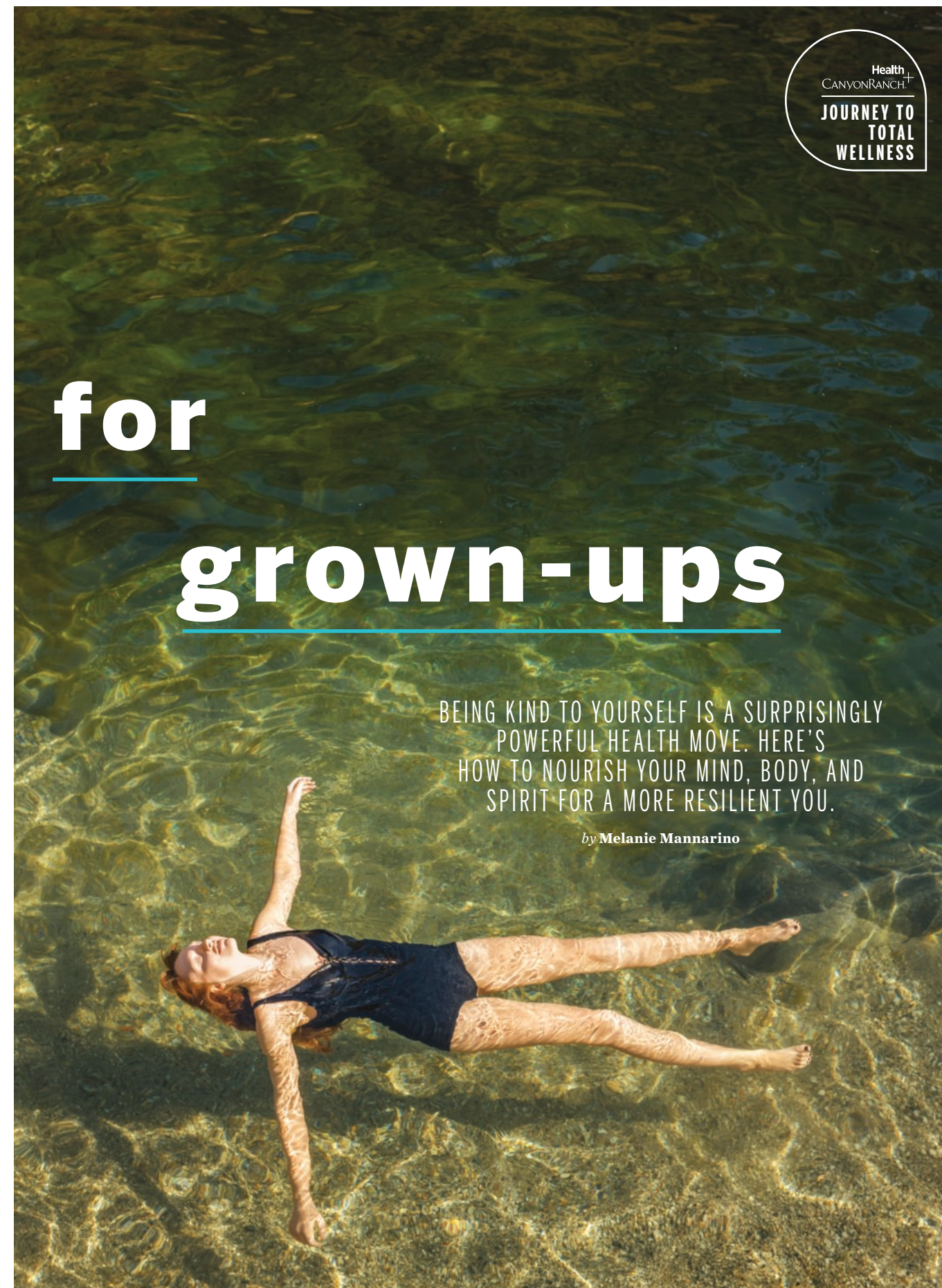




self-care



for
grown-ups

BEING KIND TO YOURSELF IS A SURPRISINGLY
POWERFUL HEALTH MOVE. HERE'S
HOW TO NOURISH YOUR MIND, BODY, AND
SPIRIT FOR A MORE RESILIENT YOU.

by **Melanie Mannarino**

t

Thanks to the burgeoning self-care movement, you’ve heard time and time again how important it is to put on your own oxygen mask first. And we’re guessing you’re already all over the essentials—making time for exercise, eating well, DVRing *Scandal* once in a while so you can head to bed early.

But true self-care goes deeper than remembering to eat your veggies or treating yourself to the occasional massage. “Self-care is compassionately providing to yourself what you experience as deeply nourishing and restorative—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually,” says Stephanie Ludwig, PhD, director of spiritual wellness at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona. “It’s a vitality sustainer.”

Taking time to nurture yourself—whether that means starting the day with 15 minutes of silence, listening to an eye-opening podcast, or simply savoring a fresh, juicy grapefruit at breakfast—helps you

flourish in the face of life’s challenges and joys. “It makes you stronger, better able to respond to others, and more resilient,” adds Ludwig.

Sounds like an easy concept (with superhero benefits), but it’s one many women have a hard time justifying. For starters, finding the time can feel impossible. But here’s the secret: Investing just 10 to 30 minutes in yourself daily can energize you and help you manage the rest of your life more efficiently, says Gabrielle Bernstein, author of *The Universe Has Your Back*. “Ironically, it’s slowing down that speeds things up,” she says.

Of course, self-care is crucial when times are tough, but it’s worth being good to yourself even when everything is going smoothly. “Make it a habit before you feel burned out,” advises Agapi Stassinopoulos, author of *Wake Up to the Joy of You*. “Otherwise you won’t have the energy to do it when life gets hard.”

And when you do hit a patch of turbulence—a crisis at work, a stressful news event, a personal trauma? Ramp it up. “At those moments, you can start to look at your life and wonder if it’s meaningful,” says Ludwig. “If you turn extra attention to yourself, you’ll feel replenished and better able to cope.”

build your self-care kit

Use these five pillars of physical and emotional health as inspiration to write out your own self-care menu. You may find that you need to dip into some categories only occasionally (weekly, monthly, even annually), while others you crave daily, notes Ludwig. Fill in the blanks with what sustains *you* (which may be very different from what refuels your best friend).



PHYSICAL CARE

What does your body long for?

- The energizing high of exercise
- The challenge and camaraderie of team sports
- The tactile comfort of cool, soft sheets or a warm bath
- The feel of digging your hands in the earth as you tend the garden
- The stress-easing touch of kids, partner, pets
- _____

EMOTIONAL CARE

How do you emotionally recharge?

- By enjoying a call or visit with a friend
- By spending distraction-free time with family
- By flipping through old photo albums
- By talking to a therapist or support group
- By keeping a gratitude journal to help find the bright spots in every day
- _____



CREATIVE CARE

What feeds your creative self?

- Dance—doing it, watching it
- Cooking or baking from scratch
- Getting visual with art, photography, etc.
- Listening to (or making) music
- Getting lost in a theater performance
- _____

SPIRITUAL CARE

How do you like to connect to something greater than yourself?

- By taking part in a prayer group
- By volunteering
- By spending time surrounded by nature
- By recharging through yoga
- By meditating
- _____

MENTAL CARE

What stimulates you intellectually?

- Learning something new in a class
- Doing a crossword puzzle or brain teaser
- Attending thought-provoking seminars and lectures
- Galvanizing yourself and others in an activist group
- Immersing yourself in a good book or podcast
- _____



What Do You Need Right Now?

Ask yourself a few questions in the moment.

1/ Are my basic physical needs met? Are you thirsty or hungry? Do you need to nap or move your body? Make sure these are taken care of before you continue. During stressful periods, it’s surprisingly easy to let the fundamentals fall away.

2/ What will ease my tension? Think long-term. What can you do now that will leave you feeling more relaxed later today or even tomorrow?

3/ What connects me? Some people need to feel bonded to other people; others need to feel grounded in nature or a greater purpose.

4/ What gives me joy? If you’re drawing a blank, look back to your childhood. Even simple pleasures like swinging, listening to your favorite band, or biking down a hill can reset you.

TREAT YOURSELF RIGHT

Some occasions really do call for chocolate (or chips, if that’s your pleasure). But if you regularly soothe yourself with food, drink, or other quick fixes that don’t sustain you in the long run, that’s not self-care; it’s self-sabotage. Here’s how to tell the difference.

SELF-SABOTAGE: A glass of wine (or three) to de-stress after a hard day.

SELF-CARE: A relaxing meal with a partner or friend instead. “Have your glass of wine at dinner with your friends,” says Ludwig, “but don’t rely on a substance to relax and enjoy life.” Strong social bonds can boost mental health in ways that pinot grigio can’t.

SELF-SABOTAGE: Cheese puffs. For dinner.

SELF-CARE: A walk around the block. Then dinner. “Ask yourself what makes you feel better after,” says Stassinopoulos. “What’s going to energize you?”

SELF-SABOTAGE: Staying up late to binge-watch reruns of some random show you never even liked the first time around.

SELF-CARE: Taking a warm bath or shower—and then, if you want, watching a single episode of your current favorite show. “Television is just more stimulation,” says Bernstein. “It doesn’t restore you.” A bath, on the other hand, is an opportunity to reflect and be still with yourself, she says.

get into a mindful groove

We’re kicking off a year of transformation with a special *Health + Canyon Ranch Journey to Total Wellness* series. Look for more in future issues, and consider launching your personal journey at the *Health Total Wellness Weekend*, May 5–7 at the Canyon Ranch Wellness Resort in Lenox, Massachusetts. For more info, go to health.com/totalwellness.

