

My Top 6 Self-Care Summer Reads (various authors)

Reviewed by Debbie Inglis (July 2020)

To me, self-care is about all those things we do to nurture, revive and restore ourselves.

This includes stress-reducing strategies including mindfulness exercises. But perhaps most importantly it's about creating a positive and resilient mindset that gives us permission to carry out self-care activities *without* giving in to that inner chatter that questions our motivations and hinders our self-care progress.

With a focus this summer of improving my own self-care, I thought I'd share 6 books I'd recommend. There are plenty out there to choose from, these are my current favourites!

#1 The Self-Care Project* (Jayne Hardy; Orion Spring; 2017)

I love so many things about this book ... spaces to write, the little drawings, the prompt questions, and great quotes such as,

"We don't need fixing, we need unleashing, unpeeling, unfolding."

"Despite what those pesky thoughts inside our heads tell us, self-care isn't selfish."

Like many of the authors on this list, Jayne shares something of herself and how her personal story and struggles led to setting up the [Blurt Foundation](#) which has positively impacted thousands of lives.

Jayne acknowledges (and lists) where she's failed at self-care. She talks about the things that get in the way (guilt, decision avoidance, people pleasing, overcommitting ...) and shares:

- tips on finding out who we are and what we want
 - the benefits of taking tiny steps on our self-care journey, and what these could look like
 - how to prioritise
- and much more.

#2 A Mindfulness Guide for the Frazzled (Ruby Wax; Penguin Life; 2016)

In her candid and humorous style, Ruby Wax gives us her take on mindfulness that is fresh, real and laden with tips. These include:

- showing kindness to yourself
- compassion
- acceptance

- strategies for the workplace and dealing with tricky interactions with your co-workers (e.g. 'What to do when your boss tears your head off')

To help develop mindfulness and create good self-care habits, Ruby also lays out a 6-week Mindfulness Course, with short activities that you can do daily.

Her ideas are backed by science and her own experiences, giving the content that useful credibility.

#3 Real Calm (Psychologies; Kelsey Publishing Ltd; 2017)

I've chosen this book for several reasons ...

- The 3 clear parts:
 - 'What does real calm mean to you?' (*As a coach, I love the fact that I've got to define 'calm' for myself; a great coaching technique!*)
 - 'What's stopping you from feeling calm?'
 - 'How can you be calm?'
- The mixture of research and practical ideas
- It's visually appealing (for me that's about use of some colour and different page layout)
- Use of quotes from experts in this field, who were interviewed for this book
- The quizzes

Apparently I switch between elements of self-sabotage when feeling less calm, to going into super-health mode when I'm calm. This yo-yoing isn't good for me and I need to create a better balance. Summer job #1!

Even the cover has a sense of calm about it!

#4 Quiet (Fearne Cotton; Orion Spring; 2019)

As Fearne explains, this isn't about absolute quiet. It's about specifically quietening the negative inner chatter that can be so effective at derailing our sense of calm.

Chapters include: Quiet Observation; Quiet Confidence; Quiet Self-Love; & Quiet Courage

My favourite is 'Quiet Self-Love', which starts with the need to forgive ourselves ... our mistakes, slip-ups, bad habits, etc.

"We are not our mistakes, we are not our failures, we are all complex fallible creatures who need a bit of kindness."

Exercises in this chapter include writing to your younger self, and making a list of the small things you like about yourself.

In terms of layout, the variety and little drawings are appealing and give it extra interest. There are also spaces to write / complete mini-tasks.

#5 Mindfulness Journal (Corinne Sweet; Boxtree; 2014)

This is definitely a 'dip in and out' book. There's lots of space to make notes.

It starts with definitions, some theory, the benefits and so on, but is mainly about the exercises, which are all short and linked to many day to day activities - both in and out of the workplace.

From mindful showering ... to dealing with 'racing thoughts' ... to calming your nerves before an important conversation (e.g. an interview) ... to how to put yourself in a good place before going into daunting situations ... to switching off at night. Probably something for everyone!

#6 The Self-Care Prescription (Robyn L Gobin, PhD; Althea Press; 2019)

I love the way Robyn describes self-care as bringing balance back to an imbalanced life.

She defines balance as the holistic approach that encompasses the 6 essential dimensions of wellness (www.nationalwellness.org)

Appealing to those of us who are visual learners, these 6 sections in the book are colour coded!

They are:

- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Physical
- Intellectual
- Vocational
- Social

You can usefully dip into the section that most appeals. For me it was the Physical dimension ... *prompting me to go and do one of my exercise DVDs, whilst writing this!*

Another thing to love about this book is that it's rich with tips and activities.

So what are your summer self-care reads?

Have you read any of the above?

What else would you recommend?