Mental Health and Self-Care

Presented by: Shalyn Isaacs
Learning Objectives

• Explore different factors that may contribute to mental health issues and identify different self-care strategies for coping with these factors.

• Identify self-care strategies that can be practiced daily and not just during “low” points in life.

• Come to a greater understanding of why self-care is important to you.

• Explore how to develop a simple self-care plan.
Your Responsibility

- Keep an open-mind
- Practice critical thinking
- PARTICIPATE 😊
- Listen & engage
- Put away cell phones
- Don’t interrupt each other
Share 2 things with the person sitting on your left:

1) What the term “self-care” means to you
2) Some of your favorite ways to take care of yourself
The Dual-Continuum Model of Mental Health & Mental Illness
Optimal mental health ("flourishing")

Optimal mental health with mental illness

Optimal mental health without mental illness

Serious mental illness

No mental illness symptoms

Poor mental health with mental illness

Poor mental health without mental illness

(Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness; McKean, 2011; taken from Report of the Provostial Advisory Committee on Student Mental Health (2014).)
Self Care:
Is it always easy and does it always have to feel good in the moment?
The Window of Tolerance & Hypo/Hyper Arousal States
Hyperarousal
- Hyperaware or vigilant
- Overly quick or intense reactions
- Feeling a lack of emotional safety
- Overwhelming emotions

Window of tolerance
- Able to think and feel at the same time

Hypoarousal
- Shut down, flat or numb
- Hard to think, disconnected
- Feeling shame, can’t say ‘no’
What Can Take Us Out of the Window of Tolerance?
Traumatic events and memories of trauma

Feeling abandoned or rejected

Feeling unsafe

Trauma-related core beliefs about the self are triggered
Strategies for Staying in the Window of Tolerance
Strategies for Staying in the Window of Tolerance:
Discussion

• Grounding Techniques
• Mindfulness – Staying in the present moment
• Deep, slow breathing
• Techniques for self-soothing and calming the body
• Self-affirmations
Stages of Burnout
• A term that has been used in research since the 1970’s to describe:

• A state of emotional and physical exhaustion where one feels cynical about the value of one’s work and experiences feelings of inefficiency and lack of accomplishment.
Stages of Burnout

Stage 1:
• High workload, high level of work/school stress, high work/school expectations
• The demands of one’s work exceed the resources available to help one meet those demands.
• The work does not fulfill one’s expectations.

Stage 2:
• Physical / emotional exhaustion
• Higher energy investment in order to execute all work/school tasks
• Sleep disturbances
• Susceptibility to headaches and other physical pain.
Stages of Burnout

Stage 3:
Depersonalization / Cynicism / Indifference
Apathy, depression, boredom
A negative attitude toward work/school, friends / colleagues / other students / family
Withdrawal from work/school life, a reduced work effort

Stage 4:
Despair / Helplessness / Aversion
Aversion to oneself, to other people, to everything
Feelings of guilt, shame and insufficiency
Strategies for preventing burn-out: Discussion

• Reach out to those closest to you
• Connect with a cause/community that is meaningful to you
• Establish and maintain your boundaries, i.e say “no”
• Take daily breaks from technology
• Nourish your creative side
Strategies for Preventing Burnout

- Make exercise a priority
- Reduce intake of foods that can adversely impact your mood
- Re-evaluate your values / purpose of the work you are doing
- Keep your space organized and tidy
- Focus daily on even “small” accomplishments
Compassion Fatigue:
- Feelings of indifference and/or apathy towards those who are suffering as a result of being exposed so often to images/situations of pain & suffering.
- A gradual lessening of compassion
- Common among those in the helping professions who are always helping others in need, but is common among all of us.
Compassion Fatigue & “Other-Care Giving”

• Leading Traumatologist Eric Gentry suggests that compassion fatigue is common among those who strongly identify/empathize with the helpless, suffering, or traumatized people or animals.

• It is common for such people to hail from a tradition of what Gentry labels: other-directed care giving.

• Simply put, these are people who were taught at an early age to care for the needs of others before caring for their own needs.
Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Feeling burdened by the suffering of others
- Blaming others for their suffering
- Isolating yourself
- Loss of pleasure in life
- Difficulty concentrating
- Bottling up your emotions
- Increased nightmares
- Feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness
- Frequent complaining about your work or your life
- Beginning to receive a lot of complaints about your work or attitude
- Denial
Strategies for Coping with Compassion Fatigue
Strategies for Coping with Compassion Fatigue: Discussion

• AWARENESS is the first step.

Setting Emotional Boundaries:

“The challenge is to remain compassionate, empathetic, and supportive of others without becoming overly involved and taking on another’s pain. Setting emotional boundaries helps maintain a connection while still remembering and honoring the fact that you are a separate person with your own needs.”
Strategies for Coping with Compassion Fatigue: Discussion

- Engaging in outside hobbies that are separate from one’s work
- Keeping a journal
- Talking to a therapist
- Boosting resiliency
- .... Practicing self-care strategies on a daily basis 😊
What are some of your own self-care strategies, and which do you hope to do more of?
Questions?
Thank you so much for listening & participating!

Contact Information:

Shalyn Isaacs
-president.wmht@gmail.com

Women’s Mental Health Talks
Facebook / Instagram / Twitter: @WMHTYORKU

Office: 310 Student Center