



## The GV Way to Well-Being Self-Care Toolkit

Self-care is a key principle within The GV Way to Well-Being (GVWay), GVSU's mindfulness programming that seeks to inspire a campus-wide cultural shift toward mindfulness, resiliency, and kindness. To see this cultural shift come to fruition, the GVSU Mindfulness Task Force (MTF) knows self-care practices essential for those working at or studying in higher education institutions. Practicing mindfulness and caring for one's self is a cyclical process. To practice non-judgmental awareness, self-compassion, conscious communication, and a mindful sense of being, one must take care of their personal needs.

This toolkit provides examples of self-care in the forms of rejuvenating practices, routines, meditation, nutrition, and exercise suggestions, and examples to differentiate between self-care and things that actually cause more harm than good to the self. This toolkit is to be used as a guide for introducing and discussing self-care in the GVWay Workshop, as a guide to personal practice, to holding one's self accountable, and to holding peers accountable to personal self-care practices. Below is a framework for identifying needs and adopting self-care practices and routines. Please use this toolkit as your guide – but know that the true expert on yourself and your care is you. Practicing self-care requires a strong personal relationship with one's self, needs, wants, and desires. Self-care can take many forms.

### IDENTIFY YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS

Self-care can take many forms. At the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health (2015), selfcare involves aligning the body and mind with the natural rhythms of a day. For others, self-care means knowing one's own worth, creating a healthy work-life balance, managing stress, and improving physical health (Nazish, 2017). Shannon Kaiser, author of Self-Love Experiment, sees self-care as the foundation to self-love and suggests celebrating small victories, practicing forgiveness toward one's self, dancing to up-beat music, and starting the day with gratitude to practice self-care when times are tough. Self-care requires an understanding of the mind-body connection and can occur at the physical, emotion, mental, or even spiritual level. Each person's self-care needs are different and knowing what to practice involves listening and attending to one's self in the present moment. Through self-care, other qualities such as vulnerability, compassion, and authenticity can emerge.

### PRACTICE

Identifying areas of your life that need extra care can be the first challenge. Start by noticing any disturbances in your state of being and write them in a journal. Be aware if any patterns appear. Take note of everything your experience – if you are feeling any exhausted, depleted, hurried, anxious, hot, cold, happy, content, or peaceful, etc. Be aware of anything lacking in your routine – maybe lacking sleep, nutritious meals, downtime, time for your favorite hobby, etc. Then make a commitment to do one self-care practice (see list below for ideas) in the next day or week.





## 1. REJUVENATING PRACTICES

### Meditation

Though meditation can be beneficial at any time of day, some say meditating in the morning is best (Silcox, 2016). Some find 10 minutes of meditation to be settling for the mind and body. If feeling anxious or like you have a “monkeymind,” try sitting for 5-10 minutes in mindful meditation and practice nonjudgmental awareness.

### Nutrition

If feeling lethargic, mentally exhausted, or depleted, look back at your meals. If you see a pattern of meals that are non-nutritious – make eating a nutritious meal full of whole foods – something you love to eat – one of your top priorities the next day.

### Exercise

If feeling lethargic or exhausted, look at your exercise routine. If exercise is nonexistent in your life right now, add in a 30-minute walk or run. Maybe lifting weights or practicing yoga is your go-to-workout. Carve out time in your week for your exercise.

### Sleep

Are you getting enough sleep in a night? If yes, you probably feel energized and clear minded. If not, you may feel like you’re dragging and fill up on caffeine to get by. If the latter is true for you, carve out time for a nighttime routine to help your mind prepare for sleep. Turn off screens by 8 or 9 p.m., dim the lights, read a light-hearted book or take a bath, and try to be in bed by 10 p.m. – all per Silcox’s (2016) suggestions.

### Saying No

Saying “no” to someone else can mean saying “yes” to you. If you are a “yes” person and feel overwhelmed, strung out, and like you are balancing too many tasks – make this your number one priority next week. Say no to things that don’t serve you and yes to things that do.

### Setting Boundaries

“Saying ‘no’” is part of setting boundaries. Boundaries could be set in your relationships, in your work schedule, or even in your eating habits, etc. The point is to create space in your life for personal fulfillment and joy. If no boundaries means little space and time for yourself, or that you are being taken advantage of or unappreciated, then set some.

### Hygiene

Self-care can be practiced in the forms of personal hygiene care. Maybe it’s bringing morning showers into your routine, or daily self-oiling massages (See routines for more details).

### Relaxation

Take time to be at peace, to soften your muscles and bring ease to the mind – think of Savasana at the end of yoga practices. If feeling up in the air or anxious, set aside some time for Savasana.





## Hydration

How do you know if your dehydrated? Be aware of your skin, nails, lips, etc., if dry and coarse, you could be lacking water. Maybe next time you feel like snacking, drink water first, you could be thirsty instead. Also, for most hydration, try to sip on your water instead of taking big gulps.

## Limit screen time

You may work on a computer or have to cram for a test using your screens, but be mindful about how you do it. Maybe plan to take a short walk around the office every hour or commit to not using any screens at lunch. Also, be aware of how you use screens in your leisure time. Maybe limit screen use after 8 p.m. so you can prepare the mind for sleeping or limit screen use all together when you are home from work.

## Fill yourself with things that make you feel alive and well

Do you love to dance? Then dance! Sing? Then sing! Hike? Hike! Think about the things that make you feel alive and well, and then create time to do them, and actually do them!

## 2. ROUTINES

In Ayurveda, an ancient science and medicinal system from India, daily routines are full of self-care practices. This section is based off routines presented by Katie Silcox (2016), author of *Happy, Healthy, Sexy*, for Baynyan Botanicals. Please view this section as a list of suggestions. Try adding one thing into what you already do, maybe two if extremely motivated, rather than trying to incorporate everything you're your routine tomorrow. The intention is to help you feel more energized for the day ahead and more relaxed when it's time to sleep. Take what supports and nourishes you, leave what doesn't.

### Morning Routine

- Wake at sunrise
- Drink warm water with lemon
- Go to the bathroom, eliminate
- Scrape your tongue (great for eliminating toxins!)
- Wash your face, mouth, teeth, and eyes
- Use a neti pot (cleanses the nasal cavities!)
- Self-massage (with organic coconut or sesame oil. A great self-love, care, and relaxation practice.)
- Exercise
- Bathe
- Meditate
- Eat a satiating and nutritious breakfast

### Lunch-time Routine

- Make lunch your biggest meal of the day (when your digestive fires are most active!)
- Be mindful of your food. The colors and smells. Pray or bless the food. Give thanks.
- After eating, allow time for digestion. Spend 5-20 minutes lying on your left side.





### Afternoon/Early Evening Routines

- Take time to relax before dinner (yoga Nidra, savasana)
- Eat a light dinner and then sparingly afterward (helps sleep)

### Nighttime Routine

- Set the mood by turning down the lights and/or lighting candles
- Stop using screens by 8 or 9 p.m.
- Avoid mental stimulation in TV or heated conversations, etc.
- Take a warm and relaxing bath
- Read an easy, light book.
- Bedtime at 10 p.m.

### 3. COMMITMENT - ONE Thing

Self-care is about caring for yourself. Anyone can do it. Think about what is feasible for you and choose just ONE thing to incorporate into your routine. By choosing just one thing, you are more likely to feel fulfilled and satisfied rather than stressed and unsuccessful (Kellar & Papasan, 2013). If that one thing sticks, then add another. Be aware of how your self-care makes you feel and adjust your routines and practices as needed (i.e. during seasonal shifts or during menstruation, etc.).





## REFERENCES

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