



Health

Self-Care Tips for Black People Who Are Struggling With This Very Painful Week

If images of Black suffering have left you feeling sad and angry and overwhelmed, here are some things you might do to get a tiny bit of relief.

By [Rachel Miller](#)

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Friends, I don't need to tell you that it's been an especially hard few weeks for Black people in the United States. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery. Chris Cooper. George Floyd. Tear-gassing the protesters who had the gall to be upset about a racist murder. All of this, during a time when Black people are disproportionately dying from the COVID-19 pandemic. It's exhausting.

Amid all this suffering, it can be hard to believe Audre Lorde when she said that caring for yourself is a form of self-preservation and, thus, "an act of political warfare." But it is, and it matters. If you are feeling sad and overwhelmed and angry right now, here are some things you might do to get a tiny bit of relief.

Make sure you're meeting your basic needs.

It's so easy to hop between Twitter and your group chats for hours, and, as you do, totally forget to drink water, go pee, eat a meal, or go to bed at your normal hour. But when you're already feeling bad, skipping on basic self-care is only going to make you feel worse. Set reminders throughout the day so you remember to have a cup of tea, stretch, fix lunch, and turn in for the night—and whatever else you need to do in order to be functional.

Let yourself feel your feelings.

Two therapists I interviewed recently for [an article about anger](#) told me that pushing negative feelings away doesn't actually help you process them. So if you're feeling angry—an emotion that is typically rooted in sadness or fear—know that that's OK. If you have PTO, or a little flexibility in your work schedule, you might consider taking a day or half-day off to reset and recharge, or to simply sit with your grief without worrying that you're not being productive. If you don't have that option right now, think about how to make time in your schedule to intentionally care for yourself—for a weekend, an evening, or just an hour.



How I Learned to Control My Anger By Breaking Things

SALEM MITCHELL

Therapist Ryan Howes said that moving your body in some way tends to be a good way to process anger—e.g., doing an activity like working out, stomping around while listening to angry music, dancing or painting furiously, or rage cleaning or [rage baking](#). Howes also said it's a good idea to think about why you're so pissed as you do this. "Get that off your chest as you're doing the physical stuff, and it will provide some relief. That helps your brain come back online to be able to think, OK, *what do I really want to do about this?*" he told VICE.

Find ways to connect with other Black people.

In



True Self-Care Is Not About You

ANGIE JAIME

times like this, I don't have a ton of space for people who don't get it—like, deep in their bones *get it*. If you tend to mainly interact with white people in your daily life, make a point to reach out to Black people or other people of color whom you trust, and who you can be your full self around. If you are currently in quarantine with white people, or if most of your friends are white, consider joining a Facebook or Slack group for Black people who share some of your interests (like a community of [Black girl gamers](#) or [Black book lovers](#) or [Black parents](#)), or even just listening to a podcast with a Black host—anything that helps you remember that you're not alone in your experiences and your grief.

Change your media diet to the extent that you can.

A lot of Black people feel obligated to bear witness to what is happening right now—to read the articles, to look at the photos and videos of protests, to consume every single Twitter thread.

I do think it's important to not look away or numb yourself to what is happening. But there's a limit to the things we, as Black people, can carry right now. (Also, a lot of what is being shared right now is intended to raise awareness among white people.)

If possible, give yourself permission to only read the news twice a day, for no more than 30 minutes at a time. Change your Twitter settings so [videos don't autoplay in your feed](#), and consider deleting the app from your phone so you don't open it out of habit. Remind yourself that you can stay informed without being glued to news or commentary every waking minute.

Set firm boundaries around engaging with people who are trying it right now.



When Dismantling Power Dismantles You Instead

MARIE SOLIS

Having to manage other people's feelings in this moment—whether those people are well-meaning, would-be allies, or bad faith actors—is just too much, and it's not your job as a Black person. You won't always be able to opt out, of course, but give yourself permission to do so more often to the extent that you can.

Maybe you decide to stop engaging with people who clearly aren't entering discussions in good faith, who aren't willing to do any reading, or who try to bait you into an argument with classics like, “Hm, seems like you're being pretty intolerant of *me* right now.”

In cases when you do want to engage without having to burden yourself further, you may want to start keeping a couple of links handy and that you can send to people who come to you with genuine questions—the implication being that you're happy they want to learn more, but they aren't entitled to a three-hour lesson directly from you, personally, when so much great information already exists. (Here's [one on general allyship](#) with a [corresponding YouTube video](#); [a list of ways white people can take action in response to state-sanctioned violence](#); and [my personal reading recommendations](#). And: It's also more than fine if you don't feel inclined to do this at all.)

Or: Maybe now is the time to get comfortable saying, “I'm not the best audience for this,” when people want to process their feelings about racism with you. Look for small ways to protect your time and energy right now, and allow yourself to hold that line.

Repeat a mantra or affirmation that helps you stay grounded.

Mantras aren't for everyone, but if the idea appeals to you at all—or you've reached the, *Whatever, I'll try anything at this point*, stage of grief—it might be a good time to find a truth that feels right to you to remind yourself of in this moment. I love [this list of affirmations](#) that Araya Baker wrote for *The Mighty*; even though the list was written with COVID-19 in mind, a lot of them are applicable to coping with general violence against Black people. (Also... Black people are still dying from COVID-19, so... y'know.)

Remember to consume Black art and celebrate Black joy.

Seeing photos of dead Black people (and furious, threatening white people) is traumatic. When I'm struggling to focus in moments like this, I find that positive, joyful, silly images and inspiring, moving, or just *damn good* art helps me feel rooted—connected to something bigger than myself and bigger than my grief.

Put on Moses Sumney or Megan Thee Stallion or Thundercat or Whitney Houston or Tracy Chapman (or just [this playlist](#)); browse old photos from [Afropunk](#); [revel in Black love](#); watch *Homecoming* or old episodes of *Living Single* or your favorite Vine videos or this [incredible Tandi Iman Dupree lip sync](#).

As the writer Hannah Giorgis [put it](#) during a particularly bad week in the summer of 2016: “From every corner of the continent, of the world, Black people hold me. We hold each other. We carry our community with love, with a commitment to disregard every message that says we are unworthy.” This kind of mutual support is possible when we try our best, in a terrible situation, to care for ourselves in any way that we can. Looking out for Black people includes looking out for you, too.

Rachel Wilkerson Miller is the author of The Art of Showing Up: How to Be There for Yourself and Your People. Follow her on Twitter.

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