



# SELF-CARE TIPS FOR *Youth* TOOLKIT

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# The Importance Of Self-Care

Stress affects everyone, and youth are sadly not an exception to this. Between managing schoolwork, keeping up with extracurricular activities, making and keeping friends, and the many stressors that come with development, children and teens definitely have their fair share of stress. When we ignore our stress, it continues to pile up until it overflows, so we want to take care of ourselves to avoid stress overload.

Practicing regular self-care is beneficial for our mental health, emotional health, and overall well-being. It's hard to focus on schoolwork, friends, or activities when our stress levels are too high, so we're here to teach you self-care tips to optimize your mental health!



## What Is Self-Care?

Self-care is the act of taking care of ourselves mentally, emotionally, and physically. Self-care can look different for different people, and that's okay! It's all about what feels right and what works for you. As long as what you're practicing is healthy, safe, and productive, and it benefits your health, that counts! Below we will focus on some great self-care tips to help you feel your best and optimize your well-being.

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## Put Yourself First

Sometimes our lives become too overwhelming and stressful to manage right in that moment and we just need a mental break. Taking some time to put yourself first when needed is a great way to practice self-care. Use this time to free your mind from your many responsibilities and dedicate some well-deserved time to yourself. It's hard to perform to the best of our abilities when we're feeling overwhelmed, so taking time for yourself gives your mind the rest it needs.

## Practice Self-Love

When we love ourselves, we're more likely to take better care of ourselves and live healthier lives. To help you reach your full potential, try these self-love tips:

- Check in with yourself (Ask yourself and examine how you're feeling physically, mentally, or emotionally)
- Allow yourself to make mistakes (You can learn a lot from them)
- Don't compare yourself to others
- Show yourself kindness and compassion



## Take a Break From Social Media and News

Being informed and keeping up with friends are both important, but overdoing them can lead to some serious anxiety. It's easy to accidentally spend hours scrolling through social media, and we're all guilty of overdoing it from time to time. However, try limiting your screen time to optimize your mental health and overall well-being. An effective way to practice limiting your screen time is to utilize features such as "do not disturb" or try turning your social media notifications off.

Try practicing "no screen zones" at home or with friends to optimize your experience in the present moment. Once you get comfortable using your phone less, you will be amazed at just how easy it can be to break our addictive habits with social media – and your mind will thank you!



## Engage in Your Preferred Art Medium

Whether you're a creator, performer, or enjoyer, the arts are a great way to treat ourselves and our minds. When you're feeling down, try turning on your favorite movie, reading your favorite book, or listening to your favorite artist to instill some peace in your mind. It's important to incorporate things you enjoy into your everyday life to optimize your mental health, so try carving out some time each day to delve into your interests.



## Have Meaningful Conversations with Friends & Family

Communicating with people we love is another excellent way to practice self-care. Sometimes our minds become too busy and overwhelmed to handle on our own, and that's where communication with loved ones comes into play. It's important to talk to trusted individuals (parents, friends, teachers) about what's going on in your life so they can offer you love and support.

It's important to have people in our lives that we trust who can listen to and help us get through tough times. Open and healthy communication is something you should practice regularly. Personal expression is also important in practicing self-care. Practice healthy, personal expression with your loved ones.



## Prioritize Your Physical Health

Physical health and mental health work together hand in hand, so it's important to pay attention to both aspects of health to optimize our best well-being. Here are some tips to help with this:



### Ensure that you're getting enough sleep each night

as sleep deprivation causes significant health effects. Getting seven to nine hours of sleep can be hard, but try scheduling your evenings out to ensure you get that much needed sleep! Practicing a 'bedtime routine' can be beneficial for getting your mind into a calm, restful place to ensure a full night's rest.



### Exercise is a great way to practice self-care and keep ourselves healthy!

You don't need intense exercise for it to be effective either! Going for a walk, practicing slow stretching or yoga, and dancing all count as exercise.



### Eating healthy

and ensuring you're getting your proper nutrition is another terrific way to optimize your health, physically and mentally. Try snacking on fruits or vegetables instead of junk food from time to time.



# Spend Time in Nature

Studies show that spending time outside has some serious benefits, so go outside! Try taking a walk around your neighborhood, playing outside, or even just sitting in your yard. You'll quickly learn to appreciate the feeling of sunlight shining down on you and the sounds of birds chirping all around. Getting familiar with your surroundings promotes more appreciation and gratitude for your life and those you share it with. Spending time outdoors promotes good mental health and is a great way to practice self-care.



## Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness is all about experiencing and living in the present moment. When our minds are racing and we're busy thinking about the past and the future, we lose the present moment. Try these two ways to practice mindfulness and living in the present moment to optimize your mental health and emotional health:

**1.Meditation:** Find a comfortable and quiet place without any distractions. Sit down and close your eyes and begin to focus on your breathing. Focus on your breathing and allow your mind to just be.

**2.Yoga:** Practicing yoga is a fantastic way to allow your mind and body to live in the present moment. Practice mindful breathing while stretching.



Life can be overwhelming and stressful, but practicing the tips shared above will help you live a more balanced and fulfilling life. Take self-care seriously to optimize your mental health, emotional health, and overall well-being. These tips will not make your problems go away, but they will help you to better manage them.

If things get too difficult to bear, there's no harm in seeking out a counselor or therapist. You're not alone, and you don't have to suffer in silence.

# 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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