

Self-Care Tips For **Teachers Toolkit**



Dr. Nekeshia Hammond

Spending time on self-care is beneficial for everyone. Doing things you enjoy helps create the energy you can tap into when you feel you have nothing more to give. This is especially true for teachers.

WHY SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT FOR TEACHERS

Teachers frequently tell others to take care of themselves, but don't listen to their advice. As a teacher, you're a caregiver who spends most of your time focusing energy on others. This is one reason maintaining good mental health is so important for you.

Another reason you benefit from self-care as a teacher is that your job is stressful. Aside from nurses, teachers have the highest stress rate of any profession. Unfortunately, ongoing stress frequently leads to poor physical and mental health. When you don't take care of these elements, burnout occurs. Perhaps it's the cause for the high turnover rate in the education field today.

SIMPLE SELF-CARE TIPS FOR TEACHERS

While loving your job is great, it's important that you make engaging in self-care a priority in your life. Doing so isn't only important for you, but also your students and colleagues too. You don't have to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on trips to the spa or overpriced travel to engage in self-care either. It's the little things that add up quickly. Below are just a few ways to make self-care a regular practice:

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Start Each Day with Something Positive

Create a positive ritual for yourself each morning. This can include journaling, meditation, yoga, or something else that brings you calm and joy. What matters is this establishes the tone for the rest of the day. When you spend some quiet time alone before encountering your students' needs, you'll feel more prepared to do so.



Make Time for Your Hobbies

As a teacher, you may struggle to find time to do anything besides work-related activities. This is stressful because you need to relax, too. Research shows that not taking this time to relax results in mental stress, physical illness, and inferior quality of life. Make sure you carve out some free time to refresh so you're more effective as a teacher.



Keep Up With Your Medical Appointments

As a teacher, it may seem like your job is never done. You have a lot of responsibilities. With everything you have going on, it's challenging to maintain medical appointments such as annual physicals. Unfortunately, this could lead to problems for you later in life. By taking good care of your physical health, you're better able to perform your job as a teacher.





Get Plenty of Sleep

When feeling stressed, sleeping less than normal only adds to your stress because your body won't be able to perform at its optimum levels. Being exhausted negatively affects the amount of work you can accomplish and your overall health as well. By getting enough rest, you'll be able to focus more clearly for longer periods, so you're more productive and perform better.

Eat a Healthier Diet

There are scientifically proven links between a poor diet and depression, anxiety, stress, and poor physical health. Eating a well-balanced diet will not only prevent you from getting sick, but when you eat properly, you'll also have more energy while teaching. You'll also find you're better equipped to handle whatever the day may bring your way.



Workout

Your physical fitness is important. Working out regularly allows you to maintain good physical health and burn off some of the stress you may feel throughout the day in a healthy way. When you feel good physically, you'll feel better mentally because you'll feel more regulated, strong, and stable.

Invest in Getting to Know Yourself

Don't get so wrapped up in your job that you forget to take care of yourself. You're not a superhero. There's more to life than educating children. Finding other things you enjoy and look forward to will enable you to become a better teacher. If you don't know what you're interested in, take up the practice of journaling to explore what you like and don't like. Even a few brief minutes each day will enable you to get to know yourself better.



Create a Box or Jar of Positivity

It's easy to become negative when you're feeling stressed. When you become too negative, you may get burnt out, which is detrimental to both your mental and physical health. One way in which you can combat this is to create a "positivity" box in which you keep positive notes, inspirational quotes, and a list of things you're thankful for. Looking at these things when you're feeling down will give you the encouragement you need to keep going.



Stay in the Moment At and Away From School

As a teacher, you may become so focused on your students that you grow frustrated and angry easily. One way to combat this, is to stay present in each moment both at school and outside of school hours. The best way to do this is to set and maintain healthy boundaries for yourself. For instance, you may need to tell your students you won't check emails at certain times so you can focus more on your family. You may also need to tell your family that you won't be home until a certain time so you can be present for your students. Defining work hours and off work hours for your life will help you focus on what is in front of you rather than worrying about things outside of your control at any given moment.





Take Some Time Off

You may need to take a break before you feel you're about to break. Take some time for yourself to rest and re-prioritize. Don't be hard on yourself when you choose to take a break. Sometimes you need to do this so you're better equipped to manage the stress that you're surrounded by.

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

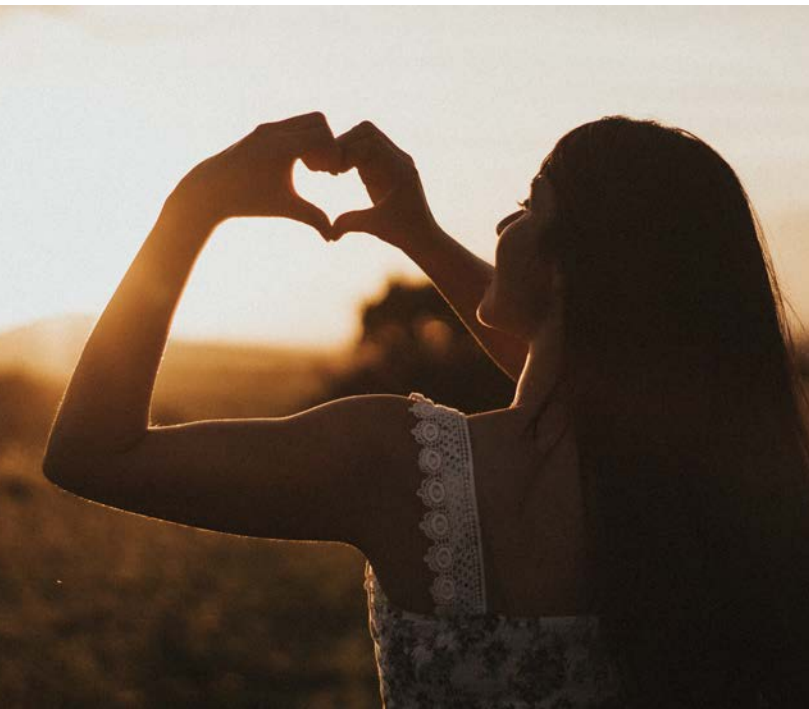
It's imperative to create a strong support system all around you. These shouldn't only be other teachers, but also friends you meet outside of the school's walls. When you're struggling, make sure you reach out to them.

You may also find talking to a therapist or counselor beneficial. There's no shame in seeking mental health treatment. If you don't want anyone to know, you don't need to share it with anyone. Having someone to talk to may be all you need to help you feel refreshed and recharged.



Build Self-Care Into Everyday

As a teacher, your days are busy, but you can't let them be so busy you forget to take care of yourself. It doesn't matter which of these tips or how many of them you choose to adopt. What matters is that you build a self-care plan that works for you. The world needs you, but it needs you at your best. You can't give from an empty cup, and you deserve to take care of yourself. Fill up your cup, and you'll enjoy better health mentally, physically, and emotionally.



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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