

# Creating a Self-care Plan



To feel your best, it is important to take care of yourself, especially when your job demands so much from you emotionally. Maintaining emotional resilience requires eating well, exercising, keeping work and home life balanced and maintaining good relationships. But there are times when even these things can't prevent stress and anxiety from creeping in. That's why self-care is so important. Taking a small amount of time out of your busy schedule just for yourself is key to handling all your duties while getting the most out of life. Try these tips to give yourself the attention you need to be your best.

**Deep Breathing.** Deep breathing focuses on using the diaphragm (the spot just under your rib cage) to draw slow, deep breaths into the lungs and to release them slowly. Take a couple of minutes every hour to practice some deep breathing.

**Stretching.** Stretching exercises can relieve tension, make your body more flexible and produce a calming effect. Even just shrugging your shoulders, stretching your arms and rolling your neck a few times a day can have positive effects.

**Meditation and Visualization.** Meditation involves "quieting the mind" by blocking out sensory input and distraction, while visualization involves using the brain's creative capacity to create a stress-free experience, much like daydreaming. Try to carve out 15 minutes daily to quiet your mind and body.

**Muscle Relaxation.** Progressive muscle-relaxation techniques involve systematically tensing, relaxing and visualizing each major muscle group. It is best to practice these techniques when you have about 20 minutes and are able to find a quiet place where you can lie down without being disturbed.

**Calming Thoughts.** Our thought patterns often cause or contribute to the stress that we are feeling. The next time you encounter a stressful situation, take a moment to tune into your thoughts and feelings. Write these thoughts down and then write down a more positive replacement.

