

# Self-Care in Challenging Times: The New Non-Negotiable for Senior Leaders

Jacqueline Brodnitzki

## 3. Optimize Your Mindset

Finally, we come to optimizing the mind. We create the conditions for an optimized mindset through having compassion, eating well and incorporating movement into our days. This lays the groundwork for creating time and space for ourselves. It's easy to make a lot of excuses about why we don't invest time and energy in ourselves. But remember, making commitments to yourself is just as important as making commitments to others.

It's not selfish to invest in yourself first. We've all heard the phrase we must first put on our own oxygen mask before helping another put on theirs. Why? As a leader, you can't be the best version of yourself, if your cup is empty, if you're exhausted, stressed or overwhelmed. If you're not in the right frame of mind, you can't make the best decisions and care for other people well.

*Giving others the best version of yourself is the best thing you can do for other people.*

### Gain Control of Your Mind

An optimized mindset begins with gaining control of the mind. Left to its own devices, our brains jump from topic to topic, figuring out every "what if" scenario, and replaying our day or difficult past events over and over. You might think we can multi-task, but if you try to type an email while on a call, you know right away that the email had your full attention.

Therefore, if we leave our mind unchecked, it ends up running our whole experience, and we'll miss the present moment. However, this [study](#) by Harvard psychologists, shows that we're much happier when we're in the present moment and that being distracted is often the cause of unhappiness. It's also one of the main causes of low resonance and low emotional and social intelligence.

Dr. Christiane Northrup, in her article, [Flourishing: Why a Healthier Mind Means Healthier Cells](#) states, "Your thoughts and beliefs are the most important key to your health."

Only you know the current state of your true thoughts and beliefs. It's important to invest in what will help you to have a positive and forward-thinking mindset. Highly driven leaders may think, "I'm tough, I don't need any help" however, [this podcast](#) will help you see that even successful CEOs need help and ask for help.

### Here are 16 tried and true ways to optimize your mindset.

1. Take a break from social media
2. Begin each day with a gratitude practice – write 3-10 things you're grateful for and why
3. Meditate for 3-10 minutes daily, here's [how](#) and here are [tips](#) for making meditation a habit – the [Calm app](#) is helpful or take a meditation classes / hire a meditation coach

5. Write in a journal or pray each morning or before bed
6. 6. Focus on where your thoughts are, when you're distracted bring your mind back to what you're doing (the work, the conversation, the meeting, etc.)
7. Take time to consider what you most enjoy doing and what fills your cup, schedule these things on your calendar, then honor what's on your calendar
8. Try or learn something new, here are some online learning options: <https://www.masterclass.com/> and <https://www.creativelive.com/>
9. Be your inner advocate and remind yourself, "it's fine for me to be selfish, it enables me to be more helpful to others" or "it's important for me to advocate for my decisions" and "it's ok to say no"
10. Notice negative thoughts and instead think about something or someone you appreciate
11. Volunteer for a charity or do something nice for a neighbor
12. Smile
13. Create boundaries for yourself – understand your limits and say no. Listen to yourself with boundaries, if you're feeling overstretched or overcommitted, set some new boundaries
14. Invest in mental health as much as you invest in your physical health – join a support group such as Al-Anon, AA, bereavement group, etc.
15. Join an online book club
16. Work with an executive coach
17. Join a CEO group (or group related to your role or industry)