

Physical Self Care:



Physical self-care involves nurturing and maintaining the health of our bodies. It consists of enhancing your physical well-being through getting enough sleep, understanding, and properly feeding your body, engaging in movement or exercise, and attending to personal daily activities.

The foundation of self-care use by caregivers is related to tending to one's physical body (Butler et al., 2019). Caregivers often have shared that they often prioritize their child's needs at the expense of their own physical well-being, sacrificing sleep, comfort, physical activity, and nutrition. Physical needs are foundational as a self-care need but are simply vital to function. Addressing our physical needs can have a direct positive impact on the child we are caring for. There are many options for physical self-care activities, all of which have marked benefits on caregiver health and well-being (National Institute on Aging, 2023; Butler et al., 2019). Physical movement, in combination with breathing techniques such as yoga, was found to positively impact not only one's physical but also mental health (Swarbrick et al., 2021). Taking a walk, joining an exercise class, and even playing with a pet help to meet the human needs for movement and engagement and help to support overall well-being.

Table of Contents:



Physical Activity/Movement ----- 2

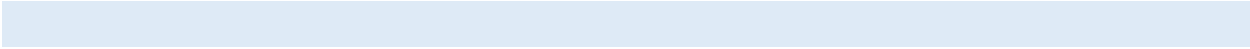
Small Moments of Physical Activity to Incorporate into Your Day ----- 3-5

- *Stretching ----- 3*
- *Walking ----- 4*
- *Cleaning/Chores ----- 4*

Tai Chi ----- 5

Yoga ----- 6-7

References ----- 9



Physical Activity/Movement



When we think of physical activity, we often think of a simple definition: any bodily movement that results in using energy. This definition usually relates physical activity to completing exercises, higher-intensity workouts, and going to the gym. Physical activity for bettering our overall health and well-being must be freely chosen during leisure time or consciously integrated into our daily routine (Piggen, 2020). When we take this approach, we can better understand and discover ways to implement physical activity as part of our daily self-care.

“Physical activity involves people moving, acting and performing within specific spaces and contexts, and influenced by a unique array of interests, emotions, ideas, instructions and relationships” (Piggen, 2020).

With busy lives as caregivers for children with complex needs, it is often difficult to feel like you have time or energy to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. There are several ways to implement physical activity into minutes within your daily routine to prioritize your self-care! You are likely incorporating physical self-care into your day, now you can become aware of the self-care you tailor to meet your needs!

Small Moments of Physical Activity to Incorporate into Your Day



Caregivers share that time, exhaustion, and limited ability to be away from the child they care for are primary barriers to additional physical self-care. Below are some options for physical activity ranging from 5 to 20 minutes that can be done with your child in the room but focused on you and your health or when you have 5 minutes to yourself.



Stretching:

Incorporating stretching into your day only takes several seconds to minutes and can benefit your overall health and well-being. Creating a timer or alarm in the morning to remind you as you wake up to complete stretches can be one example of fitting physical activity into your day. Allowing yourself to stretch out your daily pains or tightness is a great way to increase your health, but it is a good time to work on your emotional self-care.

Below are options via videos or visuals you can use that fits the time you have and self-care needs!



5 Minutes Morning Stretch - Smaller movements and simple stretches

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwUI2UIwHRQ>



5 Minutes Morning Stretches in Bed - Something we can do to incorporate into our daily routine as we wake up.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gH1Wx6byvUo>



10 Minutes Full Body Stretch - Combination of Stretching and using Yoga

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxuTCHJSers>



Walking



Walking is one of the simplest methods to improve and complete physical activity and increase self-care. Walking is something we do in our daily lives and it is easy to incorporate more into our daily routines! Walking has several benefits from reducing the risk for diseases, boosting our mood, increasing our bodies circulation, and can ease pain.

How to walk to increase caring for yourself and health:

- Allocating time in your daily day or routine
 - To use the benefits of walking, we need to allocate time into our daily routines. This doesn't have to be 30 minutes away from our child but small moments to walk talking 2 to 5 minutes
 - Examples include:
 - Walking to your mailbox, even if you don't have to drop off mail
 - If you have to grocery shop, parking farther away is a simple way to add more steps and increase walking into your daily routine
 - Walking your pet



Completing Daily Chores/Cleaning:

Completing any chore or cleaning requires energy and effort. Cleaning or completing daily tasks can be a form of physical activity having to bend, twist, and lift to complete tasks. If this is something you do within your day, you can bring awareness to the physical self-care you are completing and you can intensify the movement you do to increase the level of energy completed. For example, just putting away toys will likely require squatting, lifting, and twisting.

Tai Chi



Tai Chi is a gentle form of exercise helping our overall health and well-being by maintaining strength, balance, and flexibility. Tai Chi is a good form of self-care that can be built into routines and done as we continue to age.

Tai Chi typically will involve a warm-up, instruction and practice of tai chi and finish with what's called Qigong, which is translated to breath work.

To learn Tai Chi, videos are a wonderful tool to learn the motions that you can add to your day! This is also a great way to practice moments of mindfulness and connection to your self and body.



Tai Chi for Beginners - This video is a 15 min video with guided Tai Chi

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doKKV8PvF1s>



Tai Chi 5 minutes a Day - This is the first video but the individual has a series of 5 min Tai Chi if you want to learn more or have variety!

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEOS2zoyQw4>



Tai Chi 5 minutes a Day - This is the second video in the series

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEOS2zoyQw4>

Tai Chi Foundation

The Tai Chi Foundation offers live online free classes with the previously recorded session ready to use. In addition, on-demand series that appear to cost around \$20. This may be a great option to build a community or access Tai Chi, and you can play when you are available in your day!



Yoga



Yoga is a mind-body practice that builds strength and flexibility and promotes mindfulness and emotional/mental self-care. It benefits overall health and well-being by helping to manage pain, reduce stress, increase relaxation, regulate mood, and increase energy levels.

When we think of yoga, we often think of yoga mats and classes. While you can use a yoga mat and other tools to practice yoga, you do not need a mat, and you can implement poses to improve your self-care. You can add just 30 seconds to 30 minutes into your day!

Youtube has many, many videos that can fit the yoga practice you want. Below are a few that were selected that are guided that you can easily access.



10 Minutes Yoga Reset for Caregivers - Part of a series that emphasizes short standing yoga breaks in your day. You can listen to this for as long as you can with the time you have!

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1KTLSzXk6I



Yoga With Adriene

- This youtube channel has hundreds of yoga videos with a variety of duration and difficulty to use and add into your day!
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>

Evidence:



What yoga does to your body and brain - This video provides information if you are interested in the support and evidence surrounding yoga.

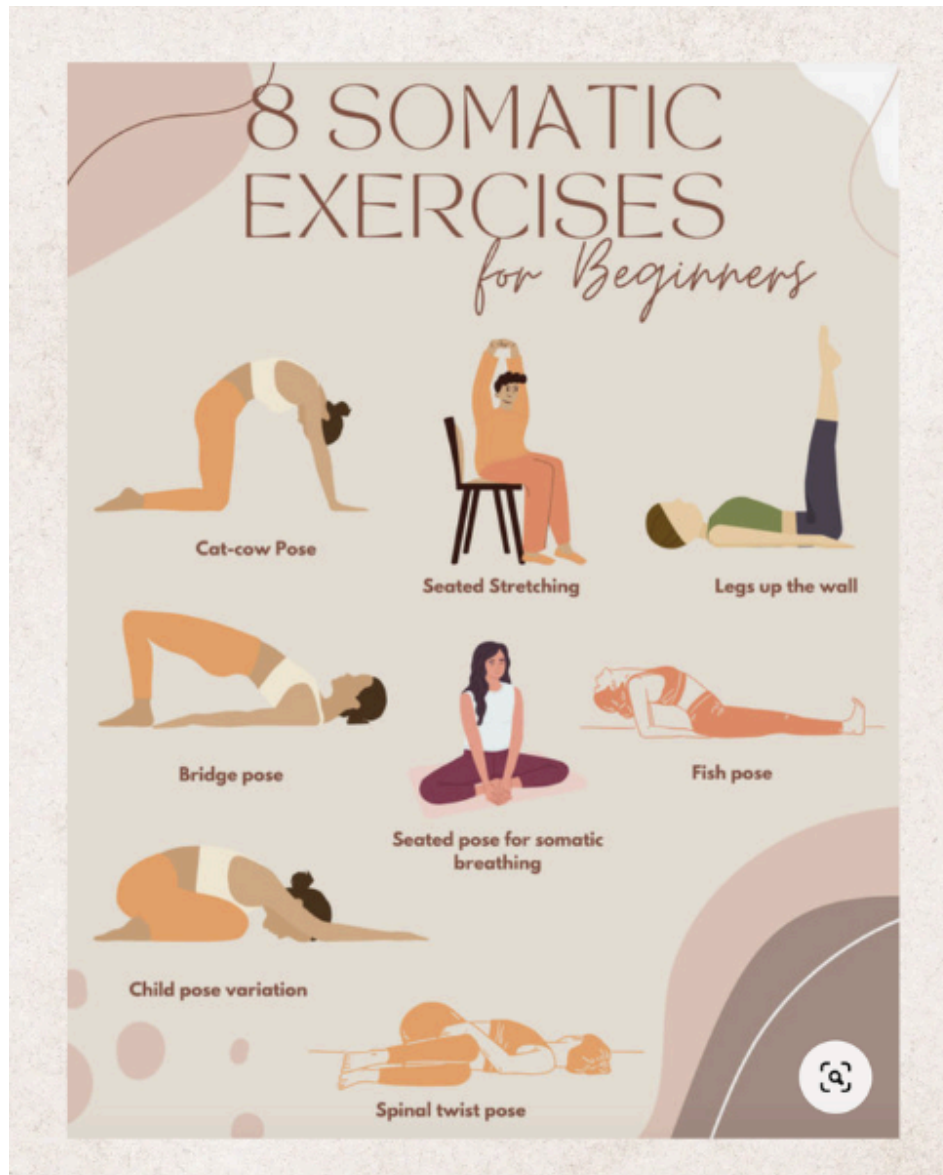
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8kV4FHSdNA

Yoga



Somatic Yoga is a gentle form of yoga that helps caregivers to reconnect with their bodies, reduce tension, and promote overall health and well-being. Below is a handout of 8 somatic exercises you can add into your day.

Example: Complete seated stretching and bringing awareness to your body right before or after you eat a meal. This small addition to your routine can have positive self-care benefits.





References:

Butler, L. D., Mercer, K. A., McClain-Meeder, K., Horne, D. M., &

Dudley, M. (2019) Six domains of self-care: Attending to the whole person. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 29:1, 107-124, DOI: 10.1080/10911359.2018.1482483

National Institute on Aging. (2023). *Taking care of yourself: Tips for caregivers*. National Institute of Health.

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/taking-care-yourself-tips-caregivers>

Piggin J. (2020). What is physical activity? A holistic definition for teachers, researchers and policy makers. *Frontiers in sports and active living*, 2, 72.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2020.00072>

Swarbrick, M., Susan, G. F., Spagnolo, A. B., & Nemec, P. B. (2021). Caregivers of people with disabilities: A program to enhance wellness self-care. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 59(5), 25-32. <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20210107-04>