

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SELF-CARE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO CARE FOR OTHERS



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"TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF WELL BEFORE TAKING CARE OF OTHERS"

By: Ted Costa

There's been a particular adage tossed around between many yoga practitioners in all of the studios I've practiced over the past 5 years as a Yoga Teacher - "Take care of yourself well before taking care of others." Every day, Flight Attendants across the globe give the same advice when they say "Put on your own oxygen mask first."

It's incredibly hard advice to follow in our day-to-day routines. This holds true as a Yoga Teacher as well as working full-time in the healthcare industry. I teach mothers, grandfathers, nurses, judges, marketing professionals, even other yoga teachers. Within all of us, in one capacity or another, is a drive to do our best for others – be it in our personal circles of influence and/or our work-life. Other people's lives literally depend on our actions, and it can call out the best in us to fully commit to the service of others – whether we get paid for it or not!

We all live within networks – strong connections in which we depend on each other. We form solid chains with others in order that we grow strong through life together. In another analogy to beget the importance of the issue, we all know that “a chain is as strong as the weakest link.” So as individuals, or “links” within the chain/connection, it turns out to be one of our most important tasks that we do our best not only for others, but also for ourselves! The busyness of daily living and working can really catch us off-guard, in that over time we lose that “taking care of” for ourselves and simultaneously expect to still be there for others at our very best.

You don’t need to hear it from me, but you might know one of the words for what may come next: burnout, stress, feeling overwhelmed. We all know what these emotions can feel like. We may also know the effects they can have on others.

It is why I still find yoga to be one of the greatest tools for what we can call “self-care.” When you show up, it’s just you – no one else is on your mat with you. It sticks you in a place where there’s nothing left to do but be with yourself for an hour. The physical benefits have been proven over and over again. The mental health benefits? – It all fits hand-in-hand. What I’m talking about today is really the time that we make/take for ourselves so that these seeds can grow and blossom in all aspects of our lives.

One of the areas in which our self-care may bloom and show in life is in the taking-care-of-others. When we show up for others as that stronger link in the chain of connection, it is entirely more plausible that we can truly impact the lives of others in a more positive and meaningful way. This can simply mean we did our job with a slight more smile or levity than we did the day before.



“ONE OF THE AREAS IN WHICH OUR SELF-CARE MAY BLOOM AND SHOW IN LIFE IS IN THE TAKING-CARE-OF-OTHERS..”

The lesson returns over and over again for me. When I feel the overwhelm or the burnout in dealing with the expectations and demands of both personal and work-life, I know that there's a practice out there that's been around much longer than me as a tool for becoming centered again. For me, that happens to be yoga.

Whether your "yoga" looks more like reading, running, gardening, or simply cooking a good meal, it matters that you treat yourself rightly before we can expect to be tip-top shape for treating others.

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If you'd like more information on yoga or some of our current virtual sessions like the practice of Mindfulness we provide to Physicians and Advanced Practice Clinicians, please feel free to reach out:

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