

# THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF *Self-Care*

## What is Self-Care?

Self-care means actively and purposely taking time for yourself to do something that replenishes and energizes your mental, emotional and/or physical health. True self-care goes beyond bubble baths and massages. Rather, it includes your whole being-body, mind and spirit. Balanced care for all parts of us- holistic self-care -contributes to our overall sense of well-being and considers our social, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. Self-care is a highly personal and individualized experience. What replenishes you, may be different than what replenishes other people in your life.



## What does Self-Care have to do with Leadership?

As leaders, and as women, we are often called upon to make decisions on behalf of the group, while considering the outcomes and consequences for everyone involved in the project or organization. When we make decisions and don't consider *our own well-being*, we are risking our mental, emotional and physical health. At work, if we are scheduling back to back appointments, saying yes to every project, staying late each day, or spending our work hours only supporting other people's projects instead of our own, we are taxing our energy reserves.

You may be thinking, as I did, "but I love to help people," or "it's selfish if I don't do these things." When we are not resourced or replenishing ourselves, we are not able to give fully to others. The point is not to stop supporting other people, in fact, service and support are a huge part of the reason you are and will be chosen for leadership positions. Finding a way to include *yourself* when making choices is key – you are part of the group and organization, too.

*"We can do meaningful work in a way that works for us and for those we serve."*

*- Laura van Dernoot Lipsky*



## Self-care is not Self-Indulgence.

As women, we are often socialized to believe that we need to be *everything to everyone*. And, while being considerate of others is an admirable value, it is important to recognize when we are giving to the point of our own detriment. With these standards set both within us and outside of ourselves, we can forget that we are only human. It can be very difficult to give ourselves permission to take a break, to breathe deeply, to say “no.” But, just like your cell phone needs to be recharged, so do you.

*“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”*

*- Audre Lorde*



*This is really, really important. Self-care is not selfish. It is an act of generosity and commitment to make sure that you are at your best when you support others. The people you love and work with will get much more effective, meaningful, and openhearted support from you if you are healthy and strong.*



### Why is Self-Care so Important?

Self-care is the core of our well-being. When we neglect to take care of ourselves in a holistic manner, our mental, physical and emotional health all begin to suffer. Sometimes we experience a slow decline, and other times the bottom falls out quickly. Lack of self-care shows up as anxiety, depression, lack of sleep, or total burn out, and the inability to remain focused at work or in life. Stress can also lead to a physical breakdown. Injury or illness is common in people who lack self-care practices. When uncared for, our immune system can be compromised, leading to frequent colds or headaches, or even pneumonia. Additionally, when fatigued, the risk of injury increases. Ultimately, the negative effects of not incorporating regular self-care can force someone to have to leave their profession altogether.

*Self-care is not simply about limiting or addressing professional stressors. It is also about protecting and enhancing your overall well-being*

# Self-Care at a Glance

## Some Consequences of Lack of Self-Care

- Increased stress
- Burn out
- Decreased performance at work
- Decreased quality of connection with family, friends, colleagues, children and partners
- Illness and injury
- Chronic health problems such as autoimmune diseases (all linked are to trauma and stress)
- High blood pressure,
- Disrupted sleep
- Lack of sleep from stress has several downsides in and of itself:
  - more likely to have type 2 diabetes
  - more likely to suffer from:
    - depression
    - anxiety
    - ADD
    - Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases
  - slower reaction times
  - linked to negative lifestyle choices – alcohol, drugs, eating poorly, etc.



## Some of the Benefits of Self-Care

- Reduced stress
- Improved work performance
- Renewed energy
- Increased creativity
- A fresh new perspective towards life
- Increased feelings of happiness, calm and peace within
- Increased health and well-being
- Increased confidence, self-esteem and self-acceptance
- Increased passion for life and motivation to succeed
- *Probably most importantly:* Improved relationship to self, improved self-awareness

WHEN YOU SAY  
'YES' TO OTHERS  
MAKE SURE YOU  
ARE NOT SAYING  
'NO' TO YOURSELF

~ *Paolo Coelho*

# Self-Care at a Glance

## How do we Know When we are Lacking in Self-Care?

Our body, mind and emotions keep us informed as to whether they are being taken care of in the way they need to be. Here are some signs to help you know that some self-care is in order

- Low energy
- Feeling stressed, irritated or frustrated
- Lacking motivation, procrastinating
- Lacking zest or passion for life
- Struggling to regulate emotions (depression, anxiety or having outbursts of anger or sadness)
- Feeling disconnected, checked-out or anti-social
- Suppressed immune system, becoming sick more often or healing slowly



## Necessary Aspects of a Good Self-Care Plan

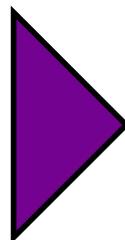
- Boundaries (knowing when to say “yes” or say “no”)
- Taking breaks (mental, emotional and physical)
- Checking in with yourself and knowing what you need
- Spaciousness and self-acceptance
- Choosing activities that you enjoy
- Replenishes you



## A Holistic Vision of Self-Care for Well-Being

Your holistic self-care plan needs to address all elements of your life. You can break these down into categories – physical, mental, emotional, social & spiritual. Imagine what your self-care plan might look like. Are there activities you would like to add or subtract? Are there domains you would like to enhance?

Physical Self-Care  
Mental Self-Care  
Emotional Self-Care  
Social Self-Care  
Spiritual Self-Care



**Holistic Plan**

*What will you do to  
nourish yourself?*

# THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF *Self-Care: Reflection*

Self-care starts with self-awareness and reflection. If we are not aware of what we are needing, how can we create a life that integrates care for ourselves?

Below are a few inquiries that will be important to consider, both in our time together, and, more deeply, afterwards.

*For just a few moments pause. Take a deep breath. Allow yourself, from a quiet space, to see what answers arise. Often, the first answer is the best answer, but give yourself the freedom to modify your responses as your awareness and understanding deepens.*

## What gets in the way of self-care?

(What barriers do you experience to self-care/what makes it hard?)

## What are you afraid might happen if you took time for yourself?

# Reflection

**What values are honoring by choosing something else?**

(What are the good reasons you don't put yourself first?)

**How might self-care & time for yourself serve the things you are currently putting first?**

(relationships, projects, work, other values, etc.)

**What replenishes you?**

# THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF *Self-Care: Self-Compassion*

On difficult days, when we are stressed out, or we are learning new ways to be with ourselves and bring care to ourselves, it can be difficult to cultivate patience and self-kindness. So often, we can be self-critical, especially when we feel we “should” be behaving differently or believe we are not okay as we are. As much as we intend to support ourselves by criticizing our behavior, we actually do more harm than good and leave ourselves even less resourced than before.

*Part of self-care is embracing ourselves and our humanity and that means learning to accept and love ourselves - starting where we are.*



*“Talk to yourself like you  
would to someone you love”*

*~ Brené Brown*



Bringing kindness and compassion to yourself can bring up a lot of concern. It challenges cultural norms. We may be worried we will stay where we are and never improve. By bringing kindness and compassion to ourselves, we may think we are making excuses.

*Despite our worries, self-compassion, however radical or unfamiliar, has the capacity to positively change our brains, and change our relationship to ourselves.*

**After all, if we don't like ourselves, why would we do something kind for ourselves like self-care?**

*For some of us, self-compassion is the first step needed to move toward a healthier, more balanced life.*

# Self-Compassion

*The next time you notice you are choosing a self-sabotaging behavior instead of self-care, try speaking to yourself in a new way:*

\_\_\_\_\_ are you so longing for \_\_\_\_\_?  
(your name) (What's missing? Ease? Partnership? Rest? Peace?)

Would you love it if \_\_\_\_\_?

Do you like it when \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_ are you so \_\_\_\_\_? Do you long for \_\_\_\_\_?  
(your name) (Feeling) (ex: exhausted, frustrated) (What's missing?)

\_\_\_\_\_ of course you're \_\_\_\_\_! You're feeling really  
(your name) (self-sabotaging behavior you're doing)

\_\_\_\_\_ right now!  
(Feeling) (ex: stressed, sad, lonely)

\*feel free to mix and match these. I have provided some examples below to support.

## Examples:

Jaya, would you just so love to have a partner who responds warmly to your efforts to connect?

Jaya, are you just frozen with worry? Do you long for unconditional acceptance?

Jaya, of course you are unmotivated and watching Netflix right now! Are you just so overwhelmed and exhausted from thinking about your projects? Do you need some acknowledgement of the burden and pressure to meet deadlines? Are you longing for some ease and joy in life right now?

*\*\*Tip: Use your own name when speaking to yourself. If you find it difficult to speak warmly to yourself, try imagining someone who has loved you (maybe a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, beloved teacher or friend, a child, or a pet you have now or had as a child). Look at yourself through their eyes and say these things to yourself.*

This exercise is inspired by the book *Your Resonant Self* and the many trainings I have attended with the author, Sarah Peyton

# *Additional Notes*



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*"I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self-indulgent.  
Caring for myself is an act of survival."*

*- Audre Lorde*

