

The Importance of Self-Care

Presented by **Anke Jones**, The Virtual School's Person-Centred Therapist
Cheshire West and Chester
October 2021

EMOTIONS AREN'T "GOOD" OR "BAD"

5 EXAMPLES 2

STRESS

"I need to slow down. I need self-care."

SAD

"It's okay. I need love & to look for joy & gratitude."

ANXIOUS

"I need calm & grounding. I can remind myself I am safe & can manage this."



They are SIGNALS to us...

our body bringing our attention to something → maybe letting you know that something is 'off-kilter' or out of balance.

ASK YOURSELF:

"WHAT IS THIS FEELING TRYING TO TELL ME?"

Objectives

- ▶ To explore our awareness of the importance of self-care
- ▶ To share our knowledge of research
- ▶ To present a selection of self-care ideas and exercises
- ▶ To explore how we can embed self-care strategies in our daily routine, in and outside of work

An invitation to think about -

- ▶ **What do we already do to recharge our batteries?**
- ▶ **Do we give ourselves time & permission to think, reflect and relax?**
- ▶ **Do we believe that to be able to care for others, we need to care for ourselves first?**
- ▶ **Are we able to switch off from your working day OR do feelings, thoughts and lived experiences stay with us for quite some time?**

The importance of self care

Sanderson (2020) highlights the importance of integrating self care strategies into our daily routines to ensure we are able to execute our “caring” duties, enabling us to:

- **Be fully present** (present in the moment with ourselves & people we are interacting with)
- **Maintain a high level of self awareness & understanding of (compassion towards) self** (to be in the present moment to be able to support others)
- **Empathic & compassionate** (to be more understanding of the person in need)
- **Transform the most challenging of work into the most rewarding** (taking time out can help us feel more productive & effective)
- **Have & maintain a work life balance if we choose to**

We are trying to avoid:

- **Burnout (WHO 2019) and/or compassion fatigue, a loss of caring (Figley 1995 & 2002)**
- **Depletion of energy, increased negative mindset, exhaustion (Maslach 2015)**
- **Secondary traumatic stress, trauma like reactions (Yassen 1995)**
- **This can lead to - Vicarious traumatisation, professionals who are transformed by reports of traumatic experiences leading to disruptions in own process, meaning, purpose and spirituality (McCann & Pearlman 1990, Cortois 1993)**

Food For Thought - Have we experienced any of the below?

- Memory & concentration problems
- Disorientation
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Change in world view
- Loss of confidence & competence
- Somatic symptoms: sleep disturbance, recurring physical illness, suppressed immune system, changes in appetite & behaviour, increased reliance on self-medication (alcohol, drugs etc)

We matter!

- **Our own mental & emotional health is important**
- **We want to care and support others effectively**
- **We want to make decisions that have a positive impact on others & our own personal lives**

From an organisational point of view - Food For Thought:

- ▶ **No matter how robust an individual's coping mechanisms are, if an organisation is not fully aware of and committed to tackling stress related issues, their staff are more likely going to be impacted!**
- ▶ **Would it help to embed the importance of self-care into policies? - what message would this give to staff?**
- ▶ **Is there an opportunity to show young people how self-care works, modelling ways to support ourselves and one another?**

An invitation to acknowledge that there is an impact of caring for others -

The Helping Process is an intense & deep engagement (Skovholt 2016)

- You give a lot of yourself everyday and I would argue that you deserve time out to recharge your batteries!
- Would it not be helpful if we could leave work behind for the day and feel refreshed for the next day?

Impact of caring varies

- ▶ Dependent on a range of internal & external factors (**own lived experience, own responsibilities & demands outside of the profession**)

THIS MEANS:

- Taking time to reflect & possibly work through our own past lived experience and how this has shaped how we relate and care for others can be helpful in tackling the impact of caring (**journaling, creative exploration, talk to trusted people around you, personal counselling are just some examples**)
- Maltzberger & Buie (1974) promote the message - 'To know all, to heal all and to love all'
- **Trust in self, being able to ask for help & a high level of self-awareness is important! - we all make mistakes / to be resilient practitioners**

Self Awareness is key

Golding 2020 -

Being in the moment - the 1st 2 stages:

1. Notice

- What is happening?
- Do I need to step in now?
- What immediate steps do I need to take to ensure everyone's safety?
- Is the pupil ready for my support?

2. Impact on you (check own response, PAUSE)

- Am I regulated, can I stay open & engaged?
- Am I becoming irritated? Do I feel useless?
- Do I need a break or can I go back to being open & engaged
- Can I be compassionate to myself (& the pupil)?

Responding in a trauma informed & attachment friendly way:

We are:

- By being mindful and aware - aiming to de-escalate, offering effective support & opportunity for a person-centred recovery
- Young people are able to pick up from the helping adult: A transferring of care, calm & consistency, - being personalised & targeted in our offered support at a time where they are in turmoil & crisis
- Working as part of a team that is supportive of one another - creating a community where everyone matters, a community of stability
- Embedding time into our working day to reflect, recharge & plan ahead
- Embedding time to learn from one another

Self-care to:

- ▶ Be more mindful
- ▶ Be aware that there is a cost to caring
- ▶ Ensure we maintain a balance between “other-care” and “self-care”
- ▶ Set appropriate boundaries
- ▶ Nourish ones own creativity & spirituality (Rothschild 2006)
- ▶ Develop an understanding of our own, individual process (increased awareness in self) to tackle signs of own symptoms of burnout, compassions fatigue, secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma
- ▶ Make time to reflect & check in with ourselves
- ▶ Be kind to ourselves first and then others

Let's do this! Let's connect with ourselves & others around us!

- ▶ Why not create our own support networks - to let one another know what I might need support with - what about some in-house air & share, individual or small group “supervision” / Reflection groups
- ▶ Check-in at the beginning & check-out at the end of the working day
- ▶ Time in the day & resources to apply self-care strategies
- ▶ Boundaries - working reasonable hours, taking breaks, contact times (off duty means off duty / create a rota of shared responsibilities)
- ▶ Time with family & friends
- ▶ Time in nature
- ▶ Laughter, fun & play
- ▶ Daily physical release

Just One Breath

BREATHING ACTIVITY



Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.

Breathe deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.



Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.

Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.



Self-Care ideas

Joyful June 2021

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1 Decide to look for what's good every day this month	2 Say positive things in your conversations with others	3 Re-frame a worry and try to find a helpful way to think about it	4 Take a photo of something that brings you joy and share it	5 Think of 3 things you're grateful for and write them down	6 Get out into green space and feel the joy that nature brings	
7 Do something healthy which makes you feel good	8 Find joy in music: sing, play, dance, listen or share	9 Ask a friend what made them happy recently	10 Bring joy to others by doing something kind for them	11 Eat good food that makes you happy and really savour it	12 Write a gratitude letter to thank someone	13 Take a light-hearted approach. Choose to see the funny side
14 Share a happy memory with someone who means a lot to you	15 Look for something to be thankful for where you least expect it	16 Speak to others in a warm and friendly way	17 Take time to notice things that you find beautiful	18 Look for something good in a difficult situation	19 Get outside and find the joy in being active	20 Rediscover and enjoy a fun childhood activity
21 Send a positive note to a friend who needs encouragement	22 Watch something funny and enjoy how it feels to laugh	23 Create a playlist of uplifting songs to listen to	24 Bring to mind a favourite memory you feel grateful for	25 Show your appreciation to people who are helping others	26 Make time to do something playful, just for the fun of it	27 Be kind to you. Do something that brings you joy
28 Notice how positive emotions are contagious between people	29 Share a friendly smile with people you see today	30 Make a list of the joys in your life (and keep adding to it)				

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS **Happier · Kinder · Together**

Action For Happiness monthly themes and ideas



Mindfulness

BRIEF MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

Take little moments throughout the day to practice mindfulness.

Just sit quietly with your eyes closed.

Simply take a moment to contemplate and reflect.



Pause before you speak and act.

Pause to consider what you are going to say before speaking. Take a two- or three-ring pause before picking up the phone to think about your intention.



Be fully present.

Deliberately give your full attention to whatever it is you are doing. When you're with family and friends, focus on being fully present with them. When you're at work, direct your focus and attention there.



Be right here, right now.

Try not to dwell in the past or think about the future.



Practice mindful stretching.

Slowly stretch each part of your body. Be aware of your breathing as you stretch.



Whatever it is you are doing, just do that.

If you're making a cup of tea, just make a cup of tea. If you're spending time with your child, just be with your child.



These tips were adapted from the LifeWorks podcast *Quick Stress Reducers*, featuring David Gelles, the author of *Mindful Work*.

© LifeWorks Canada Ltd

Brief Mindfulness exercises

TENSE AND RELEASE

MUSCLE RELAXATION

1. Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing.
2. Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body, squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.
3. Continue moving up the body for more relaxation.



Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

Tense & release Muscles

How to self-regulate in a stressful moment

Stop!

Ask Yourself:

What am I
feeling right
now?



Take a Breath.

Ask Yourself:

Am
I breathing
too fast?
Can I take a
deep breath?



Observe.

Ask Yourself:

What else am
I feeling in my
body? In my
mind?



Proceed.

Decide to
respond in a
way that
works best
for you &
your family!



www.stresshealth.org

STRESS
HEALTH

Self-regulate

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES FOR ANXIETY

- **Speak out loud.** You can use affirmations or a book. Pay attention to the sound of your own voice.
- **Call a friend.** Hearing a familiar voice and interacting will help you recognize that you are safe.
- **Move your body.** Pay attention to the physical sensations. - Eat something. Try having something spicy, sour, or cold.
- **Pet your dog or other pet.** Say their name out loud and talk to them.
- **Use your "safe place".** It will help you feel safe and secure.
- **Write in your journal.** Jot down what you are feeling and what is making you anxious.
- **Go outside.** Pay attention to how it feels. Listen and observe.



GROUNDING WITH YOUR FIVE SENSES

What are 5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE *Ideas*

 SUN
PICTURE ON THE WALL
PEOPLE WALKING

4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL

 WIND BLOWING
FEET ON THE FLOOR
PENCIL IN HAND

3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

 BIRDS CHIRPING
CLOCK TICKING
CAR HORNS

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

 FOOD FROM THE CAFETERIA
LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES
FRESH CUT GRASS

1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

 MINT
Breakfast
TOOTHPASTE

Grounding Technique ideas:

Physical Release ideas

- ▶ Mindful walking
- ▶ Sprinting
- ▶ Running
- ▶ Yoga or Pilates
- ▶ Stretching
- ▶ Weight lifting
- ▶ Swimming
- ▶ Boxing
- ▶ Martial Arts
- ▶ Hiking
- ▶ Water Sports
- ▶ Time outdoors
- ▶ Climbing Walls

Distraction Techniques

▶ Focus on an object

Focus your attention on an object. Describe it to yourself (silently) in as much detail as possible. For example, ask yourself, ‘what is it?’, ‘where is it?’, ‘how big is it?’, ‘what colour is it?’, ‘what is it made of?’, ‘exactly how many of them are there?’, ‘what is it for?’ etc

▶ Sensory awareness

Focus on your surroundings as a whole using sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste. Ask yourself, ‘what exactly can I see if I look around?’, ‘and what else?’, ‘and what else?’, ‘what can you hear?’, ‘inside the room?’, ‘outside the room?’, ‘can you feel your body in the chair?’, ‘what are you touching?’, ‘can you feel your clothes on your body?’, ‘your shoes?’, ‘what can you smell?’ etc

Distraction Techniques

▶ Mental exercises

Count back from 1000 in 7's

Think of animals beginning with each letter of the alphabet in turn

Remember a favourite time (e.g. shopping - where you went, what you bought, how much was it?)

▶ Pleasant memories and fantasies

Think of a past pleasure (e.g. an enjoyable holiday)

Fantasise what you would do if you won the lottery

Fantasise what you would say if you bumped into a chosen celebrity

▶ Absorbing activities

Do something to distract yourself. It is important to select activities, which occupy both your mind and your body (e.g. puzzles, playing sport). Those activities that do not require much thought can be made more absorbing by combining them with others (e.g. listening to radio while drawing)

To begin with, this technique might be difficult as your concentration may be slow. With practice however, this technique will become easier as it will block out thinking about your anxiety.

Journaling

Sarkis (2020) reflects on the benefits of journaling in Psychology Today:

- ▶ Journaling can result in: significant improvement in peoples' mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Journaling can lead to a reduction in symptoms related to anxiety and depression

References:

- ▶ Courtois C. A. (1993), Vicarious Traumatization of the Therapist, NCP Clinical Newsletter, 3 (2), 8-9
- ▶ Figley C. R. (1995 & 2002),
 - Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized, Ne York: Brunner / Mazel
 - Treating Compassion Fatigue, New York: Brunner / Mazel
- ▶ Golding K. (2020), Presentation ar ARC Conference - online event, CWAC
- ▶ Maltzberger J. D. & Buie D. H. (1994), Countertransference and hate in the treatment of suicidal patients, Archives of General Psychiatry, 30 (5), 625-633
- ▶ Maslach C. (2015), The Cost of Caring, Los Altos: Major Books
- ▶ McCann I. L. & Pearlman L. A. (1990), Vicarious traumatization: A framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims, Journal of Traumatic Stress, 3 (1), 131-149
- ▶ Rothschild B. (2006), Help for the Helper: The Psychophysiology of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious trauma, New York: Norton
- ▶ Saakvitne K.W. & Pearlman L.A. (1996), Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization, New York: Norton
- ▶ Sanderson C. (2013), Counselling Skills for working with Trauma, London: Jessica Kingsley
- ▶ Sanderson C. (2020), The Cost of Caring In Context: The Magazine for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK, Edition 171, October 2020. pp44-46
- ▶ Sarkis S. (2020), Want to get a head start on New year's resolution for 2021? Try Journaling, Today, December 1st 2020.
- ▶ Skovholt T. M. (2016), The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout Prevention and Self-Care Strategies For Counsellors, Therapists, teachers and Health Professionals, 3rd Edition, New York / London: Routledge
- ▶ World Health Organisation (2019), International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 11th Edition (ICD-11), World Health Organisation
- ▶ Yassen (1995), Preventing Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder, In: C.R. Figley (ed.) Compassion fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those who treat the Traumatized, New York: Brunner / Mazel

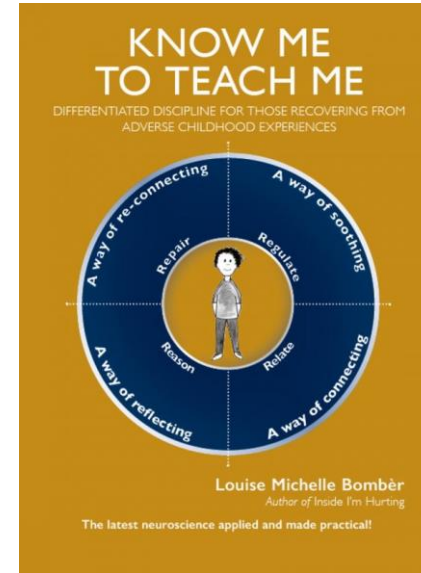
For more information, please feel you can get in touch ☺

How can I extend my knowledge about TRAUMA?

YOUNG MINDS



the **LOSS** foundation



For better mental health



How can I extend my knowledge about self-care strategies?



For better
mental health

