

Do you take care of yourself as well as you take care of others?

Not a day goes by where I don't find myself asking clients "So how are you taking care of yourself during this time? What are you doing to support yourself?" Sometimes I get a blank stare, sometimes a confused look paired with "what do you mean?" other times I get "I don't have time for me!" It is rare that the response is "Well I set aside time every day to make sure my needs are met, I ensure daily I do things that I enjoy, I make time for my health, my family, my friends and my work (and in that order)." In fact not only is that answer rare, I don't think I have ever heard it, and if I did I would probably be asking myself is this a human in front of me or an alien being?

Self care is not always one of our strong points, yet there is a reason why the airline emergency information says "please fit your own mask before helping others." That is because it is AS important to take care of ourselves as it is to take care of other people. Yet often we find ourselves last on the list of priorities after partners, family, friends, bosses, pets and sometimes even neighbours! Although the reality is that if we don't take care of ourselves then no one else will.

One of the most common reasons I hear for people not taking care of themselves is that of not having time, and this is a valid reason. Yet I would argue that it is not that we do not have enough time, but rather that we do not prioritise ourselves in the time we do have. Sure we all have commitments, but imagine how much more effective you would be in completing those commitments if you are the best you can possibly be?

Now sometimes we confuse self care with selfishness, which is not the case at all. Self care is about taking active steps to ensure you have a healthy mind and a healthy body and that those around you have the same rights to be healthy. When we take care of ourselves it is so that we can be the best we can be and so we can best support those around us to be the best they can be. Being selfish on the other hand is about putting your own wants and needs above the needs of those around you and dismissing the rights of others if it means getting your needs met.

Self care does not always have to be about taking time out, although having a massage, reading a book or spending some time journaling are great ways to self-nurture. Self-care can be as simple as self-compassion and this doesn't take any extra time- just extra awareness.

Have you noticed that when you make a mistake your critical mind jumps in with "well that was stupid" then the residents of "Shouldville" start chiming in "you should have done that better, you should have known it was going to turn out that way, " Now on the odd occasion listening to your critical mind can be helpful as it leads to self improvement, however 99% of the time when we get caught listening to our critical self we end up feeling pretty crappy and we make no changes towards anything, let alone self improvement. Self nurture can be as simple as saying "ok well it is done no point beating myself up" or "Ahh that's the residents of shouldville again- is it helpful for me to listen to them right now?" Practising self compassion is a simple and effective step that can lead to great benefits.

Reminder: Take Care of Myself

IMAGECHEF.COM

10 Top Tips for Self Nurturing

1. Solve problems- procrastinating only makes them bigger
2. Turn off the TV/Phone/PC. Make at least 2 hours a day a technology free zone
3. Call a friend- Regularly
4. Swap a half an hour of news for half an hour of comedy
5. Take a walk, go for a run or get to the gym. Daily!
6. Eat! Regularly! Nutritiously!
7. Do three things (big or small) for yourself BEFORE you leave the house each day
8. Grab a book, magazine or kindle down to the park/beach/lake and take some time out to read and enjoy nature
9. Do MORE of what you LOVE- hobbies, interests, sports etc
10. Think self care-Think self compassion!

