

## Seven Simple Ways to Increase Self-Care

I am glad you are taking your wellbeing seriously and working toward a happier, healthier you. Practicing self-care is an important step toward taking responsibility for your own life. Here are a few simple yet powerful things you can do to increase your self-care.

- ❖ **Morning Stretch/Hug** Before getting out of bed in the morning, take a moment to just be with yourself. Stretch your arms and legs, reaching as far as is comfortable. Feel the vertebra in your back lining up for the day. Then sit up, hold a pillow to your chest, close your eyes and notice that you are breathing. For three or four breaths, simply pay attention to your body, breathing in, breathing out. Now, give yourself a hug, saying, “Good morning (your name), thanks for taking a minute to just be. Let today be about learning to love – myself and others.” Don’t worry if the hug feels silly. Let it make you smile (or roll your eyes) and do it anyway.
- ❖ **Notes to Self** Keep a small notepad (or a tape recorder) with you during the day. Whenever you have an insight, or a question, jot it down or record it. Later, you can give it the attention it deserves. Journal or write about your insights; research your questions on the Internet, in books or other resources, or by talking with a trusted friend or therapist. If looking at your notes every day is too much, make sure to go over them at least once a week. If you aren’t able to address them all, go through the list and circle one insight or question to give further attention to.
- ❖ **Water Ritual** Once a day, make a ritual of drinking an extra glass of water. Drinking plenty of pure water is vital to both mental and physical health. As you swallow, take a moment to acknowledge this small act of self-care. It may be helpful to do this just before or after a habit you already have (brushing your teeth, feeding the dog/cat, etc). You can also post a note somewhere (bathroom mirror/kitchen cupboard?) as a reminder. If you like, use a special beautiful glass for this ritual.
- ❖ **Breathe and Move** Get outdoors and breathe. If you don’t already spend time outside, try parking a little farther from your destination than usual, and be mindful of breathing in and out as you walk to the door. Let the air cleanse and refresh you, resetting your mood if needed.
- ❖ **Brain Gym** Do a little brain gym. While standing or sitting, reach your right hand (or elbow) across your body and touch your left knee as you raise the knee; do the same with the left hand or elbow on the right knee, as if you are marching. Repeat for about two minutes. While you are doing this, remind yourself of all the things you are doing to improve your wellbeing.
- ❖ **Choices** Notice the choices you make throughout the day. Whether you choose the “good” thing or the “bad” thing is less important than actually noticing that you have a choice. Try intentionally saying “yes” to something healthy and “no” to something unhealthy. Give yourself a pat on the back for paying attention to your choices. Go ahead, reach your hand across your chest and pat yourself on the back of your shoulder – you deserve it!
- ❖ **Food and Sleep** Be aware of your eating and sleeping patterns. These basic functions are a big part of your well being. If either is troublesome, it may be time to make some changes. If you know what you need to do, start it. If you need help, reach out to get it.

There you have it: a few simple things to try. It isn't necessary to do them all at once, but I invite you to give yourself the gift of continuity. We all have habits and obstacles that prevent us from taking the best care of ourselves, and they didn't develop overnight. It takes time and consistency to make the lasting changes you are looking for. By engaging in these small acts of self-care, you are taking responsibility for your own well being; you are also learning to actively love yourself. The more often you repeat these gestures, the more you will get from the effort.

Why not experiment by starting an intentional Self Care practice. Here is a simple outline that might be useful.

1. **Commit to it** Set a goal or time period. Long enough to experience results, but short enough to not be overwhelming. I recommend two weeks to start.
2. **Plan it** Choose two or three simple acts at first. You can use the list above or come up with your own ideas. Be realistic; choose tangible things that are likely to be achievable. Like they say about choosing a form of exercise: the best one is the one you will actually do.
3. **Do it!** Put yourself on your calendar. If you're like me, the things that get done are the things I actually write in on my calendar.

Finally, notice how you feel about the suggestions above. Then, notice whether you have feelings about the feelings. Try giving yourself permission to not blame, shame or judge yourself. Simply notice how you feel, and know that you have good reasons for those feelings. This in itself can be an important act of self-love. Change can be scary, but positive changes are worth it.

I hope you find this helpful. If you have other simple self-care tips you'd like to share, I'd love to hear about them. Feel free to email me on the Contact page at [www.ishwari.org](http://www.ishwari.org).

Blessings on your journey.

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