

# SELFISH OR SELF-CARE?

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## MY OBSERVATION

It is my observation that I hear the word 'selfish' used more often by women than by men. It is usually used in the context of a justification for doing something for oneself, and oneself only.

I have been so curious about the difference between selfish and self-care that I researched it, and this is my opinion. See the dictionary meaning of Selfish in the purple column.

So, these two meanings / explanations are exactly what I have in my mind when it comes to the word selfish. All negative. All that most of us are taught not to be. I definitely heard my mother call me a selfish child more than once in my life! This, I believe, inculcates the idea that we need to be selfless (concerned more with the needs and wishes of others than with one's own; unselfish).

At the close of Women's Month I am chatting about being Selfish or is it Self-care ~ but content is not purely applicable to women only, men too!

According to the Oxford dictionary, the meaning of **SELFISH** is:

(of a person, action, or motive) lacking consideration for other people; concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure.

*A further explanation is:* Concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself; seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others. Arising from concern with one's own welfare or advantage in disregard of others a selfish act.

## SELFISHNESS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Please don't get me wrong, and I must iterate from the get-go of this opinion piece, that true selfishness does exist, of course. And furthermore, it is not acceptable or helpful in garnering loving and respectful relationships with others.

What I am referring to, is the concept that many of us have (more especially women) that any form of activity we partake in that is purely for ourselves; is thus selfish.

# selfish

Someone who is **selfish** cares only about themselves and doesn't consider others. If a ship is sinking and you refuse to let anyone else into your 4-person lifeboat, you're extremely *selfish*.

**You can't pour from an empty cup.  
Take care of yourself.**



I have learnt over the years the validity of the adage: you can't pour from an empty cup. Meaning, that if we are completely selfless and invested wholly in the needs of others and ignoring / discounting / disregarding our own needs; we will be left feeling depleted, defeated, and exhausted. At this stage we are no good to anyone! Worse still, is when those feelings of resentment that arise for the very people we have been serving selflessly.

## WHERE IS THE BALANCE?

### SELF-CARE

To me as a woman and a coach, the act of self-care is imperative and certainly not selfish. Self-care comes in many forms. It could be that rest that is so desperately required, it could be a healthy dose of pampering or even the pursuit of one's goals and vision for our life. Protecting healthy personal and professional boundaries is also a very important self-care behaviour.

Today a client cancelled our session, because he is taking himself and his wife for a day's spa treatment, as he has been working insanely long hours over the last few months to complete an engagement. This is such a healthy thing to do, for himself, his wife, and their marriage.

This is where I challenge the concept of selfishness that we may have, and question if we should not rather normalise the need for self-care?

#### What is **SELF-CARE**?

According to the dictionary:

'the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health (and wellbeing)'

'the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.'

*Taking an hour out to have a soak in a hot bath is not necessarily selfish and certainly is self-care in my books.*

## SELF-CARE IS MANDATORY

Pursuing your goals, your passion and purpose whilst seeking to achieve self-actualisation; is not selfish, unless it is at the cost of and detriment to all those around us. On this note, a Mother who has reached a healthy level of self-actualisation in her own life, will instill this pursuit in her children leading to a next generation who are well rounded individuals.

The same goes for leaders, when leaders have their boundaries securely in place, it demonstrates self-caring behaviours to the team, who will follow by example.

**It's not selfish to love yourself,  
take care of yourself, and make  
your happiness a priority.  
It's necessary.**

Mandy Hale



tinybuddha.com

*Whatever you do, remember the key difference between selfishness and self-care: is the activity you are engaging in at the detriment or with disregard for those around you?*

***If not, go and deliberately fill your cup, everyone around you will thank you for it!***



## Be intentional

Actively find the joy in the small things in your life. For me, that is when one of my orchid plant flowers. The release of joy I experience is immense! Especially when I have nursed the needy plant to do so!

## LET'S LOOK AT THE PRACTICALITY OF HOW ONE CAN CREATE HEALTHY SELF-CARING HABITS:

- Do something you enjoy, every day or as often as possible. That may be reading a book (not associated with your profession), take art / dance lessons. Cook that fantastic dish you have wanted to try. Get your fingers dirty in your garden (lots of evidence points to the health benefits of digging in the earth!) The ideas are endless!
- Meet your friends for coffee. Social contact is very important for the sense of belonging (and the release of Oxytocin). Make new friends by joining social groups that do an activity that you enjoy, such as hiking.
- Explore your personal way to relax. For some people it is meditation, yoga or getting a massage. Others it is that deep soak in a bath.
- Plan an event that you can look forward to. From a special dinner to a holiday, create that anticipation and excitement.
- Go for that goal (work or personal), study what you have always wanted to study, or enter that competition!