

Self-Care Is An Act of Resistance

Grass-roots meditation activist Shelly Tygielski offers 3 ways to practice self-care so we can recharge, refresh, and rewire for action.

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The day after the US midterms, after a bitter election season with hard-fought victories, severely-close losses, and some horrific violence in its wake, I found myself thinking back to a program I put together for the [Women's Convention](#) last October in Detroit for thousands of impassioned, powerful women. We were all embarking on a journey we knew would be long and hard.

I called my talk *Self-Care is An Act of Resistance: Shifting the Fight-or-Flight Response to Empathy-or-Action Response* and here's why.

The main idea is that neither “fighting” nor “fleeing” are sustainable. More than that, they are responses we can move away from, we can evolve beyond. We often hear that our brains are hard-wired for fight-or-flight, that “we evolved this way,” but we know now that we *continue* to evolve. Our brains can be *rewired*.

How can we evolve beyond fight-or-flight? By choosing to move towards two new responses: empathy and action. And I believe this starts with self-care.

The Power of Empathy and Action

I woke up the morning after the election to find over 100 messages in my inbox and via text with such a tone of despair. We had all worked hard, but so much more work remains.

I started to respond, one by one, to the messages reminding everyone that they have PERMISSION to feel this way. It is okay to cry. To be sad.

Disappointed. Tired. And in order to not add a secondary layer of emotion to everything we’re feeling— namely, guilt—we all have permission to **pause, to reset, to breathe**.

It may feel inappropriate to take time to rest, or to seek out pleasure, or even indulge in some positivity in the midst of our heated social, political, and environmental climate. But I want you all to know that it’s crucial for us to acknowledge the importance of our own self-care and to act upon it. Self-care is not frivolous; self-care is a radical act of love.

Yes, there is still work to be done. A lot of work to be done. But we don’t need to do it today. Today we can rest. Tomorrow we can rest. And then the next day and the next. We can pre-game for the holidays and think about all that we have to be grateful for, personally, and collectively. And then, those who are ready can rise up, dust off, unravel and lift up the rest of us.

Self-care is a movement in and of itself.

It's a movement of love amidst defeat, of kindness in the face of loss as well as victory. It's declaring yourself as self-deserving of emotional agency. Self-care is an act of resistance.

1. **Allow yourself to (finally) [unplug](#) from the news and social media for a few days.** Turn off your alerts and push motivations, turn off the TV and don't access social media. If you must access it for work or otherwise, limit your time and do not engage or comment on posts. It's not forever – it's a few days of peace and being off the grid.
2. **Recognize when you are in need of self-care and then respond to that need.** Sometimes [taking time for self-care](#) may impact the lives of those around you (for example, you need to take the day off from work or ask for someone to watch the kids). Inform those around you that you are responding to a personal need but do not feel the need to ask for permission.
3. **Have a self-care checklist ready that has dozens of options tailored just for you.** These self-care options can range from scheduling a mid-day call with a friend to drawing a bubble bath. Having this list ready is important because when you are on the verge of [burnout](#), you may not have the capacity to come up with the options in that moment.

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