

Stress management guru Rita Garnto has self-care tips to survive COVID-19



A RUNNER'S MIND
CHRISTINE BLANCHETTE

As we navigate through uncertain times for the ages, many are lonely in isolation and fearful of contracting COVID-19. Tempers are frayed, money is tight and nobody knows how long this nightmare is going to last. Learning how to cope is the key to managing stress during a pandemic and Rita Garnto wants to help. She is a Stress Management Educator and author of the book, *Simple Self-Care Saved Me!*

In a Q&A, Garnto the Charlotte, North Carolina resident, shares her self-care tips and why she authored the book.

Q: During COVID-19, what advice do you have on the importance of self-care?

A: Self-care and stress reduction is even MORE important now during this very uncertain and unprecedented time. When we are constantly in stress "mode", our immune systems are NOT functioning like they should be. Why? Physiologically, when we are in stress mode, ALL essential body functions are shut down! That includes our immune systems, digestion, tissue repair, reproduction, and clear thinking. That is NOT a place our bodies need to be right now to stay healthy.

Simple Self-Care Tips: take time to 'be in the moment' and stop what you are doing and engage one of your senses such as hearing. Better yet, go outside for a few minutes and just be still and ask yourself, 'what are all the sounds I can hear right now?' Add some deep breaths and you are definitely dropping your stress level in that moment. Repeat often during the day. Or engage your sight and notice all the beautiful blooming flowers and budding trees. Focus on what you see and take some deep breaths. Those are so simple and easy to add to your busy schedules regularly.

Q: Self-care means different things to each of us?

A: Yes! We are all individuals and different things resonate with us; that is why I have created 3 categories for my simple self-care: 1) in the moment, 2) movement, and 3) mindUNfullness. It is all about finding what you like to do and what is going to work the best for you.

Q: What is one daily self-care tip?

A: First of all, it is finding ONE simple self-care tip YOU like to do, otherwise

you (won't) do it or struggle trying to do it. Second, slide it into your day at regular intervals. For example, stretch while you brush your teeth (that is at least twice daily) and then set a timer to get up from behind your computer and stretch during the day. It's not complicated and just takes less than a minute.

Q: Why do you think people may not want to do self-care even though there are benefits?

A: To be perfectly honest, we think TOO much. Instead of just "doing", we pause and think too long and that allows us to come up with all kinds of rationalizations why we can't do self-care right now. I love The 5 Second Rule by Mel Robbins. Count backwards from 5 to distract your thought process and then give yourself a command. It is amazing how well it can work.

5-4-3-2-1-get out of bed!

Also, I think so many people are under the false assumption that self-care is selfish. To those people I ask, 'How can you pour from an empty cup?' If you do not give yourself the love, compassion and self-care you need, how can you show up your best for anyone?

Q: When did your idea begin to write a book on Simple Self-Care?

A: When I think back 10-15 years ago, the idea started that I wanted to write a book but was not sure of the subject. Later on while I was active in my private massage therapy practice, I thought it might be about massage and self-care. As time went on and I went through lots of life challenges and my stress level got very high and I suffered and recovered from the stress-related health issues, it became clear that I wanted to write about how effective simple self-care can be at reducing stress and improving the quality of life. A friend at the time encouraged me to write an eBook, but it turned into a full-fledged book.

Q: Is the book for everyone and do you have a favorite chapter?

A: The book is written more for women and I say that because I use phrases like, "All right ladies, put your big girl panties on!" BUT lots of men have read it and have really enjoyed it. So really, it is a good read for anyone that is struggling with how to find the time to do self-care and struggling with high stress levels.

Hmmmm ... my favorite chapter ... good question! I think the chapter where Sophie Self-Care demonstrates 19 different simple self-care techniques and explains why and how to do them properly. She's a cute character that was introduced in my book and I now have an illustrator working on a male counterpart for her.

My goal is to help stressed, busy women and men go from feeling crappy to happy using simple self-care. This is my purpose to serve and my way to give back. The way I look at life is that when you get handed lemons (difficult life challenges) you make lemonade (simple solutions to share with others.)

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) causes a respiratory infection that can involve the following symptoms:



Fever



Cough



Trouble Breathing

Let's continue to protect ourselves.



Cough into your sleeves



Wash your hands



Keep your distance



Cover your face (if less than 2 metres)



Limit your travel

[Québec.ca/coronavirus](https://quebec.ca/coronavirus)

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