

58 Ways to Care for Self

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Over the course of my years as a psychotherapist and helping professional I have learned how critically important it is to have a practiced plan for self care in order to ensure mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Below is a curated list of 58 ways to care for self that can help you create your own plan for self care.

1. Treat yourself with the same honor as you would a client. Schedule time for breaks from work and honor that time as sacred.
2. Eat slowly and mindfully. Take time to really taste the food. Sit at a table and savor your meals.
3. Observe moments of pause between scheduled appointments. Take 30 seconds. Close your eyes and slowly take four deep breaths.
4. As soon as you wake in the morning take 10 minutes to stretch your whole body before you get out of bed. Breathe deeply and fully as you slowly extend your limbs in all directions.
5. Measure out a half to full gallon of water in the morning and aim to drink a full glass each hour of your workday.
6. Drink 8 ounces of warm water with the juice of a half lemon first thing in the morning to help cleanse your digestive system.
7. Go for brisk walk before you start your workday and/or in the evening after dinner. Swing your arms. Look up at the sky and the tops of the trees. We spend so much time sitting at our computers or phones and it's important to get out and move and look UP.
8. Take stretch breaks! Get up from your chair and do some gentle, simple stretches throughout the day.
9. Eat brightly colored fruits and veggies. Forego the drive-through.
10. Opt for organic. Eat seasonally and shop at a local farmer's market.
11. Limit sugar and white flour. Your body and brain will thank you.
12. Listen to a guided relaxation recording daily.
13. Go without alcohol for 30 days or even better, skip it altogether
14. Pause before saying yes. Ask yourself if you really have time and energy to do what is asked of you.
15. Try a new exercise class. Go for a swim. Join a basketball league. Try ballroom dancing.
16. Kick off your shoes and go barefoot in the grass or sand.
17. Look for chances to laugh. Comedy radio or television shows. Seek out funny friends. Look for the humor whenever possible.
18. Build in buffer time so you can move from activity to activity or issue to issue with pauses in between.
19. Write in a gratitude journal. Build a habit at the close of each day to reflect on every small or large part of life for which you can feel grateful.
20. Spend time with an animal. Animals can open our hearts. Volunteer at the Humane Society. Visit a shelter.

21. Organize a closet, drawer or cabinet each week until your house is in good order. You'll feel lighter.
22. Plant flowers near your front door and notice their beauty as you come and go.
23. Create an herb garden in your kitchen window. Add fresh herbs to your recipes. The flavors are delightful and often good for health.
24. Learn about how to bring essential oils into everyday life. Aromatherapy is good for mood and often a natural alternative to chemical laden personal products and cleaning supplies.
25. Use castile soap, baking soda, witch hazel and coconut oil for your skin instead of commercial products. You'll save money and naturally nurture your skin.
26. Have clear boundaries with others. Honor your time, space and emotions. Don't let others treat you disrespectfully.
27. Clean out your refrigerator every month. Toss expired items and wash down the shelves.
28. Keep up with your I love yous. Connect with family and friends regularly and tell them how much you appreciate them. Actively loving others is a branch of self love.
29. Keep indoor plants in all rooms of your house and office nurture them. As they thrive, they will clean the air you are breathing.
30. Be sure you observe a daily dental routine.
31. When you hear someone saying degrading, derogatory or deprecating things about others, speak up! Point out the positive and the beauty. Bringing light to darkness is good for your spirit.
32. Practice meditation daily. Just 10 minutes each day over the course of a year will transform you in wonderful ways.
33. Read the book *Wherever You Go There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn and do the little exercises after each chapter. It will change your life for the better.
34. When you feel sadness, allow yourself to cry. Breathe while you feel.
35. When you feel angry, go for a brisk walk or a run and swing your arms while you feel your anger. The bilateral stimulation of the body and brain helps regulate emotions.
36. See a psychotherapist who practices EMDR if you've been through a traumatic experience.
37. Connect with your spiritual path. Regardless of religion or tradition, reaching out and reaching inward to what you believe in can be a powerful form of self care.
38. Donate clothing and household items to a local shelter or a charity.
39. Hire a life or wellness coach to help you get clear on specific goals, learn some new tools and skills and create accountability for yourself.
40. Spend time with young children. Join them in their play.
41. Repaint a room or an accent wall in your house or office with a bright or soothing color.
42. Keep fresh-cut flowers around you. It will remind you of the beauty delicacy of life in the moment.
43. Light a candle signifying the sacred moments of everyday life.
44. Write letters by hand to dear family and friends, expressing your appreciation and love.

45. Write your own memoir reflecting on your life experiences.
46. Leave time on your calendar for spontaneous experiences.
47. Bring out your inner artist. Paint pottery, knit a scarf, write a short story.
48. Get out into nature often. Listen to the breeze in the trees, the sound of the ocean or the song of the birds.
49. Practice affirmation statements that reinforce your love for self, others and life.
50. Go to lunch with a friend you haven't seen in a while.
51. Observe a social media and news fast occasionally. Be mindful of what you watch and listen to.
52. Read inspirational stories.
53. Follow an uplifting podcast such as *On Being* with Krista Tippett.
54. Sit on a park bench and just watch the activity of the people and animals.
55. Get ten minutes of direct sunlight every day.
56. Go on a self care retreat where you unplug from all the daily stressors.
57. Schedule your healthcare and medical check ups you may have been neglecting
58. Forgive any grudges you may be holding onto. Seek counseling to aid in any healing of past events that cause lingering mental and emotional pain.

Choose items from this list you can incorporate into your daily, weekly, monthly and annual schedule to ensure you have a regular practice of caring for self and connecting with all of who you are and those you love and care for.

About the Author

Lynn Louise Wonders has been a mental health professional supporting children and families since 2002 and has been teacher of meditation, yoga and holistic self care since 1995. She provides training and professional consultation to therapists worldwide. You can learn more at www.WondersCounseling.com.

