

managing politics & mental health

With an election on the horizon and tension growing between parties (or just...everyone) by the day, we're left defenseless against the uncertainty swelling within our political climate.

Collectively, we have no choice but to note headlines and catch updates every time we pick up our phones, and regardless of how much we *think* we're taking in, this stable inundation of information takes a massive toll.

While we absolutely have a responsibility to be informed, contributing members of society, we have an even bigger responsibility to ourselves. As every facet of the media actively burrows itself into our innocent noggins, uninvited, it tries to shame us into thinking otherwise. As a result, outside pressures maintain a tight grip around our throats, and we're bullied into thinking the stress hanging in the air — and our brains — is “normal.”

In order to remain functioning members of our progressively intense society, we have to prioritize our individual mental health before we can take on anything else — you know how you're reminded on flights to, in the case of an emergency, secure your own oxygen mask before helping others? It's like that. Except it's not *in case of an emergency*, it's *right now*.

While problems showcased in the media and pressures thrown from seemingly everyone may paint themselves as more important than our individual growth, our personal health is paramount. If we're not putting time toward our single advancement, then we're unable to grow into our best selves, and we're ultimately unable to nourish our unique, powerful energies.

In saying this, because the media's stronghold runs so deep, it's outright *radical* to face briefings and tweets and *have you seen this?*s and make room for yourself in the picture. It's outright radical to choose yourself, which, if you think about it — and even if you don't, really, honestly — that's truly wild.

It's wild that, in our current social (and political) climate, choosing ourselves and prioritizing our own mental health is, like, not our baseline level of operating. When every app in our hands and voice in our ears is telling us what we “should” be focusing on, establishing autonomy over our head spaces is revolutionary. And hard. And scary — and it's what gives way to change.

When we choose ourselves, and when we make choices to best position ourselves in the world with healthy, self-fulfilling choices, we create space for ourselves to thrive. From there, we're better able — or able at all — to feed our energy into whatever causes we decide we feel passionate about.

You can decide where your energy goes, and it's okay to be selfish with that energy.

Using that place of power, in a world that's growing increasingly, hauntingly invasive, we must create boundaries. We have to — it's crucial to our personal growth and, in turn, our greater good. Otherwise, we're at risk of accidentally devolving fully into whatever identity-stripping, agenda-pushing chaos is trying to wrap itself around us.

Whether we set timers for apps on our phones or for friends who seem a little too excited talking *all* about the nightmares plaguing us, boundaries will provide us with a safe haven. This being said, however, even in blocking every external disruption, we can still find ourselves sitting with our reeling thoughts.

Whether or not we feel “in control” of our mental space, we all have the ability to manage our mental spaces. Even if we can't remember the last time we felt “in control,” we can at any minute start making choices to find that place of strength again.

When we find ourselves stuck and riddled with anxiety, pacing through *what if?*s and worst case scenarios, we can find ourselves incapable of doing much else. When we're left drained and with too many unsolicited stressors swirling around in our psyche, feelings of hopelessness can seep into every aspect of our daily lives.

If we're involuntarily blocked from healthy headspaces, bricks of fear and stress can build into walls that back us into dark places, and those dark places can feel utterly futile — who benefits when we're unable to do anything at all?

In aiming to balance personal mental health with public health, prioritizing ourselves and our specific needs will allow us to champion any and every cause close to our hearts. In order for our priorities — remember: *you* are your priority — to flourish, proper methods of healing and self care must be in place. In saying this, the first step toward that blossoming, beaming self is recognizing where you are now.

Regardless of where you're starting, you're more than capable of dusting yourself off and focusing on your growth and, potentially — no, *probably* — your re-growth.

If we're healthy, then we're our most productive selves, and we can be the fullest versions of ourselves. If we're healthy, then we're able to be productive, leading members of society without losing ourselves along the way.