



# Make Time For You

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It's time to work on YOU. So sit back and listen to practical, actionable advice to accelerate your progress.

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If you've been feeling stressed out, anxious, or overwhelmed lately, you're not alone. Today's fast-paced, highly demanding world requires us to manage *so much* and all at once. But, with a little tweak to your daily routine, you can more easily deal with what's being thrown at you. You can calm down, slow down, and de-stress by making more time for yourself.

That's right, make time for yourself. Sounds simple, but how do we actually take a step back from our busy lives and practice self-care? We often feel like we're being pulled in different directions by the people in our lives. Maybe your boss gave you a deadline and you're struggling to find any downtime. Maybe your spouse wants to see you at home more. Maybe you have to take your kids to basketball practice and dance class, and your at-home chores list just keeps on growing. What do you do? How do you find time for yourself?

According to Matthew Glowiak, a Clinical Faculty member at Southern New Hampshire University:

*In a society in which people are expected to work long hours and pass on vacation days, there is an underlying belief that we must always be productive – which can ultimately take away from opportunities for self-care. But by taking some time out to engage in self-care, you may relieve the pressures of everyday life and reset yourself to get back to a healthy point where productivity is once again maximized.*

Whether we should be or not, we *are* all busy. So here are a few tips for finding small amounts of time for self-care practices. When practiced habitually and over time, these can have a big impact.

So, how can you make time for yourself to practice self-care?

Start by saying no! Saying no is hard. Our schedules may be packed, but we don't want to let a good friend down after she extends an invitation. And we *want* to help our neighbor with that task they've been struggling with. But if you're already hard-pressed for time to do the things *you* need to do, then you have to draw the line somewhere. Saying no so you're not overbooked, and can slow down a little, is the first step in making time for yourself!

Now, what do you do with this newfound time? You can start by meditating. In his book *Meditation as Medicine*, Dr. Dharma Singh Khalsa discusses the science behind the benefits regular meditators experience. Khalsa states that meditation, "reduces blood lactate, a marker of stress and anxiety. The calming hormones melatonin and serotonin are increased by meditation, and the stress hormone cortisol is decreased." Khalsa goes on to discuss specific meditations, their physiological effects, and how each targets specific afflictions, such as arthritis, ulcers, and even addiction.

You can start meditating for as little as five minutes each day. If you're new to this practice, there are apps, like headspace and InsightTimer, that offer guided meditations, inspiring music, and ambient background sounds that help set the right mood. You can also begin by just sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing. There are many different types of meditation to choose

from, so whichever one you do decide to try, just be sure to keep practicing. The more habitual your practice, the better you'll get at it and the more benefits you'll see!

Practicing breathwork is another way to be sure you're giving yourself the time you deserve. Breathwork is a buzzword these days, and with good reason. Over time, humans have evolved to take shallow chest breaths instead of deep belly breaths. Becoming aware of how you're breathing, and shifting to slower, deeper patterns of breathing, where you fill your belly with air instead of just your chest, has been shown to lower your resting heart rate and reduce inflammation in your body. Again, you can start with just five minutes of breathwork practice and build up to more time. If you're brand new to Breathwork, check out Wim Hof's book *The Wim Hof Method: Activate Your Full Human Potential*. Hof is a Dutch motivational speaker and extreme athlete who can withstand freezing temperatures and has performed feats such as climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in only shorts! Hof accredits this ability to his method, which focuses heavily on breathing exercises. In his book, Hof lays out an easy-to-follow method that can help get you started.

Another great option for getting in some self-care is to set aside time each week for exercise. There are oodles of benefits to be had from regular physical activity. Note, that's *physical activity*, not intense exercise. Now of course you'll see even greater benefits from vigorous exercise, but light to moderate physical activity can boost metabolism, give you more energy, and help you feel better about yourself. Now if you want to pump it up to moderate to vigorous exercise, three to five times per week, you'll see not only a lowered risk for suffering from cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity, but also reduced instances of feeling stressed, depressed, and anxious. Exercise also improves sleep and promotes a positive mood. If it's hard to get to the gym for an hour plus, start with just 20 minutes a day of light physical activity, like walking after a meal, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or tapping your foot in place while you're at your desk.

But 'you time' is not just what you do in the day. Make sure you're getting enough sleep each night. Sleep is crucial to human performance. It affects our moods, how well we can regulate hormone levels, and numerous other biological functions. The Sleep Foundation recommends adults get seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Ultimately, though, the amount of sleep

needed is down to the individual. If you're someone who struggles to get to sleep timely and feels groggy when you wake up, The Sleep Foundation also recommends:

*Sticking to the same sleep schedule every day, even on weekends.*

*Practicing a relaxing pre-bed routine to make it easier to fall asleep quickly.*

*Choosing the best mattress that is supportive and comfortable, and outfitting it*

*with quality pillows and bedding.*

*Minimizing potential disruptions from light and sound while optimizing your bedroom temperature and aroma.*

*Disconnecting from electronic devices like mobile phones and laptops for a half-hour or more before bed.*

*Carefully monitoring your intake of caffeine and alcohol and trying to avoid consuming them in the hours before bed.*

It sounds like a lot, but if you can nail a consistent, restful sleeping pattern, it really is amazing.

Finally, indulge every once in a while! In a world where busy is better, it's easy to feel guilty for taking some time to treat yourself to doing something special. But remember that's just what you've been conditioned to feel.

Researcher in motivational psychology at the University of Zurich Katharina Bernecker states, "of course self-control is important, but research on self-regulation should pay just as much attention to hedonism, or short-term pleasure." Bernecker's research shows that hedonism, or our ability to enjoy ourselves, contributes to our happiness in significant ways. "People who are living happy and satisfied lives are able to experience pleasure without being distracted by intrusive thoughts. They can just do something they enjoy and be fully in the moment with it."

If it truly makes life more enjoyable and you happier, then buy yourself that something special you've been eyeing, book that massage or a day at the spa, veg out on the couch, and watch that movie you've been wanting to see. These are all examples of how little moments of indulgence can let us rest and recharge. And the more well-rested we are, the more we'll be

able to focus when we need it, and the more energized we'll be once it's time to pick up a task again.

Incorporating these activities into your daily routine can seem like a daunting task at first. It's natural to feel this way. But once you start saying 'no' and set aside just five minutes each day, you'll soon find that you have an additional five minutes to make a 10-minute practice. Then you'll find another five minutes to make a 15-minute practice. And so on and so on. Habits take about 30 days to form so remember to stick with them. Soon you won't be able to go a day *without* taking some time for yourself! As the legendary Lucille Ball once said, "Love yourself first, and everything else falls in line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world."

Our challenge to you this week is to take that first step. Say "no" and set that that first five minutes aside.

That's all for now, have a great day.

## Reading List

- [Article] [What is Self-Care and Why is it Important For You?](#), Matthew Glowiak
- [App] [headspace](#)
- [App] [InsightTimer](#)
- [Article] [The Wim Hoff Method: Activate Your Full Human Potential](#), Wim Hof
- [Article] [How to Start Exercising and Stick to It](#), Lawrence Robinson, Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., and Melina Smith, M.A.
- [Article] [How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?](#), Eric Suni
- [Article] [You Need Both Self-Control And Self-Indulgence To Be Happy](#), Alison Escalante