



May is Mental Health Month

Taking time for yourself

Each of us is always juggling a handful of roles such as parenting, student, employee or caretaker. It may be that we are struggling with mental health issues or simply feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of everyday life. Nevertheless, it seems unimaginable to many of us to take time for ourselves. Sometimes, it can be difficult to take care of yourself, however, there are small things that can be done to make self-care and time for ourselves a little easier.

Accept yourself as you are

Remember that you are running your own race. When you start to compare yourself to others, it is easy to feel inadequate, which makes it difficult to even take the very first step in self-care. Instead, try your best to accept the person you are and where you are in life.

Focus on the basics

Sometimes it feels impossible to do even the smallest things. One of the most important things you can do is to focus on the building blocks of good self-care, such as showering, eating nutritious food, moving the body and sleeping well.

Find out what makes you happy

If you are caught up in all your responsibilities—you may not even really know what kind of self-care you need. Take the time to think about what you can do to feel happy or accomplished and find a way to add it to your schedule.

Practice mindfulness

One of the best ways to make the most of any time you have to take care of yourself is to take a few slow, deep breaths, focus on each of your senses and try to be fully present in everything you do. Mindfulness has the power to help you slow down—even in the midst of all the challenges and responsibilities of life.

Set yourself small goals

Unfortunately, taking time for yourself doesn't work overnight, so set small goals that you want to achieve instead of putting pressure on yourself to immediately establish the perfect self-care routine. Focus on taking a 15-minute walk outside every day or writing for 10 minutes every evening.

Set yourself limits

Sometimes, the only way to make time for yourself is to reduce the time or energy you give to other people. If you set limits with people around your time, emotions and health, it can enable you to devote more time and effort to yourself and your own mental health.

Remember that you are not alone. Everyone is struggling to make time for themselves, and the ups and downs of life mean that you need to be flexible and resilient in your routines and the way you plan your time.

There will always be people who understand where you are coming from and are willing to help. Ask your friends and family for help if you need to take some time for your mental health.

For more information, visit www.AFPC.AF.MIL/EAP or call your Air Force EAP at 1-866-580-9078 (TTY 711) for compassionate and caring support.