

PARENT SELF-CARE TOOLKIT

Simple Ways to Love and
Take Care Of Yourself a
Little More Each Day



BY DR. NEKESHIA HAMMOND

Take a mental health day!

When we're constantly in a state of go-go-go, eventually we simply run out of fuel. Like a car with no gas, we simply can't go anymore. If this happens to you often, it's probably time to take a day off. Whether you use that day to go hiking, take in a show, or ride a ride at your local amusement park, you need to take time for you and recharge your own batteries.

Eat well

What we put into our bodies can have a significant impact on our minds and our emotions. Your best bet to keep your machine (read your body) in good condition, is to fill it with leafy greens, good proteins, whole grains, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Get some physical activity in your schedule

There's nothing like a brisk walk or a bike ride to get the endorphins flowing, and help you feel better about yourself. Any type of physical activity will strengthen your body and increase your self-confidence. And, if you can find a way to go outdoors for your physical activity, you'll get an even bigger mental and emotional boost.

Have the best night's rest possible

When we don't get enough sleep, we're more likely to eat foods that are bad for us, less likely to work out, and we often fill our bodies with an unnecessary amount of caffeine to keep going. If you're having trouble sleeping at night, try taking a hot shower, and having my cup of chamomile tea. Then, turn off all electronic devices to lay down in a room that is as dark as possible. Aim for a minimum of seven hours of sleep a night for the best results.



Lean on your loved ones

No man is an island, and you shouldn't seclude yourself from others. Surround yourself with those who love you as frequently as you can. If you're having difficulties getting along with some of your loved ones, try to resolve those issues as soon as possible to relieve the lingering mental strain that comes with disagreements. Hanging out with people we love does a funny thing – it makes us love ourselves a little bit more because we see our goodness reflected in them.

Take a class or learn a new skill

Whether it's trying your hand at salsa, painting, learning how to sew, or something completely different, expanding our skill sets improves our self-love. Simply knowing how to do something new is empowering.

Give your wardrobe a makeover

You know how you have that one pair of jeans that you always feel good in? Or you have that blouse or shirt that every time you wear it you get plenty of compliments? You need more of that in your wardrobe! Go through your closet and take out things that don't fit well, or that make you feel bad about yourself. When we're wearing something that makes us feel good, we portray more confidence, and then become more confident as a result. You do not have to spend a fortune. Maybe buy a couple of key pieces that you can combine with some of the things you have now. Bottom line – when you look good, you feel better, and love yourself more.

Treat yourself to something you want

Take some guilt free time to read a good book, indulge in a decadent dessert, or even just watch an entire sporting event on television. You spend so much time giving to the members of your family and doing the things that they want to do. But you can't forget to take the time to do things you want to do as well. Even something as simple as detouring away from the grocery store to grab a scoop of gelato before continuing your errands can make a world of difference.





Stop the negative self-talk, and create a script of positive self-talk

If you frequently catch yourself talking badly about yourself, take a moment and pause. Intentionally interrupt the thought pattern and replace whatever that negative thing was with something positive. It may take a while to build the habit, but as you continue working on it, you'll find yourself flooding your mind with more positive beliefs and pushing out the negative ones.

Limit the negativity in all aspects of your life

For starters, go on a news diet. Yes, you may need to know critical information about things going on in the world around you. However, that doesn't mean you have to inundate yourself with negativity. It's no secret that humans mimic the things we see, and the more we consume negativity, the more negative we become. Instead, surround yourself with constructive and happy people, and positive news as often as you can.

Be gentle with your reactions to stress

When you are faced with an unexpected stressful life event, consider doing the following: Look at the situation objectively *before* reacting. Determine what you can do about it. Do the things you can and pray/meditate on what you can't control. Remember to be grateful for all you do have. Seek out the lessons from the situation.

Manage your time effectively

Mastering your time can prevent stress and stop it in its tracks. By having a written plan for each day, you won't have to worry about what needs to be done because it's already in writing. The simple act of managing your time allows you to reclaim that head space of wonder and fear about whether or not critical tasks were handled. If you don't have a time management system in place, create one.

Incorporate relaxation and meditation

There are a variety of methods for relaxation and meditation; some can be learned in class while others require you look into yourself. If you haven't found things that relax you, look for some. And, do yourself a favor and don't allow your relaxation method to be drugs or alcohol – these will only make things worse, and could actually exacerbate your stress.

Change your surroundings

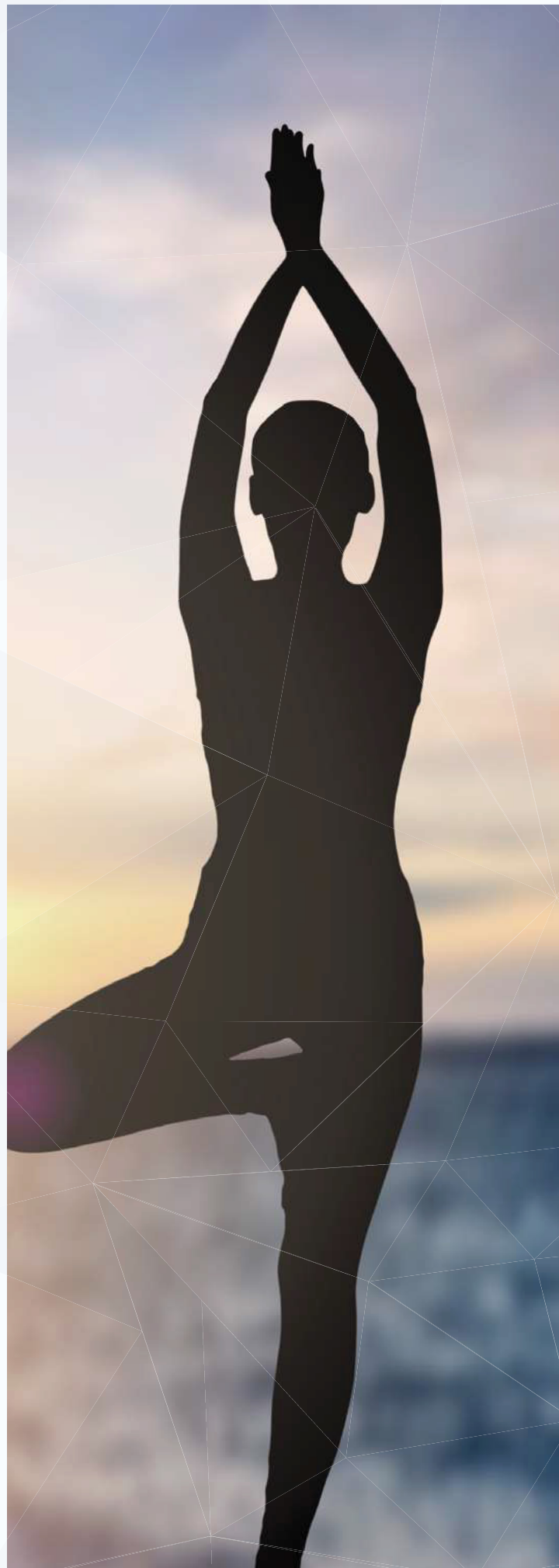
A well-organized physical surrounding eliminates being confronted with stressful situations of misplaced objects. Consider working on de-cluttering your space around you. Add candles, fresh flowers, or other calming items to create your ideal environment.

Use your support system

Developing and cultivating a strong social support network such as friends, loved ones, neighbors, business associates, and even pets, is healthy for the mind and body. A hug, a cuddle and simply chatting with people you care about can quickly ease stress. The unfortunate reality is that stress is a fact of life. You may not be able to control the stressors heading your way, but you can control how you respond to them and how you manage your own stress.

You need to be healthy to take care of your kids

You're not able to help anyone if you are not well. Your body, mind and spirit need to be healthy so that you can give more to yourself and to those around you. In the words of our kid's G. I. Joe toys, "Knowing is half the battle," the other half is taking action! Thinking about it and knowing what to do won't give you any results. You have to make your mind up to do something about your self-care and then *follow through* on it.



About Dr. Hammond

Dr. Nekeshia Hammond is an author, international speaker, psychologist, and an expert in children's mental health. She is the founder of Hammond Psychology & Associates, and the former President of the Florida Psychological Association.

Dr. Hammond speaks to various groups to help increase public education about mental health issues. She has been featured on ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, as well as various magazines and radio shows throughout the globe. She is the host of Mental Health Moment with Dr. Hammond and author of the books **ADHD Explained: What Every Parent Needs to Know** and **The Practical Guide to Raising Emotionally Healthy Children**.



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