

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF...



Contrary to popular belief, self-care is not all face masks and bubble baths. It is about taking care of our mind, body and spirit. It is about taking time out for ourselves, to refill our own buckets, so that we can be the best versions of ourselves as we nurture and grow our tamariki. Self-care looks different for everyone, so it's important to know what things work for you and what things don't.

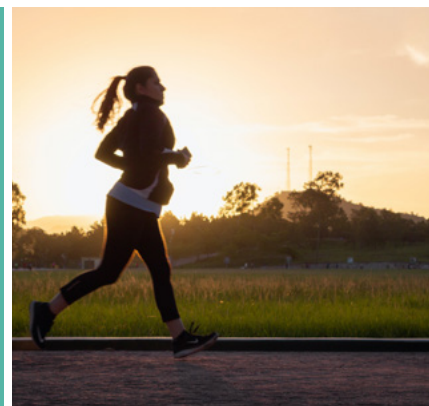
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WHY DOES SELF-CARE MATTER?

As parents / caregivers, we spend most of our time looking after others, often at the expense of our own wants and needs, which can lead to a wide array of issues, some of which can be long lasting. Issues that can result from self-neglect include: stress, increased anxiety, depression, family conflict and burnout.

When this happens to a caregiver, it affects not only them but the child and the rest of the whānau as well. Parents who are burnt out or overwhelmed can lack in empathy and patience, which can then lead to feelings of guilt only to decrease the chances of that parent taking some time out for self-care. This becomes an ongoing cycle which affects the whole whānau thus why it is just important to take care of ourselves as it is to care for our tamariki.



SELF-CARE IDEAS FOR BUSY PARENTS / CAREGIVERS

One of the most common reasons parents and caregivers give for not practicing self-care, is a lack of time. But self-care need not be time consuming. Setting aside a small amount of time each week to do one of the following activities can be incredibly effective at improving well-being.

- **Meditation:** Meditation doesn't have to be long, even a quick five minute meditation has shown to be effective in reducing stress levels. Guided meditation can be particularly useful for those who are just starting out
- **Get outdoors:** It's no secret that getting out in nature does wonders for our physical and mental health. Even spending a little bit of time in the garden can be an effective form of relaxation
- **Music:** This is great for busy parents, as listening to music is something you can do while you carry out any other tasks. Pop it on in the background as you go about your regular daily routine. Contrary to popular belief, it doesn't need to be soft soothing music either, any music you enjoy will work
- **Exercise:** Whether you're a runner, a weightlifter, or just enjoy a leisurely stroll, getting the body moving for just twenty minutes per day can increase energy and help you feel more motivated
- **Socialise:** Connection is an integral part of self-care and well-being. Maintaining social connections by catching up with friends or family members as often as you can is an excellent way of boosting psychological well-being
- **Do something you've been putting off:** This may seem like an odd form of self-care, but actually completing a task we have been avoiding can bring about a sense of accomplishment and pride, as well as a sense of relief at having one less thing on the to-do list
- **Switch off:** Take a break from electronics and social media. While many people believe social media and TV to be an effective form of relaxation, studies show that they actually increase stress and add a sense of pressure to our lives
- **Engage in spiritual or cultural practices.** Connecting with culture or spirituality can be an incredibly effective form of grounding. This looks different for everyone, so have a think about what is important to you and makes some time for it in your life
- **Laugh.** They say "laughter is the best medicine", so whether it's a chat with a friend or a funny video, take some time to find something that will make you laugh. Laughter has been shown to reduce stress and can even boost the immune system.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF...



KEEP IT SIMPLE.

When it comes to self-care, it doesn't need to be complicated. Just a few minutes here and there of something you enjoy, combined with healthy eating, enough sleep each night (ideally 7-8 hours) and some regular exercise are the most fundamental and effective ways of taking care of yourself.



REFERENCES:

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