

NURSES: **THE ULTIMATE** **GUIDE TO** **SELF-CARE**



NURSES: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SELF-CARE



Taking care of others for a living can be a rewarding career choice. The fulfilling benefits of being a nurse make this occupation desirable for many. But while it is good to do all you can to help others, it is equally important to take the time to care for yourself.

Nurses often lack self-care because they spend so much of their time caring for others. But they are the healthcare professionals who often require self-care the most.

Whether you have just started with your nursing career or you have been working in healthcare for many years, you can benefit from reading this helpful guide on the importance of self-care and how to ensure you are getting enough of it.

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WHAT IS SELF-CARE?



Self-care is defined by the World Health Organization as “what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness.” It can be something as simple as taking a coffee break or making sure you keep up with all your medical appointments.

For nurses, self-care is vital. No matter how skilled you may be, you cannot provide the optimal level of care to another person when you lack care for yourself.

It can be difficult to pause and take a step back to care for yourself when you know others need your services. That is an issue prevalent among caregivers of all types. But it’s important to remember that if you are not at 100 percent yourself, it is impossible to give adequate care to others. By taking time to recharge and making sure you are physically and mentally healthy, you will be able to provide the best possible care to your patients and help out your fellow nurses at the same time.

WHY SELF-CARE IS ESSENTIAL FOR NURSES?



Neglecting self-care is not only harmful to nurses but to their patients as well. When we neglect self-care, it can lead to unhealthy lifestyle choices.

In a recent study that 2,500 registered nurses took part in, 71% stated that they experienced severe musculoskeletal pain and 18% suffered from depression. That can be dangerous for anyone working in the healthcare industry. Nurses who are not taking care of their health tend to have a higher count of medication errors and other failures with their patients than those who are in good health.

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The stress that comes along with a lack of self-care can also contribute to severe diseases. When the stress hormone cortisol builds up in the bloodstream and the adrenaline hormone, it can cause various health conditions. These health issues can include hyperglycemia, arteriosclerosis, hypertension, hyperinsulinemia, and a poorly functioning immune system.

These severe issues could contribute to a skilled nurse having to leave the profession altogether, simply because they did not take the time to care for themselves as much as they cared for others.

5 FACTORS THAT ARE VITAL TO SELF-CARE FOR NURSES

We can break down self-care into several different areas, each of which is equally important and should never be overlooked. Here are five of the most important areas of self-care that you should pay attention to.



MENTAL

Good mental health is essential for nurses and can help them take charge of a stressful situation while staying calm. Self-care methods that can improve your mental health include listening to relaxing music, reading a journal article relevant to your work, listening to audiobooks or reading a good book, or trying out a new hobby. You can also start a journal using either a notebook, your computer, or an app to document how you feel each day and any steps you took to overcome obstacles.

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PHYSICAL

Physical activity such as exercise is vital to our self-care. The CDC recommends that we all take part in at least two and a half hours of aerobic activity each week. That can include walking for an hour around the neighborhood or taking part in an aerobics class at your local gym. To easily add more physical activity to your busy schedule, you can choose to park farther away from the grocery store or opt to take the stairs at work instead of the elevator whenever possible.

EMOTIONAL

Nursing can take a toll on your emotions. You may experience severe highs and lows from helping patients and caring for those who are terminally ill. At work, you can be sure to stay in good emotional health by taking the time to have an uplifting or lighthearted conversation with friends. After work, watch a funny movie or TV show or create a music playlist filled with some of your favorite upbeat songs to listen to while you exercise.

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SPIRITUAL

Spirituality can be helpful when it comes to self-care, even if you don't consider yourself to be very religious. Meditation has been proven to help relieve stress and improve moods, and there are many resources available to help you get started. Deep breathing, practicing yoga, or volunteering to help with a cause you are passionate about in your spare time can all contribute to your spiritual well-being.

MEDICAL

Nurses understand the importance of medical care for their patients, but they will often let minor issues slide when it comes to their own well-being. Nurses need to take care of themselves by eating a healthy diet, participating in physical activity, and knowing their health numbers. It can be easy for your blood pressure or cholesterol levels to be out of control if you do not keep your regular appointments with your family doctor. By making healthier choices, getting enough sleep at night, and finding positive ways to manage stress, you can remain healthy and achieve your self-care goals.

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HELPFUL SELF-CARE RESOURCES FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS



Here are a few valuable resources, including apps and worksheets nurses can benefit from when adding more self-care to their daily routine.

HEADSPACE

An app that introduces users to meditation and ways to feel calm.

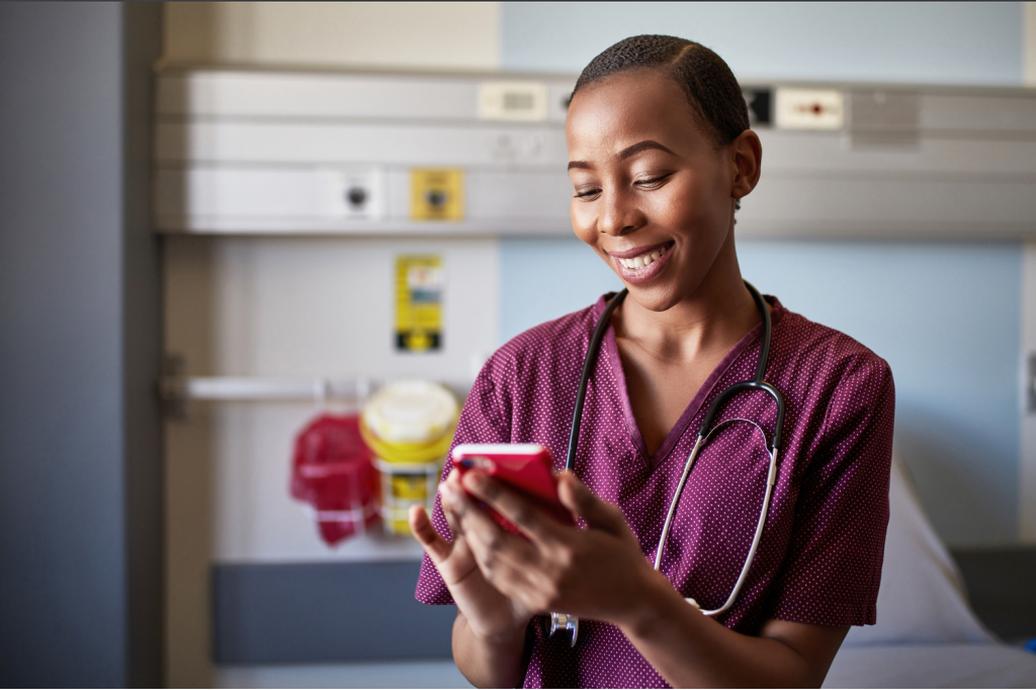
SHINE

A fun application that keeps the user motivated with uplifting quotes.

CLASS PASS GO

This app offers workouts that are ready to view at any time and range in difficulty levels.

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TALKSPACE

An app that allows you to schedule online therapy sessions to get the help you need in your own time.

EMERGENCY SELF CARE WORKSHEET

A quick practical guide for help anytime you are stressed.

DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS

Healthy meal planning tips to make it easier to eat nutritious foods.

GETTING STARTED WITH MINDFULNESS

A simple and insightful guide for those new to mindfulness and meditation.

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