

Wellness and Self-Care: Setting Healthy Boundaries and Mindfulness Practices

Oxford Dictionary defines Self-Care as **“The practice of taking action to preserve or improve one’s own health...taking an active role in protecting one’s own wellbeing and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.”** Yes... and I would add that stress and conflict are pretty much a constant in our day to day lives, and over the Holiday season sprinkle in a little bit more chaos! How do we protect and dedicate our time, compassion and energy for self-care?

It seems like it should be simple, almost instinctual, but for many reasons taking care of ourselves is not easy and requires making some tough decisions. It involves some self-reflection and intentional actions to identify and prioritize what we value and design our lives towards these. Research shows that when we align our behaviors with our values, we are more likely to flourish. Navigating through the insane amount of distractions and competing agendas in our overly ‘electronically’ connected busy lives is time consuming and exhausting. We can lose touch with our humanity and with what matters most to us in our lives. Sometimes we stay in this chaotic state until something awful happens to make us realize that placing our wellbeing first is not selfish but necessary for a meaningful life: A value congruent life that is unique to each of us.

In addition to the many foundational self-care practices that promote our wellbeing, the ability to set healthy boundaries empowers us to live our lives authentically. Setting clear limits and saying “No” to requests or commitments that infringe significantly on your personal life or that do not align with your values can be difficult to do but necessary. It will feel uncomfortable and you will risk disappointing others at times, but our time is finite. Leaning into opportunities that excite your passion is awesome but being overextended and resentful of not having any time to pursue the things you love in life is detrimental. This can be simply saying a kind ‘No thank-you’ to another evening Holiday party when you really want to be at home cozying up by the fireplace with family. We work hard and need time to unplug, recharge and incorporate reliable periods of rest throughout the day. Mindfulness practices can also be used to help calm our brains and declutter the nonsense that interferes with what we are wanting to enjoy in life. Simple brief mindfulness tools help create that space, the pause that is necessary to respond compassionately vs. react impulsively over the multitude of frustrations we face in our day to day lives that distract us from what really matters.

Please try to take some intentional time over the Holidays to rest and reflect on your personal wellbeing. Self-care is not about booking a spa day or lighting a candle. It is about fully treating ourselves like we matter. Think about where you are on the spectrum of setting healthy boundaries (rigid to flexible to none) and how potentially setting healthier boundaries may be useful. Seek awareness of what matters most to you and bring your attention to prioritize and live these values. Get your 2019 calendar out and book your vacations and days off for important birthdays, anniversaries, adventures etc. Remember that your birthday at NWP is your personal wellness day to enjoy annually and to celebrate YOU! Check out the attached articles if you are interested in how boundaries and mindfulness can help boost your energy and wellbeing too.

<https://opmed.doximity.com/articles/we-don-t-need-self-care-we-need-boundaries>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/rethink-your-way-the-good-life/201809/why-is-it-so-hard-set-boundaries>

<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/be-more-mindful-at-work>

