

"MICRO-SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES: A to Z" – Compiled by Darcy F. Wallen, LCSW, ACSW © 2015

Each of these activities or exercises can take as little time as under five minutes. By taking frequent, brief breaks for refreshment, you can prevent burnout, boredom, improve your resilience, your immune response and more. By doing various self-compassionate activities such as these throughout the day, you can enhance your "good hormones" such as dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphin. This is the busy person's "micro-self-care" system, when longer sessions are not possible especially during the day when more pressing demands are upon us. Research supports the benefit of short and frequent self-care activities – "little and often." Feel free to contact the author for any techniques referenced here.

- A** 🐾 Attend to any pressing thing that can be quickly "checked off" your list (such as a short phone call, email, etc.).
- B** 🐾 Breathing deeply, become mindful of any tension or tightness in your body, and let it go. Do a "Breathing Contest".
- C** 🐾 Call a friend or family member for a mini-connection. Contact someone who will appreciate it (i.e., by checking on a sick friend, after a celebration, on a birthday, etc.).
- D** 🐾 De-technologize, unplug and unwind – turn off digital devices and relax your eyes and mind.
- E** 🐾 Eat a healthy snack. If you are in a school or workplace that does not have healthy snacks that are "indigenous," bring a stash of easily accessible ones with you. Consider dried fruits, nuts or seeds, almond, soy or rice milk boxes, etc.
- F** 🐾 Find a minute or six to do a brief meditation such as "The Beginner's Meditation on the Breath™" (<http://rvrb.fm/1HKsJqJ>). You can even spend as little as one minute a day and derive benefit.
- G** 🐾 Get into your snack by mindfully experiencing it in a "mindful munch." Notice much more about it than normal and savor it. For instance, what is the color, texture, aroma, flavor, etc.? See: "Mindfulness Activities" handout – "Winding the Raisin."
- H** 🐾 Have a "moment of silence" with yourself without needing to do anything. Just allow your mind to flow. At the end of a minute or two, jot down any inspiration that came to you.
- I** 🐾 In 30-60 seconds you can check in with your body. Is it tense? Where? Can you let go in certain areas to remove tension?
- J** 🐾 Java or tisane time? Have a warm drink, maybe an aromatic tea such as Earl Grey, mint, etc. If you are prone to getting tired at work, don't drink chamomile – it can be so relaxing, it is sleep inducing, but it's great for later in the evening.
- K** 🐾 Kiss, hug, or give someone a handshake, arm around the shoulder, etc. Even three seconds of touch, especially skin-to-skin, gets oxytocin flowing. Self-massage works too!
- L** 🐾 Laugh! Watch, listen, or read something funny or speak to someone who makes you laugh.
- M** 🐾 Music for mood or movement? Choose favorite pieces of music that are good for the time of the day or your mood. For instance, an exciting music with a strong beat for getting you motivated or moving, a calming one for times you need rest, an inspiring, uplifting one for lonely or moody times, etc.
- N** 🐾 Notice something new and novel in your environment. Make a point to become more attentive to your surroundings.
- O** 🐾 Organize your physical environment, your room, office, desk, your phone, computer, etc., to make it more "user friendly." This can positively distract, ground, re-energize and put a fresh perspective on things.
- P** 🐾 Prioritize the rest of your day, week or month or goals you have set for yourself.
- Q** 🐾 Quell your longing for reading by taking a mini-reading break daily. Are there articles or short book segments, audio books or courses that you have been meaning to get to? Enjoy, accomplish and have a brief, but great escape!
- R** 🐾 Rehydrate with plain old H₂O. Humans are approximately 60% water. This needs to be regularly replenished throughout the day. Drinking eight 8 oz. glasses a day is recommended.
- S** 🐾 Say a nice word to someone, possibly to a stranger or to someone you don't regularly speak. Say a Positive Affirmation to and about yourself. (See: "Affirmation Formula page.")
- T** 🐾 Take a short "mindful walk." During this, be aware and notice sights, sensations, sounds, aromas and feelings in your environment.
- U** 🐾 Unwind with a brisk walk outside, depending on the weather. If you're unable to go outside, create a walking "circuit" inside your home, school or workplace, etc.
- V** 🐾 Visit a "vacation site" in your mind. Do a guided visualization such as "The Safeplace Guided Imagery" from NOGA™ Sound Solutions. (See link below.)
- W** 🐾 Watch something brief and inspirational such as a TED talk or YouTube video.
- X** 🐾 Exercise gently at your chair or desk. 1) Do neck circles. 2) Lift your feet off the floor. 3) Bend or flex your ankles. 4) Rotate them. 5) Stand up and do "pushups" against the wall. 6) Gently stretch holding onto something sturdy as an anchor. 7) Stretch from side to side. 8) Get up and walk around.
- Y** 🐾 Yawn, smile or hum for at least 30 seconds.
- Z** 🐾 Zero in on at least three things that you are thankful for today. If you have a gratitude journal, keep adding to it daily. There are two elements to gratitude: 1) being thankful and happy for the thing or occurrence and 2) directing the thanks to the proper "address" – friend, parent, teacher, God, etc.

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