

Why self-care is vital in 2020 International Year of the Nurse & Midwife

In this International Year of the Nurse & Midwife, and on the back of the prolonged drought, devastating bushfires, and in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, life, for many, has changed. Uncertainty, stress, anxiety, fear, sacrifice, exhaustion, courage and support are several of the sentiments nurses and midwives have expressed. Self-care is vital for midwives, nurses and students and a message NMHPV is passionate about.

As nurses and midwives, we understand the importance of health and wellbeing to those we care for. But sometimes, we put our own health and wellbeing last. No matter what stressors we face in life, we need to nurture our own emotional, physical and spiritual health. What techniques can we build into our day so that we don't just cope, but thrive?

Some nurses and midwives may feel that self-care is an extravagance or something only a weak person would need, but this is not true. While self-care once seemed like a foreign concept, there is increasing understanding that not only is it beneficial for our personal health, but by taking time for ourselves, we also become better clinicians.

Self-care - what is it?

Self-care is any activity we do deliberately to take care of our mental, emotional and physical health. It's a simple concept but often overlooked. Self-care can improve mood, energy and wellbeing.

Why is self-care important?

Self-care is important to ensure that we feel fit, healthy and able to live our best lives and be fully present to the needs of those we care for. It's important for people who care for others, as the fast-paced, unpredictable and people focussed work we do, can drain our reserves.

It's important to find self-care methods that work for you, and carve out the time so that you do them and celebrate your achievements. It doesn't have to be anything fancy or expensive. By scheduling self-care practices, any conflicts or challenges that arise throughout the day may become easier to tackle.

Self-care checklist

This self-care checklist will assist you to ensure your self-care is on track:

- ✓ Are you able to take time for yourself without feeling guilty?
- ✓ Do you believe you deserve self-care?
- ✓ Do you know the difference between self-care and self-indulgence?
- ✓ Do you realize self-care does not equal weakness?
- ✓ Are you okay with slowing down sometimes?
- ✓ Do you have a go-to list of self-care activities?
- ✓ Do you make leisure time a priority?
- ✓ Have you made self-care a habit?
- ✓ Do you have a basic self-care plan, preferably in writing?

Tips for self-care

Our tips for self-care:

- ♥ self-care is individual; what works for one person may not work for another. Don't be hard on yourself if you try something and it doesn't work. Acknowledge the feeling and try something else
- ♥ relaxation - choose an activity you enjoy that replenishes you e.g. mindfulness, meditation, fresh air, spending time with people you like, regular breaks from work and build in relaxation time
- ♥ establish a self-care routine
- ♥ limit alcohol and caffeine - drink plenty of water
- ♥ schedule health checks - take responsibility for your own health
- ♥ do things mindfully – eat, walk, observe
- ♥ spend time in nature
- ♥ exercise, gym, yoga, team sports - whatever works for you
- ♥ practice positive self-talk
- ♥ engage in supervision if work is following you home
- ♥ educate yourself – knowledge is power
- ♥ listen to your body – don't ignore your need for rest
- ♥ meditate/practice mindfulness – use an app
- ♥ connect and socialise with people who make you happy, and
- ♥ do something each day that makes your heart sing.

Your own self-care plan

Complete the NMHPV self-care survey, develop your self-care plan and access our health and wellbeing toolkit for resources and information that will assist you with your health, wellbeing and self-care <http://www.nmhp.org.au/health-wellbeing.html>

Set your self-care intentions - this will assist you to keep your self-care on track.

9 Simple Health & Wellbeing Tips



Begin your day with gratitude



Movement and activities you enjoy



Feel the sunshine on you



Healthy veggie meals



Walk your furry friend



Spend time outdoors in nature



Connect with like-minds



Laugh and stay positive



Quality sleep and rest

Nurses and Midwives in Victoria can call (03) 9415 7551 for free, confidential and independent counselling and support for any sensitive health issue.

www.nmhp.org.au

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