

Fall into Self-Care: Your Ultimate Wellness Guide

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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“Fall is a great time to try something new,” says OSF HealthCare psychotherapist Sara Bennett.

And by something new, she doesn’t just mean the newest pumpkin spice latte being rolled out by your local coffee shop. But that could be part of the equation!

“You have a little more time on your hands, you don’t have the burden of summer parties and running around so much. You can take time to learn a new skill or hobby,” Bennett says.

The Seven Pillars of Self-Care are a great place to start, Bennett says, when it comes to putting together a wellness routine. The pillars are mental, emotional, physical, environmental, spiritual, recreational and social. It’s important to make each pillar your own based off your life and try to obtain as many pillars as you can for your overall wellness. Many of these pillars naturally intertwine.

Bennett goes through many of these pillars and offers tips for your fall self-care routine.

Mental tip: Quiet your mind

“It’s really nice when things slow down and you can just cuddle up in front of a fire with a blanket and some hot chocolate,” Bennett says. “Just enjoy the slowness. Being able to quiet your mind is a really great aspect of self-care.”

But Bennett says it’s important to recognize potentially harmful things that can be done while just laying around.

Emotional tip: Recognize avoidance

“When it comes to alcohol and even things like video games, some of those topics are just avoidance. They may feel good in the moment because you’re not actively working towards something or maybe you’re physically blocking something out, but some of those things can be very harmful. It’s easy to get caught up in how good it feels in the moment and not be able to keep that balance.”

Mental and physical tip: Focus on healthy sleep

“If we can work on things that help us sleep better at night, that’s really mental health for us. Also, it’s affecting our physical health, our moods, and how we process things,” Bennett says.

It’s important for adults to try and get 7-8 hours of sleep a night.

Recreational and environmental tip and physical tip #2: Get outside!

Bennett suggests, “There’s nothing prettier than a nice fall hike, right? Whether it’s through a park or if you want to challenge yourself and do something more intense.”

While the fall foliage reaches its peak, it’s a perfect time to get outside and see the sights.

Social tip: Bring some friends!

“Add a few friends with it; and you’re meeting that social connection too,” Bennett emphasizes.

Social and spiritual tip #2: Build community

“Being part of your community is vital,” Bennett says. “Not only is it vital for your health, but there are people who could potentially really benefit from you. Being able to volunteer is a great example of self-care. It gives us a feel-good response and it really helps your community at the same time.”

Specifically, research shows volunteering activates the reward center in your brain and [releases serotonin, dopamine and endorphins which give your emotional state a lift.](#)

There are many ways to obtain this goal, whether it be through your local church, social service organization, or simply responding to individual requests. For example, think about visiting someone in a nursing home if they have family out of town who can’t see them often.

Different pillars might be more difficult to reach than others, depending on your passions and skillsets. This is why Bennett says fall is a great time for a “reset” and is a time to learn something new. Then you can challenge yourself which can benefit your overall health.