

PARISH NURSE'S NOTES – FEBRUARY 2024

It is easy to feel mentally exhausted in a world that demands so much our time, energy and focus. Many people push themselves from sunup to sundown in a quest to keep up with responsibilities at home and work, juggling social events, kids' activities and other commitments. With all this, the need to take care of ourselves is real. In fact, if ignored, our bodies can start to feel the impact mentally or physically, opening the door for burnout, nervous exhaustion, or even mental health and substance use challenges to develop or worsen.

So on this [National Random Acts of Kindness Day](#) (February 17), we want to encourage you to be kind to yourself by practicing self-care. The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) curriculum tells us that with treatment and care, mental health and substance use challenges can be prevented and people experiencing those challenges may recover. Whether you're on a recovery journey or just want to be able to give back to others, [self-care](#) is a great place to start. In fact, one national [survey](#) found that Americans experienced enhanced happiness (71%), increased productivity (67%) and self-confidence (64%) as benefits of self-care. From a physical health perspective, self-care also reduces heart disease, stroke and cancer. It also gives you the fuel you need to help others.

Feeling ready to practice self-care? It doesn't have to be elaborate, expensive or time intensive. It can be physical, mental or emotional — whatever you feel is most needed at the time.

Here are 10 simple acts of kindness you can do for yourself on this National Random Acts of Kindness Day and throughout the year.

1. **Place words of affirmation around your home.** Not only will writing them down be a good exercise, but seeing them in special places will lift your spirits. Examples include, "I am strong," "I am beautiful inside and out" and "I am confident."
2. **Call a friend.** Reach out to a friend you've lost touch with or check in with a buddy who you talk to on the regular. Either way, connecting with supportive people is a great way to serve your mental health.

3. **Create art or music.** Mental wellbeing can be improved through art therapy, which has been shown to be a useful tool for overall health.
4. **Curate a playlist.** If art therapy in the traditional sense isn't your thing, try creating a music playlist. Whether the tunes are calming, upbeat or spiritual, find something that speaks to you.
5. **Join an online interest group.** Love to read books? Join a book club! Enjoy cooking? Find an online cooking group. Interacting with people with similar interests is a great outlet and re-energizer.
6. **Journal your thoughts and experiences.** Sometimes it's easier to write down what you're feeling rather than speaking it out loud. There are tons of journals out there to fit your style. Some have writing prompts to guide your writing, while others are blank and let you take control. In the end, a notebook works too.
7. **Schedule a "nothing" day.** Often, we push ourselves too hard without giving our minds and bodies a chance to recover. Scheduling a day of "nothing" can do wonders for your mental and physical health.
8. **Spend time outdoors.** Research shows spending time outside reduces the risk of depression and boosts serotonin levels and Vitamin D production.
9. **Start a new book.** Put technology down and get lost in a good book. There are tons of must-read lists to get you started.
10. **Practice meditation.** Incorporating meditation into your daily routine can bring you peace, calm and balance.

Don't fret if you can't do an act of self-care as often as you'd like. Setbacks are a natural part of life. Tomorrow is a fresh start in which you can #BeTheDifference in your own life.