

Week 5: Self-Care and Indulgence

Now that you have been integrating more purposeful self-care into your routine we will explore some of the subtle ways in which good intentions for self-care get fuzzy and how many people confuse indulgent or excessive behaviour with self-care.

This week your goal is to:

- Continue to cultivate a daily contemplative self-care practice using The Model
- Brainstorm a regular baseline monthly self-care routine for yourself and do your self-care activities for the week and check them with the Indulgence checklist (tell us about them in the Group Q & A)
- Understand the fourth Element and Obstacle of Self-Care

Indulgence and Excessive Behaviour

Every so often when I am on social media, I will see someone drinking a big glass of wine with the caption #selfcare and I think to myself, "That person is confused about what self-care means".

Let's be clear- drinking alcohol is not self-care. Nor is eating unhealthy food or binge watching TV.

Don't get me wrong, I am not a puritan.

I enjoy a nice glass of wine occasionally, I love baking and I have been known to do a marathon of watching my favourite show on Netflix. But I don't consider those things self-care. Let's revisit a few of the points from our self-care checklist that I gave you in week one.

- If it doesn't fuel you or nourish you, it isn't self-care.
- Self-care is something you look forward to. If you don't enjoy/get a deep benefit, it won't fuel or nourish you.
- 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.*

Indulgent activities are often the opposite to self-care.

A glass of wine doesn't fuel me, it in fact makes me tired.

I might look forward to the dessert I baked but if I have more than a little bit, I feel rotten afterwards.

Watching mindless TV is fun sometimes but it doesn't add anything to my health and vitality.

In small doses, indulgences can be fun and harmless as long as you are conscious of your reasons for doing them.

But far too often, far too many people indulge excessively.

One drink becomes four.

One cookie leads to an empty box.

One night of watching TV turns into a regular nightly routine.

Clicking over to Facebook for a few minutes turns into two hours of scrolling through unimportant information.

You get the idea.

And ironically, people who wear the "busy badge" as an excuse for poor self-care habits are often wasting a lot of time and energy in the category of indulgent or excessive behaviour.

When I work with a client who assures me they are truly "too busy" to incorporate self-care into their life, the first thing I do is get them to find the ways they are indulging in activities that aren't adding anything valuable to their life and we work on those first.

The confusing thing for some people is that indulgences are designed to feel good in a way similar to self-care. Because of that it is easy to get them mixed up.

Indulgence vs. Self-Care Decoder

Let's explore how to tell the difference. Pick one thing you are doing as a self-care activity and answer the following questions:

1. Does this activity provide short term relief to negative emotions?

If yes, does this activity delay my discomfort, to be dealt with in the future ? (i.e. Drinking wine after an argument may temporarily help you to avoid the emotions in the moment, but you will still have to resolve the issue in the future)

2. Does this activity have long-term risks to my health, well-being, relationships, job etc?

3. Do I feel guilty or wish I hadn't wasted my time or energy *after* doing it?

4. Does it sometimes feel unconscious or out of my control?

And this isn't always straight forward.

"Overdoing" something that might otherwise be considered healthy is a form of excessive behaviour.

Yoga for instance is considered by most to be an activity that promotes health. But over the years I have seen people who do several hot yoga classes in a row, 7 days a week to their own detriment. Similarly, salad might be considered a healthy thing to eat, but if it's all you ever eat you are going to miss out on important nutrients that other foods provide.

When it comes to self-care, we need to be aware of the difference between excessive behaviour, indulgence and real self-care. Then when you decide to sit down and enjoy an indulgence, there doesn't need to be any negativity associated with it. You are free to enjoy because you are choosing it with awareness taking full responsibility for the outcome.

Self-care after all is a scared contribution you are making to yourself that will over time create a ripple effect in your life. And one side effect for many people who invest in their own self-care is they lose the desire to overindulge or spend their time and energy in excessive behaviours.

Homework

1. Watch this week's videos and spend time looking over your worksheets and calendar from the previous weeks. *If* you have the time, repeat last week's exercise:

- Using your worksheet from last week and the calendar you used to schedule your activities, check off the appointments you kept and then circle or highlight any activities you didn't do.

- In a few words, give the reason why it didn't happen. Be honest with yourself and do not sugar coat it.
- Examine your excuses and reasons. It may help to do a thought download on these and notice the themes that come up. Do a few models if you have time.
- Plan ahead for your excuses. Look back at some of the reasons you had last week that prevented you from keeping your self-care appointments (or anticipate some issues if you had a great week of self-care last week) and brainstorm as many as you can.

2. Do a daily thought download on the topic of your relationship to over indulgence and excessive behaviour. Pick one thought and do the two models on it. Share any thoughts or insights you like with us in the Group Q & A.

3. Using all the self-care work you have done until now, brainstorm a baseline, monthly self-care routine. These should not be a stretch for you in terms of your time or personal resources but things you already do or know you can commit to even when you feel like your life is full. Break these down into Yin and Yang as best you can.

For example:

Yin:

- Bath + reading 5 days/ week
- Sauna 2 days/ week
- Sleeping in 3 days/ week
- Getting house cleaned every other week
- Massage 1X per month

Yang:

- Being coached once per month
- Friday afternoon yoga class
- Gym 3X/ week
- Listen to business podcast 1X/week

These things are already almost a habit and don't take the effort that doing something new might. You also don't need to make these even between Yin and Yang. From my list above you can see I have more Yin activities listed because my life is very active right now and I need more restful items in my calendar.

4. Make these recurring appointments in your own calendar. Don't spend more than 10 minutes deciding where these things go. Put them in your calendar and if you need to make slight changes next month do so. Also set a reminder on the first

day of each month to review your list and make any appointments you need to (for instance I need to pre-book my massages or they are likely to fall by the wayside).