

55 gentle ways to take care of yourself when you're busy busy busy



We all have times in our lives when we just have too much stuff going on. There are always deadlines, exams, due dates and just too many priorities to juggle. And when everything is going wrong, the world is screaming for your attention and you just don't have time – the last thing you need to hear is to “just take a day off”. So here are 55 gentle ways you can take care of yourself when you're pressed for time and attention. Enjoy!

Say no to anything that is not important to you

Laundry, phone calls with your mom, demanding girlfriends – this is not the time to be nice and “responsible”. Give yourself the permission to focus on what's important. Getting the unessential responsibilities off your schedule will not only create some extra time and space, it will also lighten the burden you're feeling to keep up with it.

Ask for help

There's nothing wrong with asking for help, and you'll quickly learn that most people around you actually love to be asked! It makes them feel useful and important. What usually helps the most is to get help to do the normal things; cooking, shopping and regular every-day tasks. However, don't underestimate how important the people in your life can be when it comes to feedback, motivation and supporting your self-confidence regarding the important work you're doing.

Get enough sleep

An oldie, but a goodie. This old advice is not only essential when it comes to self-care, it is also absolutely essential when it comes to being able to do your best. Particularly important when it comes to exam periods and work stress, sleep will help you achieve. It's easy to think that a few extra hours of work will do you more good, but it won't. Sleep will.

Drink tea

Coffee will only get you that far, before it sends you down into tiredness again. While still being hot and comforting, tea (and especially the herbal kind) won't make you dehydrated and shaky. If you're feeling tired and think you need a caffeine boost, go for cold water (or iced tea) instead. Cold water will help wake you up!

Listen to your favorite music

Calm music will help you calm down and upbeat music will help you up your game. Pick music that won't distract you (like music without lyrics or in a foreign language). Your favorite music will boost your mood and keep you happy, no matter how tired you are.

Eat healthy and green food

I know it's tempting to order pizza, but it really pays off to take your time to cook and eat nutritious and healthy food. Not only will it help you achieve better, it will also boost your mood! I truly recommend heading over to [The Stonesoup](#) for some quick and easy recipes. Most of these recipes can be made in less than 10 minutes!

Take 5 minutes in the morning to just stretch and breathe

If you start your day in a stressful way, you'll probably feel stressed for the rest of the day as well. Make sure your morning starts with 5 minutes of silence and ease. Stand up and stretch your body to make you as tall as you can be. Then bend over and touch the ground. Stretch again. Try to just feel your body and pay attention to your breath. Starting the day in a way like this will make you more relaxed as well!

Walk everywhere

You might be busy and think that every minute is valuable time to put into your work, but some extra minutes of walking might be a better way to spend some time. If you live close to where you're going, it's better to walk than to use public transport (or your car). Not only will the exercise be good for you, you also get some important fresh air and daylight. If you have to commute, get off public transport one or two stops too early, or park your car further away than usual. The extra minutes of fresh air will save you lots of time when you start working and feel more focused.

Take 5-minute mini-breaks every hour

You can't stay focused all the time. No matter how efficient you work, you'll always get distracted; let your mind wander or end up spending time reading e-mail (and blogs) instead. A better way to spend this time is to get up from your chair, walk outside and take a 5-minute break. The change of place, the change of physical posture and the movement will make it easier to start again when your break is over. You'll also give your brain a chance to relax and process information, which is essential for your well-being.

Break your self-care habits into smaller tasks and do one each day

No need to look like you're constantly running after your life, even if you are! Just break up your routine into smaller, and more achievable chunks. Shave your legs one day, paint your nails the next day, wash your hair the day after, etc. This approach also works with keeping your house tidy – just do one little chore every day and you'll stay on top of everything more easily.

Make a plan of everything that needs to be done

Instead of juggling all your to-do's and must-remember's, write them down on a piece of paper. Then make a plan of how you are going to manage everything before your deadline. You may have to schedule a lot of tasks on certain days, and it may seem like too much to do, but at least you'll know that everything will get done. Make sure you stick to the plan, every single day. Don't fall for the temptation to start on tomorrow's tasks today, trust that the plan will take you there, and enjoy some free time on the days when you finish your tasks early.

Make sure you keep in touch with your friends

Just a few text messages, tweets or the occasional coffee will make sure your friendships don't suffer. You will feel much better when you focus on something else entirely, and it will prevent you from becoming a workaholic hermit. You don't have to keep in touch with everybody; most people will understand that you're having a busy period. Just make sure you stay in touch with the people that make you happy and inspired.

Make room for rest

This one's important. Make sure that whenever you plan to rest – really rest. That means that you will have to make a conscious effort to push all work-related thoughts and worries away. It's also important that you rest your mind as well as your body. 5 minutes of stillness is better than 30 minutes in front of the TV!

Surround yourself with inspiring photos

Put up some of your favorite photos where you can see them when you work. Whenever you get unfocused, you will feel much better if you can rest your eyes on something pretty, rather than everything that reminds you of how busy you are. If you can't put up photos at work or in a study hall, bring a scrapbook or use [Pinterest](#) on your computer.

Write a daily gratitude list

A daily gratitude list is really helpful to shift your focus and help you appreciate the situation. It doesn't have to be long, a few sentences will do. If you keep a gratitude journal, you can also look back on your previous entries whenever you need a little boost of happiness and motivation.

Spend your lunchtime as sacred you-time

... and enjoy your healthy food with a little journaling, blog-reading, or people-watching. See it as a way to nourish your soul on several levels. It's important to eat, but it's equally important to be inspired, creative, silly, whimsical and happy.

Write a worry-list

Stress makes us more vulnerable, and worry can be a nasty side-effect of a busy period. If you find yourself worrying a lot, it's a good idea to write a daily worry-list. Whenever you catch a worrying thought, write it down and save it for later. Spend 5 minutes in the morning and 5-minutes in the evening worrying about whatever you put on your list. It may sound simple, but postponing your worry will actually make it less worrying whenever you sit down and actually think about it in peace and quiet.

Take a run or a long walk

This one is pretty self-explanatory. Any sort of exercise will release endorphins, your body will thank you + it clears your head so you can focus on all the important work that lies ahead.

Keep a planner and shedule no-appointments time

To make your life less chaotic, it's a good practice to keep a planner. Make sure you write down every single appointment, to save you from unwanted surprises and missed meetings. Just remember to schedule time for yourself. Honor your appointment with yourself just as much as you would keep an appointment with anyone else. Just make sure you schedule time with yourself first – anyone else needs to come in second in your life.

Keep track of your achievements

It may seem like you're never going to get over a busy period, which is why you should keep a list of achievements close at any time. Whenever you hit a milestone – write it down! It will be very useful when you're feeling tired by the end of the day and know that you still have several more hours of work before you can call it a day.

Wear your pretty clothes

... and be busy with style! If you dress nicely, chances are you'll feel better too. All it takes is 5 minutes in the morning, and with your most powerful, wonderful and pretty clothes on, you'll feel like a million for the rest of the day.

Go to a yoga class

...Or do some yoga at home. Even ten minutes of savasana is better than nothing, and will recharge your batteries (and your mind).

Take a hot bath

Nothing helps you relax like a hot bath. Use your favorite bubbles; turn off the light, light some candles and you're good to go. One hour in the bath in the evening may be the best way to relax because of this simple fact – you can't take your work and your computer with you.

Light candles

Candles have a relaxing effect, especially gently scented ones. If you can't light candles in your workplace, make sure you light them when you get home. Lavender and cedar wood are scents that can help you relax.

Write support-thoughts and affirmations

Support-thoughts are thoughts written down when you're calm that can support you when you are really busy and tired. For example, a gentle reminder of why you're doing all the work, a short pep-talk, or a reminder of how wonderful you are is an amazing way of taking care of yourself.

Craft an emotional emergency plan

Ideally, you should have this written down before you enter a really busy period. If everything goes wrong, and you're maxed out, panicky or just plain exhausted – who do you call? what do you do? where do you go? Planning this in advance is self-care on a high level.

Breathe

Do I need to say more? When stress builds up, take five seconds off and just breathe. Deep.

Do something silly

Don't forget to have fun! Who said you can't laugh, even though you're busy! Make jokes, engage with you co-workers, read comics and just allow yourself to be silly for a little while. I promise it will boost your mood, your co-workers' moods and a little laughter every day will help you through a really challenging time.

Single-task

Now is not the time to play superwoman. Be nice to yourself and let your brain tackle one task at a time. Rumours have it that this is more productive in the long run...

Read Focus by Leo Babauta

This book is quick to read (and there's a free version!) and it will change your work habits and make it much easier to be you. Enough said.

Take the last evening off

The last night before your big D(r)eadline is the night to relax. Panicking in the last minute isn't a very good way of taking care of yourself. And you don't want to oversleep on your exam day, have dark circles under your eyes on presentation day or destroy everything in the last minute because you spent the last night cramming. Take the last evening (or even the last day) off and relax. You've done your best, there's nothing more you can do. Pat yourself on your back – you made it.

Keep a tidy workspace

It will make you more focused, relaxed and less overwhelmed.

Create some routines

When work or studies take all your focus, it can be useful to create some new habits or routines to take some of the burden off your back. Make it a habit to cook a larger batch of dinner on day 1, and eat leftovers for the next two days. Use Sundays to prepare what to wear for the next couple of days. Wear your hair in a ponytail five days in a row. This is not the time to expect yourself to find lots of different and exciting outfits, hairdo's or recipes.

Write things down

When your mind is working over-time, let it relax by helping yourself remember everything. Write down any ideas, to-do's, must-remembers and other things you have to remember. This way, you don't have to carry the additional stress of remembering everything you need to remember.

Accept a little clutter and mess

Just let it be. Some dust and a little dirt has never hurt anyone. Focus on what's important to you, you can always clean up the mess later. Just don't go around and feel bad about it on top of everything else!

Allow your emotions to come to the surface

If you're tired and sad, cry it all out. If you're stressed, don't try to put on a mask and hide it. Get it all out, all the frustration, the overwhelm, the anger and the fear. You'll feel much better after.

Honor your limits

Set some limits and stick with them. A lot of tasks when we're busy don't have a set limit, like when you're studying and being creative. It's easy to feel like you're never quite done. Set some clear limits for yourself and honor them. Say to yourself; "when the time is up, I'm DONE".

Take the weekends completely off

If you're under constant pressure over an extended period of time, it's good practice to keep the weekends completely sacred. This means no work e-mail or calls, no appointments or catching up.

Gather your support group

Call your mother and ask her to help you take care of the house, tell your girlfriends what you're dealing with, seek out others in the same situation as you, and make sure your partner is on your team. Not only can they help with practical tasks, they will give you lots of moral support and you'll feel less alone.

Outsource

Outsource what you can, for example your home cleaning, laundry or bookkeeping.

Delegate

If you're working on a team – make sure you don't try to do everything yourself, delegate as much as you can to lighten your load.

Get more sunlight

Especially if your busy period is happening in winter, make sure you get your daily dose of sunlight if you're spending a lot of time in gloomy libraries and workplaces.

Take your vitamins

This won't even take you a minute – just go for a multivitamin paired with your breakfast. Especially important if you're eating a lot of processed and unhealthy foods when you're busy but remember that vitamins don't make up for an unhealthy diet.

Eat fresh fruit and vegetables

Keep some fruits and nuts close by and snack when you're hungry. Don't forget the veg, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes and carrots are great snacks!

Use scented oils in the shower

Lavender to relax, or a little peppermint to wake you up – all you need is a drop or two of essential oil in the shower.

Resist the urge to be productive all the time

You can't be equally productive every single waking moment, so you might as well schedule some off time right away. Be nice to yourself and don't expect to accomplish as much in the late evening as you do in the morning.

Limit your media consumption

... because your brain can only process a limited amount of information. When you need your focus to be on work, don't overflow your brain with tv news, newspapers, magazines and books.

Meditate in the morning

Ten minutes of stillness can make all the difference.

Block out distractions

Need to get some work done? Consider to pull out your internet cable, switch off your phone and lock the door. If only for a few hours, you won't miss out on anything, and you'll feel a lot better afterwards.

Compliment yourself

Positive self-speech can seriously impact your mood. Instead of adding to the monkey-brain thoughts of not good enough, too stressed and panic – tell yourself you look good, that you're doing great and that you can manage everything that comes your way.

Do the dreaded tasks first

There are always tasks you'll love to do more than others, and it's tempting to do those first. However, it's a good idea to do the hardest tasks first. That way, you'll save yourself from all the dread!

Brighten your day with colorful pencils and pretty stationery

It doesn't have to cost much, but it will make a huge impact on your happiness – especially if you're a stationery and design geek... (well, who isn't?)

Reward yourself

Maybe not the best overall habit to get used to, but desperate times call for desperate measures. If you need it to get through – reward yourself with gifts, chocolate and breaks whenever you finish a task. Just don't make it a habit to kick yourself if you don't make it. Maybe you need the treat anyways?

Postpone all major decisions

... This is not the time to move houses, quit your day job or break up with your spouse (however tempting any of those changes are). Save the big stuff for when you're calmer and can think clearer.

Accept yourself as you are

Let yourself off the hook and accept that you are only human. You are doing your absolute best, and you are doing exactly what you need to do. Trust your instincts and keep doing whatever you're doing. You don't need to change anything about yourself – trust that you are perfect just the way you are.

<http://www.thefreedomexperiment.com/2011/10/28/55-gentle-ways-to-take-care-of-yourself-when-youre-busy-busy-busy/>

 Take 
care of
you first