

Self-Care for Counselors

Self-care is about learning to listen to and take care of yourself Your body, your mind, your spirit

Counselors are in a demanding role, constantly giving of themselves. When you are stressed and exhausted, you have less energy to give to others.

Those drawn to work in the helping professions are often <u>other</u>-focused rather than <u>self</u>-focused (they see the needs of others before theirs). As a result, they may not feel they need or deserve the same care that they believe others need and deserve. Of course, this is not true.

Only when we take care of ourselves can we effectively help others.

Warning Signs

The path to finding balance begins with recognizing warning signs such as:

- Feeling irritated with the children
- Low energy level
- Losing your sense of humor
- Illness, insomnia, lack of appetite

- Loss of enjoyment of work
- Detaching and isolating yourself more often
- Feeling negative, hopeless

Self-Care Assessment Tool

Begin with where you are now. Take the following assessment to determine your current level of self-care.

Using the scale helesy rate the following evers in towns of frequency:
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 (your BODY)
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
Dance, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun
Get enough sleep
Wear clothes you like
Take short day trips or mini-vacations
Other:
Emotional Self-Care (your MIND)
Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
Stay in contact with important people in your life
Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
Write in a journal
Love yourself
Read a book that is unrelated to work
Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
Allow yourself to cry
Find things that make you laugh
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					
Identify what in meaningful to you and notice its place in your life					
Meditate					
Pray					
Sing					
Have experiences of awe					
Contribute to causes in which you believe					
Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)					
Other:					
Workplace or 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					
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					
Score:					
100 points + = Congratulations! You are doing a good job of taking care of yourself! But					
there's always room for improvement. Keep working on it.					

51-99 points = Taking some good steps in self-care, but you still have to make progress.

Less than 50 points = You've got a lot of work to do to care for yourself. Set some goals now!

What to Do

- Keep in mind that self-care is a <u>necessity</u>
- Practice self-care <u>daily</u>
- Put it on your calendar in ink!
- Identify what activities help you feel your best. Self-care is individual. Self-care for one
 person will mean something completely different for someone else. One person may need
 more alone time, for example, while another may nurture herself by spending more time
 with friends.
- Sneak in self-care where you can. If you don't have huge chunks of time, you can still fit in little moments of relaxation. Even if you take just five minutes to close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, it can help your stress level.

Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.

Self-Care Worksheet

- Now, go back to your completed Self-Care Assessment Tool and select at least one item from each area that you will actively work to improve.
- Set a goal to add new strategies, or to move your score from never to occasionally, or from occasionally to frequently in activities you are already doing. Use the table below as a guide.
- Check in with yourself regularly and set new goals when appropriate.

Physical	Emotional	Spiritual	Workplace
Example: Take a short walk 3 times a week (increase from my current weekly or bi- weekly walks)	Example: Write positive affirmations in my journal every day.	Example: During my walks, take time to enjoy nature and reflect on what is good in my life.	Example: Make my workspace less cluttered and add some beauty through flowers and pictures.