

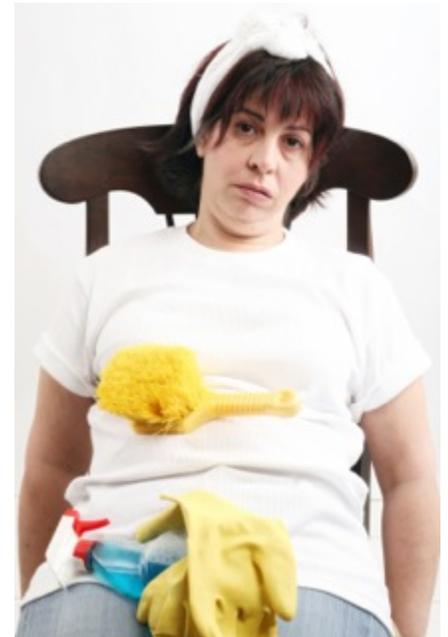


## CARING FOR YOURSELF ISN'T SELFISH

Sometimes I have a hard time taking good care of myself. My good friend Barb has watched me burn out and melt down because I've allowed myself to get depleted.

Why do I do this to myself? I know better. After all I'm the expert! And yet, I still struggle to actually practice good self care. I know I'm not alone.

It isn't that we don't know *how* to take care of ourselves, or even that it is good to do so. Every day we're bombarded with messages about how to manage stress, the value of good friendships and the importance of adequate sleep, exercise and healthy eating to our well-being.



The problem isn't knowledge. It is practice. Why don't we do it? Because we're too busy and we feel selfish, guilty and fearful when we take time or resources just for ourselves. Let me explain.

Many of us try to be a Betty Crocker mom, a Victoria Secret wife, *and* a Martha Stewart housekeeper, all while working to help provide some family income. We tell ourselves we ought to home school our kids and feel selfish if we don't want to or can't. In addition we should pray and study our Bible every day, take care of our aging parents, volunteer at church, be involved in a small group, work out at the gym ...and the list goes on and on.

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When we can't keep up, (and we can't) many of us feel guilty. We don't stop to say "no" or set limits on what we can do because we're afraid that someone might get mad or won't like us if we disappoint him or her.

But God never asks us to do it all. Rather he tells us to be a good steward of our resources.

All of us only have four resources at our disposal. Our time, our talents, our energy, and our money. How we choose to allocate these resources not only impacts us, but also those we love. Therefore, it is essential that we give some thought to our deepest values and priorities.

Feeling stressed out or burnt out exposes how we have been mispending our resources. For example, many people are overwhelmed these days because of high credit card debt and financial difficulties. Their resource of money has been overspent, and the consequences are now draining them emotionally and financially.

We do the same thing with our other resources. We go into debt with our energy resources by extending ourselves over and over again beyond our limits, leaving ourselves physically drained and emotionally exhausted.

Always hurrying is a refusal to accept the reality of time. We leave no margins for interruptions or delays and try to squeeze every moment out of our day. It's not surprising that we feel like a taut rubber band ready to snap.

Sometimes life becomes too hard because we have not been good stewards of our resources, including OURSELVES! We collapse under the stress of trying to do more than we have the resources to handle.

Take some time this New Year to evaluate how you allocate your resources of time, energy, money, and talents. Ask yourself these two questions.

1. Are you living within your limits, or are you always overdrawn?
2. Do you budget your resources according to your values and priorities and your family's needs, or do you use up your resources in order to live up to other's expectations or gain their approval?

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Living unrealistically – always going into the red is not taking good care of yourself. It is STRESSFUL AND STUPID! It's like giving someone unlimited access to your bank card. Don't do it.

Learn to say “no” when you need to and don't feel guilty or fearful for doing so! Remember, there is a high price for being too nice!