

Self-Care Isn't Always Bubble Baths: What It Really Looks Like.

Mitchell Wilson



Whenever I used to hear the word *self-care*, I'd immediately think of face masks, scented candles, and all the other surface-level routines we often see online. But that perception changed when I truly understood what self-care means—and realized that those things never really fixed my burnout.

We've all made the mistake of assuming self-care is only about pampering our bodies or tidying our spaces. Just like the polished Instagram videos suggest, we've bought into the idea that self-care is all bubbles and bliss—nothing deeper.

But the truth? Self-care runs much deeper than scented candles and spa days.

Let's explore what real self-care actually looks like.

What Real Self-Care Actually Looks Like

Self-care by definition is the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.

But applying this definition in real life often looks far less glamorous—and far more powerful—than we expect.

Real self-care isn't one-size-fits-all. It often shows up in ways that are quiet, uncomfortable, and deeply personal. Here are a few forms it can take:

Setting Boundaries Even When It Feels Awkward

Real self-care sometimes looks like saying *no*—even when your voice shakes. It's not always bold or loud. Often, it's uncomfortable and messy.

We tend to associate being helpful or available with being kind, so setting limits can feel like you're letting people down. But constantly saying “yes” to others means saying “no” to your own peace. Boundaries protect your energy, your time, and your mental health—and that's what self-care is really about.

Whether it's turning down extra responsibilities at work or choosing not to answer that late-night message, honoring your limits is an act of love—for yourself. It's not selfish. It's necessary.

Saying No Without Guilt

Saying no can feel incredibly difficult—especially when it's someone close, like a friend or family member. You start questioning yourself, thinking maybe you're being mean or selfish. Trust me, I've been there. Sometimes, it even creeps in that saying no might be an act of wickedness.

But the truth is, it's the opposite. Saying no is a sign of self-awareness. It means you understand your limits and value your peace of mind over pressure or people-pleasing. We've all felt that silent pressure to say yes—to agree, to show up, to stretch ourselves even when we're running on empty. We cling to this belief that “*every good deed deserves a sacrifice*”. But over time, always saying yes chips away at your energy and mental well-being.

Choosing yourself doesn't make you selfish—it makes you responsible. Whether you're turning down unpaid overtime, saying no to a friend's request that drains you, or simply setting firmer boundaries, it's an act of self-care. No guilt required.

Prioritizing Rest Over Hustle

Taking self-care seriously also means giving yourself permission to rest. Sometimes, we convince ourselves we don't *deserve* rest just because we haven't hit a target. But listen—**a tired mind can't function at its best.**

It's not always easy to set work aside when deadlines are pressing. But rest is just as important as the goals we're trying to reach.

These days, many teens and young adults burn through the night with the “**hustle now, rest later**” mindset—but it doesn’t always play out that way. Ignoring rest means neglecting your sanity and mental well-being.

Whatever dream you're chasing, make rest a *non-negotiable* part of your schedule—and protect it. That’s real self-care.

Choosing What Is Healthy Over What’s Easy

This part of self-care is often overlooked—either from habit or lack of awareness. But consistently choosing healthy options over easy ones is one of the most powerful ways to care for yourself.

At its core, self-care means nurturing and supporting your physical and mental well-being. It’s not always easy—especially when emotions feel heavy. In those moments, we might reach for the easy escapes: overeating, alcohol, or isolating ourselves.

But those “quick fixes” often make things worse over time. Choosing healthier options, even when they’re uncomfortable, helps you build the kind of habits that protect your well-being in the long run.

Conclusion

Self-care isn’t just a spa day or a bubble bath—like I said earlier, it’s way deeper than what Instagram makes it seem.

Sometimes, self-care means saying no. Other times, it’s pushing yourself to rest, even when your to-do list says otherwise. It can also mean doing the hard thing now so you feel more at peace later.

It’s not about what feels good in the moment—it’s about what keeps you grounded, healthy, and whole.

You deserve that.