

Introduction to Workplace Self-Care

Workplace self-care includes all of the things that you do at and for work that enable you to meet your workplace responsibilities while managing the many stressors that occur at work. Although we are focusing on workplace self-care please consider how this can enhance your overall wellbeing.

Self-care is necessary in every aspect in your life to help you thrive and find joy in the work you do, without experiencing **burnout** and **compassion fatigue**. Workplace self-care is about creating a healthy **work-life integration** (not separation) to help work feel less burdensome and become more enjoyable.

Workplace self care is and is not?

SELF CARE IS

- **Being personally healthy** and well in your physical and mental well-being. This can involve eating healthy and getting enough sleep to be your best self.
- **Seeking support from colleagues** to brainstorm ideas, reduce workplace isolation, collaborate on large projects, and generally share the burden.
- **Helping and caring for others**; for many caring for others can enhance their own well-being by making them feel good and like they have a greater purpose.

SELF CARE IS NOT...

- **Being selfish**; while self-care involves prioritizing yourself this is an important element of being able to give your best to others.
- **A 'cure all' for unmanageable stress**; it is developing new habits and behaviors that you can do to nurture yourself.
- **Adding more work to your plate**; complicated self-care can feel like 'one more thing' to do. Look for sustaining and fulfilling practices that energize you.

Make self-care less of a 'chore' and integrated into your daily habits and practices. The goal of self-care is not to add more to your plate when it is already full or to create additional stress to your daily routine. Self-care should not feel like a chore or an unrealistic practice. Identify **realistic** practices that are do-able for YOU and only YOU.

Realistic (sustainable) self care practices

- Engaging in moments of silence
- Rediscovering old or new hobbies
- Establishing stable social networks of support

Unrealistic (unsustainable) self-care practices


- Meditating for 30 minutes in the morning and evening
- Retail Therapy
- Attending every social event when invited

At the heart of self-care is your relationship and connection to self.

Self-care needs to be self-compassionate and resist self-judgment when you miss attending to self-care. Focus on practices that help you get and stay connected to yourself, practices that help you remain grounded to ensure that you not only perform at your best, but also feel your best.

Those in helping professions can quickly become depleted because each day you give much of yourself into bettering the lives of others. **You cannot pour from an empty cup, it only leads to a place of burnout.**

A few ways to incorporate self-care into your workday...

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Go easy on yourself!
 We are inevitably our own worst critics. We oftentimes find it easier to be kind to others than ourselves, therefore whenever you find yourself met with negative thoughts or a feeling of perfectionism, ask yourself, "What would I say to a colleague or friend in the same situation?" Then try out the solution you might offer to someone else.
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Set workday goals
 Give your workday some additional purpose by setting both personal and professional goals. Make sure they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based (SMART) goals, as this gives you a solid way of tracking progress and feeling good with the results.
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Mingle with your coworkers: Finding your support group
 Healthy and supportive relationships are a critical part of self-care. For some, socializing with others can bring them joy. If this is true for you, find your core group of coworkers who can champion behind you throughout the workday. Take notice of who feeds your energy and who drains it. Set more boundaries with the drainers. Invest in those who inspire and support you and who understand what it means to have a healthy give and take.
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Reflecting on previous wins
 Most of us have a hard time remembering what happened yesterday and especially the week prior because we are oftentimes focused on deliverables. Try hitting the pause button with yourself and your team to take a look back at the previous month and name and/or write down what went well or what felt particularly satisfying.
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Take (or purchase) a healthy/nutritious lunch
 This tip can seem so simple but nutritious meals truly give us the energy to power through the day. Also when you are indulging in your lunch, figure out [*ways to eat the meal more mindfully*](#) which can double as a relaxation technique.
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Switch up your workspace
 Your workspace (or environment) can have a significant impact on productivity. Try decorating your workspace by putting up pictures, artwork, or images that inspire you or remind you of the people and things that matter. Also (if possible) incorporate ergonomically correct office furniture to promote comfort, relaxation, and most importantly good posture.
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Give yourself a recharge and reboot: take some time off if you can
 Many professionals find it hard to take time off from work for various reasons, such as fear of coming back to more work or not having the "time" to take off. However, continuing to operate on limited resources can do more harm than good. Try using your PTO to take a mental health day where you do not check work emails or think about work but solely relax.

More on these self-care tips can be found in these articles:

- [6 ways to weave self-care into your workday](#)
- [14 ways you can implement self-care into your workday](#)

Assessing and Advancing Your Workplace Self Care

There are at least 7 domains of self-care that you need to pay attention to:

Workplace Self-Care
Psychological Self-Care

Physical Self-Care
Spiritual Self-Care
Relationship Self-Care

Emotional Self-Care
Environmental Self-Care

The table below can help you reflect on workplace self-care. When you are finished, reflect over your responses and listen to your internal dialogue about workplace self-care and making yourself a priority while you attend to your responsibilities at work.

Rate your engagement with the following aspects of workplace self-care:

	I never do this OR never occurred to me	I barely or rarely do this	I do this OK (occasionally)	I do this well (frequently)
Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)	0	1	2	3
Take time to chat with co-workers	0	1	2	3
Make quiet time to complete tasks	0	1	2	3
Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding	0	1	2	3
Set limits with students and colleagues	0	1	2	3
Balance my workload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"	0	1	2	3
Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)	0	1	2	3
Get regular mentorship or support	0	1	2	3
Negotiate for my needs (support, benefits, pay raise)	0	1	2	3
Have a professional support group	0	1	2	3
Seek professional development in an area of interest	0	1	2	3

Adapted from Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization; Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP; 1996

Reflect on your answers above to look for ways to strengthen your workplace wellbeing. What is one element of workplace self-care that you want to add into the things that you do during the work day? _____
