

100 Self-Care Activities to Complete in 2020

by The Founders of Simplify Magazine



Everyone has their own definition of self-care. One person's bubble bath is another person's punch line. Still, there are activities from which all people benefit. Exercising the mind. Checking in with a friend. Eating a balanced diet. Clocking a good night's sleep. These are simple things anyone can do to promote well-being.

Every now and then, we also benefit from going above and beyond everyday self-care basics. Getting a massage. Enjoying a fancy meal. Leaving behind our routine in favor of exploration.

We've compiled a collection of 100 self-care activities to inspire you on your wellness journey this year. It is not designed to be a chronological checklist. Peruse it at your leisure. Some suggestions will strengthen your body and mind; others will delight your senses. Some are meant to be done in solitude; others foster relationships. Some are simple habits to pick up one week at a time; others are one-off events. Many cost nothing more than time and mindfulness. Some beg for a small splurge.

We're not suggesting you break the bank in the name of self-care but we are challenging you to spend a bit of money along the way. Nothing extravagant, per se. The reason is simple: people's spending

habits reflect their values. This means time and money. If you want to value self-care, we encourage you to invest as your resources allow.

We also encourage you to pick up a journal if you don't already own one. Introspection—that is, spending productive time with one's thoughts—is a key component to self-care. Journaling is a reliable way to pinpoint where you are on your journey. It keeps track of where you're going and underscores how far you've come. If you don't yet own a journal, put it on your list today and pick one that will be a pleasure to use.

Let's make this the year self-care gets the attention it deserves.

Joshua Becker and Brian Gardner

1. **Articulate five core values. (FREE)** Spelling out values on paper is a powerful first step toward living a centered life. If you could sum up that which matters most to you in five words, what would you choose?
2. **Write down three simple yet ambitious goals for your upcoming year. (FREE)** Getting clear on what you want to achieve will help focus your energy. Think S-M-A-R-T: Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Return to your goals often.
3. **Write a personal mission statement in five sentences or less. (FREE)** Distilling values and declaring desires in writing is effectively creating a North Star for your everyday choices. Read your mission statement frequently and it will guide you toward a purpose-driven life.
4. **Write down five obstacles you've overcome. (FREE)** Have you tackled any fears lately? Rebounded from a career blow? Overcome a health scare or a simple temptation? Capture it in writing. This resilience-building exercise is something worth rereading when you're feeling discouraged.

5. **Forgive someone in writing. (FREE)** Dr. Fred Luskin, author of *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness* says that at its most basic level, forgiveness is on the continuum with grief. Working through complex emotions like grief on paper is often the best place to start the healing process.
6. **Conclude each day by journaling one aspect of your day that was life-giving and one that was life-taking. (FREE)** This self-awareness practice inspired by the Jesuits' Daily Examen has the power to reshape your inclinations. By identifying the specific things that stir up joy (and those that don't), you'll naturally begin to gravitate in the right direction.
7. **Write an encouraging letter to your younger self. (FREE)** This cathartic exercise might seem silly to some but it's a helpful way to gain perspective and foster self-compassion, two things every human needs.
8. **Write down 30 simple things you're grateful for. (FREE)** See if you can do it in ten minutes or less. Notice how the practice of radical gratitude impacts your state of mind.

9. **Confront three negative thoughts on paper. (FREE)** No one is immune to unhelpful self-talk. It's easy to fall prey to the lies we tell ourselves but the truth is we're enough. We're human. Write down what your inner critic is saying and then call it what it is: false.
10. **Drink water each morning before climbing out of bed. (FREE)** This is as easy as filling a tall glass as part of your evening routine and leaving it on your nightstand. Mindfully drinking it before all else is a great way to set a healthy tone for your day.
11. **Embody “less is more” for five minutes by laying down and putting your feet up against a wall. (FREE)** Let your mind wander and just breathe. Resting in this simple position for even a few moments will relieve stress, boost creativity, and kickstart clarity and focus.
12. **Stretch for five minutes immediately after your morning shower. (FREE)** Focus on your major muscle groups: hamstrings, quads, glutes, chest, and upper back. Your muscles are primed for a healthy stretch after a steamy shower.

13. **Grab a friend and try a fitness activity you've never experienced. (Varies)** Spin class, run club, barre workout, water aerobics—whatever. If it's out there and you've never done it, now's your chance. You might just discover your next favorite workout.
14. **Visit your doctor for a routine check-up. (Varies)** Prepare questions in advance so you can make the most of your appointment and stay ahead of your body's needs.
15. **Swap foot massages with your partner or a friend. (FREE)** If you're watching TV together, you might as well make the time count for quality self-care and kindness too.
16. **Set a fitness goal that requires consistent training. (Varies)** The size of the goal is irrelevant. It's the overwhelming sense of accomplishment you're after most.
17. **Go for a 30-minute walk outdoors before starting your workday. (FREE)** Think of it as an opportunity to log a bit of exercise and plan your day before getting down to work.

18. **Take an extended afternoon nap. (FREE)** As if you need an excuse.
19. **Go to bed fifteen minutes ahead of schedule each night for one week. (FREE)** Take note of how you feel after seven days of extra shut-eye.
20. **Strengthen your core for ten minutes each day. (FREE)** Jill Dailey's exercises outlined in the self-care issue are an excellent reference if you need somewhere to start.
21. **Go dancing. (FREE)** Moving to music lights up your brain *and* strengthens your cardiovascular system. Lock yourself in a room with headphones and a good playlist or simply locate a dance floor. Your body won't know the difference.
22. **Challenge yourself to consume at least 8 glasses of water each day. (FREE)** Set a timer to remind yourself to drink a glass on the hour.
23. **Learn to treat pain points with self-massage. (\$)** Mastering do-it-yourself techniques is financially healthy and lets you care for your body without juggling appointments. With a few simple

accessories—even just a small foam roller and a tennis ball—you can treat acute pain and restore relaxation in minutes.

24. **Spend five minutes stretching by candlelight before going to bed. (FREE)** If you spend most of your day at a computer, be sure to focus on your chest, neck, and hips.
25. **Run a hot bath and soak in peace for half an hour. (FREE)** Light candles and simply relax. Your tired muscles will thank you.
26. **Indulge in a high-quality dark chocolate bar. (\$)** The treat alone is its own form of self-care but your body also benefits from the flavanoids found in cocoa. These natural compounds boast antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, among other perks. Bitter is best so opt for the highest cocoa concentration you enjoy.
27. **Pair your morning beverage with mindfulness and gratitude. (FREE)** Pausing to sip your coffee or tea while it's piping hot is a chance to slip into your thoughts and reap the overall benefits of counting your blessings. Stop everything you're doing and just sit still.

28. **Combat decision fatigue by eating the same breakfast for one week. (FREE)** Minimizing choices is a small habit that impacts your mental health. Simplifying breakfast does more than save valuable brain power; it protects time and streamlines your grocery list too.
29. **Eat a nostalgic meal. (Varies)** Maybe it's a secret family recipe or the first take-out meal you enjoyed with your partner or best friend. Whatever you choose, revel in the happy memories associated with the familiar flavors as you feast.
30. **Fill up on healthy snacks. (\$-\$\$)** Sometimes self-care is literally a piece of cake but most of the time, it's best to nurture your body with fuel for the long haul. Boost creativity and beat midday brain fog by fueling your mind with healthy choices like nuts, fresh fruit and vegetables, hummus, guacamole, turkey jerky, and hard boiled eggs.
31. **Go on a breakfast date with your journal. (\$)** Treating yourself to breakfast at a coffee shop or restaurant is a simple way to indulge in alone time without overspending. Bring your journal

to capture your thoughts as you mindfully savor every bite in solitude.

32. **Stock up on anti-inflammatory foods. (\$-\$\$)** Research backs up the relationship between the gut and brain. Shop with your mental health in mind by opting for anti-inflammatory foods, things that won't stir up your immune system. Think Mediterranean fare: extra virgin olive oil, fatty fish, tomatoes, leafy greens, and nuts.
33. **Buy yourself a "special occasion" drink. (\$-\$\$)** Choose whatever says celebration to you and raise a glass simply because it's a good day to be alive.
34. **Practice a 5-minute meditation every day for a week (or more.) (FREE)** Need help getting started? Try an app like Calm or Headspace.
35. **Plan a date with a good listener and speak your mind. (Varies)** Maybe it's a therapist. Maybe it's a long-time friend. Either way, find someone you trust and do the important work.

36. **Ask for help. (FREE)** Vulnerability is a gift we give ourselves and others.
37. **Visit a library. (FREE)** Follow your curiosity through the aisles or borrow that book you've been meaning to read for ages.
38. **Visit an art gallery. (\$-\$\$)** Immersing yourself in beauty is good for the soul. Linger as long as you can.
39. **Roll up your sleeves and make something with your hands.**
(Varies) It doesn't have to be practical. It doesn't have to turn out well. Just get creative. When in doubt, knead bread.
40. **Make a playlist filled with songs from a happy season in your life. (FREE)** Play it when you need a pick-me-up.
41. **Make your weekly to-do list before going to bed on Sunday night. (FREE)** You'll sleep easier.
42. **Reassess your email habits. (FREE)** According to one study, the average American full-time employee spends 26% of their workday laboring over email. Whether it's checking less

frequently or responding in batches, consider how you can claim back your most precious resource: time.

43. **Give the 24/6 week a try. (FREE)** Author Tiffany Shain explores the power of intentional screen-free time in her book, *24/6: The Power of Unplugging One Day a Week*. Follow her lead to experience more connection, creativity, productivity and purpose.
44. **Harness email for good and start your day by sending a thank-you message. (FREE)** Relaying affirming words to a colleague or loved one before the day picks up is kindness working both ways.
45. **Spend 30 minutes cleansing your social media palette by unfollowing certain people. (FREE)** Log on to your platform of choice and part ways with accounts that lead you down unhealthy paths of comparison, discontent, or greed.
46. **Snap a picture of your values and use it as your phone's wallpaper. (FREE)** According to one report, the average smartphone user checks their phone 58 times a day. Harness the habit to reclaim your focus and influence your choices.

47. **Tap into your phone's ability to enforce healthy screen boundaries. (FREE)** [Screen Time](#) is Apple's offering. Android users can fall back on [Digital Wellbeing](#). Both will allow you to set parameters around when you can access specific apps; both will hold you accountable in the face of temptation.
48. **Commit to abandon screen time one hour before bed for one week. (FREE)** The [benefits](#) of avoiding blue light exposure are staggering.
49. **Take a break from constant texting. Meet up with a friend instead. (FREE)** If geography prevents an in-person connection, block out an hour, pour yourself a drink, and connect through FaceTime or Skype.
50. **Cut down on distractions and say "no" to notifications. (FREE)** Spend half an hour modifying your settings and enjoy a peaceful existence free from annoying alerts. Need help? Here's a complete guide for [Apple](#) users. Android tips live [here](#).
51. **Set an out-of-office reply just because. (FREE)** No explanation necessary. Just give yourself permission to walk away from your inbox for a day or two. If it's urgent, they'll call.

52. **Try making your bedroom a tech-free zone. (FREE)** Believe it or not, battery-powered alarm clocks still exist.
53. **Do your evening bathroom routine by candlelight. (FREE)** The dim glow will slow your state of mind as you coast to bed. Choose a candle with a relaxing scent, like lavender.
54. **Catch a sunrise. (FREE)** Bring along a journal or simply carry your thoughts. Start your day by taking a moment to practice mindfulness.
55. **Catch a sunset. (FREE)** Again, use it as an opportunity to practice mindfulness, journal optional.
56. **Take a lunch break outdoors. (FREE)** Abandon your desk or familiar surroundings. The fresh air and vitamin D will do you good.
57. **Find a bench and spend half an hour people watching. (FREE)** Better yet, see if you can strike up a conversation with a stranger. There's a reason "Happy To Chat" benches are gaining popularity around the world. Loneliness is the enemy of mental health.

58. **Spend half an hour among the trees. (FREE)** The Japanese practice of forest bathing is a perfect antidote for stress. Simply hike with the trees, take a seat, and use all your senses to connect with nature. Forests are optional, of course. A tree-lined park will suffice.
59. **Visit a coastline, lake, or river and dip your toes in. (FREE)** If you're feeling adventurous, go all in and enjoy an outdoor swim.
60. **Go hiking. (FREE)** Seeing life from a different perspective, literally and figuratively, is an important element of self-care. The vista and dopamine boost are always worth it and connecting with nature along the way adds an element of peace.
61. **Head outside after an overdue rainstorm and breathe deeply. (FREE)** There's a reason the smell of rain water on dry land, also known as petrichor, is a sought-after scent in perfume. Human beings are particularly sensitive to it.
62. **Tip your server a few extra dollars and leave a thank-you note on the receipt. (\$)** Generosity is another form of self-care.

63. **Send an amusing postcard to a faraway friend. (\$)** Challenge them to return the favor.
64. **Look for ways to practice kindness in the grocery store. (FREE)** Straighten a shelf. Return a cart. Help someone with their bags.
65. **Hug someone you love for ten seconds. (FREE)** Prolonged hugging reduces your blood pressure, lowers your heart rate, and releases oxytocin and dopamine. Everyone benefits so don't be shy.
66. **Whip up a triple batch of something simple and delicious so you can take two nights off cooking. (Varies)** Better yet, give a batch away to a neighbor in need.
67. **Send a thank-you email to someone who impacted your life but likely doesn't know it. (FREE)** Unsolicited gratitude goes a long way.
68. **Declutter your bedroom. (FREE)** Leave the closet out for now and just focus on the room itself. Research proves you'll sleep

better in an orderly space. If you need some direction, pick up this [Minimalist Mindset Strategy Guide](#).

69. **Declutter your living room. (FREE)** You'll enjoy more room to connect with friends when the space is uncluttered and tidy.
70. **Donate a bag of gently used clothing to a thrift store. (FREE)** If you're like most people, you might even be able to fill two or three.
71. **Clean your car from top to bottom, inside and out. (Varies)** While it's satisfying to do this yourself, sometimes it pays to let someone else do the work. You decide.
72. **Makeover your bed with fresh linens. (FREE)** It's fun to go to sleep early when there's a fresh bed standing by. If it's been a while, upgrade your mattress or buy a new pillow too. Self-care is a bed that doesn't injure your back.
73. **Place inspiring words in a spot where you'll see them every day. (FREE)** As for locations, popular favorites include the kitchen, the entryway, or the bathroom.

74. **Politely bow out of a social gathering. (FREE)** Simply say you need to catch up on some work at home. That work is your sanity.
75. **Watch a nostalgic family movie at home. (FREE)** Go big with homemade popcorn treats your parents denied you as a kid.
76. **Watch a dated laugh-out-loud teen movie. (FREE)** No one can judge your definition of comedy if you're watching solo but laughter is contagious with friends around. You choose.
77. **Buy a hilarious book or magazine. (\$)** *The Book of Awesome* is a feel-good favorite. No wonder it's an international bestseller.
78. **Reread a book that changed your life. (FREE)** When you finish it, consider paying it forward.
79. **Initiate a recurring social gathering. (FREE)** Maybe it's a weekly coffee date, a monthly book club, or a semi-annual weekend getaway. Knowing you can bank on quality time with people you love is key, whether it's once a week or once a year.

80. **Call it a half day at work and get a headstart on your weekend. (FREE)** If you've got kids, consider pulling them out of school and surprising them with a fun outing—or just spend the bonus time alone in a quiet home.
81. **Take an entire day off work and do nothing productive. (FREE)** Read. Journal. Go for a walk. Do whatever you like just don't run down a to-do list or respond to email.
82. **Step up your commute by listening to a fun podcast. (FREE)** Download something that sparks curiosity or choose something that is laugh-out-loud funny.
83. **Buy a small plant for your workspace. (\$)** Whether it's your desk or your kitchen counter, a plant literally brings life into a space.
84. **Cook yourself a big breakfast, cart it back to your room, and eat it in bed. (FREE)** Better still, let someone do it for you and return the favor in a week or two.
85. **Upgrade your everyday body wash and turn your shower routine into an aromatherapy session. (\$)** Pick something with

a delicious essential oil. Citrus scents are connected to evoking happiness while rosemary and peppermint increase mental clarity.

86. Treat yourself to a magazine you wouldn't typically buy. (\$)

Put your feet up with a blanket and read it in one sitting.

87. Treat yourself to some new socks and underwear. (\$-\$)

No need to overhaul the entire drawer unless it's been years.

Upgrading just a few pairs is enough to inject your day with a bit of happiness.

88. Have your posture assessed by a professional. (\$\$)

A chiropractor or physical therapist will gauge the relationship between your spine and overall health. They will equip you with specific exercises to strengthen your body. This could be the best money you spend all year.

89. Buy a bottle of something festive and fizzy. (\$-\$)

Keep it on standby so you're ready to celebrate on a moment's notice, even if it's something as simple as making it through a difficult week.

90. **Try a new restaurant. (Varies)** No cooking, no dishes. You get to delight in something new, plus it's a perfect opportunity to catch up with people you love. If you really want to make it memorable and your wallet allows, go all out and find a high-end spot and order the chef's tasting menu.
91. **Splurge on a scalp massage at your next haircut. (\$\$)** Breathe deeply and close your eyes. No need to make small talk.
92. **Buy a new (or new-to-you) garment in a color that makes you feel happy. (\$-\$\$)** Psychology tells us color has the power to boost our mood.
93. **Catch a concert. (\$-\$\$)** Research backs that 20 minutes of live music can increase well-being by 20%. You don't need to shell out cash for a big-ticket event. Live music at a restaurant or bar is great too.
94. **Treat your feet to a pair of excellent shoes. (\$\$)** A good-looking comfortable pair will put a spring in your step. Choose something you can enjoy with the majority of your wardrobe so you can wear them often.

95. **Buy yourself a bouquet of your favorite seasonal flowers. (\$-\$)** You have one shot all year so go for it. Showcase the blooms where you can look at them often, like on your desk or in your kitchen.
96. **Buy something cozy to slip into when you walk through the door each night. (\$\$)** Maybe it's a comfortable sweater, a new pair of sweats, or a comfy pair of slippers.
97. **Cart yourself to a spa for the afternoon. (\$\$\$)** Indulge in a treatment you wouldn't normally do and take full advantage of all the perks, like the sauna or pool.
98. **Book a night in a nice hotel. (\$\$\$)** Check in as early as possible, take advantage of all the amenities, and stay as late as you can.
99. **Plan a 48-hour staycation. (\$\$)** Keep formal plans to a minimum and simply delight in your hometown's hot spots.
100. **Define your dream vacation. (FREE)** Choosing to make it a reality in 2020 is up to you.