

Pockets of Pleasure Episode 7

Hello and welcome to episode 7 of Pockets of Pleasure.

This week we're going to explore how creating rituals can help us to lead a more pleasurable and mindful life, and how we can incorporate self compassion and self care into those rituals.

What mental image does the word ritual conjure up for you?

Is it something dark and sinister, or maybe something with religious connotations?

Whatever image pops into your head, is it something you see as being part of your daily life? Or does it feel like something world's away from the life you live?

By creating rituals around areas of your day that you find difficult to motivate yourself to do, you can turn those practices into something pleasurable that you look forward to doing rather than dreading.

We all use rituals in our lives, often without realising that's what we're doing.

Your morning cuppa is a ritual. If you have a regular routine you use before you head out of the door, that's a ritual.

The word has a bad rap though doesn't it? It's become associated with sacrifices, and dark practices. When really, a ritual is, at its core, simply a series of actions.

Routine or Ritual?

How do you feel about the word 'routine'?

Does it make you feel as though you're on top of things, or does it give you a feeling of being trapped by monotony?

Like ritual, it's a strangely emotive word, isn't it? In my opinion, routine is like Marmite - you love or hate it.

What if you could embrace the, strange but true, fact that routine creates freedom?

It's that word routine though, right? It's humdrum, boring, stagnant; not something vibrant and creative.

What if you could feel differently about routine?

What if you could bring a sense of reverence to it?

What if, turning your routines into rituals, could create something so powerful, it could change

your whole life?

Would you believe me if I told you it really could?

Tapping Into Your Senses Turns Routine Into Ritual

In [my e-course - Romancing the Soul](#) I talk about how creating a ritual around cooking, helped a dear friend feel better about the experience of cooking for one. If I'd suggested she create a cooking routine, it wouldn't've had the same effect. The magic was in the ritual.

When you create your own rituals, you can add in sensory elements that make the process pleasurable for you. When repeated regularly, these sensory prompts create associations in your brain. Anchors.

If every time you start to cook, you pour yourself a glass of something delicious (it doesn't have to be alcoholic), and take a long, slow sip, savouring it not guzzling it, your brain will recognise this as the prelude to your cooking ritual, and slip into the frame of mind you've primed it with. If you put on some music that helps to get you in the particular mood you want to evoke, the ritual becomes even more embedded in your psyche.

Suddenly, cooking your evening meal becomes something to look forward to, it's no longer a mind numbing routine, you've created a ritual that's made it a pleasurable, sensory experience. As we've discussed in a previous episode,

Using scent is an incredibly powerful sensory prompt, as the olfactory system has a direct route to the emotional memories area of the brain - scent memory associations are one of the most primal aspects of our human existence. You can utilise that to 'hack your habits' by regularly including particular scents with your rituals - I've created my range of [Sensory Alchemé aromatherapy blends](#) to help with that!

There are two things I've learnt in the last couple of years that have truly blown my mind:

Structure creates freedom

Containers encourage creativity

They sound pretty paradoxical don't they? How on earth can structure create freedom?

Structure is rigid, unyielding, the opposite of freedom, isn't it? Seemingly not, but that's a discussion for another day.. For now, suspend your disbelief and choose to accept that these two things really are true. That will free you up to explore how creating rituals creates containers for moments of freedom.

What Areas of Your Life Would Benefit from Creating Rituals?

Grab a notebook or journal and jot down the top 3 areas of your life that you currently struggle with the most.

Think about what exactly makes them hard - is it your attitude? Is it other people? Is it that it's boring and routine? Really dig into the pain points.

Now sit quietly with your list for a few minutes. Re-imagine those moments as points in your day that are filled with ease, maybe even go so far as to imagine them as joyful! How big of a difference would that make in your life? How would it free you to enjoy your day more?

What little rituals could you create that would make those moments fun, calm, pleasurable or sacred?

What could you do to get any of the other people who might need to be part of those moments, engaged in this process, so that it frees them too?

Let Me Share Another Example

I've never been able to sustain a journalling habit. As a child I would start afresh every year, and if I was lucky I'd get to the 2nd of January before giving up.

As an adult I understood the benefits of journalling, but still could never stick with it.

Until 5 years ago.

5 years ago I bought the first journal that worked for me. I created a morning and evening ritual around using it, which quickly became habit. The knock on effects are astounding to me; that daily journalling process has changed my life in ways I couldn't have imagined.

When I analyse why, there are several reasons, but the two that have really made the difference are:

The daily ritual - it's now so ingrained in me that I feel off if I miss a day

The structure of the journal itself - it isn't a notebook full of blank pages to be filled, there are structured areas to work within, which often involves getting creative about how I use that small space!

Another ritual I've been doing for years now is a different form of journalling that combines collage with a sort of vision board process, I try to do this each full and new moon - so every two weeks. It helps me to see themes in my thoughts, to uncover what's on in my mind that I'm not necessarily thinking about on a conscious level. It often gives me gentle pushes, new ideas, and even positive self talk. When I miss a session I definitely feel a difference, it really helps to reset my equilibrium.

That's the beauty of self created rituals - they afford us another way to recalibrate our nervous systems, because they're structured around own personal needs. The Pockets of Pleasure philosophy is all part of this creation of soothing, satisfying, pleasing, renewing rituals that help

us create more vibrant lives for ourselves.

Whilst many of our routines and habits are essentially rituals, it's important to remember that a habit or routine tends to be something that we do mindlessly, whereas a ritual is something we make a point of doing mindfully, usually with some kind of sensory anchor.

One beautifully affirming practice that you could make into a daily ritual before you go to sleep, is to celebrate yourself and at least one small win you've had that day. Of course celebrate the big wins too, but most days pass us by in a blur of habit and routine without anything big happening to celebrate. Looking for those small wins will end your day on a high note, which will also have the potential knock on effect of helping you to sleep better.

Ok, time for a break, when we come back we're going to explore why self compassion and self care need to be part of our daily rituals.

MUSIC

Welcome back.

Right then, self care. It's become a rather tired phrase hasn't it?

What do you think of when you hear Self Care?

Well, if the marketers have done a good enough job on you, it'll be things like spa treatments, manicures, candle lit bubble baths and all that jazz. When combined with 'me time' it's usually going to be something that doesn't come cheap and probably includes alcohol.

But is any of that truly caring for ourselves or is it self indulgence and escapism?

Now I'm not knocking self indulgence. After I experienced burnout with my previous business I took a year out and called it my year of self indulgence. Sounds very decadent and hedonistic doesn't it? But really it was a year of self care through the search for pockets of pleasure. It felt self indulgent, because I was spending time prioritising my own health and wellbeing, after almost a lifetime of putting everyone else's needs first.

Day 20 of the self compassion advent hit the spot for many of you. It was this quote from Lucille Zimmerman:

Taking care of yourself means the people in your life receive the best of you, not what's left of

you.

I'll repeat that because it's SO important that this message gets lodged in your psyche.

Taking care of yourself means the people in your life receive the best of you, not what's left of you.

We've indoctrinated to live the lie that looking after other people is honourable and virtuous, but looking after ourselves is selfish and indulgent. But it's so far from the truth. All those cliches about pouring from an empty cup, putting your own oxygen mask on first are cliches because they're true. We give more to others from our overflowing vessel, not from our empty one. You can't give what you don't have.

It's been said that the ultimate aim of self care is to create a life we don't feel the need or desire to escape from.

But self care, as it is largely sold to us, is escapism that ultimately only benefits the marketers. It's a temporary fix designed to part us from our money on a regular basis. Subscribe to a monthly self care package and give yourself the gift of 'insert whatever perceived benefit said product offers'. We look to MeTime as EscapeTime. We use our senses to help us slip out of our lives, for an hour or two, so we can force ourselves to continue living an existence that grows increasingly unsatisfying. It's a great marketing ploy that keeps us trapped in a system that was never designed to see us thrive.

This isn't to say we should give up our holidays, cocktails, chocolates or luxurious bath time experiences, but instead we need to use them mindfully, and make them a part of a life that we love so much we don't want or need to have these momentary escapes in order to survive. Self care is so much more than bubble baths, it can include them, of course, but ultimately self care is you telling yourself that you are worthy of your own time.

Taking care of our self, through all of our senses, is a moment by moment act of self love that spreads far beyond our own self. Once we start to explore how to create a life we don't want to escape from, and fill up our own cups, our attention will naturally fall on those around us, and it's this knock on effect of self compassion and self care that will help us to create a better world for us all.

All of that from simple pockets of pleasure! I feel quite emotional just thinking about the possibilities.

Right, one more break and then it's time for this week's pocket challenge.

MUSIC

okey dokes, time for this week's pocket challenge ...

Have a think back over the past few weeks - what have you learnt about yourself?

What have been the most joyful pockets of pleasure to fill?

What's been the most energising pocket you've explored?

What pocket has brought you the most peace?

Now have a think about how you can create some regular rituals using what you've learnt about yourself from your exploration of pleasure.

It doesn't have to be complicated, in fact it's better if it isn't. Simple, easily repeatable, pleasurable moments that you can weave together to create a beautiful container for those aspects of your day that you struggle to get through without wishing for a means of escape.

Allow yourself the time. You deserve this. The world needs this.

Enjoy experimenting, nothing is set in stone.

Well, that's it for this episode. I hope it's been useful.

Next week we're going to look at life tracking.

As always you can find the shownotes at thesensorycoach.com/shownotes you can find me on [instagram@thesensorycoach](https://www.instagram.com/thesensorycoach) use the hashtag [tscpockets](https://www.instagram.com/thesensorycoach) for any pockets of pleasure you'd like to share.

Wishing you a week filled with sparkle and delight

bye for now

