

-- Speaker 1 00:00:26 Welcome to another episode of Dr. MC's Self-Care Cabaret podcast. I'm Theresa Melito-Conners, a PhD level self-care expert in the greater Boston area with a passion for helping others recognize the importance of caring for themselves. For the next couple of episode releases, we are going to mix things up a bit. Instead of the usual format, we are going to share what we are calling bite-sized pods, which will be me, Dr. Mc, chatting with you about a particular topic. Episodes will continue to drop biweekly on Wednesdays. These will likely be on the shorter side, but with a new school year upon us. Shorter, maybe just what the doctor ordered. We've really covered a lot of ground during these bite sized podcast episodes. So far we've examined listening to the body, mindful eating, setting boundaries, and developing a growth mindset. There's so many more topics we could cover, but now you may be wondering how do we tie this all together?

Speaker 1 00:01:25 How does this actually work in practice? Cause it seems like I just throw a lot of things at you and it's hard to figure it all out. It could be overwhelming. And to think of your self care routine is doing every single thing every single day. That's not it. That is not a realistic takeaway. Whenever you listen to anything I put out into the world, we wanna think of our self care routines more over the course of a week. So for me, you know, I think about my week. I have my kind of my responsibilities, the things I have to do, go to my job, appointments, responsibilities, whatnot. But when I really take a step back and take a broader scope of my self care over the week, I can see where I have those pockets to start slotting in other activities where I have some time to add in some joyful movement or some journaling or some yoga or meditating or whatever it is.

Speaker 1 00:02:29 And every week may look different and there are times when I have more time to devote to self care than others. And that's okay. The important thing to remember is that this has to be manageable in order to be sustainable. If you try to do every single self-care task every day, you will just give up because that is not sustainable or manageable. And another really important piece to remember is that small habits, little shifts and tweaks to your routine over time will have a big impact. So maybe you're like, Dr. Mc, I do not have time for any of this. Well, I would invite you to find like one minute, one minute to have a body check in to do a breathing exercise or a mindfulness practice. Just adopt one new coping strategy, See how it goes. Maybe it's just moving a little more, stretching some deep breathing.

Speaker 1 00:03:40 You'll eventually see how better you, it makes you feel and how amazing you feel. And you'll want to do more of that. And remember, self-care does not have to be time consuming or expensive. That is society that makes us feel that these things are selfish and they're luxurious and they take a lot of time. They do not think back to the real definition of self care. It is your foundation, the daily consistent ways you care for yourself so you can show up is the best you possible. And when we begin to realize the true meaning of self care, we know that it's not just Manny Petty's or an occasional spa day. This is really powerful stuff that you can do that really gets to the core of your being and how you want to be and how you want to live your life. You get to decide, I can tell you all day long all the self-care strategies that work for me and they may or may not work for you, but you get to decide what is gonna work with you and really do that work. No one is coming to save you. You have to take ownership of your health and wellbeing and it's time to put yourself first on center stage and find your spotlight.

Speaker 1 00:05:14 Sometimes it's easy to just look to someone else, which just tell me what to do. We don't want to take the time and energy that it takes to really sit with ourselves and kind of just figure out our own stuff. But that's what this is really all about. And getting to figure out what makes you feel good is such a rewarding practice. So play around, try some new methods, see what feels good. And trust me that if you find yourself doing something that no longer feels good for whatever reason you have my permission to stop, I don't care. What it is is you signed up for something, you took a coup --

-- le of classes and you're like, Not for me. Don't do it. There is no value in doing things that do not feel good and that do not bring you joy. I was recently talking to a friend and she was saying how she wants to move her body more, but she really doesn't like going to the gym.

Speaker 1 00:06:19 I felt that in my soul. I also do not find joy going to the gym. There is no need to strap yourself to a treadmill for 45 minutes at a time, several times a week in order to move your body. It's much more effective to figure out what joyful movement means to you and do that. I mean, if you like going to the gym, I don't mean to always be, uh, disrespecting people that like to go to gyms, by all means keep doing that. But chances are we do these things because we feel obligated to do something and it doesn't actually bring us joy. My friend then expressed to me about wanting to get back into dance classes. And yes, adult dance classes are a thing and there's so much fun. I recently was able to pick back up taking tap dance lessons, which is something that subsided a bit during, uh, when Covid 19 hit.

Speaker 1 00:07:17 But I'm excited that these activities are back. She also expressed wanting to take tennis lessons. That gym membership money that she's feeling obligated to spend on something that's not going to bring her joy is much better spent on dance lessons and tennis lessons. So figure out what it is that makes you feel good. Don't just do something because you feel like you should. And for more on the word should listen to the previous episode. And we talked about growth mindset. So you may be wondering at this point how I like to practice self-care and what is part of my routine. I will tell you honestly that my self care routine is ever evolving and it's been a rather fluid journey. And at times I've found myself really practicing more consistently and then it ebbs and flows. Something else comes up in life. It may, may fall back a little bit, but then it always comes back.

Speaker 1 00:08:21 So I, it's, it's rather fluid. I've relied on different strategies for a period of time and then I've decided that's not for me anymore. And I've introduced something new or just put something aside. I go through phases where I really like to journal a lot and then that tends to kind of fall by the wayside. I go through phases where I really wanna meditate more and then that may ebb and flow a bit also. But as I think about the 10 domains of self-care, and we've talked about these a lot, we're not going to go into them in this episode, but it is a really helpful framework when we think about the different areas of a routine. And for me, there are a few that no matter what is going on in my life, no matter what is ebbing and flowing and what practices I wanna invite in and whatnot, there are a few constants that have always been really, really important to me.

Speaker 1 00:09:16 For one sleep, I never sacrifice sleep. I am an absolute nightmare if I don't get enough sleep and I require at least eight hours a night. I get curious when I wake up and I don't have a good night's sleep and I just feel kind, Ugh. And I want to get to a place where I feel rested and restored. So I really pay attention to my sleep, what is impacting my sleep and how I can improve upon it. Cuz it is a really, really important part of self care. And yes, you should feel rested and restored when you wake up in the morning. The second one for me that is non-negotiable is movement. I have to move my body. Now that can look different from time to time and it has, it's evolved and sometimes it's, it has been gym memberships or it has been more intense dance classes, or it's been Zumba, whatever it is.

Speaker 1 00:10:13 Right now I'm really focusing on short walks during the workday, my tap class once a week that I mentioned and gentle stretching is needed as the weather gets colder and walking outside may no longer be an option. I plan to invite more yoga back into my life. And historically, I've, I've talked about this on the podcast before, this is an area I've struggled with as I used to move my body and use movement and exercise as a means to alter my body. During my dis disease eating disorder days. It was extreme and it was excessive and it was not healthy. Now I strive to move my body, my body in ways that feel joyful.

Speaker 1 00:11:00 And the third domain for me that is non-negotiable is relation --

-- ships. I am blessed to have an unbelievable husband and mom and mo both of these special bonds. A very important to me and making sure that I'm spending time in making time for these people is super important. I talk to my mom every day. I see her frequently and for my husband. I make sure that we have time for ourselves. Even when things get really busy, we take the time to plan a date night or go out for dinner or just chill out and watch whatever show we're watching on Netflix. I set boundaries around my work life, whether it is my kind of day job or my Dr. MC work to make sure that there are those times for us to have time together. And he also does the same in his life to make sure that we are continuing to have that excellence in the relationship domain beyond those relationships. I have been working with a therapist for several years, which has also been very helpful. And I do recommend therapy for pretty much everyone. Aside from that, I make a concerted effort to hydrate and feed my body and honor my hunger and practice mindfulness. If you struggle in the area of nutrition, we've talked about this before, but please look into the research on intuitive eating and the health at every size movement.

Speaker 1 00:12:32 And although we know that Manny Petties are not the true meaning of self care, I do indulge in those services regularly as they make me feel good. And some days that's just half the battle. And that's not to say that I don't access the other domains of selfcare, of course I do. I try to keep my spaces decluttered, clean and organized. I have a slew of self soothing techniques and my spiritual domain is overflowing as I love sharing my expertise and feel inspired every day when I get to help other people on their journey to wellness. And over the years, as I've said, I've been better at this than others and that's okay. But I know that I don't feel good when I don't prioritize my needs and I don't wanna go back to that place. So I make this a priority. And the domains of self care really.

Speaker 1 00:13:23 And building a routine is beautiful. And when all the domains work in harmony with one another, cultivating these skills, having a strong routine, it just makes life better. And I firmly believe that practicing self care is powerful and rebellious. And I love it. Society is not going to give you a gold star for prioritizing your needs, but I will. And eventually you won't care what society says because you'll notice how good you feel in your body when you take care of yourself. And that will be your guiding force. Nothing else will matter. So I invite you to think about some little things you can do to prioritize your needs more start small. Little shifts go a long way when we think about a sustainable self care routine. Don't just dive into starting 9,000 new self-care practices tomorrow. That is not sustainable. And I'm going to repeat my favorite quote for self-care by Audra Lord said in 1988 As a political rally cry against an oppressive culture. Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation. And that is an act of political warfare. And with that, thanks so much for listening. We hope you have enjoyed these Bitesize episodes that we've shared over the past few weeks. And for those that are missing the interview format, we have a great news for you. Season three of the podcast will start soon and we'll kick things off with a returning favorite. Remember to subscribe and rate this podcast on your preferred player and be sure to follow on social media at Dr. Mc Self Care episodes drop by weekly on Wednesday. So we'll see you next time. Stay well and do good.

Speaker 1 00:15:55 Are you looking for exciting, engaging, and useful professional development and workshops for your school, business, or organization? Well look no further. Dr. Mc offers a variety of options and topics related to self-care and renewal. Trauma recovery, building resilience, developing a growth mindset, stress management, and more completely customizable to fit every need. And coming soon is a new program to help high school students manage the challenges they are facing today and the increasing concerns around mental health. Visit [dr mc self-care dot com](http://drmcself-care.com) to learn more and request a session. --