



## Staff Self-Care Practices

**What to do:** Review the following menu of self-care options. Circle the ones that interest you most. Feel free to add your own ideas. Then give them a try! Not all practices work equally well for everyone. Track your results to help you decide what works best for you.

**Why it matters:** Honoring your needs and having a consistent self-care routine is the key to preventing burnout, finding balance, and feeling more purposeful and productive. Also, keeping your personal battery charged empowers you to support others.

### Self-Care Menu

Type/Category	Activity Ideas	I tried...	After the activity I felt...
<b>Example:</b> <b>Physical</b>	Breathe deeply five times	I breathed in through my nose and out through my mouth, with a count of six each time.	Relaxed. My heart rate slowed, and I didn't worry about my to-do list for a while.
<b>Physical</b>	Bathe or shower. Breathe deeply five times. Dance to a favorite song. Drink water. Eat a healthy snack or meal. Exercise. Have a cup of tea. Have a massage, manicure, or pedicure. Practice yoga. Put away your phone. Rest in a quiet place. Sit in the sunlight. Sleep. Stretch. Walk. Other:		



Type/Category	Activity Ideas	I tried...	After the activity I felt...
<b>Intellectual</b>	Join a book group. Learn a language. List things you're curious about. Then explore one. Listen to a podcast. Read a book. Take a class. Try a new hobby. Watch and discuss a movie or documentary. Other:		
<b>Emotional</b>	Cuddle a pet. Hug someone you care about. Keep a gratitude journal. Practice mindfulness. Practice self-compassion. Read, watch, or do something that makes you laugh. Repeat affirmations. Say "no" when necessary. Set boundaries. Take a break. Other:		
<b>Social</b>	Apologize when you make a mistake. Ask for help. Attend a social event. Disconnect from social media. Share a hobby with a friend. Spend time with family. Talk to a friend.		



Type/Category	Activity Ideas	I tried...	After the activity I felt...
<b>Social (cont'd)</b>	Talk to someone new Other:		
<b>Spiritual</b>	Attend a religious service. Connect to nature. Create something. Daydream. Engage in music, poetry, literature, or the arts. Forgive someone (yourself?). Journal. Meditate or pray. Spend time alone and reflect. Talk to a trusted advisor. Visit a special place. Watch a moving performance. Other:		
<b>Environmental</b>	Declutter or clean your home. Decorate your desk or cubicle. Make your personal space pleasant, functional, and comfortable (e.g., consider lighting, color, smell, sound). Set aside a private space that no one else uses or enters. Other:		
<b>Professional</b>	Answer work emails during work hours only. Create boundaries. Identify and ask for the help you need to be professionally successful.. Keep a prioritized to-do list.		



Type/Category	Activity Ideas	I tried...	After the activity I felt...
<b>Professional (cont'd)</b>	Manage time and expectations Work only during work hours Say “no” when necessary Take a mental health/sick day Take short breaks during your workday Other:		

## Self-Care Strategies to Relieve Anxiety, Beat Procrastination, and Lighten the Mood

Here are additional strategies to try for yourself — and to share with friends, family members, colleagues, and students.

### Breathing Techniques

The most basic technique is simply to pay attention to your breathing without trying to control it. When your mind tries to wander (and it will!), bring your focus back to your breath with each inhale and exhale. A technique some people use for anxiety is called 4-7-8 breathing: Close your mouth and breath in through your nose for a count of four. Hold your breath and count to seven. Exhale through your mouth for a count of eight. Repeat up to three more times.



### Laughter

Laughter yoga is a real thing. Look it up and try it! Go for a walk and try skipping, which is likely to make the adults feel silly, cause the kids to laugh, and lift everyone’s spirits. Try jump rope, conga lines, hopscotch, or Simon Says with your students — outdoors on the playground or in the hallways or gym in bad weather. Watch short, funny videos or cartoons. Invite students to write or perform jokes, skits, jingles, stories, and funny songs, or have them create their own cartoons, animations, comic books, or graphic novels.

### Pomodoro Method (to fight procrastination)

If you find yourself avoiding a certain task, try a time management strategy called the Pomodoro Method to make it less overwhelming. Set a timer and work for 25 minutes, take a five-minute break, and do another 25 minutes. After four times, take a longer break (20 or 30 minutes). You can adjust the times. Do what works best for you!

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tense your toes for five seconds, then relax and notice the difference. Next do the same with your calf muscles, thigh muscles, and other muscle groups, one at a time, until you progress all the way up to your forehead. You can do one side of your body at a time or both sides at once. Bring your focus to the difference you feel in that body part each time you relax.



### Self-Talk

Be your own coach. Remind yourself of past successes. If you're anxious, tell yourself, "This state of heightened alertness I'm having feels uncomfortable, but I can actually take advantage of it to improve my performance." (There's science behind this idea!) Reassure yourself with calming words like "It's OK," or use an energizing mantra like "I'll give it my all. Let's go!"

### S.T.O.P.

Stop what you're doing. Take a deep breath. Observe what's happening around you and inside you. Proceed mindfully (either continue what you were doing or change course and do something different.)

### Walking Meditation

You don't have to sit still to meditate! You can walk or do other movements while bringing your attention to your feet, your body, and the ground below you. Focus your mind on what it feels like to walk. If you're outdoors, your focus might be on sights, sounds, and sensations — the changing sky, birdsong, the rhythm of traffic, or the sun on your face.

### Write It Out

Write out any worries and negative thoughts. This works because writing is a form of action. So instead of negative thoughts continuing to run around in circles inside your brain, they're rounded up, directed into your writing hand (or fingertips, if you're at a keyboard), and "released" onto paper. Give it a try!

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