



MY SELF-CARE COMMITMENT PLAN

- 1. Sleep** – Ensure I get an adequate amount of sleep and the rest my body requires. At this stage of my life, that means at least 8 hours of sleep a night. Current research by the National Sleep foundation recommends 7 to 9 hours of sleep for an adult between 18 and 64 years of age. I also avoid certain stimulants, such as coffee before bedtime, or a dramatic movie, which will interfere with the quality of my sleep.
- 2. Eat Healthy** – Prepare foods that support my body to do what it is meant to do. Limit carbs and fats and eat adequate amounts of protein, fruits, and vegetables. Health Canada's Food Guide has supportive guidelines for nutrition as well as exercise. I have found planning and making my lunches for work the night before prevents me from making unhealthy choices at work, when I have had no time to prepare it in the morning.
- 3. Exercise** – Do cardio and strength building to protect my body from wear and tear, especially since I spend most of my day on my feet and assisting patients physically. The older I get, the better my excuses also get for not participating in a regular exercise program. For me, walking works best as a weight-bearing exercise program. During my walks, I can meditate, plan, and de-stress. When finished, I feel quite energized. I also keep a set of weights in view of my television so that even when watching a program, I can lift weights easily.
- 4. Balance** - Make time for the things I enjoy: writing, reading, socializing with friends and spending time with my family. Sitting on my deck with a good novel and escaping into an author's printed world is one of my favorite energizing activities. Visiting friends provides lightness and laughter, and a welcome change from my work days filled with sadness and death. It also grounds me with gratitude. I found a power article on Wikipedia.org about work-family conflict that looks at our jobs interfering with our personal time as well as our personal time interrupting our work time and the stress it can cause. For instance, missing work to tend to a sick child and knowing that your peers are now short staffed can add a layer of conflict and feeling torn as to where our commitment lies.

5. **Mindfulness** – Begin my day with meditation and prayer. Even when a busy day lies ahead, by waking up 15 minutes earlier and spending a short time in quiet and stillness, I feel more grounded. Susan Kuchinskas quotes Charles L. Raison, NC clinical director of the Mind-Body Program at Emory University School of Medicine: “Those who meditate can choose among a wide range of practices, both religious and secular. What they have in common are a narrowing of focus that shuts out the external world and usually a stilling of the body.” On my days off I begin my day with 30-60 minutes of meditation.
6. **Journal** – Write a few words in my journal before I go to sleep. It sits next to my bedside table so I don’t forget. Being grateful and acknowledging your blessings, brings abundance into your life. Amy Morin, psychotherapist and contributing editor to a November 2014 Forbes article, writes in her article “Seven Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude that will Motivate you to Give Thanks Year-Round” that journaling your gratitude will open the doors for improved relationships, improve physical and psychological health, enhance empathy and reduce regression, help you sleep better, improve your self-esteem, and increase your mental health.
7. **Intentions** – Set an intention for the day such as, “Today I will be a powerful listener.” Or “Today I will be connected with other people.” After setting an intention, I remind myself during the day who I have promised myself to me. Setting intentions helps me stay grounded and empowers me to fulfill my commitment to listen, connect, or be forgiving. Deepak Chopra, MD states in The 7 Spiritual Laws of Success, “An intention is a directed impulse of consciousness that contains the seed for that which you aim to create.”
8. **Change Unhealthy Habits** – Be aware of the times I want to numb myself with alcohol and unhealthy food. When I reflect on my thoughts at the time and what would have me want to over indulge, I realize these are usually the same thoughts that can keep me from exercising: “This is too hard,” “It’s not that important,” “I deserve this.” My ego would like to escape from reality and find an easier way out. I deal with these very human thoughts my forgiving myself and starting fresh. I recommit to my healthy eating habits and to what I want in my life. I do not dwell on my failures and drag them with me. By being responsible for my thoughts and my own health, I can have honest conversations with my patients. After all, how can I invite them to live a healthier lifestyle when they look at me and see someone who is obviously now walking the talk? I them it’s not always an easy journey. I share with them that I struggle as well. I don’t pretend to have my life in perfect order. I am a human being, capable of making mistakes and experiencing struggles just like they are. I am not afraid to show my patients this part of me, while also sharing with them my commitment to a healthy life.

