



Module 6: Self-Care

Goal

Understanding self-care strategies, including the development of a self-care plan, will enhance health and well-being, help manage stress, and help maintain professionalism in one's career. Life/work balance can be challenging for everyone, but it is exceptionally important for the MEP service providers who support migratory students coming from stressful and traumatic situations.

This module explores compassion fatigue and secondary trauma before focusing on self-care strategies that will help maintain perspective and career satisfaction for the long haul. Self-care is the collection of strategies used to prevent or alleviate the symptoms of vicarious (secondary) trauma and promote personal well-being. Educators and advocates of young people must acknowledge they cannot effectively support students in healthy development if they cannot model healthy habits in their own lives. Neglecting oneself can make one vulnerable to collateral stress that can lead to increased anxiety, distraction, fatigue, anger, or depression that severely hampers the ability to meet the needs of students.

At its core, self-care is the practice of increasing personal awareness to protect one's own well-being and happiness, particularly during times of stress. It is about taking action to balance physical and emotional health by knowing one's limits and not exceeding them. It is also about identifying the things that bring joy and help decompressing. The benefits of self-care include improving overall personal wellness, decreasing morbidity and mortality, and reducing healthcare costs. Acts of self-care include basic necessities such as eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, and relaxation. However, self-care expands to include anything that feeds one's soul and eases the weight of the world even for a little while.

Objectives

- Differentiate concepts of self-care, compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction.
- Describe the signs associated with compassion fatigue and secondary trauma.
- Learn strategies and personal priorities to develop and support a work/life balance.
- Explore self-care strategies and develop a personal self-care plan.



What to Know Before Presenting the Self-Care PowerPoint

1. Introduce the concepts of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction and reinforce the need for self-care.

Compassion fatigue is the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive changes one may experience related to indirect exposure to the trauma of others. It is also referred to as vicarious or secondary traumatic stress. In contrast, compassion satisfaction is the positive balance and satisfaction that makes one feel energized in the work as a service provider supporting students.

2. Identify ways to maintain positivity throughout the day.

Examples of positivity may include increasing one's positive attitude towards those with whom one works, increasing resources to manage stress, and increasing self-care by finding inspiration and happiness in life and work.

3. Discuss organizational self-care.

Organizations can facilitate an emphasis on self-care for service providers in terms of caseloads, supervision, and providing an overall friendly and supportive working environment. Many organizations are improving their policies, procedures, practices, and social and physical environments to reflect the core principles and values of a trauma-informed care organization.

4. Stress that it is important to prioritize oneself throughout the journey of work/life balance.

It is vital to understand that we must first take care of ourselves in order to effectively help others. To avoid burnout, managing self-care is a key responsibility to maintain one's own happiness, physical health, and mental health. It requires conscious planning and follow-through to include time in the day to attend to one's own needs. Setting that time as a priority will make a difference in the work of a service provider. *"Self-care means giving the world the best of you, instead of what's left of you."* (Katie Reed).



The messages in the Self-Care PowerPoint emphasize an individual's ability to:

- **Embrace the concept of self-care.**
 - Understand it as a means of protecting one's well-being, health, happiness, and productivity.
- **Avoid secondary trauma.**
 - Learn about the dangers of compassion fatigue and burnout, and the meaning of compassion satisfaction.
- **Focus on self-compassion.**
 - Understand self-kindness vs. self-judgment.
 - Understand common humanity vs. isolation.
 - Understand mindfulness vs. over-identification.
- **Address the key elements in self-care plans.**
 - The key elements include work, home, family and peer support, and a self-preservation mindset.
- **Incorporate evidence-informed practices in a self-care plan.**
 - Self-preservation – identify what you wish you could do versus what you can actually do
 - Restorative justice – building relationships versus holding a punishment mindset
 - Growth mindset – a strong belief that most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work; brains and talent are just the starting point
 - Mindfulness – feeling grounded and ready to pivot in the moment as needed
 - Vicarious resilience – a strengths-focused concept that does not ignore or replace compassion fatigue or burnout, but instead offers a counterbalance
- **Think holistically and address all dimensions of life for full balance:**
 - Physical – improving the body
 - Psychological – dealing with feelings in a healthy way
 - Emotional – improving the mind
 - Spiritual – gaining perspective in life
 - Workplace – finding satisfaction in work
 - Balance – striving for appropriate emphasis on work and personal life
 - Financial – spending and saving responsibly
 - Environmental – occupying positive places and spaces
 - Social – relating to others and the world around us