

## WHY IS SELF-CARE IMPORTANT?

*"Self-care helps to prevent stress and anxiety. By incorporating self-care activities into your regular routine, like going for a walk or socialising with friends, you give your body and mind time to rest, reset, and rejuvenate, so you can avoid or reduce the symptoms of stress and anxiety."* Black Dog Institute

It is essential that we fill our own cups, in order to be able to give to family, friends, clients, colleagues, etc.

If we don't replenish our energy how can we give away or use more of it?

Self-care is not selfish!

## HAPPINESS CHEMICALS

Practising self-care also helps regulate the happiness chemicals in the brain which include:

- DOPAMINE – the reward system (released when doing something you enjoy)
- OXYTOCIN – the love drug (released during physical contact)
- SEROTONIN – the mood stabiliser (released when feeling good about yourself)
- ENDORPHIN – the pain killer (released after things like exercise)

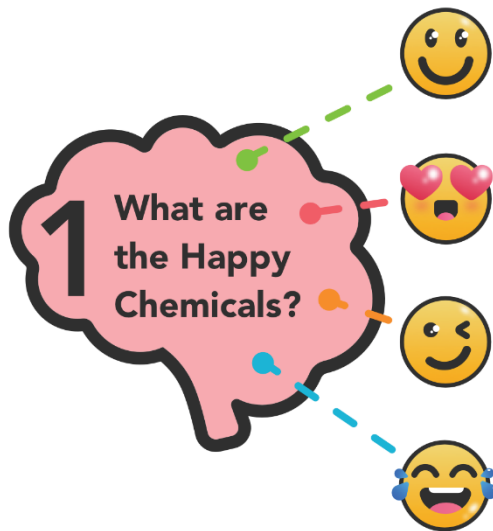
Low levels of Serotonin can lead to an overproduction of Dopamine. For example you might be feeling low on energy, low on self-esteem, anxiety or depression (low on Serotonin) which makes you want to reach out for a pleasure hit (Dopamine) such as shopping, alcohol, chocolate, etc. which may make us feel good momentarily but won't sustain our happiness in the long run.

Over stimulation such as binge watching TV, scrolling through social media for hours or consuming too much fast food can desensitise us to what use to give us a pleasure hit, or cause addiction from wanting more of it more often.

Things like healthy food, natural light and exercise can help keep our Serotonin levels in check, as well as doing things that make us happy.

## GET YOUR DAILY HAPPINESS CHEMICALS

The happy brain chemicals that make you feel good



### DOPAMINE

- Enables motivation, learning, and pleasure
- Gives you determination to accomplish goals, desires, and needs

### OXYTOCIN

- Feeling of trust, motivates you to build and sustain relationships
- Known as "Cuddle or Love Hormone", plays a role in bonding

### SEROTONIN

- Feeling significant or important among peers
- Calm form of accepting yourself with the people around you

### ENDORPHINS

- Releases a brief euphoria to mask physical pain
- Response to pain and stress that alleviates anxiety and depression

## 2 How Deficiency Affects You

- procrastination
- low self-esteem
- lack of motivation
- low energy or fatigue
- inability to focus
- feeling anxious
- feeling hopeless
- mood swings

- feeling lonely
- stressed
- lack of motivation
- low energy or fatigue
- disconnect of relationships
- feeling anxious
- insomnia

- low self-esteem
- overly sensitive
- anxiety/panic attacks
- mood swings
- feeling hopeless
- social phobia
- obsession/compulsion
- insomnia

- anxiety
- depression
- mood swings
- aches and pains
- insomnia
- impulsive behavior

DOPAMINE

OXYTOCIN

SEROTONIN

ENDORPHINS

## 3 How to Increase Happiness Levels

- meditate
- daily to-do list
- long term goals
- food rich in L-Tyrosine
- exercise regularly
- create something: writing, music, or art

- physical touch
- socializing
- massage
- acupuncture
- listening to music
- exercise
- cold shower
- meditate

- exercise
- cold showers
- sunlight
- massage

- laughter/crying
- creating music/art
- eat dark chocolate
- eat spicy foods
- exercise/stretching
- massage
- meditate

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## PLEASURE VS HAPPINESS - THE SEVEN KEY DIFFERENCES

*(from Dr. Robert Lustig – The Hacking of the American Mind)*

1. Pleasure is short-lived - happiness is long-lived.
2. Pleasure is visceral - happiness is ethereal.
3. Pleasure is taking - happiness is giving.
4. Pleasure can be achieved with substances - happiness cannot be achieved with substances.
5. Pleasure is experienced alone - happiness is experienced in social groups.
6. The extremes of pleasure all lead to addiction, whether they be substances or behaviours. Yet there's no such thing as being addicted to too much happiness.
7. Finally, and most importantly, pleasure is tied to dopamine (the pleasure biochemical/neurotransmitter), and happiness is tied to serotonin (the happiness biochemical/neurotransmitter).

## SELF-CARE TIPS

- Differentiate between things that bring you pleasure (short term - dopamine) and things that bring you happiness (long term - serotonin). SEE ABOVE
- Schedule it into your diary.
- Set reminders.
- Choose practises that make you happy (not what you think should or make other people happy) – stay true to you.
- Don't be afraid to be adventurous and creative.
- Feed your spirit or soul as well as your body.
- Activities don't need to cost money or take up a lot of time.

## NOTES

What does self-care mean to you?
Do you already practise self-care regularly and if so how?
Do you notice any resistance to the idea of practising self-care? (e.g. time constraints, guilt, responsibility)
Are there some boundaries that you need to set in order to practise self-care? (e.g. blocking out time in your diary, asking your partner/kids for help)
What are your triggers that you notice when you are starting to, or have, run out of energy, or are getting into a state of overwhelm? (e.g. getting impatient or angry, feeling emotional, reaching for the wine or beer or chocolate)

## SELF CARE ACTIVITY IDEAS

PHYSICAL	MENTAL	EMOTIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditate</li> <li>• Go for a walk or hike</li> <li>• Swim</li> <li>• Complete some cardio or weight training</li> <li>• Stretch or do yoga</li> <li>• Try Tai chi or Qi gong</li> <li>• Sleep</li> <li>• Rest</li> <li>• Have sex</li> <li>• Prepare or eat some nourishing food</li> <li>• Treat yourself to takeaway</li> <li>• Get a massage</li> <li>• Drink a glass of water</li> <li>• Take a hot bath or shower</li> <li>• Light a candle</li> <li>• Dance to your favourite song</li> <li>• Play a virtual dance or sport video games</li> <li>• Do some housework</li> <li>• Sit or walk in nature</li> <li>• See a doctor or health care professional</li> <li>• Get a dental check</li> <li>• Turn off your phone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditate</li> <li>• Be mindful</li> <li>• Set an intention</li> <li>• Read</li> <li>• Study</li> <li>• Watch a documentary</li> <li>• Do a puzzle</li> <li>• Play a game</li> <li>• Learning something new</li> <li>• Create a piece of art</li> <li>• Colour a mandala</li> <li>• Go out in nature</li> <li>• Update your budget</li> <li>• Do your tax return</li> <li>• Plan for the future</li> <li>• Daydream</li> <li>• Create a vision board</li> <li>• Write in a journal</li> <li>• Organise your home</li> <li>• Do your filing</li> <li>• Work outside</li> <li>• Listen to music</li> <li>• Purge your social media followers</li> <li>• Do your shopping</li> <li>• Turn off your phone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditate</li> <li>• Hug or touch someone</li> <li>• Do something for someone else</li> <li>• Be grateful</li> <li>• Practise empathy &amp; compassion</li> <li>• Spend time with family &amp; friends</li> <li>• Clean up rubbish</li> <li>• Book a holiday</li> <li>• Go to the movies</li> <li>• Sit by the ocean</li> <li>• Play with a pet or child</li> <li>• Listen to some soothing music</li> <li>• Watch a funny movie</li> <li>• Compliment someone</li> <li>• Create connections with people</li> <li>• Write a letter</li> <li>• Leave positive sticky notes around for your kids, partner, family, colleagues, flatmate</li> <li>• Tell someone a joke</li> <li>• Volunteer</li> <li>• Cry</li> <li>• Turn off your phone</li> </ul>

## SELF-CARE PLAN

Self-care activities are practises we can engage on a regular basis to reduce stress and anxiety and enhance our mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

On the previous page are just some examples of self-care practises and different areas and ways to practise self-care. Using these and what you wrote in your answers in the notes section, complete your self-care plan in terms of what you can do to enhance your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing:

- in case of emergency (feeling completely overwhelmed, stressed, anxious)
- on a daily or weekly basis that fits in with your schedule
- monthly or quarterly that you can plan in advance
- something special you could do once a year to really replenish your soul

*Remember to put things that bring you long lasting happiness, not just short term pleasure.*

	Physical	Mental	Emotional
Emergency			
Daily			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Quarterly			
Yearly			

# Practising Self-Care

