



Developing a Self-Care Plan to avoid Vicarious Traumatization

Here is another exercise aimed at helping you personally address and manage Vicarious Traumatization. We encourage you to focus on enhancing some specific area(s) of self care. We don't want to promote guilt or pressure you; we just want to bring to your awareness some possible ways to better nurture yourself physically, psychological, emotionally, and spiritually.

To formulate your own personal self-care plan, please write down below one thing that you could work on or increase your awareness of in the next month. For ideas, you can refer to the Self-Care Assessment included below. If you feel really ambitious or inspired, you can pick an item from two or more areas.

Physical Self-Care: _____

Psychological Self-Care: _____

Emotional Self-Care: _____

Spiritual Self-Care: _____

ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET: SELF-CARE

The following material was adapted from:

Saakvitne, K. W., & Pearlman, L. A. (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization for helping professionals who work with traumatized clients*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 61-66, 93-95.

Rate the following areas in frequency

5 = Frequently

4 = Occasionally

3 = Rarely

2 = Never

1 = It never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

_____ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)

_____ Eat healthily

- _____ Exercise
- _____ Get regular medical care for prevention
- _____ Get medical care when needed
- _____ Take time off when sick
- _____ 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 your work
- _____ Do something at which you are not expert or in charge
- _____ Decrease stress in your life
- _____ Notice your inner experience--listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings
- _____ Let others know different aspects of you
- _____ 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
- _____ 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
- _____ Reread 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 passion in social action, letters, 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 is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- _____ Meditate
- _____ Pray
- _____ Sing
- _____ Spend time with children
- _____ 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
- _____ Set limits with clients and colleagues
- _____ Balance your caseload so no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- _____ Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- _____ Get regular supervision or consultation
- _____ Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)
- _____ Have a peer support group
- _____ Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
- _____ Other: _____

Balance

- _____ Strive for balance *within* your work-life and workday
- _____ Strive for balance *among* work, family, relationships, play and rest