



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

SELF CARE: WHAT IS IT? AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

The term “self-care” gets thrown around a lot these days. It has become a pretty trendy idea, a buzzword, especially given the impact this concept has had on the wellness industry. The consumer side of self-care has many of us convinced that self-care equals regular spa days, wine in the bathtub, expensive vacations, retail therapy, as well as anything else of the treat yourself variety. While all of these things are great and can certainly be aspects of your self-care and self-maintenance true genuine self-care encompasses more than that. Plus self-care does not have to be at such a high financial cost. Let’s be realistic we all don’t have the resources to make all that part of our normal lives! The real question to ask yourself here is “Do you take care of yourself?” I would bet that most of us will instinctively answer “Yes, of course I do.” Now what if asked you a more specific question, such as “How do you take care of yourself?” Well this response I’m guessing may get a bit more complicated.

In essence, self-care is: caring for ourselves! It is really anything that we deliberately do (or refrain from doing) with our own well-being in mind. It means giving ourselves the same grace, compassion, and care that we give to others. I can imagine you may feel yourself slowly starting to cringe. The truth is, a lot of us have a difficult time even considering the concept of self-care. Many of us struggle to wrap our heads around the idea of valuing ourselves enough to intentionally look after ourselves, OR just finding the energy for ourselves! Doing so can feel like a foreign concept or like breaking an unwritten rule. Especially when you have young children, or ANY children for that matter. This reaction is partly because many of us were taught to help others and to put other’s needs ahead of our

own. That’s exactly what we do day in day out for our children/family. While this as a great virtue, I do not believe that this means we have to live a life spent ignoring our own needs. The truth is, we all have needs – emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs. Every single one of us. No one is exempt. Plus, the biggest thing to remember is we are honestly no good to others, if we are ignoring our own needs! We become resentful, exhausted, and ultimately burnt out. Self-care helps us refuel and recharge so we can be there for others. If we are not showing up for ourselves, it becomes increasingly difficult to show up for the people in our lives...especially our children and family.

To break it down, self-care basically means that we are checking-in with ourselves and meeting ourselves where we are at. When we do this, when we tune into ourselves, we recognize that we have different needs depending on the situation and depending on the day. These check-ins make us more aware of our unique needs, which in turn help us cultivate the practices needed to rejuvenate us day in and day out especially as caregivers. Self-care means we are recognizing the relationship we have with ourselves and prioritizing it – this means we have to put in intentional effort to sustain it. Sometimes it means calling ourselves out on the

Cheryl's Corner of Caring

*“Everyone you meet is fighting
a battle you know nothing
about. Be kind. Always.”
(Unknown)*

SELF CARE: WHAT IS IT? AND WHY DO WE NEED IT? CONTINUED...

things we are doing that aren't healthy for us. Sometimes it means forcing ourselves to get out of our own way! Self-care practices are as unique as each of us, there is no one size fits all solution. The good news then is that there really isn't a right or a wrong way to engage in self-care! The key is to make sure you are being intentional with these habits and helping yourself in some way by doing them. The more we practice deliberately caring for our well-being, the more resilient we become, which ultimately helps strengthen our ability to cope with and manage whatever comes our way in life. Especially the day in and day out of caring for our littles. Yes, please!

Now, the fun part. How do we start becoming more conscious and intentional about our self-care? Try and get in the habit of checking in with yourself and listening to what your mind and body tells you that it needs. Remember that it is ok to start small. Is it truly necessary to work through your lunch break? Maybe this can be adjusted. Do you notice that you tend to feel super drained around a specific friend? Maybe re-evaluate the quality of the relationship. Are you beating yourself up for missing your workout class because of spending time with your kids? Maybe try to find a more realistic time or

day of the week to get some movement in your life. At the end of the day, the relationship we have with ourselves is crucial. Many of us do not stop to think about it in this way, but we will spend more time with ourselves than anyone else in our lifetime. Would you like to give yourself permission to cultivate more or less of anything in your life? Remember, you deserve the same grace, compassion, and care that you give to others. I promise, it's ok to care about yourself, too.

SOURCES

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