

## **MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS: SELF CARE FOR THE NEW YEAR**

*Judge each day not by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.*

***Robert Louis Stevenson.***

When the thought or the words “self-care” comes up, what usually comes to mind? A clearly, defined insight to the meaning of caring for oneself is to take care of your emotional, mental physical, relational, and spiritual wellbeing. This could be a great option for 2023 because regardless of where a person might be in life this choice is *absolutely* achievable. Self-care is a form of personal development towards becoming the best version of yourself. Providentially, embracing self-care does not mean a major investment or material gains, but rather small commitments to an existing routine. Benefits to gain can be a healthier sense of wellbeing and the reduction of worry and stress. The more individuals can reduce stress with self-care strategies, the more connected they tend to feel not only for themselves but the world around them as well.

Whether introverted or extroverted, an hour of peace daily can act like a recharge medication that is essential to one’s mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. A meditative walk, prayer, deep breathing or just that quiet time for self-silence soothes the soul in mysterious ways. It is almost as if a person allows oneself to be in such alignment with the intelligence of the universe whereby through silence and peace, mindfulness and self-awareness becomes the connection thus having no room for stress, anxiety, and worry. Paying attention to self is a powerful form of self-care that increases awareness, acceptance, promotes confidence, and can be called *being spiritual*.

Social connections or catching up with a friend are a viable factor to overall happiness. Fulfilling social interactions contributes to mental health and equally can be active self-care. Some things are worth more than money, such as friends, love dreams, happiness, hope health and time. Relaxation and leisure within free time can come in different forms and shades. Me-time within free-time is caring for self and goes a long way. Hiking, fishing, going to the beach, or watching a good game of cricket are just some of the examples of relaxation and leisure. Usually, the mind is at rest during relaxation and leisure activities because subconsciously individuals usually do not realize how much they are stimulated to live in the moment. This helps to rest our mental pathways from worry and fears.

Self-care also lends itself to eating healthier and exercising. As hectic weeks roll by it can become so natural to indulge in processed foods and take outs. Getting healthy nutrients from more home cooked meals, and regular exercise promotes, not only physical benefits, but confidence. A consistent process of practicing this helps with anxiety and depression.

In conclusion, there are strong associations with getting enough sleep and benefits that are physical and mental. Seven to nine hours of sleep should be the target for an average person. Calming activities such as deep breathing, meditation and prayer, relaxing music, praying, or even having a warm shower helps to activate the body's sleep chemicals. A conscious focus on lifestyle changes rather than goals for 2023 is a sound change for a better life.