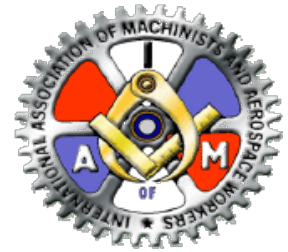




HELPING HANDS



Self-Care Isn't Selfish: Building Better Health Habits

(Compiled with the help of ChatGPT)

Self-care is an overlooked part of our total health picture and involves taking intentional steps to protect and improve your health. It does not have to be an additional duty – rather it can be quick intentional breaks throughout the day. Self-care is not selfish or a luxury. It is an important part of maintaining physical health, emotional well-being, and the ability to manage life's challenges.

Start With the Basics

Sleep: Adults generally need seven or more hours of sleep each night. Establishing a consistent bedtime, limiting screen time before bed, and creating a comfortable sleep environment can help.

Movement: Physical activity can reduce stress and improve mood. A short walk during lunch, standing for 5 minutes every hour, or taking the stairs can all contribute to better health. A few minutes of intentional breathing, stretching or quiet time can provide an opportunity to reset.



Nutrition: Regular, balanced meals provide the energy needed to get through the day. Planning simple, healthy options ahead of time can make good choices easier.

Pay Attention to Your Stress

Stress is a normal part of life. Ongoing or excessive stress takes a toll. Irritability, difficulty sleeping, headaches, fatigue, changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, and feeling overwhelmed may all be signs of significant stress. Identify the things you can control and focus your energy there. You may not be able to eliminate a demanding workload or difficult situation, but you can often control how you respond, establish boundaries, ask for assistance, or take a brief break.

Set Healthy Boundaries

Setting reasonable boundaries at work and at home can protect your time and energy. Whenever possible, establish reasonable limits around work hours, personal commitments, technology, and other demands on your time. Healthy boundaries are about creating enough space to meet your responsibilities without continually exhausting yourself.

Stay Connected

People are social beings, and meaningful relationships can be an important source of support. Make time to connect with family members, friends, coworkers, community groups, or others who contribute positively to your life. Talking with people you trust can provide perspective and remind you that you don't have to handle everything alone.

Watch for Unhealthy Coping

When stress builds, people sometimes turn to alcohol, drugs, gambling, excessive screen use, overeating, or other behaviors to escape difficult emotions. These behaviors may provide temporary relief but will create additional problems over time. If you notice that a particular behavior is becoming difficult to control or interfering with several areas of your life, consider talking with a professional. Support can make it easier to address concerns before they become more serious.

Make Self-Care Realistic

Don't try to change everything at once. Choose one or two manageable habits and build from there. Begin by taking a 15-minute walk three times a week, going to bed 30 minutes earlier, drinking more water, or spending ten minutes each evening away from your phone. Small changes, practiced consistently, can become lasting habits. Most importantly, don't view self-care as something you have to earn after everything else is finished. Your health needs to be an important priority. This month, consider asking yourself: What is one healthy habit I can start today that will help me feel better?

How to Determine the Kind of Self-Care You Need Most



Self-care is not one-size-fits-all. The first step is to pause and honestly assess how you are doing physically, emotionally, and mentally. Start by checking your energy level. If you are constantly tired or having difficulty concentrating, your body may be asking for more sleep, better nutrition, physical activity, or simply some time to rest. Small changes, such as establishing a consistent bedtime or taking regular breaks, can make a difference.

Pay attention to your emotions. Feeling anxious, irritable, sad, or overwhelmed may indicate a need for stress management, relaxation, social support, or professional assistance. Activities such as walking, meditation, journaling, or talking with someone you trust can help you manage everyday stress.

Consider your relationships and boundaries. If you feel that you are constantly doing things for others while neglecting yourself, you may need to practice setting healthy boundaries. Learning to say "no" when appropriate can be an important form of self-care.

Finally, ask yourself: "What would help me feel healthier and more balanced right now?" Choose one manageable change rather than trying to change everything at once. Self-care is most effective when it becomes a regular part of your life—not something you only consider when you are already overwhelmed.

Your EAP Can Help

Sometimes self-care isn't enough, and that's okay. An Employee Assistance Program peer or representative will provide confidential support for concerns involving stress, relationships, emotional health, substance use, family problems, financial concerns, and other challenges.

Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness. It is a practical step toward taking care of yourself. The EAP representative listed below is a great place to start:



**IAM Peer
Employee
Assistance Program**

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peers do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

IAM EAP Director, District 142

Paul Shultz

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Self-Care Aps

Headspace: Guided meditation, stress-management, sleep, and mindfulness exercises designed for beginners and regular users.

Calm: Offers meditation, breathing exercises, relaxation tools, and sleep-focused content.

Insight Timer: Provides a large library of guided meditations, mindfulness practices, breathing exercises, and sleep resources, with substantial free content. These apps can complement healthy habits but should not replace professional mental health care when it is needed.