

# Week 1: Yin & Yang Self-Care and Your Thoughts

This week we will focus on foundational work that is key to getting the most out of the entire program.

The three main goals for the week are:

- Find out where you are starting from. Namely, I want you to find all the unhelpful thoughts and feelings you have that have kept you from making self-care a regular part of your life.
- Understand Yin and Yang self-care
- Begin a short, daily contemplative self-care practice called The Model

## Getting Started

1. Watch the videos “Welcome” and “Week 1”
2. Read this handout.
3. Book 15-20 minutes in your daily calendar every day this week (ideally in the morning) to do the homework
4. Bonus: Listen to the podcast on Self-Care-  
<http://www.aquinyoga.com/podcast/episode-18-self-care-strategies>

## An Introduction to Yin and Yang Self-Care

By Erin Aquin

When you hear the phrase “self-care”, what do you think about?

I used to think about was warm baths or buying myself flowers. But true, self-care is so much more and has both a Yin and Yang aspect.

One dimension of self-care is the more traditional version (the warm baths and flowers route). This is considered the Yin form as it is nurturing and enveloping. Yin self-care is what the person who loves you most in the world does for you when you are having a rough day or feeling sick, encircling you with warm fuzzies.

Another aspect of self-care is the Yang dimension. It's the type of care that a coach or mentor might deliver. It is positivity that pushes you forward and doesn't let you

hold back your potential. Yang self-care doesn't let you eat cookie dough on the sofa while you watch your favourite childhood movie for the millionth time—it gets you off your butt and out to the gym or to yoga.

One is not better than the other, they are just different aspects of the same thing. Here are some examples:

#### **Yin Self Care:**

- Getting to bed early so you can get a full 7-8 hrs of sleep
- Taking a technology break, free from phone calls and email
- Spending time with loved ones enjoying a long meal
- Reading a novel

#### **Yang Self Care**

- Getting up early in the morning to do a physical practice
- Spending a day pushing through outstanding work so you can relax on the weekend
- Spending time with loved ones working out, or doing some healthy activity
- Learning a new skill or hobby

**Yin is nurturing and recharging. Yang is inspiring and developmental.**

And both are extremely important to our health and well-being.

#### **How do you know when it's time for one type of self-care over another?**

As human beings, we have to be aware that we have the tendency to favour one type over the other. Those who favour Yin self-care tend to judge Yang forms as being too aggressive or busy and therefore not self-care at all. Those who lean more towards Yang self-care may view Yin forms as being lazy and indulgent. While certainly when we swing too far from the midline, both of these opinions hold weight, it is important that we have strong skills to self-assess what is needed.

If you have worked a 50+ hour week and slept no more than 6 hours a night, some Yin self-care might be in order. If things have been light in your schedule but you still feel underlying stress or the need for something more, a dose of Yang is the fire you need.

There is no hard and fast rule to determine what your self-care regime might include, but I will offer a few simple guidelines that apply to both Yin and Yang self-care.

1. If it doesn't fuel you or nourish you, it isn't self-care.
2. Self-care means you do it for yourself. While asking for help or support is great, self-care should be empowering and something you can do for yourself

with as little reliance anywhere else as possible. An exception would be when others are involved in a service like a massage or coaching session.

3. Self-care is something you look forward to. If you don't enjoy/get a deep benefit, it won't fuel or nourish you.
4. Self-care results in health and vitality. Self-care doesn't mean going out and eating a 3-layer cake or getting drunk. Never use "self-care" to justify indulgent habits or behaviour that hurts you or anyone else.
5. Self-care is necessary to your well-being, take it seriously.

Did you catch that last one? **Self-care is necessary to your well-being, take it seriously.**

This is your life, and if you are a responsible, awake individual (or at the very least, want to become one) self-care is part of your work to make sure you are firing on all cylinders.

## An Overview of The Model

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How would you feel if your husband forgot your birthday? How would you want to be able to feel? Do you realize you have complete control over how you choose to feel? Did you know that anger is just an option? Well, Sylvia didn't, when she called me for a session the day after her 45th birthday—the day her husband forgot her birthday.

I am going to introduce you to the model the way I introduced it to Sylvia. I will show you how I use it in my life and with my clients. This model is designed for one purpose—to change the thoughts that cause you suffering. I will start with Sylvia's example in the model to show you how to identify a negative thought and then show you a sample with the thought changed to a better feeling thought.

This work was the real work I did with my client, Sylvia. Her husband had forgotten her birthday and she was seething mad. I taught her the model and showed her the way to change her thinking in order to get some relief from her pain and anger. Her actual work is shown below. Don't worry if it doesn't make complete sense the first time you see it—I am just giving you a peek.

**BAD FEELING THOUGHT SAMPLE:**

Circumstance: My husband forgot my birthday.

Thought: He doesn't care about me.

Feelings: horrible, sad, lonely, angry

Action: Give him the cold shoulder and avoid him.

Result: Less time spent with husband—less caring with husband.

#### CHANGED THOUGHT SAMPLE:

Circumstance: My husband forgot my birthday.

Thought: I know my husband wants to help me celebrate my birthday, so I will remind him.

Feeling: Satisfied, love

Action: Connect with husband, love husband unconditionally.

Result: Enjoy my birthday with my husband.

Notice that the thoughts in the first and second samples are OPTIONAL.

You get to decide what you think and you have the option of thinking something that feels terrible or thinking something that feels great. Also, notice in the changed sample that the circumstance is exactly the same. All the power to change how you feel is in your thinking. This is great news, because it is the one area in your life where you do have total control. I came up with this model as a way to manage my thoughts on a daily basis.

The Self Coaching model is based on the following truths: We cannot control the world. Nothing outside of us has the power to make us feel good or bad. It is not the circumstances, but our thoughts about the circumstances that create our experience. We attract what we think about. Emotions are vibrations that lead to action. We can't permanently change our results without changing our thoughts. We don't have to get anything to feel better; we can feel better right now. Being conscious and choosing our thoughts are the most important components to feeling better.

Here are the terms the way I define them:

Circumstances: Things that happen in the world that we cannot control.

Thoughts: Things that happen in your mind.

Feelings: Vibrations that happen in your body—caused by thoughts, not circumstances.

Actions: Behavior—what we do in the world. Caused by feelings, determined by thought.

Results: What we see in the world (our lives) as an effect of our actions. The result will always be evidence for the original thought.

## Homework for Week 1- Step-by-Step

*Set aside 15-20 minutes each day to do your thought download and your models surrounding your thoughts and feelings about self-care. Ask questions and share at least one of your models you are unsure about in the Q & A section.*

**1. Do a Thought Download.** Try to fill an entire page with everything on your mind around the topic of self-care. Don't hold back or try to edit yourself. Feel free to express anything even if it sounds silly or petty. You may have repetitive thoughts from day to day and that is normal.

Here is a sample of what your thought download and models might look like:

Self-care seems like a very silly pursuit when other people I know have much more serious goals for this year. I am not good at taking care of myself. I already know a lot about self-care. My work and family are more important than self-care. I am too busy to invest time into my own self-care. No one will know if I am really doing it or not. It's selfish to prioritize myself. My friends and family will think I am lazy if I start doing less for them and more for myself. (Etc.)

**2. Pick a thought that you want to work on.** For this example I will pick the thought "I am too busy for self-care."

Next complete an "Unintentional Model" - this is the pattern you are running unconsciously that isn't helping you.

Example:

Circumstance: I am taking a course on Self-Care (this is a fact that could be proven and that everyone can agree upon)

Thought: I am too busy

Feeling (based on that thought): Overwhelmed

Action (that you take based on the thought and feeling): Skip self-care work today

Result: Feel flustered and don't get the most out of the course- nothing changes in your life

**3. Now complete an “Intentional Model” with the ideal thoughts and feelings you would like to be having and what the different result can be.** If you feel like it is too far fetched, try coming up with a neutral thought or feeling instead of jumping to something uber positive that you can't yet believe.

C: I am taking a course on Self-Care (the circumstance is a fact therefore it should remain the same between the two models)

T: I am committed to my own care

F: empowered, excited

A: I make sure that my self-care work happens before I go to bed every night

R: I create a strong self-care habit over the 6 weeks that I can maintain

*Notice how in both cases the results prove the “truth” of the thoughts and feelings?*

**4. Share at least one of your models this week in the group Q&A for feedback from me and to ensure you are on the right track.**

**5. Bonus:** If you have more time this week listen to my podcast on Self-Care Strategies <http://www.aquinyoga.com/podcast/episode-18-self-care-strategies>