

2020 has been quite the year, which has quickly made many big changes in our lives. COVID-19 has changed the way we live, the way we interact with others, and our daily routines. As we adjust to our new way of life, it's important to recognize the importance of taking care of ourselves and building self-care back into our lives.

Self-care is anything that allows us to care for our body physically, cognitively, and mentally- or our body, mind, and soul. When we think of self-care, we often imagine taking a luxurious bubble bath or taking an expensive vacation. Although bubble baths and trips to somewhere tropical can certainly be a form of self-care, self-care is much more holistic than that.

The BACE acronym is an acronym we can use to check in with ourselves and to help build self-care into our daily lives.

There are two ways to use the BACE acronym: The first way is to check in with ourselves. Mentally go through each letter and see if you have done at least one thing each day under the four categories. If you haven't, decide what you can do that day to change that in under 5-10 minutes. When we are having a "one of those days" it can be a lot of pressure to force ourselves to do an hour of yoga as part of our self-care. Instead, it's more reasonable to do 5-10 minutes of stretching in the living room. Instead of letting things build up it can be better to book one appointment that we've been avoiding.

The second way to use the BACE acronym is to create a self-care schedule for ourselves. Especially for those of us who have had our typical schedules drastically change in recent months, it can be helpful to establish a routine to make sure we take care of everything we need to and to take care of ourselves. If creating a schedule is helpful for you- great! If not, do not feel like you need to add more to your already busy plate! Self-care shouldn't be a chore to cross off the to do list.

We will now go through each letter in the BACE acronym:

B – Body Care

Body care is anything that helps you take care of your body. Many of us who previously participated at gyms, sports, and group activities may have

had their typical form of body care unavailable to them. Others may find that their changing routines have made it hard to eat regular meals, drink enough water, or take care of other basic needs. Some ways you can take care of your body in under 5 minutes include:

- Drinking a glass of water
- Eating a healthy snack
- Stretching
- Going for a walk
- Meditation and mindfulness practices
- Grounding techniques
- Meal prepping
- Spending some time outside (for those of you working at home, is it possible to bring your laptop outside on a nice day?)
- Physical activity
- Taking medications and supplements

A – Sense of **Accomplishment**

Believe it or not, working is part of self-care! Many of us can find a sense of accomplishment through or work, chores, errands, childcare, and everything it takes to keep our homes running. Many of us have started working from home, where all of these duties have become merged together, making it harder to get everything done. The following are some tips for working from home and building a sense of accomplishment into our routines.

- **Set boundaries and create a schedule:** With much of our work going virtual, it's easy to answer that email "because it only takes 5 minutes" even though it's almost time for bed. It's important to create and stick to a work schedule for yourself, even if you are enjoying the flexibility of working from home. For example, we can decide that we will not answer messages or do any work after a certain time, or that we will put our work away completely on the weekends.
- **Create a dedicated workspace:** Many of us have never needed to work from home, and thus have no dedicated workspace. Creating a dedicated space tells others, as well as yourself, that it's time to work.
- **Take care of things that take less than 5 minutes to do:** Is there anything you can do to give you a sense of accomplishment that will

only take a few minutes of your time? For me, things like checking my mail, answering non-work emails, booking that appointment I've been putting off, or tidying up a space in my home are some things that I can do quickly that make me feel like I've accomplished something and been productive.

- ***Finally, recognize that it's okay to be less productive as usual when we are going through a global pandemic.***

C – Connection to Others

For many of us, social distancing can unfortunately mean social isolation. Not only are we not able to see our friends and family, but we also don't get to see our larger, more informal networks and community groups. Many of us have adapted by using technology such as Facetime and Skype. Even though we may not be able to connect with others in the same way we used to, it's important to continually make the effort to reach out to our family and friends. It can be as simple as sending a text, a 5-minute phone call, or a socially distanced interaction. Connecting with friends and family daily will help you feel more connected which contributes to mental wellness.

E – Entertainment

Entertainment is anything we do for fun. This can be any hobby, interest, or anything we do "just for fun". This is the bubble bath and vacations category. For some entertainment can be watching a favourite show, knitting, playing some music, or enjoying a nice sunny day. Make some time to do things you enjoy daily.

Hopefully you have some ideas about how you can build some self-care into your daily routines, whether it be by "checking in" with yourself or actually creating a self-care schedule that includes body care, sense of accomplishment, connection to others, and entertainment. We can't control the changes that are occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we can control the ways we care for our own mental and physical health.