



eBook

What is Self-Care? (and why it matters)



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Introduction

Self-care has evolved as a term and as a practice over the years, still many of us don't know what it means. It's one of those terms that sounds so simple that even if we are unsure we might feel uncomfortable asking.

Is it getting a massage or taking a vacation? Is it therapy? Changing careers? Exercise? Nutrition? Meeting a friend for lunch?

The answer is yes. All of those things, and more.

In this eBook we will explore what self-care is and how to access it in the way that is best suited for you.



What is Self-Care?

- What do you need to do for YOUR self-care?
- What is needed for you to be in your “optimal operating system”?
- What feels good to you?
- How do you prefer to work?
- What kind of work do you prefer to do?
- What do you need to feel content, successful, inspired, or safe?
- When do you need a break?
- What is the way you ask for help or time out?

Self-care starts with the answers to these questions and continues from there. There is a big difference between self-knowledge and taking action. When we are talking about caring for yourself both are vitally important.

Self-care is, well, caring for yourself. Honoring your needs, your desires, your boundaries. Resting when you are sick or tired. Taking a moment of pause to recenter yourself and connect with what thoughts, actions and practices will help you be your best.

Self-care is knowing who you are and how you want to feel, be, and behave and then taking actions that are in sync. Self-care is different for everyone.

At work that might mean:

- Asking for more clarification, support, or time on a project that is making you feel stressed and overwhelmed
- Initiating programs that align with topics that you are passionate about, as well as, align with the organization’s strategic vision, mission, and objectives
- Taking a lunch outside of the office daily to reset, even if it is packing your lunch and eating at the park
- Using vacation days for mental health breaks
- Speaking up when you feel taken advantage of, disagree, or when you feel uncomfortable

Self-care doesn’t always come naturally, especially for those who identify as high-achievers and people-pleasers. If your mantra or profession is taking care of others, listen up. Making yourself a priority, shifting your mindset to one of personal authenticity can have enormous benefits personally and professionally.

Expectations

One area that gets in the way of caring for ourselves properly is expectations. Expectations placed on you by others and expectations placed on yourself.

You are different from everyone else. You offer a unique perspective and that should be celebrated. There is no one on earth who has had the same life experience you have had, nor the genetics, nurturing, and values. These unique set of experiences and qualities are valuable.

If you are constantly comparing yourself, it means you aren't happy with who you are. A big element of self-care is honoring yourself, your nature, and your needs.

Many of us are brought up to conform to society, expectations of work, behavior, safety, security, ways of living. If you don't fit within society's norms, you are looked upon disapprovingly. That said, we all have quirks and idiosyncrasies. A family member used to say, "We are all crazy different!"

It's these differences that help us to find solutions to problems. The uniqueness also keeps us from getting bored. Imagine if everyone were truly the same. There would be nothing new to discover.

There are some reasons to conform. For instance, you need to follow the rules and laws of your country and community. Otherwise, you will suffer consequences for not doing so. However, when it comes to connecting with what is best for you if you apply others expectations or "should's" life likely won't play out in a way that allows you to feel successful, content, or honored.

That's why it is beneficial to get out of the habit of comparing yourself to others. When you compare, you are likely setting unrealistic expectations that will lead you to disappointment. Comparing yourself to others can result in resentment of self and others. We all have unique ways of being and experiencing the world and each is necessary and valuable.

There may be qualities you admire in others and it makes sense to adopt some of those admirable qualities for yourself. The difference is identifying role models vs comparison models. However, do so in a way that is respecting who you are and maintaining yourself in the process.

Spend your time and effort being your best self. Be who you are, and let others see you fully. You will find that others are accepting of you, and are inspired by your confidence to be you. We appreciate authenticity over disguise in life and business.

Boundaries: Just Say No or Yes, What Supports You Best?

We all have a need for boundaries as part of our self-care. Boundaries are vital because they communicate your needs and help you to honor yourself in a clear way.

This quote from Tony Gaskins says it perfectly:

“You teach people how to treat you by what you allow, what you stop, and what you reinforce.”

If you haven't been effective at setting and keeping boundaries, that's ok. The good news is, you can establish, recreate, or redefine your boundaries, and make them stronger and healthier at any time.

Here are 5 ways to move forward:

1. Permit yourself to start over.

While this step may seem obvious, that's not always the case. If you have let boundaries slide or haven't created them in the first place, giving yourself permission to set boundaries is a declaration to yourself that you're important enough to **have** them. Which is a powerful mindset shift.

Also, in acknowledging that it's ok to start over, you're not getting hung up on the past. That is you, taking control. Embrace it!

2. Pay attention.

When creating or recreating boundaries take a quick inventory of what has worked well and what did not work when engaging with others in the past.

How have people taken advantage of you in the past, personally or professionally? Where have you wished there were boundaries? How do you wish to engage with people now?

Be mindful of your feelings. Look for the disappointment and anger as well as the enjoyment and engagement. Chances are those are places where the boundaries need the most work. You'll find that self-awareness and reflection are key to your success so be ready to explore your emotions.

3. Where have you been? And where are you now?

Chances are a lot of what you feel about boundaries came from your wiring as a child. If no one respected your space growing up, it's hard to ask people to respect it now. Examine the boundaries of your childhood and compare them to the boundaries of today. What's lacking? What needs work? What would make your world, relationships and work better?

Boundaries are bound to change over time and some habits or boundaries may have been established that don't work anymore.

Help is always available as well. Working with a counselor, therapist or coach (depending on the issue) can support you as you work through some of that old baggage.

4. Take care of yourself.

When you're not feeling well, it's nearly impossible to be firm in your boundaries. Being strong and healthy gives you the energy needed to put your foot down when you need to. With that in mind, taking care of yourself not only makes sense, it is also necessary for future success. Remember the basics: Eat healthy, exercise, and get enough sleep every night.

5. Speak up.

There's likely going to be pushback when you set new boundaries. Having healthy boundaries means that you put the work in to maintain them. That means saying 'no' when you need to and 'yes' when you need to. By being clear in who you are and how you want to feel you protect those boundaries. You are also showing to yourself and the world that your needs, wants and preferences matter.

Just like anything, to get what you want, you must communicate it.

By following these steps to move forward, you're not only drawing a line in the sand; you're taking control of your life. Healthy boundaries are meant to protect you so that you have room to grow and become the person you always knew you could be.

“You teach people how to treat you by what you allow, what you stop, and what you reinforce.”

-Tony Gaskins



5 Ways to Care for Yourself

There are many ways to care for ourselves every day. Saying yes to what we want, no to what we don't and making priority the ideas, goals, and dreams we have for our lives personally and professionally. Getting that massage or taking ourselves out for a fancy lunch are also great ways to honor what you need emotionally and physically.

Here are five other ways to savor moments that feel good and support living your preferred life.

1. Appreciate the good moments.

When life is feeling good, it can be easy to bypass that good feeling because you feel good. The next time you nail your presentation or bring an awesome idea to the team, take a few moments and lock that feeling, that experience into your memory. Own it! When these exciting, winning moments happen, become present with the moment. Notice the smells, the way your body feels inside, the emotions that exist. When you need a little pick me up in the future, get present, and recall those feelings of success and feel good about your accomplishments.

2. Honor your resilience.

There are times in life that are hard. Whether the pain is personal or career focused it's real and it's meaningful. The pain shakes us up and let's us know that we are experiencing the full spectrum of life. While feeling good and supporting ourselves with the thriving behaviors that put us in the optimal condition to create the life we want is desirable, the undesirable experiences show us our ability for resilience. Just like appreciating the good times, honoring the times you have pulled through and got to the other side lets you know that it is a possible journey. When we are unsure how we are going to navigate what's to come, we can look back and remember how we navigated trials of the past.

3. Savor the freedom of doing nothing.

What is your definition of freedom? Is it a feeling? A state of mind? Permission from someone else or yourself to do what you want?

We all have a different definition of freedom. Here, you are invited to release the need to stay busy and keep yourself and your loved ones entertained constantly. Take a moment to sit in quiet, take a few breaths, just be.

If you are someone that likes or is in constant movement it might feel a little unnatural at first. Keep trying. Spending time in a quiet space alone can be deeply restorative, even if it is just 5 minutes. Give yourself the opportunity to pause and see what it offers you.

4. Lean into the moment.

When things don't go our way it's easy to shift into the victim perspective of "why me?". The more this mindset is indulged, the worse you are going to feel and the more you are giving away your personal power.

The antidote? Exploring the other side of the coin, "**why not me?**"

Leaning into this moment can serve as an exploration into awareness. For example, if you were passed over for a promotion you could explore questions like: What else can I do to prepare and pursue that position? What skills and qualities made the other person better suited, and why? Is this the path I want to take? What other opportunities exist? What different paths interest me?

5. Relish time with others.

Shared laughs, listening, being heard, and sharing space with people who see and love you for exactly who you are are important. These are the moments that make life truly wonderful.

Connecting with your tribe of leaders, women, friends or family is a powerful experience that is too often taken for granted.

Listening and sharing the experiences of being human can dissipate feelings that take away from self-care and becoming your best self. Most of all say yes to more of what structure, practices and habits will help you operate in your optimal operating zone. Remember you can't pour from an empty cup. Self-care helps you stay full, savor the good moments and go after what you want.



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In person or virtually, Barb is here to help you take your high-performing team to the next level.



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