

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR VETERANS AND ACTIVE-DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS

Source: kolmac.com

Taking care of your own mind and body is important for everyone, especially for the military and veteran population. The approach you take to self-care can be nuanced and personal. However, there are good ways and bad ways to manage pain, stress, and your mental health.

1. Exercise regularly

Regular exercise is important for everyone. Many active-duty personnel and veterans enjoy exercise. An exercise routine can be good for your mind and body. Adequate exercise can help relieve stress, improve mood, increase energy, and support better sleep – all essential elements of a successful self-care regimen.

Yoga, for instance, is an excellent exercise for learning how to slow down, practice breathing exercises, and relax your body. Swimming can be great for cardio, while taking pressure off joints and ligaments in the knees. Some exercises and activities you can include in your everyday life are walking, stretching, bicycling, yoga, boxing, martial arts, weightlifting, and swimming.

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Working on the right thing is probably more important than working hard.

- Caterina Fake

Quotes sourced from Self By Design

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Book of the Month Recommendation

No Such Thing as Normal

by
Bryony Gordon

From depression and anxiety to personality disorders, one in four of us experience mental health issues every year and, in these strange and unsettling times, more of us than ever are struggling to cope. In *No Such Thing As Normal*, Bryony offers sensible, practical advice, covering subjects such as sleep, addiction, worry, medication, self-image, boundary setting, therapy, learned behaviour, mindfulness and, of course - as the founder of Mental Health Mates - the power of walking and talking.

2. Eat a balanced diet

Research shows that the correlation between a balanced diet and mental health is real. In other words, what you eat affects how you feel. Eating nutritious foods on a regular basis may not be a cure-all, but it is an excellent place for veterans to start. Remember that eating nutritious foods is an act of self-care, as is eating treats in moderation. Follow these tips for maintaining a healthy, balanced diet:

- **Eat vegetables and fruits** — Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.
- **Eat a solid breakfast** — Eat protein and fiber every morning
- **Eat light snacks** — A light snack is the way to go in the mid-morning or the afternoon if you're feeling hungry but don't want to ruin your appetite.
- **Limit consumption of alcohol** — Drinking too much alcohol is bad for your physical and mental health. It can cause weight gain, as well as increasing anxiety or depression. If you drink alcohol, drink it safely and in moderation.

3. Get enough sleep

Get enough sleep every night. Sleep deprivation and sleep deficiency can make life's daily activities increasingly difficult. Tips for improving your sleep include:

- **Routine sleeping schedules** — Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends
- **Limit your exposure to blue light** — Your sleep-wake cycle can be thrown off by exposure to light, especially blue light. Limit your usage of screens in the evening
- **Think about what you're eating or drinking** — What you eat or drink before bedtime can affect how you sleep. Avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol or eating big meals before bedtime
- **Wind down and relax** — Wind down before bed. Stress or worry left over from your day can make it hard to fall asleep and stay asleep. Create a soothing bedtime routine, such as reading a book or listening to calm music.

4. Treat yourself

Self-care isn't always about doing the "right" thing for your body or mental health. Self-care also means knowing when to reward yourself, whether that be with a sweet dessert or a Netflix binge. Just remember to treat yourself in moderation. Different ways to treat yourself include:

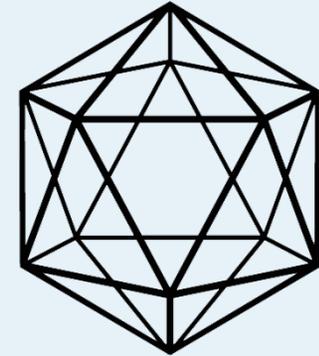
- **Eat something sweet** — Whether you prefer to bake or buy a sweet dessert, both are great ways to treat yourself
- **Watch a show or movie** — If there's a show or movie you've been meaning to watch, take a day to enjoy it
- **Get a massage** — Treating yourself to a massage is good for both your physical and mental health
- **Buy a little something** — In moderation, a little retail therapy can be good, especially if it's something you could use. New kitchen appliances or work tools are an excellent form of retail therapy
- **Take a day off of work** — If feasible, taking a day off of work can give you time to reset and refocus your mind

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