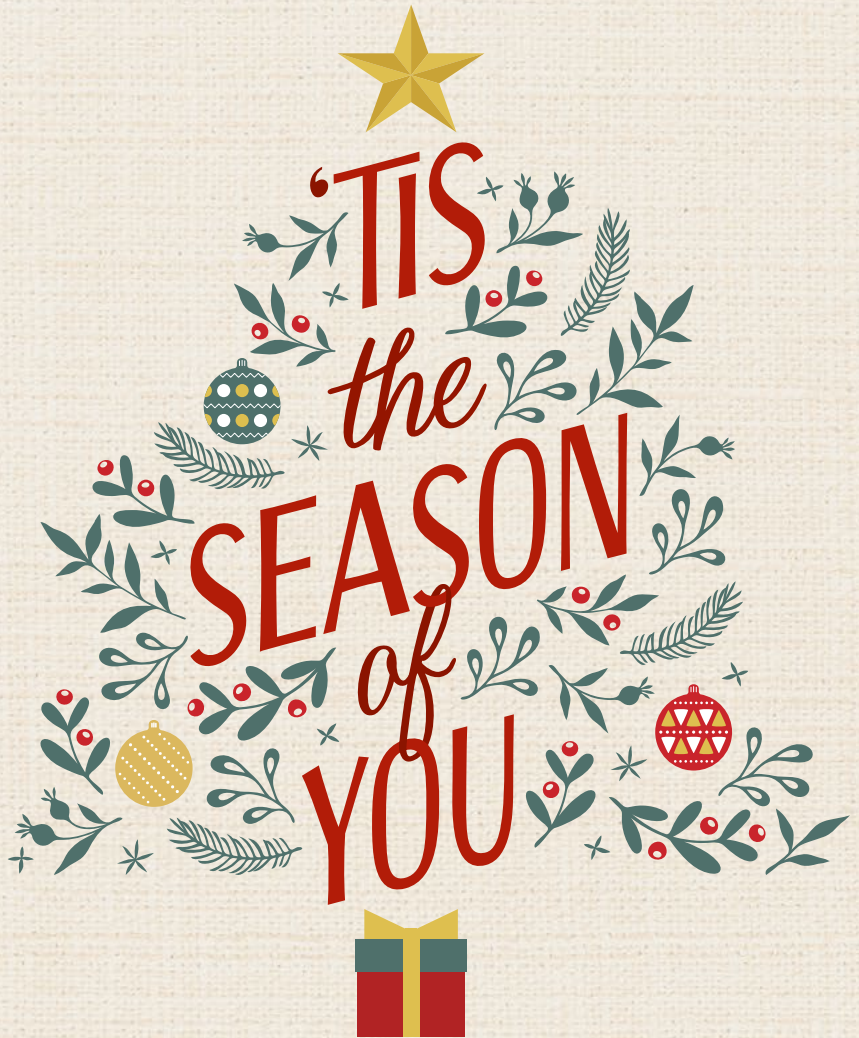




*A*s this year comes to a close, December invites us to pause, reflect and care for ourselves with intention. Amid the holiday hustle and the weight of year-end responsibilities, self-care becomes not just helpful but essential. It's a daily wellness practice that honors your emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual needs. Self-care validates your existence, helping you manage stress, prevent illness and increase joy.

This toolkit explores the many dimensions of self-care and how they support both short-term relief and long-term resilience. Whether you're cozying up with a journal, taking a walk with a friend or simply saying "no" to what drains you, self-care is about choosing what refuels you. It's not selfish because it's foundational to a healthy life.



BLANKETS, BOUNDARIES and BREATH: the POWER of SELF-CARE

Self-care isn't indulgent—it's essential. At its core, self-care is about validating your existence: recognizing that your goals, beliefs, relationships and health matter. When you consistently meet your own needs, you're better equipped to manage stress, prevent disease and increase positive emotions.

Self-care empowers individuals to improve their health, maintain their well-being and cope with illness—with or without the support of a health care provider. It's a proactive approach to wellness that relies on personal responsibility and self-reliance. True self-care isn't forced or performative, it's meant to refuel you. Whether it's a quiet moment of reflection or a brisk walk with a friend, self-care is about choosing what helps you feel whole.



LAYERS of WELLNESS: a COZY LOOK at SELF-CARE DIMENSIONS

Self-care is multifaceted. Understanding its different dimensions helps you build a balanced routine that supports your whole self.

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE:

Caring for your body improves your quality of life and helps prevent or manage chronic conditions. Physical self-care includes getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods, exercising regularly and releasing physical tension through relaxation techniques. Stress often manifests in the body, so movement, rest and nourishment are key.

Example:

If you're frequently experiencing tension headaches and fatigue, commit to a nightly wind-down routine: stretching for 10 minutes, turning off screens by 9 p.m. and sipping herbal tea before bed.

MENTAL SELF-CARE:

Mental self-care supports cognitive health and emotional clarity. Activities like reading, learning new skills, solving puzzles and setting boundaries help reduce stress and prevent burnout. Prioritizing mental stimulation and healthy thought patterns builds resilience and energy.

Example:

Block off 30 minutes each morning to read a novel before checking your emails. This quiet ritual helps you start the day with focus and calm, reducing the mental clutter that's overwhelming you.



EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE:

Emotional wellness involves acknowledging, expressing and managing your feelings. Journaling, practicing mindfulness, engaging with creative outlets, going to therapy and spending quality time with loved ones are all ways to nurture your emotional health. These practices help you process emotions and stay grounded.

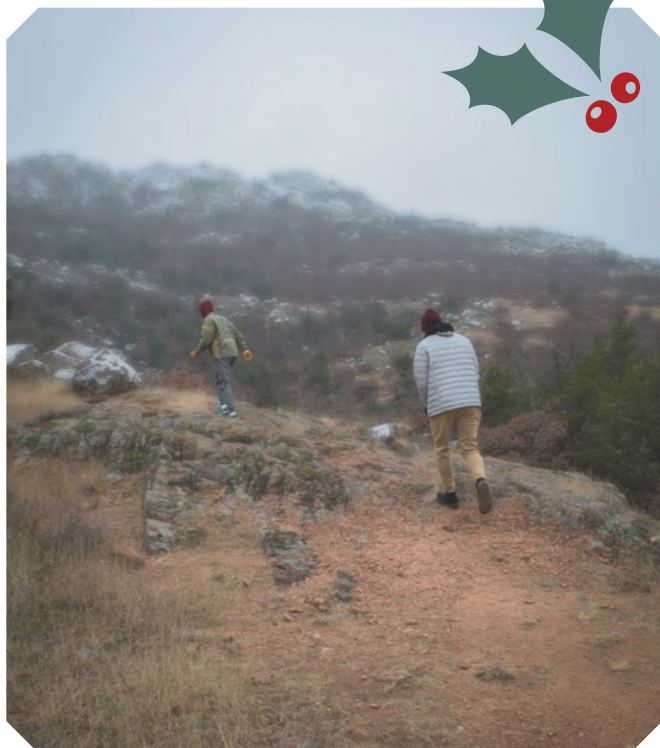
Example:

After a tough week, spend Saturday afternoon painting while listening to music. Don't worry about the outcome; just let the colors reflect your mood.



SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE:

Spiritual self-care connects you to something greater—whether through faith, reflection or personal values. For some, this means prayer or religious practice; for others, it's meditation, journaling or spending time in nature. Spiritual wellness fosters purpose, alignment and inner peace.



Example:

Go for a solo walk in a nearby nature preserve; leave your phone behind. Use the time to reflect on your week, breathe deeply and reconnect with your values. It's a reset button for the soul.

SOCIAL SELF-CARE:

Healthy relationships are vital to well-being. Social self-care includes spending time with loved ones, joining community groups and seeking support when needed. Feeling connected combats loneliness and reinforces a sense of belonging. On the flip side, lacking social support can lead to distress and unhealthy behaviors.



Example:

Join a board game night hosted by your local library. Meet new people, laugh often and start to feel a sense of belonging that eases your loneliness.

THAW the STRESS: WHY SELF-CARE WARMS your WHOLE LIFE

Self-care is a cornerstone of overall wellness. It requires regularly checking in with yourself like you would with a friend. By tuning into your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs, you can better navigate stress and cultivate balance.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach. What matters is that your self-care practices benefit you. They can help maintain homeostasis, reduce anxiety and improve mood. Being attuned to your needs also enhances your ability to be present with others. When you pause to reflect and recalibrate, you gain clarity, gratitude and a deeper appreciation for life.



SHORT-TERM BENEFITS

- **Reduced stress levels:** Resting and prioritizing your needs help calm the nervous system.
- **Increased self-worth:** Regularly meeting your core needs boosts confidence and self-esteem.
- **Feelings of belonging:** Spending time with others fosters love, connection and mental wellness.



LONG-TERM BENEFITS

- **Managing chronic conditions:** Self-care supports better outcomes for depression, diabetes and heart disease.
- **Disease prevention:** Healthy habits reduce the risk of stroke, heart attack and obesity.
- **Stress reduction:** Lowering chronic stress protects against high blood pressure, digestive issues and more.
- **Healthier relationships:** When you care for yourself, you can show up more fully in your relationships.
- **Improved job satisfaction:** Studies show self-care reduces burnout and improves teamwork.
- **Improved quality of life:** When you feel better, you live better—physically, emotionally and socially.

BUNDLE UP with INTENTION: CRAFTING Your WINTER SELF-CARE PLAN

A personalized self-care plan helps you stay consistent and intentional. Start by setting goals: Identify what you want to improve, like your sleep quality, stress levels or relationships. Reflect on your physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social needs. Choose activities that feel restorative, not forced, and define your “no list” to avoid what drains you. Schedule self-care just as you would any other priority, and track how practicing self-care affects your mood and energy. As you build momentum, expand your toolkit and invite others to join you—because wellness is warmer when shared.



DECEMBER: A SEASON to REFUEL, REFLECT and RECONNECT

The holiday season is often filled with giving, gathering and gratitude, but many of us rarely pause to give back to ourselves. This advent-style calendar is your invitation to turn inward and practice self-care in small, intentional ways each day. It's not about reaching perfection or boosting productivity, it's about presence. Whether you're sipping tea, taking a walk or simply breathing deeply, each prompt is designed to help you reconnect with your body, mind and spirit.



LET THIS BE *Your* DAILY REMINDER:

You are worthy of care, kindness and appreciation – just as you are.



1

DAY 1

Look in the mirror and thank yourself for all you've done this year – at work, at home and in your community.

2

DAY 2

Pause and appreciate your body. Say aloud: "My body is functioning. I am breathing. My heart is pumping. I am alive."

3

DAY 3

Write down two things you genuinely like about yourself – skills, traits or quirks that make you uniquely you.

4

DAY 4

Don't wait for praise from others. Celebrate yourself for something you've done well lately, whether big or small.

5

DAY 5

Practice kind self-talk today. Speak to yourself the way you would to someone you deeply admire.

6

DAY 6

Start a gratitude journal. Write one thing each day that you appreciate about yourself or your life.

7

DAY 7

Take a mindful walk. Engage your senses – notice what you see, hear, smell and feel.

8

DAY 8

Treat yourself! Whether it's a favorite meal, a cozy blanket or a quiet moment, give yourself something nourishing.

9

DAY 9

Begin a list of your strengths and natural talents. What do you bring to your team, your family, your community?

10

DAY 10

Follow a social media account that uplifts you – something that brings joy, gratitude or inspiration.

11

DAY 11

Try self-compassion meditation. Repeat: "May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I be free from suffering."

12

DAY 12

Accept yourself fully. You are enough, even with imperfections. You are worthy of rest and joy.



13

DAY 13

Give yourself a relaxation day. Take a bath, stretch, do yoga or simply unplug for a few hours.



14

DAY 14

While waiting for something (a webpage to load, a microwave meal to finish heating up or a meeting to end), jot down one thing you're grateful for.



15

DAY 15

Make plans to volunteer or help someone. Giving back is a powerful form of self-care and connection.



16

DAY 16

After a workout or movement session, thank your body for its strength and your mind for its perseverance.



17

DAY 17

Drink your morning coffee or tea mindfully. Savor the warmth and name one thing you're grateful for.



18

DAY 18

Try the STOP method: S = Stop and pause. T = Take three deep breaths and smile. O = Observe what's happening inside and around you. P = Proceed with compassion and awareness.



19

DAY 19

Start a gratitude jar. Write down moments, memories or traits you're thankful for and revisit them when needed.



20

DAY 20

Do something creative – draw, write, dance, bake or build. Let your imagination lead the way.



21

DAY 21

Say "no" to something that drains you. Protect your energy by honoring your boundaries.



22

DAY 22

Reach out to someone who lifts you up. Connection is a form of self-care; let yourself be supported.



23

DAY 23

Use your senses to reflect. Examples: "I'm grateful for three things I hear ... three things I see ... three things I smell ... three things I touch ... three things I taste ..."



24

DAY 24

Reflect upon these questions: Who am I? What do I want? What's my purpose? What am I grateful for?