

## Putting Yourself First

**Fill Your Cup:** Imagine that each person has a cup. How they feel—their emotional state, health, wellbeing, fulfillment, their energy level—is dependent on how full their cup is. Every person as the ability to pour from their own cup into someone else' by giving of themselves in one way or another. There are some people who are cup-fillers, helpers, givers who go around filling others' cups. There are also people who are like beggars on the street holding out empty cups asking or demanding them to be filled.

Sometimes the givers give too much. Their cups run on empty. They sacrifice themselves for others. They get drained, they feel empty, lethargic, stressed. Eventually they have no more to give. In some cases they become incapacitated or even pass away, leaving behind any number of people who believe they required that person in order to fill their cup.

And this all happens because of one big misunderstanding. Each person is 100% responsible for and capable of filling their own cup. Now, that doesn't mean that people are always taking responsibility for it—many people going around with their cup out looking for handouts

For the beggars, the good news is that they are more than able to fill their own cups. Often, when dependent people are forced to stop being dependent, a miraculous thing happens—they step up to the plate.

There is good news for the givers too; they can learn how to fill their own cups. There is a better way... no matter who you are, you need to learn to feed yourself, take care of your self. Do things that bring you joy, utilize your natural talents, or put you in a state of flow. Go for a walk or spend time in nature. For some people, filling their cup is reading a book or playing a game or going to a show or listening to music or creating art. Remember what fills YOUR cup and do more of it! Not only will you no longer feel dependent on anyone else to fill your up, but your cup will run over and you'll have more to give.

**The Oxygen Mask:** You know when you're in an airplane and the steward does the demonstration and tells you "in the case of an emergency and a drop in cabin pressure, put your own oxygen mask on first before assisting other passengers." It's cliché but most people miss the point. Have you ever stopped to consider WHY? Because if you don't put the oxygen mask on yourself first, and you lose consciousness, you are unable to help anyone else. In the worst case scenario, both you and the person (such as your child or a partner or a stranger) that you are trying to save will die. It is the same in life. You must honor yourself, care for your own needs, and do what you know in your heart is right for you. If you don't, both you and those you love suffer. I know it can be hard to give yourself permission to be selfish. Self-sacrifice is a habit with a lot of momentum.

Most of us are taught that selfishness is bad. It's not true. Being willing to be selfish—and take care of yourself so you are at your best and, therefore, are able to bring your best self to the world and those you love—is the most selfless thing you can do.

If you look back at your life you'll see that there are times when you made decisions that truly honored YOU. Times when you did what you loved even if it was unpopular. Times you chose not to participate in something you knew wasn't right for you. Times you gave yourself a reward or took a much needed break. And because you made those decisions, you improved your psychological and emotional state. You became stronger. Your cup became full. And you were better able to care for yourself and others.

What decisions have you made in the past that honored you? How did they turn out?

In what ways are you not honoring yourself or taking care of yourself?

Are there situations in which you are self-sacrificing (or have) to the point of self-harm or no longer being able to help those you are sacrificing for?

What changes could you make that would help you put on your own oxygen mask on first, so that you're better able to assist others?

What are some ways you could fill your own cup? What FEEDS you? What makes you feel fulfilled?

What changes could you make that would stop beggars from being dependent on your filling of their cups?

If you commit to filling your own cup, how will this change your life?