

Episode: The Self Care Myth



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Episode: The Self Care Myth

Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hey friend, welcome back to the podcast. Today we are going to talk about self care. This is something I'm really passionate about, and I think is so confused and misguided and taught incorrectly. So I teach self care in a very different way than what you will see from a lot of other teachers and coaches.

And I want you to use this podcast as a lens through which you can make decisions for yourself with respect to self care. So self care is not avoiding your life. It is not hating yourself. It is not over pleasuring yourself to feel better. It is not blaming other people. Right. And when I say it like that, it makes so much sense, right? You're like, yes, I agree with that so far. But what about the way that you talk to yourself? What about when you beat yourself up? What about when you say, I can't deal with that right now and you go take a bath or read a book and try to avoid what you're thinking about, or what's bothering you.

A lot of times, self care is taught through actions. Someone will say, or you'll read a blog post on Pinterest. If you're like me, that will say, here are 10 steps to self care and it's, you know, make time for yourself and take a bath and take care of your body. And they give you all of the actions to take. And we love actions, right? Because actions create results.

But here's the thing. If you go and get a manicure or a new outfit or read a book and you do the action that someone says is self care, quote unquote, and you don't look at your thoughts or feelings behind the action. Even if you feel a little bit of relief, because you've now changed your circumstance and are no longer experiencing the discomfort you were before, eventually that will come back. So let's say that you are feeling a lot of disappointment or frustration or some other negative emotion.

Maybe you think you're overworking, whatever the case may be and you decide, okay, I want to take care of myself. I want to do this better. I think I should go get a manicure. Take my mind off this, go do something else externally where you change your circumstance. You take action. Maybe it's read a book. It could be something that seems so well-intended. And like you're taking care of yourself.

What will happen is you'll go do that other thing. And then you might even feel a little bit better because you sought something external. It could be going out to dinner or eating a piece of cake or having a glass of wine. Right? But then the next day that comes back, the problem comes back. You haven't solved the actual problem. You have not examined your mind. So these actions can be useful and they can be a part of your self care routine.

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Only if you are first doing the thought work and the feeling work that comes before the actions, right? So if I tell you, Hey, take care of yourself, go take a bubble bath and get a good night's sleep and go get a manicure. And you do all those things, but you don't look at your mind. The next day maybe you feel refreshed from a good night's sleep, but then as soon as you start thinking about whatever it was, that was bothering you, it comes back.

So what I want you to do is think of self care as making decisions in your best interest, it is examining your life and being aware of your thoughts and feelings. So self care includes coaching yourself. It includes the thoughts that you have about you, how you feel about yourself. It includes telling the truth about yourself and to yourself and not people pleasing, right?

It's how you treat yourself. I find that the way I teach self confidence and self accountability is so different than how other people teach it. And you could kind of include those terms under the umbrella of self care. And what I teach is that you get to decide deliberately how to think about you and whether you show up for you.

So are you having your own back and saying, you know what, I'm doing my best. I got this. I'm amazing. And you're amazing. I can do hard things. I made a mistake. Let's look and see what happened. I'm going to show up for myself. So many of us will show up for everyone else, but we don't show up for ourselves. We don't have our own backs. We don't take responsibility for how we think and feel that is self care. I think that the biggest thought or idea or philosophy underlying the difference between how I teach self care and how other people teach self care is this, that self care should always feel good.

Right? So if you think about the term self care, without really thinking about it more intentionally, you might borrow someone else's ideas that you got from a post where they're telling you actions to take. So you might think that self care is action-based and that it should feel good all the time. But what about when you're on a food plan and you've decided that you are not going to eat sweets, or you're not going to eat after 7:00 PM and it's 8:00 PM and you have the urge to go into the refrigerator, and eat a cookie.

Self care is not eating the cookie. And that does not feel good, right? What you're doing there is you're deciding to do what's in your best interest, even if, and especially if it's challenging. So you make the decision ahead of time from your prefrontal cortex about what you're going to eat. And then you eat only that, and it's hard and you lean in and you love yourself. And you say, I know this is hard right now. I know this is hard. And I know I'm doing hard things. And I know I'm stronger than I think that is self care.

A lot of times we think that self care is seeking some sort of external pleasure to make us feel good in the moment that is not self care. Okay. But self care also doesn't mean that you're always going, going, going, right. It's this idea that you take care of self and for everyone, that's going to

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mean different things. So for some of you, you want to set big, massive goals. And for others of you, you don't, and that's okay. But the point is that you decide on purpose, what you want to do with your life, with your year, you know, with your week and with your day.

And then you do it. You hook up your future self by eating on your food plan. Or if you're someone who wants to get married and meet your future husband, I remember dating and online dating, and it doesn't always feel so good. It's something that I teach very differently than others as well. It's where you have to prioritize that. Just like any other goal or focus that you really care about.

And it doesn't always feel good. So are you willing to prioritize yourself and your future, even when it's hard and you don't feel like it in the moment? Okay. That is self care. Self care is also self confidence and self love. So self-confidence, we'll talk about more in another episode, but it's when you have a high opinion of yourself and your ability to go do something, right? So I believe I'm going to make a million dollars.

I hold that opinion. Right? I also believe that I don't know everything, but I believe I can figure everything out that I want to figure out. Right. I'm always like, I don't know how, but I'm doing it right. I have confidence in myself. Self-love is appreciating yourself and judging yourself less and feeling love toward yourself. That is taking care of yourself. I know that we are consumerists including myself, but I think that when we think of self care, it's most important to separate out things that we like and our consumer habits from self care.

So I am the first to admit and say kind of confidently that I like to go get my hair done. I like to buy an outfit that I think reflects my personality and my identity. I like to get a mani pedi. There's nothing wrong with that. I genuinely like those things. Right?

But that is only self care if I've decided, Hey, I really like to take care of my body. I like to buy these clothes that I feel really good in right? Doing it from that place is self care. Now, now that I'm teaching you this, you will have the consciousness to do that. But most people on default, especially my Grow You members who are on weight loss journeys, they learned this concept for the first time, because I teach them to buy new clothes now, before they've lost the weight, right?

They want to wait until they've accepted their body at a lower weight, right? They want to wait to buy the clothes until they've lost the weight. And I say, no, buy the clothes now do it from a place of, I love my body. I'm taking care of my body. I'm getting ready every day.

I love that I can afford to buy clothes. And when I'm done with them in a year, how amazing is it that I get to donate those clothes? It's not a waste. I'm not a waste, right? But you have to have this consciousness and this awareness behind the action.

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So it's not that any action in and of itself is going to be self care or not. It's your thoughts and feelings behind the action. So if I go with my girlfriend to get a mani pedi, and I am doing it from a place of, Oh my gosh, I hate what's going on in my life. I just want to avoid it all. And she's doing it from a place of, I really enjoy taking care of myself by getting a mani and pedi. And it feels good. And this is an, a value add to my life, right?

She is taking care of herself by getting the mani pedi. I am not. And you can apply this to everything. You can apply it to things that feel good. Like maybe the mani/pedi, if that's pleasurable to you, or you can apply it to things that you've decided to do, that don't necessarily feel good, right? That can be the eating on the food plan. Or maybe it's getting up on Saturday morning at 5:00 AM and working on your business or not buying something, right?

Because you want to stay on your budget. That is self care. It's honoring your decisions and doing what you say you're going to do, right? It's that self-accountability. Self care is also approaching yourself with compassion and curiosity. I see this a lot with my money mindset girls in Grow You who are working hard on those money mindsets. They beat themselves up for past financial decisions.

So they'll say it was really ridiculous. I got into \$10,000 of credit card debt, and I can't believe I did that. And I just want to know the fastest way to get out. And what I teach and what I say is, well, let's think about it. Let's approach yourself with compassion and curiosity. Go back to the time when you were getting into credit card debt, what were you thinking at that time?

I truly believe that everyone is taking action from a place of thinking that they're doing what's best for them in that moment. So you probably had what you thought was a good reason, even if that reason was simply that you thought it would make you feel better, right? Maybe you were just confused. You thought that feeling better came from buying things. And now, you know, that's not true. So now you're going to change your mind, but you're not going to hate your past self.

So you're going to say, you know what? In the past I was confused about where my feelings came from. I thought they came from buying things and now I know that's not true. I can see how confused I was. I get it. I love me. I love that I got to this point and I learned the truth. And now I get to go on this journey of getting out of debt and I'm going to grow. How can I do that now?

So it's this shift from beating yourself up to seeking understanding of yourself and genuinely caring. I think it's easiest to think about self care. If you think about someone you genuinely care deeply about if it's your spouse, if it's your father, if it's your daughter, it could be your puppy, right? It could be anyone in your life that you genuinely just care so much about.

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Think about the thoughts you have about them, and then flip them around and have those same thoughts about you. So when you think about this person, do you always give them the benefit of the doubt? It's like, Oh, I'm sure my brother had a really good reason for not calling. He was probably busy in the O R or something like that.

It's this idea that we often find it easier to care about someone else than we do about ourselves and noticing that you can start to change the conversation that you're having in your mind. So think about the relationship you have with yourself. If your relationship could talk, what would it say? Do you examine your thoughts? Do you process your emotions? Do you do your best and have your own back? Do you make time for yourself to think? What about your relationship with your body? What do you put in it? What do you say about your body? What thoughts do you have about it? Think about your relationship with your current life and your current results.

What results do you have? What are your thoughts about those results? What about your relationship with your future self? Are you hooking up your future self? I think about this in terms of drinking. I think it's going to be so amazing in 10 years when I can say that I quit drinking 10 years ago, like, think about that. I'm changing the trajectory of my entire life, my body, same thing with my business.

Same thing with food, right? Sugar for me is harder than the alcohol was. So I think about, is it worth it? And I think about, do I really want it? And then I about, okay, in 10 years, if I've really reduced the amount of sugar and I'm not eating sweets at all, that'll be 10 years without eating sweets. Right. And to me, when I think about that, it's so worth it for me to say no to the Twizzlers or the red vines, instead of just thinking in the moment, Oh, well, my day was hard and I kind of want this.

I know it'll make me feel better. Right? That's the old thinking that I used to have before awareness. And when I'm thinking, Oh, I want to take care of myself. What does that look like here? If ever I'm feeling kind of dirty pain, what I call it in Grow You it's a life coaching concept, right? It's the difference between pain and suffering. So whenever I'm suffering and I'm feeling that dirty pain, I remind myself, Oh yeah. It's time to coach myself.

And I have a brain just like you. And as long as I am living, I will have this brain. Am I spending my time in part, coaching myself, taking care of my mind, being a part of a life coaching program. That to me is self care. So I started this podcast talking about this self care myth and how most of us just think it's actions, it's taking a bubble bath, lighting a candle, going on a walk, getting a mani pedi, fill in the blank, whatever you've read about that, are actions and the problem with that is if you're doing it without examining your thoughts and feelings, it's more of an escape of your current thoughts and feelings instead of an action.

That's coming from a thought that, hey, this is how I want to take care of myself. And what I want to kind of end with is five small ways that you can practice self care. But I want to be

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careful that you take it as directive, but make sure that you are managing your mind and doing it from a place of I'm doing this to take care of myself because I love myself. Okay.

So the first thing that you can do to practice self care is to ask yourself the question, anytime you're faced with a decision. If I loved myself, what would I do? So I did want some candy the other night, some red vines, in fact, and I decided that I was going to wait until the morning to redecide. If I wanted to change my commitment to not eating sweets. Okay. This is an example of asking if I loved myself, what would I do here?

Right? Because my primitive brain gave me all the evidence of why having a few pieces of candy, was a totally fine idea. I'm not going to lose weight. I'm not even trying to lose weight. I'm healthy. It's not going to hurt anything. What's the big deal. Right? All of those thoughts, my brain was just tired and looking for evidence of how this is a good idea.

And in that situation saying, you know, if I loved myself here, what would I do? The answer was redecide in the morning, because for me, I don't have sugar cravings in the morning. So I want to make sure that I'm planning my food and my sugar from a place of having a really clear head. So whenever you are faced with a decision, especially in the moment, ask yourself if I loved myself, what would I do? This is a really good one to ask for people pleasing as well.

When someone wants you to do something. And you're not sure whether to do it or not ask yourself, what would love do here? If I loved myself, what would I do? Right? It's not just loving the other person because you can love the other person and say, no. It's like, hey, I love you. And no, right? I also love me. So the answer is no.

The second way to practice self care right now is to go on a rampage of appreciation. Every time you're in the shower. Now I made up every time you're in the shower, because I think that it's a trigger that we all do daily. So you don't have to do every day we're in the shower. But I think that it can be really fun. It's even more powerful if you write it down, but some of you will say, well, I'm really busy.

Maybe I'll get to that. It's not really important. Right? And so notice that you're not prioritizing that for yourself, but you will shower every day, probably every day or every other day. In the shower can you just go on a rampage in your mind or say out loud, all the things that you love about yourself, not from a place of being better than which is arrogance and comes from insecurity, but from a place of true love where you're loving yourself and you're loving the other humans, right?

Because our brains just are constantly scanning for negativity to keep us alive. And that means we're finding our faults all day, like, Oh, I made a mistake. Should I have done that? Shouldn't I have done that. And we get into this self-loathing and self pity, and we don't even realize we're

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doing it. So if you have a rampage of appreciation for yourself, you are directing your thoughts to take care of you.

I love how ambitious I am. I love how passionate I am. I love how much I love my clients. I love that I don't drink. I love that. I'm doing my best. Right? I love that. I found my love, right, Steve, my romantic love. So direct your brain to things that you love and really know that it is safe. And it's a very good thing for you to be thinking, thoughts about you. That take care of you.

The third way you can practice self care right now is any time that your brain says something negative about you and is basically self-critical. And you're sort of beating yourself up. I want you to, instead of trying to go to a neutral thought, say something else, that's the opposite. And also true. So if your brain tells you that you're not likely to get this new job, it just pops into your head. Yeah. Well, I'm probably not going to get this new job. I want you to talk back to your brain and say something that you do believe that is true, such as well, I've gotten jobs in the past. So for every negative, you tell it a positive.

If your brain says, Oh, you did that wrong, you say to yourself, well, it's also true that I did my best. This works really well because it gets you out of this negativity, especially if you're in the middle of the day. And it's not a time where you can do thought work. If your brain comes up with, Oh, I shouldn't have said that. You could say something like, well, it was well-intended right? Just something that's the ying and the yang where every time your brain comes up with something negative, you say the opposite, but it has to be something that you believe to be true.

The fourth way that you can practice self care is to start doing what you say you're going to do. No matter what, very passionate about this topic, we will talk more about it in the self-accountability episode coming up. But I want you to schedule something small on your calendar every day and do it and do it just for you. I think that when you become someone who only does what you say you're going to do, you truly can transform your life because you no longer think so carelessly.

You're very deliberate about actions you take, because you have so much self respect. So instead of, hey, I'm going to run a marathon tomorrow. I want you to say tomorrow, no matter what I am going to put on my tennis shoes. And I'm going to go outside and walk for five minutes. And it seems so silly and small at first, but I'm telling you, what will happen is that your brain will start to look for evidence that you are someone who does what you say you're going to do and be proud of that. Say, you know what? I am someone who does what I say I'm going to do.

The last way that you can practice self care this one I'm also very passionate about is to schedule time to think, right? We are inundated with input. And a lot of it, especially if you're listening to this podcast is positive input, right? A lot of it too is negative input, right? But a lot of it can be positive input. But what do you think? What are you feeling?

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Create space, look inward and be still, that is taking care of yourself, right? You cannot manage and control other people's brains, but you can manage your own. And when you take care of yourself from the inside out, you will find it is the most important work you can ever do. How you show up in the world, how you give back, how you contribute, how you interact in your relationships, how you parent, how you work.

It will all stem from how you're thinking and feeling on the inside. Taking care of yourself is work that is worth it. It is not self-indulgent. It is the best decision you can ever make. After all, you are all that you have forever. So remember this, you have you, and that's a beautiful thing, taking care of yourself, starting with your mind. And then your body is the best thing that you can do. That is why I'm so passionate about this work.

So start doing these little things today and really start to make decisions about whether something is truly self care for you through the lens of, is this something that I'm doing to genuinely take care of self of me, right? Am I loving myself here? Or am I just trying to escape something? That is what I have for you today. I will talk with you next week.

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