



TEN TOP XMAS SELF CARE TIPS

A common mistake many of us make at this time of the year, is seeing Xmas as some sort of deadline we have to get everything done by. We tell ourselves that we will stop, relax, and enjoy, once everything is done. I want to challenge this idea and suggest you take good care of yourself over the next few weeks so you are actually in a healthy and happy place when the holidays arrive.

Take time for yourself.

Every day plan something relaxing and nurturing that you can look forward to. It doesn't have to be big and expensive, it can be a hot bath, a new magazine, a phone call to a friend, a leisurely cup of tea or glass of wine on the deck, a walk in the park, dancing or singing to music, or painting your nails.

- What would be nourishing, pampering and relaxing for you?

2) Schedule your time.

Before you commit to social events and holiday activities think about what you most want to do and put in your calendar first. This way even if you aren't able to do everything you will still feel satisfied, because you did what was most meaningful and memorable for you.

- Are there certain friends or family members you really want to see?
- Is there a special place you would like to visit?
- What will make the pre Xmas season and holiday memorable and satisfying?

3) Focus on the important.

Ask everyone in your family what are the three most important things that really make the holiday special. Then focus on those. As keen cooks we are putting a lot of effort into a delicious meal, but are keeping presents simple with just one self-chosen gift each. You don't have to blindly follow everyone else and try to do it all, just concentrate on doing what is meaningful and memorable for your family.

4) Prioritise what you enjoy.

I actually love decorating my house, but am often guilty of cramming it in as a chore on my to do list. This year I'm giving myself a nurturing experience by allowing a full day to enjoy this ritual while singing along to corny Xmas music. Whatever you love about preparing for Xmas, schedule yourself a generous amount of time, and keep it sacred by turning the phone and computer off

5) Just say no.

Be willing to avoid parties or gatherings that leave you empty inside, or add stress to your busy schedule. Choosing to disappoint someone else may be just what you need to make sure you don't disappoint yourself. Without over explaining or defending yourself, gently let friends and family know that in the interests of self-care you will not be coming.

6) Encourage yourself.

Write affirming and encouraging notes to yourself. Use lipstick or felt pen on mirrors and windows. Put post it notes about. Deliver messages to yourself by computer or smart phone.

7) Run things through your joy filter.

Rather than do things because you should or it is expected, when making decisions about what to do ask yourself “ **Will this add joy to my life?**”

When I did this I decided that rather than send cards to everyone this year I am choosing to ring some people I really want a meaningful catch up with.

- What are you doing only because it is sensible or nice, or traditional? that you would rather not?

8) What do you need?

When you feel stressed and pressured by all your perceived obligations and “have to’s”, remind yourself that you need to look after yourself first. When your batteries are charged and replenished you will be able to happily do things for others.

So take this tip from author Louise Hay. The moment you feel overwhelmed, fed up, or tired, go to a mirror look into your eyes and ask yourself the following question

- What could I do right now to make you happy?

Then do what you can to meet your request and replenish your energy, and reduce your stress and bad mood.

9) Watch your thoughts.

When you find yourself feeling pressured to get everything done, check your thoughts. I often find I am winding myself up by replaying my to do list with an endless “then I’ve got to...”. I stop and tell myself things like

- “Right now I am focused on this task only”
- “I have all the time I need”. “
- “Everything that is important will get done”
- “It doesn’t need to be perfect”

These thoughts help me gain perspective and become calm again.

- What are you saying to yourself that is adding to your stress?
- What could you say instead that would help you feel less pressured?

10) Get help

The pre Xmas to do list can be a burden if you are doing everything yourself, but lots of fun when everyone pitches in. So think about your family members skills and delegate appropriate tasks. Get children to address Xmas cards, make ornaments or bake treats. Also consider paying professionals to do cooking, cleaning etc., especially if you are doing lots of entertaining.

- Which tasks are you able to delegate?
- Which jobs could you get a professional to do?