



Strategies and Resources: **Self-Care**

Self-care is important for everyone. However, being autistic can mean that some of us experience everyday stresses and anxieties at a higher level than most of our peers. The consequence of this can be frequent meltdowns or shutdowns, or just feelings of not being able to manage another minute, hour, or day. We may feel we get to our capacity to cope with life quickly!

It is useful to remember that our capabilities to manage daily tasks can fluctuate depending on a variety of factors- how tired we are, how much pressure we have been under, if we are hungry etc.

Keeping up with regular 'me' time or daily self-care can help to keep our mental health and well-being functioning positively, and avoid as many meltdowns and shutdowns.


Self-care tips:

- Diet - what you put into your body can impact how you feel, and autistic people can be sensitive/ intolerant of certain food types/ ingredients (consider keeping a food diary if you think you may have an intolerance).
- Social - being sociable and doing things we enjoy with people we trust is an important part of life, however it is equally important to strike a balance and not agree to too much or you risk burn-out.
- Hygiene - taking care of our basic needs can become difficult if we are overwhelmed with life. This is not a sign of weakness or something to be ashamed of.

- Take regular time off for self.
- Being balanced with things (if that works for you).
- Being focused on one task at a time up until completion (if that works for you).
- Alarms on phone to keep track of tasks/ time.
- Take time to get to know yourself and figure out the best ways to take care of 'you' (this can be ongoing work and discovery).
- Routine can be helpful and comforting.
- Knowing when and how to say 'no'.
- Not taking on too much.
- Weighing up the consequences of pushing on through a task (consider the aftermath).
- Drop the mask/stop camouflaging (can feel freeing).
- Get outdoors (greenery/quiet/peace/freedom and space from people).
- Spend time with the right people (they can keep an eye on us and prompt us to engage in our self-care strategies).
- Take our own advice.
- Positive mantras.
- Self-forgiveness.
- Bring your thoughts back to the present and back to your body (how does my foot feel on the floor? How does my body feel on this seat?).
- Take time to figure out your comfort/ happy tools (a picture, a sound, a place, a song, a movie. What makes you feel calm, warm, loved, and safe?).
- Use of earphones/music to distract from overthinking/overanalysing or a difficult environment.
- Physical activity (consider timing of exercise - too late could impact on sleep. Overcoming lack of self-motivation - we know we often feel better after some exercise, even taking a walk, but it is sometimes tough to get going! Build it into your routine or engage in activities with friends or a group).

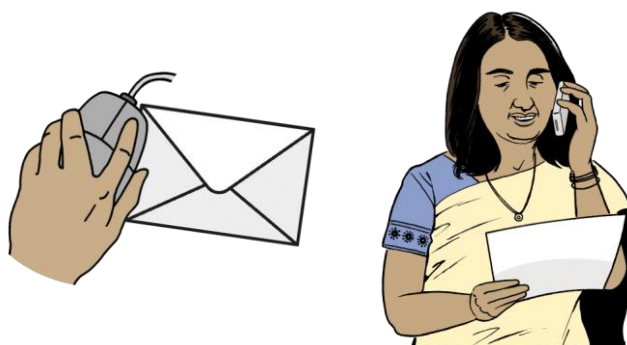
Takeaways:

1. Regular self-care can help to lessen the frequency of feeling overwhelmed which may lead to meltdowns or shutdowns

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2. Take time to work out which types of self-care work for you. This may feel a bit 'trial and error' and things that work one day may not work on another occasion
 3. Try taking a holistic approach to self-care. It can grow and evolve over time as we learn more about ourselves

Contact Us

This guide was produced by **Autism AIM**, part of The Advonet Group. We are a free service co-led by and run for autistic adults (aged 18+) in the Leeds, Bradford and Craven areas.



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