

Building a Self-Care Action Plan

Vicarious (secondary) trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout can be prevented. Doing so, however, requires a conscious effort to practice individual self-care strategies on a regular basis, both personally and professionally, to help manage vicarious stress.

Here is one example of how to build a self-care plan. There are six categories. These include

1. Physical Self-Care:

The things I do to take care of my body in healthy ways. Examples include sleep, nutrition, exercise, and regular health care visits. How well do you take care of yourself physically? Identify three activities that you currently do and/or plan to engage in from this point forward to take care of yourself physically.

A.

B.

C.

2. Emotional Self-Care:

The things I do to take care of my feelings in healthy ways. Examples include maintaining personal and professional support systems, receiving counseling and/or therapy as needed, journaling, and talking about feelings in healthy ways. How well do you take care of yourself emotionally? Identify three activities that you currently do and/or plan to engage in from this point forward to take care of yourself emotionally.

A.

B.

C.

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3. Cognitive Self-Care:

The things I do to take care of my mind and understand myself better. Examples include reading for pleasure or work, writing, and engaging in continued education for additional knowledge/skill. How well do you take care of yourself psychologically? Identify three activities that you currently do and/or plan to engage in from this point forward to take care of yourself psychologically.

A.

B.

C.

4. Social Self-Care:

The things I do in relation to others and the world around me. Examples include spending time with friends, family members, and colleagues you enjoy; having fun and playing; belonging to groups and communities; and taking part in activities that encourage positive social connections. How well do you take care of yourself socially? Identify three activities that you currently do and/or plan to engage in from this point forward to take care of yourself socially.

A.

B.

C.

5. Financial Self-Care:

The things I do to spend and save responsibly. Examples include balancing a checking account, planning for the future, and spending money in thoughtful and productive ways. How well do you take care of yourself financially? Identify three activities that you currently do and/or plan to engage in from this point forward to take care of yourself financially.

A.

B.

C.

6. Spiritual Self-Care:

The things I do to gain perspective on my life. Examples include praying, meditating, being in contact with nature, feeling a connection with God or a Higher Power, participating in worship with a community, and engaging in a 12-step recovery program. How well do you take care of yourself spiritually? Identify three activities that you currently do and/or plan to engage in from this point forward to take care of yourself spiritually.

A.

B.

C.

Now you've read the checklist and made a list of strategies for yourself. That is not enough. The bottom line is that self-care requires a conscious effort to practice individual wellness strategies on a regular basis. If we are able to make a commitment to do so both personally and professionally, we can prevent the negative consequences of compassion fatigue and stay well on the journey to student success.

Worksheets from Making Professional Wellness a Priority! By Mona M. Johnson, 2002