

The Need to Nurture...



No, this is not about the "Nature vs Nurture" debate vis a vis child rearing. I'm talking about Self-Nurture. We all need it, but why do women find it so hard to do?

Nurture- v.t. nourish, rear, foster, train, educate.

Take a moment to think. Based on this definition from the Oxford dictionary, how many people are you nurturing each day?

In my work I ask this question to groups of women and invariably get a long list of answers:- Children, husbands (!?), aged parents, troubled siblings, colleagues, clients, bosses (!), even gardens and pets!! Yet there's nearly always one person who's left off that list...Yes...that's right...who's nurturing you?

What exactly is "self nurture"? How do we get some?

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Dr Domar continues, "A number of studies have shown that social support is crucial to our physical health. Women with lots of close friends tend to live longer and are less likely to die from "breast cancer."

Going back to the dictionary once again I found that the roots of the word "nurture" go back to the Old French noureture or "nourish." So nurturing is a form of nourishment, and we all know how essential good nourishment is. Of course, how you nurture yourself is entirely a personal choice, one persons nurturing could be exhausting, boring or unthinkable to someone else. Whatever form it takes, try to remember you have Physical, Mental, and Spiritual needs that would all benefit from a bit of nurturing.

As women we have to make our own self-care a priority. No one is going to organize our lives for us so that there is magically some "extra time" to indulge in some self-nurture. It's a cliché but, if you don't do it...no one will. Don't wait around for some magical time when "everything's done" and you can finally give some time

Dr. Alice Domar, is assistant professor of obstetrics, gynaecology and reproductive biology at Harvard Medical School and also the Director of the Mind/Body Centre for Women's Health in Boston. In her book "Self Nurture: Learning to Care for yourself as Effectively as you Care for Everyone Else" she uses this definition "to care for yourself and put yourself amongst your own list of priorities." Another definition I like is "loving acts directed toward ourselves."

I'd like to point out here that "nurturing" is not the same as "pampering." The dictionary defines pamper as "overindulge, spoil with luxury." So whilst there could be some marketing mileage in the idea that women like a nice "pamper" session...what we need much more is nurturing.

Dr Domar shows that small doses of daily self-nurture can counter-act the stresses involved with juggling too many roles. She has some suggestions for every day things a person can do to nurture

yourself. Whilst I hate to quote a multinational of dubious credentials, when it comes to self-nurture - "just do it". Here are some ideas that might help you:-

Physical nurturing

Eat well - Feed your body the nutrients it needs.

Exercise - Include your kids in your exercise routine if that's the only way to fit it in.

Get or give a Facial - You don't have to have qualifications to do a facial with a girlfriend, mum, or sister.

Foot Soaks - Make a 10 minute foot soak a regular soothing ritual - morning or night. Foot soaks are known to reduce pain and relieve tension and will provide healing benefits to the whole body.

Massage - In our touch-starved lifestyles massage not only relaxes, it can boost immunity, bring better sleep, reduce anxiety, and a valuable sense of emotional balance.

when you start feeling stressed out, stop yourself and say, "What do I need right now?" It may be something simple as to take a two minute relaxation break, or look up a joke on email, or call a friend, or go for a walk, or decide to order a pizza for dinner!

You need to check in with yourself on a daily basis to find out what you need. Every morning, when your alarm goes off, spend 30 seconds to think about what you can do that's nice for yourself that day. Whether it's buying yourself a fabulous piece of fruit, or calling a great friend, or buying yourself flowers, anything!"

Motherhood of course adds a whole new dimension to the need to nurture. Quality time for ourselves is just as important as quality time for kids and partners. It is possible to find ways to self-nurture that include our kids. Take a walk, do some yoga, bake something delicious, sit down and watch a favourite movie. You will be a better mother and a MUCH better role

Mental

Enrol in a course - it could be a one day workshop or a University degree!

Reading - get books for yourself at the library, not just for the kids. Then set aside time to actually read them!

Listen to your favourite music - in the car or on your ipod whilst vacuuming.

Spiritual

Meditate - if you think you don't have time, check out "8 Minute Meditation" by Victor Davich www.8minutes.org

Spend time in nature - alone or with the family.

Catch up with friends - this really shouldn't be a chore!

Show gratitude - and be open to receiving it.

For a full transcript of the interview with Dr Alice Domar Ph.D go to www.medicinenet.com and search for Self Nurture.

As mothers often struggle with lack of support and isolation, the need to self-nurture has never been greater. Dr Domar points out "Women are more socially isolated now than at any other time in human history. Think about it... until 20 years ago, for all of man's history, women lived amongst other women, with mothers, grandmothers, aunts, cousins and sisters. Women cared for each other. They didn't need to self-nurture because they cared for each other. But in the last 20 years, not only do we have nuclear families, women work outside the home, so they're very socially isolated. Women need to be around other women. They have a unique gift in terms of compassion, empathy and sharing. Social support is crucial for our mental and physical health."

So a good Girls Night Out is not frivolous fun...it's essential!

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Self Improvement

Dr Domar's books are- Healing Mind, Healthy Woman: Using the Mind-Body Connection to Manage Stress and Take Control of Your Life. Six Steps to Increased Fertility: An Integrated Medical and Mind/Body Program to Promote Conception. Self-Nurture: Learning to Care for Yourself As Effectively As You Care for Everyone Else. Conquering Infertility: Dr. Alice Domar's Mind/Body Guide to Enhancing Fertility and Coping with Infertility. Be Happy Without Being Perfect: How to Worry Less and Enjoy Life More. You can find her blog at www.bewell.com/experts

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