

# Why self-care is so critical during menopause

The menopause years are not for the faint of heart. Dealing with uncomfortable symptoms like hot flashes and disrupted nights of sleep, on top of everything else you've got going on in your day-to-day, is a lot.

That's why Maven Mental Health Provider Cynthia Coffelt stresses that taking time for yourself is so important right now. "Menopause is often a time characterized by many changes, both physical and emotional," she says. "It's particularly important that you offer yourself as much care as possible while you navigate this new territory."

Read on for how self-care can benefit you during this transitional time.



## WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO TAKE TIME FOR SELF-CARE DURING THE MENOPAUSE YEARS?

Menopause is a major life shift. And you might be feeling all the feels about that right now. "Acknowledging that 'the change' is occurring can be difficult for many, as it marks the end of a phase of life and the beginning of another," Coffelt says. "Some may have stronger feelings attached to this transition than others."

Accepting that you're going through a transition while dealing with some very uncomfortable symptoms can be overwhelming at times. Your mental health can quickly suffer as a result.

"Menopause can place women at higher risk for depression and anxiety due to hormonal changes, feeling unwell, and competing demands from family, work, and more," Coffelt says. "Managing physiological changes that can cause discomfort, like hot flashes and sleep disturbances, along with challenges to your mental health is all the more reason to focus on self care."

Going through menopause can also make you feel like you're invisible at times. Let's be honest, it's a life stage that's largely ignored or glossed over by society. That's frustrating! But just because no one else is acknowledging it as real doesn't mean it isn't. You're here and going through it. That matters. You matter and are worth attention and care.

Lastly, you're probably used to caring for everyone else—kids, your partner, your parents, and anyone else in your community you care for. But right now, you're going through something major yourself. That means it's OK to make time to focus on just you for a bit.

## SO WHAT DOES SELF-CARE LOOK LIKE?

Ignore what you see on social media—self-care doesn't have to involve going all out on spa days, bubble baths, and gratitude journals. (Unless that's what you love, then by all means, go for it!)

Instead, it can be really small things. Especially on days when your symptoms are flaring and you're exhausted. You might want to stay in bed a bit later and read a few pages of your book. Or, order your favorite takeout because you don't feel like cooking. Self-care can be anything that you like and makes you feel good and happy.

## SO WHAT DOES SELF-CARE LOOK LIKE?

- Get plenty of rest
- Eat well/nourish yourself
- Go for a walk with a friend
- Listen to music you like
- Do yoga or other forms of gentle movement
- Spend time in nature
- Say "no" to plans or other obligations
- Ask for what you need
- Do something creative like drawing or painting

## THE BOTTOM LINE

There are going to be days when your symptoms are worse than others. There are going to be days when you're too busy with work. That's totally OK. Try to fit in small ways to care for yourself when you can. "Try setting small, manageable goals that will offer you brief opportunities to engage in self-care when you're going through something as major as menopause," Coffelt says. "Even if it's not a lot of time, it will help you learn to feel more comfortable prioritizing your needs and making self-care more of a habit."