

CHAPTER II: CARING FOR SELF

(Strategies for Well-Being)

“The Crescent/Hillel Moon and Its Symbolism”

(Fresh energy, conceptualization, focus on detail, sprouting, declaration)

**“If your compassion does not include yourself,
it is incomplete.”**

...Jack Kornfield

ne of the most important decisions I ever made in my life was to move forward and embrace the holistic health movement. I didn't know that such a movement existed until a serious event happened in my family; my dearest older son was critically injured in a car accident. The year was 1985, and I flew to Tampa, FL, where he was being taken care of.

Watching my son in a coma, not knowing if he would be all right, changed me. I grew more emboldened and decided that this wasn't the time to do ordinary things. I imagined a string that connected all the wonderful people who reached out to me; it went from person to person, state to state, and every time there was a connection the string only grew and grew. It started to vibrate and became stronger, and I realized that I had created a "Web of loving intentions," which gave me great comfort in a difficult time.

I also realized we can co-create our realities; love, kindness, and caring are potent healers, and there is more to life than what we see in front of us.

The story had a happy ending. My son is now a practicing PTA, a husband, and a father; whatever happened in Tampa had been life-changing for him. For myself, I was drawn to learn more about holistic healing, and it has become a way of life for me!

Holistic Beginnings

I was attending the national conference of the American Holistic Nurses' Association in 1989 when I first heard of the concept of self-care. The speaker asked the audience, "How can you take care of others if you don't take care of yourself?" and I thought, "*Why, this makes perfect sense.*"

And so, I began my journey to learn as much as I could about how to take care of myself. It is my personal belief that caring for self *IS* caring for others, whether it be in a professional setting, or with one's family and friends.

I see myself as a nucleus; the more I care for myself, the more energy can ripple outward. It's that simple of a concept. Happy nucleus = happy energy to the world!

Things I've Learned Along the Way

From 1985 to 1987, I was busy with my graduate education at the University of Huntsville in Alabama. I was very fortunate to be in a small class where we received a lot of attention. One event occurred there that I will never forget.

I was in the ICU working with families, talking to them and offering support. One such family was in the midst of turmoil. The father of the family was dying and on life support; the mother and their children were waiting for an errant son to arrive. I was there the day the son came. He wanted

to do everything possible to save his father, though they hadn't seen each other in years and had never discussed what his father wanted.

The father had made his wishes known to other family members, with no extra efforts to sustain his life. This son adamantly disagreed: "I want everything done for him," he said.

The staff was very concerned about this family situation and asked if I could help. I took a deep breath, centered myself, and went into the room. I wasn't alone; all the women healers of the past were by my side, and they gave me strength. Whenever I did this work, I would visualize myself as a huge tree, whose roots went deep into the earth, and I felt more grounded.

It was clear to me that years of unresolved anger and guilt were detrimental to the harmony of this situation. I began working with the family, little by little engaging the son and listening to him. He was angry with himself and the world and only wanted to let his father know that he was trying to do better. Working with him was challenging.

I told him, "Only love can heal. You can't bring your father back, but you can tell him you love him and appreciate all that he did for you. Maybe you weren't ready to listen when you were younger."

He then bent over to speak to his father. I looked around at the family. There wasn't a dry eye, only hope for a relationship that had gone wrong. The son started to cry, but he got his words out. It was a catharsis for him, and he was able to say his last goodbye. Later, the father died in peace; he could let go!

This behavior had a profound effect on me. At the end of life, it is a blessing to be there for each other. No disagreements, no power trips, just loving presence.

At nodal events such as the time of death, one needs others the most! We need the comfort to say goodbye, and the love of others to support us. We need the precious smiles, the saddened tears, and the hands that can hold and comfort us. We need each other, as others need us.

Traditional Chinese Medicine

In 1989, I attended a wonderful conference in Atlanta, given by Dr. Donald Pachuta. It was called "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." It was about the Law of the Five Elements, which is the integral theory that supports Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Of all the material I've learned, the Law of the Five Elements has been the most helpful in my life, both as a healing art and on a personal level for my family. The Law of the Five Elements is an ancient Chinese practice that integrates the whole body. The practice of imagining that all the body systems are interconnected has helped me understand where illness may emanate from. Nothing in Western medicine explains illness or disharmony as well as TCM does.

I sat mesmerized during his workshop as he explained the Five-Element theory. The body is divided into five areas, and each area has elements with different organ systems, emotions, tastes, seasons, organs, tissue, etc. The organs themselves have different “Official” responsibilities (see chart below). The idea was mind-boggling, and to this day I refer to the workshop and its wisdom.

Dr. Pachuta continued to describe two main cycles, the Sheng and the Ko. The Sheng or “Creation” cycle is considered to be the “Law of the Mother-Child,” where each element nurtures the next. Wood is burned to make Fire; Fire is burned and creates ash, which makes Earth; Earth makes ore, from which we make Metal tools; Metal makes Water that condenses on the surface; and Water provides nurturance for the Wood to grow.

What I found just as exciting is the emotional aspect of the Ko cycle, which helps us understand what the emotional antidotes to our emotions are.

The Ko cycle is considered to be an antidote for whatever ails one at the time. Fear (Water) is the antidote for love (Fire); more simply put, one can’t have love when fear is present. Love (Fire) is the antidote for Metal (grief); kindness helps sadness dissipate: *“I am so sorry for your loss.”* Metal (grief) is the antidote for Wood (anger): *“What is it that saddens you so?”* Wood (anger) is the antidote for Earth (worry): *“Will you stop worrying!”* Earth (worry) is the antidote for Water (fear): *“I am worried for you. What is going on?”*

The way this works in practice is to question oneself when an emotion enters one’s awareness: *“What am I angry about?” “What am I afraid of?” “What am I worried about?” “What is it that I am fearful of?”* And just maybe one will be able to get to the source of the moment’s emotion and gain insight into it. I believe that this ability adds greatly to a sense of self-control.

The following table lists the five elements and their accompanying areas of interest: the “Officials,” the “Organs” affected, the “Tissues” involved, the “Emotions” related, the “Seasons” of the year, the “Colors” associated, the “Sensory” organs, the “Tastes,” and the “Time” that the organ(s) functions best. After a while, the wealth of information in the table may lead one to consider what might be going wrong.

My suggestions are to open your heart to love and kindness, get in touch with your empathy, and begin to look at the world in ways you may not have. *What is going on? Where is the anger coming from?* Be willing to see the larger picture, instead of getting caught in the turbulence of the day.

TABLE OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS

ELEMENTS	FIRE	EARTH	METAL	WATER	WOOD
OFFICIALS	The Supreme Controller (heart) The separator of the pure from the impure (small intestine)	The transformer & transporter (spleen) The rotter & ripener of food/drink (stomach)	The receiver of chi (lung) The drainer of the dregs (large intestine)	The controller of fluids (kidneys) The reservoir (bladder)	In charge of strategic planning (liver) In charge of decisions (gallbladder)
ORGANS	heart & small intestine	spleen & stomach	lung & large intestine	kidneys & urinary bladder	liver & gallbladder
TISSUES	blood vessels	muscle	skin	bone	tendon
EMOTIONS	joy	worry	grief	fear	anger
SEASONS	summer	late summer	autumn	winter	spring
COLOR	red	yellow	white	black	green
SENSORY ORGANS	tongue	mouth	nose	ear	eyes
TASTES	bitter	sweet	pungent	salty	sour
TIME (optimally functioning)	11 am to 3 pm	7 am to 11 am	3 am to 7 am	3 pm to 7 pm	11 pm to 3 am
Created by: MWD 6/7/2023 Adapted from Dr. Pachuta's workshop					

At the same conference, Dr. Pachuta taught us a meditation called *Orange Liquid*. It was phenomenal to be with a group and experience such a healing modality. He had the group go on a rocket ship to another planet, where we picked up the precious healing cylinder of orange liquid. When we got back home (still in meditation), we poured the liquid into the top of our heads, and slowly and gently it flowed through every part of our bodies. It went through our brain structures, our hearts, our lungs, our arms and legs, our GI tract, everywhere. We used our hands and the soles of our feet as valves to let the liquid leave our bodies. It was remarkable!

I take time for myself and do this exercise. It is an amazing source of healing that can be done in the quiet of one's home.

Experiencing Healing Touch

Healing Touch is a gentle biofield (energy field) therapy that often causes a deep sense of calm and relaxation in the body-mind-spirit. When I decided to learn about Healing Touch, I went to a session in Nashville and several workshops in the Northern Alabama area, as well as one in Florida on Keewaydin Island. In our sessions, we practiced on each other and felt the results. I always came away feeling relaxed and centered, personally experiencing how beneficial therapy was.

Though I never intended to practice Healing Touch professionally, I truly wanted to learn it for my self-care and for that of my family.

On one occasion in Florida, a classmate inadvertently ate a salad containing a nut to which she was highly allergic. She became very stressed and asked the class if we could help her. Through a technique called “The Magnetic Ruffle,” we used our hands as if they were magnets to pick up debris. We swept up and down her body, “collecting” debris from her reaction to the nuts she had eaten. Our actions continued until her debris field was clear. I honestly was in awe that we could help her; even though she was very sleepy, she felt fine.

On another occasion, a fellow nurse, who was scheduled for facial surgery, asked me if I could help her pre- and post-op. I worked with her to relax pre-op, and, on the day after her surgery, I helped to clear her field with great results. The doctor even commented that she was doing especially well when she went for her post-op visit.

Shortly after my grandson was born, I was helping out my daughter. She asked me to give her a treatment to relax her, after which she also did very well. Healing Touch itself works on any congestion in the field; with a focused, caring, and intentional approach, the treatment can provide help to others.

I’ve done the treatment for numerous family members, as well as for friends who request it, and we always enjoy the experience. I believe that more people should be trained in this modality. As the now-deceased founder of Healing Touch, Janet Mentgen, said, “Anyone with a compassionate heart and a desire to be of service to others could become a practitioner of energy healing. All that was needed was a commitment to learn and to grow.”

Imagine, if you would, more people trained as Healing Touch Practitioners to help the world in its struggle with the current state of anxiety. Fewer drugs, more compassion--I envision this as a wonderful possibility!

Goddesses

One person whom I admire greatly is Dr. Jean Shinoda Bolen. Her books were the very essence of feminine consciousness and empowerment. She taught me about the psychology of women via the Goddesses, in her excellent work, *Goddesses in Everywoman: Powerful Archetypes in Women’s Lives*. I internalized it all, and never saw women the same way again.

There were the Goddesses that could stand alone, such as Artemis, Athena, and Hestia. They did what pleased them. For Greeks, Artemis (Diana in the Roman tradition) was the Goddess of the Hunt. Athena (Minerva to the Romans) was the Greek Goddess of Wisdom and Crafts, a strategist, and her father’s (Zeus’s) daughter. Hestia (Vesta to the Romans) was the Greek Goddess of Hearth and Temple, and the wise woman.

Then there were the vulnerable Goddesses: Hera, Demeter, and Persephone. Hera in Greek mythology (Juno in Roman) was the Goddess of Marriage. Demeter in the Greek tradition (Ceres

in Roman) was the Goddess of Grain. The Greek Goddess Persephone was the daughter of Demeter; in the Roman tradition, she was known as the Kore/Cora (the maiden).

Bolen's excellent work offers women an opportunity to examine their own lives and gain insight into their behaviors and those of others. The book was an x-ray of the psyche of women, and why they do what they do. I include it as an important part of caring for myself.

Bolen has also written a book about men, *Gods in Everyman: A New Psychology of Men's Lives & Loves*. In it, she discusses the father archetypes of Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, and the generation of sons: Apollo, Hermes, Ares, Hephaestus, and Dionysus. Again, as in *Goddesses in Every Woman*, my understanding of men has deepened after reading it, and I am clearer about the root of men's behaviors.

Bolen writes: "My practice has developed my awareness of what goes on inside men's and women's hearts and heads, of the joy that comes from having a sense of wholeness and integration when what we do is consistent with who we are."

It was Bolen who introduced me to the concepts of Cronos and Kairos and how time can be experienced in different ways, which I'd like to share.

Understanding the Concepts of Cronos and Kairos

Here is a relatively simple way of looking at time and its impact. In Greek culture, there were two types of time expressed: *Cronos* (on time) and *Kairos* (in time).

When experiencing Cronos time, we are on the clock: hurrying not to be late, making a timely appointment, and sometimes rushing to get things done. There is a sense of urgency, similar to our experience in modern-day society. I like to compare Cronos time to wearing a watch that needs to be looked at every few minutes so we can get an accurate time. In Cronos time, we never leave time; it is always with us, at all levels of body/mind/spirit.

What is it like when we are experiencing Kairos time? I like to give the example of being in the meadow with a sweet child who has no understanding of time pressure. They are in time, observing, watching the butterflies flit from flower to flower and the bees buzz about. In Kairos time, we no longer need a watch for time itself doesn't exist. We are free from time's hold on us; it is a time for us to just be. In Kairos, our spirit is lifted, and our body/mind/spirit are all enriched.

The question is this: Can we live a life that consciously seeks out more Kairos time? The answer is yes! Here are some ideas on how to balance these energies.

Managing Cronos and Kairos

Consider an imaginary jar with twenty-four marbles; each marble represents one hour of time. As one goes about time management and daily planning, consider how the day might go if all the marbles used went to Cronos time. Pretty hectic, I would guess. Consider again, what feeling

would arise if the marbles were better distributed, with some devoted to Cronos time and some to Kairos time.

Think about doing time management based on these two options:

- 1) Cronos time for shopping, sitting at the computer, working around the house, making calls, volunteering, planning, doctor's appointments, etc.
- 2) Kairos time for meditating, yoga, being in nature, writing, dreaming, smelling the fresh air, getting a massage, resting with one's partner, having a pedicure, or whatever activity doesn't lead to looking at a watch!

Let's go back to the jar of twenty-four marbles. How might it be to spend more Kairos time each day, perhaps even adding it to a daily calendar? Example: *"Looking at tomorrow, I've got to get ready for a doctor's appointment at 10:30 am. I'll be back around lunchtime and have plenty of time to work on the garden. But later in the afternoon, I will listen to music and relax ☺."*

This structure gives the human body/mind/spirit time to simply let go of all daily responsibilities, rest, and "be." It's hard to imagine the creativity that might be supported by being off the treadmill of life and allowing oneself to come away from time's constraints.

Even the heart in its wisdom rests, which is why it is called "The Master!"

A Wise Choice of Degree

Very early in 2002, I started to pursue a non-academic graduate degree in Natural Health from Clayton College of Natural Health. It was to be a PhD, which I truly would not be getting any academic credit for.

Now, why would I put myself through the rigors of studying something that wouldn't have any benefit to me--academically, that is?

My answer: I wanted to learn specific content I was personally interested in. For the next two years, I was inundated with an exceptional amount of reading material.

We learned about health from every angle: the history, the different traditions of healing (TCM and Ayurvedic), nutrition, vibrational healing, homeopathy, Color and Sound therapies, and herbal medicine. We went to seminars and studied with experts; there were herbalists, flower essence therapists, and nutritionists. I loved my time there. I received my degree in 2004, and I was never happier.

My dissertation was on "The Emergence of Flower-Derived Complementary/Alternative Therapies for Healing the Body, Mind, Emotions, and Spirit." The time I spent writing my dissertation was very worthwhile; I could feel my knowledge base expanding as I completed it.

There are times in a person's life that speak to "character." For me, one such time was choosing not to attend an accredited DSN (Doctor of Science in Nursing) program. Instead, I took the path least trodden. Almost twenty years later, I'm glad I did so, for there isn't a single day that I don't use my "degree."

Being With the Flowers

I chose to continue my natural interest in flowers, this time in a unique way. In 2005, I went to study with Richard Katz and Patricia Kaminski at Granlibakken in Lake Tahoe, in a Practitioner Training Program for Flower Essences. The resort, which was very rustic and beautiful, provided the perfect setting. The training was a gathering of teachers and healers from all over. Many US cities were represented, as well as foreign countries. The international nature of the population allowed for a cross-pollination of ideas.

The event's syllabus was very well thought-out, including a hike up the mountain to study its wildflowers. We observed the penstemon plants that "hang on" to the edge of the mountain, and learned how that may resonate with people who have a similar human experience. I learned that "taking the making of a flower's essence" was fully understanding the form and the function of the flower, along with its soul purpose. That a flower or combination of flowers could help so many human conditions was a major, revealing aspect of my study.

We each chose a plant or flower to present at the end of our time together; I chose the Joshua Tree and wrote the following based on it:

That the unified soul of mankind will again come together as it once was, as a true family that lovingly cares for every one of its members, and will again know Oneness.

My studies taught me increased awareness and sensitivity to the flower world; I practice this art with love and respect to this day and have been changed by it. I use flower essences and have created formulas for family members in need, with good results. A well-known standard formula called "Rescue Remedy," which consists of five different flowers, was created by Dr. Bach and is internationally known. It has been very useful to me over the years as a resource for those times when anxiety begins to increase, and calm is needed.

In my study of aromatherapy, I found that some groups of plants and flowers have similar properties. For example, lavender is part of the Lamiaceae (Labiatae) family that includes mint, oregano, marjoram, basil, lemon balm, thyme, and others. All have healing properties.

There are two bottles of essential oil I always have handy: lavender and eucalyptus. To me, they represent the flowers of the field (lavender) and the leaves of tall, wispy trees (eucalyptus). I use them for general health purposes and to refresh my home with their healthy fragrance. They also help me reconnect to nature within my home.

I always buy 100% genuine essential oils, because the difference between real oil and doctored oil is like the difference between an elephant and a mouse. Also, the minute I smell a “real” essential oil, I have a tingly feeling in my mouth, which means it is fresh and active.

Using essential oils has enhanced my life, offering a dimension I would not have known without them. They’re like old friends; they bring comfort and, most importantly, are healthy and empowering.

Yoga

In the late 1990s, my husband and I had the privilege to be taught by an expert yoga instructor, Prem Shakti, whose studio was fairly close to our home near West Palm Beach. We faithfully attended for four years and learned many *Asanas*, or positions. We also learned how to work with the breath, or *Pranayama*.

Prem guided us expertly through the one-hour session. There was always a great deal of heart in her teaching, and she has remained someone we greatly admire. What was so excellent about her work was that we internalized it, making it a part of ourselves. To this day, we often practice our positions, and especially our breath work, which is excellent for stress management.

At our ages of 92 and 81, respectively, both my husband and I find that yoga practice has enhanced our well-being tremendously. Even though life can be very complicated these days, we go back to the beauty and simplicity of yoga, where we have precious moments of peace.

It’s hard not to be flexible on the outside when one is flexible in the body! Body/Mind Integration helps to solve problems of everyday life. What happens *on the mat* happens *off the mat* as well. As our yoga teacher would say, “Life is a dance between will and surrender.”

When we surrender, we can let go of all that we have no control over; this can bring peace to our lives.

I always found a big difference in how I felt when we entered the studio and when we left, as a tremendous peace came over me. We were both working at the college then, and yoga made a huge difference in dealing with the great amount of stress we experienced!

The ongoing interest in yoga in America right now speaks to its ability to make a difference in a person’s life. The practice unites body/mind into an integrated whole, and I truly believe in its healing and strengthening capabilities.

How to Make Stress Management a Part of Your Day

- Recognize what the stressors are in your life. *Too much shopping in one day? Overbooked your doctor’s appointments? Changes in scheduling? A longer drive than anticipated?*
- Anticipate when stressful times might be happening in your life. Look at your weekly and monthly planners and see what lies ahead. If your week has several doctor’s appointments

in it, choose not to overbook yourself with lots of other appointments. Leave time for yourself and time to reflect and breathe, which has proven to be very effective. Leave time every day for Kairos time!

- Consider practicing yoga: Choose some favorite poses. Examples might be the Sun Salutation, Yoga Mudra (heart below the mind), Downward Dog, The Bridge, and The Eagle.
- Breathing exercises: Ujjayi, or Ocean Breath, works to calm the mind when stressed. By keeping the mouth closed one can make the sound of the ocean, and focusing on this sound can be very calming. Other exercises, such as alternate nostril breathing, are also very helpful. The easiest breathing exercise is to simply breathe in, raise your abdomen, and then breathe out – try doing this twenty times every morning and before going to sleep; it's a wonderful way to calm the body/mind.
- Dance: Develop a set of downloaded music, and when the spirit moves you, listen and dance to it. This promotes flexibility and joy at the same time. Don't care about how you look. Be free and be happy. Choose some "Oldies" for sure; it's fun to let go and "be" with the songs of a bygone era.
- Music: Have a selection of songs that you love to listen to, whether it be classical, jazz, or rock and roll. Create a beautiful mix of composers, singers, and medleys that fill your heart. And yes, cry along with them when you are so moved, and it will feel so good!
- Exercise: Walk around inside the house in inclement weather but be outside whenever possible. Walking is great exercise after dinner because it helps with digestion. Try sitting on a chair and standing up 10 times without holding on to anything, which strengthens the hip muscles. You might want to work with a personal trainer or physical therapist to develop a program best suited to your lifestyle.
- Self-talk: Here are some helpful phrases:
 - "You can do it!"*
 - "Good girl!" "Good boy!"*
 - "Would you ever let yourself down?"*
 - "Be gentle with yourself."*
 - "If it comes, it can go."*
 - "Thank you for this beautiful day. I am grateful."*
 - "Be you!"*
 - "You can choose to engage if you want to!"*
 - "Lighten up!"*
 - "Let go!"*
- Hugs: If possible, start your day off with a hug delivered in loving kindness. This simple act can hold people close together.

- Wishes: Every night before eating dinner, make a wish for someone's well-being: "*To needy children; To Peace; To stop human suffering.*" This very helpful ritual helps you to think of others and keep grounded before a meal.
- Empathy: To have empathy for others as well as yourself is vital. Rabbi Hillel once said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?"
- Gardening: If possible, work in a garden often. Let go, and be with the plants, and watch them grow. The key to watching plants grow is to connect and learn from them; learn their form, their function, and what makes them happy. It's about them, and that's the key.
- What is truly important for healthy aging is to find something that interests you that is greater than yourself. When you think about others, you free yourself from thinking about yourself. Yes, you may have "issues," but caring about others helps you transcend your daily cares.
- For those of you who have pets: they are a joy. Enjoy!
- Participating in a group supports social connections that are healthy for you. The group itself is not necessarily important; being with people is the key. A simple list might include a senior center, a book club, a group discussion, a photography club, a swim group, a yoga class, etc.
- Being with people who respect aging is vital. Granted, they may be a challenge to find, but seek out those who value you as an older person, who listen to you, and, of course, who want to learn from you. Today's society is more focused on youth. This may be nice for young people trying to find their way in the world, but it is the older adult who has much to offer.

Thoughts on Nourishing Oneself

I look at nourishment in terms of how we nurture ourselves internally and how we engage with nourishing experiences and relationships externally. This means what we put into our bodies, who and what we allow to enter into our lives, as well as the environment we put ourselves in.

Internal Nourishment

First and foremost, consider eating consciously. To eat consciously is to be aware and purposely plan one's diet. My husband and I dedicate time to deciding what we are going to eat and consider food to be a very important part of our lives. The following is a typical dialogue we might have:

Let's think about fish two times this week, maybe a meat meal, or perhaps some chicken. We'll need plenty of vegetables, and fruits. What's in season now? Is it time for the pomegranates to come out? Are Cosmic Crisp apples on sale? What about the Granny Smiths?

Eating consciously requires planning for one's well-being. A concept I follow is Dr. Andrew Weil's suggestion to limit foods that cause inflammation. His Anti-Inflammatory Diet and Food

Pyramid are excellent ways to see pictorially how to approach his recommended food choices. It starts at the bottom with fruits and vegetables and works its way up to the top with a small amount of 70% dark chocolate. (See Resources.)

Having good internal nutrition takes dedication and truly caring about self. Planning takes time and shows consideration for one's needs; going to the market with a prepared list of needed items speaks to caring.

I believe the act of planning what one will be eating shows a deep and abiding dedication to one's health. There are days when we'll look at each other and say, "I'm running out of ideas and can't think anymore." That's natural; but somehow we pull it together and figure out what's best for us.

One little caveat: Friday night is our ice cream night ☺! We cheat mightily but have decided that, considering our usually healthy diet, we're going to be okay. And, so far, we have been!

External Nourishment

How is "external nutrition" possible? I always used to think of nutrition as food, until one day I heard about "nourishing" oneself in many ways. I've since concluded that who we choose to be with, and what comes into our senses, has as much value to our health and well-being as the food we eat.

So, maybe nourishing oneself in this way is about setting limits and healthy boundaries. It's about choosing what is best for one's well-being. Again, planning and choosing what environments we put ourselves in, and who we relate to, is important. Of course, we can't have total control in our lives; as someone much wiser than myself once said, "Control is an illusion!"

But couldn't we limit the amount of time spent with someone who is potentially toxic? Couldn't we think ahead about how cold that restaurant is and take a jacket along? At times, wouldn't it be wise to say to oneself, "*I've taken this as far as I can and need to let go,*" or wouldn't it be valuable to our aging self to occasionally just say, "*No, I think not. But thank you anyway.*"

Thinking about what is in our best interest is a stress-prevention strategy! Our hours are passing, and our time on this Earth is shortening. Can we not live more wisely and consciously in the time we have left?

Astrological Perspectives

The astrology of caring for oneself speaks to having energy, and that concerns Mars and its inherent drive. There are days when I can perform and do whatever I've sought to do. But I realize that by my very nature, due to my native Mars in Pisces, I have low energy reserves. My Mars is more about imagination, which is amazing to have when I'm writing but not always helpful for physical activity.

I've made a conscious decision to move beyond any limitations I may have and purposefully move myself in the direction of my well-being. I have an exercise plan to keep myself balanced and my weight in check; with self-discipline (Saturn), I do it!

Conscious choice is always possible 😊!

Final Thought:

“In the Moon’s sprouting time, I consciously work on caring for myself so that I can model well-being for the generations to follow.”

