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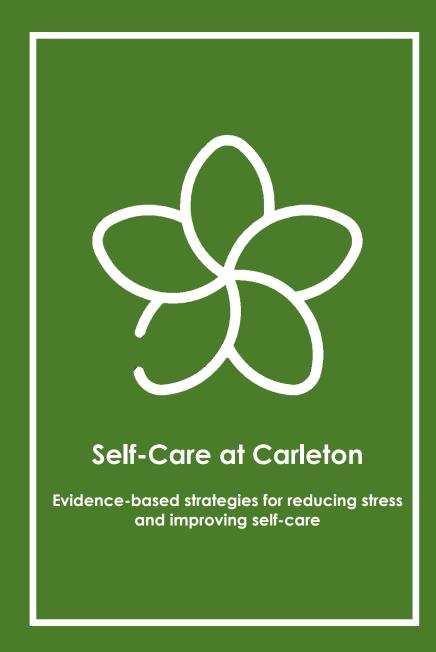
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### What is Self-Care?

"Self-care refers to activities and practices that we can engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and maintain and enhance our short- and longer-term health and well-being (Butler, 2019)."

Self-care is not just about limiting or addressing factors that may cause stress in your life but also about enhancing your well-being even when you may not have any stressors at the moment. There is no "one-size-fits-all" self-care plan, but there are similarities in all self-care plans, which include making a commitment to attend to your physical and psychological health, emotional and spiritual needs, and relationships (Donner et al., 2018; Amherst College, 2019).

#### Why is self-care important?

Self-care is often used as a response to stress, rather than as a proactive practice that lessens the impact of stress when it occurs in one's life. Consistent self-care is essential to preventing or reducing stress and burnout and to maintaining your well-being now and in the future (Hurst, 2019). Considering the busy and strenuous schedule of a college student, self-care is incredibly important in order to accomplish everything that you want.

4. Think about how you will specifically incorporate the self-care practices you have chosen to do into your daily life. Think about the specific time or location in which you will practice your self-care strategies.

5. Create a follow-up plan for yourself. Will you tell a friend and verbally check in with your friend about your goal? Will you set a reminder in your phone or calendar for your self-care practice? Will you write your goal on a whiteboard or mirror to remind yourself?

# **Self-Care Goal Setting**

Now that you have thought about these evidence-based self-management strategies, which ones might you try out this term? How might you include these strategies in your own self-care plan? Here are some steps you might consider in creating some goals this term:

1. Identify your current self-care practices (include positive and negative practices).

2. Identify which self-care practices you would like to practice? You might consider adding in an evidence-based self-care strategy.

3. Identify some barriers to practicing this strategy and how you might overcome these barriers.

# Ways in which Carleton students engage in negative self-care practices:

- Alcohol use
- Drug use
- Damaging relationships
- Excess sleeping
- Excess television
- Excess social media
- Working when tired instead of going to sleep
- Sitting in bed all day

### How do Carleton students practice self-care?

- Going rock climbing
- Practicing self-affirmations
- Visiting SWA dogs
- Biofeedback
- Meditation & yoga
- Mindful coloring
- Reading
- Knitting/crochet
- Taking a shower
- Exercising
- Taking time off
- Connecting with friends/family/mentors



What else

should be on

this list?

# **Evidence-Based Strategies**

According to the World Health Organization, stress is the second most frequent health problem. Stress is a significant problem of our lives and affects both physical and mental health of people. These evidence-based strategies can help people cope with stress and enhance their overall wellness (Varvogli & Darvir, 2011).

One might access these resources online, in books, or in various places on campus including SHAC, OHP, and the Chaplain's Office.

**Autogenic Training (AT):** A self-relaxation procedure by which a psychophysiological relaxation response is elicited. Involves learning a set of directions/exercises that command the body to relax and control breathing, blood pressure, heartbeat, and body temperature.

**Biofeedback:** A process that enables an individual to learn how to change physiological activity for the purposes of improving health and performance. Biofeedback techniques measure body functions, such as brainwaves, heart rate, breaking, muscle activity, and skin temperature and give you information about them so that you can learn to control them.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): A common type of psychotherapy that involves becoming aware of inaccurate or negative thoughts and emotions so you can view challenging situations more clearly and respond to them in a more effective way. Self-help books based in CBT may be helpful to explore as well.

#### **Relationship Self-Care**

Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse
Schedule regular activities with my family
Make time to see friends
Call, check on, or see my relatives
Spend time with my companion animals
Stay in contact with faraway friends
Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send
holiday cards
Allow others to do things for me
Enlarge my social circle
Ask for help when I need it
Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
Other:
Overall Balance
Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play
and rest
Other:

#### **Self-Care Assessment Reflection Questions**

- 1. When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses.
- 2. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others?
- 3. Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"?
- 4. Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority.
- 5. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.

## **Self-Care Assessment Cont'd**

#### **Psychological Self-Care** Take day trips or mini-vacations Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet Make time for self-reflection Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings \_\_\_\_ Write in a journal Read literature that is unrelated to class or work Do something at which I am not expert or in charge \_\_\_\_ Attend to minimizing stress in my life Engage my intelligence in a new area (go to an art show, sports event, theatre, etc.) \_\_\_\_ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes Other: Spiritual Self-Care Make time for reflection \_\_\_\_ Spend time in nature \_\_\_\_ Find a spiritual connection or community \_\_\_\_ Be open to inspiration \_\_\_\_ Cherish my optimism and hope \_\_\_ Be aware of non-material aspects of life \_ Try at times not to be in charge or the expert Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life Meditate \_\_\_\_ Pray \_\_\_\_ Sing Have experiences of awe \_\_\_\_ Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music Other:

# Evidence-Based Strategies Cont'd

**Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Manipulating the breath to expand through the abdomen rather than the chest, and deepening, and lengthening each breath. Individual focuses on taking slow, deep breaths. Practice several times a day, or as needed, for a few minutes to see immediate benefits.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR): A systematic procedure to develop enhanced awareness of moment-to-moment experience of one's own mental process. The technique assumes that greater awareness of the here-and-now will provided clearer and more accurate perception, reduce negative affect and improve energy and coping.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): Alternately tensing and relaxing the muscles--over the legs, abdomen, chest, arms and face. In a sequential pattern, with eyes closed, the individual places a tension in a given muscle group purposefully for approximately 10 seconds and then releases it for 20 seconds before continuing with the next muscle group. The mental component requires that the individual focuses on the distinction between the feelings of the tension and relaxation. With practice, one learns how to effectively relax in a short period of time.

**Transcendental Meditation:** Twice-daily practice of a repetition of a "mantra" or meaningless sequence of sounds unique to each individual. This practice enables one to transition from a wakeful to a deeply restful state of awareness.

# **Self-Care Assessment**

The following assessment is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you (Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff, 1996).

Rate the following areas	according t	to how	well you	think
you are doing:				

- 3 = I do this well (frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this
- ? = This never occurred to me.

Physical Self-Care
Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
Eat healthily
Exercise
Get regular medical care for prevention
Get medical care when needed
Take time off when sick
Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do som
other fun physical activity
Take time to be sexual - with myself, with a partner
Get enough sleep
Wear clothes I like
Other:

#### **Emotional Self-Care**

Emotional Self Care
Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
Stay in contact with important people in my life
Give myself affirmations, praise myself
Love myself
Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places
and seek them out
Allow myself to cry
Find things that make me laugh
Express my emotion in social action, letters, donations,
marches, protests
Have a peer support group
Be open to not knowing
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
Set limits with clients and colleagues
Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day
is "too much"
Arrange workspace so it is comfortable and comforting
Get regular supervision or consultation
Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
Other:
Onici.