



## **WRITER'S ROADMAP**

# **—— Roadmap to Radical Self Care ——**

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# What is Self-Care?

Simply put, self-care is the act of taking care of yourself. Self-care is a very broad term and will be defined by each person differently. For one person it might be about doing anything that is fun and exciting, while for another, it is about being quiet and fully relaxed in the moment. Of course, someone else will think it's a combination of both.

A good Self-care routine is an individualized plan of action that will empower you to be mentally, physically and emotionally healthy. It is doing exactly what you need to do to feel your best as a whole person. Everyone has their own ideas about what good self-care means. Some examples of self-care activities might include getting your hair done, ensuring you have time to read each evening before bed or even quitting your exhausting job to find work that gives you joy.

So, self-care is simply doing the things you like to do that help you become a happier and healthier person, but is that the whole story? Not quite.

Many people pay lip service to self-care. They agree that it is important because it can help relieve stress, improve relationships, improve health, etc. The problem is they wait until they are overwhelmed or stressed out before they start following a self-care routine. Worse yet, they stop the self-care when their life calms back down. Then, there are the folks who think self-care is a good idea, but they don't do it at all. They are always waiting for the right time to start or for conditions to be better.

Making a firm commitment to make yourself a priority in your life and take care of yourself on a daily basis, no matter what, is what I refer to as **radical self-care**. This is the kind of self care that will yield the greatest benefits to your health and happiness as an individual, but it is also the kind of self-care that will support you in becoming the very best person, parent, spouse, sibling, and friend you can be.

## How do you start?

Self-awareness is the beginning of any good self-care plan. Ask yourself these questions to start getting some clarity about who you are and what you need. You might even want to pull out a notebook or journal and just write down whatever comes into your mind as you consider these.

- ✓ What are the things I need to do to feel whole as a person?
- ✓ What activities help me relieve stress?
- ✓ What can I eliminate from my daily schedule that is preventing me from taking care of myself?
- ✓ What are some ways I can express myself creatively in my life?

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This is just a start. I'll bet you can come up with some additional questions to answer for yourself as you start thinking more about the areas of your life where you could use a little more TLC. The way you answer these questions will help you determine your self-care needs. As you start coming up with ideas for self-care activities, be sure to jot them down on a piece of paper or record them in a document on your computer. Don't try to just remember them. No idea is silly or trivial. Just write down everything that sounds good to you.

Once you have started your list, you can start adding these self-care activities to your daily and weekly schedule. It doesn't have to be perfect, and you don't have to do everything all at once. ***Just start somewhere and stick to it.*** It doesn't really take a lot to start noticing the benefits of radical self-care.

Remember, your self-care routine is going to be unique to you as an individual. So, what you need to do to take care of yourself won't be the same as your spouse, friends, and family. After your self-care routine is put in place you should gradually start noticing a significant change in your health and overall well-being. My guess is that others will start noticing too.

# Why is Self-Care Important?

As I mentioned earlier, some people acknowledge the benefits of self-care but don't follow through with a good self-care routine for themselves. Two common reasons for this are believing that self-care takes too much time and thinking that self-care is actually selfish. We will take a look at each of these in a moment. However, some people have such low self-esteem that they think they don't deserve to focus on their own self-care. If you happen to believe this way or feel so blue or depressed that you regularly don't care for yourself well, please show yourself the kindness of talking with your doctor or a therapist. Taking care of our mental health is incredibly important, and sometimes we need the help of a professional. No one thinks twice about seeking medical care for a broken arm or the flu, but for some reason, there is still a stigma attached to asking for help if we are depressed. Please give yourself the permission to seek professional help if you or those around you think it is needed. You absolutely deserve to feel better and this would be a wonderful step towards designing your own radical self-care plan.

## What are the benefits of self-care?

There are many wonderful results that can come from practicing radical self-care. Here are a few of the amazing benefits you may experience over time.

- **Increased Positivity** – Adding your self-care activities to your schedule will give you something enjoyable to look forward to. Now when you have a rough day, you can focus on your plan to get your nails done after work or read a good book in total silence before bed. This can make a huge difference in how you act and relate with other people throughout the day.
- **Increased Self-Confidence** – When you are making your own needs a top priority and are doing things that make you feel good, Self-confidence will naturally increase.
- **Improved Immunity** – Self-care allows you to give your body a break from stress, anxiety and emotional trauma which boosts your immune system. Stress and depression can overload your mind and body, so it is important to reduce it as much as possible.
- **Better Relationships** – The more your needs are met the better your relationships with other people will be. When you are feeling down about yourself and don't feel important, chances are good that others will treat you with the same poor regard. When you treat yourself with respect, others usually will too.
- **Higher Productivity** – All the benefits that have been stated above contribute to increased productivity at work and at home: less stress, better immunity, and increased self-confidence. You might surprise yourself at how much you can get done when all of these are at optimum levels.



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**Along with all the good things self-care offers you, there are also some important things it prevents.**

1. **Stress** – Almost everyone lives with some amount of stress in their daily lives, but it's important to reduce this as much as possible. Plenty of medical research shows that stress can cause negative side effects such as headaches, low energy, aches and pains and even insomnia.
2. **Burnout** – Burnout is another form of extreme stress that can result in physical and emotional exhaustion, negativity, lack of enjoyment and the feeling of hopelessness. Burnout typically happens when you are overworked or during events that you feel you can't control. Self-care allows you to take a break from activities that can result in burnout. Even a simple one-minute break where you just close your eyes and breathe, can help reduce this type of situational stress.
3. **Negativity** – Putting everyone else's needs above your own will eventually turn just about anyone into a negative Nellie. Feeling unimportant and that others' needs overshadow yours is a really icky place to be. The real truth is, the more your needs are met in a healthy way, the more others needs will be met too. You will experience less bitterness and resentment towards others and will be able to show them more grace and love if you take care of yourself in a radical way.

## **What are the dangers of neglecting self-care?**

Consistently putting your needs on the back burner inevitably leads to an unhealthy life. If you are not taking care of yourself, it can eventually lead to overwhelming stress, lack of confidence, less productivity and creativity at work/home and can even cause problems in your relationships with family and friends.

Here are a few major warning signs to pay attention to. If you notice these things in your life, it is important to take action before things get worse. Ask for help if you need to, but don't wait. Even small improvements in your self-care practice can give you some respite and allow you to create even more space and time for yourself.

- **Fatigue/Insomnia** – Do you feel like no matter how much sleep you are getting, you still feel tired? Maybe you are tossing and turning and can't sleep at all. Your body is trying to tell you something is wrong, so pay attention and get it checked out. You could have sleep apnea. Talk to your doctor.
- **Feeling Inadequate** – If you ever feel like you are not good enough to do something or just look and feel horrible all the time then you are probably experiencing low self-esteem. Everyone is valuable and worthy of love. You deserve to feel better than this. If you feel this way even after trying to work on it

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yourself for a few weeks, it might be helpful to seek out a counselor or therapist for assistance.

- **Blaming Others** – Have you noticed you are having more disagreements or even fights with family members, friends or even co-workers? Sometimes when people neglect their self-care they feel like the world is against them and it's everyone else's fault but theirs. The truth is you are the only one responsible for your happiness. That can be a hard lesson to accept, but it's a fact.
- **Poor Hygiene** – When you overwork yourself, it is possible that your attention to hygiene is lacking. You may be too tired and skip the shower before bedtime and then wake up too late to get in a shower before work. You might not schedule in enough time to get your laundry done efficiently and run out of clean clothes or underwear. When people don't feel good about themselves, they can also start feeling like it is not important to keep up with their appearance or their hygiene because they feel like it doesn't help them anyway.
- **Poor Relationships** – Negativity, low self-esteem, and feeling fatigue can wreak havoc on your relationships. All these symptoms of self-neglect can alienate you from others and lead you to believe that no one cares about you. The truth is, if you don't care enough about yourself to take care of your own needs, it's going to be difficult to have healthy relationships.
- **Mental Fog** – Mental fog is a combination of confusion, forgetfulness, and lack of focus. It is often associated with a poor diet of high sugar foods and drinks and unhealthy chemicals. If you're experiencing mental fog, try going on a whole food diet and eliminating sugar, starches and processed food. If the fog doesn't lift within a month, seek medical intervention.
- **Addiction** – When people are running on a schedule that doesn't include breaks or enough sleep, they often turn to drugs, medications, food and drink that lead to addictions. Coffee, cigarettes, caffeine pills, high-sugar foods, and drinks are all examples. These addictions all have negative side effects and can take years to reverse.
- **Weight Gain** – High sugar drinks like coffee at your local coffee bar or fast food that you grab on your way home can lead to weight gain. People who are on busy schedules typically forget to eat until they are so hungry, they just resort to whatever is handiest for them, and usually it is not a healthy choice. It is also easy to neglect exercise when you are too busy or overwhelmed. Weight gain can lead to more serious medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes.

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We all have times in our life when we have to sacrifice our own needs to take care of an emergency or get an urgent task done. The problem is when this lack of attention to ourselves becomes our normal way of living. ***You are just as important as anything else in your life.*** Neglecting self-care can cause health problems, horrible moods, depression, relationship problems and can even affect your work and creativity in a negative way. Self-care is imperative for a happy life for you, as well as for your friends and family.

## **Isn't focusing on myself actually selfish?**

Finally, let's look at the elephant in the room. Although this attitude does seem to be slowly changing, self-care is sometimes considered to be a negative or selfish thing by people in our society. You might even feel this way too. This can definitely cause you to feel some resistance to the idea of practicing radical self-care. Many of us were raised with the values of working hard and helping others *before* helping ourselves. Maybe you were even taught that self-care is more of a reward for working hard than something that is vital to your health. But what if the opposite is true? What if self-care actually benefits everyone else around you *because* it benefits you?

## **Put your Oxygen mask on First.**

You might have heard this before, but it's a great example of how self-care works. When you get on a plane, one of the first things they tell you to do is to put your oxygen mask on before you assist others in the event of an emergency. This is not selfish, it's simply logical. If you are having a hard time breathing you won't be able to help others around you, right? So, ultimately both you and the person needing your help are going to face dire consequences if you put them before yourself.

This same story can be interpreted in your everyday life. If you are burned-out or unhappy you won't benefit the people around you. You will do sub par work and maybe even lash out and say things you don't really mean. By simply putting yourself as a priority in your life, you can radically change your emotional well-being, your relationships with friends and family and your productivity and creativity. Radical self-care also allows you to truly discover yourself. Knowing what you enjoy that makes you happy or understanding your passion and purpose in life benefits the people around you too because they get to experience the best possible version of you. Everyone benefits in the end if you will just don your oxygen mask of radical self-care.



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## How do I fit self-care in?

Self-care activities can easily be added into your daily routine without changing much or adding a lot of time to your day. It's not hard if you just keep it simple. Remember that list of self-care ideas you came up with earlier? It's time to pull it out. Don't just do things you think you *should* do or what other people say is important. Do what you know you love and really want to do. Keep in mind that self-care doesn't have to require money or be anything extravagant. Meditating, getting up early, reading a book, or going for a walk are some simple ideas.

Here are a few examples of things you can do to add more self-care into your daily routine. These are just to get you thinking. Look at the items on your own list and see where you can start slipping a few of them into your own schedule each day.

- **Wake up Earlier** – There's magic in the morning. Wake up thirty minutes earlier than normal. Make a cup of coffee or tea and go outside for a breath of fresh air. If you are a little more awake, you might choose to go for a walk, read a good book, pray, meditate or do some journaling. It's totally your call. Just don't do anything that makes you stressed out. This is quiet time just for you.
- **Wait Times** – At some point, we all end up having to wait around for something. Waiting can be very stressful if you don't have a plan. Maybe you are at the doctor's office in the waiting area or waiting in line to pick up your kids from school. Take advantage of this time by bringing a notebook with you. You can do some writing, drawing or journaling. If you prefer you can also play a game like sudoku.
- **Breaks and Naps** – Don't pass up those breaks at work. Get outside and walk for ten minutes. If you are at home and put your kids down for a nap, don't always jump into doing chores. Take advantage of that time and do something for yourself. This might just be the perfect time for you to take a nap too. It's so common to try to fill up every moment of our day with things from our long to-do list. After all, there's always something to be done. The next time you discover you have a few minutes with nothing scheduled, try just stopping, breathing and enjoying the moment.
- **Use Your Self-Care Survival Kit** – We will go over how to create your survival kit in a moment. One way to use this kit is to pull it out an hour before you go to bed and make use of some of the relaxing items you have in there. For instance, you may want to color to bring your blood pressure down or listen to some relaxing music so that you sleep better.
- **Change Up Your Routine** – Sing while you clean the kitchen, dance while you pick up the living room, or see how fast you can fold laundry. Take a different

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route to work and blast some music or listen to an audio book on the way there. It's amazing what one little change can do for your mood and energy level.

- **Cook Something New** – Pick one day of the week to cook something new and exciting. Make meal prep easier by making each day of the week something different like meatless Mondays or taco Tuesdays. Try different recipes for twists on these dishes.
- **Smell Your Food More** – When you sit down to eat, take the time to really enjoy your meal. Slow down. Chew thoroughly. Take the time to savor the taste, texture and smells associated with your food. If you are constantly rushed at mealtimes, start with one meal a day and be very mindful about scheduling more time for it. Once you have one mealtime consistently more relaxed, you can work on the others.
- **Use Your Time Wisely** – Turn on some upbeat music, burn some incense or listen to a recording of your own voice reading some positive affirmations while you get ready for work. This can do wonders for your energy level and your mindset for the day. Doing something like this is especially important if you have a stressful day ahead.
- **Pamper Yourself** – Buy high-quality shampoo, conditioners, and body soap for your showers. Upgrade your body and face lotions. You might even want to stick to healthy organic ingredients for an added boost to your daily pampering.
- **Fidget Toys** – Keeping fidget toys like a fidget spinner or fidget cube in your purse, pocket or handy drawer at home or at work can be a real stress reliever when you are stuck on the phone, caught in traffic or can't do anything else. A stress ball and hand grip are other good ideas as well. This way anytime you feel stressed you can pick one up and play with it without interrupting what you are doing.

## Schedule your self-care.

It may seem impossible to take care of yourself while taking care of a family and keeping up with the house, or while running a business, or working a job. The very best way to handle this is by using your calendar and a daily schedule. If you are not someone who usually uses a planner or calendar give it a try. You'll seriously be shocked at how much more freedom you have when you schedule everything.

Every day, or at the beginning of each week, sit down and find areas that you can put self-care activities on your calendar. Don't just slip them in if you have time. Make time. Rearrange things, move appointments out. Get some things off your plate. You will probably need to make some difficult choices at first to ensure you make time for yourself, but it will get easier over time if you learn how to delegate, say "No" more often, and give yourself permission to let some things go completely.

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Try to schedule your self-care activities as early in the day as possible. Schedule everything even if it feels silly. This can include phone calls with your family and friends, a bath, or even a short nap. Once you have it scheduled stick to it. You would never overlook something on your calendar if it pertained to work or your family so why do that to yourself?

Make sure you schedule in enough time for each activity so you can fully enjoy it. Don't rush these activities, or you will risk turning something that is supposed to release stress, into something stressful. Choose your self-care activities wisely. Don't try to squeeze a 15 minute activity into 5 minutes.

If you haven't been practicing self-care for a while or at all, it can be overwhelming at first to break it down and know where to start. If you find yourself in that situation, you are probably overthinking it. Stop, breathe and remember to keep it simple. Self-care doesn't have to be a major ordeal to make a major difference in your life. a simple change in routine can be exactly what you need. The ideas mentioned here should help you start thinking about other ways you can include self-care activities in your daily routine without throwing your schedule into a tizzy..

## Isn't self-care expensive?

Money may be tight, and you might not currently be able to budget funds for a lot of new things in your life. Don't let this discourage you though. Self-care activities don't have to cost anything. There are plenty of things you can do without spending a dime or by taking advantage of the things you already have on hand. Here are some suggestions for free or inexpensive self-care activities.

- **Nap Time** – Who doesn't enjoy a good nap? Napping doesn't cost you anything but time, and a 30-minute power nap can do wonders for you.
- **Get Moving** – Go for a jog or a nice walk and enjoy spending some time in nature. Live in the city? Go window shopping or mall walking. You don't need to buy anything. The exercise is what's important.
- **Go Outside** – Sit outside on your porch or balcony and read a book or meditate. Breathe in the fresh air or enjoy the sound of rain. Take off your shoes and walk barefoot in the grass whenever you can.
- **Stress Melter** – Put a wet wash cloth in the microwave for a few seconds and use it after you wash your face. Lay down on the couch and feel the warmth and relax for a few minutes until the cloth is cool.

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- **Spa Day** – Look around your cabinets and you'll likely find plenty of ingredients to make into a face mask. Coconut oil, olive oil, avocado, honey, banana, oatmeal, and cucumbers are all great items to use. If you can't spare too many items just add some olive oil to brown sugar and use that as a face and lip scrub.
- **Warm Jammies** – Before you get into the shower or bath, put your pajamas in the dryer. As you bathe, take the time to enjoy the feel of the hot water and scent of your body wash. Just relax. Then once you are done you can slip into your warm cozy pajamas.
- **Talk it Out** – Self-care doesn't have to be lonely. Call some friends or talk to your spouse about your day. Maybe they could use some ideas for their own radical self-care routine too. Share tips and tricks.
- **Journal** – If you don't have a journal, you can use a document on your computer or laptop instead. You can also print out paper journals from templates online. Write about your day or how you have been feeling. Take this time to brainstorm more things you would like to do for yourself. One really powerful journaling technique is to keep a gratitude journal. List 5 to 10 things you are grateful for each evening before bed. These can include even small mundane things that most people take for granted.
- **Watch Netflix** – Catch up on a TV series you've been dying to watch or put on a good scary movie. Nothing wrong with a good binge when you need a break.
- **Dance** – Turn on that radio and get moving. Dancing is fun and is also great exercise. You'll get the benefits of exercise endorphins as well as bring back some happy memories and boost your energy all at the same time.
- **Get Your Game On** – Pull out that old board game of Monopoly or Clue and play with your family. Invite some friends over to play Pictionary or download a free game on your phone like Trivia Crack. Nothing is more fun than laughing with friends.

Got the idea? The list is truly endless and all up to you. Get creative and use your environment and things around you.

## Create your self-care survival kit.

Your self-care survival kit is a personalized box, bag or basket of fun things you can use to pamper yourself. When you are feeling sad, stressed, or just need a little pick-me-up, pull this box out and enjoy. Your survival kit will help you loosen up and relax. Also, making your kit can be just as rewarding as using one. This can be a fun activity to do with friends and family or even just by yourself to unwind.

The first order of business is to find a box or some kind of container to put things in. If you are at home most of the time, you can use a larger box. If you are on the go a lot, you

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may want to create a kit that is easily portable or even create two different kits: one for home and one for the car.

Next, get some things to decorate your kit. Colorful markers, stickers, glitter, ribbons, google eyes...anything that puts a smile on your face is perfect. This can be super crafty and creative or perfectly plain and simple. This is your treasure trove of joy. Your opinion is all that matters.

Now it's time to figure out what items to put in your kit. Essentially you want to fill it with anything that makes you feel good, brings a smile to your face, or relaxes you.

**A good way to help you get started is by using all five senses as you fill your kit. Let's look at a few ideas.**

- **Sight** – Photos of loved ones, a favorite book or magazine, a list of affirmations, postcards from friends and family, or coloring books and markers.
- **Smell** – Scented soy candles, incense, or essential oils.
- **Hearing** – Favorite music CD, an audio book, or a list of your favorite videos on YouTube.
- **Touch** – Any material that you can feel and want to touch: soft, silky things, furry things, warm fluffy things, etc. Avoid textures that make you uncomfortable. Face masks, foot scrubs, calming lotions, stress ball or extra paper or a journal to write poems or thoughts. Silly putty and kinetic sand are other great stress relieving toys.
- **Taste** – Try to avoid high calorie or extremely unhealthy foods. Gum, flavored lip balm, mints and herbal tea bags are all good options.

Again, these are just suggestions. Add whatever you like that gives you joy or helps you relax. Add as many items in each category as you like. If there are certain categories you don't care for, feel free to alter them or delete them altogether. For instance, maybe you want complete quiet when doing these activities, so you might add in some ear plugs instead of music. The whole point is to feel excited when you open this box.

Treat your self-care survival kit like a first-aid kit. Don't hide it away somewhere to collect dust and be forgotten. Keep it out where you can see it every day and easily get to it. This kit is a way to remind yourself that you need time for you. The more you see it the more you will remember that ***you are just as important as everything else going on in your life.*** Eventually, it will become a habit to open up your kit anytime you need some self-care TLC.



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## **Keep going!**

There may be some unsupportive people in your life who will see self-care as selfish or a waste of time, but don't let it stop you. Instead, try to educate them or at least be a good example to them of how to care for themselves. Remember the oxygen mask? Maybe they are just as overwhelmed as you are and don't understand the real value of self-care. Once they see your results, they might just agree with you and even start adding self-care activities to their own schedule. If they don't understand it, there is no point in worrying about what they say. Don't let them stop you from being good to yourself. Your health, happiness, and life matter, and you deserve to give yourself the gift of radical self-care.

# About Nikki



Nikki Brown, ACC is a life coach whose mission is to help writers become heroes of their own journey so they can share their creative work, inspire their readers and make the world a better place. She enjoys working with writers and other creative solopreneurs who have an amazing story to share but just aren't where they want to be or aren't getting there fast enough.

Nikki was born legally blind, so she has a lot of experience in finding new and different ways to overcome challenges. She loves helping others think creatively and break through barriers that have been keeping them from their goals.

You can find out more about Nikki and her work at [www.coachnikkib.com](http://www.coachnikkib.com)