

**Self Care Like a Boss.
Self Care For Life.**

By
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This little book was originally published on Smashwords in 2012. This was my first time writing a little book, my first bold venture into publicly and purposefully talking about self-care on my own terms. I had only been writing non-fiction in a serious way for a year. This was my big leap into a whole new thing.

Originally my sole goal was to use some of what I'd figured out, my experience and my voice to be of service to some folks. I had no idea what I was doing, my editing skills weren't the greatest and it was a big messy adventure I'm so glad I embarked on. After writing this little book, I thought it was all I had to say. I wasn't ready to go deeper yet and I was a little baby chicken flapping my chicken wings and I fell out of the nest and flew a few feet.

Six years later, I revisit this little book and in spite of the messy and the ugly, I see the foundation of work I continue to this day.

Self-care to me goes beyond treat yourself and heads into the hard stuff. Unlearning internalized ableism, learning how to navigate our own privileges, learning how to do things that freak our shit right out.

I decided to reprint the OG SCLAB because I have come so far and I'm working on a whole new book. I want to give folks a chance to see how far I've come personally in how I deal with and practice self-care. I want you to see where I've unnecessarily used problematic language and how I am evolving. I want you to see where I've come from because it has been such a long journey.

With that, for now I say please enjoy dear reader. I say, again that this is for you. If I can get into it, you can get into it. We can get into it together.

While I write the new book, feel free to come hang out around the blog. There are also some entries about how my grand plan for SCLAB failed and why. <https://selfcarelikeaboss.wordpress.com> You'll also find some reprints of V2.0 and soon, whole new entries.

The work I'm doing around self-care is the work that fills my heart. This is my passion and after much hand wringing and fear, here we are. Come with me.

Thank you for reading.

Love,

Shannon

This little book is for everyone.

This little book is about how to self-care as an act of absolute defiance.

This little book is about survival in a world that at best is unfriendly and at worst actively hostile.

This little book is especially for poor people, people feeling fucked up about their body image, people feeling fucked up about their rent, people worried about how they are going to make it day to day.

This little book is for people who are depressed, disabled, able bodied.

This is about you, it is for you because I want you to make it. I want you to have every tool and weapon I can think of to fight through the bad times.

This is about those of us who maybe have been told that self-care isn't important. It is for those of us who always take care of everyone and never ourselves.

If you haven't heard it before let me tell you now. Pay attention.

Self-care is vital.

Taking care of you gives you life, it helps you survive the bullshit.

Let's talk about what I'm going to teach you.

First small things.

What counts as self care?

How do you implement it in your every day life?

Then, we go a step further and I am going to give you every thrifty, broke ass trick and technique I use to keep myself feeling good and fancy.

We'll talk about make up, clothes, the value of small things that make you happy.

I'm going to tell you how to thrift things online and off.

I'll give you a list of questions you can use verbatim if you like, to ask online sellers.

Do you want to feel pretty? I'll give you some ideas about low cost ways to treat yourself and make yourself feel pretty. I'll give you some cheap and easy recipes for things like facial masks and hair treatments.

I'll give you a quick and dirty guide to a nice manicure that doesn't involve a lot of expense.

I'll give you some ideas of things to grab at discount stores. Things you can keep around the house to just make yourself smile.

I'll share some of my own coping mechanisms when I'm too stressed to do anything but sit in front of my computer.

I will tell you how and when it's a fine idea to booty shake.

Are you ready?

I'm ready.

Let's go.

The Little Things

I have a theory that has served me very well over the years. Sometimes, all you have are the little things. What little things?

First let's start with five minutes out of your day. You can do it. For five minutes the only person who absolutely needs you is you.

You can go sit in the bathroom with the door closed, go outside, do what you need to do but take five minutes.

During these five minutes you can do whatever you want. Color, read something, watch cute videos on youtube, listen to a stupid song that makes you laugh. The main point is you take that five minutes and be absolutely selfish.

This is not five minutes to be productive or helpful or nice. This is five minutes to do whatever you like.

That is how we start, with five precious minutes. If you can't do five do two. Just do it.

The important thing is to do something that makes you feel good. It doesn't have to serve a purpose. It doesn't have to make sense. Scratch your ass, pick your nose, belch, fart non stop, lay on the floor and stare at the water spot on your ceiling, do whatever you want.

Yes, I'm serious.

As we go along I'd like you to take a moment after you do these things and think about it. I want you to note what makes you feel really good, what touches something tender in you. You don't have to do anything with those feelings whatever they are, I just want you to be aware of them.

What other little things?

A lot of my personal self-care is deeply intersected between the emotional and the physical.

Any of us who has been depressed knows that even the little things can feel impossible.

This part is for us.

Little things you can do that absolutely no question count as self-care. Let's do it.

One of my favorite little things stems from my terribly dry body skin. I'm talking it gets itchy and painful and uncomfortable.

Find some lotion or oil you like the smell of and can afford. Personally, here's what I do because I am a glutton for luxurious body lotions.

First you need about 6-10 dollars. Next an Etsy account. Go to Etsy and drop a smell you like in the search bar. Think something that makes you feel warm and happy.

Next, for our purposes let's search vanilla.

On the left hand side of your screen select bath and beauty. Lots of expensive things will show up but don't give up. Next select lotion, then at the top of your screen order your list lowest to highest price.

We have my super secret no.1.

I buy a lot of sample-sized things. On the scale of having well moisturized skin that smells nice to dry scaly skin that itches and causes me extra discomfort, I will spend 5\$ and get the goodies.

If you don't want to wait my other trick is to check the travel size section of your local drug store. Lots of higher priced items are tiny airplane size and that can do the trick.

Other options. At your local discount store, check their bath and beauty aisles. Yes, some of that stuff is cheap crap. However, if you really like how said cheap crap smells and it costs a dollar, go ahead and indulge yourself.

On the days when putting on pants is too much or you can't get out of bed reach for that lotion and take some time to put it on your hands or elbows or butt. Be gentle with yourself.

When you're done, you tell yourself yes I *did* do something good for myself today. It counts. It matters. I still matter.

This is major. This is a moment when you may hear voices in your head telling you, you're lazy, maybe telling you that you need to do something with yourself, people telling you to just get over it.

In the act of doing that kindness to yourself, you are doing something. Even if you don't believe you deserve it, or don't believe it is important. I'm telling you it is. You are. You did something important. Just do it.

This is how we start caring for ourselves. Maybe when you get up, you put lip balm on your lips, make your favorite tea, put slippers on because your feet are cold, all those things a lot of people take for granted.

These are the things you ease into doing for yourself because you need to be cared for and you can and deserve to care for yourself. Here is where we start to develop a habit of self care and for some of us get to know how it feels.

Ready for more?
Let's do more.

But, I'm broke.

This section is for my friends who are like me and are often broke. I'm talking about being poor and making it work.

Let me be (maybe) the first to tell you that no matter how broke you are, it is still important and right to take care of yourself. Perhaps more so.

My first suggestion especially if you work and are poor is this. Save up some money, anywhere from say 5-20 dollars and purchase a multi vitamin.

I say this first because, when you're poor and possibly unable to eat as well as you might like you need to support your health. It is vital for many of us because health care can be so expensive. It is vital for many of us because we might lose our jobs if we get sick, or we have families to take care of.

The fact is it doesn't have to be an expensive vitamin. Read your labels carefully. You want something that packs a lot of punch and if you have allergies etc read for those.

If you can't or don't want to take a vitamin daily you can also keep a bottle of vitamin C and one of zinc on hand for when you are sick and need it to have a small impact on your life. Keep those things in a dry dark place and they last a while.

If you have dental problems and can't afford a dentist I have help for you too. Don't use strong mouthwashes. If you have ongoing problems with your mouth those will make it worse. There is a mouthwash I've been using for more than a decade called Biotene that was recommended to me after getting an oral piercing.

This product (I am not sure of how available it is globally, check the internet) is really good. It is alcohol free and intended to treat dry mouth but it will also help heal ulcers and assorted gum problems.

There is some expense to start this kind of thing in your life but it is so valuable it is worth saving for.

For a quick mouth related bit of soothing, brew some very strong green tea and use that as a soak/rinse in your mouth. It can help reduce swelling, has natural healing properties and honestly it can't hurt. Even if just the action of using that kind of rinse makes you feel good why not?

Let's talk about other bodily needs. If you have dry sensitive skin and can't afford fancy soap try using baby wash. These days, baby washes come in a lot of scents (my personal favorite is the Johnson's Vanilla Oatmeal), you can get them anywhere baby care is sold and often a bottle lasts for a long time.

You can even use baby wash as shampoo if you like. You can also use baby wash to wash actual babies, your face, or to take bubble baths in. A special note if you have a vagina- take care as to what you put in your bath water. There is nothing worse than a yeast infection brought on by bath products.

One of ways I have been able to afford things like quality vitamins is splitting stuff with friends. One broke person is broke, a bunch of broke people can get some things.

Find a friend and here's what you do. Say you both want a good multi vitamin. Do some Internet searching and agree on vitamins you like. Buy however many bottles, and split the cost right down the middle. You both save on shipping and are doing each other a favor.

You can also do this with make up, body care items. This is teamwork. I know you know someone who likes some of the same stuff you like.

What else?

Let's talk about being poor and having hobbies.

My hobbies are not cheap. I like to crochet, I love to own books, I love make up, clothes and shoes. I have a specific aesthetic and sometimes folks, it is really hard.

Here's how I handle it.

My closest friends all know what I like and that I am broke. When there are coupons, sales, etc people tell me because I asked them to.

Hobbies are self-care. Whether it is painting your nails, knitting, crocheting, or drawing.

I keep myself supplied by always keeping my eye out. I go to the discount store I look to see if they have books or yarn, whatever. I look everywhere because it is surprising what lurks in aisles you never go down.

I also use the Internet like a boss.

I have a system and it works for me.

I save a few dollars every month or my partner budgets out say 20\$. I decide what feels important to me and I have a rule I make myself use in that if I have what I call mad money, unless it is an emergency it is for me money.

I have a running list of things I like. Make up, yarn, nail polish, books. I use ebay, I check online used

bookstores and I spend time while I'm doing other things looking for those things. It doesn't have to be specific, sometimes I just get random and find things I like a lot.

If you are a make up wearer, look for samples, trial sizes and indie make up companies. Use etsy, ebay, google whatever you can think of. If there is a certain say make up store you like sign up for their news letters and like them on facebook etc and watch out for sales.

Sales, promotions, first time buyer deals. I use them all. I have a special email address I use only for that purpose.

Maybe you really love good food or a fancy cup of coffee. You can use the same principal. Save up 5 or 10 dollars and get yourself that thing.

I won't lie to you my friend this is hard.

This is something I battle with every time I purchase something that is just for me or because I think it is pretty.

Many of us poor folks live with deep sharp guilt about buying things that are not life necessities in the eyes of other people.

This is self-care on a whole new level.

Here's the thing that no one ever tells you.

Giving yourself some small pleasure is okay even if you're so poor you eat food from the dollar store or when you're on welfare, or don't always have bus fare.

It's not only okay but in life it is vital.

People will tell you it is terrible of you to buy that Mac lipstick, or a lap top or lpad or cup of expensive coffee because you are poor. People will tell you that poor people are being wasteful or unwise if we purchase "nice" things.

Those people are not only wrong but they are also jerks.

If no one else will tell you I will tell you while I remind myself.

It is okay.

You are not awful for spending money that could be put to rent or bills.

You are a human and you deserve pleasures in life.

You deserve to give yourself that care that may involve buying some expensive thing or taking a taxi, or having higher Internet speeds or whatever.

No one gets to tell you otherwise. They will but, you don't have to believe them or agree.

Let's take a minute to talk about when to splurge.

For me a purchase is major if it is over 50 dollars. There are times during the year that I dedicate to myself and I splurge.

My birthday and after Christmas are the big ones.

I am a cosmetics and beauty product junkie. I love them. They make me incredibly happy and though I love a lot of lower cost items sometimes, I want fancy things.

Twice a year I splurge. I shop at Sephora and spend 50-75 dollars at a time. I do that on my birthday specifically because Sephora does a free little fancy gift with birthday orders if you have an account with them. I use their loyalty program and get fancy samples.

Other times I splurge on things like boots. I love boots and for me a good pair of boots is not just a practical investment because I live in Seattle and don't drive, they please me.

What do you splurge on?

I am not in your head but here's a good way to figure that out.

What do you love to do? What makes you feel super good?

Maybe you take a class, maybe you buy a brand new hardback book, maybe you donate to your favorite podcast or buy art supplies. Did you see a piece of clothing that is fancy and calling your name really loud?

This is one of those hard moments. You have to work to keep out the thoughts that tell you all the reasons why you can't or shouldn't have a fancy thing.

It is really hard. It will hurt and might make you cry but I believe you can work through it. Stomp through it, cry through it, yammer at your best friend (that is what I do) but get through it.

You deserve it because you are alive right now. Because maybe you are really depressed and you put socks on. Maybe you went outside. It doesn't matter. What matters is for this type of moment, you are treating yourself like the best lover ever.

Quick and dirty tutorials.

Now let's talk about how to do some nice and fancy things for yourself.

How about a simple manicure?

If you wear nail polish you'll need your remover, a new color, a base/topcoat, a nail file and something greasy.

First clean your nails. Remove your polish, clean under your nails.

Second. Rub your greasy substance on your cuticles. Get a nice and thick layer. If you don't have any lotion you can use lip balm, cooking oil, coconut oil, olive oil, something moisturizing and greasy. If your cuticles look ragged and you don't have an orange stick or cuticle remover, use the thumb nail of your opposite hand to gently push those cuticles back after letting them marinate in your greasy substance for 5-10 minutes.

Rub the remains of your greasy substance into your fingers and then go wash your hands.

If you don't wear nail polish skip this part.

Apply your base/top coat and let it dry.

Now, for the health of your nails especially if they are brittle or thin don't file them naked. Get that base coat on for support. Now file your nails into a shape that pleases you. If you have fragile nails take care not to saw at them, file in one direction.

Now wipe the dust off of your nails on a cloth (your pants, shirt, underwear whatever) and apply your new polish.

Let it dry, decorate it as you see fit and VOILA. In a half hour you have a manicure.

If you have extra time or space try soaking your fingers in warm soapy water after taking your polish off and before moisturizing your cuticles.

Remember to be gentle with your cuticles. If you have a lover or partner have them run their fingertips around your nail to check for rough spots. Or do it yourself. Follow the same instructions for a pedicure.

Want to be extra fancy? Invite a friend over or sit with your partner and do each other.

How about a kitchen assisted hair treatment to make your locks feel fancy?

First up if your hair feels brittle or is breakings give this a try.

You need, hair, any old conditioner, a plastic bag (or two for very long/thick hair), one egg. Optional items: olive oil (or any other liquid oil you have on hand), mayonnaise, yogurt, a clean plastic bowl, a spoon.

Simple treatment: Mix enough conditioner to cover your hair with the egg. I use a cholesterol conditioner (check the "ethnic" section at the drug store) for good thickness. Now to level up the treatment you can add your oil, a spoon of honey, half a single serving container of yogurt, or a few

spoons of mayo.

Slather on your hair and wrap your hair in plastic.

Let that marinate for 15 minutes to an hour.

Rinse out with cool to lukewarm water. DO NOT USE HOT WATER! Hot water will scramble the egg and that is just gross.

Shampoo with gentle shampoo and condition your hair as normal.

You just gave yourself a fancy strengthening moisturizing hair mask

How awesome are you?

How about a super simple facial mask?

This also acts as a scrub.

You need a container of raw (not instant) plain oatmeal. A blender/ability to mash up the oatmeal.

Extras: Honey, milk (cow milk) if you have normal skin or have redness or irritation, strongly brewed cool green tea for oily/acne prone skin, olive oil for dry skin. You can even use powdered goat milk which is also really lovely on your skin.

First mash up or blend your oatmeal until it is powdery. It's perfectly okay if there are some lumpy bits. Do as much as you want and keep it in a jar to use as you like.

Use some warm water and any of your extras. Mix powder and liquids until you get a nice wet pasty texture. Put it on your face and chill out for 20 minutes or until it is dry. Remove with a warm wet cloth, use gentle pressure and voila.

You just did a fancy face treatment.

You can also put whole oatmeal into a tight mesh bag, a stapled coffee filter or disposable tea bag and drop it in the tub if your skin is irritated. This remedy works miracles if you are like me and are prone to hives. You can even use it on kids. Keeping it in a contained bag type thing also keeps the mess to a minimum.

You see what we're doing here?

This is self-care.

This is luxury at home for you by you. And a lot of these ingredients you can buy with food stamps if you have to, you can eat them, a lot of these things might be in your kitchen right now.

What about my friends?

This part is hard.

Sometimes in order to care for ourselves the best way we can, we have to say no.

Maybe you don't have enough spoons to go out with people, or talk to people. Maybe all you can do is cocoon in bed and watch movies.

That is okay. That is self-care.

Some of our friends won't understand, some will be upset and that's okay too.

Sometimes people will say you're being selfish if you want to spend a Saturday reading magazines or relaxing. There is a weird kind of shame that can come with being honest about needing things for ourselves.

Here's something you can tell people if you need to.

“Hey I love you and I want to see you but not right now because I need to take care of myself.”

You don't owe anyone explanations; you don't have to engage in a long conversation about it. They might be upset or angry and that is not your responsibility.

It's okay if they don't get it because they don't have to get it.

No one who is not living inside your skin gets to decide when a good or convenient time for you to take care of yourself is. They just don't.

Now in the event you know someone who needs help self-caring, you can do it!

Invite them for a manicure; tell them on IM to take some time for themselves.

You can absolutely say, “Hey I love you. You seem stressed out. Do you need some time to give yourself some care?”

If they don't know what to do, offer up some of my suggestions. If you know them well enough send them funny videos or links to awesome cute stuff on the Internet.

One of the best things about learning to self-care is showing other people. That's why I'm talking to you right now.

When we feel like we are caring for ourselves, it is easier to care for others.

People who self care are in my opinion less stressed and more awesome parents.

People who self care in a defiant way make me feel like I can do it too.

People who self-care can by engaging in self-care fight all the people who don't believe in self care.

People who self care are in my opinion more likely to survive.

With that in mind, if you aren't able to self-care on your own, ask for help. I have a problem remembering to eat. Everyone I talk to regularly knows to ask me if I've eaten.

Help is okay.

Help is needed sometimes.

I write myself notes. Eat food, remember to grab a book, I forget things so I make notes.

When shit gets hard.

This part is hard. I know that some of this may hurt but I want you to hear it.

Whether you're stressed out, depressed, sick, dysphoric, lonely, sick anything you still can self-care.

I won't blow smoke up your butt and say it's a rainbow it's not. Sometimes the hardest thing for us to do is care for ourselves. Sometimes we can't get out of bed, or wash or anything.

I want you to have a plan my friend and I don't want you to go through the bullshit I did to make a plan.

How I made a plan for when shit gets real and goes sideways is this. There are certain things we all really care about. For me, it's my skin. My skin over the years has been the source of my hardest worst moments of no self-esteem. When I am depressed or having a bad bout of insomnia my skin is the first thing I stop giving a shit about.

Here's what I figured out and when I get hard on myself.

Being that I know that when my skin is not feeling okay by my standards my self esteem tanks, I make myself take care of it when I don't want to. I get mean, I ask myself if I want my skin to get bad and therefore I will feel worse.

Honestly I don't.

No matter how I feel or what's going on now, I take care of my face. I cleanse, I moisturize. I do those things because it's something. I might not be able to put on clean clothes or sleep or stand to be looked at but, I did it.

You can do it too.

If skin care is no big deal for you start with something small you do every single day.

You can put lotion on your hands before bed, you can put chapstick on. You can drink a glass of water. You can change your pajamas, you can paint your nails, you can manicure your eyebrows, you can do a load of laundry, you can fold your laundry.

The big point is you find that one thing, that one thing that yes might be a tiny thing and make it a big thing.

The other thing you need to do is prepare. Even if right this instant you feel like you are the bees knees, you're going to have a bad day. Or days or months.

Get prepared.

Put your lotion on your bedside table. Write it down. Put aside a special shade of nail polish. Buy yourself a fancy lip balm.

Get your hardhat and big person panties ready because it's coming.

I also want you to know this.

Before the bad days become hell, know that any thing you do to care for yourself especially when you are not doing well overall is that it is all a big fucking deal.

Let me repeat that and crib from my blog.

If you opened your eyes, if you washed your face, if you ate food, if you had a glass of water, if you put lip balm on, if you walked out of your house and checked your mail it counts. You are doing it.

Make no mistake; a lot of people will not let you have this victory, especially if you are often unwell or depressed.

Fuck those people.

You did it.

You are reading this; you are doing it.

You are extremely important, your well-being is extremely important and you learning to care for yourself when nothing is okay is huge.

Now I want to talk to those of you who are parents for a moment.

For you my friend self-care will mean you will be able to be a better parent. If you're reading this while covered in spit up with a small human running around screaming, I'm talking to you. You my friend are that tiny humans blue print and tiny humans see everything. If you start showing the tiny human in your care that things like being nice and good to yourself is important you are giving them a huge gift.

When your tiny human gets older they will have shitty days that you can't make better. Imagine what puberty might have been like if you'd known that doing some self care things is not only okay but important. What about those shitty days as a young adult when work sucks, school sucks, you don't have a date, etc what if on those days you had the tools and the example of your parents to show you how to feel better?

It's huge right?

It is.

I urge you to pass these things along to your tiny humans. Figure out what they do to entertain themselves and say, baby are you having a bad day? Why don't you go color, take a bath, roll around on the floor, whatever. You get my drift.

Now your action plan is this.

Identify what feel good self-care type things really do it for you on a good day.

Find one thing and write it down, make a note on your computer or phone.

Write down steps to accomplish your self-care thing. No seriously.

When the bad days come, look at your note to yourself and do it.

It might not make you feel as good as usual but you did it. That is what matters.

How about we level up?

Write yourself a permission slip.

It sounds cheesy but it works.

Write a note that tells you that it's okay that you're not doing so hot. Remind yourself to do your special thing. Remind yourself that yes, YES it is a huge deal and that you are doing it.

There are going to be times when all you can do is survive. It is an awful thing but some days waking up is a big deal. You survived that day. I want you to start telling yourself that no you didn't take out the trash or check the mail but damn it you are alive. You made it another day.

Making it another day is going to suck sometimes. Whether you are actively suicidal or just really feeling awful, it still matters to be as good to yourself as you can be. Some days, that is enough to lean on. That is self-care when everything is against you.

I very seriously want you to stop here for a minute and absorb this one point above all else.

Regardless of how little you are able to do physically or emotionally, anything you can do counts. It does. There is no good or bad binary here. This is not about reaching some gold level of awesome. It is about survival. It is about you and I slogging through the mud and the bullshit and coming out the other side. It's about each of us doing what we can when we can. It's not a race, nobody wins.

We live.

Sometimes we live better. Sometimes we feel like we are the best most awesome creatures on the planet. Sometimes all we can do is survive.

It's okay.

Take a moment.

One of the things I am a big fan and advocate of is small moments.

I'm talking about those tiny moments that can get us through the most awful days.

How do we have more of those moments?

My strategy is sometimes I just do what makes me happy for a minute. Sometimes, I do a little dance. I sing a song. I act entirely silly whether or not people are watching for the sole reason is that it makes me happy.

Booty shaking for joy.

To be clear this does not have to involve really getting up and getting down, you don't have to be able bodied, you don't have to be in shape, you don't have to have any rhythm. I mean this for everyone.

Here is how you do it.

Find a song on youtube or you computer or just sing a song.

You can move any part of your body you want. Bob your head, shake your butt, jump up and down, roll your wheelchair back and forth, tap your cane, do jazz hands, wild out and do some kind of crazy shit no one has seen before.

This works best when you're alone if you're shy.

Whatever the beat moves you to do, go ahead and do it.

Do it because it's fun. Do it because that song is your jam and it makes you feel joy inside.

Parents this is a great thing to do with your kids.

Act like a fool.

Make faces, get sweaty, and make yourself laugh.

The point in doing this is because face it, you're funny. You do weird things; you make funny faces and noises. You are funny and you can laugh at your own absurdity.

Here's why I love this so much.

If we only ever see ourselves in major serious business light, it's harder to be good to ourselves. It's harder to say to yourself, "well shit I really screwed that up" and not make it ruin your whole day when we are so serious about ourselves nothing is funny.

The human body is ridiculous. Why not laugh?

I have a tendency to be extremely serious about myself and as a by product of that I can be an absolute bastard to myself.

No one can abuse me and make me feel worthless like I can.

About fifteen years ago I started noticing how absurd I am. I am a flappy flaily person. I cannot walk a straight line, I fall over invisible objects, I make a stupid noise when I'm startled, I make other weird random noises, I grunt and groan, I'm really gassy, when I'm nervous I make a weird face, I am slightly cock eyed, I squeak when I sneeze, I squeak when I get a hard chill, I do a lot very undignified things.

At one point I realized that it's really funny.

My inner life has gotten so much easier since I learned to just laugh at myself.

When I tip over for no reason, when I fall down, when I realize I've been walking around with a smear of mystery substance on my glasses- I laugh.

Laughter directed at self in a loving, head-shaking way makes a lot of other things easier to deal with.

Learning to not be so serious about everything makes it easier to care for yourself.

I know it sounds kind of fluffy and far-fetched but I encourage you to try it.

Do a victory dance.

Hear a song you like at the grocery store? Break it down for a second.

Home alone and in your underwear?

Act like a straight up fool.

Get loved ones in on it.

Laugh.

Laugh until you have to pee or until there are tears streaming down your cheeks.

For me, the ability to laugh at myself even when things are bad has saved my life more than once. I can look at myself and say Shannon, you are a fucked up little weirdo and it's all good.

I want you to have that moment too.

Almost the End.

Ready for the end?

Well not the end but my concluding things.

I am not going to lie to you and tell you that any of the things I've shared with you are magic. This is hard work. Sometimes it will hurt, it might make you cry. This is not a cure all for your ills.

This is a set of tools you can have no matter who you are.

These are things with which you can arm yourself against the world.

Let's face it. For a lot of us, this world is not a friendly place. From our families to the media to our "friends" on facebook who say things that hurt us.

My philosophy is that no matter how much other people love me or support me, at the end of the day I have to be able to do the same in small or large amounts for myself. There is no substitute for that little kernel of strength when things are bad.

Because I have these tools and have learned these lessons, I feel like I have more to give my community and that is important to me. It is part of my life mission to find my people and give them what I have.

You are my people.

You, person reading this even if we've never spoken and you think I am kind of a weirdo, you are important to me.

I want you to have as good a quality of life as you can. I want you to feel as good as you can. I want you to make it for as long as you can.

None of these things will protect you when things are really bad but, I hope they can help you in those times.

Let's talk about a few other things okay?

If you need help, if you need emotional support, if you are feeling suicidal I want you to get help.

I'm talking about everything from finding a local crisis center to call, finding someone on the internet to talk to, don't be afraid. A lot of us have been there and sometimes we all need help.

The easiest way to find help is to go to google and use this search string:

crisis line+(your hometown here)

Links should come up and go with your gut as to which to choose.

If you feel like there is an absolute immediate danger to your life from yourself or from anyone else call your local emergency number immediately. Don't think about it, do it.

If you need help finding help, don't be afraid to ask someone.

If you use any social media there are people who can help you. You can say, "Hi (insert name here) I know we don't know each other well but I need some help finding sliding scale therapy/group/what you need. Can you help me google it and find something?"

If you would like to do this for yourself here is what you do.

Google your home town and the words sliding scale/free/low cost mental health help.

If there isn't anything local, google online mental health help.

Personally, there have been times in my life when all I really needed was the how of something. How to find mental help or a doctor. When I am too overwhelmed or unwell I can't think about the how of these things. So here I am giving that to you.

Feel free to cut and paste that part and leave it in a document on your computer. Make it easy to find and when things are sliding, you have prepared for it and are so into self care you are ready.

Wow I think we are about done for now.

If you need the occasional thing to read feel free to come visit the following entries in my blog. You can also use my form at my blog to ask me questions about self-care. If you need someone to say I public that you are doing it right. You can come visit my little slice of the internet and have a nice stay.

Now here we are. It's all over.

Some extra info for you.

My Blog: www.blog.nudemuse.org

My question form where you can anonymously ask me anything: <http://nudemuse.org/ask.html>

Thank you for buying this tiny book.

A Little Bonus Matter.

You may have reached the end and shaken your head in disgust. Who is this Shannon person to tell me what to do?

I'm not.

Here's the thing, I am not perfect. I am a mess. I am a hot ass mess. I don't personally believe in waiting until one has everything perfect to share what knowledge you have gained.

Let's be screwed up together and learn together.

This matters to me. You even if I don't know you or wouldn't recognize you on the street, you matter to me too.

I fully believe that it is imperative in my life's work to share the things I know help. It is imperative to me that as many of us make it as we can because this world is full of assholes.

I want there to be more of us than them.

This is war and these are your weapons.

This is a fight for our lives.

These are survival tools for the rest of us.

Now my darling homie, I'm all done with taking up your time. Go forth. Self care like a boss baby. You deserve it.