



Jesus-Style Self-Care

Jesus Moved Fast AND Slow

“Slow down!” “Remove stressors from your life!” “Relax!”

These self-care messages that we hear, though well-meaning, can leave us feeling defeated and confused when we see that certain seasons in life require a lot of us. Jesus models a life of moving fast AND slow. In Mark one, we trace a VERY busy ministry day; teaching in the Synagogue (v. 21), delivering a demon-possessed man (v. 25), healing Simons’ mother-in-law (v. 31), then healing a delivering many more after that (v.32)! Jesus had days like that and I hope that we can all find comfort in knowing that there’s nothing wrong with really intense, busy seasons that require a lot of us. What we can also see in Jesus’ model, is that the morning after this intense ministry day, he went away to be alone and pray before dawn. He slowed down.

Research affirms that we are imminently capable of working hard and moving fast, what gets unhealthy for us is when we never slow down. Having seasons of fast and slow, rhythms in our weeks and days...those are the variations that represent good self-care. Jesus lives like this! With a variation of fast and slow in his life.

Jesus Found His Yes AND No

After his busy ministry day in Mark 1 next morning, he prays by himself (Mark 1:35). When the disciples come to find him, they want him to continue what he had begun the day before; a healing and deliverance ministry! Jesus says NO to this and YES to going to the neighboring towns to preach. Because “that is why I came” (v.38). The time in prayer seems to help Jesus focus on what is most essential. This can be our essential self-care prayer model as well! We may be facing a choice like Jesus is; we could keep doing a really great thing, something everyone expects us to do, or we can listen to the nudges and prompts of the Holy Spirit, reminding us of our truest purpose, our greatest call.

You may discern a call on your life here at Urbana. After you leave, there may be many, many pulls on you to pursue other things. Your quiet place of prayer with the Father may be the place of your continued reminder of what God has given you to do!

Jesus Modelled Emotional Health

Many of us are suffering from poor mental health because we don’t know what to do with all of our big emotions, especially the ones we deem to be inappropriate. Jesus models a life of experiencing and expressing emotions that should encourage us! Many of us are familiar with Jesus weeping when Lazarus died, but did you know that in the verses before that, that Jesus experiences “deep anger and was deeply troubled” (John 11:33) upon seeing all of the people wailing with Mary. Then he weeps, then after, he is still angry (v. 38)! Too often, Jesus is painted as emotionally flat or unaffected. This can lead us to struggling to feel certain emotions are okay to experience. Be encouraged! Jesus shows us a life of great emotional range and we have much to learn about tolerating and experiencing our own emotions.



Four Realms of Soul-Restoring Self-Care

In my years practicing soul-care, I have learned that no matter what you are dealing with, tending to these four realms will help ANYONE feel better in the moments, hours, and days of their lives. Missing anyone can lead to feeling empty, overwhelmed, or discouraged.

Thoughts

“For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). This spiritual battle is often waged in the world of our thoughts. Learning to recognize thought patterns and shift our focus is one of the most important skills towards regulation and steadiness.

TRY THIS! Who is inviting you to think?

As we grow more aware of the thought patterns we tend to fall into, the next step is to ask, Who—or what force—is inviting me to think? Is it anxiety? Fear? Regret? Depression? Despair? Ephesians 6:12 tells us that the “mighty powers in this dark world” are at work, pulling us out of commission, and that battle largely happens in our minds. What better weapon does the enemy wield than an alarming or depressing thought placed in our brains for us to contend with? Our best discrimination work comes when we can recognize the forces driving our thoughts. If the Holy Spirit invites you to think something, wonderful—by all means, follow up! If your grounded self offers an invitation, that is also worthy of your time and attention. But if it isn’t God or your wise self, then proceed with caution.

Emotions

Our often-unconscious resistance to certain emotions has a huge impact on our mental health. Learning to handle our emotions the way Jesus did can lead to great relief and freedom. The goal? Confidence that we can experience and handle any emotions.

TRY THIS! Let the Psalms School You:

Plan to read through the Psalms over time (one per day, three per week, one per week... whatever pace feels good to you). With each psalm, name the emotions that the psalmist seems to be processing. Consider how you experience those emotions in your own life.

Rhythms

We can impact the way we feel by creating rhythms that help our brain and bodies adjust speeds. It's important to know how to do this in any given hour, morning, afternoon, and evening. Learning to create needed rhythms doesn't have to be difficult! It can mean stretching your body or reading a Psalm instead of scrolling through social media.

TRY THIS! Who is inviting you to think?

Most of us get into ruts, our phones becoming the thing we grab when we want some sort of break. Trouble is, the phone often causes stress hormones to flood our bodies. A better break will give you happy hormones instead! Here are just a few ideas: having a mindful hot chocolate, or a mindful clementine, or a mindful mint, walking around the block or office just to move your body, reading something spiritually encouraging or uplifting, doing some stretches that help release tight muscles, listening to the Holy Spirit, listening to a song, praying for an hour, doing a morning, midday, or evening liturgy, or checking in with a friend or colleague.

Fulfillment

If we don't learn how to have some kind of fulfillment in most of our days, our overall well-being will be impacted. Wasted time, undone tasks, disconnected relationships, anemic prayer life....all and any of these things can contribute to a lack of fulfillment.

TRY THIS! A Pleasure Examen:

At the end of each day, consider the following questions and record your answers in your journal, a notebook, or your phone.

- When did you experience true pleasure today? What were the circumstances? Was it planned, or did it just happen?
- How did you feel in response to the activity (playful, relaxed, whimsical, satisfied, full, etc.)?
- How could you incorporate this more into your life?

Remember, John 10:10 is our encouragement.

“the thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a RICH and SATISFYING life”

Jesus wants your day-to-day life to be rich and satisfying. That doesn't mean there aren't periods of intense suffering in our lives, but it does say something about ongoing emptiness or despair. Jesus doesn't want that for any of us and he most definitely doesn't want you to burn out pursuing his call on your life. For more skills in each realm, get my book, *Restore My Soul: Reimagining Self-Care for a Sustainable Life* and start living differently today!

Hormone Soup

Guide for Self-Care

Think of your body each day as a vat of soup...hormone soup. The ingredients for the soup are stress hormones and happy hormones and YOU are the chef.

To have great tasting soup in any given day, we need a nice mix of stress hormones and happy hormones. Too little stress hormone and your soup may be bland, too much and it may be way to spicy.

Happy hormones can function to ease the over-spiced soup, somewhat like adding brown sugar or potatoes mellow a spicy soup.

This can be an empowering strategy when your have stressors in your life that aren't easy to reduce or eliminate.

INGREDIENTS:

- **Stress hormones** (adrenaline, cortisol) activate the amygdala and give us oomph but having too much in our bodies will make us feel anxious and edgy.
- **Happy hormones** (dopamine, endorphins, oxytocin) activate the pleasure and connection parts of the brain and help us feel at ease and steady.



It doesn't have to take too much time! We can get a burst of happy hormone very quickly that will make a big difference in the way you feel overall.



Add Happy Hormones

Some activities that will add happy hormone to your soup that take only 1-5 minutes to practice:

- a big hug
- Kissing
- Petting your pet
- Cuddling with kids, beloveds
- Tickle fights
- Impromptu dance party
- Have a cup of tea
- Mindfully eat a piece of chocolate or treat
- Read a poem, scripture, or prayer
- Recite a poem, scripture, or prayer
- Listen to a song
- Check in with a friend
- Pray
- Step outside and let the air/sun touch your face
- Do a yoga pose
- Meditate
- Lie down
- Do 20 Burpees
- Do 30 push-ups
- Jumping jacks or high knees
- Doing paced breathing
- Laugh
- Affirm someone
- Sign up to give blood
- Practice gratitude for something good
- Tell a hurting friend or acquaintance that they are on your mind
- Donate money to something you value
- Plan something that you will be able to look forward to
- Read a few pages of an enjoyable book
- Do some kind of craft or handwork
- Tell someone you love them
- Take a short walk
- Send a card to someone
- Run around your house
- Clean something
- Sign up to volunteer for an organization you believe in
- Practice an act of kindness
- Have a family LOUD time
- Have a pillow fight
- Remind yourself of the things you do well
- Remember a happy event or accomplishment
- Practice silence
- Read fixed hour prayers
- Sing
- Do a sun salutation
- Schedule an appointment for something enjoyable or good for you
- Look at photos of a vacation or event you enjoyed
- Ask a friend for support
- Plan something enjoyable with a friend/loved one

Add your own ideas to this list

Balance Stress Hormones with Happy Ones

In times when you feel that your hormone soup is out of whack, try to assess the number of stressors contributing stress hormone to your soup and add the same number of happy hormone interventions. While your stressors won't be eliminated, this practice will definitely help you have more hormone balance and thus, better hormone soup!

What are your Stressors?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Add Happy Hormone in equal number to the Stressors (in a given day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Choose interventions that you feel confident you would enjoy.

When stress hormone is flooding our bodies, we don't feel like doing some of these things. But be encouraged, if you do them, the good feelings will follow. Our goal? Sustainable self-care efforts that make a difference and aren't overwhelming to do!