

How to look after yourself

Caring for a child or a whole family can be very challenging. It is a full-time job and many parents and carers put their children's wellbeing before their own. However, it is very important to remember that if you look after your own mental and physical needs as a parent or carer, it will not only benefit your well-being but also that of the children and people around you. Self-care is an active effort aimed at protecting your own health and well-being, especially during times of stress. Self-care is very personal and each of us can tailor it to our own needs and time availability. It can include a variety of activities such as sleep, eating habits, exercise, meditation, faith practices, etc.

To start things off, try thinking about what makes you happy and what calms you down. Then set aside 5-10 minutes for yourself in your schedule each day.



Here are some tips on what you can include in your 'self-care' routine:

- Set a timer for 5-10 minutes, turn off the ringtone on your phone and read a few pages of your favourite book. Do this before your child wakes up, at bedtime, on the bus, or during lunch.
- Incorporate regular movement into your day. Regular movement doesn't have to mean running or working out for hours. You can incorporate self-care into your daily routine by walking your dog, dancing to your favourite music, doing yoga or Pilates, or playing with your children, for example. Research also suggests that being outdoors is very beneficial to our mental well-being, so try to take exercise outdoors whenever you can.
- Slow down. Slowing down can be the key to becoming more focused on the present, on relaxing and recharging. Taking a bath or shower can be a good way to create space to intentionally recharge. Self-soothing can also include quiet moments: lighting a favourite candle, sipping hot tea or cocoa, or spending time with a pet.
- Keep in touch with loved ones, whether in person, by phone or text message. Try to keep in touch with friends so you don't forget your relationships outside your family. This will prevent feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Self-care also includes being able to ask for help when you need it, whether at home, at work, at the doctor's office or at a mental health professional's. For more information on help-seeking, see **Where to seek help for children and adults**.



Grounding exercises you can use at any time:

Take a break

Here's a one-minute relaxation activity you can use whenever you feel stressed.

Step 1: Get ready

Find a comfortable sitting position, with your feet on the floor and your hands on your lap. Close your eyes if that feels comfortable.

Step 2: Think, feel, and engage your body

Ask yourself: "What am I thinking about right now?".

Notice your thoughts. Notice whether they are negative or positive.

Notice how you feel emotionally. Notice whether your feelings are pleasant or not.

Notice how your body feels. Notice anything that hurts or feels sensitive.

Step 3: Focus on your breath

Listen to your breath as you breathe in and out. You can place your hand on your belly and feel it rise and fall with each breath.

You might say to yourself: "It's okay. No matter what it is, I'm okay."

Then just notice your breathing for a while.

Step 4: Come back

Notice what you feel in your body.

Listen to the sounds in the room.

Step 5: Reflect

Think "Do I feel a little different now?".

Open your eyes when you are ready.

For more practical tips on self-care, visit

<https://www.opatruj.se/pece-o-sebe>