Making the Case for Self-Care

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How do you feel about your Self-Care?

What are some of the challenges you are facing with your self-care?

A fresh look at Self-Care

Self-care has become the topic of much discussion within the helping professions.

The goal to examine the issue of counselor burnout prevention through the practice of self-care

Why The Need to Make a Case?

Burnout Among Counselors continues to increase

Three Dimensions of Burnout

- The mental and physical exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of ineffectiveness that are often a result of the process of overextension (Devilly, Wright, and Varker 2009; Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter 1996; Kumar 2011), and can be reversed with changes to one's self-care routine (Weiss 2004).

- Encompasses three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The dimension of emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being depleted, overextended, and fatigued. Depersonalization (also called cynicism) refers to negative and cynical attitudes toward one's consumers or work in general. A reduced sense of personal accomplishment (or efficacy) involves negative self-evaluation of one's work with consumers or overall job effectiveness (Stalker & Harvey, 2002).

Rationally Speaking…

- Self-care is not a luxury.
- Self-care is not a waste of time.
- Self-care in the helping profession is an ethical necessity
- Self-care must be pursued intentionally by practitioners.
- Self-care concepts must be modeled and taught to emerging professionals in the field.

Clinically Speaking…

Empirical Evidence as Justification

"Healthy, psychologically present, and committed professionals are in a better position to offer assistance to trauma survivors than those providers who suffer from symptoms of compassion fatigue and burnout."
(Killian, 2008)

Research: Kyle D. Killian conducted a multimethod study focused on therapists' stress and coping in their work with trauma survivors, identifying factors related to resilience and burnout.

Results: Qualitative interview data demonstrated that therapists detect job stress through bodily symptoms, mood changes, sleep disturbances, becoming easily distracted, and increased difficulty concentrating.

Clinically Speaking…

Ethical Considerations of the Matter

Preamble

- **Beneficence** working for the good of the individual and society by promoting mental health and well-being

- **Nonmaleficence:** Avoiding actions that cause harm (ACA Code of Ethics, 2014, Preamble-p. 3).

Standard A.4.a.

- ***Avoiding Harm:*** Counselors act to avoid harming their clients, trainees, and research participants and to minimize or to remedy unavoidable or unanticipated harm. (p. 4)

Clinically Speaking…

Ethical Considerations of the Matter

Standard C. Introduction

- ***Self-Care:*** Counselors engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities (p. 8)

Standard C.2.g.

- **Impairment:** Counselors monitor themselves for signs of impairment from their own physical, mental, or emotional problems and refrain from offering or providing professional services when impaired. They seek assistance for problems that reach the level of professional impairment, and, if necessary, they limit, suspend, or terminate their professional responsibilities until it is determined that they may safely resume their work. Counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment and provide consultation and assistance when warranted with colleagues or supervisors showing signs of impairment and intervene as appropriate to prevent imminent harm to clients.

Clinically Speaking…

Who Needs Self-Care?

- **Everyone needs care of self**
- **Self-care is not a indulgence, it is a necessity**

- **Helping professionals** need personal care more than most; without care of self, there is risk of:
  - Secondary traumatic stress/Compassion fatigue
  - Impaired professional competence
  - Burnout
  - Distress

Clinically Speaking…

Symptoms Defined

Secondary traumatic stress, Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue: Intrusive thoughts and images related to the client's disclosures, avoidant responses, physiologic arousal, somatic complaints, distressing emotions, and addictive or compulsive behaviors that may adversely impact one's competence (Figley, 1995).

Impaired professional competence: Impaired ability to effectively utilize and implement knowledge, skills, and abilities. May be a gradual process of falling on a continuum resulting in a lack of awareness that fatigue even exists. (Guy, Poelstra, & Stark, 1989).

Clinically Speaking…

Symptoms Defined

Burnout: Baker (2003) describes this as "the terminal phase of therapist distress" (p. 21). Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decreased sense of accomplishment.

Distress: The subjective emotional response an individual experiences in response to any of a number of a number of challenges, demands, and stresses in one's life (Barnett, Johnston, & Hillard, 2006).

Practically Speaking…

Why Self-Care?

- Personal mental health management
- Professional longevity and effectiveness
- A life more full
  - Joy
  - Happiness
  - Love
  - Contentment in your calling

Turning Compassion into Self-Compassion

(Nelson, Hall, Anderson, Birtles, and Hemming, 2018)

Practically Speaking…

What is GOOD Self-Care?

- Know what feeds you
  - Learn your love language
  - Different personalities/genders have varied responses

- Be intentional
  - Seek it out
  - Schedule it
  - Actively implement

Practically Speaking…

What is GOOD Self-Care?

Killian's Solutions: Self-care strategies include

- Processing with peers/supervisor
- Spirituality
- Exercise
- Spending time with family

Basic Strategies

- Establishing Appropriate Boundaries
- Ability to say…No.
- Be intentional about prioritizing your needs
- Go back to the basics
  - Exercise, water, rest, diet, sunlight, positive social support, etc.
- Schedule your self-care in your calendar
- Turn off your cel ph.
- Create your own set of strategies according to your needs

Practically Speaking…

- Create Space
  - Time alone
  - Quiet spaces
- Breathe
  - Prayer
  - Meditation
  - Mindfulness
  - Scripture
  - Music for worship or play
  - Daydreaming
  - Reading for pleasure
  - Time outdoors
  - Physical rest
  - Doing nothing

- Connect
  - With a significant relationship
    - Phone calls, write letters
    - Play together
  - With a counseling professional

Self-Care Action Plan

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