



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 other-focused rather than self-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 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 is 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 necessity
- Practice self-care daily
- 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.