

Adult Day Self-Care Newsletter

February 2024

February is Heart Month!

While every month, and every day, should include a focus on heart health, having a special month and a special day provides an important reminder. This month is a chance to learn, to assess our own health and health risks, and to set goals to adopt a more heart-healthy lifestyle. National Wear Red Day® is celebrated this year on Friday, February 2. This is a time to raise awareness about heart health issues that are specific to women. Most adults know of the importance of exercise, eating well, and not smoking. The emotional health factors are less well known. [Recent scientific evidence](#) suggests that cardiovascular health can be negatively affected by stress. This includes severe stress or trauma, as well as ongoing stress such as challenges from work, poor-quality relationships, financial hardships, and discrimination. Chronic anger and hostility also are associated with risk of heart disease, along with anxiety and depression. Cultivating positive psychological health may help. Some people are naturally optimistic, have a strong sense of purpose, and tend to be happy more often than not. Others may need to put in a little effort, through mindfulness practice, gratitude journaling, or "[joy-spotting](#)." Physical and emotional health are closely linked. People with better psychological health are more likely to access preventive screenings and to follow guidelines for a healthy lifestyle. ♥

Risk Factors for Heart Disease

Three risk factors¹ in the US are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking. Too often, people are not aware of these risk factors. For example, high blood pressure usually has no symptoms. However, it's easy to check—either through a healthcare provider or your local pharmacy.

Other factors affect risk, too. For example, the [American Heart Association](#) reports that Black adults are 32% more likely to die from heart disease. Black women are nearly 60% more likely to have high blood pressure than White women according to the [CDC](#).

February is a good time to remind the people you care about to take action for their heart health! Be a model through self-care, too!

¹ CDC. [Know your risk for heart disease](#).

#OurHearts are healthier with self-care

Devoting a little time every day to care for yourself can go a long way toward protecting the health of your heart.

Try these simple self-care ideas, such as:

- Taking a moment to de-stress.
- Giving yourself time to move more.
- Preparing healthier meals.
- Getting quality sleep.

These acts can all benefit your heart. Connect with others to make these efforts more successful.



Self-Compassion

One path to positive psychological health is to practice self-compassion. Essentially, this means treating yourself with the patience, kindness, and understanding that you would offer to anyone you love who was in pain.

Dr. Kristen Neff, a prominent researcher in this area, describes self-compassion as having three inter-connected components:

Self-kindness: A common reaction to making a mistake, no matter how small, is self-criticism. Common reactions to pain and suffering is to try to ignore it and to judge ourselves as weak and whiny. Instead, self-kindness means being gentle with yourself. Acknowledge that “things happen”—we don’t always get the life we want. Allow yourself to face your discomfort and to give yourself permission to feel as you do.

Common humanity: Everyone suffers at some point for various reasons. You are not alone. Instead of isolating yourself, accept that being human is not easy. Self-compassion means reminding yourself that others have been through similar difficulties, made similar errors, or fell short of their goals.

Mindfulness: Take a pause to feel what you feel. Don’t judge your emotions. Just observe what you’re thinking and feeling, without denying them. At the same time, be open to noticing positive feelings, gifts in your life, and beautiful moments.

In a way, self-compassion is a way of being, but it takes practice to develop that habit. You can start by trying one of the practices on Dr. Neff’s website. There are guided “self-compassion breaks” that take only five minutes—you can even download these for free to listen any time.

<https://self-compassion.org/>



visit our website www.care2caregivers.com for information on caregiver support groups

For More Information

Heart Month posters, fact sheets, and materials for social media posts can be downloaded for free:

[National Institutes of Health](#)

[Go Red for Women](#)

[American Heart Association NJ](#)

Care2Caregivers Website

You can find the [Adult Day Resources pages](#) on our website through the drop-down menu in the Professional Resources section.

As always, you can access the Self-Care resources on our website for free. Use our NEW link:

Self-Care for Professional Caregivers
<https://care2caregivers.com/professional-resources/self-care/>

Upcoming Caregiver Education 2024

Heart Health for Caregivers

February 14, 2024 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register



Rest for Caregivers: Tools for Supporting Good Sleep

March 13, 2024 1:00pm

Click [HERE](#) to register

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