

ACTIVITY SHEET 10: SELF-CARE

EAT

- Eating regular, healthy meals will help keep you focused, in a good mood, and will also keep you healthier and feeling better overall. Skipping meals robs you of the energy to cope.
- Eating healthy carbohydrates such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruits will help keep your energy levels stable throughout the day because they break down into a slow stream of sugar in your blood. Conversely, eating mostly refined carbohydrates such as candy, French fries, and white bread will lead to spikes and dips in your blood sugar, which can cause you to go through mood swings and have trouble focusing on daily tasks. livestrong.com

“What we need to do is find the wellspring that keeps us going, that gives us the strength and patience to keep up this struggle for a long time.”

— Winona LaDuke

SLEEP

- Getting enough sleep is essential to your overall wellness and mood. Sleep is also critical to anyone who is studying and learning. Most people know that it's more difficult to take in new information if you don't sleep well the night before. What's surprising is that it's just as important to get a good night's sleep after learning something new: a good night's sleep allows you to process and retain information that has been learned. healthysleep.med.harvard.edu

MEDITATE

- M.R.I. brain scans taken before and after participants meditated for 30 minutes for eight days found increased gray matter in the hippocampus, an area important for learning and memory. The images also showed a reduction of gray matter in the amygdala, a region connected to anxiety and stress. A control group that did not practice meditation showed no such changes. well.blogs.nytimes.com

EXERCISE

- Physical activity is great for your body and great for your mind. Exercise has been proven to increase the release of stress related hormones and it has been proven to fight off illnesses. Exercise is also great for helping to improve your overall mood.
- Exercise can reduce your risk of depression and may help you sleep better. Research has shown that doing aerobic, or a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities, three to five times a week for 30 to 60 minutes can give you these mental health benefits. Some scientific evidence has also shown that even lower levels of physical activity can be beneficial. cdc.gov
- Exercise increases the level of brain chemicals called growth factors, which help make new brain cells and establish new connections between brain cells to help us learn. Interestingly, complicated activities, like playing tennis or taking a dance class, provide the biggest brain boost. health.usnews.com

MAINTAINING A BALANCE

- Maintaining balance in your life between school, work, family, friends and other areas of importance is key in preserving your overall quality of life. Take time to reflect on what is important to you. What are your priorities? Once you remind yourself of these, check how you use your time: how much time are you spending on your priorities?

This Activity Sheet was written by staff and student leaders of SOMECA. The concepts and tips have been developed through application and reflection.