



Benefits of Self-Reflection and Self-Care for Leaders During COVID-19

Part Two of a Workshop Series
for Durham Region NFP Leaders

Family Services Durham

by Wendy Beales, M.S.W., R.S.W. and Stacey MacNeil, M.ED, R.P.
November 16, 2021

Welcome Back!

Housekeeping



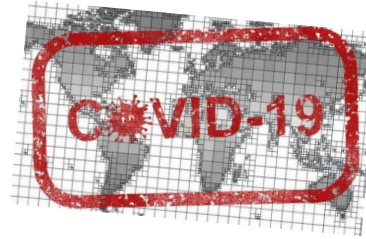
- Cameras and microphones can be left on (participants will be asked to turn off if needed, such as if bandwidth issues occur).
- Review Confidentiality – any personal stories or information that is shared stays in the “room”!
- As this is only a 1.5-hour workshop and we have lots to discuss, we will not have a structured break.
- This is Part Two of a 3-part workshop series. You are invited to attend Part Three (Self-Compassion for Leaders and Strategies for Fostering Resiliency) on December 7/21.

Workshop Goals

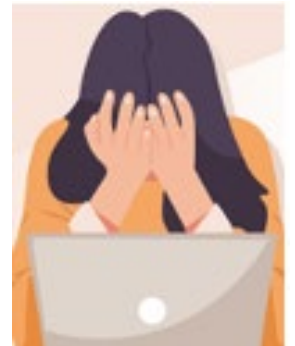


- Review the impacts of stressors faced by NFP leaders.
- Reflect on what participants have been noticing and practicing since the first session (well-being, coping).
- Discuss self-reflection as the basis for self-awareness and explore ideas to practice it purposefully.
- Discuss the importance of self-care in maintaining resilience and identify common barriers and potential solutions.
- Identify and practice some strategies for self-care and regulation.
- Provide opportunity to reflect, discuss, and give mutual support.
- Identify relevant resources that may support coping and resilience moving forward.

Review



- NFP leaders are under extreme stress at a time their leadership is most critical to their organization, staff, clients and community.
- Leaders are often found to be the most stressed within their organization but are often perceived as immune: a dangerous myth.
- This can have many consequences, as discussed in Part One:
 - Burnout, compassion fatigue (empathic strain), moral distress
 - Chronic stress and anxiety
 - Anger and frustration
 - Feelings of guilt, ineffectiveness, hopelessness, and helplessness
- It is crucial that NFP leaders find ways to care for themselves effectively.



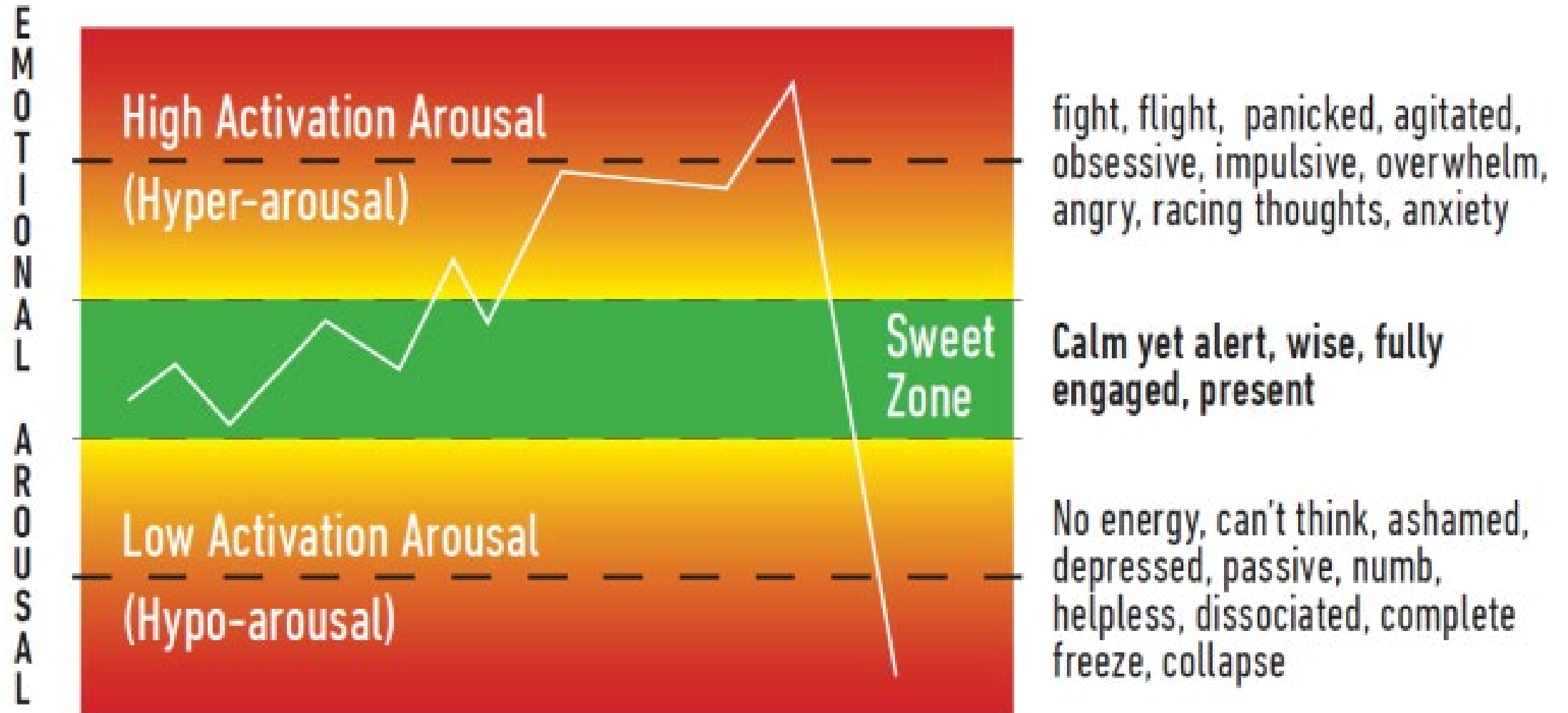
Self Awareness



- Crucial for coping and mental health.
- Recognizing how you're doing in any given moment, and overall:
 - Emotions
 - Thoughts
 - Physical well-being
 - Behaviour
- When we notice signs we're struggling, we can choose to do things to address this (active coping).
- Tools to help increase self-awareness through purposeful reflection were shared in Part One:
 - Window of Tolerance (assess how you are in the moment)
 - Mental Health Continuum Model (assess how you're doing overall)

The Window of Tolerance Framework

Adapted from Siegel, Ogden and Minton



MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL



Checking In



What have you been thinking about, noticing, and/or trying in relation to the concepts discussed last time?
(ie: Window of Tolerance Framework, Mental Health Continuum)

- What has this been like?
- What has made a difference?
- Have you encountered any barriers to making changes you'd like to make, such as improving self-care?

Self-Reflection

- The basis for self-awareness and growth.
- Purposefully thinking about our feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and sensations and assessing how we're doing.
- Important for coping (can “get used to” stress and not see it).
- Includes looking at our inner experiences, and our behaviour in our interactions with our environment/others:
 - Helps us “slow down” in the moment and be less reactive.
 - Provides an opportunity to process our experiences.
 - Gives insight into feelings, thoughts, and actions (in the moment, and patterns).
 - Creates a context where we can choose to do things differently.
 - Improves our sense of self (clearer about who we are, what we need).
 - Helps us develop self-compassion.
 - Essential for EI (ability to understand and manage emotions).



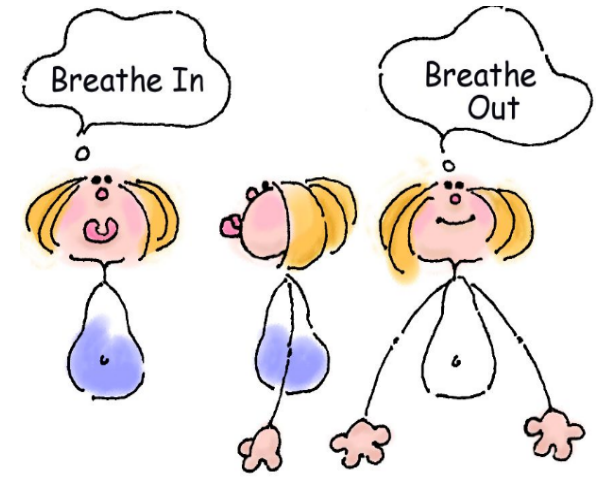
3 Minute Breathing Space

1. Sit upright in your chair with a purposeful posture (comfortable but not too relaxed)
2. Close eyes, if comfortable, or lower your gaze
3. Guided Meditation:
 - Bring awareness to current sensations, thoughts and emotions
 - Name these without getting pulled into the content
 - Bring your attention/focus to your breath
 - Expand your focus to whole body breathing
 - Take in sounds and sights/return to your day
4. Check in: how was this for everyone?



Mindful Breathing

- Mindfulness involves noticing what you are experiencing in the moment without judgment.
- Slow, deep, rhythmic breathing helps trigger the relaxation response.
- Both are very helpful for emotional regulation, coping, and resilience.
- Mindful breathing combines them (focusing on breath sensations).
- If your mind wanders, notice this without judgment and return your focus back to the sensations of your breath.
- There are many tools to help practice (apps, websites, You Tube).





VIDEO

Why Self Reflection is so Important for Leaders and Strategies for Reflection

Self reflection is a valuable thing to do in every aspect of life.

[Leadership Skills: Personal Reflection - YouTube](#)



Self-Reflection for Leaders

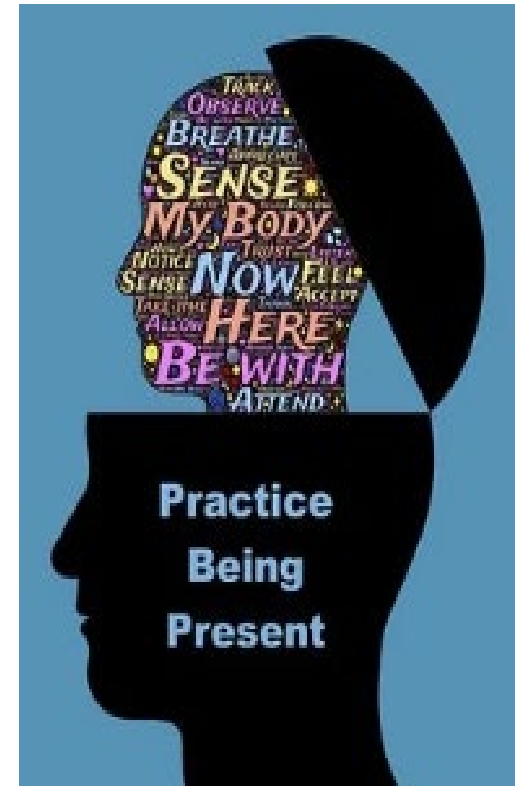
- Dee Hock, the founder of the Visa credit card: “If you look to lead, invest at least 40 percent of your time managing yourself.”
- Instead of constant acceleration, Kraemer says, leadership demands periods of restraint and consideration, even—perhaps especially—during a crisis. Leaders must regularly turn off the noise and ask themselves what they stand for and what kind of an example they want to set.

Actions:

- Know your priorities
- Be aware of your shortcomings
- Minimize surprise
- Regulate your feelings
- Build Stronger Teams

Tips for Self-Reflection

- Schedule time for purposeful self-reflection.
- Be honest about your feelings, thoughts, and actions:
 - If this is difficult, think about why.
 - We often deny or minimize pain/vulnerability to cope.
- Be curious, not judgmental (self-compassion).
- Consider how what you're doing fits with your values.
- Consider your successes and things you're grateful for (not just areas where you'd like to see change).
- Accept that what worked before may not work now.
- Helpful to couple with other healthy activities (ie: walking in nature).
- Also notice what you're experiencing in your body.



Body Scan Exercise

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- Begin with five deep breaths, inhaling deep into your belly for a count of four then exhaling completely while counting back down to one.
- Focus on each area of your body one by one, noticing how it feels:
 - Head, forehead, face, jaw
 - Shoulders and neck
 - Elbows, wrist, fingers
 - Torso
 - Legs and feet
- Become aware of any tension you're holding in each area, and with your next exhale release it.



Self-Care

“Rest and self care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”

- Eleanor Brown



What is Self-Care?

- Involves regularly doing things to meet our full range of needs.
- Is a foundation for all aspects of physical and emotional wellness and the basis for resilience and healing.
- Includes creating balance between different areas of life.
- Particularly vital during periods of increased stress (need to “charge our battery” more often when our resources are in more demand).
- However, we’re often least likely to nurture ourselves with good self-care during chaotic times when we need it the most.
- Leaders may face additional barriers due to the nature of their role.

What are some factors that make it difficult to maintain balance and practice good self-care consistently?



Common Barriers to Self-Care



- Excessive demands and limited time.
- Leaders less likely to have routine workdays (harder to plan/schedule).

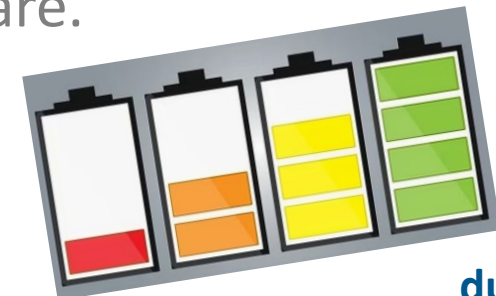


- Values/beliefs that prioritize “giving”:
 - Expectations of self and/or others (role and gender-based).
 - Fear of conflict or judgment (ie: being viewed as “lazy” or “selfish”).
- Self-talk that leads to feelings of obligation/guilt (ie: “should”).
- Belief that having needs equates to “weakness” or “vulnerability”.
- Stigma related to emotional health needs/challenges.
- Denying or minimizing our own needs (ie: “*I don’t need to sleep*”).
- Past experiences where we were unsupported or shamed for trying to meet our own needs.



Strategies for Self Care

- Ensuring your needs are met (varies from person to person).
- Reflect on your self care habits periodically (needs shift over time).
- Practice self care “regularly and as needed”:
 - Consistent self care on a regular basis.
 - More “radical” self care when stressors increase, and/or you notice signs of stress or dysregulation (WTF, MH Continuum).
- Find ways to make self care a priority:
 - Schedule the time for self care into your life regularly.
 - Give yourself permission to meet your needs (“leaders are people too”).
 - Set boundaries with others (to limit stress and protect time for self care).
 - Remember you can’t be effective without self care.
- Use self-reflection to determine what “charges your battery”.

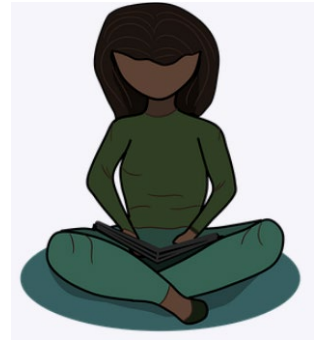


Areas to Consider for Self Care



Physical:

- Good nutrition and hydration.
- Regular exercise.
- Adequate sleep.
- Avoid excessive substance use.
- Medical and dental care.



Emotional:

- Notice and reflect on your feelings.
- Allow yourself to feel your emotions without judgment (self-compassion).
- Actively do things to reduce/cope with stress and difficult feelings.
- Seek and accept emotional support.
- Engage in creative pursuits.
- Spend time outdoors.



Areas to Consider for Self Care (cont'd)

Balance and Relaxation:

- Purposefully choose how to use your time (schedule).
- Use boundaries to set limits with others and to create balance (between productivity and pleasure, and between work and home).
- Purposefully engage in activities that are enjoyable and fun.
- Regularly do things that are relaxing and soothing (mentally and physically).
- Do things outside work where you aren't "in charge" or "the expert".

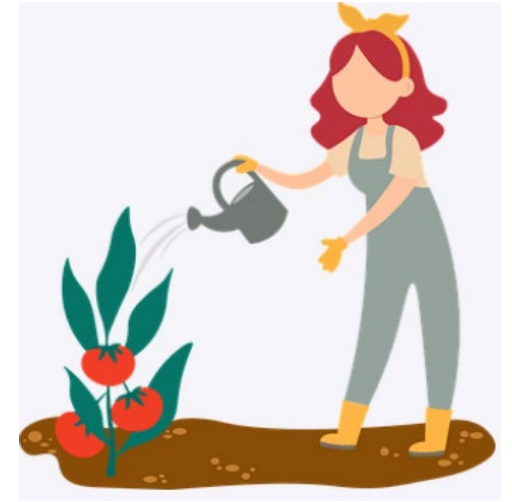


Interpersonal:

- Make time to interact with others (in and outside of work).
- Make it a priority to nurture your important relationships.
- Obtain adequate support (personal and professional).



Areas to Consider for Self Care (cont'd)



Cognitive:

- Take time for self-reflection to identify/challenge unhelpful thoughts.
- Explore things you're curious about or interested in (unrelated to work).
- Discuss/exchange ideas with others.



Spiritual:

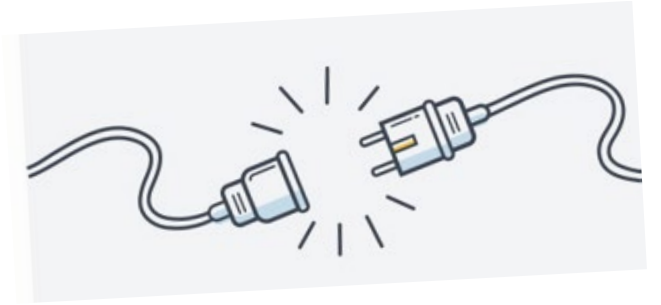
- Stay connected to what's meaningful to you (is it reflected in your life?).
- Do things that provide a sense of spiritual connection (ie: religion, nature).

Work/Life Balance is an Essential Part of Self Care

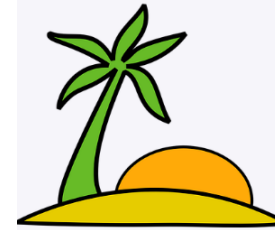
- Reduces work-related stress.
- Provides a physical and emotional “break” from work.
- Ensures adequate time and energy for self-care.
- Ensures adequate time and energy for all roles.
- Signs of inadequate work/life balance:
 - Regularly prioritizing work over other areas of life.
 - Being too tired to do things after work.
 - A sense of “losing control” of your life.
 - Guilt for “neglecting” one role or another.
 - Always feeling you “should be doing something else”.
 - Often feeling “stretched thin” or overextended.
 - Feeling frustrated and overwhelmed.



Tips to Improve Work/Life Balance



- Maintain a full “life outside work”.
- Realistic understanding of roles and strong boundaries (“unplug”).
- Take regular breaks/vacations.
- Find ways to “leave work at work”.
- Actively “de-stress” after shifts.
- Create a clear distinction between work and home (transition rituals):
 - Visualize yourself “packing up” the day’s events and locking them away.
 - Do a brief meditation or relaxation practice, or journal for 5 minutes.
 - Shower/change clothes.
 - Go for a walk or do something else physical.
 - Sing to your favorite music on the drive home.
 - Watch/listen to something that makes you laugh.



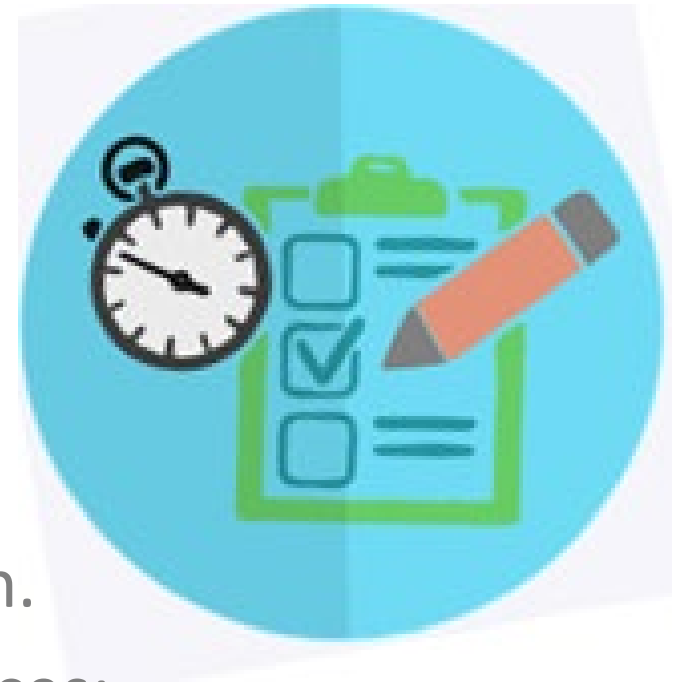
Breakout Rooms: Achieving Balance

How would you rate your ability to “leave work at work” and maintain separation between work time and other spheres of life?
(on a scale of 1-10)

- What do you do to make this number as high as it is?
- What could you do to increase it a even just a bit?

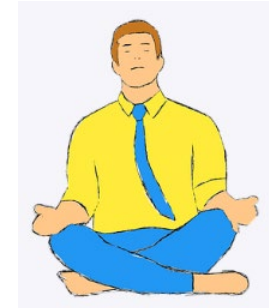
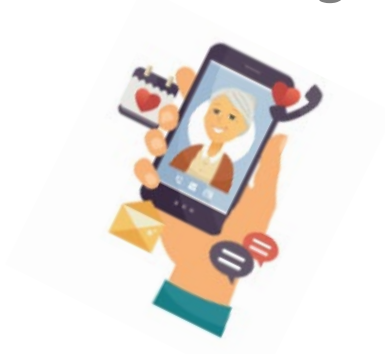
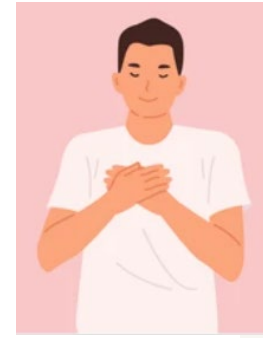
Micro Self-Care

- Acts of self-care vary in scope (five deep breaths / a weekend away).
- “Larger” acts of self-care are important, but may be difficult when our resources are stretched thin.
- Important to incorporate “micro self-care” practices: quick acts of self-care that can be practiced frequently in daily life.
- Can be practiced regularly (scheduled), and “as needed”.
- More practical (time/resources) so more likely to happen and sustain.
- Can quickly become “self care habits” that we automatically practice.
- Small things can “add up” quickly and lead to big changes!



Examples of Micro Self-Care

- Gratitude (think/write 3 things you're grateful for)
- Mindfulness (what are you noticing right now?)
- Dance/sing for the length of one song
- Body scan (notice and release tension)
- Do something to please your senses (smell, touch, taste)
- Briefly connect with someone important to you (ie: send a text)
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise (mindfulness of senses)
- 10 mindful deep breaths
- Cross crawl
- Doorknob confessions ("*I value being a leader because...*")
- Wring yourself out
- Connect to calm
- Connect to pleasant



Cross Crawl

- Exercise is essential for physical and emotional wellness.
- Physical movement helps us connect with our body (“get out of our head”) and ground in the present moment.
- Movement can “activate” us when we are shut down or stimulate relaxation in the brain and body when we are agitated.
- Boosts immunity and emotional resilience.
- Improves sleep, which is also an essential part of self-care.



Let's try together!

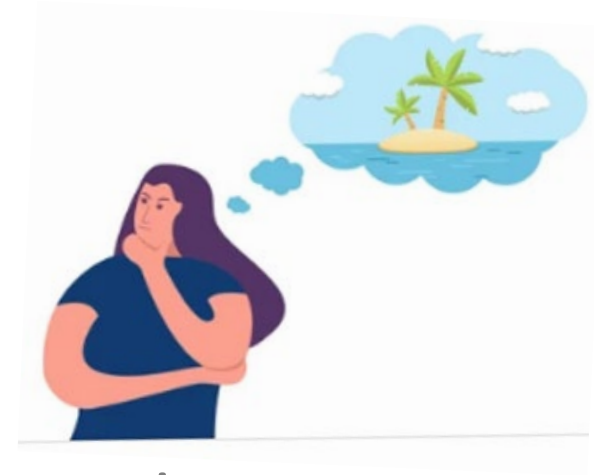
Connecting to Calm

- Take a deep breath and turn your attention inward.
- Notice what's happening now (thoughts, emotions, body sensations).
- Is your internal experience reflective of the green, yellow, orange, or red zones of the WTF and/or Mental Health Continuum?
- Shift your focus to think about someone who represents calm to you.
- Take time to visualize and imagine them (what they look like, sound like, where they are, what they are doing or saying).
- Notice what it's like to be in their presence (continue deep breaths).
- What might they say or give to help you connect with a sense of calm?
- Remember their words/gift during stressful situations when they arise.



Connecting to the Pleasant

- Helps cultivate positive emotions and “reset”.
- Pick an emotion you'd like to experience more often (ie: happy, calm, confident, hopeful).
- Think about a time in the past you experienced that emotion:
 - Where were you? What was happening? What were you doing?
 - What did you notice with your senses?
 - What thoughts were you having?
 - What did it feel like in your body to experience that emotion?
- Refocus on your current mood: has there been any shift?
- If you notice even a small positive shift, enjoy and appreciate it.
- Can list memories of times you felt positive emotions and use these as “shortcuts” to those feelings in times of distress.
- Will get better at purposely “visiting” positive emotions over time.



Thinking Ahead: Self Care



**What self-care strategy can you commit to doing for
1-5 minutes each day?**

When will you do this? How will you ensure it happens?

Develop a Personal Self Care Plan



1. **Identify needs** (physical, emotional, cognitive, social, spiritual).
2. **Identify gaps** (where needs are not getting met).
3. **Identify strategies to fill gaps** (concrete/realistic).
4. **Implement these strategies** (plan/prioritize, schedule/checklist).
5. **Reflect on outcome** (revise if needed).

REMEMBER:
Every small change matters!

Self-Care Assessment Tools

A self-care assessment can help you identify gaps and make plans to bridge them.

These tools were developed by Dr. Linda Fisher, and are available online from the Tend Academy:

- [Self-Care in Your Workplace Questionnaire](#)
- [Self-Care in Your Personal Life Questionnaire](#)

Don't Hesitate to Get Support

- Support-seeking is strongly related to resilience.
- Vital part of stress-management and self-care.
- Connections to others reduces stress hormones.
- Inadequate social support increases risk of emotional health issues.
- Need a solid support system inside and outside of work.
- Some stress is a normal response to any challenge, particularly in circumstances that involve a lot of change and/or uncertainty.
- Consider accessing professional support if:
 - You feel highly distressed much of the time.
 - Stress and related symptoms are impacting your overall functioning/well-being.
 - Things that helped you cope in the past are no longer working.
 - You find yourself using coping strategies that have potential to cause harm.



Counselling and Mental Health Resources

- If you or someone else is at risk of harm at any time, call 911 or go to an ER.
- Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS) provides 24/7 support to those 16+ experiencing crisis (905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890).
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service offers 24/7 crisis support (1-833-456-4566).
- MindBeacon and AbilitiCBT offer internet-based CBT for anxiety and depression.
- Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support provides various supports including immediate phone counselling 24/7 (1-866-585-0445).
- BounceBack is a free phone-based program to address stress, anxiety, and depression (go to website or call 1-877-767-9642).
- ConnexOntario helps find mental health and addiction support (1-866-531-2600).
- Family Services Durham provides counselling for a wide range of issues (call 905-666-6240 ext 1 or 1 866 840-6697 ext 1 to request service).

Free Online Resources

Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment

- [Mental Health Meter \(CMHA\)](#)
- [Self-Care and Resilience Guide \(MH Continuum Self-Assessment\)](#)
- [Self-Care in Your Workplace Questionnaire](#)
- [Self-Care in Your Personal Life Questionnaire](#)
- [How Self-Reflection Can Make You a Better Leader](#)
- [Strategies for Self-Reflection](#)
- [The Value of Self-Reflection \(Ted Talk\)](#)
- [Personal Boundaries - Thriving in the Workplace Toolkit](#)
- [10 Ways to Build and Preserve Better Boundaries | Psych Central](#)
- [Why Good Mental Health is a Leader's Best Friend - Thoughtful Leader](#)
- [64 Journaling Prompts for Self-Discovery](#)
- [11 Best Journaling Prompts for Self-Reflection - Declutter The Mind](#)

Self-Care and Resilience

- [Bouncing Back - Workplace Resilience Guide](#)
- [Self Care Strategies for Effective Leadership During COVID-19](#)
- [WEBINAR: Avoiding Burnout - Self Care and Resiliency for Leaders](#)
- [Self Care: Your Resources for All Things Self Care in Canada](#)
- [COVID-19 Self-Care and Resilience Guide \(The Working Mind\)](#)
- [Balancing Work and Life while Staying Well – Five Essential Tools](#)
- [Leaders Are People Too: Staying Well During COVID-19](#)
- [Self Care for Leaders: A Simple Guide](#)
- [This is a Marathon, Not a Sprint: Strategies to Address Wear & Tear](#)
- [Self Care for Leaders: What, Why & How](#)
- [Serious Leaders Need Self-Care, Too](#)
- [Resilient Leadership Responding to COVID-19](#)

Mindfulness, Relaxed Breathing, Progressive Relaxation

- [Deep Breathing Audio Track](#)
- ["Clouds" Guided Breathing Exercise](#)
- [Stress Control Relaxation and Mindfulness Download Page](#)
- [How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation \(Audio Guide\)](#)
- [Guided Muscle Relaxation Exercise \(VIDEO\)](#)
- [What is Mindfulness? \(with exercises\)](#)
- [Getting Started with Mindfulness](#)
- [5 Minute Guided Body Scan Meditation](#)

Questions and Comments





Family Services Durham

Social Services Department

The Regional Municipality of Durham

605 Rossland Road East

Whitby, Ontario L1N 6A3

Telephone: **905-666-6240 ext. 1**

Toll-Free: **1-866-840-6697 ext. 1**

durham.ca

[@RegionofDurham](#)

