Self-Care

When asked the question: "Do you take care of yourself?" most of us will answer "yes" — we might even think, "What kind of question is this? Of course, I care about myself." When asked, "In what ways do you take care of yourself?" - Well, that's where the tricky part begins.

What is self-care?
Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Although it's a simple concept in theory, it's something we very often overlook. Good self-care is important to improve mood and reduce anxiety. It's also important to foster healthy relationships.

What is not self-care?
Knowing what self-care is not might be even more important. It is not something that we force ourselves to do, or something we don't enjoy doing. Self-care is something that refuels us, rather than takes from us.

Self-care is NOT a selfish act. It is not only about considering our needs; it is also about knowing what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves, so that we will be able to take care of others as well. That means, if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be in the place to support, help and give to your loved ones either.

In a few words, self-care is the key to living a balanced life.

Where do you start? Stick to the basics. Over time, you will find your own rhythm and routine. You will be able to implement more and identify more particular forms of self-care that work for you. Self-care needs to be something you actively plan, rather than something that just happens. It is an active choice and you must treat it as such. Add certain activities to your calendar, announce your plans to others in order to increase your commitment, and actively look for opportunities to practice self-care. Be aware of what you do, why you do it, how it feels, and what the outcomes are.

Although self-care means different things to different people, following you will find some helpful hints and ideas for things you could do:

➢ Create a list with things you know you don't like or you no longer want to do. Examples might include: Not checking emails at night, not checking Facebook or snapchat before bed, or not answering your phone during meals.
➢ Maintain a healthy diet. Consistently plan nutritious, healthy meals.
➢ Get enough sleep. Adults usually need 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Teenagers usually need 8-10 hours of sleep each night.
➢ Exercise. In contrast to what many people think, exercise is as good for our emotional health as it is for our physical health. It increases serotonin levels, leading to improved mood and energy. In line with the self-care conditions, what's important is that you choose a form of exercise that you like! Even going for a daily walk or hike is considered exercise.
➢ Use relaxation exercises and/or practice meditation. You can do these exercises at any time of the day.
➢ Do at least one relaxing activity every day, whether it's taking a walk, spending 30 minutes unwinding or spending time listening to soothing music.
➢ Do at least one pleasurable activity every day.
➢ Look for opportunities to laugh!
➢ Spend quality time with your loved ones.

I recommend you set up a 14 day self-care routine and see how you feel before and after. And never forget: As with everything, self-care takes practice! How about getting started today?

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