

Ways of Self-Care at Times of Grief and Loss ¹

Francis Weller and other grief teachers (like Martín Prechtel, Stephen Jenkinson, Joanna Macy, and Parker Palmer) offer a wide and deep vision of self-care that goes far beyond spa days or “treating yourself.” They talk about tending the soul, body, and community in ways that make grief livable and transform it into connection and meaning. Here’s a synthesis of **ways of self-care in grief and loss** they emphasize:

Francis Weller’s Ways of Self-Care ²

1. Create Rituals of Grief

- Set aside sacred time and space (candles, nature, music, altar).
- Engage in rituals that let sorrow move through the body (weeping, drumming, writing letters, burying symbolic objects).
- Rituals give grief dignity and keep it from being buried inside.

2. Grieve in Community

- Weller stresses that grief must be *witnessed*.
- Sharing sorrow with others—circles, groups, vigils—prevents isolation and deepens our sense of belonging.

3. Honor Hidden and Ancestral Grief

- Attending to losses we inherited (family trauma, cultural wounds, ecological grief).
- Practices like storytelling, genealogical reflection, or ancestral rituals are part of this care.

4. Hold Grief and Gratitude Together

- Daily self-care includes naming what we mourn and also what we cherish.
- This balance keeps grief from becoming despair and gratitude from becoming shallow.

5. Softness and Self-Compassion

- Approach wounds without judgment.
- Treat sorrow like a guest to welcome, not a problem to solve.

¹ Response from ChatGPT after asking: “What ways for self-care does Francis Weller and other people who speak and write about grief and loss tell us?”, (accessed September 22, 2025).

² Francis Weller, *In the Absence of the Ordinary: Soul Work for Times of Uncertainty--Essays on grief, change, and sacred transitions*, August 19, 2025; *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*, September 15, 2015

Other Voices on Grief & Self-Care

Martín Prechtel (*The Smell of Rain on Dust*)

- Grief is praise: crying and lamenting are acts of love.
- Singing, dancing, creating art are all self-care because they honor the beauty of what was lost.

Stephen Jenkinson (*Die Wise*)

- Refuse the pressure to “get over it.”
- Sit with sorrow, tell the truth about death, allow slowness and silence.
- Self-care means making time to live *with* grief, not past it.

Joanna Macy (*Active Hope*)

- Name ecological and communal grief (climate, war, disconnection).
- Practices: speaking grief aloud in circles, gratitude practices, connecting with nature.
- Caring for the earth is a form of self-care because our wellbeing is bound to the planet’s.

Parker Palmer (*Let Your Life Speak*)

- Listen to your soul instead of forcing productivity.
- Rest, reflection, journaling, and asking gentle questions of yourself.
- Community sharing where vulnerability is welcomed.

Practical Self-Care Practices (Across These Teachers)

- **Journaling grief:** write letters to what/whom you’ve lost.
- **Movement:** walking in nature, yoga, dance to embody grief.
- **Creative expression:** painting, singing, poetry as offerings.
- **Breath and stillness:** meditation, contemplative prayer.
- **Naming losses:** create lists, altars, memory boxes.
- **Companionship:** regular grief-sharing circles, therapy, or spiritual direction.
- **Rest:** adequate sleep, letting the body recover.
- **Service:** channel grief into acts of compassion or community care.

✨ In short: For Weller and his peers, **self-care in grief is soul-care**—ritual, expression, compassion, and connection that allow sorrow to be felt, honored, and shared.

For more articles on grief and loss go to: <https://lifesjourney.us/death-dying-grief-and-loss-menu/>

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