

PRINT-Prioritize Self Care in 2019

Self-care is a new buzzword these days and it can be a great prescription for better overall health. It is a way of recharging yourself so you can be ready to be of service to others. If you're looking for ideas, just type #selfcare into the search area of your favorite social media platform and you'll get thousands of images of what "me time" looks like.

Luke Raymond, LCPC, Behavioral Health Services manager for OSF HealthCare, says self-care can range from taking time to pray, exercise, meditate, write poetry or socialize with friends. He says it involves finding what personally resonates with you, even if that's watching your favorite TV show.

"You want to sit and have a glass of wine and watch Real Housewives, knock yourself out until it becomes something that is creating an imbalance or a lack of availability for other things in your life."

However, sometimes doing something for yourself makes things worse for people with an [anxiety disorder](#) which represents about 20 percent of all adults in the U.S., making it the most common mental illness.

Raymond says for people with anxiety, recommending self-care can trigger the fight or flight mechanism in the brain which can affect the way self-care is interpreted.

"If you're dealing with anxiety, your brain often tries to find things to worry about and if we say, 'Ok you've got anxiety so it's important to engage in these three self-care activities a week,' well that's just one more thing to add to the plate of worry," according to Raymond.

Raymond adds prescribing self-care can also trigger feelings of guilt or low self-worth, especially in people with anxiety who can obsess about not spending time on something perceived as more productive.

For an easy, low-pressure approach to self-care, Raymond suggests looking for momentary opportunities.

"Instead of looking at self-care as this big, prescribed notion of what you have to do to get through the day, just take a little bit of time, even throughout the day – a minute or two here and there – to decompress; to do something that is relaxing and fulfilling for yourself."

For people with anxiety, it is important to work with a mental health professional to develop a toolbox for what might work best rather than looking at more traditional self-care options.

As the new year approaches, think about a resolution that includes being more deliberate about self-care. To do that could require some strategizing. For example, schedule time for yourself just as you would a meeting or event. Create tangible reminders like calendar invites, or phone alerts to make moments for self-care a more regular part of your daily routine.

Raymond also suggests for anyone who finds self-care burdensome, consider cutting out extraneous things that aren't enjoyable or meaningful.

If you want help creating a self-care plan, consider contacting an [OSF HealthCare Behavioral Health professional near you](#). For help managing moderate anxiety, depression or stress, you can also try [OSF HealthCare's "Silver Cloud" app](#), available by phone, tablet or internet browser.