20 ways to prioritise and practise self-care

A guide created by

Saint Belford

New to self-care?

Not sure how to make it a practical part of your life?

You've come to the right place.

Our mission is to provide you with the tools and resources that empower you to keep self-care at the top of your to-do list.

Why?

So you can design, build and live a life that genuinely fulfills you, without compromising your wellbeing in the process.
Self-care doesn't have to be complicated.

It's all about finding practical ways to inject more moments of rest and rejuvenation into your daily life.

Let's explore 20 ways to prioritise and practise self-care.

Contents

Reframe the self-talk that interferes with your self-care intentions

Reframing your inner dialogue is not about ignoring or suppressing your thoughts. It's about challenging that critical voice. It's about acknowledging the words of your inner critic but consciously choosing to believe a more supportive and helpful narrative that is led by your inner coach.

Remember, that critical voice is just one point of view. It doesn't make it true.

For every limiting thought, think about what you would say to a loved one. Consider your tone of voice. Show yourself the same kindness, compassion and support.

Inner critic

Inner coach

I haven't done enough today so I can't rest yet.

>>>

I am doing enough.
I am worthy of rest.

If I don't do [insert chore/task], nobody will.

>>>

I am allowed to delegate tasks. My partner, family and friends want to help and support me.

My partner is already doing too much.

>>>

My partner has told me many times that he wants to help wherever possible.

It needs to be done now.

>>>

It can wait.

Prompts

- What recurring thoughts prevent you from following through with my self-care rituals?

- What would you say to a loved one who had the same thought? How would you coach them through their negative self-talk?

Make your self-care habits enjoyable

Figure out what your version of self-care looks like. Yoga and meditation sounds good in theory, but if it feels like a chore to you, opt for something else that feels a little more enjoyable. It could be watching the clouds, lying down with your legs up on the wall, going for a walk or taking a luxurious bath.

For me, it's lying down on the floor with a lavender filled eye pillow resting on my eyelids. It's simple, but feels incredibly grounding. For a few minutes (or as long as I choose to lay on the floor), I can zone out and rest.

The key thing to remember is this: if your self-care rituals are enjoyable or satisfying on some level, you're more likely to repeat the activity.

Prompts

- If there was one thing you could do each day to create more ease, what would it be? How can you incorporate this into your daily routine?

- List five self-care activities that make you feel refreshed and rejuvenated.

Create a self-care cheat sheet

Create a list of 5-10 self-care activities that take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Think about simple things you can do to boost your energy, de-stress and calm your senses.

Bonus points for activities that can be done at home, at work or on-the-go.

This is your cheat sheet. Write it down in your diary. Add it to your Self-Care Menu in Curation. Add it to the notes section of your phone. Write it on a post-it note and stick it on your desk. The goal is to keep it accessible so you can refer to it when you are stuck for ideas.

This will help combat the "I don't have time" excuse.

When you do your self-care homework and proactively think about practical ways to care for yourself, self-care becomes more accessible and easier to integrate into your life, even on busy days.

Here are some 10 minute ideas to get you started:

Meditate using an app like Oak, Smiling Mind or Headspace.

Try a calming breathing exercise like square breathing.

1. Let out all of the air in your lungs to the count of four.
2. Keep your lungs empty for a count of four.
3. Inhale for a count of four.
4. Keep your lungs full for a count of four.
5. Repeat steps 1-4

Sing along to your favourite song.

Dance it out and feel the tension melt away.

Lie down on the floor with your legs up against the wall.

Light a candle and focus on the aroma. Let yourself daydream.

Go for a walk around the block and get some sun.

Walk barefoot on grass to ground yourself.

Watch the clouds and look for shapes and images.

Watch an inspiring TED talk.

Do some burpees to get your heart rate up.

Prompt

- List five self-care activities that take less than 10 minutes. Where and when can you incorporate these activities into your life?

Fact-check the urgency of your to-do list

If you're thinking
It needs to be done now!!

Ask yourself
Is it urgent? Does it absolutely need to be done right now?

Often, the answer is no.

If the answer is no, then, it can wait.

It can wait. This is what I tell myself when I'm breastfeeding and I want to do some work on my phone. It can wait. It's not urgent.

Often, what you've classified as urgent can wait (at the very least) a few minutes for you to rest, catch your breath and compose yourself. I'm not saying ditch your to-do list and sit on the couch all day. We all have responsibilities.

Give yourself some breathing room between your commitments. Give yourself permission to press pause, instead of trying to cram as much as you can into every minute of every day. It's just not sustainable.

Create time buffers

Avoid back to back scheduling wherever possible.

Create a time buffer for your events, classes and appointments so you can arrive feeling a little more relaxed and calm as opposed to feeling frazzled. This can provide you with a few micro moments of rest between your errands and commitments.

If it takes you 20 minutes to get from A to B, give yourself an extra 10 minutes to get there. It could eliminate a lot of the self-imposed daily stress that comes from rushing around.

There have been countless occasions where I've arrived at a class or event completely out of breath (from literally sprinting from the car park) and it just doesn't serve me, so this is something I've chosen to work on.

Fact check the "I don't have time" excuse

We've all used the "I don't have time" excuse before.

It certainly feels that way when we've overcommitted and over scheduled ourselves.

The truth is, you do have time. You're just choosing to spend it on other areas of your life.

The question is, what are you spending it on? Are you saying yes to everything and everyone, except yourself? Something has to give. And it shouldn't be your well-being.

It can be helpful to review your week to determine where you've spent your time. Your phone can also reveal some interesting insights.

Take a look at how much screen time you're logging each day and what apps are eating up most of your precious time. Consider implementing app limits to help reduce your screentime.

Prompt

- What can you do to free up space in your schedule?

Consciously curate your newsfeed

Curate your newsfeed in a way that serves you and consciously limit content that sends you down a negative path.

What is on your newsfeed is feeding your mind. It can set the tone for your day, shift your mindset, and influence your decisions and actions.

Fortunately, you can control the accounts you follow and the type of content that appears on your newsfeed.

When you see an upsetting post, let that be your cue to unfollow that account.

You can also proactively go through the accounts you're following and unfollow the ones that are no longer helpful or relevant to you. This allows you keep a curated feed that aligns with your values, interests, goals and intentions.

Remember, energy is contagious so be extra mindful of what you are consuming and the impact that is having on your wellbeing.

Stay flexible with your routine

Habits and routines can be incredibly powerful. They can support your wellbeing, improve your quality of life and help you make real progress on your goals.

However, if you are too strict and rigid with your habits, you can end up ignoring your intuition. You might favour "pushing through" and past your limits instead of listening to what you truly need on any given day.

Ultimately, what matters most is choosing to honour the needs of your mind and body even when it doesn't feel good for your ego. There's nothing lazy about changing your self-care routine to honour your needs and limits.

We also need to acknowledge that not everything will go according to plan. For example, a flat tyre or traffic jam might make you miss your yoga class or gym session. It's worth devising a Plan B for these scenarios. This could be an online yoga class you've saved on YouTube or a simple stretch sequence you can do on your own.

You've gone to the effort of clearing a block of time for yourself, so use it, even if it's for a smaller version of what you intended to do.

Prompt

- List the self-care activities that haven't gone to plan in the past due to factors outside of your control. Devise a Plan B for each of these activities.

Optimise your environment to make your self-care habits easier

It's less about remembering to practise self-care and more about curating an environment that encourages self-care.

A small change in what you see in your environment can greatly influence the habits you engage in.

If you want to journal at night, keep your journal on your bedside table.

If you want to practise yoga in the morning, keep your yoga mat next to your bed.

If you want to floss at night, keep your floss on the bathroom counter next to your toothbrush.

Be strategic with the placement of your possessions. Let the objects around your home serve as reminders to engage in the activities and rituals that fill up your cup.

Prompts

- What simple changes can you make to your home environment to encourage more downtime and rest?

- What objects can you reposition to make your self-care habits easier?

Remove work-related distractions from your living space

Once work is done for the day, keep your laptop and work items out of sight.

The goal is to feel at home, not *at work.*

If possible, try to avoid working where you would typically relax, like your bed or the couch.

Your brain associates certain objects and spaces with specific activities so using the same space to work and relax can create mixed signals for your brain, making it difficult for you to unwind and switch off at the end of the workday.

Prompts

- What do you have in your living spaces that remind you of work?

- Where can you relocate these possessions so they are out of sight once work is done for the day?
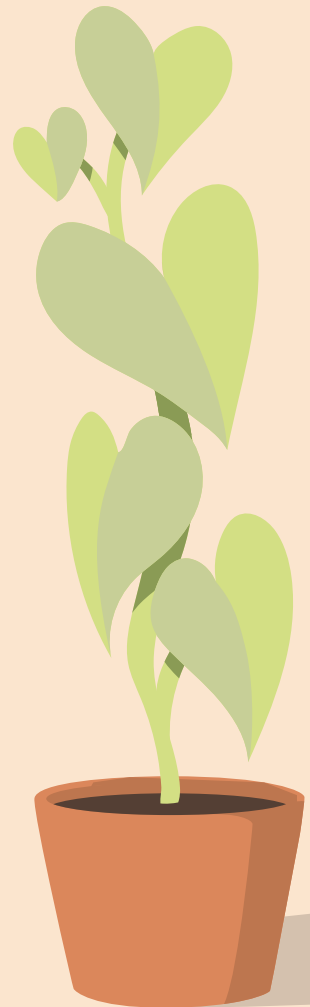
Be deliberate with your decor

The reality is, your behaviour is largely influenced by the environment you are in and the things you are exposed to, so why not use this to your advantage?

Display visual reminders of your values and intentions everywhere— think desk, bedroom wall, bathroom mirror. It can strengthen your mindset and help you prioritise what's important to you.

These visual reminders might be in the form of quotes, phrases, post-it notes, magazine cut-outs and/or wall art.

For example, I've got the phrase "*Gently does it*" on my bedroom wall. It's my morning reminder to approach the day with a slow and steady mindset.

Prompts

- What self-care reminders do you need?

- How can you practically implement these reminders?

- What quotes or words of wisdom do you want to live by?

Gently does it

Set recurring reminders

Setting the intention to practise self-care is a good start. However, remembering to do it can be tricky, especially if scheduling time out for yourself is a new habit you're trying to build.

Don't rely on your memory. Reserve that brain power for something else.

Set recurring reminders on your phone to help you stick to your intentions.

I have one that pops up on my screen every morning at 10am reminding me to:
"*Take a deep conscious breath. Relax your shoulders. Release all tension.*"

It's a simple yet effective way to build some pauses into your day.

Prompts

- What self-care habits do you tend to forget about?

- What would be the optimal time of day to complete these habits? Set up recurring reminders accordingly.

Schedule a few big acts of self-care in advance

I'm talking about the type of activities that either need to be pre-booked or require a longer time commitment, like a 60 minute yoga class or a 45 minute gym session.

Proactively schedule these activities before your week begins. You might like to make this part of your Sunday ritual.

It's so much easier to commit to these acts of self-care when they are already scheduled in. It's a lot harder to "find" the time in a packed schedule.

Half the battle is just deciding to block out time for yourself. When you've figured out the time, activity and location in advance, all you need to do is show up. It takes A LOT of the resistance out of practising self-care.

Prompt

- What bigger acts of self-care would you like to engage in during the week? Schedule these in.

Create a "no" list and learn how to say no

Decide what you will say "no" to each week. These are the things that steal time and energy away from your priorities.

These may change over time, depending on the season, but regularly reflecting on what (or who) drains your energy and steals focus can help you honour your boundaries and intentions. It also prevents you from repeating unhealthy patterns that don't serve.

Your "no" list might look like this:

Staying out past 9pm on a weeknight

Drinking on a work night

Going on my phone after 9pm

Upon reflection, you realise drinking and staying out past 9pm on a weeknight affects your sleep, energy levels, gym routine and productivity, so you want to avoid that where possible.

You also realise scrolling in bed at night affects your sleep quality. You don't feel well rested the next morning, and the data collected by your sleep tracker confirms this.

Having a set of self-care rules will make decision making so much easier during the week.

For example, if a coworker asks you to join them for drinks on a work night, you can trust the wisdom of your past self and politely decline. Your past self has already made the decision for you.

3 ways to say no so you can start prioritising what matters most:

Start with gratitude. Thank the person for the opportunity, invitation or for simply thinking of you. Thank you goes a long way.

Reflect on why you're saying "no". It's harder to say "no" when you don't know what you're reserving your time and energy for. It's up to you if you want to disclose your why.

Be clear and kind. Avoid leading people on by saying things like "maybe, I'll think about it, I'll let you know". Don't wait for people to read between the lines. If it's a no, communicate that clearly and kindly.

Prompts

- What do you wish you said "no" to last week?

- Who or what is likely to distract you from your priorities this week? Let these responses inform your "no" list.

Get an accountability partner

Sometimes, we need a gentle nudge from someone else to help us on our self-care journey.

That person might be your partner, best friend, brother, sister, mum, dad... whoever it is, it needs to be someone you trust. They need to wholeheartedly support your intentions and be able to give you a gentle push when old habits get the better of you.

The benefit of having an accountability partner is that your intentions are no longer private.

Somebody else knows and that somebody is going to check in and ask you whether you've done what you said you were going to do.

Your social reputation and perceived reliability is at stake. Therefore, you're more likely to uphold your intentions.

Prompts

- What self-care habits or rituals do you need an accountability partner for?

- Who do you trust to keep you accountable?

Delegate to free up time for yourself

Go through your to-do list and reflect on whether each task needs to be completed by you.

Of course, it's natural to want to "do it all" yourself, but at what cost to your physical and mental wellbeing? Something's got to give, and you get to decide what that is.

Often, it's our ego preventing us from asking for help and delegating, so consider if that's the case.

The reality is, nobody ever got to where they are without some help along the way, so let go of the need to "do it all" and give yourself permission to get the support you deserve.

Here's how you can reframe asking for help:

It's a feel-good opportunity for the helper. When we help others, our brains release oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine, boosting our mood and lowering our stress levels.

It's a chance to connect on a deeper level. Being vulnerable is the path to true human connection. It's how we develop a stronger bond with one another.

I'm giving others permission to ask for support. Our friends and family will feel more comfortable asking for help because we're leading by example and normalising it.

I'm learning, taking action and making progress. It's easy to procrastinate when we feel stuck or don't have the answers, but we often have to get out of our own way and put our ego aside in order to make progress.

Prompts

- What tasks can you delegate from your to-do list?

- Who can you delegate to? What do you need to do to make this a reality?

Get in the habit of asking yourself: "what do I need today?"

Make a conscious effort to listen to your body and address your needs instead of ignoring the signals and blazing through your to-do list.

It can be tempting to shelve those needs for a more "convenient" time but shelving those unmet needs only creates more problems. Instead of shelving your needs, find practical ways to address them as and when they surface.

For example, I understand we don't all have the luxury of taking the day off whenever we feel stressed, but perhaps closing your eyes and meditating for 10 minutes is a practical way of addressing that feeling of stress and overwhelm in the middle of the day.

Commit to finding your version of practical self-care.

Implement mini breaks

Break up your workday with mini breaks away from your desk and screen. If you're guilty of dismissing this sage advice, here's what you need to know.

Prolonged attention to a single task actually hinders performance. In other words, resisting downtime could be impacting your productivity, creativity and motivation.

The next time you feel stuck or your motivation levels have plummeted, treat it as a sign to give your brain a break. You might like to stretch, get some fresh air, go for a walk, exercise, eat lunch, enjoy a cup of coffee, practise some deep controlled breathing or complete a quick chore or two, like unloading the dishwasher or putting the washing on the line.

If you need a more concrete reminder, set a recurring reminder on your phone to "take a mini break" every 90 minutes.

Just remember, the goal is to rest the "thinking part" of your brain so be mindful of how you spend your downtime.

Prompts

- What will you do during the day to give your brain a break?

- What visual cues or reminders do you need to implement?

Create a wind-down ritual

Create a wind down ritual to mark the end of your work day and help you transition into "home time."

For most of us, the act of leaving the workplace marks the end of the workday and changing locations helps signal to our brain that it's time to close down our "work tabs" and begin to relax.

However, with many of us now working and living from the same space, it's very easy for work time to bleed into our personal time.

Having a simple ritual in place, like going for a walk, calling a friend, doing a workout or even changing out of the clothes you were working in can help you make that daily transition and signal to your brain that it's officially "home time." Bonus points if this ritual involves another person who can keep you accountable.

Building a new habit with a friend who shares the same values and intentions can boost your commitment. You're less likely to abandon your ritual when there is someone else involved.

Prompts

- What is something practical you can do to mark the end of your work day and transition into a more relaxed state?

- How will you remember to complete this ritual?

Set up your digital devices to work for you, not against you

Whether you're having lunch with a friend, brainstorming ideas for a project or enjoying some quiet time, a buzzing phone will inevitably rip you away from the present moment and disrupt your flow.

How many times have you picked up your phone after hearing or seeing a notification pop up and 30 minutes later, you're still on your phone... Was the notification that important? Probably not, but you took the bait anyway. Don't worry, we've all been there.

The solution?

Tweak the settings of your mobile device so that it supports your goals, habits and wellbeing.

This might involve disabling notifications, removing certain apps, repositioning other apps, implementing social media limits or setting recurring reminders for your daily habits.

Tom, Co Founder of Saint Belford, has his social media apps in a folder on the fourth screen. You literally have to swipe four times before you can access it. It was a strategic move to limit his automatic response.

Prompts

- What app limits can you implement?

- What apps can you remove or reposition on your phone?

- What notifications can you realistically turn off?

Time limit

Want a weekly dose of self-care inspiration?

Listen to [The Saint Belford Podcast](#) for practical, easy-to-implement tips that will boost your self-care confidence. Learn how to integrate self-care into your day-to-day life and build healthy habits that make you feel alive and whole.

Connect with us here

@saintbelford | **f** facebook | ✉ hello@saintbelford.com.au