

The Unspoken Complexity of "Self-Care"



Deanna Zandt [Follow](#)

Oct 17 · 5 min read ★

Note: The alt-text option is VERY short here on Medium, so I've included the full text and descriptions at the end of the comic for anyone who needs it. ♥

Note #2: Folks asked for prints and posters. So kind of you! They're here now:

Posters and cards: <https://deanna.nyc/selfcareposter>

Printed mini-comic: <https://deanna.nyc/selfcarecomic>

Note #3: Edited and updated on 11/5/2019 — full notes on edits at the very end.

THE UNSPOKEN COMPLEXITY OF "SELF-CARE"

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But what does self-care really mean?

First, I think there's a difference between **self-care** and **self-soothing**. Self-soothing might look something like this, for example:



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Such delightful things!

Self-soothing is INCREDIBLY important to our well-being. Sometimes, though, these activities may not actually get at stabilizing you, or creating opportunities for you to move forward.

That's where self-care can come in:



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mean ~

& KEEPING!-
BOUNDARIES

@deani

Do you feel the difference between soothing & care?

(That "finances" one may or may not be borne out of my own traumatic experiences with money, btw. Also: certain things may be self-soothing for some, and self-care for others. You get to decide!)

Still, it takes a LOT to be able to even do self-care, since the systems and cultural norms in which we currently live can feel impossible to navigate on our own.

That's why it's important to have workarounds:

COMMUNITY CARE

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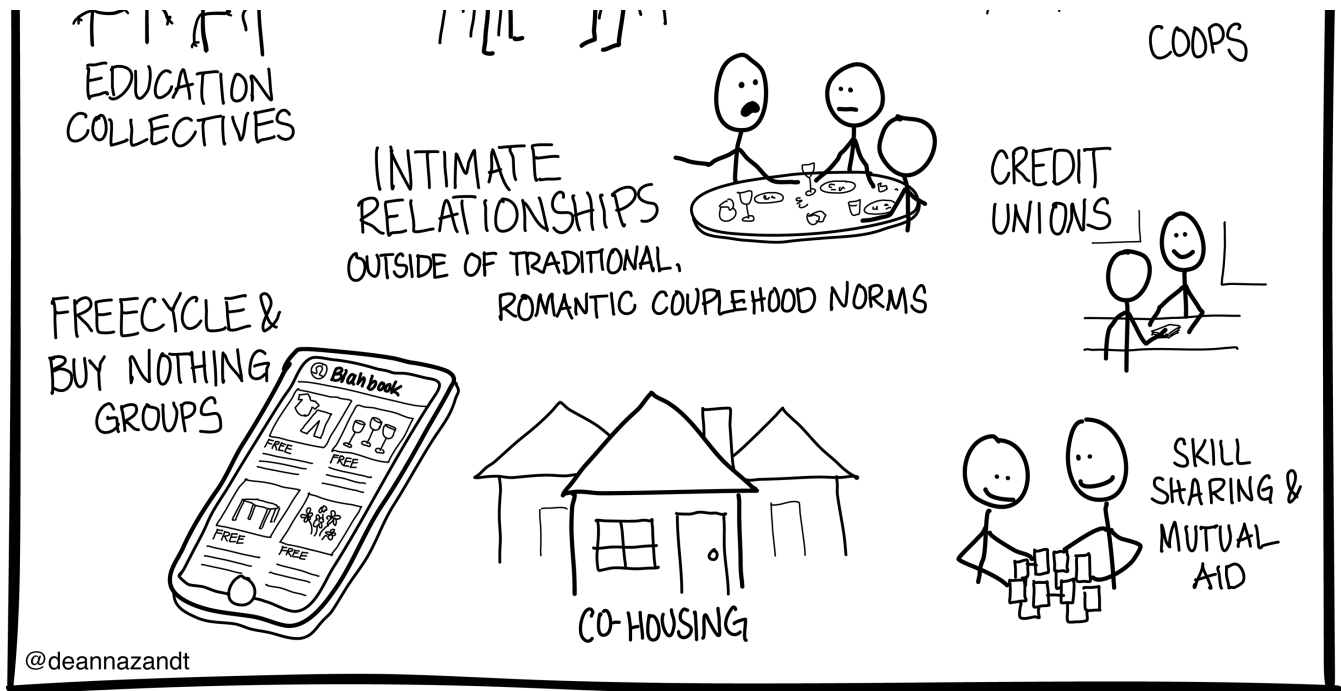


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Taking one step further back, it's also important to recognize that workarounds and harm-reduction are also only one part of the solution.

We also need to fundamentally overhaul (or tear down and rebuild entirely) the systems in which we live, so that we can be further enabled to work on the other kinds of care that we need.

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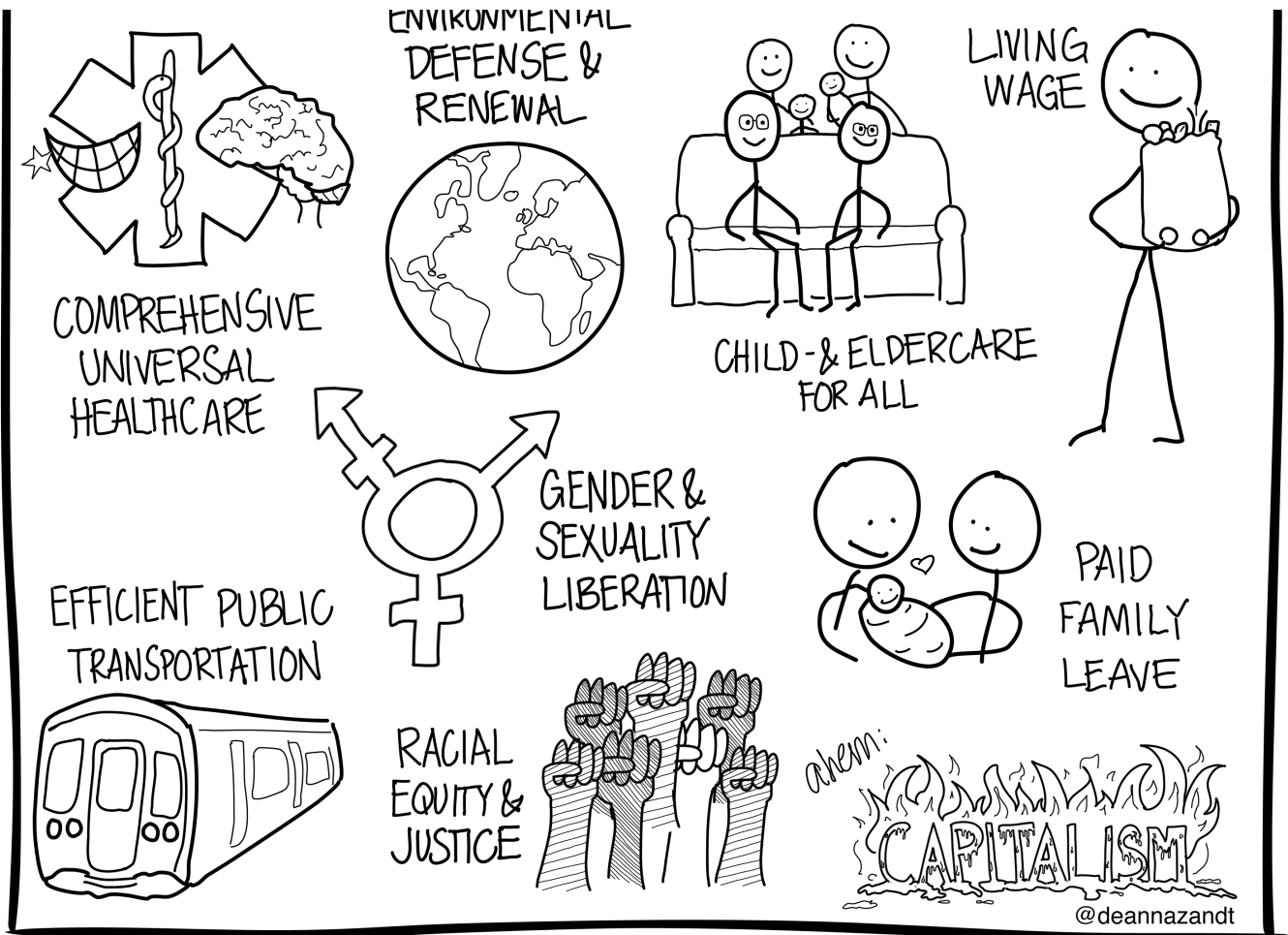


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No single person can do all the kinds of care that are needed all the time; we each can play a role in supporting each other in different ways, though. Now, go forth and care for each other—and yourself.

SELF-

CARE

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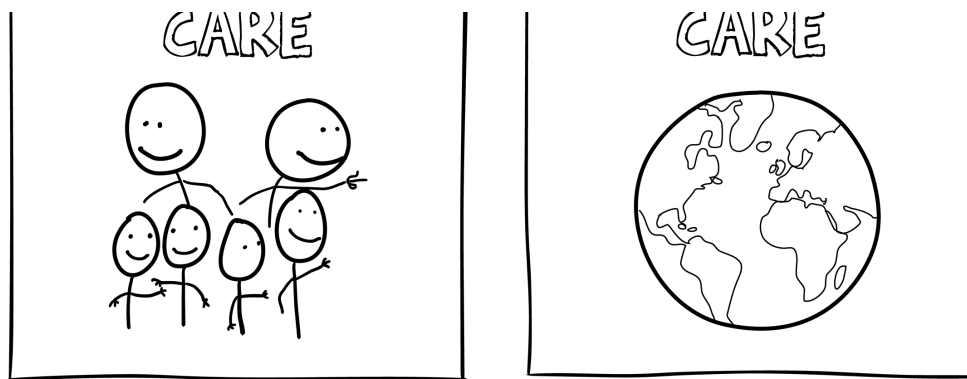


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@deannazandt

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Full text and description of all images:

Self-care is thrown around a lot as a magic bullet to solve all of your problems. If you'd only take a second to treat yourself, you'd be fine!

But what does self-care really mean?

First, I think there's a difference between self-care and self-soothing. Self-soothing might look something like this, for example:

Self-soothing: Activities that provide distraction and/or comfort in difficult times

Examples illustrated include: TV bingeing, bubble bath, fancy beverages, singing loudly, getting out into nature, time off from home responsibilities & childcare, fresh flowers, cuddling, exercise

Such delightful things!



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Examples illustrated include: Going to therapy, meditating, exercise, taking ownership of your finances, napping, saying “yes” and “no” when you really mean it, massage, getting medical care, eating well for your body, yoga, setting — and keeping! — boundaries

Do you feel the difference between soothing & care?

(That “finances” one may or may not be borne out of my own traumatic experiences with money, btw. Also: certain things may be self-soothing for some, and self-care for others. You get to decide!)

Still, it takes a LOT to be able to even do self-care, since the systems and cultural norms in which we currently live can feel impossible to navigate on our own.

That’s why it’s important to have workarounds:

Community care: Workarounds for systems that don’t inherently support care (ie, capitalism!)

Examples illustrated include: Childcare & education collectives, freecycle and buy nothing groups, dignified, supportive healthcare orgs, intimate relationships outside of traditional romantic couplehood norms, worker-owned coops, credit unions, co-housing, skill sharing and mutual aid

Taking one step further back, it’s also important to recognize that workarounds and harm-reduction are also only one part of the solution.

We also need to fundamentally overhaul (or tear down and rebuild entirely) the systems in which we live, so that we can be further enabled to work on the other kinds of care that we need.



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other — and yourself.

. . .

EDITED ON 11/15/2019!

Thank you all SO much for your suggestions on how to improve this. The main one is that I moved “massage” to self-care, thanks to the rallying cries of many practitioners. It was such a mistake! I view my own massage experiences as self-care, why on earth did I put them in soothing?! Haha.

Next, I wanted to reinforce that I view self-soothing as SUPER important. I think with the original text, some people thought I was saying that self-soothing was frivolous or not useful. Quite the opposite! I soothe the helllll outta myself regularly. I’ve updated that explanation panel to reflect this thinking.

I realized also that I had gotten quite ableist with my drawings, so I made sure to include a person with physical disabilities in the new “nature” drawing in self-soothing. It’s bugging something in my brain that “wheelchair” is the default representation of all people with disabilities, though. Does someone have a suggestion for how I can do better in the future?

In structural care, I separated gender/sexuality and racial equity/justice. I was trying to show their integrated nature in the first version, but I think ended up doing a disservice to both. I also renamed the planet one to “environmental defense & renewal,” though that still doesn’t cover the total essence of righteousness that I feel there, heh.



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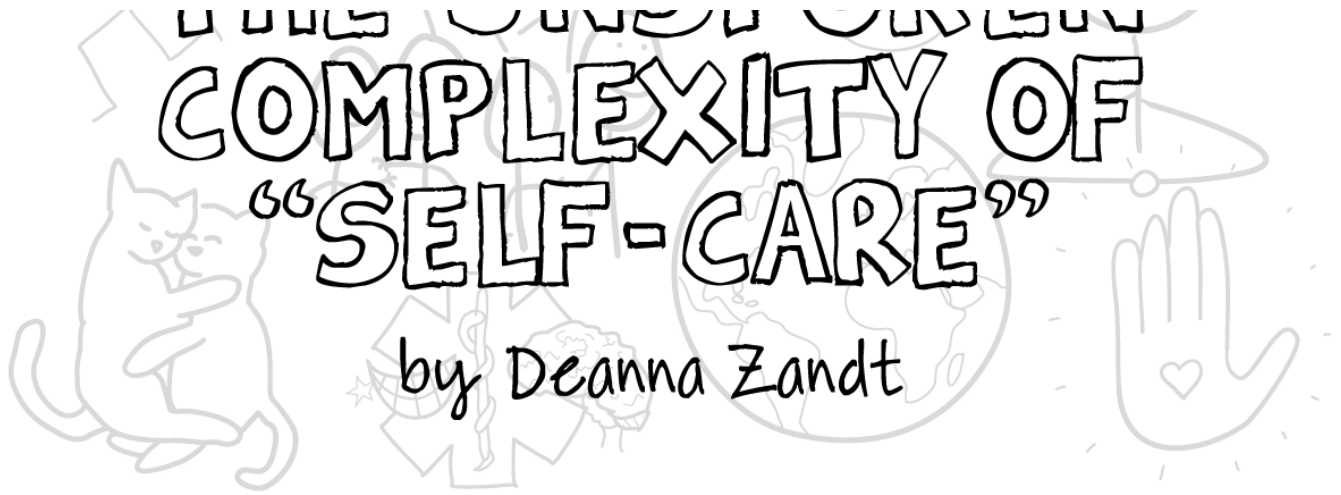


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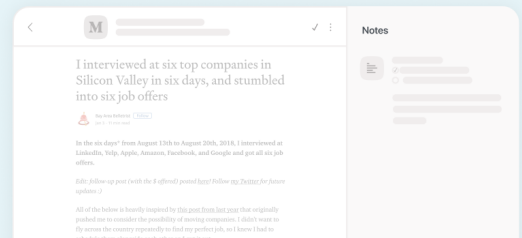
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