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Nurturing Leaders & Healing the Healers:

Healing, Joy & Transformative Leadership:
“Caring for Ourselves in Unprecedented Times”

July 23, 2025 ~ Blue Ridge Institute (BRI)



Maame Afon

Whole Woman.

“Transforming Leaders for a Whole World”

African Born & Raised in Ghana, having an American Experience

- Consummate Networker & Connector
- Relationship Architect
- Impact Coach
- Activist & Thought Leader
- Nurturing Leaders
- Hold Space, Shape Experiences via facilitation
- Mother, Mentor, Wife, Woman of Faith
- Inspirational Vocalist (Wholesome Music)
- Contagious Humor & Energy (Spreading Joy)

MAAMEAFON.COM | THEMILTEDGE.COM |
@MAAMEAFON



Learning Outcomes

- Facilitate deep, authentic human connections rooted in joy
- Rediscover each other anew with delighted attention
- Transcend transactional relationships, and move into transformative engagement
- Access tools, strategies and resources for holistic wellbeing -spotlighting care, community and peer support - showing up for each other and the world/future we envision

Connect Authentically, Bring Bravery, & Engage with Care & Candor

When We Gather: How To Be With Each Other

<p>Meet each other where we are</p> <p>Compassionate authenticity</p>	<p>No experts We're all learning</p> <p>Value & support courage</p>	<p>Share time and space equitably</p> <p>Cognizant of access needs</p> <p>Inclusivity focused</p>	<p>Honor different forms of communication</p> <p>Be Intentional & People first centered</p>	<p>Step up, step back</p> <p>Get out of your comfort zone</p> <p>Lean into growth (stretch don't shrink)</p>
<p>Listen generously & with curiosity</p> <p>Share delighted attention</p>	<p>Kind not Nice And not But</p> <p>Engage each other reflecting the world we envision</p>	<p>Hold everything as a purposeful invitation</p> <p>Assume Positive Intent</p>	<p>Sit in each other's stories</p> <p>Comfortable with discomfort</p>	<p>Play: lead with soul & heart</p> <p>50/50 attention to self...to the collective</p>

Acknowledging...

Acknowledgement #1

“The world is overwhelming”

What’s going on in (your world) right now?

What are the things you’re most worried about? What keeps you up at night?

Acknowledgement #2

Universally, Everyone is Dealing with Significant Stressors!

List some stressors...

- Health issues
- aging parents
- kids college tuition
- financial uncertainty
- political disruptions...

You are not in this
alone. Your feelings are
valid and real!

Acknowledgement #3

It feels like there is no end in sight, but....

Remember:

- This is but a season, and this too shall pass - soon the cold will give way to brighter & better days.
- *How we walk through tough seasons matters!* “grow through what you go through”

“Be Careful not to make permanent decisions during temporary seasons.” ~ @MaameAfon

Caring for Ourselves

SelfCare. Self Leadership. Self Compassion.

Selfcare.

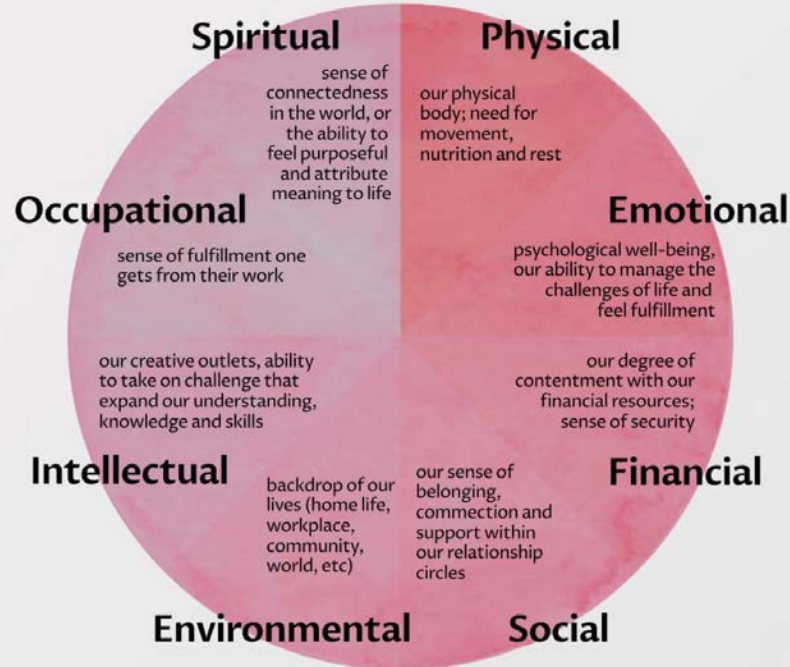
Key Components of Self-Care...Soul-Care

- Building Healthy Boundaries
- Paying Attention to Burnout
- Transforming & Processing Trauma
- Doing the Work to Heal
- Paying Attention to our Mental Health

Selfcare.



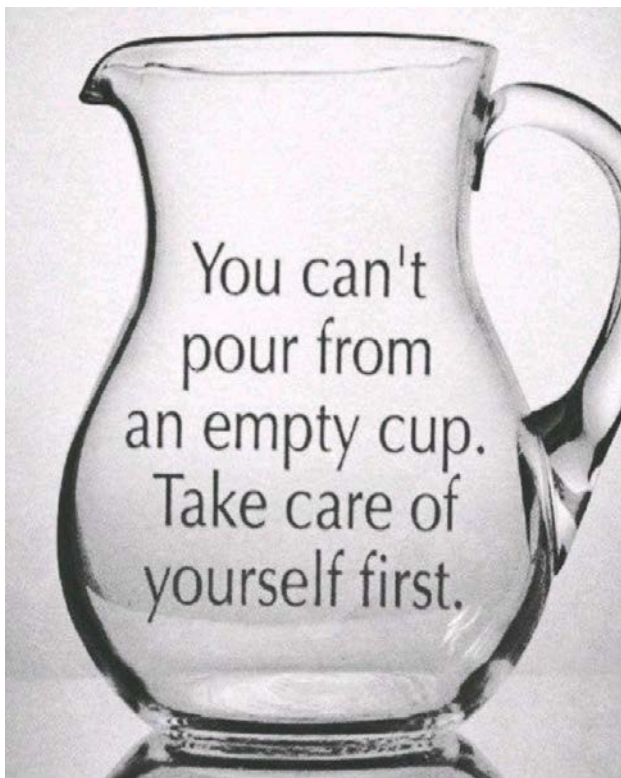
The Dimensions of Wellness



Selfcare.

Self-care is not an “emergency response plan” to be activated when stress becomes overwhelming. Healthy self-care is an intentional way of living where your values, attitudes, and mindful actions become part of your daily routine.





What are things you do
to fill up your vessel?

How do you empty your vessel to
make room for critical things?

Note positive and potential negatives that
we put in and take out of the vessel

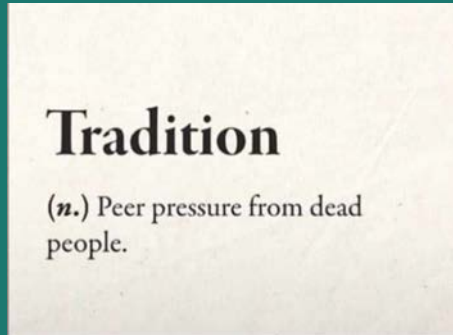
Create Your Selfcare List:

Credit: Lakiba Pittman, 2022

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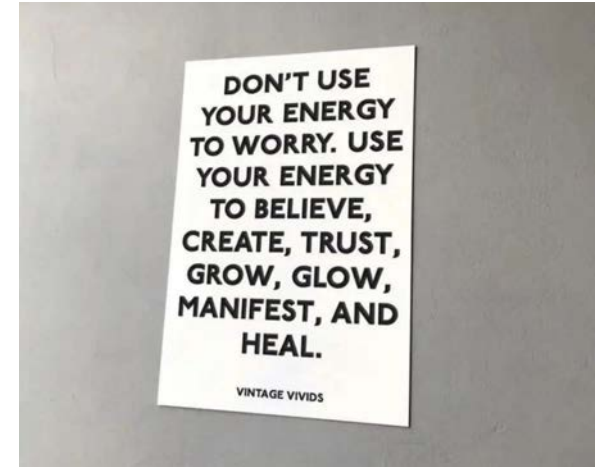
Selfcare Reflection Question

What stands in the way, making us to compromise our wellbeing & selfcare?

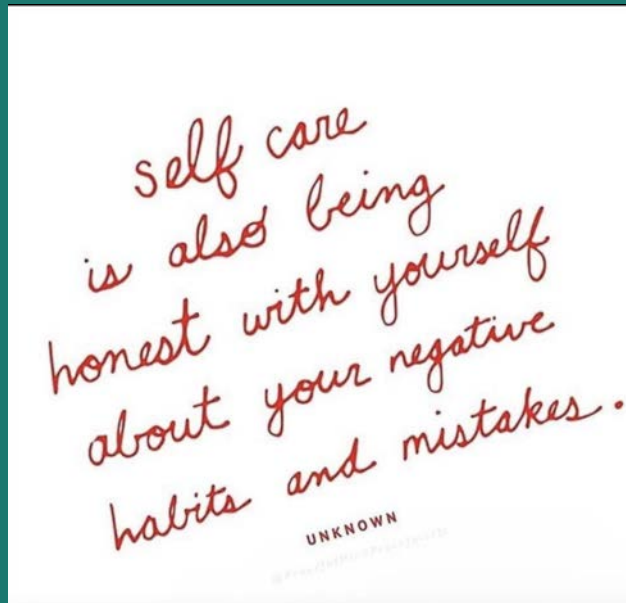
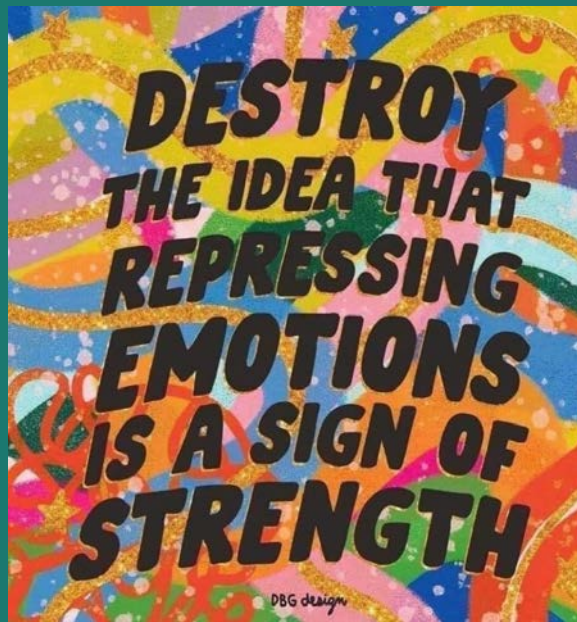


Self Care Assessment Wisdom

- Figure out the roots and origin of the stress
- Consider what you can control—and work on that
- Do what you love - ***passion & purpose driven life***
- Examine how you budget/steward time & energy
- Cultivate and preserve healthy boundaries
- Note the difference between worrying and caring
- Use mistakes as stepping stones to grow
- Don't drown in unrealistic standards of perfection
- Turn failure into fuel for success



Rewiring Our Mindsets for Selfcare



“True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don’t need to regularly escape from.”

BRIANNA WIEST

Deconstruct & Rewire for Selfcare



“Trauma not Transformed becomes Trauma Transferred.”

~ Dr. Tabitha Mpamira

Understanding Your Triggers...

“Avoiding your triggers isn't healing. Healing happens when you're triggered and you're able to move through the pain, the pattern, and the story...and walk your way to a different ending.” ~ Vienna Pharaon

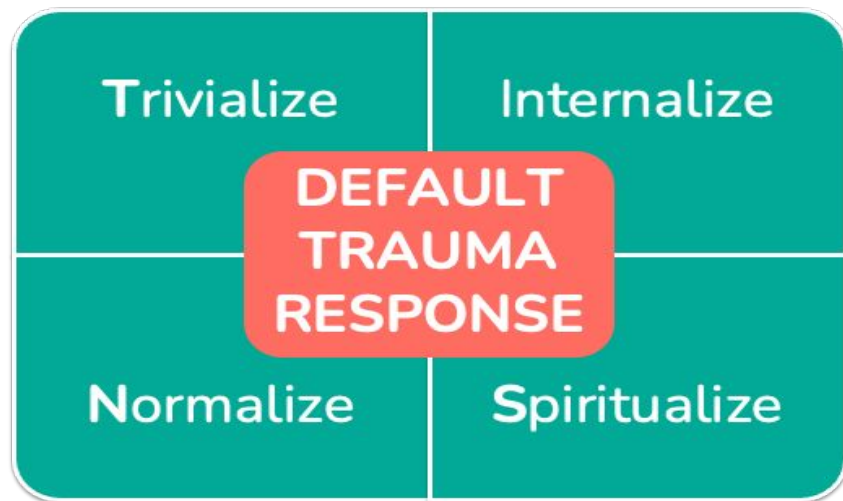


you gotta really take the time to learn yourself. understand your triggers. take note of your weaknesses. take pride in your strengths. confront your limiting beliefs. be clear on who you are outside of other people's projections and assumptions.

Take Action: Through reflection, identify and name some of your own triggers?

Our Response to Trauma...

“We are all **recovering** from the **traumas** of our collective histories; attempting to **unlearn** the **internalized mistruths** we have been told about each other, and ourselves.” This transformation takes time, **patience** and **grace** with **ourselves** and **each other**” - **Maame Afon & Priscilla Ankrah**



The MILT TINS Framework



(5) Types of Trauma Response

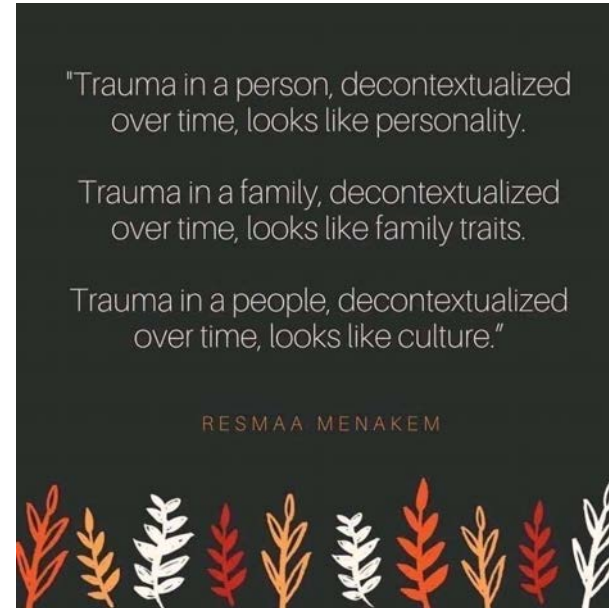
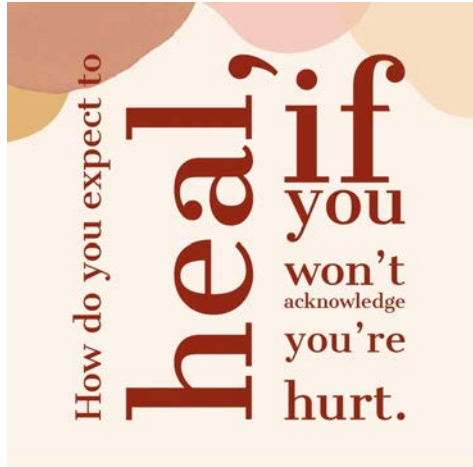
- Fight or Flight
- Fawn or Freeze
- Flock (trauma bonding)

“I prayed and God sent me a therapist”

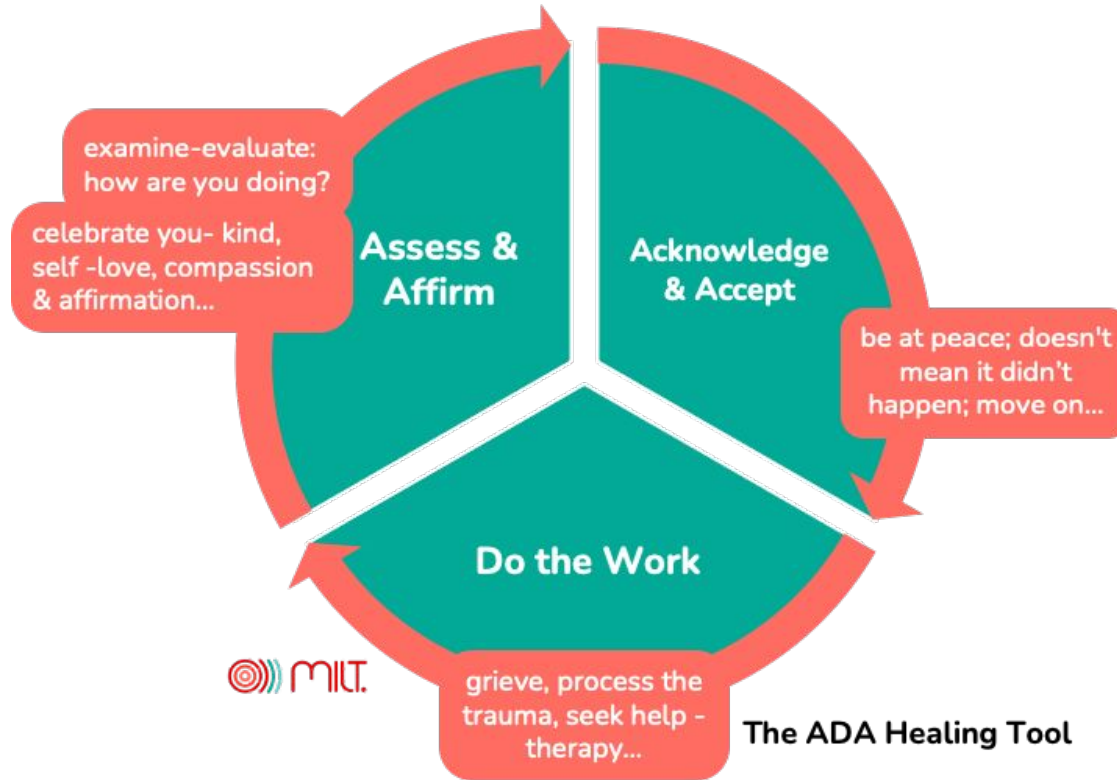
~Edrence Yalley

The transformative Power of Healing

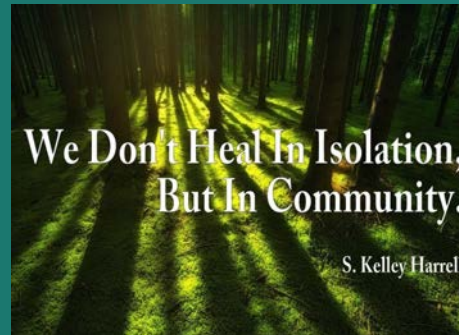
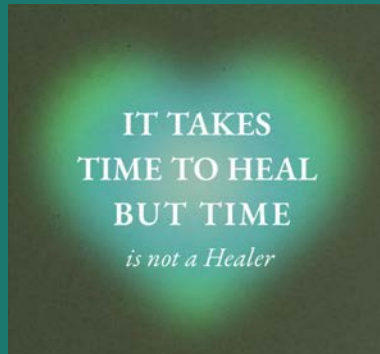
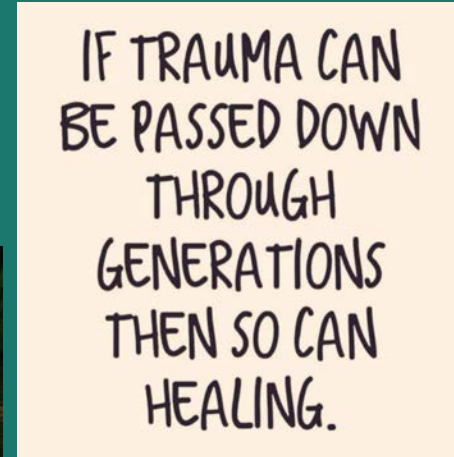
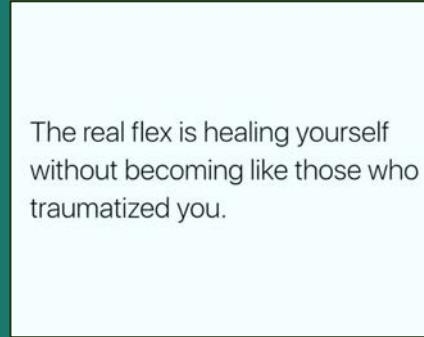
When we don't Heal: What Happens to Unprocessed Trauma?



Framework for Healing



Ultimately...



Self Leadership

Self Leadership

Kind Not Nice!

**Kind leadership is
not about being
“nice”.**

**It's about being
real, honest, and
genuinely caring.**

CHIEF | Debrief

“If you're caught up in toxic niceness, you'll get to a point where you're going to plateau in your leadership. Toxic niceness can put a ceiling on your own potential.”

Kelly Parker

Leadership Consultant

in "Is Niceness the New Red Flag for a Toxic Culture?"

Self Leadership

“a true leader makes sure they are working on being the best version of themselves ~ the journey of leadership starts from within - it starts with you.”



Katy Leeson

@KatyLeeson

You can be committed AND take time off.

You can be a good leader AND delegate tasks.

You can be consistent AND have an occasional “bad day”.

You can be a problem solver AND ask for help.

You can be flexible AND prioritise family.

You can work hard without overworking yourself.



Self Leadership

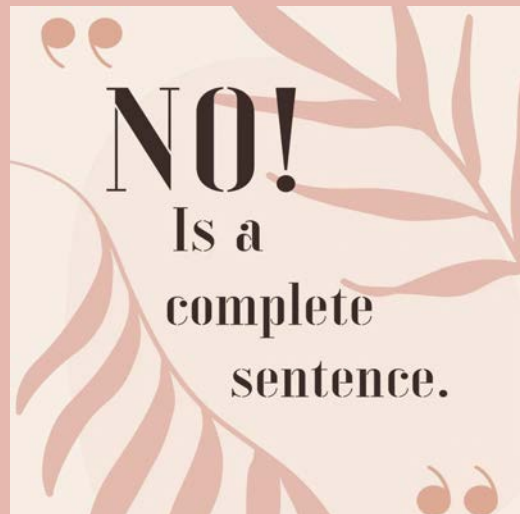
Building Healthy Boundaries - The Power of NO!

PRACTICE A "NO" DIET

For a set period of time, start with "No" to all requests. These phrases may help.

- "Let me look at my schedule and get back to you."
- "I'd like to sleep on it and give you an answer in the morning."
- "Give me a moment to take a few breaths and think about that."
- "Let me check with others and see if that works with what else we have planned."
- "I'd like to say no for now and I'll get back to you if I change my mind."
- "I've got other plans (which might include resting) and won't be able to."
- "It sounds like a great opportunity and I don't like saying no, but I'm going to prioritize handling what I already have on my plate."
- "I'm not really sure what I want right now. Let me take some time to get clear and I will get back to you by ____."

www.conscious.is



"When you say yes to others, make sure you aren't saying no to yourself." –

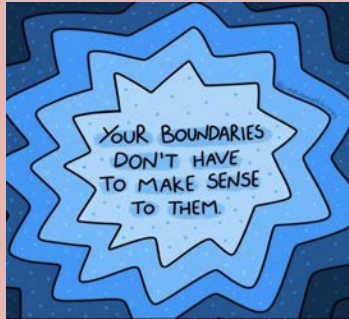
Paulo Coelho

Self Leadership

“a key component of self leadership is the ability to build healthy boundaries”

“Asserting our boundaries is a choice we must make daily and deliberately”

“A boundary is not what you expect of others, but rather what we insist on”



“their reaction to you
holding them accountable
is not your burden to
carry.”

— iambrilliant

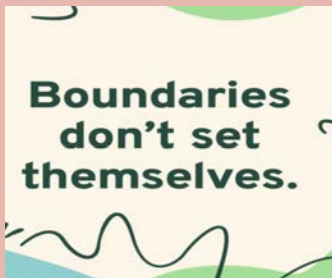
Honor your boundaries.

You can't be everything
to everyone and
nothing to yourself.

- Shane Steele

Self Leadership

“a key component of self leadership is the ability to build healthy boundaries”



Framework for Setting Boundaries



Define

Just like bumpers at the bowling alley, **we need to set our own boundaries** to avoid the gutter.

Building awareness of the boundaries you need will ultimately help you stick to them.

Communicate

Once the boundaries are defined, share what you need. Use “I” statements to communicate what you need to help have authentic conversations around your boundaries.

K.I.S. Principle

Keep it simple.

You don't need to explain or justify how you're feeling.

When you communicate your boundaries, just be persistent, clear, and consistent.

Mind the Boundaries

Make sure you share why your boundaries are important and **have a plan of action if they are not respected.**

It is important to plan ahead to follow through with these actions.

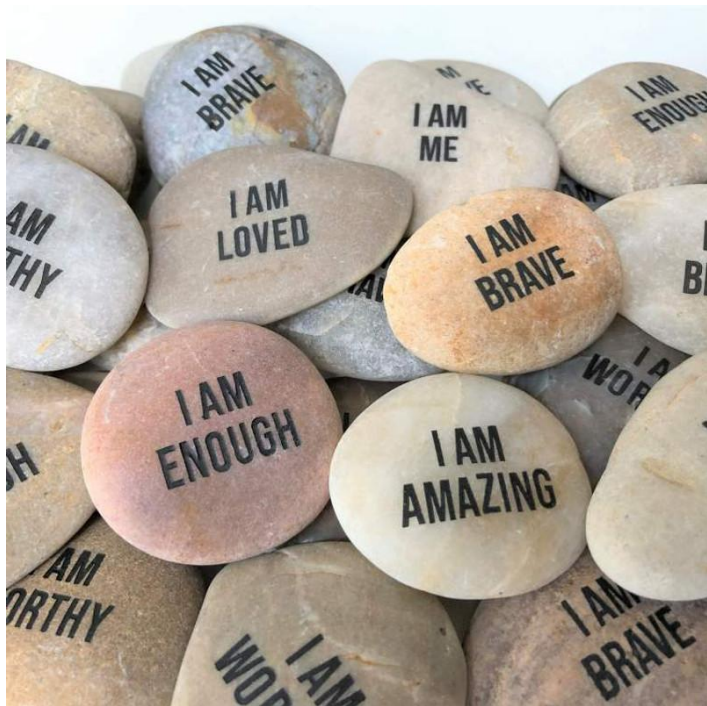
Self Compassion

The Power of Compassionate and Appreciative Language

Discovering your compassionate voice

The Power of Affirmations





Write your Own Affirmations

Start with "I AM" ...

"Self love - be your own best friend"

I AM A WHOLE WOMAN

I am beautiful & gifted
 I am blessed to be a blessing
 I am victorious & I walk in abundance
 I come from strong women
 I am African, black and proud
 I am resourceful and resilient

I am a fierce and passionate advocate for Mama Africa, especially her daughters
 I am royal, I am the daughter of the king
 I am a wonderful mother nurturing amazingly gifted children who will make a difference in the world
 I am the partner and co-creator of an iconic, progressive, phenomenal African man

I am a rare gem, I am one in a million
 I am an amplifier of voices, gifts, talents and purpose

I am not who you say I am:
 I am not aggressive, boisterous, angry, poor, needy or burdensome
 I am not to be trampled upon, or silenced by oppression, fear, racism, xenophobia....
 I am bold & courageous
 I am a whole woman... I am enough

By Maame Afon Yelbert-Sai

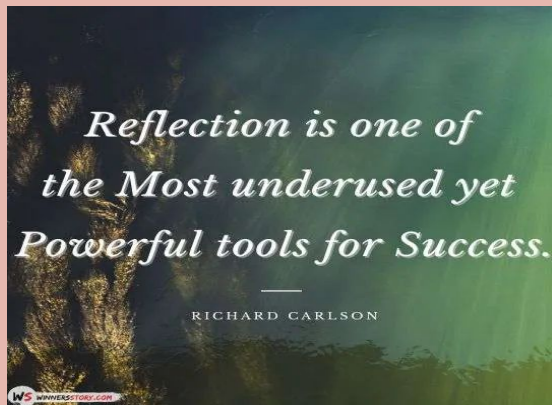
The Power of Joy & Reflection

“Joy is a leadership superpower.”

1. *Reflect and focus on what brings you joy?*
 - a. *What types of work fill your cup?*
 - b. *What types of movements bring you joy?*

What's ONE thing you will add to your Joy Jar today?

Cultivating Joy through the Power of Reflection

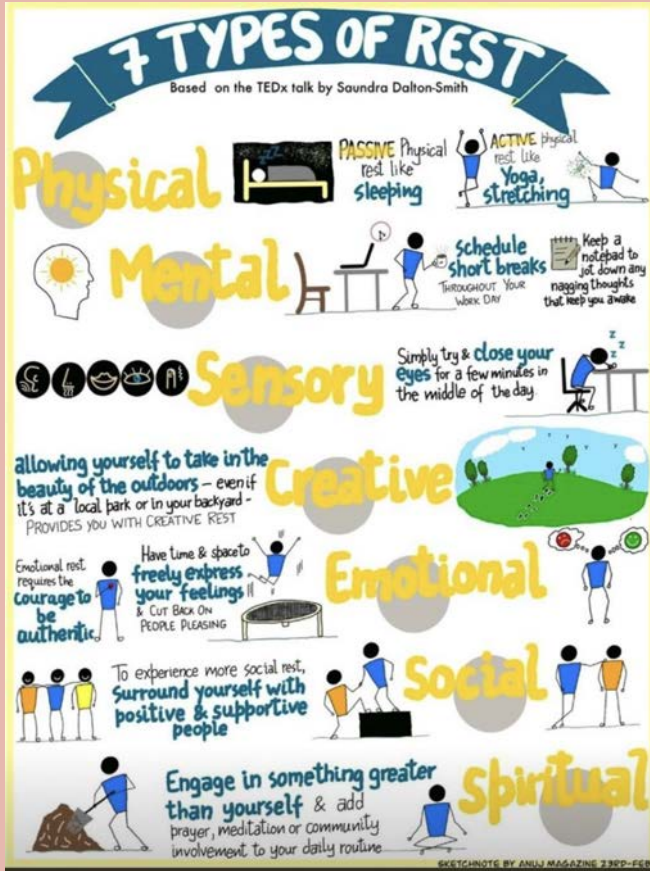


pause

S...L...O...W it all down. Pause from your full calendar and long task list. Take a moment— or ten— to simply be. To remind yourself that this is life, right here and right now. To reacquaint yourself with your pulsing heart and your incredible body that allows you to do all that you do. To remember that life is precious and fragile and should be lived in love. To remind yourself that whatever is happening or wherever you find yourself in your journey, it is all as it is supposed to be.

- Walk the Earth

Cultivating Joy through Laughter & Rest - "rest is resistance"



**Rest when you need to.
Even the ocean lulls
and quiets when the
tide is running low.**

ALISON MALEE

@THRIVE

**The most wasted
of all days is one
without laughter.**

E.E. CUMMINGS

Laughter is Contagious!

Let's Try It. (LOL)

@THRIVE



The Power of Gratitude & Celebration

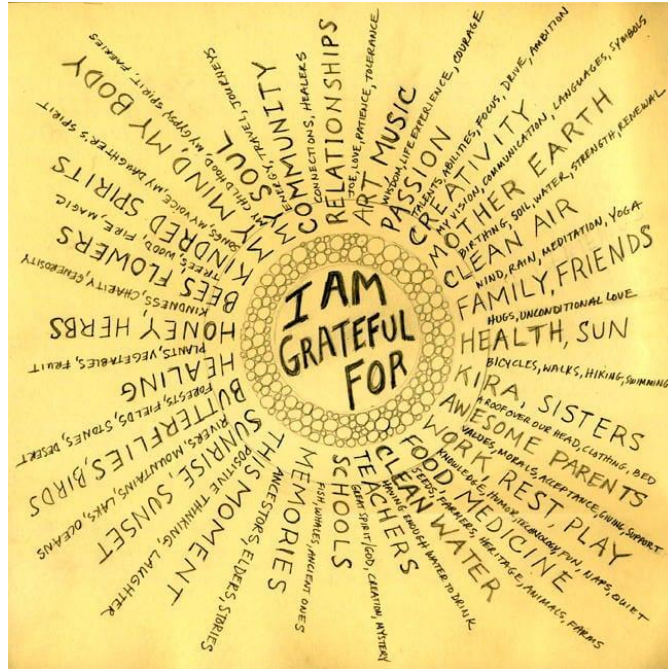
Gratitude
turns
what we
have into
enough.



Gratitude
helps us to
Center the
Present and
Appreciate the
Past.

Journal Prompt

What are you grateful for, big & small? Write a letter of gratitude to yourself



One of the most powerful ways to rewire your brain for more joy and less stress is to focus on gratitude. Here are 10 simple ways to become more grateful:

- 1. Savor, absorb and really pay attention to the good things in your life**
- 2. Remember the challenging things; reflect on the good**
- 3. Write a letter to someone that you are grateful for?**
- 4. Keep a Gratitude Journal**
- 5. Meditate on your Relations**
- 6. Share Your Gratitude with Others**
- 7. Use Visual Reminders**
- 8. Make a Vow to Practice Gratitude**
- 9. Watch Your Language**
- 10. Count your blessings**

attitude
♥ OF ♥
Gratitude



**How do you
celebrate?
What is your
celebration
mantra?**





But did you congratulate
yourself on the progress
that no one knows about?
Honor yourself.

There's a lot that is
good in your life - don't take
it for granted. Don't get so
focused on the struggles that
you miss the gift of
today.

Celebrate your wins, no matter how small.
Celebrate your wins, no matter how small.
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Relevant Resources

1. Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself: Nedra Glover Tawwab
2. Stop Self-Sabotage: *Six Steps to Unlock Your True Motivation, Harness Your Willpower, and Get Out of Your Own Way:* Dr. Judy Ho
3. Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto: Tricia Hersey
4. The Body Keeps The Score- BRAIN, MIND, AND BODY IN THE HEALING OF TRAUMA: Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.

1. [The Nap Ministry](#)
2. [Five to Thrive - Corean Canty](#)
3. <https://pay.thelifeisproject.com/b/00g5klbJW3oCelw4gg>
4. [Consistency for Better Sleep and How to Deal With Insomnia- Morgan Adams](#)



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www.themiltedge.com

www.youtube.com/maameafon

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