

WELL-BEING SNAPSHOTS K-7

SELF-CARE FOR KIDS



	When I feel really upset, I can:
	• tell someone how I feel
	• take 5 deep breaths
	• say something nice to myself
	• ask to take a break
	• squeeze a pillow or something soft
	• pretend to blow up a balloon
	• ask for a hug
	• do 10 jumping jacks
	• ask for help to solve the problem



Karen Peters, RCC

The term “self-care” has become a buzzword, which can start to feel cliché, thus dismissing its importance. I’m going to attempt to convince you to make it matter again, and self-care is important even for kids.

True self-care isn’t about pampering, but about becoming present and grounded. It’s about having a reg-

ulated nervous system. A person’s nervous system can be dysregulated at any age and stage of development, so self care can be applied at any age.

Here are some essential ingredients for taking care of yourself and what this looks like for kids:

RESOURCE LINKS:

[Parenting in the Trenches Podcast, Series 5 Episode 2](#)

My Kids Locker, 3 part series on reducing anxiety, a podcast for kids:

[My Kids Locker 1](#)

[My Kids Locker 2](#)

[My Kids Locker 3](#)

1. **Play.** When playful, we counteract states of stress. Play requires the part of the brain that turns “off” when prioritizing staying safe, so activating that part of the brain through play, reassures the nervous system that you are safe in the present moment. Engage your child in physical, imaginative, or creative play—do a puzzle, wrestle, play a game, do a craft, build a fort.
2. **Use your body.** When under acute or chronic stress or feeling anxious, your body releases cortisol and adrenaline to prepare the body to fight or flee perceived danger. Those chemicals need to move through you in order to come back to a state of calm and moving your body can do that. Kick a soccer ball, climb at the playground, dance, do jumping jacks, or squeeze a pillow.
3. **Meet basic needs.** Sleep and eating routines are simple but powerful ways to regulate our nervous system’s baseline. Our survival instincts kick in and our tolerance for stress goes down when we are tired or hungry. Create positive rituals around bedtime and mealtimes to make those experiences predictable, inviting, and connective.
4. **Breathe.** When under stress, the body changes its breathing patterns, which changes heart rate and blood flow. You can take physiological steps to regulate your breathing. Practice taking slow, deep breaths with your child when they are calm so that you can use this skill when they get upset. ●