

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE

Looking after your own wellbeing is one of the most selfless things you can do.

As busy adults putting in lots of effort for our employers, families, friends, and favorite causes, we sometimes put ourselves last in line. We may forget to take care of ourselves — to love and value ourselves as much as we do others. But, just as the flight attendant instructs you to put on your own oxygen mask first in case of emergency, you must take care of yourself before you can effectively care for others.

Self-care isn't selfish. Self-care can be defined as making a commitment to activities that support your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. With these elements in place, you'll have more energy to share with your family, friends, co-workers, and the larger world. So, if you're in the habit of neglecting your own needs sometimes, here are some ideas for changing that:

- **Maintain yourself with healthy habits.** First, get enough rest. Strive for eight hours of sleep per night. This supports your mental and physical health, and helps you better respond to stress. Make sure there's some exercise in your day to keep your body strong, and maintain a healthy, nutritious diet. Also, remember to drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- **Schedule some daily "you" time.** Find at least 15 or 20 minutes each day to do something just for you. This could be a spiritual practice such as meditation or prayer, art or music appreciation, stargazing, a creative hobby, or whatever means a lot to you on a personal level. You deserve it!
- **Take breaks.** When you're absorbed in a work task, take an occasional break to stand up, stretch, and move. You needn't go far, but your body and mind will appreciate a brief "unplug" once in a while, and it can recharge your creativity.
- **Set boundaries and say "no" sometimes.** Carefully select activities with which you agree to help. If something doesn't fit with your priorities right now, you can gracefully decline a request.
- **Grab quiet one-on-one time.** If you have a life partner, be sure to take a little time each day to stop and share stories from your day. This helps keep your relationship healthy, intimate, and supportive.

