THE MANLY MAN'S GUIDE TO SELF-CARE

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Dudefluencer Presents

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Female influencers dominate the realm of self-care. Too often, men are taught to think that self-care is feminine. Unfortunately, that means a lot of men aren't getting their needs met because they are worried about being excluded from the masculinity club. Let me be the first to tell you men's self-care is just as important as women's self-care.

Men's self-care isn't much different than women's: we love being pampered, we love feeling healthy, and we love relaxation. The only problem is that we don't know how to ask for it or that because women have dominated the self-care space that the whole movement is wrongly stigmatized as a woman's thing. But we men at Dudefluencer know a thing or two about men's self-care, and we want to tell you that there's nothing more manly than taking care of your mind and body.

Self-care is all about taking care of yourself, but it shouldn't be just a once in a while thing. "Treat yo self" is a great catchphrase, but if we want to maximize our wellness, there are a lot of men's self-care activities that you can be doing daily. We want to create a generation of healthy men and healthy men practice self-care.

WHY WE CARE ABOUT SELF-CARE

Our body's primary stress hormone is cortisol. Most people have heard of the hormone because it's what causes our "Fight or Flight" instinct. Still, cortisol also has a vital role in our sleep cycle, boosting energy during stressful times, and keeping inflammation down. Usually, when faced with a threat, our cortisol levels shoot up and then come down after everything has passed.

But if those levels never come down, we are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, sleep problems, weight gain, and a myriad of other issues we don't want. So part of the self-care movement's goal is to find ways to lower cortisol levels daily because no one deserves to be in pain.

Men's self-care isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to stress. For some men, exercise and nature walks are enough to equalize ourselves, whereas others do better with meditation and being a part of a community. This manly man's guide to men's self-care is meant to help provide

different options while also de-stigmatizing the notion of self-care for men.

BODY FOCUS

Before you say anything, picture this: you're in round 5 of your fantasy football auction draft that started two hours late on a Wednesday evening. You've got a glass of wine (or beer or Gatorade, doesn't matter) in one hand, your fantasy football mock draft list in the other while neck-deep in a bathtub of bubbles. What's better than an auction fantasy football draft? An auction fantasy football draft in a bubble bath.

And that's why it's important men's self-care takes the time to focus on our bodies. Whether it's eating well, exercising, or just taking extra time to groom yourself, focusing self-care on our bodies is one of the most rewarding things you can do for yourself.

THE PIZZA AND BEER MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY GUY.

It's Thursday morning. A half-eaten box of Mellow Mushroom Mighty Meaty is sitting on your coffee table. Your stomach is making noises, you feel lethargic, and most importantly, some weird smells are coming from your butt. At 20, eating an entire large pizza by yourself was nothing. Now, it's doomsday for your metabolism.

You realize it's time for a change, and one of the best ways to improve men's self-care is by taking care of what you eat. That means veggies on top of vegetables on top veggies. Eating healthy can be delicious if you have the right options and recipes available to you. No need to completely give up meat, it's just time to add some differentiation to your daily diet of chicken tenders, meatball subs, and pizza.

WHAT TO DO

Start slow - One of the biggest mistakes folks make when changing their diet is that they decide to go all-in with whatever latest trend making its way through the internet. Instead of making immediate, swift, and drastic changes (unless your doctor tells you otherwise), start slow with your new nutritious diet.

The key to a successful diet change is small, gradual steps. This way, you can still enjoy the foods you love while adding a whole bunch of healthier options too. Also, if you break your diet, you're less likely to feel like you failed if everything is gradual. Adding more fruits and vegetables to your pallet can be difficult. Think of it like adding, not subtracting.

Find the right recipes - Hello, my name is Garrett. I love pizza, good flavor, and I hate all vegetables. Nice to meet you.

When my wife decided to become a vegetarian, my love of food flashed before my eyes. But quickly, through the help of some excellent recipe guides, I found a bunch of vegetarian meals that I now love more than their meat equivalents. Take, for example, this vegetarian chili

recipe, no meat whatsoever, but the right mix of tomato and spices provide the same delicious flavor. It's easy to get frustrated eating vegetables if your only options include a lentil burger, boiled veggie dogs, or anything involving mushrooms.

I'm going to include a couple of useful resources below that offer easy-to-make, healthy, delicious recipes. Eating well doesn't need to be a pain in the ass, and it doesn't mean you need to sacrifice your love of flavor. Next time you're craving a specific dish, try and find a healthier version of it online and see how it goes. The taste might surprise you.

Frozen foods get a bad rap - Americans eat out 2-4 times per week on average. Not only is that costly, but frequently it's unhealthy. One big reason why we order take out so often is that we are in a rush: maybe we're coming home late from work, or the kids are staying after school today. No matter the reason, it's usually easier to just visit GrubHub and have your dinner waiting for you at the door.

But one thing to consider is frozen foods. I'm not talking about Hot Pockets or Bagel Bites. Companies like

Amy's, Evol, and Kashi are producing high-quality frozen meals made from natural ingredients. When faced with the choice of ordering out, or a frozen meal, sometimes the healthier option is sitting right there in the freezer. There's always meal-planning as an option, but next time you're at the grocery store, take a look at the frozen food aisle and pick up a couple of healthy dishes to add to your cuisine.

THE I NEED TO EXERCISE GUY.

You've been quarantined since March. Your greatest physical achievement in the last two months has been that walk-off homer you hit in MLB The Show 2020 ranked seasons. Your couch now has a permanent impression of you on its cushion. And obviously, you don't remember the last time you put on pants. That's okay; we've all been there these past couples of months.

You realize after looking at your Apple Watch that over the past week, you've accumulated 2,367 steps total that it might be time to start fitting in some physical exercise between Zoom meetings. Men's self-care means taking care of our bodies, and there's no more way to do that other than moving around a bit more. Whether you're a beginner or a pro, it doesn't matter as there are plenty of options available to you.

WHAT TO DO

Nature walks - I know everyone has said this, but they're right, going out for a nice walk through nature might be precisely what you need. And yes, everyone else is also probably out walking your favorite trail too. No matter, visit All Trails to find a couple of new hikes that you have never visited before or hit up an old favorite.

Studies have shown that walks through nature are essential to men's self-care. They allow you an opportunity to get exercise while also exercising your mind. If you're feeling a bit overwhelmed, anxious, and in need of some movement, take some time for yourself outside. Breathe in the fresh air, even play in the water. It's the best self-care you can give yourself right now.

Home exercise routines - Exercising at home no longer needs to be cringy or something your grandmother does. Since streaming video has taken off in the last ten or so years, so has the modern in-home exercise movement. Traditional workout videos like P90X or Insanity remain popular, but what's even better are the more unique options like Buff Dudes Workouts Superhero Workouts.

Their bodies might not look like mine, but their personality is welcoming to viewers of all shapes.

Maintaining an exercise routine doesn't just help your physical body, but it helps your mind too because it releases endorphins in your brain. Endorphins help with depression symptoms, managing stress, and even decrease cortisol, which is one of the biggest reasons why we're focusing on self-care. You don't need to start like the Buff Dudes or Shaun T; begin where you feel comfortable. Remember that everyone needs to start their exercise journey somewhere. It's not important where you start, you must put in the effort, to begin with.

Find a physical activity that you love - I've never really been a traditional exercise guy. I hated working out when I was a high-school wrestler, and I didn't enjoy it when I trained for a marathon. But put a wiffleball bat in my hands, and I'll go outside right now. And that's why if you're someone like me, it's imperative to find a physical activity that you enjoy doing.

That might mean joining an adult men's soccer league or lacing up those cleats for a return to the baseball diamond. Not only will you be exercising, you'll also be

building a community of friends. I met one of my closest friends in a wiffleball league, and quite a few others playing recreational soccer. A lot of gyms have basketball courts where you might find a pickup game to join, or visit Meetup.com to find a local group of people to play whichever sport you want to start. Exercise is a whole lot easier when you're forgetting that you're exercising.

THE "I'M ALWAYS TIRED" GUY.

Late nights binging *Tiger King* only to get sucked in by an all-nighter playing *The Last of Us* in preparation for the release of the sequel has all led to the same thing: your sleep cycle is fucked. You go to bed at 3 A.M., wake up at noon, and struggle not to take naps in the middle of the workday. And you have no idea what's going to happen once you're required to start going back into the office.

Men's self-care is reliant on you getting a good night's rest. You're more productive, more energized, and more likely to live longer. We used to fight sleep as children, and now as adults, we must realize how crucial good sleep is. Not just a couple naps during the afternoon to catch you up, but get yourself some of that deep-sleep goodness. With a little bit of work (and a couple of long nights in between), your sleep schedule will be back on track.

WHAT TO DO

Bedtime routine - Remember when we were kids, our parents would make sure we had a bath, maybe a small snack, and they'd read to us before we closed our eyes? Our parents were trying to give us good sleep habits (and probably get themselves a couple of extra hours of sleep as well) from the start. Unfortunately, as we get older, those routines start to fade away, and we end up struggling to stay awake during the day.

But it's never too late to re-start your bedtime routines. There are a few things you should avoid doing before putting your head on the pillow: using electronics while in bed, drinking tea, and most definitely working out. By developing a simple routine, you're much more likely to fall asleep at a reasonable hour and stay asleep. Maybe sneak in some time to finish that book you've been reading or focus some of that energy on some journaling. The first step in men's self-care should be getting your sleep schedule back on track.

Reset your sleep pattern - A smooth start to getting your sleep schedule back to normal is by scheduling a specific time to wake up every morning. For me, I set my alarms to 8 A.M. every day. If I stay up too late, I face

the consequences of being exhausted the next day, and without naps, it allows me to fall asleep at a more reasonable hour that night. There are a ton of different sleep guides like this one from James Clear.

Consistency is critical when resetting your sleep schedule.

Spend time outdoors - Who would've thought spending time out in the woods would be so important to men's self-care? Studies show that if you're struggling with your sleep cycle, there are benefits to camping. The whole idea is based around our circadian rhythm, basically our daily schedule, and how our body's melatonin levels. Those who spent time camping were found to have lower earlier in the evening to coincide with the sunset and rise earlier in the morning.

My experience with this phenomenon is similar to what Erin Berger described in her essay, "I Slept Outside For A Week, And It Changed My Life." Rachel and I rented a cabin out in the woods; no cell phone service, no internet access. And for a couple of days, I found myself better rested, and my sleep schedule adjusted to the sunrise and sunset. The summer's heating up, so now is the perfect

time to plan that camping trip to get your body back in shape.

THE WAY TOO HAIRY GUY.

At the beginning of the month, your friends compliment your new beard. A week or two later, they start to ask how long your planning on growing your beard out. Two months later, your beard is dangling below your V-neck t-shirt, your upper lip still tastes like Lucky Charms cereal and milk from this morning's breakfast, and your friends now think your beard is disgusting.

Men's self-care includes giving ourselves beauty treatment. You want to look your best to feel your best, so why not get some help. Facials, manicures, and pedicures aren't just for women. The beauty industry space has been dominated by women, often turning men away for fear of looking feminine. Dudefluencer is here to tell you that you've been missing out, and the next time you're looking for some self-care time, think about making a reservation at the spa or for a massage.

WHAT TO DO

Get a facial - Taking proper care of your skin should be just as important as getting a good haircut. Thankfully the days of men being afraid of facials are starting to fade away as more men's self-care treatments call for treatments designed to take care of your skin. Facials are great for removing underlining acne problems like blackheads, exfoliating your skin, and are also super relaxing.

Men's Health suggests getting a facial every four to six weeks, and we agree. We love being pampered, and there are few ways better suited for a calming afternoon than a good facial. Don't worry about not looking masculine- more men than ever are making appointments at spas and making sure their skin stays fresh.

Get a pedicure - After two days of walking throughout Walt Disney World, Rachel suggested a trip to a nearby spa for a pedicure. I scoffed, I complained, and eventually succumbed to going with her. And boy, was I missing out on one of the greatest forms of self-care ever. It's part massage, part foot-cleansing, and all amazing. Before my wedding, Scott and I went to my favorite

barber to get haircuts and pedicures. Scott freaking loved it.

The first step in a pedicure is soaking your feet. Think of it as a bubble bath for your toes. Next comes the clipping of your toenails and cuticles. And men, we all know we have some ugly-ass toes. And after all of that treatment, you get a foot massage. If you're on your feet all day at work, or just got back from a long hike, there's nothing better in the world than a good pedicure.

Trim that hair - Let's face it, dudes, we're hairy. Facial hair, chest hair, back hair. You name a body part, and we probably have hair on it (gross). That's why companies such as Manscaped have become so popular. Men's self-care and grooming skills go hand in hand. Maybe it's time to pick up that manscaping kit to trim those nether regions or visit The Art of Shaving for some new after-shave/ shaving foam.

Grooming is one of the purest forms of self-care, but an essential one at that. For me, a sign of my depression sinking back in usually is when I grow my beard and hair out. The longer it is, the less likely I have the motivation to take care of myself. But once I give myself a good ol'

trim, it's almost like a weight has been lifted off of me. Go online, get yourself a nice self-grooming product, and go to town. You'll feel great afterward, we promise.

MIND FOCUS

You find yourself lost in thought at work; your eyes stare out the office window as you drift in and out of focus. You've been working 60 hour weeks, and something just feels off. You miss the quiet self-reflection of the woods, or maybe you stopped your daily meditation sessions. All that matters now is that you take care of yourself. You've taken care of your body; now it's time to give some self-care to your mind.

Men's self-care isn't just about grooming or exercise, but it's also about giving yourself time for personal growth. Whether you're dealing with increased anxiety, overwhelming stress, or just in need of a brain-rest, there is so much you can do to a quick mind-reset.

THE LOST GUY.

You're working a dead-end job with the same routine. Wake up. Work. Eat. Sleep. Repeat. You're bored with life. You find yourself surrounded by people all the time when all you need is just a little more alone time. You don't even remember the last time you took an hour, a day, a whole week to get your head on straight.
An essential element of men's self-care is to take some time for self-reflection. Create something new. Remind yourself of what/who you love. And most importantly, take this self-reflection time to practice a little self-love. Men's self-care is all about taking care of ourselves, and treating ourselves with kindness is one of the most efficient ways of doing it.

WHAT TO DO

Schedule time for yourself - I know this sounds simple, but it's the most important step. There's a reason why going out into nature keeps coming up over and over again. Being outside is the perfect place for self-reflection because you can turn off all of your electronics, find some peace, and just sit with yourself.

But sometimes it's hard convincing ourselves that we need something a little more than a mental health day.

So if you're feeling out of touch, or looking for some more in-depth answers about yourself, give yourself a day off. Heck, if you have the ability, take a week off. Blocking off that time is the first step to lowering stress, improving productivity, and providing better balance in your life.

Write in a journal - Most people had journal time in elementary school. It was the one time of the day where you could write about anything you want without ever getting in trouble (most of the time). Now, as an adult, you don't even remember the last time you picked up a pen and a notebook and started writing. But if we're looking at opportunities for introspection, journaling is one of the best ways to give yourself time to think.

While most of us do our writing on our phones or computers, there's a different connection we make as we write out words on paper. That's why I recommend getting physical notebooks or journals. And while he didn't keep up with it afterward, Matt D'Avella did a great video on 30 days of journaling that you should

check out. As for ideas for yourself, record a morning check-in to get your day started on the right foot. Maybe pair it up with your new sleep routine; it's a perfect way to reflect on your day and avoid electronics before bed.

Meditation - I've already written about how 30 days of meditation changed my life, and it might be time for you to give it a shot as well. Tony Robbins does a version of meditation/breathing exercises every day, as does Michael Jordan to help balance himself out for the day. These exercises are all about taking time for ourselves to relax and find our center. If you're struggling to figure out your purpose, I'd highly suggest giving meditation a shot.

And what's great about meditation is that it lasts as long or as little as you'd like. If you only have a couple of minutes in the morning, do it up. Even better is adding it to your nighttime routine (see how many of these ideas and thoughts can be connected). Remember, though, meditation is about taking time for yourself.

THE LONELY GUY.

You've been stuck in quarantine for weeks; you haven't seen your friends, your family, or even your co-workers. You find yourself turning down plans to go out, and you find yourself self-isolating. You already know that these are the first signs of depression, but it's so hard to pick up the phone and reach out to someone. It's okay to feel lonely, and it's okay to want to see your friends.

Men's self-care sometimes requires other people too. That's why you need to make sure you're part of a community of people that support each other. The hardest part of the quarantine for some men is that they've had to come to grips with the fact that they lack close male friendships, and it's nearly impossible to build them while stuck inside. Below are a couple of options that you can try while in quarantine, and for when your state loosens up.

WHAT TO DO

Meet up with friends (in person) - Yes, I know. This usually is very simple. Call them up, go out to a bar or restaurant, and there's your social time for the week. Now that most places are still closed up (or limited capacity) meeting up with your friends isn't as easy. It's time to think outside the box. The good news is that the weather outside is getting warmer, which means it's perfect social distance weather.

But if you're feeling lonely, it might not be enough to just be around people again. Take this opportunity to tell your friends how you've been feeling. If you're looking to have real conversations, check out this guide from Man Enough that provides a list of conversation starters. I've come to realize that my closest friendships didn't just happen; they took work to grow like any healthy relationship. If you're feeling lonely, I know it might sound difficult now, but opening up to people you love (and who love you back) will pay dividends in the future.

Online men's support group - I've talked about my appreciation for men's support groups many times before on Dudefluencer. I truly believe that joining up with a group of like-minded men to build relationships, increase

communication, and find support to become better men is essential to men's self-care.

Todd Adams, the founder of Tribe Men's Group, told Dudefluencer, "We create the space for an authentic conversation. It is rare in circles of men at the bar or on our kid's soccer field to have anything other than a conversation that stays 'safe.' In a men's group- we simply encourage each other to tap into how they are feeling feelings and create a space for those feelings to be expressed. It's all about supporting and being supported." What's great is that a lot of men's support groups are being developed online so that you can still find camaraderie and friendship while inside your home.

Schedule events - Every Friday, my friends and I sit down and watch professional wrestling together over Zoom. Would it be better in person? Of course. Does it work for now? Absolutely. But what makes it work so well for us is that we all have this time booked out and scheduled so that nothing interrupts it. Waiting for friends to reach out to you might not be enough; you might need to take the time to plan things yourself.

For someone like me, scheduling time with my friends is significant. That's why I also got groups of people together for organized sports or weekend Madden tournaments. I needed to know that there was going to be time for my friends and me to spend together. Without that time booked, everything is always up in the air.

THE OVERWORKED GUY.

You find yourself once again, stuck in the office. Leftovers from lunch lie on your desk on top of manilla folders filled with more paperwork. You told yourself that you'd be done working late, but that was two weeks ago before your boss mentioned that if you kept up the hard work, you'd be in line for a promotion. Hustle culture is calling.

With our economy in flux, it makes sense that we focus on work as a way to feel comforted. But the line between being overworked and healthy is too often being crossed because we don't know when to stop. If you're looking for men's self-care advice, take a look at your work schedule. Are you making sure you eat enough? Sleep enough? Have time for yourself enough? To be the best version of you, you might need to reflect on your work habits.

WHAT TO DO

Stop Hustling - Hustle culture is dangerous: it can have adverse effects on your personal life, relationships, and health if not kept in check.

Milena Regos from Unhustle told Dudefluencer, "Social media influencers, your parents, your school, society's norms demand that you work long and hard to succeed. However, the latest science shows that long work hours don't make us more productive; it makes us less productive. Not only that but when you work 16-18 hour days for long periods, you end up exhausted. You are sleep-deprived. You are not taking care of your well-being. You have no time for yourself. And all of this adds up to burnout. When you are tired and stressed out, there's no way you are getting into a state of high performance. But if you are well-rested, then you can get into a state of flow - and by doing so, you can get more done in less time. So you can still have a life and perform well at work."

Talk about it - Men struggle to talk about their emotions, and it's even more difficult in the workplace where masculinity still reigns over many offices. But if you're feeling stressed or overworked, you must talk

about it with someone. Maybe a friend, your partner, or even a therapist. There's nothing wrong admitting that you are burnt out. This is the first step to getting yourself out of dangerous habits.

Combine this with working on your sleep cycle, or self-reflection, and you'll realize that men's self-care routines often utilize more than one technique. So if you're struggling at first to talk about burnout with your friends, maybe take up journaling for a little bit to get your thoughts put together. Admitting that you're burnt out does not make you a failure, it makes you a stronger man.

Place different expectations on ourselves - As men, we are taught early on that it's not masculine if you're not the breadwinner of your household. That means working long hours, sometimes at the detriment to our health. What needs to change is our expectations of ourselves in the workplace. You can be a good employee and still not overwork yourself.

That means it's okay to take a mental health day for yourself, or even longer. Not going into work to rest your

mind is a good thing. No one should be stigmatized for working on themselves.

CONCLUSION

Men's self-care is essential to healthy and fulfilling lives. So take some time this week to think about yourself, what do you need most to feel more robust about your life. Take a look at these tips and suggestions, and remember, they're not one-size-fits solutions. Something that works for you might not be on this list.

We just want you to take care of yourself.