



Know! To Put Self-Care and Connection into Practice in the New Year

We've happily kicked 2020 to the curb and welcomed in 2021 with open arms. Now it is time to figure out what we want to make of this fresh, new year. If we learned anything in 2020, it is the importance of self-care and connection for a healthy mind and body. We may still be wearing masks, social distancing, and dealing with other COVID-related regulations, however, the time to get motivated, set new goals, and create joy is now. Children of all ages can and should be encouraged to do the same.

When it comes to New Year resolutions, experts say that 60% of people abandon them within the first six months, while another 25% do so after just one week. With that in mind, instead of getting stuck on repeat, let's focus on meaningful, achievable goals that promote well-being for ourselves and others.

Dr. Gail Matthews, a psychologist from California's Dominican University who led a study on goal setting says that a key to making it happen is to **WRITE IT DOWN and refer back to it often**. She found that people who put their goals on paper were 42% more likely to achieve them.

So, let's gather our children, with pens and papers in hand and get started. Two essential points for a healthy mind and body, as we all know, is to move our bodies and watch what we put into it. But there are a variety of other self-care items that can also be included on their 2021 checklists.

Here are some additional self-care ideas to get the creative juices flowing:

- **Talk to yourself with kindness.** We tend to be our own worst critic. Let's make a point to give ourselves the same break we give (or should give) others.
- **Try guided meditation.** It is shown to reduce stress and anxiety, while improving memory and attention span, along with a variety of other health benefits. There are endless apps and websites to get you started.
- **Remove negativity from your life or distance yourself from people or things that bring you down.** It may simply involve turning off the news, or not-so-simply involve a thorough examination of the company you've been keeping.
- **Let go of a grudge and forgive.** Just as it was freeing to let go of 2020, it is equally freeing to let go of a grudge. Forgiveness of others is actually a huge gift to yourself, mentally and physically.
- **Make your bed as soon as you get out of it.** This way you begin each day with an accomplishment already under your belt.

Once they've written down some ideas on taking care of themselves, it's time to come up with some ways to reach out and help others. This is a win for the giver and the receiver. The benefit to the receiver is obvious. However, research shows that helping others provides the giver with a sense of purpose and increased self-confidence. Experiencing that sense of connectedness with others can also improve mood, decrease stress, and even boost the immune system.

Here are some ways to make it a win-win:

- **Conduct a closet raid.** Go through your clothes and donate what you no longer need or want.
- **Be kind on social media.** Steer clear of gossiping, negativity, and unnecessary drama. Instead share words of affirmation; spread positivity. There is always someone out there feeling down. Be the person who lifts them up.
- **Send handwritten thank you notes to the important people in your life.** In the age of technology, handwritten letters have become a lost art. However, it is a genuine, thoughtful gesture that your loved ones will appreciate and cherish.
- **Start a new hobby that can also be shared with others.** If you take up baking, you can drop off your homemade goodies on a neighbor's doorstep; if you take up knitting or sewing, learn to make newborn hats or blankets and donate them to a local hospital; if you're interested in journalism or family ancestry, you can interview grandparents or other family members over the phone; you'll be documenting your family history and they're sure to love that you are interested in the stories they have to tell.
- **Do random acts of kindness.** Shovel someone's driveway, give your mom flowers for no reason, babysit for a struggling parent for free, offer to walk your neighbor's dog for them, create "get well" cards to send to patients in the hospital. Use your creativity—the possibilities are endless.

Encourage your child to come up with a checklist of around 10 meaningful, achievable goals for self-care and connection, then post it in a highly visible location where it can be looked at and referred to often. Be sure to offer your support and guidance in helping them make it happen. They should check off those boxes as they go. That incredible feeling of accomplishment is sure to help them keep going over the course of 2021.

Happy New Year!

*We at Prevention Action Alliance wish you and yours
good health and tremendous joy throughout 2021.*

Sources

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