



SELF-HELP EXERCISE: ESTABLISHING HEALTHY ROUTINES

INTRODUCTION

Getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, taking breaks, and leisure activities are all important parts of a healthy lifestyle. Good self-care is also essential if you want to take care of others and be a good leader or mentor for others (co-workers, children, etc.). Also, you can't heal and recover from combat and operational stress if you don't take care of your body and mind.



It's not enough to engage in healthy self-care only occasionally. Self-care needs to be part of your daily routine. Having a regular routine that includes activities that are stress-reducing, rewarding, and pleasurable will help you to take charge and reclaim a sense of control in your life, even when other parts of your life may be hectic or crazy.

As a veteran, you are probably used to having your daily schedule revolve around duties, responsibilities, and training, so it may feel a bit strange to develop and use your own personal self-care routine. Keep in mind that, although they may be rewarding, hard physical and mental work bring wear and tear on your body and mind; self-care will repair, refresh, and refuel you.

Setting self-care goals and working toward them will help you build up and conserve your mental, physical, and spiritual strength for the people in your life who need you, and for the challenges that lie ahead. For those who are in leadership positions or have parenting roles, you might think it is selfish to take care of yourself. If this describes you, bear in mind that you can't take care of others if you are overly stressed and unhealthy yourself.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

This self-care questionnaire can help you to think of areas where you may want to direct your efforts.

Self-Care Questionnaire	Never 1 pt.	From Time to Time 2 pts.	About Half the Time 3 pts.	Most of the Time 4 pts.	Every day 5 pts.
1. How often do you go to bed at the same time?					
2. How often do you get up at the same time?					
3. How often do you eat a healthy breakfast? (fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, minimally processed foods)					
4. How often do you eat a healthy lunch? (with fresh vegetables and protein sources)					
5. How often do you eat a healthy dinner? (with fresh vegetables and protein sources)					
6. How often do you eat healthy snacks? (fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains)					
7. How often do you practice good hygiene? (showering, shaving, brushing your teeth)					

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WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT

	Never 1 pt.	From Time to Time 2 pts.	About Half the Time 3 pts.	Most of the Time 4 pts.	Every day 5 pts.
8. How often do you exercise? (walk, go to the gym, ride your bike, swim, play basketball)					
9. How often do you remind yourself about your strengths and achievements?					
10. How often do you take time to just relax?					
11. How often do you take a break if you are feeling upset or overwhelmed?					
12. How often do you engage in leisure/recreational activities? (watch TV, see a movie, go out to dinner, play pool)					
13. How often do you talk to others about personal things? (talking about a personal problem, sharing how you are feeling, asking for a listening ear)					
14. How often do you forgive yourself or cut yourself some slack? (give yourself credit for things you did right, tell yourself you did the best you could)					
15. How often do you take time to clean and organize your living space?					
16. How often do you laugh?					
17. How often do you spend quality time with family or friends?					
18. How often do you participate in healthy social groups? (church groups, support groups, community service groups)					
19. How often do you do positive activities that make you feel good about yourself? (volunteer, do something nice for a friend in need)					
20. How often do you reward yourself after you've done something positive? (go to a ball game with friends)					
21. How often do you try to set limits or cut back when you feel like you are doing too much and getting overwhelmed?					
22. How often are you productive? (arriving on time to work, doing chores at home, setting and completing goals)					
23. How often do you do something nice just for yourself? (make your favorite dinner, get tickets to a game, get away for the weekend)					
24. How often do you have fun? (relaxing and letting yourself enjoy an activity, going out with a friend)					
25. How often do you get out of the house?					
26. How often do you ask someone for help or support? (directions, feedback, advice, tips on how to do something)					
ADD UP YOUR TOTALS FROM EACH COLUMN:					

OVERALL TOTAL (ALL COLUMNS):



HOW WELL DID YOU SCORE?

102 – 130

Keep up the good work — your self-care is pretty good! You still might be able to find a few areas to improve upon, but mostly, you should concentrate on keeping up the good work.

74 – 101

Your self-care routine could be improved. Look for items that you scored 3 or lower on and try to improve those behaviors.

46 – 73

You haven't been taking such good care of yourself. The good news is that concentrating on improving some of these skills will likely make a big impact on your mood and stress levels. Look for items that you scored 3 or lower on and try to improve those behaviors.

26 – 45

Your self-care needs a lot of work. Fortunately, there are some basic things you can do to improve your functioning and mood. Even though self-care may not be a priority for you right now, making it a priority is the fastest way to improve your mood and decrease stress. Look for items that you scored 3 or lower on and try to improve those behaviors.

Review the list of items from the self-care checklist that you do not do very often — all items you scored as 1 or 2.

Over the next few weeks, make an effort to improve your self-care. Pick at least one or two areas to work on during the coming week and see how that feels.



Tips for improving your self-care:

- ★ Do one thing at a time
- ★ Give yourself permission to take breaks when you feel stressed or fatigued
- ★ Build in some leisure time

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This can't be a one-shot deal. Just as prevention is a much smarter strategy for maintaining a car (e.g., regular oil changes and engine maintenance) than major overhauls brought about by neglect or misuse, self-care is a smart strategy for preventing bigger mental and physical problems down the road where stress, if not properly managed, will take a serious toll on your mind and body.

Keep in mind that you are not alone; self-care is a lifelong challenge for everyone. Create healthy self-care habits that become a routine part of who you are and what others know you for. The more self-care becomes a part of you, the better prepared you will be for challenges that lie ahead.

