

Self Care

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Self care is one of those important skills that they sometimes forget to teach you in college. Self care is the relationship you develop with yourself. Most of us are encouraged to focus on external demands, from teachers, work supervisors, etc., but we are rarely encouraged to look inward to see what things we need for ourselves. There are some aspects to self care that are very personal and unique to each person. You may not need to the same things as someone else to recharge your batteries, but it's important for you to discover what you need.

Self care means learning how to set boundaries with others and learning how to say "no". If this is an area of struggle, watch someone who is effective at setting limits. Learning ways to say no without being harsh or mean-spirited is a very helpful skill. Without it, you will find yourself at the mercy of others, doing more and more but enjoying things less and less.

A related aspect of self care entails finding the time to do the things that matter to you. Whether that's browsing in a bookstore, going to a coffee house to hear jazz, or spending time outside enjoying the fall leaves. College can be a great time to experience new things that may become part of your self care whether it's watching foreign films,

learning to shoot pool or taking yoga. Whatever you enjoy, creating balance to provide some time to nurture your soul is an important facet of self care.

Self care also refers to our social lives. When the work load intensifies it is often tempting to withdraw and avoid the hassle of being social. But as social animals, we crave community for the sense of belonging and understanding it brings. Allow yourself to have time to connect with others. If this is an area you've neglected, you can begin now by taking a moment to really say hello to someone or spend a few minutes over dinner in the residence hall. Being heard, knowing that someone understands, and sometimes just knowing someone cares, is a very powerful message.

Self care also pertains to how we treat our bodies. It's important to keep your body well nourished, well rested, and well exercised. Your body needs a variety of nutrients to build muscle, to help the organs function and to keep your mind alert. It's easier to feel content when our bodies feel good. Our immune system and overall energy levels get a boost from even moderate exercise. And adequate rest is also a key ingredient to managing stress. Research connects sleep deprivation to illness, difficulty concentrating and memory deficits.

Self care is really an attitude that says "I'm worth it". It is the wisdom to see that you need to care for yourself and realizing you get one body, one life, and it's your job to learn how to live your life well. I hope you are able to make wise choices for yourself this semester. Best wishes in maintaining some quality self care even as finals approach.

