

SELF CARE IS CARING FOR OTHERS



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Self-Care: The Cornerstone of Effective Leadership

Have you ever wondered why you feel so drained after a long day, despite your best efforts to meet the demands of your role? Our society often equates self-care with selfishness, but the truth is quite the opposite. Caring for others is giving them your best, not your least. When we neglect our own needs, we inevitably fall short in our ability to serve others.

As women leaders, we often find ourselves caught in a whirlwind of responsibilities, leaving little time for self-reflection and replenishment. This can lead to burnout, a



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state of physical and emotional exhaustion that can have detrimental effects on our work performance and personal lives.

Research by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski in their book "Burnout: The Secret to Unraveling the Stress Cycle" highlights the importance of self-care in preventing burnout. They emphasize the need to address both physical and emotional needs to maintain a healthy balance.

When we sacrifice sleep or prioritize the needs of others over our own, we ultimately fail ourselves. This can lead to a negative mindset, decreased energy levels, and impaired cognitive abilities. In our fast-paced world, it's easy to become so focused on external demands that we forget to take care of ourselves. I've encountered clients who can't recall the last time they truly prioritized their well-being. They're operating on the basic physiological and safety needs outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Even highly educated leaders may find themselves running on fumes, driven by these fundamental needs. Yet, they often aspire to more from their lives and careers, becoming frustrated and drained by the constant busyness and lack of time for themselves.

Despite recognizing the problem, many people don't take responsibility for making necessary changes to align with their aspirations and desires. They blame

external factors like the VUCA world, their colleagues, the economy, or their clients, but rarely examine their own contributions to the issue.

Clients who feel overwhelmed and on the brink of burnout often have the most difficulty listening to their own feelings and thoughts. As they begin to pay attention, they may notice a disconnect between their desires and their actions. Interestingly, when asked how they would support a child or nephew going through a similar situation, they often have perfect answers: set healthy boundaries and prioritize self-care. They recognize that others are at their best when they take care of themselves. This also involves being more humble and acknowledging one's own needs rather than constantly showcasing strengths and selflessness, which can be detrimental in the long run.

When clients come to me exhausted and overwhelmed by their workload, I often find that they've accumulated a backlog of tasks in an attempt to prioritize their responsibilities. They neglect their rest, their relationships, and their own needs, ultimately leading to depletion.

I often use the following analogy with my clients: "Imagine you're on an airplane experiencing sudden pressure loss. The oxygen masks drop down from above your seat. You must put on your own mask first



before helping others. How can you expect to care for others if you can't breathe properly?"

Leadership must be sustainable, which means shifting our mindset about what it truly means to lead. It's not about pleasing everyone, but about leading by example, even when it seems difficult. It's about transcending limiting beliefs and assumptions that leaders are invincible or robotic. Even heroes have their limits.

If you truly care about your team, take care of yourself. They will appreciate having the best version of you leading them. You will be a role model for your children and the young people around you. While this approach may not please everyone, you will be respected and recognized for your commitment to your own well-being and that of others.

What are your thoughts on self-care and leadership? As a woman and a leader have you experienced the benefits of prioritizing your own well-being? What are your tips? Share your experiences and insights in the comments below. Let's continue the conversation and inspire others to make self-care a priority in their lives.

Resources and references:

Burnout: The Secret to Unraveling the Stress Cycle by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski

The Power of Vulnerability by Brené Brown
Mindfulness for Beginners by Jon Kabat-Zinn

"Self-Care Isn't Selfish: Why Taking Care of Yourself Is Essential" by Psychology Today

"The Importance of Self-Care for Leaders" by Harvard Business Review

"Why Self-Care is Crucial for Effective Leadership" by Forbes

