

LET'S START A SELF-CARE REVOLUTION!

By Ann Douglas

Abstract: Self-care isn't selfish. It's self-preservation. It's what allows you to function at your best, both personally and professionally. But it can also be a source of tremendous anxiety and guilt. You may worry that it's self-indulgent to prioritize self-care. Or you may feel like you're letting yourself down if your efforts to practice self-care end up falling short. This article encourages the reader to work through a series of guided questions that have been designed to encourage self-reflection and to spark community-wide conversations about the importance of self-care.

Keywords: self-care, goal setting, leadership, transformation, mental health and wellbeing, healthy active living, creating community

Self-care isn't selfish. It's self-preservation. It's what allows you to function at your best, both personally and professionally. But it can also be a source of tremendous anxiety and guilt. You may worry that it's self-indulgent to prioritize self-care. Or you may feel like you're letting yourself down if your efforts to practice self-care end up falling short.

How do I know this?

Because I've lived it.

For entire decades of my life, I could have been the poster child for self-neglect!

If you find yourself cringing when you see the words, "self-care," you might be tempted to skip this article and/or to bow out of my self-care workshop at Quest entirely. But before you hit the eject button on this article or my workshop, I'd like you to know this: *You don't have to have your self-care act together in order to benefit from this exercise.* In fact, you'll get a whole lot more out of it if you're someone who currently struggles with self-care. Because here's the thing: the questions that follow are designed to get you thinking about self-care in a way that will inspire you to map out a strategy for taking the best possible care of yourself,

starting right now—and in a way that works for you. In other words, you don't have to be a self-care rock star. You just need to be someone who's open to trying new things to make self-care more achievable and sustainable—because lasting change, the kind of change that “sticks,” is the ultimate goal, after all.

Ready to get started? Here are the questions.

1. What kinds of thoughts come to mind for you when you think about self-care? Does your mind wander to a particular time, location, or activity? Please take a moment or two to jot down a few of the most powerful words or images.
2. What kinds of emotions do you experience when you think about self-care? Are you surprised by any of these emotions? What can you learn from your feelings about self-care?
3. Think about a time when you felt really good about your ability to practice self-care. When was this? Who were you with? Where were you? What were you doing? What were you thinking and feeling? What can you learn from this?
4. Think about a time when you felt really frustrated by your inability to practice self-care. When was this? Who were you with? Where were you? What were you doing? What were you thinking and feeling? What can you learn from this?
5. What are some of the biggest barriers that you currently face in trying to practice self-care? What advice would you offer to a friend who happened to be struggling with these very same barriers?
6. What would change for you, both personally and professionally, if you were able to make self-care a regular part of your life? How would your life be different? How would *you* be different? Is this something you want for yourself?
7. What would change in your school (or workplace) if everyone were empowered to prioritize self-care? How might this affect your relationships?
8. How much time can you realistically devote to self-care (a) on weekdays; (b) on weekends? What types of self-care activities are most likely to provide you with the

greatest return on investment of time and effort? What steps would you need to take to make these activities part of your regular routine?

9. Think of the last time you were able to make a significant, far-reaching change in your life. What did that experience teach you about yourself? How can you apply this knowledge of yourself to your goal of better prioritizing self-care?
10. What is your self-care action plan moving forward? Please be as specific as possible. Spell out what you intend to do, how often you intend to do it, when and where you intend to do it, who you could turn to for help in honouring this commitment to yourself, how you will monitor and celebrate your successes, and how you will get back on track after the inevitable roadblocks and stumbles.

If you're planning to participate in my workshop at Quest, it would be great if you could work through these questions ahead of time so that we can have the richest possible discussion during our short time together.

If you're working through these questions on your own after the conference, I'm hoping you'll share any insights you gain with others who will support you in your self-care journey—and, if you're so inspired, that you'll share some of the highlights of your learning with me as well. Self-care can be transformative. It's a powerful resource that can fuel your life and energize your community. Here's to maximizing that power!

About the author: Ann Douglas sparks conversations that matter about parenting and mental health. She is a bestselling parenting author (her most recent book is *Parenting Through the Storm*) and the weekend parenting columnist for CBC Radio. A passionate and inspiring speaker, Ann delivers keynote addresses and leads small-group workshops at health, parenting, and education conferences across the country. Her website is anndouglas.net and she is @anndouglas on Twitter.

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