

Self Care as a Revolutionary Act

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If you always put yourself last, chances are that many of the people around you will follow your example.

It is possible to take care of self without being selfish. Is there any area in your life where you can at least occasionally practice putting your needs first? If not, are there any changes you feel ready to make to create such an area?

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Loving the woman I am...

...and nurturing the woman I am becoming

You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.

Buddha

- What I love about me... make a list of your top ten.



Some Challenges

Dueling Expectations

- Women of color are expected to serve and take care of everyone else but when we are spent (no emotional resources left because we have been pouring into everyone except ourselves) we are shamed for being angry, chastised for being unhealthy and/or overweight and accused of not leaning on God enough if we experience depression.

Write about how that makes you feel:



According to John Hopkins Medicine losing just 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can reduce your risk of diabetes by 58% . That is only 10 to 20 pounds if you weigh 200.

You don't have to be a size 2 to be healthier

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Start where you are

Not ready to overhaul your diet? Plan to add instead of subtract. Include a serving of fresh fruits or vegetables with all meals and snacks. For example, have a small salad before the burger, a glass of water before the soda or an apple before the chips. Create a win-win by taking in more of the foods you need and not eating as much of the less healthy foods without feeling deprived.

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I am myself, I am not the representative

Living on the margins often involves vigilant self scrutiny to avoid being the unacceptable other.

What would it be like to let go of the pressure to be acceptable to the mainstream or inside the margins?



Job One

Regardless of your occupation the most important work you will ever do is on yourself.

- Write about the skills and resources you need for your revolutionary self-care practice.



Busier isn't necessarily better

Who you are isn't about what you do and worth is not measured by the number of your accomplishments. You are lovable and worthy because you are you. You are already enough.

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Start where you are

Not able or willing to start a garden project and you want fresh veggies at home?

- Grow microgreens- these nutrient dense greens grow easily in a shallow container. Place in a sunny window and you will have a healthy addition to your salads and meals in a week or two.
- Join a food co-op.
- Check your neighborhood for weekly farmer's markets
- Barter for veggies with a neighbor that has planted a garden



You are your best advocate

“God helps those who help themselves”

- This common phrase is not actually a bible verse
- It is intended as a way of encouraging initiative, but often functions as a way of shaming instead

The real truth....if you don't speak up for yourself, who will?

- No one understands your needs better than you do
- You are your own best advocate
- Asking for help should not be understood as a sign of weakness.
- Strong, capable people need help just like everybody else.
- Having initiative does not mean you have to be completely self-reliant.
- Identifying and advocating for your needs is a way of taking the initiative for getting those needs met. *Choosing not to remain silent about what you need and want is a way of practicing self care.*



The truth doesn't always set you free

Often, claiming to be direct or “telling it like it is” is really just an excuse for using language as a weapon. Think carefully about your intent in “telling the truth.” What are you trying to accomplish by offering feedback at this time and in this way? Will your words get you closer to or further away from that place? Think too about how the words you choose will impact the listener's sense of self as well as your personal integrity and your relationship in the long term.



Your flaws don't have to mean failure

Everyone, even the most put together person you can think of, has some flaws. Make a list of all your flaws (both real and imagined). Now decide what you want to do about them. Yes, you have choices. You can accept some, reframe or shift the way you think about some, make a plan to change some, stop hiding some (shout about them from the roof tops). No matter what you decide to do about them, you can also love yourself anyway. We are always evolving. It is okay to accept both the woman you are and the woman you are becoming.



Audre Lorde

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



Just breathe

Each time you wash your hands today, pause for a moment. Slow down and breathe deeply, allowing your belly to fully expand as you inhale. Exhale slowly and sigh out loud as the breath moves out of your body. Remember to sigh. Sighing can help you regulate disrupted breathing patterns and lead to feelings of calm.

Breathe deeply throughout the day and remind yourself that you are okay. While you are taking a breath break why not also take a break from trying to manage what others think of you or how they feel about you.



Tired of being tired

We often talk about being tired - physically, spiritually, emotionally exhausted. For so many reasons, that makes sense. What doesn't make sense is not having a committed plan of response to ourselves when we feel this way.

Where do you need to make changes? How will you begin your restoration plan?



Small cuts hurt, too

Take care in the face of microaggressions. These “small” daily assaults can pile up and wear us down. Things like forced invisibility, being silenced or discounted, assumed to be inadequate or unworthy, backhanded compliments, unreasonable limits, constantly changing expectations that make “success” unattainable, cement ceilings...the list is endless. These “small” acts of violence unattended to or second guessed away can result in microscopic tears in the psychic self. Over time the tears will create large holes that feel impossible to fill.

What safe spaces do you have or can you create to gain some perspective and make a useful plan to respond to microaggressions?



Who do you think you are?

Maybe the question looms large each time you try to step outside your box. Or maybe it is yet unspoken and lodged deeply in your subconscious mind, blocking any bold ideas before they form into actions. No matter where the question is, for many of us it is there and must be answered to throw off the burden of unrealized potential. So...who do you think you are?

Write it now, loud and proud. Claim your gifts as well as your faults. Embrace the promise that is within the part of you not bound by doubt, fear, criticism or the voice of your insider critical observer. Maybe she does make you feel safer, but she also keeps you away from what is possible.



The burden of strength

Strong women get tired and feel weak sometimes...just like everybody else.

Just because you may have had a lot of practice does not mean there are no limits to the emotional and physical pain you can endure. Give yourself permission to step away from the myth that you can take anything. Saying you have had enough does not diminish your strength or power.



Anonymous

She who trims herself to suit everyone will soon whittle herself away.



Just Say No

Sometimes saying no to others is a way of saying yes to yourself.
Name one thing or person you'd like to say no to. What would saying no mean?



Some of us did not die

The title of June Jordan's essay collection - Some of us did not die - can sum up the miracle that is our daily survival. We continue to live in spite of a deeply embedded cultural hostility that threatens our emotional, mental and physical well-being. Still, though we did not die, many of us are sick. Women, and particularly women of color, must commit to self-care as a strategy of defense against systemic forces designed to undermine our sense of self and, ultimately, to destroy us. We cannot effectively resist our individual and collective oppression when we are physically, spiritually and emotionally spent. It is not always enough to not die. We deserve more. We deserve to live vibrantly. If we give up, stop trying, use up all our energy, burnout and stop caring, we won't be prepared to fight for our lives.

