

Self-Care is Not Selfish

written by Princess R. Lakshman

Caring for yourself is not an option – it is a vital necessity. Self-Care starts with a positive mind. A positive mind is a result of awareness. When you are aware of your habits, your thought patterns and your programmed reactions to life's triggers, you are able to transform yourself whereby you are no longer living life on a default mode but rather living a life of mindful actions, joy, compassion and gratitude for the abundance ALLAH has bestowed upon us.

We often take our 'Physical Self' as the primary self. When it comes to self-care, we need to delve deeper and find the 'Essential Self' – our essence. This Essential Self is what dwells inside the physical body...particularly the heart.

For example...

When you use words like: "I am angry", "I am fat", "I am confused", "I am hungry" and so on, what you are really saying is that your physical body is angry or fat or confused or hungry. Your energy force, the Essential Self, within you, "I", is free from anger or hunger or confusion or fat.

When the Essential Self is ignored for too long, the Physical Self begins to show negative symptoms such as anger, confusion, anxiety, fear, accumulation of abdominal fat, lack of sleep, fatigue, worry, increased blood pressure and shallow breathing, to name a few.

To know your Essential Self, you need to be silent for a few minutes and do an Awareness Scan of your Physical Self.

Try it now. As you read this...

Blink your eyelids and feel the inner lids touching the eyeball.

Now, bring your awareness to your neck, your throat, and your shoulders.

Become aware of your hands, your fingers and fingertips. Expand your chest with deep, full breaths in and out a few times.

Bring your awareness to your abdomen, then to your lower back and your thighs. Now try and feel the softness that is underneath your knee-caps.

And finally, become aware of your legs down to your feet. Wiggle your toes.

Spend a few minutes daily in silence and acknowledge your Essential Self by doing a body scan similar to the one above.

Self-Care Strategies

1. Have the intention to nourish your body with whole foods by choosing ingredients that are directly from nature, unpackaged and unprocessed.
2. Daily after salah, spend time on your prayer mat, with your eyes closed and breathe deeply, mindfully. Try having a routine of deep breathing after each salah time, even for just 60 seconds. You can still manage at least 20 long breaths.
3. Spend time outside in nature. Touch the grass. Touch trees. Smell the flowers. Bask in the warmth of the sun on your face. At night, spend a few minutes looking up into the night sky and become aware of your connection with the entire ever-expanding universe. Know that you are part of this beautiful creation.
4. Have a morning and evening skin-care routine. You don't need expensive products. Sweet almond oil blended with a few drops of calming essential oils can be great to moisturize your face and body with. Lavender and Ylang Ylang blend works beautifully just before bedtime. Citrus oil blends work wonderfully in the mornings.

5. Be of service to someone and do it purely for the sake of ALLAH.

6. Journal your thoughts and feelings regularly.

7. Water stores memories. Adult human bodies are 60% water. The brain and heart are 73% water. (Source: https://www.usgs.gov/special-topic/water-science-school/science/water-you-water-and-human-body?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects)

If there is a persistent negative memory that your body is holding onto, drink lots of water and detox your body's fluids through natural excretion. I call it the Strategy of Peeing and Pooing Out Toxic Memories.

8. Switch off your device at least 1 hour before bed. Read a book or a magazine instead, until you feel tired.

9. Create something with your hands. Learn a new craft or practise more of the craft you already know.

10. Manage your emotions by finding healthy and peaceful ways to express them. Anger is a normal emotion, but what you do with it can result in you living a life filled with angry, aggressive reactions or a life with mindful, peaceful responses. Know that emotions are mere signals to tell you whether you are listening to your heart and taking care of yourself. Most unhappy people are simply unhappy because they are constantly doing what their hearts really don't want to do. Listen to your heart – it knows what you need to do.

11. Speak kindly about yourself to yourself. Always. You are a beautiful creation of ALLAH.

12. Practise patience through expressing gratitude. Every moment is a moment of mercy if you choose to look at it that way. You have a choice to be a victim of your circumstances or a victor of them.

Always remember, you are not your experiences. You are the FORCE that overcomes them.

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