

Holding Space!

Factoring Yourself into the Equation of Your Life

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We seem to do it naturally for others, but struggle to prioritize our own needs, desires, and self-care. Let's look at how to hold space for ourselves, treat ourselves with care, consideration, kindness, compassion, and love.

Each time we board a commercial flight we are given an important life lesson that most of us overlook! Before take-off, flight attendants review the in-flight safety features and procedures, including what to do if the cabin loses air pressure, and oxygen masks drop down from overhead. The important life lesson goes something like this, “*Make sure to place the mask over your mouth and nose before you assist others.*”

These instructions speak loud and clear to the very human impulse to place the needs of others before ourselves. These pre-flight instructions address the reality that we need to prioritize ourselves and our wellbeing. What good would we be to others on board who need our help if we were to deprive ourselves of oxygen? None. The same rule applies to putting our needs front and centre in the overall equation of the demands family, career, and friends!

Tuning into and making space for the needs of your body and mind, your emotions, and your truth is critical to maintaining physical and mental health, and for your betterment and growth.

A profound choice

Factoring yourself into the equation of your life is a profound choice that will impact every aspect of your life. It frees you from the needs and opinions of others dictating who you need to be, what you need to do, and how you need to live.

Holding space for you in your life is a way of living authentically with yourself, meeting your needs, and factoring your wellbeing into every role and responsibility you take on. It is a choice that can positively impact not only your work and social life but your intimate relationships as well. Many people unconsciously undermine an otherwise great intimate relationship by expecting their partner to meet all of their needs, or by meeting the needs of their partner at the expense of their time, energy, and authenticity.

You do you

Holding space for yourself begins with self-acceptance and self-love. When you start to factor yourself into the equation of your life, you begin to set healthy boundaries around the finite resources of your time and energy. You start to take better care of your own needs, rather than over-committing your time and resources to others. You soon begin to feel like yourself again, and when that happens, you can begin to enjoy *doing you!*

When you say ‘no’ to others when you know you don’t have the time or energy, you’re making room for yourself in your life, and saying yes to yourself. This is not to say you shouldn’t do things for others. Of course, you should! But it is important to help others in a way that does not impede your wellbeing.

A helping hand

It is important to check in with yourself before committing to helping others. Make sure that you can afford the time, energy, and

resources to help. Ask yourself whether in doing something for another person you are hindering the person you are helping from learning how to better take care of their own needs, and stop depending on others to meet their needs.

When we get comfortable with setting boundaries around our time and energy, we start to tune into our own needs. We prioritize checking in with ourselves. We are tuned into ourselves when we are feeling tired, stressed, overextended. We make time to sit and process negative emotions when they come up. We challenge our negative self-talk and self-defeating patterns of behavior.

The ripple effect

Author and mindfulness teacher Jack Kornfield says: *“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”* Deciding to hold space for ourselves is like embarking on a great pilgrimage back to your true self. Holding space for yourself means seeing yourself with all your faults without judgment and criticism, and with kindness, compassion, and love, just as you would a friend. It’s making friends with yourself, speaking with pride on how far you have come and grown.

We can’t hold space for others if we can’t do so for ourselves. If there’s no space for us in our lives, there’s no quality space for others. When we’re kind to ourselves, there’s a ripple effect. The kindness we show to ourselves expands and impacts the lives of others. We become more available, empathetic,

compassionate, kind, present, balanced, and authentic.

The more you accept and love yourself, the more you will look stand up for yourself and your own needs. Holding space for yourself gives you a place to check your directions, to see who or what is in the driver's seat of your life, and the opportunity to change course when you need to. It brings space and awareness into your life, ensuring your life reflects your heart's desires and goals.

Holding space for you

Six simple steps to factoring yourself into the equation of your life

Embrace your imperfections. *The more you can accept and learn to love your individuality, the more you will express it and the happier you will be.*

Learn to say no. *When you say ‘no’ to others, you very often say ‘yes to yourself.’*

Set healthy boundaries. *Healthy boundaries are essential to ensuring you have the time and energy to tune into yourself*

Tune in to you. *Take time to be still, alone. Check-in with your needs. Sit with and process negative emotions.*

Reach out for support. *Look for support when you need it. This strengthens your ability to be there for yourself. Knowing your limits and knowing you can get support if you need it makes your commitment to be there for yourself stronger and deeper.*

Make a pact with yourself to do at least one nurturing thing that brings you joy every day

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About the author

Dr. Monica Vermani is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in treating trauma, stress and mood & anxiety disorders, and the founder of Start Living Corporate Wellness. She is a well-known speaker, columnist and advocate in the field of mental health and wellness.

*Her upcoming book, **A Deeper Wellness**, will be available for pre-sales in November 2021, and her in-depth online self-help program, **A Deeper Wellness**, offers powerful mental health guidance, life skills, knowledge and healing, anywhere, anytime. <https://www.adeeperwellness.com/> <https://www.drmonicavermani.com/>*

