AN INTRODUCTION TO SELF CARE

Self-care is not selfish.
You cannot serve from an empty vessel.

Eleanor Brownn with 2 Ns.
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• You may learn new information or experience something different today – be as open as possible
• Be respectful of other’s self-care notions that may differ from your own
• Be present – limit distractions, focus on listening and being in touch with yourself and others

It is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows. -Epictetus
WHAT DOES SELF-CARE MEAN TO YOU?
Self Care defined:

...any **intentional** action taken to increase one’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

...attention to and regulation of one’s overall mental and physical health which is under the individual’s control, deliberate and self-initiated
What you feed your soul is what you harvest with your actions

~Shannon Alder

How do you feed your soul? Please share with the group your current self-care practices.
what gets in the way of self care?

- Feeling that one doesn’t ‘deserve’ or ‘need’ self care
- Belief that self care is frivolous or over indulgent
- Conviction that self care is expensive
- Cultural, familial, or personal norms
- Fear of the unfamiliar or unknown
- “It it ain’t broke don’t fix it!”
- Other?
Why self-care?

How is self-care important to your role, your safety, your success?

• Self-care is essential to boundary management and ethical practice
• Self care affords balance for the multiple challenges of community mental health work:
  • Productivity
  • Documentation
  • Bearing witness
• Self care is a parallel process!
  • Stress and burnout can be contagious
  • We should not be asking others to do what we are not willing to try ourselves (lead by example)
You have permission to rest. You are not responsible for fixing everything that is broken. You do not have to try and make everyone happy. For now, take time for you. It’s time to replenish.
Self-care is **Personal**

- There is no ‘one size fits all’
- No one has the right to judge, criticize, guilt or shame you for whatever type of self care you choose to adopt
- A person’s self care plan is a function of their individual stories, culture and experience
- Self care is fluid, variable and evolving
- Self care is a process—not an event
- Self care requires commitment and practice
- Self care ultimately benefits you personally and professionally
How to begin the journey towards self care

• Be willing to try something new
• Commit to action
• **Find and protect time**
• Be willing to keep trying
• Be compassionate with yourself
• Keep trying
• Be prepared to feel challenged by silence or stillness
• Practice letting go
• Keep trying
• Take a piece of paper and pen
• Make a list of everything, large and small, weighing on you in this moment—the things that distract you, trouble you or cause you distress and anxiety. They may be
  • Global: politics, traffic, violence, etc.
  • Personal: finances, children, marital problems, health issues
  • Professional: colleagues, clients, commute, etc.
• Fold your paper into fourths
• If you are comfortable with it, place your paper in the basket
Self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others.

Parker J Palmer
8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS
Wellness is directly related to how and how well we live. The 8 dimensions are interconnected and multi-dimensional.

- They involve self awareness
- They require self-defined balance...
- Together, they are critical to improving personal wellness

Picture a mobile; all of the parts must be weighted correctly for it to hang naturally!
Wellness is not the absence of disease, illness, and stress, instead a striving toward:

• Purpose in life
• Active involvement in satisfying work and play
• Joyful, sustaining relationships
• A reasonably healthy body and living environment
• A level of contentment
• Other?

Wellness requires that we balance work with play and rest, build in time for recuperation and recovery so we can live our lives fully and productively...
Welcome to Dogbert's seminar on work-life balance.

First, review this list of your priorities.

Family job
Exercise vacation
Must-dos medical eating
Hygiene sleep romance
Holidays

You have time for three things. Work and holidays are two. You get to pick the third.
Introduction to Belly Breathing

1) Close your eyes or focus on something in front of you
2) Place one hand just above your belt line, and the other on your chest
3) Take a deep breath and gently sigh. This relaxes the muscles of your upper body.
4) Close your mouth and inhale slowly through your nose by pushing your stomach out. Pause briefly for whatever time feels comfortable.
5) Slowly exhale through the nose
6) Continue this breath for the next three minutes

End: take another deep breath through the nose. Sigh as you exhale through your mouth by pulling your belly in.

Remember, it takes practice to become comfortable with this, and it will become easier the more you practice it!

http://www.anxietycoach.com/breathingexercise.html
Time to Explore!

**do something SIMPLE...**

1. Become a blanket burrito and watch your favorite movie.
2. Make yourself a cup of tea or coffee!
3. Listen to soft music and breathe deeply.
4. Look at pictures of things you really like.
5. Write a list of positive affirmations you can say about yourself.
7. Do some stretches!
Implementing Self-care
Self-Assessment to Practice
• Please fill out the four quadrants of your stress profile being as honest and thorough as possible (p. 6 of handout)
• Consider the things that have created or are likely to create stress for you from a work perspective
• Partner with one or two other people and compare your four quadrants
• Identify common themes and shared stressors
• Remember, knowing your stressors as well as identifying both healthy and not so healthy ways that you respond to stress, is the first step in developing a comprehensive, sustainable self care plan!
• On your own, please complete the self care self assessment (pp. 7-9 of handout).
• Be as honest as possible
• Write in your self care ideas on the last page. Be creative!!!
• Pay attention to domains in which you scored more 4’s and 5’s and domains in which you scored 1’s, 2’s or 3’s.
• Discuss your assessment with one or two other people.
• Your final task is to complete the last page of the assessment – ‘replenish the well’ (on page 10).
• Refer back to your assessment for areas in which you scored 1 or 2 for ideas!
• Would anyone be willing to share one of their self care goals with the group?
How will I know if my self care is working?

• You will develop the habit of checking in with yourself on a regular basis
• You know and are attuned to your early warning signs of stress and exhaustion
• You understand that your ‘locus of control’ is internal; i.e., you can frequently only control your own responses to things – not those of other people
• You are intentional about work/life balance in your world
• You are conscientious and committed to a few activities a week that enhance your sense of wellbeing
• You are able to be present for most of your life
• You feel in charge of your life direction
• You are better able to ‘take the high road’ in challenging situations and with challenging people
1. Take baby steps – don’t overwhelm yourself with grandiose ideas, pick simple things to start off with i.e., decide to start with a 5 minute meditation each day rather than 30 minutes.

2. Make it practical – again, stick to what you know you could achieve if you put your mind to it. Start with a 15 minute walk; you can then increase the time if you like.

3. Go easy on yourself – remember when starting something new we all need time to adjust and learn. If you fall off the wagon don’t berate yourself, that’s not what this is about, get back up and keep going.

Tips on starting a self care plan

“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.” ~ Lao Tzu
starting a self care plan

• Listen to your inner coach, not your inner critic. Your inner critic will attempt to dissuade you from trying anything new. It’s the part of you which is motivated by fear. **Quiet** that critic and begin to listen to the supportive voice of your inner coach. Your inner coach will always encourage you.
The most important element of self care is to just make a start on it!

You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.
You cannot slake the thirst of another from a dry well...

In the work that we do, we cannot give to others what we, *ourselves*, do not possess.
Be well and thank you!

It is not selfish to refill your own cup, so that you can pour into others. It's not just a luxury. It is essential.