

Date With Your Self

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Prepared by Root Cuthbertson 2020
based on The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron

“Imagination-at-play is at the heart of all good work.” – Julia Cameron

Self-Care

Self-care is about cultivating personal resilience, knowing when your inner resources are getting low and it's time to replenish. Self-care is also about the integration of compassion to prevent burnout. You can prioritise self-care to bring more good energy to anything you do.

Self-care is not the same as anything that feels good. Modern societies offer many 'quick-fix' temptations based on maladaptive coping strategies that are good for numbing short-term, and potentially harmful long-term. These provide temporary relief at best, and are not long-term solutions, or foundations of self-care.

A Date for Replenishing

Overextension or overdoing can diminish your inner resources. Making time to have a date with yourself is one way to replenish your inner resources. There are many activities you can choose from. Some activities that are repetitive or soothing – like cooking, mending, showering, swimming, scrubbing, or gardening – relax the logical side of the brain and allow the creative side of the brain to play.

Julia Cameron describes a date with your Self as a block of time, perhaps two hours weekly, set aside and committed to nurturing your Self. It can be an excursion or a play date that you typically pre-plan and ideally you do not take anyone else on this date but you and your inner Self.

Cameron recommends treating your inner Self like a child with certain needs. Your inner Self benefits from focused attention, shared encounters and experiences; not being ignored. Honouring your time commitment is important. Your inner Self benefits from solo quality time with you, not shared with others. This time can lead to important self-discoveries or disclosures, aspects of your creativity, and help to build more resilient relationships with your Self and with others.

“To have a real relationship with our creativity, we must take the time and care to cultivate it.” – Julia Cameron

Inner Critic

Cameron also says a weekly date with your Self, while feeling productive or replenishing to your inner Self, may feel threatening to your Inner Critic. Expect some resistance from your Inner Critic, the part of you which may not value time for self-care. Your Inner Critic may find excuses, try to avoid having the date, or attempt to replace the time with 'more important' activities. Like many people, you may have some fear of self-intimacy, of spending quality time with yourself.

Self-care practices, like a date with your Self, are uncontroversially good for you. When practiced correctly, they have long-term benefits on all levels: physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and for worldview (See Self-Care guides: **Physical & Sensory, Nature, Mental, Emotional, Social & Worldview**).

Bypassing Your Inner Critic

(Julia Cameron)

To begin, try the following exercises to soothe your Inner Critic, or to bypass any objections.

Affirmations

Self-care supports my well-being and makes me stronger.
Being hard on myself reduces my well-being.

Remembering Joy

My favorite game as a child was...
My favorite movie as a child was...
My favorite way to dress up is...
The music that cheers me up most is...

Spontaneity & Frivolity

Answer rapidly, to bypass your inner critic. For each, make a list of 5 things.

- hobbies that sound fun
- classes that sound fun
- things I would never do that sound fun
- skills I'd enjoy having
- things I used to enjoy
- silly things I'd like to try once.

Forbidden Joys

Rapidly (to bypass your inner critic) make a wish-list of 20 frivolous personal wishes. (e.g. fairy wings, dance the tango, wild swim in nature, time to sit and do nothing). Then list 10 things you would love to do but might not allow yourself to.

Try doing 5 of these artistically, rather than literally. Draw, paint, or write about how you would do these things. Try acting one out, or put on some music and dance what it would be like.

Postponed Pleasures

List 5 things for each.

- If I were 65, had time and resources, and could do whatever I wanted, I would...
- If I were 20, had time and resources, and could have any adventure, I would...
- Right now, if I had courage and resources, I would try...

Risk Doing Something Badly

List 20 things you would try if you didn't have to do them perfectly.

Generating Ideas

Try the following exercises to begin making a list of ideas for dates with your Self.

Self-Care Pie

Draw a circle and divide it into 6 pie pieces. Label each piece with a kind of self-care: physical, social, nature, adventure, play, worldview. Feel free to adjust them, e.g. replace one with romance or spirituality. Let the area toward the outer edge of the circle represent more, and the area toward the center less. Mark a dot in each pie piece to show how much self-care you presently allow yourself. This will show you which areas you could spend more time on. Even a small amount of self-care time can help replenish your sense of well-being.

Making Time

List 20 things you enjoy doing. Next to the list make two columns. In one column mark the calendar date for the last time you did each one. In the other column, put in calendar dates for the next time you plan to do each one.

Starting Small

From your list of 20, note 2 of your favourites that you haven't done in a long time. Make a goal to spend a little time on each this week. Don't look for large amounts of time, aim for small windows of 15 minutes or less.

Sample Date Ideas

Make Personal Space

In the place you live, convert a corner, nook, or an entire room into your personal space. Install a screen, hang a sheet, or close a door to mark the space. Decorate it for fun, not as an office. Make space for beautiful or inspiring items you enjoy: flowers, candles, pillows, art. Make it an area where you can focus on self-care, creativity, and replenishment.

Creativity

Invest in some playful, enjoyable eco art supplies and spend an hour or two making art you find pleasing.

Collage. Collect at least 10 magazines. Give yourself 20 minutes or more to tear through them, collecting inspiring images that reflect your life or interests – past, present, or future. With tape, staples, or glue affix the images to a piece of paper, arranged in a way you find pleasing.

Listen to an entire selection, 20 minutes or more, of your favorite music. It could be from one artist, a compilation, or a musical. As you listen, doodle, paint, or draw whatever you hear in the music. Or move spontaneously to the music. What movements help express what you hear?

Replenish

Take yourself to a place where you can feel replenished in silence and solitude. This could be a place of worship, a library, a park, a river or in some trees. Any place that helps you feel timeless wonder.

Spend 1 hour following your inner guidance. Listen to your inner desires and follow them. Relax any pre-planned agenda, and simply see what you feel drawn to do. Ideally prefer creative or engaging activities, and avoid numbing ones.

Adventure

Make a plan to spend an entire day with yourself, 8-12 hours or more. Look into all the necessary details and logistics. Make a list of things to bring. Get ready, preparing as best you can, for either a stay-cation or an outing that will support your well-being (see [Self-Care: Worldview](#)).

Reflections

Take some time afterward to reflect on what happened during your date. Start by considering the questions below. If it feels good, invite a close friend or family member to ask you about your date. Sometimes telling your story to another person can help you integrate your experience.

How was your date? What did you do? How did it feel at first? Afterward? Did anything specific happen that changed the experience for you? Did you notice any patterns or synchronicities? Did you receive any creative ideas, clear messages, answers to questions, or solutions to problems?

Related Inner Transition Resources

Self-Care guides:
Physical & Sensory, Nature, Mental, Emotional,
Social & Worldview

References

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Course in Discovering and Recovering Your Creative Self*. Tarcher Penguin 1992.