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 assist in managing 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; counseling and/or therapy as needed; journaling; and, talking about feelings in health 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 and colleagues you enjoy; having fun and playing; belonging to groups, communities and 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. 

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6. **Spiritual Self-Care:**
The things I do to gain perspective on my life. Examples include: prayer; meditation; contact with nature; connection with God or a Higher Power; participating in worship with a community; and 12-Step Recovery. 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*