

TREP Project Resource Brief

Mental & Emotional Self-Care

Self-care practices are more than just a good workout regimen or a bubble bath. Strong self-care practices, both in and outside of the workplace, involves acknowledging and responding to your mental and emotional well-being. This form of self-care includes moments for self-reflection, seeking ways to decrease stress, and many other intentional practices that enable you to look inward. Practices that enable mental and emotional self-care can be integrated into your workday. Check out this video to hear *what educators are saying* about this.

Emotional self-care includes the utilization of healthy coping strategies that allow you to effectively manage uncomfortable emotions, such as anger, anxiety, and sadness; as well as helping you to acknowledge and express your feelings regularly and safely.

Mental self-care includes engaging in cognitively stimulating and self-reflective activities that strengthen your self-awareness and promote positive personal growth. This is critical because the information you consume what you think and greatly affects well-being.

Your thoughts and feelings about life's ups and downs influence the way you feel about yourself, and good mental and emotional health helps you see the best in yourself despite challenges.

Attending to your mental and emotional health has short-term and long-term benefits. In the short-term, good mental and emotional health can help you maintain a positive attitude in the midst of life's challenges, which can increase your energy and help you focus and think more clearly.

There are long-term physical health benefits such as, protecting you from stress disorders like high blood pressure, weight gain, heart disease, and others. As well as buffering you against the harm that chronic stress can cause to your immune system.

There are also long-term interpersonal benefits such as enabling you to maintain deep relationships with colleagues even when the work is stressful. This is because when you're equipped with the skills to manage your emotions, it's easier to productively work through disagreements and talk through your feelings, and show empathy and compassion.

At the heart of self-care is your relationship and connection to self.

Attending to Mental and Emotional Self-Care At Work

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Be aware of your stressors
 Everyone is different as it pertains to stressors and how it affects them. For some, stressors can be work deadlines that cause impending doom. For others, it can be taking work home or working with colleagues. Developing self-awareness in this area is the first step in caring for your emotional needs.
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Be transparent with your boss about your emotional needs
 In some cases this can be a challenge, especially if you do not have a close or supportive relationship with your boss. Nonetheless, it is important to advocate for yourself and put your emotional needs first. This requires some degree of transparency with your boss.
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Protect your energy
 There are often people at work who can drain your energy if you let them. Once you recognize who those individuals are within the work space, try to limit your interactions with them if possible. Also be aware of topics that can be emotionally provoking or arousing and try your best to avoid engaging in those discussions, as they can leave you emotionally drained.
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Use breaks to detox from work
 Treat a break like a break. Walk away from your desk and use that time to recharge instead of working from your desk. This can involve getting out of the building and taking a walk around the block or going for a drive.
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Engage in mentally stimulating exercises at work
 Being at work can get repetitive, but there are many ways you can exercise your brain while at work. Completing mentally stimulating exercises at work can help cure boredom on slower days while improving your memory, focus, and recall. Try completing a puzzle, listening to a podcast or TedTalk, or read an online newspaper. You learn about things you're already interested in or discover new interests.

More on these self-care tips can be found in these articles:

- [Nine Ways to Practice Self Care at Work + Exercises](#)
- [Seven emotional self-care habits you should develop at work](#)

As you strive to maintain positive mental and emotional health it's important to remember that people who have good emotional health can still have emotional challenges or mental illness. Stress and distress with family, work, or school can trigger mental illness or make it worse. Counseling, support groups, and medicines are helpful tools. If you are experiencing ongoing distress, talk with your doctor, they can help you find the right type of professional support.

Assessing and Advancing Your Mental & Emotional Self-Care

There are at least 7 domains of self-care that you need to pay attention to:

Professional Self-Care
Psychological Self-Care

Physical Self-Care
Spiritual Self-Care
Relationship Self-Care

Emotional Self-Care
Environmental Self-Care

The table below can help you reflect on mental and emotional self-care. When you are finished, reflect over your responses and listen to your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority.

Rate your engagement with the following aspects of mental and emotional self-care:

| | I never do this OR never occurred to me | I barely or rarely do this | I do this OK (occasionally) | I do this well (frequently) |
|--|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mental Self Care | | | | |
| Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Do something at which I'm not in charge | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Learn or practice something new: art, sports, etc. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Read things that are unrelated to work | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Emotional Self Care | | | | |
| Seek out and engage in things that make me laugh | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Give myself affirmations and praise myself | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, and places | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Allow myself the freedom to cry | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests, etc. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Adapted from Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization; Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP; 1996

What is one element of mental and emotional self-care that you are not currently doing that you want to integrate into your work day? _____
