

4 Self-Care

There is so much fun in retirement: playing with grandchildren, traveling, practicing hobbies, serving others, learning, and gardening to name a few. To do these activities, however, you need physical and emotional fuel, and the source of that fuel is self-care.

What is Self-Care?

Self-care is the time and attention you give yourself that fills your well-being fuel tank. It gives you the capacity to be your best self and do the things that matter most. The analogy of fuel and fuel tanks is appropriate, as we've all experienced being low or even running out of fuel. If you don't prioritize self-care by paying attention to your fuel gauge and taking time to "fill up", you become vulnerable to fatigue, stress, and disease.



"TAKING CARE OF ME DOESN'T MEAN 'ME FIRST' IT MEANS 'ME TOO.'"

1 **There are many benefits of self-care.**

Besides feeling good and being able to accomplish your to-do list, self-care gives you the ability to handle challenges. Consider the difference of how you solve problems when you get a good night's rest and when you haven't slept well. The situation is the same, but your ability to handle it is significantly improved when your fuel tank is full.

2 **No one can do self-care for you.**

Self-care is something that cannot be delegated to another person, including your spouse or children. You're responsible if your fuel tank is full or empty. It can't be blamed on anyone or anything. As soon as you recognize this, you stop being a victim and become accountable for your own well-being.



3**We have a unique way of doing self-care.**

Each of us has a personalized fuel formula. For some it may be pickleball, for others, Pilates. It's your responsibility to discover the things that nourish your soul, and then care enough about yourself to make room for them in your life.

Your self-care formula evolves over time based on circumstances and abilities. Science, however, is clear that for physical health you should always include good sleep, physical activity, plentiful fruits and vegetables in your diet, and preventive care.

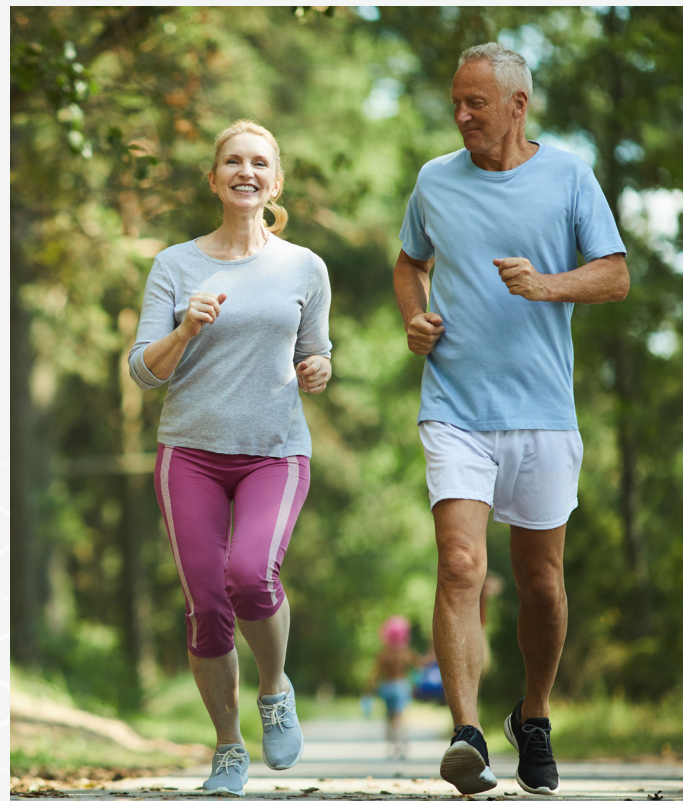
“Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness.”

-EDWARD STANLEY

4**Self-care requires commitment.**

At any given moment there are barriers to doing self-care. Insufficient time is the biggest obstacle followed by the belief that others' needs are more important than your own.

There are no magical answers to these two barriers, but once you make a commitment to doing self-care, the door of creative possibilities opens. Maybe it's listening to a book as you walk the dog or going to lunch with friends after your annual physical exam. It's important to also remember that when you say “yes” to others, you may be saying “no” to yourself.



5

Self-care comes in all sizes.

A Hawaiian vacation counts as self-care but so does a five-minute breathing exercise. As you identify your self-care formula, include choices of all sizes. This will give you a good selection depending on your available time.

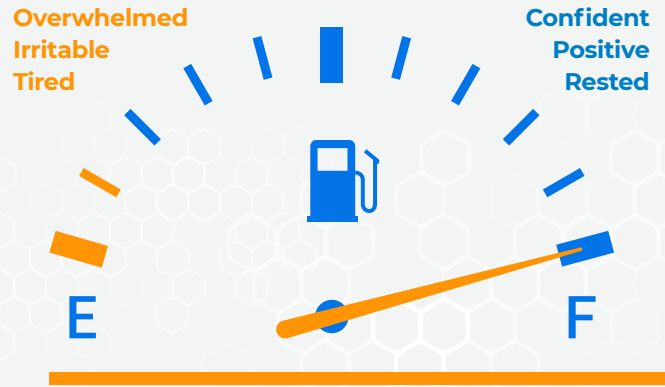
Self-Care Routine



6

Pay attention to your fuel gauge

Become familiar with how it feels to have a full fuel tank of well-being and when you're running low. Common signals of a full fuel tank include feeling rested, positive, and confident you can handle what comes your way. Feeling tired, irritable, and overwhelmed are signs that it's time to prioritize self-care.



Ideally, we would always have full tanks of well-being. Realistically, try for a half tank most of the time. This gives you the benefits and a reserve for when emergencies happen.

7

Discover the rewards of self-care.

As you do self-care, notice your personal benefits. Maybe you feel more creative, grateful, or patient with yourself and others. By discovering the gifts of self-care, you're more likely to consistently take the steps to prioritize it in your daily life.

Summary

It's true there is more time in retirement to do self-care. But if you're not paying attention and making intentional choices the time can be filled with a lot of busyness but not actions of real value. Make self-care non-negotiable, recognizing that without it, what really matters won't be really possible.





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