

# Study Unit 4

# Self-Care for mental health professionals

## Study Unit 4

### Outline

- ❖ Understanding Self-care
- ❖ Developing a self-care plan

### Study Unit Duration

This Study Unit requires a 4 hours of formal study time.

You may spend an additional 4 hours for revision

## Introduction

This study unit nurtures its learners in line understanding self-care for mental health. This embeds portraying and explicitly explaining the needs for self-care.

In addition, the knowledge of developing self-care plan moreover with the monitoring techniques are also attained ounce this material is thoroughly utilized in the learning manner.

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## Learning Outcomes of Study Unit 4

Upon completion of this study unit, you should be able to:

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- 4.1 Discuss self-care
  - 4.2 Describe the need for self-care and enumerate the consequence of not attending to self-care
  - 4.3 Summarize steps to building self-care plan and then finally construct a self-care plans
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## 4.1 Understanding Self-care.

### What is self-care?

Self-care relates to the processes of caring for yourself; taking steps to maintain, enhance and restore your well-being mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. This involves on understanding and identifying our needs and what it takes to meet these. As mental health professionals we are often very good at helping others to look after themselves, however this is not often met with parallel plans to prioritize own needs.



**Title:** Self-care

**Source:** [https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsoundgirls.org%](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsoundgirls.org%2F)

## 4.2 The need for self-care.

Life is full of challenges both in daily life as well as especially stressful events such as bereavement, illness etc. it is on top of these stressors that we are aiming to undertake working in mental health care. Mental health profession has also got its own set of stressors associated with it. The most common stressors related to mental health work include:

1. Distress.
2. Burnout.
3. Vicarious traumatization.

#### 4.2.1 Distress

Distress is “extreme anxiety, sorrow, or pain”. Distress is considered normal and inevitable experience of life however left unattended, our distress can cause feelings of inadequacy or and feelings of being unable cope. If we fail to attend to our level of distress this leads to burnout.

#### 4.2.2 Burnout.

Burnout is a term used to explain a experiences that can cause a mental health professional becoming **emotionally exhausted, losing of empathy, and sense of accomplishment**. If you realize that you are having difficulties coping, it is your indicator for the need of a self-care plan, which we will be coming to in due course.

#### 4.2.3 Vicarious Traumatization.

Working with severely traumatized clients can also cause those who care for them to be faced with vicarious traumatization. This is a situation that occurs when professionals begin to suffer emotionally upon hearing about the distressing emotional experiences. Symptoms can include distressing **psychological arousal, avoidance and preoccupation with the client’s disclosures**. Without due attention to these matters, the professional will begin developing trauma symptoms similar to their clients.

#### 4.2.4 Compassion Fatigue.

Compassion fatigue happens when we have excess amounts of empathy, and is worsened by the pressure of the fact that those you are trying to help don’t seem to be making



### 4.3 Developing a self-care plan.

The essence here is to make a holistic plan to care for your body, mind, soul, spirit. Below we have suggested steps you can take to develop a plan that works for you. But remember this is


your plan and it is important that you add things you need and ignore things that you don't feel you need the most important thing is to develop a plan for your needs.

**The steps we recommend are as follows:**

**4.3.1 Step one: Understanding current coping.**

Start with a list of good things that are good for your wellbeing prioritizing those that really help in stressful times.

*Table 4.1: Understanding current coping.*

Life style and behavior						
	What do you do more when you are under stress?					
	Negative Stress coping behaviors	Ye s	No	Positive stress coping behaviors	Yes	No
	Smoking more			Engage in sports and physical activities		
	Drinking more than 1-2 cups of coffee or tea a day			Get 6-8 hours of sleep every night		
	More than 1-2 units of alcohol a day			Maintain good healthy eating habits		
	Use of Illegal drugs			Maintain healthy rituals and habits		
	Over or under eat			Spend quality time with loved ones		
	Overspend			Make future plans		
	Excessive television watching			Plan your stress management		
	Withdraw from social circles			celebrate achievements and reward yourself for them		

Ignore the impact of stress			Engage in positive thinking		
Being stuck in destructive relationships			Maintain lightness, sense of humour and play and relaxation		

Have you got any unhelpful behavior you may be using as a way of coping? Aim to replace at least one of those (from the red list) with a more adaptive coping strategy (from the green list).

### 4.3.2 Step 2: Understanding current self-care behavior.

You can use the worksheet below to assess for what you are already doing and how often for self-care.

#### Self-Care Assessment Worksheet

This assessment tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care. After completing the full assessment, choose one item from each area that you will actively work to improve.

Using the scale below, rate the following areas in terms of frequency:

5 = Frequently

4 = Occasionally

3 = Rarely

2 = Never

1 = It never occurred to me

#### **Physical Self-Care**

Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)

Eat healthy

Exercise

Get regular medical care for prevention

Get medical care when needed

Take time off when needed

Get massages

Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun

Take time to be sexual—with yourself, with a partner

Get enough sleep

Wear clothes you like

Take vacations

Take day trips or mini-vacations

Make time away from telephones

Other:.



### Psychological Self-Care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Have your own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are not expert or in charge
- Decrease stress in your life
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Notice your inner experience—listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings
- Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance
- Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say “no” to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

### Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Love yourself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage in social action, letters and donations, marches, protests
- Play with children
- Other:

**Spiritual Self-Care**

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time with nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Spend time with children
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)
- Other:



**Professional Self-Care**

- Take a break during the workday (e.g. lunch)
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Set limits with your clients and colleagues
- Balance your caseload so that no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Have a peer support group
- Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
- Other:





#### **4.3.4 Step 4: Continue to Monitor your Self-Care.**

Now that you have thought about yourself care and made a plan, you should remember to continue to monitor your stress level and your coping strategies at a regular basis.