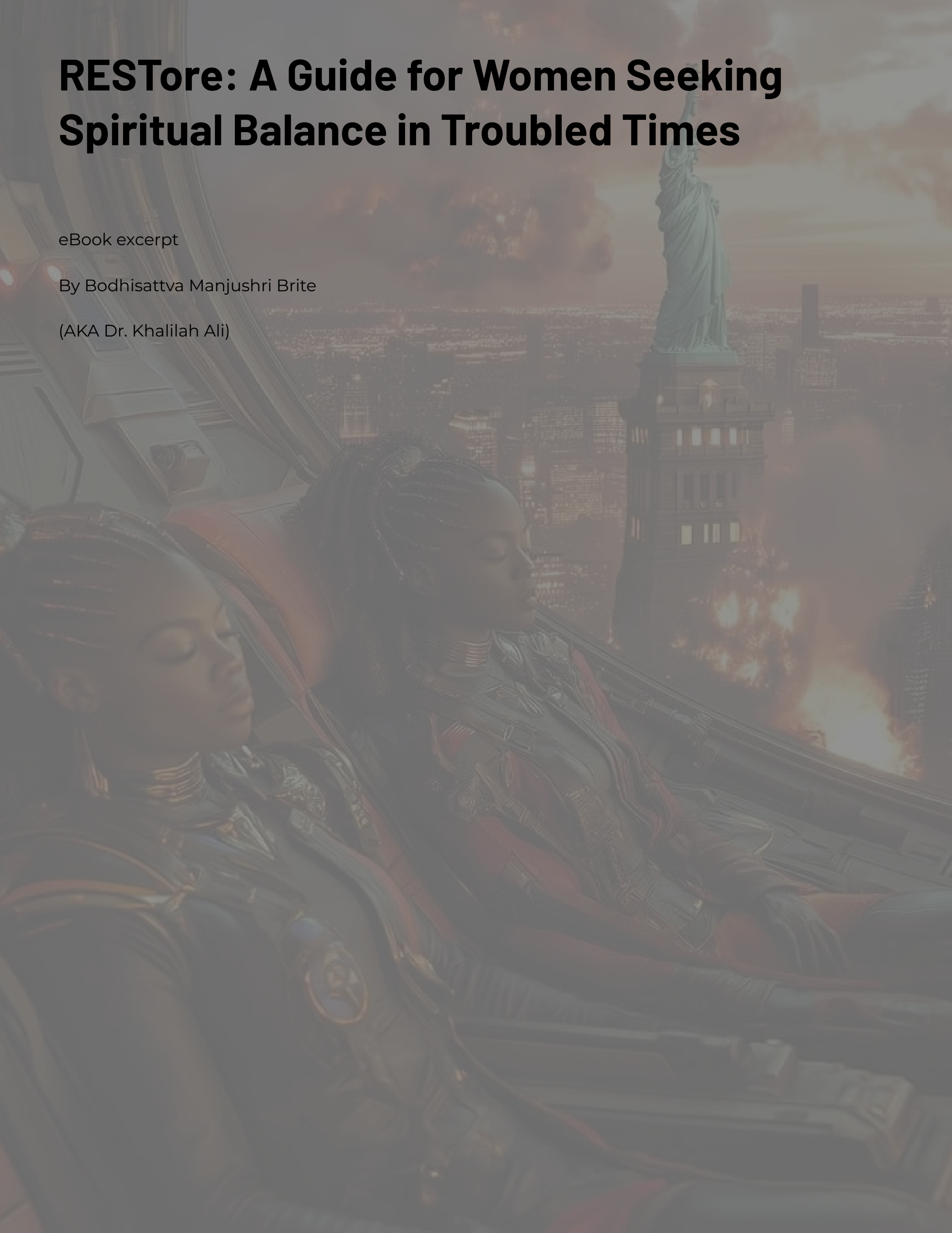


# REStore: A Guide for Women Seeking Spiritual Balance in Troubled Times

eBook excerpt

By Bodhisattva Manjushri Brite

(AKA Dr. Khalilah Ali)



# The Kindness Within: Self-Care as a Womanist Practice

"If you light a lamp for someone else, it will also brighten your path."— Buddha

Kindness, as a spiritual practice, often feels outward-facing: being generous with others, showing compassion, and seeking to minimize harm. However, true kindness begins within. The Buddhist principle of ahimsa—non-harm—teaches us that harm to oneself is as significant as harm to others. To extend kindness outward, we must first embody it inwardly. For women navigating complex roles and turbulent times, this means prioritizing self-care as an essential act of kindness—not just for oneself, but for the collective.

Alice Walker's definition of a womanist aligns seamlessly with this idea. A womanist, she tells us, is someone "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." Yet Walker makes it clear that this commitment does not preclude the necessity of withdrawal. A womanist is "not a separatist, except periodically, for health." This periodic separation, this intentional withdrawal, is not about abandoning the collective but about ensuring that one's own light remains strong enough to lead, nurture, and heal.

In this chapter, we explore how centering self-care as a spiritual practice strengthens our ability to contribute meaningfully to the collective. Through the lens of womanist luxocracy and Buddhist wisdom, we reclaim self-care as an act of leadership, healing, and resistance.

# The Practice of Withdrawal: A Womanist Necessity

Walker's concept of withdrawal as "not separatist, except periodically, for health" reframes self-care as a critical component of collective care. This withdrawal is not selfish or avoidant; it is restorative. It is a womanist act of recognizing that our ability to serve others is deeply tied to our ability to care for ourselves.

When we withdraw, we step into a sacred space where we can reflect, heal, and replenish. Like the moon disappearing into darkness before reemerging full, withdrawal allows us to recalibrate. It honors the natural cycles of energy that sustain us and gives us the strength to return to the collective with renewed purpose.

## Practicing Withdrawal with Intention

Withdrawal as self-care might look like:

1. Creating Boundaries: Declining requests or invitations that drain your energy.
2. Engaging in Solitude: Spending time alone to meditate, journal, or simply rest.
3. Physical Separation: Taking a break from people, spaces, or activities that overwhelm you.
4. Prioritizing Restoration: Using your withdrawal time for practices that nurture your mind, body, and spirit.

This kind of separation, intentional and periodic, is a way of ensuring that your light remains steady and bright. By tending to your own needs, you align with Walker's womanist principle: survival and wholeness for yourself and, by extension, the collective.

# Balancing Self-Care and Collective Care



## Begin with Yourself

Self-care is the foundation. By nurturing your own light, you strengthen your ability to support others.



## Extend Care to Others

Once restored, your light can illuminate the path for others. This might involve acts of kindness, shared rituals, or collective healing.



## Return to Yourself

Recognize when you need to withdraw again. The cycle of care—giving and receiving—is ongoing and fluid.

## Practices for Womanist Self-Care

1. Kindness Meditation (Metta Bhavana)
  - Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Repeat phrases of loving-kindness, starting with yourself:
  - May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I be free from harm. Then extend this kindness outward to others and the collective. This practice reinforces the interconnectedness of self and community.
2. Sacred Withdrawal Ritual
  - Create a space in your home where you can retreat for moments of solitude. Light a candle, play soft music, or meditate. Let this space remind you that withdrawal is an act of care.
3. Daily Boundaries Practice
  - Begin each morning by setting an intention for your boundaries. For example:
  - "Today, I will honor my energy and say no to what does not serve me." Reflect each evening on how you upheld these boundaries.
4. Joyful Rest
  - Redefine rest as an active part of your spiritual practice. Engage in activities that rejuvenate your spirit, like reading, dancing, or spending time in nature.
5. Affirmation of Worth
  - Repeat Walker-inspired affirmations:
  - "I am whole and worthy, and my care for myself strengthens my care for others."
  - "My withdrawal is a gift that restores my light."

# Actionable Steps for Self-Care

## Schedule Time for Withdrawal

Dedicate at least one day a month to complete rest and restoration.

## Practice Loving-Kindness

Use the kindness meditation daily to balance self-care with care for others.

## Create Boundaries

Write a list of non-negotiable boundaries and share them with trusted people.

## Join a Restorative Circle

Connect with a group focused on mutual care, such as a yoga or meditation circle.

## Celebrate Small Acts of Care

Acknowledge and reward yourself for moments when you honor your needs.

Self-care is not a retreat from the world but a preparation to re-enter it with renewed strength and clarity. As Buddhist teachings and womanist wisdom remind us, kindness begins within, and from that foundation, it flows outward. By centering ourselves, we honor our value and fortify our ability to lead, heal, and contribute.

As Alice Walker wrote, *"It is crucial that we withdraw, and I assure you, it is equally crucial that we return." Let us honor the rhythm of withdrawal and return, always grounded in the light of our own care, always connected to the collective glow.*

# Sacred Everyday: Weaving Rituals Into the Ordinary


"Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment."— Buddha

In a world that often feels chaotic, rituals are the threads that weave meaning into our days. They remind us to pause, to breathe, and to connect with our inner light. Rituals are not confined to sacred spaces or grand gestures—they are as simple and profound as lighting a candle, sipping tea with intention, or whispering a prayer before stepping out into the day.

Rituals invite us to infuse the mundane with the sacred, transforming everyday moments into opportunities for joy and reflection. They ground us in the present while connecting us to the infinite, creating a bridge between our inner world and the collective consciousness. In this chapter, we explore how to create and sustain personal rituals that align with the principles of womanist luxocracy—illuminating our lives and contributing to the shared light of the world.


# Crafting Sacred Rituals

Creating a ritual is deeply personal, and there's no right or wrong way to begin. Here are guiding steps to help you design practices that resonate with your spirit:




### Identify Your Intentions

What do you want your ritual to bring into your life? Whether it's grounding, gratitude, or inspiration, clarity of purpose will shape the ritual.




### Choose Your Elements

Incorporate tools and symbols that hold meaning for you. These might include candles for light and focus, crystals for grounding and energy, journals for reflection, or incense and essential oils for cleansing.




### Create a Sacred Space

Dedicate a spot in your home for rituals—a table, a windowsill, or even a corner of your room. Infuse it with personal touches that evoke peace and connection.



### Embrace Simplicity

Rituals don't need to be elaborate. A simple act, performed with intention, holds profound power.



### Commit to Consistency

Repetition strengthens the impact of rituals. Choose a time—morning, evening, or another quiet moment in your day—and commit to it.

## Examples of Everyday Rituals

- 1

### Morning Light Ritual

Light a candle as you wake up. Sit quietly and set an intention for the day. Say: "May my light shine brightly today, bringing joy to myself and others."
- 2

### Gratitude Tea Ceremony

As you prepare your morning tea or coffee, take a moment to express gratitude for three things. Sip slowly, savoring the warmth and the moment.
- 3

### Evening Release Practice

Before bed, write down anything you want to release from the day—worries, frustrations, or doubts. Burn or shred the paper as a symbolic act of letting go.
- 4

### Monthly Moon Ritual

During the new moon, set intentions for what you want to manifest. During the full moon, reflect on your progress and release what no longer serves you.
- 5

### Walking Meditation

Take a slow, mindful walk, focusing on your breath and the sensations around you. Use each step to affirm: "I am here. I am light. I am joy."



# About Dr. Bodhisattva Brite (Khalilah Ali)



Bodhi is a cultural theorist, educator, and artist dedicated to reclaiming rest, ritual, and radical pedagogy as acts of resistance and renewal. She is the author of *REStore: A Guide for Women Seeking Spiritual Balance in Troubled Times*, a meditation on Black womanhood, rest, and spiritual reclamation, and [\*\*The Conscious Cultural Worker\*\*](#), a manifesto for educators, artists, and organizers committed to transformative justice and community-based knowledge. Her work centers Black feminist thought, womanist theology, and liberatory education. Whether in classrooms, art spaces, or public scholarship, she inspires others to teach, create, and live with intentionality and insurgent joy.

## Contact:

470-917-3204

[bodhisattvabrite@gmail.com](mailto:bodhisattvabrite@gmail.com)