

20 Ways to Take Care of Yourself Every Day

Begin today to take good care of yourself. Treat yourself as a wonderful parent would treat a small child or as one very best friend might treat another. If you work at taking good care of yourself, you will find that you feel better about yourself.

Here are some ways to take good care of yourself today, and every day:

1. Pay attention to your own needs and wants. Listen to what your body, your mind, and your heart are telling you. For instance, if your body is telling you that you have been sitting down too long, stand up and stretch. If your heart is longing to spend more time with a special friend, do it. If your mind is telling you to clean up your basement, listen to your favorite music, or stop thinking bad thoughts about yourself, take those thoughts seriously.

2. Eat healthy foods

A healthy daily diet for an average adult * typically includes:

- 1 ½ to 2 cups of fruit
- 2 to 3 cups of vegetables
- 5 to 8 ounce equivalents of grain foods (half of which should be whole grains)
- 5 ½ to 6 ½ ounce equivalents of protein foods
- 3 cups of foods from the dairy group

* *USDA recommended averages for men and women ages 19 and older. Specific recommendations may vary.*

3. Avoid junk foods (foods containing a lot of sugar, salt, or fat).

4. Exercise. Moving your body helps you to feel better and improves your self-esteem. Most adults should aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity every week *and* muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups. Find time every day or as often as possible when you can get some exercise. You don't have to do it all at once; you can be active in increments during the week –and even during the day. You can do many different things. Taking a walk is the most common. You could run, ride a bicycle, play a sport, climb up and down stairs several times,



exercise to a recorded workout, or play the radio and dance to the music--anything that feels good to you. If you have a health problem that may restrict your ability to exercise, check with your doctor before beginning or changing your exercise habits.

5. Make time for personal care that makes you feel good about yourself. Things like taking a bath, washing and styling your hair, doing your nails, shaving, getting a haircut.

6. Have a physical examination every year to make sure you are in good health.

7. Plan fun activities for yourself. Learn new things every day.

8. Take time to do things you enjoy. You may find that you have gotten in a habit of spending little or no time doing things you enjoy--things like playing a musical instrument, doing a craft project, flying a kite, or going fishing. Make a list of things you enjoy doing. Then do something from that list every day. Add to the list anything new that you discover you enjoy doing.

9. Do something that you have been putting off. Clean out a drawer. Wash a window. Write a letter. Pay a bill.

10. Do things that make use of your own special talents and abilities. For instance, if you are good with your hands, then make things for yourself, family, and friends. If you like animals, consider having a pet or at least playing with friends' pets.

11. Dress in clothes that make you feel good about yourself. If you have little money to spend on new clothes, check out thrift stores in your area.

12. Give yourself rewards -- you are a great person. Listen to music, watch a favorite movie or television show, read a book, go for a walk, make your favorite meal.

13. Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself -- people who treat you well. Avoid people who treat you badly.

14. Make your living space a place that honors the person you are. Whether you live in a single room, a small apartment, or a large home, make that space comfortable and attractive for you. If you share your living space with others, have some space that is just for you--a place where you can keep your things and know that they will not be disturbed and that you can decorate any way you choose.

15. Display items that you find attractive or that remind you of your achievements or of special times or people in your life. If cost is a factor, use your creativity to think of inexpensive or free ways that you can add to the comfort and enjoyment of your space.

16. Make your meals a special time. Turn off the television, radio, and stereo. Set the table, even if you are eating alone. Light a candle or put some flowers or an attractive object in the center of the table. Arrange your food in an attractive way on your plate. If you eat with others, encourage discussion of pleasant topics. Avoid discussing difficult issues at meals.

17. Take advantage of opportunities to learn something new or improve your skills. Take a class or go to a seminar. Many adult education programs are free or very inexpensive. For those that are more costly, ask about a possible scholarship or fee reduction.

18. Begin doing those things that you know will make you feel better about yourself -- like going on a diet, beginning an exercise program or keeping your living space clean. Start small, something is better than nothing. Be proud of yourself for what you do.

19. Do something nice for another person. Smile at someone who looks sad. Say a few kind words to the check-out cashier. Help your spouse with an unpleasant chore. Take a meal to a friend who is sick. Send a card to an acquaintance. Volunteer for a worthy organization.

20. Make it a point to treat yourself well every day. Before you go to bed each night, write about how you treated yourself well during the day.

You may be doing some of these things now. There will be others you need to work on. You will find that you will continue to learn new and better ways to take care of yourself.

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