



Self-Care For Parents & Caregivers

COVID-19 is an unprecedented event that has affected every community and all families in some way. Everyone is involved in the efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to provide support to children and families in this uncertain time. While parents and caregivers have a responsibility to care for and nurture their children, it is also important that they engage in **Self-Care practices** to remain healthy and to place themselves in the best position to support their families.

What is Self-Care?

Self-Care is the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.

It is particularly important for parents and caregivers to engage in Self-Care practices to ensure that they are physically and emotionally able to support children or others in their care. Taking care of oneself, especially during a crisis, should be seen as an essential responsibility. Do not put your personal needs aside.

During times of stress, Self-Care is often overlooked or misunderstood. Self-indulgence or unhealthy coping habits should not be mistaken for Self-Care. It is important to know that engaging in true Self-Care practices should never make a person feel guilty, selfish, or more overwhelmed. Self-Care should not be viewed as: being greedy, actions that deplete us, one more item on the “to do” list, something to do “later”, or a quick fix. Self-Care is not negative, but positive action towards wellness.

What are the Benefits of Self-Care?

Research shows us that the benefits of Self-Care include:

- More Energy
- Physical Health Benefits
- Increased Life Satisfaction and Happiness
- Better Relationships
- Better Balance of Life Demands
- Helping Provide [Safety and Security for Families](#)
- Fostering a Sense of Control
- Stress Reduction
- Mental Health Benefits
- Ability to Better Prioritize Tasks and Responsibilities
- Ability to Gain Perspective
- Modeling of Healthy Coping for Children
- Bringing Predictability to Unpredictable Situations
- Facilitating Recovery

On the other hand, those who do not engage in Self-Care may see the opposite results of the above list and are also at risk for burnout, less productivity, and compassion fatigue- which will make it much more difficult to properly care for children. Practicing personal Self-Care practices ensures that you have the health and wellness to thrive and serve the best interests of your children. If parents do not take care of themselves, they will not have the energy to care for others.



Self-Care Strategies

Self-Care can come in many forms and each can help promote wellness and the ability to care for others. Make it a priority to be a “*human being rather than a human doing.*” Try to pick at least one or two from each category every day and be consistent and balanced in your strategies.

PHYSICAL Self-Care

- Maintain a Healthy Diet
- Exercise (walks, bike rides, playing with children, work-outs, yoga, etc.)
- Develop A Regular and Healthy Sleep Routine
- Stretch
- Practice [Deep Breathing](#)
- Attend to Medical, Dental, and Health Needs
- Limit/ Eliminate Alcohol & Substance Use
- Drink Plenty of Water
- Practice Good Hygiene and Get Dressed and Groomed Every Day
- Ensure That Your Surroundings are Safe, and Clean
- Take Breaks During the Day
- Spend Time Outdoors
- Relaxation Techniques (can utilize [Relaxation Apps](#))
- Hug or Snuggle with Those Physically Quarantined With You

SOCIAL NEEDS & CONNECTION Self-Care

- Stay [Virtually Connected](#) with Friends, Family, Teachers/ Schools & Social Networks
- Engage in Daily Family Rituals (meals, games, activities)
- Conduct Random Acts of Kindness
- Engage in Advocacy or Volunteer Work
- Engage in Relationship Building with Children, Partners, and Friends
- Join Parent Support Groups or Interest / Hobby Communities
- Communicate Your Feelings and Experiences with Others
- Adopt and Care for a Family Pet
- Participate in Virtual Meetings or Games
- Engage Your Families in [Healthy Conversations About the Pandemic](#)



Self-Care Strategies, cont.

EMOTIONAL Self-Care

- **Maintain a Schedule for Time Management and Predictability**
- **Set and Monitor Daily Personal and Family Goals**
- **Practice Your Spiritual or Religious Faith**
- **Engage in Meditation and/or Mindfulness**
- **Keep in Mind Those Things You Can Change / Control and Those You Cannot**
- **Engage in a New Hobby or Activity and Learn Something New**
- **[Know and Monitor the Signs of Typical Stressors During Crisis](#)**
- **Have Quiet Time by Yourself to Be Still and Reflect (have a cup of coffee, warm bath, etc.)**
- **Engage in Calming Strategies (self-talk, soothing music, visualization, etc.)**
- **Journal (balance releasing emotions and noting gratefulness and positive events)**
- **Engage in Enjoyable Hobbies**
- **Utilize [Cognitive Reframing](#)**
- **[Reduce and Limit Exposure to Media Coverage of the Pandemic](#)**
- **Know Your Limitations and Feel Free to Say “No”**
- **[Know and Monitor Signs of Secondary Trauma](#)**
- **Look For and Talk About Gratefulness, Goodness, Beauty, Kindness, Positivity, [Hope](#), and Humor**

PROFESSIONAL / WORK-BASED Self-Care

- **Turn Off Your Email and Phone Outside of Work Hours**
- **Ask For Flexible Work Times or Shift Shares if Available**
- **Access Services and Support from Employee Assistance Programs**
- **Set Up An Employee Support Group**
- **Celebrate Your Successes and Your Colleagues’ Successes – Appreciate Your Work and Your Growth**
- **Give Yourself Permission to Take On Fewer Responsibilities and Say “No”**
- **Take Frequent Breaks to Engage in Non-Work Activities**
- **Engage in Regular Supervision or Consultation With Colleagues**
- **Ask for Help and Support When Needed**
- **Set Realistic Work Expectations (expect typical productivity to decrease in times of crisis)**



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Self-Care: Seeking Support

A final component of Self-Care is acknowledging when you or your family may need help.

Some symptoms are [typical crisis responses](#) and should be expected. However, if at any time you experience the following, do not hesitate to seek [professional help](#).

Consider Professional Help If You Are Experiencing:

- Extreme Anxiety / Panic Attacks
- Detachment / Numbness / Emptiness
- Chronic Stress
- Helplessness
- Personal, Familial, or Professional Burnout
- Extreme Immune, Digestive, Cardiovascular, or Other Medical Issues
- Significant Difficulties with Eating or Sleeping
- Extreme Changes in Memory, Concentration, or Focus

Seek Professional Help **IMMEDIATELY** If You Are Experiencing:

- Inability To Provide Basic Needs or Support for Your Family
- Thoughts of Harming Others or Aggression Towards Others
- Violence Towards Partners / Children
- Suicidal Thoughts or Ideations

**Oklahoma Coronavirus Hotline:
877-215-8336**

**National Parent Hotline:
1-855-427-2736**

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-8255**

**Childhelp Hotline:
1-800-4-A-Child**

Keep in mind that recovery from a crisis takes time, is different for each person, and may not happen in a linear fashion—especially during a pandemic that does not have a distinct, known end. Awareness, balance, and connection can help!

For Questions, Concerns, or Assistance, Contact the Oklahoma State Department of Education [Office of Student Support](#).

Erika Olinger, PhD, NCSP, BCBA-D
Crisis Team School Psychologist
Erika.Olinger@sde.ok.gov

Trisha Goga, MA, NCSP, RBT
Crisis Team School Psychologist
Trisha.Goga@sde.ok.gov

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