

The Self-Care Handbook

Dr. Ken Druck

(Author, The Real Rules of Life)



Self-care! What's that?

Self-care may seem like a no-brainer. “Rest when you're tired. Eat when you're hungry. Say 'Yes' when you want something, 'No' when you don't. Pee and take coffee breaks when necessary. Go to the doctor (and dentist). Say what you want. And ask others what they want.”

So what's the big deal?

What possible need could there be for a “Self-Care Handbook?”



Self-care is not only the cornerstone of healthy, effective relationships and lifestyle, it is the most underutilized resource in our personal/spiritual growth and wellness toolkits.

Self-Care Deficit (SCD) is also the cause of untold stress, pain, imbalance, illness, disappointment, sorrow and resentment in too many of our lives. It should surprise nobody that SCD is becoming pandemic in a world of increasing demands, pressures,

challenges and technology. Taking care of ourselves, going from a “deficit” to an “abundance” of self-care, is the secret sauce of robust health and resilience.

The cumulative effects of SCD get us into trouble. Ignoring and/or giving token attention to the very things that replenish, rejuvenate and rebalance us holds us back from a better, longer life. Benign self-neglect stands directly in the way of becoming the smarter, kinder, healthier, more loving, grateful, forgiving and enthusiastic version of ourselves. So let's do something about it!

Your invitation to a self-care upgrade! Are you ready?

The motivation to change is not always easy. Deciding to take better care of yourself may come at the point of a crisis when the threat of loss or changes in our marriage, health, family, finances or job force us to reconsider our care needs. Only then do we begin to entertain the possibilities for taking better care of ourselves. But we need not wait for a crisis. The window of opportunity is open at this very moment. So what's standing in your way? Why might you resist change even when you know better?

Those of us with more deeply-rooted challenges may deny we even have a problem. Decisions about self-care when it comes to getting (and staying) sober, for example, are no simple matter. Whether we hit the bottom, or bottom comes up to hit us, recovery from drug addiction or alcoholism must become a devotion. The disheartening struggles to lose weight, stave off anxiety and overcome depression can also be resistant to change. Sometimes we need help and support to move forward. Doing it on our own isn't going to be enough. Self-care also means getting the professional help and personal support we need -- when we need it.

2. Being in an Abusive Relationship with a Controlling Person You Fear

The best, smartest and most loving amongst us sometimes mistakenly end up in hostile, or even abusive, relationships. Any act of self-care or independence is considered a threat. Accused of being “selfish,” and/or “spoiled,” we defer. Taking care of a controlling partner’s (often excessive and unending) needs, walking on eggshells, can cause us to ignore and disallow our own needs, feel helpless and even work our way into a depression.



3. When We Allow Guilt, Shame, Fear and Embarrassment to Shut Us Down

Some of us are prone/predisposed to feeling guilty, as though we’re responsible for how other people feel. We may automatically blame ourselves when things don’t go perfectly. And we shame ourselves for feeling good when they do. Embarrassment, guilt and shame hold us back and keep us down when it comes to self-care.



4. Feelings of Un-deservedness, Unworthiness

Some of us do not feel deserving or worthy of love, care, respect and/or affection. The idea of taking time out just for ourselves is unthinkable. We may have been brought up to believe that it is our job to tend to everyone else’s needs (Type “E”), and automatically disallow our own. Or we grew up thinking poorly of and deny ourselves the love, care, support and attention we need. Not surprisingly, we end up spending much of our time alone.



5. “Never Enough” Perfectionism

Having internalized the belief that “only perfect is OK,” we strive for perfection in everything from parenting to work, to the way we look. We can never do enough to satisfy “the boss” and therefore, we do not deserve to take time out for rewarding, appreciating, replenishing, rebalancing and/or loving ourselves. “Do more, more, more!” is our mantra. Working ourselves into a state of exhaustion, allowing our tanks run on “empty,” we become susceptible to burnout, discouragement and even illness.



6. Fear of Losing Status, Power and Our Identity

In some cultures, including corporate cultures, self-care is shunned as a shameful and self-indulgent. It's no different in many of our families. Long-suffering behaviors, including sleep and food deprivation, excessive overwork, passive neglect of one's health and martyrdom are considered signs of strength, loyalty and sacrifice. Whether we're doing it "for the family," "team" or "company," we allow our fear of losing status, power or identity (as a Mom, Dad, CEO, "favored child" or "family hero") to be the controlling factor in whether and how we take care of ourselves. Allowing our fear to shape our decisions about taking a much-needed break from years of non-stop activity, "pleasing" and caregiving, is the antithesis of good health. Breaking free of these fears allows us to think clearly and independently about how to take genuinely good care of ourselves.



7. Unforgiving, Self-Defeating and Self-Punishing Behavior



Although it's not always easy to see or admit, sometimes we have it in for ourselves. That's right! We have become our own worst enemy. Being at odds with ourselves, if not at war, there's little or no possibility for self-love, no less self-care. Punishing, berating and beating ourselves up for something we did or did not do in the past, is a kind of retribution or payback. It's comparable to being in a courtroom with only a prosecuting attorney. With no judge, jury or lawyer representing us, we're virtually defenseless against our own one-sided accusations. By doing this, we make situations, conditions and circumstances harder, and more painfully

difficult than they need to be. Those of us who fall into this self-destructive pattern of turning opportunities for self-care into ones of self-neglect, often end up portraying ourselves as victims.

8. Please use the space provided below to add something you believe stands in the way of becoming a more self-caring individual. You can also sketch a picture to illustrate what this looks like. _____



SEVEN KEYS TO MASTERING SELF-CARE

Chances are that you, or someone you care about, are reading this because you're ready to make a change. Mastering the practice of self-care is a great starting place. Now that you've become more aware of how things can undermine your efforts, let's embrace the very things that will best insure positive change. What exactly are the keys to mastering self-care?



1. Make the Decision to Change the Way You Take Care of Yourself



Undertaking change of this magnitude and importance takes courage, humility, conviction and a vision of your best possible future. These ingredients allow us to say "Yes!" to ourselves. We have a right to do the things that make life better, easier, less stressful and more joyful. And to say "No" to the people and things that drain and deplete us. Sustainable change requires a promise we make to ourselves, "I will do whatever is necessary to become the better (more self-caring, self-respecting) version of myself." We may not know how we're going to change (deeply ingrained, habitual thinking

and behavior), but we're 100% committed to finding out.

2. Define Your End Goal

Begin to sketch out what you want it all to look and feel like after you have succeeded. Perhaps you're sleeping longer, exercising regularly, eating better and speaking to yourself with greater kindness/compassion. You may be ready to hand in your resignation as someone's doormat, whipping post, dumping ground, enabler, or damage control in favor of a more reciprocal relationship. Or you may be a "pleaser" who is ready to face your own fears about letting people down. Some of us have gotten used to following the elephant around the circus with a shovel. And we are just waking up. Something is shifting inside of us, declaring "Enough!" "It's time!" and we are ripe for a change. Whatever your end goal, take the time to say what it is. Get clear about your desired outcome by writing it down, "The return on my investment of learning greater self-care is _____



_____."

3. Make a List of Things/People You Need to Say “No” to



Write down 15 people and things you need to learn how to say “No” to. Begin each sentence with “The people I need to learn how to say no to _____” or “I need to learn how to say “No” when _____.”

Some of us are born caregivers, pleasers and rescuers. Having spent a good part of our lives zooming in on and taking care of other people’s needs, we almost automatically say “Yes” to those in need. We do this even to the neglect of our own health and well-being. It’s time to stop putting ourselves and the people we cherish at risk, by over-committing ourselves to things that are not in our best interests. Prioritizing and

saying “no” may be painfully hard in the beginning. Old feelings of guilt, obligation and responsibility are hard to kick. After a while however, you will begin to feel 100% better and thank yourself for staying strong. The people who matter will still love you and the ones who depended on you to say “yes” even when it was not right will be somebody else’s problem. The results of learning to say “No” speak (loudly) for themselves.

4. Lighten Your Load, Unburden Yourself and Allow Pleasure

Although it may be terribly unpopular (years of training the people around you that with a little guilt, you’ll do anything), it’s time to begin letting folks know you’re in the process of making a change. Learning to delegate and share/assign responsibility to others, like any new skill, takes time and practice. You may be unaccustomed to the patience, kindness, encouragement and support you get -- or to giving yourself permission to turn off the computer



and take a hot bath. Don’t let the old voices of self-criticism and condemnation weaken your resolve as they once did. Continue to do the things that lighten your heart, and your load. Set yourself free to nurture, pamper, care for, allow, delight in, dance, sing and savor the goodness of life. And give yourself permission to be happy.

5. Listen to Yourself



Sometimes the best source of wise counsel comes from within. Tuning in to the inner voice that tells us to “slow down,” “relax” and/or “take it easy,” gives us the encouragement, strength and guidance we need to take care of ourselves. Listening to the kindest, most patient, supportive, forgiving and nurturing parts of ourselves is always a good thing when it comes to self-care.

6. Find a “Self-Care” Opportunity in Every One of Your Relationships

The choices we make in our relationships are as much a reflection of our willingness and ability to practice self-care as any other factor. Relationships are also one of life’s greatest testing grounds for practicing self-care. Balancing taking care of our relationships with family, aging parents, kids, friends and co-workers, with taking care of ourselves, is one of life’s greatest challenges.

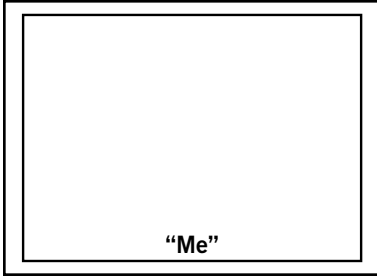


7. Pat Yourself On the Back for a Job Well Done



When it comes to taking better care of yourself, every step forward, including baby steps, is worthy of an encouraging, congratulatory pat on the back. You did it! Despite the fear and resistance that comes with change, you are summoning the courage and strength to become the better, more caring version of yourself. This is difficult (inner and outer) work, not to be taken for granted or glossed over. By stopping and appreciating yourself, you are writing new chapters in “The Care and Feeling of Me.”

My Self-Care Master Plan



It's time to put words and ideas into action. The changes that lead to exceptional results are born here. Please take whatever time you need to write down what you're willing to do to take better care of yourself in the moments, days, weeks, months and years ahead. A few "Sample Actions" have been provided to get you started. Please be concrete, specific and realistic.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-CARE

Sample Actions:

- I will practice speaking to myself with kindness
- I will work on disempowering my saboteurs
- I will keep a "You're worth it!" sign on my desk
- I will meditate, walk in nature and listen to relaxing music

My Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

Sample Actions:

- I will schedule two self-care breaks into my day
- I will begin walking every other day
- I will drop 25 lbs. by next year at this time
- I will schedule regular check-ups with my doctor and dentist

My Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

RELATIONSHIP/FAMILY SELF-CARE

Sample Actions:

- I will say "No" to my Mother-in-law when the time is not right
- I will make time to replenish my marriage
- I will limit the time I spend with people who drain me
- I will clear the air with people I care about

My Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

WORK SELF-CARE

Sample Actions:

- I will tell my boss I'm no longer going to work past 5:30 PM
- I will become a better communicator with my co-workers
- I will begin to more effectively delegate to my subordinates
- I will talk to my supervisor about my future

My Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE

Sample Actions:

- I will read about, attend talks/workshops for spiritual deepening
- I will block time to go to gentle yoga several times a week
- I will spend more time with friends who value spiritual awareness
- I will allow myself more time in silence, solitude and prayer

My Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

OTHER SELF-CARE

Sample Actions:

- I will take quiet time every day after work to decompress
- I will play soft, soothing music every day
- I will not take on any more school, work, neighborhood, or community projects for the rest of the year
- I will redo my "Bucket List" to reflect more of my true needs

My Plan:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Make a copy of your Self-Care Master Plan, keep it where you can see it, share it with your family and friends and add to it as you become aware of new ways you can take care of yourself.

Remember, this plan is a working document, designed to change your life for the better. Do not hide it away where it will accumulate dust. Use it and thrive!

Summary

Self-Care is your hand resting gently on your heart. Giving yourself your due has nothing to do with selfishness, entitlement, arrogance or taking food out of someone else's mouth. It is a gift born of a humble gratitude for the life you have been given and the person you are. While it's great to have a Master Plan and an end goal, self-care is a work in progress. You need not wait until a crisis or the end of life to grant yourself permission for loving care.



My prayer for you, at whatever stage or season of life you happen to be, is to cultivate life-affirming, health-giving self-care practices. May the gentleness, kindness, self-compassion, generosity of heart, forgiveness, permission and peace you're learning to give yourself spread like a warm breeze across the world.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken Druck".

Ken Druck
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About Dr. Ken Druck

Photo by Lisette Omos



A true pioneer in the field of psychology, Dr. Ken Druck has broken new ground in the field of self-care, effective parenting, male psychology, healing after loss, resilience and most recently, courageous aging. His last book, *The Real Rules of Life: Balancing Life's Terms with Your Own*, was published worldwide as are his articles/blogs in major social

media outlets. His forthcoming book on *Courageous Aging* is due to be published in early 2017. Dr. Druck provides expert commentary regularly on CNN and gives keynote speeches across the US on topics including “*Mastering Self-Care*,” “*Transforming Adversity into Opportunity*,” “*Resilient Leadership*” and “*The New Old*.” His Coaching/Consulting practice is based in Del Mar, California where he is widely recognized as a community leader.

To Contact Dr. Ken Druck

Please feel free to contact Dr. Ken Druck with your thoughts, questions and teaching stories about how you've made positive changes in your self-care.

To have Dr. Druck speak at your event or conference, inquire about organizational consulting, schedule an Executive Coaching appointment and/or attend one of his upcoming workshops, please contact info@kendruck.com or call (858) 863-7825.

For a media kit or to find out more about Dr. Druck's books, bio, CD's, “*Small Print of Life*” blogs, You Tube videos and community leadership projects, please go to www.kendruck.com.

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