






“I Will Hold the Stars For You:”

**The Precious Legacies
of Self-Care
by and for Women of Color**



Agreements for this Presentation

- **Confidentiality** people are sharing personal information, in context
- **Active Listening**
- **Respect** for yourself and for everyone else
- **Reflection** is key
- **“I” Statements** – what you believe or think
- **No putdowns** of yourself or anyone else
- **No rescuing**
- **Give equal space and share the room, so that all who wish to can participate**
- **Accept that there is no closure today, or at any other time**



Self-care is any
(intentional) action you
take to care for your
mental, emotional,
spiritual, physical health
and well-being.




Recognizing The Need for Self-care

- ❖ Tired or even exhausted
- ❖ Stressed
- ❖ Feeling undervalued
- ❖ Frustrated
- ❖ Lack of energy
- ❖ Demoralized



Why the talk of self-care and the stars?

The stars have played an important part in many culture of color when talking about health.



Every great dream
Begins with a dreamer.
Always remember,
you have within you the
strength, the patience,
and the passion to
reach for *the stars* to
change the world.

– Harriet Tubman



Much of the philosophy and practice around self-care as we think about it today was largely developed by women of color during the Black Liberation and Women's Liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s.



Because of the emotional and physiological stresses of doing civil rights, anti-racist, liberation, and social justice work, women realized that taking care of themselves - and thereby their communities - needed to be an intentional act.





A frequent discussion among the women of the community:

staying healthy by taking care of one body, mind and spirit.




For many communities of color, cultural wisdom about health, spirituality, and the strength of community has often been provided by women elders.

Everything on Earth has a purpose,
every disease a herb to cure it, and
every person a mission. This is the
Indian theory of existence. - **Mourning**

Dove 1888 – 1936 aka **Christal or Christine Quintasket** , Hum-Ishu-Ma (Okanagan)

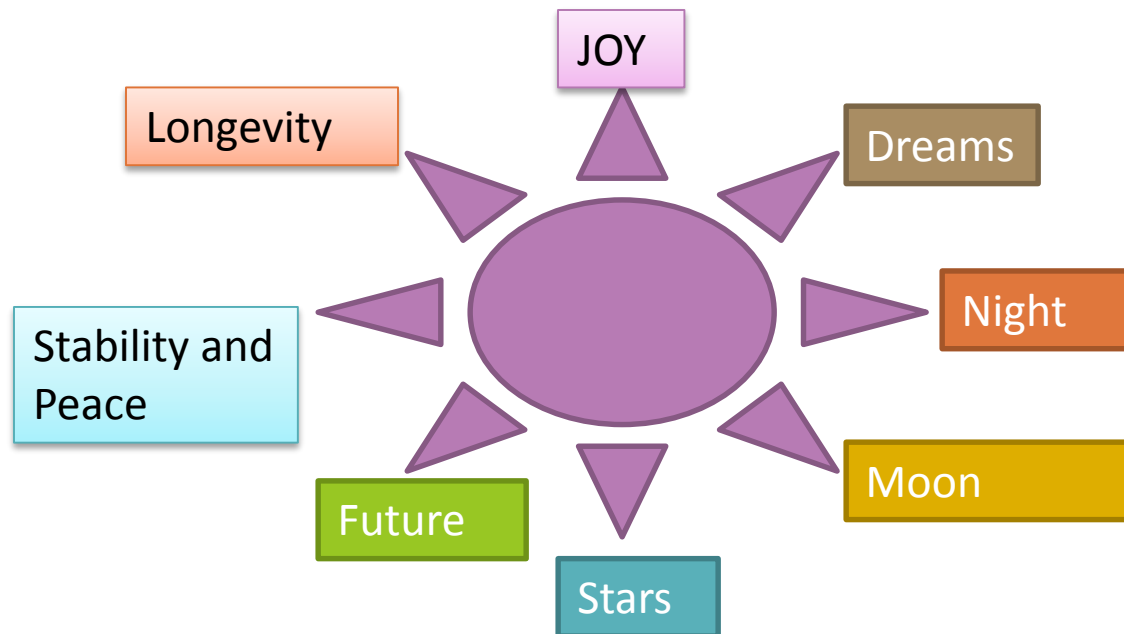




The many resources held by women elders, often told through stories and anecdotal examples, pass along history and understanding for particular practices, as well as helpful remedies or ideas that support those in the community seeking to improve their health or simply heal from trauma.



In many instances, female elders link individual **health** to **dreams**, which are related to **night**, which is related to **the skies** – the **moon**, the **stars**, the possibilities of the **future**, which are related to **hopes of health, peace, stability, joy, and longevity** for the self, and therefore for the community.






Journalist Aisha Harris, writing in Slate, noted:

Women and people of color viewed controlling their health as a corrective to the failures of a white, patriarchal medical system to properly tend to their needs.

Self-care was “a claiming [of] autonomy over the body as a political act against institutional, technocratic, very racist, and sexist medicine,” Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, an assistant professor at the New School currently writing a book about the history of American fitness culture, told me.



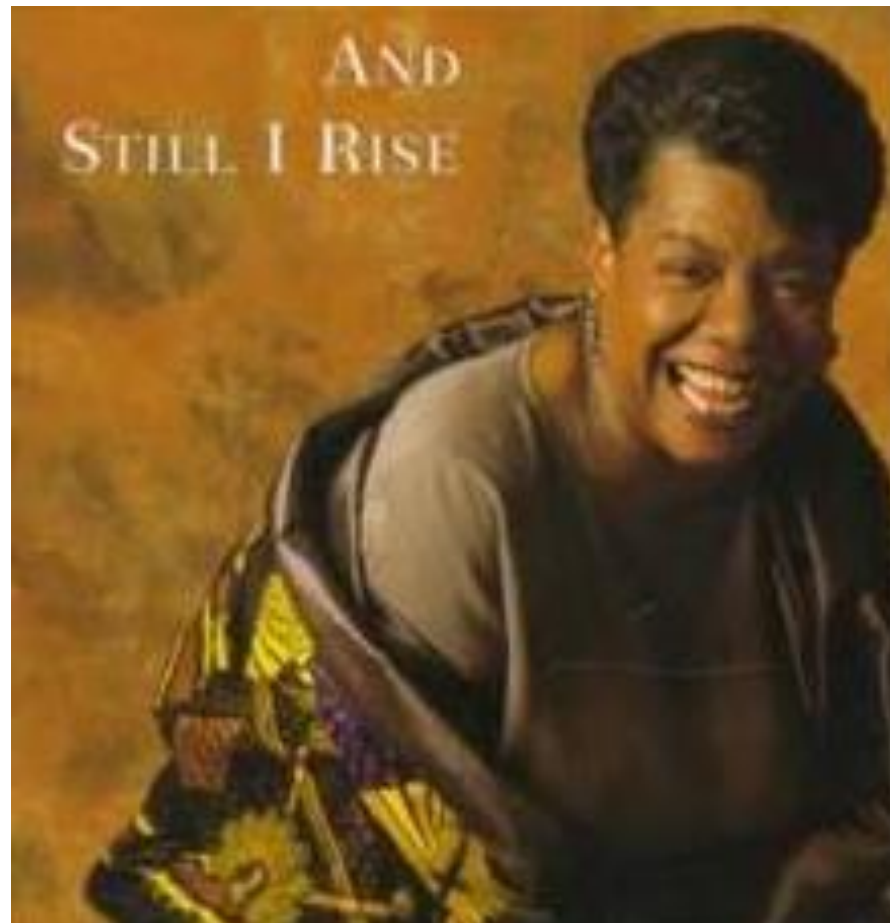
Practicing self-care can be the difference between feeling hopeless and isolated or inspired and optimistic.




The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious.

The desire to reach hearts is wise.

- Maya Angelou





To practice self-care is to make a decision to put yourself at the center of your own life.

You have decided to acknowledge, address and take care of your body's needs — emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually, among many other ways.



Put aside your guilt.

Put aside your anxiety.

**Put aside your fear
that to place yourself
first in your own life
is somehow
wrong.**




SELF-CARE WHEEL



This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from "Self-Care Assessment Worksheet" from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013). Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide.

www.OlgaPhoenix.com





**CARING FOR
MYSELF IS NOT
SELF-INDULGENCE,
IT IS SELF-
PRESERVATION
AND THAT IS
AN ACT OF
POLITICAL
WARFARE.**

AUDRE LORDE

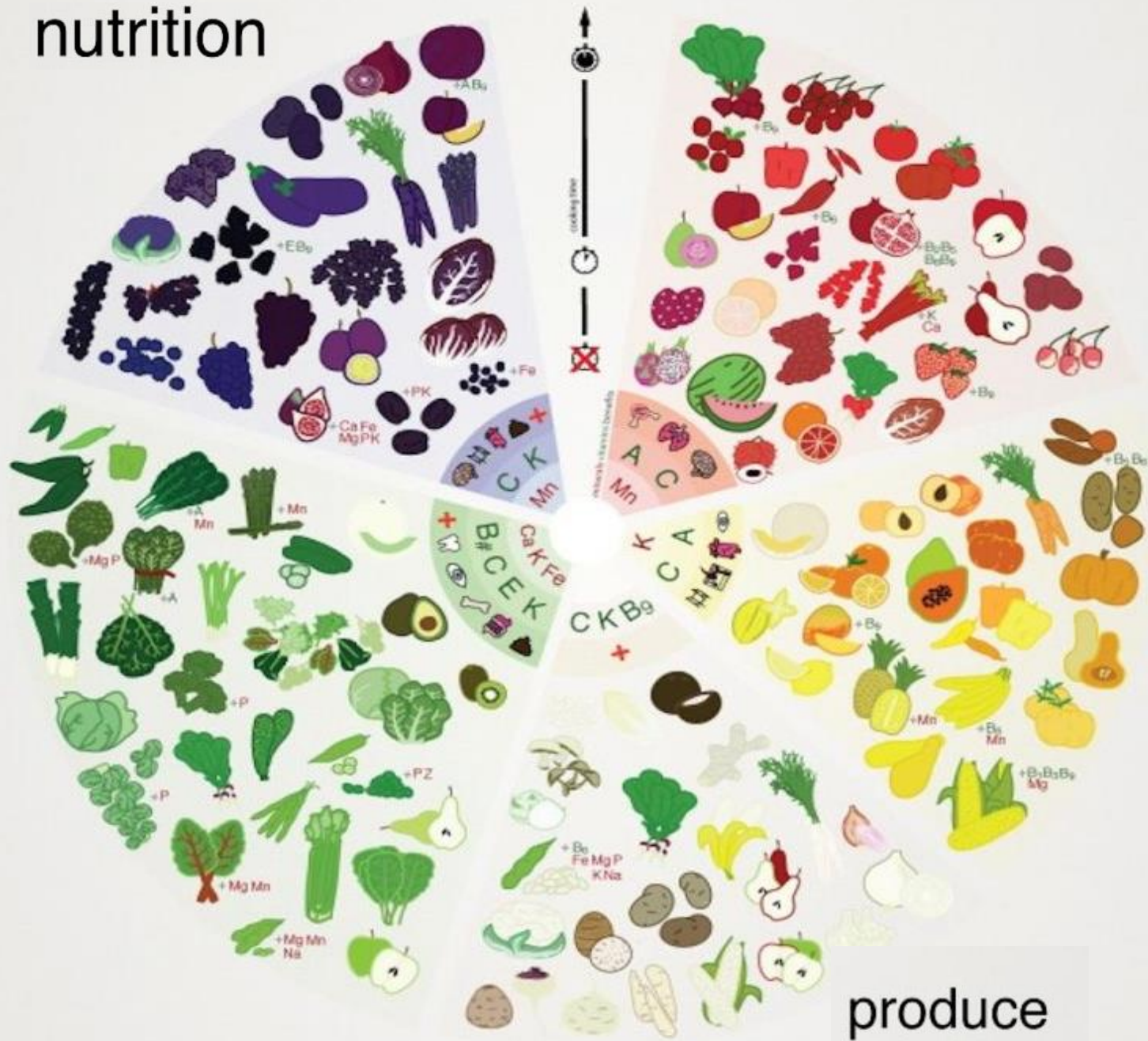




Find creative outlets that
feed your passions,
empower them.

Strengthen your skills and
confidence.

nutrition





Honor your strengths.

Examine your challenges, and work to improve them.

If it feels wrong, don't do it.


Trust your instincts.

Stop being so hard on yourself. Give yourself some room to forgive yourself. *Be kind to yourself.*

Make a list of at least 3 positive things you love to do, and do them frequently.

Don't be afraid to say no.

Don't be afraid to say yes.



“So many things in the world have happened before. But it's like they never did. Every new thing that happens to a person, it's a first... In that night I felt expansion, as if the world was branching out in shoots and growing faster than the eye could see. I felt smallness, how the earth divided into bits and kept dividing. I felt stars.”

- Louise Edrich, *Love Medicine*





Create strong boundaries.

Rest – set aside time to get enough sleep.

Eat properly – good food is a gift to your body.

Drink lots of water!


Spend time in safe environments.

Mistakes are valuable lessons. Choose to grow from them.

Take specific actions when necessary.

Nurture your dreams.

Never give up on your dreams!



Get support. Ask for help from trusted friends. Let the people who care about you support you as you heal. Let yourself receive. No protests that you don't need help. Just say "thank you."

Take lessons from your sheroes and heroes. Who are your heroes? Dolores Huerta? Maya Angelou? Toni Morrison? Michelle Obama? Maybe even Oprah Winfrey?

P L A Y !

We as women should shine light on our accomplishments and not feel egotistical when we do. It's a way to let the world know that we as women can accomplish great things!


Dolores Huerta



www.fromthevaultradio.org



You can't
force someone
to respect you,
But you can
refuse to be
disrespected.



I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for contradictions.

- Maxine Hong Kingston





Self-care:


Let us remember its origins and be more thoughtful of why self-care has become a necessary piece of social justice work.

It is the intentional and thoughtful integration of head, heart and passion into self.

What are your personal forms of self-care?

How do you make sure you use them?


Do you need to add or create additional forms of self-care to your practice?



So you protected yourself and loved small. Picked the tiniest stars out of the sky to own; lay down with head twisted in order to see the loved one before you slept.

– Toni Morison, *Beloved*





Let us take wisdom from the women elders of our communities of color.

Their messages to their communities were healing, energizing, full of vitality and growth.

Let us take the knowledge of the ages and remember the foundational messages they give us.

Self-care is a necessity, and it is lifelong.

Take your time.

Make it your daily practice.



Remember:

Self-care is a marathon, not a sprint.



Women's Marathon, 2016 Olympics, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

A portrait of Angela Davis, a Black woman with curly hair, wearing a green jacket and a patterned scarf. She has her hand near her chin in a thoughtful pose.

**" I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change...
I'm changing the things I cannot accept..."**
- Angela Davis





Image credit: X-ray: NASA/CXC/SAO; Optical: Detlef Hartmann; Infrared: NASA/JPL-Caltech

