

What is Self-Care?

Self-care is a conscious, active choice to engage in activities that promote optimal physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological health.

Why is Self-care Important?

- Witnessing children's reactions to traumatic experiences or hearing their story is often difficult. When we bear witness to this on a daily basis, it can become difficult to process the sadness and trauma of another person. Sometimes it can bring up our own past experiences or make us feel like we are directly sharing the other person's pain. This is called vicarious or secondary trauma. Caregivers are at high risk for experiencing this.
- Prolonged, unrelieved stress or secondary trauma can lead to burnout (mental, physical and emotional exhaustion that results in the inability to effectively care for ourselves or others).
- Because the effects of stress and secondary trauma often build up slowly, caregivers sometimes don't recognize them until they have reached burnout.
- Practicing self-care is the best way to combat stress and prevent burnout.



Signs of Burnout

Physical

- *Feeling drained and tired most of the time*
- *Frequent muscle aches, headaches, and back pain*
- *Change in appetite or sleep habits*
- *Decreased ability to fight infection, feeling sick a lot*

Emotional

- *Sense of self-doubt or failure*
- *Decreased sense of accomplishment or satisfaction*
- *Feeling defeated, trapped and helpless*
- *Increasingly negative or cynical outlook*
- *Loss of motivation*
- *Feeling alone in the world or a sense of detachment from others*

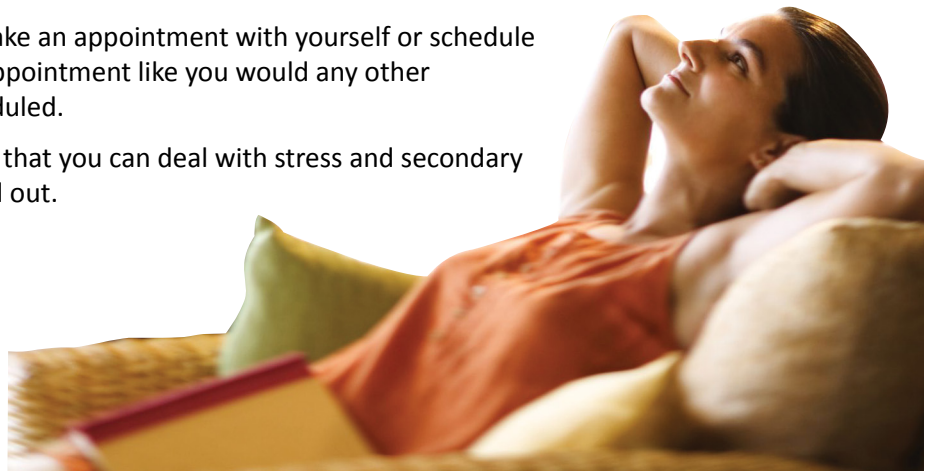
Behavioral

- *Withdrawing from responsibilities*
- *Taking longer to get things done, putting things off*
- *Isolating oneself from other people*
- *Taking one's frustrations out on others*
- *Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early*
- *Using alcohol, drugs, or food to cope*



What Can Be Done?

- Take time daily to practice self-care. Make an appointment with yourself or schedule it into your day if needed. Guard this appointment like you would any other important appointment you have scheduled.
- Pay attention to how you are feeling so that you can deal with stress and secondary trauma before you begin to feel burned out.
- Develop a support system.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- If you feel like burnout is beginning to have a foothold in your life, talk to someone who is trained to help.



Self-Care Ideas

- *Exercise: walk the dog, do yoga, lift weights, or whatever you enjoy.*
- *Take a bath or shower.*
- *Read a book.*
- *Do something creative...draw, paint, work on a craft or building project.*
- *Talk to a trusted friend.*
- *Write in a journal.*
- *Laugh...watch a funny movie or comedy show.*
- *Listen to music that you find uplifting or relaxing.*
- *Spend time in nature.*
- *Relax, even for five minutes. Sit quietly, meditate, pray, or simply focus on your breathing.*
- *Get the sleep you need.*
- *Eat well. Don't skip meals, and choose healthy snacks.*
- *Drink plenty of water or other non-caffeinated beverages during the day.*



MORE INFORMATION



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