

What every woman needs: a self-care plan

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Every woman of color on the planet needs to have an on-going self-care plan in place that includes spiritual renewal, emotional wellness, and physical revitalization. It is often the relational quality of women that make us exceptional leaders, whether in or outside our homes.

Unfortunately, because we are intrinsically invested in our work; and others are dependent on our work, we can be susceptible to prioritizing it over our own health. Many of us unfortunately focus on fulfilling the needs of others, only to leave our own needs unmet. Let's examine three areas to implement self-care changes.

Spiritual Renewal.

God has created each human with a spirit that embodies energy and power along with the dynamic force of life. Since our spirit is a living part of us, it needs to be nurtured to grow or it like any other living thing, it will die. Spiritual renewal consists of honoring the spirit of God

within us. It grows as we feed it by praying, meditating, practicing silence, and listening to uplifting music.

As we observe the gifts of God in nature and people around us, our spirit is strengthened. We can also nurture our spirit when we fast and deny ourselves the pleasures of food, drink and entertainment for an appropriate season.

Emotional Wellness.

Having the capacity to feel a range of emotions (including joy, contentment, sadness, fear, pain, and anger) enables us to know that we are alive and experiencing life. We don't measure our emotional wellness by how we are doing when life is good, but how well we manage the challenges. In order to stay emotionally healthy one can:

"Acknowledge when you get stuck in one emotional state like anger, grief, or the other extreme perpetual excitement and get some assistance with balancing your feelings.

"Move through negative feelings by expressing them to appropriate people and not taking them out on yourself or others.

"Practice the art of forgiveness.

"Learn new skills or hobbies



that enable one to be engaged in life in new ways and builds self-confidence.

Physical Revitalization.

When we are involved in busy lives, we often neglect our bodies. Revitalizing our bodies includes exercise, eating healthy and rest and relaxation. The thought of adding exercise to your life might seem like torture. However, the reality is that if you do not exercise regularly you are committing a crime against your body.

Exercise lifts one's mood, helps maintain mental clarity and releases positive energy. Make your exercise program something reasonable and manageable. It helps to invite friends to join you.

There are benefits to group exercise: It is a time to socialize, you can hold each other accountable and you are mak-

ing an active contribution to helping a friend be healthy. Many Black women struggle with the thought of messing up their hair.

Be adventuresome and get some suggestions for alternative styles that can be maintained if exposed to perspiration and water.

Making changes in one's eating can mean examining family traditions, cultural tastes, and personal finances and schedules. If you need to start slowly, you can simply eliminate one or two of your current unhealthy eating habits: sodas, junk food, fast foods or items high in sugar or salt.

Action Steps:

If every woman reading this article made a commitment to discuss these topics with a friend and to implement one healthy habit, it would set positive change in motion. Let each of us stop and make a commitment to live out a better self-care plan that includes spiritual renewal, emotional wellness and physical revitalization.