

Five Minute Self-Care Breaks

You are a human being. Don't burn out.

In the middle of this extraordinary public health crisis, the pressure to be a superhero can be overwhelming. You're not a superhero. Make new habits that remind you of your own needs. These might help:

Goal #1

Get present.

Move to a safe space where you will not be interrupted. This may not happen often, but take advantage of each opportunity. It may be sitting in the car, at your desk, even in the restroom with the door closed. Allow yourself to feel your feet on the floor, supported by the ground. If you feel safe, you can close your eyes, but you don't need to. Allow your attention to settle into your body. Notice any places of tension or pain, and adjust your position if it will ease that tension or pain. Then draw your attention to your breath, wherever you notice it. You may sense it in your abdomen, as it moves in and out. You may notice it in the flow of air through your nostrils. In and out. If your attention leaps away to something else -- your to-do list, or a memory, or an image -- notice that it has left and draw it gently back.

Goal #2

Feel what you feel.

Ask yourself: what do I feel right now? And then ask: Why am I feeling this way? Some questions that might help to clarify: What just happened? What is happening right now? What do I imagine will happen in the future? Repeat this from time to time throughout the day. Is what I'm feeling -- or how much I'm feeling it -- keeping me from being able to function effectively? If so: What can I do to feel differently? (Some suggestions: Change work tasks. Take a break. Eat a snack or a meal. Move (as the Twelve Step community says: Move a muscle, change a thought). Take a nap someplace safe (perhaps your car). Talk with a colleague or a loved one. Express gratitude for something that has gone right, or someone who supports you.) Make a concrete plan and commit to follow it. It may be that you have to defer starting it until later in the day. That's OK -- making the plan will make a difference.

Goal #3

Connect.

Ask a colleague for time to check in. No need to go deep -- you're not their therapist, parent, or partner. Answer off the top of your head -- really, keep this to 2-5 minutes. Ask each other these questions: Give me your inner weather report: Cloudy, sunny, windy, stormy, foggy, etc. Tell me one thing you want to leave behind here today. Tell me one thing you're grateful about right now.