Start Making Self-Care a Priority

For many people, attending to family, pets, work deadlines and other obligations often means that taking time to care for your own physical, mental and emotional health gets moved off the to-do list. However, attending to self-care is essential to build resilience to stress, improving your stamina, relationships and even your job performance! Here are a few ways to put self-care prominently on your to-do list this year:

Mark “me time” on your calendar. Whether it’s 15 minutes during your work break to read a book, or a half-hour to walk with a friend before the day starts, make sure you carve out time each day for a restorative activity.

Jot down routine health checkups and screenings, too. Schedule your annual exam, dental cleanings, and any applicable screenings like mammograms.

Easy Ways to Start the New Year Right

Looking to improve your health in 2020? Breaking down your goals into smaller SMART goals can be the difference between aspirations and realizations. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Adopting behaviors in this manner helps to create lasting lifestyle changes! Think about the goals you have for your health and the positive results you hope to achieve in 2020. Try some of the examples below!

• Every day, write down three things you are grateful for and one thing that you’ll do for someone else.
• Aim to go to bed at a time that allows you to sleep for 8 hours five days per week.
• Designate three evenings each week to be screen-free time.
• Walk for 15 minutes of your lunch break five days each week.
• Add an extra serving of fruits or vegetables every day.

Cook at home more whenever possible. Eating home-cooked food with wholesome ingredients is generally more nourishing than turning to microwaved or packaged food, which is often laden with salt, sugar and fat. Tying out easy, healthy recipes can stoke your creativity, while sharing cooking with family or friends can bring you closer together.

Get organized. It’s hard to focus on things to take care of yourself when you’re losing track of schedules, or wading through clutter to find items. Start with small changes, like keeping a daily calendar on the fridge, or stowing bins at the front door to hold workout gear for the next day.

Improve your sleep habits—the very foundation of self-care. Go to bed and rise at the same time every day; avoid screen time, caffeine, alcohol and exercise before retiring to bed; and keep the bedroom dark, quiet and comfortably cool.
Living a Life in Balance: Redefining it

In our high-demand lives, wanting to “find balance” has become a universal quest. Yet achieving balance is not a once-and-done pursuit. And it’s not really about devoting equal amounts of time to our personal, work and family life. Instead, it’s more realistic to strive for attaining a sense of steadiness or stability as we experience the changing day-to-day life demands, allowing us to feel both happiness and accomplishment. Here are some tips to live a more balanced life, no matter what life throws at you:

Start by defining specifically what you want. Instead of a vague desire about wanting to spend more time with your family, define your goal as, “I want to spend at least an hour every week one-on-one with each child.”

Reexamine your priorities daily. For example, is catching up on social media on your entire lunch break more important than going out for that daily walk you have wanted to do? Focusing on your priorities regularly can help you stay the course for more fulfillment.

Strive for, and appreciate, the small moments of steadiness. It’s unrealistic to expect to feel content and balanced all the time. A home maintenance issue may throw off your plans to get together with your friend, for example. That’s okay. You will find this steadiness again—just keep striving for what’s important to you.

Practice mindfulness. Taking just five minutes to sit quietly and follow your breath, accepting each moment without judgment, can help you feel less fragmented and more balanced.

Include other ways to find more balance. Share tasks with others, nurture creativity by cultivating new interests, spend time in nature, and take your vacation time!

Feeling overwhelmed with life? Talk to a healthcare practitioner for suggestions to help get on a steadier track.

Blood Donor Month

Blood donation appointments can be made by downloading the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) to make an appointment or to receive more information. All blood types are needed.

Visit our award-winning healthcare blog at blog.HealthAdvocate.com

Health Advocate is not a direct medical care provider, and is not affiliated with any insurance company or third party provider.