

# How to Care for Self First...Three Steps to Self-Empowerment

By Pat Heydlauff

Is “taking care of self” number one on your to-do list, not the very last thing? When you do take care of yourself, do you do it only if there is time and energy left to do so? In this case, caring for self is not the same as being selfish but rather a new way of looking at living your life.

Only if you take care of self first will you be able to perform well at work, properly care for children, nurture a spouse, have rewarding equal relationships or have enough energy left to do what you want to do, not just have to do.

- “Caring for self first” provides you a more energetic way of living and thinking
- “Caring for self first” develops new positive energy habits that will reward you at the end of the day with more energy left to enjoy your family and social commitments with friends
- “Caring for self first” helps you be more efficient, effective and productive
- “Caring for self first” creates a less stressful environment.

## Invigorate You by Eliminating Some of your Surroundings

There are no magic cures when it comes to reducing stress in your life, being more productive and energizing self. However, there are a few simple steps you can follow that will help energize you and create a supportive personal environment while reducing some of the stress in your world.

Step one, unclutter your world. Go through your home room by room and get rid of everything that does not fit, is broken, doesn't look right in your current home or is simply stacks of “stuff” that you really do not want or need. The more uncluttering you do the simpler your life becomes and the easier it is to take care of what is left.

**In fact, the things that are left should be only things you really love because those are the things that provide you supportive positive energy.** Do you really need four dozen pictures of glowing sunsets or twenty pictures of each of your children all at age three shoved into shoe boxes? Will you ever again wear half of the clothes in your closet that are either a size too small or went out of style five years ago? Get rid of all of those things. The rule of thumb for clothing is **“if it doesn't fit, is out of style or you don't feel great in it, get rid of it.”**

## Are You at the Top of Your To-Do List?

Next, learn to work with daily lists of things to-do. **At the very top of your list place at least one thing each day that you will do to care for yourself.** It can be something as simple as quietly sitting in the sun by yourself for 10 minutes just relaxing; or, listening to soothing music and allowing your mind to go completely blank for 20 minutes – no phone, no television, no talk radio, no interruptions. Only when you allow

your mind to go completely blank can you remove stressful thoughts and be filled with new positive energy and new ideas.

On the remainder of the list place the things you have to do and the things you want to do. Number them in order of importance and **do number one first** so you always get the most important thing done and reduce stress but only after you've done at least one thing for you to energize you. Doing number one on your list will remove much unnecessary stress from your life. If you do the little things or the fastest things first you will still have the stress of the most important thing looming over your head.

### **Clean Out the Mental Cobwebs**

Step Three, unclutter your mind. The mind stores forever all of the negative things that have happened to you over your lifetime. Most people never remember all of the good things that have happened to them but always manage to hold onto all of the hurts and painful experiences.

The more bad memories, hurtful experiences and no-longer-relevant thinking you hold onto the more negative energy you carry with you every day. No wonder you do not have enough energy left at the end of the day. Think of how you would feel at days end if you carried around a 10 pound bag of potatoes tied to your waist. That's exactly what you are doing to your mind by carrying around years of negative thinking.

The easiest way to get rid of negative thinking is to simply say to yourself, "I no longer need to hold onto \_\_\_\_\_ (your specific negative thought); I have learned all I need to learn from that experience and now I send it away forever." The more you follow this simple procedure the more room you make for positive energy to enter your life so it can replace the old.

An alternative way to get rid of your past mental cobwebs is to write lines and lines of free flowing negative thoughts, ideas and conversations you've had onto a yellow tablet or just scraps of paper and shred them as soon as you are done. Then follow the same procedure above as you are shredding them.

When you feel overwhelmed, hopeless or need an energy boost, reflect on whether you've neglected taking care of yourself. Put yourself at the top of your daily to-do list then get rid of all of those negative thoughts which will set you free. These few changes in your lifestyle will help create balance in your life, lower your stress, be more productive, provide you lots more positive energy - and are extremely self-empowering.

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Pat Heydlauff, president of Energy Design, helps business leaders streamline and transform their companies, resulting in employee satisfaction, client retention and bottom line profitability. She energizes and enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of workplace environments using color, design and organization principles. Her new book,

"Feng Shui: So Easy a Child Can Do It," provides change that leads to success and prosperity. Contact Pat for consulting and speaking: [www.Energy-by-Design.com](http://www.Energy-by-Design.com) or call: 561-799-3443.