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## QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

### Self-Care Plan

#### Introduction

As part of the self-assessment process, it is important for registrants to ensure that they are tending to factors which may contribute to their stress load or in some way affect their ability to perform professionally. Once these factors have been identified, registrants must consider the impact of these factors on their ability to meet professional obligations and plan to engage in sufficient self-care to mitigate any potential negative impacts. When necessary, this may include reducing or withdrawing from professional activities.

There will be no requirement to submit to the College any self-care tool used. The purpose of this process is to prompt independent reflection and facilitate the development of an effective, proactive strategy for registrants to attain and maintain personal and professional wellness.

**Due to the personal nature of this self-examination, registrants who wish to use another manner of self-care planning may do so if it helps them to reflect on personal and professional risk factors and plan mitigation strategies.**

#### The Need for Self-Care

Psychological and behavioural practitioners can experience high levels of work-related stress including psychological distress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization (Smith & Moss, 2009; Barnett, Baker, Elman, & Schoener, 2007; Posluns & Gall, 2019). To balance the impact one's practice may have on their personal and professional wellness, it is important to undertake self-care activities which support the maintenance of physical, physiological and mental health.

Consequences of professionals' distress, for example, may be apparent when they begin to disrespect clients; lose their sense of empathy and kindness; trivialize their work by viewing it as empty and meaningless; make more mistakes; lack energy; become anxious and afraid; use work to block out negative feelings, and lose interest, commitment, meaning, and excitement in their profession as a whole (Pope & Vasquez, 2016). The implementation of various self-care activities can prevent an imbalance of work-related demands from negatively affecting professional functions, services and capacity, in addition to areas of a practitioner's personal life (Posluns & Gall, 2019).

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## SELF-ASSESSMENT OF STRESSORS AND BALANCES

Reviewing the following factors may help you to identify personal and professional areas that require attention. If any of the listed signs or symptoms are relevant to you, consider your current strategy for addressing these factors, or if additional self-care is needed to mediate these factors, remedy stressors and prevent risk.

### Precipitating, Aggravating and Perpetuating Factors

#### Personal

Anxiety

Current life stressors (e.g., illness, bereavement, moving, job change, changes in marital status, birth or adoption of children; other psychosocial, physical, vocational or financial challenges life presents)

Depression, sleep or appetite disturbance, lethargy or negative mood

Inability to focus or concentrate; forgetfulness

Inadequate leisure or non-work activities

Inadequate personal supports

Poor self-care practices

Relationship conflicts, increased isolation from or conflict with intimates

Social isolation

Substance use/abuse or other compulsive behaviours engaged in to manage stress

Unhelpful coping strategies

#### Workplace Environment

Administrative/ legal/ regulatory/ financial and/or business concerns

Feeling unappreciated or undervalued for work done

Inadequate organizational or managerial supports

Increased cynicism, negativity, irritability, impatience

Increased reactivity and loss of objectivity and perspective in work

Insufficient balance/variety in caseload

More frequent clinical errors

Poor fit with colleagues

Professional isolation/ different frequency of contact with colleagues than desired

Subject to unprofessional behaviours

Workload too heavy or too light; lack of control

Exposure to ethical violations

## Professional Role

Challenges managing the intimate, confidential and non-reciprocal nature of the client-practitioner relationship (if applicable), e.g.,

- Are there clients you struggle to work with? Why?
- Are there particular client problems that are difficult to deal with (e.g., loss, traumatization, neglect, isolation, situations you have experienced yourself)?
- Are there clients you think about frequently or between appointments?
- Are there clients you express very strong feelings, concern or anger on behalf of?

Dislike of the work

Inadequate knowledge, skills or training for specific work

Inadequate professional supports

Mismatch between work and your own values and beliefs

Negative social/ political/ cultural attitudes to the population served or services provided

Poor personal fit with the work being done

Stigma within the profession for practitioners who acknowledge distress or impairment

Unrealistic self-expectations

**If there are other factors or stressors not listed which you find relevant to your personal or professional wellness, you may describe them below:**

## Mitigating Factors, Balances and Remedies

Self-awareness; honest assessment of psychological and physical health

Prevention (Including activities that are personally restorative, such as adequate sleep, good nutrition, regular exercise, yoga, meditation, massage)

Satisfying hobbies, nurturing of interests apart from psychology or applied behaviour analysis

Satisfying close relationships, social supports

Personal psychotherapy/counselling

Spiritual practice

Strong professional support network

Regular vacations or breaks from work

Monitoring of substances and/or processes used for relaxation or entertainment

Realistic expectations about workload, responsibilities, and capabilities

Familiarity with literature or occupational risk for psychological or behavioural practitioners (e.g., burnout, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, colleague assistance and professionals in distress)

**If there are other mitigating factors or self-care activities not listed which you find beneficial to your personal or professional wellness, you may describe them below:**

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## DEVELOPING A SELF-CARE PLAN

Based upon your self-assessment of relevant stressors, consider whether you would benefit from further self-care to mediate or remedy these issues and prevent them from affecting your competence, capacity and wellness.

To create an actionable Self-Care Plan, you may wish to develop a mitigation strategy using SMART objectives: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound

<b>Identified Stress Factors for Personal or Professional Wellness</b>	<b>Mitigation Strategies</b> Self-care activities or practices planned to remedy stressors, address potential risks, and maintain or increase personal and professional balance.

It may be beneficial to return to your Self-Care Plan over the next two-year period to monitor your progress and reflect on what planned activities or practices have been beneficial, and which may require further or renewed attention.

**If an identified issue is negatively affecting your ability to perform professionally, you must consider whether it is necessary to withdraw from professional services. For more information about this obligation, please review Standard 13.1 [Impairment Due to Health Factors](#).**

## References and Resources

- APA's Advisory Committee on Colleague Assistance. (2010). *Tips for Self-Care*. American Psychological Association Services Inc. [https://www.apaservices.org/practice/ce/self-care/acca-promoting?\\_ga=2.228384857.53630523.1581714788-1464340257.1581714788](https://www.apaservices.org/practice/ce/self-care/acca-promoting?_ga=2.228384857.53630523.1581714788-1464340257.1581714788)
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- Maranzan, K. A., Kowatch, K. R., Mascioli, B. A., McGeown, L., Popowich, A. D., & Spiroiu, F. (2018). Self-care and the Canadian Code of Ethics: Implications for training in Professional Psychology. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie Canadienne*, 59(4), 361–368. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000153>
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- Posluns, K., & Gall, T. L. (2019). Dear mental health practitioners, take care of yourselves: A literature review on self-care. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 42(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-019-09382-w>

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