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Investing in Self-Care

In the frantic pace of everyday life, our own needs often come last. We might think “There’s no time to fit in one more thing!” Certainly it’s rare to have others encouraging us to slow down and take better care of ourselves. However, our body and mind tend to make their needs known, if not always in the most healthy and productive manner. After focusing on the needs of work and relationships while neglecting our own, we may find ourselves blowing up at a partner, child, or co-worker. Or trying to fill ourselves up with junk food or junk TV or Internet. Here are some alternative ideas—Perhaps keep this list at hand, to review when you can tell you are needing some self-care:

1. Take a walk or go for a bike ride.
2. Call a friend or family member to vent.
3. Ask for what you need.
4. Take a hot bath or shower.
5. Listen to relaxing or meaningful music.
6. Play with your pet.
7. Take 10 deep breaths.
8. Get out your crayons.
9. Write about your thoughts and feelings, focusing on releasing any stress.
10. Get out in your garden, relax in your backyard, or go to the park.
11. Do one thing you can accomplish completely and quickly (like replying to that email you’ve been meaning to, or finishing folding the laundry). Revel in the success!
12. Daydream about how things will be when your problem is solved (or you’re able to take that vacation, or you’ve won the lottery...).
13. Go to a batting cage, driving range, fishing hole, etc.
14. Read a book or magazine.
15. Relax with a coffee or iced tea in a comfy chair.
16. Peruse a bookstore or library.
17. Watch the funniest TV show or movie you have. (Even better with a friend or family member to laugh with you.)
18. Stretch.
19. Yell into a pillow.
20. Pick up a hobby again (if even for a few minutes).
21. Sing in the shower or your car. Dance in your kitchen.
22. Watch the sun rise or set.
23. Look for constellations in the night sky, or pictures in the clouds.
24. Pray, meditate, repeat a meaningful quote or verse.
25. Ask someone for a hug.

Some of these ideas (or others you have used) may speak to you, while others may be turn-offs. Most importantly, find what fits for you, what you find either relaxes or energizes you. With time often being tight, consider highlighting many of the ideas that take five minutes or less. However, I also encourage you to make more significant time investments in your self-care whenever possible. Self-care provides an opportunity for healing and recovery, as well as a chance for the rest we all need to enable us to make advances in thinking, feeling, and responding better regarding the stressors in our lives. And when we are functioning better, we significantly increase our ability to take care of the important people in our lives and to fulfill our responsibilities. It can take practice and experience to see it this way, but taking care of ourselves is one of the most unselfish things we can do.

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