

Submission for weekly column “Space for Reflection” in The Current

“Take Care of Yourself”

I wonder how many NSU students heard these words—or some variation on them—from a parent or a friend as they headed back to school over the past two weeks. Or maybe it was at the end of a phone call since arriving at school. “Take care of yourself.” It’s such a simple message, but it says so much. For one thing, it shows that the person saying it cares about you, wants you to be safe and well.

For the college student, there are certain givens: exam stress, late nights, lots of pizza, unfamiliar social situations. So when we hear the message to take care of ourselves, we don’t need it spelled out that this means such things as: get enough sleep, eat healthy, exercise, practice safe sex, don’t drink and drive. We just understand that these ways of being careful and wise are implied by the message.

Each of us may have more or less success at following this advice. (After all, pizza just always tastes good!) But at least, somewhere in the far recesses of consciousness, we are aware of this advice and we realize these things are important. What we may not realize is that there is another facet of taking care of ourselves that is equally important. I think of it as “taking care of your spirit.” The familiar phrase “mind, body, spirit” represents the three elements of wellness. We’ve got the intellectual stimulation of our classes and the fantastic new RecPlex at the UC to address the first two elements—mind and body. But how do we take care of our spirit?

There are likely as many answers to that question as there are students at NSU. Each of us has different ways of chilling out, finding inspiration, filling up with joy. For some, it may mean writing in a journal or talking with a close friend from home in order to find expression in words for all the thoughts and feelings they’re having. Others may want to connect with nature for peace and inspiration by going for a walk on the beach or just sitting in a pretty place on campus. For so many of us, music is a powerful source of joy and energy, whether we’re lying alone in a dark room listening to our favorite mellow music or dancing wildly at a party.

Students who find strength and community in their religion may want to take care of their spirit in part by connecting with Hillel, IMAN or IVCF—the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian organizations on campus. And the Interfaith Council welcomes anyone interested in spiritual issues, whether or not you consider yourself particularly religious.

Whatever it is that feeds you spiritually, just don’t forget to include it as part of taking care of yourself. No matter how fit your body and how impressive your GPA, if your spirit is troubled or depleted, it’ll be hard to have a happy, successful year. So be sure to take care of your spirit. Pray, reflect, commune with nature—whatever it is that takes care of that third essential element of wellness—spirit. And please let me know how *you* take care of *your* spirit. I’d love to hear some of the different approaches used among NSU students. You can reach me at the phone number or email listed below!

Robin Cooper
G.A. for Multicultural and Spiritual Affairs
robicoop@nova.edu
954-262-7253

