



Self-Care Guide



“Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others.”
– Christopher Germer

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, self-care practices are of vital importance for healthcare workers. This packet is designed to provide various tools and techniques that can help you as you navigate this crisis.

I'm feeling unmotivated or depressed... Try -

- Dry brushing the skin, start from your feet and work up the legs and lower torso, and from the hands toward the heart (A full description of this practice is located in this packet)
- Yoga (Specifically flowing, movement-oriented yoga postures)
- Get some fresh air, go for a walk or spend time outside
- Dance to your favorite song
 - *Did you know* - After animals experience a traumatic event in the wild, they literally “shake it off” before continuing with the rest of their day.

I'm feeling nervous, anxious or overwhelmed...Try -

- **Self-massage**, starting from the feet and working upward toward the torso and working from the hands inward toward the heart.
 - *Tips – Use your favorite lotion, or try using coconut oil for a cooling effect, or sesame oil if you are feeling cold*
- **Deep belly breathing** (also known as diaphragmatic breathing). Try breathing in and out for the same number of counts (Inhale for the count of four, exhale for the count of four)
 - Try lengthening the exhale to enhance the calming and relaxing effects on the nervous system! Just make sure you are comfortable during the practice!
- **Sit or lay on the floor or grass and feel the support of whatever is holding you up.** Feel the points of contact your body makes with the surface you are on and imagine you could relax the whole body and mind into those contact points. Feel the support of the earth beneath you, holding you up

General Self-Care Ideas:

- **Establish a morning and/or evening routine** (include anything on this page or in this packet that resonates with you, or anything else that you enjoy and feels like self-care!)
- **Exercise** – Go for a walk, try a Yoga, Zumba or Pilates class online, or work in the yard! ([Yoga classes are available on the Yoga Everywhere Youtube Channel and Facebook Page](#))
- **Yoga (Meditation)**
 - *Here is a simple meditation practice you can try – Imagine that you are breathing in and out from the center of the heart. As you inhale, imagine that you are drawing in anything that you feel like you need (such as love, compassion, balance, good health). As you exhale, imagine that you are releasing anything that is not serving you (thoughts, beliefs, tension, poor health or sickness etc.) Finally, just rest your awareness in the heart center and feel gratitude for something about yourself, someone special, or for anything else in your life and breathe into that feeling.*
- Take time off from social media or even shut off your phone if that’s an option.
- Keep a journal of thoughts, creative writing or poetry.

Yoga and Self Care

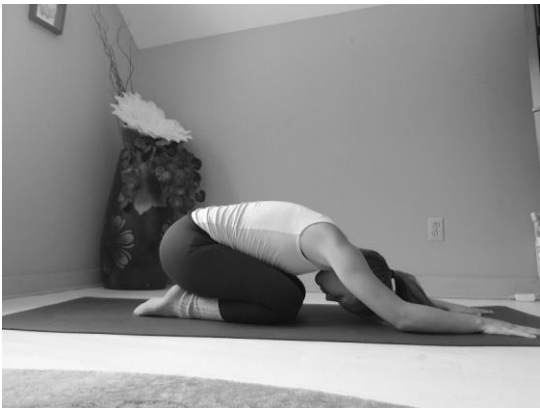
Yoga is the original Self-care practice. Developed thousands of years ago, it was primarily a meditation practice that accompanied the ancient Ayurvedic healthcare system for a person's overall health, both physically and mentally. Over time, yoga has developed into a practice that combines meditation and breath awareness with yoga postures, also called *Asanas*. While yoga has taken on more of a physical form, its deep roots in mindful awareness have made it an incredible self-care practice to support someone's overall well-being.

Facts from the Harvard Medical School's Guide to Yoga:

1. Regular yoga practice helps protect our cells and maintain the structure of our DNA.
2. More than 90% of the current research on yoga reports a positive impact on overall health.
3. Yoga breathing (specifically low, deep breathing) helps lower high blood pressure, reduce the heart rate and increase heart rate variability. It shifts our nervous system to “rest and digest.”

Easy daily yoga practice:

1. Start with a simple yoga flow. From table top position (hands and knees), exhale and shift your hips back toward your heels and relax your chest toward your thighs for child's pose(1). Inhale back up to hands and knees. On an exhale, curl the toes under, straighten the legs and press the hips to the sky to come into downward dog(2). Inhale and gently lower the knees back down to hands and knees. Exhale back to child's pose, inhale to hands and knees, exhale to down dog and then inhale to hands and knees again. Repeat four to six rounds, or as many times as you like.



(1) Child's Pose



(2) Downward Dog

2. Come back to hands and knees. Then, lift your right leg and extend the heel back away from the body actively and engage the low belly. Keep the hips square, and then see if you can lift your heel even higher. Once you feel steady, extend the left arm forward, lifting both the extended arm and leg up to their highest point. Hold for six seconds, and then repeat with the opposite arm and leg. Do this for six rounds (twelve times total) holding for six seconds each time. Release to child's pose (1) and take a break if you need to.



3. From hands and knees, come into a lunge (3). You can decide if you want to lift your back knee up or keep it down. On an inhale, scoop the arms overhead. On an exhale, release the hands back down to the ground. Repeat six times, then hold the arms up overhead for six breaths, keeping the shoulders relaxed. Then switch to the other side.

(3) Lunge



4. Come onto your belly and release your hands down by your hips with the palms facing the floor. Inhale and see if you can lift the chest, arms and thighs up off of the ground. Exhale and release down. Repeat 6 times, then hold for 4 – 6 breaths.
5. Lay on your back with two folded blankets under your hips for support. Extend your legs up to



the sky. If you'd like a more restorative posture, try this with your legs up the wall. Imagine that you are inhaling the breath down into the belly, and on an exhale the breath travels up to pass through the heart, creating a smooth, circular flow of breath between heart and navel center.

6. Come to lay flat on your back for savasana (Make sure to remove the props from beneath your hips). Focus on the breath and the way it expands from front to back, side to side in the belly. Breathe in and out for the same number of counts, trying to keep the breath smooth, even and effortless. You might try breathing in and out to the count of four. Set a timer for five minutes.
7. End with meditation. There is a heart-centered meditation practice outlined in the Self Care Guide on page 3. You can also try holding the awareness of the breath in the belly or holding awareness at the point between the eyes. Imagine you are inhaling and exhaling from whatever center you choose, trying to rest your attention there. You can set a timer and just focus on the breath, or you can count each breath backwards from twenty-five to zero.

Using Yoga as a Self-Care Practice

Originally, yoga practice was an individual experience supported by a student-teacher relationship. This one-on-one relationship has been overlooked in our western adaptation of yoga, and the benefits of this type of individualized practice have been forgotten. Individual guidance in practice allows yoga students the chance to really understand the *why* and the *how* behind what they are doing. With the help of a knowledgeable teacher, students are able to learn how to identify the practices that will be the most supportive to the individual needs of their bodies and minds.

Home Practice Guide

Daily: List three things each day that you are grateful for and log what number/s you practiced!

1) Stress Relief: Pure Breath/1:1 Breathing

- Seated or lying down, start by breathing in and out for the same number of counts. Breathing in and out to the count of four can be a good place to start. Try to make the breath as smooth, even and connected. The goal is to make the breath flow as easily and effortlessly as possible.

2) Lower Back/Daily Mobility 1: Lying Series

- Bend(exhale) and Extend (Inhale) Leg 6 – 12x
 - Then do ankle circles in both directions (repeat on both legs)
- Dynamic Lying Twist 4x-6x; hold for a few breaths on each side
 - Bring your knees in to your chest and let your arms rest out like a T at your sides. Exhale and let both knees fall towards one arm, inhale to come back through center and exhale across to the other side
- Dynamic Bridge: 6x-12x Then hold for a few breaths
 - Make sure both knees are bent so the knees are stacked on top of the ankles and raise your hips up to the sky. Sweep the arms overhead so the knuckles touch the floor above you to mobilize the upper back.

3) Yoga Flow/Daily Mobility 2: Tabletop(I) – Child(E) – 4s(I) - Downward Dog(E) -

*Optional Lunge (I) - *Down Dog (E) 6x – 12x, hold each pose on the last round for a few breaths (3-6 Suggested)

4) Limb Strength 1: 10 Squats, 30 Second Plank, 5 push ups

5) Limb Strength 2: 25 Squats, 45 Second Plank, 10 push ups

6) Core Strength: Core Boat Series: Repeat Each exercise between 5 – 20 times

- Start each exercise by placing your hands behind so you can lean back on to them. Then, elevate your heels until your shins are parallel to the floor. From here, lift the hands away and bring them alongside your shins.
- Boat with Leg Extensions (Exhale knees in, Inhale push heels away)
- Rowboat (Exhale Cross Knuckles to Floor, Inhale Center)
- Elbow to Knee Boat (Exhale elbow to knee, inhale center)
- Half Boat to Full Boat (Inhale straighten arms and legs, exhale and bend knees and lower arms parallel to floor)
- Hold Half and/or Full boat for 30-60 seconds

Visit: <https://youtu.be/CP6ekxTck2I> for a guided practice incorporating these movements.
More practices are available on the Yoga Everywhere Youtube Channel and on Facebook

Online Private Yoga Coaching is Available!

Email MyPrivateYogaCoach@gmail.com for information

