



What Is Self-Care, and Why Is It Important in Recovery?



When we think of self-care, we often imagine cucumber slices on our eyes and a beauty mask slathered across our faces. It usually involves relaxing, recuperating, and renewing your body and mind. This depiction is not entirely wrong, especially if this kind of self-care treatment is what helps you feel successful!

However, there are various ways to experience self-care, and they all depend on what you like to do and what you're seeking. Regarding addiction recovery, taking care of yourself and putting the work into growing as an individual is essential.

Keep reading to learn more about self-care, what it is, and why it's important to addiction recovery.

What Is Self-Care?

Self-care is taking care of yourself both physically and mentally daily. Self-care helps you to feel your best, inside and out.

Self-care does not have to be luxurious, though it can be nice to splurge on yourself sometimes! To best know how to practice self-care, you need to understand what improvements your life could benefit from and where you need healing and support.

Ask yourself: Am I spending enough time taking care of my physical health? Am I doing things that I love to do every day? Do I make time for myself to relax? Have I fed myself enough food today? Have I done anything nice for myself recently?

For people that struggle with substance use disorder, self-care can be one of the last things on your mind. You are likely neglecting your self-care more when you're struggling with addiction than if you weren't. Keeping up with your addiction is likely taking priority, but finding ways to make your health your first priority will be essential if you want to see progress.

What Can It Look Like?

Self-care is often about physical and mental recuperation and healing your body. You know yourself best, so you will learn more about your needs as you practice self-care. How you care for yourself might change over time, but you can start with simple practices to get a feel for what you like.

Self-care could look like:

- Journaling every time that you feel overwhelmed.
- Ensuring that you are bringing a water bottle with you wherever you go.
- Spending quality time with friends and family.
- Going on walks with your dog.
- Starting a new hobby.
- Buying yourself a perfume or piece of clothing you've been saving up for.
- Getting yourself your favorite comfort food after a long day.
- Listening to music and dancing around.

Whatever you find that helps you feel more in tune with yourself can be made a part of your self-care routine.

Importance of Self-Care in Recovery

You may never get better if you are not taking care of yourself during your addiction. As harsh of a reality as that is, learning how to put yourself first so that you can prioritize your needs over your addiction is integral to healing.

What you put into yourself is reflected in your day-to-day life. It can be a domino effect of little setbacks when you aren't taking care of yourself. If you aren't sleeping enough, you wake up exhausted. You are then too tired to put all your focus into your job.

You may come home feeling as if you didn't do enough of what you wanted to with your day and become discouraged. Instead of finding a healthy coping mechanism, this is when bad habits might come to life.

Self-care, especially in recovery, can help you to access a range of tools that will help you to overcome addiction.

What Is HALT?

When you are experiencing feelings of anxiety or cravings, you likely need to check in on how your basic needs are being cared for. This is where the acronym HALT comes into play.

HALT stands for hunger, anger, loneliness, and tiredness. You are meant to think about what aspect of the acronym you are struggling with.

Hunger

Have you heard the term “hangry”? We've all been there, but it can be easy to misinterpret it. Nutrition is important for proper cognitive functioning. If you are not fueling your body with enough food, you will likely experience side effects such as mood swings, headaches, irritability, and lack of energy.

Listening to your body when it's hungry might be something you have to learn to do properly. When you feel hungry, you should eat. You should start with three set meals a day that you try your best to stick to. Have a snack midway through the day if your body needs it.

Anger

Addiction can assist with the numbing of a lot of anger and hostility in a person's life. Anger is a common emotion that people struggle with displaying appropriately. If you block yourself from feeling your emotions, you will never learn to regulate properly.

When you feel anger or distress, you should assess why you're feeling that way and what the best option is to avoid regression. The goal is to divert your emotions into coming up with a solution that best serves you and your safety.

Loneliness

If you are struggling with addiction, you understand how lonely it can feel. Active addiction strains relationships, and asking your loved ones for help can be hard. In recovery, finding a community to rally around you and show support is key.

This connection is essential whether this is family and friends or people you've met in an online sober community.

People in recovery benefit from having a community that understands what they are going through. Shared experiences and advice from people who have gone through similar troubles can shine a light on what is ahead.

Tiredness

Are you getting enough sleep? This is one of the most common reasons a person feels *off*. Getting enough sleep at night can help you re-energize, improving focus, mood, and motivation.

When you are tired, you aren't able to take care of yourself properly. You might not cook yourself nutritious meals, fall behind on work, and become more depressed. Working on a healthy sleep schedule and listening to your body when tired can make the recovery process a bit easier.

Benefits of Self-Care in Recovery

Taking care of yourself is good for your health and prevents health issues later on in life. When you take the time to care for your basic needs, you work towards improving your health. The results you feel from basic self-care actions can be uplifting and exciting. You'll never actually know how they might help you until you try!

When taking care of your physical and mental health, you are more capable of getting the results you want out of recovery. Recovery takes a lot of mental and physical energy to succeed, and you have to be willing to change to see progress. You are worth it!

You might also see improvements in your social life as you care for your own needs. When you care for yourself, those you love will feel it and follow suit. Everyone wins! Putting yourself first isn't natural for everyone, but once you start investing in your health and well-being, you start to see it all payoff.

Practicing Self-Care in Recovery

The first step in learning to practice self-care is figuring out what your goals are for yourself. What do you want to accomplish in a week, a month, six months, and a year? Writing down goals for yourself can help you to focus on what is most important.

Start with the basics:

- Eat three meals a day.
- Get eight hours of sleep a night.
- Drink enough water throughout the day.
- Do something nice for yourself once a day.
- Take your medications on time.
- Tend to your responsibilities.

Find new hobbies that you love and work them into your day. Do things that make you happy! As you get used to caring for yourself, tasks become second nature, and you can make even more time for yourself to figure out what you'd like to do with your time.

Self-Care and Community

Self-care is surrounding yourself with people that support you and want to see you succeed. Having access to a sober community can be motivating during the recovery process.

It can be nerve-racking to put yourself out there and announce that you are struggling with addiction. Other sober-seeking individuals can relate to this!

Sober Sidekick understands that recovery is scary and doing it alone or without resources is nearly impossible. Online communities are just as beneficial as in-person ones. With Sober Sidekick's anonymity, you can find comfort in knowing all you have to be is yourself.

Sources:

[Caring For Your Mental Health | NIMH](#)

[Focus: Addiction: Relapse Prevention and the Five Rules of Recovery | NCBI](#)

[Relationship Of Hope, Sense Of Community, And Quality Of Life | NCBI](#)