

Week 6: Nourish Yourself, Help the World

In our final week we take a step back to look at the big picture of why self-care is important not just to your personal health and well being but to your overall contribution to the world.

This week your goal is to:

- Continue to cultivate a daily contemplative self-care practice using The Model
- Refine your baseline monthly self-care routine and add the extras you want to do this month
- Understand the fifth Element and Obstacle of Self-Care

Self-Care and Ongoing Thought Work

By now in our course, you begun to incorporate self-care into your daily, weekly and monthly routine. You have also simultaneously begun to uncover and clean up some of the patterns, beliefs and feelings that have hindered your progress. And if you have been paying attention you have no doubt realized that the unhelpful thoughts you have about self-care are obstacles that hold you back in many categories of your life.

Perhaps you have noticed thoughts like:

I am too busy..

Who am I to waste so much time and energy on myself?

I don't deserve this

I am too tired to look after myself

Or feelings of:

Guilt

Embarrassment

Exhaustion

Unworthiness

Worry

These feelings and thoughts could be subtle or very loud, but either way they are obstacles as you strive to improve your wellbeing and outlook on life.

If these thoughts and feelings were a person, you certainly wouldn't want to take them on a vacation, to the spa or hire them as your personal coach.

It is difficult to enjoy the beautiful self-care activity you have set aside the time for if you are riddled with negative thoughts and feelings.

That is why those daily Thought Download and Models I have asked you to take on throughout this journey are so important. They help you to clean up your thinking and remind you that you have a lot of choice in how you show up and respond to the world.

The Thought Downloads and The Models are *the best tools* I have found to help observe and deal with unhelpful thoughts and feelings on a regular basis so you can appreciate life as fully as possible.

The Greater Implications of Self-Care

When I was in school studying Chinese Medicine, the topic of self-care was highlighted often. We were encouraged to employ a wide array of techniques to help keep ourselves open, healthy, and available for our patients.

While I agreed with this in theory, and even preached the importance of self-care, in reality I went through years subtly neglecting my need for sleep, consistent nutrition, and regular time off.

Part of me felt self-indulgent if I took a vacation or a day to myself even when my energy was low. I even found it impossible not to squeeze in an extra client or class on a already full day if asked.

After years of undermining my health and well-being, I struggled with burnout and illness. I learned the hard way what happens if you try to support and nurture others without taking care of yourself at the same time.

Luckily, I was able to use the very tools and techniques we have discussed in this course to move towards a more harmonious approach to life. And I hope you will continue to do so in your own life long our time together is finished.

If you are still not convinced that your self-care is not only important to your own well-being but has the power to change the world around you try this exercise.

1. Get a blank piece of paper and put your name in the centre.
2. Write down the names of the people closest to you in a circle around your name. Think about people who rely on you for something or who you know you impact directly. Connect them to you.
3. Next write down some of the people or groups of people who are affected by that circle of people. Perhaps take this 3 or 4 levels out to include people who make the products you use, grow the food you eat, work at the places you visit.

While you may not directly impact every single one of those people on a personal level, whether they know it or not you are part of their lives and they are part of yours.

The people in your immediate circle will be directly impacted by you and how you operate in the world. So if you aren't convinced your self-care matters, think of it this way.

Can you give the best of yourself if you are underpowered and burned out?
How would "your" people feel if you were no longer part of their lives?
Would you rather be a positive force in the world or drag yourself through life feeling exhausted and resentful?

When you fall off the "self-care wagon" which we all do from time to time, this along with the purpose exercises from our early weeks are what you can use to bring you back and get dialed in to why it matters.

The Five Obstacles to Self-Care

Before our course ends I wanted to review the five main obstacles that stand between you and self-care. These are all important thoughts and feelings to watch out for as you continue your exploration so you can be prepared.

Obstacle #1: Self-care is pointless or superficial

When this thought comes up it usually means you are not consciously connected to your purpose in life. Once you get clear on what you want to do with this amazing life you have it is only logical that you will want to take better care of the mind, spirit and body you have so you can fulfil that purpose and enjoy the path along the way.

Obstacle #2: Self-care takes up too much time that I don't have (aka. "I am busy")

A busy life is not a reason to skip self-care. In fact, it is more reason to schedule it into your calendar with the same seriousness as an important business meeting or time with a loved one. Wearing the *busy badge* without stopping to refuel will lead to burnout and poor health if you aren't careful. When you do run out of batteries, you will have no choice but to take care of yourself but by then it will be slow progress and much more time consuming. Save yourself the trouble of burnout and plan self-care activities often.

Obstacle #3: I don't deserve self-care (lack of self-worth)

Most of us learned at a young age that putting others before ourselves made us "good" and doing something purely for ourselves is selfish. But modelling good self-care habits to your friends, partner and children is a way to teach those you love to value their time, life energy and their bodies. When you do this for yourself, you are reinforcing your own worthiness as a human being as well as demonstrating it to others so they can remember it for themselves. Plus after a good self-care session, it is easy to feel kinder, more grounded and available for the important people in your life.

Obstacle #4 Confusing indulgence or excessive behaviour with self-care

Remember if it doesn't nourish you and has negative long term consequences it probably isn't self-care. Fun indulgence once in awhile in a healthy life usually no big deal, but be honest with yourself. Self-care adds to your life, indulgence can do anything from delaying discomfort to negatively impacting you.

Obstacle #5 I feel guilty or worried when I am doing my self-care

Do you wonder if your household is falling apart while you are out getting a massage? Do you feel guilty when you take time away from caring for others at home or in your work? If you are an "overthinker" or worrier you *need* self-care to help you change the channel and tune into yourself. If chronic worry or guilt is part of your regular experience, self-care can help you reprogram your patterns and give you a break from unhelpful thoughts.

The most important thing to remember is that each of these obstacles belong to you. What I mean by that is no one else can ever make you feel or think a certain way even if they intend to. Have you ever said something to someone with the intention to help them but the other person acted like you had hurt them deeply?

This is a perfect example of what I mean.

Your intention was to be helpful, but the other person chose to think or feel another way that had nothing to do with what you were hoping for.

The obstacles to self-care can not be created or prolonged by anyone but you. Even if no one else in your life values self-care, you don't need to share that same thought.

In the end, it is your thoughts and feelings that lead to the actions and results you create in your life. You are the only one that gets to decide where you give your time and energy. I hope you will direct more of it towards good self-care, but it is up to you.

Self-Care for the Five Constitutions

Here is a short review of some of the Elemental qualities and self-care ideas that may appeal to those types. The list is by no means complete and any one of the constitutions may be drawn to the different self-care ideas, but these are ideas to inspire you.

Water types:

- tend to be ambitious, visionary, leaders, need to feel purpose in what they do
- Can lean into burnout easily because so driven

Self-care ideas:

Yin

- Relaxing bath, float therapy, water circuit spa, restorative yoga

Yang

- Life coaching, reading spiritual or inspirational books

Wood types:

- Organized, focused on the plan, strategic
- Can be stubborn and rigid when focused on a goal, easily gets "too busy"

Self-care ideas:

Yin

- Yoga nidra, gentle hatha yoga, guided breathing practice, walking in nature

Yang

- Long hike, flow yoga, Bootcamp style workouts, outdoor adventure retreats

Fire types:

- Passionate, warm, funny need to feel connection
- Can overindulge in excessive behaviours

Self-care ideas:

Yin

- Massage, yin yoga, silent retreat/ meditation

Yang

- Artistic classes, dancing, quality time with loved ones doing something fun

Metal types:

- Inspirational, reflective, clear headed
- Can struggle with self-worth and letting people see who they are

Self-care ideas:

Yin

- Bodywork, contemplation practices, acupuncture, gentle pranayama (breathing),

Yang

- Flow Yoga, writing, rock climbing

Earth types:

- Generous, kind, warm
- Can give too much without remembering to nourish themselves

Yin

- Cooking nutritious meals, fibre arts, head massage

Yang

- Gym workout, book club, running

Homework

1. Watch this week's videos.

2. Do a daily thought download on the topic of guilt and worry. 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. Refine your baseline, monthly self-care routine and add any extra activities you would like to do for yourself this month. Schedule and do them!

4. Ask any last questions in the group page. Our course is almost over so this is your chance to get clear on anything you are unsure about or have me look at your self-care routine before Feb 12.