



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**

Beneath the Surface: Self-care Myths and Facts

Over the years, we've seen a steady increase in mental health awareness. More and more, we're hearing and talking about wellness, mindfulness, therapy, stress management and self-care.

While it's exciting to see increased interest in mental health, the popularization of wellness can sometimes lead to misinformation and the desire to profit from it—sometimes even called “wellness washing.”

While taking luxurious baths can feel great, self-care goes far beyond that. True wellness requires more than skincare serums, kitchen gadgets and scented candles—and you don't always need to spend money to feel good.

Self-care is quite literally taking care of yourself. Your whole self.

To help you better understand what self-care is and isn't, we've laid out some popular myths and facts:

Myth: Self-care is all about pampering yourself

Fact: Like we said, self-care is simply the act of caring for yourself. Sometimes that looks like sipping tea with a face mask on, but it can also include creating boundaries, getting your heartrate up or paying bills.

Myth: Self-care is only for people with poor mental health

Fact: Self-care is for everyone. In fact, you're already doing it. Even the most basic functions of life count as self-care. If you're brushing your teeth, you're practicing self-care. If you've gone to bed early to get a good night's sleep, that's self-care. If you've sung in the shower lately, that can even be self-care. The reason self-care is more well-known to those struggling with their mental health is because life's curveballs can sometimes make the most basic acts of self-care difficult.

Myth: You need to spend money to practice self-care

Fact: Nope! If you feel you need to pay yourself a little more attention, self-care can be as simple as going for a walk or calling a friend. Buying that expensive pressed juice or downloading that fancy app might feel great, but it's not the only way to care for your health and wellbeing.

Myth: Self-care is just about things that make you feel good

Fact: Sometimes self-care is doing things that feel awful in the moment but are good for you in the long run. Like cleaning your bathroom or having a difficult conversation. These types of things can benefit you in the future, even if they don't feel great in the present.

Myth: Self-care is only about taking care of your mental health

Fact: We are complex beings and there are many things that make up the self. Think of all the things that make you you. Self-care is caring for your mental and emotional needs, physical needs, social needs, spiritual needs, practical needs and intellectual needs. If you neglect one or more of these buckets, it can be difficult to feel balanced and well.

Myth: Self-care is indulgent and selfish

Fact: You need to care for yourself to be able to care for others. It's not selfish to fulfill your needs. Blocking off time in your calendar for "me time" is essential to avoid burnout, professionally or otherwise. You can't pour from an empty cup.

Myth: If you practice self-care regularly, you will always have good mental health

Fact: Having good mental health is not an individual responsibility (see social determinants of health). Yes, practicing self-care can boost your mood and help you feel well, but it is not a magical cure for mental health problems and illnesses.

Fresh air is not a cure-all. Someone who is grieving a loss cannot shrug off their sorrow with scented candles and steamed vegetables. And baking banana bread cannot erase the uncertainty and anxiety we have faced with this pandemic.

There are many factors that play a role in well-being, and self-care is something that we can control and act on. Sometimes that's enough to soften the blow of a bad day.

To help you carve out time for self-care, and to help you make yourself a priority, we've developed a guide. (*See the attached self-care guide*)