

REMEMBERING THE “ME” IN MERRY: TIPS FOR SELF-CARE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays are almost here, and, while that can mean a time for fun and festivities, it can also be a source of stress. In fact, many people rate the holiday season as the most stressful time of the year. The burden of added expenses, family gatherings, and juggling responsibilities can make this time of year hard to enjoy.

For many, the holiday season means planning and taking care of others. However, this often leaves little time for taking care of yourself. Self-care means setting healthy boundaries, saying “no,” and prioritizing yourself. It is making sure that your cup is full so that you have what you need and are the best version of yourself. In turn, this allows you to show up for others in ways that you choose.

So, take a moment to slow down, take a deep breath, and consider incorporating some of the following strategies to help you practice self-care so you can enjoy this busy time of year.

- **Start small.** Self-care does not have to be 3 hours every day. It can be as quick as 30 seconds of gratitude in bed before you get up for the day.

- **Tell yourself a new story.** So many of us tell ourselves that we don't have time for this or that, especially self-care. What if, instead of thinking that we don't have time, we tell

ourselves, “I always have time for self-care. It is important to me.”

- **Schedule time for self-care.** You can schedule a self-care activity at the same time every day, so that it becomes part of your routine. You can set a timer or an alarm to remind you.

- **Practice gratitude for the people, events, and things in your life.** This could include writing a thank-you note, telling someone that you are grateful for them, or writing in a journal.

- **Engage in deep breathing or other relaxation techniques.** Listen to soothing music; pray; meditate; practice yoga, tai chi, or qi gong; take a hot bath, etc.

- **Tune into your emotions and monitor your stress level.** Emotions can be positive, negative, or both. Call “time-outs” for yourself to check in on your feelings. A journal is a great outlet for this. Have a list of activities that you can engage in for a few minutes to help you relax such as taking a walk, doing some yoga, or watching TV.

- **Try to understand why you might be experiencing negative emotions.** For some people, negative emotions could be the result of unrealistic expectations around the holidays or feeling overwhelmed. If that's

the case, try adjusting your expectations so they are more realistic and attainable.

- **Take care of your physical health.** Get enough sleep. Develop a plan to enjoy special foods and treats around the holidays while balancing them with other nutritious food.

- **Set boundaries.** Boundaries are important, especially with so many family gatherings during the holiday season.

Before the first family gathering, take time to really think through the boundaries you wish to have. Doing this in advance will help you in being prepared to enforce your boundaries.

So, as you soak up the merriment of the holiday season, make time to try out different activities to find what works best for you and

your schedule. Self-care is a gift you can give yourself to care for your own needs and emotions. As flight attendants say as part of their safety demonstration before take-off, you need to

put on your own oxygen mask before helping others. Self-care works the same way—you need to care for yourself before you care for others.

“... self-care is a gift you can give yourself ...”

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