KEEPING BURNOUT AT BAY:
ENGAGING SELF-CARE PRACTICE TO
PROTECT AGAINST CAREER BURNOUT
AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

Resources

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SUBJECTIVE UNITS OF DISTRESS (SUDS) TRACKER

Try checking in with yourself before and after a self-care practice using this SUDs technique.

Rate feelings of distress, fear, anxiety or discomfort on a scale of 0-10 on the log provided. For your practice, keep track before and after to help figure out the best self-care techniques that works for you.

100: Highest anxiety/distress that you have ever felt.
90: Extremely anxious/distressed.
80: Very anxious/distressed; can’t concentrate. Physiological signs present.
70: Quite anxious/distressed; interfering with functioning. Physiological signs may be present.
60: Moderate-to-strong anxiety or distress.
50: Moderate anxiety/distress; uncomfortable, but can continue to function.
40: Mild-to-moderate anxiety or distress.
30: Mild anxiety/distress; no interference with functioning.
20: Minimal anxiety/distress.
10: Alert and awake; concentrating well.
0: No distress; totally relaxed.

Source: https://psychologyservices.net.au/suds-thermometer/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SUDS START #</th>
<th>INTERVENTION</th>
<th>SUDS END #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>example: 11/9/18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Paced breathing</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Applications

Headspace
Introduction to the foundations of meditation in an easy to use, short-term way

ScreenTime on iPhone iOS 12
Track and manage time spent on your phone. Set time limits and deactivate specific apps during different times of the day

Aloe Bud
Custom notifications unique to you, helps with monitoring water intake, taking short breaks and connecting with friends

Tracking & Journaling

Passion Planner
- Appointment calendar
- Goal setting
- Journal
- Sketchbook
- Gratitude log
- To-do lists

Define My Day
- Goal setting
- Identify priorities
- Track habits
- To-do lists
- Journal
Integrating Self-Care into a Graduate Training Program Course

The self-care experience described below lasts throughout the academic year. In the fall semester of students’ second year, they are introduced to, or reminded of, the topic of self-care to promote health and well-being while they are engaged in graduate study, and also as a way to instill the importance of self-care beyond graduate training. This is necessary because as identified in the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards (2016), school counselors have a responsibility to self to “monitor their emotional and physical health and practice wellness to ensure optimal professional effectiveness…” (ASCA, 2016, B.3.f., n.p.), and a likely place for students to initiate a focus on self-care that they then carry into their professional careers postgraduate school, is in the graduate training program. Additionally, there is a focus on self-care in the 2016 Core CACREP Standards with standard 1.1—self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role—which identifies the need for counselor preparation programs to provide education around self-care as it relates to the counselor’s role.

The Self-Care Activity

At the first class meeting of the semester, students are asked to choose a week during the semester when they would like to present on self-care. As part of their presentation, students are required to research a self-care technique or activity that is accessible to all class members; Note: Students are informed that the activity should not be extremely labor intensive, such as a two-hour hike, as all class members may not be able to participate. Each week, students present their researched activity to the group at the outset of the class, with specifics for engagement, including any time requirements. The class then participates in the activity over the course of one week, and during the next class meeting, class members (faculty included) share about their level of engagement, any difficulty experienced while engaging in the activity, benefits they found when engaging in the activity, and how the activity influenced them over the week.

For example, one of the students researched the use of a nature walk and adapted the activity for the class. The class was to engage in either one longer walk (time variable), or several walks broken up into smaller chunks of seven to 10 minutes over a number of days during the week. The student provided small sealable bags to the class with a checklist included inside, with items that class members were to find on the ground during the nature walk, such as a heart shaped rock, three different types of leaves, a feather, two different types of bark, and other items. Once found, class members were to collect the items and place them in the provided sealable bag. Class members then brought the bags—with items included—to class the following week, and we discussed as a group our experience engaging in the activity.

Adapted from Minton (2017) Printed in New Faculty Interest Network (NFIN) Newsletter
This is a rather simple example of how one can implement self-care throughout the week to refresh. There were other activities reviewed during the class, e.g., decluttering your space—based on the work of Marie Kondo, cooking a meal with others (a spouse, significant other, family member, etc.), using the bedtime app on your cell phone to create a regular sleep routine, and creating tiny habits (see Dr. BJ Fogg) based on the videos accessible via YouTube. These are all examples of weekly activities that were engaged over the course of one semester.

Having these weekly activities built into the course was an effective way to ensure that a focus on self-care was present throughout the week, and ultimately throughout the semester. This author found these breaks to be extremely beneficial to maintaining work and life balance, a sentiment shared by the majority of students in the course. Many students also shared that they had explained the course self-care activity to their field site supervisors, who then chose to include self-care into their regular counseling program meetings. Ultimately, students expressed a willingness to continue the practice of self-care throughout their postgraduate school daily routines. At the conclusion of the semester, students and faculty can create a toolbox (virtual or hard copy) of activities that were beneficial to them during the semester, so they are available to use in the future. It is recommended that participants include instructions for activities, time requirements, modifications, etc. for each activity in the toolbox. This information should be available from when students and faculty engaged in the activity during the semester and reported on their participation to the group.

In conclusion, multiple stressors, such as the demands of the tenure track (Tower, Faul, Hamilton-Mason, Collins, & Gibson, 2014) and lack of time of faculty, may preclude the engagement in self-care activities (Hellsten, Martin, & McIntyre, 2010). Yet, we also know that focusing on the self is crucial to work and life balance. In this document, a simple pedagogical practice that can be infused into the curriculum of one or many courses to ensure that a focus on self-care is present, not only for graduate students, but also for faculty has been outlined. Ultimately, self-care is a relevant practice to ensure “… healthy living, renewal, and quality of life…” (The Sun Program, n.d., n.p.), and is needed to rejuvenate and enhance overall well-being.
References


