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# The Gift of Self-Care

by **Shawn Eigenbrode, MSW, LSW, GC-C**  
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Western Reserve Grief Services

The year 2021 brought many challenges. If you experienced the death of a loved in the past year or more – whatever the circumstances or timeline – you may still be healing from that loss. The death of your loved one may have triggered related losses: your roles, routines, purpose or self-identity. Separately, you may have endured other significant losses, such as relationships, employment, opportunities or security.

If you feel depleted, please know that you are not alone. During times of loss and uncertainty, it's especially important to take care of yourself, even as you care for others. Grief and stress take a very real toll on the body, mind and spirit.

Seasonal demands and special occasions often add to that burden. Although you may have little control over the external events and people affecting your bereavement, you do have control over your own daily self-care.

Self-care is simply the practice of promoting one's own health and wellbeing. Any personal choice or action that supports your well-being can be considered self-care. It encompasses your most basic needs as well as your greater enrichment.

If you are a longtime caregiver, a habitual people-pleaser, or a chronic workaholic, you may have greater difficulty prioritizing your own needs. But your well-being matters, and it deserves your attention. Self-care is neither selfish nor self-indulgent; it is self-preservation. Self-care is essential to

healing and adaptation. While it doesn't need to be time-consuming or costly, self-care does require some self-awareness and self-discipline.

Briefly reflect on these four domains of your well-being, and some of the everyday choices you make for yourself within them:

- **Biological** – your nutrition, hydration, sleep, exercise, medical care
- **Psychological** – your knowledge, thought processes; emotional expression, coping strategies
- **Social** – the interpersonal company you keep, your support systems
- **Spiritual** – your sources of higher meaning, purpose and unity In which domains are you deprived or struggling? What might provide relief? Which of the choices mentioned here can you control? Where could you make improvements?

Even small changes may yield benefits to your well-being. Sustained changes often lead to bigger changes and greater benefits. Again, you are

deserving of your own attention and effort! The gift of self-care is available to you anytime, anywhere. It takes the form of personalized comfort, nurturing and sustenance. It can help make most burdens, including bereavement, more bearable.

Although no one can predict the challenges ahead, you can better meet the demands of the coming year by fostering your innate resilience. The new year offers a timely opportunity to prioritize self-care, helping you to be a greater asset to yourself and to the important others in your life. Remember, empty lanterns provide no light. Self-care is fuel – allowing your light to shine and endure.

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*Western Reserve Grief Services is a community-based grief support program provided by Hospice of the Western Reserve. A wide variety of resources are available to help anyone who is grieving the death of a loved one, including virtual grief support groups, healing arts workshops and more. No connection to hospice services is required to utilize the resources. For more information, visit [hospicewr.org/griefandloss](http://hospicewr.org/griefandloss).*



**To learn about critical resources available to you, click here.**



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