Self-Care Plan

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As a brand-new graduate student, I’ve heard a lot about how self-care is extremely important. I’ve always tried to implement consistent self-care strategies in my life, especially during my undergraduate experience, but I never understood how necessary self-care is until now. Finding strategies that work for me has been a trial-and-error process for me, but I’ve established 10 strategies that I feel work for me. One strategy that I’ve fallen in love with is **exercising** or being physically active. I’ve found that it’s hard to maintain a consistent exercise schedule throughout the week, but I’ve noticed that when I find the time it makes me feel better mentally and physically. Another strategy that correlates with exercising and that I feel goes hand in hand is maintaining a **balanced diet**. I try to incorporate nutritious meals or snacks in my daily routine that are beneficial to my overall well-being, but I also allow myself to eat foods and drink beverages that I find comforting and satisfying. I’ve learned that having a balanced diet keeps nutrition exciting and more enjoyable, especially if I’m not restricting myself from having things that I truly want. A third strategy that correlates with exercise and balanced diet is making sure I have **plenty of rest each day**. This is something that I struggle to make a priority every day, but I’ve noticed that my mental and physical health are better on the days that I’m well-rested.

Three more strategies that I feel correlate and have helped to benefit my life are scheduling a **mental health day**, **discussing my personal feelings with peers**, and making certain that I’m **self-aware** of my own thoughts, feelings, and struggles. Being a full-time student, working during the week, and trying to maintain a social life is very time consuming. Sometimes it feels as if I’m not making any time for myself or that I’m always going, so I’ve found it to be helpful if I schedule a day in my week that is dedicated to relaxation. This could include taking a break from my coursework, watching TV, spending time with my friends, or doing absolutely nothing. I’ve also noticed that participating in self-disclosure with my friends and family helps me to maintain self-awareness and listen to my body and mind when I’m struggling. It’s also helpful to discuss those thoughts and feelings with others so I’m not isolating myself or trying to deal with them by myself. Practicing self-awareness can be hard at times, but working to improve this strategy will help me now as a graduate student and in the future as a professional counselor.

The final four self-care strategies that I’ve established don’t necessarily correlate with each other, but they are very important to my plan. The last four strategies include **spending time with friends and family**, **traveling**, **doing something that I enjoy every day**, and **setting work hours**. My friends and family are very important to me, and this strategy has been one of the most successful self-care strategies that I’ve participated in. They act as a major support system in my life because they keep me grounded, bring me joy, and provide the emotional support that I need. One of the best pieces of advice that I was given was to always include something in my daily routine that makes me happy. I’ve already begun incorporating this strategy into my life as a graduate student, and it’s already benefited me and shown how necessary this was to my daily routine. I’ve also found a love for traveling, whether that be short trips or long trips, I really enjoy traveling to new places or familiar places. Traveling gives me something to look forward to because it’s something exciting and different from my daily routine. Finally, I’ve tried scheduling specific work hours or time frames during the day to work on assignments, coursework, and anything else that I need to work on. This has helped to alleviate any stress over upcoming assignments and or responsibilities that I may have and help me to manage my time better.