

## Week 2: The Purpose of Self-Care

Last week we focused on where you are starting from when it comes to your thoughts and feelings surrounding self care. If you have been writing out your daily thought downloads, models and sharing them with me for feedback you have probably uncovered some unconscious thoughts and beliefs you had previously mistaken for facts. I hope by now you have started to open up some space to reconsider the unhelpful thoughts and feelings you have.

One example in my life is that for years I considered “I’m too busy for self care” to be a fact (in the “Circumstance” line of the model) rather than what it truly is- a thought that creates feelings which I act upon that give me a certain result.

If you haven’t yet shared one of your Unintentional and its corresponding Intentional Model in our group Q&A yet I hope you will do so today.

It can be a challenge to do this work and the only way I can help you get the most from the tool is to see what you are working on. This is key to getting the most out of the course so if you have yet to share a model with us please do so now in the Group Coaching Q & A page.

During Week 2 your goal is to:

- Continue to cultivate a daily contemplative self-care practice using The Model
- Evaluate what you are already doing that falls into Yin and Yang self care
- Understand the first Element and Obstacle of self-care

### Elements of Self-Care: Purpose and Intention

As a yoga teacher and former Chinese Medicine practitioner, I use the lens of Elemental Yin Yang theory in how I view life. While I won’t be going into the Five Elements too deeply in this course, no doubt some of you will be able to spot the themes of the Five Elements within this teaching and I will talk about the constitutional types. In this module we will get to know our first Element of Self-care- Purpose or Intention.

Self-care is not a bandaid solution or counterbalance to the stresses we experience (although many people use it this way) but rather, if used correctly and consciously, a rung on the ladder towards not only a more nourishing lifestyle (yin) but also towards your big goals and dreams (yang).

The way to shift your perspective from thinking of self-care as a frivolous, unworthy or second rate use of time and energy is to be clear on your life's priorities. In Elemental Yin Yang theory, we are dealing the the element of Water when we investigate purpose or intention.

One of the main purposes in my own life is helping others realize their potential. I became a yoga teacher because the practice room is a wonderful place to help a group of people who all have their own (often limiting) beliefs about what is possible for themselves experience a paradigm shift. If a student believes they can't do a certain pose and then gets the right amount of support to give it a try they often prove that what was previously held as "impossible" is now totally within their sights.

As a teacher I don't care about the posture or the end result, the purpose of the exercise is to be limber of mind. Over time the student stops prejudging what they can and can't do and instead responds in the present moment to what is happening.

Through yoga, I have been able to help many people see their potential. I studied for years to become a Chinese Medicine practitioner, wrote a few books and moved much of my business online with that life purpose in mind.

*But* I admit that while spending so much of my time "outward" facing, I neglected to take the same advice I was giving others. At the height of my success as a practitioner, while still teaching nearly a dozen yoga classes a week, I had mysterious inflammation that attacked most of the joints in my body for nearly nine months. It wasn't until I gave up my license to practice Acupuncture and took a hiatus from teaching that things began to improve.

It was this experience that got me serious about self-care. I learned that understanding the importance of self-care intellectually is not the same as doing it.

Of course you already know that to be true that having knowledge on a topic and putting it to use are two very different things. I was after all an "expert" on health and well-being and loved helping people but didn't extend that same care towards myself. And the price I paid to finally recognize that was high.

My guess is that you resonate with some or all of this because you are here.

### **Self-Care Doesn't Come Naturally**

Most of us are cared for by others in our youth. As we grow older we are taught how to "take care of ourselves" within the structure of our culture. We learn the basics of

how to groom ourselves, how to cook, clean, drive a car and learn a set of skills that help us in our jobs etc.

But very few of us are taught to care for ourselves at a deeper level. We are not programmed to naturally rest and nourish and popular culture doesn't reward us for prioritizing sleep or a daily contemplative practice. In fact, many of us learn who do these types of things "lazy" and wasting time.

Instead we are taught that it takes full volume ambition and hard work to achieve our goals. Along the way we are kept afloat by stories about how "hardcore" someone is when they stay up all night to finish a report or work a 14 hour day to show their boss they deserve a promotion. They are praised for "grit" and "fortitude".

And that for many of us is why we stink at self-care. It isn't valued by society and no one taught us how to do it properly.

The good news is we can take that education into our own hands and make it relevant, starting now.

Imagine you are going on a road trip to your dream destination. You decide to clutch the wheel, ignore the scenery and speed along as fast as possible all the while ignoring the other people in your car and their offers to take a shift to drive so you can get some rest. When you finally arrive, you are stressed out and exhausted and can't be present with the people and the place because you are such a mess.

Many people approach life this way in bursts of frantic energy followed by periods of burn out. Self-care is a way to take breaks along the way and enjoy the scenery and the various destinations we get to in our lives. It doesn't come naturally for most of us and that is why we are taking this course together- to contemplate it, practice it and make room for it in our lives.

It helps us stay connected and nourished so we can not only achieve the big goals for our life, but enjoy both the journey and the results when we get there.

Watch this weeks video for a deeper dive on the Elemental constitution connection, fear and more.

## Homework for Week 2

Spend some time writing out the answers to the following. Allow your mind to wander and dare to dream here. Most of us spend our time focused on our to-do lists and the things we need to do to maintain the status quo so you may not have clear answers. That is common but do spend time working with these questions.

1. What do I feel most called to do with the precious time and energy I have in this life?

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2. If I only had one year left to live, what would I do differently than I am doing right now?

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3. If I knew I was going to live for another 100 years and had unlimited money and energy, what would I do with my life?

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4. What is my main purpose in life right now?

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The individuals in this world who are most successful in their field or offer the most to the rest of humanity are very serious about self-care. Some meditate daily, others have impeccable diets or routines that support their high output lives. Why should you be any different?

Next, brainstorm 10-20 Yin (nourishing) and Yang (inspiring or developmental) self-care ideas that would support that purpose and why. These are not meant to be “tasks” on the way to a goal but rather things you might do for yourself that support a healthy person who is living their purpose.

For example:

Purpose: Help my students realize their potential

Self-care items that would support that and why (in detail):

Yin:

- Get 7-8 hours of sleep each day - a bad sleep means I have trouble focusing on my clients
- Get a massage every month - yoga is physical work, taking the advice I give others
- Meditate daily - meditation allows me to work with a clean slate, I am more effective with people when I have grounded myself

Yang:

- Session with a coach or mentor 1 x month - they help me see what I need to work on and challenge me to go deeper
- Work with trainer - challenges me in a different fitness realm than yoga and expands my knowledge of the body which I can take back into my own classes
- Take an art class - I am not an artist so it would be a stretch outside my comfort zone to do something creative that does not come naturally to me, just for the fun of it. I ask my students to expand outside their comfort zones and find joy, so I need to do the same

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Self-Care Ideas (and how they support my purpose):

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## Daily Homework

Once you have your purpose defined and some ideas of self-care support items your daily homework will be to do the following:

1. A Thought Download on yesterday. Spend a page writing down all the thoughts and feelings (especially the unhelpful ones) about how your day was. Here are a few questions that can help you get started if you have trouble: What was your energy and time spent doing? Did it feel satisfying? Was your day overall more fast-paced and action packed (yang) or did it feel slow, spacious and quiet (yin)? Any thoughts or feelings about that?
2. Pick one thought and do an unintentional model on it followed by an intentional one.
3. Choose a simple self-care item that supports your life purpose right now and plan to do it today.
4. Share at least one model and any experiences, questions etc. with us in the Group Q & A page.