

# Ep #3: Self-Care Success: How to Implement Self-Care, Feel Successful, and Avoid Burnout



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Nicole Symcox**

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## Ep #3: Self-Care Success: How to Implement Self-Care, Feel Successful, and Avoid Burnout

Self-care is so much more than bubble baths and massages. Hey, I love that stuff too. It relaxes me. Sometimes I even feel reset after I do something like that, but it doesn't always hit me at the deeper level that I need to truly fill my tank back up. And as an ambitious human myself, I've learned the hard way that it is critically important to take care of your inner world so you can continue to be successful in the real world.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hello my friends. Welcome to the show. I am so excited that you're here today. I feel pretty good today because I know I am taking the rest of the week off. So I've been feeling a little tired lately so I've chosen to take the week off to hang out by the beach and be with some people that I love to be with because I think my main need right now is rest.

And so as we're going to talk about in this podcast, there's a lot of different ways to fill yourself up depending on your emotional needs. So identifying that for yourself is going to be the key to your success in doing self-care in a way that truly fills you back up.

But this whole self-care thing, let me tell you, I used to be terrible at it. Oh my goodness. I treated myself like a production machine and it landed me in a heap of burnout, stress, I was sick all the time, and just really overwhelmed. And a lot of it had to do with the fact that I just continuously pushed myself to achieve, achieve, achieve all these ambitious goals that I had, and I would make a lot of progress in them so that reinforced this idea

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that I need to keep doing it because whenever we get a perceived positive feedback, then we usually keep going.

And at that point in my life, I just did not understand that self-care was even a thing. I thought it was selfish, I thought it was luxurious, I thought it was almost bougie, like something like, whatever, that's just something rich folks do. And that is absolutely not what self-care is, so I had to go through this whole refinement process of understanding what self-care actually is and the value that it has in my life, especially since my profession is helping others.

I'm in a helping profession, and if you're in a helping profession or if you're a mom or somebody who's supporting another person, emotional, mental, any kind of support, you need to take a time out to take care of yourself, otherwise you're going to end up depleted like I did and so that's kind of what we're talking about today.

And I think you're going to find in these episodes like, I'm basically pulling together everything that I've learned from my personal experience and my professional experiences. From my education and just working with clients, but at the heart of all of the things that I say, I really practice what I preach. And I am hoping that you can learn from these podcasts and make some choices that really fuel who you want to be and your destiny.

But anyway, no matter what your goals are, self-care is an incredibly important aspect to taking care of yourself, your wellbeing so you can be the best version of you and you can continue achieving your goals. You don't have to trade one for the other, but if you land in burnout, you're going to trade one for the other because you're not going to have a choice anymore.

So let's stay ahead of that. Let's not get to that point. So today's topic, let's talk about self-care success. So self-care is one of those topics that is widely talked about everywhere, and what I've noticed is everyone is

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talking about it but rarely is anyone actually doing it in a way that truly supports their inner world. Their emotional world.

I hear often from people that they are frustrated from doing self-care and yet still feeling drained, overworked, and over-stressed when they get right back into it. So it feels like a cycle almost that they're not winning. And so basically, what they're telling me is you know, the bubble baths didn't cut it. And when we jump into what they're doing, it doesn't take long for us to figure out why their self-care routine isn't working and so we end up making a plan and reroute them and their methods to get them on the right track with some self-care tactics that will specifically support them.

So today we're talking about just that. How to implement self-care so you can continue to feel successful at everything you're doing and avoid burnout. You are a human being made up of a mind, body, and soul. The sooner you acknowledge and treat yourself this way, the easier things will be for you.

We live in an age of technology where everything is instantaneous and we can have many programs and apps running at the same time. Multitasking and doing things for us. But we, ourselves, as humans are not made to run at the speed of technology, and I think unconsciously, we compare ourselves to technology and try to perform like robots.

And the truth is we're just not. We are not robots. And if you've ever met a person who acts like a robot, they're really not that interesting, so it's not really this thing we should be aspiring to be. We are designed as humans with a heart, body, a soul, a mind, and we have to take care of those things in order to be at our best.

So when we treat ourselves like production machines or robots with no limits or boundaries, we run the risk of burnout because we're living at a level we were not designed to maintain as a human being. So many of my clients are leaders, perfectionists, people-pleasers, ambitious, high-

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achievers that get things done. And they are incredibly hard on themselves and they don't tend to be able to regulate for themselves when enough is enough.

They are always seeking more, to have more, to be more, and to achieve more. Because they are so responsible, they tend to have a lot of people that depend on them and so they end up falling into this caretaking role of always taking initiative, being in control, and managing a lot of things at once.

So on the one hand, I might switch out people for we because I really relate to this struggle because I'm ambitious and I'm an achiever myself. So it's like on the one hand, we really like this doer part of ourselves. We like that we can organize and strategize and get things done, but on the flipside, we have to manage our emotional energy.

So here's the thing; you only have so much of it to give on any given day and that is once you're out, you are out. So it's really important to keep a thermostat on how you're doing and how much emotional energy you are spending on thing so you don't run out.

So let's take self-care a step deeper. Let's move away just for a second from this idea of just bubble baths and massages. Again, those are beneficial, you should do them, they help you relax, but there's another part to self-care that we don't talk about as much.

So my definition of self-care is being emotionally attuned enough with your emotional needs that you can meet those needs with care. Now, I know that sounds a little bit confusing, but basically what I'm saying is you need to know yourself. You need to know what your needs are because if you don't know even what your emotional needs are, how can you provide a solution if you don't know the question?

And that's where people in therapy get frustrated. They're like, I don't even know how to take care of myself, I don't even know what I need. And so

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unweaving that web and learning and understanding what do you even need to feel better is a big part of self-care.

And it's a big reason why self-care is just not always a one size fits all practice. Depending on the area in your life where you're depleted, you're going to need different things to give it support. So for a lot of people, this is hard because they don't know what their emotional needs are. So meeting them with self-care and support feels incredibly confusing. I mean, how can you meet a need if you don't even know what it is?

And so this is where therapy, coaching, or taking a class can be helpful in figuring out what your emotional needs are so that you can make a plan to get them met. So in my opinion and my experience, the quickest way to feeling burned out has to do with feeling overly responsible for other people or other things and denying your own needs in the process.

I know this has been true in my own life. When I start to feel too responsible for the outcomes of others or things, I start to get worn down because I'm so external-focused, I'm not paying attention to what's happening to me internally. And I see this a lot in people but in particularly moms.

Moms tend to be very busy making sure their kids' needs are taken care of, significant others, work, staying on top of everything, and then if you throw any kind of crisis or stressful situation that's happening on top of that all, self-care just goes out the window and it becomes almost like this pipedream for another day.

And self-care becomes like, oh, it's a luxury, I'll deal with that later. And in my opinion, the quickest way to feeling burned out has to do with feeling overly responsible and denying your own needs. So I know this is true in my own life. When I start to feel too responsible for the outcome of others or outcome of things, I start to get worn down because I'm not paying close

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attention to what's going on for me internally and supporting myself at the same time.

And I think this is true for many people. When you get really externally-focused on achieving or working on a goal or if you're in school or if you're a mom, and then if you throw in any type of crisis or stressful situation or life event that's happening on top of all the day-to-day, self-care just is not something we tend to think about because it's not fitting into the box of our survival.

And in those moments is when I hear people say, how can I take a timeout to do something I enjoy when everything is falling apart? Or how can I take a timeout to do something I enjoy when everything will fall apart if I don't take care of it all? I can't let my family down, they're depending on me.

Okay, we're going to use that statement and I'm going to coach you through it a little bit. So let's first start with the belief that just showed up in that sentence because I hear it often. So I'm going to say the sentence again. How can I take a timeout to do something I enjoy when everything will fall apart if I don't take care of it all?

So let's work through that belief because I think it's very common for people and I hear it often. So the thought, everything falls apart when I'm not in control is how we would break that down. And that, my friends, is a statement of over-responsibility. And I'm calling that out because I almost think that that can go automatically in our thought process like we don't even realize that we're putting that much pressure on ourselves.

Sometimes we do, but a lot of times we just accept it as the way of life, like no, I need to be in control at all times. And we don't really do any checks and balances with that. We just kind of proceed. So the thought everything falls apart when I'm not in control, it's a very common belief for high-achievers. We are so worried about filling in the gaps for other people and believing they can't take care of things themselves that we expend an

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incredible amount of emotional energy doing other things for others and denying ourselves our own needs.

So before you freak out, I'm not saying doing things for people is wrong. But what I am saying is we need to have a healthy sense of responsibility for ourselves and for what others are doing to keep our emotional engines running smoothly. We need to maintain a clear sense of where we end and someone else begins.

I'm going to say that again. We need to maintain a clear sense of where we end and someone else begins. I'm saying that twice because whenever I tell clients this in therapy, they look at me like I'm an alien. They're like, what does that even mean? And so I'm going to be really honest. That's actually more of a boundary statement than it is a self-care and in my boundaries course, self-care and boundaries actually overlap many times.

And so this is a boundary statement that I teach in one of my courses, so we're going to actually save that for a future podcast episode where I'm going to talk about boundaries, but this is an important thing for you to kind of think through.

And for any of us who have suffered any kind of dysfunctional childhood or challenges, we might learn at a very young age to deny our own needs and be on high alert for the needs of others because as a child, if you were abused or just dealing with any kind of trauma or tough situations, many times our very life at the time depended on knowing how to do things in a way that kept us out of trouble or kept us out of harm's way, from someone hurting us or filling in the gaps for someone who was sick or difficult to talk to.

We became really good at being hyper-vigilant and filling in the gaps for others. And it ends up becoming part of our internal wiring and how we learn to feel safe in the world when the world, A.K.A if we're talking about childhood, the home we grew up in felt very unsafe.

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So this is why - and we talked about this in another episode, taking care of your emotional health is so important because a lot of people have painful experiences in childhood that go unaddressed. And when they go unaddressed, they are allowed to play out in your emotions unresolved.

And so when you go back to heal those things, you're able to get a better sense of yourself and healthy resolve because a lot of times those survival mechanisms we needed as kids, we may not need them anymore as adults, and it takes processing that pain in order to be more present in your life as an adult.

Such as - because right now we're talking about over-responsibility, so maybe as a child that was part of your survival mechanism but as an adult, perhaps you don't need to do that as much. Perhaps it's okay to take care of yourself. Perhaps it's okay to engage in self-care and support your inner world.

But without processing any of that, we carry all this responsibility from our childhood into our adulthood and in our daily lives. And this survival way of life is going to have an expiration date. Your body can only hold this level of stress and responsibility and overwhelm for so long before you burn out. And burnout is like lights off. Your emotional world shuts down and it's very difficult to come back from, and that's a whole other topic to even talk about, like how to repair yourself after burnout has happened.

Because I've been there, I know a lot of professionals that have been there, and it takes a great amount of time and conscious effort to pull yourself back up. So we want to stay out of that. And the thing is even if you weren't abused as a child, many people fall into these traps of just taking too much responsibility for the outcomes of life rather than just flowing with the stream of it.

And I know that sounds like some woo-woo shit but let me explain what I mean by that. Constantly being in control of the outcomes in life are going

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to put your body in fight or flight. You're going to have high stress levels and anxiety and worry because you're so future-based all the time and so focused on the outcomes for others and filling in the gaps that your body never really gets a chance to rest.

And this is why self-care is so important. Self-care is an internal job. Managing expectations, implementing boundaries, connecting in healthy ways to people, and taking time for your emotional world to breathe. Just allowing it to be and giving it nourishment and support in the ways that you need.

When you implement these practices as part of your daily life, you will inherently feel more in control and at ease with yourself. Honoring your boundaries and a sense of self is key to thriving in life. So as I've mentioned before, many people did not learn this as children and they enter into adulthood not knowing how to do this. Not knowing their emotions matter because no one ever helped them figure that out or understand it.

And this is where therapy can be really helpful. I have many clients in therapy express how upsetting it is to them that no one taught them how to value themselves or nurture their inner world and they have fallen into many unhealthy relationships or situations, jobs because they never learned this. And it's almost like a grief process for people. You have to kind of grieve what you didn't get.

But the story doesn't stop there because you can take action steps and engage in the healing process to teach yourself and pour back into your emotional world so you feel better. I mean, therapy helps or can help rewire your brain, heal your emotional world and teach you skills to relate to yourself and others in ways that feel healthy and good to you.

And when you do these things, self-care becomes so much easier to implement because you believe you are worthy and deserving of love and

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respect, and you are, no matter what anyone's told you. You are. And sometimes, love and respect looks like taking care of yourself in a healthy way so you can maintain your emotional reserves and give people in your life the best version of you. The emotionally available version of you.

Because the truth is you can't give what you don't have, and if you are emotionally depleted, you are not going to be able to offer emotional availability to anyone else. And in fact - and if you're already burned out, this very idea of being emotionally available to people probably repulses you on some level. Like cognitively, you wish you could do it but physically, it probably feels heavy and you dread the very thought of expanding yourself in this way.

So do you guys see why self-care, it's so much more than bubble baths and massages? It's kind of a deep, internal process that is very possible, so don't get overwhelmed by that. If you're feeling overwhelmed by that, my guess is that this is just a part of you that needs more self-discovery and a little bit of work, and that's totally okay. I mean, we're all imperfect humans learning and growing and trying to be the best versions of ourselves. And so part of that is just identifying where we need extra support and there's no shame in that.

And as always, I want you to remember, getting help is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of strength. We are not robots programmed to know everything. We are human and we are designed to be connected with one another and constantly learning. And as such, we need to help each other be the best we can be. But it starts with you making a decision and walking on that path.

But remember, you're never stuck. I encourage you to adopt a learner's mindset and just be open to what life wants to teach you and engage in the process to get better at whatever you want to be better at. So let me give you a tool that you can use to get you started.

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And at first glance, you're probably not going to like this tool but just hear me out here. So here's a self-care tip. Start your morning with 15 minutes to yourself. Drink your coffee at sunrise, get up before the kids, stretch, breathe, pray, whatever you need to make sure you remind yourself in those 15 minutes that this is your time. Nobody else's.

You are owning this time to feel at peace and in control before the day takes over. And so by doing this, you have to be very mindful and conscious. You can't scroll through your phone, you can't be watching TV. This needs to be a very mindful, conscious act that your brain can record. So visually looking at nature or maybe listening to music that feels calming but really embracing these 15 minutes are yours.

It doesn't sound like it's a lot but it's a simple deposit into your nervous system to start your day feeling a little bit more in line before the kids wake up and have all their needs and before the job takes over and before all those things, just taking a little bit of time to be aligned with yourself. Some people even journal in these 15 minutes, which is fine, but what I want you to do more than anything is just to make a very mindful, conscious intentional step to communicate with yourself. These are my 15 minutes and they belong to me.

And as always, I want to do a little disclaimer here at the end as just a way to empower your sense of wellbeing. If you notice things come up for you when you're listening to this podcast, such as strong emotions, feeling triggered, or feeling stuck, I highly recommend you seek support from a mental health professional in your local state of residence. You have to remember, triggers and emotional responses are just information that something in your emotional world needs support. There is no shame in seeking out support from a licensed therapist, doctor, or mental health professional.

Taking care of your mental health is the best decision you can make for yourself, so I highly encourage you to take that step today And if you

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