

Practicing Self-Care in a Dire Moment

from R. Brezny, October 7, 2025

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The self-care advice typically offered—limit news consumption, practice mindfulness, focus on what you can control—can feel insultingly inadequate when democracy is under assault and we feel the bullies’ hatred in our blood and bones.

But there are practices that can help us maintain our humanity and equilibrium.

1. Acknowledge the reality without being consumed by it. Find healthy ways to reduce stress rather than denying or ignoring our feelings. Allow people to grieve the loss of dreams and change expectations for the future rather than staying stuck in anger. The grief is real. The anger is justified. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.

2. Manage the Firehose of Fear. Set boundaries with news. Doomscrolling feeds anxiety. Choose when and how long you’ll engage with political updates.

3. Don’t just read grim news. Make it a point to expose yourself to music, art, nature, comedy, and stories of resistance and triumph. It retrains the nervous system to remember joy.

Many people out there right now are passionately devoted to creating beauty and wonders and miracles. To keep track of them, I highly suggest you check in regularly with three compendiums of very good news:

- David Byrne’s REASON TO BE CHEERFUL: <https://reasonstobecheerful.world/>
- THE GOOD NEWS NETWORK: <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/>
- FIX THE NEWS: <https://tinyurl.com/FixTheNews>

4. Ground the Body, Calm the Nerves. Breathe low and slow. Place your hand on your belly; inhale to a count of four, exhale to six. Signal safety to your body. Move. Walk, stretch, dance. Physical release metabolizes stress hormones. Ritualize rest. Create a nightly wind-down. Dim lights, turn off screens, read or journal. Protect sleep like a sacred right.

5. Find Each Other. Mutual aid beats solitary despair. Join or start a support circle, whether political, spiritual, or artistic. Talk feelings, not just facts. Fear dissolves faster when named aloud in trusted company. Humour and play are medicine. Laughter is rebellion; joy is resistance.

6. Reclaim Agency in Small, Fierce Acts. Pick one cause. Trying to save everything burns you out; focus sharpens hope. Do something tactile. Write postcards, attend a rally, cook for neighbours. Schedule regular check-ins with friends. Physical actions counter helplessness.

Celebrate wins, however small. Each petition signed or friend consoled is proof you are not powerless.

7. Protect the Vulnerable, Protect Yourself. Check in on at-risk friends. LGBTQ+ youth, immigrants, disabled folks. Sometimes a single supportive text can make a difference. Share resources. Crisis hotlines, local clinics, therapy funds: Circulate them. Remember your limits. Compassion fatigue is real. You're not betraying anyone if you take breaks.

8. Protect your capacity for sustained resistance. This won't be over quickly. Burning out serves no one. Know your own limits and boundaries. Being compassionate with yourself reduces hesitation to speak up and helps daily functioning.

9. Seek Help Without Shame. Therapy, support groups, and hotlines exist for crises like this. Use them. If you can't access professional care, lean into peer counselling, clergy, trusted elders, or healing practices rooted in your culture. Asking for help is an act of solidarity, not weakness.

10. Document what is happening. Write down what you're witnessing. The gaslighting will be intense. Your own records will help you trust your perceptions.

11. Anchor in Meaning and Values. Define your compass. Ask: What do I refuse to surrender, no matter what the tyrannical regime dismantles? Hold onto the future. Imagine the society we are still capable of building. Visualization is a psychological shield against despair. ”

