



15 SELF-CARE SECRETS HANDBOOK

SELF-CARE SECRET #1: IF YOU WANT THINGS TO BE DIFFERENT, YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Instead of trying another diet, making empty resolutions you won't keep, or berating yourself for not being good enough, what would happen if you allowed yourself to try things that are different and new? What if instead of dieting, you were able to learn how to listen to your body, understand its cravings, and respond in a way that doesn't involve polishing off a whole bag of cookies? The secret to getting different results is to try different things! It sounds simple, but it's the truth. Experiment. Give yourself permission to go against the grain and find what works for you and your body. Look at your experiences as feedback, not as failure. Try something new.

Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. – Albert Einstein

SELF-CARE SECRET #2: GO ORGANIC FOR THE DIRTY DOZEN

Most of us know that organic foods are a great option, but it can sometimes be tough to justify the extra cost. Organic foods are great because they are grown without the use of toxic pesticides and chemicals and recent studies show that they are higher in nutrients than conventionally-grown produce. Fortunately, there's a way to eat organic foods without breaking the bank! Through extensive testing, the Environmental Working Group has determined which fruits and vegetables have the most pesticides and which have the fewest. They've created two lists: one for the "Dirty Dozen", the twelve most polluted fruits and veggies, and a "Clean Fifteen" list which shares the least contaminated veggies and fruits. You can cut down the number of pesticides you're eating by 80% when you stick to buying only organically-grown versions of the "Dirty Dozen". How cool is that? You can access both lists here:

<http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/>

SELF-CARE SECRET #3: DRINK MORE WATER

All life on this planet needs water, and your body is no exception. Your brain is about 70% water, and your body is composed of about 60% water. Even mild dehydration can cause your cells to contract and leads to fatigue, headaches, and other physical ailments. A good rule of thumb is to drink half your body weight in ounces each and every day. For example, if you weigh 140 lbs, you should drink 70 ounces of clean, filtered water per day. Many of my clients discover that simply drinking more water helps with cravings, low energy, insomnia and even weight loss, so be sure to drink up!

SELF-CARE SECRET #4: FIND A WAY TO MOVE YOUR BODY THAT MOVES YOUR SOUL, TOO

Have you ever noticed how most people at the gym don't look happy? When exercise feels like something we're supposed to do instead of something we really want to do, it's really easy to blow it off and move our workouts off our priority list. What if you could find a workout that actually made you WANT to go to it? There are all kinds of different classes and workout programs these days, ranging from Zumba classes, dance classes and Barre classes (a blend of ballet, Pilates and yoga) to boot camp, martial arts and even aerial trapeze classes. Instead of forcing yourself to hit the elliptical machine and suffer through another boring workout, can you find a way to move your body that moves your soul, too? Take a look at your gym's class schedule or look in at the activities available in your community. Head outside for a hike or a brisk walk – the fresh air and sunshine will have you feeling better, too. Commit to trying one new class a week until you find what makes moving your body fun. Express your gratitude for the beautiful body you have, and for all the incredible things it does for you. If you can do that, you'll never have to 'exercise' again.

SELF-CARE SECRET #5: STOCK YOUR PANTRY TO PREVENT FAST FOOD AND TAKEOUT RUNS

A well-stocked pantry is one of my top tips for my clients. Having food at home and ready to go makes it so much easier to stick to your healthy eating plan, especially when you know you always have something that will taste good, satisfy your cravings and doesn't take long to prepare. A can of wild salmon quickly turns into a curried salmon salad to be eaten on crackers or on a big green salad. Sun dried tomatoes, artichokes, garbanzo beans and olives can be mixed into quinoa for a Mediterranean-style salad. Each week when you go to the grocery store, buy a few things that you know you can use to make a quick dinner for those nights when you're tired and you want something that can be pulled together quickly. If you do this, you won't have to rely on fast food or takeout anymore.

SELF-CARE SECRET #6: SCHEDULE YOUR SELF-CARE ON A REGULAR BASIS

At a minimum, you should have one thing each week that you do for fun and that is just for you. It could be an hour at a coffee shop reading the paper, a weekly massage, or something as simple as taking a walk on a weekend morning. **Taking time to re-charge yourself daily, weekly and monthly is your secret weapon to being able to give freely of yourself to others in your life.** Our culture teaches us that it's important to give freely of ourselves, but the truth is that if we only give freely to others and don't re-invest in ourselves, we're going to run out of steam quickly. In fact, I believe that the BEST way to give to others is only AFTER we've given to ourselves. After all, you can't pour from an empty pitcher, and if you're tired and worn out then you're not able to give the best version of yourself to your family, your friends, your work and even your community. However, when we take the time to renew and replenish ourselves, our capacity for giving to others grows, so taking an hour each week for yourself isn't selfish – it actually allows you to show up as your best version of yourself.

SELF-CARE SECRET #7: CREATE A NIGHTLY BEDTIME RITUAL

A nightly bedtime ritual can help you turn off your brain and get your body ready for sleep. If you're prone to insomnia, be sure to leave your computer, tablet and smart phone OUTSIDE of the bedroom. Your bedroom should be a peaceful sanctuary that promotes rest. Before going to bed, take some time to transition out of your day and into a restful state. Perhaps you can read a little, meditate, or, my personal favorite, write in your gratitude journal. I keep a journal in my nightstand and each night I spend 5-10 minutes thinking about my day and writing everything that I'm thankful for – even if some nights the only thing I can come up with is gratitude for a warm bed. Practicing gratitude creates a peaceful state of mind and aids in falling, and staying, asleep.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. – Melody Beattie

SELF-CARE SECRET #8: TAKE A BATH

Baths feel luxurious and seductive, but did you know they can also be good for your health? Adding 2 cups of Epsom salts adds minerals to the bath water, which your body can absorb through the skin. Epsom salts also have detoxifying properties, helping to draw toxins out of your system, so you're doing something that's healthy as well as relaxing. The next time you feel guilty about taking a bath when there's so much other work to be done, remind yourself that it's not just a chance for you to relax, but also an opportunity for you to take care of your health.

SELF-CARE SECRET #9: AIM FOR COMPLETION, NOT PERFECTION

Women tend to believe that everything they accomplish needs to be done perfectly. We compare and despair, we notice what everyone else does well and critique our own work, and we waste a lot of time and energy trying to be 'perfect'. Give yourself permission to aim for completion instead of perfection. So what if you don't have a full 90 minutes to dedicate to your workout today? Head to the gym for 45 minutes instead and do what you can with the time you have. The house isn't perfectly clean? Go ahead and invite your friends over anyway! What you'll remember is how often you laughed, not the cleanliness of your grout. Releasing the need for perfection opens up space for exploration – and that's where the fun is waiting.

**The reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else's highlight reel.
– Steven Furtick**

SELF-CARE SECRET #10: FIND SOMEONE WHO STRETCHES YOU

There are two kinds of people in our lives – those who support us, and those who stretch us. People who support us – our family and friends – are an important part of our lives because they love us just as we are and want us to be happy and safe. People who stretch us want the same for us, but they also want more. **People who stretch us can see what's possible for us, and often hold a bigger vision for us than we are able to hold for ourselves.** Mentors, coaches, teachers and colleagues are often people who can stretch us to our fullest potential. Find someone who can help hold you accountable to your big vision, even when you can't do it for yourself. We all need someone who can pull us forward, show us how to take the next leap, and provide the perspective we need in order to feel the fear and go for it anyway.

SELF-CARE SECRET #11: FIGURE OUT YOUR PERFECT BREAKFAST FOODS

Many of my clients come to me complaining of low energy, fatigue through the day, weight gain, bloating, cravings – all kinds of yucky things! One of the first things I do with all of my clients is what I call the breakfast experiment. Interestingly, many women are setting themselves up for blood sugar disaster by eating yogurt, granola, cereal and other 'health' foods for breakfast. The fact is that these common breakfast items are actually very high in sugar and cause your blood sugar to spike quickly. When this happens first thing in the morning, you're setting yourself up for a day of cravings and energy dips. Instead, spend a week figuring out YOUR perfect breakfast. Eat something different each morning and track what happens through your day. Try different options like yogurt one day, eggs another, a protein smoothie, toast with almond butter, even half a chicken breast if you're up for it. Keep an eye on your energy levels throughout the day and you'll get clear on what you need in the morning to stay focused and strong all day long. And don't be surprised if your perfect breakfast is something non-traditional – it's all about finding what's right for you!

SELF-CARE SECRET #12: INSTEAD OF THE OBSTACLE, FIND THE OPPORTUNITY

This mindset shift can save you years of heartache and pain. Everyone has obstacles they face, and it's hard to argue who is having a tougher experience when it comes to suffering and struggles. However, even in the most painful moments, there's a lesson to be learned – the opportunity within the obstacle. Sometimes the opportunity is easy to find, other times it can take time and patience to truly understand. Trust that there ALWAYS is an opportunity presented along with every obstacle and you'll find that you move through the challenges in your life much more quickly and smoothly.

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. – Winston Churchill

SELF-CARE SECRET #13: FIND A WAY TO MAKE HEALTHY LIVING PART OF YOUR JOURNEY, NOT YOUR DESTINATION

Being healthy is not a destination; instead, it's a way of life. In fact, the most surefire way to be healthy is to make healthy choices part of your life, rather than something you do only some of the time or only do in order to reach a specific goal. However, this doesn't mean you need to change everything overnight. In fact, I've found the best way to make lasting change when it comes to healthier living is to take it week by week. Each week, decide on ONE thing (and only one) that you can do to be healthier that week. Is it drinking more water? Finding your perfect breakfast? Making sure that half your plate is full of vegetables at lunch and dinner? When you pick up one good habit each week (or drop one bad one), at the end of the year you've made 52 changes toward living a healthier life. Now *that* really adds up!

SELF-CARE SECRET #14: GET BACK TO THE BASICS TO FIND YOUR GLOW

Instead of overhauling your whole life and making drastic changes to get into your glow, what would happen if you went back to the basics and took it one step at a time? Remember, you can't just flip a switch and have everything be different. Finding your glow and taking really good care of yourself is a process. Start keeping track of when you feel great, and when you get stuck. Can you find patterns of what knocks you out of your glow? Identifying what puts you outside of your glow zone is the first step to getting really good at getting back into your glow in the shortest amount of time possible. Once you've gotten clear about this, ask yourself: what is the most basic step I can take to get back into my glow? Over time, this reaction will get faster and faster. Every journey begins with a single step – take some time to explore what your first steps could be.

SELF-CARE SECRET #15: DO THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOUR HEART SING

This one is a no-brainer – doing things that make you happy is the highest form of self-care. Try to think of the last time you were really, truly happy. What felt possible when you were in that space of joy? If you can't remember what makes you really happy, it's time for you to have an infusion of fun - and right away! Try re-visiting childhood activities like roller skating, jump roping, bowling, reading comic books, dancing like a maniac to your favorite song – whatever you used to do that felt like a lot of fun is a great starting point to finding your bliss now. Having fun is a great way to renew and recharge your spirit. Aim to have fun at least once a week, if not daily.

**Every single day, do something that makes your heart sing.
– Marcia Wieder**

MY SELF-CARE ACTION PLAN:

1. One thing I'm already doing well when it comes to self-care is:
2. When it comes to self-care, I really want to be better about:
3. I commit to taking the following action to improve my self-care over the next week:

I need the following support to make this happen:

4. I commit to taking the following action to improve my self-care over the next month:

I need the following support to make this happen:

Signed:

Date:

Bonus tip: Put a reminder in your calendar for a month from today to re-visit this action plan to see how you did. If you've done everything on your list, congratulations! Do this exercise again for the next month. If you didn't reach all your goals, it's okay. Take a minute to figure out what went wrong and how you can put support in place to help you achieve your goals in the next month. Remember, this is a learning process, and every single step you take will be worth the effort in the long run.

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