

The importance of self-care at university

NOT many may be aware that July 24 is International Self-Care Day, as designated by the International Self-Care Foundation in 2011. The day aims to highlight the importance of self-care for overall health and well-being.

It's well known that members of the university community – students and lecturers alike – are usually stressed out due to busy academic schedules, preparing for exams, meeting deadlines, etc.

Not knowing how to cope with this stress can lead to various physical and mental health issues, exacerbating the situation. When overall health is compromised, it hinders performance and creates issues for those around you. For instance, neglecting self-care and developing a severe physical problem might hinder you from participating in official and social

activities, causing colleagues or fellow students to view you as a poor team player.

In terms of physical health, try to incorporate regular exercise, whether through sports, workouts, or even just walking. Mental health and relaxation are also something that shouldn't be cast aside. Start by taking simple self-care steps, such as mindfulness and relaxation exercises.

Deep breathing is a simple relaxation technique that involves sitting comfortably, closing your eyes, and taking slow, deep breaths through your nose while counting, then exhaling slowly through your mouth. This practice can reduce stress, improve focus, and promote overall relaxation.

Managing emotional well-being can be tricky, as it requires continuously fostering self-awareness

and regulating your emotions, and this is vital for a supportive and empathetic university environment. To do this, you must carve out time for yourselves to improve your emotional resilience – for example, by engaging in hobbies and activities that bring joy to you. This can prevent burnout among both students and lecturers.

Next is to prioritise your sleep. It is common for university students to not have a good sleep schedule when chasing deadlines. This should be avoided because maintaining a regular sleep schedule and creating a restful sleep environment can dramatically impact both mental and physical health. A minimum of six hours of sleep is essential for cognitive function, emotional regulation, and overall health.

Proper nutrition is also crucial

as it fuels the body and mind, enhancing academic performance and general wellbeing. Make sure to have a balanced diet rich in protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, which is known to improve overall health and cognitive function. Always opt for “real” food like a plate of well-balanced nasi campur instead of fast food like nuggets and sausages.

Understanding the importance of self-care and incorporating these suggested steps can help to ensure a healthier you, as well as a healthier university environment.

**LINA ZAINAL
NOR FADHILAH AHMAD
POWZI**

**Centre for Language Studies
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn
Malaysia**