

Put on Your Own Oxygen Mask First

I'm thanking that perky flight attendant on the Tucson-Chicago flight for this simple idea. I usually listen to the safety instruction on airplane flights; sometimes I even twist around to scope out the nearest exit.

Perky FA went through the seat belt and exit instructions, then moved on to "Should the air flow to the cabin be reduced, an oxygen mask will drop down from overhead. Pull the elastic over your head, place the mask over your mouth, and breathe. If you are traveling with a young child or someone who needs help, put the oxygen mask on yourself first." At this the woman next to me sighed, "If only I could do that every day."

Well, hold on here, why not? I readily acknowledge there are things that make me feel like there is no time for me. **My To Do list** gets endless. The "**I have to's**" edge out any chance of getting to the gym, doing my meditation, or just sitting and staring out from my patio and... not doing anything.

Research shows that 4 minutes of meditation can change brain waves, a nap does refresh you, and going to sleep if you are tired has its benefits. This goes against much of what I was taught. *Work first, then play. Finish the job. Push through. Suck it up.* Yes, these enable me to 'get the job done' but the recovery from the resulting stress makes for an unbalanced equation.

Bad vibes, dis-ease, can make me want to escape. Even new situations sometimes call for a break. New baby, new job, new house. Same with losses through death or divorce. Life can be difficult.

If the feelings of not having time for me are pushed aside, they build up like a soda can that was rolling around in a hot trunk. If the feelings are not lessened, its gotta blow. **The tension that builds up around the feelings, thoughts, expectations of these situations = STRESS! If situations are repeated, it's chronic stress.** ex. Caring for an aging/ill parent/partner; being a parent, being a manager.

The inability to say no to yet another request for your time, money, expertise. "Stress—when your mind says NO and your vocal cords form a squeaky yes."

Give yourself permission to put on your O2 mask first!

Some Possible O2 Masks:

- Yoga, karate, dance, read, sport, walking, hiking, biking,
- Start/end the day with time for yourself: walk, read, meditation, exercise, sleep.
- Daily: Listen to music, write affirmations, put a Do Not Disturb sign on your office doorknob or desk, breathe. Parents: Put yourself in Time Out.
- Make your own Comfort List. Use it as your Oxygen Mask.
- Practice saying, "I'm really sorry but I have to say no."
"I can see this is really important to you, let me think about it and get back to you." Make sure you do respond with your diplomatic 'no.'

Self-care is not selfish.

Put on your own O2 mask first!

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www.etheleemiller.com etheleemiller@me.com