

3.2 Staff Self-Care Plan

Use this worksheet to create your own self-care plan. You do not need to share your answers with anyone—this is simply for self-reflection. Check back regularly to see how things are going and assess whether you need to make any adjustments to your plan.

1. Recognize the warning signs.

Becoming aware of the effects your work has on you is essential to helping you take care of yourself. Think about the warning signs of STS and related conditions and consider how they may be present in your daily life. Even if you are not regularly exposed to student trauma, you may be struggling with issues of burnout or remnants of your own personal trauma experience. Feel free to add other signs that you are feeling overworked, overextended, or overwhelmed.

Warning Sign	Yes or No	If Yes, Describe the Effect on You
Increased anxiety or concern about safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Intrusive, negative thoughts and images related to your student's traumatic experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Difficulty maintaining work–life boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Avoiding people, places, and activities that you used to find enjoyable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Feeling emotionally numb, disconnected, or unable to empathize	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Warning Sign	Yes or No	If Yes, Describe the Effect on You
Experiencing feelings of chronic exhaustion and related physical ailments	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Regularly feeling angry and/or cynical about students, staff, and your work	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Feeling inadequate in your work and questioning whether what you do matters	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other:		

2. Assess your self-care practice.

Many strategies are available to support self-care and reduce the signs and symptoms of STS and related conditions. Take some time to complete the self-care self-assessment below. This tool provides ideas about how to practice self-care across many areas of your life. Remember that no one strategy works for everyone.

How often do you do the following? (Rate, using the following scale):

5–Frequently 4–Sometimes 3–Rarely 2–Never 1–It never even occurred to me

Physical self-care

Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast and lunch)
Eat healthfully
Exercise or go to the gym
Lift weights
Practice martial arts
Get regular medical care for prevention
Get medical care when needed
Take time off when you are sick
Get massages or other body work

Do physical activity that is fun for you
Take time to be sexual
Get enough sleep
Wear clothes you like
Take vacations
Take day trips or mini-vacations
Get away from stressful technology, such as pagers, faxes, telephones, and e-mail
Other:

Psychological self-care

Make time for self-reflection
Go to see a psychotherapist or counselor for yourself
Write in a journal
Read literature unrelated to work
Do something at which you are a beginner
Take a step to decrease stress in your life
Notice your inner experience—your dreams, thoughts, imagery, and feelings
Let others know different aspects of you
Engage your intelligence in a new area—go to an art museum, performance, sports event, exhibit, or other cultural event
Practice receiving from others
Be curious
Say no sometimes to extra responsibilities
Spend time outdoors
Other:

Emotional self-care

Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
Stay in contact with important people in your life
Treat yourself kindly (supportive inner dialogue or self-talk)
Feel proud of yourself
Reread favorite books, review favorite movies
Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places
Allow yourself to cry
Find things that make you laugh

Express your outrage in a constructive way
Play with children
Other:

Spiritual self-care

Make time for prayer, meditation, and reflection
Spend time in nature
Participate in a spiritual gathering, community, or group
Be open to inspiration
Cherish your optimism and hope
Be aware of nontangible (nonmaterial) aspects of life
Be open to mystery, to not knowing
Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
Sing
Express gratitude
Celebrate milestones with rituals that are meaningful to you
Remember and memorialize loved ones who have died
Nurture others
Have awe-filled experiences
Contribute to or participate in causes you believe in
Read inspirational literature
Listen to inspiring music
Other:

Workplace or professional self-care

Take time to eat lunch
Take time to chat with coworkers
Make time to complete tasks
Identify projects or tasks that are exciting, growth promoting, and rewarding for you

	Pursue regular learning and professional development
	Get support from colleagues

	Negotiate for your needs
	Have a peer support group
	Other:

Follow-up questions to consider

1. What was this process of filling out the checklist like for you?

2. Were you surprised by any of your responses? If so, which ones?

3. In what areas are you strongest? Weakest?

3. Adopt specific strategies.

Based on your responses to the self-care self-assessment, list 1–2 things in each area that you already do and 1–2 things that you would like to do to take care of yourself. Then choose 3–5 things from your list that you can make a commitment to doing in the next month.

Area	Already Do	Would Like to Do
Physical		
Relational		
Emotional		
Spiritual		
Professional		

Committed to doing:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____