

## GUIDES

# Definitive Guide To Self-Care & Stress Reduction

The science on why self-care is crucial + finding time to practice it daily.

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It's easy to fall into the routine of being present for everyone but yourself—helping the kids with their homework, walking the dog, supporting a partner, or all of the above. After a while, the lack of “me-time” can be frustrating, not to mention exhausting and detrimental to your physical and mental health. That's where self-care comes in. Whether you're setting an intention to bring more of that me-time into your everyday or looking for new ways to keep your mind, body, and soul happy, we've curated a guide for all things self-care, from why it's so essential to easy ways to get started with your very own self-care routine.

## What is Self-Care?



First things first: self-care isn't selfish or self-indulgent. It's an important component of maintaining a happy, healthy lifestyle — and medical professionals agree. The **World Health Organization** defines it as “the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider.” A 2004 **American Journal of Nursing** study describes it as “the self-initiated behavior that people choose to incorporate to promote good health and general well-being.”

Their view may have more of a clinical ring to it, but over time self-care has taken on a broader definition that's just as much about doing what makes you happy to relieve stress.

In a nutshell, self-care is anything you want it to be, never a one-size-fits-all routine. For some, that's morning affirmations; for others, it's doing a face mask while listening to a podcast, and there are those who need a daily jog to clock in that me-time. No matter your preference, we're big believers in a daily dose of self-care, even if it's just 10 minutes.

## Why Self-Care is So Important



Numerous studies have concluded what many of us now know: self-care is rewarding. It can be a way to help you reduce stress, cultivate self-compassion, fortify friendships and sharpen your brain.

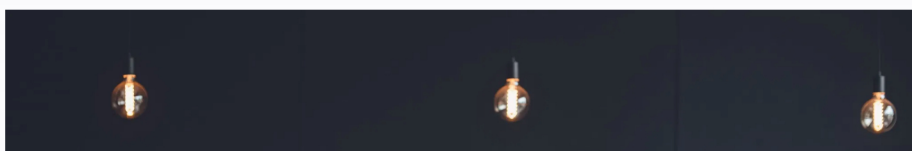
A 2018 study, for instance, found that medical students who actively took on **self-care measures** — like healthy eating, physical activity, spiritual growth, or time with loved ones — were less stressed out overall and said they enjoyed a better quality of life. Another report from 2015 looked at adolescents experiencing emotional distress. Self-care practices like sports, art, and their community of friends were instrumental in improving their mood.

So even though we know self-care has been scientifically proven to reap plenty of positives, why does it seem so difficult to do?

Time is usually the culprit, with many of us thinking we can't fit it in between work and family responsibilities. But just like consecutive days of not sleeping enough or multiple days of junk food sessions, it can catch up with you. And studies have shown that compounded stress can lead to high blood pressure, **decreased immunity**, **digestive issues**, and more.

That's why it's important to remember that your stress-busting strategy is unique to you. Your friend may find that release through reading, but you might like a HIIT workout. Do what works for you and keep it up, even if it's just a quick practice every day.

## 5 Ideas to Start Your Own Self-Care Routine





Establishing a self-care habit means finding the routine that's right for you. You can use our ideas as a jumping-off point, figuring out what makes the most sense for your schedule, space, and happiness level.

## #1 Meditation

Much like self-care, meditation doesn't fall under one definition. It doesn't have to be a daunting, hours-long session. It can be a 5-minute morning meditation while lying in bed or a walking meditation on a hiking trail. No matter your method, it's all about mindfulness, which has been linked to **improving mood** and **reducing cardiovascular risk factors** like hypertension and type 2 diabetes. Wondering where to start? FitOn has a **meditation category** with plenty of options.

If you haven't joined our community yet, sign up for free and try a FitOn meditation today.

- **Inviting Ease**
- **Body Scan**
- **Mindful Awareness**
- **Visualize Calmness**
- **Morning Mindset**

## #2 Daily Movement

**Regular exercise** — whether you're into **HIIT classes**, **yoga**, or walks in the neighborhood — reduces stress, improves sleep, and boosts those feel-good emotions. And if you're ready to get sweaty and get your heart pumping, rigorous exercise can also sharpen your memory and cognition. If you're new to fitness, Harvard Medical School recommends starting with a few minutes every day and upping the amount by five to 10 minutes each week until you hit about 150 minutes per week.

To add more movement into your self-care routine, take a look around the FitOn app to browse various workout categories and see what styles of exercise you love the most!

## #3 Fueling Your Body with Health-Boosting Foods

The old saying goes, "you are what you eat," and you can feel just how true that rings after a few days of eating a well-rounded diet, one that includes fiber-rich vegetables and whole grains, lean protein, and plenty of water to stay hydrated. These foods serve as fuel to keep you going and keep you satiated, so you're not reaching for that chocolate bar when you're stressed. And remember, if you've indulged a little extra one day, don't beat yourself up. Tomorrow is a new day.

## #4 Find What Brings You Joy — and Do It More Often

Take stock of what you do every day, making a mental note of the things that make you happiest, whether it's your workout, trying new recipes, or giving yourself scalp massages before bed. Don't worry about what you think you're supposed to do. Focus on what you actually enjoy because the more you inherently love it, the more likely you are to make it a habit.

## #5 Get Enough Sleep

"I feel like a new person," says anyone who finally gets peaceful, uninterrupted sleep. **Studies** have shown that catching enough zzz's improves immunity, memory, and emotional balance, among other markers. While everyone's needs are different, researchers agree that you should get at least 7–7.5 hours per night. To prep for **proper sleep**, avoid heavy meals or intense workouts before bedtime. And if you have stress on the mind as you head to bed, FitOn has a huge variety of sleep-themed meditations, like **Deepest Sleep Ever** and **Goonight Meditation**.

# More Inspiration For Starting Your Own Self-



# Care Routine



## The Best Self-Care Strategies

Establishing a self-care routine is all about forming good-for-you habits. **Here**, we break down 10 of the most game-changing practices, from making movement a nonnegotiable to maintaining meaningful friendships.

## Our Go-To Guide For Recharging

Maybe you start with one tech-free day a month or bust out that foam roller hiding in the closet. Whatever your refresh, we've curated easy, approachable ways to give your mental health some TLC with this **guide to recharging**.

## Life-Changing Sleep Hacks

A good night's sleep is the foundation for feeling your best, **physically** and emotionally. So we rounded up fun, accessible ways to clean up your sleep hygiene, including calming playlists, blackout curtains, and a bedtime snack (yes, really!). **Read the 20 life-changing sleep hacks here.**

## Support Your Immunity

It goes beyond getting Vitamin C. A robust immune system depends on a well-rounded diet, healthy gut, quality sleep, and more. Add these immune-boosting ideas to your week — chances are, you're practicing some of them already! **Read more here.**

# Defining Your Own Self-Care Routine

There are so many ways to practice self-care and getting your daily dose could be as simple as pressing play on a 5-minute FitOn meditation, making your favorite wholesome meal, or as elaborate as planning a staycation or booking your next salon appointment. It all comes down to what fills your cup — what leaves you feeling recharged? While self-care may look different for everyone, the important thing to remember is just how essential it is. Self-care is an integral part of any wellness journey. So, while you plan your workouts and meals for the week, be sure to pencil in some time for daily self-care too.

A promotional banner for the FitOn app. It features a collage of images on the left showing people exercising (yoga, running, strength training) and eating healthy food. In the center is the FitOn logo, which consists of a stylized 'F' made of three colored lines (blue, purple, green) above the word 'FITON'. Below the logo is the text '#1 FREE FITNESS APP' and a purple button that says 'SIGN UP TO START'. On the right, there are more images showing people working out and a smartphone displaying the app's interface with a workout plan.





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Archana Ram is an Ojai, California-based journalist specializing in health, sustainability and food for outlets like Vogue, Conde Nast Traveler, and more. Her passion for wellness has taken her to a 10-day silent meditation retreat in India, backpacking across glaciers in Patagonia and swimming through a mermaid-inspired aerobic class. More frequently, you'll find Archana hiking, practicing yoga or baking something sweet because hey, everything in moderation.

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