

Practice Self-Care

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We all need to take a moment for ourselves in order to stay effective as supervisors. Use this self-care activity by yourself, with a partner, or get your entire unit involved.

Below are different areas of self-care and some ideas for improving each. Review your calendar and identify small amounts of time each week for a self-care activity you know makes you feel relaxed, centered, and recharged. Record the activity on your calendar and make a deal with yourself that for one month you will not let anything get in the way of completing this self-care task. At the conclusion of the month, observe the effects your efforts at self-care have had on each area of your life. Evaluate your overall wellness. In addition, note any barriers and consider how you will overcome those barriers and reduce your stress.

Physical Self-Care

- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet consisting of mainly whole foods**
 - Look at the label. If you don't know what an ingredient is, don't buy it.
 - Look at the label. If it has more than five ingredients, don't buy it.
 - At mealtime, your plate should be proportioned so you are eating $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits & vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ lean proteins, and $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains.
- **Exercise 30 minutes a day/5 days a week**
 - Use the 10-10-10 rule. Do some sort of activity 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes in the afternoon, and 10 minutes in the evening.
 - Be creative and make it fun or productive (e.g., have a chore race to see how fast chores can be completed or take the dog for a brisk walk).
 - Utilize time during your work day for exercise (e.g., walk the stairs for 10 minutes before work, during lunch, and after work or; bring light weights and do various lifts during break times; or start a lunch time walking group).
 - Join a gym near your home or work and workout right before or after work.
- **Get an adequate amount of sleep**
 - Maintain a consistent sleep schedule.
 - Utilize the bedroom for sleeping and sex only.
 - Unless it is absolutely necessary do not sleep with your phone in the bedroom.
- **Access and utilize medical care**
 - Schedule and keep appointments.
 - Consult your doctor and be honest with him/her about your health and any concerns or questions.



- **Get a massage**
 - Find a listing of local massage therapists and reviews online or ask around.
 - If money is tight, try self-massage using a foam roller.

Psychological & Emotional Self-Care

- **Use self-awareness**
 - Identify what causes your stress. Keep a log of times you experience any of the following symptoms of stress: poor concentration, difficulty making decisions, headaches, tension in neck, back, or stomach, increased or decreased appetite, anxious moods, feelings of hopelessness, irritability, or social withdrawal.
 - Think about your thinking. This is a practice called learned optimism or an “optimistic explanatory style through which misfortune is interpreted as a temporary setback or challenge that can be overcome as opposed to an indication of personal failure that is likely to persist or be permanent” (Cox & Steiner, 2013). For example, instead of thinking that your supervisee’s missing of a deadline is a sign of disrespect and laziness, consider it is not about you but rather about their schedule or a recent case which they are struggling to deal with. Also, think of times when you experienced success in a specific area.
- **Self-regulation**

Minding your mind. Monitor and change your destructive thought patterns. Try one of these strategies:

 - Benefit Finding – uncover the positive effects of a negative situation
 - Benefit Reminding – remind yourself of a previous success or positive outcome from a similar situation (e.g., hanging a picture colored by a successful client in your office or starting a “wall of victories” where workers can post names, messages, thank you notes, or pictures of successful cases).
 - Cognitive Reframing – change your perspective about self, clients, and system
 - Instead of thinking clients are helpless; think clients are now getting the help they need.
 - Instead of thinking that you are helpless, think you are a helping tool.
 - Instead of thinking of the system as not working, think the system needs work.
 - Soothe the Soul – utilize mindfulness to increase present moment awareness and calm in order to counteract worry, reactivity, and restlessness
 - Use visual, auditory, and tactile methods:
 - Visual – observe nature or focus on a picture that makes you happy
 - Auditory – listen to a favorite song or calming sounds such as waves crashing
 - Tactile – focus on your breathing, taking a warm bath, or slowly eating your food
 - Increase your connectivity
 - Smile at people you pass in the hallway or holding the door for someone.
 - Share stories or experiences with a co-worker and listen to theirs.
 - Create a peer support group to bring concerns to, receive support from, and discuss solutions with. This is especially important for supervisors as it is not recommended to share such issues with supervisees.

Spiritual Self-Care

- Take time to pray and center yourself before the day begins.
- Practice meditation (see the “Meditation Techniques” box to learn how).
- Practice gratitude for small things.
- Read books that nourish your soul.

Professional Self-Care

- Practice self-efficacy, which is the belief in oneself and one’s capabilities nurtured through professional development, vicarious learning, and celebrating small steps.
- Arrange your workspace to be a place of peace and calm through decorations, pictures, light, and scent; or advocate for a relaxation room to be set aside for employee use if your own workspace is not quiet or private enough.
- Take mini-breaks throughout the day and a break for lunch.
- Take a walk through the building and talk to someone new or an old friend, listen to music, whatever renews you in a short amount of time.
- Learn to say “no.” If asked to do an additional task assess current work load to see if you can indeed add one more thing and do it well, if not, say no or ask for an extension.
- Balance work, play, and rest. This can be in many areas:
 - Personal and professional relationships
 - Number and intensity of cases on your caseload
 - Between administrative functions and direct service
 - Having empathy for others and the need to stand apart from their pain

Meditation Techniques

- **Guided**
- **Stealth/Short (Salzberg, 2014) Meditation**
 1. **Relax.** As you sit down at your desk or work space, spend a few moments just listening to the sounds around you. Note your reactions to them.
 2. **Center yourself.** This can be as short as following three breaths-to connect with a deeper sense of yourself.
 3. **Focus.** Concentrate on just one thing for a small portion of time. Try setting a timer for 15 minutes, so you can focus without straying. Notice how you are holding something in your hand-a steering wheel or a cup, for instance. What is the quality of your grip? Sometimes we exert so much force holding things; unknowingly it increases our body’s tension.

References

Cox, K. & Steiner, S. (2013). *Self-care in social work: A guide for practitioners, supervisors, and administrators*. Washington D.C.: NASW Press.

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