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## Give Yourself the Greatest Gift: Self-Love

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Christmas is a time to love. We all know human beings thrive on love and healthy, happy relationships. Without these, we become emotionally dysfunctional. What some people don't know is that a healthy and fruitful relationship begins with *self-love*. Only by loving and caring for ourselves are we fully equipped to love and care for others. Happiness is, after all, an inside job. If we are not whole and content within ourselves, we become vulnerable, and dependent on others for happiness and approval.

Self-love is about taking care of our whole being: physically, mentally and emotionally. Ultimately, our commitment to ourselves will impact how we interact with and take care of loved ones. It's therefore imperative that we create a loving balance between our personal needs and the needs of those that depend on us.

Every single day, we are challenged on so many levels. We are constantly endeavouring to fulfil the needs of our families, friends, and communities. It's no wonder we sometimes feel drained, frustrated, and short-tempered, yet we dismiss these emotions or label them as 'bad'. We're quick to acknowledge when our loved ones need downtime, so why do we refuse to acknowledge and act on our personal needs? Instead, we need to welcome, interpret and work with our emotions in order to grow and evolve as well-balanced human beings.

### Self-Discovery and Emotional Awakening

Sometimes, there is an imbalance with how we experience our world. We assume that our lives would have been perfect if people and circumstances had been different. This assumption can impact our confidence, and arouse fear and a feeling of being overwhelmed. What we actually need to do is to *shift our perspective*: we have to be willing to look at ourselves, and learn how to understand, connect to, and accept our feelings and memories in a way that is instrumental in thriving. Each experience is an opportunity to grow.

As an Executive and Wellness Coach and Wellness Practitioner, I found **Bach Flower Remedy** especially helpful for self-discovery and emotional awakening. The remedies can support you as you seek to understand and pinpoint the underlying facts, inner experiences and emotions that directly impact your outer experience—the way you feel and ultimately behave.

Once deep emotions are identified and acknowledged, the Bach Flower Remedy healing system can support a range of emotional states. For example:



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## Mimulus

At some point in time, we have all felt uncomfortable at social settings or business meetings. When that sweaty feeling kicks in and the color rises to our cheeks, it's not uncommon for a powerful and negative internal voice to rear its ugly head and undermine our self-belief and ability to manage the situation effectively. Mimulus effectively allows users to access their inner courage, alleviate nervousness, and assert themselves with confidence.

## Impatiens

Fast-paced Hong Kong calls for rush and speed. As we endeavour to fit more into our day, we can become impatient with others, easily frustrated and quick to lose our temper. Often, we think it'd be quicker if we just got things done ourselves. Some women experience these emotions during pregnancy or their menstrual cycle, which impacts their interaction with others. Impatiens restores patience so we learn to slow down, accept that others go at a different pace and, as a result, become more cooperative.

## Red Chestnut

It's normal to feel concern for loved ones but over-concern and fear, as a result, calls for Red Chestnut, a Bach Remedy renowned for restoring emotional peace. Coined the 'Mother Remedy', Red Chestnut is ideal for mothers who are usually very concerned for the welfare of all family members.

Learning how to understand, connect to, and accept our emotions and feelings in a way that is conducive to thriving is a conscious choice that can only be made when we are ready for a journey of self-discovery and self-improvement. We need to overcome the fear of being present with ourselves: we need to acknowledge when we feel pain, when things are not working too well in our lives, and when we need external support. There is no shame of reaching out for help and there are no super heroes out there.

If we all embark on this wonderful journey we become better human beings, friends, partners and parents. We are able to better understand ourselves and be more compassionate toward others too.

## Caring for ourselves physically and mentally

Our physical and mental wellbeing deserve as much attention as our emotional wellbeing. We may believe we're too busy and focused on our loved ones to incorporate self-love into our day but it's entirely doable. Here are three easy-to-implement tips that can allow for a balanced day:

### 1. Morning

Ditch the habit of reaching for your mobile phones or Blackberry first thing in the morning, and instead engage in a short, empowering mindfulness practice. **Mindfulness** is a form of kindness to self. It is the moment of time when you attend to yourself and your inner needs, instead of others.



Mindfulness meditation has been linked to lower emotional and chemical stress levels. It can help to ease depression and anxiety. It can result in reduced arthritis pain, asthma, the risk of Alzheimer's, and cardiovascular disease. Mobile phones and electronic devices, on the other hand.... It's your choice how you want to set up your day: with stress or calmness.

## 2. Afternoon

Sitting is considered the 'new smoking'. As much and as often as possible, keep the body moving. Movement encourages the bowels to move; it lubricates joints; and it promotes deep breathing that helps remove the toxins and clear the mind—pumping in endorphin, a natural mood enhancer.

We're not really chained to our desks. Even with deadlines looming, we can still create pockets of time to get up and go.

## 3. Night

Eat light and eat early.

We all know we should be getting more sleep hours than we do. Sacrificing our sleep not only makes us feel lethargic and lacking in energy, it can also increase the chances of heart disease, depression and high blood pressure.

Recent studies highlight that we would also benefit from turning the clock forward when it comes to dinner. Here are a just a handful of benefits to your wellbeing:

- The longer lapse between meals allows the body to process the food more efficiently. Research shows that those who eat an early dinner and then fast for 16 hours are slimmer than those who eat the same amount of calories, but snack around the clock;
- Late-night meals can cause indigestion that interferes with sleep quality
- Studies show that late-night noshing increases triglyceride levels, a type of fat found in your blood. When you eat, your body converts any calories it doesn't use right away into triglycerides; and high levels may increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.

Giving time, attention and priority to your wellbeing are the greatest forms of self-love. Just as a car won't get to its destination without sufficient fuel, neither can you without sufficient self-love. If you are caught up in life's busyness and you're not allowing yourself to self-love, my question to you is what's holding you back? What are you avoiding to connect with in yourself? If so, you're impacting your ability to lead a fulfilling, healthy and happy life.

May this calling serve as a reminder in this holiday season to give yourself the most important gift of all: *love*.

Originally published at <https://www.imi.com.hk/imi-central-natural-medicine-clinic-hong-kong>