



You spend a lifetime making time for others — parenting, caregiving, volunteering, working — but how often do you take a personal timeout?

The American Heart Association recommends making a conscious decision to do at least one thing every day that you enjoy. Taking time for yourself is good for your mind, body, and soul. Follow these tips and aim to spend at least 10 minutes a day on just you.

Get to Know You

What makes you, you? What gets you out of bed in the morning? What is your purpose? To help you answer these questions, think about the things you believe in, the values that guide your life, and the passions that motivate you. Have you identified and thought about what is really important to you and what you want to get out of life, including your short- and long-term goals? Once you answer or revisit these questions, gather your thoughts and seek opportunities that fulfill you.

Take Care of Yourself

Life is busy. As a result, you may neglect your own well-being, which can lead to stress, irritability, moodiness, and even depression. Proper self-care, such as sleep, nutrition, physical activity, and low stress can help improve mood and daily productivity. By taking care of yourself, you will be more relaxed and content. You

What is your ikigai?

Ikigai is a Japanese concept that translates to “reason for being” or “sense of purpose.” *Ikigai* is a very personal experience, according to Dan Buettner, author of *Blue Zones: Secrets of a Long Life*.

will also feel stronger and more confident. A person who places an emphasis on self-care is more efficient, better able to concentrate and help others, and will be more likely to accomplish and enjoy more.

There are many ways to take care of yourself:

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Eat healthy
- Laugh more
- Declutter or organize your house and/or office
- Read a book
- Walk your pet
- Play with your kids or grandkids
- Join a club
- Go to your doctor for checkups



Take a Break from your Daily Routine Without Feeling Guilty

It is mentally healthy to take breaks from life's daily routine, and such breaks should not come with guilt. Slipping away from your daily routine doesn't have to occur for extended periods of time — it can mean taking a bath, reading a book uninterrupted, or going to your bedroom with your door closed to sit in solitude. Help your family and friends around you understand that this is a time you do not want any interruptions. If it's difficult for people to leave you alone, leave the house and go for a walk, meet a friend for coffee, or see a movie.

Make a To-Do List

A to-do list is a motivating and organizational tool that helps you plan your day and manage your time effectively. Prioritizing your list into due dates, short- and long-term goals, and rank of importance can help you feel more control and balance. It also helps you recognize that everything does not have to be accomplished in one day. Crossing items off to-do list can be gratifying and empowering because it is a mental reminder that you're making progress. Leave enough room in your day for day-to-day tasks and other unplanned events that naturally appear. If you are feeling down at the end of the day because your list is incomplete, remember that some days are better than others and accept the unfinished to-do list for what it is: an opportunity to finish it tomorrow.

Be Physically Active

Physical activity and exercise, including strength training, is a healthy way to spend "me time." Exercise affects overall physical and mental well-being. It increases strength, cardiovascular conditioning, flexibility, balance, and muscle mass. It also decreases body fat. It also boosts self-esteem and confidence and helps lower stress and anxiety. Walking is a great way to get started with an exercise routine, even if it is just around the yard. If you already have a regular exercise routine, try something new like joining a yoga or cycling class. Group exercise provides both social and physical stimulation. Children and teens should exercise for approximately 1 hour per day. Middle age and older adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of exercise per week.

Try This!

Set an alarm to remind you about "me time." Eventually, it will become a habit that you won't want to break.

Eat Smart and Drink Water

Wholesome, nutritious foods provide you with more energy, combat depression by keeping your brain functioning at its best, and prevent numerous other health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancers. Drinking plenty of water will help hydrate your skin and your body. It also flushes toxins out of your body and helps you concentrate. By considering the following recommendations from the USDA's MyPlate program, you can eat for a healthy and more successful future:

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.
- Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Make at least half of your grains whole-grains.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Choose food that is low in sodium.

Relax

Relaxation, the body's natural unwinding technique, has been referred to as the single most important key to health and well-being. As a result of relaxation, you may experience more energy, better sleep, enhanced immunity, increased concentration and problem-solving abilities, greater efficiency, smoother emotions, and fewer physical reactions to stress. Relaxation has also been known to decrease muscle tension and blood pressure and increase blood flow, which is good for the heart. Relaxation can occur through taking a hot bath, reading a book, getting a massage, or taking a few deep breaths. Professional methods of relaxation include visual imagery, body awareness, and progressive muscle relaxation. Meditation is a form of relaxation. Meditation is a state of peace that occurs when the mind is calm, and it helps reduce stress, depression, and anxiety. In addition to contributing to a calmer, more peaceful, and happier life, meditation can increase creativity and productivity in the workplace or classroom.

Laugh

It's no joke. Laughter really is the best medicine. Laughter has the ability to increase the "feel good" hormones in the body, called endorphins. Laughter boosts the immune system, which contributes to overall healthiness. Finding humor in daily situations can even reduce stress, lower depression, and help your mind and body heal. With such positive benefits, make laughing a goal. Laughter is contagious. Watch a funny movie or television show, go to a comedy club, take an impromptu comedy class, or simply laugh with a close friend or loved one.

Just Say NO

Do you find yourself saying "yes" to everything that is asked of you; even if it is something you really do not want to do? Always saying yes is not healthy. It often overcommits you, which can cause stress and fatigue. Saying no allows you to honor existing obligations and dedicate quality time to those commitments. Saying no to things that you have always done but are tired of doing, allows you to try new things. You should not feel guilty saying no, as saying no helps you focus on what's important.

Create a Bucket List

A bucket list can act as a road map for "me time" today and into the future. It is a list of goals, dreams, and life-experiences that are important for you to experience within your lifetime. Bucket lists aim to help you maximize every moment of your existence and live your life to the fullest. Such lists can be grounding because it is easy to get caught up in the madness of daily activities and fail to live by personal plans and goals. A list helps you identify purpose and meaning because it provides reminders about what is important in life, what you have done, and where you want to go. While bucket lists are often associated with dreams of traveling the world or skydiving, your list should fit your personal goals and dreams no matter how big or small.

Conclusion

In today's busy world, you juggle multiple priorities and responsibilities and likely make time for others before making time for yourself. But you are important too. Taking time for you — even if it is just for 10 minutes a day — is a healthy lifestyle behavior that influences optimal aging throughout the lifespan.

References

- Abraham, J.; Velenczei, A., Szabo, A. (2012). Perceived determinants of well-being and enjoyment level of leisure activities. *Leisure Sciences*, 34(3), 199-216.
- American Heart Association (AHA) (2011). Top 10 tips to refresh yourself. Retrieved from www.heart.org/HEART-ORG/Caregiver/Refresh/Top10TipstoRefreshYourself/Top-10-Tips-to-Refresh-Yourself_UCM_301810_Article.jspa
- Bassi, M., Steca, P., Monzani, D., Greco, A., & Delle Fave, A. (2013). Personality and optimal experience in adolescence: Implications for well-being and development. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, June, 1573-7780
- CDC (2011). How much physical activity do you need? Retrieved 10/31/11 from www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html
- Girishwar, M. (2009). Self and well-being. *Psychological Studies*, 54(2), Jun, 2009. pp. 85-86.
- Grossman, C. & Bly, L. (2008). Making a 'bucket list' before you kick. Retrieved from www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-01-14-bucket-list_N.htm
- Hutnik, N., Smith, P., & Koch, T. (2012). What does it feel like to be 100? Socio-emotional aspects of well-being in the stories of 16 centenarians living in the United Kingdom. *Aging & Mental Health*, 16(7), 811-818.
- Kalash, N. (2011). Why a to do list keeps you healthy. *Prevention*. Retrieved 10-31-11 from www.prevention.com/todolists/list/7.shtml
- Kovacs, J. (2010). Blissing out: 10 relaxation techniques to reduce stress on-the-spot. Retrieved from www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/features/blissing-out-10-relaxation-techniques-reduce-stress-spot
- Mayo Clinic (2011). Relaxation techniques: Try these steps to reduce stress. Retrieved from www.mayoclinic.com/health/relaxation-technique/SR00007
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2011). Choose MyPlate. Retrieved from www.choosemyplate.gov

Bucket List

Directions. A bucket list is a list of goals, dreams, and life-experiences that are important for you to experience within your lifetime. Use this worksheet to help you identify some of the things you want to do and accomplish in your remaining years. As you read the following questions, begin thinking about items you want to put on your bucket list.

- If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today?
- Where have you always wanted to travel?
- What do you want to accomplish?
- What skills do you want to have?
- What special moments would you like to have?
- What do you want to experience?
- What would you do if you had unlimited resources?
- What have you always wanted to do, but haven't?
- Who would you like to meet?
- What would you like to witness throughout life?
- What is your biggest dream?
- What would you like to achieve socially, physically, financially, socially, health wise, spiritually, or with your career?

Now that you have started thinking about your bucket list, write down at least 10 of your goals and dreams as well as experiences you wish to have throughout your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



Adapted and used with permission of the University of Arkansas Research and Extension, and the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture.

Authors

Erin Yelland, Ph.D., CFLE, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Adult Development and Aging, K-State Research and Extension

Amy F. Hosier, Associate Professor, University of Kentucky

LaVona S. Traywick, Associate Professor, University of Arkansas

Reviewers

Dr. Rosalie Otters, University of Arkansas

Dr. Lisa Washburn, University of Arkansas



Publications from Kansas State University are available at www.ksre.ksu.edu

Publications are reviewed or revised annually by appropriate faculty to reflect current research and practice. Date shown is that of publication or last revision. Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit author, *Keys to Embracing Aging: Taking Time for You*, Kansas State University, December 2015.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, John D. Floros, Director.

MF3267 December 2015