

## Get Creative With Your Self-Care

August is National Wellness Month. Practicing self-care this month, and always, is one of the best ways that we can keep ourselves mentally, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually healthy. Daily calories do not provide the energy necessary to make us feel truly fulfilled; instead, activities focused on positivity, motivation and purpose are important ingredients in the recipe that is our overall satisfaction and happiness.

**Consider these fun, inventive ways to put wellness first and prioritize self-care this month.**

**Take a walk as a nature photographer.** Upgrade your nature hike by bringing along your digital or Polaroid camera and taking time to capture the beautiful moments around you.

**Cook a new, nutritious recipe.** You could seek out a healthier alternative to a childhood favorite meal or simply try adding something completely new to your rotation.

**Create a scrapbook.** Focus on the things, places and people that bring you joy and purpose by crafting a scrapbook of some of your happiest memories.

**Go seasonal fruit picking.**

Melons, berries, peaches and apricots are all at their peak season this month; find a nearby orchard and bring home some sweet, flavorful produce.

**Invite a friend to a picnic in the park.** Pack a basket of nutrient-filled snacks and take your meal outside on a sunny afternoon. You could put together a playlist to be the soundtrack for your outing, or just spend time catching up with a valued friend.

**Embark on an outdoor scavenger hunt.** Visit a nearby scenic area and bring along a kid-friendly nature scavenger hunt [list](#), or head to the beach and see how many different seashells you can collect.

**Take your activity on wheels.**

Ditch the normal walk around the neighborhood for a bike ride or roller skates and bring a bit of fun to your exercise routine.

**Look up.** Getting up early to watch the sunrise or staying up late to stargaze are great opportunities to mindfully ground yourself in the present moment.

In the wellness world, self-care has shifted from a helpful addition to a critical part of any healthy lifestyle. Don't be afraid to put yourself first: it's one of the most powerful tools at our disposal when it comes to living as our happiest, healthiest selves.

"50 Best Self-Care Ideas for Mental and Physical Wellbeing," Good Housekeeping, Accessed July 23, 2024.



# SIMPLE WAYS TO *relax*

In our busy lives, stress often becomes an unwelcome companion as we juggle work, family, and personal commitments. However, adding relaxation techniques to your routine can reduce stress, lower blood pressure, improve focus, ease pain, improve sleep quality and more! Try these simple techniques to help you live stress-free:



**DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES** Focusing on your breath can help clear your mind of distractions. Try diaphragmatic breathing by inhaling deeply through your nose, allowing your abdomen to rise, and then exhaling slowly through your mouth. Repeat this a few times and you'll feel more relaxed and centered in no time!



**MINDFULNESS MEDITATION** This technique encourages present-moment awareness and is great for reducing anxiety and stress. Start by finding a comfortable quiet place to sit, close your eyes and focus on your breath. Let your thoughts come and go. Start with a few minutes a day and increase the time as you get more comfortable.



**VISUALIZATION** Take your mind on a mental vacation by imagining soothing scenes, places or experiences and engaging all your senses. Spend a few moments immersing yourself in this calming environment. Visualization can help boost your mood and reinforce a positive vision of yourself!



**YOGA AND TAI CHI** Yoga and tai chi are wonderful ways to connect with your body and mind. Both practices combine deep breathing with a series of postures and flowing movements to leave you feeling refreshed and recharged.



**PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION** Give your body a mini massage by systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups, starting with your toes and work your way up to your head. Hold each tense for five seconds and then relax for 30 seconds before moving to the next group. See how this practice makes you feel more at ease!



**MUSIC THERAPY.** Listening to music can soothe the mind and body. Try creating a playlist of your favorite calming songs or nature sounds. Spending a few minutes a day listening to this music can transport you to a more relaxed state!

Consider setting aside time each day to experiment with these relaxation techniques to find what works best for you. Make relaxation a regular part of your routine and watch as your stress levels drop and your sense of wellbeing soars!

"Six relaxation techniques to reduce stress." Julie Corliss, Harvard Health Publishing, February 2, 2022.

"Relaxation techniques: Try these steps to reduce stress." Mayo Clinic, mayoclinic.org, April 28, 2022.



## Gluten-Free Homemade PIZZA PARTY

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ cups (234g) gluten-free all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons (18g) buttermilk powder or (14g) nonfat dry milk
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon xanthan gum
- 1 ½ teaspoons instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar or honey (optional)
- 1 cup (227g) warm water
- ¼ cup (50g) olive oil

Prep Time: 15 minutes  
Bake Time: 25 minutes  
Yeast Rise Time: 30 minutes  
Dough Rest Time: 45 minutes  
Total Time: 1 hour 40 minutes  
Yields: one 9-inch or 12-inch pizza; serving 8 slices

### INSTRUCTIONS:

**1.** Weigh your gluten-free all-purpose flour\* or measure it. Add the dry ingredients (except the yeast and sugar or honey) to a large mixing bowl and mix with an electric hand-mixer or stand-mixer until thoroughly blended.

\*Experts recommend measuring flour by weight rather than by volume because dry measuring cups aren't standardized. Experienced chefs and bakers recommend an inexpensive digital scale for every kitchen to ensure recipes and results are precise.

**2.** Add the sugar or honey, warm water, 2 tablespoons (25g) of olive oil, the yeast, and about ½ cup (78g) of the dry mixture into a separate, small bowl. Stir to combine. A few lumps are OK. Set the mix aside for 30 minutes until it is bubbly and smells yeasty.

**3.** Add this mixture to the dry ingredients and beat on medium-high speed for four minutes. The mixture will be thick and sticky, much like wall spackling!

**4.** Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let the dough rest in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

**5.** Preheat your oven to 425°F.

**6.** Drizzle 2 tablespoons (25g) of olive oil onto the center of a baking sheet or 12-inch round pizza pan. Scrape the dough from the bowl onto the puddle of oil.

**7.** Using wet fingers, start pressing the dough at the center and work outward into a 12-inch to 14-inch circle.

**8.** Let the dough rest, uncovered, for an additional 15 minutes.

**9.** Bake the dough for 8 to 10 minutes, just until it's set. At this point, the surface will look opaque, rather than shiny.

**10.** Remove your dough from the oven and top with your summer harvest ingredients! \*

\*Experts recommend choosing cheese options that melt well, like mozzarella, fontina, cheddar, Jack, provolone, brick, Gouda, and Muenster.

**11.** Return your pizza pie to the oven to finish baking, about 15 minutes.

**12.** Remove your garden harvest pizza from the oven and enjoy!

### NUTRITION FACTS

Serving Size: 1/8 of recipe, Calories: 152, Protein: 2 g, Total Fat: 5 g, Total Carbohydrate: 25 g

"Gluten-Free Pizza Crust," King Arthur Test Kitchen, kingarthurbaking.com/recipes, accessed on July 9, 2024.

"Basic Gluten-Free Pizza Dough," Nicole Hunn, glutenfreeonashoestring.com, Nov. 3, 2020.