

This is the **DO IT SCARED PODCAST** with Ruth Soukup, **EPISODE #35**. In today's episode, we are going to talk about daring to make time for self-care in our life....even when we're not quite sure we deserve it.

Hey there, and welcome back to the Do It Scared podcast! My name is **RUTH SOUKUP**, and I am the founder of Living Well Spending Less and the Living Well Planner, as well as the founder of Elite Blog Academy, and the New York Times bestselling author of five—soon to be six—books!

Whether you are new and just finding me through this podcast for the first time, or whether you've known me for a while from Living Well Spending Less or Elite Blog Academy—welcome! My hope is that this is a place where you will find new inspiration and motivation to move past the things that are holding you back so you can create a life you love.

In today's episode, we are going to chat about a topic that I don't think we talk about nearly enough, maybe because it feels selfish or self-indulgent, or because we feel guilty even wanting it—and that's self-care. More specifically, daring to make time—real time—in your life for taking care of yourself, for nurturing your body and your soul, for filling up your tank and making your own needs a priority.

Because truthfully, for so many of us, this just doesn't happen, or it happens far too infrequently. For moms and women, especially, we are constantly putting our own needs on the back burner in order to take care of the people around us. But what happens then, is that we get burned out. And that makes everything worse. And I think that's exactly why we need to spend time talking about why daring to make time for self-care is one of the bravest—and most unselfish—things that you can do.

Because ultimately, that's what this podcast is all about. It's daring to face the parts of our life that our tripping us up, in order to get back on track so that we can create a life we love.

But courage doesn't mean we are never afraid. Instead, courage is being scared but taking action anyway, despite our fear. It is putting one foot in front of the other, even when we're not quite sure where the path will lead us.

Okay, so one more quick thing before we dive into all the practical application today's episode—As always, I've got a great little download that you can grab that will walk you through some of the practical strategies we'll be discussing today. You can get it, along with our shownotes, by visiting [DoltScared.com/episode35](https://DoltScared.com/episode35). Once again, to get the shownotes and the corresponding download for this episode, simply visit

## [DoltScared.com/episode35](https://DoltScared.com/episode35).

And while I'm being bossy, the other thing I want to make sure I do is invite you to follow me on Instagram. It's the place I share daily thoughts and inspiration, and the best place to message me directly with your feedback, comments and questions! You can find me at [@RUTHSOUKUP](https://www.instagram.com/RUTHSOUKUP)—that's r-u-t-h-s-o-u-k-u-p.

Okay, with that out of the way, let's dive in!

At the beginning of the year, my husband and I decided to go to marriage counseling to work through some stuff. At the time, we were both frustrated because it felt like we were just having the same fight, over and over and over again, without ever actually resolving it.

I saw things from my point of view. My husband saw things from his point of view. And that was just it. I don't know if we were both just too stubborn to budge or maybe so steeped in the reality of our own experience that we just could not find a middle ground.

And so, we went to counseling.

And the crux of our biggest argument went something like this—Chuck felt like our life was simply too chaotic, like we have too much going on all the time, and like he just couldn't keep up with all his responsibilities—taking care of the girls, keeping up with the housework, laundry, grocery shopping, activities...all the things. He was angry with me for working too much, and for wanting to do things like travel and always taking on new projects. He felt like I was purposely creating more chaos in our already chaotic life.

But I didn't feel like our life was all that chaotic. In fact, I loved our life! I felt like after years of working crazy hours to build my business, I had finally got my work schedule down to what most people would consider pretty normal—Monday through Friday, 8-5. I wasn't working on the weekends or in the evenings, and I was even making time to work out every mornings. I love to travel, so yes—I was always dreaming about the next place to go, and I hate to be bored, so yes—I was constantly coming up with new home projects on the weekend—organizing, redecorating, cooking, whatever. I like to be busy.

And that was stressing him out. Because Chuck felt like we were already way too busy.

But what we discovered in counseling is that this argument between couples is actually super common, even though it is normally in reverse. But because in our family I am the breadwinner and Chuck is the stay-at-home parent, it is a little different.

Our counselor told us that for most of the couples he sees, it is the wife who shares

the same complaints that Chuck was sharing—an overwhelming feeling like they just can't keep up, like they are on this treadmill of the endless to-do list—all this STUFF that needs to be done all the time, over and over again, and is never actually finished, and because they are so overwhelmed, they feel like if they have to add just one. More. thing, they might. Just. Lose. Their. ever-loving. mind.

And then he asked Chuck a question that surprised both of us. He said, “how long have you been burned out?”

He went on to explain that burnout for parents who fill that role—being the primary caregiver and the primary one in charge of the home and all those repetitive tasks that are never actually done—is actually super high.

And the signs of burnout are the ones that Chuck was experiencing—feeling stressed out and irritable, as well as feeling underappreciated, completely overwhelmed at the thought of adding just one more thing, and resentful of the spouse who isn't stuck in that role.

We talked about that for a while, but then the counselor asked Chuck a different question.

He said, what are you doing for self-care?

And Chuck, who may be Mr. Mom, but is still a guy's guy in every way, simply scoffed. “Self-care is stupid.” he said. “I don't need any self-care, nor do I have time for it. The problem is that we have too much going on, not that I need to be making time for self-care.”

But, as our counselor explained, everyone needs to make time for self-care. Because if we don't, if we spend all our time running from one thing to the next, or taking care of everyone else's needs, we will eventually get burned out. And when we're burned out, we don't serve anyone well. Not ourselves or the people around us.

Daring to make time for self-care is actually one of the least-selfish things that we can do, because when we make sure we are filling our own tank, we are also giving more to the people around us.

Burnout doesn't serve anyone.

And yet, when we are stuck in that place where Chuck was at, feeling like it is all you can do to just keep up, it is hard to imagine a different way. Taking a step back feels almost impossible—like if you do that, everything might just fall apart.

So how do we find the courage to make time for self care in our lives? I think it starts with four simple but incredibly essential steps.

The first step is to **UNDERSTAND WHAT FILLS YOU UP**

When you are stuck on that treadmill of the daily grind, it can be a challenge to even allow yourself to think about what sort of self-nurturing activities are going to actually help refill your tank and not just add to your stress level.

Because the reality is that what is super fun and relaxing and restorative for one person feels like pure torture for the next person.

For instance, at my core, I am an introvert. An extroverted introvert I think is what it is called. But what that means, and what I have learned about myself, is that the thing that fills me up more than anything else is alone time. I need it and I crave it.

In fact, my favorite day of the week is Monday, because on Monday afternoons my husband takes our daughters to dance, and they don't get home until a little after 6pm. And that means when I get home from work around five, I have a whole precious hour to myself to cook dinner. It's pretty. glorious! I put on my apron, pour a glass of wine, tell Alexa to play me some Norah Jones, and I just have this little moment to myself, to chop and saute and get creative with food. I love it. I just need that little moment.

And that is something that it has taken me a long time to really understand about myself—that I can only fill my tank by having alone time.

One thing that I started doing a few years ago is taking personal retreat. For 4 or 5 days, I will go away to a hotel all by myself and just read and think and sleep and completely revel in being alone. I'll take long walks and listen to relaxing music and watch movies while I take long baths. I don't talk to anyone the whole time, and it. Is. Incredible. It fills me up in a way that nothing else can.

And you introverts who are listening to this right now are probably nodding your heads and thinking YES—that's exactly what I need too! I just want to be completely BY MYSELF for a little while—to hole up in a hotel or even just in bed for a day or two days or a week, and just revel in the quiet.

But you extroverts who are listening are probably thinking THAT SOUNDS LIKE TORTURE. Why on earth would you want to be completely ALONE for 5 whole days? How can you stand not talking to anyone???

And if that's the case, then it is just as important to understand what fills YOU up. Maybe for you, being around people is what makes you feel restored. Maybe it is having deep and meaningful conversations with your closest girlfriend, or having quality time or a night out with your spouse.

I know for my husband, who is far more extroverted than me, the very last thing he wants is to be alone, especially because as a stay-at-home dad, he is by himself most of the day. He craves conversation and togetherness, and he is always wanting to spend time together and to do activities together as a family—attending events and festivals and the farmer's market and the rennissance fair or whatever, and he loves

having our house be the place where all the other kids come to play.

And the thing is—there is no right or wrong here! Me needing to be filled up by alone time is not somehow better or more important than my husband needing to be filled up by togetherness. The important thing is that we both recognize, for ourselves what sort of activities are going to help restore us, and what is going to drain us.

So understand what fills you up—that's the first step.

The second step is to **HAVE SOME CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS**

And this isn't always easy. But once you really start to understand how your own brain works, and what fills you up and brings life back to you, it is YOUR job to communicate that to other people, and to advocate for yourself.

I think sometimes we get upset or aggravated or offended that the people closest to us aren't giving us what we need, when the reality is that we have never communicated what we need. We are expecting them to read our minds, to understand exactly how we feel, when in truth, that is impossible.

I know for a long time, this was a huge source of conflict for Chuck and I. Because he is an extrovert and I am an introvert, we wanted different things and we craved different things, and he couldn't understand why I just wanted to be by myself—in fact, he would get offended by it—and I couldn't understand why he was always wanting to be together. And the more he wanted togetherness, the more I wanted space! It felt suffocating to me, but my pulling away felt incredibly hurtful to him.

And for us, it finally took sitting down and really talking about it—explaining how we felt and what we actually needed from each other. Because the thing is—he hadn't been trying to suffocate me—he just wanted to spend time together, and assumed that I would too. And I hadn't been trying to hurt him, I just really need to have regular moments of space and alone time, or I start to shut down.

But once he understood that having alone time made me more capable of then enjoying my time together with him, and once I understood how important it was to him to sometimes just have my full attention, things started to improve for us. We both became a lot more intentional about giving the other person what we needed.

Chuck will often take our girls to do activities on the weekends—parades, home depot, the farmer's market, whatever—but I will rarely go. In fact, a few weeks ago, on Halloween, a friend asked me, 'where are you taking your kids to go trick or treating.' I immediately said, 'oh I'm not going.' And to be honest, she was shocked by this. She said, 'how can you not go? They are only little for a short time!' I explained then that I never go. Chuck takes them to the hot trick or treating spot downtown, but there are way too many people there for me. They want to take their time and I just want to get the heck out of there. we realized years ago that it is more fun for everyone without me!

And that has always been true, but now instead of me feeling bad about it, or Chuck being irritated by it, we just realize this part of our personalities. I need space and he needs togetherness. Because we've had that conversation and we have communicated what we need.

So have the critical conversations. Stop expecting other people to read your mind. It's your job to tell the people around you what you need. That's step two.

The third step, then, is to **GET IT ON THE SCHEDULE**

This is where the rubber meets the road. Because just like you are responsible for communicating what you need to the people around you, you are also just as responsible for actually making time for self-care. It is no one else's responsibility to take care of you.

And so, if you know that you need time alone—get it on the schedule. Block out a weekend for a personal retreat, even if it is just going to a local hotel for a night or two all by yourself. Schedule a spa day or convince your spouse to take the kids camping or to the zoo for the day, or whatever, so that you can have the whole house to yourself. Plan to spend a whole day in bed watching Netflix. But actually be intentional about putting something on the schedule, and making time just for you a priority.

Same thing applies if you don't need alone time! Maybe your self-care is planning a weekend away with a few girlfriends, or a special date with your spouse. Maybe it's hosting a dinner party or having lunch with a friend.

Once you've figured out what type of activities are going to be most restorative to you, make a point of getting them on your calendar. Try to do something small for yourself at least once a week, and make a bigger effort at least once a month.

For me, that means blocking out time for exercise in the mornings, and also making sure that I have at least a few hours to myself on the weekends to read or work on a project or do whatever. And then it also means scheduling my personal retreats at least a couple of times a year.

So that's step three—get it on the schedule.

And then finally, the fourth and final step is to **GIVE UP THE GUILT**

And this might be the hardest step of all, especially for women, and especially for moms. Because the truth is that we spend so much of our time taking care of everyone else that there's not usually any time left for ourselves. And so I think that in our minds that we start to believe that if we do make time for ourselves, we'll be taking away from everyone else, and that will make us selfish.

Maybe we can't shake this nagging feeling that all this self-care talk is really just a nicer way of saying be selfish. Put yourself first. Your family doesn't matter. Your spouse doesn't matter. It's all about you baby.

But that's not what self care is. Self care is knowing how to fill your own tank so that you CAN then pour into the other people in your life—your spouse and your kids and your career and all those other commitments. Self care is the fuel that keeps you going.

Without it, you will eventually run out of gas and get totally burned out. Just like what happened to Chuck, and what happens to so many of us. Self-care is the opposite of selfish!! It means you care enough about the people around you to take care of yourself and your own needs, so that you have more to give to everyone else. It is putting on your own oxygen mask before you assist the person next to you. Because if you pass out, you can't help anyone!

And that is why we need to stop feeling bad about taking care of ourselves. We need to stop apologizing for it, stop putting it off, and stop making excuses for why we can't. Because daring to make time for self care is truly one of the bravest things we can do.

So are you taking care of yourself? Really, truly, and on a regular basis?

And if not, why not? What needs to change in your life right now to make regular self care more of a priority?

The thing is, becoming more intentional with self-care in your life means making a pretty big mindset shift. It needs to become a priority, not an afterthought. And to make that mindset shift, to make start making self care a priority, the four steps we talked about today are the place to start. First, figure out what fills you up. There's no point in trying to do self care in a way that works for other people if that is not what is actually restoring to you. Know yourself, your own personality, and what sort of thing will fill your tank. Second, have those critical conversations with the important people in your life. It is your job to communicate what you need. Stop expecting other people to read your mind, thirdly, get it on the schedule. Just like it is your job to communicate what you need, it is also your job to actually make time for what you need, and to make it happen. Stop waiting for someone else to do it for you. And then finally, give up the guilt! You are not selfish for taking care of you.

Okay, so don't forget that if you would like the worksheet that goes along with this podcast—that will walk you through the three steps we just talked about and remind you to always own it—you can download it, along with our show notes, at [doitscared.com/episode35](https://doitscared.com/episode35). Once again, that's [doitscared.com/episode35](https://doitscared.com/episode35).

Before we go, I just want to say, as always, that I LOVE hearing from you! If you have any questions about what we talked about today, or any other topics that you would like to see addressed on the Do It Scared podcast, please feel free to reach out, either via email or just by messaging me on Instagram.

And that about does it for this episode of the Do It Scared with Ruth Soukup podcast! Thank you so much for joining me today! If you liked what you heard, you can leave a review on iTunes, or, better yet, share this episode on your Insta story and tag me to let me know! If I repost your story, we'll send you a do it scared t-shirt just for fun!

Also, be sure to subscribe, either on **ITUNES** or Stitcher or wherever you like to listen, to be notified of new episodes!

And speaking of upcoming episodes, be sure to join me next week as we chat with the with my dear friend, the incredible and talented Lisa Leonard, about brave love and daring to embrace your messy, imperfect self. Lisa and I have been friends for years, but her new book, Brave Love, touched me in ways I never expected. She shares so openly about the struggles in her marriage and learning how to accept herself, and I know it is a topic that is so relevant for so many women—including me! It's definitely one of our most powerful episodes yet, so don't miss it!

I'll catch you then!