

Redefining Healthy

6 WEEKS OF SIMPLE STEPS TO BIG CHANGES IN YOUR HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND LIFE

WEEK 4 WORKBOOK: INFUSE SELF-CARE INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE



One of my biggest takeaways after cancer is to live more and do less. Self-care plays a huge roll in that.

I resisted this for a long time and didn't fully understand the importance of self-care until after cancer. I thought self-care meant carving out 20 minutes of my day to get my nails done, and then go back to my busy nonstop schedule. All in all, self-care was just one more thing on my to-do list.

After my cancer diagnosis, I was forced to deal with self-care. I was forced to put myself first on the list. I needed to take care of my needs first -- my life depended on it.

So after healing from cancer, self-care became the most important thing on my to-do list. **Self-care also became easier to do as I started seeing the results of slowing down.**

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And when I am taken care of, I become a better mother, friend, and wife. **Our culture makes us think self-care is selfish, but it's actually the most important thing we can do for the people in our lives and our responsibilities.**

One of my favorite quotes is from spiritual teacher and medical doctor, Deepak Chopra:

“We are not human doers... We are human beings.”

As women especially, we get caught up in the doing and not enough of the being. Self-care is about more being. And yes, it takes practice to do less and “be” more!

There are so many ways to infuse self-care into your daily life. Here are my three favorite ways I show myself self-care every day:

ACTION STEPS

HERE ARE MY THREE TOP ACTION STEPS FOR INFUSE SELF-CARE INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE

ACTION STEP #1: HIT PAUSE

The simplest, most important thing you can do for yourself everyday is to hit the “pause button.”

As a woman, it’s our nature to take care of everyone around us whether it’s our family, co-workers, or our animals. We tend to go-go-go. Which is why we need this activity built into our hectic day.

I remind myself on a daily basis that my life is not measured by the amount of things I cross off my to-do list. I need down time more often than I used to think, and I make sure I stop several times a day to sit quietly by myself with two feet on the ground and take at least 5 deep breaths. I call this “hitting the pause button.”

Sometimes my pause button is driving around the block with a fun tune to give myself a little more alone time before pulling into my driveway and into my mom role or other times it means getting to dance class a few minutes early before my daughter is finished. The extra breathing space around activities has made a world of difference from feeling frustrated and stressed to enjoying the time alone in the car with the kids.

The “pause” button is a great place to start if you have a busy schedule and fitting in a daily 1-hour yoga class feels overwhelming or impossible! **We’ve all got 5 minutes to spare (and if you don’t think you do, it’s even more important that you take them!).**

BABY STEP #1:

Set a timer on your phone and hit your own pause button for a minimum of five minutes once a day this week. (Set your your cell phone down and on airplane mode during your “pause”!) Start building downtime into your day and really tuning into how your body feels post-pause.

Tune into when you feel rushed and stressed throughout the day. Is there a way for you to remove something from your to-do list that can alleviate some stress?

ACTION STEP # 2: TELL YOUR BODY SOMETHING NICE

Viewing my naked body immediately after being diagnosed with cancer, I felt like a fool for picking apart my thighs and not appreciating the body I had. After all... they had just completed a half-marathon, and now they were going on the cancer journey with me.

I knew right then if I was going to get through the next year of cancer treatments, I would need to change the thoughts in my head. If there was ever a time to show my body some love, this was it.

I made a pact with myself that I would no longer pick apart my body. When my mind crept back to parts of my body being “bad,” I would gently guide it back to pleasure. And I remembered that my body deserves pleasure.

So many of us have tumultuous relationships with our bodies. We spend so much of our time wishing our bodies would change or be different -- rather than appreciating the way our bodies serve us day after day.

A powerful place to start is by acknowledging your body for all everything she has done for you in the form of a love letter.

I led this exercise for a group of 80 young women in high school, where I instructed them to pick a body part that they don't like about themselves and instead show it some love. What happened next was truly magical -- not one young girl hesitated writing! Everyone has that part of themselves that they find fault with. How can we show that part some love and positive feelings rather than negative?

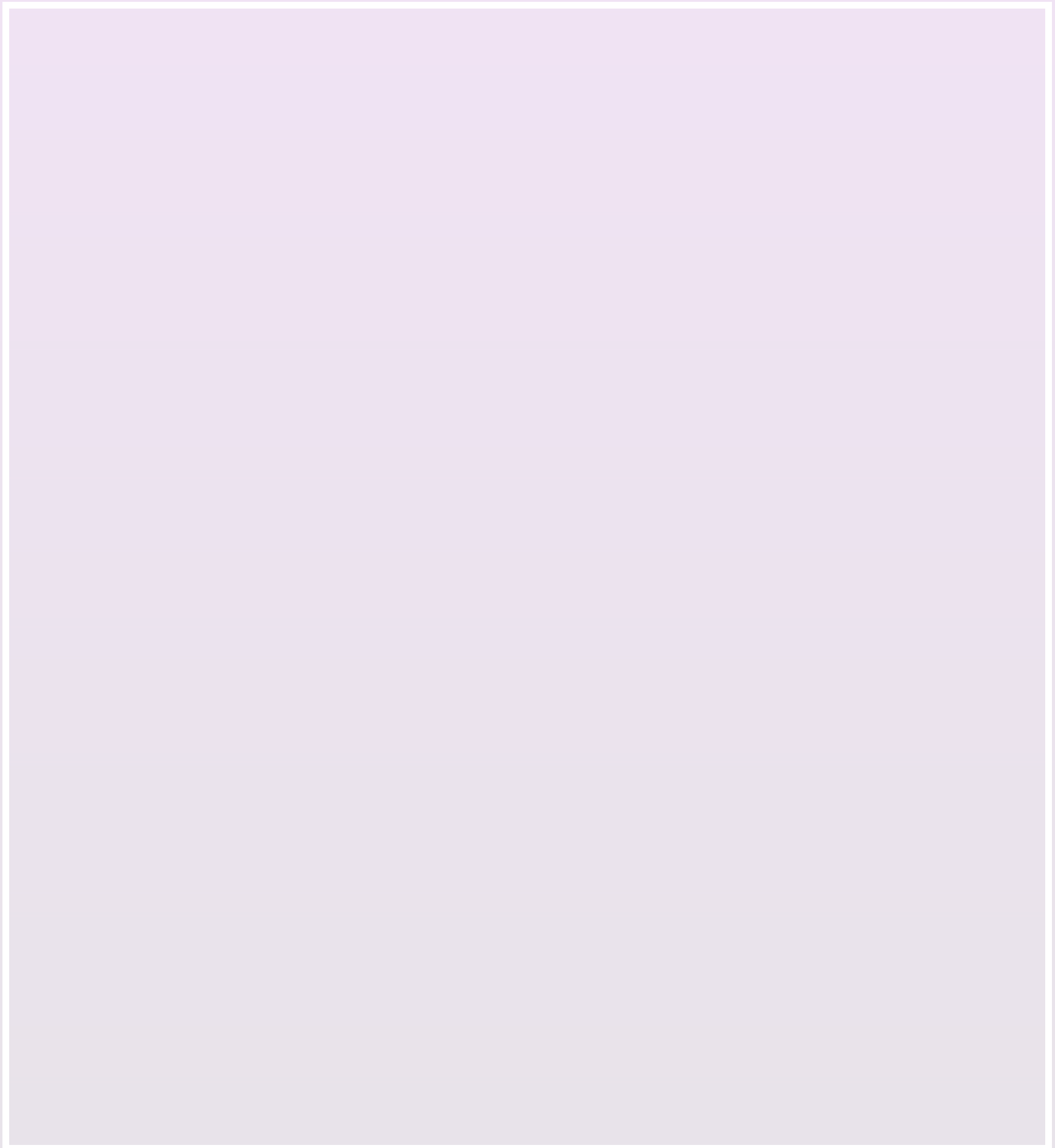
BABY STEP #2:

Write your body a love letter. We all have those body parts that we struggle with. I know you completely understand what I'm talking about!

What do your eyes first fixate on when you look into the mirror? Is it your thighs, your butt, the lines on your face? Can you imagine how wonderful it would it feel to send that body part some love?

Set the timer on your phone for 5 minutes and write down some loving thoughts to body parts. It can be in full sentences or bullet points! No judgement. Now is time to show your body love it deserves instead of self-loathing.

LOVE LETTER



ACTION STEP #3: GIVE YOUR BODY PLEASURE!

Before the cancer diagnosis, I didn't value the importance of pleasure. I wasn't looking for the pleasure in everyday life (again, because I was so caught up with my to-do list!). I saved my pleasure for the weekends, when I could finally relax.

But going through the treatment for cancer, I clung onto pleasure for the first time. I wanted my body to remember what good touch felt like, not just the poking and prodding of medical procedures.

Here are a few ideas:

- **Regular massages:** Massage is a great way to relax. Studies have been shown they reduce stress levels, anxiety and depression too. It is a great way to tune into your body and clear your mind.
- **Spending time in nature:** Science suggests that one simple way to improve our overall well-being is by spending time in nature. One of the studies I read about claims that spending just a minimum of 15 minutes outdoors can fight depression and improve memory.
- **Learning how to say yes more instead of no:** I learned to say no to the things I didn't want to do and yes to the activities that made me feel happy. When you get invitations, take a moment to ask yourself, "Do I really want to do this? Or do I just feel I have to do this?"
- **Find pleasure in the small things:** I also found pleasure in small things like cooking a meal with my family, snuggling under blankets while watching a movie, or laughing with my kids. What are some small ways you can find pleasure in the regular things you're doing in your life?

- **Say yes to sex more:** I started saying yes to sex more, because I fully understood that my body deserved to feel really good. Can you say “yes, yes, yes!” to your partner more? Why are you denying yourself pleasure when you know that it feels good!

During cancer treatment, I would seize the opportunity to feel pleasure, because I couldn’t predict how I was going to feel later that day or even tomorrow. **Lesson learned: I stopped delaying pleasure and starting experiencing it more often.**

BABY STEP #3:

Pick one of the self-care tips from above, or create your own, that you’d like to commit to doing this week!

Check in with your mood, your stress level, and how your body is responding to your new self-care ritual.

Write down which self-care tip you will complete this week:

Set a date and time for the self-care activity:

Tune into your body before your self-care activity. How do you feel?

Tune into your body after your self-care activity. How do you feel now?

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Pretend this week is a game and the winner is determined by how great they can feel by the end of the week.
- Ask yourself several times a day: *how great can I have it?*
- Remember, you are designing your life: You are the one in control! Life is a very long time, so be sure you are enjoying it!
- For more information about my self-care routine, check out Chapter 5 in *The Healthy Girl's Guide To Breast Cancer*