

# Student nurse self-care handbook



Developing people  
for health and  
healthcare

[www.hee.nhs.uk](http://www.hee.nhs.uk)

Taking care of my physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing - ensuring that I have time to rest and enjoy myself within my private life as well as work. **Looking after your own well-being.** *Self-care is a good having balance with work and personal life. Time for me.* **Looking after yourself. It's the practice of protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in especially during periods of stress.** *I would define self-care to looking after yourself not only physically but emotionally, mentally and socially.* **Looking after myself mentally.** **Taking care of oneself during nursing practice.** *I would define self-care as taking time out for one-self/ break. Self-care for me is taking action or care of my physical and mental health which will then enable me to care, love and give compassion to myself as I do to others.* **Spending some time on just yourself.** *Anything we do deliberately with our own wellbeing in mind. It means taking care of my physical, nutritional, emotional, spiritual needs as a whole and find time to relax and have enough sleep on a daily basis.* **Taking care of yourself physically, mentally and spiritually!** **Eating balanced meals taking enough rest days, doing things that calm you and make you happy!** *Taking time for yourself. Doing things you enjoy. Switching off from placement or academic work.* **Taking time out of the normal.** **Prioritising myself.** *Prioritising my mental health. Taking care of myself to prevent stress such as eating well, mindfulness, exercise, good sleep.* **Doing things I enjoy e.g. painting nails, face masks, seeing friends etc.** **Taking time to slow down and reconnect relax.** *Taking time and doing things to ensure your own personal mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and social health and wellbeing to enable you to continue to perform, thrive, enjoy and achieve in life and maintain resilience in the face of challenges and adversity.* **To put yourself first and treat yourself. Looking after yourself - in all aspects from eating to mental health.** *Doing something purely for yourself.* **Looking after your own wellbeing and being able to manage your stresses and find time to do things you enjoy.** *I need to be well to take care of others. Allocating time to properly take care of yourself whether that be mental or physical.* **Looking after your own physical and mental health.** **Acts that improve an individual's well-being.** *Being conscious of your own wellbeing.* *It is bigger than having a long bath or a Netflix day- it is healthy eating, exercise, getting enough sleep, setting boundaries, putting things in place so you don't feel the need to recharge so often. A bit of pampering a bit of time to reflect on yourself a bit of procrastination of whatever makes you happy and relaxes you and charge you with energy.* **Something you do for yourself to relax and feel better.** *Relaxing, lush baths, pampering, playing games I enjoy, reading books for fun, going on walks.* **Doing things that relax me and my mind, that allow me to step out of the challenges of life. This helps me to focus the mind on things I enjoy such as a candle lit bubble bath, a craft or reading with a tea on a rainy day.** *Personally, self-care is the practice of looking after and prioritising own mental and physical wellbeing.* **Looking after your mental health and physical health.**

## Student nurse self-care handbook

Studying nursing is a full-time degree and with university lectures, assignments and placements, there is little time left for yourself. Understanding the importance of self-care amidst your busy study schedule, family and social life is a good way to ensure you finish your degree without feeling too wiped out.

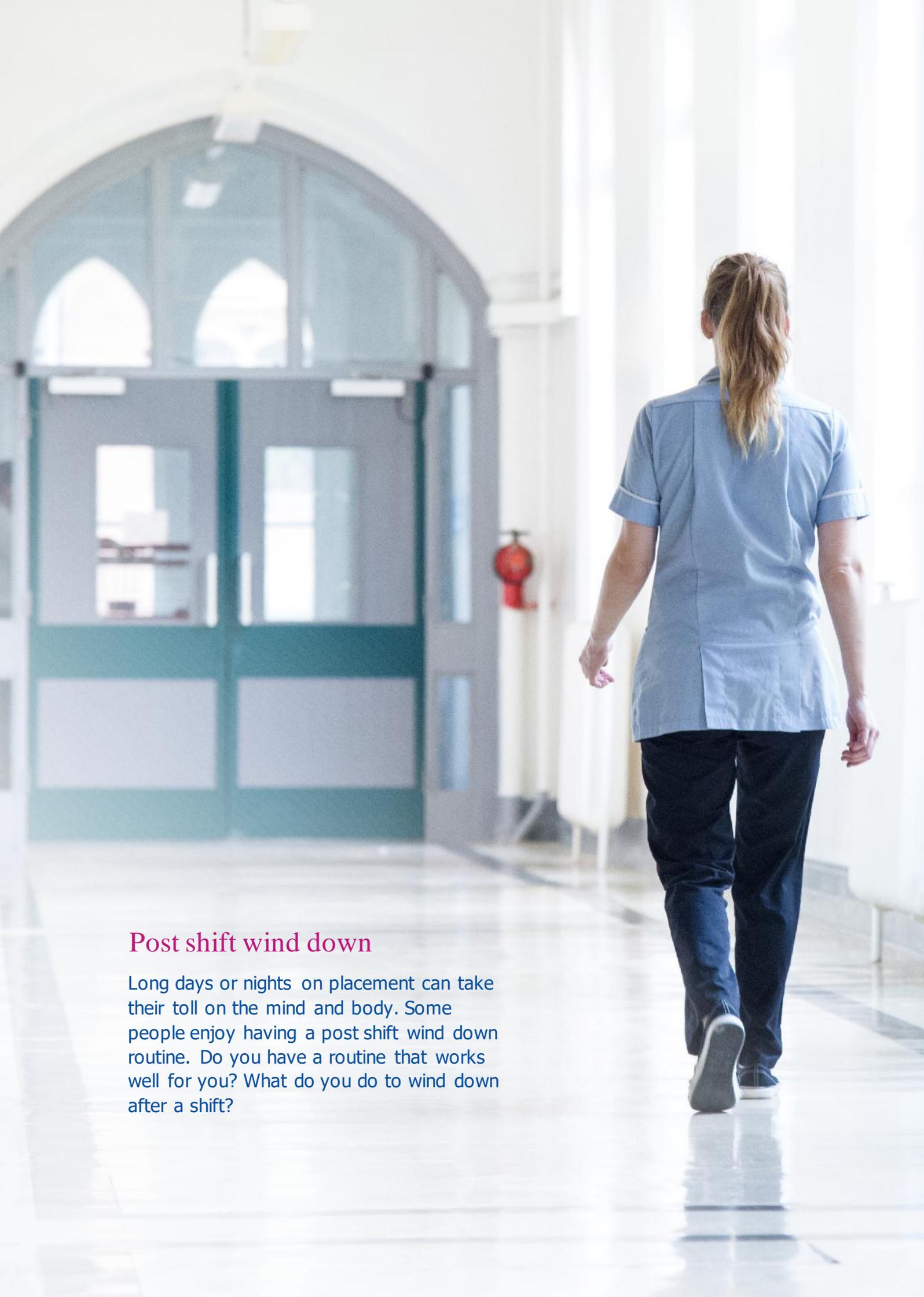
Knowing where to access help – either through your university health and wellbeing department, your personal tutor, family and friends, the student lead at your placement or online support groups – is part of self-care. A good example of online support can be found at [Every Mind Matters](#).

Different definitions of how student nurses view self-care can be found on the front page, highlighting how we all have our own idea of what self-care means to us. We all have our own interests; some are hobbies that we share with others, and some are more individual. And even if you don't yet know what works best for you, this guide will help give you ideas for what to do during downtime.

This student self-care handbook will highlight a range of self-care ideas. It is not an exhaustive list, so add your own thoughts to the list below and it will serve a reminder of what you can do if you ever feel stuck for ideas.



Compiled by Zoe Carciente, Registered Children's Nurse  
With thanks to our London stakeholders and their contributions.



## Post shift wind down

Long days or nights on placement can take their toll on the mind and body. Some people enjoy having a post shift wind down routine. Do you have a routine that works well for you? What do you do to wind down after a shift?

## Nourish the mind and the soul

Some people find spending time in the kitchen therapeutic, which is an added bonus if you see it as self-care time. Making food to nourish your mind, while winding down after a day at university or out on placement is beneficial. So here are some quick and easy recipes shared by fellow students:

**STIR FRY** – stir fry a few selected fresh vegetables, fresh fish or boiled chicken without oil or sardines. Mix with browned rice or normal white rice. Note: the vegetables should be more than the rice.

**BREAKFAST** - Fat free Greek yoghurt with frozen berries, sprinkled with sweetener, yummy healthy breakfast to take to work which defrosts by 1st break.

**KIMCHI FRIED RICE** – Stir fry together the cooked rice, sesame oil, fresh garlic, chopped kimchi, beansprouts, chopped pak choi, and gochujang pepper paste.

**TRAY BAKE ROASTED VEGETABLES** – drizzle with olive oil, garlic, balsamic vinegar and seasoning of choice, place in oven and bake. Serve with a quick protein choice such as quorn fillet, turkey breast, chicken fillet.

**VEGAN TAGLIATELLE** – Cook the tagliatelle as per the packet, drain and then mix in olives, lemon juice, parsley, fresh garlic and salt.

**PASTA BAKE** – fry some onion, garlic and mincemeat whilst boiling pasta. Once the mincemeat is cooked, add a tin of tomato soup and a beef oxo cube, allowing it to bubble for a couple of minutes. Drain the pasta and add to the mincemeat mix, stirring together. Transfer to an oven proof dish, sprinkle cheese on top and then bake until the cheese has melted. Works well heated up, and it's easy to prepare and take to placement!

**PASTA WITH FRESH TOMATO SAUCE** – chopped onion, 5 tomatoes de-seeded and roughly chopped, garlic (as much as you like). Cook the pasta and drain. Meanwhile, gently heat the onion and garlic until browned and then add the tomatoes and simmer gently. Once this is cooked, mix with the pasta. This can be made in bulk and frozen.

**VEGETABLE CURRY** – fry onion, garlic and ginger until soft and then add either a curry paste (like massaman curry paste) or spices. Mix and cook for a couple of minutes then add coconut milk and vegetable stock. Let it bubble and then add chunky vegetables, like sweet potatoes, potatoes, carrots and peas. Cook until vegetables are going soft and season to taste (spice/paste/salt). Takes around an hour from start to finish. Can be easily frozen and defrosted to take to placement with rice and broccoli.

## Hydration

Keeping hydrated is also an important part of self-care, because without water we can feel tired, leaving little energy left after studying and placement. Many students report that as soon as they started the habit of drinking water daily, it became second nature. Here are some ideas of how to keep hydrated whilst on shift or studying.



## Sleep well

Sleep is a vital part of selfcare. A lack of sleep can affect concentration, weaken your immune system and make you more accident prone, amongst other issues. Students sometimes find it hard to wind down after a long day at university or placement. It's advisable to find a routine that works for you that helps you find a way to go to sleep at night (or day if you have a nightshift!).



**Meditate**, Hydrate before going to bed,  
**Exercise**, Relaxing **shower** or **bath**,  
Cup of **Chamomile tea**, Don't use the  
phone an  
hour before

**sleep**,

**Lavender**

on the

**pillow**,

Use an **eye**

**mask**, Make

sure your

sleep space

is **tidy**,

Write down any **notes** for the next day  
to help **clear** from your **mind**, **Read**

## Time out for you

It's easy to get caught up in university life, impending assignments, placements. Some people have long journeys at the start and end of the day, and use that time to catch up with friends, read a book or listen to music. Finding a way to fit in family and friends into your life can be difficult, but it's important to carve out time for people close to you as they are your support system.

Once you've found some time for yourself, what can you do with that time to ensure self-care is a part of the experience? Here are a few ideas. These can be done alone or with others. But whatever you do, make the most of your time.



## Mind Plan Quiz

[The Mind Plan Quiz](#) includes 5 questions for you. The answers will help you build a practical plan you can use to maintain and improve your mental health and wellbeing.

### Take this short quiz to:

- Reflect on how you have been feeling over the past 2 weeks and issues that are affecting you.
- Get top tips for action you can take, and advice about further support.
- Once you've completed the questions for the first time and emailed your plan, you can revisit the page and edit it at any time.

Your Mind Plan is for people aged 18 or over and is only designed to point you in the right direction. It is not a diagnosis tool.

Jot down ideas you have below of what you can do for your next self-care session and share on Twitter [@capital\\_nurse](#).

It's easy to talk about fitting self-care into the schedule, but it is very important to follow through and do set aside time for yourself. Self-care can take many forms and different lengths of times. Sometimes, even the smallest acts of self-care can have a big impact on your wellbeing. Hopefully this handbook has given you some ideas of what you can do when you have some downtime from studies and placement.

**Look after yourselves so you can look after others!**

