

Self-Care for the Selfless

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Stress levels in adults have been increasing over the years and recent studies have found over half of Americans deal with stress on a daily basis (Knox & Neighmond, 2017). The American Psychological Association (APA) reports that most stress levels tend to be caused by work and finances (2007).

In a world where “hustle” is something to be proud of, rest and self-care tend to get put on the back burner. Often times, people actually feel guilty about taking time for themselves because they fear that if they aren’t hustling and being productive then they won’t advance in their career or make a big impact.

So, instead, a majority of people spend most of their days worrying about projects, deadlines, and everyone they serve, in turn, neglecting themselves. They’ll skip meals, work through lunch, and drink caffeine to attempt to keep themselves moving and productive.

However, when your body is stressed out and you neglect its needs, it starts piling on until, eventually, you crash. When your body is in a constant state of stress and panic, you naturally have less physical and mental energy to devote to the things you love and care about, like your relationships and your job.

When you are unable to think clearly because of stress and exhaustion, your decisions can become clouded, your productivity can decrease, and the impact you want to make in the world can actually lessen.

In order to make true change in the world, and to help others, you must first take care of you.

Here are some tips to include more self-care into your daily routine:

1. Get outside. Connecting with nature is a great way to appreciate yourself and recognize the small things that make up life. Nature, in and of itself, is very healing and can help pull you outside of the office hustle and back to a calm and relaxed state. If you work in an office all day, try to get outside for at least a few minutes each day. The fresh air will do your body and mind good.

2. Practice saying “No.” As a chronic people pleaser, it can be hard to say no to something, especially if it is something you believe in. But you must remember, sometimes saying no is the most loving response you can give. Often times, saying yes to too many things can lead to burnout and cause you not to put your full energy and investment into the project or event at hand. In this case, you are doing everyone a disservice by not being fully committed. Start saying no more often and remember that it is the loving response.

3. Get your sleep. Sleep is an underrated nutrient when it comes to health and wellness. Every night when you sleep, it's like an internal cleaning crew goes into your body to balance your hormones and cleanse your system for the following day. When you don't get enough sleep, your body doesn't have time to clean itself out and do what it needs to make you feel energized and ready to go. Try shutting down your electronics at least an hour before you head to bed to allow your brain and eyes to detox from the day.

4. Decide what makes you feel best. A big misconception in the self-care industry is you have to do things like get weekly massages and private yoga sessions in order to implement self-care. While those things can be great, you have to decide what makes *you* feel best. If it's a massage, great! If it's calling and talking to a friend, that's great too. For some people, it's having fifteen minutes of uninterrupted time to themselves in the morning. And for others, it might be sewing, painting, or going to a concert. Figure out what makes you happy and feel taken care of, and implement that on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Remember, self-care is health-care. The APA reports a variety of impacts stress can have on your overall health (2011). By incorporating and implementing self-care habits now, you can help prevent health issues and other stress-induced issues later on.

By honoring yourself and your body, you will have the time, energy, and space to make an even bigger impact in the world and ultimately help more people.

References

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