What is Self-Care?

Self-care is taking care of yourself physically and emotionally, in the best way you can, to promote better health and general well-being. Self-care allows us to cope better, to keep up with a busy daily life and aids our long-term health. The benefits of self-care can be improved mental, physical and emotional well-being.

Types of Self-Care

Although everyone is different and what may help one individual may not necessarily help another, there are three common categories that we can divide self-care into - physical, emotional and spiritual self-care.

Physical Self-Care

Looking after yourself physically means you feel stronger, healthier and have more energy. By prioritizing enough **sleep**, maintaining regular **exercise** and eating a **healthy diet** you're engaging in physical self-care.

Emotional Self-Care

Emotional self-care could be catching up with friends, taking time to read a book or have a **bath**, doing a **hobby** you enjoy or just **saying 'no'** to activities that cause you to stress.

Spiritual Self-Care

Spiritual self-care for some is attending **church, praying, meditating**, keeping a **journal** or paying forward acts of kindness.

You don't need to engage in all three kinds of self-care. It's important to choose self-care activities that you enjoy and help reduce your stress levels.

Why Self-Care is Important in the Workplace

Most people will tell you that one of their main sources of stress is **work**. Whether it's a conflict with co-workers, long hours, deadlines or a heavy workload, work-related stress is a big problem in all sectors of the workforce. Embracing self-care activities can help reduce some of the stress for workers. To manage work-related stress, you can try self-care activities such as meditation or mindfulness, taking time away from work, or pulling back on extra workload.

Employee-Led Self-Care Activities

Self-care should be incorporated into every workday. At lunchtime, get out of the office for some light exercise if possible. If there is a **peaceful spot** close by, take some time to clear your mind and become more aware of your surroundings. Feel the breeze, listen to the sounds and take note of the smells around you. Take some time out and have a coffee break with a work friend. Or, on your commute, choose to ride a bike or walk part of the way to work to fit in more physical exercise.

Employer-Organized Self-Care Activities

Employers can encourage employees to engage in self-care by offering a range of activities. Lunchtime yoga or meditation can encourage staff to step away from their desks and engage in a physical self-care activity. A **walking group** or even encouraging **walking meetings** to get people up and outside can be beneficial for both personal self-care and boosting team culture. A **workplace well-being program** and access to healthy lifestyle programs can also encourage staff to up their self-care game.

14 ways to practice self-care at work

Here are several different ways you can incorporate self-care at work:

1. Pack a nutritious and delicious lunch

Rather than grabbing from the cafeteria yet again, consider taking a few extra minutes each morning to pack yourself a lunch that you can look forward to. Choose ingredients that are

going to make you feel energized. Of course, it's fun to add a little treat that you can savor at the end of your lunch hour.

2. Take your breaks outside

When you need a quick break from your work, consider going outside for some fresh air and light exercise. Going for a walk in nature or just around the block can help you clear your mind and rejuvenate your body. Even doing some light stretches outside your building can get your blood flowing and help you feel better.

3. Drink more water

This may seem like a basic one, but drinking more water throughout the day can help you feel more energized. If you need help remembering to drink water, consider getting a special water bottle for your desk. You could even have some fun and ask your work friend to be your water friend. Make the process more fun by infusing fruit, cucumbers or fresh mint into your drinks.

4. Set goals for yourself

Add some purpose to your workday by setting personal and professional goals for yourself. You may find that by having a list of goals in front of you, you'll start feeling more motivated and inspired to succeed. When creating your goals, use the SMART method, meaning they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. This framework can help you create goals that better align with your lifestyle and personal bandwidth.

5. Create an ergonomic workspace

Since you spend a lot of your time at work, it's important to build a workspace that encourages comfort and good posture. Take some time to research what an ergonomic workspace setup looks like. Consider investing in things like a stand-up desk to improve your comfort levels at work. You may even find that by bringing this up to your employer that they'll reimburse you for the expenses. Along with feeling better, you'll be taking better care of your body.

6. Wear your favorite clothing

As long as your favorite outfit fits within your office's dress code, consider wearing it to work every so often. Even just incorporating a small accessory or fun color into your work attire can make the workday more enjoyable. Choose clothing that makes you feel confident and displays your unique personality. You may find that wearing the right outfit can improve your demeanor and help you feel more like a true professional.

7. Limit your responsibilities

While it is important to be a helpful **team member**, it is also important to set boundaries for yourself at work. Learning to say "no" can be a challenging skill to learn, but it can be useful for your own wellbeing. For instance, if your to-do list is already packed and your coworker asks you to do them a favor, it's perfectly fine to say, *"I would love to help, but I am extra busy today."* Respecting your own capacity to do work can help you meet your more important deadlines while having the ability to work at a more relaxed pace.

8. Socialize with coworkers

If socializing with others brings you joy, make an effort to connect with your colleagues. When you notice something has a pause in their work, try to start a lighthearted conversation with them. You could even share a funny comment or joke to liven up the mood. By showing interest in your coworkers' lives, they may feel more inclined to chat with you. Along with building camaraderie in the workplace, this socialization can make the day go along faster.

9. Ask for feedback

Understanding how you are doing at work can improve your awareness and emotional wellbeing. Rather than constantly wondering how your manager views your efforts, ask them to meet for a one-on-one to discuss your performance. This is a great opportunity to learn your strengths and what you can improve. Use this discussion to go over your goals and get advice from your manager. You may find that asking for a performance review enhances your relationship with your manager and shows them that you take initiative.

10. Request some time off

If it's been a while since you took a day off, you may be due for a little vacation or simply a few days to relax at home. Some people even feel better after taking a few days off of work to catch up on personal errands, appointments or chores. What you choose to do on your day off depends on what is going to help you feel recharged when you return to work. Start by putting in a paid-time-off request and getting your work prepared for your temporary absence.

11. Decorate your desk

Take some time to personalize your workspace with things that make you smile. Adding in a few trinkets or decorations is a simple way to customize your desk. Add some photographs of loved ones, or beautiful places to bring some joy into your work area. You can even include some of your favorite art prints to display your personal taste and add visual interest to your desk.

12. Listen to your favorite music

When working on a task where you can listen to music, consider curating an uplifting playlist for yourself. Choose songs that help you feel upbeat and focused on what you're doing. If songs with lyrics make it challenging to focus, consider choosing instrumental pieces. Music can help improve your mood and make work more fun.

13. Accept your mistakes

Making mistakes is a normal part of the learning process. Rather than dwelling on an error that you made at work, reframe it as an opportunity to grow in your role. Once you take accountability for what you did, start to turn the situation around by showing your problem-solving abilities. When thinking back to this situation, enjoy the solution you figure out rather than your initial mistake.

14. Learn to be present

While at work, try to keep your mind on the current task you are doing rather than your other responsibilities. When you find yourself daydreaming about household chores and after-work errands, try to re center your focus to the present moment. Being mindful can help you do

more intentional work and help you manage stress levels. If you feel like you have a lot going on at once, take a moment to do some deep breathing exercises or even set aside ten minutes for meditation to help yourself feel refocused on the present.

Benefits of Employee Self-Care

Employees who engage in self-care activities are more likely to be productive and motivated at work. With exercise and a healthy diet, they are likely to be healthier with a strong immune system, which in turn leads to fewer sick days.

When an organization offers self-care activities, employees feel like the employer cares about their health and well-being. Employees are more likely to speak positively to their friends and family about their workplace and are more likely to stay with an organization, reducing frequent turnover rates.

RFERENCES

1. Self-Care at Work: How to Reduce Stress, Boost Productivity, and Do More of What

   Matters
   By Melissa Steginus . 2019

2. Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace

   A Practical Guide for Employers and Employees
   By Gill Hasson, Donna Butler · 2020

3. Social Workers' Desk Reference
   By Lisa Rapp-McCall, Al Roberts, Kevin Corcoran · 2022 (PAGE 30)