

# SELF-CARE AS A RADICAL ACT OF LIBERATION

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## Overview

### Goals

- Expand our knowledge of what self-care is, why it's important, and how it is a radical act of liberation.
- Cultivate the wisdom in the room around self-care practices that are grounded in our ancestral knowledge and lived experience.
- Reclaiming and Remembering our Magic to heal ourselves.

### Assumptions

- \*There is NO neutral; we live in a toxic society; it conditions us not to see the toxicity and to normalize it<sup>1</sup>
- \*There is no way to talk about racism/oppression without replicating racism
- \*Racism and white supremacy cause trauma
- \*We MUST love ourselves into who we want to be
- Expect/Accept Non-Closure
- When I say, "white supremacy or racism/racist" I am speaking to the "ideology," not the individual, per se
- Racism is a system (it has many forms) that is a pillar of white supremacy
- Healing is messy; it just is. Breathe through your discomfort, because Healing must happen for everyone, if we are to achieve Peace

### Agreements

- Listen to understand
- Be willing to do things differently
- Be willing to experience discomfort
- This is Brave Space rather than Safe Space

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<sup>1</sup> From Michelle C. Johnson, social justice activist, Dismantling Racism trainer via the 2019 Oppression, Privilege, and Spiritual Practice symposium – Skills in Action module

When you are in alignment with who-you-really-are, you cannot help but uplift those with whom you come into contact.

Your value to those around you hinges upon only one thing: your personal alignment with Source. And the only thing you have to give to another is an example of that alignment - which they may observe, then desire, and then work to achieve - but you cannot give it to them.

Everyone is responsible for the thoughts they think and the things that they choose as their objects of attention.

*Abraham-Hicks*

## Morning Ritual/Morning Flow Chant<sup>2</sup>

One practice of many African and Indigenous cultures is to welcome and end the day with a chant of appreciation. Below is an open source chant taken from **Ancestral Resistance: Offerings + Practices**.

The following is a short practice of affirming your strength and setting intentions that can be used to begin your day.

- Place your hands on your belly
- Become present with your morning rhythm, sounds and your body
- Breathe in over that area with a slow calming breath, inhaling for a count of three (3) and releasing.
- Stand if you are comfortable doing so and either in your mind or out loud...chant the following:

*Good morning beautiful being of mine.*

*With these morning breaths, I rise.*

*I rise with love filled vibrations.*

*I rise with power.*

*I rise with grounding energy.*

*I rise with gratitude for another day.*

*I rise for collective peace.*

*I rise for collective liberation.*

*I rise for collective existence in resistance.*

*I rise for those present and those to come.*

*I rise...*

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<sup>2</sup> From **Ancestral Resistance: Offerings + Practices** by Francisca Porchas

this is your space  
an oasis where you can relax  
take off your shoes  
enjoy yourself and the art of living  
feel free, think big, think small  
this is a place where people will be seen  
take your time and breathe  
sense the moment, use your key  
and open your heart  
laugh, cry or be crazy if you like  
this is your space

## Self-Care: Definitions

**Resilience**<sup>3</sup>: is the ability to renew ourselves during and after difficult, oppressive and/or traumatic experiences. It is our ability to keep hope, to “bounce back” to find a way through that has some integrity and is life affirming. Somatically we see resilience as our ability to shift ourselves from traumatic, alert reaction to a calmed and more cohesive way of being. Resilience brings back a positive imagination for the future, and allows for both safety and connection to be re-established.

**Self-Care**<sup>4</sup>: is a journey of deepening self-discovery and nurturance of the true nature of one’s total being:

- **Physical** – optimizing the operating efficiency of the physical body through food, movement, and relaxation
- **Mental** – increasing self-awareness through uncovering and witnessing the machinations of the mind
- **Essence (Spirit, Soul)** – penetrating and connecting to the deep mystery of life – “Who and what am I?”

**Racism**<sup>5</sup>: a spacious classification system of human beings, created by Europeans (who have come to be called white) assigning human worth and social status, establishing themselves as the height of humanity and the model of human achievement for the purpose of maintaining power and privilege.

- Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power.
- Racism = a system of advantage based on race.
- Racism = a system of oppression based on race.
- Racism = a system designed to build and maintain white supremacy.

**Capitalism**<sup>6</sup>: a social and economic system that is sustained by exploitation. ... Under capitalism all things are produced by people who sell their labor for what we call a wage in order to make a living. Inherent to capitalism, the working class – the people who create things – do not own what they create and do not own the machinery/tools used to make said things.

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<sup>3</sup> Generative Somatics; <http://www.generativesomatics.org/>

<sup>4</sup> IWES – Institute for Women & Ethnic Studies <http://www.iwesnola.org>

<sup>5</sup> Undoing Racism, The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond; <https://www.pisab.org>

<sup>6</sup> Spit Justice, an open mic workshop and community space in South Central LA; [www.instagram.com/spitjustice](http://www.instagram.com/spitjustice)

**Habit<sup>7</sup>:** is a recurrent, often **unconscious**, pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition.

**Practice<sup>8</sup>:** is a repetitive act **consciously** practiced for explicit benefit, improved over time (gets better and better with lots of practice); a habit is NOT a practice; a practice that becomes a habit loses its value.

**Micro-Aggressions<sup>9</sup>:** are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

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<sup>7</sup> The Strongfield Project at CompassPoint, sponsored by Blue Shield and the Movement to End Violence (MEV) project

<sup>8</sup> From The Strongfield Project at CompassPoint, sponsored by Blue Shield and the Movement to End Violence (MEV) project

<sup>9</sup> term coined by psychiatrist and Harvard University professor Chester M Pierce in 1970 to describe insults and dismissals which he regularly witnessed non-black Americans inflicting on African Americans.

## Why is Self-Care a Radical Act of Liberation?

**“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”**

- Audre Lorde

Many women, especially Black women, have asserted, created and implemented self-care practices gleaned from ancestral and lived ways of being, into their lives and bodies of work, especially those in academia and the nonprofit industrial complex.

Writers such as Audre Lorde and June Jordan have written about the act of self-care in a world that targets Black women, as an immediate act of resistance, liberation, and self-love.

In her writing, *Healing Circles as Black Feminist Pedagogical Interventions* (Chapter 16), Jennifer Richardson states...

*“I argue that in order to produce true social transformation and strive for a radical notion of collective freedom, we must pay attention not only to our political/ideological positions, but also to our individual and collective practices of self-care and healing – practices that are themselves deeply political.*

*Pedagogies and praxis in the Black feminist tradition that are accountable to oppressed communities must take a serious look at healing, balance and self-care as powerful forms of resistance to hegemonic cultures and structures.”*

To further illustrate this point, we look to the works of Gillian Giles and Dr. Joy DeGruy for the historical markers of why self-care is radical and an act of liberation within a racist and capitalist construct.

## Reflecting on the Root Causes that Prevent Us from Practicing Self-Care

Now that we've read the article and watched the video, consider the following:

1. What is surprising about what you heard in the video and/or the article?
2. What does this mean in regards to you taking care of yourself?

### 1, 2, 4, All Activity:

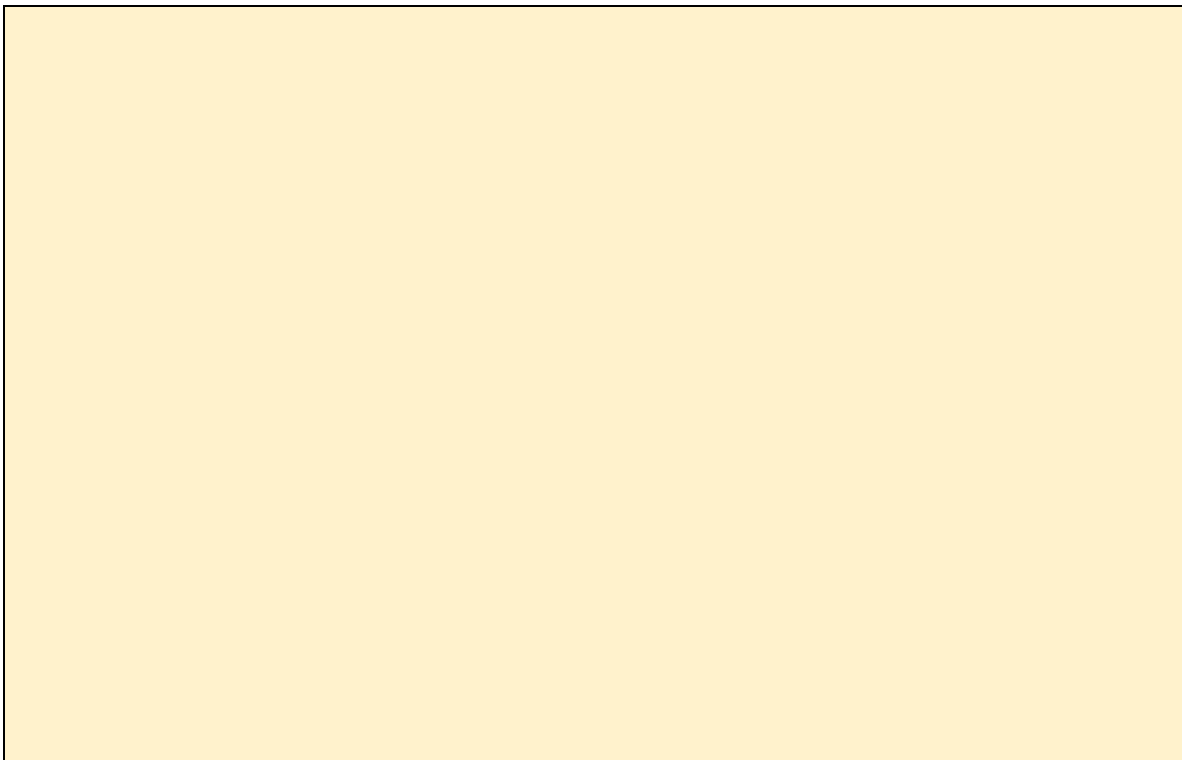
**1** – Reflect/journal about the content presented – write what you're feeling.

**2** – Find a partner and share your reflections with them.

**4** – With your partner, find another pair and share your reflections in a group of four.

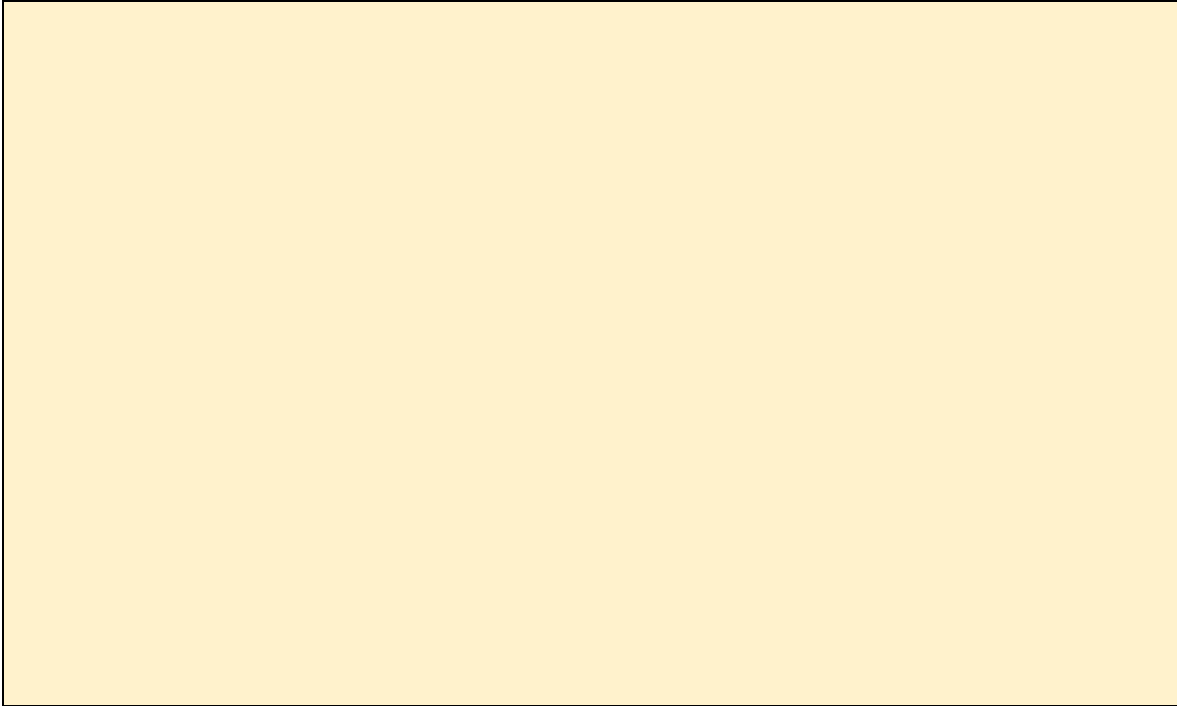
**All** – Come back to circle - Debrief feelings/reflections in larger group.

### 1 – Self Reflection

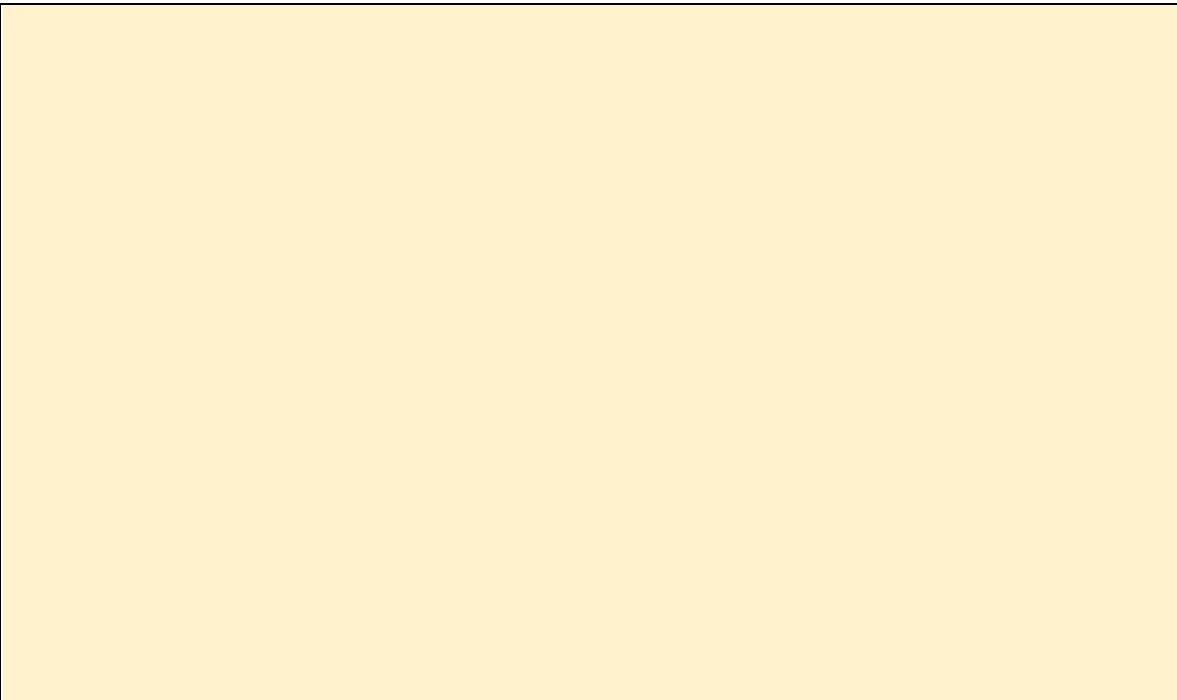


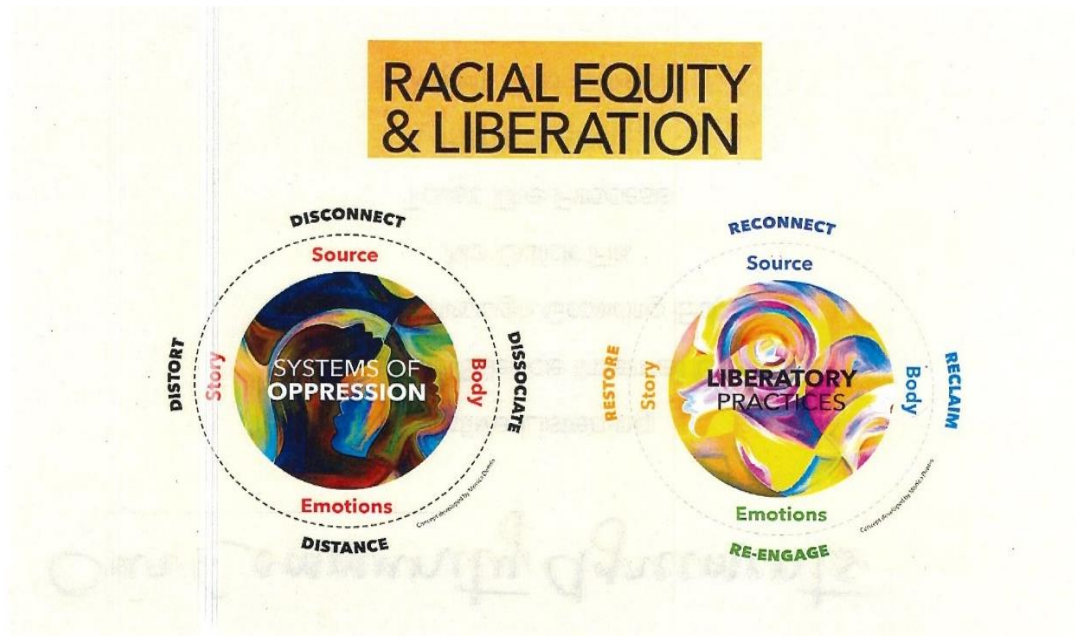


**2 – Pair Share** (listen attentively; capture anything that resonates with you)



**4 – Group Share** (listen attentively; capture items that resonate with you)





As illustrated in the image<sup>10</sup>, in order for the colonized worldview to perpetuate itself, it requires:

- A **disconnect** from **Source/Spirit** (key)
- A **disassociation** from the **Body**
- A **denial or distancing** from **Emotions/Feelings**, and
- A **distortion** of the **Narrative/Story**

This is necessary in order to quell the guilt around the genocide and enslavement of nations of “people” via an agenda of violence.

If you will recall the video on Thomas Jefferson; in order for him to embrace his white supremacist ideology around slavery – he had to disconnect from Source, especially, in order to carry out such barbarism against two nations of people...and his own children.

Thus, the act of **(re)connecting** to Source/Spirit, a **(re)claiming** of sovereignty of our Bodies, a **(re)engagement** with our Emotions/Feelings and a **correcting** of the Narrative are the practices that will assist us, as leaders, in liberating ourselves and our people and will dismantle these systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy.

<sup>10</sup> Racial Equity & Liberation symposium, facilitated by Monica Dennis and Racheal Ibrahim in connection with the Move to End Violence movement

## (Re)Claiming Our Legacy of Magic Radical Self-Care Modalities

In preparation for the creation of your own unique plethora of practices, I will share my journey of (re)membering and (re)claiming my magic in creating my own practice (aka...My **JuJu Bag**) – broken down by **Mind, Body, and Spirit**

Before we get started, there are a few items I'd like to state upfront – these are not “The Truth” but *my* truths, in that...your ears will know your truth when they hear it. My ears heard these things and perked up!

- Everything we need, we already have within us.
- The Mind, Body and Spirit are hardwired together; you have to attend to all 3 and Spirit will be the common thread through it all
- Once the process of healing and creating a unique self-care plan begins, areas of resistance will pop up. Don't sweat the small stuff and keep it moving.
- There will be 4 Gates that show up once you start the work:
  - Doubt
  - Fear
  - Delusion
  - Suspicion
- The fastest way to change resistance is through the body – in other words, focusing on our breath and creating a physical practice
- We carry historical, as well as current, trauma in our body and our DNA – be gentle with yourself during this process
- Self-care is **NOT** a luxury for only the rich – CLAIM yo sh\*t!
- There is **NO** one way to this – so don't get stuck on perfection. Each person's path will be unique to them. Don't get stuck on comparing the journey – enjoy yours!
- The oppressor despises “joyful” action – do this, and do it often!
- Our primary objective in this Re-Evolution is to **SHINE** and **THRIVE!**
- You cannot be wise if you're undisciplined – practice will require discipline and the by-product will be that you become WISE!



## Self-Care: Mind

If I say that I am broke, Universal Law will give me situations to make this statement true. If I say things are difficult, Universal Law will give me situations to make this statement true. If I say I want to travel, Universal Law will give me opportunities to travel. If I say, I am Divine and loved, Universal Law will give me examples expressing that this is true. See how that works?

Our thoughts, especially the internal ones, are key when we are seeking to heal and align with our Source/Higher Power. Here are some modalities of self-care for our minds:

- **Positive affirmations**
- **An attitude of appreciation**
- **Reading**
- **Meditation**
- **Qi Gong (intentional breathing technique)**
- **Gardening**
- **Water-gazing**
- **Walking meditation**
- **Finding things that make me happy!**
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## Self-Care: Body

A few points to note about the body work required.

- Trauma lives/sits in our bodies
- Our bodies need space – breathing assists with this
- We interrupt the “Gates” by moving our bodies

In caring for our bodies, grounding is necessary. There are various ways to achieve this:

- **Grounding** (see handouts, I Feel Your Pain, by Nikki Elliot, pgs 122-126)
  - Earth
  - Air
  - Water
  - Fire
- **Earthing** (grounding through direct contact with the earth)
- **Tai Chi**
- **Self Defense**
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## Self-Care: Spirit (a.k.a. Source)

In developing our daily self-care practices, it is necessary for us to reconnect with Source and see humanity in its original state. Our Inner Self is constantly communicating with us and directing us, toward our Higher Purpose. Some practices that can be used to do this include:

- **Meditation**
- **Numerology**
- **Birth charts**
- **Readings from a qualified psyche**
- **Religion**
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Norma Wong, “The Renegade Monk”, at the Art of War retreat I attended, stated the following when speaking to us about Spirit:

- **The Resistance is an important part of the Universal Plan – and self-care is a key ingredient to this.**
- If you are creating and you’re happy...that’s a good thing.
- Joyful action irritates the oppressor. **We must tend to community to create together.**
- We must know what we love. If we only know what we hate, we have a problem.

## Chalk Talk

**As people in the reproductive rights, health and justice movement,  
what kind of self-care do you need?**

### Reminders for process:

- Chalk talk is silent – but you can (and are encouraged to) have conversations on the paper!
- You can emphasize, underline, ask a question about, or draw connections between what others have written.
- Move around the paper to see what other conversations are happening.

### My reflections on this activity:

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