



*A Short Guide to*  
**SELF-CARE**





## **A Happy New Year to you All!**

As we hurtle into 2025, after what has been for many (most?) of us a hugely productive and often challenging year, I wanted to send a personal message to all our UKIHCA Members, Advisors, stakeholders and supporters:

### **YOU MATTER TO ME!**

I'm asking you to prioritise YOUR self-care in 2025.

Your energy, commitment, kindness and your support has inspired, encouraged and energised TEAM UKIHCA in building UKIHCA. There are times (as we surely all know) when we feel like stopping the clock; an email, a telephone call or a Zoom meeting will recharge the batteries and re-ignite the fire.

I'm asking you to put your health and wellbeing front of mind each day, so that you can keep on keeping on with your fabulous work and make a *huge* difference to the health and wellbeing of our populations – locally and globally.

### **Invest in yourself**

Ultimately, self-care is not just a personal practice; it's our professional *responsibility*. By investing in our own wellbeing, health coaches, healthcare practitioners and professionals improve their ability to support their clients and patients in living healthier, more balanced lives.

As health coaches and healthcare professionals, self-care is a cornerstone of effective practice. It impacts directly our ability to provide compassionate, high-quality care. Whether you're a health coach or a healthcare practitioner, prioritising your own self-care ensures that you can offer the best possible support to others, while also maintaining your own wellbeing, managing overwhelm and preventing burnout.



For health coaches, self-care is especially important because the work often involves helping individuals make lasting changes in their lifestyle, health, and behaviours. To guide clients through these transformations, health coaches have a responsibility to model the principles of self-care, demonstrating the value of balance and boundaries, healthy habits and deep resilience.

By practicing what we preach, health coaches become credible role models, showing clients that personal care and well-being are key to lasting lifestyle and health behaviour changes.

For health and care practitioners and professionals, who are often on the frontlines of patient clinical care, self-care is equally crucial. The demands of patient care, long hours, and emotional strain can easily lead to burnout, impacting both our personal health and the quality of care we are able to provide.

Healthcare practitioners who practice self-care - whether it's through modifying lifestyles, regular exercise, stress management techniques, or setting healthy boundaries - are more able to show up as present, compassionate professionals. Showing up like this enhances our ability to form trusting relationships with patients and foster positive health outcomes.

For both roles, self-care improves physical and emotional resilience and mental clarity, making it easier to deal with the challenges and pressures that come with the increasingly challenges of working in the health space. It also supports our professional longevity, helping health coaches and practitioners not only to sustain but to *develop* their careers over time.

### **Visibly walking our talk for our clients and patients**

When health coaches and healthcare providers make their self-care a priority, it sends a powerful message to patients about the importance of caring for themselves. It supports the important concepts of supported self-management and cultivates and a sense of personal agency, self-empowerment and self-accountability... and doing what we can with what we have.



It reinforces the notion that wellbeing is not just about medical intervention; it's about a whole-person, holistic approach to health – one that includes taking care of body, mind and spirit.

### **A self-care gift to you**


I wanted to gift a resource which I hope will support you to keep at the front of your mind the plethora of actions you can take NOW to support your self-care. You may have seen social media posts featuring these elements - I've put them all together in a handy resource.

Start with small steps for BIG wins. What matters most to you? Start by choosing one or two actions that matter most to you and commit to a journey of health creating.

Please feel free to share with your colleagues, clients, contacts, friends and family - let's remember we are all in this together.

Sincerely wishing you a happy, healthy and a successful new year. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing... YOU MATTER!

With warmest wishes,

Izabella 

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# *Find a* **PURPOSE**



Researchers have found that individuals with a sense of purpose, control and a feeling that they are doing something meaningful tend to live longer, have fewer strokes and heart attacks, enjoy better sleep, and have a lower risk of dementia and disabilities.

Finding our purpose may be a step-wise journey that takes us weeks, months, or it can be a lifelong journey which changes over time.

We can start make a by pausing and reflecting on whether we feel like the path we're on now is taking us in the direction we want to go and consider strategies to help us reveal, or find our purpose and a more meaningful life:

- ◆ Volunteering for a non-profit, donating money to causes we care about, helping out by serving meals in a soup kitchen, driving our elderly neighbour to the supermarket or doing a kindness for others, can add meaning to our lives.
- ◆ Reaching out to people who know us and asking what they think of when we enter their mind; noticing when someone pays us a compliment or makes an observation about us and writing down these observations can reveal patterns.
- ◆ The company we keep says something about us; we can draw inspiration by surrounding ourselves by people who are making positive change.
- ◆ Stepping out of our comfort zone and striking up conversations with people outside our immediate circle can open up activities, causes or career opportunities that we never knew existed.
- ◆ The things we like to talk about with friends and conversations we enjoy sharing on social media may reveal the things that give us purpose in life.
- ◆ Donating time and energy to give to a cause, or campaigning for an injustice that we believe in can bring purpose and meaning.
- ◆ Reflecting on talents or passions can we bring to the table and how might we turn these into something meaningful to us can reveal our purpose.

Finding purpose is a tool for better, happier, healthier life and certainly isn't a 'one horse town'. We can have more than one purpose and find meaning in a variety of pursuits.



# CONNECT

*with people*



**People need PEOPLE.** Too many of us exist in state of disconnection and loneliness.

Downstream, we risk a wide variety of physical, mental and emotional illnesses and disease. In the tight-knit communities of the 'Blue Zones', we see residents who enjoy better health and longevity. Independent of diet, we see that their social environments support rituals, kinship, friendship and community. We see their lives are connected to PEOPLE.

There are many reasons why we feel lonely; we'll have our own, often deeply personal experiences: physical isolation, working from home, moving to a new location, divorce, the death of someone significant in our lives, the loss of a relationship, the loss of a job; withdrawal through low self-esteem.

But we can break out of loneliness and into thrive...

- ◆ Recognise that loneliness is a sign that something needs to change.
- ◆ Understand the effects that loneliness has on our lives - physically, emotionally and mentally - and committing to taking steps toward change.
- ◆ Ask if our environment is pushing us into loneliness and making a plan to change it.
- ◆ Join (or volunteer at) a local Parkrun.
- ◆ Cultivate an attitude of gratitude; recognising what we have to be thankful for is deeply uplifting and helps us reframe perspective.

**TAKE IT SLOWLY** - thinking about meeting new people or going to new places can be paralyzing...

- ◆ Go outside for walks along a regular route where others walk too.
- ◆ Become a regular at a local café.
- ◆ Visit the cinema or a sports event to be around others, but not be expected to interact - often, simply being around others is a huge step in helping with our feelings of loneliness.
- ◆ Later, commit to acknowledging or smiling at people we encounter.
- ◆ Volunteer... it's a great way of meeting like-minded people and can absolutely help improve our mental health and quality of life.

People need PEOPLE. Small steps.



# Heal with SLEEP



Sleep is powerful medicine; getting sufficient, timely, quality sleep has never been more important.

Sleep is absolutely critical to healing and to immune system support.

A plethora of studies have shown the importance of sleep for every single aspect of our health.

The wisdom that 'every hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after midnight' is proving true: studies confirm that sound sleep between 10pm and 1am has a tremendous impact on the production of growth hormone to support tissue repair and fuel our immune system against invading viruses.

**GOOD SLEEP** (for most of us) might something like this:

- ◆ You sleep for around 7-8 hours (depending on your age and other factors)
- ◆ You do not wake in the night or if you do, you don't remember and go straight back to sleep
- ◆ You do not need the loo in the night
- ◆ You sleep peacefully and don't thrash around
- ◆ You wake up feeling refreshed and ready for the day

**BASIC HABITS FOR GOOD SLEEP** (for most of us) might look something like this:

- ◆ You regularly practice stress management techniques (stress and sleep are toxic bed fellows)
- ◆ In bed by 10 pm and asleep by 11 pm
- ◆ Your bedroom is quiet, dark and cool... think cave
- ◆ You have a bedtime 'wind-down' routine: switching off the TV, devices, bright lights and reading or listening to relaxing music for an hour or so before bed ... this is a major one!

**LESS OBVIOUS HABITS** for good sleep:

- ◆ You go outside every morning for 10-15 mins to reset your circadian rhythm (internal light/dark body clock) for the day
- ◆ You're eating adequate protein and a variety of whole, minimally processed foods throughout the day
- ◆ You're taking moderate exercise, like walking during the day
- ◆ You limit or say 'no' to alcohol, caffeine, nicotine after early evening
- ◆ You keep a journal or written to-do list to get things 'out of your head'
- ◆ You limit or avoid caffeine, chocolate, heavy meals several hours before bedtime
- ◆ You sleep with your mobile in another room.

If we don't sleep well, we simply cannot heal well.





# MOVE *in nature*



◆ Even simple physical activity like walking can help keep you healthy.

“Studies show that participating in regular physical activity reduces blood pressure, blood sugar levels and helps with maintaining a healthy weight.

◆ In addition, interacting with nature on a daily basis has been shown improve mental health by reducing levels of stress, anxiety and even improving symptoms of depression.

◆ Green exercise - any physical activity that takes place outside - has been shown to improve both physical and mental health.

Activities can be:

◆ Intentional, such as visiting a neighbourhood garden or riding bike.

◆ Incidental, such as interacting with people while walking to the grocery store or walking in the park.

◆ Indirect, like looking at trees through a window or viewing pictures of nature scenes while moving.

◆ Green exercise can include a variety of activities such as gardening, cycling, walking, flying kites, walking a pet, hiking local trails or participating in a neighbourhood project like planting flowers.

◆ The greater the time spent doing green exercise, the greater the improvements in both self-esteem and mood. Those impacts were increased when there was a presence of water. However, even brief times engaging in green exercise showed improvements in mental health.

*\* Shared from Michigan State University: Green exercise can improve physical and mental health (2024)*



# *Fuel with* **REST**



INVEST in REST. Resting is a fundamental part of health and energy, happiness and success.

Despite (in-spite) of the many distractions in this too-busy, digital and device-filled world, unplugging - throughout the day -from other people's demands and devices is vital to our long-term health.

Brief, daily periods of rest teaches us how to STOP to heal our body and mind, reduce stress & protect our immune system; boost creativity; improve productivity; enhance decision making

It's not hard to 'rest' with simple daily practices:

- ◆ Gratitudes
- ◆ Slow, deep breathing technique
- ◆ Mini-mindfulness sessions
- ◆ Lingering after-meal conversations
- ◆ Soft-focusing eyes away from screens & devices
- ◆ Moving outside in green spaces
- ◆ Listening to soothing music
- ◆ Soft amber/pink lighting
- ◆ Consistent sleep hygiene routines

INVEST in REST and your body and mind will thank you!



*Eat*  
**REAL FOOD**



- ◆ Real food is minimally or unprocessed
- ◆ Real food is nutrient-dense and delicious – using a variety of whole ingredients, cooked from scratch as often as possible
- ◆ Real food should be grown and produced in ways that support health – free from harmful chemicals and additives
- ◆ Real food can nurture community – sharing and connecting with family, friends, local economies and re-connecting with nature
- ◆ Real food supports and restores – our soils, our oceans and our natural environment
- ◆ Real food is about respect – for plants, for animals, for nature and for the farmers, growers and cooks who feed us
- ◆ Real food can heal our bodies, our minds and our society
- ◆ Real food is our birthright and should be affordable and accessible to ALL.



# *Bust the* **STRESS**



Chronic stress is NOT our friend.

Living in a state of ongoing stress leaves our bodies chronically inflamed and ultimately underlies, causes or exacerbates many serious mental and physical health problems and long-term health conditions.

What can we do? We can do a lot.

- ◆ Work out “what’s important to me?”
- ◆ Stop saying “yes” when we want to say “no”
- ◆ Get organised - avoid procrastination
- ◆ Practice breathing & meditative techniques daily
- ◆ Take gentle exercise daily
- ◆ Reduce caffeine and/or alcohol
- ◆ Write down feelings
- ◆ Express gratitude
- ◆ Spend time with supportive people
- ◆ LAUGH... a LOT!
- ◆ Listen to relaxing music
- ◆ Read for pleasure
- ◆ Avoid watching stressful TV
- ◆ Use high quality, calming essential oils
- ◆ Establish an evening ‘wind-down’ routine

We CAN beat the stress. Take action. Take small steps. **Take one today.**