

# SELF-CARE

## What is self-care?

Self-care involves doing ongoing and purposeful activities which take care of your psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

Self-care is about taking “me time” to do something for yourself – it will look different for everyone. A common misconception about self-care is that it always needs to be fun or enjoyable. While it can be fun sometimes, the main goal is for it to be beneficial to your overall wellbeing. This means that it can include “boring” but necessary activities such as doing your chores, showering, and cooking meals.

### Examples of what self-care can involve.

- ◆ Psychological: journaling, talking to a friend.
- ◆ Emotional: allowing yourself to cry, expressing emotions.
- ◆ Physical: exercising, dancing.
- ◆ Spiritual: meditating, praying, being in nature.
- ◆ Academic/professional: learning a new skill that will help your work, taking breaks when you study.

## What is NOT self-care?

A common mistake that people make is that they engage in activities which seem like self-care but aren't actually helpful for them in the long-term and can lead to unhelpful patterns. See example on the left.



## Examples of activities which are NOT self-care.

- ◆ Skipping meals.
- ◆ Only eating junk food or takeaway.
- ◆ Excessive drug or alcohol use.
- ◆ Inconsistent sleep schedule.
- ◆ Avoiding your friends, family, and support system.
- ◆ Consistently missing classes.
- ◆ Being overly critical or mean to yourself.
- ◆ Studying without taking any breaks.

## Journaling

Journaling is a helpful tool for self-reflection, recognising achievements, helping you to understand yourself, and changing unhelpful styles of thinking. It's a great strategy if you find yourself wanting to reflect and understand yourself more, but don't know where to start.

### Writing prompts/tips

- ◆ Start writing about what is happening in your life at this very moment. Try to avoid censoring your thoughts or feelings.
- ◆ Just start writing. Set a timer for five to 10 minutes and just start writing a stream of consciousness. Don't edit anything or fix your grammar. See what comes out!
- ◆ Keep a daily list of things you appreciate using a gratitude journal.
- ◆ Write about music that feels meaningful to you and the thoughts, memories, and feelings that it evokes.
- ◆ Be creative. Journaling doesn't always have to involve writing. You can add pictures, drawings, or create collages.
- ◆ Keep a log of successes from your daily life. You can start by writing about the big events that you remember but try to add the small ones too – they add up!

### Reflection questions

- ◆ What benefits do you think journaling can have on your life?
- ◆ What stops you from journaling? How can you overcome these barriers?

## Who can I contact for more support?

VU's Counselling Service provides free professional services to enrolled students that are designed to support you in your personal, psychological, academic, and social development. To book an appointment, call 9919 5400 and have a look at our webpage [vu.edu.au/counselling](https://vu.edu.au/counselling)