**Self-care is an important part of daily life, however during times of uncertainty and this unprecedented situation with COVID-19 the need for self-care is imperative.**

Self-care is often the first thing that gets sacrificed when life is busy and stressful, and people often think that taking time for themselves seems indulgent. But looking after your own wellbeing will help you get through this challenging time, and will help you to better care for others.

Amidst the confusion and constant stream of information due to COVID-19, a self-care plan can help you focus, make decisions and stay healthy.

### Self-care helps to prevent stress and anxiety

By incorporating self-care activities into your regular routine, like going for a walk or socialising with friends, you give your body and mind time to rest, reset and rejuvenate, so you can avoid or reduce the symptoms of stress or anxiety.

### Self-care makes you more effective

When you take time for yourself and give your body the food, rest, and activity it needs, you will actually have more energy to meet the demands of daily life –however unusual they might be. Bringing more balance to your daily routine will help you be more productive and more resilient to stressors.

## How to create a self-care plan

### Step one | evaluate your coping skills

Examining your own habits is an important first step in developing a self-care plan. How do you typically deal with life’s demands? Can you identify when you need to take a break?

When faced with challenges, we can use either positive coping strategies or negative coping strategies. Below are a few examples of each.

Which strategies do you use?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | | |
|  | **Positive** |  | **Negative** |  |
| Deep breathing | Yelling |
| Listening to music | Smoking |
| Exercising | Pacing |
| Meditation | Skipping meals |
| Reading | Drinking alcohol to excess |
| Connecting with others | Withdrawal from friends and family |
| Engaging in a hobby | Biting fingernails |
|  | | | | |

It is important to be honest when evaluating your behaviours. If you find yourself unable to cope with a situation or feeling angry, snappy with others, or anxious, take a deep breath and refocus. It may be time to re-evaluate your go-to coping skills.

### Step two | identify your daily self-care needs

Take a moment to consider what you value and need in your everyday life. Then consider what you value and need during these difficult times of uncertainty. It may not seem like the right time to be planning, but time spent now will reap benefits later if you can get a plan in place.

Remember that self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs; consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial and workplace wellbeing.

You will find a template for ‘*Identifying needs*’ at the end of this fact sheet that you can print off. This template contains useful examples to get you started.

### Step three | reflect. examine. replace

# Reflect

Reflect on the existing coping strategies you have identifies have outlined in the previous activities. What is working? What is not working?

Keep the helpful tools and remove anything that is unhelpful.

# Examine

Are there barriers to maintaining your self-care? Examine how you can address these barriers.

Start taking steps toward incorporating new strategies that will benefit your health and wellbeing.

# Replace

Work on reducing, and then eliminating, negative coping strategies. If you find yourself using negative strategies, then begin by choosing one action you feel is most harmful and identify a positive strategy to replace it.

Positive coping skills are an important part of your self-care toolkit.

### Step four | create your self-care plan

Once you have determined your personal needs and strategies, write them down. Your self-care plan can be as simple or as detailed as you need it to be. You may choose to keep a detailed plan on your desk and carry a simplified version in your wallet, in your purse, or on your phone.

Look at it regularly, keep going back to it and refining it as the situation with COVID-19 develops.

You will find a template for your [personal self-care plan](#selfcare) at the end of this fact sheet that you can fill out.

In addition to your self-care planning, it is important to find an approach that SETTLES the mind.

Our advice is:

Stay focused on the here and now and avoid thinking too far into the future and take each day one step at a time.

Engage and stay connected with friends, family and support networks. Working together with communities, united as a country we can move through this.

Thoughts are thoughts, not necessarily facts. Be alert to negative thoughts and don’t give them power.

Treat people with kindness, support others through this time of uncertainty.

Limit information and time on unhelpful media. Constant exposure to anxiety-fuelling stories drives panic and uncertainty.

Exercise in key, research shows that good physical health is critical for a healthy mind, focus on good sleep, eating well and working out.

Seek help, if you are concerned about yourself or others talk to your GP, the Black Dog online clinic is a good place to start with a self-assessment.

**1**

## Identifying needs

### Daily self-care

What are you doing to support your overall wellbeing on a day-to-day basis? Do you engage in self-care practices now? Are you more active in some areas of self-care than others?

Use the table below to help you determine which areas may need more support.

| **Area of self-care** | **Current practices** | **Practices to try** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Physical**  e.g. eat regular and healthy meals, good sleep habits, regular exercise, medical check-ups | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Emotional**  e.g. engage in positive activities, acknowledge my own accomplishments, express emotions in a healthy way | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Spiritual**  e.g. read inspirational literature, self-reflection, spend time in nature, meditate, explore spiritual connections | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Professional**  e.g. pursue meaningful work, maintain work-life balance, positive relationships with co-workers, time management skills | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Social**  e.g. healthy relationships, make time for family/friends, schedule dates with partner/spouse, ask for support from family and friends | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Financial**  e.g. understand how finances impact your quality of life, create a budget or financial plan, pay off debt | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Psychological**  e.g. take time for yourself, disconnect from electronic devices, learn new skills, access psychotherapy, life coaching, or counselling support through your EAP if needed | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

**1**

## Identifying needs (continued)

### Emergency self-care

When you are faced with a crisis, you likely won’t have time to create a coping strategy. Take time to develop a plan in advance so it is there when you need it.

Try completing the following table to help identify your unique self-care needs during times of distress.

| **Emergency self-care strategies** | **Helpful** | **Unhelpful** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Relaxation and staying calm**  Which activities help you to relax?  e.g. deep breathing, taking a walk…  Which activities make you more agitated or frustrated? e.g. yelling, swearing, or drinking. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Self-talk**  Helpful self-talk may include, “I am safe/I can do this”.  Harmful self-talk may include, “I can’t handle this/I knew this would happen/I deserve this”. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Social support**  Which family members and friends can you reach out to for help or support?  Which people should you avoid during times of stress? Be honest about who helps and who zaps your energy. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Mood**  Which activities support a positive mood?  e.g. listening to uplifting music, enjoying the sunshine.  What should you avoid when times get tough? E.g. staying in bed all day, avoiding social activities? | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

**2**

## Create your self-care plan

### Once you have determined your personal needs and strategy, it is time to write it down.

Your self-care plan can be as simple or complex as you need it to be. You don’t need to use this template, you may just prefer a list or diagram.

Here is an example of how your self-care plan might look:

| **My daily self-care plan** list your favourite practices for each category | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Body** | **Mind** | **Spirit** | **Emotions** | **Relationships** | **Work** |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

| **My emergency self-care plan** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Helpful** < to do >  *List your top five emergency practices* | **Harmful** < to avoid >  *List five practices, people, places or things to avoid during crisis or stress. This will serve as a helpful reminder to keep you on track.* |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

