



Volunteers
of America®

MINNESOTA AND WISCONSIN



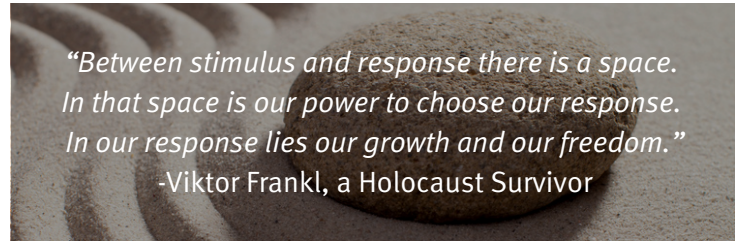
EMBRACING THE PAUSE

January 12, 2023

Weekly Practices for Self-Care & Well-Being

Embracing the Pause is a weekly resource that cultivates insights and practices to support communal well-being and self-care amid the toll we have accumulated over the past few years.

Curated by Laura Thelander, VOA's Director of Racial Justice and Spiritual Care, and colleagues, this series encourages finding a moment of pause to ground ourselves and reflect.



"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."
-Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust Survivor



This week's Embracing the Pause is a short reflection by Director of Racial Justice and Spiritual Care, Laura Thelander.

Over the years the practice of self-care has turned into a multibillion-dollar industry that has reduced individuals to consumers. This development is a far cry from the above definition offered by Audre Lorde who penned these words after being diagnosed with cancer for a second time. As a queer, Black woman and civil rights activist, Lorde recognized how much she had devoted her life to activism. Now, faced with the limitations of illness, she recognized in a deeper way that nourishing her body, mind and spirit was primary for any meaningful and effective engagement in the world.

In our line of work, we understandably focus our attention on what we are doing: the number of people served; the amount of revenue generated; the number of work hours logged, and so on. Our sense of worth and purpose can so easily get caught up in how much we produce and accomplish. That way of thinking can wear us out, leading us to over-extend ourselves and ultimately burn out. And no amount of self-care products can cure that.

As we begin this new calendar year, it is a good time to remind ourselves in the words of the Dalai Lama that "we are human beings not human doings." Having come through the frenzy and commotion of the holidays, there may be a spaciousness and quietness to these beginning days of January. How might we receive this openness as an opportunity to stop, really be with ourselves, and give our attention to that which is most valuable to us?

Inspired by Lorde's wise insights, may we reclaim the radical power of self-care and begin this new year with a renewed awareness of our intrinsic worth simply by who we are. We are enough.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

-AUDRE LORDE

