



**"Nurturing yourself is not selfish – it's essential to your survival and your well-being."
- Renee Peterson Trudeau**

As a person living with a trauma-based mental illness, working in the mental health field, while rewarding, can be incredibly difficult. I love what I do and I love the people I get to work with everyday and I don't think anything will ever change that but I experience my triggers on a frequent basis. What that means in my life is I need to be really deliberate about my self-care.

Self-care means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. The media often portrays self-care as bubble baths and spa days. For me, self-care is all the little things I do to get through the day. It means doing my best to get enough (but not too much) sleep. It means showering and brushing my teeth and going grocery shopping every week so I have healthy food in the house. It means paying my bills on time and getting to work on time every day. It means taking small breaks throughout the day to breathe and do something mindless - I love playing games on my phone for 10 minutes when I have the time. It means taking a little extra time to plan my day and taking notes for things I need to remember.

One of my favorite hashtags I've seen online is #boringselfcare. If meditation and yoga and fitness classes and bubble baths are what works for you, fantastic! For me though, a little time in the evenings to read or knit or play a video game is the best self-care I can give myself. My #boringselfcare is journaling and following my daily routine. It's attending therapy and psychiatry appointments. It's calling my doctor when I'm not feeling well. It's doing the little things every single day that, while not flashy or exciting, keep me well mentally and physically.

I encourage all of you to find the self-care that works for you, whether #boring or not. Self-care is 100% about you and your needs and you don't need to compare the ways you take care of yourself to anyone else. Maybe you like to sit in the grass under a tree. Maybe you practice photography or drawing or painting or sculpting. Maybe you spend time with animals or friends or family. Maybe you garden or take care of houseplants. Maybe you watch a favorite TV show or movie. Maybe you write stories or poems. Maybe these things aren't for you but you keep yourself well by taking medication every day or calling hotlines when you need them or using services like therapy or case management or ARMHS or ACT. Anything that keeps you well is self-care.

When a trigger comes up at work, I have a few identified things I can do to keep myself well. I talk with my supervisor or coworkers. I journal in my (password-protected) online journal. I do a quick guided meditation. I play a phone game, go for a walk, read, knit. I call someone who cares about me.

Even if you don't have a history of trauma, there's likely things that come up at work or in life that upset you or make you anxious or scared. Maybe something comes up that makes you really angry. That's okay. It's okay to feel however you feel. It's your body's natural response to what's happening. What you can do, though, is find those coping skills that help you get through the moment. Get through the day. It may take a while to find something that works but I promise you that there is self-care out there for you. And you're worth the journey to figure it out.

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We are the evidence; We hold the hope.