



### A RADICAL DAY OF EXTREME SELF-CARE

Busyness is “the state or condition of having a great deal to do”, and although it is the way I live my life too, it is energy depleting. Constant busyness fosters burnout across professions, cultures, and socioeconomic status. My mother, Joyce Robertson, was the busiest person I have ever known. She held down a full-time job, cared for my aging grandmother and maintained my childhood home like a boss. She had a huge garden and came to all of my activities in the days before helicopter parenting. If I took off a pair of socks on a Wednesday night, they would be washed, folded and back in my drawer on Thursday morning. If she was watching Wheel of Fortune on television, she would have a pan of peas from her own garden sitting in her lap which she was shelling. Being busy was expected in my home, which means essential, life-giving self-care does not come naturally to me. What about you?

I have had glimpses of healthy practices through the years, and I propose everyone periodically have a few days each season dedicated to self-care. Of course, living a life completely self-centered is empty and without the fullness service to others helps us transcend the smallness of our individual consciousness. Because we are, indeed, one in eight billion inhabitants on this cosmic roller coaster called earth. However, small practices to create a centered way of navigating life creates the energy necessary to love others well. As I often say to my divorce clients, one must put on their oxygen mask first if the plane is going down. It is also true one must have oxygen rich air every day to have a better experience in the often painful challenges of today. Everyone’s day of self-care will be very different for sure. We are snowflakes.

Just think about it. How much more energy and vitality could we experience if once a month, we took a day or even half a day devoted to caring for own body, spirit and mind? In hopes to make

this a part of my life too, the following are my ideas, albeit very ambitious ones, about what a full day of self-care could look like if we are brave enough to take it.

### *Planning*

A radical day of self-care requires preparation and planning. You need to make sure it is scheduled on your calendar weeks in advance. You will need the cooperation and approval of your romantic partner and coworkers. You may have to board the dogs and ask family, friends, or a paid helper to manage the schedules of your kids. Obviously, it is easier to do self-care on vacation or the weekend, but what I envision for a full day of self-care is one that could happen in your hometown on a random day of the week. As you will see from the ideas below, you may need to gather materials, make reservations and appointments as well as coordinate with the people who are going to share in your day. Do it early and make a commitment to yourself nothing will stand in the way of being intentional about filling your own cup –just for one day, now and again.

### *Early Morning*

**Coffee:** Your full day of self-care starts at 5:00 a.m. Yes, 5:00 a.m. This day is about creating space for energy, vitality and renewal, so you are not going to want to be asleep when your energy level is completely full. To be up at 5:00 a.m., you need to get to bed early the night before. I take magnesium and melatonin every night to help me get ready for bed. When you arise and turn off the alarm, try to leave your phone on the nightstand for the first part of the morning, as it is simply too tempting to start looking at texts, emails and social media, which puts other people thoughts in your mind before you are even good and awake. Of course you are going to need your phone for certain activities and in case of an emergency, but to the extent possible, try to make your day as screen-free as you can.

Let's start with coffee or tea.

Today, unlike the day before, you are not going to just drop a pod in the Keurig or Nespresso machine, you will instead savor the experience and ritual of the process. I am a coffee guy. On my full day of self-care, I will grind the beans of my favorite roast, boil filtered water in my wife's teapot, scoop the black powder into my French press, and savor the aroma as I pour the hot water over the coffee grinds. As the liquid is being transformed, I will slowly heat one-part A2 milk and one part of a coconut almond blend before frothing the mixture using my electronic handheld foam maker. In the meantime, I will pause to be grateful for another day of breath and that first cup of life-giving caffeine. I love a great coffee, and I will take the blissful combination of coffee and foamed milk to the most comfortable chair in my house and savor the moments of silence and solitude before the sunrise. What about you...coffee or tea?

**Meditation:** Next on the list is ten minutes of meditation. I was introduced to the concept of meditation at a pandemic-shortened cohort I participated in with [Suzanne Stabile](#), who many call the Godmother of the Enneagram. Her husband is Reverend Joseph Stabile, and he taught a comparatively short session on [Centering or Contemplative Prayer](#). The basic idea is to find a quiet, comfortable place to spend time, close your eyes and clear your mind of thought for ten minutes, being intentional about noticing your own breath. The goal is to be fully present in the

moment, and to listen rather than talk. This is not a time for deep pontification. The goal is to extend as little mental energy as possible, which, of course, I find next to impossible. If I need a little help focusing, I will use an application called [InsightTimer](#), but there are dozens that are more popular. Reverend Stabile recommended InsightTimer mostly for its clock, but I have also enjoyed the “Check In” feature as well as the guided meditations. When you check in, you click a box about how you are feeling and then you are given twelve categories about why. After you decide why you feel the way you do, the user has about eight other options to give descriptive words for any other feelings one may be having. After you check in, there are suggested guided meditations. Some are a little weird, but some are very cool, with voices from around the globe, helping you concentrate on the art of being fully present.

**Journaling:** After clearing your mind with a morning meditation, next comes a page or two of journaling. A book I often recommend is [The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity by Julia Cameron](#). The book is now thirty years old and was written for artistic creative recovery and teaches techniques and exercises in gaining self-confidence in harnessing a person’s creative talents and skills. One of the essential exercises recommended by Cameron is morning journaling sessions she calls “Morning Pages.” Morning pages are essentially stream of consciousness journaling sessions, where your mind is emptied of its contents onto paper. The writing can be anything, but the goal is to purge the mind of burdening thoughts. This is not an opportunity to write your “to do” list. Worried about protecting your thoughts? Turn your morning pages into a letter to your attorney, creating a legally-protected private writing. Journaling is a great way to process trauma, and everyone has encountered circumstances, whether acute or over time, whether something really big or rather small, that overwhelms our coping mechanisms and leaves us different as we move forward in life. A universally accepted tool to help heal trauma is journaling, so get out your pen and paper and write until you fill at least one full page, single spaced.

**Make Your Bed:** It sounds trivial, but after coffee, meditation and journaling, spend five minutes and make your bed with fresh sheets. You will feel a small sense of accomplishment and regardless of the quality of your day, you will end it in the cover of fresh linens. Admiral William H. McRaven gave a [famous college commencement address](#) on this subject you can watch online if you are not one of the 16.8M and counting viewers who have already seen it.

**Stretching:** A few years ago, I went to a daddy-daughter retreat in Northern California with my oldest daughter. The camp, called [J.H. Ranch](#), is a Christian relationship building camp, with lots of physical activities and outdoor challenges like ropes courses, hiking and often difficult two-person challenges. I have mixed feelings about the camp itself to be honest, but the participants were mostly amazing and truly seeking to enrich their parental relationships. There was a grandfather who brought his granddaughter. He was a tax lawyer with a desk job who rivaled the performance of men half his age in the various physical activities. As a divorce lawyer who also has a desk job, I wanted to know his secret. His answer was simple –He stretches an hour at night before he goes to bed. Every night. It was basic, practical and powerful advice from an elder who had walked the planet decades longer than me.

So now, after a slow start with coffee, meditation, journaling, and making your bed, accomplishing so much already, it's time to move your body. In your advanced preparation, I suggest scheduling an early morning yoga class. Locally, check out [M Theory](#). There are other options offered at local gyms. I am a 6'3", 220-pound man who was a [walk-on college baseball athlete](#) almost 30 years ago. I had a gold chain and a pair of Oakley's, but not a Camaro. I look stranger in a yoga class than most, but I feel confident however hesitant you may be, you have enough Lululemon in your closet to pull it off. Everyone feels better after a good stretch, and a good yoga instructor not only helps you move your body in strange but wonderful ways, she does a great job of helping to connect your mind, body and spirit through intentional breathing. I have been in classes where scripture or poetry was being read, and I have been in classes where I worked up more of a sweat than on a good run. If yoga pants and a public downward dog create anxiety for you, at least spend thirty minutes on the floor and go through a basic stretching routine. There are thousands of video tutorials online, but the basics from your elementary school physical education class will likely do the trick, especially if you are as inflexible as me.

**Breakfast:** After a great stretch, it's time to eat. But let's keep it lite. Today is about self-care, focus and freedom, not over-indulgence. My oldest daughter and I love to go to [Primo's](#) and order the Early Bird –eggs over medium, well done bacon, hash browns and one chocolate chip pancake instead of bread. She gets the same thing, but she likes her eggs scrambled and she has white toast – which enables us both to have one slice of toast and a half pancake. Another pro tip if you are a coffee drinker, go half decaf in your morning coffee so you can drink more and talk longer.

While a Primo's breakfast is certainly a great thing to add to a full day of self care, I am going to opt for something at home. Today, it is just a simple smoothie. I put a whole banana and a few frozen blueberries in a blender with two scoops of vegan chocolate protein powder. I throw in a dash of hemp seeds, a quarter handful of pistachios and a few tablespoons of chocolate chips. I then cover the concoction with a coconut water and blend until silky smooth. If I do not have a banana, I use avocado. You can use chia seeds in place of or in addition to hemp. Obviously, you can substitute any nut for the pistachios and any dairy or non-dairy liquids to create a drink. The combinations are endless. Right after my smoothie, I take a handful of vitamins, including Vitamin D, B12, a high quality omega as well as a multi-vitamin for men. [Metagenics](#) has great supplements you can buy locally at [Uptown Pharmacy](#) in Gluckstadt. I am also a big fan of CBD. I pick mine up in Ridgeland at [Healthway Nutrition Center](#). Ask for John. He knows his stuff.

### *Late Morning*

**Cardio:** Next on our list for this day of care is movement –which preferably takes place outside and in nature. I recently listened to a [Rich Roll podcast episode where he interviewed a one-hundred-year-old man, Mike Fremont](#). Mr. Fremont credited his longevity to a healthy diet, daily movement and stress management. My friend, functional nurse practitioner and multi-time Ironman triathlete, [Jackie Williams](#), explained to me a brisk 30-minute walk is the equivalent of taking a Xanax. Our podcast sponsor and fellow functional provider, [Kelly Engelmann](#), agrees.

If you are not a pitcher, baseball does not require much cardiovascular training. When I was finished playing, I turned to running the hills in Oxford during law school for stress management. This habit carried on for a good two decades. Believe it or not, I was actually in the best shape of my life in my early forties, until a back injury and COVID set me way back, but that is a blog for another day. Anyway, a friend who was upgrading his road bike gave me a good deal, and to combat the amount of time I spend at a desk each day, I started to ride. If you think you might be interested in riding, check out [The Bike Crossing in Ridgeland](#). Cycling evolved into triathlon training, and I loved it. My back does not allow me to run on hard surfaces very much anymore, so I ride my bike and swim. I love to be outside, and for me, swimming requires hyper-focus and hyper-presence. Cycling taps into the freedom I felt as a child when I would pedal my Redline racing bike all over South Jackson. Whatever your preferred choice of activity to increase your pulse and make you sweat, as long as it requires you to move your body and be outside, it will work. Get your heartrate up from anywhere between 30 to 60 minutes and you are guaranteed to feel better.

**Cryotherapy:** Emma, my younger daughter, is a serious athlete and an intense competitor. Unfortunately, she has suffered through some bigtime injuries. To help with her recovery, we were introduced to cryotherapy. There is a facility in Ridgeland called [Core](#), which offers multiple wellness programs. Here is how it works. After you strip down to your underwear, you protect your hands and feet with gloves and boots. You then step into a tall cylinder called a cryosauna, which uses nitrogen gas to rapidly lower your skins surface temperature. The cryosauna temperature ranges between -238°F to -274°F for two to three minutes of treatment, but while it feels cold, you would never guess the temperature was that crazy low if you didn't know ahead of time. You can read all about cryotherapy on [Core's website](#), but all I know is I feel remarkable when I get out and the entire process takes about ten minutes. For a next level experience, sign on for an oxygen treatment while using compression boots in one of their recliners. The boots provide dynamic compression therapy to speed your body's recovery process, and they are super relaxing. The last time I used the compression boots, I fell asleep.

**Snack:** A person can burn significant calories after a cryotherapy session. After a full morning of activity, it is time for a snack. While I am not huge on snacks, I also know my body needs fuel to perform and for me to feel well. Nothing makes me feel better than a green drink. Place a whole avocado, a small bunch of spinach, a peeled apple, the inside of a kiwi, half of a thumb-sized piece of peeled ginger, the juice of a lime and a spoon full of good honey in a blender with ice and coconut water and blend into a smoothie. My friend Doctor Mike has amazing honey from his backyard hives in Fairhope. [I wrote about his heirloom tomatoes some time back](#). He doesn't sell his honey, but there are lots of local farmers who do. While eating local honey does not help with allergies, it tastes incredible. If a green smoothie is not for you, try some nuts and dried fruit, a fresh apple or any healthy and restorative whole food snack. Now, jump in the shower and get cleaned up before the next item on today's agenda.

**Therapy:** I am personally resistant to therapy. I do not like to recognize feelings, much less talk about them. My direction of choice is forward, and I do not care to think much about about the past. Indeed, I am more of an internal processor as opposed to one who works things out with

spoken words to another human. However, being a husband and father of teenage girls has slowly but essentially changed my perspective. Sometimes if you ignore feelings, you orbit around a problem instead of moving on through. If you are in life transition or dealing with a crisis, therapy is a must. It is so much better for you than medicating with a chemical (alcohol, drugs and food) or a process (shopping, gambling or sex) and it is cheaper and more beneficial than a legal professional to bail you out of the financial hole, relational mess or criminal act when stuck in an unhealthy pattern of behavior. Also, most licensed professional counselors who have a good practice take several forms of insurance, so your willingness is the only real barrier to mental health services. I personally think men should see men and women should see women, and your therapist should be at least your age or older. I am sure some therapist will read this and disagree, but they also may not see as much [infidelity as I do](#), and many men simply cannot distinguish emotional connection from sex –full stop.

**Lunch:** My favorite people are funny, and laughing is amazing medicine. Healthy people laugh more than unhealthy people, and I unfortunately laugh way less in my 40's than I did in my 20's. For lunch, go to your favorite place where there are waiters and spend time with your funniest friend. Order something you already know you like, and let your funny friend entertain you with their exaggerated stories, impersonations, bathroom humor and/or whatever else cracks you up.

As you can see, a full day of self-care requires you to get out and get moving. Maybe you are thinking to yourself, "There is no way your day of self-care starts at 5:00 a.m." I understand. However, I do not want the idea of rest to be confused with my self-care proposal. We all need rest. Biblically it should happen every seventh day. This is an ambitious call for radical activity. There is a lot left to discuss, so be looking for Part 2 coming to a social media outlet near you.

Welcome back to a radical day of caring for yourself. If you have not read Part 1, click back and start from the beginning. We just finished lunch and we have already done more self-care than most people do in an entire year. Great food, laughs, maybe a few tears in counseling and moments of movement and quiet geared toward creating space for yourself. We will serve everyone else the other 350-plus days of the year, but for now, let's move on to the afternoon schedule of events.

### *Early Afternoon*

**Haircut:** After lunch, it is time for a haircut. I have been seeing the same person for over twenty years. Between you and me, I have cheated on her a time or two. Quite frankly, the convenience of getting a different person to style my hair almost never outweighs the anxiety I feel thinking the new person might screw it up. Not all haircuts are created equally, and not all cosmetologists have the same level of skill or familiarity with your hair that makes you feel like a better version of yourself. Your full day of self-care is not the day to experiment with a new color or try something radically different. A new person or style is simply too risky on this precious of days. We do not want anything to extinguish the vibe we are working to create. Upon request, I bet your hair professional will massage your scalp during the wash,

conditioning deeply –finishing with a hot towel. Next, even (or especially) men should clean up those eyebrows before the main event –a fresh cut and style. For men, skip the straight razor shave. There is more terror and pain involved than relaxation. I wrote a [blog](#) about my experience several years ago, and I have no plans to go back. Are you a woman who needs color? Today is the day to cover up that gray, but again, opt for something tried and true. Go with pink highlights next time.

**Massage:** One of the experiences I have added to my frequent routine is massage therapy. After twenty-three years at a computer and lurching around courthouses and conference rooms in a litigation-centered law practice with my less than stellar posture, my back hurts. I also herniated a disk in the backyard when I temporarily forgot my age playing with the girls when they were younger. I see Tamara Harris of [Living Waters Massage Therapy Clinic](#) in Ridgeland. She is incredible. Notice the word “spa” is not in the title. You feel more like a car getting an oil change than a prince or princess being pampered. Good massage therapy can be intense and sometimes painful, but I look forward to my 60-minute session with Tamara when I see it on my calendar. She specializes in ashitsu massage (a massage that uses the feet), hot and cold stone therapy, deep tissue and sports massage. She also incorporates stretching. She’s a beast. Actually, just forgot you read this part, because her schedule stays booked because lots of others have discovered the secret gift of frequent massage therapy. I will leave you with this –I have not been back to the chiropractor or physical therapist since I started massage therapy several months ago.

*Late Afternoon*

**Meditation:** After your massage, it is time to meditate again. This time outside if the weather permits. In Mississippi, we get about twenty amazing days of weather in October and April combined, so even if today is not one of those days, find a tree to sit under or a bench in a park, close your eyes and intentionally clear your mind. I am not a great meditator, but it helps me sometimes to envision an empty movie theatre, staring at a blank screen. If a thought comes into your mind, recognize it like a duck on a pond with a smile and a nod and let it swim by. No need to call the duck, catch the duck, or feed the duck. Don’t quack back. Just let him swim away, out of your consciousness and out of your mind. I recommend ten minutes for the beginner. Honestly, sometimes my itchy existence will only allow me five or less, and it certainly does not happen every day. Like law, I guess that is why they call it the “practice” of meditation.

**Play:** After a mental reset, time to play. Like laughter, play often escapes us as adults when the burdens of work, children, relationships and just life consume most of our energy, which I am finding is precious and limited each day. Play takes many forms and is specific to the individual at play. My younger kid lights up on the volleyball court. If she gets into it, her serve is unreturnable and after her team chants A-C-E, she will give you a smile and a little dance. When I was a child, play was synonymous with sports too. Any form of competition would do. While I played football and baseball in high school, my friends and I would put together whiffle ball games, three on three basketball, tennis matches, dodgeball and sometimes games we made up. When I was alone, I liked to be creative. I would paint, draw and build things in my dad’s shop. When my dog Bear plays, he wants to fight. I have a friend like that too, he’s my age but

he goes to a jujitsu class to spar. Play for you may be golf, tennis, sporting clays, hiking, painting, wood working, board games, rock climbing, cards, puzzling, bowling, hunting, fishing or a cooking class, but relearning the word PLAY is essential for self-care.

### *Evening*

**Cocktail Hour:** Drinking is bad for you, but I still do it. Some may debate a glass of wine on the occasional evening is healthy, and I like to believe this to be true. Obviously, if you struggle with alcoholism, drinking at all should be out of the question. The older I get, the more difficult my body has processing things I used to love like beer and margaritas. Honestly, I love all types of libations as is evidenced by my TikTok feed, because every third video is some guy or girl mixing a drink. While we probably shouldn't drink on our full day of self-care, I am going to add one little indulgence to my agenda. While the options are endless for the cocktail portion of the full day of self-care, my choice is a glass of red wine. On a quick trip to Birmingham many years ago, Rachel and I stayed at a fabulous hotel, the [Grand Bohemian](#). On that particular night, a Napa Valley Merlot called Emmolo was the house red. It is amazing. I have even seen it at the local Costco from time to time, and the price point is very reasonable. When a Merlot like Emmolo is good, it is rich, round, earthy and expressive, with ripe but complex fruit character. If the weather is right, I will take my Merlot near a wood burning fire, with glowing embers and a soothing heat rivaling the inner warmth of this most blessed of self-care days. I will also take mine with Rachel, in our backyard, because she is my best friend and defines "comfort" for me.

**Dinner/Music:** We love to cook in my house. We love eating out too. Actually, we just like food, wherever it is being served. When I am relaxed and rested, I like to do creative things. Cooking is a form of creativity that you can enjoy regardless of your level of talent. Frankly, if you can read or know how to search something on YouTube, you can cook. After a day of being on the go, sometimes it is nice to have food at home. When I am cooking, I am also playing music. My taste in food and music is quite eclectic. On a fantastic short trip Rachel and I recently took to New Orleans, after lots of food and drinks in different venues in NOLA, we closed out our time back in Jackson enjoying dinner with friends before a Jason Isbell show, and that is how I recommend this full day of self-care be closed out too. Great food, great friends, family and music. Home or away, the choice is yours.

**Bed:** After a fantastic day of self-care, it is time to slip into the fresh linens of the well-made bed from this morning. About an hour before lights out, I take a little magnesium and melatonin. If you want to go next level, use a few drops of lavender oil on your pillow or behind your ears. With the lights out and your head nestled in bed, think of the things for which you are grateful as you close your eyes. Goodnight. Namaste.

You did it! You dedicated a full day to taking care of yourself (or at least you took 15 minutes to read an article about it from me). Clearly, what you have just read is ambitious and maybe next to impossible to fully complete, but could you string together three or four of these concepts one morning or afternoon? Could you implement a small, regular practice to fill your cup? In a culture of busyness, wouldn't it be nice to have conversations around how well we are taking

care of ourselves as opposed to how strung out we are with work and kids and everything? I challenge you (and myself) to make self-care a regular topic of conversation and practice for our collective health, happiness, relationships and wholeness. Remember, to live a transcendent life, you cannot be fully focused on self. That's called [narcissism](#). But a full day of self-care, once in a while, and regular restorative practices are simply game changers for those who seek a better way to be.



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