

# HELLYEAH SELF CARE

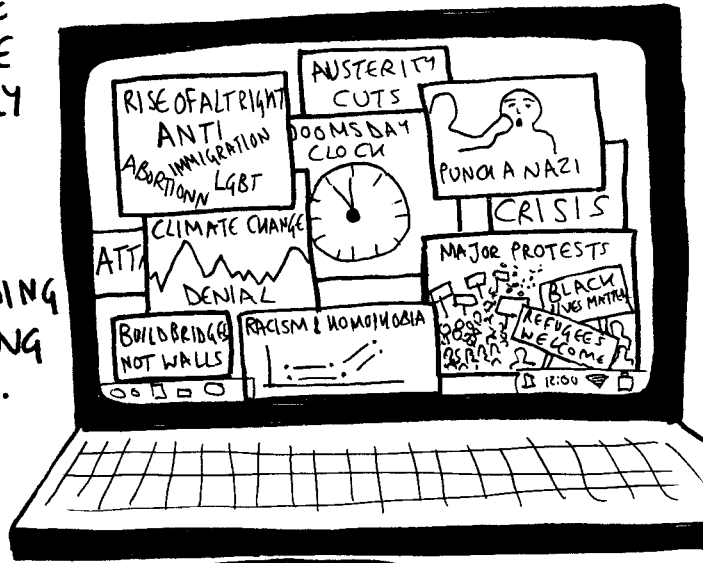
By Meg-John Barker

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# INTRODUCTION

I'M WRITING THIS ZINE BECAUSE THINGS IN THE WORLD HAVE GOT REALLY TOUGH RIGHT NOW. I'M GUESSING THEY'LL STILL BE TOUGH BY THE TIME YOU'RE READING IT. WE'RE ALL REACTING IN VARIOUS WAYS...



I'M COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED. I CAN'T EVEN.

I'M SO SHOCKED THAT IT COULD COME TO THIS

WE DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY TO BE OVERWHELMED WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING NOW.

YOU'RE SHOCKED? ARE YOU KIDDING ME? MANY OF US HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH THIS SHIT OUR WHOLE LIVES

VIOLENT PROTEST IS THE ONLY WAY

MY PEOPLE WERE ALREADY PRECARIOUS NOW IT'S LITERALLY LIFE & DEATH

WE HAVE TO SHOW THEM THAT WE'RE BETTER THAN THAT

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I LOST MY WHOLE FAMILY. I JUST CAN'T WHEN THEY VOTED FOR THIS



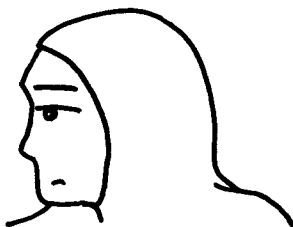
# SERIOUSLY, SELF CARE?

YOU MIGHT THINK THAT SELF CARE SHOULD BE OUR LAST PRIORITY RIGHT NOW



WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING, NOT TAKE A BLOODY BUBBLE BATH!

TERRIBLE THINGS ARE HAPPENING TO PEOPLE. I NEED TO FOCUS ON THEM, NOT ME



I'M FINALLY REALISING HOW MUCH PEOPLE LIKE ME, & THE SYSTEMS THAT PRIVILEGE US, ARE THE PROBLEM. I DON'T DESERVE IT

EVERYONE LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE IS WHAT GOT US INTO THIS MESS



# AUDRE LORDE

I KEEP RETURNING TO THE WORDS OF THE  
BLACK FEMINIST WRITER & ACTIVIST, AUDRE LORDE.

CARING FOR  
MYSELF IS NOT  
SELF-INDULGENCE  
IT IS  
SELF-PRESERVATION  
AND THAT IS  
AN ACT OF  
POLITICAL WARFARE



# SELF CARE AS...



LOOKING AFTER MYSELF  
MEANS THAT I SURVIVE IN A  
WORLD THAT DOESN'T WANT  
PEOPLE LIKE ME TO SURVIVE  
RIGHT NOW



CARING FOR MYSELF DEMONSTRATES  
THAT PEOPLE LIKE ME ARE  
VALUABLE EVEN IF WE'RE  
BEING TREATED AS THOUGH  
WE WERE DISPOSABLE



SELF CARE GIVES ME THE  
ENERGY TO RESIST



WHEN I LOOK AFTER MYSELF  
I HAVE MORE ENERGY TO  
LOOK AFTER OTHERS



PAUSING FOR SELF CARE MEANS  
I PICK MY BATTLES MORE CAREFULLY  
SO I HAVE THE TIME & RESOURCES  
TO ENGAGE IN WAYS THAT ARE  
MOST LIKELY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

# POLITICAL WARFARE

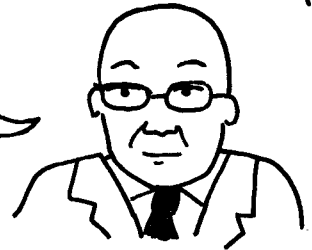
LOOKING AFTER MYSELF MEANS I CAN SEE THE WAYS I CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBLEMS WITHOUT CRUMBLING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THAT KNOWLEDGE. THEN IT'S MUCH EASIER TO START DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY



WHEN I CARE FOR MYSELF I NOTICE I'M MUCH MORE ABLE TO HEAR WHEN PEOPLE POINT THINGS OUT ABOUT MY BEHAVIOUR INSTEAD OF INSTANTLY GETTING DEFENSIVE



SELF CARE MEANS I HAVE THE TIME & ENERGY TO PROTEST-NOT JUST WHEN THE ISSUES IMPACT ME DIRECTLY



CARING FOR MYSELF GIVES ME MORE EMPATHY FOR OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH THIS STUFF, JUST LIKE I AM



COULD WE CREATE A RIPPLE EFFECT WHERE WE ALL START BEING MORE SELF-CARING? WHAT MIGHT THAT ACHIEVE?

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# CRITICISM CULTURE & SELF CARE

FINALLY SELF CARE CAN HELP US TO PERSONALLY & POLITICALLY RESIST THE CULTURE OF SELF CRITICISM - ALL THE MESSAGES WE GET THAT THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH US THAT NEEDS FIXING (TO SELL US THINGS & TO MAKE SURE WE KEEP LOOKING INWARDS INSTEAD OF OUTWARDS) IT DOES THIS IN MANY WAYS...

LEARNING HOW TO BE KIND INSTEAD OF CRITICAL

MORE ABLE TO NOTICE TOXIC MESSAGES, INEQUALITIES, & CRITIQUE THEM

MORE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS

LESS FOCUSED ON SELF-MONITORING - MORE ABLE TO TURN OUT TOWARDS THE WORLD

LOWER DEFENSES  
DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT  
ABLE TO BE VULNERABLE

SPENDING FAR LESS ENERGY ON 'SELF IMPROVEMENT' - SO MORE TO OFFER

LESS TOXIC SHAME & FEAR OF IT BEING TRIGGERED BY OTHERS

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SEE MY SOCIAL MINDFULNESS ZINE FOR MORE ON THIS



# SO WHAT IS SELF CARE?

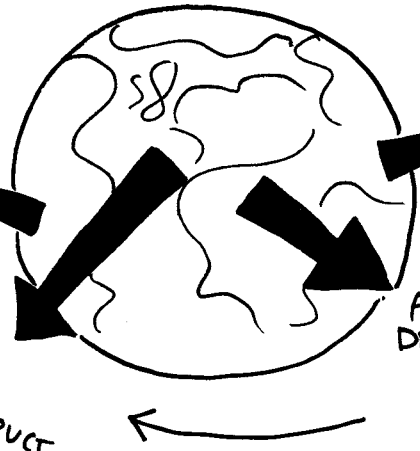
WE CAN TRACE THE ROOTS OF SELF CARE TO MANY DIFFERENT TIMES & PLACES, WITH DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF IT FOR EXAMPLE...

BLACK FEMINIST IDEAS OF COMPASSIONATE RESISTANCE

BUDDHIST PRACTICES TO ENHANCE COMPASSION & DISSOLVE EGO (NO SELF/OTHER SPLIT)

FOUCAULT'S TECHNOLOGIES TO CONSCIOUSLY CONSTRUCT OURSELVES

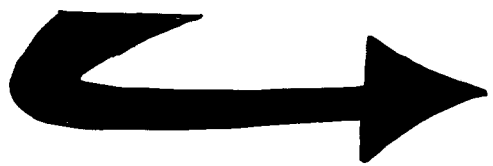
ANCIENT GREEK PRACTICES TO DEVELOP WELL BEING & SELF KNOWLEDGE



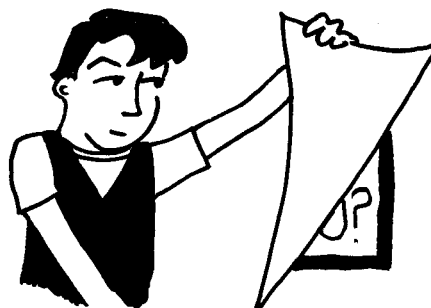
LET'S LOOK AT 5 MEANINGS IN MORE DEPTH...

- MEETING OUR BASIC NEEDS
- CUTTING DOWN SELF CRUELTY
- KIND SELF CARE
- JUST BEING
- REFLECTIVE SELF CARE

} ALL LINKED OF COURSE



(7)



# MEETING OUR BASIC NEEDS

THIS IS THE IDEA THAT THERE'S SOME BASIC MIND-BODY STUFF THAT PROVIDES A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR EVERYTHING ELSE. YOU MIGHT'VE SEEN CHECKLISTS LIKE THIS...

## FEELING ROUGH?



HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH SLEEP?

NO →

TAKE A NAP / MAKE SURE YOU GET A FULL 8 HOURS TONIGHT / CHECK OUT SLEEP ADVICE ONLINE

YES ↓



HAVE YOU EATEN IN THE LAST FEW HOURS?

NO →

HAVE A SNACK OR A MEAL AS SOON AS YOU CAN

YES ↓



ARE YOU PHYSICALLY WELL RIGHT NOW?

NO →

SEE A DOCTOR / TAKE ANY MEDICATION YOU NEED / PRIORITISE REST & RECUPERATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

YES ↓



HAVE YOU DRUNK ANY WATER RECENTLY?

NO →

HAVE A DRINK OF WATER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

YES ↓



HAVE YOU WASHED TODAY?

NO →

TAKE A BATH / SHOWER / WASH & PUT ON CLEAN CLOTHES IF YOU CAN

YES ↓



HAVE YOU BEEN OUT & MOVED YOUR BODY?

NO →

GO OUTSIDE SOMEWHERE PLEASANT & / OR HAVE A QUICK DANCE OR SIMILAR IF YOU CAN

YOU COULD ALWAYS MAKE YOUR OWN TO MATCH YOUR OWN MIND, BODY & LIFE BETTER

# CUTTING DOWN SELF CRUELTY

IT'S SO TEMPTING IN OUR CULTURE TO DO THE OPPOSITE OF SELF CARE, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE'RE NOT FEELING GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES. WHAT THINGS DO YOU DO THAT ARE SELF CRUEL? & HOW COULD YOU AVOID THEM? AGAIN EVERYONE'S ANSWERS WILL BE DIFFERENT

**CRUEL**



**KIND**

I CHECK MY PHONE LAST THING AT NIGHT WHEN I'M REALLY TIRED ALREADY



I LEAVE MY PHONE DOWNSTAIRS SO I CAN'T CHECK IT. IT'S MUCH EASIER TO GET TO SLEEP

I STAY IN BED TILL THE LAST MOMENT, SO EVERY DAY STARTS WITH STRESS



I GIVE MYSELF 30 MINUTES IN A CAFE BEFORE WORK. IT'S EASIER TO GET UP FOR SOMETHING NICE LIKE THAT & I START THE DAY CALMER

I FOLLOW PEOPLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHO MAKE ME SO ANGRY!



I'VE UNFOLLOWED EVERYONE I FIND TOUGH. I READ DIVERSE VIEWS IN DIFFERENT WAYS NOW & ON MY TERMS

I GO ROUND & ROUND IN MY HEAD THINKING OF THINGS I SHOULD'VE DONE BETTER



WHEN THAT HAPPENS I MESSAGE A FRIEND WHO GETS IT & WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER THROUGH

I TRY TO DO ALL THE ACTIVISM IN ORDER TO FEEL GOOD ENOUGH & I BURN OUT



I'M TRYING TO FOCUS ON WHAT I'M SKILLED AT & WHAT I ENJOY INSTEAD OF DOING ALL THE THINGS

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WHAT ABOUT YOU?

# KIND SELF CARE

IN SUCH A SELF-CRITICAL CULTURE, KINDNESS CAN BE A MAJOR ACT OF RESISTANCE. IT DEMONSTRATES TO US THAT WE'RE WORTHY OF KINDNESS NO MATTER WHAT & IT'S A GOOD WAY TO PRACTISE FOR BEING KINDER TO OTHERS. HERE'S SOME IDEAS...



PLAN ONE SMALL THING PER DAY THAT'S DELIBERATELY KIND  
EG. WATCHING THE BIRDS, HOT CHOCOLATE, YOUR FAVOURITE SANDWICH FOR LUNCH, TIME WITH A PET, LISTENING TO FAVOURITE MUSIC, CUTE ANIMALS ONLINE, RE-READING A BOOK YOU LOVE, SKYPING A FRIEND...

SMILED AT PERSON ON BUS, FINISHED THAT THING, MADE NICE FOOD

LAST THING AT NIGHT REMEMBER THREE THINGS YOU'RE PLEASED WITH YOURSELF FOR FROM THE DAY.  
REALLY SMALL THINGS ARE GREAT.



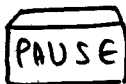
JOIN OR SET UP AN ONLINE (OR OFFLINE) GROUP TO SHARE KIND IDEAS, TO OFFER KINDNESS TO EACH OTHER, OR TO GET TOGETHER & DO KIND THINGS



MAKE YOUR OWN JOURNAL OR MINI-ZINE OF SMALL THINGS THAT LIFT YOUR MOOD E.G. SONGS, ITEMS OF CLOTHING YOU WEAR, QUOTES, IMAGES, ETC...



LOOK AT THE YEAR AHEAD WITH KINDNESS IN MIND - WHAT THINGS COULD YOU PLAN IN THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU? E.G. KIND PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS OR ACTIVITIES? WHAT LESS KIND THINGS COULD YOU LET GO OF OVER TIME?



PRACTISE NOTICING WHEN YOU'RE BEING UNKIND TO YOURSELF & TRYING TO BE UNDERSTANDING OF THAT



TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OR KEEP OBJECTS RELATED TO THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SMILE, GOOD MEMORIES, OR KIND THINGS THAT PEOPLE SAY TO YOU

# JUST BEING

THIS IS THE IDEA THAT IT'S USEFUL TO SPEND SOME TIME 'BEING' NOT 'DOING' - SOMETIMES CALLED MINDFULNESS OR BEING PRESENT. IT'S A GOOD WAY TO GET TO KNOW OURSELVES & OUR HABITS BETTER, TO SHOW RESPECT TO OUR FEELINGS (INSTEAD OF TRYING TO GET RID OF THEM) & TO COUNTER THE CULTURAL IDEA THAT WE'RE ONLY OK IF WE'RE PRODUCING SOMETHING OR DOING SOMETHING ACTIVE. HERE'S SOME WAYS TO PRACTISE 'BEING'...



5 MINUTES WITH YOUR FAVOURITE HOT DRINK REALLY FOCUSING ON THE EXPERIENCE OF DRINKING IT. COMING BACK TO THE SENSATIONS IF YOU GET DISTRACTED



THERE ARE LOADS OF FREE AUDIO MEDITATIONS YOU CAN TRY ONLINE & THROUGH APPS. FIND ONE THAT WORKS FOR YOU



10 MINUTES ON A PARK BENCH JUST LISTENING TO THE SOUNDS AROUND YOU



STRETCHING, YOGA, OR SIMILAR FOR A FEW MINUTES. FOCUS ON HOW YOUR BODY FEELS



BATH OR SHOWER, JUST PAY ATTENTION TO THE SENSATION OF THE WATER



WHEN A STRONG FEELING HITS GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO FEEL HOW IT IS IN YOUR BODY INSTEAD OF CARRYING ON, DISTRACTING, OR TRYING TO GET RID OF IT



3 MINUTE BREATHING SPACE A FEW TIMES A DAY - JUST NOTICE THE FEEL OF BREATHING

SEE MY STAYING WITH FEELINGS ZINE FOR MORE ON THIS

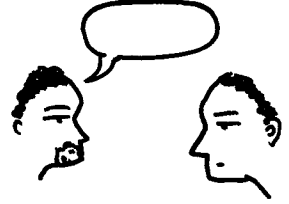
# REFLECTIVE SELF CARE

IT'S ALSO GREAT TO TAKE SOME TIME FOR REFLECTING: UNDERSTANDING OUR PATTERNS, CONSIDERING OUR VALUES, PRIORITISING WHAT TO DO, ETC. HERE'S SOME WAYS TO DO THIS...



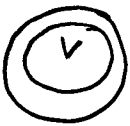
WRITING ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS, OR CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT SIDES OF YOURSELF

PEER-TO-PEER LISTENING - BOTH TAKE TURNS TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND (YOU CAN GET BOOKS/TRAINING ON HOW TO DO THIS)



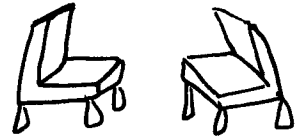
HAVE A WANDER TO WONDER - THINKING THROUGH A SPECIFIC THING

JOINING OR CREATING A SUPPORTIVE GROUP AROUND AN ISSUE, OR READING GROUP



MAKING A SPECIFIC TIME IN THE DAY, OR WEEK FOR REFLECTION

HAVING A THERAPIST, COACH OR MENTOR - FIND A GOOD FIT FOR YOU & CHECK OUT LOW COST OPTIONS LIKE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES



YOU COULD KEEP A NOTE OF THINGS YOU WANT TO REFLECT ON, OR CHALLENGING STUFF THAT COMES UP, IN BETWEEN.

# DIFFERENT THINGS... ...FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE

THERE'S NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL KIND OF SELF CARE. IT'S ABOUT FINDING OUT WHAT WORKS FOR YOU, & IN WHAT SITUATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE...

TOTALLY RESTORES ME

3 HOURS OF NETFLIX UNDER THE DUVET



LEAVES ME FEELING SCRATCHY & IRRITABLE

HELPS ME REALISE WE'RE ALL STRUGGLING & GET SUPPORT

GOING TO THE PUB WITH MY MATES



TOO NOISY & ALCOHOL ISN'T GOOD FOR ME

GREAT WHEN I'M ALL REWED UP

CHATTING ABOUT WORLD SITUATION ONLINE



OVERWHELMING IF I'M ALREADY FEELING BAD

HELPS ME FEEL GROUNDED & CHECK IN WITH MYSELF

MEDITATION



I REALLY STRUGGLE WITH SELF CRITICAL THOUGHTS WHICH MAKE ME FEEL WORSE

BRILLIANT! SOLIDARITY, MUTUAL SUPPORT & MAKING A DIFFERENCE

NO TRANNIST GOING ON A MARCH



TERRIBLE! CROWDS, NOISE & OFTEN INACCESSIBLE FOR ME. I'D RATHER DO OTHER KINDS OF ACTIVISM

NO 'RIGHT' WAY

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BE CURIOUS & FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

# BALANCE

IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO BALANCE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SELF CARE BECAUSE IT'S HARD TO DO ONE WITHOUT THE OTHERS. FOR EXAMPLE IT'S TOUGH TO BE KIND IF YOUR BASIC NEEDS AREN'T MET. IT'S DIFFICULT TO SELF-REFLECT IF YOU NEVER PAUSE & TAKE TIME TO NOTICE YOUR EXPERIENCE.

HERE'S SOME SELF CARE BALANCES TO CONSIDER...

KIND	---	REFLECTIVE
ALONE	---	WITH OTHERS
GIVING SOMETHING	---	GETTING SOMETHING
(JUST) BEING	---	DOING (ACTIVE)
INTERNAL FOCUS (ME)	---	EXTERNAL FOCUS (WORLD)
STILL	---	MOVING
ONES I FIND EASY	---	ONES I FIND DIFFICULT
PUTTING OUT INFORMATION / CREATING	---	TAKING IN INFORMATION
ONLINE	---	OFFLINE
PLANNED IN ADVANCE	---	ON THE SPOT WHEN THINGS GET HARD

YOU COULD ALSO THINK ABOUT WHAT SELF CARE WORKS FOR YOU IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS SO YOU HAVE AN IDEA NEXT TIME YOU'RE ENERGISED, TIRED, SAD, DRAWN INTO CONFLICT, ETC.

PLAY WITH IT

EXPERIMENT



# BUT... I DON'T HAVE THE TIME/MONEY

- LET'S END BY CONSIDERING 3 REASONS WE OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH SELF CARE
- FIRST OUR SOCIETY IS SET UP SO THOSE WHO NEED SELF CARE MOST OFTEN HAVE LEAST SUPPORT, TIME, & RESOURCES FOR IT
  - THE EXAMPLES IN THE ZINE ARE AS NO/LOW COST AS POSSIBLE
  - REMEMBER YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING
  - YOU COULD COME UP WITH A REALISTIC PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE, EG.

DAILY	- Sitting with my cup of tea
	- <u>Basic needs</u> - Daily kindness
	- Journal
WEEKLY	- <u>See friends at least twice</u>
	- Go to the sea
MONTHLY	- <u>Meet with my group</u>
	- Local college course
YEARLY	- Week away relaxing

- PERHAPS YOU CAN THINK OF WAYS YOU COULD HELP OTHERS TO GET THE TIME/RESOURCES/ENERGY FOR SELF CARE
- E.G.
- LOOKING AFTER THEIR PEOPLE/ANIMALS TO GIVE THEM TIME
  - GIVING UP YOUR SEAT SO THEY GET TO SIT
  - OFFERING SUPPORT OR DOING LISTENING VOLUNTEERING
  - GIVING PRACTICAL HELP BASED ON SKILLS YOU HAVE
  - AMPLIFYING THEIR VOICE/S ONLINE
  - TAKING SOME OF THEIR BATTLES ON (IF THEY'D LIKE THAT)
  - LEARNING ABOUT BEING A HELPFUL ALLY
  - CREATING RESOURCES
  - SETTING UP GROUPS
- (15)

# BUT... IT FEELS SELFISH

AS AUDRE LORDE'S QUOTE SUGGESTS, WE GET STRONG MESSAGES THAT SELF CARE IS 'SELF INDULGENT' & THAT THAT ISN'T OKAY



THE OXYGEN MASK APPLIES HERE. ON A PLANE YOU'RE INSTRUCTED TO SECURE YOUR OWN MASK BEFORE HELPING SOMEBODY ELSE

WE'RE GENERALLY FAR BETTER AT CARING FOR OTHERS IF WE CARE FOR OURSELVES BECAUSE...

- WE HAVE MORE ENERGY
- WE SEE THE SITUATION MORE CLEARLY INSTEAD OF GOING ON AUTOPILOT, JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS, OR EXACERBATING PROBLEMS
- WE'RE MORE LIKELY TO KNOW OUR LIMITS & NOT BURN OUT
- WE WON'T GET RESENTFUL
- WE'RE MODELLING THAT EVERYONE DESERVES CARE INSTEAD OF ACTING LIKE SOME PEOPLE DON'T NEED IT
- WE'RE TREATING OURSELVES AS FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS INSTEAD OF ACTING LIKE A SAVIOUR (DISEMPowering)
- WE'LL BE BETTER ABLE TO HANDLE CRITICISMS OR UNFORSEEN PROBLEMS

SELF CARE IS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE AGAINST CULTURAL MESSAGES THAT CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE SHOULD SERVE OTHERS, BE VALUED LESS, PUT OTHERS FIRST, PROTECT OTHERS, OR DO ALL THE EMOTIONAL LABOUR. IT INSISTS WE'RE NO MORE OR LESS VALUABLE THAN ANYONE ELSE

I'M OK ~ (16) - YOU'RE OK

# BUT... I BEAT MYSELF UP FOR NOT DOING IT (PROPERLY)

DON'T WORRY, MOST OF US DO THIS TOO!  
IT'S TESTAMENT TO THE TERRIFYING SUCCESS OF OUR CURRENT CULTURE THAT EVEN SELF CARE BECOMES A THING TO CRITICISE OURSELVES ABOUT...



- AGAIN IT'S AN ACT OF RESISTANCE TO BE KIND AT SUCH TIMES
- TRY TO CHOOSE FORMS OF SELF CARE YOU FIND EASY ENOUGH TO DO
  - EXPLORE WHERE THESE MESSAGES THAT WE'RE NOT OK OR DESERVING COME FROM & GET SUPPORT WITH THEM
  - GENTLY LAUGH AT THE RIDICULOUSNESS OF BEING UNKIND ABOUT OUR STRUGGLES TO BE KIND!
  - SHARE THESE STRUGGLES & VULNERABILITIES WITH TRUSTED OTHERS (WHO DOUBTLESS STRUGGLE TOO)

YOU ARE OK

YOU DO DESERVE SELF CARE

# FURTHER RESOURCES

You can find my other zines at megjohnbarker.com, and there's more on self care in my book *Rewriting the Rules*.

Justin Hancock and I are creating a 'Make Your Own Self Care Guide' to include over on megjohnandjustin.com. Meanwhile you can check out our other 'Make Your Own' guides there.

Some useful books about things in this zine include:

Adams, K. (1990). *Journal to the self*. New York, NY: Grand central publishing.

Chodron, P. (2000). *When things fall apart: Heart advice for difficult times*. Shambhala Publications.

Kline, N. (1999). *Time to think*. London: Ward Lock.

Lorde, A. (2011). *I am your sister*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stone, H. & Stone, S. (2011). *Embracing your inner critic: Turning self-criticism into a creative asset*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.

Sara Ahmed talks about Audre Lorde and self care here:

<https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/08/25/selfcare-as-warfare/>



QUEERSQUARE  
ZINES