

Be Self Aware to Self-Care: Tips to Care for Yourself

Opinion / **Published On September 28, 2021 07:11 AM /**

Staff Consortium **September 28, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



Commonly people go on with their daily routines and their lives without missing a beat. Getting ready for work, preparing kids for school, or caring for a loved one is like second nature. Often, they do not stop to assess how they feel, and some even feel guilty doing so, even during these times of the pandemic. Everything and everyone else is a priority, although many of us now work from home.

Everyone should evaluate their emotions and feelings to know more about where they are physically and mentally. It should be a priority, yet it is not practiced regularly due to the other things that we put first in our lives. National Self-Care Awareness Month in September is an excellent time to check in with ourselves, although we should not wait until now to peek into how we are doing.

Self-awareness allows us to be aware of our behavior and feelings. Self becomes the focus of attention, and we work to put ourselves first. When we know how we feel, we can seek ways to care for ourselves.

Neglecting ourselves can impede us from caring for other people. It is a common issue and struggle for Caregivers. In the Virgin Islands, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has shared the importance of self-care, especially during these times. Taking care of ourselves also helps our bodies and minds be better prepared to combat illness, something we must work for as we continue the fight against the prevalent COVID-19 virus and its variants, and as we work to end the pandemic. Staying up to date with our vaccines is one way. The importance of vaccinating against the COVID-19 virus is prevalent all across the nation and in the territory. Learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines and their distribution in the VI by visiting aarp.org/vivaccine. Residents in the VI can also call the VITEMA Hotline at (340) 777-VACS (8227) or visit the VI Department of Health website at vidoh.org or covid19usvi.com to make an appointment online.

Other vaccines that are important to check on are those for Influenza, Pneumonia, and Shingles. Contact the VI Department of Health by visiting their website at vidoh.vi.gov or calling (340) 718-1311 in St. Croix or (340) 774-9000 in St. Thomas and St. John to learn where you need to go to verify that your vaccines are up to date.

Caring for ourselves in these times also involves our physical and mental state. Stress and anxiety can have significant impacts on our well-being. A study conducted by AARP in April found that many adults ages 50-plus say "they have been bothered with anxiety and/or have little interest or pleasure in doing things," and many have been feeling depressed. Ways to cope with the two ills include:

- Calming techniques – Breathing can help with relaxation
- Exercise – Walking at least 30 minutes a day
- Stay connected – Connect with family and friends as much as needed. Talking to others can help keep the mind off worries and helps not to feel overwhelmed.

Self-care also involves recognizing when we cannot do everything that is planned or required of us the same way, all the time, and asking others for help. Family members and friends can be a network of support. They can help you take time off when you really need it. A plan or schedule can help ensure everyone who becomes part of your network is clear on the activities, dates, and times when they will lend a hand to assist you. Caregivers especially can get respite care when they join a program. In the Virgin Islands, caregivers can visit the aarp.org/caregiving website for a guide and resources or contact the VI Department of Human Services Family Caregiving Assistance Program at (340) 774-0930 ext. 4484 on St. Thomas/St. John and at (340) 772-7100 ext. 7056 on St. Croix. You may also visit their website at www.dhs.gov.vi.

Self-care makes us healthier and happier. It goes along with that old saying, "we can't take care of others if we are not healthy," and the message from the flight attendant or the video as you board an airplane that instructs us to place the oxygen mask over our head first before we do so for the child. We must breathe first before we can save the lives of others. Making ourselves first is a practice we can begin to improve on today. This September, make it a point to learn more ways to prioritize yourself. Visit aarp.org/health and aarp.org/vi for more tips on healthy living.

Submitted by AARP USVI

© Viconsortium 2024