

Self-Care Assessment¹

Looking for Balance

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive. It merely contains some suggestions. Check off what you do currently. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you. There is space at the end of the document for you to fill in additional areas, if you wish.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care? Are there areas of self-care you'd like spend more time on? Can you come up with a plan for incorporating additional self-care into your routine? When could you fit it in? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more of in your life.

Workplace or Professional Self-Care

- Take a break during the workday
- Chat with co-workers
- Have a peer support group / mentor
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Consider ways to set limits with clients and colleagues
- Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"
- Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for my needs (flexible schedule, benefits, pay raise)
- (If relevant) Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
- Other:

Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Care for your body
- Take time off
- Get massages
- Do something fun
- Sleep / Rest
- Wear clothes I like
- Other:

Psychological Self-Care

- Take time off
- Consider time away from electronics / news
- Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- Talk about my thoughts and feelings with another person
- Write in a journal
- Engage in an activity that stimulates new experiences / learning
- Do something at which I am not expert
- Attend to minimizing stress in my life
- Find ways to be creative / play
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

¹ Adapted (with assistance from A.Stone, HLS '19) from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton, by Lisa D. Butler, Ph.D., retrieved 8/6/2010 from http://www.ballarat.edu.au/aasp/student/sds/self_care_assess.shtml.

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in my life
- Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- Look for attributes that I like about myself
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Allow myself to cry
- Find things that make me laugh
- Care for others
- Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- Other:

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- Meditate / Pray / Sing / Chant
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which I believe
- Read inspirational material or listen to inspirational talks, music
- Other:

Relationship Self-Care

- Schedule regular dates with a partner or spouse
- Schedule regular activities with my children
- Make time to see friends
- Make time for romantic intimacy
- Call, check on, or see my relatives
- Spend time with my companion animals
- Stay in contact with faraway friends
- Make time to reply to outreach from others
- Allow others to do things for me
- Enlarge my social circle
- Ask for help when I need it
- Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- Other:

Overall Balance

- Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
- Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Other areas of self-care that are relevant to you:

Low Impact Informal Debriefing and Stress-Reduction²

1. Low Impact Informal Debriefing Class Exercise (10 minutes total)

Pair up with someone new. Pick some aspect of the loss exercise that you'd like to debrief about. Or imagine that you're having a difficult day, either for personal reasons or because of something you've read or heard about at work, and you need to debrief with a work colleague. Practice how you might debrief about it. One person will start by debriefing for 5 minutes, while the other listens and responds. Then swap roles.

Instructions for the person debriefing

- Pick something that is weighing on you (as noted, it could be related to the loss exercise, to something personal, or to one of the client stories in the affidavits or books you have read in class or worked on in a clinical setting) to debrief about with a work colleague. Think about how you would share the information that is weighing on you.
- Keep in mind the low impact debriefing steps outlined in the Mathieu reading last week:
 - (1) *Fair Warning*: Try to prepare the listener for what he or she is about to hear. If the listener knows that you're going to share a traumatic or difficult story, he or she may be better prepared to hear the information.
 - (2) *Consent*: Once you've prepared the listener, ask for consent. Try something as simple as: "I need to debrief, is this an okay time?" "I heard something hard today and could use a moment to debrief, can I talk about it?" The listener can then accept or decline.
 - (3) *Limited Disclosure*: Once you have consent to debrief, consider how much you share. Do you need to share the most painful or disturbing or graphic details in order to convey the information you need or want to convey?
 - (4) *Increased Self Awareness*: Try to become more aware of the story you're telling and the level of detail you're providing – are all the details necessary? What is your goal in debriefing, or what do you hope your colleague will help you with?

Instruction for the listener

- As the listener, consider some ways in which you might set some parameters as to how much/what you are told, while still being available for the debrief.
 - *Giving Permission*:
 - Are you ready/able to hear your colleague's story? Consider giving colleague parameters such as "I'd like to help, but I only have a few minutes, can you give me the snapshot?"
 - *Provide Containment*:
 - Help your colleague move towards the goal of the debrief, sparing extraneous details, by using a prompt like: "Tell me what it is that is bothering you about the situation."
 - *Set Listening Limits*:

² Adapted by Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program from: Mathieu, Francoise, The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: creative tools for transforming compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization

- If you've had a hard day, or for some other reason, can't handle listening to much, consider letting your partner know. You could think about saying something like: "I had a rough day, maybe we could both find someone else to debrief with?" or "I had a tough client today too, maybe we could both share what was so hard?"

2. Stress-Reduction Exercise (5 minutes)

Now that you've debriefed, imagine you're going home at the end of the day, what do you need to go home and recharge? How do you make the transition between work and home and release the day's stress?

- Consider what you might do to take care of yourself. Reflect on the domains in the self-care assessment worksheet and the techniques identified in the poster from the first class. What domains receive the most attention?
- With the same partner with whom you debriefed, commit to doing one destressing thing in the next week.
- Identify what steps need to be in place to make it happen.