

A cup of tea on a wooden tray with colorful confetti in the background.

how to
make an
amazing
self-care kit for
bad days

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We all have bad days.

For those of us who struggle with mental illness, they can be much harder to navigate.

A lot of little things can add up: conflicts and confusion, headaches and poor sleep. Anxiety and overwhelm can creep in, making way for the sadness that tends to linger a little more.

Bad days can leave me huddling up with soft blankets and comfy clothes, good books and hot tea. I know I need to work proactively to take care of myself, stretching and taking vitamins and eating especially well.

Thankfully, I've built up a tried-and-true self-care kit that helps me on my bad days. You can create one for yourself so that you always have what you need to get through your worst days. Here's what's in mine:

Face Wipes

When it seems like even washing my face takes too much energy, face wipes are my best friend. My sensitive skin has been happy with [Yes To Cucumbers](#) and [Burt's Bees](#) (usually available at Target/Wal-Mart).

Yoga Mat

Stretching and strengthening exercises like yoga and pilates make a world of difference with my chronic pain and anxiety. I found mine at TJ Maxx, but this [yoga mat](#) is a great option.

Baths

[Epsom salt](#) baths can help relax muscles, boost serotonin, are a great way to help relax. You can find Epsom salt in most drug stores for a few bucks, so it's one of the most affordable items in my self-care arsenal.

Essential Oils

I often reach for [cardamom](#), [lavender](#), and citrus oils like [lime](#) and [tangerine](#) and either sniff them directly from the vial, diffuse them in my home, or mix them with a carrier oil and roll them on my skin. (Note: Despite what you hear on the Internet, essential oils should not be ingested. They can be dangerous, so proceed with caution)

Comfy Clothes

There's something deeply comforting about cocooning myself into cozy clothing. I've even had a therapist suggest it as a form of self-care. Sweats, a sweater, leggings, cozy socks - whatever you like!

Eye Mask

I use [this one](#) almost every night and sleep so much better for it (plus it doesn't press on my eyelids).

Ear Plugs

These [ear plugs](#) cut down on unwanted sound a ton without totally blocking it out. They also help me sleep through my husband's snores :-)

Encouraging, happy, and funny words

Encouraging notes, funny things kids say, and great quotes are all handy when I'm struggling. If you don't have kids in your life, you can get some chuckles from [this list](#) or [this one](#) (note: both lists contain some profanity and "adult" language).

My Favorite Books

For some reason, children's books are my go-to when I'm depressed or anxious. They're so sweet! My favorites are [Winnie the Pooh](#) and [The Little Prince](#), but any book that makes you feel good is perfect.

Dark Chocolate

Believe it or not, dark chocolate has tons of health benefits and can even [help with depression](#). Some great, ethical options you can find at Target, Kroger, and even Walmart are [Green & Black's](#), [Equal Exchange](#), and Theo.

Journal & Pens

Journaling helps symptoms of [PTSD](#), anxiety, and [depression](#). Right now, I'm using this [gorgeous leather specimen](#). You can find cute, inspiring ones like this on Amazon.

I also use a [dot-grid notebook](#) for my bullet journal planner. It helps me track my self-care habits (like exercise and quiet time) and keeps me from getting overwhelmed.

Weighted Blanket

Weighted blankets are [scientifically proven](#) to be effective at calming 78% of people involved in the survey. I made my own. But it was a HUGE project, so check out [Amazon's top-rated weighted blanket](#) or [this more affordable option](#).

Lotion or hand cream

My favorite was a lavender-honey cream from Shea Moisture, but now it's only available as a [baby lotion in a pump bottle](#). These days, I carry this [lavender hand cream](#) in my purse.

Tea

Green tea actually contains an amino acid that [helps fight anxiety](#). My favorite is this [pomegranate-flavored](#) one. I also really like a matcha-coconut milk latte.

I'm obsessed with [Hot Cinnamon Spice](#) (contains caffeine) and [Bengal Spice](#) (herbal). Aside from that, I drink a lot of peppermint and lemon-ginger tea or whatever I find at the grocery store.