



Wholeful
Living

Self-care

To take care of you, keep you whole and healthy. That doesn't mean you disregard everything and everyone. But you want to come with your cup full. You know: 'My cup runneth over.' What comes out of the cup is for y'all. What's in the cup is mine. But I've got to keep my cup full.
-Iyanla Vanzant

Isn't self-care selfish?

To take care of you, keep you whole and healthy. That doesn't mean you disregard everything and everyone. But you want to come with your cup full. You know: 'My cup runneth over.' What comes out of the cup is for y'all. What's in the cup is mine. But I've got to keep my cup full.

•-Iyanla Vanzant

I have spent the last couple years obsessed with food and nutrition. Nutrition is more than food. It's how we treat the body we have. It definitely includes food, and that's just one part. Relationships,, opportunity for creativity, movement, goals, and emotional well-being have just as big or often bigger impacts on our health.

Here's an example of how it shows up for me: If I have a job I hate going to, a relationship under stress, or have too many things on my plate, I am more likely to 'treat' myself to less healthy choices like not moving my body during the day or eating less nutritious choices. My body is already depleted when I am overbooked and stressed, and then I 'treat' myself with poor nutrition. So now I know that it is important to slow down, especially when there is a lot going on or are feeling stressed.

For those of you with a screaming inner voice saying, "Self-care, isn't that selfish?" I hear you loud and clear. My 5 year ago self would completely agree. Of course, that self was stressed all the time, ashamed of emotional breakdowns from exhaustion, and feeling like everything was a chore. Today, when I am stressed, I know I need to slow down. The results are my head is clearer, I am much happier (hormonally-balanced) overall and I have more energy. Of course I changed my diet too, but diet alone wasn't cutting it. Treating myself better, and as a priority for once, created a huge impact.

So take some of these tips and see if your body treats you better just for acknowledging what it needs, even outside of food. Many of these are quick and free so there is no reasons for not trying them a few times to see if you find benefit. It's a great way to slow down your day and your cortisol levels.

The first step is simple. Learn to listen to your body. Slow down a couple moments out of the day to notice any pain, inflammation, or tightness. Your body is always relaying messages. We need to be still and quiet enough to listen.

Tracking, Organizing, Growth

Self-care gives us time to learn more about ourselves, inside and out. As you take more and more steps to self-care, writing down your thoughts is more than a capture of ideas, it can help you learn more about yourself, find the right path for you, relieve stress, and track your progress.

Daily Food, Activity, and Mood Tracking

Ever think you are making progress and then suddenly, time has passed and nothing seems to have changed? How if I am eating right, am I still experiencing bloating or intestinal cramps? For me, it was watching carefully what I ate. Certain foods really don't agree with me, even if they are whole foods. By tracking my food in a health journal, I am able to compare the days I was not well with what I ate those days compared to the days I was great.

I have clients track different things for different concerns, but I highly suggest you track 1 your food, 2 your movement, and 3 A specific concern or concerns that you have. For example, if you have stress, rate your days of stress in a 1-10 rating on a spreadsheet and you can see a graph over time. Or you can look back at your food and movement around the times of extreme stress. Could the food or lack of movement be contributing your stress level?

Personal Growth and Processing

This is probably the closest to classic journaling. This is what always calls me back to journaling. When I need to learn something about myself or my perspective on my circumstances. Since I was in middle school I have kept journals off and on to work out relationship woes, to record the journey of growing up and refining my own personal views. It helps me to be clear in my thoughts, especially if I have one of those hard-to-have conversations with someone I respect or admire.

If peace comes from seeing the whole, then misery stems from a loss of perspective.

• Michelangelo

Morning Pages: Clear it Out

Morning pages allow you to write whatever gobbly-gook you have ping-ponging around your head so that you can start the day clear. I always have all the answers, what I need is a moment to collect them and reassure myself.

How: Open up a page and just start writing. Write about how your husband snores, or the grocery list or the neighbor you are struggling with - whatever comes to mind. Give yourself at least 15-20 minutes and try not to stop until you feel clearer and more able to be mindful the rest of the day.

Detox Your Skin Daily

Detoxing your skin is important. It is our biggest vulnerability that we don't often consider. We don't notice the millions of toxins every day that touch our skin. Detoxifying our skin is vitally important to skin health, and also many other reasons like improving circulation and lymphatic function, relieving stress, and even fighting cellulite build-up.

My two favorite daily ways to detox my skin at Skin-brushing and Hot Wash Cloth Scrub. These both increase lymphatic function and help rid the body of dead cells. During my detox days, I am sure to incorporate these both into a daily routine. It helps to flush the toxins.

Hot Towel Scrub

For me, there is nothing more relaxing than a hot towel scrub. It also improves circulation, reduces muscle tension and brings my mindfulness back to my body. If you are in the shower, it really isn't the same. So yes, I am really telling you to stand naked in your bathroom for a few minutes.

Here's how simple it is:

1. Fill up a sink with hot water.
2. Dip a washcloth in the hot water. (Microfiber cloths are even better, and any washcloth will work just fine.) Ring out the washcloth a bit and then start scrubbing.
3. I start with my hands and my arms, scrubbing every inch inward towards my body. Your skin should turn pink, and it should not be painful. This is a self-care exercise, not torture.
4. Dip and rinse your washcloth as necessary to keep it hot. Cover your entire body.

I love this in the winter too because I do not have a bath tub, just a shower. The hot towel scrub allows me to get hot water and circulation going in my extremities without standing under the shower for 20 minutes.

*What spirit is so
empty and blind,
that it cannot
recognize the fact
that the foot is
more noble than
the shoe, and skin
more beautiful
than the garment
with which it is
clothed?
-Michelangelo*

Dry Skin Brushing

Skin brushing is easy and effective. Dr. Mercola's post "[Dry-Skin Brushing: Benefits and How-To](#)" describes the benefits to skin brushing. Here's the directions he gives for skin brushing.

1. Use a dry body brush to get rid of flakes, stimulate your lymphatic system, and more as described above (do this for a few minutes on your dry skin, before getting wet)
2. Avoid using soap or use the least amount possible, especially in winter or in dry climates, as this may promote and aggravate dry skin
3. Instead, apply a natural body scrub to exfoliate your skin (also apply this to your skin before getting wet, and choose one that also contains oil to moisturize)
4. After your shower, apply a heavy natural body butter or natural moisturizing oil (not mineral oil or baby oil) to help seal in moisture; coconut oil works well for this purpose.

And more exciting, keep following this blog and later in the month we will discuss making some body scrubs and moisturizing oils at home to gift or make for yourself cheap.

Sugar/Oil Scrub

We all know that most soap can be pretty damaging to our skin. One way I replaced all those harsh chemicals in my body washes was to create my own sugar scrubs at home. Not only is it the most nourishing wash I put on my body, I can also get rid of all the sugar in my kitchen doing it.

Any of the scrubs are typically a 1:1 ratio of sugar and oil, maybe slightly more on the sugar side. I even add essential oils if I want a certain scent, but usually if I add anything it may be a splash of vanilla extract because it's cheap and smells awesome. I use avocado, olive or almond oil with turbinado or brown sugar. Try making your own and see what you think!



Nurture your Oral hygiene

Self-nurture doesn't always lead to thinking flossing more, however, there are ways to boost your health from where most of it begins – in our mouths.

Flossing and brushing are important daily routines that every dentist will advise and I agree. I am not claiming to be a dentist, I am sharing ways to detox it in possibly less harmful than regular toothpaste in the store with fluoride* and other chemicals, or in addition to. Just try a couple of these.

Easy Starter: Tongue Scraping

This was one step highly recommended at Integrative Nutrition. This removes all that built up stuff on your tongue. It's all bad stuff that can cause mouth diseases and I think that's enough of an explanation.

If you want to know more, Google it.

Anyway, tongue scrapers are cheap and great ways to feel like you are making an improvement on your overall health. Let's face it, the less unwanted 'stuff' in your mouth, the less in your digestive track which is responsible for about 70% of our overall health.

Easy Starter: Tongue Scraping

Here's one of a million things that coconut oil is fantastic for – cleaning the bacteria out of your mouth. It's anti-microbial quality is perfect for deep-cleaning all those places out toothbrushes don't get. A great 20 minute meditation while swishing oil around is the gist of it. Ok, the meditation part is my preference, you can wash the dishes or do your hair, whatever passes the 15-20 minute mark easier for you. It took me a little getting used to, especially if the coconut oil is at its solid state when I start.

Google oil-pulling and you will find a plethora of information. The basics are: Put a tablespoon of coconut oil in your mouth. Then just swish for up to 20 minutes (it may take some getting used to doing it that long). The spit out in a trash receptacle. It's pretty toxic at that point to go down the sink.

I only get to this once or twice a week and am told that your teeth will actually whiten and even start healing if you do it daily. I am not expecting miracles because I am a realist, and I also know that my teeth feel like I just left a cleaning at the dentist. My teeth feel so clean!

*To keep the
body in good
health is a
duty,
otherwise we
shall not be
able to keep
our mind
strong and
clear.
~Buddha*

Muscle Love and Touch

There are different types of massage, and you don't have to pay a professional masseuse to get health benefits from massage. Even self-massage, offers benefits like increased circulation, calmed nerves, and deeper sleep. I find it often gives me a moment to just relax and re-center myself which is helpful because I have a lot on my plate. Massage is important especially when you think you don't have time.

Professional Massage

Oh yes, this is ideal. If I could afford to move one in to live with me permanently, I would. I will on certain occasions go to a favorite woman in my home town. She is worth twice every penny I give her, and I just don't have the budget most of the time to schedule them regularly. If you have the budget, make this a regular to do for self care.

Massage Trade

This one is easy if you have an intimate partner, a little trickier (but not impossible) if you are not. If you don't have a partner currently, do you have any friends or family? I mean real friends and family that would tell you if you have lipstick on your teeth or are acting too drunk at a party. Usually those type of friends you can ask for the same deal. Watch a movie while you switch rubbing shoulders or heads or whatever aches you (within reason, this is a friend, not a paid pro).

Self-Massage

There are many ways to self- massage. You can find a whole [YouTube list here](#). This is by far the most convenient method of the three because you are the only one who needs to be there. So you can do it any time. And did I mention free?

One of my favorite sites is [yogahealer.com](http://www.yogahealer.com) and she explains about the [Ayurvedic Abhyanga technique](http://www.yogahealer.com/the-benefits-of-self-massage-ayurvedic-abhyanga/) (<http://www.yogahealer.com/the-benefits-of-self-massage-ayurvedic-abhyanga/>). There's a lot of good instruction there and some printouts that you can hang to help yourself remember too.

It's important our bodies are loved and our muscles appreciated. They work hard for us, and massage is one way we can maintain and nurture them.

*Massage therapy has been shown to relieve depression, especially in people who have chronic fatigue syndrome; other studies also suggest benefit for other populations.
-Andrew Weil*

Go See a Live Show

Why Live?

Because there is something in the chemistry of a roomful of people sharing an experience put on by people who are also live. There is an elemental bonding that can boost your spirit and lower your stress level.

Live Music

We all have favorite artists that we would love to see in concert. I would love to see U2 for one, and I cannot justify spending hundreds of dollars to see them live. The albums will have to do. Luckily in just about every city, there is some type of music offered for free. You may need to look, but check with the Chamber of Commerce in your area for events, or the local newspaper. It may not be platinum selling artists, however, seeing and supporting a local artist live can be much more fulfilling, while much less cash intensive.

Plays & Musicals

There is something about live acting that you can't get on TV. It's not always perfect and often props or backdrops have a hitch, and that is the magic of them.

The same as with music, we would all love to see first-rate shows every night and it is practical or even available for most of us. However, opportunities abound. Check the newspaper again. Often there are volunteer organizations or schools that are having plays and musicals you can attend. Personally I love High School pieces. Something about the kids and parents in the audience probably being related or friends with the actors, makes it more comfortable and connected. Another bonus is that you don't have to purchase tickets or reserve seats ahead of time usually. These performances are usually craving for more people.

Talent Shows

If you know of talent shows in the area, you need to go. Even if you don't participate, the entertainment is in the talent (or sometimes lack thereof). We have millions of people tuning into American Idol, yet not many attend the talent in their own backyards. Sure, there will be some dreadful to sit through (or a good time to visit the restroom), and seeing people (who really want to be seen) perform will be a service to them and you.

So go do it now! Go schedule something in the next two weeks or better yet, find something for tonight or this weekend. There are plenty of events out there, you just need to find them.

*I like the
energy of live
performance.*

*-Sandra
Bernhard*

Learn Something New

If you read any Alzheimer's studies, you know that keeping your brain and body active leads to better health down the road. Learning something new is energizing and can challenge you to think differently or use your brain in new ways.

Whether you learn something new to help with your career goals, or find a new hobby to help with your creative outlet, choose something today from somewhere local – or online to start in the new year. You often don't need a lot of cash. Some places I have and continue to get more learning from:

Community Colleges – These schools often have a non-credit course section. Where I live, I am lucky that our county's college has a full teaching kitchen and offer classes from writing to sewing to business management. As a bonus, these courses are also pretty inexpensive.

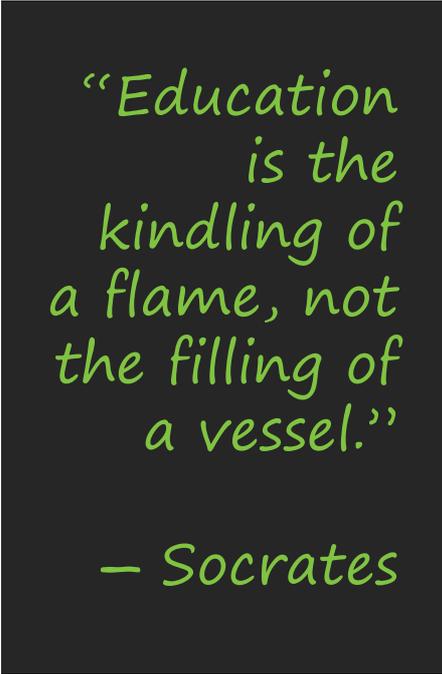
Online – I have taken several courses online from great teachers. I attend summits that are often free recordings of lectures from people in the top of their field. I have also learned a lot of painting techniques, self-care, yoga, and more on YouTube. Online is often a great tool for those of us who may be tight on cash.

Community & Arts Center - Look for local community centers and arts centers which usually have workshops that you can attend pretty inexpensively often.

Churches – In my area, many churches are opening encouraging participation by offering free or cheap workshops, discussion groups, seminars. Many offer exercise like yoga or Pilates quite inexpensively if you are a first timer wanting to try it out in a less experienced environment.

Specialty teachers/mentors - Of course, if you want to learn a new musical skill or try dancing or need coaching to help you learn what you need to achieve a goal, you might consider getting a personal teacher or coach. Admittedly, these may a little more expensive, however, if you are attempting a goal you were unsuccessful at before (maybe more than once or ten times), you may consider getting focused assistance. I personally keep a health coach, even as a health coach and one of my goals is to get a business mentor in the new year.

So do it know maybe even find a couple things to try, and remember not to overdo it. Your goals need to be challenging and attainable. Pick one for career goals and then one for a hobby or fun interest. You can space them out or take them together. When you are finished and taken in the lessons, pick something new. It's for growth and continued health.



*“Education
is the
kindling of
a flame, not
the filling of
a vessel.”*
– Socrates

Get Your Glow With Oil

The body needs oil. It is a lot of oil. When I grew up all make-up and cleansers I was told to get were oil-free. I had breakouts. Major breakouts and they continued to my thirties. Admittedly, a lot of that was my diet. Even when I started eating better, my skin did not completely clear up. I had even tried some pretty well-known product and they just seemed to make my face hurt which made it break out even more. Ugh.

Oil Cleaning Method

Then I read about the Oil Cleaning Method (OTC). All you need is some type of oil, a washcloth, and hot water. Don't judge, just try it, whether or not you are having skin problems. I find it to be a great relaxation technique, in the least. You can read my post about it here (<http://wholefulliving.com/2014/09/06/confession-i-wash-my-face-with-oil/>).



Make Your Own Spa Products

This year for gifts, I am creating my own spa products. From sugar scrubs to lip gloss and lotion, I am going to make sure the people I love are naturally clean and moisturized (and smell good too). If you want to try making something for yourself, you can search it or head over to Homemade Mommy, she offers a ton of easy recipes.

I don't want to tell you too much about mine now because I would like to keep some surprise for my friends and family, but I will post the recipes (along with how each went over with the crowd) in the new year!

Coconut Oil

Coconut Oil is good for so many things because it's low on the greasy scale, it has anti-bacterial qualities and it stays solid unless above 70 degrees. If you haven't tried it, give yourself a self-massage from yesterday with coconut oil. Don't do the hair, and you won't need to shower. If you use just a reasonable amount, you will see it almost melts right and then disappears except maybe for a faint scent. I often use coconut oil before bed or after a shower. If you melt some and add in your favorite essential oil, you now have your very own scented oil.

Nature is Outside, You are Nature

*I believe in
God only I
spell it
'nature.'*

*-Frank Lloyd
Wright*



I am not here to debate religion, and I think no matter your religion, being in nature often brings you closer to it.

There is something spiritual and grounding about nature, about feet in the grass or sand, the smell of fresh flowers, birds chirping, squirrels scurrying. You know what I mean, and if you don't, it has been too long.

It may not seem practical, and make a point to schedule at least a few moments outside to just notice nature. If you are a still meditative type, check out the Sitting on Purpose Course that my friends at Sagefire Institute have about sit-spotting. It's a great way to connect with nature while settling your adrenal levels.

Walking is always a great outdoor activity that can give us a glimpse of nature even in the city.

For a more grounding and centering exercise that is said to decrease pain amongst other health benefits, try **earthing** which is walking mindfully barefoot through grass or earth of some type. I am not an expert on this effect, and here is one that shows you why it is important to do this especially because of the amount of technology we use today. You can see a video about it here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnZjY_q2WQk

Go outside now and get some fresh air. Feel the seasons on the outside and feel your inner nature.

Stretch Your Muscles

Movement is good for our bodies. From the muscles to the organs, everything benefits when we get our circulation going while being present to what we are doing. I highly recommend yoga. With more and more research out supporting yoga for improving your mood, lowering your risk of injury, increasing flexibility, supporting weight loss, and improving overall muscle strength and tone.

Whether you have 5 minutes or an hour, you can find something free on YouTube that you will like, for the level of yoga, or for specific health problems.

Today's self-nurture tip is to actually go do it. Right now.

Tara Stiles is one of my favorite yogis. Go search on YouTube and you will find plenty of 10 minute videos from beginner to expert and for balance or strength or whatever you are looking for.

And after you have done it, when you are feeling good about your accomplishment, go schedule more time to stretch your muscles and stick to it.



*Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured.”
-BK Iyengar.*

Here's a couple videos to get you started:

For beginners:
<http://youtu.be/edNfbfeIDHE>

For more of a challenge:
<http://youtu.be/MOvpHwCHInE>

Gift Your Time

Sometimes the best things we can do to change our own circumstances is to help someone else.

The Gift of Time

Giving gifts is nice, and so is offering time, which is often more valuable than things that can be purchased.

For instance, one of the best gifts I received when my son was young, was from a friend who would babysit him for a few hours each year. I didn't have a many (or any) family who were interested in watching children, so it was great to have this break to be able to nurture myself or at least buy gifts for him without him around. Who around you might just need some time from you? Is there someone caring for a parent that might use a night out? I have helped friends clean their homes or just run errands to help distress someone's day. Knowing how busy most of us are, taking anything off the task list can be much more desired than a gift.

Who can you offer your time to now? Contact them and offer it, or give them a holiday gift with a coupon book of hours they can cash in during the year as needed.



Volunteer

This is year-round also. I hear from my clients that they just want to find a way to make an impact on others, and I offer them this same information. Often, they don't know what they give. Surely, anyone can offer to volunteer at a soup kitchen or some other non-profit, and I find it more impactful to do something I am passionate about or best uses the skills and experience I have.

If you don't know where you fit, think about these questions:

- What are your particular skills that you find interest in?
- Who or what type of people are you interesting in supporting?
- How can what you have and what they need match up?

Sure, someone may already have the volunteer position that you would be best at, it's ok to take another position to see if the one you want opens up. Remember that volunteers have high turnover, so even if it's not available today, it could be soon.

If you are like me, you may be thinking, where on Earth would I find the time? Widen your perspective. Gifting time is a great way to strengthen your relationships with acts of service and caring. This time is necessary to connect with yourself, to step out of your regular day-to-day to get another perspective on life. I make it a monthly required self-nurturing task.

How can you give your time?



De-Stress Your Day with Morning Rituals

Most of us have a morning routine. Mine has historically been rushed with only enough time to get what I needed done, which if you have kids, results in being late more times than I care to admit. The beauty (and sometimes the irritant) is that little kids have not yet discovered the adult importance of time. They wake up to learn new things and see what happens today. They don't have a list of to-do's, a work schedule, deadlines, etc. They have nothing but time. It's a beautiful perspective.

What do I do:

It depends on the day of the week and what I have going on that day, but there are several things I try to do before I start my day.

- Before I even leave the bed. I take deep breaths. Conscious and grateful for my breathing.
- I go to the bathroom, [wash my face](#) and, if I feel like it, I do a [hot towel scrub](#). I also drink some water.
- Then, my husband usually brings me tea (yes, I am spoiled) and I will sit in front of the altar of items that are meaningful to us. These items mostly remind me of moments that I am centered and bring me joy.
- Then I usually do a short bit of stretching or yoga poses.
- I write my [morning pages](#). Get all the garbage out of my head.
- I have a few quotes and affirmations on the mirror that help me remember that my health is my priority, along with kindness and compassion. One question I hang there: "Will this matter to you on your deathbed?" It's a question that reminds me to keep close what is important and forget about the bull.
- After that, I just go into my dressing routine and get everything else prepared so that I can have a cooked breakfast with my family.

If it sounds unrealistic to have a cooked breakfast every morning before work, I just want to share that it depends on what's important to you. I do this because I know it's a way to guarantee everyone is at the table at the same time and I also get the benefit that I am less likely to eat garbage if I cook something myself. So feeling good and spending time with my family beats the extra minutes I have to wake up earlier.

De-Stress Your Day with Morning Rituals



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Other Options for Morning Rituals

You can make your morning ritual contain whatever you think would benefit you to gain clarity to start the day. Here are some things I have recommended to clients:

- Skin brushing
- Journaling
- Meditating with or without a mantra
- Foot massage
- Gratitude letters to one's we love
- Reading inspirational books
- Listening to music, or playing if you do that
- Painting, drawing or art of some kind
- Purposefully setting your intention or goal for the day
- Dancing
- Exercise
- Walking outside

Anything that makes you feel good and keeps you in the present moment and away from anxiety is something good to try.



Nostalgia is Good for the Soul

Each time of year brings different memories for me. Nothing brings back each seasons feel like music, annual events, and movies from previous years that may have become tradition. Like when I hear a song in an elevator or store and suddenly I remember a relationship or era of my past that fills me with warm memories.

Comfort-Food Movies

Pick a night, or several nights to watch your favorites from childhood, adolescence, or whenever everything felt right and watch it again. A lot of them may be on Netflix or YouTube.

Some of my personal comfort food movies include: Flashdance (I was a child of the 80's), Miracle on 42nd Street, Gilmore Girls (not a movie, but a darn good show marathon), A Christmas Story, Breakfast Club, and I could go on, but you get the idea.

Comfort-Food Music

Try listening to music from those other eras of your life too. I still listen to the old Madonna or Beastie Boys albums when I wash dishes or working on the computer. Playing music from a time in my life when I was more relaxed and care-free helps me feel that way.

Comfort-Food Events

Is there something that you did as a child that you loved? For me, we had a very tight budget, so at Christmas, we would just drive around and look at other people's Christmas lights. As a child it was magical to see all the arrangements. There were several houses that had yards of lights that you could walk through.

I also make a date with my friends to make cookies, or whatever holiday do-it-yourself project I have cooked up for each holiday. In the winter, my husband and I take a day off and just spend time being together and making clay beads. It is something I look forward to, which is hard to find in mid-winter.

It is true that some times of the year are marked by sorrow too, however, just as you had beautiful, perfect holidays, you have probably also had those you would like to forget about. All the good feelings are just a click away and it is much healthier than piling on loads of comfort foods that are rich and unhealthy. Make yourself a healthy snack and enjoy some nostalgia.

Care for Yourself Through Authentic Connection to Others

Connection to other is a meaningful way to care for yourself. Connecting to others helps us learn about ourselves, to feel like we aren't alone and to be heard. In that connection there are benefits to the body, mind, and spirit.

Send (Or Make) a Card

In addition to the regular birthday and individual holiday cards, I also use cards as my people gratitude list. I like to send thank you's to people years after a shared conversation, when I can see what it actually meant to my journey. I like to send congratulations cards to people, for personal goals they completed a while ago, just to remind them, they have come so far. I also send sorry cards, whether it's I am sorry for doing something silly or sorry for your loss.

There are so many reasons to send a card. Just to tell a person they are awesome is cause enough. People don't stop to say it (or hear it) enough, in my opinion. And if you are artsy or want to do a little art self-care, you can also create it yourself.

Call a Friend

It is so easy to lose track of your friends as we get older, and busier. These same friends who you got drunk with, who held you while you cried through a break-up, who know things about you no one else does. Do your best to keep your good friends.

One of my weekly goals is to make sure I have socially reached out to one person I do not see on a day to day basis to check in. I know I am too busy if I haven't checked in with at least one person per week. Your goal may be higher or lower, I admit I am a passionate workaholic so I start with goals I can commit to.

Have a Sleep-Over

One way I connect to women that are a bit far for a one day trip is to plan a sleepover. We kick the men and children out to sleep at another sleepover participants home and we have girl talk, movies, sometimes art or just playing cards. A house of women (or men) without spousal or child responsibilities is a necessary retreat once in a while. It's why I am thinking of hosting a retreat in the spring (stay tuned).

Go call a few friends and see when you can arrange a sleepover. Make everyone come up with a couple ideas and a couple treats and make some memories.

The overall idea is just to connect with your friends. Remind yourself that connection is important to your human side, even if it isn't something easily jammed into a day. Make a goal to stay in touch with your friends and make it a priority.

Take Time to Hear the Wisdom

Listening to my elders was preached in my house, however, usually when I was told to do (or not do) something. Without any grandparents locally to relate to, I did not learn the patience and listening that makes up most of the communication between younger and older people. Today, I have learned a great deal from people who will never learn to use a computer and still play records on the player.



It's easy for us to see the elderly when they are much slower than the speed limit and in front of you on the road. It's also easy to chuckle at their lack of technological skills, or any of the other stereotypes we give them. Yet we overlook all the other relatable experiences that we have in common. Elders have been children and young adults and parents and middle aged, etc. They know what its like to be your age, at least how it was for them.

OK, so what does this have to do with the month-long nurturing posts?

Listening to an elder for a short time:

Gives you perspective and perhaps some data you did not have before.

Gives them a chance to relate their experience and be heard.

Can offer you a different or wider perspective of your own life.

Connect with the piece of you that is ancient, spiritual, or star-stuff.

So find an aunt, grandparent, distant cousin, friend's parents, or volunteer at a nursing home. There are many elders waiting to share their knowledge and sadly, too few to listen.

What value have you gotten by sitting with an elder?

There are two barriers that often prevent communication between the young and their elders. The first is middle-aged forgetfulness of the fact that they themselves are no longer young. The second is youthful ignorance of the fact that the middle aged are still alive.

-Jessamyn West

Use Your Imagination for Relaxation

It's easy to get caught up in tasks that need to be done, goals that need to be reached and end up making everything about those tasks. However, our brains need some creative reading that stretches the imagination or our ideas will start going stale and I know I will often fall into a world of urgent and unimportant stuff.

So how do I stop the drone of tasks floating in my head before bed?

I step out of my world and get into a fictional one.

In the past, I felt it irresponsible to 'waste' my time on fictional books and would read career-building or personal growth books. And these are also important. However, fiction allows me to go to a space that I don't visit often, where anything can happen.

Fiction can give a new perspective on life, on people. It allows our imaginations to create things that cannot be created in a more serious, concrete world that we live in. Some of my greatest work ideas came from expanding into fictional reading. I can think outside the box, widen my view.

Some studies even suggest that reading fiction can extend the health of our brains by working spaces that often are unused during the rest of the day.

So go find a list of books to pick up and challenge yourself to read each day, just a little.



Take Comfort in Each Season

It is a grounding feeling. This too shall pass.

December especially reminds me of this. No matter what is going on in my day-to-day, each year there will still be snowmen made and holiday music on the radio when today's list is a memory. Each year, the sledding and ice-skating will happen amongst my minutia as long as I take time to notice it.

In the last few years, I have made a more conscious effort to try to remember this through the seasons. My garden guides me in this. In the spring, we plant and new life begins. Every year the fresh scent the ground gives off when it has thawed out, and the apple blossoms that bloom for only a few days before the spring rains wash them away. In the summer, incredible growth makes my garden lush and filled with life and smells of herbs and heat. Then in fall, when some plants die off, and some hit a last spurt of growth. Animals dig for whatever they may find left to hoard for winter.

Take a moment to smell the roses, or the pine, or the spring buds. No matter what season it is, look around and see what still feels the same. Think about what people one hundred years ago would have also seen or felt or smelled. How is it the same as now? Journal it if you feel like it, or create a poem to remind you.

This is a lesson in coming back to importance and letting go.

I get the same feeling when standing next to the ocean. I feel like all the worries I have are insignificant when I think about how long the waves have been doing this same thing. I can't always be near an ocean to do that, but I can take in the season it is.

Often I will add a little sweet, hot tea and some buttery toast in the morning on the deck. Because that's how my grandmother and I took in each morning when we had time. Will what I am worrying about today mean more than the feeling of having hot tea outside in 10, 20, or 30 years? If not, let go. If so, make a plan, follow the steps, and let go of expectations.



*"Spring passes and one remembers one's innocence. Summer passes and one remembers one's exuberance. Autumn passes and one remembers one's reverence. Winter passes and one remembers one's perseverance."
-Yoko Ono*

Gratitude is the Ultimate Self-Care

In the culture of the US, it seems very easy to see in the media what we don't have – whether it be an intimate relationship, or a skinny body, or a big house. Comparison is the root of shame and shame belittles self-care and self-worth. Don't play the shame game.

Instead be thankful.

Live as though life were rigged in your favor.

-Rumi

If you start seeing everything that is good in your life, it is much easier to see life rigged in your favor.

Gratitude may not always be as easy as it seems. Years ago when I was suffering depression, someone said that each morning I should awake and be grateful for the day vocally.

If you have ever suffered depression, you know that being thankful first thing in the morning when it feels as though the world is on your shoulders, can be a daunting task. And I did it. Each day I wrote down at least 3 things that I was sincerely thankful for. Funny thing happened, although I struggled at first to find three things, I looked harder and then all of a sudden, I found gratitude everywhere, like just the fact that it wasn't raining when I had a load of groceries to carry in or finding a parking space in a busy lot.

Gratitude Challenge

I challenge you to get a gratitude jar. Each time you have a thought of gratitude, write it down, and put it in the jar. At the end of the year, you will have a stack of what you do have to be thankful for, and you will sharpen your vision to see more and more have and less have nots.

What are you grateful for today?

As a Health Coach, I am your personal advocate for living an energized and passionate life. I work with my clients to help them create happy, healthy lives in a way that is flexible, fun, and free of denial and discipline. By working together, we can discover the food and lifestyle choices that best support you. Making gradual, lifelong changes enables you to reach your current and future health goals.

Want a free strategy session? Contact me.

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*This Self-Care Guide was created by
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