



PRESBYTERIAN
SENIOR LIVING

Nurturing Your Whole Self



**Prioritizing Self-Care
and How Life Plan Communities
Support It**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
In this Guide	3
The Importance of Daily Self-Care Routines.....	<u>4-5</u>
The definition and purpose of self-care routines	
The science behind the benefits of forming consistent habits	
How a self-care routine can support physical and mental health	
Nutrition and Self-Care: Eating for a Better You	<u>6-7</u>
The mind-body connection: how what you eat affects how you feel.....	
The basics of balanced nutrition.....	
Foods that boost mood and energy	
Mindful eating practices.....	
Mindfulness and Meditation for Mental Health	8
What mindfulness is and why it matters	
Meditation as a daily mental reset	
Starting small: integrating mindfulness into daily life	
Tools and apps to help build a mindfulness practice.....	
Social Connections: The Power of Relationships	<u>9-10</u>
The role of connection in emotional and physical well-being.....	
The difference between quantity and quality of relationships	
How to nurture healthy social connections.....	
Digital vs. in-person connection: finding a balance	
Movement, Activity, and Play	<u>11</u>
How movement supports mental and physical health	
Exercise vs. joyful movement: finding what feels good	
Creating movement rituals	
Hobbies and Creativity: Fuel for the Soul	<u>12</u>
Why creative expression is a form of self-care	
Making time for play and passion, even with a busy schedule.....	
The benefits of engaging in hobbies	
Letting go of perfection and comparison in creative pursuits	
How Life Plan Communities Support Better Self-Care	<u>13</u>
Built-in wellness and healthcare support	
Nutritious meals and flexible dining options	
Community and connection	
Opportunities for purpose, creativity, and play	
Stress reduction through simplified living	
Conclusion	<u>13</u>



Introduction

September is National Self-Care Awareness Month. If you aren't quite sure what self-care means, you aren't alone. While many people have heard the term, fewer understand what it really entails. Self-care is any intentional action you take to support your physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual well-being. It's about taking care of yourself in a way that helps you function at your best—not just for others, but for you.

Self-care is not only about treating yourself to something nice (although that's valid, too!). It's about consistently meeting your own needs and creating space for rest, reflection, and growth. In honor of this month-long awareness campaign, we've created a guide to help seniors develop a daily routine that boosts overall health and well-being.

Inside this Guide

In this guide, we'll share tips on establishing a self-care routine—from meditation and mindfulness to nutrition, movement, and socialization—that improves your quality of life and supports healthy aging. We'll conclude by discussing the various ways in which life plan communities support better self-care.

The Importance of Daily Self-Care Routines

A self-care routine is a set of regular practices or habits that maintain or improve your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Your routine can be as simple or as detailed as you want, as long as you intentionally make time to take steps to feel your best.

And there's plenty of science to show that creating healthy habits and consistently following them has a variety of health benefits. A good self-care routine can help you:

- **Prevent burnout**

This is especially important if you're juggling multiple roles, such as work, relationships, or caregiving.

- **Improve mental health**

Self-care helps lower stress and anxiety while also boosting mood.

- **Increase productivity**

When you're well-rested and focused, you're more efficient and productive.

- **Promote physical health**

When self-care routines include sleep, exercise, nutrition, and rest, you'll look and feel better.

- **Strengthen self-awareness**

Regularly checking in with yourself helps you recognize what you need emotionally and mentally to feel your best.

- **Feel more confident**

Taking care of yourself helps to remind you that you are worth time and effort.



Nutrition and Self-Care: Eating for a Better You

When it comes to healthy self-care, it's important not to overlook the strength of the mind-body connection. That's especially true of your diet—what you eat greatly impacts how you feel. So, it's essential to take time to learn about the basics of nutrition, such as balancing your macronutrients, staying properly hydrated, and getting enough fiber.

Equally important is learning more about the foods that boost mood and improve energy. Nutritionists say your menus should include foods rich in omega-3s, leafy greens, fermented foods, and protein. If you need resources to help you learn more about balanced diets for older adults, the [National Council on Aging](#) and the US Department of Agriculture's [MyPlate program](#) are two to explore.

One final nutrition-related tip is to learn how to practice mindful eating. So many times, we eat on the run and fail to even notice what we are consuming, or how fast. Mindful eating involves slowing down and paying close attention to your food—its taste, texture, smell, and how it makes your body feel—without multitasking or getting distracted by the TV or your phone.





Mindfulness and Meditation for Mental Health

Mindfulness is being fully present in the moment, with awareness and without judgment. It's about tuning in to the thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and environment you're experiencing right now, rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.

It is a powerful practice because the mind and body are deeply connected. When you train your brain to be more present, you start to notice real improvements in your overall well-being. While you can practice mindfulness at any time, no matter what you are doing, it's often cultivated through meditation.



Learning to be present and aware while engaged in pursuits such as meditating, walking, or gardening acts as a daily mental reset. Not only can it help reduce stress, improve focus, and regulate emotions, it can also:

- Calm the nervous system
- Aid in lowering anxiety and depression
- Boost emotional resilience and self-awareness
- Improve both quantity and quality of sleep
- Help lower blood pressure
- Support immune function
- Reduce inflammation linked to chronic diseases
- Encourage healthier eating habits
- Help break addictive patterns or emotional habits like stress eating or smoking
- Support regular exercise by increasing motivation and enjoyment

If trying to master mindfulness or meditation feels overwhelming, keep in mind that you can start small and build from there. For example, you can download an app that acts as a guide to encourage meditation or mindful walking. [Calm](#), [Meditation Studio](#), and [Zen](#) are a few to try.

Another way to help you ease into integrating mindfulness into your daily life is to journal. It can be as simple as documenting 10 things you are grateful for at bedtime, or writing down your thoughts and feelings at the start of a new day. The idea is to be in the moment and aware.

Social Connections: The Power of Relationships

Another important aspect of developing a healthy self-care routine is to better understand the role of connection in your emotional and physical well-being. As you begin to live more in the moment, you'll start to perceive the difference between the quantity and the quality of your relationships.

Self-care means fostering healthy social connections—that often means narrowing your circle of influence and prioritizing those who bring you joy and strength, not those who drain your energy and confidence. Choose friends and groups that make you feel safe, heard, and encouraged. Once you do, focus on building mutually respectful relationships. Here are some ideas to help you accomplish that:

- Put the phone down when you're spending time with people.
- Listen actively—that means really hearing what the person is saying, not just waiting for your turn to talk.
- Make eye contact, nod, and use your body language to show you care.
- Schedule regular calls, coffee dates, or video chats—even quick check-ins help.
- Say thank you. Tell people you appreciate them.
- Celebrate people's wins and support them during their lows.

In today's busy world, it can be hard to juggle all your valued relationships in-person. But technology can make it a little easier as long as you find a healthy balance between the digital world and the real one.





Movement, Activity, and Play

Movement is one of the best practices you can engage in to benefit both your body and your mind—and it doesn't have to mean hitting the gym every day, either. Whether it's walking, dancing in your kitchen, stretching, or doing a full workout, movement supports your mental and physical health in big ways.

- **Reduces stress & anxiety**

Movement lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol and helps your brain release feel-good chemicals like endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin.

- **Improves mood**

Regular movement can help ease symptoms of depression, boost energy, and improve overall emotional well-being.

- **Boosts focus & brain function**

Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, which can sharpen memory, concentration, and creativity.

- **Enhances sleep quality**

Physical activity helps regulate your sleep cycle, making it easier to fall—and stay—asleep.

- **Builds confidence & resilience**

Setting fitness goals and seeing progress builds self-esteem and helps you feel more in control, especially during stressful times.

- **Strengthens the heart**

Cardiovascular exercise improves circulation, lowers blood pressure, and supports heart health.

- **Supports healthy weight & metabolism**

A consistent exercise routine can help you manage weight, blood sugar, and energy levels more effectively.

- **Boosts immune system**

Regular movement can enhance immune function and reduce inflammation.

- **Keeps muscles & joints strong**

Staying physically active helps prevent injuries, reduces stiffness, and improves flexibility and balance as you age.

- **Improves gut & digestive health**

Movement stimulates digestion and can help with issues like bloating or constipation.

As you find ways to get and stay moving, don't underestimate how important it is to find activities that bring you joy and leave you feeling good, whether it's yoga, nature walks, or dancing. Making those activities a priority will increase the likelihood that you'll stick to your routine. Creating rituals, such as stretching before you get out of bed each morning or taking a power walk after lunch, will also help you stay more committed to movement.



Hobbies and Creativity: Fuel for the Soul

When you are busy or don't think you have any artistic talent, it can be for tempting to let hobbies or interests slide. Fortunately, when you're engaging in arts and crafts, the end result doesn't matter. It's the actual process of creating and expressing yourself that's the key to better self-care. And spending even short blocks of time on hobbies can yield big results.

So, what are the benefits of tapping into creativity? Whether it's painting, writing, knitting, playing music, gardening, or even cooking, doing something creative just for fun brings a bunch of real, science-backed benefits. Here are just a few of them:

- Getting into an artistic flow can act like a form of meditation—it helps you relax, unwind, and be in the moment.
- Creating gives your brain a dopamine boost, improving your mood, increasing motivation, and reducing feelings of anxiety or depression.
- Tackling a creative project (even a small one!) gives you a sense of accomplishment and pride, while also helping you process emotions.
- Engaging in creative tasks strengthens neural connections and can keep the brain sharp, especially as you age.
- Practicing creativity often involves thinking outside the box and seeing things from new angles—skills that are useful in everyday life.

Making time for play and passion, even amidst a busy schedule, is a great way to take good care of your body, mind, and spirit. Just remember, you don't have to compare your skills to others or achieve perfection. Make your goal to relax and enjoy the process.





How Life Plan Communities Support Better Self-Care

If you are a retiree interested in making your health and wellness a top priority, one idea to consider is making a move to a PSL [life plan community](#). These communities are designed to provide residents with their best quality of life. Some of the benefits you'll find at each of our locations include:

- Daily fitness classes, wellness programs, and healthcare support
- Well-balanced meals with flexible menu options, available in a variety of settings (both casual and formal)
- A campus that fosters a sense of community and connection among residents, team members, and families
- Daily opportunities for purpose, creativity, and play in organized and informal gatherings
- Few worries about home maintenance and managing a house, resulting in lower stress and anxiety

It all adds up to a living environment that makes it easier to develop and stick with a healthy self-care routine as you grow older.

Conclusion

Self-care routines are more than just a trend—they're an essential part of living a balanced, fulfilling life. Whether it's moving your body, connecting with others, practicing mindfulness, eating with intention, or getting creative, these small but meaningful habits support your mental, physical, and emotional well-being. And moving to a life plan community is a great step to take as you work to make caring for yourself a priority.

We invite you to visit a PSL life plan community near you to learn more!

Schedule a Visit to a PSL Community

We invite you to call a Presbyterian Senior Living community near you to learn more and schedule a personal visit.



PRESBYTERIAN
SENIOR LIVING

**One Trinity Drive E., Suite 201
Dillsburg, PA 17019**

717.502.8840

www.psl.org

View Our Community List

