



# **Black Vegan Life™**

***Guide to Self-Care***

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# Black Vegan Life™

## Guide to Self-Care

by  
**Trish Ahjel Roberts**

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*“Wake up with Gratitude. Nourish  
your Mind, Body and Spirit. Work  
with Passion. Rest Completely.  
Repeat Daily.”*

There is a lot of talk around self-care. I created the affirmation above as a guide for daily self-care. I will shed light on the meaning of each component in this e-book.

Our bodies, minds and spirits all require maintenance the same way we maintain our cars, computers or any other machines that we've come to rely on. Unfortunately we live in a society that dictates “if it ain't broke, don't fix it.” It's a illness-minded healthcare model that waits for a crisis before intervention. Imagine if you waited for a blowout before you changed your car tires, or a computer crash before installing virus-protection software. Our whole selves require maintenance also. However, unlike the car or the computer, we don't come with a manual. Let this e-book serve as your mini-manual for self.





## *Chapter One*

# Wake Up with Gratitude

Gratitude is a spiritual practice that is meant for daily engagement. Sometimes it can seem like being actively grateful is a time-consuming chore. Let me tell you why you want to make this an active, conscious part of your day.

- ❓ **It's impossible to be angry or unhappy and grateful simultaneously.**
- ❓ **Gratitude changes your mental state from negative to positive. It alters your perspective. This new mindset reflects back to you and improves the way people respond to you.**
- ❓ **The natural response to "thank you" is "you're welcome." In that same way, when you are grateful the world is more generous with you. (Imagine a huge "you're welcome" from the universe.)**


Think about how you feel when you go out of your way to do something for someone and they don't even have the courtesy to say "thank you." You don't feel like doing ANOTHER SINGLE THING FOR THEM. Your generosity dries up. Each day the world offers you breath, a beating heart, sunlight, food, shelter, community and so many other things we take for granted.

We can't even understand the complexity of our own beating heart and yet we easily take it for granted. Scientists have spent hundreds of years trying to understand our solar system and most of the time we ignore the sun, often complaining about the weather instead. We have access to complex, imported foods and give virtually no thought to the workers who pick crops and pack foods, the designers who design beautiful packaging and the barge operators and pilots who transport our foods from overseas. We live in complex shelters with running water, heating and cooling systems, dish and clothes washers, elevators and many modern conveniences. Whatever we think of our government in the United States, particularly with the recent coronavirus pandemic, we can still agree it has been reasonably stable since the civil war and meets our basic needs for infrastructure and protection against foreign attack.

If we add these basic gifts to the personal day-to-day experiences that we're grateful for, we will find, no matter what our circumstances we have a lot to be thankful for. **When we say "thank you" the world says "you're welcome." It's a game changer.**

#### Here are a few tips to cultivate gratitude:

- ❑ First thing in the morning as you wake up, say "Thank you for another day. I have so much to be grateful for." (Take a few moments, even just thirty seconds to think about the basic things that you are grateful for.)
- ❑ In the evenings, write down what you are thankful for on that day. (You should have at least three items. If you have more, write as many as you want. Let the gratitude overflow!)



## *Chapter Two* Nourish Your Mind

Your mind reflects whatever you feed it, much like your body. If you feed it junk, it will reflect junk. If you feed it high-quality food, that's what it will reflect.

Racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of hatred are the result of a poorly nourished mind.



**Choose to actively nourish your mind with what works for you. Here are some ideas:**

- ❓ Challenging intellectual work (this could be your career or a hobby)
- ❓ Brain games (puzzles, cards, chess, sudoku, etc.)
- ❓ Educational films and documentaries
- ❓ Thoughtful films and dramas
- ❓ Thought-provoking books, reading materials and discussions
- ❓ All varieties of music (of course excluding low-vibration lyrics like misogyny, self-hatred, etc.)
- ❓ Playing or learning an instrument
- ❓ Learning a language
- ❓ Writing in any form (Journaling, fiction, non-fiction, etc.)
- ❓ Artistic expression (paint, sculpture, crafting, needlepoint, crochet, knitting, etc.)
- ❓ Friendly debates on religion, politics and values. (I truly believe the national mindset to not discuss politics or religion in polite conversation is completely misguided. We should be able to have thoughtful conversations on topics that matter.)

**Here are a few tips to nourish your mind:**

- ❓ Choose an activity to nourish your mind on a daily basis. If your current job is intellectually demanding, look for at least one other activity that challenges you in a different way that you can participate in on a weekly basis.
- ❓ If your current group of friends and family don't engage your intellect, consider joining social groups to interact with people outside of your normal social circle. Facebook and Meetup have a lot of groups you can join. I organize Black Vegan Life, Vegan Writers Retreat and Cocoa Risers Reading on Meetup.com here in Atlanta.



# Nourish Your Body

Our body is the vessel that allows us to exist in this human experience, hopefully for a long enough time to achieve our full potential. It requires daily maintenance in a much more obvious way, because most of us will not go through a full day without eating.

### Here are a few tips to nourish your body:

- ❓ Get regular exercise, or at minimum, 30 mins of cardio 3x per week. Ideally, you should have a regular schedule for cardio, strength-training and stretch.
- ❓ I believe a mostly organic, whole food, plant-based diet provides optimal nutrition to the body, however I am not a nutritionist. There is consensus in the wellness and medical community that a whole food diet, avoiding processed foods, excessive sugar, salt and fat is ideal. Whole foods are foods as they occur in nature: fruits, vegetable, beans, whole grain rice and oats, etc. Generally speaking if it comes in box or was altered in any way it's no longer a whole food.
- ❓ Limit or avoid alcohol.
- ❓ Don't smoke or vape.
- ❓ Limit or avoid caffeine.
- ❓ Schedule an annual physical with your primary care physician.
- ❓ Schedule routine dental cleanings and checkups with your dentist.
- ❓ Get outside daily for sunlight and fresh air.
- ❓ Drink plenty of water. If you don't love water, try adding lemon or fruits to improve flavor. Unsweetened herbal teas and seltzer are also good options for zero-calorie hydration.
- ❓ Have a spa schedule if you can afford it. Massage and heat therapies (sauna, jacuzzi, infrared, steam, etc.) are excellent for increasing circulation and removing toxins from the body.
- ❓ Consider intermittent fasting. There is a lot of information available about the health benefits of fasting. Fasting has been used since biblical times for physical and mental clarity. New research indicates that periods of fasting allow the body to heal. It could be a few hours or a full day.



## Chapter Four

# Nourish Your Spirit

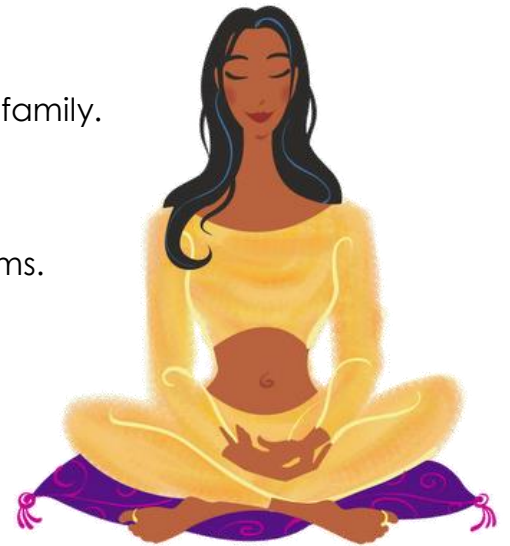
Whether we want to believe it or not, we are spiritual beings. That doesn't mean you have to subscribe to a particular religion, but I do believe at some point you have to acknowledge there is a whole lot going on inside of you. If you pay attention to your inner self through meditation, prayer, silence, stillness and contemplation you will discover the full wealth of You. It's this place of acknowledgement that opens the door to a spiritual world of wisdom and intuition.

### What does a spiritual life do for you?


- It provides meaning in world that can often seem chaotic.
- It provides comfort in the face of illness and death.
- It provides a community of support aside from friends and family.

### Here are a few tips to nourish your spirit:

- ? Be curious - read or listen to books from other belief systems.
- ? Practice positive self-talk and affirmations.
- ? Forgive yourself and let go of anger toward others.
- ? Attend spiritual meetings or religious services.
- ? Learn to meditate.
- ? Try yoga.
- ? Watch spiritual films.



If you're not a big reader, audiobooks are great and most local libraries offer them for free. You might enjoy pop-culture bestsellers like Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, TD Jakes or Joel Osteen. My favorite spiritual author, and Buddhist teacher is Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. The first book I read from him is called *How to Solve Our Human Problems*. It completely changed my life in less than 140 pages. Yoga is another great way to access your inner spirit. Practicing stillness during meditation, restorative yoga or yoga nidra can quiet the mind and help you access your inner wisdom.



## Chapter Five

# Work with Passion


MLK is famously quoted as saying “if a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted.” It took me years before I learned that putting forth a mediocre effort (even at work I didn’t want to do) wouldn’t benefit me or anyone else. Caring for yourself means finding what you most want to do and doing it with passion. If you find yourself doing work that you don’t want to do, find a piece of the work that you can get excited about and make it your own.

Studies show that there is benefit in working in the focused state sometimes referred to as “the zone.” Hours pass by quickly in this heightened state of awareness. Try to spend time in this mental space either with your paying job or some other work or hobby.

## Tips for Working with Passion

Many of us have wandered into careers promoted by our parents or our teachers. If you find the bulk of your day is spent at a job you’re not passionate about, here are some ideas:

- Identify components of the job that excite you and work to grow them.
- Research other careers and consider taking a leap.
- Seek out hobbies that inspire you and nurture them.



## *Chapter Six* Rest Completely

The pharmaceutical industry makes over \$60B in profit selling sleep aids. Adequate sleep is necessary for every function of the human body. Despite this, our culture glorifies burning the midnight oil and running on caffeine. We do not live in a society that values rest. However, lack of sleep contributes to accidents, lack of productivity and ultimately disease. If you want to take care of yourself and reach your highest potential, you're gonna need some rest.

Although sleep is indescribably important to good health, it's not the only way we rest. Our bodies are typically in fight or flight mode daily, keeping our sympathetic nervous system over-worked. Even during sleep we may find ourselves stressed in our dream state, whether we're running late for work or fighting zombies. Sometimes dreams simply move our stress from the conscious mind to the subconscious.

**Here are some tips for more restful sleep and for rest (even when you're not sleeping):**

- 🔍 Allow time for a full 7-8 hours of sleep at night.
- 🔍 Create an evening routine.
- 🔍 Stop eating at least 2 hours before bedtime.
- 🔍 Include herbs and essential oils in your bedtime routine. Chamomile, valerian root and lavender are powerful sleep aids.
- 🔍 Try restorative yoga or yoga nidra to cultivate rest while awake.



## Chapter Seven

# Repeat Daily

There is a quote that I like. "Motivation will get you there. Habit will keep you there." We are creatures of habit. Habit and routine make life a little easier. Too much and you run the risk of becoming boring, but just enough will keep you on track without recreating the wheel on a daily basis. To find your balance, I encourage you to create small habits that are sustainable. Perhaps 15 minutes of meditation upon rising and three workout sessions per week to start. Try making one or two changes per week and letting them settle in before adding more changes. Too many changes at once may feel overwhelming

## Summary

You are an amazing creation. You are not only a physical body, but also a divine spirit and a curious mind. You are a complete and fascinating network of atoms, energy and spirit. The human consciousness and physical body is still only partially understood. I encourage you to take an active role in understanding and caring for your own unique self. **Most of all, be kind to yourself. Forgive yourself if you get off track. You may not always realize it, but you are profoundly beautiful.**



## Bio



Author Trish Ahjel Roberts is a novelist, blogger, self-actualization coach, yoga and meditation instructor, reiki practitioner, retreat organizer and founder of Black Vegan Life™. Look out for her upcoming self-help memoir, "Thinking Outside the Chrysalis: A Black Woman's Guide to Spreading Her Wings."

**Find additional resources for your self-care journey at [HoneyButterflyz.com](https://HoneyButterflyz.com).**

