

Be a Youth First Family

*Resources from Youth First Social Workers and Programs
for parents and caregivers to use in the home.*

Practice Self-Care

Ten Self-Care Tips

1. **Practice Deep Breathing** - During periods of anxiety, the body triggers a stress response. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, heart rate increases, and the body becomes tense. You can combat the stress response by triggering the relaxation response with deep breathing. Breathing becomes deeper and slower and the symptoms of anxiety fade away. You can practice deep breathing by breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth like you are blowing out through a straw. You can adjust the counts as needed, but a good place to start is to breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, and breathe out for 6 counts, making sure your belly fully expands.
2. **Practice Mindfulness Meditation** - The goal of mindfulness meditation is simple: to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement. During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It's normal that your mind will wander. You'll simply bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing. Aim to practice daily for at least 15 minutes. There are lots of good apps for this including Headspace, Calm or even YouTube.
3. **Move Your Body** - Squeezing in 30 minutes of physical activity a day can make a huge difference in your mood. Exercise triggers the release of chemicals such as serotonin and endorphins in the brain and central nervous system which will help you feel happier, more relaxed, and sleep better too.
4. **Prioritize Sleep** - Getting enough sleep is one of the most important things humans can do for our physical and mental health. The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7-9 hours for adults. Sticking to a sleep schedule will help you feel better and be better equipped to handle stress.
5. **Spend Time with Your Pets** - From giving unconditional love to providing companionship, pets can be hugely beneficial for our self-care. Dogs especially can help reduce stress and feelings of anxiety and can even lower blood pressure. Try taking your dog for a walk or even just hunker up on the couch and give your pet a good cuddle.



About Youth First, Inc.:

Youth First's mission is to strengthen youth and families through evidence-based programs that prevent substance abuse, promote healthy behaviors, and maximize student success. Youth First partners with 81 schools across 10 counties to provide 60 Master's level social workers who assess needs, develop and implement prevention plans, and connect students and their families to community resources. Youth First also offers afterschool programs involving parents and caregivers to strengthen families. For more information about Youth First, please visit youthfirstinc.org or call 812-421-8336.

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6. **Laugh** - Laughter has so many benefits. It releases endorphins, relaxes the body, lowers stress hormones, and helps us let go of anger, anxiety, and sadness. To tickle your funny bone try watching a funny movie, TV show, or YouTube video, spend time with someone funny (even if it is via phone or FaceTime), play silly games with your kids or pets, read comics or tell jokes.

7. **Limit Your Media Intake** - Constant monitoring of news and social media feeds can quickly turn compulsive and counterproductive—fueling anxiety rather than easing it. The limit is different for everyone, so pay attention to how you're feeling and adjust accordingly. If anxiety is an ongoing issue, consider limiting your media consumption to a specific time frame and time of day (e.g. thirty minutes each evening at 6 pm). Lastly, stick to trustworthy sources such as the CDC, the World Health Organization, and your local public health authorities.

8. **Stay Hydrated** - Drinking enough water has many health benefits. Our physical health has an impact on our mental health and vice versa. Drinking too much caffeine or sugar can make you feel jittery and increase anxiety. Therefore, replacing some of these caffeinated and sugary drinks with plain water can help you feel better.

9. **Get out in nature, if possible.** Sunshine and fresh air will do you good. Even a walk around your neighborhood can make you feel better. Just be sure to avoid crowds, keep your distance from people you encounter, and obey restrictions.

10. **Spirituality** - Spirituality and religion often provide a sense of security and those beliefs can be a strong coping mechanism through trying times. If your religious beliefs and affiliations provide you with a sense of peace and purpose, be sure to do things to support that like watch church services online, pray, do Bible study, etc.



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