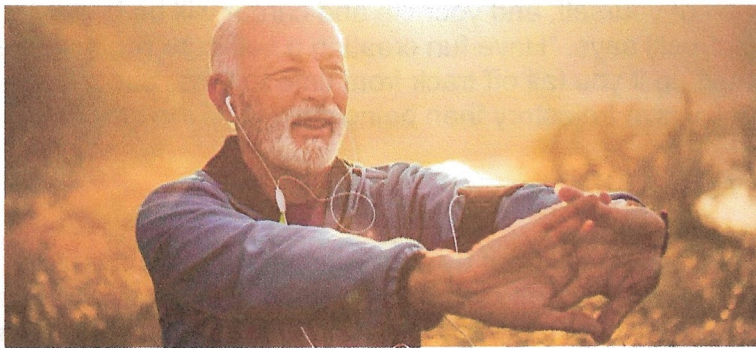


The following self-care stretches and small-ball self-massage exercises were adapted from two different Massage Therapy Journal articles on AMTA's website. The articles were written for massage therapists; however, the self-care stretches and exercises are beneficial for anyone, especially those working as caregivers. Links to each full article are provided.



## Stretching Into Self-Care

Link to the full article: <https://www.amtamassage.org/publications/massage-therapy-journal/self-care-stretches/>



“It is very common for caretakers and givers to put their own needs last, but we need to put the proverbial oxygen mask on ourselves first,” explains Jill Burynski, an Asheville, North Carolina-based massage therapist and Thai massage instructor. “We need to practice what we preach.”

Following are some stretches you can incorporate into your daily practice to help both ensure career longevity and keep your own health and wellness top of mind.

### The Doorway Stretch

1. Stand in the doorway with your arms at a 90-degree angle (cactus arms).
2. Rest your elbow and forearm against the door jamb, making sure your upper arms are perpendicular to the floor.
3. Then, lunge forward with your front leg until you feel a tolerable but effective stretch in the pectorals.
4. Hold for 15 seconds.

## The Clock Stretch

1. Stand next to a wall with your feet about 12 inches away.
2. Raise your arm overhead to the 12 o'clock position.
3. Lean in toward the wall until you feel a tolerable but effective stretch in your side-body.
4. Hold for five to 10 seconds.
5. Then, move your hand behind you to the 1 o'clock position.
6. Hold for five to 10 seconds.
7. Repeat until you've moved your hand through 6 o'clock.
8. Turn around and repeat the process with the other arm.

## Forearm and Wrist Flexor and Extensor Stretch

1. Reach one arm out in front of you with your palm facing upward.
2. With your opposite arm, pull your arm and fingers toward you until you feel a tolerable but effective stretch in your flexor muscles.
3. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Now, turn your palm facing downward.
5. Pull your arm toward you until you feel a tolerable but effective stretch in the extensor muscles.
6. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
7. Repeat on opposite arm.

"You deserve to be the best version of yourself, and your life and career will be better for you making self-care a priority," Burynski says. "Have fun creating a self-care regimen that works for you and don't beat yourself up if you fall off track from time to time. Success at anything is more about being on a positive trajectory than being perfect all the time."

## 3 Quick Tips to Jumpstart Your Self-Care

**Don't rely on willpower.** Set yourself up for success by designing your environment and schedule to make developing and sustaining a good habit frictionless. "Stock your kitchen with healthy options that you like and leave the tempting ones in the store," Burynski says. "Keep your yoga mat or gym bag in your car so you are ready every time."

**Make it easy.** "The more obstacles we put between ourselves and our desired behavior, the less likely we are to perform the desired behavior," Burynski says. So, if the gym you want to join is a 20-minute drive from your home, check out what's available close to where you work or find a workout you can do without a gym membership, whether at home or with a neighborhood running club.

**Make it enjoyable.** "My two main forms of exercise are mountain biking and yoga," Burynski says, "both of which I enjoy immensely." Choose an activity that you look forward to doing, because if every self-care activity is a struggle, the chances that you are going to stick to it long-term are low. Self-care should be a treat, not a chore.



# Playful Self-Care Techniques for Hands and Wrists

Link to the full article: <https://www.amtamassage.org/publications/massage-therapy-journal/hands-and-wrist-self-care/>



Small-ball self-massage techniques can easily be included throughout your workday to playfully counteract some of the repetitive movements... Starting out with a few ball-rolling movements gives you an effective way to take care of your hands and wrists.

While doing these self-care exercises, remember to breathe deeply and fully, releasing tightness and tension with every exhalation. Choose the amount of pressure that feels best for you, while also staying mindful of your body posture and positioning. Small-ball rolling can be performed while standing or seated at a table or counter. For your comfort, remove any jewelry or watches. If you experience any numbness or tingling in any part of your hand or wrist associated with pressure applied with the balls, stop immediately, as you may be pressing on a nerve.

**Following are a few examples you can try:**

## **A. Finger Pressing**

Place one hand flat on a table or counter. With the other hand, slowly press and/or roll the mini ball over the top and between each finger with pressing, stroking and circular movements. Repeat on the other hand.

## **B. Joint Decompression**

Place the mini ball between two fingers and curl your fingers to make a loose fist. Slowly and gently squeeze 2–3 times. Repeat the squeezing between each finger of both hands, including between your index fingers and thumbs.

## **C. Hand Rolling**

With moderate pressure, playfully roll your hand over the mini ball using pressing, stroking and circular movements. Then with a continuous motion starting at each fingertip, press into the ball and roll up your forearm to the elbow. Repeat with your other hand.

## **D. Thumb Release**

Press the pad of muscles at the base of your thumb into the mini ball, pinning the ball to the table, and place your other hand on top. Slowly press and release. Then with a squishing motion, try rotating your bottom hand as if making orange juice. Repeat this motion throughout the rest of your palm, and on the other hand.

## **E. Forearm Release**

Place one forearm flat on a table or counter. With the other hand, slowly press and/or roll the mini ball over the wrist and forearm with pressing, stroking and circular movements. Explore between the radius and ulna; apply moderate pressure to the wrist extensor mass. Repeat on the other forearm.

**Taking better care of yourself is the first step to taking better care of your clients.**

Following are some additional ideas for you to add to your self-care regimen:

- Eat nutrition-dense foods
- Hydrate throughout the day, every day
- Get plenty of sleep
- Move in a variety of ways (include moderate to vigorous exercise to total 30–60 minutes on most days). Also, don't forget to move and stretch in opposite directions of your routine.
- Relax (meditation, yoga, listening to music, creative activities, spending time with loved ones).
- During work with clients, check in with yourself often to notice how your body is feeling, your energy level and your mood. Make time to consciously breathe, relax, stretch and rest throughout the day. Breathing deeply, slowly and regularly helps release tension and stress—calming the body and clearing the mind. Focus on exhaling fully, and allow the next breath to arrive deeply and naturally.