

How to Hold Space for Yourself

By [Azriel ReShel](#) on Friday August 5th, 2016



The Importance of 'Being There' for Yourself

Most people would say they are good at supporting their friends and family, but why are we so bad at being there for ourselves?

When my second eldest daughter was a few months old, she developed colic. She would wake every night, crying for several hours, utterly inconsolable. Nothing I did helped her, not breastfeeding, holding her, rocking her, or my attempts to soothe her. Sometimes her cries pierced me so deeply I felt like giving up and leaving her alone. I felt so powerless.

Though it was difficult, my daughter taught me something vital and precious. As I watched her healing journey, I realised I cannot take away someone else's pain or rescue them. I cannot change what they are feeling, patch it up and move along. All I could do was witness, be there and be present for her. Yes I got frustrated, angry, and distraught that I couldn't do more, but eventually I found a place of calm as I sang mantras and focussed on staying peaceful in my own body. In learning to hold space for her, I learned to hold space for myself. In fact, I couldn't be present for her, without being present for myself. Her pain triggered my own deep pain, and I had to allow myself to move through it if I was going to help her.



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It took the crumbling of a 13 year relationship to make me see how much of my energy goes into holding space for others; my four children, ex-partner, and those I work with in my teaching and healing practice. While I can hold space well for others, am sensitive and empathic, I recently realised again that there was a ceiling to this ability. In order to expand my capacity to be there for others, I needed to truly learn how to be there for myself. I was so focussed outwards, that I was neglecting the very thing that makes me solid and potent as a healing force for others: My own wellbeing.

I have a daily requirement to centre, ground and remain in my own core, otherwise I'm knocked off into other people's solar systems and wander around in a lost galaxy for a while before finding my way home. We all need to hold space for ourselves if we are going to be able to live life in a healthy and balanced way.



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What exactly does it mean to “hold space” for yourself?

We seem to do it naturally for others, but what does it mean to do it for ourselves? For me, holding space means becoming the container to experience myself; to grow, to feel, to express, to test out, to live. It is being present, treating yourself with care, consideration, kindness, compassion and love. Hearing the needs of your body and mind, feeling your emotions, and listening to the yearning of your soul. It's a way of being, a lifestyle, a profound choice and a stand you take. It's not a belief system, but is rather a way of being with yourself and meeting your own needs. This can be lifesaving in intimate relationships, where we can ruin a good thing by trying to make the other meet all our needs. We spend every minute of the day with ourselves. How much of it is good, supportive, and kind?

Holding space is like a great pilgrimage home to your own soul. A key to holding space for yourself is to see yourself with all your faults and without judgement and criticism. To see yourself with kindness and love, just as you would a friend. It's making friends with your fear, inviting Cousin Self-Doubt, Mrs Perfectionist, Brother Criticism, and Sister Putdown, in for a cup of tea around the fireplace.



Treat yourself with care, consideration, kindness, compassion and love.

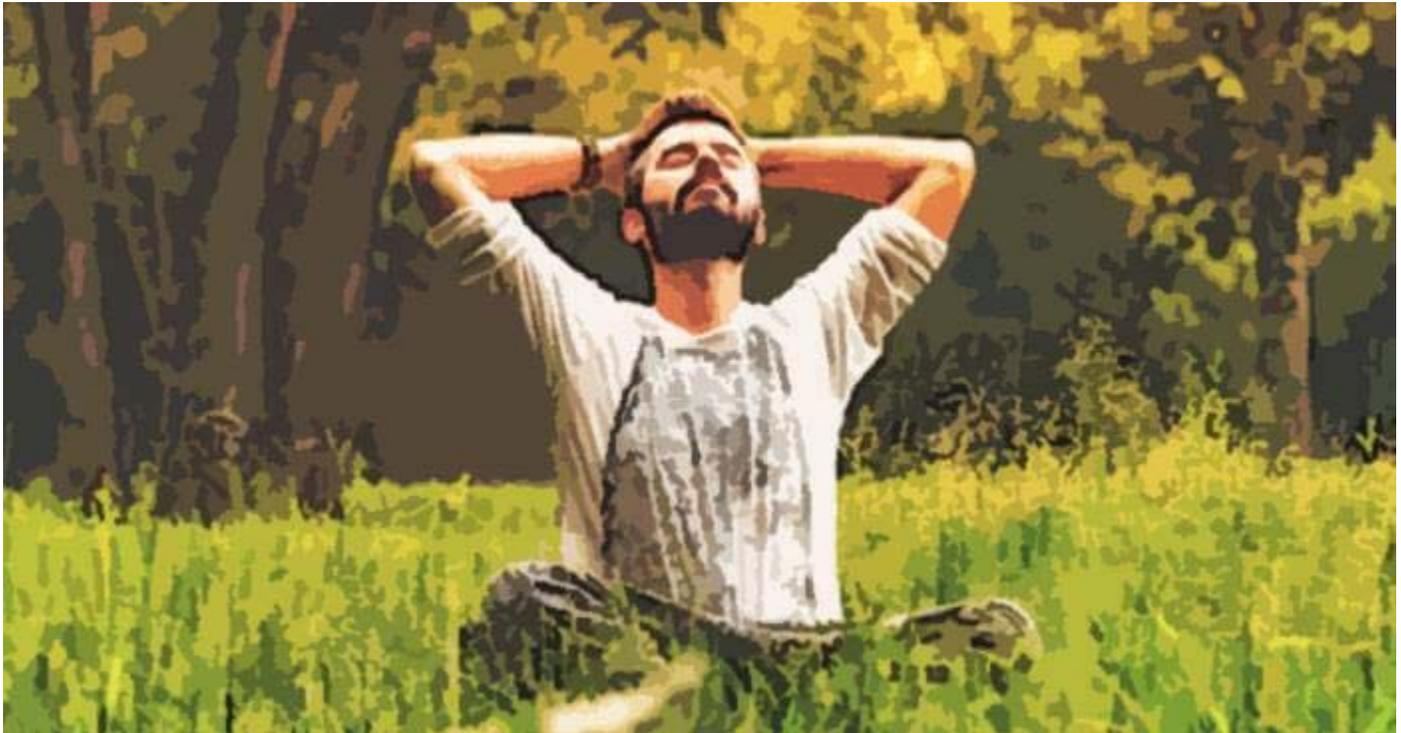
“Self-acceptance is my refusal to be in an adversarial relationship to myself.”

Nathaniel Brand

Holding space for yourself gives you a place to check your direction, to see who or what is in the driver seat of your life, and to adjust your course when you need to. It brings space and awareness into your life, ensuring your life reflects your soul and your longings, so you don't have to wake up at age 45 and realise you don't like who you've become. If you truly want to help others, and make a positive impact on the world, then learning to hold space for yourself, to befriend and love yourself, is the greatest impact you could make on the planet. You can't hold space for someone else if you can't be with your own pain and hold space for yourself. If there's no room for you in your life, there isn't really any room for others. When you're kind to yourself you impact the lives of others by being less reactive, more responsive, more available, empathic, compassionate, kind, present, balanced and at peace.

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

But how do we hold space for ourselves? Here are some simple steps to ensure there is room in your life for you.



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9 Vital keys to holding space for yourself

1. Embracing your imperfection

Your “imperfections” are what make you unique and can often be the gateway to your greatest gifts. If you try and be like everyone else, you rob the world of your special talents and the rare contribution that only you can make. The more you can accept and learn to love your individuality, the more you will express it and the happier you will be. Some of the world’s most uncompromisingly brazen individuals have made enormous impacts. Who would have ever thought a monobrow could be cool, yet Frida Kahlo made it so! Self-acceptance is key to holding space for yourself. The more you accept and love yourself, the more you will look after yourself and value your own needs.

2. Saying no

When you say ‘no’ to others, you very often say ‘yes’ to yourself. If you’re doing something for others at the expense of yourself, it is not beneficial for anyone.

Through years of pleasing others, my new mantra to live by has become: ‘if something feels right in my heart then it will serve others too’.

Honouring yourself always works out well. It’s unkind to put yourself last, and agreeing to do things through obligation always breeds resentment. This is not to say you shouldn’t do things for others (of course you should!), but there’s a way to do it that also supports your own wellbeing. When you say ‘no’ to others, you strengthen your self-esteem, you show yourself that you are important and valuable. And you give others permission to do the same.



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3. Developing boundaries.

When you have good boundaries, are assertive and can say ‘no’ without feeling guilty, then obligatory relationships end and you can enter the realm of the undefended heart – a place where you are able to love freely and generously. Much of loving is defended loving. When you know you have the strength to stand up for yourself and stand in your own corner, you can actually love more freely. Boundaries don’t need to shut out, they can actually strengthen bonds.

4. Communing with yourself

Making time to truly connect with yourself supports your overall health and wellbeing. I have a practice each morning and evening where I place my hands over my heart, and drop into my inner world, to visit my deepest self. I tune in to my heart and feel where I’m at, observing how my body is feeling, and noticing my emotions and thoughts. I recall all those fragments of myself, the energy that has been scattered between situations, people and places, and put myself back together like a puzzle. I also take this time to connect with my spiritual nature, to remember I am spirit, and to pray for guidance and support. However, you can do this in whatever way feels right for you. Creative practices like music, art, journalling, or just being in nature, are deeply healing for the spirit that has been left out in the cold.



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5. Listening

In stillness we get to know who we are. Taking time to be still, alone, to simply be, supports you in getting to know yourself and your dreams, and gives you space to correct your course if you have lost your way. It helps you to shine a light onto negative cycles and habitual patterns. Simply noticing what you ‘do’ is the first step to healing. Observing with kindness, acceptance and humour is key to disrupting the cycle, as criticism keeps us locked into these negative patterns.

6. Reaching for support

In order to hold space for yourself, you must be able to reach out for support when you need it. This strengthens your ability to be there for yourself. Knowing your own limits and knowing you can get support if you need it, makes your power to be there for yourself grounded and deeper.



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7. Being authentic

This is you! You know the truth. You know who you are. Don't hide it from yourself. Have the courage to see all of you; your gifts and your less than perfect bits. When you see yourself with kindness and compassion, you have the power to change aspects of your self or your life that you dislike.

8. Being a good parent to yourself

A creative parent holds space for a child to explore, be creative, test boundaries, let their imagination run wild, experience different personalities, ideas and roles. A great parent doesn't control or shut down. This is the same when dealing with your inner-child. Allow yourself explore and experience life, empower yourself to make the right choices and live life in your own way. Be an innovative parent to your inner child: loving yourself when you're sick, being encouraging when you fall over, and always cheering yourself on.

9. Developing supportive rituals

Take a stand for yourself. Do at least one nurturing thing for yourself every day and make a promise to yourself that you will check in with *you* every day. Just as you would invest time in a friendship, making time to call your friend and find out how she's doing, or give extra love and support during a rough time, you can do the same with yourself. Truly, you are your own best friend. My thing is warm baths, with flower essences, epsom salts and essential oils. This is my Humpty Dumpty cure, and it works every time!

“You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You, yourself, as much as anybody in the universe, deserve your love and affection” – Buddha

Feature Image: Artwork by [Regina Lord](#).

Read more about [What it Really Means to Hold Space for Someone](#).

<http://upliftconnect.com/hold-space-for-yourself/>