

“Any Questions?” Podcast Transcript
Episode 9: Real Talk about Self Care (LIVE)

[jazzy instrumental intro music]

Dani: Hello everyone, and welcome back to a new season of the *Any Questions?* Podcast. This episode is an exclusive live version of *Any Questions?*, and we are so excited to talk about self care, because it means so much to the both of us. My name is Daniela Gutierrez, I use she/her pronouns, and my beautiful co-host Ashlyn Nikles, she also uses she/her pronouns.

Ashlyn: Thanks Dani for the intro, so on this episode, we are going to be discussing, essentially, the intricacies of self care, and how it can be so much more than just the face masks and the bubble baths that we often see from influencer culture on Instagram, and just social media in general. So, self care looks really different for everyone, and we’re gonna examine how that looks different for everyone. It can be incorporated into our day to day lives, and into our daily routine, and it absolutely does not have to be this radical idea that is only accessible to some people - it’s 100% accessible to all people.

Dani: But you may be wondering, you know, what is self-care anyway? That’s something that a lot of people think that it’s just one thing, that it’s linear, but it’s something that’s ever changing, and self care can definitely look different for everyone. What works for me might not work for you, and what worked for us yesterday might not work for us tomorrow. It’s also learning to, you know, change that mentality that self care is just nurturing for yourself and learning what works for you - it’s a learning curve. And now I’m gonna leave Ashlyn, who’s gonna talk about some really important stuff when it comes to influencer self care on Instagram.

Ashlyn: Yeah, thanks Dani. So, why are we doing this podcast in the first place? Why are we talking about the difference between influencer culture self care and real self care? Doing the occasional face mask, or bubble bath, or getting a massage, or whatever it may be, could definitely be temporarily relaxing for some people. But, self care really involves having a near day to day routine that goes beyond just pampering yourself. It really involves having that ritual, it involves a lifestyle change that is not just something that is a once in a lifetime occurrence for you.

On that note, self care really means just incorporating different activities, rituals, and tasks into your everyday life that truly bring joy to yourself and elevate your dimensions of wellness in some way. In addition, self care is also about listening to your body and knowing what’s good for you, knowing what feels right in that moment, and meeting yourself where you are, you know, even if that means, as a student, like, not accomplishing everything that you were set out to do in one day, because you know you need, you know, you need that time for yourself - you need that time to cook, and get outside, even if that means not getting that extra assignment in.

Additionally, maybe staying in on a Friday night when your body is telling you to rest if you’ve had a long week and, you know, it would just feel better to rest, maybe you stayed in for the

night. Or maybe going out on a Friday night is something that your body needs to recharge! It's really up to the individual. The problem with the influencer culture and how they portray self care is that self care does not require spending money, contrary to what we might believe when we log into Instagram or Twitter or whatever it is - and this really impacts our Financial Wellness. So, this really emphasizes the often held belief that self care is really only for people who have money and can afford it, because we are mostly seeing it portrayed as, like, getting a massage or, you know, buying some sort of facial product or something, whereas self care does not require spending money at all, and it can be completely free.

It's not always gonna be aesthetically pleasing - as fun as that would be, that's just not the case. Self care really oftentimes requires confronting your thoughts and feelings that might just be a little discomfoting. They might be thoughts and feelings that maybe you've been neglecting for a while, and that's totally okay, but I think it's definitely important to acknowledge that it's not, you know, all flowers and roses all the time. So additionally, doing things like, you know, face masks and bubble baths or whatever it is, is just not made for everyone. So this could be potentially problematic because someone could see that and say "okay I'm gonna do this." Maybe they say "I did what the influencer did, but I still don't feel any better." We definitely want there to be more education about what self care looks like, other than just the influencer culture of self care, because it's important to note that not everything works for everyone.

So, all of these things that I've listed are still considered more "feminine" things in our society, and this could just reinforce the general idea that self care is only for feminine-aligning individuals - that's just not the case. Self care is for everyone, even masculine-identifying individuals, because everyone matters.

Dani: Yeah, for sure, and a point that Ashlyn brought up was self care being predominantly feminine-aligning, which is something that we really see a lot of. Me personally, I don't see a lot of influencers that are, that identify as a man, whether cis or trans man, talking about self care, and how they interact with themselves, and nurturing who they are. But sometimes, we really have to realize that some people don't really know about self care, or maybe they're not in a place where they don't know where to start off because self care is something new to them. "*How can they apply self care to their lives?*" is a question that I ask myself a lot when I started acknowledging self care as a concept that you have to do in your day to day life. And this podcast is really just to remind everyone that it's never too late to start mindfully practicing self care and self nurturing. Sometimes self care doesn't feel like a forte, and that's completely normal.

Oftentimes, we hear people talking about, "you need to work on your self-confidence," "you need to find yourself," "you need to discover body positivity," and while all those things sound very pleasing, it can be really difficult, and Ashlyn talked a little bit about that. Sometimes self care isn't pretty or isn't something that feels right, sometimes it's very uncomfortable, but small acts, just like cleaning your room, or not cleaning your room - me personally, I can't do an exam without cleaning my entire room first. But for someone else, cleaning their room might present a

lot of mental barriers or emotional barriers, from being used to having their room that way, and cleaning it might disrupt their train of thought, or how they feel. So, identifying those small acts of self care and what they mean to you is really important. Asking yourself, what's something that works for you, is also really important. It's hard to start on that journey, but just acknowledging that you might want to embark it is so important and so essential. And we want to share a little bit about our own personal stories, so I'll let Ashlyn start with her own personal self care journey.

[jazzy instrumental transition music]

Ashlyn: So, for me, before I was really involved in the Health Center and you know, when I was in high school, and I was an underclassman, I could definitely say that, um, things were different [laughs]. Before, I really didn't understand self care, and I thought that this was really only for people who had to, you know, go get, like, a massage, or whatever. I thought it really only involved the materialistic things that I was seeing on Instagram, versus the much, much broader view of self care that I know now.

So, when I was a junior, so about a year ago, I became involved in the Health Center through Health Promotion and Wellness Services, that's what me and Dani are from, so I was a Peer Educator, and now I'm a Peer Leader. I feel like I learned so much about, you know, overall wellness and mental health and self care, and I feel like that drastically changed my view. I started to see self care as harm reduction -- as, you know, reducing harm, and it's not harm elimination. Oftentimes, when we look at harm reduction, we look at it on a spectrum, and typically the spectrum on one end is like chaotic use of, like, if we're talking about substance use, it would be chaotic use of substances, and then the other extreme would be just abstinence, no use at all. Harm reduction spectrums look different for everyone.

The spectrum also involves you know, like, small goals, not going from, taking this big jump from A to B, it's really about recognizing the little goals that you wanna make, whether that is, you know, within a few hours, within a day, or even within a year, but making these small goals are much more attainable, especially for me when I was trying to plan out my week, which is definitely a form of self care for me. I felt that I got the most done when I was able to chunk what I needed to get done into hour to hour, versus, you know, just weekly, all the things I had to get done in a week -- that didn't really work out for me, because for me, that didn't keep me accountable on a day to day to day basis. So yeah, those small goals are really important, meeting yourself where you're at and not making end goals that are, you know, super unattainable, for sure.

I also realized that self care, like, definitely requires some introspection. I realized that I definitely housed some dark internalized thoughts I was trying to, you know, keep them out of my head, and just focus on other things so I didn't have to focus on that. I was scared of those things bubbling to the surface, but now I really accept those negative thoughts, and I recognize that they are there, but they're not going to ruin my day, my week, whatever it is, and I also learned to, maybe, try to figure out where those thoughts are stemming from. That's just a little

bit about how my view of self care has changed, I definitely feel really confident in my day to day self care routine, and I feel like I really wouldn't be where I am right now without the guidance and the education that I learned from the Health Center.

Dani: Thanks, Ashlyn, for sharing. Personally, I never thought I practiced self care -- personally, I thought self care was a cliché, in part because I always saw so many social media posts about girls on Instagram doing a face mask with their friends, and it all being sunshine and sparkly things, and I just thought that, that can't be reality. And in some ways, it isn't, because sometimes we need more than just a face mask or an Instagram post to really feel better about ourselves. And like you were sharing Ashlyn, self care really has to do with perception.

When I started on my self care journey, I was neglecting myself. I didn't want to - I didn't want to take care of myself, and that sometimes sounds really troubling, but we just need to learn to accept that sometimes it's hard to take care of ourselves. It's hard to put what we need first. We have so many external pressures on our lives, when it comes to school, who we are, our identity, there's so much that contributes to who we are as a person and how we feel, and sometimes it just gets too much where we decide to put to the side and not, not acknowledge it, not talk about it, not deal with it, which only really contributes to us not feeling well, and it getting worse, and some emotions piling on. But sometimes, it's a coping mechanism as well, to just block it all out, because it just seems too much, too chaotic for ourselves. So I resonate a lot with what Ashlyn said about, you know, internalizing those dark thoughts, because sometimes it's just too hard to accept them and bring them to light, because then you feel obliged to also deal with it, and try to find ways how we're gonna heal from whatever trauma, or whatever is going on our life.

For me, I really had to take self care seriously when I came to the University of Maryland my freshman year. I came from a very small high school that was majority minority, I was always in a very diverse population of students, everyone looked a little bit different than I did, and coming to University of Maryland being a PWI, I definitely had culture shock because I didn't see people who looked like me as much as I used to. So, also evolving from living with my parents to living on my own was a really big struggle for me because I now had to branch out of my comfort zone, I had to find new friends, I had to figure out how to feed myself three meals a day, if that was attainable. I had to learn, you know, when is my bedtime and how much sleep can I get, and how much time do I have to actually just have fun, like Ashlyn was saying, especially being on a college campus where we have so many activities surrounding us.

So there's endless opportunities for self care, sometimes we just don't get there, and that's just about it. And for myself, it was just learning how to take care of myself. It was learning, maybe today I'm not gonna do that extra assignment, like Ashlyn was saying. Maybe today, I'm gonna talk to my hometown friends and see how they're doing and reconnect with what makes me feel safe and what is familiar. Sometimes it was standing up for myself, when it came to friendships on campus that I didn't feel comfortable with, or conversations that were happening around me that I didn't think were conducive for my own emotional or spiritual health as well. So there's so many things that contribute to ourselves, our wellness, that play with our self care as well.

Some personal techniques that I adopted, like I said earlier, was cleaning my room before an exam. Another one was wearing a very nice outfit, or an outfit that I felt really sexy in on an exam day, just to give myself that extra boost. Maybe I hadn't studied enough, but if I walked in there feeling more confident from what I was wearing, maybe that could also influence, you know, how I did on my test. I don't always recommend relying on a nice outfit to help you on an exam, however it does help in that sense of confidence.

But also, you know, allotting time in the week -- every Sunday I would sit down, see how much work I had to do in that week, to make sure that I was balancing, hey, when can I go out to dinner with my friends, or when can I go see my parents, just go back home and have a nice home cooked meal. So all of these things really were hard to come to -- it's hard to sit down and realize "*hey, I need to sit down and pause and just be a person,*" you know, stop with trying to be a successful student, or trying to be the best version of yourself, because sometimes that just feels unattainable, but it's not impossible.

It does take work, it does take patience, but, just the whole entire message of our podcast is that you can do it, you can find things that make you feel better, and also you can have time where you're just not okay, and that's fine.

[jazzy instrumental transition music]

Ashlyn: But yeah! I wanna thank you guys again for being here, we hope you learned a few things at least --

Dani: -- yes, thank you so much everyone, I hope that you have an amazing night, remember to incorporate that self care, whether it's today or tomorrow. We thank you so much, this truly means the world to us, and thank you for coming!

[jazzy instrumental outro music]

Ashlyn: Tune in next time, when Ashlyn and Dani discuss the queer use experience on some dating apps, and how the inclusivity of queer people on these apps can impact wellness.

[Preview clip of next episode]

Dani: We know that these apps can give you a space to make friends, find love, or have sex --

Ashlyn: -- and while there are some benefits, there are definitely some ways that these apps could not be as conducive to queer users as possible.

Dani: So Ashlyn, what really is harm reduction?

Ashlyn: It really is pretty self-explanatory, it's literally reducing harm. When we're talking about these harm reduction strategies that we found, it really made the both of us realize how much easier taking these steps can be for some straight people.

Dani: Being on dating apps is something really prevalent, especially right now, and it's important for us to realize that it's even more complicated for per se -- maybe more complex is a better word -- for the queer community.

Ashlyn: Join us in Spring 2021 for the newest episode of *Any Questions?*

[jazzy instrumental outro music fades]