

7 self-care SAVIOURS

Restore your relationship with yourself with these tips to soothe body and mind

There's no doubt that the enforced isolation that we've all experienced this year has had a huge impact on our mental health. According to a study from the Office of National Statistics, more than two-thirds of adults in the UK report feeling somewhat, or very, worried about the effect COVID-19 is having on their life. The most common issues affecting wellbeing are worry about the future and feeling stressed or anxious, meaning that it's even more important than ever to take care of your body and mind to keep yourself healthy. Taking time for yourself every day, even for a short while, can hugely benefit you, so we've rounded up some easy ways to do just that, with the help of some top experts. Remember to go slowly and cut yourself some slack – you don't have to be perfect all the time and it's been an incredibly difficult period for us all, so be gentle with yourself.

FOCUS ON YOUR STRENGTHS

"We have a natural tendency to focus on the negatives more than the positives, but it is far more beneficial for you to focus on your strengths," says self-image specialist, author and speaker Camilla Collins (camillacollins.com). Not only will you have a lot more enjoyment doing it, but you will excel much faster, as well as being far truer to you – the more strengths that you build, the more irrelevant your weaknesses become, and the more self-confidence you gain."



Begin your morning with a self-care practice

"Now is a golden opportunity to try putting a morning self-care practice into place," says Suzy Glasie, functional medicine certified health coach, host of the Wellness Unwrapped podcast and founder of Peppermint Wellness (peppermintwellness.co.uk). "This is a wonderful way to honour your body and it doesn't have to be anything complicated or time-consuming. You could start by taking just three minutes to focus on your breathing or do some gentle stretches. The key is to allow yourself that time before you launch into grabbing your phone and checking the news! I find that a morning routine helps set the tone for the day and boosts my emotional resilience for whatever it throws at me. Doing a regular mindfulness practice first thing will help you manage post-lockdown anxiety (there are loads of apps you can try – do the Calm app's Daily Calm in the morning!)"



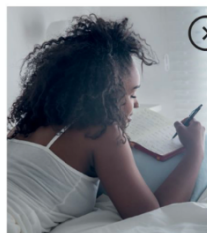
Take your time with exercise

"It's tempting, post-lockdown, to go all out on improving your fitness or losing weight," says Pilates instructor Hollie Grant, founder of Pilates PT (pilatespt.co.uk). "However, it's important to take your time. This is the perfect opportunity to fall in love with exercise again, so choose what you're going to do wisely. Try new activities that light your fire and fitness classes that you look forward to, not dread and resent. Treat this as a fresh start and shake off any habits you may have formed. While you may not have the same relationship with your body that you had at the start of the year, it got you through lockdown safely then it deserves some love and respect for that."



Ask yourself questions

"This is the best way to connect to yourself," says Camilla. "Have a 10-minute Q&A session with yourself every morning on paper to uncover more about your true desires, values and passions. Ask yourself 'how am I feeling?', 'why am I feeling this way?' and then continue probing with 'what' and 'why' questions for each answer you give yourself to get to the root of your thoughts and feelings."

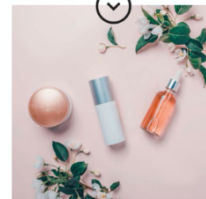


REBOOT YOUR MIND BEFORE BED

"Keep a nice notepad by your bed and just pour out whatever is on your mind onto the pages before you go to sleep," advises Suzy. "You'll be amazed at how calming it is to empty what's in your head onto paper and it's a kindness to yourself to allow yourself this time to decompress before you go to bed. A gratitude journal is another brilliant way to help you focus on the positive and drift off to sleep with happy thoughts rather than ruminating on what's wrong. All you have to do is keep a special pad by your bed and write down three things each evening that you're grateful for from that day."

THANK YOUR BODY

"One of my favourite morning self-care practices is to take a spoonful of a body oil, scented with essential oils, and rub some mindfully into each part of my body, thanking each bit as I go along, such as my feet for grounding me, and my legs for allowing me to walk," says Suzy. "It's a really powerful way of connecting with your own body and honouring how miraculous it is and how blessed we are to have it. It also helps us to focus on the positive aspects of our body rather than ruminating on the surface imperfections we might get hung up on."



Tune into your instincts

"If something doesn't feel right, then it generally isn't right for you," says Camilla. "If a person, place or activity doesn't make you feel good, then something is misaligned. Tune into your instincts and build your self-confidence by moving away from situations that you instinctively feel are not serving you."

