[Jo Linden](http://www.bombilore.com/la-loba/?author=5869be7c893fc0dff9fe45f7) , [March 30, 2017](http://www.bombilore.com/la-loba/2017/3/23/7-self-care-strategies-for-dismantling-the-patriarchy), [La Loba](http://www.bombilore.com/la-loba/?category=La+Loba)

There is an increasingly palpable sense of urgency that pervades our world right now, an insistence that seems inherent to the times we live in.  Keeping up with daily demands alongside ongoing injustice and ignorance: the enormity can feel overwhelming. Being alive in these times asks so much of us, collectively and individually. It often seems that I can never do enough, that we can never do enough. And **there is no discernable destination, no resting place, no clear point of arrival.  Only a constant insistence that we continue.**

These times demand diligence and persistence, an unyielding eye toward justice and an acute level of self-awareness that hasn’t been valued, let alone cultivated, by a culture built from the ground up on distraction and avoidance. The times we are in demand tireless creativity and dedicated attention. But they also require that we take the time to care for ourselves.

**The story given us by the current paradigm says that our worth is defined by our productivity.**

What we have “to show for ourselves” is more important than how we show up.  Colonialism gave us white supremacy and institutionalized oppression. It also gifted us the Protestant work ethic, which tells us that our very salvation is wrapped up in the obligation of work.

**This is the same mentality that measures the worth of a forest by the board-feet of timber that can be harvested, rather than by the health of the ecosystem,** the biodiversity of life that it encompasses, the oxygen and clean water that it allows. It’s the same mentality that measures the worth of a country by gross domestic product, rather than by the health of its people, the vibrancy of its culture, the beauty of its art.

**In order to deconstruct this mentality, we engage with the arduous but liberating work of identifying and dismantling it as it shows up in ourselves and our lives.**

We must refuse to let our worth be defined by what we do, even as there is so much that needs to be done.  When approached from this perspective, we can recognize that the very fact of caring for ourselves is in itself a revolutionary act.

In this, we say: I am an ecosystem, not board feet of timber to be sold. In this, we say: I refuse to let my life be mined for profit. I am not a resource; I am not a machine. I am a human animal with a soft and tender and beautiful living body that needs rest and movement and sunlight and laughter. I am a soulful, emotional, social creature and I refuse to reduce myself to a commodity.

If we are dedicated to dismantling the pervasive structures that serve so few and take so much, then **the very acts we take that nurture our souls are themselves microcosms of a new way of being.** In this, we might recognize that how we care for ourselves is how we care for our world.

And the ways that we care for ourselves matter.  Numbing out, avoidance, and escapism may feel like “self-care” (this is what I often tell myself when I’m on hour five of Netflix or eating yet another chocolate chip cookie) but often serve not to nourish us but to drain us, all the while perpetuating the very systems we seek to dismantle.

**The times we are in demand much from us.**  They demand diligence and perseverance, yes. They demand unprecedented courage and relentless compassion. And that **courage and compassion begins with each of us learning how to truly care for ourselves**.

**So if you want a revolution...**

**1. Feel all the feelings.**

Allow yourself to feel the sadness, anger, grief, and despair evoked by the realities of this moment. These emotions are not only valid responses to the madness in our world, but are themselves evidence of your connectedness with others beyond yourself. Patriarchy and white supremacy culture centralizes the individual, tells us that our emotions are a personal pathology that reflects our weakness.

**Hyper-individualism personalizes these emotions as a personal ‘issue’ rather than a healthy response to the injustice, destruction, and ignorance that we face. Tears are medicine.**

**2. Practice gratitude.**

In a culture that profits from perpetuating an internalized narrative of ‘not enough,’ **gratitude is a revolutionary act.** When practiced with intention, it is not a ’silver lining’ panacea, or fodder for toothless complacency. It speaks to what is sufficient and abundant. It allows for a solid foundation from which to act. It also offers a framework to explore the unearned privileges and comforts that you may enjoy—which is work that is deeply necessary right now—without getting mired in the swamps of guilt and shame.

In the words of Sam Keen, **“the more you become a connoisseur of gratitude, the less you are a victim of resentment, depression, and despair.** Gratitude will act as an elixir that will gradually dissolve the hard shell of your ego—your need to possess and control—and transform you into a generous being. **The sense of gratitude produces true spiritual alchemy**, makes us magnanimous—large-souled.” We need large-souled humans in this time.

**3. Practice self-compassion.**

Be kind to yourself, even as you are allowing yourself to feel the full weight of this moment.  Even as you are doing the fierce work of dismantling the systems of privilege and oppression within yourself, and potentially experiencing deeply discomfort in this. (And also, when five hours of Netflix and innumerable chocolate chip cookies happen).

**Be kind to yourself.**

Expectations of perfection, self-judgment, and shame are forms of internal violence that we perpetrate on ourselves, and which are a quiet and spectacularly awful form of internalized oppression. They divide us against ourselves, which diminishes our strength and capability. You are a beautiful and flawed human. Offer yourself some grace in this.

**4. Connect to your community.**

**Be with your people.** Develop and foster your relationships. **Surround yourself with loving, compassionate, dedicated humans who are doing the work.** Give each other the space and support and encouragement to process everything that is happening right now.  Hold one another accountable, and encourage one another to rest.  Do not let each other fall into complacency.  Prioritize laughter.

**5. Develop or maintain your spiritual practice.**

What we need now more than ever are the teachings of interconnectedness, compassion, and grace. Spirituality can provide a sense of belonging to something greater than yourself that can be a deep well of strength. **It provides a foundation upon which to build the world we wish to see, the deep-rooted connection to source that can give us the strength to do that which we think we cannot do.** Finding spiritual community serves to doubly reinforce the nourishment and replenishment that this allows.

**6. Spend time in nature.**

There has been a lot of conversation after the election about getting out of **our digital "echo-chambers**,” places where our pre-existing ideas and beliefs are amplified and reinforced by repetition and agreement, which creates a false version of reality, and which **disinvites the diversity of opinion that is actual reality.**

**Most of us**, especially those of us who live in cities, **live in an echo-chamber of the human species, in which our interactions and experiences are limited to the human world.**  **Being in the natural world is inherently grounding and calming.** It can also offer humility. When we decentralize humans from the top of the hierarchy, we have access to the immense wisdom of billions of years of evolutionary learning.  If we are to craft truly sustainable societies that foster diversity, we must honor this, and listen.

**7. Ingest conscious entertainment.**

**We are creatures of story.** There is something deeply human about narrative, and stories have the power to evoke emotion, foster empathy, or inspire action. Stories also have the power to disempower, to perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce oppressive structures.

Through the work of many over the preceding decades, **it is possible now more than ever to hear the voices of those that have historically been marginalized and silenced.**  Rather than using movies and TV and novels as a form of mindless escape, we can choose to expose ourselves to stories and perspectives that allow a more encompassing version of what it means to be human. **Seek out these voices. Read them. Watch them.**

When we take on a wider lens, we can see how the acts that nourish the deepest parts of ourselves are the very acts that give us the strength, courage, and skills to keep going, even as they are opportunities to practice the very ways of being that we want to bring into the world. **Caring for ourselves allows us to care for others from a placed of rooted grace, a place of grounded awareness.** In this time of great urgency, we must give ourselves permission to slow down.

\*title gratefully inspired by [Chani Nicholas](http://chaninicholas.com)

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**Due Tuesday, April 23, 2019 Name:**

1. What information in this article did you find interesting?
2. Is there anything did not seem right or resonate with you?
3. How does this article relate to this math class?
4. As we head into the end of the semester, what can you do to take care of yourself so that you can do your best on the unit 3 test, the optional cumulative final, and the final project?
5. Any other comments or thoughts on this article or information?