

12 Self-Care Tips For Domestic Violence Survivors

BY SAFE SPEAKS | AUGUST 4, 2020

Self-care becomes essential in helping one to reduce the turmoil and volatility that undermines their ability to work or even function well daily.

By Edith Mecha

Last year, about the time most families were running around the city chasing goodies for the long festive season, I met with a longtime friend as she crossed from Kencom stage to Hilton Bata. Grace didn't look like her normal self, at all.

She would usually be cheerful, lively and bright, telling it with a smile, a chuckle, and a joke over another. Now, against all odds, she struck me hard: dull, sickly and absent. I felt confused after my initial excitement of almost a decade of 'longtime-no-see'.

I couldn't hide my concern, perhaps asking for the upteenth time if everything was okay.

No longer able to sustain the simple "all is well, deskee" lie to my persistent quest on her self-care, she leaned over to my left shoulder, and almost inaudibly confessed that she was going through depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), emanating from the two-year physical and emotional abuse she had endured from her ex-husband. And, reviving the friendship of yonder, in a low tone conversation, she divulged the sorrows she had persevered that almost broke the once tireless promising leader.

It's likely that you may know someone who is going through the same. It could be a friend, a family member or even a colleague. This is because healing from trauma or abuse can sometimes be a challenging journey that requires commitment and a safe space for it to be successful. It is a gradual, ongoing process that could take months or years for one to come to a point of complete healing. However, with the right attitude, strategies and support, one can move past the trauma, rebuild their sense of control and self-worth, and come out stronger.

Self-care becomes essential in helping one to reduce the turmoil and volatility that undermines their ability to work or even function well daily.

Unfortunately, many survivors view self-care as a comfort they cannot afford or don't deserve as many victims of abuse are often forced to put the needs of their abuser before their own. This shouldn't be the case at all because everyone merits self-care which can be done using simple strategies within a person's means. It could involve creating a healing journal or even watching one's favorite TV show.

Being kind to oneself is important. One needs to find interesting ways to take care of themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Doing things that make you happy can serve a crucial role in healing.

With compassion, acceptance of oneself, and some self-care tips, one can gain a better version of themselves leading to great achievements.

Here are 12 self-care tips that can be helpful.

1. Positive self-affirmations

Survivors, having endured hurtful words, physical and emotional abuse for a long time, need to reprogram their subconscious mind. They could replace all the negative words the abuser told them with positive words. This can be done by recording positive affirmations like "I am worthy, I am valuable, I am beautiful, I will make it." Listening to your own voice saying these affirmations daily, is a great way to rewrite the narrative abusers have written for you and eliminate one's own inner toxic critical voice.

2. Engage in physical exercises that excite you

Studies show that trauma lives in our bodies and minds till we find ways to discard it. Dr. Sussanne Babbel, in her book [*Heal the Body, Heal the Mind*](#), observes that “traumatic events can leave mental and physical scars but these scars don’t have to define you. By practicing exercises and mind-body interventions, one can learn to move past trauma, restore relationships, and cultivate spiritual awareness.”

Therefore, it’s important to look for an exercise that you love like aerobics, dancing, walking, yoga or jogging to release the negative thoughts and feelings. Physical activities are a good stress reliever.

3. Reignite activities or hobbies that used to make you happy

This could be drawing, writing, painting, photography, making music, or doing arts and crafts. This is a good way to release the trauma in alternate ways that engage both mind and body. Remember, hobbies have always been a good antidote for daily pressures.

4. Ask for help

Find a validating mental health professional or counselor. At their support you will be able to address your trauma triggers in a safe space.

5. Join a survivor support group

Being around people who have gone through similar experiences can be useful, help you regain confidence and yourself. Sharing your story with other survivors can be incredibly healing and liberating. Look up groups on Facebook, Google and Safe Speak.

6. Take deep breaths

Simply taking just a few moments daily to practice some deep breathing exercises can decrease stress, relax your mind, body, help you sleep better and keep you focused.

7. Set goals and track your performance

This will keep you focused. It can also rebuild a sense of wellness and happiness. Attaining one's goals will bring a sense of achievement and a positive mindset that is valuable to you, your loved ones and society.

8. Keep in contact with friends and family

Friends can be good medicine. A Harvard study established that having solid friendships helps promote brain health. Friends help us deal with stress, make better lifestyle choices that keep us strong, and allow us to rebound from health issues and disease more quickly.

9. Develop a realistic to do list

This could include time for work, rest, eat, sleep, relationships, and recreation. Eat three meals a day and drink enough water.

10. Create a to be list and add activities to help you become the person you want

11. Meditate for 10 minutes

12. Write a list of things you're grateful for

Finally, throughout this process of healing, learn and appreciate yourself. Count your blessings. Acknowledge the baby steps. Healing is a journey and, with a positive attitude and commitment, you will make it.

These tips can be very useful in one's recovery. You can choose the ones you are comfortable with and transform them to a habit. That will involve daily commitment and, more importantly, having a self-care plan. Your self-care plan can be as simple or as detailed as you want it to be. Start by identifying your daily needs and coping strategies when trauma threatens to overwhelm. Subsequently, create your plan.

A better form of yourself awaits you, coz your best is yet.

<https://safespeaks.org/2020/08/04/12-self-care-tips-for-domestic-violence-survivors/>