

SELF CARE:

Summary written by Mrs. Dilworth Ricks, Culturally Specific Victim Service Advocate

Be better to yourself in 2020. As we enter the new year and people are making their New Year's Resolution, let's intentionally make taking care of ourselves a priority.

Here are some of our favorite tips for self care taken from an easy read 34-page paperback book entitled "Self-Care After Sexual Assault: 10 Ways to Start Healing" by Alison Jennings. According to Amazon, this book is a road map for anyone who has been or may have been sexually assaulted. Whether you (or someone you know) have been recently assaulted or were decades ago, you will gain insight into how you can take care of yourself. Mind, body, and spirit all need to be tended to after a traumatic event like sexual assault. The author speaks from her own two experiences with sexual assault. Not designed to take the place of therapy, physical help, or legal matters... but to act as a guide to reach healing.

1.GET HELP

If for some reason you can't go to the police, the hospital, or another service, tell a friend or relative. Keeping this secret inside not only eats you up emotionally and spiritually, but it could potentially hurt or harm you, should you decide to press charges.

Even if you are unsure if you were assaulted, you can always call a rape crisis center or national hotline to speak with someone. They will have the resources to better inform you on what action to take. Talking to someone about what happened to you might seem scary, but people WANT to help you. And if you don't like a certain person or don't feel comfortable, ask to speak with someone else. There are plenty of people to help you and it's okay to wait to find someone you like and feel comfortable with.

2. CRY ... EMBRACE THE MELTDOWNS

Crying can be healthy and is totally normal; ESPECIALLY if you have just been through a traumatic event such as sexual assault. And don't forget to breathe! It's easy to get caught up in our feelings and forget to breathe.

If you don't want to cry in front of anyone, find a safe place where you can let it go. Get a box of Kleenex and give yourself permission to feel the way you do. It doesn't mean you're weak by crying. It means you're honoring yourself.

3. READ

Read other people's stories. You will find that when you search for other people who have been sexually assaulted, you feel an automatic bond with them.

Another helpful thing to do for yourself is to read something that uplifts you. Romance novels, mysteries, Spiritual and/or self-help books, comics, how-to-books, ANYTHING that brings you closer to feeling joy and happiness. Reading is a great way to get your mind off of other things in your life.

4. JOIN A COMMUNITY

Like attracts like. This means that if you want to have healing, find a healing group. If you need more positivity in your life, find something that makes you happy. And when you have more like-minded friends and networks in your life, you start to heal. It is vitally important to know that you have people you can count on to call when you have a rough day, or someone you can talk to, or just sit with and share a moment or thought.

5. SEEK COUNSELING

If you don't go to the hospital or police station, but still want mental and emotional help, please seek it out. Or maybe your assault was years ago, or maybe you don't even remember the assault but KNOW it happened and want some healing.

Seeking help outside of your immediate circle of friends and family is IMPERATIVE. You are WORTH the help! So, let people help you! Just listen to your heart and it will tell you where to go.

6. RELAX

This might be a very challenging step. But in an effort to take care of yourself, it is essential.

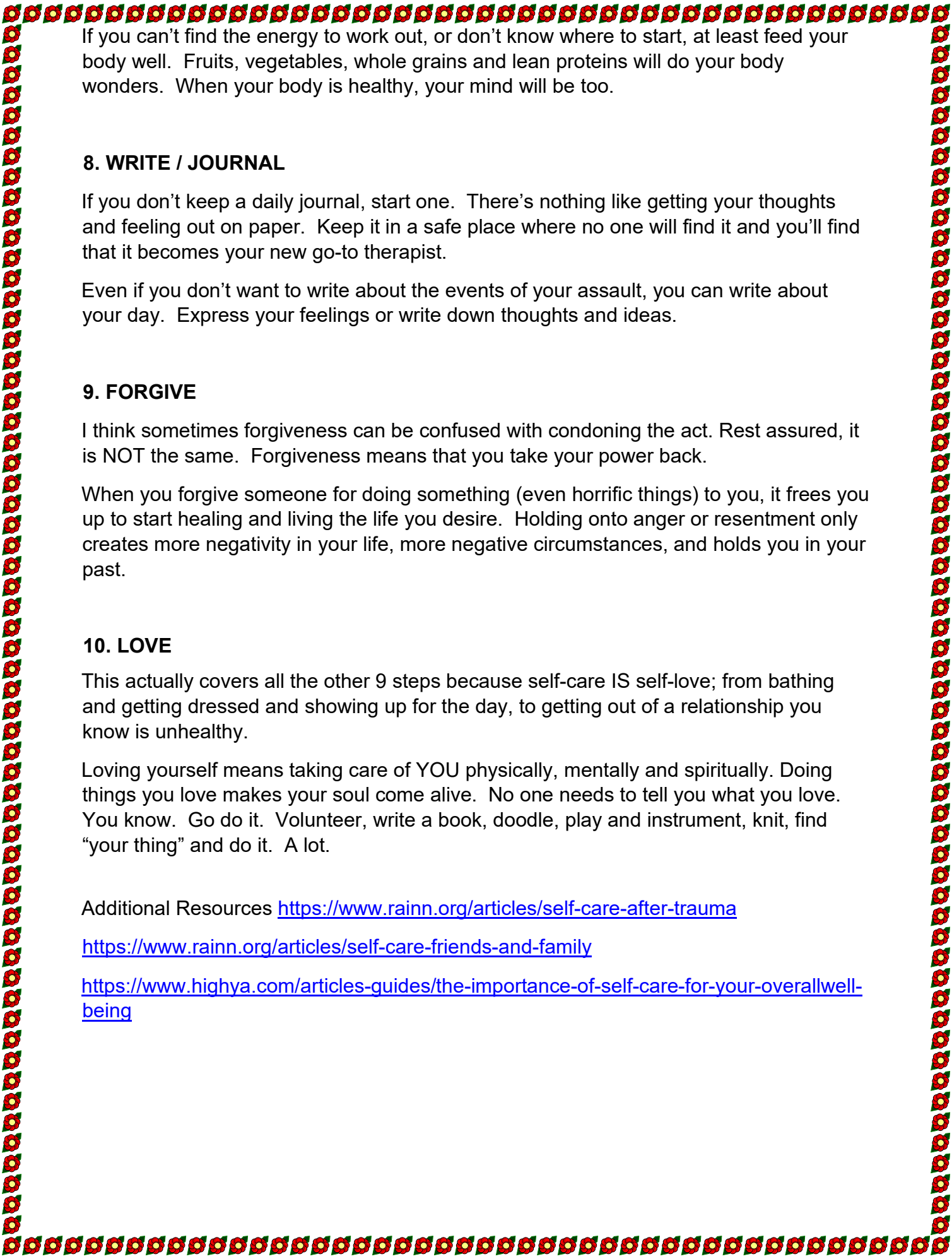
Take your time on things. Take long baths, with incense and / or candles. Take long walks. Take time to smell the flowers, the fresh cut grass, the smell of a fall fire in the air.

Taking time to relax is NOT selfish. IT is nourishing and positive self-care!

7. EAT WELL & EXERCISE

Exercise is one of the best ways to show self-care. Not only does it help you physically, but mentally it is one of the best ways to boost your mood.

There are so many forms of exercise you can do. You really don't need a gym. It's great to have one, but not necessary. Start by walking or running. Find a friend to go walking with. Take a class, buy a cheap DVD, dance in the living room. When you consistently exercise, you will find your confidence and mental health go way up.



If you can't find the energy to work out, or don't know where to start, at least feed your body well. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins will do your body wonders. When your body is healthy, your mind will be too.

8. WRITE / JOURNAL

If you don't keep a daily journal, start one. There's nothing like getting your thoughts and feeling out on paper. Keep it in a safe place where no one will find it and you'll find that it becomes your new go-to therapist.

Even if you don't want to write about the events of your assault, you can write about your day. Express your feelings or write down thoughts and ideas.

9. FORGIVE

I think sometimes forgiveness can be confused with condoning the act. Rest assured, it is NOT the same. Forgiveness means that you take your power back.

When you forgive someone for doing something (even horrific things) to you, it frees you up to start healing and living the life you desire. Holding onto anger or resentment only creates more negativity in your life, more negative circumstances, and holds you in your past.

10. LOVE

This actually covers all the other 9 steps because self-care IS self-love; from bathing and getting dressed and showing up for the day, to getting out of a relationship you know is unhealthy.

Loving yourself means taking care of YOU physically, mentally and spiritually. Doing things you love makes your soul come alive. No one needs to tell you what you love. You know. Go do it. Volunteer, write a book, doodle, play an instrument, knit, find "your thing" and do it. A lot.

Additional Resources <https://www.rainn.org/articles/self-care-after-trauma>

<https://www.rainn.org/articles/self-care-friends-and-family>

<https://www.highya.com/articles-guides/the-importance-of-self-care-for-your-overallwell-being>