

14 Days of
Self-Care
to
Kickstart Your
Healing Journey

Two Weeks of Self-Care Activities Designed to
Help You Start Making Yourself a Priority

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Self-Care Saved My Life

*Self-care is how you
take your power back.*

You can't pour from an empty cup. We've heard that phrase over and over again, but what does it actually mean?

It means if you constantly give and give and give to the people and things in your life, but you don't take the time to recharge and re-energize your mind, body, and soul, you're going to end up burnt out, stressed out, and on the verge of a mental breakdown.

So, how do you avoid this scenario? Self-care.

It seems so simple, yet taking care of ourselves has become a bit of a novel idea.

We can find time to be all the things to all the people, but we can't find time to take care of ourselves.

It's not acceptable. We need to start making ourselves a priority.

That's my goal with this book- to teach you actionable ways to incorporate self-care into your daily life so it becomes a natural part of your routine. So that then, yes, you can be all the things to all the people because your cup will be full and you will have plenty to pour out to others without becoming physically and mentally dehydrated.

Self-care saved my life after my divorce. Like many divorcees, I was devastated when my marriage ended. It was a total identity shift for me. I had been a stay-at-home mom for nearly 10 years, and all I really knew was how to be a mom and a wife. I had never even lived on my own before. I had gone straight from my parents' house to living with my husband.

In the matter of four months, I had to move and figure out a career, all while trying to heal myself emotionally from a divorce and be a good mom at the same time. To say it was difficult would be an understatement. I was struggling, big time.

Therapy helped, but it wasn't enough. I had put myself last for so long that when it came time to go through this very hard time in my life, I was depleted in every sense of the word.

Enter: self-care. I thought taking care of myself meant I was selfish. Moms aren't supposed to put themselves first! We even sit down last at the dinner table, ensuring our loved ones are fed and happy first. But I knew that in this moment, self-care was exactly what I needed.

So, I started making time for it. Finding the time wasn't easy, but I had to put it on my list of non-negotiables so that it got done each and every day. After a while, self-care became a regular part of my routine. I didn't have to force myself to make the time because I knew how much better I felt when I made myself a priority.

My mental health started to improve. My physical health started to improve. Good things started coming into my life. Instead of being punished for practicing self-care, like subconsciously I thought I would be, the universe was actually rewarding me.

It felt good. Self-care honestly saved my life. I don't know where I would be right now if I hadn't started making myself a priority. I had some very dark days during my divorce, but those daily self-care activities were the one bright light I had to look forward to.

These self-care activities are not just for people going through a divorce or breakup. They are helpful for anyone who wants to take back the power over their life and start making themselves a priority.

Each self-care activity falls into one of seven categories: write, exercise, release, try something new, reconnect, fuel your body, and relax. You don't have to be a professional writer or a fitness buff to perform these activities. They are designed for everyone and most of them don't require any special equipment or even a lot of time.

While the activities are designed to be done in order, if you aren't able to perform a certain activity that day, for whatever reason, don't fret. Skip it and come back to it another day. The goal is to just get into the habit of making time for self-care each and every day, so that by the end of the fourteen days, you will be so pleased with how much better you're feeling physically and emotionally that you will want to continue making self-care a regular part of your routine.

Remember, self-care is not selfish. It's actually the most selfless thing you can do, for you can't give to those around you if you can't first give to yourself.

You deserve this.

Week One

Feel

It

*You can't heal it if you
don't feel it.*

-Lindsay Cushman

Feel It

The focus of this week is to recognize how you're currently feeling so you can start to heal. I am not one to brush things under the rug. In my experience, doing so only leads to a bigger explosion later on.

I advocate hard for allowing yourself to sit in your feelings for a bit, just don't stay there for too long. I tell the people who reach out to me all the time, "You can't heal it if you don't feel it". Pretending to be okay doesn't help anyone in the long run. It may appease those around you, but those who truly love you want you to have peace within yourself, too.

I don't encourage false positivity. Divorce is hard. Breakups are hard. Life, in general, is hard. Acting like it's not isn't teaching you how to heal- it's teaching you how to avoid.

Before you begin the exercises this week, I want you to really think about whatever is currently bothering you. Bring those feelings to the forefront of your mind so you can start working through them. Each of these self-care activities are designed to, in some way, encourage that.

I truly believe that the fact that I didn't just brush things under the rug after my divorce led me to heal faster. This is a good week to reach out to a friend, family member, therapist, or other trusted mentor and tell them you're starting this self-care journey. Ask them to check in with you throughout the journey, and to help hold you accountable if you aren't being consistent with it.

If you really want to live your best life, you have to let go of the things that are holding you back. But first, you must recognize how you feel about those things and process those feelings.

Let's get started...

Day One: Write

Activity:

Grab a journal (or purchase a new one) and jot down your thoughts about the past six months.

Putting pen to paper may seem unnatural in today's technology-driven world, but nothing really matches the cathartic release that occurs when you do so. You don't have to be a professional writer to benefit from journaling.

Don't worry about grammar or punctuation. Just let the words flow through your body and out of your fingers. If you can only come up with a few sentences, that's okay. You'll have plenty of time to come back to this journal and write down more of your thoughts.

Why are we focusing on the past six months? Because those are the thoughts that are likely affecting you *right now*. Before you can deal with the past, you have to get the most-recent stuff out of the way first.

They can be happy thoughts, negative thoughts, a mixture of both. The point is to just start writing. If you get stuck, consider one or more of these journal prompts:

- What are 5 good things that have occurred over the past six months?
- What's one thing I keep wishing I could change, but that I know I have to let go of?
- What's the overall theme of the past six months? (i.e. busy, overwhelming, exciting)
- Did anything life-changing occur during this time?
- Name something that happened over the past six months that you're thankful for.

Once you complete this first journal entry, leave your journal somewhere that is easily accessible to you, but private from others. Your journal should become your safe space for writing down your feelings. Try to write in your journal at least once a week, if not more.

You can even have several journals going at once. I currently have three journals: one for work, one for my healing journey, and one for my future goals. Dividing them up in this way allows me to stay organized, and makes it easier for me to go back through my journal and re-read what I wrote if I need to process my feelings a little more.

If you find journaling boring, make it more exciting by using a fun pen, or writing in different colors. An online journal is also acceptable, if you prefer not to write by hand. Start a blog! Blogging has been a huge part of my self-care journey. You never know whose life your words may touch.

Day Two: Exercise

Activity:

Find a playlist from your favorite decade (this is a good time to relive those high school/college memories) and dance in your bedroom, living room, kitchen, etc. for at least 20 minutes.

Dance! It's been a part of my life since I was eight years old when I took my first ballet class. I dance 5-6 times per week in my own home, and it's honestly how I've lost over 50 lbs in a year.

I turn on my favorite music (for me it's usually a mixture of country, '80s hair bands, '90s hip-hop, and '00s boy bands- ha!) and I just move my body. I add in some squats, lunges, crunches, and planks along the way, but dance is the core of my workout routine.

It's fun, which is why I've been able to stick with it for so long. If you aren't someone who works out regularly, dance is the perfect exercise to get you moving. Even if you are an avid gym-goer, dance is still a great stress reliever, and a good thing to do on the days you just don't feel like making the trek to the gym.

The benefits of dance are vast. Moving your body in this way can increase your muscular strength, improve the condition of your heart and lungs, and lead to better coordination and balance. The potential weight loss is just an added bonus.

Regular exercise is also a great mood booster. Chemicals called endorphins are released when you work out, and those endorphins can trigger a positive feeling in the body, thus reducing stress and enhancing your overall mood.

Have you ever gone to a wedding and seen everyone laughing on the dance floor? Sure, the high amount of alcohol consumed at a wedding may have something to do with that, but so does the fact that they're moving their bodies and releasing all of those mood-boosting endorphins.

The best part is, you don't have to be super fit or the greatest dancer to do this. You're dancing in the comfort of your own home! You can literally dance like no one is watching.

So let loose. Move your body. Feel the music flow through you. Escape your troubles for just a little while. Dance your heart out!

Day Three: Release

Activity:

Go through your phone and delete 10 pictures that you no longer need, or that remind you of negative thoughts.

I said that this week is about feeling, so here we go. In order to release all of those negative emotions, we first have to address them.

If you're like me, you probably have thousands of pictures on your phone. I still have ones from when I was married. Some of those memories are good, and some are not-so-good. Every once in a while, I'll need to scroll through my pictures for something and I stumble across one of those pictures and it triggers me.

Why do we keep these memories? They're already ingrained in our brains. Do we really need a physical reminder of it, too?

The answer is, no we don't. But, we're human, and letting go is hard. That's why we need to let go little by little. There's no need to let it all go at once. That's way too overwhelming and can leave you regretting things in the end because you just weren't ready for that drastic of a change.

So, we need to feel those memories one last time and then file them away in a neat little box in the back of our minds that should only be touched when absolutely necessary.

I have a hard time letting go of anything. I'm a bit of a hoarder, in a sense. An emotional hoarder anyway. Those pictures are really, really hard to let go of. But that feeling of melancholy when I see those pictures is much, much worse.

Today, I want you to scroll way back in your phone and find pictures from the past. Choose 10 and look them over. If the picture brings up a bad memory, try to replace it with something positive, like a lesson you learned or a person you met during that experience.

Then, delete it.

Delete all 10.

I know it's hard. I know it's sad. But those pictures aren't serving you. They're holding you back from moving forward in life. And if the feeling of deleting those pictures seems too overwhelming, remind yourself that you still have thousands of pictures in your phone with good memories attached to them.

You've also now created space to take 10 more pictures. Pictures that will trigger positive feelings, not negative ones.

You're feeling. You're healing. You're moving forward.

Pat yourself on the back, friend. I'm proud of you.

Day Four: Try Something New

Activity:

Pick out a new book to read. Make it a goal to finish it within a month.

When's the last time you've held an actual book in your hands? So much of our reading is done online now, but nothing really compares to physically holding a book and smelling the crisp scent of the bound pages.

This week is all about feeling, which is why I want this exercise about trying something new to be something you can physically touch. You can also read an ebook, but I strongly recommend choosing a traditional book. Feel the weight of the book in your hands while you read it and allow yourself to be transported to another place and time.

Books really are magical. With words, the author is able to awaken your imagination so that you feel everything the character does. You hang on every word because you really want to know what happens next.

What if we treated our lives more like a book? Each page as a new opportunity. Each chapter as a fresh start. The ultimate goal being a happy ending. If you knew that something better was waiting for you around the corner, would you be more apt to turn the page, or would you keep rereading the last one?

You'd turn the page!

As you venture into your new book, ponder that thought for a moment. You are the author of your own story. You have control over the pages of your book. You can either choose to keep rereading the last page- the one that makes you sad and miserable. Or, you can choose to turn the page and fill it up with good memories.

Reading gives you an opportunity to escape, for just a little while. It fills your brain with valuable knowledge. It improves brain connectivity, increases your vocabulary, and has been proven to prevent cognitive decline as we age. Reading before bed can also aid in better sleep (night owls- I'm talking to you!).

Our English teachers were right! Reading really is our superpower!

Day Five: Reconnect

Activity:

Hug someone! It can be your significant other, child, even a pet. This first week of activities have likely had you in your feelings, so this hug will benefit both you and the recipient. It's amazing what a little physical touch can do for the soul.

Reduces stress. May reduce blood pressure. Boosts your mood. Increases self-esteem. Reduces the feeling of pain. Comforts another human being. I can continue to list all the benefits of a simple hug, but I think you get the idea.

Physical touch is good for the mind, body, and soul. It doesn't have to be sexual in nature, either. Hugging someone is the most comforting thing you can do. It expresses your love in a way that words can't.

You've been letting go of a lot this week. Learning new patterns and breaking old habits can seem overwhelming at first. By now, you likely need a good hug.

Maybe you're not a regular hugger and this is actually a difficult activity for you. That's okay. If it's easier to hug your pet instead of another human being, that's a good baby step towards your ultimate goal of being able to communicate your emotions more freely.

If you are a hugger, then this is the perfect activity for you! Don't limit yourself to just one hug. Give out those hugs freely. You never know who might need your comforting embrace.

I was never much of a hugger until recently. Growing up, my family didn't really express our emotions physically (or verbally, for that matter). Hugging is kind of new for me.

I've always openly hugged my son, but my friends would always comment that I give loose hugs. I don't give those big bear hugs. So, I start trying to hug tighter. And you know what? It feels really good.

It feels good to connect with another human being in that way, especially when you've been apart from them for so long.

So hug! Reconnect! Enjoy that embrace. Even if it's a little awkward at first, I bet it warmed your heart.

Day Six: Fuel Your Body

Activity:

Drink at least eight glasses of water today (and each day going forward).

Cleansing your body physically is just as important as cleansing it emotionally. One of the best (and easiest) ways to cleanse your body is to drink water!

For something so simple- and free- it's hard to believe that nearly half of us aren't drinking enough water. We're literally dehydrated physically, in addition to being dehydrated in an emotional sense because of a lack of self-care.

How do we solve this? Drink more water!

The goal is to drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day. We're talking water here, not soda or other sugary drinks. Those should be limited as much as possible.

Getting the correct daily intake of water can:

- Boost energy and brain function
- Increase your performance during a workout
- Help prevent or reduce chronic migraines
- Make it easier to go when you have to go (you know what I mean here!)
- Reduce the recurrence of kidney stones in those who are prone to them (like me!)
- Help you lose weight

I honestly did not see the benefits of drinking water until recently. I'll actually credit an ex-boyfriend with this realization (insert eye roll here). He noticed that I was drinking a ton of iced tea, and even though it was "diet", it was still loaded with sugar.

He challenged me to start drinking more water, so I did, and within a week I had dropped five pounds. I had also started seeing more benefits from my workouts, sleeping better, and just feeling better overall.

Now, I don't even want to drink anything but water. On occasion, I'll have a glass of orange juice, but I don't even like the taste anymore. I never thought I would enjoy drinking water, but I do!

The secret, for me, is ice-cold, purified water. I keep a jug of purified water in my fridge and refill my glass all day long. If you work outside of the home, invest in one of those insulated mugs so your drink stays cooler, longer.

I really want you to challenge yourself to drink eight glasses of water today. Really think about how you're feeling after. Less sluggish? A clearer head? Is your skin looking better?

Once you start seeing the benefits, I think you'll stick with it, just like I did.

Now, go drink up!

Day Seven: Relax

Activity:

Light a candle and sit for 15 minutes, watching the flame and reflecting on the week.

You've done an excellent job this week of feeling. Now, it's time to unwind and breathe for a bit. Release some of the weight that you've been holding onto this past week, month, year, decade.

Did you know there's something called Candle Gazing, or Candle Meditation? It's a thing, and it works!

If you've ever sat by a cozy fire and felt instantly relaxed, watching the flame of a candle is very similar. Something about focusing solely on that little flame really centers and relaxes you.

Candle gazing can improve memory and concentration, help with your eyesight, and even open up your third eye (if you're a believer in that).

To do this, light a candle (a pleasantly-scented one is even better!) and place it on a table a few feet in front of you. Sit in a comfortable position, either relaxed on a soft surface like a couch or chair, or sitting cross-legged on the floor with your spine straight and your hands on your thighs.

Take a few deep breaths. In and out. Once you feel your body start to relax, open your eyes and fixate them on the flame of the candle. Don't look at the wick or the wax of the candle- you must focus on the flame.

Pay attention to how it moves. Is it high and steady, or does it move from side to side? Does the orange color fade to yellow? Is there a lot or a little smoke rising from it? Try to focus on the flame and nothing else.

Look away if your eyes start to feel uncomfortable. You can simply close your eyes and breathe in the scent of the candle. Reflect on your week. Think about the activities that you've done so far. Are you starting to feel the benefits? Are you proud of yourself for finally putting yourself first? You should be!

I'm proud of you. You're making yourself a priority. You deserve to live a life free of the weight of your past. You're worth letting go of the things holding you back so you can move forward in abundance to accept all of the wonderful things life has in store for you.

Relax. Breathe. Good job this week, warrior.

Week Two

Forgiveness

*Forgiveness is not about
letting someone off the hook
for their actions,
but freeing ourselves of the
negative energy
that binds us to them.*

-Author Unknown

Forgiveness

Forgiveness. One word, yet so loaded with meaning. It's hard to forgive, isn't it? That old adage, "forgive, but don't forget" doesn't actually happen that often, because every time you remember what that person did to you, it's going to bring up those negative feelings again.

You kind of have to forget in order to forgive, and that, my friends, is not easy. It involves releasing a lot of anger, resentment, and negative energies that bubble up to the surface when you think about the person who wronged you.

Consider this: if someone cheats on you, and you say you forgive them but you won't forget what they did to you, that's going to affect every aspect of your relationship...right? If they're always on their phone, the first thought that's going to pop into your mind is that they're texting someone else. If they're late coming home, the first thing you're going to think is that they're hanging out with someone they shouldn't be. If they forget an important date, like an anniversary, you're going to think it's because someone else is on their mind. You can easily see how this "forgive, but don't forget" scenario can be difficult.

So, the question is, how do you forget so that you can make true forgiveness a reality?

Obviously, we're human and our brains don't just magically forget about something that hurt us, but we can do things that will fill our minds with positive thoughts so that those negative ones don't hold as much space there anymore.

I'm not promising that you'll forget about the things that are holding you back, or about the way someone made you feel, or even about what they did to you. What I am promising is that these exercises this week will encourage you to look for more of the positives in your life and relationships so that those hurtful things don't constantly fill your thoughts.

I've heard the saying that "forgiveness is for you, not for the person you're forgiving", but that sounds a little selfish. While we're working on putting ourselves first right now, and being a little selfish is okay, we also don't want to start not caring about other people.

Keep in mind that at one point, the person who hurt you held a special place in your heart. Even if you no longer want them in your life (which you totally have the right to eliminate them if you need to!), it doesn't mean you have to hold hate in your heart for them.

Holding hate in your heart like that is toxic. It will destroy you mentally and physically. I'm not telling you to let people walk all over you and to blindly forgive them, but let's try to move forward in a positive and uplifting way. Let's be the bigger person, because you know what the bigger person does? They win.

Day Eight: Write

Activity:

Write a gratitude list.

When was the last time you wrote down what you were thankful for (aside from maybe during a Thanksgiving day activity)? If you don't regularly practice writing gratitude lists, the answer is probably a long time ago.

Writing a gratitude list is something that the very successful and highly-respected Oprah Winfrey swears by. If her endorsement isn't enough, acknowledging what you're grateful for has been scientifically proven to boost your mood and increase happiness.

It's a task that only takes a few minutes of your time, but can reap so many benefits- both for your physical and mental health.

So, what should you put on your gratitude list? Don't stress if you can't seem to come up with something profound to be grateful for. Not all days, weeks, or even months have anything monumentally special happen.

Recognizing the simple things can sometimes be even more meaningful. Look around you. That bed in your room? That's a comfortable place to sleep. That television in your living room? That's a vast amount of entertainment at your fingertips. Your children's voices as they run down the hall? That's your very own flesh and blood, growing and changing right before your very eyes.

If you shift your mindset, nearly everything around you is something to be grateful for.

Start small. Today, make a goal of writing five things down on your gratitude list. Come back to it anytime you think of something new to write down. See how long your gratitude list can get by the end of the year.

Once you get in the habit of recognizing what you're grateful for, you'll start realizing that the glass isn't half-full or half-empty. It's refillable. And the way to refill it is by focusing on the positives in your life.

When you stop dwelling on the negative, forgiveness also becomes easier. Once you start feeling the weight of those negative thoughts being lifted, you'll want to release the things you've been holding onto. You'll want to forgive so you can move forward.

Day Nine: Exercise

Activity:

Take a walk outside. If the weather today doesn't make this possible, choose another day this week to do this activity.

Walking has so many health benefits, but walking outside has even more benefits for your mental health. Fresh air can do wonders to boost your mood. Sunshine is a natural source of vitamin D, which is known to help ward off depression and anxiety.

Those with a vitamin D deficiency are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression, which is why those living in a climate that forces them inside for long periods of time (such as the Northeast) often complain of the "winter blues".

While you can (and should) take a vitamin D supplement if you are severely deficient, getting outside in the sun is a natural way to give your body some of this mood-boosting fuel. That's why it's so important to do this activity on a day when the weather is cooperating. In order to get the most mental-health benefits out of your walk, the sun needs to be shining.

Your walk can be as long or as short as you'd like, but I recommend taking at least a 15-minute walk. When I was going through my divorce, I would walk an hour every single night, and it really helped relieve some of the stress and anxiety I was experiencing.

Exercise also releases those endorphins that are natural mood boosters. When you're feeling good physically and mentally, you'll be more willing to let go of the negative energy that is tying you to the past. Forgiveness comes a little easier because you don't want anything messing up your good mood.

I had a lot of things to forgive after my marriage. That forgiveness did not come easily. I had to make the choice each and every day during my divorce journey to move forward. My desire for a new life had to be stronger than my familiarity with the past.

Before you set out on your walk, think about the things you need to forgive in order to move forward in your life. As you start your walk, look around you. Take it all in. Feel the sunshine on your skin. Breathe in the fresh air. Listen to the birds chirping and the cars driving by. There is life everywhere. It's truly amazing when you think about it. So many souls moving through the same space, each with their own story.

Your story deserves to end happily. Remind yourself of this as you take each step. You're moving towards forgiveness, and it's a beautiful thing.

Day Ten: Release

Activity:

Find a space where you can be alone (your car or empty house is ideal) and yell out whatever bad feelings you've been holding onto. Yell as loud as you want.

Remember when you were little and your teachers used to tell you to use your "inside voice"? Our entire lives, we've been told to be quiet. There is a time and place where the quiet is necessary, but sometimes, you just need to YELL.

Yelling can actually be a form of therapy. It's sometimes referred to as "scream therapy", and there is an entire science behind it. Much like when you exercise, yelling releases mood-boosting endorphins that can reduce anxiety and help you get rid of negative feelings you've been holding onto.

It gives you a bit of a natural high, and once you do this yelling activity once, you might decide to make it a regular part of your routine.

Yelling by yourself is much different than yelling at someone. Yelling at someone is never okay, and that is not the focus of this activity. The point of this activity is to give you a physical way to release the things that are holding you back from moving forward in your life.

Whatever you're upset about- shout it out loud. Scream at the top of your lungs if it feels good. You may not even have a specific word that you shout out. Just a general scream can be enough to help you let go of those emotions that are weighing you down.

I had a lot to forgive after my divorce, and I remember one particular day, about a year after it was finalized, I just could not carry the weight of it all anymore. I just went in my bedroom, shut the door, and screamed. I cried a little, too.

I sat there for probably an hour afterwards and I felt so much lighter. I think I sort of zoned out for a while. I could literally feel my emotions transforming from negative to positive.

That day changed things for me. I didn't realize all of the feelings I was holding inside until I finally let them out.

So today, find a space where you can let it all go. Yell. Scream. Release it so you can move on.

Day Eleven: Try Something New

Activity:

Find a healing podcast to listen to.

I'll admit, I've never been a big listener of podcasts. I've always preferred listening to music while I'm working or driving. But I've been introduced to a whole host of incredible people in the divorce industry since I started my blog, and many of them have really helpful podcasts. So, now I'm a regular listener.

While music heals, so does listening to other people share their stories and expertise. If you do an internet search for "healing podcast", you'll see hundreds of options pop up. Everything from guided meditations to ones focused on self-care are there for your listening pleasure.

If you aren't a regular listener of podcasts, it might feel a bit strange to you at first. Let's face it- most of us have grown up watching television or listening to music, not listening to "talk radio". Podcasts may seem outdated, but they are actually very helpful.

There are some surprising benefits of listening to podcasts. Since there's no visuals involved, the listener has to use their imagination to form a picture in their mind. Getting that imagination activated can make a person more creative. Hearing versus watching something can also make you a better listener.

Throw the fact that the podcast is focused on some form of healing, and the benefits are virtually limitless.

If it takes you a few tries to find a podcast you enjoy, that's okay. This activity is all about experimenting and finding something that really works for you. I prefer more of a conversational podcast instead of a solo podcast because I enjoy the back and forth banter. The different viewpoints keep me entertained for longer. So find what you feel really benefits you the most. You may find, like I did, that podcasts are just as interesting as listening to music or watching television.

Get that imagination flowing and start healing!

Day Twelve: Reconnect

Activity:

Reach out to a friend or family member you haven't spoken to in a while.

Making the first move is hard, isn't it? When you haven't spoken to someone in a long time- whether on purpose or simply because you got too busy- it can leave you wondering how and when the right time to reach back out is.

Here's the thing- life is too short to wait any longer. You don't want to leave things unsaid or relationships in limbo if you don't have to. There are certainly legitimate reasons to end a relationship with a friend or family member. If it's toxic, letting it go is even necessary. But if there is someone you've been meaning to reach out to, but keep putting it off, now is the time.

If you aren't sure how to start, keep it simple. A quick, "Hey, how've you been?", is often enough to get the conversation started. You might be surprised to find that they've been thinking about you just as much as you've been thinking about them.

The first conversation doesn't have to be heavy. If apologies are owed, those will come in time. Just take the first step. You might not even realize how much you've missed that person until you start talking to them again.

I reconnected with a lot of people after my divorce. Some relationships were worth renewing, and some weren't. One thing is certain though- I have no regrets for reaching out. Now, I no longer wonder "what if". Reaching out was a big part of my healing process. I was able to move forward in my life because I no longer had anything left unsaid.

Whoever you choose to reach out to, make sure it's a healthy situation. I'm not encouraging you to invite toxic people back into your life. This reconnection is for those people you think of fondly, but just haven't made the time for recently. You never know where this reconnection could lead. It may lead to a new romantic relationship, a business venture, or even the discovery of a new coffee shop (if the initial reconnection conversation goes well- ask them to meet for coffee!).

Even if all this activity gives you is a little bit of closure to a relationship you've been wondering about, then it's a beneficial contribution to your self-care journey.

Day Thirteen: Fuel Your Body

Activity:

Start your day with a healthy breakfast (and a healthy mindset).

Those first few moments when you wake up in the morning- still slightly groggy and disoriented- are actually the most important moments of your day. If you wake up with the mindset of “today is going to be a bad day”, you’re going to have a bad day. That’s why starting your day off on the right foot is so important, especially during the tender first days of your healing journey.

There’s been some debate as to whether or not breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. I don’t know about you, but if I don’t eat breakfast, I get pretty hangry by the time 10 a.m. rolls around. The last thing you need when you’re healing is to be irritable and tired, two things that low blood sugar levels can lead to.

What you eat is just as important as when you eat, though. Grabbing a donut on the way out the door may seem efficient, but that sugar will fade quickly and you’ll be left starving well before lunch. The best option is to eat something with a healthy mix of carbohydrates and protein. The carbohydrates will give you that much-needed energy boost in the morning, while the protein will fill you up until lunchtime.

If you aren’t normally a breakfast eater, that’s okay. You don’t have to eat a huge meal first thing in the morning, but it is a good idea to eat within the first hour of waking up to maintain your body’s healthy rhythm of fasting and eating.

If you worry you won’t have enough time in the morning to eat breakfast, prep ahead of time. I like to make homemade breakfast sandwiches in large batches and freeze them, so all I need to do is pop them in the microwave to heat them up. I’m also a big fan of yogurt and gluten-free granola. The granola I eat is packed with protein from Chia and sunflower seeds, so even someone like me- who is allergic to nuts and isn’t a big fan of meat- can get that important protein first thing in the morning.

It’s common for your appetite to decrease when you’re going through an emotionally stressful time. This may mean you’ll need to force yourself to eat. If you’re in this position right now, make breakfast the meal you force. It really can help you start the day with a more positive mindset and give you the energy you need to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

No one, and nothing is worth sacrificing your health for. Take care of yourself right now, mind, body, and soul.

Day Fourteen: Relax

Activity:

Turn your phone off for an hour (or more).

When I was going through my divorce, I was constantly being bombarded with phone calls, texts, and emails from divorce attorneys, leasing agents, concerned friends, and more. It was overwhelming, to say the least. All I really wanted to do was run away. While that obviously wasn't possible, I did the next best thing- I disconnected.

The average person spends over 5 hours on their phone every day. This number increases for teens and for those who work in an industry where frequent contact with others is required. If you sleep for 8 hours a day (on a good day) and spend 5 hours on your phone, that only leaves 11 hours to do all of the other "stuff" that life requires.

When you think of it that way, it's no wonder most of us are scrambling to get things done at the end of the day. We're wasting so much valuable time scrolling social media and responding to texts and phone calls that simply could wait- if we allow them to.

We need to disconnect more often in order to be more present. Our brains need some downtime. It may seem counterintuitive, but if you really think about it, it makes sense. Eight hours of sleep may be enough to reset our bodies, but our minds really need another mid-day reset in order to function properly.

One hour. Can you do it? One hour without your phone. If it ends up being a difficult task for you, then it's a good opportunity to look at how your day is structured and why being on your phone has become so important.

Let's be more present with each other. We can be in the same room with our loved ones, but if we're preoccupied with our phones, we may as well be in another city.

You may not be able to run away from your problems right now, but you can certainly give yourself an hour off from them. They will still be there waiting for you when the hour is up, but hopefully you will go back with a fresh mindset- ready to deal with whatever life throws at you next.

During that hour, relax. Breathe. Take a long shower. Go for a walk. Pet your dog. Catch up on your favorite television show. Give yourself this time to think about anything else besides what's troubling you.

You need this break.

Conclusion

We may have come to the end of our two-week journey together, but the self-care shouldn't stop here. Now that you've made self-care a priority, continue it daily. It doesn't have to take up a lot of time to make a big impact.

Remember that you're so strong and that you can do this. You can heal and come out on the other side of the journey whole and happy. You just need to want it for yourself. No one else can do the work for you.

It's going to be hard some days, but I promise you, you are worth it. Don't give up. Better days are coming. I'm living proof that you can survive the storm and THRIVE.

If you're interested in continuing your self-care journey, and you'd like support along the way, be sure to join my free Facebook Group, "Self-Care with Mama Bear". There, we'll focus on the next steps in your healing journey: finding yourself and following your heart.

Until then, my friends...stay well.