

Om : Ink's Holiday Self-Care Challenge

· Nourish · Ground · Replenish ·

As you move through this bustling month of giving, give yourself a chance to be thankful for *you*, taking time to slow down and bring yourself into balance. This season as other mammals begin hibernation, give yourself time for rest and replenishment. Remember that the most important person is *you*—in order to love and help others, you must first care for yourself.

This Holiday Self-Care Challenge offers you a short practice or prompt to incorporate into each of your days to nurture and give back to yourself.

Let's move into this month with this intention:

I commit to self-care.

I listen to what I need.

I give back to myself.

Keep your journal handy – set an intention to write at least three sentences a day – observations, things you wish to cleanse yourself of, experiences, or your responses to the self-care challenge of that day – just collect it on paper. I believe that you have time for three sentences a day :)

Let us emerge into the New Year ready to flourish.

Wishing you an ommazing and ink-filled December bursting with inspiration and love,

c. amber kilian, om & ink



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December 1:

Incorporate a small **cleanse** into your day: Start the morning off with a tall glass of warm lemon water, throw in a few twist-focused yoga poses like Eagle, Reclined Twist, or Half Lord of the Fishes to ignite your digestion and detox the spine, and add a refreshing toast to winter with my healthy, antioxidant packed salad:

Arugula Cashew Pomegranate Salad with Lemon Dressing:

Start with a handful of Arugula
Toss in chopped Red Onion
Scatter with chunks of Goat Cheese
Add Cashews
Decorate with Pomegranate Seeds
Lightly drizzle with Lemon Olive Oil & White Wine Vinegar
Add Salt & Pepper to taste

December 2:

Unplug from work, the computer, television, and your phone for the evening to move your attention inward & toward your intuition. Try a seated meditation practice with a mantra, putting on music and just letting your body move, playing with your kids, or taking a bath in candlelight. Whatever you do, just be.

December 3:

Set five timers that will go off throughout your day. Each time one chimes, take a **moment of mindfulness**. Pause to experience your breath, your body, and the beauty of what it means to be you. See how these tiny reminders throughout your day allow you to pause, inquire, and breathe consciously—showing how even the shortest breaks where you are fully present are amazing for grounding and replenishing yourself.

December 4:

Give yourself a fresh spin by bringing your work to a new location. Bring your laptop to a coffee shop, your journal to the beach, or simply switch directions. Studies have shown that it's good for your brain to shift things around—take a different route home from work, sleep in a different direction in bed (i.e. North to South instead of South to North), rearrange your desk space, or change the direction you view your computer. Any shifts you make help stimulate your brain and create new neuro-pathways. **Switch your direction in some way today to invigorate your mind.**

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December 5:

Practice mindful walking in nature to nourish and enrich your experience of moving across the earth. Stay present—when your attention wanders, bring it back to the sensations of your feet touching the ground. Focus on one tiny step at a time—all the contractions and relaxations that happen to put one foot in front of the other. We accomplish more with small, mindful movements. Tiny steps fuel passion. Approach each step as your first step with kindness and curiosity.

December 6:

Today I'm leaving open for you. **Create your own experience or ritual that cultivates self-care and gratitude.** Go to Om & Ink on Facebook or tag @om.and.ink on Instagram to share what you came up with. I can't wait to see your posts!

December 7:

Open your heart in service. Practice Karma Yoga, also known as Seva, meaning selfless service, by giving something back to your community. This can come in the form of a beach clean-up, volunteering at a local school or community center, donating clothing to a women's resource center, or donating your time in the form of a class or lesson that showcases one of your talents (like a free yoga class at a shelter or a song-writing workshop at a brain injury rehab center).

December 8:

Make something to give away. Create with clay or watercolor or paper. Design a yoga routine for a specific person. Or opt for verbal art—write a song, a short story, a poem. Your creativity is your most beautiful gift and it feeds the soul to create art and give it away. Sharing your creativity is healing and energizing.

December 9:

Over the next few days, **practice the art of the handwritten letter by recognizing those you are grateful for.** Bask in the feeling you get from writing the letters and sending them out in the universe, and not in the hope of the lovely responses you wish to receive.

Today, choose **five people who have made a difference on your life's journey.** Choose people who are not family or close friends, but instead those that you crossed paths with and have added some joy or taught you something—they could be a yoga teacher, the barista who you see often for your coffee fix, a doctor whose care helped you—and write each one a handwritten thank you note, acknowledging what their presence in your life has done.

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December 10:

Choose **five friends who have played an important role in your journey** and whose support has helped you during the past year. Write each of them a note expressing this gratitude.

December 11:

Choose at least **five family members** to write letters to. These could be those who you wish to **rekindle a relationship with, reach out to, or simply wish them well**. Make these letters different from the traditional holiday card in which you recap your entire year and instead focus on what joy they have brought your life throughout the year(s)—even if it's many years ago—and send them this memory of joy with a wish for joy in their New Year.

December 12:

Express **gratitude for someone special** in your life—this could be a spouse, partner, sibling—who you would not normally write a card of your appreciation to. Thank them for the things, no matter how simple or mundane, that they have done for you or helped you with throughout the year that have made a big difference.

December 13:

Take a hike. Choose somewhere different even if it's a little bit of a drive. Go with a friend or by yourself, but make a promise to be silent. It will be more difficult on the hike in as your mind chatters away. At the midpoint, rest, breathe, and listen. Get to know the surrounding environment through acoustics alone. Listen to every texture, every layer, and focus your attention on nothing but sound, allowing each one that comes into your realm of awareness to move in and out. On your return hike, your mind will be quieter.

December 14:

The **Long Night Moon**, tonight's full moon, falls on one of the longest mid-winter nights. Congratulate yourself on what you've done this past year. Look back fondly on memories of the past. Begin to mediate on what you would like to cleanse yourself of for the coming year, and what intentions you would like to set. *Journal about each of these things.* There is something so affirming, so clarifying, and so meaningful about putting words onto paper. Set a timer. Give yourself 10 minutes (you'll be surprised at how fast it goes) to reflect. Then step outside to watch the moon rise, or bask in its light. Breathe in its soft, cool glow. Set an intention. Say a prayer. Make a wish. Smile.

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December 15:

Give yourself a power outage. Spend an evening in only candlelight, or the light of a fireplace. Trace your ancestry back to the times when evenings would be spent sewing, drawing, reading, or writing letters by firelight. *Soak in the simplicity.* In yoga, the practice of sense withdrawal is called Pratyahara, and it is the precursor to meditation. We are often bombarded with stimulus. The more we practice minimalizing stimulus, and drawing our senses inward, the more we activate our intuition, a key aspect for creativity to flourish.

December 16:

Reconnect with the radio era. Make a cup of tea, grab your favorite blanket—anything that will make you feel cozy—and listen to a podcast (some of my favorites include The Moth's storytelling radio hour, This American Life [so many archives!], and On Being which looks at all aspects of what it means to be human through interviews with poets, musicians, philosophers, and physicists). While you listen, close your eyes. This is the fastest way to bring your mind into concentration. Our vision occupies 40% of our brain's capacity. Rest your eyes as you enjoy a story being told to you or listen to a conversation you don't need to participate in.

December 17:

Spend an evening reading aloud. Read to a friend, a loved one, or to someone at a senior center. If possible, switch turns so the other person can also read aloud to you. Experience the texture and tone of their voice and enjoy seeing a story unravel only through your imagination.

December 18:

Visit a local Farmers' Market. Go early when everything is fresh, there's lots to choose from, and not many people are there yet. Choose all local, fresh ingredients that call to you by shape, color, or your urge to try something new, and make your own creative dish out of what you gather. Experiment. Let all your senses get involved. Cook with abandon.

December 19:

During this season of giving, remember to **listen to your own body.** We cannot give open-heartedly if we are depleted. Being selfish is the first step in being selfless. Everything channels back to caring for ourselves first. You must nurture and show compassion for yourself before you can do so for others. The first step, and often the most difficult, is opening your heart to your own being. Practice a supported restorative pose like Reclined Bound Angle and have a conversation with your body—it all starts with being a good listener and tuning in.

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December 20:

Give yourself the **gift of doing yoga outside with a view**. Stretch. Feel what it means to breathe clean air and be present in your body. Feel yourself grounded to the earth and a surge of inspiration run through you as you move through whatever pose or movement calls to you. Do not think too much. Do not judge yourself. Close your eyes. Go where your body wants to take you. Move from the heart.

December 21:

This year, Winter Solstice occurs on December 21st at 5:44 a.m. EST when the sun reaches its farthest southward point for the year, giving the Northern Hemisphere its shortest day and longest night. If possible, **celebrate the Winter Solstice** at its exact moment. Imagine more light and possibility coming into your life. Breathe deeply, uniting your body and mind to the earth and its natural rhythms as we move toward a New Year. Take time to meditate on your body's natural rhythms and those of the world around you. As we verge on the beginning of a New Year, we receive more light, more abundance, and more clarity, as darkness slowly starts to fade. Journal about what this means to you.

December 22:

In many cultures, the sun is a sign of creation rising. Take a few moments to journal as the sun rises after the darkest day of the year, during the beautiful balanced hour between dawn and day. Let the words flow. Try not to think too much—just keep pen to paper and feel. Tap into the light within you, that deep center of intuition, and **draw out an intention for your own creative prowess in the coming year**.

December 23:

Connect to your ancestry. Get together a friendly game of baseball because your dad has always loved baseball, bake your Grandmother's favorite recipe, or go further back in your ancestral line to cultural practices that your German or Native American ancestors performed during this time of year. Do something that connects you to your roots and that brings you to a simpler time, asking you to slow down. Give gratitude to those who came before you.

December 24:

Spend five minutes in nature. It might turn into more, but start with five. For today, take time to watch the clouds move across the sky, examine a leaf, feel each step you take on the earth, and do nothing but be present in the miracle of being alive. Studies have shown that spending time outside boosts memory, creativity, and is especially healing.

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December 25:

Think about these three words: **magic, delight, and merriment**. What do they mean to you and in what ways can you weave them into your upcoming year? Write whatever comes to you.

December 26:

Practice mindful eating. Before you eat, take a moment of gratitude, considering how each of the items came to you. The seeds that they grew from, the hands that harvested them, the journey they took to you. Then take pleasure in each bite. Approach your food with curiosity and as if you were eating for the first time—experience nuances in texture and taste. Be mindful of what each bite feels like in your mouth and imagine it nourishing your entire being.

December 27:

Today is open to your imagination. **Do something that inspires you, motivates, gives you reckless pleasure.** Feel like a kid again. Play, create, and move through your day absolved completely of judgement. Record your experiences however makes sense to you—in a dance, in a poem, in a journal entry, in paint.

December 28:

What things do you wish to leave behind in 2016? Feelings, emotions, memories, ect. List the things that you no longer wish to carry. Write them down on toilet paper so you can flush them away, a piece of paper you can shred, or throw yourself a special bonfire to purge these things. Consider the metaphor of the phoenix—a beautiful bird that rises from the ashes, purified and rejuvenated from the fire, ready to begin life with a fresh perspective. What can you let go of so that you can emerge refreshed and cleansed for the new year?

December 29:

Tonight's New Moon represents new beginnings. Close your eyes and do a short meditation focusing on the most important things that you want to cultivate in the coming year. Peace? Self-love? More energy? And then ask yourself what these things look like. Describe them in detail. What color are they, do they have a face, what do they feel like, what do they make you feel like? What do you need to be like to experience them? What do you need to do to experience them?

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December 30:

What things are you looking forward to? What are you thankful for? What are your favorite memories and moments of the past year? Write these things down. List everything you can, even small things. Write these down in a space that feels welcoming to you. This could be in nature at the mid-point of a hike, at the end of a yoga class, following meditation, or in a space in your home that you have set up with calming energy for the New Year with lit candles, music playing, etc. If you are answering these questions with a partner, friend, or your family, read aloud your answers so you can all share in the joy.

December 31:

Set your intention for the New Year. Write it down. Be very specific. Write out a plan for how exactly your intention can be achieved—this is important because it makes it concrete and feasible. Once you can picture your intention clearly in front of you, focus on it, bask in its beauty, picture yourself bathed in it, picture it moving fully into your life. And with a deep exhale, release your intention into the universe and make a promise to yourself to honor it in the coming year. If you're feeling especially brave, share your intention—sometimes putting it out there is just the motivation you need! If you share on FB or Insta, tag Om & Ink—I'll be so excited to see your intentions and send you some encouragement for them to come to life!

*"There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and **there is only one of you in all time.** This expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost." -Martha Graham*

Happy New Year! May it be filled with presence, inspiration, and drive!

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