

# AND ANOTHER THING ...

## Don't Ignore the Need for Self-Care

*Stay at the top of your game by rejuvenating mind, body and soul.*

by *Erin Wiley*  
Community Contributor



Licensed counselor **Erin Wiley**.  
Photo courtesy of Erin Wiley

Back when I was studying mental health counseling, I remember a college professor advising my class to come up with a plan for how we would replenish our depleted energy working in this field. She suggested that, because we would be giving so much of ourselves, we would quickly “burn out” if we didn’t make self-care a priority. I remember thinking that I was above the need for that kind of rejuvenation. That she was

speaking to my peers ... and that her suggestion was not for me.

I used to think self-care was for the people who needed it. You know, the people who didn’t have the energy, will or drive to really push through and make their goals a reality — people who weren’t inherently strong enough to get back up when life dealt them a blow, those who shied away from the big challenges of life. That’s who I thought needed “self-care.” That is, until I, myself, hit the proverbial wall — after only one year working in private practice.

I had a very full load at work. I was in the office weekdays, weeknights and some weekends. I refused breaks in the day so I could see as many patients as possible. “THIS is how you maximize your efficiency and contribution to the world!” I thought. But at home I was tired and irritable. I had very little left over to give to my husband and sons. I had stopped spending time with friends and ran out of energy and desire to exercise. Apparently the stress also lowered my immunity, because I even developed a case of shingles. I was struggling to get out of bed in the morning. It was official. I had hit The Wall. My choice to ignore the importance of self-care — and my need for it — was my undoing.

In general, most people are over-committed and are giving much more emotionally, physically and mentally than they are receiving. If we give repeatedly, without ever filling up our own energy tank, then we are destined for failure. The number one person invested in making sure you are healthy and well-cared for is YOU! You owe it to yourself to be your own best friend, your own advocate for what you want and need to function at your very best.

We are beings made up of three parts: body, mind and soul. Caring for each part of ourselves is vital for optimal health. Here are some ideas for how we can rejuvenate ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually.

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Ideas for rejuvenating the body: take a walk, eat a healthy snack, get a massage, do yoga, go swimming, take a nap, get a manicure or pedicure, hug someone, cry, do something physical that’s not necessarily “exercise”: build a snowman, pick up trash on a hike, start a garden, play with the dog, chase your kids, help a friend move, landscape your yard.

Ideas for rejuvenating the mind: read a book, spend time with a friend, see an art exhibit, sing, attend a seminar on a topic that interests you, see a comedian or watch a funny movie, meditate, speak with a counselor, spend the afternoon exploring the library, write a story, bake, paint a picture, keep a diary, attend a support group, explore a new hobby.

Ideas for rejuvenating the soul: pray, attend religious services, be still in a quiet space, listen to spiritual music, start a gratitude journal, join a congregation of like-minded people, explore sacred text, spend time in nature, practice random acts of kindness, go for a long drive, spend time alone.

My self care plan started by taking some personal days off from work to rest, and to figure out what I needed to recharge my batteries. Today I am so much healthier because I honor myself through self-care. Things I now do on a regular basis include: choosing silence instead of turning on the TV or radio; playing word games on my iPhone, going on dates with my husband, playing with my dog, baking; holding my boys (as much as they will let me at 10 and 11 years old!); going to church; creating time for friends; and taking walks in the park.

Plan on creating your own self care plan that honors and recognizes all three parts of your whole self. Do it today! It will change your life — you’ll be so glad you did.

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