

Lesson 6 – Implementing Self-care

Self-care is like taking care of your phone. We all know that our phone batteries need to be recharged. We have four strategies when it comes to recharging our phones:

1. Wait until the battery is empty and then go without the use of your cell phone until you find a place and opportunity to recharge.
2. Listen to the cell phone's signal when the battery is low and then recharge it.
3. Recharge your battery regularly
4. Hope for a miracle.

There is no such thing as life without stress – the question is “Is it manageable?”

Self-care is an ongoing, action-oriented, intentional practice designed to:

1. Strengthen resilience
2. Increase wellness (wellbeing and quality of life)
3. Improve physical and mental health
4. Enhance satisfaction and fulfilment

Self-care is more than a set of techniques. It is an operational mode that is based on mindset, beliefs, emotions, and actions.

It is also an invitation to heal our relationship with the concepts of self-love, acceptance, dependence, needs, wants, and desires.

When coping with a health challenge or medical crisis, self-care is an essential part of a comprehensive health strategy and should be practiced regularly.

Caring for ourselves can be challenging because it requires that we address things we tend to avoid, such as our fears, insecurities, limiting beliefs, and difficult past experiences.

It is often easier to care for others than to care for oneself.

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Self-care needs to be practiced regularly, not just in times of crisis (medical or otherwise). Self-care enables the caregivers to be balanced so that they are capable of seeing different possibilities, keep fit so that if and when a crisis happens, s/he are ready to handle it, and it is central in the prevention and recovery from burnout and compassion fatigue, as caregivers are exposed to stressors all of the time.

Self-care is more than a strategy we resort to when we reach an absolute level of exhaustion that requires some reprieve from the relentless pressure of our lives.

Self-care is a way of life.

Many people have obstacles that prevent them from following self-care practices.

These are a few examples of sentences that indicate the presence of an obstacle:

- I don't have the time right now
- I don't have the money for it
- I have other obligations/commitments/responsibilities right now that are more important
- I am in the middle of a crisis
- There are more urgent things I need to do
- Once this is over, I will make time for it
- This doesn't feel like a priority right now
- It can wait

The 7 Main Obstacles to Self-care:

1. **Identifying a need with a problem.**

When having a need means something is wrong with me.

Example: if I need _____, it means I have a problem, because I am not able to _____ / I am _____ .

2. **Confusing a need with dependence.**

Needing something can create a dependence on that thing, which can lead to feelings of shame and guilt.

Example: If I need something from you & you give it to me, I will become dependent on you for that thing.

3. **Internalized messages about self.**

Internalizing messages about the connection between asking/receiving help or support and self-worth.

Examples: I am not worthy of _____, I don't deserve _____, I can receive/ ask for what I need once everyone else has received theirs, I am not a baby/child that needs constant care (self-care or other care)

4. **Emotional Avoidance.**

Addressing one need can reveal the pain of other unmet needs. This is often not conscious.

Example: If I give myself _____, it will only bring up the pain of everything else that I was deprived of, and I prefer not to feel it.

5. **Beliefs and stories about receiving care– what it says about me.**

Connecting self-care with identity.

Examples: only weak people need to _____/the help and support of others, I need _____ because I am not _____ enough, I must be self-sufficient and not rely on anyone else, I am loved/accepted when I am self-sufficient/ strong.

6. **Beliefs and stories about receiving – what it says about others.**

Placing the responsibility for my self-care and wellness on others.

My _____ should know what I need and how to give it to me, and if they don't, it means they don't love/see/ care about me.

7. **Beliefs and stories about ability.**

Addresses the ability to receive help, implement self-care practices, and the efficacy of those practices on overall well-being.

Example: I have tried everything and nothing seems to help; there is nothing I can do to change this, and I won't be able to cope with asking for help and not receiving it.

Making Self-Care a Priority

In the past decade, self-care has become a buzzword, often attached to things that have little to do with genuine self-care.

- It has become a way to sell wellness products. For many, this creates a struggle – consumerism vs. minimalism (what do I really need?)
- It has become connected to self-identity and boundaries (“putting yourself first”), creating confusion resulting in a conflict – “Selfish” vs “Selfless”.
- It has become a way to assess the legitimacy of stress - “My issues are nothing compared to his.” Caregivers often feel that the health issue, or any other issue for that matter, is not **as** significant as that facing the care recipient and is therefore not worthy of the necessary care investment.

Care for oneself and know oneself

Socrates

Maintaining a certain regard for ourselves and engaging in self-compassion and self-care are fundamental to creating a good life for caregivers, their care recipients, and other people they care about.

- When caregivers feel depleted, they have nothing to give.
- Doing what caregivers love recharges them.
- Caregivers lose their authentic selves in the “do, do, do” mentality.
- Caregivers can drain others when they don’t get their own needs met.
- Caregivers lose themselves to their “critical inner voice.”
- Caregivers fail to practice self-compassion.
- Caregivers' stress hurts them and those close to them.
- Driving themselves can impair their performance, both in caregiving and other areas.

From both a Caregiver Coaching and a Health and Medical Coaching perspective, self-care has little to do with salt baths, chocolates, or spas and has everything to do with listening to the body, making long-term wellness decisions, bravely letting go, re-strategizing, and being honest with ourselves and others about what we need.

It can be messy, ugly, and challenging to do, but it is essential, and that is why we refer to it as PROFOUND self-care.

When coaching on Self-Care, we want to address these five levels:

1. Basic Needs – addressing the current crisis. If you are a Health, Wellness, or Medical Coach, this includes medical care and adherence to medication.
2. Physical Needs – listening to the body’s needs regarding nutrition, hydration, rest, movement, and touch.
3. Emotional needs –addressing issues of love, acceptance, authenticity, connection, and self-expression.
4. Spiritual needs –addressing vision, purpose, connection to a higher self, intuition, creativity.
5. Social & Relationship needs – addressing choice, connection, boundaries, open communication, support.

The roles of self-care and a healthy lifestyle are central in the prevention and/or recovery from compassion fatigue.

In Caregiver Coaching, we use a Metrix template to help clients establish a structured self-care practice.

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The Caregiver Coaching Self-Care Matrix

The first step in addressing self-care is understanding what it means to that person.

<u>Level</u> <u>3</u>	Purpose	Spirituality	Personal Development	Mind-Body Connections & Nervous System Regulation	Values	Emotional & Social Support
<u>Level</u> <u>2</u>	Family Relationships	Relationship with Care Recipient	Medical Team	Additional Caregivers	Finance	Work Related Issues
<u>Level</u> <u>1</u>	Nutrition	Movement & Exercise	Rest	Environment	Time & Resource Management	Health

Level 1:

- **Nutrition:**
 - Create awareness regarding healthy nutrition.
 - Evaluate the situation.
 - Evaluate options.

- **Movement & Exercise**
 - Create awareness regarding the importance and impact of movement and exercise.
 - Evaluate options.
 - Invite the client to make a conscious choice.
 - Create new strategies.
 - Invite the client to make a conscious choice.

- **Rest**
 - Create awareness regarding the nature and impact of rest.
 - Evaluate options.
 - Invite the client to make a conscious choice.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Environment**
 - Create awareness regarding current stressors and challenges in the environment.
 - Evaluate options.
 - Invite the client to make a conscious choice.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Time & Resource Management**
 - Review of current challenges regarding time & resource management.
 - Evaluate options.
 - Invite the client to make a conscious choice.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Health**
 - Create awareness regarding self-compassion
 - Regular follow up on medical and health existing conditions
 - Addressing adherence issues.
 - Creating strategies and actions regarding treatments and doctor appointments.

Level 2:

- **Family Relationships**
 - Review stressors and challenges regarding relationships with family members.
 - Clear stressors.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Relationship with Care Recipient**
 - Review stressors and challenges regarding the relationship with the care recipient.
 - Clear stressors.
 - Create new strategies.

- **Medical Team**
 - Review stressors and challenges regarding relationships with medical teams/medical team/caregivers.
 - Clear stressors.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Additional Caregivers**
 - Review stressors and challenges regarding relationships with additional caregivers.
 - Clear stressors.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Finance**
 - Review current challenges regarding finance.
 - Evaluate options.
 - Invite the client to make a conscious choice.
 - Create new strategies.
- **Work-related Issues**
 - Review stressors and challenges regarding workplace relationships.
 - Clear stressors.
 - Create new strategies.

Level 3

- **Purpose**
 - Identify a bigger sense of life's purpose ('for the sake of what' is it important to address your stress and self-care?).
- **Spirituality**
 - Reframe spirituality as a self-care resource.
- **Personal Development**
 - Identify areas the client would like to continue developing.
 - Explore options.
 - Create new strategies.

- **Mind-Body Connections & Nervous System Regulation**
 - Create awareness regarding the “Body-Mind” connections.
 - Identify with the client what it means for him/her.
 - Create new strategies.
 - Address Nervous System Regulation tools

- **Values**
 - Create awareness regarding the concept of values and core values.
 - Identify with the client the values around health and self-care.
 - Create new strategies.

- **Emotional & Social Support**
 - Identify areas where the client would like emotional support.
 - Create awareness regarding the need and added value of social support to self-care
 - Identify specific needs.
 - Explore options.
 - Create new strategies.

There are three principles we invite our clients to implement in every self-care action plan:

1. Realistic actions
2. Compassion
3. Self-nourishment

* **Self-nourishment** is a term coined by David Richo.

It describes a balanced approach to wants and needs.

We tend to describe things that are essential to survival as needs, and things that are inessential to survival as wants. Everyone has a right to receive. Receiving is accepting what someone wants us to have. Getting is asking someone for something we want.

When early experience teaches us that what we want and what we need is a problem, we have two strategies for adapting:

1. **Self-sufficiency**

Self-sufficiency is the effort to meet our needs and wants without relying on external sources, support, or the cooperation of others.

This is an illusion and never fully works. Disruption of the illusion of self-sufficiency causes deep anxiety. Attempting self-sufficiency puts one at war with human generosity, vulnerability, and imperfection (in self and others).

Sometimes, when people struggle with becoming more self-sufficient, they turn to Self-deprivation, which is an attempt to reduce material comforts and non-productive experiences to a bare minimum.

2. **Emotional dependency.**

Emotional dependency is the attempt to have our wants and needs met by other people. Others are seen as the origin of our wants and needs, and therefore, it becomes their duty to fulfill them. While this strategy is suitable for children, when adopted by adults who also desire full autonomy, it is unsustainable and tends to create chaos in relationships.

The two strategies can co-exist in one person.

Self-nourishment means taking ownership of our wants and needs in a balanced and self-regulated way. This means taking care of ourselves (from a place of increasing wellness) while actively asking for help when needed and seeking good things others can give us.

This also means that while we would like to be able to meet our wants and needs easily and also have them met without asking, we hold a general faith that the world and people can be good and that “no” is a possible reaction, which we have the resources and resilience to cope with.

Self-nourishment is a mindset that can be applied to all aspects of life

Caregivers naturally want to meet and fulfil as many of their care recipient’s wants and needs, risking the care recipient’s need to develop a healthy ability to self-nourish.

Things to remember when coaching caregivers on self-care:

1. There is no “one size fits all” formula.
2. Beliefs about the “right way” to self-care can become stressors.
3. Clients may present emotional issues stemming from experiences of burnout and inadequate self-care.
4. Dealing with self-care can bring up issues of self-worth, insecurity, and confidence.
5. Work-related self-care issues often mirror personal and home-related issues, and vice versa.
6. The “Once Removed” approach is very effective when coaching caregivers on self-care

Self-Care for Coaches

As Caregiver Coaches, we are exposed to:

- Anxiety
- Grief
- Anger and frustration
- Conflicts
- Narratives
- Beliefs
- Stress
- Changes in perception of reality, anchors, and safety
- Helplessness
- Compassion fatigue
- Secondary traumatization
- Moral injury
- Emotional chaos

Relevance of Coach Self-Care to the process and results:

When a coach practices self-care and regulation regularly, it impacts not only the coach but also the coaching process, the coaching space, and the client.

The coach can maintain and increase the following: (Based on the work of Geller & Rogers, 2014)

1. Presence
2. Empathy
3. Rapport
4. Calibration
5. Co-regulation
6. Trust
7. Safety
8. Modeling

Self-care is both a professional requirement and an ethical duty.

Reflective Self-care questions for the coach:

1. What is my need?
2. What is preventing me from meeting this need?
3. What do I need to cope with that?
4. What's important for me right now?
5. What action can I take to honor that?

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.”

Anne Lamott

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As I Began to Love Myself

By Charlie Chaplin

As I began to love myself, I found that anguish and emotional suffering are only warning signs that I was living against my own truth. Today, I know, this is "AUTHENTICITY".

As I began to love myself, I understood how much it can offend somebody if I try to force my desires on this person, even though I knew the time was not right and the person was not ready for it, and even though this person was me. Today I call it "RESPECT".

As I began to love myself, I stopped craving for a different life, and I could see that everything that surrounded me was inviting me to grow. Today I call it "MATURITY".

As I began to love myself, I understood that at any circumstance, I am in the right place at the right time, and everything happens at the exactly right moment. So, I could be calm. Today I call it "SELF-CONFIDENCE".

As I began to love myself, I quit stealing my own time, and I stopped designing huge projects for the future. Today, I only do what brings me joy and happiness, things I love to do and that make my heart cheer, and I do them in my own way and in my own rhythm. Today I call it "SIMPLICITY".

As I began to love myself, I freed myself of anything that is no good for my health – food, people, things, situations, and everything that drew me down and away from myself. At first, I called this attitude a healthy egoism. Today I know it is "LOVE OF ONESELF".

As I began to love myself, I quit trying to always be right, and ever since I was wrong less of the time. Today I discovered that is "MODESTY".

As I began to love myself, I refused to go on living in the past and worrying about the future. Now, I only live for the moment, where everything is happening. Today I live each day, day by day, and I call it "FULFILLMENT".

As I began to love myself, I recognized that my mind can disturb me and it can make me sick. But as I connected it to my heart, my mind became a valuable ally. Today I call this connection "WISDOM OF THE HEART".

We no longer need to fear arguments, confrontations or any kind of problems with ourselves or others. Even stars collide, and out of their crashing new worlds are born. Today I know "THAT IS LIFE"!