



Self-care for Coaches

Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.
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Originally trained as a psychologist, Dr. Glenn Livingston has helped literally thousands of clients. Along with his wife Sharon, he's sold consulting, teambuilding, and workshops to big names like AT&T, Nextel, Panasonic, Whirlpool, Novartis, Lipton, Colgate-Palmolive, Kraft, and Panasonic. Their work, research, and theories have been seen in major media publications like The New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, Crain's NY Business, AdWeek, America West, and more!

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Table of Contents

- Introduction 6
 - Modeling for your clients..... 6
 - What recharges your batteries? 6
 - Determine burnout warning signs 8
 - Working a lot vs. burnout 8
 - Stress vs. burnout 9
- Take care of your mind..... 11
 - Continuing Education..... 11
 - Learn something completely different 11
 - Reading 12
 - Carve out time for creativity 14
 - Take up a hobby 18
 - Hobbies that you can pursue with family and friends 19
 - Activities to do alone 21
- Take care of your body..... 22
 - Diet 22
 - Hydration 25
 - Exercise 25
 - Balance and flexibility 29
 - Flexibility 29
 - Balance..... 30
 - Yoga..... 30
 - Tai Chi..... 32
- Health Care 32
 - When you should go to the doctor 33
 - When you need to see a therapist..... 34
 - When you need to go to the dentist..... 36
- Personal Care..... 37
 - Get a makeover..... 37
 - Invest in a manicure and pedicure..... 37

Get a massage	38
Sleep	38
Take care of your spirit.....	41
Devotion.....	42
Prayer and meditation	43
Meditation	44
Give back.....	45
Do a good deed every day	45
Create a bucket list.....	48
Gratitude.....	50
Learn to say no.....	51
Unplug from the electronics	53
Get your own coach.....	53
How to choose a coach	54
Conclusion	55

Introduction

Most coaches love what they do. There's nothing better than getting up in the morning and helping people achieve their goals and dreams. Most of us get to set our own hours, which provides some flexibility that we wouldn't have in the typical 9-to-5 job. We also get to work with the clients we choose, which also can help cut down on stress.

But as with any career in a helping profession, coaches need to make sure they take care of themselves. Because we are naturally people who are generous with our time and talents, sometimes we give to the point of neglecting ourselves. There are times, too, when our clients' problems can start to overwhelm us.

When we are mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted, we can't always be the best coach we can be. That's why from the very beginning of starting your coaching practice it is important to begin a daily self-care routine.

Plus it's important to know when you may be over your head with a client. We all have people we work with who leave us feeling drained, sad, or feeling like we can't help them. It's important to know when those situations are healthy and when we need to get additional help.

Modeling for your clients

One of the things that we do as coaches is model behavior for our clients. Self-care is something that many of our clients desperately need. If we practice taking care of ourselves, we can give our clients encouragement to do so as well.

The funny thing about self-care is that most people know at least some of the things they need to be doing on a daily basis. For example, we all know that we should be eating healthy options and exercising daily. A lot of people don't, though. It's OK to remind yourself, as well as your clients, about self-care practices that seem to be a given.

In the following pages I'll give you a wide variety of life hacks and ideas to help you create a daily self-care routine that you can personalize. I'll discuss some of the warning signs of being over your head, and what to do about it. All you have to do is put some of these tips to work to create self-care that is right for you. And then, in turn, you can teach your clients how to create their own plan as well.

What recharges your batteries?

One of the first things to do to create a personalized self-care routine is to figure out what you need to recharge your batteries. Making this determination will drive the rest of your self-care plan. Everybody needs down time to relax and unwind, but depending on your personality that can look very different.

One of the classic ways to determine what you need to recharge is to know if you are an introvert or an extrovert. Most people think that extroverts are people who are the life of the party and introverts are the strong, silent type. Although those perceptions may be true, they aren't always.

One personality inventory that can determine if you are an introvert or extrovert is called the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. It determines whether you are introverted or extroverted by where you believe you get your energy. Introverts get their energy with alone time, while extroverts get their energy from being around people. (Note: If you take the test at [HumanMetrics.com](https://www.humanmetrics.com)

You can see why knowing which category you fit is important in determining a self-care plan. An introvert isn't going to recharge on their day off if they are spending it with a group of people, and an extrovert isn't going to get energy by staying home and reading a book. Knowing what you need will help you create your own plan.

So how do you know if you are an introvert or an extrovert? Here are some tips based on information from the Myers-Briggs Foundation.

Signs you may be an introvert:

- Others think of you as "reserved."
- You like to do things on your own.
- You prefer to know a few people really well.
- You sometimes don't act fast enough because you think about something too long.

Signs you may be an extrovert:

- You are perceived as "outgoing."
- You feel comfortable working in groups.
- You have a lot of friends and know a lot of people.
- You sometimes jump into something too quickly without thinking it through.

In general, extroverts need time with other people to regenerate. Introverts need time alone. That's something to consider when developing a self-care plan. If you are an extrovert who works from home alone, you need to schedule some quality time with

people. If you are an introvert who has back-to-back clients all week, you need to schedule some alone time.

You can incorporate your alone time or time with others with other parts of your self-care plan. For example, to take care of your body, extroverts might take an exercise class, while introverts might enjoy a solitary run through a park.

One of the things I do to maximize my time is to combine work and play. I love to hike in the White Mountains near my home in New Hampshire. While I'm hiking I'll listen to recordings, and I often make phone calls on the road in the time it takes to drive to my hiking destination and back. I'm doing something to feed my soul and get exercise, plus I can squeeze in a little work.

Most people aren't 100 percent introverts or extroverts, so you may need to experiment a little to determine what recharges your batteries. It may depend on several factors, such as how busy you've been or if you have other stressors going on in your life. But knowing what you need is the first step to creating an effective self-care plan.

Determine burnout warning signs

Burnout can creep up on you. That's why it's important to know the signs and symptoms that you're overextended. Frankly, I believe the biggest preventative for burnout is to love what you do. Life is too short to do a job you hate. Most coaches love their jobs, but sometimes personal problems and other issues creep in that can lead to burnout.

So what exactly is burnout? It's a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion brought about by prolonged stress. A word about stress – we can't avoid it. Stress is a part of life. However the kind of stress that leads to burnout is overwhelming. It's not the kind of stress that leads to creativity and invention. It's the kind of stress that saps the life out of you.

Self-care helps to prevent the type of stress that leads to burnout. The problem is that we don't always take care of ourselves. I've been known to work 80 to 100 hour weeks. I can do it on rare occasion when it's really necessary—*and what seems necessary is less and less often as I get older!*—but I can't do it every week for months without burning out...

Because I just wouldn't have the time to take care of myself properly.

Working a lot vs. burnout

I personally don't believe there's such a thing as a workaholic. If you have agreed with your loved ones that working most of the time is a priority while you're getting your

coaching practice going or saving up for retirement, that's fine. If you love working, then I believe it can be therapeutic to have a crazy coaching schedule.

From my experience as a psychologist, I'm not *entirely* sold on the concept of a “balanced life.” Not because I think people should just work all the time... that's crazy. And I DO 100% believe in shifting your activities to ensure you're attending to all the critical areas of your life. (*Relationships, finances, health and fitness, leisure, etc*)

But when people get too enamored with the “balanced life” concept I find they start filling their free time with things which just aren't good for them. Drug and alcohol abuse, addictions to shopping, food, bad relationships, and other self-destructive things seem to creep into the free time...

I'm not a particularly religious guy—(*you'd never know it by looking at how I conduct my life today, but I was raised by hippie therapists during the 60s*)—but I do believe the old quote “Idle Hands are the Devil's Workshop” bears serious consideration.

But even if you stay busy and love what you do for a living, outside stress and extended periods of less-than-optimal self-care still can easily lead to burnout.

Stress vs. burnout

Stress can be a good thing. It's what pushes us to our limits, to achieve. Too much stress isn't good for you, and prolonged high stress leads to burnout.

Sometimes people suffering from too much stress think they have burnout, but they have completely different, and often opposite symptoms. Here are the signs that you are under too much stress:

- Physical exhaustion from a lot of activity
- Anxiety
- Feeling overly emotional
- Stress-related disease, like high blood pressure

The good news about being a coach is that most of the things that cause other people stress on the job aren't usually a problem for you. You control your workload, your clientele, and your environment. You have work that is challenging and provides personal satisfaction because it helps others overcome obstacles in their lives.

Lots of things in our lives can cause too much stress, though. Maybe you're going through a rough patch financially. Maybe you've just had a child, got married, or divorced. Maybe you are in sandwich generation, where you are caring for children and

elderly parents. Demands like these can cause too much stress, especially if you do nothing about it, and lead to burnout.

Routine self-care can help you manage stress, but if you haven't been taking care of yourself you may already be suffering from burnout. Here are some of the symptoms:

- Lack of motivation or ideas
- Depression
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Getting sick a lot because of a compromised immune system
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Procrastination
- An increasingly negative outlook on life
- Isolating yourself to conserve energy

Reaching burnout as a coach is more devastating than many other careers. Coaches generally are positive by nature and curious about the world. When those qualities slip away, it's hard, if not impossible, to motivate other people. But it's like that old saying about the cobbler not having his own shoes – if you give too much of yourself and don't take time to recharge, you can reach burnout.

If you think you are getting near the burnout zone—*which I hope you never do because you practice self-care*—here are some tips to help you recover:

- Take a break to rest and regroup. You don't need to take a two-week cruise to the Bahamas. Just take a four-day weekend to relax and unwind doing something that you want to do.
- Talk to someone. If you have a coach—*and if you ARE a coach you should HAVE a coach!*—reach out to him or her. Spend time with supportive family and friends.
- Think of where you are as an opportunity to re-evaluate your life. What have you been neglecting that you really need? What can you do to lighten your load? What things can you control, and what do you need to let go of?

Remember, you *do not* ever have to get to a state of burnout. With a self-care plan that you practice on a regular basis, you'll manage stress better, keeping you physically, emotionally, and mentally fit.

Take care of your mind

Good coaches have a natural curiosity about people and what's going on in the world around them. That means that we love to learn. Life-long learning is important for everybody, but it's particular true for coaches. Everything that we learn, especially if it has to do with human nature, helps us become better at helping people map their goals and stay motivated to reach them.

Continuing Education

Take advantage of coaching continuing education. None of us have perfect coaching skills and need to get additional training from time to time. Maybe you need some help learning to improve your active listening skills, or perhaps you could benefit from learning a new technique to help your clients to get unstuck. Skills training is ongoing for a good coach.

Another positive about continuing education is that you get to meet and share knowledge with other coaches. Making new contacts and getting to know other coaches gives you a resource to tap when you need some advice or encouragement.

Your coaching area of expertise is also an opportunity for continuing education. Join trade organizations that represent your area of expertise and attend seminars and workshops. These events are not only great to help you keep up with your field, they are perfect opportunities to market your coaching practice.

You may also want to take classes that can help you with your business skills. Learning how to design a website or write copy may not only help you save some money, but can give you some the personal satisfaction that you've learned a new skill.

Learn something completely different

One of the things we do as coaches is help our clients see things in a different way – or experience a paradigm shift. One of the ways to do that is to look at a problem (*or a solution*) from a completely different perspective. You can do that by taking a class in something completely different from coaching or your niche.

Think about that elective you wanted to take in high school or college that you just couldn't fit in your schedule. Maybe it was a foreign language or a creative writing class. What class didn't you take because you were afraid you wouldn't do well? Take it now. Push the envelope. Work hard to do well, but don't worry about your grades.

Taking a chemistry class or lectures in medieval history will give you a different perspective. It will also help you relate to people who may have backgrounds in fields different from yours. These clients will be able to relate to your new perspective or your analogies that relate back to your class. You may be able to even expand your niche to a whole new group of clients.

I personally find it helpful to learn about philosophy, law, and cosmology. It's rare that I can directly apply an insight from one of them to my coaching activities in particular. But they definitely open up my mind and get me thinking in new directions... and find a day or two after I've been studying one of these topics I often DO get a seemingly unrelated "aha" relevant to my business.

Reading

Dovetailing with continuing education is daily reading. Keeping up with current events, your niche, and reading for pleasure are important to not only keep you up to date, but to keep your creative juices flowing. Some people say that reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. Daily reading has a wide variety of benefits that will help keep you sharp and informed. Here are some examples:

- **Cognitive stimulation.** This increases your memory and your ability to focus and think. Some researchers believe that reading actually helps people delay the onset of dementia.
- **Stress reduction.** Escaping into a good book is like a mini-vacation for your body. You will relax and take stress off your adrenal glands, which produce the hormone that creates the "fight or flight" response. Stress triggers the release of this hormone, which under constant stress contributes to adrenal fatigue and metabolic disorder, a pre-diabetic condition.
- **Staying engaged with the world.** Some people, especially those who try to stay positive, avoid current events because they are too depressing. Watching the evening news is different from reading about it. More information in print tends to have analysis and other information you don't get on television news. Keeping up with current events gives you the opportunity to have conversations with clients and others about what is going on in your community, your country, and around the world.
- **Sharpens your skills.** Reading about coaching or new trends in your niche helps you to keep your skills on the cutting edge. Reading trade magazines and articles on the internet can help you be aware of the latest developments in your field. You don't want to be caught completely unaware about something groundbreaking when a client brings it up.

- **Better focus and retention.** In a world of multi-tasking, reading demands you focus completely on the task at hand. If you read on a regular basis, you'll find you'll remember more of what you read and be able to apply it to your life or your work.
- **Sparks your creativity.** It may seem like reading a novel is something you do just for entertainment value, but reading for pleasure does a lot more than that. Reading a novel gives you're the opportunity to see through the eyes of a person who lives in a different world. It helps you develop different perspectives and can improve your vocabulary, too!
- **Improves your writing.** You may not recognize it while you are reading, but you are improving your writing techniques. As you read, you subconsciously pick up sentence structure, grammar, and even spelling. Many professional writers learn their craft without a lot of instruction – they simply read a lot.

Reading some of the world's best literature adds to your education, no matter what your field of study. People who are well-read are interesting and have a variety of different ways to look at the world. Here are some of the most critically acclaimed novels. Pick one a month to read this year.

- *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
- *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte
- *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster
- *The Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- *A Bend in the River* by V.S. Naipaul
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
- *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank
- *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes
- *The Bible*
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
- *Ulysses* by James Joyce
- *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene
- *Birdsong* by Sebastian Faulks
- *Money* by Martin Amis
- *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling
- *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville

- *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
- *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pulman
- *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy
- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
- *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon
- *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac
- *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad
- *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope
- *The Outsider* by Ibert Camus
- *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
- *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
- *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells
- *Men Without Women* by Ernest Hemingway
- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift
- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe
- *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey
- *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller
- *The Count of Monte Christo* by Alexandre Dumas
- *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden
- *The Divine Comedy* by Alghibri Dante
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde

Try to spend 30 minutes to an hour reading every day. One of the easiest ways to do this is to use an e-reader or smartphone that you can keep with you most of the time. You can squeeze in a little extra reading time every day while you are waiting in the line at the grocery store or for an appointment to call in. After a couple of months, you'll notice how much reading is enriching your life.

Carve out time for creativity

Another essential way to enrich your life is to make time to be creative. Everybody has an inner artist. Human beings find deep fulfillment in being creative. Creativity is defined as expressing yourself from your own unique perspective, and human beings crave these opportunities. Here are some of the benefits that researchers have found in people who take time to be creative:

- They are willing to take risks and become less afraid of being wrong.
- Creative people develop a stronger sense of humor.

- They become more willing to express their emotions and become better at doing so.
- Creative people learn to develop and trust their intuition.
- They make new connections with information and become willing to challenge old connections.
- Creatives become interested in unusual problems and solutions.
- They become more and more willing to push themselves to become more competent.

So what creative activity should you pursue? Odds are you already have something that you've always wanted to try, whether it's painting, making jewelry, or creating stain glass. Take that class in landscape design that has always interested you, or take the guitar lessons you've wanted to try for years.

Here's a list of dozen creative activities you can do to feed your mind and your spirit:

Art. Pick your medium and get going!

- Try acrylic, oil, or watercolor painting.
- If you like to work with your hands and tools, take a sculpture class.
- Weld metal to make fantastic creations, or create a collage with things you find in nature.
- Try making a mosaic with shards of pottery
- Create art with photography.
- Paint a mural as a project to spruce up a neighborhood.
- Learn the ancient art of pottery or buy the work and paint it to create unique ceramic pieces.
- Use precious metals and gemstones to create jewelry.
- Blow glass to make one-of-a-kind bowls, vases, and stemware.
- Learn to whittle with wood or even soap.
- Create a stunning window decoration with stained glass.
- Fold paper to make intricate figures with origami.

Interior Design. One of the most rewarding places to be creative is in your home, and with millions of do-it-yourself projects online, you can pour your creative energies into making your home a reflection of your personality. Here are some ideas to get you going:

- Learn how to paper or paint the old file cabinets in your office space.
- Stencil an accent wall with a tone-on-tone pattern.
- Create unique light fixtures with LEDs or neon.
- Make a wreath.

- Learn to make floral arrangements.

Fiber Arts. Although you may think of knitting and other fiber arts as something that grandmothers do, they have taken off among young women and men. People who practice these art forms like the feel of fiber and creating something that they care wear, use in their home, or give as a gift. Here are some suggestions on how to get started:

- Learn to knit a scarf.
- Crochet granny squares to create an afghan.
- Needlepoint a pillow.
- Embroider a towel.
- Spin fiber to make yarn.
- Learn to quilt.
- Tat a lace tablecloth.
- Create your own perfectly fitted clothes by sewing them.
- Learn how to use beads to decorate clothing or to create jewelry.

Music. Do you regret not really paying attention when your mother made you take piano lessons when you were a kid? You can always pick up where you left off or even choose to learn another instrument. Music helps reinforce math skills and nourishes your soul. Here are some ideas of how to be creative through music.

- Learn an instrument or take lessons to improve your playing.
- Perform with a band or orchestra.
- Write music.
- Learn how to make instruments.
- Unleash your inner performer with karaoke.
- Join a choir.

Performing Arts. Ever dream of singing lead in a musical or directing a film? Performing arts can help you learn to work as a team, overcome stage fright, and get instant gratification from applause. Here are some artistic endeavors in performing arts that will help you get in touch with your inner artist:

- Dance. From ballet to ballroom, make moving to music an artistic event.
- Comedy. Put together a stand-up act or take part in an improv group.
- Theatre. Get involved in community theatre as an actor, singer, director, a lighting assistant, or just a gofer. Or write your own play or musical.
- Film. Make a movie! Write a screenplay or direct a film with your friends and family as actors. Or produce a TV show on public access television.

- Radio host. Ever want to host your own radio show? Through the innovation of the internet, stream your own show, whether you want to play your favorite music or host a talk show. (This would be a great thing to do for marketing, too!)
- Puppeteer. If you have children or grandchildren, this would be a fun way to be artistic. Volunteer at a children's museum or a group home for kids.
- Clown or mime. Not all clowns are scary, and most kids love them. Or go with the art of telling stories without words as a mime.
- Magician. Who hasn't wanted to pull a rabbit out of a hat? Entertain your family and friends with some magic tricks.

Writing. Almost everybody has an idea for a book, so why not write it? A lot of people find writing a great outlet for their creativity. But what many don't know is that writing can also help you learn to articulate your thoughts more clearly, unburden yourself of issues in the past, and provide insight about yourself and others.

Don't be intimidated about a big writing project. You don't have to write reams every day. Even novelist Stephen King writes only around 1,500 words a day. Write that every two or three weeks and you'll be making progress.

Here are some writing projects that will help you get in touch with your inner artist by providing you a creative outlet.

- **A Novel.** Who doesn't have an idea for the next great American novel? Even if it never sees the inside of a bookstore, if you love to write a novel is a fulfilling pastime. Focus on the characters and the story-telling. If you love movies or the theatre, turn it into a screenplay or play.
- **A Biography.** Maybe you have a family member who survived the Death March of Bataan or have an interesting life story yourself that deserves to be put down on paper. Sharpen your interviewing skills by learning another person's life story.
- **Poetry.** Write someone you love a poem, or express yourself about something, or someone, else you feel strongly about. Improve your presentation skills by reciting your poetry at a poetry slam or open mike night at your neighborhood coffee house.
- **Non-fiction.** Is there a historical topic or real-life mystery that you want to explore? Investigate and write a book or article. This is a great way to hone your research and interviewing skills.
- **Journaling.** Writing down your thoughts about each day is therapeutic for many people. Journaling improves your writing and creates self-awareness. Some people write a list of things that were positive that happened during their day and then a list of things that need improvement in their lives. Solutions to challenges are easier to see when you've written something down. Some people confuse a

journal with a diary. Although diaries and journals both frequently contain details about someone's day or week, journaling tends to go deeper. It's a way to vent, explore, think, and create. Journaling is also a good skill to pass on to your coaching clients.

Developing your creative side doesn't just help you with stress management. That creative ability spills over into your coaching life, too. Feeding your artist within will increase your ability to think of creative solutions for your clients, and you'll be modeling behavior for them to boost their creativity as well.

Take up a hobby

Maybe you aren't artistic, or maybe your tastes just tend to lean toward other or additional recreational pursuits. If so, adding a hobby to your weekly routine is a great way to enrich your life.

Hobbies help to relieve stress, but they also give you a great outlet to learn new skills. Every coach is encouraging their clients to learn to do something new, and picking up a new hobby yourself can help you build your own confidence. Taking the time to do something completely different is challenging and inspirational.

One of the biggest objections people have about pursuing a hobby is that it can be expensive. Disposable income can be hard to come by when you are first starting a coaching practice. Although it's true that some hobbies can be expensive, you can choose to do something that is free or only sets you back a few dollars. Most of the hobbies I've listed for you to think about are free or inexpensive.

The other caveat I have about hobbies is that you pursue your activities in moderation. Gaming is a fun activity for some, but not if it gets in the way of your work or family life it could be turning into an addiction. If you have a drinking problem, perhaps winemaking or brewing your own beer isn't a good idea. Collecting, when it turns into an obsession, can lead to hoarding. Stay watchful that you continue to make sure your hobbies aren't crowding out other priorities, like your coaching practice and your family.

The great thing about hobbies is that you can choose from fun activities that will help you sneak in things you aren't getting enough of in your life, like exercise or quality time with family and friends. Or if you're an introvert, you can choose hobbies that give yourself the alone time you need in order to recharge.

Here's a list of hobbies from you to choose from. The first list is geared for extroverts because they are activities they can do with other people. Most people need more time with family and exercise, so I've highlighted some that will give you time for those activities, and some allow you to do both!

Hobbies that you can pursue with family and friends

Geocaching. This is a cheap hobby that you can do alone or with family and friends, and it can give you a workout, too! All you need is a smartphone or GPS device and a good pair of shoes or hiking boots. Millions of caches, ranging from boxes that contain small items to just a list to complete, are hidden all over the world. From a geocaching website or smartphone app, you can find maps to where caches are located. Most are hidden in plain sight in public places, and you'll get the opportunity to see some landmarks in your area or even when you travel. If you're really competitive, try to be the first to locate a new cache. Geocaching involves walking and sometimes hiking, which will help you squeeze a little more activity into your week.

Bird watching. Checking our feathered friends requires only a bird identification guide and a decent pair of binoculars. Most excellent birding sites will require a little bit of a hike or a walk, which adds to your physical activity. You can teach kids how to identify birds, too.

Card or board games. Hold a monthly game night with your family and friends. You can make it kid-friendly with easier board games or a regular standing penny-ante poker night with your buddies. Either way, it will give you time to socialize and have fun while helping you learn strategic skills.

Gardening. Yard work and gardening is rewarding for many people. Plus, depending on the work you're doing, it can be great exercise. Just about anybody can grow something, even if it's just a few container plants on an apartment balcony. If you have a large backyard, consider putting in a vegetable garden. Kids love to help with gardening tasks, and you'll be teaching them about how plants grow.

Gourmet cooking. Entertain your family and friends with a gourmet meal or just an old-fashioned cookout. Keep it casual unless you enjoy entertaining so you don't feel compelled to stress yourself out over the details. You can get the entire family on board when cooking a meal. It's a great opportunity to teach kids how to prepare food (and clean the kitchen!) Be sure to throw in some healthy options.

Astronomy. Virtually every month there is a meteor shower or planetary view that can be a thrill to see through a telescope. Make it an event by inviting family and friends to gaze at the stars. Kids love looking at planets, comets, and meteors, and they'll learn some astronomy while they are at it. The best view with a telescope is away from city lights, so you may have to travel or walk a distance to get to a location without a lot of light.

Museums/Galleries. If you love history or science, check out a new exhibit at a museum. Art lovers can appreciate works at museums and gallery openings. If you live

in or near a large city, they'll be new exhibits and openings monthly or weekly. Many science and history museums have kid-friendly exhibits, which makes for a fun, inexpensive family afternoon.

Learn a language. Ever want to conquer French or have the ability to order a meal in Japanese? Maybe learning a new language would be the hobby for you. You can pursue your studies alone –there are tons of free resources online – but consider hiring a tutor and taking a class with your family and friends. A weekly class divided up among four or five people can be surprisingly inexpensive, and you'll get more one-on-one instruction and feedback.

Camping. If you and your family love the great outdoors, weekend camping trips may be the hobby for you. Getting away from the hustle and bustle of the city and getting back to nature is relaxing and beneficial for many people. If you have children, you can teach them how to pitch a tent, build a fire, follow a trail, and identify wildlife. Making s'mores and telling stories around a campfire often provide great memories for family and friends.

Spelunking. If you live in a part of the country that has caves, spelunking can be a fascinating past time. Caving can be dangerous, so it isn't an activity for younger children, and adults should receive some training before heading into a cave. Unique wildlife and stunning rock formations await weekend spelunkers.

Playing chess. Chess develops critical thinking skills and is an enjoyable hobby for many people. After you hone your skills, consider playing competitively as a member of a chess club. It's a great way to meet new friends and spend time doing something you enjoy.

Canning. Before refrigerators, canned food is what people subsisted on during the winter. It's still a popular way to keep fruits and vegetables around the house when they are out of season. If you have a backyard garden or fruit trees, canning is a great way to preserve your fresh, organic produce to enjoy all winter long.

Building models. Whether it's cars, trains, boats or spacecraft, building models is a fun pastime for both adults and children. Models teach you how to follow directions and give you some creativity with paint and decals. Plus you get a reward at the end ... something cool to display.

Jigsaw puzzles. Families enjoy putting together a jigsaw puzzle. The great thing about leaving a puzzle sitting out in a dedicated space is that you can take a short break to work on it. Add a couple of pieces in between chores or before you go to bed. Before long, it's finished. You can frame your finished projects if you want or piece them together again.

Pets. Although most pet owners would consider their animals part of the family instead of hobby, the time and dedication it takes to care for a pet is considerable enough to qualify as a regular activity. You can also have hobbies that involve your pets, like dog agility training or showing your cat in competitions.

Woodworking. Whether it's building a project or refinishing a reclaimed piece of furniture, working with wood can be a rewarding hobby. Websites like Pinterest have thousands of ideas for woodworking projects, from home improvement to outdoor upgrades. Put your tools to work to create something useful that your family will cherish.

Cake decorating. Getting creative with frosting and cake can not only be a hobby. If you become accomplished at it, cake decorating can become a side business. Wedding and birthday cakes have become more elaborate, and making a special treat with a festive theme for friends and family can be a lot of fun.

Hunting/fishing. In many parts of the country, hunting and fishing are a rite of passage for older children and teens. If you enjoy sportsmanship, then by all means get out there during your favorite hunting season. Fishing is a great pastime, especially with children. Both hobbies can cost quite a bit, especially if you buy a boat or a rifle.

Activities to do alone

If you are an introvert, you need time and space to yourself to recharge. Many of the hobbies I listed that you can do with other people can also be done alone. Here are some additional activities that introverts can do in their downtime to challenge themselves and develop their creativity.

Web design or programming. Every coach should have a website, and if you enjoy tinkering with it, save yourself some money by learning how to do design or programming. Not only will you give your creative side a workout, you'll learn how to solve problems through coding.

Calligraphy. Some people enjoy the painstaking beauty of writing script. You'll need a set of calligraphy pens, some ink, and some bond paper. Lots of resources are available online for the budding scribe, and there are calligraphy societies in many cities you can attend if you need help.

Crossword puzzles/Sudoku. Many people still start their day with *The New York Times* crossword puzzle, and research has found that it's a great way to ward off dementia in older people. If you prefer numbers, go with the highly addictive Sudoku. These pastimes will help keep you sharp.

Genealogy. The internet has made looking for your roots easier than ever. With the help of free and paid websites, you can determine your ancestry and details about your lineage with some investigation.

Scrapbooking. Scrapbooking gives you the opportunity to be creative and memorialize your favorite memories. Many scrapbookers make memory books for family and friends as gifts for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and births.

Gaming. From bingo to elaborate role-playing games, there is a treasure-trove of online games, many of them free, to occupy a little of your spare time. Just a 20-minute break to decompress with mindless fun does some people a lot of good.

Your mind is important to keep healthy and active. Model ways to keep mentally challenged and sharp to your clients. No matter what your coaching niche, creativity, problem-solving, flexibility, and a willingness to try new things are skills that your clients will need to move forward to meet their goals.

Take care of your body

Over the last 20 years, it's become evident that taking care of our bodies affects our minds and our spirits. Staying healthy helps to keep us in a positive mindset. Good health starts with a healthy diet, physical activity, and getting enough sleep.

Why is this so important as coaches? Because many of our clients don't take care of their bodies. We have to model the behavior that will help them meet their goals, and part of that is staying healthy.

How is your self-care when it comes to your physical health? Are there things you can do to improve? Odds are, you can. None of us takes perfect care of ourselves. But here are some ideas to get you started.

Diet

Over the last decade, we've been bombarded with diets, studies, and new food pyramids, all designed to help Americans eat a healthier diet. It's led to a lot of confusion for some people about what they should be eating. People have begun to question things like, are eggs and potatoes really bad? Is genetically modified wheat making me sick?

Most people can probably simplify the whole question about what foods are good and bad with one word: moderation. What you eat ONE day is unlikely to kill you. What you eat day after day can! That said, there are some foods that are better for you than

others, Personally I think we should all ask ourselves the question “Does it Grow?” before we put anything in our mouth. Not that we can’t have some processed foods, lean meats, sugars, starches, etc. in addition... but if it doesn’t grow, it’s probably not that good for us. Simple, right?

Eating right will keep your heart healthy, lessen your chance of developing diabetes, and will help keep your weight under control. Eating wrong not only affects your digestion, it also affects your mood and the energy you have to do your coaching!

Here are 17 do's and don'ts when it comes to eating right that you can consider:

1. **Do** read labels. You'll start to notice that most process food has sugar in it. Anything with "-ose" at the end of the word is sugar. Plus you'll see lots of additives and preservatives. One rule of thumb is, if you can't pronounce it, don't eat it.
2. **Do** eat darkly colored fruits and vegetables. Generally the darker the color, the healthier it is. Greens and kale have a lot more nutrients than iceberg lettuce. Eggplant is healthy, too. Blueberries and blackberries have lots of antioxidants that will help keep your immune system healthy.
3. **Don't** fall for the fast-food or restaurant salad trick. You may think you're getting a healthy meal, but once you add the cheese, the fat in the dressing, and the croutons, you might have gotten a healthier meal with a burger.
4. **Do** pay attention to portion size. Many people who are overweight neglect to do this. If you read labels, you'll see what is considered a serving or portion – one piece of bread, a half-cup of pasta. Especially with grains, fats, and meats, pay attention to serving size.
5. **Don't** exceed the number of calories you need to eat every day for optimum health. For most women, it's around 1,600 calories. For men, 2,000. If you need to lose weight, cut back on calories and increase activity. If you're very active or muscular, add 25 to 50%.
6. **Don't** drink sugary drinks. Fruit juice and soda are considered the primary culprits for too much sugar in most adult's diets. Cutting them out of your diet, or at least limiting them, will help you stay healthy.
7. **Do** eat organic. Commercially grown fruits and vegetables have been sprayed with herbicides, pesticides, and more. And meat, as well as products made from milk, contains hormones and antibiotics. Organic foods are pesticide, antibiotic, and hormone-free and don't expose you to chemicals.
8. **Don't** eat fast food. That burger or burrito has little nutritional value and is high in fat. Opt instead for a healthy meal at a restaurant or a prepared roasted chicken from the grocery store along with some steamed vegetables.

9. **Don't** forgo vegetables because you don't like them. Lots of vegetable-haters get their four servings a day by drinking smoothies made with vegetables along with fruit. You won't taste the spinach – just the strawberries. Look for recipes online.
10. **Do** eat more poultry and fish than beef and pork—if you must eat animal products at all. (*I personally think EVERYONE owes it to themselves and their families to read “The China Study” before they make this decision*).
11. **Do** eat healthier oils if you feel you need to add processed oil to your diet. Olive, canola, and corn are the best way to go. Avoid any oil that comes from animals, like lard. But remember, oil = calories with the nutrition removed. The problem with this is that your body will continue to crave the nutrition, forcing you to eat more calories than you need. This goes for EVERY oil, even the healthy ones.
12. **Don't** skip breakfast. Recent studies have linked not eating breakfast to pre-diabetes conditions and weight gain.
13. **Do** skip sugary desserts and eat fruit instead. A bowl of berries or sliced peaches or pears are a healthy alternative and will satisfy your after-dinner sweet tooth. Plus, berries enhance your immunity. Leave the cake and pie for special occasions.
14. **Don't** go to the grocery store hungry. And make a list before you go to cut down on impulse purchases of foods that aren't healthy.
15. **Do** consider at least one meatless dinner a week. The practice will help make sure you get in all your vegetable servings at least one day a week and will give you the opportunity to get creative with your meals.
16. **Do** watch your sodium intake. Too much salt in your diet can lead to high blood pressure and heart disease. Salt is a preservative in most processed food and in almost all prepared frozen food. Read labels carefully. Adding spices to food helps add that little extra something that salt provides. Try using the pepper instead. (*Note: Even if you don't have blood pressure issues, too much sodium can still seriously increase your risk of hemorrhagic stroke later in life!*)
17. **Do** give yourself a treat from time to time. Eating healthy doesn't mean that you can't ever have fun with food again. Just limit your intake of unhealthy foods.

If you need to lose weight or have health issues like diabetes or high blood pressure, focus more on eating vegetables and follow the diet your doctor gave you. With weight loss, remember that the idea is to burn more calories than you eat in a day. Eat four to six smaller meals of healthy options in small portions to help stay full during the day.

Eating right makes you a good example for your clients. Nobody expects their coach to be perfect, but eating right will give you ideas to help your clients eat right and stay healthy, too. We really are what we eat, and following a healthy diet will help keep you happy and healthy.

Hydration

How many water bottles do you own? Or better, how often do you use them? Drinking enough water every day is important to keep your body in top form. The rule of thumb is to drink eight 8-oz. glasses of water every day. You can buy water bottles that delineate how much daily water intake you should have. If you are working out or outdoors in hot weather, it's even more important to push the liquids.

Dehydration can easily become a serious health condition, but most of the time it simply keeps your body from functioning at its full potential. It's a primary cause of fatigue and can decrease athletic endurance. Dehydration can adversely affect your heart and blood pressure.

Drinking water does your body good in a number of ways. The primary reason is that it keeps you from getting dehydrated. Our bodies are about 60 percent water, and water replenishes the moisture that we lose on a daily basis. It's good for your skin, hair, and even your nails.

If you aren't a big fan of water, there are other ways to get the hydration you need, at least partially. Here are some tips to help you stay hydrated so that you can perform at your best every day.

- Eat fruit. All fruit contains a lot of water, but melons in particular can be a great source. Watermelon is 90 percent water.
- Add lemon, lime or another shot of flavor to regular water if you don't like the taste.
- Sparkling water has a satisfying carbonated fizz and also counts toward your daily intake.
- Alcohol dehydrates you. Be sure to replenish your water supply if you are drinking.
- If you are exercising or outdoors on a hot day, you need more water. The basic rule of them is that if you are sweating, you are dehydrating.

Hydration is essential for everybody, so model this self-care principle for your clients.

Exercise

Everyone knows that to stay healthy and fit, we need to exercise between 45 minutes and an hour most days. The fact is, a lot of times exercise doesn't take priority. Keeping your body healthy with physical activity is as important as keeping the mind sharp with learning. Physical fitness is an imperative part of self-care for coaches.

Here are some of the most important benefits of getting regular exercise:

- **Weight loss.** If you need to lose a few pounds, exercise coupled with a healthy diet is the way to get it done. For those who aren't overweight, exercise will help keep you thin and trim.
- **A healthy body.** Getting regular exercise is good for your heart. It keeps chronic conditions like high cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure at bay. It also lessens your chances of developing some cancers, depression, and arthritis.
- **Improved mood.** Ever hear of the runner's high? When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel better mentally. Physical activity reduces stress and makes you feel more positive. People who exercise regularly have higher self-esteem and more self-confidence.
- **Improved mind power.** Exercising helps with concentration, memory, and makes you smarter. You'll be more mentally sharp after working out.
- **Boosted energy.** Regular exercise gives your heart and respiratory system a workout, which eventually makes them work more efficiently. When your body gets fit, it takes less energy to operate your essential functions, leaving more energy for everything else. Physical activity increases your muscle strength and improves endurance.

Now that you see the benefits, what kind of activities will you do to increase your physical fitness? Although some people find going to the gym is motivating to get their exercise program on track, others don't.

I hike for fitness. I like the challenge of reaching the summit of a mountain and looking at the stunning scenery below. That's what works for me.

And when I can't hike, I go to a crazy exercise class where a psycho-ex-policeman yells at me to work harder. I have a bunch of friends there and we all joke around and try to annoy the sergeant so he gets mad and pushes us harder. This wouldn't work for most people, but it works wonders for me because I really enjoy being pushed to my limit.

The key to developing an exercise routine and sticking to it is doing something that you enjoy. Otherwise you'll convince yourself you're too busy or too tired and not do it.

The best workout routine combines cardio exercise – movement – with weight training, stretching, and neuromuscular balance.

Interestingly, women are probably in more need of weight training than men. After age 35, women lose five pounds of muscle a year. That's why so many middle-aged women have trouble with weight gain. It's important to replace the muscle that you lose to stay physically fit and to keep the pounds from accumulating.

What activity sounds fun? Maybe you pick up the sport you played in high school or college, or maybe you do something completely different. If you don't play a sport, there are literally hundreds of ways to get exercise. I've listed 14 activities you can do to get your body moving. Some are things you'll do once a week, while others are things you can do every day. The key is to move 30 to 45 minutes most days.

- 1. Dance in your living room.** Most people bust a move every once in a while anyway, so why not plan some time to groove to your tunes? Dancing is a workout. You can also borrow the kids' entertainment console and play games that involve dancing. If you've always wanted to learn a particular dance style, like ballet or ballroom, take a class.
- 2. Wash your own car.** All that reaching, vacuuming, stooping and scrubbing can burn calories. You'll get even a longer workout if you give your vehicle a new coat of wax.
- 3. Housework.** Mowing the lawn, mopping the floor, and scrubbing the shower help burn calories. If you do heavy housekeeping weekly, you may be able to count that as one day of exercise.
- 4. Take the stairs.** Whenever you have a choice, climb stairs. Try to push yourself to go up them at a brisker pace as you near the top.
- 5. Wear a pedometer.** When you run errands or go about your day-to-day activities, track your steps. A rule of thumb is that 10,000 steps equal four miles. Take breaks to walk around the block or park your car at the back of a parking lot to get in extra.
- 6. Recruit an exercise buddy.** People new to regular exercise tend to stick with it if they have a partner. Walk or cycle with your spouse or a friend. The accountability will keep you showing up, and extroverts will enjoy having a companion.
- 7. Don't watch TV unless you are exercising at the same time.** Whether it's in the comfort of your own home or at the gym, get on the treadmill or stationary bike while you watch your favorite shows. Take your favorite flicks to the gym on your tablet and watch while you're on the elliptical. You can also do exercises while watching your favorite shows.
- 8. Walk the dog.** Whose dog's eyes don't light up when they see you with a leash? Take your furry friend out for a stroll before or after dinner. You'll both enjoy the downtime.
- 9. Hit the pool.** Swimming is great exercise, and it's easy on arthritic or sore joints. Take a few laps every day in the community pool or take a water aerobics class at your YMCA.
- 10. Bowling.** For people who love a team sport but want to start slow, bowling is a great option. It's also an activity for a group of family or friends to enjoy with you.

- 11. Tai Chi.** This form of Chinese movements is great for older people or those with arthritis. It helps with muscle strength and flexibility. There's more about tai chi in the Balance and Flexibility section.
- 12. Work out with a video stream, TV show, or DVD.** Working out in the comfort of your own home is great for introverts or people who don't live close to a gym. It saves time and gas, too. Video workout programs also offer a lot of variety, which is important to keep your workout interesting and to target different groups of muscles.
- 13. Skating.** Whether you ice skate or roller skate, it's a great activity for fitness. It's a fun afternoon outing for the family or even date night. If you ice skate and are competitive, consider joining an adult hockey league.
- 14. Take a fitness class.** If you are unsure what kinds of exercise you might enjoy, take a class. Kickboxing or spinning might be right up your alley, but you may not know until you try. The great thing about a class is that you will have access to an instructor who can help you and answer any questions you may have.

If you have been athletic in the past or want some ideas about how to change up your routine, here is a list of some of the most popular sports for adults. Pick a couple of new activities to give yourself a challenge.

- Walking
- Tai Chi
- Stretching
- Jogging
- Dance-based fitness class
- Yoga
- Isometrics
- Volleyball
- Water Aerobics
- Pole dancing
- Skating
- Baseball
- Softball
- Calisthenics
- Skateboarding
- Jumping rope
- Cycling
- Mountain biking
- Surfing
- Hiking

- Mountaineering
- Tennis
- Racquetball
- Handball
- Canoeing, Kayaking
- Skiing or snowboarding
- Hockey
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Fencing
- Running
- Triathlons
- Rock Climbing
- Martial Arts
- Touch football
- Boxing
- Gymnastics

Balance and flexibility

One part of physical fitness that is especially overlooked in the United States is balance and flexibility. As we age, we become less steady on the feet and less flexible.

Beginning to work on balance and flexibility early in adulthood will help reduce sports-related injuries, but in later life it can help prevent serious falls, back pain, and difficulty with everyday tasks, like reaching to put something in a top cabinet. It's never too late to get started.

The great thing about working on balance and flexibility is that you don't need much instruction. It doesn't take a lot of time and you can incorporate it in your daily life. You can also do it alone, which is a great opportunity for introverts to grab some alone time.

Flexibility

The best time to work on flexibility is before exercise. Stretching muscles before your workout will help prevent strains and other injuries. To stretch, produce a slight pull on the muscle, but never pain. Hold the position for 15-30 seconds. Repeat each stretch three to five times on each side of the body. You can find a wide variety of stretches online, but here are some basic stretches:

- **Calves and hips.** Take a step forward with one leg. Put your weight on the front leg while keep your back heel on the ground. Stay in this position and press the back hip forward to stretch your hip flexors.
- **Hamstrings.** Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you. Keeping your back fairly straight, lean forward from the hips. Keeping leaning until you feel the stretch in your thighs.
- **More hips.** If you haven't performed this stretch before, hang on to something like a chair or a table. Standing on one leg, bend your knee, grab your foot, and bring it to your butt. Pull back while keeping your hip straight and your knee pointing to the ground.
- **Chest.** Start by standing in a corner, bring your hands shoulder height and push against each wall until you feel the stretch in your chest.

Balance

When it comes to balance, one of the easiest ways to start making some headway can be performed while you are in the kitchen. It only takes a few seconds:

Stand facing the sink. Place two fingers on the edge of the sink for stability, and balance on one leg. Use your whole hand to hold on if you have to. Hold the position for 10 to 15 seconds then do the same thing on the other side.

Over time, hold the position longer. Then gradually work until you can balance on one leg without assistance. After you master this, try balancing on one foot while standing on a cushion or pillow.

Another way to improve your balance and flexibility is to take up yoga or tai chi. Both of these practices provide a number of mental, physical, and spiritual benefits, which makes them ideal for self-care because you can boost all three areas of your life with just one activity.

Yoga

Although there are a wide variety of yoga types, generally it can be described as a combination of meditation and exercise that improves flexibility, relieves stress, enhances breathing, and maintains health. Many people who practice yoga say it also improves your outlook on life.

Yoga components include postures that stretch the body as well as proper breathing exercises. Breathing helps to relax the muscles, focus the mind, and maintain the posture.

Here are some specific benefits that people can achieve from yoga

- Lower blood pressure.
- Reduce fatigue.
- Improved flexibility
- Create and strengthen muscle tone
- Better posture
- Prevent or improve arthritis or its symptoms
- Ward off osteoporosis.
- Improved circulation
- Strengthens the immune system
- Helps with weight loss or management
- More efficient breathing
- Ease muscle pain
- Better sleep

Yoga works muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments, and can ease the production of cortisol, the chemical our body produces in response to chronic stress that contributes to belly weight and metabolic syndrome, a pre-diabetic condition.

In addition to its benefits, yoga is available in a wide variety of different types so that you can get what you need the most out of your routine. Having options can also keep you from getting bored. Here are some types of yoga and the primary focus of the practice:

- **Ananda.** Considered gentle, this practice centers on breathing, affirmations, and postures to create awareness of the body.
- **Ashtanga.** This is for the experienced practitioner, or someone who wants a strenuous workout. A variant of ashtanga is called, appropriately, power yoga.
- **Bikram.** For people who want a vigorous workout and love the heat, bikram is for you. The temperature during the class will be a steamy 85 to 100 degrees, and practicing 26 different poses is thought to clean you inside and out.
- **Integral.** This yoga type puts almost as much stress on breath control and meditation as postures.
- **Ivengar.** If you've been practicing yoga for some time and are looking for a change, this discipline may be the right one for you. You'll use props, like blankets, wooden blocks, and chairs to achieve postures, and you'll hold them longer than in other types of yoga.
- **Sivananda.** This practice focuses on a healthy lifestyle, and includes eating vegetarian and meditation. In each session, which is considered gentle enough for beginners, students not only practice postures, but chant, meditation, and focus on deep relaxation.

- **Viniyoga.** This practice is a lot like ashtanga but at a much gentler pace. The teacher selects postures based on the students' abilities. This makes it an ideal yoga type for the beginner.

If you aren't sure what yoga class is for, talk to an instructor for advice.

Tai Chi

This Chinese martial art is recommended frequently by alternative medicine practitioners because of its variety of benefits. It involves moving the body slowly and gently with focused breathing. Anyone at virtually fitness level can practice tai chi, which makes it a good fit for people inexperienced with keeping fit.

The National Institutes of Health has been conducting research on the effects of Tai Chi and have found some evidence that it is helpful for a significant number of conditions, including fibromyalgia, headaches, and even smoking cessation.

Here are some of the other benefits of practicing tai chi:

- Improved flexibility, muscle strength, and coordination
- Better balance
- Less pain and stiffness
- Better sleep

In addition, tai chi offers the same benefits as any low-impact aerobics workout. It will help you maintain or lose weight, lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes, and increase your general health and fitness.

No matter what route you choose to maintain and improve your flexibility and balance, don't skip it. You can get positive effects by working on it just twice a week. Encourage your clients to add flexibility and balance exercises to their self-care, too.

Health Care

One of the most important self-care steps we can take is taking care of our health. That means going to the doctor when we are sick, getting help from a mental health professional when we need it, and scheduling regular medical and dental checkups.

Everyone should get a medical checkup at least once a year. If you have chronic health conditions or are over 50, you need to go more often. Women need to get mammograms and pelvic exams on a regular basis, and if you're over 50, just schedule the colonoscopy and get it over and done with. An annual eye exam as well as two dental exams and cleanings should be on your calendar. Also get a flu shot every year.

It not only keeps you from getting the flu, but it also helps to prevent the spread of the disease.

We encourage our clients to take care of themselves, but sometimes we don't. Most coaches have full schedules and rarely take significant time off, especially if they are just starting out. If we have to cancel appointments because we are sick, it disappoints clients and affects our incomes.

However, part of coaching is doing the things we want our clients to do. That includes taking care of our health. If we get sick, we need to take care of ourselves first to make sure that the illness doesn't get worse or lead into another condition that might take even longer to recover from.

When you should go to the doctor

American medicine has begun focusing more and more on preventing medical problems before they occur. We, as patients, should get with the program and go to the doctor when we experience certain symptoms. The earlier we get treated for a medical condition, the faster we can be on the road to recovery. And everyone should have a check up once a year.

Studies have found that women make most health care decisions in the household and are more likely to go to the doctor if they have a problem. Men need to do the same thing, unless they have a female in their lives that encourages them to go to the doctor. Here are some conditions that you should get checked out, without question:

- **Headaches.** Everybody has one from time to time, but if you have chronic headaches, see your doctor. If you have the worst headache you've ever had, go to the hospital. It could be an aneurysm. If your headache it is accompanied by fever, back pain, or a stiff neck, get immediate treatment because you could have meningitis.
- **Excessive thirst and urination.** These are classic symptoms of diabetes. Undiagnosed or uncontrolled diabetes can lead to all kinds of serious issues, like blindness, amputations, and death.
- **Chest pressure or pain radiating into the left arm or jaw.** It can be hard sometimes to tell indigestion from a heart attack, but don't take the chance, especially if you have an increased risk for heart disease because of other medical conditions or family history. These symptoms may also be accompanied by sweating, nausea, and anxiety.
- **Excessive weight loss or gain.** If you aren't trying to lose weight and the scale is more than 10 or 20 pounds more over a month or less, get medical treatment.

A wide variety of medical problems could be in play, including thyroid dysfunction, diabetes, or cancer.

- **Sudden slurred speech, dizziness, or weakness.** These are classic stroke symptoms. The good news is that the sooner you get treatment for a stroke, the more likely you will fully recover. Like heart attack symptoms, this is one of those situations where you want to err on the side of caution.
- **Bleeding.** Unless you are injured, blood should not be coming out of your body, unless you are a menstruating woman. Blood in stool, vomit, or urine is something to get checked out. You should also see a doctor if you have frequent nose bleeds or cough up blood.
- **Acute stomach pain.** About 7 percent of the population will need to have an appendectomy in their lives, so go to the doctor if you have sharp pain around the belly bottom or the lower right abdomen. A burst appendix can create infectious havoc in your body that can take significant time to recover from.
- **Loss of consciousness.** Any time you faint, or lose consciousness because of a blow to the head, get immediate medical attention. Fainting can be caused by a wide variety of medical problems, including low blood sugar. A head injury can be very serious, especially if you pass out.

It's also a good rule of thumb to get a medical opinion for any symptom or condition that lasts longer than two weeks, even if you think it's a cold. Most minor illnesses run their course in about 10 days. If you stay sick, you may have a secondary infection or some other problem.

When you need to see a therapist

As a psychologist, I'm a little bit biased when it comes to therapy, but it can do miracles for people with psychological or behavioral issues. I believe that most people face something at some point in their lives where they can get some help with therapy. It could be dealing with the loss of a spouse, depression, or a phobia that is affecting their daily life.

Unfortunately, therapy still carries a stigma. Some people still believe that seeking help for a problem or behavior is a sign of weakness or lack of self-control. I think that getting help for a problem is a sign of strength, and often therapy patients are people who simply have encountered something that they can't cope with.

That's why it's important for coaches to get mental health services if they need them. Being courageous enough to deal with your problems is a positive, and behavior that you want your clients to emulate. Even coaches don't have all the solutions and need help from time to time.

You've learned the differences between being a coach and a therapist. There will be times, even with excellent screening, that you will have a client who needs a therapist. In fact, it's a good idea to know a therapist who you can refer clients to if needed.

Here is a list of reasons that you may want to consider therapy:

- You have concern about something you are feeling or doing.
- The feeling or behavior has gotten worse over the last month.
- You have tried to stop the behavior or feeling on your own but it hasn't helped.
- Someone who cares about you has suggested therapy.
- You can't talk about your problem with your family or friends, or they don't seem to know how to help you.
- You are having trouble concentrating.
- Your doctor has recommended finding a therapist.
- You are having trouble with a significant relationship and don't know what to do.
- You have suffered a loss, such as the death of a loved one or losing a job and are having trouble coping with grief.
- You or a close loved one has a problem with addiction.
- You or a loved one has an irrational fear that disrupts daily life.
- Things are not getting better using coaching alone
- You are struggling with a loved one's serious illness.
- You are dealing with after-effects of abuse.

How to find a good therapist

Finding a therapist can be tricky, depending on the part of the country you live in. The best bet is to ask your physician. You can also ask friends and family members for a referral.

Websites that review therapists can be helpful, but just because of the nature of their work they are likely to have at least one negative review. Don't let that stop you from making an appointment.

During your first appointment, see if you feel comfortable with the therapist. You want someone who will listen to you as well as provide feedback. Be sure to ask what sort of decision-making process your therapist undergoes to refer you for medication for a psychiatric problem. Unless your therapist is a psychiatrist, you will have to be referred to a physician to be prescribed medication if you and your therapist believe you may need it. For people with depression and anxiety, therapy and medication combined can make faster significant process.

And don't be afraid to "shop" for a therapist the same way a smart consumer shops for anything else. Call a dozen of them and ...

- See what their voice mail sounds like
- Record how long it takes them to call you back
- Pay attention to how you feel when you speak with them
- Find out how they make decisions about when to talk, when to be quiet, and when to make a serious intervention with their clients
- Ask if they have specific experience with the problem you'd like to work on
- Pay attention to how you feel when you speak with them (*yes, I said that twice!*)

When you need to go to the dentist

Who hasn't blown off going to the dentist? It's probably the most common health self-care task that we put on the back burner. It's uncomfortable. It costs money. But regular dental visits can not only save your teeth. They can save your life.

Yup, dentists do more than fill your cavities, clean your teeth, and do root canals. Dentists most frequently diagnose oral cancer, which is on the rise in the United States. Just like any cancer, finding it early can drastically affect your prognosis.

Here are other reasons that regular dental visits are important:

- **Treatment of gum disease.** Even though it is the most significant factor for tooth loss in the U.S., that's not even the worse thing about gum disease. It has been linked to serious medical conditions, too, like lung disease, diabetes, and even pancreatic cancer. If your gums are bleeding, see the dentist.
- **Preventative care.** Did you know that getting a cavity filled early can prevent the need for a root canal? Not only does prevention spare you from additional discomfort, it costs less time and money.
- **Clean teeth look and feel good.** Let's face it, people like a nice smile. It's a great thing to have nice-looking teeth in your photo on your coaching website. Plus just-cleaned teeth feel great.

Dentists recommend you visit twice a year for most people. If you smoke, your dentist may ask you to come in more often for cancer screenings. You may need to see the dentist three or four times a year if you have diabetes, a compromised immune system, or a propensity for cavities or excessive plaque buildup.

Personal Care

Some things that are important for self-care keep us looking and feeling good. It's important for self-esteem and confidence to look your best. I'm not talking about winning a beauty contest, but simply taking care of those things that help us keep our appearance looking happy and healthy. Busy schedules sometimes make us let these things slide.

Successful coaches have self-confidence and are generally happy with who they are, but that's not to say that we shouldn't try to look our best. Taking care of things that make us look and feel better is a great characteristic to model to our clients.

Get a makeover

Some women get a makeover periodically. A makeover, I understand, involves new makeup techniques, skin care regime, and a new hairstyle or hair color. It sometimes involves getting an updated wardrobe, too.

Both men and women need to look in their closets and get rid of shoes and clothing that are woefully out of style, uncomfortable, or no longer fits. Enlist a friend or family member to help you shop for clothing that looks and feels great.

And, except for perhaps the makeup techniques, men might consider a makeover, too. Getting a new haircut can make you look younger or more professional. And even guys need to take care of their skin.

If you have things about your appearance that bother you, consider taking care of them. I'm not advocating plastic surgery, but simply tending to those small things that affect your self-esteem and self-confidence. Adults can wear invisible braces to correct their teeth. If you don't like mole that growing on your nose, ask your dermatologist to remove it.

Creating the best "you" possible will make you feel more confident, interesting, and maybe even sexy. If you haven't evaluated your look in the last five years, it's probably time to do so.

Invest in a manicure and pedicure

They aren't just for women anymore. The mani/pedi is a relaxing way to make your hands and feet look and feel terrific. You'll often get a hand or foot and leg massage as part of the process, which can help relieve stress.

People who have diabetes or poor circulation need to consider a regular pedicure. Proper foot care is important to prevent infections or even amputations.

Get a massage

A therapeutic massage can do wonders for body and your mood. A good massage eases stress and tension, as well as muscle pain and stiffness. From a psychological standpoint, being touched is very soothing. That's why for decades it's been recommended that people get a hug every day.

Here are some of the benefits of getting a regular massage:

- Relief from anxiety
- Less frequent and severe headaches
- Less joint pain
- Relief from sprains or soft tissue injuries
- Sleeplessness caused by stress or pain
- Extra energy

You can get several types of massage that stress particular benefits.

- **Deep massage.** This technique uses slower, forceful strokes to massage deep layers of muscle and connective tissue. It is often used to help heal muscle damage, but is also a great massage to get at sore muscles and joints.
- **Swedish massage.** If you've never had a massage, start here. This technique is gentler than a deep massage. It uses long strokes, kneading, and deep circular movements to help relax and energize you.
- **Trigger point massage.** If you have chronic muscle pain from injury or overuse, this is the massage for you. It focuses on areas of tight muscle fibers that could benefit from better circulation.

If you haven't gotten a massage before you could have some soreness the next day. Be sure to tell the massage therapist if a technique hurts you. He or she can modify what they are doing to give you good results without hurting you.

Sleep

The United States is fast becoming a nation of zombies. Study after study shows that we don't get nearly enough sleep, and what a lot of people don't know is that sleep deprivation does a lot more than create fatigue and black circles under your eyes. It

lowers productivity, mental processing, the ability to feel full while eating, and your immune system. It increases the chance of having a vehicle- or work-related accident, too.

Adults need between seven and nine hours of quality sleep every night. Quality sleep means you don't wake up several times or sleep too lightly to enter REM sleep, the sleep phase where you dream. People with physical pain may have difficulty sleeping until their discomfort is addressed. But for the vast majority of Americans, poor sleep hygiene is the culprit for not getting enough quality sleep.

Before you follow any advice for better sleep, it's important to make getting some zzz's a priority. If your idea of sleep involves collapsing after you've done everything else you've needed to get done, you're doing it wrong. You need to schedule bedtime just like you do your workday.

Here are some tips to make the most of your sleep time:

- **Go to bed and wake up at the same time.** Keep the same schedule, even on weekends. If you do this, your body clock will regulate, letting you fall asleep quicker and allowing you to stay asleep all night.
- **Relax before bedtime.** This is the time to read, take a relaxing shower, or meditate. Try to avoid anything exciting or stressful for half an hour before you go to bed. Forgo the nightcap, though. Alcohol can keep you awake.
- **Exercise.** Yup, daily exercise helps you get a good night's sleep, along with all the other many benefits.
- **Avoid electronics.** The light of a monitor, tablet, or smartphone screen is bright enough to trick your brain into keeping you awake.
- **Don't use your bed for anything but sleep and sex.** Don't watch TV, listen to music, read, or anything else in bed. If you wake up or can't sleep, get out of bed, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.
- **Sleep on a good mattress and pillows.** Even the best mattresses need replacing about every 10 years. Make sure you have pillows that make you feel comfortable. Rid your room of any allergens that may bother you while you sleep.
- **Get Fido his own bed.** Letting your dog or cat sleep with you can disrupt your sleep. Make the bedroom off-limits to pets.
- **Keep your bedroom cool.** The optimum temperature for good sleep is between 60 and 67 degrees.
- **Block out the light and noise.** If your partner snores all night, it's hard to get a good night's sleep. Same thing if a streetlight pours through your bedroom window. If there is too much light, hang black-out shades or curtains, or consider wearing a sleep mask. If noise is the problem, ear plugs, white noise machines,

and fans can help. Also check the humidity. If it's too dry, use a humidifier when you sleep.

- **Take melatonin at bedtime.** This supplement produces the chemicals your body needs to feel sleepy. It's a great supplement to take to cure jetlag, too.
- **Avoid heavy meals and cigarettes at night.** Nicotine can keep you awake, and a heavy meal can lead to heartburn or other gastric distress that makes it hard to sleep.
- **Soak up the sun.** Exposing yourself to the sun in the morning and avoiding bright light at night will help you fall asleep faster.

If you are still having trouble sleeping a month or two after making sleep a priority and developing good sleep habits, you may have a sleeping disorder. If you are tired during the day, fall asleep suddenly, or can't keep your eyes open during a meeting after lunch, you may have a problem.

It's important to get help for any sleep disorder because, untreated, it can kill you. Heart disease, diabetes, stroke, accidents, and much more have been linked to not getting enough sleep.

Here are some of the most common sleep problems.

- **Snoring.** You can wake yourself up snoring, and it's not pleasant for your partner, either. Your doctor can provide a variety of solutions to help you cut down or eliminate snoring, or may have prescribe a sleep study to determine if you have sleep apnea. Avoiding sleeping on your back helps many people who snore.
- **Insomnia.** Everybody has the occasional sleepless night, but when it becomes habitual you have insomnia. A variety of things can cause insomnia, including jet lag, poor sleep hygiene, depression, anxiety, and stress. Some medications can also cause insomnia.
- **Sleep apnea.** People with sleep apnea wake up dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of times every night because their upper airway becomes blocked, which causes them to stop breathing, waking them up. Many sleep apnea patients aren't even aware they wake up after they stop breathing. Sleep apnea is very serious. Apnea patients can fall asleep driving, and the condition puts a lot of stress on the heart. It can lead to a variety of health issues. Many patients get relief from a CPAP machine, which blows a steady stream of air into a mask they wear when they sleep. It creates pressure that keeps the upper airway open so that the patient can breathe.
- **Oversleeping.** If you are sleeping more than 10 or 12 hours a day every day, you may be oversleeping. Depression is the leading cause for sleeping too much, but people with untreated sleep apnea can need more sleep to try to make up the

poor-quality sleep they get at night. Some medications can also cause excessive drowsiness. Ask your doctor if you're not sure.

- **Narcolepsy.** This neurological condition affects the control of being awake or asleep. People with narcolepsy can fall asleep instantly, even in the middle of an activity like driving. Symptoms include excessive sleeping during the day, loss of muscle control, hallucinations, and sleep paralysis –the inability to move when falling asleep or waking up. Many narcoleptics report feeling like they are falling before an episode occurs. Medication can help people with narcolepsy
- **Teeth grinding.** Grinding the teeth together at night is a common condition. It can, however, harm teeth or lead to jaw pain. No one knows exactly why some people grind their teeth when they are asleep, but anxiety, missing teeth, and an abnormal bite can contribute to it. Wearing a mouth guard at night can help.
- **Restless leg syndrome.** This condition produces an uncomfortable feeling that only goes away when the sufferer moves their legs. It often leads to people moving their legs or kicking in their sleep. The movement wakes up the patient, but, like with sleep apnea, they rarely remember waking up. No one knows the cause of restless leg syndrome, but it can be treated with medication. Home remedies include exercising the legs before bedtime and keeping the calves covered with leg warmers or knee-high socks.

Encourage your clients to take care of their sleep issues. Just like your mother used to say, getting a good night's sleep makes everything better. And it helps you stay healthy, too.

Take care of your spirit

Taking care of your mind and body are essential to good self-care, but don't neglect your spirit. What is your spirit exactly? It's the part of you that yearns to be the person you were put on the earth to be. Some people might call it your soul. Most people feel some need to fulfill a higher purpose in their lives. Some do that by following a religion or some other set of principles.

I'm not promoting any particular way of getting in touch with your spirit. I'm going to discuss in generalities some spiritual practices that seem to help people get in touch with a high power or achieve a deeper knowledge of their higher purpose, no matter what their religion...or even if they don't have one.

Why is this important? Because living within a set of principles every day helps us to stay on track. And when disaster strikes, spirituality is a rock. It can help you get through it in a way that nothing else can. Plus, feeding your soul is comforting and relieves stress.

Here are some other things that feeding your spirit can accomplish:

- **Decision-making.** You will have more clarity about your goals, principles, values, which will help you see things more clearly when making tough decisions.
- **Improves mood.** People who follow spiritual practices are more positive, joyful, and often worry less.
- **Grounding.** Daily spiritual practices keep you grounded. Reinforcing your beliefs and making it part of your routine keeps you steady and on an even keel.
- **Perspective.** Spiritual practices give you the skills to step back from a situation and see it in a different way or from a broader perspective.
- **You live in the moment.** Dwelling on the past or worrying about the future robs us of what is happening around us at any given moment. Living in the moment opens us up to opportunities we may have missed while being preoccupied with the past or the future. You also develop presence – being aware of others around you instead of frequently being caught up in your own thoughts.
- **Assurance.** You'll develop a sense of assurance about yourself and your decisions.
- **Intuition.** Spiritual practices help develop intuition. You'll learn to trust your gut more, and because you grounded, your gut can be trusted.
- **Better physical health.** Studies have found that profoundly spiritual people live longer and have a better quality of life than people who aren't.

If you have already incorporated the tips I suggested for taking care of your mind and your body, you are already practicing taking care of your spirit. Just the mere fact that you decided to pick up this book and learn how to take care of yourself is a spiritual discipline in itself.

Here are some more spiritual disciplines that will feed your soul.

Devotion

If you worship on a weekly basis or read some sort of scripture daily, you are practicing devotion. For those who aren't religious, you can still create your own devotion reading inspirational writers. The point is to have a few minutes of quiet time, ideally at the beginning of the day, to get centered. Choosing to do this can get you off to a positive start.

Prayer and meditation

Prayer and meditation are proven methods of centering yourself. One way to think about prayer is talking to God, while meditation is listening. Both practices offer stress relief, a positive mindset, and an overall better outlook on life.

Different ways to pray

Many people don't think they know how to pray. The truth is they probably are praying and don't even realize it. Prayer can be anything you are doing in the name of your higher power *or your personal divine purpose*. (*You don't have to believe in "God" to do this!*)

For example, you can prayerfully crochet a blanket for a new baby. You can stop whatever you are doing when a fire truck passes by and bless the firefighters and the people they are going to help. **Prayer interrupts the day-to-day to remind you that you have a purpose.**

Just like reading, you can pray out loud or in silence. You can pray a prayer someone wrote, or one you make up. You can pray with others, or alone. Some people have a particular place in their home where they pray and meditate that is quiet.

Here are some ways to pray:

- **Breath prayer.** Breathe in good thoughts, and out negative ones. A simple breath prayer is thinking, "God" as you breathe in, and "help me" at you breathe out.
- **Intercessory prayer.** This prayer is focused on praying for other people. Some studies suggest praying for people, whether they know you or not, helps people recover faster from illness. Regardless, another benefit of intercessory prayer is that *it forces us to focus more on others and not ourselves*. This trains your empathic muscle... perhaps THE core strength coaches need to succeed!
- **Cue prayer.** Some people say a prayer at stoplights. Others bless the person on the other end of the phone before they pick it up. Get creative and develop your own cue prayer.
- **Pray over your food.** Giving thanks for a meal reminds us that there are people who don't have enough to eat. It makes us stop to think of the people who grow our food.
- **Pray while exercising.** Many cyclists and runners pray as they exercise. Any activity that provides a rhythmic sound, like feet on pavement, creates an inviting atmosphere for prayer.
- **Write down your prayers.** Some people write letters to God, to their higher power, or their divine purpose. That's a prayer.

- **Pray in color.** You can doodle your prayers or draw a person's name or a concern in crayon.
- **Water prayer.** The soothing water of your morning shower is a simple backdrop to a prayer. Water is important in all faiths, so acknowledge the role of water in your religion as you pray.
- **Just be prayer.** One of the most powerful prayers is to simply sit, doing nothing, in the presence of your higher power.
- **Walk a labyrinth.** You can find labyrinths outdoors at church retreat centers and at some large churches. The labyrinth is an ancient Christian practice that believers performed when they couldn't, for whatever reason, make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Pray as you walk, and be aware of your feelings. When you reach the center of the labyrinth, stop and offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

Although there isn't any specific way to pray, don't fall into the trap of reciting a laundry list of things you want and need every day. Acknowledge the power of your God, remember to mention things you are grateful for, and admit any shortcomings that you may have committed.

Meditation

Meditation is the ultimate in stress relief. It gives you time to calm down, relax, and breathe. I'm certainly not an expert—if *you're a beginner and would like to work with a meditation expert I might recommend [Damon Dickinson](#) who is also an [ICCA graduate](#)*—but here are the basics:

The key to meditation is becoming still. It takes practice to still both your body and your mind. Most people start by doing it five minutes at a time. Over time, work up to 20 minutes.

You can meditate any time of day, but one of the most refreshing times is at the end of the work day. The meditation time gives you a transition from work to your personal life that prepares you to shift your focus from work to your loved ones.

To prepare to meditate, get comfortable. Most people sit with their hands on their thighs. You can also lie down, but sometimes people fall asleep in that position. You can close your eyes or leave them open, focusing on an image or a candle. Some people play soothing music. It's also a good idea to set a timer.

Some people have a mantra to use to meditate. A mantra is a word or even a short scripture that you can repeat in your mind. A mantra keeps you focused and helps to keep your mind from wandering.

Here are some techniques to help you meditate:

- **Empty your mind by counting your breaths.** The counting helps you keep your mind still.
- **Use imagery.** Every time a thought pops into your head, imagine it as a pretty fall leaf floating away down a crystal-clear mountain stream.
- **Meditate with audio instruction.** You can download audios and buy CDs with guided imagery and other meditation techniques if you have trouble getting started or simply need a change of pace.
- **Dance like no one's watching.** Focusing completely on your movement to the music while not letting your mind wander is meditation.

Give back

Another spiritual practice that is universal is giving back to others. When we acknowledge what others have given to us, whether it's love, support, or time, one way to respond is to give those gifts to others.

What does giving back do? It helps us affirm that we didn't get where we are today by ourselves – that we had the help of others to put us on the path of achieving our goals and dreams. It also helps us to feel grateful for what we have and the ability to be able to give something to someone else.

Here are some other benefits of giving back.

- Studies have found that people who give of their time live longer.
- You might meet new people.
- Giving back makes you forget about yourself and your own problems.

Do a good deed every day

The easiest, fastest way to start giving back is to do something kind for someone else every day. This doesn't have to be a huge, time-consuming endeavor. One of my friends said she started by simply holding the door open for other people at her office. "Some days I was just so busy I didn't even pay attention if someone was behind me," she said. "Most days I would have held the door anyway. The difference was being intentional about it."

You could also call this spiritual practice random acts of kindness. Some people drop quarters in parking meters to add extra time for cars parked outside their office building. Others pay for the person's order behind them in the drive-through at Starbucks. The point is, you never know how one small kindness can affect another person.

Here is a list of some other ideas for a daily good deed/random act of kindness.

- **Call someone you haven't seen in a while.** You know that friend or relative you've been meaning to call but haven't? That one.
- **Offer to pick up groceries for your neighbor.** On your way to the grocery store? Ask your neighbor if you can pick something up for her.
- **Leave small gifts for people to find.** Leave a paperback book on the train for someone else to enjoy. Leave an umbrella at a bus stop on a rainy day for the person who forgot theirs.
- **Let someone in front of you in traffic, even if you are in a hurry.** It only cuts a few seconds off your time.
- **Tell somebody they are doing a good job.** Maybe it's the clerk at the drugstore or someone you work with. Most people don't hear praise enough.
- **In the grocery store parking lot, take someone's cart so they don't have to take it back to the store.** Choose a mother with several kids, an elderly person, or someone wearing a uniform.
- **Leave a \$5 bill in a public place.** Make somebody's day by dropping it in a parking lot or leaving it on a chair in the library.
- **Give a homeless person a gift card to a restaurant.** You'll know he got a good meal that day
- **Freeze a bottle of water and put it in your mailbox for your postal carrier to enjoy on a hot day.** They'll appreciate it.
- **Let someone cut the line.** Aren't in a hurry? Let someone who is rushed or has young children with them go ahead of you in line to pay for items at a store.
- **Make eye contact and smile at people.** When you start doing this, you'll realize how many people respond. Sometimes people look surprised, then delighted. We live in a society where people don't acknowledge the presence of others. People love to be noticed.
- **Talk to the shy person at a party or other public event.** It's tough to be shy in a room full of people. Give the shy person a break by striking up a conversation. You may make a new friend.
- **Take flowers to a friend having a hard time.** People are deeply touched when people acknowledge their pain or struggles.
- **Compliment a stranger.** People like to hear that you like their handbag or their tie. Conversely, when someone compliments you, don't minimize it. Just thank them.
- **Write a thank-you note.** Send a note to a client that sent you a referral or to someone who helped you recently.

- **Send a care package to a college freshman near finals week.** Freshmen are homesick and stressed out their first year. Send them some chocolate chip cookies, a homemade blanket, and a book you read that you enjoyed in college.
- **Donate blood.** If you are physically able, the blood bank always needs it.
- **Contact the teacher who most inspired you.** She's probably on Facebook, so send a message. If not, pick up the phone and call.
- **Send letters and care packages to someone in the armed forces.** This is especially thoughtful during the holidays.
- **Donate your hair to Locks of Love.** They'll use it to make a wig for a child with cancer.
- **Leave an extra-nice tip for your hairdresser or waitress.** Everyone likes to be appreciated with a little extra cash.
- **Do something thoughtful in honor of someone else.** A friend recently lost her sister-in-law, who practiced giving back. My friend decided on the fourth of every month, the day of her sister-in-law's birth, she would send a gift to one of her Facebook friends.
- **Write a positive comment on someone's blog.** Bloggers love to get the positive feedback.

Although it's OK to toot your own horn about your coaching practice, keeping quiet about your daily good deed will keep you honest about your motivation. You won't be expecting praise from others for your good work. After practicing giving back for a while, you'll do good deeds spontaneously.

Volunteering

Giving of your time is more valuable for most people than giving money. That's why volunteering is such a generous way to give back. Even working just a few hours a month can make someone else's life infinitely better.

The key to volunteering is choosing a cause that you are passionate about. Maybe your passion is finding homes for abandoned dogs or cats. Or maybe you have a political cause that pushes your hot button. Choosing something you really care about will give you the motivation you need to continue your volunteer efforts even with work and family obligations could easily put your cause on the back burner.

If you want to work directly with the people you want to help, that's great. But you don't have to. People behind the scenes are sometimes even more important to getting needs met. Do something that fits your skill set or that you enjoy.

Be sure to start slow. Many people get caught up in wanting to do as much as they can and get burned out after a few months. Making small commitments in the beginning

helps you to figure out just how much time you can volunteer and meet your other obligations.

Along the lines of not biting off more than you can chew, be firm with the organization you are volunteering with about what you will do and how much time you can spend. It's much more efficient for an organization to assign more work to current volunteers than to spend time, and often money, to find new recruits, so be firm and do only what you can do.

Here are some ideas for volunteer activities.

- Join walks and bike-a-thons to raise money for your favorite charity.
- Donate household items and clothing to organizations that help the needy.
- Collect non-perishable food items for your local food bank.
- Tutor at-risk kids in an after-school program.
- Build a home for a needy family for Habitat for Humanity.
- Work on a suicide hotline.
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter.
- Provide a meal for families at your local Ronald McDonald House.
- Volunteer to be a school-crossing guard.
- Work with your college or high school alumni association
- Help with the local cleanup day at the beach.
- Work in an animal shelter
- Mentor a high school student who wants to enter your field.
- Organize games or a sing-along at a nursing home.
- Deliver Meals on Wheels.
- Start or help with a community garden.
- Work at your public television fund drive.

Find out what your family and friends know about in your community to get other ideas for volunteer activities. Every community needs lots of help.

Create a bucket list

Consider making a list of 20, 50 or 100 things you want to do or see before you die. Think of it as sort of a wish list for things you'd like to accomplish in your lifetime. Most people, especially coaches, have goals for the major areas of their lives, but sometimes we don't take the time to figure out fun things we would like to do. You can feed your soul by setting goals that would be the thrill of a lifetime or just offer a simple pleasure.

Bucket list experts say that most lists contain a lot of travel – more than most people will be able to accomplish in one life time. They recommend taking a few weeks to compile

your list, getting inspiration from social media like Pinterest or from bucketlist.org. to come up with a mix ideas that easily attainable and some that would truly be once-in-a-life time trips or events.

Other bucket list preparation tips include being realistic. For example, it's not likely that any of us will own a house on the moon in our lifetimes. *(Although that would be fun!)* Also be specific. Something like, I want a front-row seat at a rock concert.

Experts also recommend some small purchases, too, like a special pen or hard-to-find gift item. You can even make everything on your bucket list something free. One of my friends has listed that she wants to experience every kind of natural weather phenomena. She has accomplished all of that, except thunder snow. All of those experiences were free.

Share your list on social media for accountability. Someone may help you achieve one of your dreams or nudge you to accomplish more. Also, make sure you add to your bucket list. It should be a living document that grows and changes as you do.

Here is a list of ideas for your bucket list:

- Buy shoes in seven foreign languages.
- Eat escargot.
- Flamenco dance.
- Attend a masquerade party
- Touch a building more than 2,000 years old.
- Fly first class.
- Write a message, put it in a bottle, and drop it in the ocean.
- Ride a cable car in San Francisco.
- Walk behind a waterfall.
- Act in a play.
- Take a photo every day for a year.
- Enjoy a ride in a hot air balloon.
- Get a cream pie in the face.
- Bungee jump.
- Learn to belly dance.
- Take an overnight train trip in a sleeping compartment.
- Visit a castle.
- Find a set a salt and pepper shakers like my grandmother used to have.
- Make kimchi from scratch.
- Earn a master's degree.
- Buy a pair of white canvas sneakers and doodle on them.

- Type on an antique typewriter.
- Buy a pearl necklace.
- Have a white Christmas.
- Go skinny dipping.
- Get the Dalai Lama to laugh at one of your jokes.
- Show a dog at Westminster.
- Try every variety of sushi.
- Fit into my prom dress from high school.

Give it some variety with things that are fairly easy to attain vs. some that will require saving some money and some time.

A bucket list can give you or your client some lighthearted goals to make you feel accomplished. Be sure to share it to create some accountability.

Gratitude

A lot of people focus on gratitude in November or around Thanksgiving. What if you thought about it every day? Not being happy with what we have can be motivation to do something different, but it can also be the fast-track to unhappiness and negativity.

You've probably noticed that your coaching clients tend to see the things they are looking for. If they are looking for rudeness, they'll see it. If they are looking for kindness, they'll see that, too. The same goes for gratitude. The more you look for it the more you will experience it.

Being grateful can be helpful in tough times because it brings hope. It provides a perspective that allows you to look back on your entire life and not be overwhelmed by temporary circumstances. Research has found that building up an attitude of gratitude creates a psychological cushion that helps protect us when we fall. Studies have found grateful people endure stress more successfully and don't sweat the small stuff.

Several studies have been conducted on people who practice feeling grateful. Here are some of the results.

- People who are grateful are less likely to get depressed.
- Gratitude lessens anxiety and effectively helps people with post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Grateful people sleep better.
- Cardiac health is improved by gratitude.
- Older adults who practice feeling grateful tend to have a better memory.

Practicing gratitude as a spiritual discipline doesn't mean that you gloss over the negative things that happen in your life and focus only on the positive. You remember the trials and tribulations in your life and see how you got through them to where you are now. It reminds us that we have learned coping skills that will help us survive, even if things get really bad again.

Gratitude also helps us reframe negative experiences to include the positives that came out of the situation. Those memories no longer have the same devastating emotional impact they once did. You might recognize this coping skill – the ability to turn an obstacle into an opportunity. That's what coaches model to their clients all the time.

Here are some questions to ask yourself (or your clients) about a negative experience that will help develop gratitude.

- What lessons did I learn from this experience?
- What can I find to be grateful about the situation, even though I didn't think there was anything to be grateful for at the time?
- What skill did the experience draw out of me that surprised me?
- How did this experience make me become more of the person I strive to be?
- Did the experience remove a barrier that kept me from feeling grateful before?

The simplest way to practice gratitude is to make a list every day of 20 things you feel grateful for. It's not as easy as it sounds. After you get past the general responses, like family, friends, a roof over your head, and a job, you'll most likely have to begin reframing events to make a longer list.

Reframing is a powerful coaching tool that helps get clients moving forward. Help them (or yourself) to continue to reach for goals by developing the spiritual practice of gratitude.

Learn to say no

Learning to say no isn't really a spiritual practice, but it does feed your soul. To take care of our minds, bodies, and spirits and meet all of our professional personal obligations, time is at a premium. That means when people ask us to give of our time, we need to consider it carefully.

Let me give you an example.

A friend of a friend is a recent seminary graduate. In her pastoral self-care class, her professor told the students they couldn't pass until they learned to tell people NO. She brought in past students to plead, beg, whine, threaten, and attempt to manipulate

them, just like members of their congregations would. Every future pastor had to look the past student in the eye and tell him no.

Everybody passed, but it wasn't easy. Pastors, like coaches, are helpful people. And helpful people more than anyone have to guard their precious time. If you don't, you won't have time to do the things you need to do. You may end up burned out or feeling bitter about being taken advantage of.

The key to learning how to say no is realizing it is OK. Everybody has the right to say no. And just like advice columnist Ann Landers used to say, you can't be taken advantage of unless you let someone do it. So don't.

Here are some strategies to help you learn to say no.

- **Be aware of your priorities, even if they are shifting.** Keeping your priorities top of mind will reinforce your reasons for saying no. If it doesn't fit in your priorities and you don't want to do it, say no.
- **Never say yes, at least at first. Say that you'll think about it.** If someone calls or asks you face-to-face if you'll do something, do not answer immediately. Always tell them that you will think about it. This strategy keeps you from blurting out yes before you get a chance to think it through or develop a reply for saying no.
- **Rewrite your reply.** If you are responding to an email request, write your rejection once, then rewrite it. Rewriting allows you to sort out your thoughts.
- **Keep it simple.** Don't give in to the need to explain yourself. Giving those details just weakens your response. Also keep any written rejections short – a greeting, the rejection with a short explanation, and alternative suggestions, if you want. An example of a short explanation would be "due to my workload," or "because it's not a good a fit."
- **If you want, suggest an alternative.** If you really want to do the thing you're being asked to do, suggest a different time that is more convenient. If you feel like you have to do something out of courtesy, but not exactly what you are being asked to do, clearly state what you are willing to do.
- **Just say no.** You really can just decline without any explanation. As long as you do it politely, there's no reason not to.

Teach your clients that it's OK to say no, too. They'll benefit, just like you will, from the extra time and less aggravation that giving yourself permission to decline gives them.

Unplug from the electronics

Technology has made us all available 24/7. People can call, text, email, or chat with us from almost anywhere we are. This barrage of communication is stressful, distracting and can take a toll on our relationships.

The solution is to unplug. Going off the grid isn't as easy as it sounds. It can make some people feel anxious that they might be missing an important email or call. It's a habit for many people to interrupt what they are doing to read an incoming email. Every distraction is a waste of time.

So how do you unplug? Here are some ideas:

- Turn the sound off announcing incoming email on your phone and your computer. Most of us react to that auditory cue like Pavlov's dog. Pick intervals during the day when you read and answer email.
- When you go to dinner with family or friends, put all of your phones in a pile in the middle of the table. The first person who reaches for their phone picks up the tab.
- Set times during the day to check social media. Try to avoid it for a half a day at least one day a week.
- In planning your day, block out times that you are not available so you can focus on work. Turn off your cellphone and don't check your email during those times.
- Celebrate the National Day of Unplugging, held on March 20.
- Set boundaries. Tell clients and colleagues that you don't answer email on holidays or Sundays. Then stick to it.
- Turn off the phone when you are with family or friends.
- Also turn the phone off when you are driving. Many communities have outlawed talking and driving, and even if yours hasn't, it's dangerous.

Unplugging can help you stay focused and be present to your loved ones. Encourage your clients to give it a try, too.

Get your own coach

In coaching certification training, I recommend that students get their own coach. There are a variety of reasons to do it – but the primary one is to develop a relationship so that you can reap the benefits of being coached yourself. Giving yourself these benefits is good self-care for your spirit.

It's important to have support when you are starting a coaching practice. Your family and friends may be supportive, but it's the company of other coaches, whether as a

client or in supervision, that help you through those first years of launching a coaching career.

Your own coach can help you when you get over your head with a client. From time to time, especially in the beginning of establishing a coaching practice, you may miss something important in your screening process and accept a client who has more problems that you are equipped to deal with. Having your own coach, who has undoubtedly had the same experience, can help you create a plan to refer your client to someone else.

And sometimes you'll have a great client who is a good fit, but you get stuck. You've used every tool in your coaching toolbox, the client is doing what he is supposed to do, and he still isn't moving forward. Your coach can also help you determine ways to effectively work with this kind of client.

How to choose a coach

When looking for a coach, you'll have several variables to consider. The first is what area of weakness you need help with. It may seem pretty self-evident that you want a coach who coaches other coaches, but not necessarily. If you feel like you are lacking in one particular area, such as marketing, time management, or personal finance, you may decide to select a coach specializing in those niches.

Here are some tips to help you find a great coach:

- Ask what results their clients achieve and determine if some of those results fit your goals.
- Determine if the coach you're thinking of working with actually coaches you during your initial session.
- Mention a particular area where you feel challenged and ask the coach how he or she would approach working with you on that problem.
- Make sure they clearly outline how they will work with you. And remember, most good professional coaches will ask your client to sign—*perhaps just electronically but definitely to sign*—a contract acknowledging you understand their terms. (*Particularly the difference between coaching and psychotherapy*)
- WARNING: Good coaches have a clearly defined system for working with people. They don't just "go by the seat of their pants"
- Determine if you have creative chemistry with your potential coach.
- Shop for a coach the same way you might shop for a car... you don't have to buy the first one you see! Call around and talk to people until you find the right one for you.

- Trust your instincts. If you've been coaching yourself, you'll have a gut feeling about your potential coach. Go with it.

ICCA Coaching Services are Listed on the [Products and Services Page](#)

Feeding your soul is the final piece that contributes to holistic self-care. Be sure to add some ways to feed the soul to your week.

Conclusion

Self-care is essential to coaches because we tend to give a lot of ourselves to others, but everybody needs self-care. No matter what niche you coach, be sure to teach self-care techniques to your clients. Taking care of themselves will give them benefits that will help them to reach their goals more easily and to see their life with more clarity. A person who practices self-care is already a step ahead of those who don't, which makes coaching them easier and often more rewarding for both of you.

Be kind to yourself and you'll have all the tools you need to be the best coach you can be.



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Self-Care for Coaches



Sharon Livingston, Ph.D.

The
New York
Times

Entrepreneur

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CRAIN'S
NEW YORK BUSINESS

Originally trained as a psychologist, Dr. Glenn Livingston has helped literally thousands of clients. Along with his wife Sharon, he's sold consulting, teambuilding, and workshops to big names like AT&T, Nextel, Panasonic, Whirlpool, Novartis, Lipton, Colgate-Palmolive, Kraft, and Panasonic. Their work, research, and theories have been seen in major media publications like The New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, Crain's NY Business, AdWeek, America West, and more!

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