Add Self Care to Your Wellness Routine

This article was published by Avena Integrative Medical Center, Putnam, CT on March 24, 2020

In times like this, it is even more crucial to take a step back and reflect on your own care. It is a common misconception that self care means spending lots of money going to spa days, mountain retreats or diving into a sugar filled treat. But self care is really all the small, simple things we do that allow us to make time for ourselves.

Wellness and Stress
We are all striving to live a life of wellness. But wellness is more than just our physical wellbeing, it encompasses our emotional and mental state as well. Yet when life doesn't go as we planned and schedules get busy and events outside our control happen, we tend to forgo our wellbeing, causing our bodies to kick into survival mode. Our diets, exercise and overall quality of life are left to suffer.

When life throws things at you, it's normal to panic and stress. But staying in a state of stress creates long-term negative consequences for the body. Your body responds to stress by creating chemical signaling to the rest of your body to be in a state of high alert. In this state, your body is constantly overworked and is unable to rest and recharge. This leads to chronic health issues like fatigue, adrenal distress, impaired gut health and even inhibited immune function.

Thankfully, self care routines can support wellness and reduce stress. By putting systems in place (like reading a book or going for a walk) you can take control back over your wellbeing. Managing stress is one of the greatest health hacks you can utilize. We have put together a list to help get you started:

1.   Eat Real Food - This doesn't sound like self care but feeding your body whole, nutrient-dense food allows for your body to take care of itself from the inside out. Fueling your body with whole foods is like topping up your car with premium oil: it helps it run better, for longer.

2.   Get Outside - Fresh air does wonders for the body and mind. Go take a walk, listen to the birds chirping and get your blood flowing. Plus you'll be able to hit your daily does of vitamin D while enjoying this spring weather!

3.   Practice Social (and Digital) Distancing - Social distancing helps limit the spread of germs but digital distancing helps limit the spread of stress and anxiety. Schedule time throughout the day to take a break from social media and the news, especially at night to allow your body time to wind down.

4.   Move Your Body - This one is critical. Human bodies were made to move and there are so many benefits that come from moving. By adding movement into your daily routine, your mood will improve, your body will send signals to produce new healthy cells, your brain function will improve, etc. The list really goes on and on but the bottom line is get up and move!

5.   Take Your Vitamins - Your body needs vitamins and minerals to function properly. While you should first be supporting your system with real food, it often times is not enough support with the way we live today. Strengthen your immune system and support healthy cell function by taking your vitamins and supplements daily.

6.   Tidy Up - Did you know that clutter in our life can create clutter in our body? Studies have shown the clutter raises our cortisol levels making it harder for our bodies to function properly. By tidying up one room at a time, you are actually helping your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing!

7.   Breathe - We hope you are always breathing because that's how you stay alive but are you taking the time to practice intentional breathing? Like meditation, breathing exercises relax the mind and body. Intentional breathing can trigger your brain to send signals to the body that it is safe. Practice 8 second inhales with 10 second exhales for 5 minutes.

8.   Stay Hydrated - Your body is made up of 60% water and while hydrating is not the Instagram version of self care, it is so important to practice. Hydrating your body increases your mind and body function but it's easy to forget about. Add some Ultima or lemon slices to your water to help keep it interesting and flavorful.

9.   Sleep Better - Quality sleep can be restorative to the body. Create a nighttime routine (hint: use some of these tips like reading and breathing!) that help calm your mind and body before bed. Taking the proper steps can ensure that you are getting the quality and quantity of sleep needed to restore your body for the next day.

10.   Nourish Your Mind - While you're detoxing from technology, grab a book and curl up in a sunny spot. Pick something that interests you or an old favorite and give your mind something good to soak in.
Each one of these tips can help restore balance to your overall wellbeing and reduce stress. But you don't have to apply all these methods at once. In fact, applying all of them every day could increase your stress levels and become overwhelming. Test a few out and see which ones you like and what works with your daily, weekly and monthly routine. The bottom line is: when you don't make time for self care, stress overtakes the body. But by creating a self care routine that is purposeful and unique to you, you can take control of your wellness again.

Daily Distractions
Websites
While the world seem to has come to a halt, the best thing we can do is Cherish the Pause. Cherish the Pause
Tish Roy, owner of Ananda Mind Body Therapies shares a wonderful perspective on the power of breathing and the importance for us all to be present in the moment. Don't forget to listen to the guided Pause Between Breath at the bottom of the article.

Recipes
As far as we are concerned, chocolate helps take the stress out of any situation. These chocolate brownies chocolate brownies are egg free, lectin free, and dairy free. Keep your mind and hands busy while baking and then treat yourself to a bite of warm chocolate-y goodness.