

# Episode: What Is Self Care, Really?



## Full Transcript

HEALTHY EATING FOR BUSY WOMEN PODCAST  
WITH KAT RENTAS

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Hello there. Welcome back to the podcast this week. Today's topic is going to be a fun one. Because we're going to discuss a very popular topic in the wellness community which is, self-care. And the reason why I wanted to do an episode on self-care, is because I find that with many of us women we tend to define self-care in a way that doesn't actually serve us. And I want to talk about what self-care really should look like when you're on a journey to healthier eating and achieving the goals you want with your body, along with any other goals you have in your life. In certain ways, we can really use this concept of self-care against ourselves, which is what I'll talk about here. Self-care can be a wonderful thing, but not at the expense of our future and achieving the results we want. And most of us will define self-care as acts of indulgence, right? It's the bubble baths, pedicures, getting our hair done, face masks – all of the really fun and wonderful things, that I personally love. It's really portrayed in wellness culture as the act of making us feel comfortable. But this can also not serve us in really sneaky ways. And I want to talk a little bit about my experience with self-care. So you can get an idea of how I was doing self-care the wrong way. I first got into self-care, probably about a decade ago when it started to become really popular online. And there would be all of these articles that would list everything you could do to form a self-care practice. This concept of having a self-care routine became very normalized. And I started implementing the bubble baths and face masks – all of the things that, in my mind, I was doing to take care of myself. To love on myself a little bit. And these acts of self-care did serve that purpose for me. Doing these things in my routine did better allow me to take care of my body and see my body as something that I wanted to take care of. It did increase my relationship with my body in a sense. But, I also found that I was reaching for acts of self-care when things in my life got hard. So, when I had a stressful day at work. When I had maybe an argument with a loved one. When I had a long to-do list

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that was overwhelming to me at the time. I found when I was experiencing uncomfortable, negative emotions, that this is when I would start reaching for the self-care. And this is exactly the moment when self-care stopped serving me. And there's two ways of looking at self-care. There's two ways of defining it for yourself. One definition will serve you and the results you want with your body. And one will keep you stuck. And that's really what ended up happening for me, for years. At first, self care was a way for me to genuinely take care of my body and show it some love. And then I found myself reaching for it when my brain wanted to escape anything uncomfortable. Which caused me to procrastinate, avoid, and hide in many areas of my life. And what's interesting is this concept of self-care began working against me. Because if there was something I didn't want to do because it made me slightly uncomfortable emotionally, I had a really compelling reason for not doing it, right? My brain would just be like, "Oh, it's okay. You just need some self-care right now. You don't want to do too much and burn yourself out. Let's just take a bubble bath". So, instead of showing up fully at work and being committed to my goals, I would reach for what felt comfortable. And your brain knows that there's nothing more comfortable than the "self-care" practices. Self-care, in the way we've been defining it as a society, can give your brain a compelling reason for not showing up to your life. It will give you a compelling reason to believe "I just need a break right now", "I'll try again tomorrow", or "You deserve this because you've been working so hard". In ways that are sneaky, right? It's when we're not really being honest with ourselves. And we'd rather just seek this comfort rather than show up to our lives and feel uncomfortable when it serves us. And for the record, all of us have this part of our brains. Even the most disciplined person in the world, who always shows up for their goals, has this part of their brain. The part that's coming up with compelling reasons for them to quit. To take a break. And the difference is the version of you who shows up

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her goals, whether that's healthy eating or anything else, hears those compelling reasons from the brain, but she doesn't listen to them. She doesn't indulge them. She hears that voice that tells her, "It's ok, you can just take a break. You can take a bubble bath". And she says, "Nope we're good. We'll do that later". This is something we all have in our minds and I want you to consider how often it's coming up for you.

Now, as I mentioned, we can really choose from two definitions of self-care. And one will serve the results you want, and the other will keep you stuck. So, first let's talk about the one that will keep you stuck. And this is when we define self-care as seeking comfort. And when I say seeking comfort, I'm not referring to taking care of your body and showing it love. I'm referring to the times in your life when you want to avoid, escape, hide, or procrastinate from your life. This is the time when self-care will work against you. And, again, as I mentioned, all of our brains want to do this. If you have a human brain, there will always be a part of it that wants to escape when any uncomfortable emotion shows up. This is the part of your brain, that when you have a presentation at work would much rather curl up and take a bubble bath or watch Netflix, then work on your speech, right? It's this part of your brain that hates anything new and uncomfortable. Because to your primitive mind, anything new and uncomfortable means danger. So our brains are wired in this way to seek comfort and avoid pain. And we also know that this brain is stronger and faster than our intentional brain. Which is the part of your brain, the prefrontal cortex that sets goals and makes intentional decisions. And if you're constantly letting the bigger, primitive brain that's always seeking comfort, run the show, your decisions will feel as if they're being made for you. And you'll find yourself always looking for the self-care, rather than showing up to your life. And I find, this shows up for my clients as well. It applies to anything in your life, but it can really apply to healthy eating. When you're on a

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journey to eat very intentionally, so you're not overeating or emotionally eating, this part of your brain will activate. And what will happen is you'll be going about your day feeling set on your decision not to overeat, and then a negative emotion will come in. So, maybe you feel stress from work that day, or you feel overwhelmed because of projects you have coming up, or you feel frustrated because of something your boss said to you that day, and then you start questioning the promises you made to yourself with food. Because your brain is going to come up with lots of really compelling reasons for you to stray away from that plan. It will tell you things like "This just isn't the right time", or "you'll try again next week", or "you deserve to eat what you want right now". And these will all feel like facts to you. They will feel so true. When really, this is just your brain giving you compelling reasons for seeking comfort. And then this is when many of us will overeat and go off plan, because we'll listen to that sneaky part of our brains that wants the candy, right? And this is the same part of your brain that wants to reach for the self-care when it feels slightly uncomfortable. Because our brain's are very sensitive. It's like a little toddler. Sometimes that toddler has a tantrum and wants that candy. And when we keep listening to it, it's going to keep screaming at us to give it that candy. Because it knows that when it does, it'll get the candy. And this is how I like to think of that part of my brain that's like, "You just need a break right now. You just need to take a bubble bath, watch Netflix, etc. etc.". And now, I've practiced this work for some time, so I don't make it mean anything. I don't make it mean anything has gone wrong. And I've stopped listening to it. But what's interesting is we've romanticized this concept of self-care, so much so that it works against us. Because your brain will say "You just need a break right now" or "This isn't the right time to make these changes", and you'll listen to it in the name of self-care. Because self-care is seen as something morally right. And it can be. But oftentimes, we're thinking about self-care in a way that

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works against us. And self-care can be important, but it's never more important than reaching your goals. When you use self-care as a way to avoid, escape, hide, or procrastinate from your life, it will only lead to suffering. You will feel out of control with the results in your life. And then what happens from there? You think you need more self-care because the negative emotion just keeps on coming. So then we end up in this self-perpetuating cycle of being stuck. And it's very sneaky, how our brains like to do this.

Now, let's talk about a definition of self-care that will serve you. This is when you're looking at self-care, not as a way to make yourself more comfortable, but as a way to genuinely take care of your body. And it's a really subtle, but impactful difference. Because there's a lot of things on your journey to healthier eating, or with anything in life, that will require growth. Which means it will require you to feel uncomfortable. So, that's not how we want to define self-care. That's not the intention we want to have when practicing acts of self-care. We want to practice self-care with the intention of taking care of our bodies. The intention of taking care of the house we live in. Because we're loving it, right now, exactly how it is. And I really encourage you, next time you practice any act of self-care, to try going into it with this intention. Of caring and loving for your body as it is now. Because, as women especially, we're conditioned to think we should love our bodies when we change it. We'll think, "Oh, I'll love my body when I lose X amount of pounds", right? And the reality is we need to practice loving the body we have now to make changes to it. And acts of self-care can be a perfect opportunity for you to practice that intention with yourself. Self-care also means processing your emotions that feel uncomfortable. It doesn't mean escaping them and pushing them down further, just so they come back even stronger at a later time. It means allowing any uncomfortable emotion to come up, giving it a seat at the table, and then having compassion for it. Allowing yourself to feel it fully and process it

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effectively, so you're not hiding from your life. This is real self-care. And I'll even make processing my difficult emotions into a sort of typical self-care practice. I'll lie down with some candles and music, and close my eyes, and breathe deeply into any uncomfortable emotion that my brain really doesn't want to experience. Because I know that self-care isn't letting that primitive, scared mind determine my results in life. I'm going to really show myself care and process those emotions fully so I can move through them rather than against them. Self care is also having curiosity and compassion for those emotions, or whatever comes up in your life. Sometimes self-care just means saying to yourself, "Let's figure out why we feel this way. And why this happened. We have a good reason for everything we do. So what could we try better next time?". And sometimes self-care means saying to yourself "Oh, I understand exactly why we did that. That makes so much sense. Of course we feel that way." These are acts of self-care, foundational acts of self-care, that will really serve you and your goals. Whether that be with healthy eating or with anything else in your life. Intentionally decide to see self-care not as a way to make yourself comfortable, but as way to take care of your body now, process uncomfortable emotions, and by having compassion and curiosity for yourself always.

A good way to observe what your relationship to self-care is right now, is to look at your reasons for doing self-care. So I always like to say, "Do whatever you want, just like your reason". And just ask yourself, next time you feel compelled to take a break, make a bubble bath, or cozy up on the couch and watch Netflix, ask yourself if you like your reason. If you do, then perfect. It's likely that you're taking care of your body and this act of self-care isn't limiting your ability to show up to your goals. But if you don't like your reason and you feel like you're doing this self-care to hide from your life, then this is a good time to reflect. And it does require us to be really honest with ourselves. But, it

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will serve you so well. Sometimes, one of the best things we can do is to schedule those indulgent acts of self-care ahead of time. So, we know we're taking care of our bodies, but we also know that we're not letting our brain use those acts of self-care for escape. I hope this really makes sense to you and allows you to look at your relationship with self-care a bit different. And something to take away from this episode is that self-care isn't always a warm hug. Despite what we've been led to believe. True self-care isn't always a warm hug or bubble bath. Sometimes self-care is being willing to do what's hard, in service of the woman we want to become. And when you consider this, you can determine what real self-care will look like for you. Alright my amazing, lovely friend. I thank you for being here with me today and I'll talk to you next week.