



Savvy Self-Care Tips for Busy Professionals

“Self-care is never a selfish act –it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others. Anytime we can listen to the true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch.”
- Parker Palmer

It used to be (not so long ago) that the standard reply to the question “How are you?” was something like “Fine” or “Good, and you?” These days, almost nine times out of ten when I ask someone how they’re doing they reply with “Well, you know, I’m **so** busy. Between work, traveling, the kids... (you can fill in the blanks for yourself).”

In our fast-paced society it’s easy to get caught up in the busy pace that so many of us find ourselves riding the waves of life on. The majority of my coaching clients are business professionals or small business owners who are motivated and dedicated to achieving a certain level of success. It can be daunting for them to even consider taking a one-hour lunch break or taking a day off to celebrate the completion of a big project.

Yet, slowing down and taking time to refuel and recharge your body, mind and spirit is **essential**. And, there are many ways you **can** recharge without going on a week-long retreat or taking an extended beach vacation in Mexico. Below are some tips on how to recharge your batteries and “fill your tank” without breaking the bank or having to take a sabbatical from your job:

- **Nourish your body.** Sure, it’s easy to pick up a pastry and a latte at Starbuck’s on your way to work... or carry-out on your way home after a long day. If you’re eating out all the time, though, chances are you’re probably getting more fat and empty calories than your body needs. Not only does this contribute to feeling sluggish, it can also lead to health problems down the road, which are preventable. Take the time to grocery shop intentionally so you can have healthy food choices on hand. You’ll **feel** better when you’re eating better... and, you’ll also have increased energy to meet the multiple demands of your day!



- **Take time to just “be” with yourself.** When was the last time you gave yourself a couple hours of free, uninterrupted time to do whatever you felt like? Consider this time a “should”-free zone, a time when you don’t do anything you think you “should” or “ought” to be doing. Rather, this is a date you make with yourself where you get to do whatever you feel most **inspired** to do. Imagine (gasp!) going to a movie in the middle of the day or calling the spa to see if you can get in for a much-needed massage. The whole point is: you give yourself permission to have this time, with nothing planned, and then use it to do whatever feels most nourishing and inspiring to you in the moment.
- **Listen to your body.** Our bodies are a rich source of wisdom and will usually tell us what they need. We must be willing to listen, though. Heed signals such as extreme fatigue, irritability, pain of any kind, and try to adjust your lifestyle accordingly. How many times have you kept pushing and pushing yourself to get things done, even though your body is sending you clear signals that something is not okay? A little extra rest can go a long, long way in terms of managing stress and heading off a major illness.
- **Seek solitude.** Meditate. Pray. Walk in nature -whatever helps you slow down and reconnect with yourself. Even if you only have ten or fifteen minutes, you’ll be amazed at how replenishing a short “solitude” break can be for your body, mind and spirit.
- **Check your internal “fuel gauge” at least once a day.** Catch yourself **before** you start running on fumes! Think of it as preventive maintenance. Think of an actual fuel gauge and ask yourself: “Where am I at right now?” If you’re below half full or close to empty, stop right away and ask yourself what you need to bring your energy level back up. Some days this might be an invigorating workout, and on others a nap may be in order. Listen to what your body and your life are telling you.



- **Connect with good friends.** Make it a priority to connect with your friends, **especially** during busy or stressful times. Friendship not only provides moral support and a sense of connectedness, but there are also a number of health benefits associated with spending time with friends. According to recent research done at UCLA on women and friendship, having healthy and supportive friends can actually help you live better and longer. The benefits of spending time with friends is so positive that scientists at UCLA testify to that fact that it can reduce the symptoms of stress that most of us encounter on a regular basis.
- **Cultivate an attitude of gratitude.** One easy way to do this is to keep a daily gratitude journal where you list at least five things you're grateful for. According to Professor Robert Emmons, a psychology professor at University of California-Davis who has been studying gratitude for more than ten years, the practice of gratitude can increase happiness levels by around 25%. His research shows that keeping a gratitude journal for three weeks can create a positive effect that lasts six months or more. Dr. Emmons also has found that cultivating gratitude brings other health effects, such as longer and better quality sleep time.

Mindy Stern, LCSW is a Colorado-based life and retreat coach who brings just the right mix of warmth and wisdom to the coaching process. Through her inspiring, practical work, clients discover untapped resources within themselves and take new actions with surprising ease. Mindy's style of coaching and facilitating combines tender compassion with hard-edged truth from the heart – all delivered with humor, humility and joy.

Mindy nourishes herself with the beauty of her surroundings; living in a beautiful mountain town in SW Colorado with access to the running trails and ski slopes where she loves to recharge her batteries. Her love for, and connection with, nature helps her stay in touch with what she most values. Mindy herself embodies fitness, creativity, self-care and a love for life.

For more information on coaching or going on retreat with Mindy, visit <http://www.bridgescoaching.com>.