursing home

Financial Self-Care

Finances are the #1 cause of stress in most marriages and a driving factor in anxiety in many people. The smart things you do with your finances regularly will lower your stress about money. Caring for your finances is just as important as caring for your body.

- Pay into your savings with monthly auto-save
- Make a budget and live within that amount
- Pay bills on time and utilize online bill payments
- Unsubscribe from monthly services you don't use
- Treat Yo'Self (splurge once in a while)
- Eat simple meals at home
- Invest in retirement funds and utilize automatic withdrawals
- Avoid debt when possible, especially credit card debt
- Take inventory of what you already have and use it up!
- Be thoughtful on wants versus needs

Sensory Self-Care

Treat your senses to a little stimulation to reduce your stress levels. Making your environment one that pleases the senses can go a long way in helping you feel balanced.

- Burn a scented candle or atomize essential oils
- Organize your space, tidy up clutter
- Walk barefoot on the ground
- Look at art that you enjoy, online, in person, or as a screen saver
- Listen to soundscapes or nature sounds
- Listen to calming music you enjoy
- Wear soft fabrics or sleep on soft sheets
- Take that bubble bath!
- Don't forget to breathe!

Self-care activities are unique to each individual, so take the suggestions that work and keep on doing the ones you already love. Remember that these de-stressing aid stations are meant to help energize you to keep running the race, not to make you feel guilty. Pick one or two things in the areas you are struggling in...this is not a checklist of tasks to add to your already long list of things to do! The hope is you will find some peace of mind and the ability to feel happiness during this long race.



We want to hear your ideas on self-care. What has been your saving self-care ritual this year? Share your thoughts with us on LinkedIn and use the #IASAinc.