

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 leaners 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.

Learning Outcomes of Study Unit 4

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

- 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



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%

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?					
·					No
regulive suess coping behaviors	S	110	Tositive stress coping behaviors	103	110
	3				
Smoking more			Engage in sports and physical		
			activities		
Drinking more than 1-2 cups of			Get 6-8 hours of sleep every night		
coffee or tea a day					
More than 1-2 units of alcohol a			Maintain good healthy eating habits		
day					
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		



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

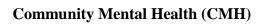
This assessment tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care. After completing the full assessment, choose one item from each area that you will actively work to improve.

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
1 = It never occurred to me Physical Self-Care Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner) Eat healthy
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:.



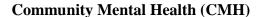
Psychological Self-Care

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 in meaningful to you and notice its place in your life	
Meditate	
Pray	
Meditate Pray Sing 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:	





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Strive for balance within your work-life and workday
Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play and rest
Adapted from: Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization. Saakvitne,
Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996)

After completing your Self-care assessment, make a list of areas for improvement, and list a set of concrete goal for you to implement in an effort to be more compassionate to yourself. You should continually monitor your stress level and self-care regime to monitor your Self-care by using the assessment provided below in Step 3.

4.3.3 Step 3: Make a Self-Care Plan.

It could be helpful make a Self-care plan that includes your coping strategies. Additionally you could develop a list of things you should avoid during stress.

You can write this plan and keep it to remind yourself

List of stress full situations	List of behaviours to avoid	Self-Care coping strategies
		for stress





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.