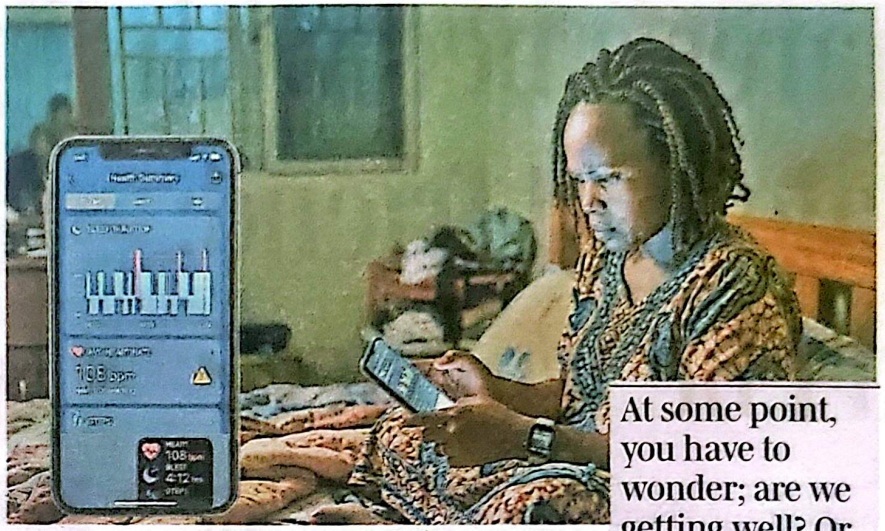
# When does self-care become self-harm?



**At some point, you have to wonder; are we getting well? Or are we just getting really good at performing wellness for an audience of one very anxious person in the mirror?**



Sylvia Mwesigye
Another Perspective

Last weekend, my Gen Z daughter, bless her relentless little heart, tricked me into watching an episode of *Jubilee*. If you are, like me, a digital immigrant who still secretly misses landlines, you have no idea what that is. I did not either. So, I looked it up. They call themselves: "A digital media company that pushes boundaries, tackles taboos, and breaks the rules." Fine. Whatever. But then they added: "We are not afraid to go there."

And let me tell you; going there is not a threat. It is a promise.

The episode pitted wellness influencers against body positivity influencers. The body positivity people were all soft voices and "love the skin you are in." The wellness people on the other hand were combative, explosive and vicious. They called full-bodied people losers and fat without flinching. One participant, a man named Myron Gaines from the Fresh and Fit podcast, made me do a double take so hard I nearly gave myself whiplash. I will not describe him further, I have boundaries, however porous, but he opened my eyes to something uncomfortable.

Wellness has become a blood sport.

Here is the thing: I am not anti-wellness. I walk. I cook. I try to meditate without falling asleep. But somewhere along the way, wellness stopped being about feeling good and started being about performing goodness. We have handed over our rights to the wellness industry machine to dictate for us what we eat, the routines we follow, the products we use; all become part of our identity. And platforms reward that. Transformations go viral. Before-and-after is the hero's journey for the Instagram age.

But here is the irony that keeps me up at night; the more we chase wellness, the sicker we get. Not physically. Mentally.

Because wellness has given birth to its own dark twin; hypervigilance. That is the clinical word for constantly monitoring your body like it is a suspect under surveillance. Step counts. Sleep scores. Heart rate variability. Mood trackers. On paper, these tools are neutral. Helpful, even. But the problem is, when you are tracking everything, you stop living in your body and start living in a spreadsheet of your body's supposed failures.

Hypervigilance is exhausting. It is that low-grade hum of anxiety that tells you something is always wrong, or about to go wrong, and it is your job to catch it and fix it. You are always consumed by how many calories are in a meal instead of enjoying the deliciousness of a loved one's cooking. Your body stops being a vessel that enables you to do all these wonderful things with and starts being the thing that holds you back from enjoying a glass of wine with a friend.

I have seen this in fitness people, especially the extreme kind. They are not well. They are anxious, brittle, and perpetually disappointed in themselves. Health anxiety makes you feel like your body is the enemy. And the wellness industry, whether intentionally or not, feeds that fear. Because a scared customer is a buying customer.

As we begin Mental Health Awareness Month, I find myself asking a complicated question: What if our pursuit of mental wellness is making us mentally unwell? At first glance, overconsumption in wellness looks harmless. A few extra products. A few new routines. But over time, it adds up. Chasing health becomes stressful, expensive, and yes, harmful. It also deepens inequality, because wellness becomes something you have to buy, not something you can simply live.

We are chasing products and protocols but forgetting the basics. The boring things that actually work. Sleep. Conversation. Sitting still. Not tracking anything for one whole hour.

The irony is almost unbearable; the more we try to perfect our health, the more disconnected we feel from it. And at some point, you have to wonder; are we getting well? Or are we just getting really good at performing wellness for an audience of one very anxious person in the mirror? My hope, this month and every month, is that we do not lose the tiny, imperfect wellness we already had while chasing a version that does not exist.

