

# SELF-CARE

## FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Self-care is important for building resilience as a parent;

**'You cannot pour from an empty cup'**

The first step in looking after your children is to take time to care for yourself, something that parents often do not do much!

It is very easy, as a parent or carer, to prioritise the needs of your family and others ahead of your own wellbeing, but, taking time for yourself is not selfish. It is important that you have empathy and compassion for yourself too. Looking after ourselves also gives us an opportunity to model healthy ways of coping with stress.



### MYTHS ABOUT SELF-CARE

-  Self-care is an indulgence
-  Meaningful self-care includes making mindful changes in patterns of thoughts and behaviours that do not contribute to your wellbeing.
-  Self-care is selfish
-  When you make time for yourself and get sufficient rest & exercise, you feel more energetic and will be able to do more - for yourself as well as for those around you.
-  Self-care is a one-time experience
-  Looking after yourself is an ongoing practice in building resilience to face hardships and in preventing burnout.
-  Self-care is time consuming
-  Self-care does not require you to take out a huge chunk of time from your busy day.

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# DAN SIEGEL'S SEVEN ESSENTIAL MENTAL ACTIVITIES



There are seven core things that we could consider doing for ourselves each day to keep our minds healthy (according to Dan Siegel, a clinical professor in Psychiatry).

Here is a diagram of the seven areas: Physical Time, Focus Time, Down Time, Connecting, Play, Time in (reflecting on our feelings, our inner world), and Sleep. It is worth thinking about which areas you are already doing great at, and which areas you need to spend more time doing.



## SELF-CARE IDEAS

We all fill our cups differently, so while some ideas may be your cup of tea, others might not. There are a few things that we can do when practising **self-care**:

### 1. Engaging in our Interests or Hobbies

Finding time to engage in things that you enjoy can boost your self-esteem and have a positive impact on your wellbeing. This might include getting back into any old hobbies or interests that you may have had before, or starting a new hobby! This will look different for everyone, but some ideas could be: reading a book, time being creative (crafting, art, painting), baking, watching your favourite TV show, exercising, caring for your plants, cooking a new recipe, having a pamper evening, seeing your friends, or doing a puzzle/jigsaw.

## 2. Physical Activity

Physical activity can also be a great way to de-stress and release endorphins, as well as helping to maintain our physical health, which in turn can help our mental health. Sunlight and fresh air are also instant mood-boosters. Regular exercise doesn't have to mean intense running, it can also include: taking the dog for a walk or going for a walk alone, putting on some music and dancing, following a fitness video on YouTube, practising yoga, as well as playing with the children. Research also suggests that exposure to natural surroundings is beneficial to our wellbeing, so if you can get out into green space (even if it's just your local park) all the better.



## 3. Practising Self-Compassion

Be kind to yourself and remind yourself to take things one day at a time; there will undoubtedly be good and not so good days, so avoid setting unrealistic goals and try to be compassionate and empathetic to yourself. We're often much harder on ourselves than we would be to anyone else - the old saying goes that, 'You are your own worst critic'. Trying to imagine how you would speak to a friend can be a helpful first step in being kinder to yourself- how would you talk to them, how would you comfort and encourage them?



## 4. Slowing Down

Slowing down can also be key in allowing us to be more present focused, to rest and recharge. Having a bath or a shower can be a good way to create intentional space to recharge. Find some time to be alone: stretch your body, take a few deep breaths, practice mindfulness and breathing techniques, and journal out your thoughts. Self-soothing can also include having quiet time: reading a chapter of a book, lighting your favourite candle, putting on your comfiest clothes, making a hot tea or hot chocolate and cuddling your pets.



## 5. Connecting With Others and Putting Boundaries in Place

Trying to keep in touch with friends and family can help you to stay connected and supported. Connect with people that have a positive impact in your life, whether it be in person, over the phone, or a text message. Allow space for all of your feelings and reach out to people who make you feel safe.

Take the time to set boundaries that will protect yourself and your energy. It's OK to say no; remember that you have the right to say yes or no without having to explain your reasons. Ask for help from others when you need it. Asking for help from others can sometimes feel as if we're failing, but parenting can be tough and reaching out for support is nothing to feel ashamed of. Whether it's looking after your child for a short period to allow you to get things done, or running a small errand for you, friends and family will often be happy to help.

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg"