



A collection of personal stories from Veterinary Nurses suffering from a Chronic Illness or Condition.

A personal story by Emily Holmes



Why Prioritising Self Care isn't Selfish

Looking back at my RVN journey it's fair to say that I have had an up and down relationship with the term self-care. From the outside looking in self-care sounded like a guilt-free way of spending ridiculous amounts of time and money to achieve the ever-elusive feeling of happiness. But oh boy how wrong I was.

Where it all began...

I decided to spend some time and take a deep dive into the realm of self-care. I thought by doing some research on the internet I would be able to find my answers and be on my way. As time went on, I found it wasn't just a case of googling for the answer, instead it felt like I was opening up a bigger can of worms each time. Feeling somewhat defeated, it was time to bench this research project and deem it inconclusive.

Picking up where I left off

Being an inquisitive person, I will admit curiosity got the better of me and I decided to pick up where I left off. Instead of trying to google to find the answer, I was going to put the theory into action. Now the logical thing to do would be to work through a methodical list and reflect on my experiences. But in a true magpie style I picked up every shiny object that I could find. I tried to do all the things at once which left me feeling overwhelmed and disheartened. Over time I found that some things were becoming automatic. If I'd had a bad day or my anxiety was through the roof, I found myself picking up a notebook and dumping everything onto paper. When I was feeling low, I would list out things that I was grateful for. Sometimes I would share these on my Instagram stories to hold myself accountable to show up.

It's all about the evidence

One thing I did learn during this exploratory phase is that collating evidence is a part of figuring out what self-care looks like. When my mental health is at its lowest my brain tries to convince me that what I am doing is a waste of time and effort. That doing all of this is not going to change the way I think about myself, or even how I am perceived by others. It tries to isolate me and stop me caring for myself, because let's face it no one else cares so why should I? This is where the evidence base comes into fruition. By referring back to this evidence you are by no means stroking your ego. You are reminding yourself of all the things that you have achieved and will continue to do so.

Find those nuggets

I am very fortunate to have the wonderful Katie Ford as part of my tribe. We were chatting one day, and she told me this little golden nugget and I have kept it in my pocket ever since. The probability of you being right here reading this blog post is 1 in 400 trillion. 1 in 400 trillion. How crazy is that? If there is any piece of evidence that you need to remind yourself that you are worthy, it's that right there.

Reflecting on my self-care journey

As I sit here and type this post out, I am proud of my self-care journey. It has given me the opportunity to share what my take is on the meaning of self-care. To me self-care means that you can see the value in who you are as a human being. Not as a veterinary professional. Not in what activities you do or how much time and energy you put into them. Not in other people's perceptions of who you are and what you do. The fact that you have the ability to listen to your body and really hear what it is saying and take action on that. I have learned to listen out for when my body is wanting to take it slow, or when I feel frustrated and need to investigate why I feel that way. Yes, there is an element of letting go, whether that be emotions or limiting beliefs. Once you can do this you will truly experience what self-care looks like for you. Don't get me wrong it has taken a lot of trial and error to get to this point and my journey of self-care is an ongoing discovery. If I could say one thing to myself back, then it would be that self-care doesn't look the same for everyone.

Take pride in the fact that you are prioritising yourself and stop justifying why your routine looks different to everyone else's. You are 1 in 400 trillion. Don't forget that.

