

## The Roots of Self-Care

*by Amanda O'Regan-Marchand, Executive Staff Officer,  
Professional Learning*

Welcome to September and all the new beginnings it brings! Your PL team here at the NSTU hope that you had an enjoyable summer and that your September startup is as successful as possible.

Last year, we shared the September calendar from [www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org). The calendars are the same each year and focus on the theme of self-care for September. We all recognize that this term is in our common vernacular these days. Have you ever wondered about the origin of the term? Did you know the term self-care is deeply rooted in African American History?

An [article](#) in Teen Vogue from 2021 written by [Lenora E. Houseworth](#), describes the history of self-care. It was an integral movement towards agency for and of one's own wellness in times of great injustice during the struggle for justice and equality for African Americans that took place mainly in the 1950s and 1960s. The toll taken on the physical and mental health of protesters, activists and their allies during the American Civil Rights Movement was overpowering, resulting in numerous compounding challenges during an already tumultuous time.

In her article, Houseworth speaks to the process of unlearning that young Black women had to accept and engage in to challenge and overcome the messages they received, telling them they were not strong or powerful. Working through these messages and

redefining their sense of self by incorporating practices like mindfulness, yoga and self-defence, saw self-care grow to become a holistic practice of intentional work to develop and maintain a standard of wellbeing for, "Black, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming youth as well."

When we decide to focus our energy inward and make time for our wellness, it requires conscious and intentional effort, in which we often feel we do not have time. When we are bombarded with messages and advertisements for what is now a ten-billion dollar a year business, let us acknowledge and honour the roots of this industry at the, "intersectionality of self-care and civil rights".

As we make a conscious effort to dedicate time to our own wellness, another author referenced in Houseworth's article, Audre Lorde reminds us that, "Self-preservation is foundational for community building." We have often heard that we cannot give all of ourselves to others without taking care of ourselves. So, with this balance in mind, as we work to heal parts of ourselves that have not received enough of our time or energy, let us all make a conscious decision and effort to also dedicate time to others by doing our part to speak up for those whose voices are not present.

Let us work on building our relationship with ourselves and others so our communities can be stronger than they were before.

