“I Will Hold the Stars For You:”
The Precious Legacies of Self-care
by and for Women of Color

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Agreements for this Presentation

- **Confidentiality** people are sharing personal information, in context
- **Active Listening**
- **Respect** for yourself and for everyone else
- **Reflection** is key
- "I" Statements – what you believe or think
- **No putdowns** of yourself or anyone else
- No rescuing
- **Give equal space and share the room, so that all who wish to can participate**
- Accept that there is **no closure today**, or at any other time
Self-care is any (intentional) action you take to care for your mental, emotional, spiritual, physical health and well-being.
Recognizing The Need for Self-care

- Tired or even exhausted
- Stressed
- Feeling undervalued
- Frustrated
- Lack of energy
- Demoralized
Why the talk of self-care and the stars?

The stars have played an important part in many culture of color when talking about health.
Every great dream Begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

– Harriet Tubman
Much of the philosophy and practice around self-care as we think about it today was largely developed by women of color during the Black Liberation and Women’s Liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s.
Because of the emotional and physiological stresses of doing civil rights, anti-racist, liberation, and social justice work, women realized that taking care of themselves - and thereby their communities - needed to be an intentional act.
A frequent discussion among the women of the community:

staying healthy by taking care of one body, mind and spirit.
For many communities of color, cultural wisdom about health, spirituality, and the strength of community has often been provided by women elders.
Everything on Earth has a purpose, every disease a herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence. - Mourning Dove 1888 – 1936 aka Christal or Christine Quintasket, Hum-Ishu-Ma (Okanagan)
The many resources held by women elders, often told through stories and anecdotal examples, pass along history and understanding for particular practices, as well as helpful remedies or ideas that support those in the community seeking to improve their health or simply heal from trauma.
In many instances, female elders link individual health to dreams, which are related to night, which is related to the skies – the moon, the stars, the possibilities of the future, which are related to hopes of health, peace, stability, joy, and longevity for the self, and therefore for the community.
Journalist Aisha Harris, writing in Slate, noted:

Women and people of color viewed controlling their health as a corrective to the failures of a white, patriarchal medical system to properly tend to their needs.

Self-care was “a claiming [of] autonomy over the body as a political act against institutional, technocratic, very racist, and sexist medicine,” Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, an assistant professor at the New School currently writing a book about the history of American fitness culture, told me.
Practicing self-care can be the difference between feeling hopeless and isolated or inspired and optimistic.
The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious.
The desire to reach hearts is wise.
- Maya Angelou
To practice self-care is to make a decision to put yourself at the center of your own life.

You have decided to acknowledge, address and take care of your body’s needs — emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually, among many other ways.
Put aside your guilt.

Put aside your anxiety.

Put aside your fear that to place yourself first in your own life is somehow wrong.
This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from “Self-Care Assessment Worksheet” from Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013). Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide.

www.OlgaPhoenix.com
SELF CARE

- EASE
- REST
- ATTEND TO COMFORT
- PRESENCE
- SUPPORT
- ACCEPTANCE
- AWARENESS
- PLEASURE
- EXPLORATION
- SLOWING DOWN
- FOCUS ON PROCESS
- PRIORITIZING
- COMMUNITY
- MINDFULNESS
- GENTLE
- ADJUSTING ENVIRONMENT
- PATIENCE
- ATTENTION
- KINDNESS
- CURiosity
- TIME
- CHOICE
CARING FOR MYSELF IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, IT IS SELF-PRESERVATION AND THAT IS AN ACT OF POLITICAL WARFARE.

AUDRE LORDE

https://womenofcolormidd.wordpress.com/self-care/
Find creative outlets that feed your passions, empower them.

Strengthen your skills and confidence.
Honor your strengths.

Examine your challenges, and work to improve them.

If it feels wrong, don’t do it.

Trust your instincts.

Stop being so hard on yourself. Give yourself some room to forgive yourself. *Be kind to yourself.*

Make a list of at least 3 positive things you love to do, and do them frequently.

Don’t be afraid to say no.

Don’t be afraid to say yes.
“So many things in the world have happened before. But it's like they never did. Every new thing that happens to a person, it's a first... In that night I felt expansion, as if the world was branching out in shoots and growing faster than the eye could see. I felt smallness, how the earth divided into bits and kept dividing. I felt stars.”

- Louise Edrich, *Love Medicine*
Create strong boundaries.

Rest – set aside time to get enough sleep.

Eat properly – good food is a gift to your body.

Drink lots of water!

Spend time in safe environments.

Mistakes are valuable lessons. Choose to grow from them.

Take specific actions when necessary.

Nurture your dreams.

Never give up on your dreams!
Get support. Ask for help from trusted friends. Let the people who care about you support you as you heal. Let yourself receive. No protests that you don’t need help. Just say “thank you.”


PLAY!
We as women should shine light on our accomplishments and not feel egotistical when we do. It's a way to let the world know that we as women can accomplish great things!

Dolores Huerta

www.fromthevaultradio.org
You can’t force someone to respect you, but you can refuse to be disrespected.
I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for contradictions.

- Maxine Hong Kingston
Self-care:

Let us remember its origins and be more thoughtful of why self-care has become a necessary piece of social justice work.

It is the intentional and thoughtful integration of head, heart and passion into self.

What are your personal forms of self-care?

How do you make sure you use them?

Do you need to add or create additional forms of self-care to your practice?
So you protected yourself and loved small. Picked the tiniest stars out of the sky to own; lay down with head twisted in order to see the loved one . . . . . before you slept.

– Toni Morison, Beloved
Let us take wisdom from the women elders of our communities of color.

Their messages to their communities were healing, energizing, full of vitality and growth.

Let us take the knowledge of the ages and remember the foundational messages they give us.
Self-care is a necessity, and it is lifelong.

Take your time.

Make it your daily practice.
Remember:

Self-care is a marathon, not a sprint.

Women’s Marathon, 2016 Olympics, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
"I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change... I'm changing the things I cannot accept..."
- Angela Davis
Image credit: X-ray: NASA/CXC/SAO; Optical: Detlef Hartmann; Infrared: NASA/JPL-Caltech
Thank you!