



## Practicing Self-Care

### Definition

Many individuals in caring professions are drawn to their work by a deep passion for improving the lives of others. Consequently, these caregivers often shoulder the emotional burdens of the children, families, and communities they support. ***Practicing self-care is an essential, proactive strategy to prevent compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout.***

In mental health, "**self-care**" refers to the practice of deliberately engaging in activities that prioritize and maintain one's emotional and mental well-being, often including actions to manage stress, improve mood, and promote overall psychological health by actively listening to one's needs and taking steps to address them; essentially, it means taking time to do things that help you feel good and function optimally ([National Institute of Mental Health](#), [Southern New Hampshire University](#)).

Self-care is a combination of deliberate actions that prioritize physical, emotional and mental well-being to reduce stress, improve mood, and self-esteem and enhance overall mental resilience. Self-Care should be a holistic approach that considers all aspects of a person's life that is customized to their individual needs and preferences. It should be a daily act of living aimed at reducing stress, minimizing the negative impact of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, and preventing burnout ([Marquette Today](#)).

### Data and Statistics

- A research study from Vagaro found that 75% of Americans believe that self care activities provide stress relief.
- There's a recognition that self care brings lots of benefits beyond making us feel good. A study found that 64% of people saw a self confidence boost, 67% saw increased productivity, and 71% saw an increase in happiness.
- Studies found that only 6.6% of people engaged in health and wellbeing self care every day.
- Only 32% of parents feel they have time for self care, and 39% feel guilty about taking that time.
- Around 59% of people only practice self care when they're stressed, instead of integrating it into their everyday lives.

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## Why It Matters: Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

### **Vicarious Trauma/Compassion Fatigue** –

Typically experienced by frontline workers, social service providers, and caregivers of individuals experiencing trauma. It is the result of “walking with” an individual has experienced a traumatic event.

#### *Characteristics:*

- Intrusive thoughts
- Physical problems (stomach aches, headaches, lethargy)
- Loss of hope
- Questioning one’s contribution
- Skepticism and guilt

**Burnout** – is a state of chronic exhaustion that results from unmanaged stress and pressure in the workplace. It can cause people to feel mentally, physically, and emotionally depleted, and can affect their ability to work and maintain relationships

#### *Characteristics:*

- Emotional exhaustion
- Alienation from work-related activities
- Reduced performance

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## 5 Dimensions of Self-Care

1. **Physical** – this dimension includes movement, but also skincare, body care, nutrition, physical touch and sleep hygiene. These acts of self-care can include going for a walk, stretching, eating nutritious snacks, staying hydrated, getting extra sleep, washing your face, taking a long shower or hugging a friend.
2. **Mental** – this dimension includes striking a balance between exercising your mind and giving it rest, which is different for everyone. You can practice this type of self-care by reading a book, listening to a podcast, learning a new skill or language, doing a puzzle or playing a board game.
3. **Spiritual** – this dimension is focused on spirituality, which is not the same as religion. For many, it means connecting with nature, the deity you believe in or reflecting on your purpose and how you relate to the world around you. Practice of spiritual self-care includes meditation or praying, yoga, going for a hike or participating in a water activity (paddleboarding, etc.), or volunteering for a cause or organization you care about.
4. **Social** – this dimension is focused on connection to others. It includes intentionally making time to connect with family, friends and loved ones by calling to catch up, joining a social club or going to a class with a friend, writing a letter or card to someone to show your gratitude for them, or organizing a game night or movie night.
5. **Emotional** – this dimension focuses on feelings and mental well-being, versus brain health. Activities that promote emotional well-being include seeing a therapist, positive daily affirmations, writing in a gratitude journal, caring for pets or plants, or diffusing essential oils. ([OrthoCarolina](#))

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## Take Action

- [20+ Self-care Practices to Help You Prioritize Your Wellbeing](#) – Calm
- [20 Ideas for Self-Care on a Budget](#) – Self Care Cabin
- [25 Unusual Self-Care Ideas](#) – Self Care Cabin
- [Apps and Tools](#) – Everymind
- [Caring for Your Mental Health](#) – National Institute of Mental Health
- [Self-Care Recommendations](#) – Active Minds (2 Episodes)
- [Self-Help Tools](#) – Mental Health America
- [The 7 types of rest that every person needs](#) - Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, Ideas.TED.com
- [The 7 types of rest we need](#) - Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, Sara K Peck

## Resources

- [Caring for Your Mental Health](#) – National Institute of Mental Health
- [Compassion Fatigue: Symptoms to Look For](#) – WebMD
- [Compassion Fatigue Workbook](#) – Building a Region of Resilience NWGA
- [Mindful Self-Care Assessment](#) – University of Buffalo
- [Self-Care Resources](#) - Cornell Health, Cornell University
- [Workforce Self-Care Resources](#) – Star2Center
- [Learning How to Navigate Secondary Traumatic Stress in the Helping Professions](#) - Fabricia Prado  
2023 RG blog post
- [Center for Mindful Self Compassion](#) - Scientifically researched self-compassion practices
- [Unwinding Your Mind](#) – Rosalyn Carter Institute

**Resilient Georgia** is dedicated to healing adversity and promoting resiliency in children and families. We do this through the prevention and early intervention of ACEs and sharing best practices. We all have a role to play in providing better futures for children.

