

# Self-Care

Taking Care of Ourselves in Service to Others

The content below is based upon information found in the University of Buffalo's School of Social Work "Self-Care Starter Kit" which can be found at: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit.html>

## Why Self-Care?

- Self-care is an essential social work survival skill.
- Self-care is necessary for your effectiveness and success in honoring your professional and personal commitments.

"Just like you do on a plane, you need to put on your own oxygen mask first before trying to help others."  
-Dean Nancy Smyth

## What is Self-Care

- Self care includes any intentional actions you take to care for your physical, mental and emotional health.
- Self-care refers to activities and practices that we can engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and maintain and enhance our short- and longer-term health and well-being.

## Simple steps are sometimes the most difficult:

- Eat Right
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Medical Care

## Compassion Fatigue

- "Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper."  
-Dr. Charles Figley

**Awareness**

**EXERCISE**  
Light **3 DAYS** exercise **A WEEK** improves happiness by **10-20%** increases work productivity by **15%**

**MEDITATE**  
**50%** reduction in overall psychiatric symptoms  
**70%** decrease in anxiety  
**44%** reduction in common medical symptoms

**READ**  
A new trend in treatment of mental illness boosts creativity and activates sensory areas of the brain.

**GREENSPACE**  
Having **over 30%** of green space in your surroundings is recommended for **healthy cortisol levels**.

**LAUGH**  
Laughter strengthens the immune system, boosts energy and diminishes pain. Children laugh **over 300 times** per day. The typical adult chuckles **15 times** per day.

**TIME OFF**  
**30%** of employees use their vacation time, which leads to better quality sleep, decreased stress and improved mood.

**EAT WELL**  
Omega 3 fatty acids improve hearing and memory and fight mental disorders. Carbohydrates aid in the release of endorphins.

**SLEEP**  
The CDC currently classifies insufficient sleep as a public health epidemic. Sleep restores cognitive functions.

### Self-Care will help...

- Identity and manage general challenges
- Be aware of personal vulnerabilities
- Achieve more balance in your life

### Developing a Self-Care Plan

- Common thread of all self-care plans: making a commitment to attend to all the domains of your life, including your physical and psychological health, emotional and spiritual needs, and relationships.

### Goals of Self-Care

- Taking care of physical and psychological health
- Managing and reducing stress
- Honoring emotional and spiritual needs
- Fostering and sustaining relationships
- Achieving an equilibrium across one's personal, school, and work lives

### How do you cope now?

- Identify what you do now to manage the stress in your life.
- Decreasing or eliminating at least one "negative" coping strategy can be one of the goals of your maintenance self-care; employing more "positive" strategies can be another

### Self-Care Plan

- To develop your self-care plan, you will identify what you value and need as part of your day-to-day life (maintenance self-care) and the strategies you can employ when or if you face a crisis along the way (emergency self-care).

### What do you do for Self-Care now?

- Highlight the good things you are already doing for yourself and whether there is an imbalance in the areas in which you practice self-care
- **Self Care Assessment (activity)**

## Maintenance of Self-Care

- Maintenance self-care: activities that **you have identified as important to your well-being** and that you have committed to engage in on a regular basis to take care of yourself.
- It is also useful to **identify possible barriers or obstacles** that could get in the way of implementing and/or maintaining these new activities

**Self Care Plan (activity)**

## Share Your Plan

- Remember that friends, family, peers, and/or colleagues may be good additional resources for exchanging new self-care ideas/strategies and to provide support and encouragement.

## Emergency Self-Care

- Planning out what you would do under extremely trying circumstances, even though they are rare, is also important.

## Follow Your Plan

- You have identified the core elements of your personal Self-Care Plan
- The final step is to implement your plan and keep track of how you are doing

*Remember that self-care is always a work in progress!*

## Commit to Yourself

- Take a moment, think it over, and then make your personal commitment to your own self-care. You deserve it!
- Self-care is not only essential to your well-being, but it is also a necessary element for you to be effective and successful in honoring your professional and personal commitments.

## Resources

- Self-Care
  - University of Buffalo: School of Social Work
    - <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/self-care-assessments-exercises.html>
- Compassion Fatigue:
  - Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project:
    - <http://www.compassionfatigue.org/>

### Other thoughts:

- Relaxation
  - Meditation: internet, itunes
  - Yoga
  - Music/Sounds: Pandora
- Exercise
  - Find an exercise partner to keep you going
  - Find something you enjoy
  - Put it on your calendar

Thank you  
and  
TAKE CARE