

## Why Self-Care is Hard for Depressed Individuals

Looking after yourself (self-care) is vital to physical, emotional and mental well-being. Self-care is best defined as the ability to take proper care of your daily living needs, like eating, sleeping, grooming. But it's also about identifying your own unique needs and taking steps to meet them—like making the time to do things that nurture you, as well as activities that keep you healthy.

But when you live with depression, self-care can sometimes feel unattainable. You're tired, with feelings of despair and corrosive thoughts that push and shove in an endless tug-of-war within you. Often, depression leaves you feeling like your physical and emotional reactivity has been used up, draining you of the ability to look after yourself.

**Develop a Self-Care Program** Our brain is adaptive therefore new neural pathways can develop with the practice of new habits. When it comes to depression and the brain, recovery of the executive functions returns to a healthy level when depressive symptoms reduce. One of the ways to foster this recovery is to create a self-care program.

**1) Start small.** Aim for small goals like getting up out of bed, getting in the shower or sitting in a different room with some sunlight or fresh air. Starting off with small goals will eventually lead to the completion of bigger ones.

**2) Go from inactive to active.** The key to self-care is accepting that you need to move from the draining numbness of depression to a more active state. As your depression lifts, you'll be able to do more structured activities like exercise or yoga and tend to tasks in the house, school or at work.

**3) Feed your senses.** Depression is a state of complete and utter depletion, and recovery comes sooner when you take the time to see, feel, hear, taste and touch. Things like getting out in the sun, listening to music, taking in a lungful of fresh air, getting a hug or eating comfort foods all help to soothe you. But even more meaningful is to recognize how they help boost frontal lobe functioning. If your depression is so intense that you can't make these experiences happen on your own, ask someone to help you.

**4) Keep a routine.** Once your symptoms of depression have reduced, be mindful about sticking to a routine that allows you to maintain your self-care program. Taking proper care of yourself is vital in so many ways, the most important of which is that it prevents a depressive relapse.

*Modified from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/two-takes-depression/201702/why-self-care-is-hard-depressed-individuals>*

**Remember, ERC is here to help should self-care seem an insurmountable task to tackle on your own.**



### HOW TO USE YOUR EAP:

ERC is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). For additional information, visit our website

[www.ERCincorp.com](http://www.ERCincorp.com) or simply call 1-800-222-8590.