



## **EXTREME Self Care: The Key to Being Resilient in Real Time**

**By Amy Frost, MBA and MA Spiritual Psychology**

### **Abstract**

In your busy life, perhaps including a demanding profession, you devote so much dedication, commitment, energy, and concern that you run the risk of achieving “BURNOUT” or becoming numb from the stress of continual demands on your mind, body and spirit. You can get so caught up in doing so much for others that you don’t give yourself the time and energy you require to be whole and healthy. This article will give you techniques to care for yourself, create a support team, develop your own care practices, and make those practices a part of your “real” life.

Key words: self care, self-loving, resilience, burnout, stress management, personal support team

### **Introduction**

What do a corporate trainer, a marketing expert, a trauma specialist, and a school psychologist all have in common? They care so much, resonate so strongly, and do so much for others that they suffer physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually! Linda, Kristin and Cindy. I’m most proud to call them my friends and colleagues, and to meet with them regularly.

Linda is a marketing expert and supports people in showing who they are and what they do in the world. Kristin is a trauma expert and supports people in healing from their past and living fully in the present. Cindy, a school psychologist, supports teachers, parents, and children to learn how to be free of anxiety.

As for myself, I’ve always been an overachiever. That is part of being a member of my Nielsen family, and especially as the oldest Nielsen girl. Being the firstborn of five sisters, I assumed the role of taking care of them. My life was always about taking care of someone else. I was honored to care for my sisters, and it started a pattern in that persisted in my life for many years. At 18, I began working full time for the Air Force while attending school at night. I never had a spare minute, as I was always taking care of my sisters, my close friends and now my co-workers. I was always the model student and worker, always smiling and taking on more. Every three months, without fail, I would have bronchitis so badly I would be in bed for days. Nevertheless, I would continue to do my homework and keep my life perfect no matter how ill I became. Everyone wanted to be me.

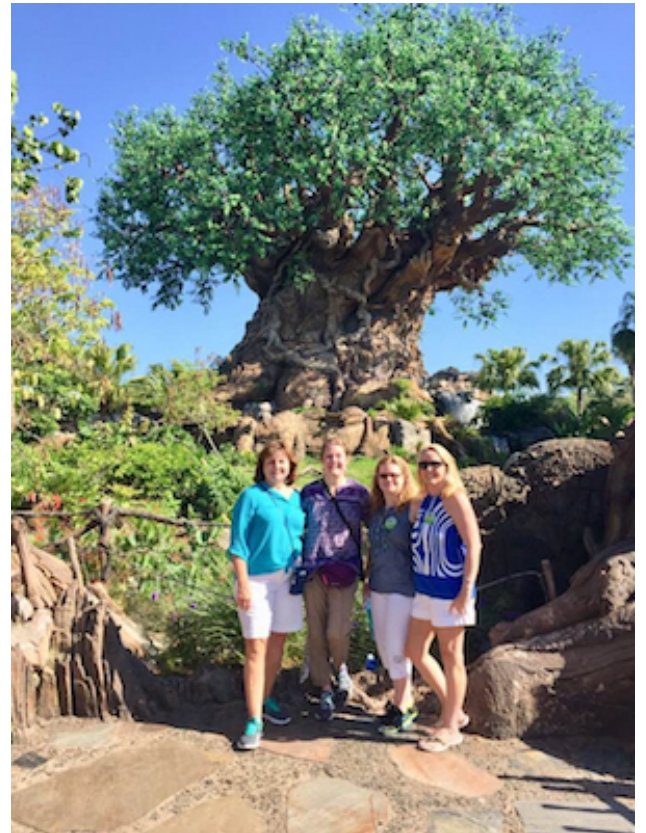
I hit my breaking point in my forties, when I started having debilitating chest pains. My father had died at age 49 from a heart attack. My doctor told me that I was stressed and needed to create a new approach to life, as I was at risk for ending up like my father. I had no idea what that meant, but it started me on a new path of including myself on the list of the people I care about. I became a self-care evangelist. I don't take this issue lightly, and I have learned that it is not easy to execute in real life. I also know that getting support made all the difference in my life.

So joining with this group of special women was part of my taking my doctor's advice seriously. We all came together to support humanitarian efforts and found we also need help in nurturing ourselves. We had been working together on projects with the Association of Comprehensive Energy (ACEP) Humanitarian Committee. We initiated monthly project calls which quickly became support calls for us as individuals. Next, we organically started emailing, texting and calling on an ongoing basis. All of us have come to feel that this group has provided us with a lifeline needed to keep going with our respective work. Providing self-care begins at home!

Don't go it alone! Kristin, Cindy, Linda and I live in different parts of the country and have families we adore, as well as full lives, and calendars, and HUGE MISSIONS.

Many people come to us for support. We meet on a conference call a couple of times a month. We connect via text, phone, and email as needed we need to and on an ongoing basis, on text, phone and email to celebrate our successes and our angsts. We make our time together a priority. We support each other on our personal, professional and spiritual goals. We know we are loved, supported and in the ready to be of service to each other.

We are a family of choice – friends who love each other. Moreover, we have FUN together!!! Each of us went down for the count at different times during the past couple of years at different times and with our unique this foundation of support, we are able to stay in the game of life and to deal with any crises that arise as they occur.



*“Self-care is not a luxury. It is a necessity!”*

- Cindy

## **Self-care**

There is so much written about and talked about in the main stream on self-care.

I work to make it very simple for myself and those I support. Self-care is a daily practice of taking steps in your life to care for you as a whole person. I recommend taking time each week to create a plan of self-care that has physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual practices.

Michelle Morris, the author of *The Cherished Self* (Morris-Spieker, 2001), writes about the importance of us cherishing ourselves not as an afterthought but as a priority. When you are a Depleted Self you blame others for your life circumstances, you are exhausted, bored with life, and resentful. ANYONE? Whereas, when you are the Cherished Self you are compassionate with others, you are vibrant, feel connected to life, and contribute your unique part.

Here's a sample plan:

- Physically commit to walking 15 minutes daily
- Mentally commit to jotting down each time you say something negative about yourself
- Emotionally commit to making a list of what makes you happy and do one of them during the week
- Spiritually commit to reading something inspirational ten minutes a day

You seek support from other like-minded and like-hearted people who become supportive, accountability partners. In this role, they who nag, inspire, coach, and lovingly help you implement your plan.

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Over the past twenty years I have written about and presented on lectures, workshops, and podcasts on topics like: Moving from Burnout to Inspiration; Living a Self-Care Life Style – NO REALLY!"; Creating a Healthy Lifestyle; and Self-Care at Work – at conferences, corporate events, and in workplaces all over the country. I finally came to understand that I am my own best coach and friend. I know that I can be love and care for myself while doing the same for those around me. I don't have to sacrifice myself blindly. I can do self-care in grace. Now, I can now implement a self-care life style by receiving support from individuals who understand what motivates me, unconditionally love me, and hold me accountable in a graceful way.

*"The best community service I can offer the world is to stay safe and sane."*

- Liz Elisabeth Gilbert (Gilbert, 2007)

Do you have the energy to be the kind type of person you want to be? When we are exhausted, we don't act from our highest self. Exhaustion makes it easy for the dark side to show its head. Everywhere you look, this the message that of the importance of self-care is coming across, and we hear listen to it, but our listening does not translate into hearing. Unfortunately, we usually typically listen after a disaster, or a health problem manifests due to our neglected high stress levels.

And any time we think we've finally arrived at our goal of mastering self-care, we should prepare ourselves to be invited to learn the next step. For example, I conducted a two-day workshop on Leadership Skills for Non-supervisors. It was hard work, and I enjoyed it. I had been working hard for weeks and had not really realized the toll this effort was taking on my mind, body, and spirit. Then I asked the group, "If you had more time, how would you spend it? After each person answered, I then challenged them to do those things they had listed. At that point, they asked me the same question. I immediately replied, "I would just BE." And I had to admit I needed to do this for myself! I couldn't could not remember the last time I just allowed let *being* simply be enough.

*"When one is pretending, the entire body revolts."*

- Anais Nin (Nin, 1939)

I comfort myself that I'm not alone on being on a constant learning curve. Most people exist in a constant state of crisis. – Being OVERWHELMED and STRESSED is the norm. I find this same situation to be the case in the many of the groups with in which I speak to and work with lots of groups and it is always the same. We know we should take care of ourselves, but we rarely do it. For our health and sanity, isn't its time we made self-care a priority!

*It is said that wars are won in the general's tent. Sharpening the saw in the first three dimensions – the physical, the spiritual, and the mental – is a practice I call the "Daily Private Victory." And I commend to you the simple practice of spending one hour a day every day doing it [self-care]— one hour for the rest of your life. There's no other way you could spend an hour that would begin to compare in terms of value and results. It will affect every decision, every relationship. It will greatly improve the quality, the effectiveness, of every other hour of the day, including the depth and restfulness of your sleep. It will build the long-term physical, spiritual, and mental strength to enable you to handle difficult challenges in life.*

- Steven Covey (Covey, 1990)

Let me share a composite case of how self-care can be transformative.

When 'Tom' came to me for help, he was ready to walk away from work he had formally loved. He worked a full time and a part time job to pay for his passion of being a minister. I supported him in creating boundaries around his work and ministry. He stopped all work on Wednesdays, put working out and fun time with his wife on his calendar. He has stepped back into his ministry, has much better health and his happier in his marriage.

## **Self-Loving**

Self-loving is a habit we develop in childhood and refine throughout our lives. It is an attitude and a skill that we can cultivate and refine.

Take time to ponder and write the your responses to these questions:

- How do you care for yourself?
- How do you acknowledge and validate yourself?
- What activities give you renewed energy, hope, and/or calm you?- What activities drain you of energy of or knock you off balance?
- What brings you joy? Alternatively, if you can't think of anything, what brought you joy in the past? Or what could bring you joy in the future?
- Who supports you?

When I met 'Dan', he was going through a change in career, a divorce, loss of his house and his kids moving to the opposite of the county. He had completely thrown himself into his work to deal with everything and his health both physically and mentally was suffering. We created a plan to make working out, eating healthy meals and the practice of stress management skills a part of his daily life. Weekly we met to discuss how the plan was going and to update it real time to meet his needs. After a few months, he was able to work in balance with his health numbers back to normal with the return of an optimistic state of mind.

We must work to cultivate self-love. We must repeatedly commit ourselves over and over again to taking good care of ourselves. By doing so, We then become able come to know and honor our

needs and to balance the our unique interests and relationships in life. We discover a natural zest for life when we give our fullest attention to doing this.

Make a list of ways that you might care better for yourself better and put joy as a center-point of your life. Brainstorm many possibilities. Don't worry right now whether they are realistic or not.

*What wound did ever heal but by degrees?*

- Shakespeare (*Othello*, 2.3.371)

### **Some of my self-love favorites:**

- Place familiar sacred objects with which you have a strong spiritual connection around you in your office, home, and car.
- Spend some quiet time alone each day, even if it is for only a short time. This Doing so helps you to reconnect with YOU. Learning to BE takes practice.
- Recharge your batteries daily. Don't wait until burnout. What simple things can you do? Try taking a deep breath, Breathe, take a short walk, and eat a healthy snack, etc.
- Have at least one, focused, connected, and meaningful conversation per day. This engagement can give you heaps of energy.
- Spend "real" time with family and friends.
- Create a Circle of Friends.

Just keep adding to your list until it seems as if you have run out of ideas., then think a little longer and come up with a few more. Set aside the list for a little while. When you return, choose one thing to do for yourself and implement it. Every day, do something for YOU from your list.

'Robin' manages a large retail store. She was timid about leading her people, about standing in her power and this lead to her attempting to be perfect at everything and working beyond what her body could handle. We met weekly to practice resilience skills (ACEP, Web ref) to develop a plan on how to communicate effective with her employees and to find ways to eat with her restricted diet to have the energy she needed to be successful. In the past year, her store's sales numbers have increased dramatically, she handles stress with grace and she is calm when she has challenges in leading her employees.

You are the conductor of your life. You can bring the choir in your being to new levels of brilliance. Balance the "doing" and the "being". Let the intuitive voice guide your journey. The rational voice can tell you what to do next.

I met monthly with a team of middle managers from several branches of an organization that supports families at risk. We talked about how work and life were going for them. Each month I presented a self-care skill like journaling and led an experience with that skill. They were challenged to use that skill the following month. Each month, they would report how that skills helped them both at home and at work. They all saw a marked improvement on all counts. It became an ongoing session that continues to help them take care of themselves and each other.

*May I be at one with the various parts of myself. So that mind and heart work together. . So that the conversations in my head form a choir in perfect harmony. So that what I do is supported by my Heart's desire like a shadow dancing behind a child at play.*

- Karen Kedar

Do you have at least a small amount of time to contribute each week to an very important cause?

Of course, you would make the time if it your participation would make a BIG change in our world.

What if that cause was YOU?

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Author, *Making a Living while Having a Life*

“My passion is supporting people in their lives and at work using cutting edge as well as tried and true tools and techniques to stay calm in adversity, to be productive, successful, optimistic and happy.”

I’ve worked with thousands of managers and employees dealing with a multitude of workplace related issues that impact company morale and productivity. I’m an accomplished trainer, facilitator, radio and podcast host, educator, keynote presenter, life management coach, career coach, and writer. I’m a Collaborative Partner with Corporate Spiritual Care Program <http://www.tuffservices.org/>. I worked for the Department of Defense for 20 years as a contract negotiator and a Total Quality Management (TQM) facilitator. I was on faculty at the University of Phoenix where I was distinguished as an outstanding faculty member and was a faculty mentor. In 2012, I received the Oprah Magazine, Crocs Cares and Nonprofit Sector Foundation Stepping Up to your Purpose and Walking for Good Award. In 2018, I received the Humanitarian of the Year award by the Association of Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP).



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