

Words of Wisdom

Selfish Is Not a Bad Word

Welcome to the second installment of Pat's Words of Wisdom. This article will have special meaning to the caretakers among us. Please read it with an open mind and an open heart and give yourselves permission to indulge in a bit of self-care.



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Those of us who are caretakers...

we know who we are...are all guilty at one time or another of saying yes to something or someone when we really want to say no. Sometimes we say yes out of a sense of responsibility, sometimes out of a sense of guilt and sometimes just because we do not know how to say no. Somewhere in our growing up years we learned that to say no meant we were being selfish and being selfish was a bad thing. I am here to tell you that being selfish is not a bad thing. As a matter of fact, it may be the most unselfish thing you can do for the important people in your life.

Have you ever tried to pump water out of the ground using a hand pump? Probably not. Let me tell you a little bit about what happens. The pump handle sticks up out of the ground a few feet giving you plenty of room to grab a hold and exert a significant amount of elbow grease in order to get the water up out of the ground. You can spend a great deal of time and effort pumping away and getting no water in return. Now, take a bit of water and pour it in to the pump...prime the pump...and then try to get the water up out of the

ground. Voila...up comes the water. It's a little like the adage that it takes money to make money. As caretakers we often find ourselves trying to get water out of the ground without taking the time to prime the pump first. We expend lots of time and energy and get little in return for our efforts, both for ourselves and the people we care about.

How is this related to being selfish? When we honor ourselves with nourishing self care we prime our pumps. The time we invest in taking care of ourselves (being selfish) pays off tenfold. When we prime our pumps we end up with lots more energy and creative ideas to share with those who are near and dear to us and we find ourselves being more efficient and effective in work environments, as well.

There are lots of dirty rumors about self care. I am here to dispel some of the most common ones starting with the one most closely tied to this article.

Isn't it selfish to put myself first?

No. Nurturing oneself is one of the most important factors in being able to keep up your strength, motivation and inner resources so that you can continue to nurture and support others.

On a recent trip I was reminded of the safety instructions given on every airline flight. You know, the part about placing the oxygen mask on yourself first before assisting a child. As a mother, that flies in the face of everything I hold dear. However, when I think about what would happen if I passed out before helping my child/grandchild, the thoughts are terrifying. Clearly, sometimes doing the "selfish" thing is a most unselfish action.

I don't have time to take care of myself!

You don't have time NOT to take care of yourself. We all have the same 168 hours in every week. Some of us are just better at managing the energy expended during those hours. When we spend some of that energy taking care of ourselves, the result is a rested and rejuvenated self ready to tackle whatever challenges come our way.

I don't have money to spend on myself!

Who said it takes money for self care? Here are some "free" caretaking activities we often overlook. Get adequate sleep; eat a balanced diet; exercise regularly; learn how and when to say "no".

You may be surprised at how much better you feel about yourself and your ability to take care of those special people in your life when you first practice a little self-care. Give it a try and let me know how it goes.

I welcome your comments and suggestions for future topics.

Please contact me at pat@breakthroughs4life.com

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