

STEP #1

UNDERSTAND WHAT FILLS YOU UP

When you are stuck on that treadmill of the daily grind, it can be a challenge to even allow yourself to think about what sort of self-nurturing activities are going to actually help refill your tank and not just add to your stress level.

For instance, at my core, I am an introvert. An extroverted introvert I think is what it is called. But what that means, and what I have learned about myself, is that the thing that fills me up more than anything else is alone time. I need it and I crave it. In fact, my favorite day of the week is Monday, because on Monday afternoons my husband takes our daughters to dance, and they don't get home until a little after 6pm. And that means when I get home from work around five, I have a whole precious hour to myself to cook dinner. It's pretty, glorious!

STEP #2

HAVE SOME CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

I think sometimes we get upset or aggravated or offended that the people closest to us aren't giving us what we need, when the reality is that we have never communicated what we need. We are expecting them to read our minds, to understand exactly how we feel, when in truth, that is impossible.

I know for a long time, this was a huge source of conflict for Chuck and I. Because he is an extrovert and I am an introvert, we wanted different things and we craved different things, and he couldn't understand why I just wanted to be by myself—in fact, he would get offended by it—and I couldn't understand why he was always wanting to be together. And the more he wanted togetherness, the more I wanted space! It felt suffocating to me, but my pulling away felt incredibly hurtful to him.

STEP #3

GET IT ON THE SCHEDULE

This is where the rubber meets the road. Because just like you are responsible for communicating what you need to the people around you, you are also just as responsible for actually making time for self-care. It is no one else's responsibility to take care of you.

And so, if you know that you need time alone—get it on the schedule. Block out a weekend for a personal retreat, even if it is just going to a local hotel for a night or two all by yourself. Schedule a spa day or convince your spouse to take the kids camping or to the zoo for the day, or whatever, so that you can have the whole house to yourself. Plan to spend a whole day in bed watching Netflix. But actually be intentional about putting something on the schedule, and making time just for you a priority.

STEP #4

GIVE UP THE GUILT

This might be the hardest step of all, especially for women, and especially for moms. Because the truth is that we spend so much of our time taking care of everyone else that there's not usually any time left for ourselves. And so I think that in our minds that we start to believe that if we do make time for ourselves, we'll be taking away from everyone else, and that will make us selfish.

But that's not what self care is. Self care is knowing how to fill your own tank so that you CAN then pour into the other people in your life—your spouse and your kids and your career and all those other commitments. Self care is the fuel that keeps you going.