

***Developing Commitment:
How to Grow Your Self Care Practice***

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I don't know about you, but many times I've said to myself, "from now on I won't eat ice cream" or "As of tomorrow I'm going to get up at 5am every morning!" The time comes to fulfill the promise I've made to myself, and there I am, enjoying a dish of my favorite frozen treat (which usually includes chocolate and peanut butter), or hitting the snooze bar while the clock turns to 7am.

And yet, somehow I've managed over the years to cultivate a strong, enduring commitment to yoga and meditation. Only rarely does a day go by when I don't practice yoga and sit. I always go to certain classes I think are especially valuable and I make personal sacrifices to go on meditation retreats. I rely on these wholesome elements of my life to help me keep afloat when life's seas get rocky, and give joy and peace when the waters are calm.

If you are interested in undertaking a practice to support your wellbeing, perhaps my experience can be of service to you. Here are a few things I've noticed about the process of developing commitment that may help:

1. **Start where you are.** Set the intention to accept yourself, just as you are. As I hope my story above shows, your commitment to caring for yourself need not be perfect to make a really substantive difference in your life.
2. **Choose something you like.** My husband is an avid cyclist, who really (and I mean *really*) enjoys riding his bike. He often tells me that whenever he has an opportunity to ride, he takes it, even if he doesn't feel like it. His love of the sport makes it easier for him to maintain his commitment, even in those inevitable low-energy times.
3. **Keep your goals modest.** In the case of yoga, for example, it's much better to choose to attend one class each week than go to class six days in a row and then burn out and never return. Developing self-care is like growing a fruit tree. It requires *small* actions repeated over time. If you plant the tree and forget it, it may never grow. If you tend it just a little bit, regularly, it will thrive.

4. **Stick with it.** With all the choices we have these days, it's easy to get lost in trying different things and never spend enough time on one to feel its benefits. Choose your self-care practice with care; then stay with it for some time, at least a year or two and hopefully many more.
5. **Forgive yourself and begin again.** If, for example, you commit to practicing one yoga posture at home every day, and then fail to get to your yoga mat one day, don't turn a small glitch into a larger one! Go back to your mat the next day, and leave your self-judgment behind.

May your intention to cultivate a practice of self-care take deep roots, grow strongly, and bring forth the fruits of health and happiness!
