

Micro Self-Care Takes Less Than 5 Minutes and Improves Happiness — Here are 10 Ways to Try It

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We all know that routine self-care is critical to our mental, physical and emotional health, so I won't spend the precious 100 words I have to capture your attention raving about its importance. Instead, I'll let you know that like a lot of women, I have difficulty making time for routine self-care. I mean, I often keep myself so busy that anything beyond doing my laundry and smearing on some facial cleanser is just not happening.

That's why discovering micro self-care was a game changer. Micro self-care practices are small activities that can be done in a few minutes (or less) and are flexible enough to be woven into the workday (or other scheduled activities).

While you might think anything less than a therapy session or massage isn't changing much, like I did very recently, Licensed Social Worker Ashley Davis Bush says the validity of micro self-care has been found in recent neuroplasticity research.

"Small repetitive practices matter, both in creating new neural networks in our brains and in creating sustainable self-care," [she writes](#). "It can be as simple as 'shrinking down' the macro—[self-care activities](#) and practices that you already love into their most powerful essences."

She offers the example of setting a timer and relaxing with a minute-long breathing exercise between meetings as a way to get started with micro self-care.

Art therapist and mom Adele Stuckey also writes about the merits of micro-[self care](#). However, she says this form of self-care is about more than the quick activity you're doing; it's about getting intentional with your mindset and resetting your day.

"It's about making things intentional and deliberate," [she writes](#). "Putting lotion on my hands can feel like a luxury if I am mindful during the process. How does it smell? What does it feel like? What color is the lotion container? Focusing on these senses brings

you to the present moment. You are here in the now; you are safe, comfortable and focusing on YOU.”

While real, prolonged self-care should eventually be a priority of yours — and no form of self-care is a hearty enough replacement for necessary medical care — micro-self-care can be a great step towards [prioritizing](#) yourself during a busy day. So, beyond these examples, how can you practice micro self-care? Here are 10 creative ideas to give a whirl:

1. Use a motivational quote or question as your phone screen, and spend a few seconds meditating on it throughout the day.
2. Keep post-it notes on your desk and write down small things that make you happy throughout the day. At the end of the day, look at each post-it note as you throw them away.
3. Set your passwords as something you love about yourself; smile every time you type them.
4. Give a friend or loved one a call as you walk to your car or walk home on your commute.
5. Love reading, but don't have time for a novel right now? Keep a book of poetry on hand and sneak one in between tasks at work. Give yourself some time to think about what you read.
6. Do a sun salutation in your office. We promise no one is watching.
7. Keep a small album of your favorite photos on your phone; flip through them when you're feeling overwhelmed.
8. Take five minutes and schedule your next doctor's appointment, fitness class or date night. You'll feel [productive](#), and you're setting yourself up for success later.
9. Fill up a glass of water and actually drink it. Or, make a glass of your favorite tea.
10. Interact with the world — open a window, water a plant or find that office puppy to pet.