

Small,

Daily

Decisions

MAKING EVERYDAY CHOICES
THAT BUILD US UP

story by KATHLEEN GEIGER

We know and accept, deep in our bones, that children, aging parents, pets, and even our plants need nourishment. Not only with good food for the body, but also through kind, instructive, encouraging words for health and growth within. And while keeping those who depend on us well-tended takes continuous planning and effort, we'd never consider doing otherwise. They are extensions of ourselves—our hearts outside of our bodies.

What a strange irony it is, then, that nurturing our own inner selves—that sacred source of all our creative thought, resilience, and zest for life—often goes largely undone. Maybe we simply don't think about caring for ourselves in that way. Our families and daily responsibilities are visible and tangible, after all. But self-care that lasts? We're doing good to drink enough water in a day or eat our vegetables.

But building our hearts and minds up for the long haul doesn't actually require cramming another should-do into the calendar. That's the beautiful thing about the nature of nurture. Opportunities to nourish ourselves are actually all around us in the ebb and flow of every day. If we simply notice them and choose to engage, these small shifts can make all the difference.

To slow down. To practice gratitude for what surrounds us. To notice our inner dialogue. In moments that might seem mundane and routine, we can still make these choices. And every time we do, we give ourselves just a little more space to grow.

Imagine this:

YOU'RE WAITING IN A LONG LINE
AT THE GROCERY STORE...

Except this time, instead of looking down at your phone, scrolling and willing time to move faster, you choose to lift your gaze and really take in what's around you: The baby smiling at you over her mother's shoulder. The food that's in your cart. The gentleman who let the tired young mother wrangling two toddlers go before him in line.

You acknowledge the goodness right there in that moment. And something slows and softens within. You catch your breath. Who knows how long you've been holding it.

LITTLE,
MEANINGFUL
DAILY
CHOICES—
THAT'S HOW WE
STRENGTHEN
OURSELVES
FOR LIFE'S
LONGER NIGHTS
AND MORE
DEMANDING
SEASONS
AHEAD.

When was the last time you noticed how you talk to yourself when you make a mistake? Like clockwork, the old inner critic cranks up: *I always do this. I never get things right.* But what if this time, before spiraling, you catch that inner dialogue in its tracks. You pause, pivot, and choose to talk to yourself like you would an old friend. *Stuff happens*, you say to yourself. *You're not alone. You have the resources to figure this out.* Suddenly, you're moving again and with a little more trust than before.

When we're safe, wherever we are becomes a place we can thrive. And we can create that space of safety inside ourselves with small yet significant shifts of intention.

A Shift Toward Nurture

HOW OUR EVERYDAY LIVES
OFFER ENDLESS MOMENTS
TO BE INTENTIONAL WITH
OUR CHOICES.

Strengthening ourselves is something we can work on as often as we choose. It's about starting where you are and remaining open to moments when you can show yourself compassion.

Slowing Down

Being more aware of what's happening in the moment can put you in touch with the world that's unfolding around you—the textures and smells that bring your environment front and center. This offers moments for gratitude, but it also grounds you physically by helping slow your breathing and giving your nervous system space to settle.

Is there part of your daily routine when you could slow down and be more present to what's happening around you?

Practicing Gratitude

This need not be as formal as a gratitude journal. It can be as simple as setting an intention to be more aware of the ways you are fortunate or of the people in your life who are important to you. In stressful situations, finding one small nugget of something positive can be nurturing.

What can you think of in your life right now that you sometimes take for granted, yet you are very grateful for?

Noticing Inner Dialogue

Self-compassion is a practice where we talk to ourselves the way that we talk to a friend. Simply ask yourself: Would I ever say that to someone else? If the answer is no, then it's time to show yourself that same kindness.

In moments of frustration, what positive thoughts could you exchange for any negative scripts that run through your mind?

If adding activities to your list of “things to do” feels difficult, then don't. Perhaps starting with a few kind words is right for this season. For change to be lasting and for nurture to be authentic, it must grow out of what feels natural and true for you.