

## What is Self-Care and Why is it Important?

Is self-care all about bubble baths and meditating in a field of wildflowers? Some people may find those practices helpful; however, *self-care is an overall approach to cultivating health and wellness in all areas of life.* Sometimes people think about self-care as selfish or self-indulgent. In consumeristic cultures, people can too often fall for marketing ploys that try to sell easy fixes and distractions from the pressures of life. In those cases, self-care gets reduced only to pampering. Ideally, self-care helps us *pursue a sustainable lifestyle* rather than one from which we have to constantly escape.



Self-care is a way of actively investing in one's health, which includes physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual wellness. A critical component of health is nutrition: eating a variety of nutrient dense foods on a regular basis improves brain function that affects emotional and intellectual capacity and performance; diet also affects physical function such as mobility, digestion, and energy level. *The Harvard Health Blog* has a good article, with links to research, called [“Nutritional psychiatry: Your brain on food”](#) if you'd like to read more. Another critical component of health is social connection: being with friends and family you trust to offer empathy and support as well as with whom to relax and have fun is indispensable to wellness. All of us experience the need for love, belonging and inclusion (third level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs). If you have 20 minutes, check out this TEDx talk on loneliness as [“The #1 Public Health Issues Doctors Aren't Talking About.”](#)



**Wellness Idea:** Practice self-care by *sharing a nutritious meal* with friends, family and/or colleagues. Take the time with others to sit, savor each flavor, enjoy conversation, and know that you're cultivating the health and wellness of yourself and those with whom you gather at the table. You might consider organizing a potluck where each person contributes a food/dish with personal significance such as a childhood favorite, a cultural staple, etc.

**Featured Campus Resources:** *WellTrack* - an online service with tools such as wellness assessments, a guided and self-relaxation Zen Room, a MoodCheck tracker for understanding trends in your activities and feelings, and courses in self-help therapy.



Download the app to your phone and give it a try. It is free for UC Merced students [here](#).

**Graduate Student Support Group** - This free and confidential group facilitated by [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) meets Wednesdays from 4-5pm in SSB 217. It is a safe space for sharing whatever is on your mind. For more information, call CAPS at 209-228-4266 or email [counseling@ucmerced.edu](mailto:counseling@ucmerced.edu).