



The Challenge of Self-Care

by Emma Sims, Holistic Therapist

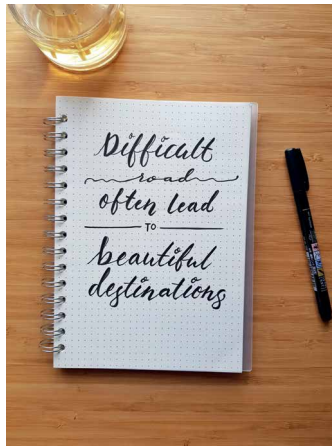
In the light of the strain on the NHS during the Covid pandemic, now more than ever, our attitude to self-care has been highlighted. What can we do to maintain our health and can we really 'do' self-care? Lack of regard for our own well-being is a major obstacle for many on the self-care journey if we are carers, givers or if our mental health is strained.

A wake-up call can come from being at rock bottom. A self-care epiphany in my 20s brought me to the realisation that I would do everything to help my beloved animals, but not me. My journey to well-being started with regular use of essential oils, meditation, vitamins and listening to my intuition. I began to take responsibility for my health **instead of wishing for medicine to do it all for me**. I say 'began' because it isn't always easy!

Baby Steps

I recommend starting with baby steps. Commit yourself to something that you can easily achieve. I like the saying, 'a journey of 1,000 miles starts with one small step'. What do you think is achievable for you to do?

Self-care may range from the effort that someone with health problems has for taking a shower to the choice of food to fuel our body. Moderate exercise, **getting out into nature and engaging in hobbies** can all support our



physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Noticing the clothes that we wear – **are they fresh and clean?** Can we replace old ones with new ones? Asking another person or organisation for help if we're struggling can be a brave step or booking an appointment with the GP or therapist – and taking action to do it!

Self-Compassion

I appreciate life is complex and **self-care can be a challenge** so listening to our intuitive wise-self can help. We each have a unique journey to self-care. **Meditation may calm the mind for one, but be torture for another!**

It can be quite a journey realising it's not selfish to take care of our needs. On aeroplanes, passengers are asked to put their oxygen masks on before they fit their children's. **Would you treat a best friend the way that**

you treat yourself? Can we cultivate some self-compassion if we are self-critical?

When we 'take' care of ourselves, **it sends a message back to us that we are worthy**. We then have more to give to others. When we *give* ourselves time and attention, we top up our well-being bank.

Doing Things Together

Self-care isn't necessarily lone-care, it can be a group venture. Someone told me recently **she dings a bell every time she drinks water** and that reminds her colleagues to drink too. Doing things together builds good self-care habits which can also enrich relationships. It is OK to have needs; **we aren't superhuman robots**. We would not expect a car to run without petrol or to let our battery on our phones go flat so give **yourself** a chance to plug in and find the ways to self-care that work for you.

Emma has written a book about self-care which is due to be published on October 3rd. It is available through WordWorx Publishing. More details can be obtained from emmasims.co.uk/.

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