

Self-Care?

By: Laura Leary on January 28, 2022

Worst
Chaos!
Kris!

In our field we tell everyone that will listen that they should practice self-care. We even challenge ourselves to do self-care. Many of us define “self-care” as: *A bathtub full of aromatherapy. Candle lit dinner for one. Reading a book for enjoyment. Playing a video game.* Who has time for that!? If we are trying to fit this into our schedule and not able, we see ourselves as failing ... headed straight for burn out or compassion fatigue! Noooooo!

What if we look at what we already do every day? Maybe you go about your day spending money and stuffing receipts into some secret place where you’ll find them later. At the end of the pay period, you are struggling to figure out, “Where did all of my money go?” and it adds to your already overwhelmed self.

What if my self-care is creating a functioning budget for my household? You might be thinking, come on, that’s not self-care, that’s for my entire household! I’m here to tell you that is self-care, because the next non-payable Friday that comes, I’m going to be fully aware of what I can spend ... I’m not going to be fretting about where my money is because I took the time to review our spending habits.

When we look at “self-care” as a buzzword we may hear “selfish” or even “narcissist” to describe ourselves. Whether those words come to us from an internal or external source we can see where the buzzword can be off putting. As I write this, I am reminded of the times that I have put myself first, caring for my mental health in a proactive manner; so many times, I have heard those external and internal messages from people. I might tell myself that I don’t care what others think, but that’s a lie.

Now that I am looking at “self-care” in a different way, I can see so many ways I practice self-care every day.

I love to cook. Making a meal that leaves others raving or asking for the recipe fills me with a certain kind of joy. I also enjoy finding humor in the world around me. These are two things that I consider to be self-care even though others benefit from it.

All of this leaves me to wonder, how can we give ourselves permission to redefine the idea of self-care in a way that truly makes us fulfilled rather than setting ourselves up to fail by the current definition of this buzzword?

Maybe I can think of an alliteration? Nah, we aren’t all poets, that’s too much. Wait, what about an acronym? We all love an acronym ... TCOM, FTM, CAFAS, IDD, SUD, RAD ... I’m sure you can think of a few more that you must define to anyone outside of your professional circle. Sure, let’s go with that!

WHY ME

When we are deciding what we are labeling as self-care we can check to make sure that we answer if we are meeting any or even all these guidelines. Does the activity help me to:

Worry less

Honor my values

Yearn to succeed

Make my heart happy

Evoke joy

As part of the Psychological First Aid Team (PFA), I have learned how truly important it is for me to take care of myself. (By the way, sorry about yet one more acronym!) We know that we must be okay to take care of those that we provide services to. How can we possibly find time between our personal and professional obligations to satisfy our personal needs? Could we already be doing this within those obligations, and we don't see it because we are working so hard to find fulfillment in places that society tells us we should find fulfillment?

If you are struggling with the chaos and overwhelm of personal and or professional expectations and need a confidential person to speak to ... **Kara Jaekel** is calls MHC (Mental Health Center) her home. She holds the title of **PFA Specialist**. You can contact her by stopping by her office near the front of MHC, or you can call the **PFA line** is **231-724-3600**. The PFA Team can assist with personal and professional concerns.

As I conclude I want to remind you to seek satisfaction in "WHY ME" so that you can see that you are meeting your ability to care for yourself; you are putting yourself first, even if others don't describe it as such.