

Self-care in the Midst of COVID-19. Practicing Mindfulness.

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Self-care is not selfish. Put your own (COVID-19) mask on first before helping others. Practice mindfulness and continuous improvement. Progress, not perfection.

How many times have you been on an airplane and the flight attendant announced, "In the event of an emergency, please put on your oxygen mask first before helping others." Likewise, certainly the present global pandemic is a public health emergency, one that we must ensure the stability of our own health before helping others. Easier said than done sometimes, don't we know. You are not alone. No one has it all right and figured out, even if they act like they do. A few points are certain: we can be mindful of our practice, be reflective practitioners, and work on continuous improvement. October 19-23, 2020 is National Health Education Week (NHEW). This year's NHEW theme focuses on increasing national awareness about public health issues and promoting health education. Self-care is central to all aspects of our work.

According to national leaders in health education and prevention, [#Partnering4Health](#), stress increases the risk for chronic disease. The good news is that most chronic diseases are preventable and they can also be effectively controlled and managed. **The unprecedented and highly traumatic events of 2020 call for an awakening, a reality check, and renewed sense of self-care strategies that support health and wellness.** How we act (or not) during 2020 will never be forgotten. We must strategically engage in action and proactively use our voice, beginning with self-care, health and wellness. Self-care is not selfish.

So how do we practice mindfulness, be reflective practitioners, and work to continuously improve our health and well-being? Here are **three specific self-care strategies** and tips gleaned from reputable organizations such as [AIR](#), [CASEL](#), [CDC](#), [Covey](#), and [Florida SEL](#):

1. Keep first things first, intentionally put the big picture in perspective. It is okay to refuse some requests. Remember, do good coaches respond to every play? Clarify your specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timebound (SMART) goals and strategies to help keep daily, weekly, and monthly tasks in perspective. Consider accountability. Who are your [critical friends](#)?
2. Eat right and stay active, especially now. Back to the basics for some strategies with health and wellness, like with handwashing to prevent the spread of disease (i.e. COVID-19 in 2020?). All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten by Robert Fulghum is quite timely. Simplicity works.
3. Stay connected. Understand that you are not alone. We must remain hopeful; nothing stays the same; this too shall pass. Research supports the benefits of positive social connections and good health and longevity. In staying connected, seek help as needed. Let's keep moving forward putting the first things first. We are in this together.