



Parkville College Self Care Plans

Why are self care plans important?

1. *They are an anti- compassion fatigue strategy*

Researchers in the field of 'helping profession burnout' (Bloom,1999; Figley,2010; Herman,2001; Rothschild,2003) have acknowledged that compassion fatigue is a “disorder that affects those who do their work well”. Even very healthy helpers with optimal life/work balance and self care strategies can experience a higher than normal level of compassion fatigue when they are overloaded and are working with a lot of traumatic content. These changes can affect both personal and professional lives with symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, intrusive imagery, loss of hope, exhaustion and irritability. It can also lead to profound shifts in the way we view the world and our loved ones. Additionally, we may become dispirited and increasingly cynical at work and make clinical or teaching errors, violate student boundaries, lose a respectful stance towards our students/clients and contribute to a toxic work environment. Every day our teachers are engaging, developing relationships with and fostering a safe, learning environment with traumatised students. It has a cumulative impact! Self care plans can help with planning how to reduce this.

2. *They help us reflect on and understand the impact of the work*

Our work at Parkville College can trigger emotions and reactions in ourselves, particularly if we have had similar past experiences as our students. Vicarious trauma may also happen from hearing their stories, even if we haven't had similar experiences. A self care plan that includes some time to reflect on your own reactions and time talk to others can normalise these expected reactions. Regular checking in and reviewing the impact of the work is critical to good wellbeing. Exhaustion, compassion fatigue and the demands of work can mean that wellbeing at home is sacrificed. It is important that we remain reflective and fresh enough to consider our own biases and assumptions that may arise from our cultural backgrounds and life experience. Good self-care can facilitate this mindset.

3. *They help us model the importance of self care in our lives for our students*

All our students will respond to the impact of trauma in their lives differently. These responses can result in mental illness, substance misuse, self harm, sexualised acting out, hyper emotional reactivity, out of control anger/violence, thought disorder and learning/memory impairment. It is important to prioritise self care in our lives; it is something that teachers can model for their students.

Tips on how to do self care plans

- ✓ Work through the self-care plans in Leadership Supervision. If you are a leadership supervisor, it is important to do them yourselves first and share this experience with your team.
- ✓ Build in regular review time, within leadership supervision.
- ✓ Go through the different categories and talk about the distinction between personal, professional and work place/school culture. Compassion fatigue researchers (Figley, 2010) have identified that we need to do things at all three levels to reduce the risk of compassion fatigue.
 - Personal: strategies to do outside of work time, consider all aspects & activities of life: physical, mental, spiritual, cultural & emotional
 - Professional: strategies to do in the classroom or at work
 - Workplace: the bigger career picture, such as values and purpose that are important in a work culture
- ✓ Take stock- what's on your plate? Make a list of what demands there are on your time and energy, at home and at work. Stand back and look at the list. What might be contributing to the feelings of being too full up. What can you change? What can't you change? Leadership supervisors can facilitate this conversation.
- ✓ Be realistic in your choice of self care strategies- no 'magical' strategies that are not achievable. Keep the number of strategies to a few achievable ones. Have some fun with them.
- ✓ Identify what would get in the way of implementing the self-care plan at all levels. In leadership supervision, you can develop an early warning system that lets you both know when people are moving into the caution zone of Compassion Fatigue.

Example Self Care Plan

Level of Intervention	What energises and supports me?	Who is involved?	What is currently in place?	What is the next step?
Personal <i>(activities outside of work and includes physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cultural aspects)</i>	Exercise 3 x week Seeing friends Getting enough sleep Yoga 1 x week Connecting with family Singing (gospel/spiritual) Playing sport	Me, gym, Me, Other friends Mum and my sisters A choir group My aunty and sisters Local footy team	Nothing! Seeing friends once a week Staying up too late Going to yoga Going to church infrequently Training and playing on Sats	Renew gym membership Try to see friends during the week Organise regular family outings Join a choir Don't give up the footy!
Professional <i>(in classroom or staff room)</i>	Outreach to students Breathing & body awareness before and after class End of day: make list of successes, body scan when I leave precinct Getting feedback on classes Feeling part of the team Enjoying being a teacher	Me, team leader sometimes Me Me, talk to team Leadership supervisor	Not enough Only do it when I am stressed Sometimes do it Not regular Regular Team meetings Wellbeing groups	Do outreach every day Do body scan at start & end of day Suggest we do a breathing exercise in the staff room Start a daily journal of things that went well Book times for my TL to observe me & give feedback Get to every WGS.
Workplace/school culture <i>(includes alignment of work values and purpose with your personal values)</i>	Social justice values Team culture Organisational culture of improvement	Team Leader, Principal, Team	School fits with my values I'd like my connection to my team Would like to be more engaged with projects in the school	Talk to my TL about leading an end of week reflection Find out about taking on an extra role



Level of Intervention	What energises and supports me?	Who is involved?	What is currently in place?	What is the next step?
Personal <i>(activities outside of work and includes physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cultural aspects)</i>				
Professional <i>(in classroom or staff room)</i>				
Workplace/school culture <i>(includes alignment of work values and purpose with your personal values)</i>				

Accountable to:

Review Date: