

Self-Care for Leaders Checklist



Less than 5 Minutes

Laugh

I'm serious. Go look up some kid jokes or dad jokes. Go look at a funny cartoon. Watch cats getting stuck in boxes. Whatever makes you laugh will help you reset your mind and your mood.

Trigger Happiness

We all have strong positive emotional associations to certain key triggers. I have one friend who plunges her hands into a basket of buttons collected by her grandmother as a stress release. When she does public speaking, she carries a small cluster of buttons to hold in her hand before she goes on stage. What is it for you?

- Taste – strawberries, vanilla ice cream, roasted peanuts, beef jerky? What makes you feel that the world is a happy and wonderful place?
- Touch – silk, the rough wood of a barn, being barefoot in the grass, nuzzling your beloved puppy. What touch makes you feel grounded and connected?
- Sound – what song makes you feel happy? Play just a few bars to remember that you can dance!
- Sight – what places or sights make you feel full of wonder and joy? The beach? The redwoods? Your kids or grandchildren? Go spend 3 full minutes JUST looking at those things.
- Smell – the strongest connection to emotion of all. What smell transforms your mood? Roses? Vanilla? Fresh hay? Find a way to have that scent around you – a candle or essential oil, even a scratch and sniff book will do. Spend a full minute inhaling and see how that resets your mind.

Fire Drill

We all know that you should have your fire drill in place BEFORE the fire hits. That's why it's a great idea, when you ARE feeling good, to write down things that bring you joy – activities, sights, smells, sounds, whatever it may be. Have that list ready for your fire (that time when you feel sad, unempowered or stressed), Then do ANY ONE of the things on the list. You'll be surprised how taking one small action can turn the tide!

5-15 Minutes

Change your Environment

Take a walk around the block, or just go to the backyard and take your shoes off. Feel the earth beneath your feet, the air around you. Hear the birds. Even listening to the rain can give you that little break you need.

Body Reset

Lay on the floor with your calves resting on a chair at a 90-degree angle. Breathe. Feel the support of the floor on your back. Relax in knowing that you don't need to do anything to receive that support, it's already there. Let a breath out, then let the next breath come back in. Notice how your body will always give you that support. Release tension. You don't need to do anything to support yourself in this moment. Let go.

Dance Party

Yes, I'm serious. Find a song from your youth and play it. That song you used to dance to in High School. Play it. LOUDLY. Dance or just walk around the block listening to it. Dance in your imagination. You're amazing. You know it!

Virtual Hugs

One of the big things we are all missing right now is human contact. Fun fact! Did you know that your mind doesn't distinguish between a highly imagined experience and a real one? Ever had trouble falling asleep after watching a scary movie? Nothing happened to you! It was all in your mind. Use this process in reverse to have a happy mood. Watch 3-5 minutes of kids hugging, people snuggling animals, animals snuggling animals. Horses giving kisses to dogs. Seriously, set your time and go get some virtual hugs!

15 Minutes or More

Forest Bath

The Japanese have a term for spending time in nature, called "a forest bath." Research has shown that spending 2 hours in nature once a week has a profound effect on our bodies. Take the kids, take everyone! [Go to the beach, go to the park, go to wherever makes you happy.](#)

Binge Comedy

This is one of my favorite tricks. Now that we can watch comedy shows old and new pretty much whenever we want, it's amazing how spending an hour or two just laughing at whatever makes you laugh will brighten your day and lift your mood.

Binge "Things that Make Sense"

When the world feels especially chaotic, I love watching Law & Order, Criminal Minds, any detective show. Or even reading Sherlock Holmes. First, there's the mystery, which gets my mind off things, and then there's the "bad guys get punished, good guys turn out ok" aspect of things. In the real world, that doesn't always happen. I find it comforting to seek out stories where justice is served.

Family Fun

It's easier to get into the mood when you include others. Can you do a dance party with your family? Eat breakfast for dinner? Have a picnic in the hall? If you're on your own, how about a Zoom costume party, or playing games with others?

Focus on a Friend

Call or make a Zoom date with a friend for the sole purpose of making that person feel special and heard. Take the time to really give them all those compliments you give them when they're not around. How often do we really listen to others for the purpose of making someone else feel heard, appreciated or understood? It's magic because the feeling works both ways.

Game Time!

Not everyone enjoys talking with others as much as I do (ha ha ha). Sometimes we just need a distraction. Challenge a friend or family member to a board game, (Battleship, Hungry Hippos), do crafts together (at the same time on Zoom), coloring, building a Lego pirate ship, go fishing – the rule is that it has to be FUN for no reason other than it's fun. Try this at home!