

# Practical Self-Care for Mum's

A **self-care plan** can help you enhance your health and well-being, better manage stress and be able cope better with meeting the needs of your baby. Having a plan helps keep you on track when you are busy and/or tired.

**What is self-care?** Self-care is any activity you do to take care of your physical and emotional well-being. It is something that refuels you. Think of it like a bank balance – how many withdrawals versus deposits have you made lately?

**Why is this important?** You cannot pour from an empty cup. You, your baby and your family will benefit from it. Self-care improves well-being, reduces stress, depression and anxiety.

## What can I do? I don't have time! I don't want to leave my baby!

*Include your baby.* Self-care doesn't always have to equal time out from your children. It is important to come up with activities that are beneficial to you that can include your baby. Practice breathing/mindfulness while your baby feeds, wear a face mask during the day, have a special cup of tea or treat, take a walk with your baby, go outdoors, be crafty/creative.

*Use your shower time.* This is the perfect opportunity to pamper yourself with an everyday activity. Use a beautiful scrub or delicious smelling soap. Burn a candle or oil. Use dim lighting. Listen to the water. Feel the water. Smell the scents. It can be a wonderful sensory experience when we pay attention.

*Move your body.* Get the endorphins, dopamine and serotonin pumping. This is another activity you can do with your baby. Go for a walk, do stretches on the floor, put music on and dance while your baby watches, try a youtube yoga class on the floor at home..

*Eat well.* Unhealthy diet is a risk factor for depression and anxiety. The Food and Mood Centre at Deakin University has scientifically proven that diet and mental health are linked. Look after yourself and eat well. Nourish and fuel your mind and body!

*Ask for help and take whatever time you can get.* You don't have to do it all on your own. You can and should ask for help that is available to you. Accept those offers for help, even if at first it seems difficult. Time out is an effective way to refuel and helps you to engage better with baby.

*Join a group.* A mothers group, an exercise group, the local library, whatever interests you. Social engagement and a sense of belonging is crucial to our health and well-being.

*Listen to music.* This is another activity you can do with your child that can boost mood and motivation.

*Get creative.* Be arty, crafty, cook, colour-in. Creative pursuits can mimic the same brain state that occurs during meditation.

*Go to bed earlier.* It can be tempting to stay up if your baby is sleeping in the early evening, but it is important to maximise your sleep, especially if baby is very wakeful during the night. Be sure to go to bed at a reasonable time.

*Self-compassion.* If all of this seems too hard for whatever reason. Stop and ask yourself, if this was a friend you loved and cared about, what advice and encouragement, are you going to offer them right now? Now think - what if that friend was me? Talk to yourself like you would someone you love.

*Self-Care can also be things you don't do!*

Don't do the vacuuming/washing/chore today. Practice being assertive. Say no to unwanted visits/outings/commitments. Don't check emails or answer unwanted calls, have break from social media.

# My Self-Care Plan

Things I can do more of:

---

---

---

---

Things I can do with my baby:

---

---

---

---

Things I can do less of:

---

---

---

---

Things I want to work on:

---

---

---

---

Share this with your partner and/or loved ones, let them know about your self-care aims and why it is important. Being aware of your self-care plan will help your loved ones to better support you.