

Self Care Notes

Self care is about awareness, compassion, permission (to be imperfect & to do what's best for you), ease, self-discovery, healthy boundaries... among other positive things!

WHY self care?

- Our **survival-focused brains** naturally look for danger and negatives, not happiness or relaxation.
- Western culture is based on **Victorian and puritan** perspectives — “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” beliefs are almost in invisible demand.
- The world believes we **succeed via stress**. Push through it, no pain no gain, life is about struggles and suffering. Ok yes, that can be very true. If you look at your successes and high points, what was the real source?
- We **fear taking a break**, thinking we won’t be able to get back to work when needed. In fact it’s the opposite, the break refreshes us, makes us more able. Sometimes we may not even *be able* to let the stress go because it’s not comfortable to “down regulate,” it seems better to avoid it by staying busy. But then the stress builds until we burn out.
- **“Grind” or “hustle” culture** harms us, but we can support each other to change that. The feeling that we need to be constantly producing or doing, even beyond the demands of work and everyday life, can surround us with a sense of “should.” We often feel guilty if we’re not keeping up, whatever we think that means.
- Goals and being productive are wonderful. It’s only when they negatively impact our **quality of life** that it’s time to reconsider.
- My theory (and I’m not the only one) is that **humans have developed** to a point where it may be better to move away from always seeing “what’s wrong” and focus instead on what’s already happening that is helpful and healthy.
- Humans have a natural **urge toward betterment**, compassion, courage, and curiosity. We’re built to notice what’s novel, which is another side of the survival instinct.
- However, sometimes the new exciting things, and the stress of life itself, can foster **abandonment of the body’s needs and emotions** instead of aiming for integration and inclusion.

WHAT does self care mean?

- **Self awareness** – what’s happening inside my body/mind/emotions? What do I need, what works, and what doesn’t?
- **Self compassion, kindness** – start with yourself! For example consider talking to ourselves the way we might talk to our pet: “hi cutie, you’re so good! Need a nap?”
- **Permission** – allowing ourselves to give ourselves what’s really needed in the moment. If we don’t know what we need, we find out.
- **Healthy boundaries** – when we respect ourselves, we not only teach others to respect us, but we model that respect for others so maybe they’ll try it for themselves.
- **Behaviors that support health and happiness** – not necessarily ONLY naps and bubble baths.
- **Healthy balance** – having a realistic purpose, letting go of expecting the impossible from ourselves, others, and the world.

WHERE and WHEN to do self care?

- **YOU choose** based on your personal needs, your preferences, and your current situation.
- Here’s where **permission** comes in too.

HOW to do self care?

- There are **endless options!** Hopefully this information will encourage and inspire you to discover what works for you.
- Once you find options that work for you, make a commitment to **practice those behaviors**, so your ability to access and do those behaviors is already a natural part of you when you need them most.
- **Self love** – how would you treat a child or your pet? Notice what you say to yourself, and when you're mean to yourself, then choose a kinder way.
- Find **your own pace**, versus the pace of the outer world. There are many ways to be in the world: sharks are always moving to stay alive, butterflies flit from flower to flower, sloths are usually laying on a branch, lions rest a lot then run, hunt, and get it all done quickly.
- What small things can you do on a regular basis that can improve your state of mind/heart/body/spirit? Don't know? Try something, **experiment!**
- **Play** is one of the few things that **causes new neurons to grow** in our brains, and it encourages cognitive processing. What makes you feel playful? How do you like to play?

Experientials / Practices

(Please connect with me if you'd like more or have questions...)

- **Baseline body scan:** Begin at head or feet and notice how your body feels as you slowly scan down your body while focusing on each part... do you feel stress points, pain, ease? Then notice again after doing any practice to test any change in your body or state of mind, and to gauge if it's a good practice for you. As part of the body scan you can breathe into any spots that hold tension so they can relax.
- **Qigong warm ups:** bounce, shake hands/legs, body tap, ear massage. (see resources for Qigong sites)
- **Ground, Release, Fill:**
 - **Ground:** breathe into your feet, and as you breathe out imagine sending a root or light cord (or whatever feels right to you) connecting to earth's center.
 - **Release:** let any negativity, stress, or unwanted energies flow down the root/cord into earth's center. You can imagine the earth transmuting the gunk into healing energies.
 - **Fill:** imagine golden white liquid light flowing into the top of your head, filling every atom of your being with love, light, joy, blessings... whatever feels most positive to you.
- **Rose Protection Circles:** Imagine a circle of large roses (any color you like, my favorite is iridescent white) surrounding your body, home, car with the intention that they absorb any stress or negativity coming toward you or from you. When you sense the roses are full, simply imagine flinging away the old, full roses to the sun for clearing and transformation. Then imagine a fresh, powerful, new rose circle instantly blooming in its place.
- **Jin Shin finger holds:** thumb = worry, index = fear, middle = anger, ring = grief, little = insecurity (see resources for finger hold sites)
- **EFT short version:** Using the thumb of the same hand, tap or hold for each finger on the spot where the finger nail meets the skin around the nail. You can do both hands at once. (see resources for more EFT sites)
- You can do any of the above practices as often as you like. It might be helpful to try a practice for the first time in a safe, private place so you can be mindful of any reactions that might come up, and learn how that practice feels for you.

Self Care Plan

Your self care plan may adjust based on your needs at the time. This basic self care plan has three simple steps: 1) Purpose, what need is being met?, 2) Response to that need, and 3) Timing.

- 1) Purpose:** What do you need most? What would you like to adjust in your life? What calls to you? What one positive thing do you find yourself consistently wishing for? (To feel more relaxed, have more energy, have a clear mind, feel happier...?)
- 2) Response:** What lights you up? What helps you feel most rested or energized? Choose what you like to do, things you enjoy. Experiment with things you haven't tried, if you've noticed your usual ways aren't working.
- 3) Timing:** Decide on a frequency and time line. How often, and for how long is this plan or practice doable for you? Start small and work up to doing practices more often or for longer periods of time. For example if you choose to try a retreat practice, you may start with an hour once a week and work up to a few days every month.

Start small, commit to something, do it with kindness to yourself — not just as another thing on your to do list. This is about self soothing, healing, and creating spacious, uplifting ease for yourself.

Resources

Just to get you started... some helpful, some just fun

Greater Good Magazine

Science-based insights for a meaningful life

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@greatergoodscience>

Good News Network

good news itself is not in short supply; the broadcasting of it is

<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/>

Relaxation techniques

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/six-relaxation-techniques-to-reduce-stress>

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/how-to-calm-down-5204405>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>

EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), also called Tapping

How to use EFT, long version (4 min YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAclBdj20ZU>

Brad Yates - <https://www.youtube.com/@tapwithbrad>

Nick Ortner, The Tapping Solution - <https://www.youtube.com/@TheTappingSolutionChannel>

Gary Craig, EmoFree - <https://www.emofree.com/>

EFT International - <https://eftinternational.org/>

<https://eftinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EFT-International-Free-Tapping-Manual.pdf>

Resources (cont'd)

Finger holds, Jin Shin

(index = fear, middle = anger, ring = grief, little = insecurity, thumb = worry)

<https://balanceflow.com/the-jin-shin-jyutsu-practice-of-holding-the-fingers/>

<https://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/sites/default/files/finger-attitudes.pdf>

Qigong

Lee Holden - <https://www.youtube.com/@HoldenQiGong>

<https://www.nqa.org/what-is-qigong>

Energy Reboot at Work, George Kao (15 min YouTube)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_nVcDFVZFo

A Message that will Change Your Life, Jonna Jinton (52 min YouTube)

Positive messages from ordinary people about what they want the world to know

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsKWocJ3eq4>

Meditation app

<https://insighttimer.com/>

Apps that remind you to take a break - (there are tons, I just grabbed these as examples, I have no personal experience with them)

Stretchly - <https://hovancik.net/stretchly/> (open source)

Workrave - <https://workrave.org/>

Big Stretch Reminder - <https://monkeymatt.com/bigstretch/>

Gratitude, Louie Schwartzberg, TEDxSF (10 min YouTube)

Time lapse photography of nature

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ>

Nature Timelapse: Relaxation for your Soul, Filippo Rivetti (1 hr 4 min YouTube)

Nature Timelapse photography

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITBMT-sUeH0&list=FLC_u8yV2xtR5n8K9bTjI2JA&index=5&t=2449s

Storytelling

<https://www.storieswithspirit.co/>

Rob Breznsny

Book: Pronoia - All Creation Is Conspiring To Shower Us With Blessings

<https://freewillastrology.com/beauty/pronoia>

<https://freewillastrology.com/beauty/therapy>

https://substack.com/@freewillastrology?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Resources (cont'd)

Books (again there are so many, these are just examples)

And Then We Rise, Common, 2024

1,001 Ways to Slow Down, Barbara Ann Kipfer, 2017

Peter Levine

Developer of Somatic Experiencing, a body-oriented approach to healing trauma and other stress-related disorders

<https://www.somaticexperiencing.com/about-peter>

Favorite comedy

Robin Williams Invents Golf (full version) (5 min YouTube, Warning: profanity)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_S11eKcyOYY

Funny Times

ad free magazine/website of humor and satire

<https://funnytimes.com/>

Google “self care activities” for more ideas about things to do - here are a couple I liked:

<https://positivepsychology.com/self-care-worksheets/>

<https://www.developgoodhabits.com/self-care-ideas/>

Self Care Ideas List

Mental health

- Avoid toxic people
- Learn not to feel selfish when you say “no”
- Stop feeling you “should” be doing things
- Question negative thinking and consider a more positive approach
- Intentionally schedule “me time” on your calendar or planner
- Discover your stress indicators that let you know you need self-care (mood swings, short temper, or feeling drained, overwhelmed, or angry)
- Reward yourself for completing small tasks
- Learn a new board game you’ve never played, such as chess, etc.
- Buy a coloring book and crayons or colored pencils
- Use online tutorials to learn something new
- Do something spontaneous
- Unplug from email and social media for an hour (or longer)
- Take a mental health day
- Call a trusted friend or family member and talk things out (if you need professional help, learn about how therapy can improve your mental health)
- Develop a relaxing evening ritual
- Start a journal to record your thoughts and experiences

Self Care Ideas List (cont'd)

Mental health (cont'd)

- try self reflection to see if some part of yourself might benefit from an upgrade/update
- make a self care plan
- find a self care buddy or group to keep doing a positive practice when you might want to skip it
- don't allow "enemies" (negative thoughts) to live rent free in your mind, redirect thoughts to positive things or people you care about
- reset breaks between activities - no thoughts or plans, just sit or move, then make positive intentions for the next activity
- take a mini-home retreat for a day or two, you get to decide what "retreat" means

Emotional health

- Allow yourself to feel and express all of your feelings (in a safe and appropriate environment)
- Take a moment to name your emotions without judging them, notice where you feel them in your body and what the sensation is like
- HALT (am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired?) - notice what you're feeling and adjust as necessary before reacting to any situation. Remind yourself that others' reactions to you, or in general, are rarely about you. It's often about their own unresolved stuff splashing out on whoever is around
- Ask three good friends to give your positive feedback, what do they love about you?
- Do one thing today just because it makes you happy
- Finish this sentence when you wake up: "I love myself because..."
- Have a good, long, cathartic cry, if it's hard to get started watch sad movies or listen to sad songs
- Try some mindful exercises to help bring you into the present moment
- Keep a running list of great things people say about you, and read it when you feel down
- Keep a file of encouraging notes you've received to read as needed
- Look at yourself in the mirror and imagine what your best friend would tell you right now
- Make funny faces in the mirror to make yourself laugh
- Create an inspirational collage and hang it where you see it often
- Tap into your creative side, use painting or another creative outlet to release any unwanted emotion
- Read some feel-good poetry. (The Essential Rumi by Jalal al-Din Rumi, Letters to a Young Poet by Rainer Maria Rilke, Dream Work by Mary Oliver)
- Keep a running list of what you're grateful for
- Donate or volunteer and notice how good it feels to help others without expecting reciprocation
- Notice when you're being your harshest critic, allow yourself to make mistakes. No one is perfect
- Take a moment to write about anything bothering you, then safely burn, bury, or throw away the paper with the intention of clearing it from your mind
- Place encouraging affirmations or inspirational quotes where you'll see them every day
- EFT (tapping)
- "RAIN" process (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture) - Recognize (notice what you feel), Allow (let it be just as it is - you're allowed to have this feeling), Investigate (look deeper, what am I believing about me or another, feel the sensation in the body, ask yourself what does this need right now?, how to be with this?), and Nurture (put your hand there to keep it company, respond with compassion to the needs of this part, say words that are healing or feel them coming from a trusted other, let that kindness bathe, fill and comfort you). Now notice what's shifted since you did this exercise.

Self Care Ideas List (cont'd)

Physical health

- Practice relaxation techniques
- Get up and dance to your favorite upbeat song
- Do some stretching
- Do some gentle, deep breathing exercises
- Body check for stress, then do a practice and notice any change
- Take a power nap with or without an alarm clock
- Take a walk
- Drink more water
- Get a massage, learn self-massage or acupressure
- Spend 10 minutes in the sun
- Go for a bike ride to nowhere in particular
- Spend time in nature
- Go swim for fun
- Go to bed when you're tired
- Go up and down the stairs three times
- Join a walking group in the neighborhood
- Know and use self-soothing activities, petting a dog, giving yourself a hug, or sipping hot tea
- In a safe place scream, pound pillows, tear up paper, or shake your body to move the energy out
- Sleep in, sometimes it's ok to dump your schedule and let yourself rest
- Roll your body on foam rollers or tennis balls in a sock (it helps stretch muscles, allows contracted muscles to relax, improves blood and nutrient flow)
- Try acupuncture, Tai chi, Qigong, Yoga, Laughter yoga (go to a class with a friend, or find YouTubes)
- Try homeopathic remedies (Rescue Remedy, Bach Flower Remedies, www.bachflower.com)
- Learn about and use essential oils

Spiritual health

- METTA - loving kindness prayer / mantra - here is one I created:
May we be free from suffering and safe from harm.
May we happy and peaceful, strong and healthy,
wealthy and free, wise and enlightened.
May we take care of ourselves and each other with ease, joy, success
and especially with love.
May we be filled with loving kindness.
May we be filled with loving kindness.
May we be filled with loving kindness.
- Create and regularly use a personal intention or positive word mantra
- Make time for meditation
- Do a body scan technique to check in with each part of your body
- Do several one-minute body awareness meditations throughout the day
- Do several one-minute breathing meditations throughout the day

Self Care Ideas List (cont'd)

Spiritual health (cont'd)

- Do several one-minute thought awareness meditations throughout the day to check in with your feelings and emotions
- Do something nice for someone in secret
- Donate money to a charity of your choosing
- Help someone, open a door, carry a bag, or feed someone's parking meter
- Intentionally find five unexpected beautiful things on your way to work
- Pay mindful attention to the things you do during your morning and evening routine
- Read some spiritual literature or poetry
- Sit somewhere in nature, be still and quiet for a few minutes
- Soften your expectations of yourself and others
- Be the better person when you disagree with someone, agree to disagree
- Empathize, try to learn and understand why others react differently
- Try random acts of kindness
- Volunteer at a local shelter, hospital, or nursing home, be of service to others
- What are you good at? Find an opportunity to use that strength today

Social activities

- Accompany a friend or family member while they run errands or attend events
- Ask for help, it's ok to let people know you need some help
- Ask friends and family to remind you that things will be OK, and that what you're feeling is temporary
- Call a friend or family member you care about, just to say hi
- Choose who you spend your time with, spend time with people who are enthusiastic and positive
- Try some improvisational movement or theater
- Converse positively with someone in customer service
- Dress your pet in a silly costume and show them around to make others smile
- Go out in public and be around other people, engaging is optional
- Tell someone what you appreciate or like about them
- Have a picnic with family or friends
- Host a family movie night
- Intentionally reconnect with someone you've lost touch with or have unresolved conflict with
- Join and attend a support group meeting, share and listen
- Leave a funny voicemail for someone you care about
- Make cookies or brownies and give them away to a neighbor, family member, friend, or even strangers
- Schedule a regular date night with your significant other
- Seek out models of inspiration and read their stories
- Send a surprise care package to someone you love
- Send a letter or a postcard to someone far away
- Share a kind smile with strangers
- Start a genuine conversation with a trusted person about the deeper things in life
- Take a family member out to lunch
- Take your dog or a friend's dog for a walk
- Talk to a stranger at the bus stop

Self Care Ideas List (cont'd)

Sensory activities

- Do some gardening
- Find a shop with tea, coffee, or spices and enjoy the free smells
- Go to an art museum
- Lie down, or just stand in your bare feet, on the ground for a few minutes
- Listen to meditative sounds or nature sounds
- Look at the stars
- Put up some colored lights in your home
- Take pictures of anything that catches your eye
- Try using an essential oil diffuser
- Turn down the lights, sit down, stare into space, and do absolutely nothing
- Watch the clouds
- Watch the sun rise or set
- Wrap up in the softest blanket you have
- Hug yourself, cuddle someone or something (ask first)

Pampering activities

- Allow yourself to fantasize and daydream
- Attend a local sporting event
- Bake something just for fun
- Build something with Legos
- Buy a fun treat when grocery shopping
- Buy some flowers that delight you
- Eat your favorite comfort foods
- Go out to see a movie by yourself or with a friend
- Go to a comedy club
- Go to an antique shop or a museum
- Go to the farmer's market
- Read comic strips that you enjoy
- Read some inspirational quotes
- Revisit your favorite books from childhood
- Sing at the top of your lungs
- Sit in a coffee shop or on a park bench and people watch
- Swing on a swing set
- Light candles around the house
- Use aromatherapy
- Watch or listen to your favorite comedy podcasts or funny videos
- Wrap yourself up in a cozy blanket and sip a cup of hot tea while reading a book
- Listen to or play music that soothes and calms you
- Take a leisurely ride in the car to someplace beautiful

Self Care Quotes

“We’re so afraid of lethargy that we don’t allow ourselves any leisure.” ~ James Hollis

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” ~ Carl Rogers

“This revolutionary act of treating ourselves tenderly can begin to undo the aversive messages of a lifetime.”
~ Tara Brach, *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha*

“We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same.”
~ Carlos Castaneda

“Self-care is how you take your power back.” ~ Lalah Delia

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.” ~ Anne Lamott

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.” ~ Jack Kornfield

“Self-care is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation.” ~ Audre Lorde

“You cannot serve from an empty vessel.” ~ Eleanor Brown

“Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.” ~ Parker Palmer

“Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane.”
~ Anne Lamott

“Rest and laughter are the most spiritual and subversive acts of all.” ~ Anne Lamott, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*

“Honoring your own boundaries is the clearest message to others to honor them too.” ~ Gina Greenlee, *Postcards and Pearls: Life Lessons from Solo Moments on the Road*

“Our self-preservation is not self-indulgence when we exist in a system that is literally killing us and is not designed for our lives to matter.” ~ Kathleen Newman-Bremang

“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.”
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we’ll ever do.”
~ Brene Brown

“I learned a long time ago the wisest thing I can do is be on my own side, be an advocate for myself and others like me.” ~ Maya Angelou

Self Care Quotes (cont'd)

“Doing nothing is still doing something when that is what’s needed.” ~ Common, And Then We Rise

“For those of you who struggle with guilt regarding self-care, answer this question: What greater gift can you give to those you love than your own wholeness?” ~ Shannon Tanner, Worthy: The Power of Wholeness

“Be kind to yourself, dear—to our innocent follies. Forget any sounds or touch you knew that did not help you dance. You will come to see that all evolves us.” ~ Rumi

“Care for your psyche...know thyself, for once we know ourselves, we may learn how to care for ourselves.” ~ Socrates

“Radical self-care is quantum, and radiates out into the atmosphere, like a little fresh air. It is a huge gift to the world. When people respond by saying, “Well, isn’t she full of herself,” smile obliquely, like Mona Lisa, and make both of you a nice cup of tea.” ~ Anne Lamott

“The most radical act anyone can commit is to be happy.” ~ Patch Adams

“Loving yourself isn’t vanity, it is sanity.” ~ Katrina Mayer

“Self-care is an act of resistance, shifting the fight-or-flight response to an empathy-or-action response.” ~ Shelly Tygielski

“Exhaustion is not a sign of excellence. [We don’t] realize the physical effects of weathering as we continue to try to overproduce in hopes that it will make this system value us.” ~ Dr. Omolara Uwemedimo

“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” ~ Rumi

“We don’t stop playing because we get old... We get old because we stop playing.” ~ George Bernard Shaw

“Givers need to set limits because takers rarely do.” ~ Irma Kurtz

“Creativity is the residue of wasted time.” ~ Albert Einstein

“The more complex the mind, the greater the need to play.” ~ James T. Kirk, Original Star Trek, Shore Leave episode

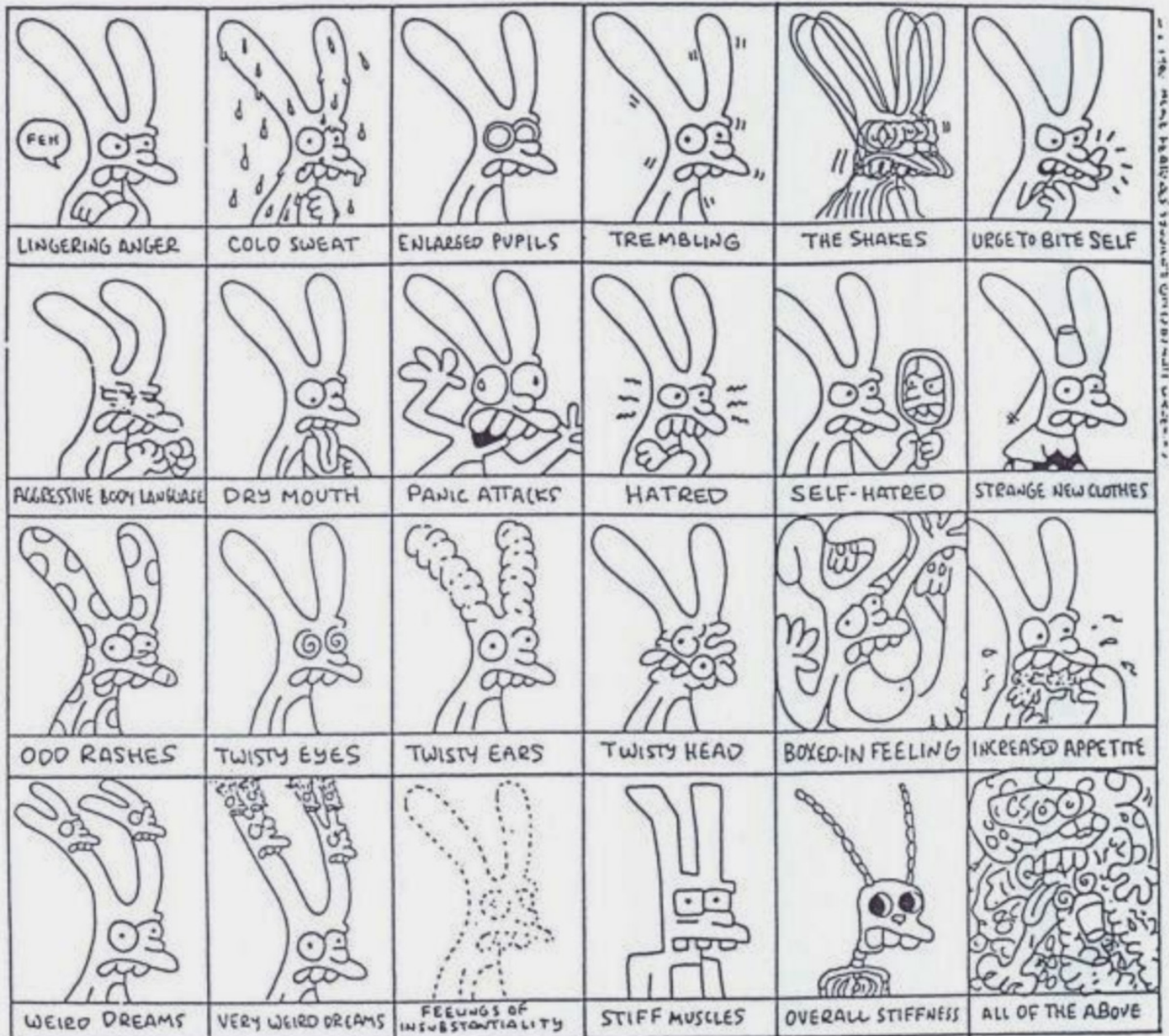
“We aren’t just accepting ourselves as individuals, but assisting an entire world into the healing grace of self-acceptance by how we view and treat ourselves.” ~ Matt Kahn

“All behavior is either love or a call for love.” ~ paraphrase from A Course in Miracles

Keep Smiling

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GROENING

THE 24 WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS



by Matt Groening, the creator of The Simpsons