

# PERSONAL RESILIENCY

## THE BASICS OF SELF-CARE

**EAT** The expression “You are what you eat” applies to us when we need to refuel. If we are under a lot of stress, be mindful of the foods you choose. Also, keep a healthy snack close by so that you can refuel easily and avoid being “Hangry”.

**SLEEP** Aim to get seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Research has shown that getting five hours or less of sleep a night can create health problems. Getting enough sleep also helps you to better deal with the stresses of everyday life.

**DRINK** A lot of water and consider decreasing or discontinuing your caffeine intake as the latter creates a stress reaction in your body and can cause you to feel nervous or contribute to sleeping difficulties.

**MOVE** The positive effects of being physically active are astounding. It increases your energy, enhances your immune system, reduces insomnia, stimulates brain growth, and even acts as an anti-depressant. You can achieve these benefits by as little as a 30-minute walk. Endorphin production following physical activity is nature’s gift to you for stress management!

**CONNECT** Strong social connections are one of the most powerful influences on our mood. Those who are dedicated to spending time with friends, and family show the highest levels of happiness. If you can’t see your loved ones every day, you can still send an email or make a phone call.

**PAUSE** Make sure to take time for yourself during the day, to listen to music, take a few deep breaths, meditate, write in a gratitude journal, do a few stretches, take a brisk walk or do some other activity that helps you feel restored.

**ACKNOWLEDGE** Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings, both positive and negative, as part of your self-care. Finding a healthy outlet (see some suggestions below) to process your emotions and self-talk can lead to optimal self-care practices.

**REFLECT** Take time to reflect on what is important to you both personally and professionally. Your values and sense of purpose help you focus on what is meaningful for you. Taking time to reflect can assist you to intentionally and systemically make decisions in your life.

**REPEAT** Research has shown that trying a new skill/habit/routine for 21 days in a row will increase the likelihood of maintaining this new practice. It is recommended having an accountability partner during those first few weeks; it’s a helpful strategy to enhance your success rate of maintaining your new practice.

### WHY BOTHER?

Taking care of oneself is a crucial and necessary ingredient for those who care for others. This is especially true of those working in helping professions (mental health professionals, teachers, nurses...) and of those who are parents or engaging in elderly care. Self-care is just like the oxygen mask on a plane. We need to place it on ourselves before we can possibly hope to help others.

### + BUILDING HAPPINESS

External factors often only have partial influence on our level of happiness.

Promotions, new relationships, and lucky lottery wins give only a temporary boost to happiness before we return to our baseline.

Sustained happiness takes work. Listed here are a few exercise ideas that, when practiced frequently, can build habits of happiness.

Choose a few exercises that fit well with your life and make a point to practice them every day.

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#### Journal About Gratitude

Every night write down three good things about your day. They don’t have to be major. They might be as simple as a good meal, talking to a friend, or getting through something difficult.

#### Write a Letter

Think about someone who has had a major impact on your life, someone who you would like to thank, or someone who you appreciate having in your life. Write a letter with specific details about what it is you appreciate about them, and send it.

#### Visit Someone Whom You Appreciate

Take the idea of a gratitude letter a step further and actually visit the individual whom you would like to thank. You can choose to deliver and read a gratitude letter, or simply visit and tell them why it is that you appreciate them.

#### Say, “Thank You”

Keep your eyes open throughout the day for reasons to say “thanks”. Try to notice and recognize the actions that people do, such as a coworker who works hard or a friend who seems willing to listen.

#### Take a Gratitude Walk

Go for a walk and make a special effort to appreciate your surroundings. You might notice the smell of flowers, a pretty building, or a soothing breeze. Spend a few minutes focusing on each of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to find new things you may not have noticed.

