Mental Health Self-Care Tips & Benefits | Bloom Healthcare

Canonical: https://bloom-healthcare.com.au/blog/the-importance-of-self-care-for-mental-health/

Details:

Self-care supports mental health. It does not treat mental illness, and it is not a substitute for professional care. The useful question is not whether to do it, but when to add something to it. As a general guide, if a difficulty has lasted more than a few weeks and is not improving, shows up in more than one part of your life, or is affecting your daily routines, that is the point to talk to a GP or a mental health professional. This page sets out where that line sits, what to do at it, and which supports are funded to help.

If you need help now

In an emergency, or if someone's life is at risk, call 000.

Lifeline — 13 11 14. Crisis support and suicide prevention, 24 hours a day, every day.

Medicare Mental Health — 1800 595 212 , weekdays 8.30am to 5.00pm excluding public holidays. A free government service that connects people with mental health support. No referral or treatment plan needed.

Your GP. The usual entry point for assessment and referral.

Bloom's psychology service works by appointment and is not a crisis service.

What self-care does, and what it does not do

Self-care is worth doing. Sleep, movement, food, rest and connection all affect mood and how well you cope, and small consistent routines make difficult periods more manageable. Where it earns its place is in maintaining wellbeing and building some capacity for what comes next.

What it does not do is treat a mental health condition. Depression, anxiety conditions, post-traumatic stress and similar conditions respond to assessment and evidence-based treatment. Being unable to feel better through routine alone is not a failure of effort or discipline, and treating it as one is the most common reason people delay getting help.

The honest framing is that self-care and professional support do different jobs, and most people who are unwell need both.

The signs it is time to add professional support

Use this as a checklist rather than a feeling. Seek professional support when one or more of these apply:

The difficulty has lasted more than a few weeks and is not improving on its own.

It shows up in more than one setting — home and work, or home and school — rather than being tied to one situation.

It is affecting daily routines : meals, sleep, personal care, getting dressed, getting out of the house.

It is affecting learning, work or behaviour , including attention, following instructions, or relationships with the people around you.

You are seeing escalation , with distress becoming more frequent or more intense.

There is loss of skills someone previously had , or any safety risk . Treat this as urgent.

For children, a parent's or carer's persistent sense that something is not right is itself a reason to get an assessment, particularly if the concern shows up across settings.

What to do at that point

Start with your GP, or for young children a child and family health nurse. Take one page of notes covering what you are noticing, when it happens, what makes it better or worse, and what daily life looks like on a hard day. That page will get you further than trying to explain it from memory in a short appointment.

For children, it is also worth ruling out hearing and vision early, because both can look like attention or behaviour difficulties.

Then match the support to the need. Your GP can advise whether psychology, counselling or another service fits, and can refer you.

When ordinary self-care advice does not fit your body

Most self-care articles assume a body that does what it is told. "Go for a walk" and "stick to a sleep schedule" are not neutral instructions if you live with chronic pain, fatigue, sensory sensitivity or a disability that affects mobility or executive function.

This is where occupational therapy is genuinely useful, and it is a funded support rather than advice:

Daily routines. Building morning, evening and transition routines that actually hold, using visual schedules and timers, and finding the specific pinch points in a day where things reliably break down.

Sleep. Practical sleep routines including temperature, light and sensory regulation strategies, which matter a great deal for people who find ordinary sleep advice ineffective.

Energy conservation and pacing. Structured approaches to fatigue so that a good day does not create three bad ones, along with equipment and set-up changes that reduce the physical cost of tasks.

Self-care skills. Showering, dressing, grooming, meal preparation and medication routines, broken into steps and built up over time.

The difference between this and a list of tips is that an occupational therapist looks at your actual home, your actual energy and your actual day.

The funded supports that sit behind self-care

If you have an NDIS plan, several of the things described as self-care are supports you can be funded for.

Psychology and counselling. Therapy, coping strategies, emotional regulation and trauma work, usually funded under Capacity Building, Improved Daily Living. See psychology and counselling .

Exercise physiology. Regular exercise can help reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress, and it also builds a sense of achievement and reduces isolation. Exercise physiology is recognised in the NDIS pricing arrangements and sits under Capacity Building, in Improved Health and Wellbeing and Improved Daily Living. It works best when it is coordinated with psychology and framed around routine, motivation, sleep and confidence rather than fitness alone. See exercise physiology .

Dietetics. Where disability creates barriers to eating well, a dietitian can build eating plans that fit your life and budget, which affects energy, mobility and mood. Usually funded under Improved Daily Living. See dietitian services .

Occupational therapy. Routines, sleep, pacing and self-care skills, as above. See occupational therapy .

All of these have to be reasonable and necessary and linked to your plan goals. What your particular plan holds is specific to you — check with your support coordinator or plan manager, or call Bloom on 1300 771 465 .

Outside the NDIS, a GP can assess you and, where appropriate, refer you under Medicare's Better Access initiative for a set number of subsidised psychology sessions each calendar year. Rebate amounts are set by Services Australia and change, so ask your GP or Services Australia for the current figure.

If you are a carer, this section is for you

Carers are told to look after themselves more often than they are given any means of doing it.

Carer burnout is the physical, emotional and social load of caring accumulating past what one person can hold. The warning signs are worth naming: withdrawing from social contact, physical or emotional exhaustion, struggling with tasks that used to be manageable, rising tension at home, and your own health starting to slide.

What actually helps is structural rather than motivational:

Respite. Temporary care that gives you a genuine break, from a few hours to longer. Respite is available through the NDIS and, for older people, as an independence service within Support at Home, in-home or residential.

Carer support groups. These reduce isolation in a way that advice does not, because everyone in the room already understands the situation.

Education and coaching. Practical training on the condition, on managing behaviour and communication, and on how to work the system, so you are not learning by trial and error.

Allied health that reduces the load. An occupational therapist can recommend home modifications and handling strategies that reduce physical strain on you. A dietitian can take the stress out of mealtimes. Exercise physiology that increases the other person's independence directly reduces what you have to do.

Counselling for you. Your own mental health is not a side issue.

Older Australians

For older people, the difficulties are often grief, loss, anxiety, depression, cognitive change, and loneliness that follows reduced mobility or communication difficulty. Loneliness is not a personality issue; it is usually the consequence of losing the activities that used to produce contact.

Bloom provides psychology and counselling for older adults in the home, including individual therapy, cognitive assessment and support, and family counselling, alongside aged care physiotherapy, exercise physiology, occupational therapy and speech pathology. Delivering it at home removes one of the main reasons older people do not start.

Aged care services are accessed through an assessment with My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 .

Getting started

Bloom delivers allied health in the home and community across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and the ACT, with telehealth available. See all services , call 1300 771 465 , use the referral form or contact us .

Anyone can make a referral, including you.

Common questions about self-care and mental health

Can self-care replace therapy?

No. Self-care maintains wellbeing and helps you cope. It does not treat a mental health condition. If something has persisted for weeks, spread across settings or started affecting your daily routines, add professional support rather than trying harder at routines.

How do I know if what I am feeling is normal stress or something more?

Duration, spread and function are the three things to look at. Distress that passes, stays tied to one situation and does not stop you doing your usual things is different from distress that persists for weeks, shows up everywhere and is interfering with sleep, meals, work or relationships. The second one warrants a GP appointment.

I have tried everything and nothing works. What does that mean?

Usually that the problem is not one that routine changes can fix, which is information rather than failure. Take that to a GP. It is a useful thing to be able to say in an appointment.

The standard advice does not work for my body. What now?

Ask for occupational therapy input. Routines, sleep strategies, pacing for fatigue and self-care skills can all be adapted to your actual capacity and environment, rather than assuming a body that does not tire or hurt.

Is exercise really useful for mental health?

It can help. Regular exercise is associated with reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress, and it builds confidence and reduces isolation. It is a support to treatment, not a replacement for it, and an exercise physiologist can build a program around what your body can actually do.

Will the NDIS pay for things like gym memberships or wellbeing apps?

The NDIS funds supports that are disability-related, reasonable and necessary and linked to your goals. It does not fund everyday living costs unrelated to disability. Funded therapy such as exercise physiology or dietetics is a different question from funding a general consumer product. Ask your support coordinator or plan manager before you commit.

I am the carer. Where do I go?

Start with your own GP, and ask about respite through the NDIS or, for older people, through My Aged Care on 1800 200 422. Carer support groups and carer education programs are worth pursuing early rather than at the point of collapse.

Can I get this support at home?

Yes. Bloom's main delivery method is in the home and community, and telehealth is available where distance or health makes travel difficult.

What if I need help immediately?

Call 000 in an emergency, or Lifeline on 13 11 14 for 24-hour crisis support. Do not wait for an appointment if you are in crisis.

How does the World Health Organization define self-care, according to the article?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines self-care as the ability of an individual to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the assistance of a health provider.

What activities are included under the concept of self-care?

Self-care encompasses a broad range of personal activities and practices, including personal hygiene, grooming, bathing, showering, dressing, and daily maintenance tasks essential for independent living, as well as practices and strategies that support mental health and psychological well-being.

How does self-care help reduce stress and anxiety?

Self-care practices such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing can help reduce stress and anxiety significantly by calming the mind, reducing the production of stress hormones, and promoting relaxation, creating a buffer against the pressures of everyday life.

How can self-care boost self-esteem and confidence?

Engaging in activities that make you feel good about yourself, such as taking time to care for your physical appearance, can help boost self-esteem and confidence.

What topics or keywords does this article cover?

The article's keywords include anxiety, mental health problems, mindfulness, mood, nutrition, relationships, self-esteem, and stress.

What is Bloom Healthcare's mission according to the organization description?

Bloom Healthcare is a boutique disability and aged care allied health provider that wants to change the status quo, believing that all people have the right to access quality healthcare, with a model focused on evidence-based practice and client centricity delivered by highly qualified health practitioners across Australia.

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