



INTRODUCTION

As part of self-assessment, it is important for registrants to ensure that they are taking time to review factors that may contribute to their stress load or in some other way affect their ability to perform professionally, and assess the impact of these factors on their competence and ability to meet professional obligations. Registrants must then engage in sufficient self-care to mitigate the negative impact of any factors identified, which may include reducing or withdrawing from professional activities, as appropriate. Because of the personal nature of self-examination, registrants may elect to use a formal self-assessment tool or determine their individual risk factors in a manner of their choice. There will be no requirement to submit any Self-Care documentation created. The purpose of this process is to enhance and facilitate self-assessment and create an effective, proactive strategy for registrants to attain and maintain wellness.

Registrants who wish to use another method of planning for self-care may do so if it helps them to identify specific personal and professional risk factors and plan mitigation strategies.

The Need for Self-Care

Psychological practitioners can experience high levels of work-related stress including psychological distress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization (Smith & Moss, 2009; Barnett, Baker, Elman, & Schoener, 2007). Pope and Vasquez (2016) categorized some of the resulting consequences of professionals' distress and describe, for example, those who may 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 the profession as a whole (Pope & Vasquez, 2016). Everall & Paulson (2004) write that burnout has been associated with several ethical violations such as dual roles, over-involvement with clients, and meeting the needs of the therapist rather than the client. Preservation of wellness requires adequate self-awareness and the ability to acknowledge one's weaknesses and blind spots in practice. It also requires self-compassion (Di Benedetto & Swadling, 2009). Although there may be a modest relationship between self-view and actual behavior/ performance (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004; Kruger & Dunning, 1999), self-assessment is the first step towards wellness.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Reviewing the following items may help identify areas of personal and professional life that require attention. Please identify any of the following signs and symptoms that could indicate a need for greater attention to self-care:

Precipitating and Aggravating Factors

Personal Factors

Social isolation
Relationship conflicts, increased isolation from or conflict with intimates
Inability to focus or concentrate; forgetfulness
Anxiety
Substance use/abuse or other compulsive behaviours engaged in to manage stress
Depression (e.g., sleep or appetite disturbance, lethargy, negative mood)
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)

Workplace Factors

Inadequate organizational or managerial supports
Poor fit with colleagues
Administrative/legal/regulatory/financial and/or business concerns
Professional isolation/different frequency of contact with colleagues than desired
Workload too heavy or too light
Insufficient balance/variety in caseload
Feeling unappreciated or undervalued for work done
Increased cynicism, negativity, irritability, impatience
Increased reactivity and loss of objectivity and perspective in work
Unprofessional behaviours
More frequent clinical errors
Ethical violations

Role

Challenges managing the intimate, confidential and non-reciprocal nature of the client-therapist relationship, 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, between appointments?
- Are there clients you express very strong feelings, concern or anger on behalf of?

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

Dislike of the work

Poor personal fit with the work

Inadequate knowledge, skills or training for specific work

Mismatch between work and your own values and beliefs

Perpetuating Factors

Inadequate professional supports

Inadequate personal supports

Poor self-care

Inadequate leisure and non-work activities

Stigma within the profession for professionals who acknowledge distress or impairment

Unrealistic self-expectations

Unhelpful coping strategies

Mitigating Factors/ 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
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 practitioners (e.g., burnout, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, colleague assistance and professionals in distress)

SELF-CARE STRATEGY

Using the information above, create an action plan to maintain or improve your self-care. SMART Objectives will assist in creating goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound**.

Risk Factors Identified	Mitigation Plan	Objective

Please add additional pages as needed. It may be beneficial to return to your plan over the next two year period to monitor your self-care progress.



References

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- Maranzan, K. A., Kowatch, K. R., Mascioli, B. A., McGeown, L., Popowich, A. D., & Spiroiu, F. (2018, November). *Self-care and the Canadian Code of Ethics: Implications for training in ...* Research Gate. Retrieved March 14, 2023, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328680806_Self-care_and_the_Canadian_Code_of_Ethics_Implications_for_training_in_professional_psychology