Warm greetings, Dear Heart.

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Introduction
by Sarah Hawkins, Sacred Comfort

In May 2013 I published the first in the Field Guide series and it was so well-received, I was moved to produce an update. So I asked a group of women if they’d like to contribute an article, poem, or artwork - and here’s the result. Nineteen gorgeous souls who practice and/or teach the art of self-care stepped forward with their recipes to be included in this book. You’ll find heartfelt and soulful (and humorous!) advice, actionable steps, and moving stories. But mostly what I hope you’ll find is the sense that you are not alone, and that there is a way out of the constant “do-ing” and into a new sense of simply “be-ing.”

Self-care is a topic many struggle with. We lose ourselves in the expectations of others, in this culture which reveres the can-do attitude of the individual, doing it all (alone) with grace and ease. We denigrate ourselves for not succeeding, for not living up to our own unrealistic expectations. Taking a break is for losers. Loving yourself is conceited. Taking time for self-care is selfish. You’re not trying hard enough.

We have become separated from ourselves, subjugating our soul’s longing in order to show up in the way we think we should so that other people are comfortable. We don’t rock the boat, we do what’s expected of us, and we suffer as a result. What would it mean to turn the old paradigm on its head, and tell the world, “No, not anymore”?

Henry Thoreau famously said, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

I say this: Do not die with that song in your soul. Engage in the care of your soul, the sacred work of Radical Self-care. Radical, because it goes against the stream. Sacred, because it’s the most important work there is. Please, take a stand. Stand up and be radical. Go against the stream and do what you need to do to take care of yourself. You’re the only you we have, and whether you believe it or not, you are deeply loved – just because you are you.
Let this be a beginning. At the end of the book, you’ll find information on how to get in touch with the beautiful women who contributed. We hope you’ll consider checking in and letting us know how this book has helped you, and how we may continue to be of service. We also hope you’ll pass this book along to others, spreading the message of hope and renewal far and wide.

Gratitude

I am indebted to the women who contributed to this book and to the idea of this book, and to those with whom I walk the path to wholeness. Much love to my husband, Marshall Hawkins, who truly is a gift from above. Hugs and kisses to Alice Phoenix. A raised fist to the East Coast Dharma Punx. Much gratitude to First Church, Unitarian Universalist in Jamaica Plain, MA. A deep bow to my Interspiritual Counseling classmates around the world. Enchanting kisses to the Enchanted Entrepreneurs Circle. Soulful hugs to the Authentic Connectors. Three cheers to the amazeballs members of the When I Grow Up Clubhouse. Goodness is magnified when created together; none of this is possible without you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Love and light to all who may be touched by the contents of this book. May you find comfort for your soul here.

Shine Brightly,

[Signature]

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Saving me

by Renee Avard, Catch a Falling Star

'I just want to be noticed.' 'I want to be accepted.' 'I want to be heard.' 'I want unconditional love.' 'I want to be saved.'

How many times have you heard or thought the above statements? In this human existence, we all long for those things and most spend their lives seeking the ones that would notice, listen, accept, and love them when the reality is it is not someone you seek, but something you discover to be inside of you.

This brings about the radical subject of self-care and self-love. It is radical, in my opinion, because to a lot of people, it feels selfish by getting it in their head from someone or something else. We are often told to consider others’ feelings and make sure others know how valuable they are and all the while, we are not doing this for the most important people in our lives – ourselves.

Because of the desperation to finding the other half of the longings and questions, many find illusions of the answers, in the wrong ways. It’s why we have so many people with the wrong mates, unhappy jobs, wrong varying ways to cope, receiving false hopes from answers that are unstable or thinking they have found the answers in ways such as drinking, smoking, or taking drugs.

Does any of that sound like the proper way to be loving yourself and respecting and caring for yourself? Not at all.

What most people have not realized is that they are deserving of love, respect and ultimate care. And what most have not realized is they have these traits and these answers are inside.

So how do we make self-care a priority and how do we make it make sense in our lives? I have a 5-step thought process when it comes to this much-needed awareness.
1. Realize you are just as important, if not more, than everyone else.
2. Know that you are deserving of love, affection, kindness and more from not just others, but from yourself as well.
3. Take time out for you. If you are always devoting time and energy to others and this leads to neglect of yourself and you cannot properly help others until self-care and love is made a priority.
4. Release fears of committing to too much from too many and know that it is okay to say no to some things and yes to others.
5. This one seems obvious, but it is often forgotten — eat right, drink water and juice, disconnect from media once a week, do things that make you happy from reading to visiting with friends, to taking that extra-long shower, go exercise, go outside, love on your family, cuddle your pets, even cleaning your house can be a form of self care.

And finally, I will reveal to you my big secret that I have discovered to learning and living the self-cared-for life. You know how people say you know you are in love when the love songs and various music and movies begin making sense?

I know that I am on my true path when those things start to make sense in regards to myself. If I hear a song, (example: Nickelback's “Savin' Me” and the chorus is 'say it if it's worth saving me.') In the past I would have associated that to, more than likely, the current 'crush/love' in my life. I know I have moved forward because I know I do not need saving, I am already here and existing and loving who I am and I know, (in relation to the above song), I am saving myself.

This can apply to any song and even some movies or television shows. It is worth trying because it changed my whole outlook and perspective on life and the various ways we are taught lessons and how we can then share with others. Expand your mind and your heart to show yourself love and care.
Nurturing the spirit of your family at home

by Kathy Bozzuti-Jones, Interspiritual Directions

A family is a living thing -- an organism, the soul of which requires some care and nurture over the course of the routines, demands, stresses and joys of daily living. A parent’s sacred task is to keep an eye out for opportunities to nurture the soul of the family and to create the conditions for the spiritual development that will enrich and nurture a whole family life.

In these challenging times for families, where life is fast and distractions are many, family self-care means taking some steps to make your home a sanctuary. At home, family members find rest and drink from the well, filling up and carrying that sense of wellbeing back out into the world.

Here are some practical suggestions for the sacred task of family self-care. Nurturing the spirit of your family at home involves incorporating some practices, making some counter-cultural choices, and being intentional about the quality of shared time together.

1. Begin some practices.

*Eat meals together* -- as often as possible. Statistics have long shown a direct link between the family table and family cohesion. If breakfast is what you can manage, make breakfast a time for setting your intentions for a good day. At dinner, talk about your work and your life in a way that teaches your children to be curious and to participate. Prompt your children to talk about their days, their ideas, their challenges. Take care not to over-focus on clean plates and eating vegetables; it’s a higher value to have a pleasant experience around the table.

*Begin meals with prayer.* Pray in thanksgiving for being together, for having enough to eat, for those who don’t have the care of family, for those who will go to bed hungry, and for the heart to share with others. In this way, your family table strengthens your connections to each other and to the wider world.
Mark special days through family ritual. In our family, we are always celebrating something. If not, we’ll invent something, like our son’s first solo school bus ride. Children enjoy making signs and special menus, offering prayers and sparkling cider toasts. Designate and decorate a special goblet for just such occasions — a blessing cup. Fill it with a favorite drink then pass it around, inviting everyone to offer a few words before taking a sip. Or pass around a giant cookie for dessert, offering “one thing I am grateful for” or “one thing I love about you” before each bite.

Practice the pause. In a world of moral relativism, we are sometimes led to believe that values and choices are equally acceptable, whether they build up or tear down. An important part of a family’s development is for each member to keep track of their moral life each day and to practice being a force for good in the world. Without being moralistic, families can practice basic discernment: When faced with a choice to speak or act, pause and ask yourself, “Is what I am about to say or do life-giving?” This is as important a lesson for children in school faced with seeking peer approval as it is for adults seeking to hold composure at work. Practicing the pause at home will help in the project of making your home a sanctuary; it is a gift you can give to one another. In that instant between idea and act, compassion grows.

Make art together. For fun, for together-time, for celebrations, at sad times. It can be difficult to schedule time for art-making, but you’d be surprised what happens when you simply set out some supplies and begin making art yourself. In that creative space, you will notice that family conversation has a different quality. You will come to treasure its freedom and depth. You may, instead, find it powerful to work alongside one another in silence. Or it may be an occasion to laugh and play.

2. Set some limits.

Choose your family’s rhythm. Remember what it was like when your first child arrived? I can remember the very moment it became clear to me that my regular frenetic pace would no longer serve and that I must attune to the slower, gentler, and unpredictable rhythm of my newborn. I had to slow it down. You can make a choice about
your family’s rhythm, too. You can be a family that dashes around from lesson to game to event to appointments to parties. Or you can set a pace with a number of activities that is sure to enrich and not deplete. It takes some oversight not to let your family life be pulled in too many directions; a gentler schedule will help your family to feel more grounded.

*No is an answer.* You are the guardian of your family’s spirit. If your family is part of a spiritual community that meets on a particular day and time, say no to competing activities. For example, if your family tradition is to attend church on Sunday mornings and your daughter’s soccer coach changes the Saturday game schedule to Sundays, no is an answer. It may not be a popular answer, even with your own children. But if you see community, service, and worship as important facets of your family’s spiritual life, help your family to hold that time and space as sacred. The weekly rhythm, learning, quiet introspection, ritual, and communal life associated with religious traditions can serve to deepen your family’s inner life as well. Say yes to the support of community.

*Limit screen time.* For little ones, take care that they don’t happen to watch the news over your shoulder; the violence they see on television may cause anxiety and a sense of un-safety at home. For older children, a couple hours of homework after sports practice, clubs, or music lessons brings them pretty close to bedtime, already. Encourage your older children to consider the best use of that transition time, whether texting friends, talking on the phone, winding down with reading, a television show, or preparing for the following day. When parents honor a child’s sense that they know what they need (within the boundaries set at home), children learn to listen to themselves, trust themselves, and make better choices outside the family.

**3. Attend to waking and bedtimes.**

*Lie in bed for a while each morning.* For years, I tended to jump out of bed at the first moment of consciousness to begin getting ready for the day. Lately, I have a prayer taped at eye level on the wall beside me, so that it is the first thing I see and a reminder to spend some time in bed setting a more peaceful and sane tone for the day.
Beginning the day in gratitude, mindful of the miracle that our lives are, appreciative of the things going right and the blessings we have been given, affects our outlook and helps us to remember what matters in life. Every family member can practice this, from the youngest to the oldest.

*End each day on a positive note.* First, try to be consistent about everyone getting a good night’s sleep; practicing care for the body and mind will help the whole family to be more calm and less easily disturbed by the little irritations of daily life. Sitting together at bedtime, review the day (joys, challenges, things you will try to do differently tomorrow) and end by sharing one thing for which you are grateful or by imagining an act of kindness you might do for someone the following day. Consider reading a short “sacred” text -- that is, anything that teaches about being compassionate and loving and growing into your best self. Whatever is unfinished or unsettled among you, be gentle with yourselves and with each other -- tomorrow is another day for everyone!
From flare to recovery: transitioning to self-care

by Mary Caelsto, Muse Charmer

There’s truth to the statement that certain personality and behavior traits make one more susceptible to fibromyalgia. Most of the people in my circle who share this diagnosis are like me: driven, perfectionist, caretakers. And even when we know better, we push ourselves. That’s when my “fibro monster” (I think he looks like Telly Monster from Sesame Street.), rears his head and sends me into a flare. My fibro flares are reminders that I need to slow down, take care of myself, and most of all, listen to my body.

I don’t think you need to have fibro to learn the lessons from transitioning to a self-care practice. And all of us, regardless of any health issues, sometimes push too hard and need the reminder. The first step toward moving back toward a self-care practice is acknowledging that you’ve pushed too hard. It may mean being aware of aches and pains or exhaustion which might come. Creating an inventory, even a small one, of the symptoms and being aware of what’s happening in the body provides the tools you need to create your unique self-care program.

Next, be honest in what you need for yourself. Is it time alone? Do you need someone to take care of a few chores? Determine what you need and create an action plan to get it. After a hectic week that leaves me close-to, or actually in, a fibro flare, I make plans to travel as little as possible. The downtime of having a few days at home usually is enough to help me return to self-care. You may need something else to help you return to balance.

Enlist the help of friends and family. Whether it’s support and encouragement or something more concrete such as helping out with chores around the house, don’t be afraid to ask for what you need. And take the time for you that you require. That is probably the most important part of transitioning to self-care. Saying you “don’t have time” or “it’s not important” short changes your move back to self-
care. When I reach the point of a fibro flare—it’s too late! I should have been working on a self-care practice a long time ago.

So why wait until you have a fibro flare or other physical event tell you that you need a self-care practice. Start one now. Work self-care into your life on your own terms and have a practice that’s ready to serve you when you need it.

The good news about self-care is that it’s something you can work on at any time. Small steps reap great dividends. Find one thing, just one thing, that you can do just for you. Whether it’s reading a book, or watching a favorite television show, schedule that time. If you are the type of person who keeps a calendar, make an appointment with yourself and don’t break it!

Each act of self-care you do is cumulative. It builds on itself until you have a solid practice of self-care that can see you through most everything that happens.

When we find ourselves in a flare or dealing with the physical effects of over-exertion, it’s our self-care practice that is going to bring us back. It’s like a toolbox we can reach into when we need and find the way to help support ourselves and not just be there during the rough moments, but make the most of them and thrive. Self-care is vital to protecting ourselves and healing ourselves in the hectic world that is our lives. The practice of self-care is insurance. It’s there to help you when you need it.

By following the four steps—acknowledging, assessing, asking, and assigning—the self-care practice becomes easier and easier. It is truly then, when you have an active, strong, self-care practice that will help see you through the tough times and every day!
Who's responsible?

by Leanne Chapman, Claim Your Treasure

Years ago, after a particularly traumatic relationship break-up, I found my way to a therapy group that was based on Gestalt therapy techniques. A key principle in this approach was the idea of personal boundaries.

Although I was in my 30s at the time, this was a completely new concept to me. Apparently other people weren’t responsible for how I felt or the decisions I made. Who knew? And likewise, I wasn’t responsible for how others felt or the decisions they made.

I felt like someone had turned the light on in a very dark room. I had grown up in a family where I played the role of scapegoat. I would literally tiptoe around the house to avoid upsetting anyone. I came to believe that I annoyed people just by my presence and so I tried to become invisible. As you can imagine, this made me miserable. I am a social person and this severely limited my ability to interact with others. So I blamed my family. They were responsible for how I felt, just as I was apparently responsible for their feelings.

In my therapy group, I learned that when other people project blame on you for their experiences, you can refuse it. You don’t need to buy into it or try to defend yourself. Likewise, in realising that others are not responsible for your experiences, you regain your power over your own life. This was a radical shift in thinking for me.

Setting clear boundaries around who is responsible for what is the foundation of extreme self-care. Clear boundary-setting makes a significant contribution to our well-being and peace of mind. It frees our energy from having to guess what’s going on for someone else, and trying to change our behaviour to match our guesses. It also means we no longer need to wait for others to read our minds, or get upset with them when they don’t.

Below are some examples illustrating these principles:
We are responsible for how we feel and for communicating these feelings to others when necessary.

If your workplace has not paid you on time, you are probably going to feel annoyed. In taking responsibility for how you feel, you decide to communicate your annoyance to the appropriate department in a respectful way, stating how this situation affects you and what you would like them to do about it.

Alternatively you could blame them for your annoyance by complaining about them to others, and never directly discuss it with them. This takes away your power and you’re unlikely to get what you want.

We are responsible for acting on our thoughts and feelings.

If a friend suggests you see a particular movie and you have a feeling you're not going to enjoy it, you take responsibility by sharing your reluctance in a respectful way – you're not saying it’s a bad choice, it's just not your choice - and suggesting a possible alternative.

Or you could decide to keep quiet, go along to see the movie, and then blame her when it turns out to be awful. Again you have given away your power over your own choices.

We are not responsible for the thoughts and feelings of others.

You suggest to your partner that you go to a restaurant that has live music, but your partner prefers somewhere quiet where you can have conversation without having to shout. By recognising that you both have different but equally valid preferences, you have no need to make anyone 'wrong' or lay blame. You might suggest a compromise, such as going somewhere quiet for dinner and then seeing a band afterwards.

However if your partner gets mad at you for wanting to go somewhere that she wouldn't enjoy, and blames you for not knowing what she wanted, you are not responsible for this. It was her responsibility to share her thoughts and feelings, while at the same
time allowing you to have your own thoughts and feelings. Chances are neither of you will go anywhere at this point.

**Setting Boundaries**

When you set boundaries in relation to someone else's behaviour, you are sharing who you are – this is how intimacy grows. For instance there is no need for anyone to become defensive when you tell them you’d prefer they didn’t talk on the phone in the same room when you’re trying to read. Having someone talk on the phone while they read might not bother them at all, but they now know that it does bother you, and they can consider whether they want to change their behaviour accordingly.

You have not told them they’ve done anything wrong, you’re simply sharing how you experience things so they’ll know and understand you better. You are also not ‘wrong’ in feeling the way you do and sharing it. It takes a lot of courage for people to do this, so it helps to recognise someone's commitment to their own self-care and to your relationship when they share these things with you.

**Saying No**

Sometimes when we set boundaries by saying 'no' to someone, that person reacts with anger and more boundary-pushing, it can feel like we ‘failed’. But we don't measure our success by the other person's reaction. It's understandable they might react badly - you’re not doing what they want you to do.

We don't just walk away when we stop getting something we're used to getting. If your car suddenly stopped running you wouldn’t just shrug and say 'oh ok then' and walk away. You’d probably do everything you could to get it started again, including using a few choice words!

Take it as a measure of success if someone you set boundaries with pushes back. It means you’re doing something differently, you’re respecting yourself. And have some faith in them that they can take care of themselves and will eventually adjust to the changes or they’ll go elsewhere.
If you give in, you're telling them not to take your boundaries seriously. You're also setting the scene for more bad behaviour in future, because you just reinforced it. Setting boundaries by asking for what you want and saying 'no' when you need to isn't selfish, it’s radical self-care. Try it!
Do you listen to the whispers of your heart?

by Suzie Cheel, The Heart Whisper

The whispers of your heart allow your true inner wisdom to shine. They also alert you to your own self-care needs. It is like having your own personal radical self-care angel come knocking to remind you when you are off course.

Recently I wrote these words to accompany Your Weekly Heart Whisper: “My fragile heart is whispering rest, listen to your body. The wisdom will come when you slow down and rest!”

It was a week from then, before I understood the significance of this message from my heart.

I had succumbed to a lung infection which the doctor described as borderline pneumonia clearly I been overdoing things. But my heart knew and had tried to let me know!

I then took out my radical self care kit and followed the advice I so often give to my clients. It was for me just another sidestep in what has become my healing adventure over the past 2 years. I have been given many signs of how important self-care is on one's own self-love path.

Suzie's Radical Self-Care Toolkit

Daily Meditation: This is what I do first thing in the morning, then sometimes at the beach and then maybe another 10 minutes later in
the day. This was one of the messages my heart has often given me when my body is in need of radical self-care.

Rest: This has been an awakening for me. I thought I was resting well, not so! I discovered that I was resting my body and the mind still needed to rest too. I wrote these words: "As I rest I release the toxins of my body and my mind. My heart whispers: thank you" to emphasize the importance for me of rest. Can't switch the mind off?

Visualize: being well and full of energy. When I wake up I am taking time to visualize my day and seeing my body as healthy, I might visualize the healthy food I will eat that will feed my body and make my cells happy, the healing abundance of the sea, the healing and love I receive from around the world.

Practise EFT and Ho'oponopono: this is Hawaiian tradition that allows for healing, forgiveness and gratitude. The words to use are I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you.

Gratitude: Maybe is a foundation to radical self-care. By keeping a gratitude journal and each night writing down at least 5 things that you are grateful for moves one closer to loving you and your life.

Stay hydrated: Drink lots of filtered water. I have lemon with mine to keep my body alkalized. They say disease cannot live in an alkaline body- My body is alkaline so it mustn't have got that message this week!

Laugh and watch funny movies. I have a tendency to get a bit "poor me" as part of me feels I have been through enough in past 2 years or so;) Laughter is said to be the best medicine.

Say YES TO YOU. I have included this as although I have become much better at saying no to others. I discovered recently that I was saying no to me when I should be saying yes to me! Very enlightening! I am really listening to the thoughts I think and the words I speak!

Exercise: I think exercise is a key to self-care. When we are taking care of our body we are giving ourselves care. What I do is beach
walk each day. I swim in the sea as I believe those ions help to heal, I do some exercises for my back and do a gentle form of yoga.

Breathe: We often forget about breathing and the cleansing power of the breath. I do some energy breathing, a breath of happiness and belly breathing.

Be forgiving: You might start with making a list of people you have to forgive or you may find that there are many incidents that in forgiving yourself will help you feel better about you.

Journal: Daily journal writing and keeping an artist's journal has been a very powerful way for me to heal. I completed 45 Intuitive hearts as part of my self-care process back in 2011 and used Julia Cameron's book The Artist's Way to illicit inner wisdom and find it both empowering and illuminating.

You can get your own weekly Heart Whisper art and self-love inspiration here. This will help you begin to listen to the whispers of your heart which in turn will increase your own self-care.
Refilling the well YOUR way: how your personality aspects affect your self-care

by Tanja Gardner, Crystal Clarity Copywriting, Ltd

The way I see it, self-care is doing the things that refill our inner wells

There are all kinds of ways to “do” self-care. From indulging in a spa day to booking a massage to curling up on the couch with a great book... we all do it differently. And we all define the term differently too.

In this post, I’m going to assume that “self-care” is – literally – about taking care of yourself. It’s about acknowledging that the hundreds, if not thousands, of little demands on your time every day add up to a serious energy drain. And it’s about realising that if you don’t do something to replenish that energy, your inner well very quickly runs dry.

For me, real self-care is inextricably tied to being introverted

Don’t get me wrong – it’s not that I don’t enjoy some of the pamper-packages that get marketed as “self-care”. I love the boneless lethargy of sinking into a scented hot tub, or the sensation of skilful hands kneading my muscles in an aromatherapy massage.

But fun as those things are, self-care isn’t just about treating my senses for me. Instead, it’s about being aware of what I truly need: both as a general rule, and in any given moment. Then, once I know what I need, it’s about actually taking the actions that will meet that need. And because I’m so deeply introverted, my introversion informs a LOT of those needs.

Curious about what I mean? I’ll try to explain in the rest of this post.

Firstly, being introverted informs a lot of what I need generally
Once upon a time, before I discovered I was an introvert, I used to think there was something wrong with me.

Why, I wondered, could I happily stand up on a stage and talk to a room of 200 people, but then freak out majorly if I had to interact with one of them afterwards? Why did I love being around my friends but get “peopled out” so quickly when I spent time with them? Why did I want to make plans with people, but then always feel that sense of guilty relief whenever someone rang to cancel? And why did I need so much freaking alone-time?

Learning about the introversion-extroversion scale – the way our energy levels respond to interaction – was a huge eye-opener for me. Suddenly, all those apparent contradictions started to make sense. And I realised that the crazy amounts of alone-time I craved weren’t selfish or anti-social... they were about self-care.

**So self-care for me starts with scheduling enough time alone**

Spending a significant amount of my time totally alone isn’t all that self-care entails for me – but without it, no amount of massages or movie-dates will help to rebalance me. That’s because, as an introvert, I can’t replenish my energy levels until I get time to myself.

What I actually do is rarely as important as the fact that I do it alone. Sometimes I’ll pick up a pen and journal. Other times I’ll plug in a yoga DVD, meditate, or play with art. Often I’ll pick up a novel, or watch an episode of whichever TV show is currently obsessing me.

Sometimes I’ll get a distinct sense of needing one of those things more than the others. Mostly, however it doesn’t seem to matter what I do. As long as I’m doing it alone, my well usually refills itself.

**But introversion isn’t the ONLY thing that plays into my self-care**

Something else I’ve realised is that not only do I need alone-time with no people in it, I also need unstructured time with no “ought-
to”s in it. It’s not that I don’t enjoy – and get a lot out of – meditation, journaling, and other “traditional” forms of introvert-friendly self-care.

But I’ve noticed that if I schedule alone-time and specifically plan to spend it journaling or meditating... those plans can quickly turn into “should do”s. I might feel all good and virtuous afterwards because I meditated as I’d planned to... but I rarely feel as though my inner battery has been recharged by whatever I’ve done.

So I’ve learned that rather than scheduling a daily meditation session or daily journaling, I just need to schedule daily “me-time”. Then, once I take that time, I can check in with myself to figure out what would most replenish me in that moment.

And, since I also have a touch of high sensitivity, not all alone-time is equal

I wrote a post last year about the potential interplay between introversion and other personality factors. For example, when I’m around a lot of people, I’m much more sensitive to loud noises, strong scents, and chaotic visuals. When there are strong sensory triggers around me, interacting with people becomes an order of magnitude more draining.

In self-care terms, that translates to the fact that sometimes sitting on the couch, reading, while my husband plays on his computer is all I need. Other times, I need to actually have physical boundaries between me and any other human being – to make sure that I’m totally alone in my sensory space.

That might involve going into another room and shutting the door, or listening to music through headphones. It might even involve getting right out of the house and going for a walk. Again, the key is to be able to check in with myself in the moment and figure out what would be most helpful for me then and there.

How about you? What does your self-care look like?
Take a moment now to ask yourself what self-care *really* looks like for you.

- Are there general practices or activities that you know will refill your well? Or, like me, do the most effective practices vary according to what you need in the moment?

- Are you more introverted or extroverted? How do your self-care practices reflect that aspect of your personality?

- What other personality factors play a role in determining what replenishes and drains you?
Best friend

By Ana Goncalves, Awaken Your Heart and Soul

Self care to me is about being kind and honouring who you are. A simple act or word of kindness can make a difference when spoken by you. When the world outside is a stranger and people around you are not your friend, that’s when you know you can count on yourself.

Look inside, a helping hand there you will find.

Surrender to the Soul and your best friend will emerge. Wherever you are is right where you need to be, you are being guided and supported. When you look within and see yourself, know that every part is as beautiful as your heart. Uncover your truth and connect with the love that you are. As when you do, great miracles occur. As the mirror looks back at you, what do you see? Do you see the beauty emanating that is you, or do you feel it unknown? When you look into your eyes, you open up the doors to your soul and you let light in. Allow yourself to go there, explore every part of you that you haven’t met before. Savour the moment and appreciate all that you see, for it is the reflection of you.

Learn to accept that part of you that is your reflection and pay attention to what it emits. You know your soul better than anyone, and even if you don’t know that person looking remember you can always start today. Your helping hand is here you see, waiting for you to be happy.

Learn to be there for you, and give yourself all the tender loving care you need. For it is this that gives you strength to stand tall step and experience life the way you truly desire. When you give to yourself, you give to the world and that’s when miracles occur. Your life is here to explored and ridden like the waves in the sea, and as you flow you enter into the trust that is within. As you take care and pay attention to your needs, you will forever be grateful to yourself. You light the way when you trust, and you surrender to what is possible. Without faith in yourself and love your walls cave in. When you know the power of love, you know everything. Give yourself the support you need as you dive into unsettling experiences, for it is
here that you open up the door to the light. As light enters you realize just how powerful you are and the world begins to shine in a new way.

You are a magnificent being and the connection you have with yourself is to be nourished and appreciated. Give yourself the gift of love everyday and treat yourself with kindness. When you begin to realize just how magnificent you are the world opens up and you realize the friend you have had all along is right there with you. Only then will you begin to realize how lucky you are, to have the very best friend alongside you always, looking out for you and lighting the way. It shows you the parts you are not proud of and it gives you an opportunity to look deeper so that you can understand there is more to this than what you see.

Every part of you is as significant as all the other parts you are scared of, and when you surrender to your whole self and all that is happening you give yourself permission to live. Take time out to listen, appreciate and be there, for the friend you have is right there within you. Only you can set it free and make life the very best for you.
Redefining selfishness as a defiant act of extreme self-care

by Jenny Griffin, The Power of Change

Why does it often seem easier to care for others than ourselves? I know for so many people it has become a habit through the years to put themselves after just about everyone (and everything) else.

There’s the word selfish which is bandied about like a horrible insult, inducing guilt trips and shame in whoever is on the receiving end of it. It has become a way to keep people tied to all manner of unhealthy situations, insisting that their desire for something other than that is in fact selfish.

The thing is, I’m not going to tell you it’s not selfish, but I will tell you that it’s time we reclaimed the word to reflect a healthier understanding of the term. To care for ourselves is Self-ish, in that it returns us to a state of self-love and self-awareness necessary to connect with others in a deeper way. It is a focus on the self that involves nurturing and celebrating who we are - our gifts, our quirks, our foibles, our emotions, our desires and our needs. From this starting point, we can then say to others, ‘here I am, where are you? Let’s meet half-way,’ or ‘here I am, and this is where I’ll stay today if I want to remain healthy.’

It’s only when we start from a point of self-acceptance and self-understanding that we can know if and when we or others have crossed personal boundaries. We can recognise the anxiety that comes of putting our needs aside in favour of others, or the fear that comes of not allowing ourselves to shine in the fullness of who we are. We can embrace our humanity, as we allow others to embrace theirs, and know that we also deserve to be forgiven for falling once in a while.

Think about it from the angle of our inner children, whether or not you are consciously aware of them. When I’m in doubt about something, I run it by my inner child, who always gives me a straight answer. If she doesn’t like the idea of _____whatever it is____,
chances are I’m not going to, either. I ignored her for a really long time and went through some serious darkness before I rediscovered and started listening to her. I’m not about to stop now.

If you put the image of the inner child outside of yourself, it goes back to the beginning, where I suggested it’s sometimes easier for us to care for others than ourselves. Our inner children are a part of us, yet they’re also somehow separate, so it may be easier to keep them in mind when considering self-care. For instance – would you punish a small child on a starvation diet just so she could fit into a smaller size? Would you berate her repeatedly for saying the ‘wrong thing’ to the new boss? Would you expect him to wait until everyone else was happy before he thought about his own happiness?

Somehow, relating these situations to an ‘imaginary’ child outside of ourselves seems ludicrous, but we all have that inner child – the Self inside of us that is asking to be recognised and acknowledged. When I first came into contact with the idea of an inner child, someone suggested I picture her sitting on a chair in front of me, as I said to her the horrible (and untrue) things I said to myself. ‘You’re so stupid!’ or ‘You sure are ugly!’ feel WAAAAAAAY worse when you’re staring an innocent, wide-eyed four-year old in the face. She takes on everything she hears as the truth and applies it to her (you got it) Self. Is that selfish? Hell, yes, but how do we engage with the world around us if not through the Self we’ve developed through our diverse and divinely guided experiences?

So in some ways, to believe the things we’re told by authority figures, family and those who don’t necessarily have our Highest Good in mind (anyone outside ourselves), we are being more ‘selfish’ than when we reject those external descriptions of who we are. We are assuming that everything anyone says about us is true, and then accepting that as a part of the Self we present to the world. These distortions of ourselves are so far from the truth that they can barely be related to the Self we came into the world with.

Let’s reclaim selfishness as something that defines the act of caring deeply for the pieces of ourselves that reflect our inner truth, and allow us to see our divinity, as well as that of others. We can all be selfish together and connect more deeply from a place of knowing
who we are and what we truly want. We can all rest easy in the knowledge that our (own) innermost needs and desires are looked after, by and for us. We can sit our inner children in a circle and let them loose to create some magic, no holds barred.

Our war cry? ‘Selfishness is a defiant act of extreme self-care!’
You did it again.


It happens. We make mistakes.

Yet sometimes mistake follows mistake and suddenly we’re in a black hole of despair and self-loathing – convinced that we’re going to get fired, end up homeless and friendless, living under a bridge in a cardboard box, with nobody but river rats to keep us company.

My mind used to try to get me to believe this stuff. A simple mistake would kick off a raging stream of thoughts, completely taking over rational thinking and action. Running on fear, adrenaline pumping, I’d feel compelled to do whatever it took to protect myself from the perceived threat to my safety and security. This usually meant hiding. Sweeping the mistake under the rug. Not asking for the help I need. Pretending I’ve got it all under control.

Fear is a great weaver of tales, and I still tell myself stories like this sometimes, but over the years, I’ve learned new skills – skills of radical self-care that have changed my life, and I’m hoping these skills can help you, too. I’ve learned how treat myself with love and respect. I’ve learned to accept my humanity, my perfect imperfection in all its beauty. I’ve learned that just because my mind tells me something, I don’t have to believe it, and that connecting with other people is the best way to get a reality check.

So how do you get out of the car when Fear is driving you at top speed down the Autobahn?

Fear is a powerful emotion. So powerful, it can highjack just about every other thought and action so that we become paralyzed, our thinking dulled. Or else we want to run away and hide. Sometimes
we get angry and lash out, blaming others for not giving us our creature comforts, or for “stealing” what we think should be rightfully ours. It’s not rational, but in the moment, your body thinks it’s real. Your mind is telling your body you are in danger and you’ve got to prepare – quickly! – for the end is nigh! Fear is driving the bus.

**Good news! You can co-exist with Fear and any other difficult emotion that rears its ugly head.**

The trick is not to attempt to rid yourself of fear – because that’s just not going to happen. Difficult emotions will arise. It’s what we do with them that matters. Our reaction to discomfort is the key. Because we can choose to be a victim, or we can choose to accept things and move on.

When you’re in a bind, when the world feels like it’s caving in on you, when you’ve been triggered and your Fear stories are unfurling, try this four-step method of connecting with your SOUL. With practice, this process is guaranteed to bring you to a place of greater presence, self-compassion, and self-love.

**The SOUL Method**

**S = STOP.** Stop obsessing about whatever it is you’re obsessing about. Step off of the merry-go-round, and put a pause on telling yourself the same fear-based story. You don’t have to go there. You can stop gripping the arms of your chair and breathe. Breathe. Take five long, slow, and deep belly breaths. Breathe, and ask God (Spirit, Divine Presence, Higher Power) for help. Pray, if that’s your thing. “Help, help, help,” is a perfectly adequate prayer.

**O: OBSERVE.** What’s actually happening right here in this moment? Where are your feet? Look at them. Press the soles of your feet into the floor. Scan your body for tension. See if you can breathe into those places and soften the tension. Feel the breath enter and leave your body. Feel the rise and fall of your belly with each breath. Ask yourself what you really want in this moment. Why do you want that? Ask yourself “why” five times. More, if necessary. Your answers may surprise you.
U: UNDERSTAND. There is more here than the habitual understanding. Your story is not the only story, nor is it the only reality. Others may see things differently. What if a friend of yours came to you with the problem you’re currently facing? How would you help your friend? How do you think your friend would see your problem? See through another’s eyes. Is there another way for you to look at this situation?

L: LOVE. Find a loving (compassionate) response. Can you forgive yourself for your reaction in the moment? Can you show yourself compassion? Try putting a hand on your heart, and say something short and sweet and kind to yourself, whatever needs to be said. Try “Yes,” “It’s OK,” “I’ll be fine.” How about gratitude? Is there space to be thankful for this life lesson? Take out a sheet of paper and list some ways you can show yourself some love. When time allows, refer to this list and take action on it. Call your best friend. Buy yourself some flowers. Treat yourself to a massage or spa treatment. Say no to that lunch date you’ve been dreading. Clear your weekend of obligations and make time to do things that bring you joy. Meditate. Touch your heartspace and send love there.

"You must be the change you want in the world." Gandhi

Love and fear cannot coexist. Love wins out every time. Why are we here? I say we are here to experience and channel God’s love. It’s your birthright and your obligation to let love in, let love out – each in our own unique way. Love is all around you. Open wide and let it rush in. Filled with love, you radiate love, healing yourself and healing the world. “Be the change.” Radical, right?

*The SOUL Method is based on concepts from Cindy Wigglesworth’s “SQ21: The Twenty-One Skills of Spiritual Intelligence”
The only thing that matters

by Catherine Hummel, Second Chance Coaching

I used to roll my eyes at “Just Love Yourself” written on 10,000 self help books, blogs, and magazine articles. I laughed when you told me that “self care” meant meditating for an hour, taking baths, going to a yoga class, surrounding my room with flowers or getting 8 hours of sleep.

Can’t you see that I’m trying to get things done over here?

I had a lot of friends, a partner, a family who loved me, and a job I liked. However, I still felt empty, afraid, and unworthy.

I soon realized I was missing the only thing that meant anything.

Self love.

I believe self care IS self love.

And self love is the only thing that matters.

I’m not telling you NOT to go to yoga. Yoga has absolutely made a difference in my life. What I am sharing with you is that is yoga isn’t for you, awesome. What I wish for you is to find what does feel right for you and to make time to do that. I am sharing with you that if you don’t like yourself, it won’t matter how much yoga you do.

What matters is how you feel about yourself each moment you are doing pretty much anything at all.

If you go to yoga because you think that’s what you “should” do, that’s not self care.

How it works:

When I love myself I say no. I say no a lot. When I love myself I only say yes to things that feel good to me and lift me up. When I love myself I listen to what I need rather than do what someone else
wants me to do. When I love myself I let go of people, beliefs, and fears that no longer serve me. When I love myself I eat only when I am hungry and I go to sleep when I am tired. When I love myself I surround myself with people who treat me well and who respect me. When I love myself I live my life from a place of wholeness, I feel empowered to make decisions, I feel brave enough to speak my truth, and I’m not concerned about what you think of me.

When I love myself I don’t need you to love me. When I love myself I laugh a lot more than I cry. When I love myself I only put good, healthy food into my body because I care about nurturing myself and helping myself feel energized to do all the things I love to do. When I love myself I speak kindly to myself, which then enables me to speak kindly to you. When I love myself I don’t have to chase anything or try and make things happen. When I love myself I am able to relax and breathe into the knowing that what is meant for me will always find me. When I love myself, I take care of myself and when I take care of myself, I am able to take care of and love, you.

How do you practice self care? You love yourself. How to love yourself? Try these 3 things right now.

**Say Affirmations.**

How you speak to yourself really, really matters. Would you ever speak to a child the way you sometimes speak to yourself? I imagine no. You are no less special than any child and you are equally deserving of kindness and praise. You just have to be willing to try these, willing to believe them to be true.

I deeply and completely love and accept myself as I am. I can take care of myself before I take care of others. I deserve to receive what I need. I will be supported when I choose to support myself first. I am worth taking good care of.

**Be Honest With Yourself**

Right now, in this moment, how are you? How are you feeling? Do you like yourself? Do you like your life? What is working for you and what’s not? What steps can you take right now to bring your life into alignment with your heart? You don’t have to tell anyone the
answers to these questions if you don’t want to. I have often found it to be really powerful to tell the truth to others, but we know it must first happen with ourselves.

Being honest with yourself isn’t just about being honest about your feelings and giving yourself permission to acknowledge them, it is also about being honest about your desires and your dreams. What do you want? What do you dream about? What do you long for? Know you are worthy of your dreams and your desires and it is possible for all of them to come to you and come true.

Spend some time right now writing down what’s true for you and answer some of the questions above. The truth will set you free.

**Make Time For Yourself**
The fact that you have spent time right now reading this eBook and now reading my article, is a powerful indication of your level of self love! We all have the exact same amount of time each day (86,400 seconds) and how we spend our time is a direct reflection of what we value. When I value myself I make time for myself. It doesn’t have to be drastic - you don’t need to cancel all your plans for the rest of the day now! Maybe you begin by setting aside 5 minutes to reflect on the questions above, 5 minutes in silence, 5 minutes saying new affirmations or 5 minutes listening to your favorite song. What feels right for you? What would life look like if you put yourself first?

Wishing you all the best in your path to self love, your path to self care. Every second is a chance to turn your life around and it only takes one second for you to begin to love yourself a little more right now.
Be the best friend you can be...to you

*by Caroline Kirk, Walking Barefoot to Self-Love*

I believe Self Care is giving yourself permission, with love in your heart, to be, have and do all that you’re in the habit of denying yourself.

**It is both painful and liberating to find that much of our sense of lack and limitation actually begin and end within.**

Truly caring for yourself is about listening, without judgment, to your heart and souls inner callings, from the simple to the majestic, and gifting yourself these.

Self care is about you loving you, as you would a child, a beloved. Self care involves understanding, compassion, acceptance and forgiveness; soul wrenching, liberating self forgiveness, clearing a much needed space in your heart for expansion, for love.

Self care is radical because it is so often left undone.

It means allowing a space for mistakes, poor decisions, for veering off-course *again*; it means always having a best friend at hand with your best intentions at heart.

Always!

Yes, radical self care means being your very best friend. Why ever not?

Since I’ve discovered this integral female need, I feel a little sad for what a poor friend I was to me; I placed much less value on myself than others, in certain ways. I tolerated too much, too often, for too long.

I forgive.

I always thought I had adequate self esteem and in some ways and times, I did and do. In others, I did not! I felt because I had moved
on from violent relationships and other soul-destroying behaviours that I knew my value.

I didn’t.

I would move on, but in my lack of awareness, I never wholly treated the underlying cause. Subsequently, I just invited the next heart-wrenching experience in its place.

The more I delved into my life patterns, highlighting my inner beliefs and ways of being, the more I devoured spiritual and personal growth wisdom, the more I realised I was not as I seemed.

At all.

I didn’t always receive the love & care I longed for because I wasn’t giving it to myself.

The first real awareness occurred during a Tony Robins seminar, amidst 8,000 people, tears streamed down my face with the bleak, yet igniting, awareness that I did not love myself.

I don’t feel good enough.

We attract circumstances & people that mirror our often subconscious beliefs.

It was me that didn’t love myself enough, not them, me!

Ouch!

I’d like to say things changed there and then, and they did, to a certain degree. I totally changed how I lived my life, I moved on from damaging pastimes and relationships. I worked on understanding me; I incorporated self care into my choices, into how I treated myself.

Do you find when things are going well in our lives, we forget?
We forget to continue with the practice, we forget to monitor our self talk, to connect within, to engage in radical self care.

Enter my greatest lesson to date on limited self care.. the let down of all let downs..... carrying the gift of splitting my heart wide open. ...

...so it could finally begin the journey of healing.. from within..

*I am the cause of this grief. I lost sight of me again. I let myself down. A double whammy, I still felt let down by the other party, I still felt undervalued, unworthy due to their behaviour but I knew, I knew without a shadow of a doubt, that I was in the driving seat.*

Ouch!

And the only way left.....was in.

In I went, delving deeper into my part in all this, linking the chains of my life patterns, let downs, greatest hurts, deepest cuts, poorest choices and the consequences of ignoring my intuition.

*I do not love myself enough. I am not partaking in self care. I'm back here again.*

They say the first cut is the deepest, but it isn’t is it?

It’s the subsequent reopening of old scars, joined with new lesions.. combining to a gaping, weeping wound.

*When will I get it right?*

I think I’m on the right path.... finally.

**It all begins within. With Radical Self Care.**

Self love is the underlying, and essential foundation, for the rest of your life. Build this layer securely and firmly and nothing and no-one can pull your world from under you. Including you!

Are you really, truly partaking in radical self care?
I invite you to look at the relationships in your life, partner, friends, colleagues, boss, parent, children.... I invite you to see how their treatment of you may be mirroring your treatment of yourself.

- Do you feel valued?
- Do you feel Loved?
- Do you feel you are getting back the care & concern that you give to others?

Transformational change begins within. Treat yourself as you would like to be treated; in every area and aspect of life.

I invite you to look at how you speak to yourself.

- Is it the voice of a dear friend who has your wellbeing in the core of their heart?
- Or not?
- Does it match how you speak to others?
- Does it match how they speak to you?
- Do you feel loved, cared for by this inner voice?

Transformational change begins within. Commit to speaking to yourself the way you would a loved one. Prove to your heart & soul that you are, wholly and completely on your side.

I invite you to become aware of all that you deny yourself as you go through your day, your life. Create a life-changing plan of action that allows you to fill these painful voids.

- What do you crave, what does this represent?
- How can you fill this void, you? (*hint: radical self love*)
- What will you let go of?
- What will you undertake?

I invite you to forgive yourself. I truly believe we do the best we can. It’s over.

*Commit to radical self care. Be, have and do all that your heart and soul desires.*
Throw yourself a pity party

by Chiray Koo, Urban Shaman

Resistance is a real part of change and growth for many of us. If you’ve had moments of resistance, those annoying twinges (or huge waves) of fear and doubt, or those “I am so crazy right now!” moments, you know exactly what I’m talking about. Over the past 5 years, I’ve come to work in tandem with my contrary side, rather than fighting it and making myself crazy. I’ve discovered that radical self-care involves being hugely kind to yourself and giving expressions to that contrary self. It can be an annoying process at first because most of us would rather simply ignore our (often) irrational resistance and get on with life, but there is a wisdom that comes from honoring your irrational side.

It’s not always easy to meet your contrary side and honor it. My contrary self is a powerful, sullen child who is bad at change, hates surprise, doesn’t respond well to rational arguments, and is very good at digging in when she doesn’t feel heard. She’s a control freak who is the embodiment of my resentment that things aren’t the way I want them, when I want them. When I first worked with her, I cringed since she’s everything I don’t aspire to be. However, as I gave her voice, I came to realize that she holds my instinctual wisdom and doesn’t put up with crap.

Getting to know her was a challenge, though, since we were constantly “fighting.” Since she’s nonlinear like a child, I realized that I had to deal with her like a child and subverted the power of whining. Admittedly, it is not easy to appreciate whiny children. However, whining can be a powerful release provided action is also being taken. “I hate running!” my elementary students used to complain. “That’s great!” I’d say, “Just run faster while you’re hating it!” Then there’d be more grumbling and eye rolling, but they ran faster.

I apply this principle to my life. There’s something very cathartic to saying aloud in the moment, “This SUCKS! Why am I doing this??” Usually, I complain aloud when I’m alone or with people who have been prepped to not take my whining seriously (and the truth is not
everyone will be cut out to be a good listener for you. Good listeners have to be willing to listen without judgment or advice). Or, I’ll carry on little conversations under my breath. “This is really hard.” “Yes, and I’m doing a great job. Keep going.” “Omigod, this is taking forever.” “Not forever, it’s faster than last time. Keep going.” I may sound like a nut to people who overhear me, but since I’m a nut when I’m feeling crazy and stuck, I might as well embrace it and get myself back on track.

Other times, I’ll whine in my journal with the intention of leaving it on paper so it doesn’t clutter my mind. I’ll purposely let my child throw a tantrum, which usually gives me insight into the emotions I’ve been suppressing or the ways I’ve not been true to myself. Then I’ll ask her at the end (still on paper), “Do you feel ok now? Cuz I really need to work now.” Usually, I’ll get a feeling of “Fine, I don’t love it but let’s do it. Can I have a treat today?” Then I make a bargain to treat myself to something fun, whether it’s a bath, a cookie, or a wearing a fabulous outfit that makes me feel good.

Ideally, I should check in with my contrary self on a regular basis to head off bouts of resistance. In reality, as she’s the bearer of emotions painful, embarrassing, and difficult, I usually don’t until I see my behaviors that indicate I’m heading towards a breakdown: I’ll get upset or obsessed about little things, I’ll lose all desire to clean my space and even have the urge to create clutter, or I’ll become amazingly clumsy and knock things over left and right.

At this point, I know it’s time to schedule an intervention so I don’t devolve into a meltdown. I’ll clear time in my schedule within the next few days so that I can schedule my breakdown in the form of a pity party. I love my pity parties – I’ll declare 4 hours (or an entire day if I can manage it) of alone time when I don’t answer the phone, wallow in my emotions, and treat myself to food and tea that makes me happy. Sometimes, I am truly sad and have a good cry, but many times, I’m in a “this is f--d up and I’m getting off this train” mood. I may read a book, go to my favorite coffeeshop, or just lie on the couch and nap.

Whatever I am feeling, it’s important to honor it so that I can work with it and start to heal myself. The goal of a pity party is to balance
heaviness and drama with kindness and everyday forms of happiness until I can smile at myself and regain my perspective. Usually, my pity parties end with some resolution that moves me forward – a realization that I can’t go it alone and need to get some help, an acknowledgement that I need to evaluate and make a hard decision, or the simple acceptance of my next step forward.

Radical self-care – honoring all parts of ourselves, especially the ones that we’d rather shut away and not have other people know about – is vital if we are to ingrate into healthy beings and increase our personal power. I encourage you to get to know your contrary side and honor what it has to share. If you don’t know your signs of impending breakdown, observe yourself while checking in with your contrary self. Most of all, treat yourself to something fun or do yourself an act of kindness at least once a week. Try whining like a child or throwing yourself a pity party – you may find it the most fun you’ve had with yourself for a while!
Your inner guide to self-care

by Becky McCleery, Raising Loveliness

My life is busy these days. I would guess that perhaps yours is too, after all, we live in a busy world.

From my personal experience, I understand that it can be challenging to make time for self-care. After all, who has time to slow down and intentionally nourish and restore body, mind, heart and spirit?

At the same time, I know that self-care is an essential element for me to keep up with the pace of my life, while at the same time living each day from a place of wonder, gratitude and love.

Self-care is a choice, a day-by-day, moment-by-moment choice. We have to choose self-love. We have to choose self-kindness. We have to choose to honor and nourish who we are and what we need. Before I became a mother, I can’t say I ever gave much thought to the idea of self-care. If I wanted to rest or relax, I did. If I needed time to slow down and go within, I made that a priority. Somehow, I always found a way to renew and restore my spirit.

Once I became a mother, my world was turned upside down and I found it growing increasingly difficult to meet my needs. I was tired, worn out and drained – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Looking back, I can see I needed to recharge. I was giving so much of myself to my daughter, and rightfully so, but I wasn’t doing anything to honor or care for myself. At the time, I believed this unbelievable exhaustion was simply part of being a new mother. Looking back, I wish I would have been kinder and gentler with myself. Looking back, I wish I would have taken time to do the things that nourish my heart and feed my soul, recognizing that I didn’t have to be “on demand” at all times.

I didn’t know all of this when I first became a mother, but over the course of seven years and having two more children, I have learned
that my self-care is essential for myself and for the well-being of my family.

Now, as a planner, my first idea to avoid burn out, was to add self-care to my daily to-do list. It sounded like a decent plan, an easy way to keep self-care in mind and make sure I fit it in. Though well-intentioned, I found this system didn’t really support me.

As a work-at-home mother of three, with a seemingly never-ending to-do list, it’s easy to make the choice to forego self-care in order to get more done each day. It’s easy to tell myself that I don’t have time to slow down, relax or recharge. It’s easy to convince myself that taking time just for me is selfish and that I need to focus on caring for everyone else instead.

At the same time, when I don’t slow down and nourish my spirit, I begin to burn out. I might not always notice it immediately, but eventually I’ll see the side effects.

Everything feels so hard. Everything becomes overwhelming. I don’t want to do anything. I don’t want to be around anyone. I am cranky and irritable.

This isn’t how I want to live my life.

I want to enjoy my family, I want to enjoy my life. I want to wake up excited for a new day to unfold. I want to live each day with a sense of wonder and gratitude for beauty and blessings all around me. I want to love my life and live as love in action.

I knew I needed to slow down and recharge, but rather than creating a soul-nourishing support system, I found that in adding self-care to my to-do list, I was worn out from feeling as though this was one more thing I had to do, one more thing I was failing at when I couldn’t check it off my list.

Then one inspired day, I began to approach self-care differently. Instead of committing to a pre-determined self-care activity such as meditation or journaling, I began to go within and ask what I need
right now and how I wish to live this day. From this place of open curiosity, I usually find it is clear what I need to focus on. While this began as a morning practice, I find the more frequently I go within, the better my days tend to flow. Whenever I find myself feeling frustrated or overwhelmed, I am learning to pause and go within.

What do I need right now?

How do I wish to live this day?

What will support me with this?

Deep within, I believe that you know what you most need and desire right now. Deep within, I believe you have your own inner guide to self-care. The trouble is, we tend to focus our time, attention and energy on everything going on around us. It can be so easy to be swept away by the busyness of life, by everything we feel we “should” do as we try to become who we believe we are “supposed to” be. For today, beautiful soul, I invite you to go within, ask and listen. Stay open and honor the answers you receive. Allow yourself to honor your needs and desires. Allow yourself to slow down and nourish all of who you are.

For today, dear one, I ask you to please remember that self-care isn’t selfish and it isn’t small. Rather, when we choose to honor and nourish who we are and what we need, we are choosing to expand love within ourselves and throughout our lives. For as we honor, love, nourish and celebrate all of who we are, we naturally share more love, joy and compassion with everyone around us. Let’s live as love in action. Let’s begin by expanding love within.

What do you need right now?
Precious Heartache
by Sama Morningstar

Hold me tight
Don't let me run away
Searching for some escape
From you, delicious pain
  Breathe with me
  Until all my tears
Have shed their skins
  Before divine feet
Promise me
You will call to me
Don't weep alone
  In the dark
  Hidden
  While I pretend
  I don't hear you
But wail in my ears
Clamor with ecstatic rage
  Until I have no choice
  But to listen and feel
All of life's mysteries
Eternally befriending
  Myself with love
A Place
by Sama Morningstar

There is a place
Where I float
In my own waters
Where I bathe in my breath
There is a place that stretches me
Inspiration expanding me
Inner joy pressing out
Stronger than the outside
Blissful collapse
Surrender
This is the place where I grow
Each cell opening
Preparing for eternity
Silk kimonos + naked yoga: how to stay in touch with yourself when you're overwhelmed

by Kris Oster, Mythic Rhythm

When I sauntered into this year I was full of energy, passion, vitality.

Here I am 11 months later and let’s just say I’m the opposite of full. I’m depleted.

Deciding to become an entrepreneur has been the most rewarding and most exhausting journey of my life.

My to-do lists throughout this year have been enormous. Projects full of complexity.

And, my revenue and audience size doubled.

I can even say this has been the most exciting year of my life. Yet, it’s also been the most draining.

I now turn to you and ask, “How are you feeling?”

What have you accomplished this year and are you feeling energized and ready for more?

January 1st is a big “RESET” button for many of us. When we are filled, yet again, with enthusiasm for the adventures that lay before us in the new year.

I don’t know about you, but what I realllly want is to feel like I can wake up in the morning and press that “RESET” button. Every. Day.

Cultivating a sense of renewal, adventure, passion and joy each day is no small task.

We know this.
I’m endeavoring to do something humongous this year. I intend to be playful in every task, no matter how menial + dull it feels. I will fill each moment with deep pleasure.

I’m going to wash dishes, sweep the floor, do laundry, work on marketing copy while wearing the $800, hand-painted silk kimono my father brought me from Japan in the 1990’s.

Backstory: My father used to be the drummer of a well-known rock band and toured the world for the first two decades of my life. While in Japan, he found two beautiful kimonos and brought one back for my sister and one for me (also, my mother is half Japanese).

It hung on my wall as a decorative piece of art for years. I never even considered wearing it … for like 15 years.

Then one day I got out of a hot, healing bath. It was hanging in my closet since I had moved and didn’t yet have a wall to hang it on.


In the wearing of this celestial garment I remembered something …

...that the soul and the body are inextricably intertwined. When we are overcome with pleasure or beauty, the glue that binds these two aspects of ourselves together is stronger. We come into greater presence and peace when the body/soul connection is deepened.

A second story to share with you … this year I gave a workshop on marketing with mythology and soul. Each participant was directed to create a list of pleasures that they would keep on hand to indulge in BEFORE setting themselves to any work task or goal.

“NAKED YOGA” appeared on the list of at least 6 of the women, including me. Those that didn’t write it on their list added it.

I will leave you with this same assignment (and make sure your list has at least 10 items on it). And, I will ask you to put a reminder on your calendar or phone to press the RESET button every day.
Reset yourself to pleasure first. Reset yourself to adventure. Reset yourself to energy + joy.

And, don’t forget to do your daily Sun Salutations. Naked, of course!
This is your life...Drop the guilt and revel in a date with yourself

by Nishaan Sandhu, Nourish Mind Body Spirit

Do you find yourself farming your most energized waking hours to everyone but yourself? If you find little time to rest or play on your own accord, I have two tips for you.

Tip #1 Grab a pen (notice I did not say pencil). Open your day-timer and schedule a date with yourself this coming week.

Ignore that little voice in your head whispering, “what if so-and-so calls/needs me...oh no, I can’t decide...”

Just do it!

Feeling a little crazy? A little selfish?

Good.

That is exactly the first step you need to set up some real boundaries and joy time just for you. You don’t have to make any wild or luxurious plans. A hot bath, a cup of tea, a space out session with your favorite wall...it’s all in your hands.

I got this tip from my Aunt Rita, who admirably, has always made time for herself.

My favorite part of her sharing her ‘date with self’ tip (other than her sweet Southern accent), was how she leaned in as if it were secret, “…if anyone asks to meet you at that time, just say, ‘oh no, I won’t be able to make it then...I have a date,’ because, really sweetie, you do...you have a date with yourself!”

You Aren’t Really Lying...

Though, one may see this as an act of selfishness and luxury, I personally see it as sane. Especially within the wildly packed, fast paced, technology filled world in which many of us live.
Are you feeling a bit guilty or unable to make such time?

Get a hold of yourself!

This is your life, pick up those reigns like you mean it...no one else is going to schedule in that self-care time but you.

You are worthy! Got it?!

Try scheduling in another one for the following week...or month. The best dates with self are those you schedule so far in advance that you surprise yourself.

Tip # 2 goes back to the part where I mention how being a part of this wild and wooly technology driven world can be maddening.

But first, I have a big embarrassing question for you...

Have you ever found yourself sharing time with your smart phone while visiting the loo?

Okay, how about just texting?

If you answered “yes,” turn that shit off! Seriously, don’t let social media get the best of your quiet time.

We may not all do it, but, hopefully we are laughing together. I’ve met way too many people who feel the bathroom is their quiet time (ahem, moms) to not take their matter seriously (and with humor).

My goal is to come up with creative ways to cultivate mini breaks outside of the bathroom.

Aside from that...

I wanted to see how linked you are to your phone so I could convince you of my proposition...

What if you took a short break from technology? How much peace of
mind could you further gain by turning off your cell phone or computer (if you possess one or the other) for one--whole--day?

**What if you allowed yourself a cellphone free day once a week?**

Once a month?

Eight hours a day?

I am trying to negotiate here.

We have been a thriving species for thousands of years prior to the invention of computers and cellular phones.

Do you really think your world may come crashing down if take a break?

If you are worried about it, take a few precautions to tie loose ends and cut cords of curiosity.

Ask a neighbor to be your lifeline in case of emergencies. Set up an auto-responding email that declares your break. You will likely inspire others to recognize they deserve the same.

You may find yourself walking into a more beautifully synchronistic space with real live books, long thought about projects, or accidental meetings.

Yes, I imagine I have some Luddite blood in me somewhere…and I suppose I would like to encourage you to get back in touch with some of the simpler things in life, such as taking a walk to make a bouquet (Winter and Fall bouquets are gorgeous) or writing an old fashioned letter to share that golden feeling of real mail.

**Remember all those things you loved to do ten years ago that somehow got away?**

Indeed, as we grow further into the blossoming Summer of our lives, we become filled with more responsibilities.
Though, I think this seeming dilemma has worsened with the express speed of communication technology.

Don’t get me wrong, I totally enjoy and appreciate being able to play a part in this luxurious web of technology.

I have made some very meaningful relationships, shared creative outlets, and have saved lots of time when I needed it most.

**I know how easy it is to fritter away precious time, get screen-staring headaches and bouts of insomnia.**

Oh, and what about irritability? Such as those moments where you feel annoyed (with stranger) or get snappy (with family member) because a real life person asks you a question as you interact with your unassuming phone.

Ouch! That’s just plain detached from reality and mean (I do it too). One day, our etiquette (or technology) will evolve in such a way that allows us to tackle both at once.

As humans without technology, in the past, we made larger families to help keep things afloat. We had patience, we had quiet, we had time. We also hauled buckets to bathe and drink water...

**So, consider yourself lucky. It is a time to enjoy the best of both worlds**

A good old break from communication technology can uplift your spirit, and reground your entire being.

So, what do you say? Are you able and ready?

Enjoy a predictably quiet moment. Place those fandangles out of sight and out of mind!

Wishing you the best of luck on your sassy and solo date...Oh, and don’t be afraid to make it lame, those are the best.
Lost and Found

by Ayo Oum Shanti, Joyful Trickster

The values of self-love and self-caring were not passed onto me as a child. I know this is true for many of us. I discovered them on my own as a child and lost sight of them at different times as an adult, only to rediscover them. Each time they were revealed on deeper levels. Each time was a journey through circuitous routes: unconsciousness, denial, resistance, submission (letting go of a particular perspective or belief I was stubbornly holding onto), and self-reunion.

I wasn’t really starved for self-love and self-caring, because music, dancing, writing, being in nature, and solitude were the sources I had found early in life. But I was hungry for connection, love and acceptance, and self-expression. It was my own fear that kept me from expressing my true spirit with others.

My fear was of standing out and being recognized for who I really was (even though this contradicted my childhood dream of becoming one of the greatest dancers in the world). Dancing was the only exception, because when I was performing onstage (it was safe to stand out then because my mother considered dancing to be an inferior art) I didn’t try to hide myself. Once my feet touched the stage I would feel an explosive freedom course through me – the freedom to be whoever I wanted to be, the freedom to let my spirit express itself through the movements of my body. Though dancing on stage was freedom for me, it was the applause afterwards that felt dangerous and sometimes terrifying.

My mother programmed me to believe that I was less worthy than everyone else, and that to focus in any way on myself or on my needs was the epitome of selfishness. Everyone else had to be cared for first. But even though I felt inferior or unworthy when I was with others, when I was alone I had a strong sense of my own being. I found inner worth in my love of music, dancing and writing, as well as in developing a deeper awareness of nature and the spiritual world (where all are connected and accepted as equal).
In relation to others, I became an expert at subtle self-negation (I would adroitly dismiss any compliments with self-deprecating modesty and shyness, especially when I was in my mother’s presence). I also mastered the ability to make myself “invisible” in social situations and transport myself to other realities. Friends often would ask me where I went when I “disappeared” like that, and my daughters used to call out, “Earth to Mom, Earth to Mom...” to try to bring me back to their reality.

Whenever I moved too far away from my “center”, my source, my “home base” of self-love and self-care, I would suffer the consequences on many levels (including economically and in my relationships). Often I continued to ignore the signs by blaming others and/or the situation, or just by “weathering the storm” and holding on for dear life – not looking at myself, not going inward to see who I was really being. The wisdom of my body would then take over, sending a loud and clear message and forcing me to either face myself or suffer pain.

We humans all have a stubborn streak in us, but as a Taurean I have certainly mastered the ability to trap myself in my own stubbornness. This is where pain became the great teacher for me. Like a child sticking its hand in the fire, eventually (even as stubborn as I can be) I would learn how I caused my own pain and how I could avoid it if I became more conscious of the choices I make.

My greatest “fire lesson” came when I injured my back at work. I was pushing myself on all levels (home, work, and family life), but not paying attention to my own needs. There was no “me” time, no time for music, dance, writing, nature, contemplation – all those things which nourish me.

I ended up with 3 herniated discs, nauseating pain, unable to eat or sleep (the agonizing trip from bed to bathroom would take 20-30 minutes). Besides the pain, the worst of it was the sense of utter helplessness and uselessness. My whole self-identity as The One Who Is Reliable and Responsible was shattered. I was totally dependent on others.
It was an 8-month journey of letting go of the idea that I had to be responsible for everyone and everything in my life and of rediscovering all the ways to be in my joy. Working together with my chiropractor (it was team work – he would tell me where in my body I needed to send my energy and then he would work with it) I was able to move out of the state of intense pain and begin taking more and more responsibility for my own healing.

After a month I was able to listen to music and let its energy move through my body (even if I couldn’t move my body very well myself). I was able to start writing again and eventually wrote the first draft of my novel (now published) during my recovery process. My absorption with the characters and the world I was creating was healing and took my mind off the pain while it slowly receded.

That was a long journey through which I discovered that the essence of self-love and self-caring is in allowing the natural, unblocked flow of my creative spirit energy and in maintaining a balance between the energetic in-flow (nourishment) and out-flow (expression). It is like breathing – in and out, in and out. We can’t keep breathing in without breathing out, we can’t keep breathing out without breathing in. I believe that putting that awareness into our full consciousness and action is the essence of self-love and self-care.

Will I lose myself again? Probably. But I will find myself sooner and suffer less pain. I will recognize the journey and not resist it.
Cosmic Care

by Kim Tennant, Krysalis Astrology

As an astrologer, I have always been very aware of the role that the cosmos plays in our lives. When presented with the question regarding self-care, I started to think of my own birth chart and the planet that relates most strongly to this subject.

I truly believe that the planet Venus relates to our own self-care needs. Venus also rules the 2nd chakra, which is all about our pleasure. Doing things that we enjoy, taking the time out to relax and unwind is important. This is all part of self-care.

There are 12 signs of the zodiac and Venus moves through them all, so the Venus in your birth chart may be in the same or a very different sign to the one your Sun is in (or your star sign). So what does Venus in each sign like to do for pleasure?

- Aries – Venus in Aries often manifests as a love of physical pursuits. Physical activity here can actually be nurturing, as it’s something your body delights in. Being creative (often messily so) is also a fun pursuit. It allows you to develop a connection with yourself. Being independent in a relationship is also very important, so make sure to give yourself ‘me time’ regularly.
- Taurus – Venus in Taurus can be very sensual. If you have Venus in this sign, you will delight in all sensory experiences. Treating yourself to something or somewhere luxurious can be very beneficial. Regular massages, scented baths & candlelit dinners are also ways of caring for yourself.
- Gemini – Venus in Gemini has a love of people. Spending time with others in a light-hearted, fun way can be very satisfying. Those with Venus in Gemini often don’t enjoy being responsible for others, so give yourself a break from responsibility every now & then in order to recharge.
- Cancer – Venus in Cancer loves strong emotional attachments. Spending time with loved ones on a regular basis can make you feel good. Motherhood also lights you up,
so spend fun time with your children and connect with your own mother regularly. Cooking can also be a relaxing pursuit.

- **Leo** – Venus in Leo can be passionate, creative, warm and fun. Treat yourself to a trip to the theatre or the local playhouse for a good time. Dress up & go out, stay in & entertain lavishly. Share good times with those who know how to enjoy themselves.

- **Virgo** – Venus in Virgo has the potential to be very self-critical. In order to self-nurture, those with Venus in Virgo need to spend time in nature. Go outside and do some gardening. Tend to a vegetable patch. Go on a picnic or join a bush-walking group.

- **Libra** – Venus in Libra is romantic. Beauty and peace are important to those with Venus in Libra. Show self-care by creating a peaceful environment for yourself. Go on a date to a romantic restaurant. Buy yourself a beautiful piece of jewellery or clothing. Look in the mirror and see your true beauty.

- **Scorpio** – Venus in Scorpio is intense. Self-caring can be about self-exploration for those with Venus in Scorpio. Spend time with those who you can connect with on a deep level. Learn about the occult. See an astrologer or a psychic.

- **Sagittarius** – Venus in Sagittarius is honest & friendly. Those with Venus in Sagittarius like to be free to explore the world. Spend time in nature or take a trip. Go on a retreat for the weekend.

- **Capricorn** – Venus in Capricorn is loyal and steadfast. Those with Venus in Capricorn often prefer spending time with older people, so take the time to do so. Respect yourself. Give yourself a break from being responsible all the time – hand the reigns over to someone else for a few days.

- **Aquarius** – Venus in Aquarius is quirky. Seek out people from different walks of life in order to satisfy your need to connect with all walks of life. Join a group. Connect with those who bring a sense of excitement to your life.

- **Pisces** – Venus in Pisces is dreamy. Those with Venus in Pisces often like to live in a fantasy world. You can nurture yourself by purchasing a good book & losing yourself in it for the night. Go & see a movie with a friend. Do something creative – paint, draw, sing!
I, myself, am a Sagittarius Sun but my Venus sign is Libra. I need peace and quiet. I find that noisy surroundings really bother me. My home is my sanctuary, my place to retreat from the world. When I go out to restaurants, the ambiance is just as important as the food. I love candlelight, soft music and an unhurried atmosphere.

Being aware of these things helps me to live my life the best way I know how for ME. If I know a place or experience won’t fulfil me, I don’t waste my time going. If life gets rushed (as it can with 2 teenage kids) and I start to feel stressed, I stop and take the time to relax somewhere peaceful. This always brings me back to my centre.

We are all children of the cosmos and we are all different. Finding our own way to self-nurture is imperative, as we cannot grow and evolve if we are too caught up in the fast pace of life. Take the time out to connect with who you are and what sustains you. It will benefit you for life.
A Recipe for Radical Self-Care

by Merry Wise, Happy Sexy Life

What are the benefits of self-care?

- Self-Acceptance
- Shift in Perception
- Clarity

More to the point: why are they important?

I started out as a Relationship Coach because it was the one area of my life that I had mastered. Throughout my 20s and at least partially through my 30s, I struggled with love in my life.

I had always been exceedingly independent and Dad did everything he could to engender that attitude in me. He taught me to look after myself and cultivated in me the belief that “anything a man can do I can do better.” If I couldn’t, he taught me how.

Which was great – it was fantastic. Except it was hell on my relationships.

Add to this mixture the loss of my mom at the tender age of 18 and what you get is the perfect recipe for romantic disaster.

In my mid-30s, I finally got tired of hitting the “Fail Button” on my relationships and that’s when I discovered coaching. Oh what a glorious day it was!

Through a long and exhilarating journey, I learned to accept my femininity and learned about balancing the masculine and feminine in relationship. Perhaps more importantly, I learned that I had to be absolutely crystal clear about what I wanted in a man and how I wanted a relationship to look. Once I got my juggling act together, my relationship story healed almost overnight.
I share this with you because the three steps I shared with you earlier are the tools I used to heal my relationship story. They will also work for you; no matter what area of your life you’re trying to heal.

Self-acceptance is the foundation piece to the rest of these steps. Without a little self-love, you haven’t got much. Maybe you can identify with this:

Growing up, I didn’t like being a woman. I thought if I was a man I would have so many more opportunities open to me. I thought as a man, I would be safer and more secure. I hated feeling vulnerable and had this inner core belief that if I were a man, everything would be different.

What I know now is that there is nothing weak about being feminine. I have my own strengths and abilities as a woman that I would sorely miss if I were a man.

Whatever it is that you’re having trouble accepting about yourself, I want to ask you today to embrace it. If you’re not in love with your body; show it love anyway.

Personally, I have the body of a goddess and I tell my belly that I love it every day. How’s that for Radical Self-Care?

Here’s why it’s important...

Have you ever watched reruns of the TLC series, “What Not to Wear?” I’ve been a fan from the first time I saw it; here’s why:

The very first episode I watched, I learned their philosophy that you can’t wait to buy flattering clothes until you have the body you want; you have to treat yourself now.

I love this! Because truly, the secret lies in looking and feeling the best you can right now. When you look great, you feel great. And when you feel great, you’re more likely to indulge in self-care by going to the gym, or skipping that second donut.
That philosophy is an absolute truth. You don’t have to actually love your goddess belly – at least not at first. The miraculous thing is this: Once you start telling your belly you love it, you’ll find you begin to accept it and as a result, stop being so hard on yourself. It will shift your perception, which clears the way for you to stop focusing on what you perceive as “negative” about yourself.

It gives you clarity. When you don’t hate your belly, you’ll find you’re more motivated to do whatever it is you decide to do about it – if anything. You’ll no longer avoid your yoga class because it reminds you of your big ol’ sexy goddess belly.

It works the same in relationship, manifesting abundance or any other aspect of your life that is currently causing you pain.

With self-acceptance comes a shift in perception and with that shift in perception, comes clarity.

Today, as a Business Accountability and Abundance Coach, I use these same core principles to help my clients create prosperity in business.

If you want abundance, you have to first love and accept yourself enough to believe you deserve it. Nothing creates bigger money blocks than self-hatred or lack of self-acceptance. You have to love yourself just as you are. You may be imperfect, but you ARE Perfectly You.

One way to really boost your self-acceptance is to develop an attitude of gratitude and this is where my recipe for self-care gets rather radical...

I view each and every day and pretty much everything I do as an opportunity to show myself some love. Rather than view a shower as a chore, I focus on the feeling of the warm water coursing over my body. Rather than view putting on lotion as a hassle, I concentrate on how great that lotion feels sliding over my skin and how loving an act it actually is.
And on top of it all, I express gratitude for the lovely things I take for granted every day – things like warm running water; the fact that my limbs work beautifully on their own so I can apply that lotion; and, perhaps most importantly, I indulge in some very fine, yummy-smelling lotion to use. Even brushing my teeth has become in exercise in grateful self-care these days.

I encourage you to apply these principles to whatever area of your life you may be struggling in. I believe life is a beautiful journey; let’s enjoy that ride.
About the Authors

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As an eclectic Spiritualist with focus on Earth-Based Spirituality, Renee Avard, the “Uniquetivity Guide” has many areas of knowledge and this business was created to be a customized Holistic and Spiritual endeavor assisting in bringing out the unique and creative side each person already has inside them. Forever learning, Renee is both a student and a Guide here to show all how to allow your Star inside to lighten Life outside through various modalities such as crystal therapy, intuitive readings with oracle and Angel card readings and more. Renee imparts the wisdom needed for everyone to know and accept that we are ALL worth catching.

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Tanja Gardner:
Tanja Gardner is a deeply introverted (but not even *slightly* shy!) heart-based biz owner who started business life online as a copywriter for difference-makers.

Somewhere along the lines, she discovered she yearned to work with other introverts like her to help them build their businesses while honouring their introversion. So she started Conscious Introvert Success: a library of introvert-friendly information and resources.

You can check out Tanja’s thoughts about everything introvert-related on her blog.

Or, download her free “How to Keep an Eye on Your Energy Levels” guide for introverted business-owners who need help with energy management.

Ana Goncalves:
Ana Goncalves is a Spiritual Guide, Healer and Soul Purpose Mentor who helps individuals reconnect with who they are and what they desire in life. With her gentle and transformational approach she enables individuals to heal and release what no longer serves while stepping into their potential with ease, love and awareness.
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Jenny Griffin:
Also known as 'The Catharsis Coach,' Jenny is a high-level intuitive guide, empath and channel. Her journey through catharsis, a deep, deep letting go of ingrained patterns and beliefs, resulted in a feeling of connectedness, with the world around her and with that wise and wonderful voice within. Jenny has learned to engage with her life and experiences in ways that allow her to use the knowledge gained through them to serve others. When she's not writing, she's coming up with new ways to help people move through change with grace and ease.

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Sarah Hawkins:
Sarah’s ministry is one of joyful re-discovery through sacred centering and divine connection – leading women on soulful journeys to the authentic life they were born to live.

As an INFJ, Sarah finds great joy in collaborating with other soulful travelers to bring
beautiful things to life. This book is an example of that work, the second in the Field Guide series. You can download your copy of the first Field Guide here.

Sarah lives in Boston with her husband (who is her soul mate & best friend), and is working toward certification in Interspiritual Counseling from One Spirit Learning Alliance in NYC.

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*Catherine Hummel:*

Catherine Hummel is the gal who helps women who’ve lost their spark re-discover the magic within and fall in love with themselves & life, maybe for the first time.

She is a women’s life coach, yoga teacher, Reiki practitioner, and women’s circle and retreat facilitator. Her deepest passion is guiding women home to their heart to build and create lives they are excited about living. Her own journey home serves as the inspiration to everything she does in her life and the title of her book “The Truth Is, You Are Enough: A Journey to Your Heart” to be finished in 2014.

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Caroline Kirk:


My heart-felt hope is to guide women towards self love, soul connection & freedom, to happy & healthy harmony of mind, body & spirit, which I believe provides a platform for deep inner growth, positive authentic living & the courage to pursue your greatest passions & way of being.

Happiness, Freedom & Self Acceptance are innately yours, let’s rediscover it.

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Chiray Koo:

Chiray Koo is an urban shaman working to integrate ancient wisdom into daily life. She assists others in balancing the goals of the heart, the skills of the mind, and the wisdom of spirit. She offers coaching that combines spiritual practices such as tarot reading, Tarotpy ™, energy cleansing/protection, and guided journey quests with knowledge and practical skills garnered from 20 years in conflict resolution, ethics, project management, education, nonprofit, and government. She is a land healer who pulls stagnant energies from the earth, conducts land healing ceremonies, and provides energetic space clearing for buildings.
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Video interview :: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7obBS5E_Xw

**Becky McCleery:**

Becky McCleery is an inspired mama, writer and teacher.

A seeker of kindred spirits and believer in possibilities, she loves meeting heart-centered souls who are passionate about living life to the fullest and making a difference along the way.

Becky believes that we (the whole of humanity) belong to one another. She believes in the power and wonder of connection, compassion and community.

Through her site, Raising Loveliness, a series of collaborative e-books, and a series of inspirational e-courses, she is dedicated to creating a gathering place for women to come together in order to cultivate a more compassionate world.

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**Sama Morningstar:**

Sama Morningstar is a Light Energy Healer, Yoga Practitioner/Instructor, Thai Yoga Massage Practitioner, Spiritual Doula, Birth Doula, and Spiritual Poet. Her poetry has been one channel of divine light energy into this life and she is thrilled to be able to share it with you.

**Connect with Sama:**

Website: Sama is currently working on her new webpage at [www.lightspiritbirthdoula.com](http://www.lightspiritbirthdoula.com) where you can go to sign up for online yoga classes, ebooks, and ecourses as well as private consultations.

**Kris Oster:**

I’m equal parts a magical business strategist and a total mythology geek, merging the world of branding + marketing with the world of magic + enchantment.

I’ve immersed myself in mythology and archetypal psychology for over a decade ... and I’ve had a lifelong affair with stories, legends and fairytales from cultures around the world. I’ve studied ritual in Brazil from a high priestess of Candomblé and with a Druid Bard from Wales.

(And, it doesn’t hurt that I have 19 years of experience in web design/development and email marketing from working with the likes of E!, Paramount Pictures, Disney and Citrix Online.)

What I’ve found is that the best business advice ... the advice that actually works in practice ... comes from mythology. I’ve helped hundreds of entrepreneurs create a business and livelihood that feels otherworldly ... bewitching ... enthralling ... and totally enchanting.
Connect with Kris:
I welcome you to visit my watery world ... www.mythicrhythm.com.

Nishaan Sandhu:
Nishaan Sandhu is a community herbalist, spiritual aromatherapist and bodyworker with a passion for crafting personalized botanical perfumes. She loves to explore the natural worlds with her trusty phone camera and enjoys sharing magical observations through her writing and photographs. She has a botanical medicine practice in Kentucky, where she resides with her life partner and kitty companion.

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Ayo Oum Shanti:
Ayo is a visionary change agent, teacher, and writer. She awakens, inspires, and creates safe space for individual and global evolution. She sees possibilities at all levels beyond the illusion of limitation, and is a synapse that facilitates connections between the seemingly non-connectible.

Ayo has traveled widely, lived abroad, participated in rituals/practices of different traditions, studied diverse forms of music and movement, performed in sacred dances, and founded a dance company. She co-created community
organizations, served on leadership committees, and worked in management in financial companies, education, publishing, the arts, and medical research. She is a published writer.

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**Kim Tennant:**
Kim Tennant is a mother, wife, astrologer, registered nurse and much more! She has a passion for helping people to understand themselves and their loved ones through their birth chart. Kim loves to connect with people from all around the globe and is always happy to make new connections.

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**Merry Wise:**
Merry Wise is a Business Accountability and Abundance Coach working with female entrepreneurs to help them overcome money blocks and create a juicy business that works. You can jumpstart your life abundance and business prosperity by grabbing her Rewrite Your Money Story Kit - absolutely free at: [http://HappySexyLife.com](http://HappySexyLife.com).