

UMOJA SELF-CARE GUIDE

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare"

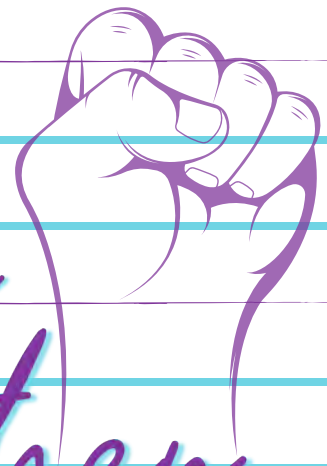
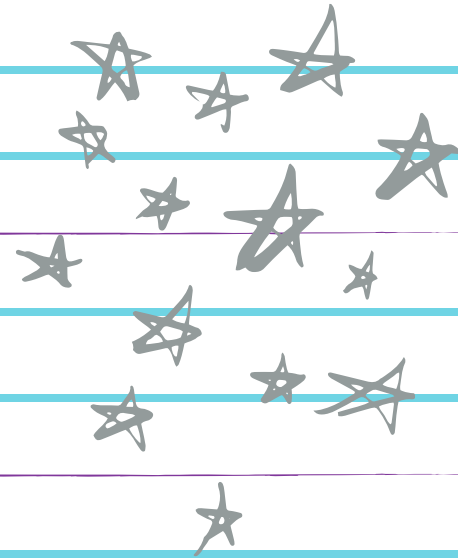
- Audre Lorde



mcedsv

WHAT IS UMOJA?

UMOJA, which means unity, is an anti-oppression group within MCEDSV. The acronym UMOJA is, "Uniting and Mobilizing Opportunities for Justice and Access." UMOJA recognizes that race and ethnicity continue to be a worthy and necessary grounding to eliminating barriers in the movement to end domestic and sexual violence. In addition, our umoja/unity is open to those who experience oppression in multiple intersections of their identity.



*stronger
together*



"Beautiful Fall Colors"
photo series by Karen Paritee

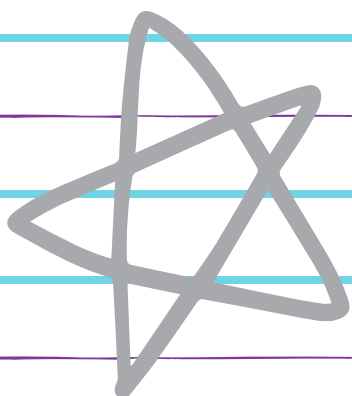
ABOUT THIS GUIDE

In the face of recent events, particularly for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People Of Color) and BIPOC communities, conversations about self-care have become of particular significance. The mainstream monopolization and politicization of “self-care” remains exclusionary and often fails marginalized people and communities. It fails to see that even beyond these recent events BIPOC face a lifetime of oppression. It fails to see that self-care often fills gaps that are created by culture and inequitable systems.

For BIPOC, self-care can be the act of surviving.

Many modern definitions of self-care have been designed, incidentally, through a lens of privilege. These definitions feel limiting and prescribed, often centering on an abundance of resources, money, and time. Yes, indulging in a spa treatment and lighting candles may be relaxing but the notion that it is the only form of “self-care” is increasingly becoming the standard.

Self-care is vital and, most importantly, it isn't a reward for withstanding intolerable situations. The value of a person should never be tied to whether they are deserving of self-care. While caring for body and mind looks different person to person, it remains a fundamental right for everybody. Choosing to engage in self-care can be challenging. We hope that you can take time to reflect on the things you need and use this resource in your journey.



be in the
moment!

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

CONTINUED...

[A Journey](#) by Zahra reminds us that self-care is fluid and a self-exploration of our emotions can be a great way to know your needs.

Through [Tik Tok Therapist](#), Josef encourages us that as life is happening, be kind to yourself and if you haven't figured out what self-care looks like for you, it's okay!

[Everyday Self-Love](#) is a glimpse into Jacqy's journey and shows us that how you care for yourself can change over time and in different life circumstances. Self-care shouldn't feel like a chore, or unachievable. Incorporating practices into your life so that they become second nature ensures that you don't find yourself asking "do I have the time?" Jacqy shares many ideas and resources that have worked for them, some may also work for you!

[To The Man Who Works Twice As Hard](#), Roderick illustrates that in addition to practicing self-care as a part of lifestyle, there are strategies you can use to organize your thoughts and feelings. Continuous reflection can help you remain in tune to your needs and to be creative in how you are approaching your self-care.

Ti'Fani reminds us of the importance of replenishing yourself with positive, comforting thoughts and experiences. Family and friends can be a great social resource for you. Focusing on ways to strengthening these relationships is self-care. Saying affirmations, reading a poem or reciting lyrics to yourself and others is a great daily practice. Read [Little Big Brown Eyes](#) and share it with a loved one.

Layla invites you to grab a big bowl of shorbet addes (lentil soup) and read about her perspective on self-care, through her lived experiences. [Lentil Soup for the Arab American Soul](#), affirms that experiences of self-care are unique to you. A common feeling that many people experience is feelings of guilt for prioritizing yourself. These harmful ideas may have become internalized because of systems of oppression.

For some, the idea of self-care may feel counter-intuitive. For others, the practice of self-care may be inherent, a part of who you are, your community, or lived experience. Phalguna tells us what makes her happy in [JOY](#). Whether its laughter, service to others, physical activities, or quiet time - doing what centers you and makes your happy is self-care.

The "self" in self-care doesn't always mean alone. You may feel that your self-care is a community-centered notion and rooted in the history. Personhood can be inextricable from community and finding strength in community is self-care. Merkeb honors her community and ancestry in [Buttered Braids](#).

Many images strewn throughout this guide are from the "[Beautiful Fall Colors](#)" photo series by Karen, when she takes walks as part of her self-care routine. She always feels at peace whenever she gives herself at least 15-20 minutes a day to unplug from the inside world and connect with nature.



A JOURNEY BY ZAHRA MUKHTAR

When I think about what self-care is to me, I think that self-care comes in forms or steps. I think that before someone reaches the point of doing yoga or forms of body care (such as bathing, going to the sauna etc.) one should confront their state of mind. I don't think that you have to sit and feel all the emotions all at once, but I do think it wise to take a moment to acknowledge our feelings and be mindfully aware that they are either in a state of crisis, hurt feelings, or anger. After we take this moment, we can then decide if we want to deal with those feelings head on or flee from particularly difficult emotions and focus on a different aspect of our emotional well-being and do something that can help calm us whether it be playing the guitar, writing things down, or talking to someone about our emotions. Lastly, the most important lesson I feel like I have learned is that self-care is fluid: there is no "one way". There is no generalization, and it's unique to everyone. I feel self-care is just about exploring you and exploring what helps you be you.

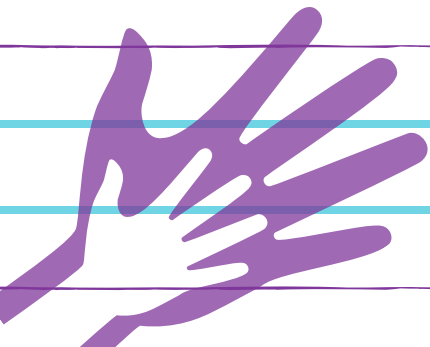
One thing I want to acknowledge for myself is that self-care requires steps, but those steps have no particular order. Following where your emotions are pointing you for what self-care means to your body is what truly matters not what any social media platform tells you.



*self-care
is fluid*



WHO OR WHAT ARE YOUR SOURCES OF
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT?



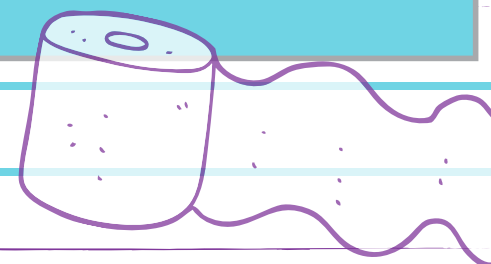
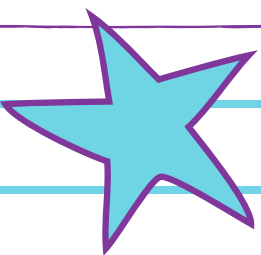
"Always Loving Hands" by Karen Paritee

TIKTOK THERAPIST BY JOSEF CANARIA



A TikTok therapist once spoke about how some habits (such as overspending, social isolation, and casual hookups) can actually be forms of self-harm if it's done in abundance and left unchecked. I found myself reframing these behaviors to sound like: "It's been a long work week AND it's on sale! Treat yo'self!" or "Recharging introvert time! Too many Zoom work meetings this week!" or "Grindr hookups can be fun and healthy! I'm just living my best life!" Obviously, these can absolutely be forms of self-care, but when it's ALL I ever do, and I'm not actually examining the fundamental reasons of why I engage in these behaviors, it can become toxic, lead to unexpected negative consequences, and my conscious efforts at healing, recharging, or sustaining myself in advocacy work in the long run might not be possible.

During this pandemic, I found myself justifying so many spending choices that I would not have made before COVID. Choosing the nicer name brand of toilet paper, going to Whole Foods instead of the regular grocery store (organic foods are just arguably healthier, amirite?), or impulse buying random stuff I don't need on Amazon Prime Day, because of justifications like: "I'm not spending as much gas money anymore!" or "I'm no longer getting lunch during the week, so I've saved so much!" Or "That stimulus check was SUPPOSED to be spent!" But, even with that, my bank account looks exactly the same as it did before "social distancing" became a term, not to mention the overwhelming sense of guilt when I know millions of people are desperately struggling to make ends meet. This all compounds and often leaves me wanting to spend more to mask those gnawing feelings. I've greatly altered my spending habits before March 2020 to now, all because I've personally framed it as "self-care" and sometimes, it's completely valid to get Cottonelle or the \$6 carton of oat milk, but when I look back on all of this, I need to reflect and think "Would I have done that if we weren't in a global public health crisis?"




TIKTOK THERAPIST

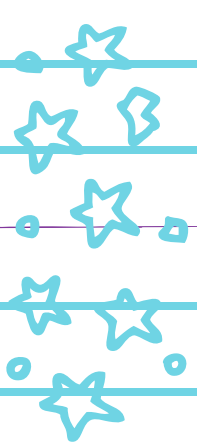
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I'm sure most people at this point in the pandemic are "Zoom fatigued" and the thought of being on camera for the twelfth time in one work day, sounds like an absolutely living nightmare. We're expected to always be "on" and available and working from home has added extra pressures to over perform to justify that extra-long lunch I took, or the midday errand I ran. So, as a coping mechanism, I have stopped connecting with my friends and loved ones to "recharge." I cancel on park hangouts and say "Gosh, the COVID rates are really shooting up though, huh? So...like, would that even be a good idea to be outside?" or "I was around too many people at Target without masks on, so I don't want to be an asymptomatic vessel and get you sick!" or "I'm SO sick of being in front of a screen, can we reconnect another time?" Living alone and finding more excuses to stay alone, has actually left me feeling less supported, less connected, and less able to process and reflect over what I'm going through. Framing my need to disconnect from technology, has actually led me to disconnect from a lot of relationships that were built on Sunday morning brunches, window shopping local boutiques, or meeting up for Boba. I've chosen to say, "Alone time is my recharge time," but now that it's led to a sense of being socially isolated, it's not healing or reenergizing.

All of this to say, as someone who struggles with defining, practicing, and holistically embracing what "true" self-care means, it's important to recognize that some behaviors that we frame as "self-care" could actually be harmful, and contradicts the entire spirit and meaning of what "self-care" is. In order to reenergize, heal, and sustain ourselves in this movement to serve survivors, we need to also be aware and recognize that coping through the trauma of living in a global pandemic can be difficult, and not everything we do should be considered "self-care." Be gracious and patient with yourself and know that you're not alone if you have yet to figure out what "self-care" means to you.



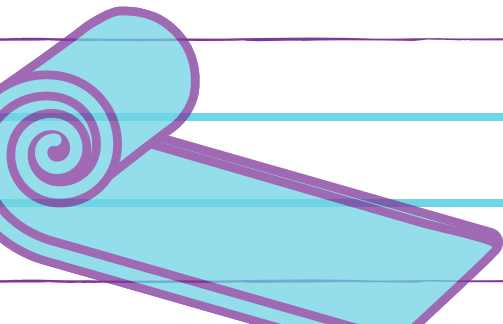
be
kind
to
yourself...



WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE SELF-CARE TO
LOOK LIKE FOR YOU.



"Beautiful Fall Colors"
photo series by Karen Paritee



EVERYDAY SELF-LOVE

BY JACQY HIPPE

Finding self-care is a very internal practice. It takes time and intention. For me, it has changed and developed over time. Finding my self-care has been a battle at times, as I live with anxiety and depression due to complex traumas I have experienced. To me, self-care is a well-rounded, holistic approach of care that connects me to my body, mind, and soul.

For many, rest is an important component of self-care and I too find this very important. Yet living with my depression means I have to be mindful of the duration of my sleep and how it impacts other aspects of my every day routine. When I was younger, without knowledge of my mental health state, I would frequent this activity - sleep. With less responsibilities, it functioned with my lifestyle. As I grew older, and better equipped to manage my mental health, I learned that physical activity curbs my anxiety and reduces my depressive state. In my twenties, self-care looked like yoga classes, team sports like volleyball, and the combination of music and movement like dance classes, my favorite being Zumba! Yet as I get older, and have more responsibilities, I have found the importance of physical activities that are also within nature, so walking and jogging outside have benefited me in many ways.

To support my mental health, journaling, anxiety workbooks, self-help books, and podcast like "Therapy for Black Girls" have supported my understanding of how my anxiety and depression manifest and show up in my day to day life. This helps me identify and manage it, day by day. I have learned that my anxiety causes me to catastrophize my life and go to the worst-case scenarios which cause me to increase my worrying.

Journaling and daily affirmations also tap into my self-love language of "words of affirmations." As I know my anxiety causes neurons in my brain to misfire, I can create new connections by using mantras and speaking positively to myself.



self-care
shouldn't
feel like
a chore!



EVERYDAY SELF-LOVE

CONTINUED...



For my emotional well-being, I enjoy using meditation apps that are at my fingertips, like Liberate. This app allows me to listen to BIPOC people - people who sound like me and may have faced the same oppression I have faced - discuss healing and meditate with me, using sound bowls. Additionally, I find self-care activities that connect with my number one self-love language, "act of service," truly support my emotional well-being. Cleaning my home, specifically doing the dishes brings me much joy. It's something about hearing the faucet run and having my hands in water. This is a simple way to be near water for me, when a pool and ocean are not available. Also, cooking and painting tap into my sense of creativity when I have identified I am in a negative or exhausted state, emotionally. Cooking recipes passed down to me from my Liberian mother, like Jollof Rice and Cassava Leaf Soup, take me back to days with my family where we gathered around the dinner table. I get to reap the benefits of those activities with a comforting meal or new art to place around my home or gift to others.

For my spiritual well-being, I split my time between religious and spiritual activities. I use praise and worship activities and listening to gospel music to start my day. I also do spiritual activities to get in tune with mother earth. Through my moon rituals during the full and new moon, I can meditate, charge my crystals under the moon light, take a moon bath and light candles that align with what I want to manifest for the month, or what I am working on healing. I also journal during my moon rituals about the things I want to manifest into my life and what will be my focus during the month. It also helps me identify the feelings, situations, or emotions I want to release from my life during full moon rituals. Additionally, I work to align my charkas each day when I meditate, by identifying which chakra is blocked or one I want to enhance to support my daily life or a situation I am working through. Wearing my crystals also rids my body of negative energy, which also support my physical well-being and for my emotional benefit.



EVERYDAY SELF-LOVE

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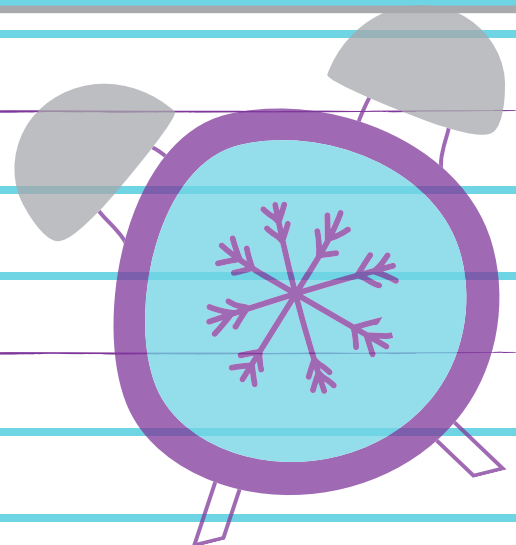
To me, self-care can change over time. It depends on your physical and social environment and what tools you have access to. I prefer to focus on self-care options that are built into my daily life and have minimal costs associated with them. As I have learned, my self-care needs to be a part of my everyday routine, so that I can cope with added stressors that may come from events, relationships issues, or busy schedules. Being a new parent has taught me that self-care does not have to be activities that take up your whole day.

How can you use 10 minutes of your day to take time for just YOU?

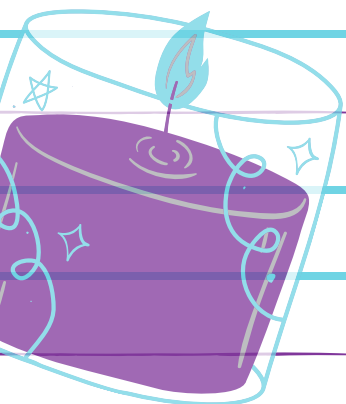
How can you recharge yourself throughout the day by taking small self-care breaks to do ground techniques? Self-care can also be setting boundaries, affirming yourself and your needs, and knowing that self-care is not selfish. Self-care allows you to show up healthier and stronger for those around you.



self-care
allows you to show
up healthier and
stronger...



NAME A FEW ACTIVITIES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD.
WHEN WILL YOU DO THESE ACTIVITIES?



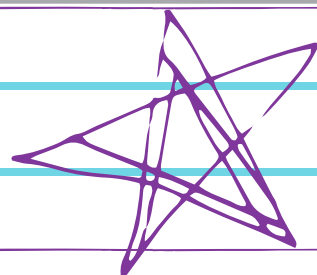
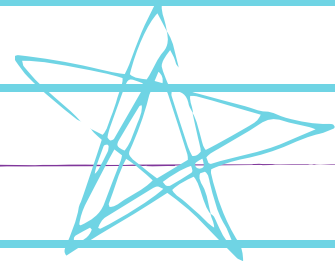
"Beautiful Fall Colors"
photo series by Karen Paritee

TO THE MAN WHO WORKS TWICE AS HARD BY RODERICK BULLARD

Throughout this past year we have dealt with several things that have made some of our daily lives more difficult. The most prominent thing for most people is the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the police brutality that people of color are experiencing on an almost daily basis. This continuous information can be very taxing emotionally and mentally. I'd like to share some information that has worked for me and helped me navigate and practice self-care during this time.

One tool that has helped me successfully navigate my self-care journey is to practice using a planner and calendar. At a quick glance, these may just seem like objects for organization, but they have also been able to serve as a creative outlet for me. When I have the time, I like to decorate and section off my planner to give it a more personalized feeling. This allows the planner to not only serve as a space for organizing your schedule, it can also serve as a tool to organize your thoughts and feelings. Using my planner in this way has been helpful for me in processing my feelings and in keeping track of my life when it feels hectic.

Another important tool for me in practicing self-care is acknowledging when I need time to myself. When you are always working on something, taking time for yourself means not working on "work". When I take time for myself as an act of self-care, it has been helpful for me to make sure that I am not doing anything that is related to a responsibility that I have. During this time, I may watch TV, listen to music, take a nap, or cook. For me the act of not engaging in something that I am responsible for doing, for a few hours, is an act of self-care.



reflection can help
you remain in tune
to your needs...

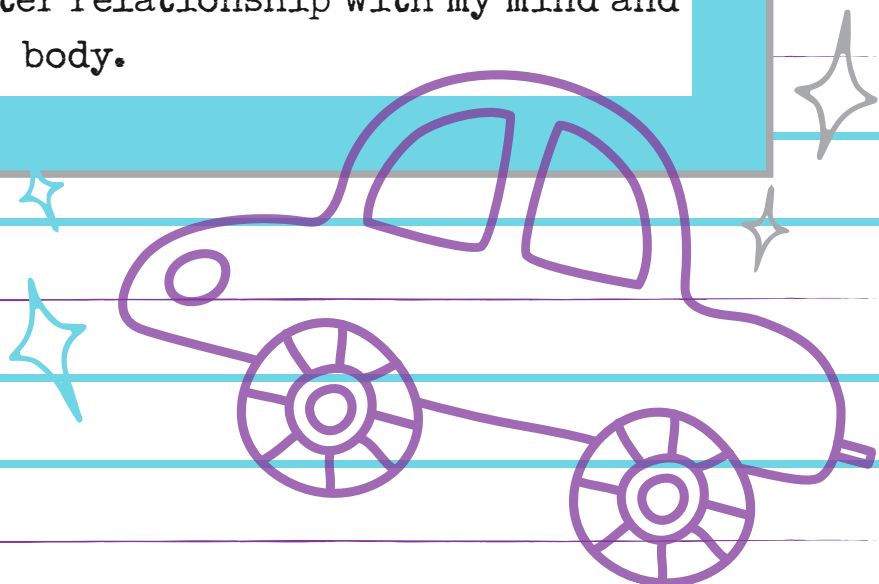


TO THE MAN WHO WORKS TWICE AS HARD

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Not to be contrary, but sometimes self-care does mean to be actively doing something. This does not have to be something that I do with others all the time, but it is helpful for me during the colder months to make sure I am being active and engaging in things I enjoy. This helps me, not only keep a warm body during the colder months, it helps me fight of the desire to always isolate myself during these colder times. During the current times we are living through, it has been helpful for me to workout, play tennis with my partner, and to go for drives.

Some of the self-care methods that I have described do not work for everyone and that is okay. Self-care is something that every person has to discover for themselves and it's okay to not know what it looks like for you. I didn't wake up and know that doing these things put my mind at ease, I stumbled onto them accidentally and started using them in my life. It took time for me to find these things but once I did and I gave myself permission to admit I need self-care; I was able to start forming a better relationship with my mind and body.



LIST SOME WAYS THAT YOU ORGANIZE BOTH
ACTIVITIES & YOUR FEELINGS?



"Beautiful Fall Colors"
photo series by Karen Paritee

LITTLE BIG BROWN EYES

BY TI'FANI LAW

Little Big Brown Eyes

Carrying the warm smooth essence of chocolate, espresso, walnut

You bring me joy

Reverence

Little breaks of clarity and kindness

Laughs of sweet simplicity

Hearts of untainted hope

Four little big brown eyes

I whisper sweet sayings

Affirmations of all you can be

All you can achieve

Your presence brings unwavering comfort

Your smiles the same

Looking back at you is my own two brown eyes

Streaked red in need of rest

Draped in bags of blueish purple

My own two brown eyes

But when my brown eyes take in those four little big brown eyes

Everything glows

Everything shines

Everything becomes anew

When our brown eyes meet

The weight of the world is lighter

The stress of today is distant

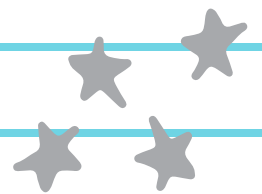
The ache of my back is smaller

And in that moment

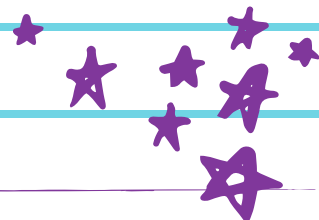
That fleeting moment

That moment when your little big brown eyes meet mine

That moment becomes my pocket of peace



replenish
yourself
with
positive
thoughts



WHAT AFFIRMATIONS ARE RELEVANT AND SIGNIFICANT TO YOU? WILL YOU COMMIT TO SAYING ONE AFFIRMATION TO YOURSELF DAILY?



"Beautiful Fall Colors"
photo series by Karen Paritee

REPEAT AND RE-WRITE THESE AFFIRMATIONS:

- I AM WORTHY OF SELF-CARE
- CARING FOR MYSELF DOESN'T MEAN I'M NEGLECTING OTHERS
- I HAVE AND WILL MAKE TIME FOR MYSELF

LENTIL SOUP FOR THE ARAB-AMERICAN SOUL

BY LAYLA ELABED

I have always found it difficult to talk about self-care in the context of a first generation Arab American. It's difficult because it's such a foreign concept within my cultural scope as a daughter of Palestinian immigrants, raised in a very Arab-Muslim centric home. Often, when we talk about selfcare, it's in a very Western and privileged framework.

Anytime I have seen self-care proposed in a mainstream concept, I am very much like, "No, that is not going to work for me. I am not white." It also feels very selfish to need or want selfcare because I think anyone who has immigrant parents and who left their home country to come to the United States for a better life carries a certain amount of guilt. It's almost like survivors' guilt, but where we have this pressure to accomplish a certain amount of success because the sacrifices our families made to provide us with every opportunity of the "American Dream." We are reminded from very young ages that we haven't had to experience the same struggles as our parents and ancestors before us.

Unsurprisingly, BIPOC folx aren't immune to "the struggle" and even more so, we face daily struggles with the added barrage of racism and discrimination that contribute to stress, exhaustion, and burnout. It took me a long time to realize that there are forms of self-care specific to my experience as an Arab that have always been part of our traditions, but they don't necessarily conform to that mainstream idea of self-care. I think it is essential to our authentic selves to explore and discover those things we do within our cultures and traditions to heal, recharge, and sustain our bodies and beings, outside of the mainstream. With that I present, "Lentil Soup for Arab American Soul", plus more.

prioritize
yourself!

LENTIL SOUP FOR THE ARAB-AMERICAN SOUL

CONTINUED...



Ingredients

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 cup onion finely chopped
- 1 cup red lentils thoroughly washed
- 2 cubes vegetable stock
- Salt to taste 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 lemon squeezed
- Parsley for garnish.

Directions: In a pot over medium heat, sauté chopped onions with olive oil until lightly browned. Add lentils and stir with onions for a minute or two (roasting lentils before cooking gives them extra flavor). Add veggie stock and 6 cups of water. Cover the pot and leave it under low-medium heat for about an hour or until lentils are very tender and creamy. After they have cooked, add cumin, turmeric, salt to taste, and juice of half a lemon. Blend the whole mixture using a blender to make a creamier soup. Garnish with parsley and serve hot.

Shorbet addas or lentil soup is that ultimate comfort food, that Arab super healer to the soul. This dish is often made during the month of Ramadan because its filling, easy, and tasty, but is also made really anytime with any dish. There is just something so comforting about the blend of roasted onion and lentils with the spice of cumin, it feels like warmth.



LENTIL SOUP FOR THE ARAB-AMERICAN SOUL

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Other activities that provide the benefits of self-care that I have noticed as a practice among my fellow Arabs and others who observe our traditional healing practices is smoking hookah. After a long, stressful day, it's not unusual to wind down the day with a nice, relaxing session of argileh (hookah). Let the aroma of your favorite flavored tobacco blended with the burn of your preferred choice of charcoal encircle you in a satisfying cloud of smoke to a comfortable state of relaxation. Argileh or hookah is a staple in the home for many less health conscious Arab Americans to gather with friends and family for a night in of down-time and casual conversation. This is a great way to relieve stress and recharge.

Using henna to beautify has also been a way for me to practice selfcare. In the past, henna was normally reserved for special occasions like weddings, engagements, and the Eid, but it has become a normal practice to get henna done just because. For myself, getting henna done on my hands, arms, and feet just makes me feel better, makes me feel beautiful, and encourage the health of my mental state.

The last piece of self-care I would like to recognize in all my Arab-ness is the making and drinking of coffee and tea. Arabs are heavy coffee and tea drinkers, especially as the inventors of coffee. One special thing I like to do with my kids especially after a long day of work and school, I make a pot of black tea with mint or sage and a cup for each of us. It's a moment for us to talk, get things off our minds, and take in every healing sip.



HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED
TO COMMUNITY?



"Beautiful Fall Colors"
photo series by Karen Paritee

JOY

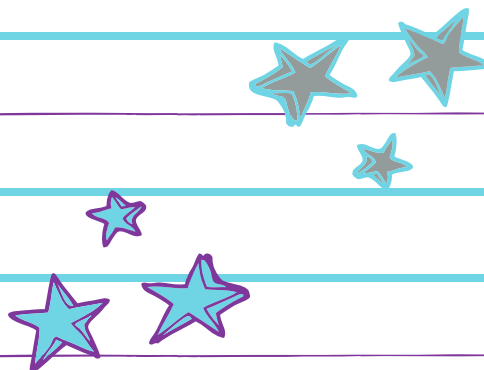
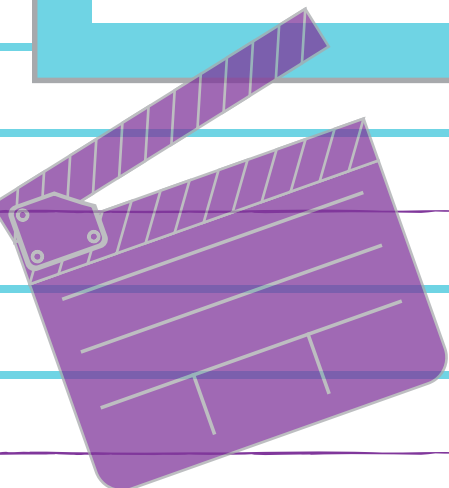
BY PHALGUNA SIDDAPUREDDY

You don't choose the times you live in, but you do choose who you want to be, and you do choose how you want to think. -

Grace Lee Boggs, American Revolutionary

I am thinking about self-care and when it became a part of my life: I believe it has always been a part of my life, even when it may not have been labeled as "self-care." Self-care is not limited to any one thing or one way of practicing it. There is a such a wide range of ways that we can choose self-care as a part of life and at various stages of our lives.

Volunteering plays a big role in my mental and emotional self-care. Over the years, I have loved volunteering at nursing homes and in community kitchens. More than what I gave, I received - in JOY. With COVID-19, my volunteering at a local community kitchen has changed. We used to prepare and serve food in the past, but now we can only prepare the food - and that is okay. I am grateful that we still have this monthly opportunity to prepare meals at a shelter. Another volunteering activity that I enjoy is offering Spiritual educational classes for children within my spiritual group. This is something that keeps me engaged on an ongoing basis through the pandemic. This activity acts as an emotional, mental and spiritual self-care activity for me.



JOY

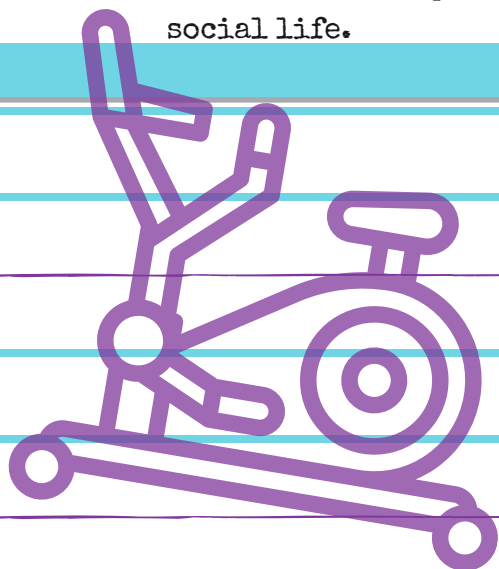
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Without access to gyms, I learned to consciously enjoy taking my dog out for a walk (I did not enjoy taking my dog for a walk earlier) with upbeat Bollywood music. Or I watch an Indian or Pakistani television series while working out on an elliptical three to five times a week, to keep up with my physical well-being.

Daily prayers, listening to spiritual music and discourses, participating in weekly virtual study circle and bhajans (group singing), and mindful self-compassion sessions through a work group have been very helpful in my overall well-being during the pandemic.

I can never forget another important aspect of self-care that I owe to a fellow co-worker - setting boundaries at work. This was something I did not realize I was NOT doing until I was alerted by this very concerned colleague. This colleague reminded me that to provide best survivor-centered services, it is important for me to set healthy boundaries at work and not feel apologetic about it. For this, I will be ever grateful to this colleague. This has been a valuable tool of self-care at work, personal, and social life.

doing what
centers you
and makes you
happy is
self-care



THINK ABOUT A HAPPY MEMORY.
WRITE ABOUT IT, DRAW IT, OR EXPRESS IT IN SOME WAY.
VISIT THIS OFTEN AS MOTIVATION OR INSPIRATION AS YOU
NAVIGATE THROUGH YOUR SELF-CARE JOURNEY.

A large rectangular area with a thick, dark purple border and horizontal blue lines, intended for writing or drawing.

BUTTERED BRAIDS

BY MERKEB YOHANNES

The melodic tune of a krar (a traditional East African stringed instrument) accompanied by a steady staccato beat played on a goat skin covered drum. My five AM alarm. My eyes slowly open and I hum along to the familiar beat as I shake my shoulders to the rhythm and mumble “Alexa, turn off my alarm”. A smile slowly spreads across my face and I think about how horrified my grandmother would be that I am starting my day with secular tunes and a shoulder shimmy! Slowly I reach over the edge of my bed and grab my eyeglasses from my night stand. I quickly press my thumb on my phone and once unlocked the sounds of notifications and awaiting messages compete with the melody of the krar that is still stuck in my head. A quick glance at the clock tells me I am late, its 5:15 AM. I hurriedly open the app and hit the redial button - two rings and I see her smiling face. My Yima. My Mama. My Grandmother.

“Hello, I thought you forgot about me today.” Every day since March 20th this is how she has started our daily conversations. And every time I have responded “How could I forget about you, you’re my favorite person in the world!” Mama fights a grin and quickly changes the topic because speaking directly about affection isn’t a thing we do. Mama peppers me with questions about my health, the family, work, and my general well-being. Like a finely tuned exchange I respond to her questions and reassure her that all is well. “What are you doing?” she asks. “It’s pretty early here, even the roosters are contemplating whether it’s time to crow yet” (a rough translation). “What?! You’ve let the hurriedness of the day conquer you? (rough translation meaning, the day went by and you haven’t done anything), we’ve had lunch and are enjoying coffee.” Some days Mama remembers that we are in different time zones, and other days she doesn’t. Some days Mama will call me by my Mother’s name, and sometimes she knows who I am.



[self] in self-care
doesn't always
mean alone



BUTTERED BRAIDS

CONTINUED...

Not before long, my favorite part of our conversation ensues. A gentle but stern reminder that I'm getting older and need to get married to which I teasingly reply that she'd better work harder on finding me this partner! After our banter, Yima again asks about my health, the family, work, and my general well-being. She isn't repeating this because her memory is failing her. Yima always taught me that asking someone how they are doing once is a courtesy, one that we even extend to strangers. How will they know that you are sincere? Asking someone twice is like inviting them to test the river water with one foot (roughly translated and meaning being consistent helps someone know you are trustworthy). I reluctantly tell her just enough because she knows when I'm lying but not so much that she worries about me while a continent away.

Silence. I worry that I have said too much. In a moment that brings me great amusement, I stifle my giggles as Mama forgets that we are on a video call and puts the phone to her ear. In a most serious tone she quickly rattles off her list of herbs and tells me to make sure I boil this tea and drink it every night for rest and peace of mind. She instructs me to put clarified butter in my hair and with each braid say the recitation of my foremothers. A henna rinse for my feet and legs to ease aching muscles and appreciate the beauty of my femininity. A steam bath in solitude to mediate and reflect. Prayer. But most importantly she says, "and make sure that you tell and share with your neighbor - hard times are hard for all."

One more time she asks me about my health, the family, work, and my general well-being. She isn't repeating this because her memory is failing her. Yima always taught me that you ask the first time to be courteous, a second time to show trustworthiness, and then a third. A third because just as there is no day that goes without the moon or a sunrise, or a sunset - neither should there be a day when a soul should go without hearing the tongue of another soul (roughly translated). And so, my neighbor, how are you? How are you? How are you? May this day be a day when you hear the tongue of another soul.

* *
*
make sure that you tell
and share with your
neighbor... * *
* *



HOW ARE YOU?

Lined writing area with alternating blue and purple horizontal lines.

THANK YOU!



*we are
continuing
a revolution!*



As a community of advocates, we share the honor of walking alongside survivors. As a community we also share the honor of walking alongside one another as we continue the important conversations about how we care for ourselves.

We challenge the norms that tell us that self-care is unachievable and those that exclude BIPOC communities from these conversations. Most importantly, we aspire to amplify the voices of those that are often sidelined or silenced.

The compilation of works in this resource were contributed by members of UMOJA. Like many of you, our words and stories show the vulnerability it takes to embark on the journey of self-care. Inspired by the words of Audre Lorde, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" we are continuing a revolution! We need to care for ourselves to sustain ourselves - its for the sake of our survival!

In Solidarity...

Contributing Authors:

Roderick Bullard | Josef Canaria

Layla Elabed | Jacqy Hippe

Ti'Fani Law | Zahra Mukhtar | Karen Paritee

Phalguna Siddapureddy | Merkeb Yohannes



For more self-care
resources, visit
[http://mcedsv.org/
umoja/public-
resources](http://mcedsv.org/umoja/public-resources)



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