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Self-Care in College Students

Self-care is one of the most important things in one's everyday life, but it is also not something that everyone prioritizes. Especially college students, who are in a constant battle trying to juggle everything in life; from school to work and even personal life. After doing everything that needs to be done, they are only left with little to no time for themselves, much less have time to unwind and perform some sort of self-care. Self-care is extremely vital but what exactly is self-care? It can be a lot of things, but according to Morgan Turner in "What Does Self-Care Mean-And Why Is It Important?" she states that self-care is good for our well-being in different ways. This essay will highlight the positive effects of including self-care, the negative effects due to the lack of it, a helpful guide on prioritizing self-care, distinct types of self-care and the findings of a research study on senior college students.

So, what exactly are the kinds of self-care, according to Jed Foundation in their article "Self-Care for College Students" written by Kelly Burch, she mentions 4 types. Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. In each of these, she gives off a brief definition on what it is. Physical means taking care of your physical health such as "moving your body in a way that feels good to you" in which Robert Parmer includes solutions to. In his article "The Importance of Self-Care for College Students" he says to "keep personal hygiene in mind" such as simply brushing your teeth which can "help promote wakefulness." Not only that, but most of the time college students skip meals, so getting enough food and water is vital. Parmer recommends taking 6-8 glasses of

water per day. The second type of self-care mentioned is mental, which Kelly says includes “managing your mental health conditions.” The solution Parmer gives is getting rid of electronics for a day and “consider taking a break.” Emotional self-care is “learning to manage your emotions and feelings.” For emotional self-care Parmer states that a “change of scenery” can enhance motivation significantly.” The final form of self-care Kelly addresses is spiritual self-care in which finding an activity in which you feel “connected to yourself” can be beneficial. For this form of self-care, Parmer doesn’t give any solutions on what to try as he says it is “unique from person to person.”

Self-care may not seem to be important, but overtime, the lack of self-care can cause long-lasting side effects on the body mentally and physically. Samantha Smith in “The Negative Effects of Lack of Self-Care” mentions 4 distinct kinds of consequences it can cause. Beginning with physical consequences, Samantha states when “you fail to take care of yourself, your body begins to suffer.” The University of Massachusetts highlights this in “Self-care for college students: Learn how to prioritize your wellness,” there’s some adverse side effects that begin from the top. Lack of self-care can cause headaches, allergies, muscle tension, acne, and the risk of cardiovascular and autoimmune diseases, as well as the risk of hypertension. Secondly, the side effects it has mentally can cause emotional consequences. UMA (The University of Massachusetts) lists a couple of ways the lack of self-care can affect your mood which can cause a big toll on mental health. The lack of self-care can affect your mood by creating stress, restlessness, lack of focus, feeling overwhelmed, anger, and finally depression.

Social is the 3rd form of consequences Samantha addresses, she states that it can lead to a “lack of intimacy and closeness” It can push you away from family, friends, and even relationships all because self-care isn’t provided. In her article she shares how prioritizing

yourself above others will lead to “happier and more fulfilling relationships.” The final form of consequence is professional. Samantha states when self-care is neglected for extended periods of time, it can “lead to lower productivity” which can create “poor performance at work.” UMA provides the effects it can have on your behavior which can be shown not just at work but school as well. Those effects are angry outbursts, drug/alcohol misuse, social withdrawn, and over/undereating.

Elisa Martin from Siena College conducted a study on senior college students, in her article “College Student Self-Care: A Journey, Not a Destination” she chose 28 participants, 24 of which were female, and the remaining 4 males (Martin p.211). After the study, the findings were categorized into 5 themes, which were: Assessment of self-care practices, journey through the course, peer feedback, commitment to yourself, and self-care plans(p.211). In the section for Assessment of self-care, the answers of the students regarding self-care were shown. With some feeling that stress was doing too much, some had limited knowledge of self-care, and then some simply neglected self-care (p.212). In Journey through the course, the students reflected on their personal growth, in which some included: elements of mindfulness, self-awareness, feelings of peace, and prioritizing self-care, and recognizing the importance of physical/social health (p.212,213). Thirdly, in peer feedback, the students were able to receive feedback from their peers. In which they felt “appreciated” since they learned they weren’t alone in what they were going through; with one student saying “feedback was one of my favorite parts of this class. It allowed me to validate myself and my feelings” (p.213).

Continuing with the 5 themes, commitment to yourself is the 4th that was spoken on. The whole purpose of this section was to get the students to think about self-care and how important it is. As one student said, “I have learned how to care for myself when I am at that limit and that

it is just not waiting until you are less busy” (p.214). Finally, in self-care plans, the students were asked to think about forms of self-care relating physically, social, and professional. In physical care, students said: exercise, healthy eating, and sleep were ways to incorporate self-care. For social care, “all students had a goal of spending time with friends and or family” in which they said they would like to enjoy meals together and stay connected in some sort of way. The last point was professional, which students wanted to focus on a good life balance (p. 214).

In conclusion, self-care can come in different forms, and it doesn’t have to be anything extravagant. Your form of self-care can simply be what works with your schedule whether it be reading a book, sleeping, or exercising. It doesn’t matter if it is being performed sooner rather than later. It is extremely vital to remember the negative effects of lack of care, so any further issues can be avoided.

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