

SELF-CARE IS THE KEY

SELF-CARE: Self-care means doing those things that are important to mind, body, spirit and environment - every day! Even though some things need to be done daily, others weekly, some monthly, the 'attitude of self-care' must be ever present in order for momentum to build. Daily things might include reading, listening to or viewing positive material, meditation, relaxation, walking, cycling, swimming, monitoring diet and good supplementation, pursuing things that bring you joy and fulfillment. There is not a definitive list because of the differences between lifestyles, interests and personal choice. One person may find joy in playing badminton and another in sitting quietly in their garden. Work out the song of your own heart and sing it every day.

SELF-NURTURE: Self-nurture means reaching a point in your self-care where your momentum simply won't allow you to betray yourself and break the promises you've made. It's that point of inner joy and satisfaction where your regard for yourself is too great to put off for tomorrow what in fact needs to be done today. Self-nurture includes all of the previous list but could also include therapeutic baths (Epsom salts/magnesium chloride/arnica etc.), other forms of bodywork (chiropractic, Bowen, acupuncture, Shiatsu etc.), exercises such as Tai Chi, yoga, circuit training, running and Pilates to name a few. Some of these activities might be done 2-3 times a week and may not be part of the daily schedule. Once again there is no definitive list. The point here is that whatever you choose to do, those activities become non-negotiable!

SELF-RESPECT: Self-respect means sitting in such a beautiful, comfortable position of self-worth, a real understanding and appreciation of one's own value. No external confirmation is needed or sought because you 'know' your true worth and quietly celebrate it in a variety of ways. Compromises that lead to loss of self-respect have finished and there is now a culture of continued validation and strengthening of one's core. Self-respect includes both of the previous lists, adapted to one's individuality but at the point of self-respect, these are not non-negotiables anymore, they are the sweet chorus of your heart. In other words, you are now counting your blessings as you walk, singing the songs of gratitude whilst eating your meals, bathing in the joys of the pampering of the body, breathing in the wisdom and the insights of the quiet revelations of prayer, meditation and relaxation. Self-respect is where there is no difference between your self-care and your life; they are one and the same. Any feeling that these things are a chore has long since faded.

SELF-LOVE: Self-love means not to simply have arrived - it's much more than that - it means to be standing in your promised land! Self-love is a destination but it is also the beginning. In fact, it's where a new journey begins. The destination now is to live according to your potential and to honour your purpose and because you're beyond the gravitational pull of self-loathing (see Self-Loathing), that endeavour becomes an easy undertaking. However, the other preoccupation of self-love is maintenance. The biggest mistake anyone can make is thinking self-love requires no further nourishment and sustenance, because it certainly does. In fact, it needs a rich and diverse diet as described in The Story of Health. Self-love has been achieved as a result of the on-going reverence to the needs of mind, body, spirit and environment and for that position not to falter one must continue to worship at the altar of self-care (see Self-Love Diagram). This is obviously easier to do from a position of self-love, because the habits and patterns are now in place. But one must be aware of complacency, ignorance and arrogance, as all three are enemies of growth and can deceive

the individual, leading to a loss of focus and respect for those endeavours and practices that generated the self-loving state. It is at this point more than at any other time that the pursuit of self-care must be maintained. Only then is there the continued promise of growth and enlightenment.

Hopefully by now you can see that this journey of self-improvement, leading ultimately to that self-loving state, depends entirely on self-care. The experience of self-love simply isn't possible until self-care becomes your primary preoccupation. You need to find time to firstly plan your self-care timetable, carefully working out exactly what you require to meet your needs. Remember this is a very personal diet so you need to explore what the self-caring options are and then work out which ones are best suited to you. It's very important at this stage not to try and do everything. Remember, less is more (see Less is More). Wanting to do 'more' is a classic mistake. Sometimes the desperation to fix one's problem is such that there's a belief that the more one crams in, the quicker the results will come. This is nearly always a false belief. In fact, the opposite is usually true. The more one packs into one's life, the more likely one is to fall foul of old patterns and repeated mistakes. So take your time, choose wisely. Be honest with yourself about where you are and what you're capable of. Start with small and realistic endeavours and you'll find you'll be able to grow into all that you're capable of becoming.

Self-care means being repeatedly kind to yourself. It is only by developing a culture of compassion that you can make it to your destination. Condemnation simply doesn't work. It only hurts your heart and means you are more likely to hurt the hearts of others. Note however, that kindness and compassion does not mean complacency. This is not about letting oneself off the hook. This is about realising real strength and power is a gentle, unwavering force that moves towards its destination in an uncompromising way. It's time for you to make self-care your highest priority. Self-care is not selfishness. Selfishness has no regard for how it reaches its destination. It will happily and willingly walk across the backs of others, with no care for them, in order to reach its objective. Self-care on the other hand, is a position which causes no harm either to oneself or to the other. So do not fall into the trap of thinking that by taking self-care seriously you are being selfish. Understand that if self-care does not become your mantra you will fall into the grasping clutches of self-loathing and self-loathing leads only to further neglect, lack of nurture and disrespect. One can never find peace or well-being in that place.

Now you know what you need to do, move forward without apology. Break the habit of thinking you have no reason for being... and that you're somehow not important enough. If you are reading this or listening to this, you are being told that you have the capacity and the potential to change. Listen to the echoes of eternity: great philosophers, scholars and other great minds have repeatedly told us that 'we are what we believe', that our reality is to a very large extent constructed by our consciousness, intentions and choices. If we don't choose the reality we want for ourselves, then circumstance will choose for us! We cannot then say, "poor me", "why does this always happen to me?", "no matter what I do nothing ever seems to change". Beware of such thoughts, they are deceivers, they will have you believing you are less than you really are. They will select particular experiences to prove they are right and then they will help you to live down to those expectations. It's now time to live up to who you are and what you're capable of being and it all begins with self-care....