

The Journey of Care



Notice

You begin to see an issue you overlooked before. Once the noticing starts, you might see that thing repeated everywhere.

"A plastic bag and soft drink cup found their way into my front yard, and I noticed there was smaller litter on the sidewalk and in the gutter."

Give Attention

As you notice more and more, the issue gains importance in your mind. You start to make connections and create context around it.

"Now when I go on a walk, I see trash, big and small, all along my block and in my neighborhood."

Map Key

- ATTENTION
- - - INTENTION
- ACTION
- REFLECTION

"Attention focuses us in a way that creates intention. And intention is what leads to action. Paying attention is a sacred act."

— Robin Wall Kimmerer

Cultivate Awareness

You learn more about the issue, find books to read, listen to those affected most by the issue, look up the history, find organizations addressing it, etc.

"There's an organization called SOLVE that meets up regularly to pick up trash around the city, and one on the coast. There's also one called Adopt One Block that asks people to pick up trash regularly on their block."

Reflect Internally

You ask questions about the issue, and may wonder what your role is in perpetuating or addressing it.

"Should I clean up more than my own yard? How could I make a difference here?"

Recognize Assets

As you get closer to action, you take an account of what you have to offer. This could be money, time, professional support, raising awareness in your community, etc.

"I can't make the SOLVE meetup times, but Adopt One Block sounds doable. I can do that with my kids, too. I also have money to donate toward the bigger city cleanups with SOLVE."

Build a Relationship

You begin an active relationship with the issue where you show up in some way. Often this means entering into the community working on the issue.

"Every other Sunday, I pick up trash on my block with my kids. We have lots of conversations with our neighbors and some of them have adopted blocks, too. I post on the Adopt One Block Facebook page to encourage others in the group."

Sustain the Practice

Over time, you gain skill and knowledge around the issue, and become more integrated in the community. You'll need to iterate—involvement may ebb and flow as circumstances change, and you may need to shift your thinking and behavior as you gain more awareness.

"I've been noticing that many of my houseless and unsheltered neighbors are in need of trash pickup. I found a group called Neighbors Helping Neighbors and expanded my involvement to include a biweekly trash pickup at a camp near me. I'll need to take a break to recover from a surgery next month."

“Care is our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive—along with the planet itself.”

The Care Manifesto by The Care Collective

The Promise A poem by Betsy Lance

It seems silly, really
when you think about it, to hope
that the insignificant seed
(a glorified spec of dust)
cradled minusculely
in the crease of my palm,
will grow into anything at all.
That it would deepen into roots,
strengthening, spreading, stabilizing
into the rich earth.
That it would reach upward,
leaves outstretched, effortlessly
turning sun into food.
That its blossoms would invite,
its shade offer shelter,
and its fruit sustain others.
And so, through care,
in our seemingly small ways
do we deepen, strengthen, stabilize,
reach, invite, shelter, sustain
each in turn, together.



Using the Journey of Care Map

The map on the back shows the process of developing an ongoing Practice of Care. The dotted lines describe the stages: *attention*, *intention*, and *action*, plus one more line showing *reflection*—we need space to reflect, assess, and build upon what we’ve learned.

Although this map portrays care as a step-by-step process (albeit, a winding one), it’s really more like a dance. You might go back and forth between steps, stay on one step for a while, or even skip ahead. You’ll likely need to cycle through the loops over and over as you grow, challenging your initial understanding of the issue in order to deepen and mature in care. This can be difficult work, but keep at it and give yourself grace! Learning to care well is a skill that takes time and practice.

Now try it!

Think of the ways you show care in the world. Where are you situated on the map? (Tip: you’ll probably be in different places depending on the type of care—you may already be in the action phase in care for your neighbors, but still noticing in the awareness phase when it comes to racial inequity.)

Once you’ve found your place on the map, dive in! Embrace where you are and put effort into getting the most out of that phase before moving on.

Care Practice

There are SO MANY ways to show care. Here are a few ways to get started. Try some out. Follow your gut. Listen to your inclinations.

- Write down all the ways care shows up in your life for one week. What did you notice?
- Drop off treats or flowers on a friend or neighbor’s doorstep.
- Call your grandma, granddad, or another elder in your life.
- Create a daily or weekly ritual with the land you live on. This could be an evening walk in a certain park, morning coffee in the garden watching the birds, or a visit to the creek in the mornings.
- Notice when you see strangers caring for one another. Keep a running list in your journal or phone.

Learn from Others

Resources to help deepen and broaden your understanding of care:

BOOKS

- The Care Manifesto* by The Care Collective
- My Grandmother’s Hands* by Resmaa Menakem
- Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande
- The Book of Delights* by Ross Gay
- A Timbered Choir* by Wendell Berry

PODCASTS

- “Where Does It Hurt?” with Ruby Sales, **On Being Podcast**
- “Now Listen, Really Listen” with Gordon Hempton, **The Correspondent Podcast**
- “Why Do We Meet?”
To the Best of Our Knowledge Podcast
- “A Historic Day... And Why The ‘Nap Bishop’ Believes Rest is Radical” with Brittany Packnett Cunningham
UNDISTRACTED Podcast

- Host a potluck brunch or BBQ for your block or street. Put posters up on telephone poles to invite everyone!
- Mail a letter to someone you haven’t connected with in a while.
- Start a running list of organizations that are doing amazing community work in your town. Pick one and see how you can get involved — volunteer, donate goods, or give financial support?
- Get a trash bag and go on a clean up walk around your block.
- Create a relationship with a plant (tree, potted plant, garden plant, etc) you can see frequently—visit it regularly, notice how it changes through the seasons, draw it or take notes.
- Before a meal, give thanks by acknowledging all involved in getting that food to your plate—plants, animals, soil, farmers, transportation drivers, grocery clerks, etc. Spend some time thinking through the whole process before enjoying the bounty.
- If you haven’t been touched or hugged in a while, put your hand on your heart. Give some comforting pressure there. Feel your heartbeat and your skin and any other sensations you notice.
- Invite some friends or neighbors to have a brainstorming session about how to be better carers in your city. What needs exist? What do you have to share or give? Get creative, think big! Each leave with one actionable step.
- Journal about what assets you have to show care with. Time? Money? Professional skills or knowledge? The ability to talk to anyone? Deep empathy? Lived experience? Once you have your list (p.s. look at you, you’re awesome!), think of ways to activate them in care.
- Ask for help on something big or small. This is good practice—sometimes asking for care is harder than offering care.

This is an invitation.

Care is one of those words, like love, that has many vague meanings, but, at its deepest, it speaks of relationship and interconnectedness between people, places, and our kin in the natural world. How might we grow in our understanding of care, and lean into its challenges as well as its blessings? By activating our senses, holding space for reflection, and developing a posture of listening, we can become better practitioners of care as we participate in the messy, beautiful, challenging, imperfect, heartbreaking, joyous work of living together.