

PRIORITISING YOURSELF

Taking care of yourself is crucial to leading a fulfilling life, but many people struggle with feeling guilty when they prioritise themselves. Let's break down this concept in a way that's easy to understand and relatable.



Imagine you're a plant.

You're constantly giving fruits to others, but you forget to nourish yourself. Over time, you get dried up, and you have nothing left to give. But if you take the time to ensure that you are getting all the nourishment you need, you can give endlessly without running dry. Prioritising yourself is like taking care of yourself as a plant and ensuring that you absorb all the nutrients to stay healthy, so you can keep giving to others without feeling depleted.

To understand the importance of letting go of the guilt behind prioritising yourself, let us walk you through a story.

Lily was a hardworking mother of two who always put her family first.

She rarely took time for herself and felt guilty when she did. One day, her best friend convinced her to take a solo weekend getaway to a nearby beach. However, she felt guilty about leaving her family behind.

She felt she was being selfish because she needed a break and wanted to take some time out for herself. But, her best friend told her how it's important to take care of herself. She asked Lily to go just once and see how she feels after that. Lily didn't feel fully convinced, but she took a leap.

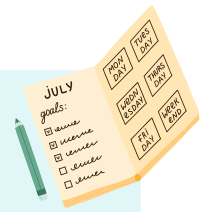
And when she did go for that solo weekend getaway, she realised that taking care of herself was just as important as taking care of her family. She returned home feeling refreshed and rejuvenated and had more energy to give to her family work, and herself.



To let go of the guilt behind looking after yourself, it's essential to understand where that guilt is coming from, challenging your beliefs, and taking active steps to prioritise your needs. To help you do this, here's a short activity that can help take steps towards prioritising your needs.

Instructions:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to complete this worksheet.
2. Bring a journal, a pen, and an open mind.
3. Complete each section of the worksheet and have fun!



This activity can help you understand the reason behind you feeling guilty and then move towards challenging these reasons.

Answer the following questions:

1. Each time you prioritise yourself, what does that inner voice sound like?

2. When does guilt as an emotion get activated for you? Is there any past experience linked to it? For example, the last time you did something for yourself, you were called selfish?

3. What stories do you tell yourself about putting yourself first? Are these stories based on reality or your own beliefs or based on someone else's beliefs? For example, feeling that your family won't be able to take care of themselves if you prioritise your needs?

4. What happens when this guilt takes over? For example, do you end up feeling frustrated or have bouts of anger, spiralling, self-loathing, rumination or other such experiences?

Befriending Guilt Attached with Self-Care

Prioritising yourself can be difficult, especially when you've learned to prioritise others before yourself. This can lead to feelings of guilt when you do take the time to prioritise your own needs and wants. **However, it's important to recognize that prioritising ourselves is not only healthy but also necessary for your overall well-being.** This guilt often surfaces when you think that you've made a mistake or done something to be ashamed of.



But here's the thing: when you prioritise yourself, you will be able to show up as your best self in all areas of your life. This will allow you to be more present and engaged with others. By taking care of yourself, you will be able to give to others in a sustainable and healthy way. **It's not about thinking about yourself first, but about thinking about yourself, too.**

Remember that self care is not selfish!

So, when feelings of guilt arise, it's important to remind yourself that prioritising yourself is not a selfish act, but rather a necessary one. It can be helpful to ask yourself reflective questions, such as:

- What do I need in this moment?
- What can I do to take care of myself right now?
- How will not taking care of myself affect my well-being and my ability to show up for others?
- Am I telling myself negative stories about prioritising myself?
- How can I challenge those beliefs?

- What would your body feel like when you water it/give it the nourishment it needs?
- What words come to mind when you read the word "care"?

Now that you've gone over the reflective questions, take a moment to go over this little exercise. You will find a short and simple sentence-completion activity below, feel free to complete the sentence with words or phrases that you find appropriate and relatable:

- **For me, the word 'care', looks like...**

- **When I invest time in taking care of myself, I feel...**

- **To me, self-care means...**

- **The act of caring for myself is...**

- **I prioritize self-care because...**

- **When I neglect self-care, I tend to feel...**

- **My favourite form of self-care is...**

- **Self-care is essential for me because...**

- **One thing I wish I knew about self-care earlier is...**

- **When I indulge in self-care, I notice that...**

- **I define self-care as...**



By listening to your own needs and honouring them, you are able to show yourself the same kindness and compassion that you would offer to others.

Remember that putting yourself first is essential for your well-being, and you deserve to take care of yourself.

If you, or someone you know is looking to seek professional help, reach out to us at **The Mood Space** <https://www.themoodspace.com/getstarted> and our Care Team will get back to you within 24 hours.

Not looking for professional help just yet? We understand, keep browsing through our Care Space tools and explore our self-help handouts and worksheets to navigate mental health-related challenges in a better manner.

Self-care IS EMPOWERMENT

