

THE POWER OF REST

Tartan Community Day Newsletter

On Self & Care

BY JEFF BEYER PH.D.

Having your “heart in your work” means “having your heart” in the first place, and that involves a commitment to time spent in an open and intimate relationship with yourself. It involves striving to adopt a posture of steadfast friendliness toward yourself, to relate with yourself as you would with a close friend or loved one, relating with the kind of openness and acceptance that leads naturally to a sense of care. This brings you into the world at your very best. The experiences of the reciprocating intermingling between yourself at the deepest, most genuine level and others and the rest of the world leads to a sense of connection, of being at home, the very source of rich and meaningful experience. But achieving this “resting” in yourself requires actually experiencing moments of inhabiting that deepest part of yourself, attending gently to it, knowing it with ever greater familiarity.

Being able at any moment to rest in this place is not always easy, not always readily accessible. You must at times move deliberately to carve out the opportunity for the experience to be actualized. If you spend most of your waking time busying yourself with the demands of the day then the conditions needed for sinking into the quiet depths of experience may be too few, the connections may therefore be threadbare, distancing you from your heart.

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It is too easy to be distracted from yourself by work and vegging out, to slide into numbed out experience. Sometimes the whole of the self must be carefully and deliberately settled into, like one takes the time to settle into a warm bath. In the process of that settling in one must expect some resistance or internally motivated impediments to the movement: in the lifelong process of psychologically surviving youth and navigating a culture that has its own agendas, it happens that we emerge into adulthood with habituated strategies that may or may not lead to a sufficient attention and attunement to the genuine self. To thrive rather than just survive, that deep connection with the self must be carefully explored, nurtured, and inhabited.

This “resting” is not always solitary—resting in connection with yourself is also a resting in connection with others, and also with the rest of the world. Bringing into these connections more of the whole of yourself sets the stage for experiencing a satisfying, grounded, lived sense of involvement and wholeness, of feeling like you are a “part of” rather than “apart from.” Here we can see the all-important difference between “being driven” and “driving”: being driven is to live life without living it with full heart and vitality. It is living life without your most genuine self doing the driving. Being driven is an abandonment of the heart. It is better for you and better for others and the world for you to strive for “driving” your life than “being driven” through your life. In your desire for a rich, meaningful, and productive life, you also hope to be engaged in doing something that’s good for the world. But the world needs a lot!

Advising his students on career paths, the great theologian and civil rights leader Howard Thurman once wrote, “Don’t ask what the world needs, ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” Coming alive requires you to fully inhabit and nurture the heart of yourself, attentively and lovingly.

Should I work hard?—Yes. Should I rest well?—Yes. Work-and-rest are two intimately and inextricably intermingled sides of the human coin: rest without work is a diminishment of rest, and therefore also of living vitality. Work without rest will keep your heart from inhabiting and enhancing your work. So work, but make yourself friendly with rest, and regularly reacquaint yourself with your deeper self. Visit there often.

“To thrive rather than just survive, that deep connection with the self must be carefully explored, nurtured, and inhabited.”

Rest As Self-Compassion

BY BRIANA ROOT, PH.D.

Many of us have been conditioned to believe that our worth is derived from our performance and achievements. This also means, that for many of us, rest is experienced as a threat—if we are not progressing or being productive, then it can feel like our worth and belonging are at risk.

In all of our doing and striving, however, we can become disconnected from ourselves and cut off from our own humanness. Our in-the-moment experience holds a wealth of information that is always available to us if we know how to access it.



When we are constantly pushing ourselves forward, we can leave parts of ourselves behind. We miss important signals from our bodies about our needs. As humans, we have natural, inherent needs for nurturance, for rest, and for connection. These needs do not reflect a deficiency or weakness—they reflect our humanity. If we can allow ourselves to have needs, then we can find ways to fulfill them.

Self-compassion gives us the resources to meet our in-the-moment experience, giving us access to our internal wisdom about what we are needing to support ourselves.

“As humans, we have natural, inherent needs for nurturance, for rest, and for connection.

These needs do not reflect a deficiency or weakness - they reflect our humanity.”



Rest As Self-Compassion contd.

Self-compassion is the practice of tuning into our experiences with curiosity and kindness, recognizing that our experiences connect us with humanity. We pause and turn inward; we shift from doing to being. We make room for what is happening in our bodies—tension, discomfort, stress—and try to offer friendly companionship to our feelings. Instead of judging ourselves or moving into fixing, we hold space for ourselves and be with ourselves. Once we get acquainted with our internal experiences, we can then ask ourselves, “What is it that I need in this moment?”

“Self-compassion is the practice of tuning into our experiences with curiosity and kindness, recognizing that our experiences connect us with humanity.”

Many of us are so focused on what we “should be” thinking, doing or feeling. Self-compassion invites each of us to consider:

Can it be, that in this moment, there are no requirements of me and my experience?

Can I give myself permission to be just as I am in this moment and welcome my imperfect self?

Can I use my in-the-moment experience to guide me about what I am needing—what needs nurturance and support, what needs attention and care, what needs protection and advocacy?

What may become available to me if I give myself space to be—to be human, to be myself, to be still, to simply be?

Reading List

THE ELEMENTS OF
SELF-COMPASSION

THE MYTHS OF
SELF-COMPASSION

PRACTICE:
SELF-COMPASSION
BREAK

Invitations to Self- Compassion

WILD GEESE BY MARY
OLIVER

START CLOSE IN BY
DAVID WHYTE

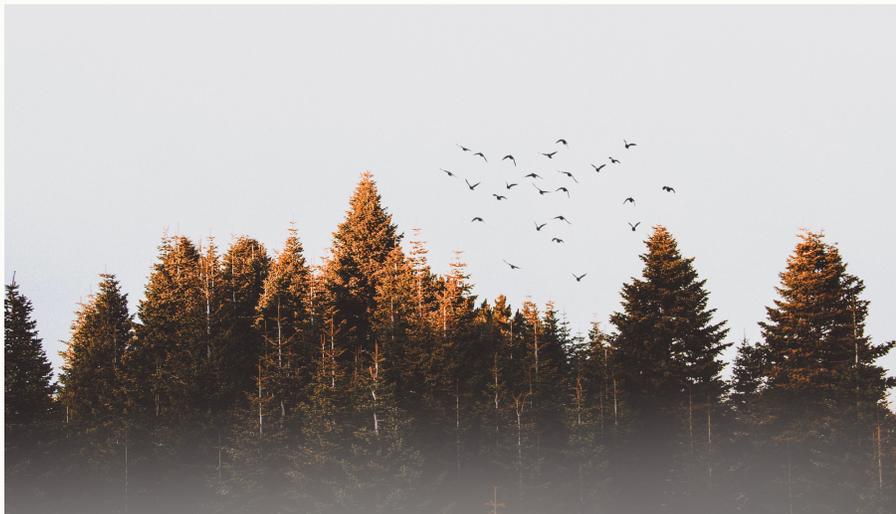
Rest As Collective Care

BY SHUBHARA BHATTACHARJEE, PSY.D.

Prevailing cultural attitudes towards both work and recreation can often subtly shape one's own attitudes towards these concepts, and that includes viewing rest as either solitary or communal in nature. In a predominantly individualistic cultural environment that implicitly values productivity, competition, achievement, speed, and efficiency, finding sufficient time to rest can become a necessity to replenish one's depleted energy reserves, in readiness to be able to repeat the cycle over again the following day. Rest then ceases to be a human need that seeks fulfillment, and instead begins to resemble a chore that demands attention so that one can work again.

The professional and personal connections that one makes in these places have the potential to be helpful and rewarding, yet the prevailing cultural attitudes that encourage competition also create the potential for these connections to become sources of stress. Taking time to rest may also risk becoming incumbent on the individual to withdraw from a bustling workplace or place of learning and from some of those connections, making rest itself a solitary activity.

However, what of cultural attitudes that nurture rest and human connection within collective spaces? In cultures across the world that value cooperation and collective effort, human beings understand the vital, implicit importance of rest for the existence of harmonious communities.



“There
is more to life
than simply
increasing its
speed.”

MAHATMA GHANDI



Rest As Collective Care contd.

The cultural attitudes that emerged from within these societies also reflected a value for incorporating respite and rejuvenation into their ancient ways of life. Physical spaces and periods of time marked in the local calendar also emerged where people could authentically connect with each other as human beings, and not as competitors. The social scaffolding provided by these collective spaces, and continually observed through cultural traditions such as music, art, recreational games, and feasts, allowed for human connections to flourish as part of respite and rejuvenation. People were able to slow themselves down from work, enabling them to simply “be with” each other. Modern psychology and research reveals the psychological underpinnings of collective respite, and confirms the psychological benefits of such traditions and practices through the nurturing of authentic human connections, all of which are intrinsic to collective cultures. As you reflect on collective rest, consider the following:

Are you familiar with collective rest?

Where do you find space and time for collective respite with others?

What cultural traditions are you familiar with that facilitate healthy human connection and collective replenishment?

Where are the opportunities for collective rest in this environment?

Reading List

CARE OF THE SOUL

WE NEED TO MOVE ON
FROM SELF-CARE TO
SOMETHING THAT
CANNOT BE CAPTURED
BY CAPITALISM

WE NEED COMMUNITY
CARE TO THRIVE.

BUILDING OUR CAPACITY
FOR COLLECTIVE CARE

FINDING REST IN SOCIAL
CONNECTION

Rest as Radical

BY DAREEN BASMA, PH.D.



As we think about rest and care, it's critical that we acknowledge external variables in our culture that implicitly and explicitly get in the way of centering the self. All too often, marginalized communities are conditioned to view physical and mental health symptoms as personal/individual rather than collective, as a sign of something being wrong with them rather than as a healthy response to immersion in a toxic environment, as something that needs "treatment" rather than something that needs justice. Knowing that liberation isn't found in adjusting to an unjust society, we recognize self-care cannot be realized only through long walks and mindfulness exercises. Self-care, fully realized, comes through radical and political liberatory action

Healing is an act of resistance to oppression that can produce counter knowledge, celebrate the spirit, and foster community through affirmation and sharing, particularly as it pertains to those carrying the weight of oppression. When we invoke the term "healing," we seek a continuation of Audre Lorde's work, which locates healing at the center of our interactions not just with ourselves, but also with our friends, family, peers, colleagues and community members.

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”

AUDRE LORDE



Rest as Radical contd.

Healing, and resting by extension, should not be an afterthought towards liberation, but a key component for resistance and justice. Who benefits when you reject resting, when you work yourself to exhaustion, when you are too burnt out to keep it going?

Radical self-care means unpacking personal, generational, and historical trauma and the ways people have survived by seeking proximity to a mythical norm reflective of cultural imperialism and patriarchy. Radical self-care requires a process of redefining one's goals, one's values, and, ultimately, one's self for oneself. It means disrupting the cycle of socialization. It involves knowing what's truly in our best interest and not what we've been socialized to believe is in our best interest—but is actually the oppressors' best interest. Through this revealing and unpacking, self-care can then be operationalized in a liberatory fashion based on one's unique social location.

What does liberatory self-care look like?

It may look like saying “no” more often or “yes” more often.

It may look like doing what really scares us: being our most authentic selves in a world that, if it even sees us, views us as distasteful and unpalatable.

It may look like finding spaces where we can be more connected to our indigenous selves.

Reading List

[REST & RACIAL JUSTICE](#)

[THE DANGERS OF
RADICAL SELF LOVE](#)

[LIFE HACKS OF THE
POOR AND AIMLESS](#)

[THE POLITICS OF
CONSPICUOUS DISPLAYS
OF SELF-CARE](#)

[ANECDOTES OF
COLLECTIVE HEALING](#)

[HOW AUDRE LORDE
TAUGHT ME TO LOVE MY
QUEER BLACK IDENTITY](#)

Restorative Resources

Self-Care Resources

Active Minds

Self-Care Practices For a Healthy Mind, Body & Soul

Meditations by Chris Germer

Proactively Coping With Racism

POC Online Classroom Resources on Self Care

Brown Girl Self-Care Blog

Surviving Racism Amidst COVID-19

The Nap Ministry - Rest Supports Grieving

Healhaus - Circle of Care for Black Women

Sista Afya - Healing Workshops

Headspace: A meditation app

Liberate: A meditation app by and for the black diaspora

Madness and Oppression: Paths to personal transformation & collective liberation

Elizabeth Bishop - Tartan Community Day Keynote Speaker

UnpackU Resources

The Heart Advocate

Writing Unplugged

Podcasts:

Brown Girl Self Care Podcast

The Melanated social work podcast

A Different Perspective

AFFIRM by Redefine Enough

Naming It Podcast

Instagram Pages:

@cmucaps

@thenapministry

@centerformindfulselfcompassion

@selfcareisapriority

CMU Resources

COUNSELING &
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SERVICES (CaPS)

CENTER FOR STUDENT
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

UNIVERSITY HEALTH
SERVICES

WELLNESS INITIATIVES

RELIGIOUS AND
STUDENT LIFE
INITIATIVES

STUDENT LEADERSHIP,
INVOLVEMENT AND
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
(SLICE)

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