

Self-Care During a Global Pandemic

(WORKBOOK)



*“Fall in love with taking care of yourself.
Fall in love with the path of deep healing.
Fall in love with becoming the best version
of yourself but with patience, with
compassion, and respect to your own
journey” – S. Mcnutt*

By: LaToya Bridgewater

What will the world and Bermuda look like after all this is behind us? I try not to focus too much on that. Instead I focus on the blessings and the lessons in front of me.

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness” ~ Desmond Tutu

Blessings

A month ago, I never would have imagined that this is where we would be right now. Everything has changed so quickly. One minute I am at work, the children are in school, and I can meet up with my friends whenever we have time. The routine that I have considered my life for the past 10 years was functioning as normal. The next minute, the ground collapsed from beneath me/us and it feels as though I have been free falling for almost a month. It has taken a while for my brain, my heart and my emotions to catch up to the true depth and scope of what we are currently experiencing. Yet, my children are safe, healthy and we are together. They can continue learning and communicating with their friends. I can continue working; albeit online.

Lessons

Each day I would experience a multitude of emotions ranging from gratitude, compassion, fear, exhaustion, joy, hope, faith, frustration and finally surrender. I was so busy dipping and moving as things were shifting and changing that I didn't realize that I wasn't honoring how all these changes and new stressors were affecting me physiologically and behaviorally. Like so many others, I would just deal with what's next, listen out for the government



updates and keep busy, because keeping busy was better than feeling helpless. Well, today I sat in my room, by myself, and for the first time I was able to exhale. As I breathed out, I felt all the pain, confusion, and denial that I had been burying inside of me for the past three weeks, come to the surface and all I could do was cry. I cried for the people who have lost their lives, their jobs and those who don't know how they are going to make ends meet. I cried for my children and their friends, for my neighbors and our nation, gosh, for all nations and I cried for myself.

When I finished crying, I took a long nap, after my nap I made a list of things that I needed to do to take better care of myself, (I will share my list below). I accepted that whether I like it or not, we are going through a period of mourning and loss. Our old way of being is becoming a memory, we now can create a new lifestyle. For me it started with honoring how I was feeling. **“We need to feel in order to heal”.**

Everything we are taking in can be fuel and nourishment for our new form. Like the caterpillar, let's enter our cocoons and emerge stronger, wiser, more beautiful versions of ourselves.

With love + hope.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE

Solitude. Find some time to be alone. You can use this time to do nothing—just be present in the moment. Being alone gives you an opportunity to clear your mind. You can also use the time to plan out your day, week and life. Solitude sparks creativity. Increases peace of mind, empathy and productivity.

EXERCISE. Movement energizes and stimulates your life force energy. Improves your mental health and mood. Any kind of movement done three or four times a week for at least twenty minutes, can be beneficial for your health; this can be walking (within ½ mile of your home), running, dancing, yoga, or whatever motivates you to move.

Laugh- a lot! Enjoy the company of your children and spouse by playing board games or watching funny movies. Laughing boost immunity, lowers stress hormones, decreases pain, eases anxiety and tension, and strengthens resilience.

FOOD. Be mindful of what you feed your body, your mind, and your spirit. Make sure your food diet, emotional diet, and spiritual diet are balanced and healthy. Incorporate more fruit and green leafy vegetables if possible.

CONNECTION. We are social beings and love to connect with our family & friends. Though we are practicing social distancing, don't let that stop you from reaching out to your friends and family via telephone, Zoom or WhatsApp chat. Find creative ways to connect and have a good laugh!

AWARENESS. Your mind is more than a storehouse of information. It is also a tool of awareness. There is something beyond thought, beyond emotion, beyond speech and action. It is a place of awareness. This place of perspective allows us to notice our thoughts and emotions without acting on them. Instead we pause and reflect, and then choose. This is freedom.

RESILIENCE. The ability to recover and bounce back from adversity or unexpected, and unwelcomed change, and grow from the experience. After this is all said and done, we will all be able to move beyond resilience by becoming stronger in the places that we were most challenged.

EVOLVE. Where there is life there is change. Without change there is no growth and no life. Reflect on change, its inevitability, and how to gracefully accept it, even if it hurts. The ability to embrace change is an essential part of living. To align with life, we must be one with change and “go with the flow.” If nothing changes, nothing changes.

“Anyone who is interested in making change in the world also has to learn to take care of herself, himself, their self.”

~Angela Davis

A contract is a visible reminder of commitment. It can influence your thoughts and your actions. When you look back at all the things that you have ever achieved, you probably made a commitment to get it done. Make this agreement with your higher self that this is important to you, and that you will commit to it.

SELF-CONTRACT

I, (print name) _____, sign this contract on this day _____. I realize that in signing this contract that I am taking a chance on myself. I realize that I am affirming my purpose here on this planet which is to love and be loved. I realize that I am committed to my healing, to my self-actualization, and to living the life that I desire. I am committed to emerging from this situation a stronger version of myself. I am committed to bringing my vision to life. I am committed to being of greater service to the world. I know that I am beautiful, that I am smart, that I am compassionate, kind, and loving. I know that my soul has yearned to truly awaken. In signing this contract, I open myself up to the infinite possibilities that life has to offer to me. I walk each day in gratitude, peace, and love. I am constantly co-creating with the divine, and I trust and surrender to the process. I am worthy. I am worthy. I am worthy. I now open myself up to joy and to the miracles and magic of this beautiful life. With gratitude and hope.

_____(Signature)

Creating Sacred Space

“Close your mouth,
Shut your doors,
And live close to the Tao.
Open your mouth,
Be busy all day,
And live in confusion.”
(Tao Te Ching, 52).

“There comes a point when you know,
without a doubt, without hesitation,
that you cannot go back to your old life.
You cannot be who you once were and have
a new life with new riches.”
~Julie McIntyre

With so much going on in the world and in our lives, it is easy to become overwhelmed by everything happening around us. It is vital that we have a space, no matter how large or small that is sacred to us. This is a place for peaceful reprieve. This is a place where you can get still and listen to your own inner voice and to your intuition. This is a place where you can replenish your mind, your spirit, and your soul. *This is your sanctuary.*

How do you create sacred space?

- 1) **Determine what kind of space you want.** Is this a room in your home, or is it a corner in a room?
- 2) **Make the space what you want it to be.** Decorate the space in a way that is pleasing to you and to your senses. You may decide to put a plant in the space



to connect with nature, or you may decide to add inspirational quotes around the space. You may always want to put something comfy to sit or lay on.

- 3) **Put up a sacred altar.** To pull in a more spiritual energy, place objects on an altar that correspond with your beliefs and practices. You may choose to create an altar that utilizes the four elements of: **Air, Water, Fire, and Earth.** To do this you may put a dish of water, use incense, light a candle, and use a crystal, stone, or salt. You may even add pictures of loved ones, fresh flowers, or anything that catches your fancy. Make it your own! If you do not have enough space for a permanent altar, create a temporary one.
- 4) **Use your space.** Retreat to your space for prayer, meditation, to connect to the divine, or whatever it is that creates a sense of peace and rejuvenation for you. Ex. Writing, Artwork, Music. Allow yourself to feel worthy of having a space where you can feel calm, joy, clarity and peace. Your space can be indoors or outside.

What would you like to have in your sacred space?

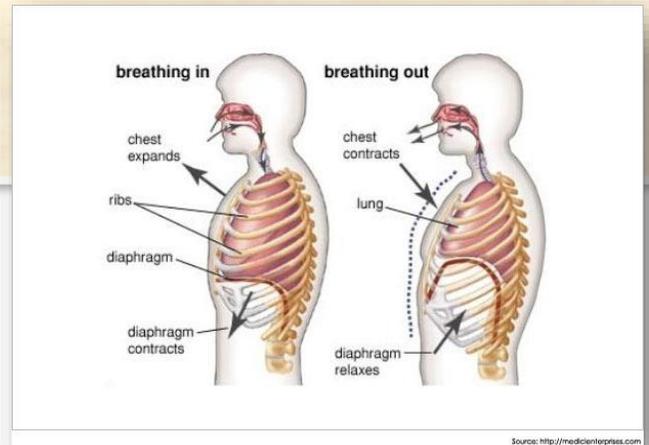
Meditation and Mindfulness

“Quiet the mind and the soul will speak.” ~Ma Jaya Bhagavati

You have probably heard the term “**meditation**,” and about the benefits that you can get from meditating and from practicing mindfulness. Meditation is a practice that trains the mind to focus internally so that it becomes more than just a storehouse of information but is transformed into a tool of awareness. Meditation is a study of the mind... the observation of the mind in a nonjudgmental way. It is the ability to notice our thoughts, and our emotions while sitting in stillness and silence. A meditative mind is not necessarily a quiet mind; rather it is an observed mind.

Basics:

- 1) **Sit or lie down comfortably and close your eyes.** You want to make sure that your spine is as straight as possible.
- 2) **Focus on your breathing.** Breathing is a vital part of life and of meditation. Breathe naturally at first, deepening your breath. When you breathe in, your chest should expand, and your diaphragm should contract out. When you breathe out, your chest should contract, and your diaphragm should relax. Inhale for 2-3 seconds, and exhale for 3-4 seconds, pause and repeat.



- 3) If your mind begins to wander (and it almost inevitable will), do not feel guilty or beat yourself up about it. **Just refocus on your breathing.** (Side tip: I also try to breathe and count my breathing at the same time. Trying to do both of those functions at the same time helps me to keep my focus and not think of other things).

Please note that you can meditate at whatever time works for you. There are also numerous different types of meditations, and you can research those to find the one(s) that work for you!



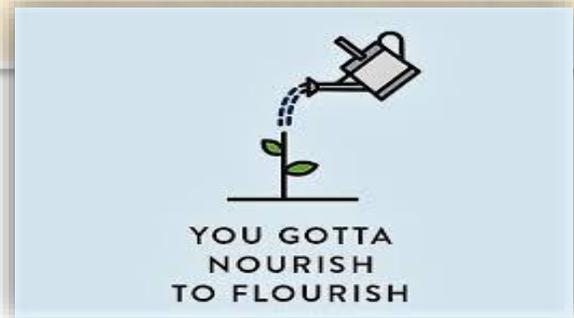
Self-Care

(Working with dried herbs, essential oils, and crystal energy to practice self-care).

I am a huge advocate for self-care. In my opinion, if you do not take care of yourself, you will not have any energy left to share with others, and to do the things that you need to do to achieve your goals. Self-care looks different to each person, and there are many ways that you can achieve it.

One way to achieve your own personal self-care is to come up with your self-care plan. Think about the different aspects of your life, and activities and practices that you can put in place for each to meet your self-care goals.

Area	Activity/Practice
Spiritual Self-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meditate
Emotional Self-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep a journal
Physical Self-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get enough sleep & Exercise
Relationship Self-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spend quality time with people that you love and care about
Work/Professional Self-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take online professional development training



What are some activities/practices that you can do for your own self-care?



I love working with dried herbs, essential oils, and crystals in my self-care routine.

For example, if I have trouble sleeping, I may use a few drops of lavender essential oil on my pillow to soothe and relax my mind. I also like to meditate with crystals, and I use them in my spaces—work and at home to help create the energy that I desire in that location. Additionally, I like to make baths using dried herbs, and there is much happiness to be found in a good cup of dried herbal tea!

Disclaimer: Please make sure to research the herbs and oils carefully. Not every herb should be used internally, and not every oil is meant to be used on your skin.

Things to remember...

1. Positive self-talk equals positive communication

We all have been affected and all our lifestyles have changed, including our children's, be gentle with them. Remember that every waking hour we are engaged in self-talk. Let's make sure we are practicing positive self-talk. Our self-talk is the inner voice that we use to explain experiences as they occur in our lives. Here are some words we can use to encourage positive self-talk & positive communication:

- I know you are trying your best
- I am listening
- Do your best
- I appreciate you
- I am sorry
- I am counting on you
- I love you
- I trust you
- I accept responsibility
- We're in this together
- You can do it

2. Being home allows you to complete some of the projects that you have always wanted to do but did not have the time:

- Start a Garden
- Organize the closets, cabinets and pantries
- Paint

3. Have a list of resources and guidelines that are useful to you and your family.

