



Self-care

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Session objectives

- Understand why self-care is important for health professionals
- Learn about the different types of self-care
- Consider our own and common barriers to self-care
- Develop a self-care plan
- Gain your feedback to inform future sessions

Why self-care?



- Research suggests that engaging in self-care practices can substantially reduce negative outcomes such as burnout amongst mental health practitioners and in turn greatly increase wellbeing.
- A correlation between a lack of self-care is said to be related to higher levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress symptoms. In addition, there are said to be adverse effects on overall health and an increase in the symptoms of stress.
- Carrying out regular self-care routines can be attributed to increased overall wellbeing. Self-care is said to lower stress levels and improve the ability to flourish evidenced in self-rated academic and clinical performance, compassion satisfaction and quality of life.

(Posluns and Gall, 2020)

Vicarious trauma

“Vicarious trauma is a process of change resulting from empathetic engagement with trauma survivors.

Anyone who engages empathetically with survivors of traumatic incidents, torture, and material relating to their trauma, is potentially affected, including doctors and other health professionals” (British Medical Association, 2022)

- Just because a health professional is trained and paid to witness trauma daily does not make them immune to the effects of vicarious trauma. Health professionals are exposed to the trauma of other people, often daily, which is much more than in most other professions.
- Vicarious trauma can result in substance misuse, relationship issues and avoidance of work. (Versola-Russo, 2005).

A one way profession

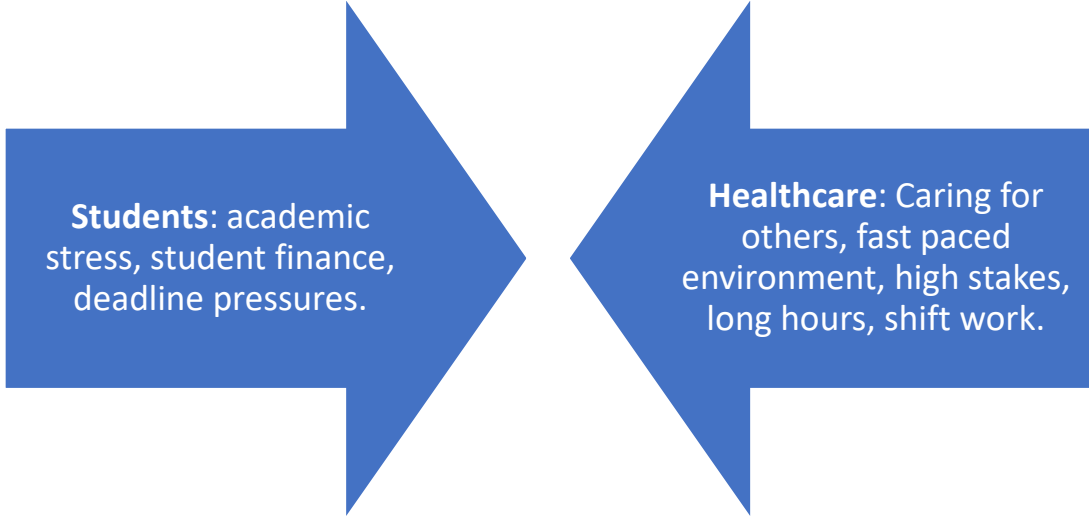
- Often health and social care roles are a one-way caring profession. Roles such as nurses, care workers, doctors, social workers and therapists are required to give compassion and empathy with nothing in return.
- Providing this level of compassion and empathy consistently each day to all patients can leave health professionals at risk of burnout, stress and even impact negatively on professional judgment.

(Posluns and Gall, 2020)



Student practitioners

Research shows that healthcare students experience **higher levels of anxiety, depression, burnout, and personal distress** compared to their non-healthcare student counterparts. High workload, ethical conflicts, and the intensity of both contact hours and clinical practice make healthcare students significantly stressed



The diagram consists of two blue arrows pointing towards each other. The left arrow contains text about student stressors, and the right arrow contains text about healthcare stressors.

Students: academic stress, student finance, deadline pressures.

Healthcare: Caring for others, fast paced environment, high stakes, long hours, shift work.

It's not all bad!

Whilst health professionals do not receive like for like care in return from patients and service users, studies suggest that improving others lives, helping make changes in society, being connected to colleagues and finding purpose in service to others can lead to a high degree of compassion and satisfaction.

(Xu et al., 2019)



YOUR body is one of the most sophisticated machines on earth

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT YOUR AMAZING BODY

- Human body produces 25 million new cells per second.
 - Eyes are composed of about 200 million working parts.
 - You're made up of 100 trillion cells that do a variety of jobs.
 - Your heart will beat about 3 billion times throughout your lifetime.
 - All the blood that flows through your body is actually a liquid organ.
 - The surface of your lungs is about the size of an average tennis court.
 - Your skin is your largest organ and the only one exposed to the elements.
 - Your heart pumps 1.5 gallons of blood per minute.
 - Human brain can read up to 1000 words per minute
 - Nose can remember 50,000 different scents
- And much more!



"Let's say that when I turned sixteen, a genie had appeared to me. And that genie said, 'Warren, I'm going to give you the car of your choice. It'll be here tomorrow morning with a big bow tied on it. Brand-new. And it's all yours.'

Having heard all the genie stories, I would say, 'What's the catch?' And the genie would answer, 'There's only one catch. This is the last car you're ever going to get in your life. So it's got to last a lifetime.'

If that had happened, I would have picked out that car. But, can you imagine, knowing it had to last a lifetime, what I would do with it?

I would read the manual about five times. I would always keep it garaged. If there was the least little dent or scratch, I'd have it fixed right away because I wouldn't want it rusting. I would baby that car, because it would have to last a lifetime.

That's exactly the position you are in concerning your mind and body. You only get one mind and one body. And it's got to last a lifetime. Now, it's very easy to let them ride for many years. But if you don't take care of that mind and that body, they'll be a wreck forty years later, just like the car would be. It's what you do right now, today, that determines how your mind and body will operate ten, twenty, and thirty years from now." Warren Buffett.



Looking after your 'vehicle'



Warren Buffett is known for being a successful business man, but what matters here is his philosophy of self-care.

At 91 years of age he recently stated he is in excellent health and has no plans to step down from his role as the CEO of Berkshire Hathaway.



Discussion

In your groups nominate a speaker to feedback.

Discuss:

1. What is self-care?
2. What are self-care activities?
3. What do you do as a form of self-care?
4. What do you wish you could do, or do more of, as a form of self-care?

15 minutes then you will be asked to feedback



What is self-care?



The Oxford Living Dictionary defines self-care as;

“(t)he practice of taking action to preserve or improve one’s own health...wellbeing and happiness, in particular during periods of stress”

Six domains of self-care

Butler et al., (2019) proposed six life domains that need to be considered in the act of self-care:

1. Physical
2. Professional
3. Relational
4. Emotional
5. Psychological
6. Spiritual

Physical self-care

Physical self-care is about looking after your machine; your body. Your body does a pretty good job of managing itself, however it does need proactive help from you to maintain its optimal functioning and help it prevent illness and injury in the short and long-term. To do this there are four key areas it requires input from you:

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Health maintenance

Professional self-care

Professional self-care is often viewed as the responsibility of the institution/manager, and whilst they are required to take accountability, it is important that we consider ways to prevent burnout and increase work performance and satisfaction. There are various aspects to consider in relation to professional self-care:

- Preventing stress and burnout
- Aiming for role engagement
- Responding to secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma



Relational self-care

Relational self-care is about us nurturing interpersonal relationships we have with others in our lives, this may include people who we see every day such as family, friends, colleagues and peers, but also those people who we may not see as often, and for some these close bonds may include the relationships they have with animals/pets.

- Social integration and social support
- Altruism
- Virtual social networks

Emotional self-care

Emotional self-care is engaging in practices that try to prevent negative emotional experiences and create or enhance positive emotional experiences.

- Identifying and replacing destructive ways of coping
- Reducing negative emotional experience
- Increasing wellbeing and happiness

Psychological self-care

Psychological self-care involves considering our mind and experience of self, it is about understanding what provides healthy stimulation for the mind such as learning, and the feeling of having free agency over our lives/identity

- Intellectual pursuits and other enjoyable activities of the mind
- Self-awareness and mindful reflection on self



(Butler et al., 2019)

Spiritual self-care

Spiritual self-care can be practised through a particular faith or religious affiliation, or it can be a secular practice.

Ultimately both approaches are under the context of understanding one's place within the universe and on the earth. We are all part of one system, understanding one's impact within the system can be extremely powerful.

- Faith-based spirituality
- Spiritual meditation
- Connecting with nature

Discussion

In your groups nominate a speaker to feedback.

Discuss:

1. What are the barriers to engaging in self-care?
2. What are the enablers of self-care?
3. What are the results of not engaging in self-care?

15 minutes then you will be asked to feedback



Barriers to health-promoting behaviours

- No time/overwork
- Lack of adequate resources/facilities
- Fatigue/lack of sleep
- Outside commitments
- Unhealthy food culture

(Ross et al., 2019)



Individuals who influence health-promoting behaviours

- Supportive versus unsupportive individuals
- Positive versus negative role models
- Self-sacrifice valued?

(Ross et al., 2019)





What can we do to solve this problem for us and our peers?

Group discussion

Self-care plan-commitment

	Activity	By	Who needs to know	Role model for
Physical	Try and online exercise class on Youtube	10 th Dec 22	No one	Can tell my peers
Professional	Say no to something which I usually feel too guilty about to say no	15 th Dec 22	Partner to encourage me	My peers and children
Relational	Go for the coffee with XXX that I don't think I have time for	8 th Dec 22	XXX partner to babysit	Me
Emotional	Take time to consider my own emotions and what they are indicating to me about a situation/person.	20 th Dec 22	No one	Me
Psychological	Listen to an audio book that has nothing to do with work or study.	29 th Dec 22	No one	Me
Spiritual	Try a mindful meditation based on nature.	4 th Dec 22	No one	Me



To conclude

- Health professionals can be at risk of burnout if they do not engage in self-care
- Health professions are demanding roles, caring for others and not receiving the same care back, but can also be extremely rewarding
- We only have one body and mind that needs input from us to remain healthy
- There are six key areas for us to consider taking care of
- Sometimes there are barriers to self-care within our lives and work places, if we work together we can influence culture to remove these
- Engaging in self-care requires a commitment from us to take the time to consider and plan activities to look after oneself

Resources



- <https://www.mentalhealthtoday.co.uk/news/mental-health-profession/report-highlights-the-unique-stressors-faced-by-healthcare-students-and-its-not-just-junior-doctors> health care students article
- <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/NHS%20%28HEE%29%20%20Mental%20Wellbeing%20Commission%20Report.pdf> – health care students report
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-problems-introduction/self-care/#.XMLWdUmWyUk> – what is self-care?
- <https://www.studentsagainstdepression.org/making-changes/the-importance-of-self-care-and-self-compassion/> - importance of self care?
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/living-the-questions/201504/your-ultimate-self-care-assessment-resources> – self-assessment
- <https://www.mindful.org/why-you-need-a-self-care-plan/> - self-care plan
- <https://www.blessingmanifesting.com/> - free e-books!
- <https://www.actionforhappiness.org>
- <https://www.blurtitout.org/2018/05/17/365-days-self-care-journal/> - and buddy boxes

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[Vicarious trauma: signs and strategies for coping \(bma.org.uk\)](http://bma.org.uk)
