



Self-Care Guide for HR Professionals

A how-to guide for creating your
own unique self-care plan

[CALM.COM/BUSINESS](https://calm.com/business)



Contents

01

INTRODUCTION	03
What is mindful self-care?	04
Why <i>your</i> self-care matters	05

02

HOW TO DESIGN A SELF-CARE PLAN	07
Reflect	08
Examine	09
Replace	10
Share	11

03

SELF-CARE PRACTICES FOR HR PROFESSIONALS ...	12
Mental: Meditate	13
Mental: Let it go	14
Emotional: Track your mood.....	15
Emotional: Practice gratitude	16
Emotional: Befriend yourself	17
Physical: Prioritize sleep	18
Physical: Get outside	19
Work: Protect your schedule	20
Work: Create a “Warm & Fuzzies Folder”	21

04

APPENDIX.....	22
Your self-care plan template	23

Caring for ourselves is our most important task.

If you're an HR professional in 2021, your role has only intensified in the last year.

You've been tasked with trying to minimize the impact of a global pandemic on an entire workforce—creating new workplace practices and policies amidst constant change and unknowns, and responding to the emotional impact that complex current events have had on your workforce.

In your everyday work, you are asked to constantly reflect on the question, "Are our employees safe, healthy, and emotionally okay?"

But who is asking this question about you?
How are *you*?

Now, more than ever, HR practitioners are at an increased risk of burnout and disconnect.

Just as you would fix your own oxygen mask before helping someone else, the best way to support the well-being of others is by first taking care of yourself. As you strive to provide your teams with the support and mental health resources they need for their own resilience, you must not overlook your own self-care. When you're thriving, you naturally have more energy, creativity, and empathy to offer others.

So please, use this tool to reflect on what actions will 'fill your cup,' so that you can be your best self, and best support those around you.



Sarah Tobin
Head of Talent Development, Calm

How to use this self-care planning guide

This guide is designed to help you identify your self-care needs, create a personalized action plan, and learn how to prioritize and engage in self-care. There are two ways this tool can be used:

1. You can take this opportunity to develop and implement your own personalized self-care plan; or
2. You can simply reflect on the process of planning for self-care, without documenting a formal plan.

Whichever option you choose, the act of reading this is already an act of self-care!

What is mindful self-care?



“Self-care means asking yourself what you need and following through on the honest answer.”

– Shelly Tygielski

Self-care refers to the activities and practices that we deliberately choose to engage in on a regular basis to maintain and enhance our health and well-being. This is not a luxury, it is foundational work required for our physical and emotional wellness. This means that self-care is not always fun, sometimes it’s hard—like lacing up your shoes to go for a walk when you’d rather be watching Netflix.

Self-care is exponentially more effective when it’s infused with mindfulness—the practice of paying attention to the present moment on purpose with kindness and curiosity. It’s the difference between taking a bath with a clenched jaw while contemplating your to-do list versus breathing deeply and letting the warmth of the water soothe your weary mind.

The way you do something is just as important as the act of doing it in the first place.

Why *your* self-care matters

Although it may sound fluffy or frivolous, self-care is crucial to your optimal functioning.

In a society that celebrates busyness, there is an underlying belief that we must always be productive. This can ultimately leave us feeling like there is no time for self-care. And while it may be counterintuitive, it actually makes us more productive to set time aside for ourselves. Research suggests that steady and intentional practice of self-care not only reduces stress and prevents [burnout](#) but it also improves concentration and work productivity, helping us refocus.

To create a [culture of self-care](#) at work, it helps to model it. HR professionals can talk about the importance of mental wellness, but if it's clear to their teams that they're not practicing self-care themselves, their teams won't either. **Effective role modeling from leaders and HR professionals is one of the most powerful drivers in ensuring people take care of their own mental health.**



Repeat after me:

A happier and healthier workplace starts with taking care of myself.

2.0

How to design a self-care plan

How to design a personal self-care plan

A self-care plan is your own unique well-being roadmap—with strategies and tools to help you, both in day-to-day life and in times of emergency.

By designing a self-care plan, you're directing your best self to reflect on what you may need in your most challenging moments. When it comes to self-care plans, there is no one-size-fits-all. We all have different needs, strengths, and limitations. The following four-step process will help you to build a plan that's right for you.

Reflect

Look at your existing coping strategies and assess what practices you'd like to try.

Examine

Identify your main barriers to self-care and how you can overcome them.

Replace

Identify any negative coping strategies and try and replace them with something positive.

Share

Share your plan with colleagues, friends, or family for support, encouragement, and accountability.

Reflect

01 Reflect

02 Examine

03 Replace

04 Share

Take a moment to consider **what you value and need in your everyday life**. Then consider **what you value and need during times of high stress**. Fill your self-care plan with activities that you enjoy and that support your well-being. Start with four categories—mental, emotional, physical, and work—and in each one, write down the things you currently do and the practices you want to try.

AREAS OF SELF-CARE

Mental

Emotional

Physical

Work

CURRENT PRACTICES

PRACTICES TO TRY
(Consider [these ideas](#))

Examine

01 Reflect

02 **Examine**

03 Replace

04 Share

Are there barriers to maintaining your self-care? Once you've written down what you do to care for yourself, write down what might get in the way of you being able to accomplish it. Then, strategize how you can shift that roadblock to keep your plan on track.

SELF-CARE STRATEGY

Example: Remove work email from my personal phone so I can't check it if I'm away from my computer.

BARRIERS TO MAINTAINING MY SELF-CARE STRATEGY

I do have the Slack app on my phone and I'm tempted to check it to see what's happening.

HOW I WILL ADDRESS THESE BARRIERS AND REMIND MYSELF TO PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Delete the app or put notifications on silent after a certain hour so I won't see them until the workday begins.

Replace

- 01 Reflect
- 02 Examine
- 03 Replace**
- 04 Share

Work on reducing, and then eliminating, negative coping strategies. You can refer to [this list](#) from Harvard Health for more guidance on unhealthy stress responses. If you find yourself using negative strategies, begin by choosing one action you feel is most harmful and identify a positive strategy to replace it. We increase our likelihood of adopting and maintaining new habits when changes are incremental. Overhauling every aspect of our daily life at once is difficult, uncomfortable. Take your time and remember that small **steps add up over time.**

NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES I WOULD LIKE TO USE LESS OR NOT AT ALL

Example: Skipping meals and working through lunch when I'm stressed.

WHAT I WILL DO INSTEAD

Prepare my lunch the night before and block time in my calendar to eat without distractions.

Here are three tools to help you make sustainable shifts in your life:

[Masterclass: Breaking Bad Habits](#)

Psychiatrist and addiction expert Dr. Judson Brewer outlines proven techniques for overcoming bad habits in this Calm Masterclass.

[Breaking Habits](#)

A collection of meditations to help break habits that no longer serve you.

[How to Change Habits Mindfully](#)

A step-by-step guidebook to inspire new possibilities and make important changes in your life.

Share

- 01 Reflect
- 02 Examine
- 03 Replace
- 04 Share

Self-care is personal, but it doesn't have to be done alone! Creating a self-care plan is an excellent bonding activity for coworkers or teams, and sharing the experience helps to hold you accountable. If you're not comfortable with discussing your plan with your team, share it with a friend or family member. Ask them to check up on your progress and help you evaluate areas where you've struggled.



CALM TIP

Sharing your goals and intentions can provide accountability, support, encouragement, and connection—which makes it much easier to develop a new habit. If you're looking for mindful connection online, join our [Calm for Business Ambassador Community](#).

3.0

Self-care practices for HR professionals

Need help identifying self-care activities to incorporate into your practices?
Consider these ideas and rediscover what feels most nourishing to you.

Mental: Meditate

“You must be friends with silence to hear”
– Joy Harjo

Working in HR can be demanding and stressful. One of the overarching stressors arises from the deep level of care that is felt for employees, and the pressure they put on themselves to help.

While this is a positive response, it can feel painful if you are unable to support employees who are struggling.



Feeling helpless and under-resourced in the face of suffering can lead to “compassion fatigue,” a form of burnout commonly experienced by those in helping professions. The good news is that it’s possible to be both compassionate and passionate at work without running yourself into the ground.

Meditation makes it easier to balance the care we have for others with our own self-care by tuning in to how we might be overextending ourselves and ignoring the body’s distress cues.

Ultimately the awareness that develops through a meditation practice can help you get clear on what you need to feel happier and healthier.

Consider meditation as a mental training that prepares you to meet the challenging circumstances you face in your personal and professional life with clarity, kindness, and balance. Practicing at home will help you to bring [mindfulness into the workplace](#) with more ease and authenticity. Employees will naturally benefit from the shift in your state of being as you integrate the practice into your routine.

Here are three ways to get started today.



Daily Calm

Calm offers a unique meditation and mindfulness teaching every day. Our members credit Tamara’s soothing voice and gentle wisdom as their go-to for developing a regular meditation practice.



How to Meditate

Calm’s 30-day intro series is a no-nonsense approach to meditation. Perfect for beginners to learn the basics. While long-time meditators also enjoy experiencing the practice anew via Jeff’s fresh perspective and humor.



Meditation Guide

We created this journal to set you up for success in beginning (or expanding) your own personal meditation practice. Like any habit, it requires a mix of intention and practical action that honors your current circumstance.

CALM TIP

Make meditation a daily habit by pairing it with an already established routine like waking up, eating lunch or winding down in the evening.

Mental: Let it go

“If you want to fly, you have to give up what weighs you down.” – Roy T. Bennett



It's almost impossible to go through life without being irritated or triggered by others. And it's all too easy to fall into a narrative of "they're wrong, and I'm right." Regardless of right or wrong, these interactions and thought patterns impact both mind and body. We may experience tension in the jaw, and muscle tightness in the neck, shoulders, and upper back.

One way to positively reframe this experience is to **recognize that everyone is doing their best.** Even if it's not obvious, we're all confronting our own challenges.

Perhaps the colleague who forgot to thank you is feeling anxious about something they have to share with a loved one at dinner, or they're going through financial difficulties.

When we remind ourselves of the complexity of life, we begin to soften, and forgiveness becomes possible. Imagine what kind of world we could co-create if we all tapped into kindness and compassion more often.

Here are some meditations to encourage us to make the world a kinder place:



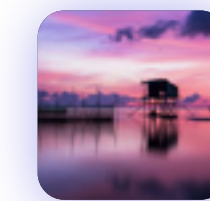
[Relationships with Others](#)

Meditations to cultivate healthier and happier connections (even during times of conflict).



[Forgiveness](#)

A meditation to release resentment and invite greater peace into your heart.



[Loving Kindness](#)

A meditation to develop warmth, compassion and love towards yourself and others.

CALM TIP

Inhale to acknowledge your irritation.
Exhale to let it go.

Emotional: Track your mood

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” – Carl Rogers



Paying attention to present-moment experiences and labeling our emotions is a powerful way to care for our mental well-being. Taking time daily to note how you're feeling can help you:

- Create space to feel your feelings
- Get insight into what you need and how to best take care of yourself
- Recognize patterns and triggers
- Communicate clearly to others
- Get the support you need

CALM TIP

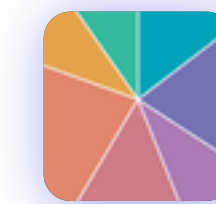
If you're struggling to manage your emotions or feeling stuck in despair or anger, you may want to seek out the help of a therapist, doctor, or counselor.

Get started today with these three resources:



[How Are You Feeling? A 31 Day Challenge](#)

Record how you're feeling with Calm's mood tracker. It's a daily check-in that helps you build awareness of the ebb and flow of your feelings.



[The Feelings Wheel](#)

Feelings influence our thoughts and behavior, so it's important to tune in and appropriately attend to your emotional well-being.



[5 benefits of tracking your mood](#)

Scan the wheel to discover what adjective best describes your state and let that understanding empower you in the moment.

Emotional: Practice gratitude

**“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.
It turns what we have into enough.”**

– Melody Beattie



Gratitude creates space for the goodness in our lives. It’s the sweet feeling of thankfulness that comes when we appreciate an experience, a person, or a thing. While it can arise spontaneously in the moment, it’s also a feeling that can be cultivated with a gratitude practice.

People who practice gratitude consistently feel more generous, compassionate, and connected to others. Many people feel that gratitude is one of the keys to unlocking happiness.

CALM TIP

If you’re struggling to feel gratitude you may be experiencing one of these [barriers](#).

Here are three ways to make gratitude a practice:



[Gratitude Masterclass](#)

Unlock the transformative power of gratitude. This uplifting Calm Masterclass offers tools, insights, and inspiration to develop this life-changing practice.



[Gratitude Toolkit](#)

A toolkit of helpful exercises and practices to support you in forging a daily habit of expressing and feeling gratefulness.



[Daily Gratitude Journal](#)

Gratitude wakes us up to the beauty and magic of everyday life, but we have to choose it. Use this 30-day journal to reflect on what inspires gratitude within you.

Emotional: Befriend yourself

“Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we’ll ever do.” – Brené Brown



Many of us live under the weight of a harsh inner critic. From a young age, we learn that we should be perfect and flawless. We’re taught to feel inadequate, as though we’re a damaged vessel forever in need of repair. So we embark on a lifelong quest for perfection, trying to fix what is already unique and beautiful in us.

Of course, it’s natural to seek self-improvement. But it will never bring us fulfillment if rooted in a belief that we’re fundamentally flawed as a person.

Our flaws make us human and whole. Our unconventional views, unusual habits, and quirky patterns are all key ingredients in the recipe of who we are. If we can practice quieting that judgemental inner voice, replacing it with compassion and kindness, we may learn to love ourselves—just as we are.

CALM TIP

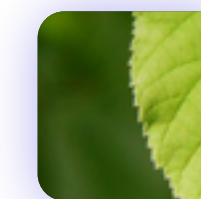
Watch this [video](#) if you’re feeling hard on yourself today.

Here are three ways to soften your inner critic and become a better friend to yourself:



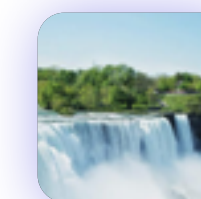
Radical Self-Compassion

Our inner critic can hijack our ability to connect with others, express ourselves, and experience joy. But, it doesn’t have to be this way. Try the practice of radical compassion instead.



Relationship with Self

A series of meditations to strengthen your relationship with yourself through trust, insight, and compassion.



Non-Judgement

Recognizing our judgmental tendencies is the first step towards softening them. Return to this meditation again and again.

Physical: Prioritize sleep

“The best bridge between despair and hope is a good night’s sleep.” – Matthew Walker

Do you ever walk into a room and forget why you’re there? Can you not remember all of the items on a grocery list? Do you regularly lose your car keys? If that’s the case you might be sleep deprived.

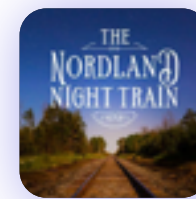
With a lack of sleep comes less patience, difficulty focusing, and decreased motivation and creativity in being able to tackle problems.

Restful sleep prepares us to take on whatever the day throws our way, and helps us meet work and life with more energy, efficiency, and peace.

CALM TIP

If your brain is caught up in a whirlwind of thoughts at night, try journaling before bed. Write down any worries, to-dos, reflections, and anything else that’s on your mind to reassure your brain that you’ll attend to them tomorrow.

Here are eight ways to sleep better so that you can show up to work feeling bright, calm, and resilient.



[Sleep Stories](#)

Sleep Stories are soothing tales read by well-known voices bedtime stories for grown-ups. Try it out and see if what worked for you as a kid still works now!



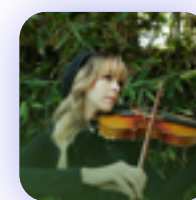
[Deep Sleep Release](#)

Listening to sleep meditations at bedtime settles the mind and relaxes the body so that you can fall asleep sooner and more reliably.



[Evening Wind Down](#)

Calm Body helps prepare the body for rest and sleep with a gentle stretching sequence that you can do in bed.



[Lunar Lullaby](#)

Calm’s meditative music tracks can help you unwind and settle into sleep more quickly.



[Gently Back to Sleep](#)

For some, it’s not falling asleep that’s tricky, it’s getting back to sleep. We have meditations designed to help you stay relaxed if you wake up, before easing you back to slumber.



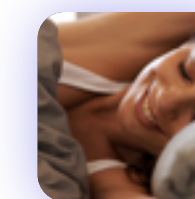
[How to Sleep Guide](#)

A guidebook and journal to help you enhance the quality of your sleep through small, doable changes.



[Ocean Waves](#)

If your sleep is disrupted by outside noise, try Calm Soundscapes. You can play these soothing forms of white noise for as long as you need to mask unwanted sound.



[Sleep Better Masterclass](#)

Delve into the science behind getting a good night’s sleep with our Calm Masterclass. We recommend listening during the day when you’re alert and can soak up all of the helpful information.

Physical: **Get outside**

“In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they’re still beautiful.” – Alice Walker



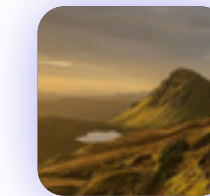
Take a deep breath of fresh air. Smell the scent of the trees. Feel the sun on your face. One of the most powerful ways to de-stress is to spend time outdoors.

Interacting with people all day can be exhausting, so give yourself a break with the restorative effects of nature. If it’s cold, throw on some layers and go for a hike. If it’s hot, find a natural body of water and go swimming. Notice how spending a little time in nature makes you feel.

CALM TIP

If nature isn’t easily accessible on a daily basis, spend time looking at the sky, and delight in the way it changes. Or, bring the outdoors inside by adding plants or flowers into your space.

Try this walking meditation to help you fully receive the world around you:



[Mindful Walking](#)

A guided meditation for walking mindfully

Work: Protect your schedule



“When you say ‘Yes’ to others, make sure you are not saying ‘No’ to yourself.”
– Paolo Coehlo

Research shows that after about 50 hours of work, employee productivity and output plummets. Protecting your schedule often means learning to say no—this can be tough. But, remember that saying “no” creates space for everything that is a “yes” in your life.

Here are three ways that you can say no without using the word “no.”

Wharton professor Adam Grant suggests:

The Deferral: “I’m swamped right now, but feel free to follow up”

The Referral: “I’m not qualified to do what you’re asking, but here’s something else”

The Introduction: “This isn’t in my wheelhouse, but I know someone who might be helpful”

Work: Create a “warm and fuzzies folder”



Sometimes, when hard days hit, it's important to remind yourself of the good. Start a digital “Warm & Fuzzies File,” and fill it with compliments or kind words you've received, good memories, and favorite photos.

“All you need to know is:
YOU are doing a great job””

4.0

Appendix

Daily self-care plan

List your favourite practices for each category

MENTAL

EMOTIONAL

PHYSICAL

WORK

My top three positive coping strategies

Record three strategies you want to get in the habit of doing

1.

2.

3.

My emergency self-care plan

HELPFUL (TO DO)

List your top five emergency self-care practices (e.g. deep breathing, taking a walk, helpful self talk "I can do this:")

UNHELPFUL (TO AVOID)

List five practices, people, places, or things to avoid during times of crisis or stress
This will serve as a helpful reminder to keep you on-track.

Sources

Adapted from Butler, L. D., & McClain-Meeder, K. (2015). Self-Care Starter Kit. Located at <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/developing-your-self-care-plan.html>

Figley, C. R. (Ed.). (2002). Treating compassion fatigue. Routledge.

Grant, A. (2014). 8 Ways to Say No Without Hurting Your Image. Retrieved from: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140311110227-69244073-8-ways-to-say-no-without-hurting-your-image/>

O'Brien, E., & Linehan, C. (2014). A balancing act: Emotional challenges in the HR role. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51(8), 1257-1285.

Pencavel, J. (2015). The productivity of working hours. *The Economic Journal*, 125(589), 2052-2076. Retrieved from: <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8129.pdf>



**May you take
care of yourself
with ease.**

[CALM.COM/BUSINESS](https://calm.com/business)