



Self-care and Self-worth

~ Nicola Dehlinger, ND

When we talk about taking care of ourselves, most of us say that we don't have time. I would challenge you to take a deeper look at that response and ask if that is the whole truth...Many of us can list the reasons that it's important to take care of ourselves. What might be more helpful is to look at why you *wouldn't* take care of yourself.

More often than not, we don't take care of ourselves because we don't believe that we are worth it or we feel like we should be taking care of others – our families, friends, community, work. It can feel counter-intuitive or even selfish to take care of ourselves. Like the flight attendant always reminds us, it is crucial to put our oxygen mask on first so that we are in a position to help those around us. If we don't allow ourselves to breathe and be healthy, we can't possibly be available for others.

We teach people how to treat us. When you care for yourself you communicate to yourself and others that you are worthy of care. You communicate not only to yourself, but to others around you, that you are worthy of respect and kindness. People will take advantage of us if we let them. They may not realize they are taking advantage, and they may not mean to take advantage. They might not even realize that we don't want to do what they ask of us. After all, if we've never said "no", how would they know? It took me years to learn how to say "no". Finally I realized that it's as simple as saying, "I'm sorry, I'd love to help you out but I just can't right now." That simple.

Self-care has to proven to produce positive feelings, which builds self-love, self-confidence and self-esteem. Self-care can be the first step in developing and deepening our relationship with ourselves. Often, we don't want to get to know ourselves deeply – there are too many icky or painful parts. It's not about changing them, it's about acknowledging that they're there and allowing them to be. Then we can start working on offering love and compassion to those parts. It's about self-acceptance, holes and all.

And when we can accept ourselves completely, we can be more tolerant of others.

Isn't amazing how we take care of our cars and our pets, and we put our bodies as the lowest priority?

You might have a hard time with this in the beginning. You might feel guilty or selfish. You might say you can't fit it into your schedule. You might say you have too many other obligations. If your schedule is that full every day, then it is even more crucial to carve out some time for yourself. You might need to say "no" to other obligations in your life. Ask yourself: who am I doing this for? Be careful of taking on obligations that aren't yours. Beware the people pleaser mentality – it only leads to resentment. We must let go of something in order to make space for ourselves. It's a matter of believing that you deserve to be cared for just as much as everyone else in your life does.

Another question to ask yourself is: What is your motivation? Some people experience a sense of pride that comes from working themselves to the bone on a regular basis. These same people tend to have crisis after crisis in their lives and always feel rundown, unorganized, and anxious. Is your self-worth wrapped up in external achievement? Once you reach your goal, do you feel anxious to start another project? Have you acknowledged your achievement? When self-worth is attached to external goals, it is fleeting and not really nourished from within, so we get trapped in an endless cycle of jumping from project to project, never really able to get our need met. If you don't make the time to care for yourself, who else is going to?

"If you aren't good at loving yourself, you will have a difficult time loving anyone, since you'll resent the time and energy you give another person that you aren't even giving to yourself." – Barbara De Angelis.

Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- Instead of doing self-care rituals because we feel worth-it, do them **because we want to feel worth-it**. This is a great time to implement the "fake it 'til you make it" principle.
- If you feel shaky, nervous, or undeserving while brainstorming, scheduling, and/or doing self-care acts remind yourself, "I am doing this so that I will feel better about myself.
- Start with baby steps – even a few minutes a day
- Incorporate it into your routine you have already
- Make a wellness plan with concrete goals
- Choose a wellness buddy to support you