THE WHOLE PERSON: IDENTIFYING SELF-CARE AND COPING STRATEGIES IN A PANDEMIC

Presented by Haben Abraham, LCSW
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will be able to identify the five realms of self-care and why self-care strategies are significant to their work.

2. Participants will explore visualization and an interactive activity to enhance their own self-care toolbox.

3. Participants will identify areas for development of self-care within their personal and professional worlds.
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What do I need?
In what areas do I need to become unapologetic?
What fuels me and what does not?
How will I know I am struggling and need to reset?
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER 
CONTD.

What have I not granted myself permission to experience, explore and become curious about in this journey of taking care of myself?

What am I avoiding?

What brings me joy? Do I know these things? Can I access them?
"CARING FOR MYSELF IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, IT IS SELF-PRESERVATION, AND THAT IS AN ACT OF POLITICAL WARFARE."

-AUDRE LORDE
LET’S BREATHE AND GRANT OURSELVES PERMISSION

- Sit comfortably, preferably with your back supported.
- Hands placed gently on a surface or on top of your knees.
- If comfortable, close your eyes.
- Follow my voice.
- If you find yourself becoming distracted, just come back to center and re-join.
WHAT INSPIRES THIS WORK AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Turnover, Fatigue and Burnout

Stress responses

COVID-19, misinformation and misconceptions of “moving on”
COVID-19 STATISTICS AND OUR MANY REALITIES

• Despite your stance on COVID-19 there have been significant changes to how we travel, interact, socialize, publicly conduct ourselves, etc. There are new regulations and rules we are all navigating as a collective.

• The numbers are changing; especially with recent holiday season we are experiencing increased positivity rates and hospitalizations (8.3% positivity rate in Connecticut just two weeks ago versus 6.08%).

• Misconception that we are “past COVID-19”, when in reality we do not have firm projections, an end date or full knowledge of long-term consequences. What we can see however are mixed messages on progress (i.e. sense of laxed approaches related to large festivals, larger than before unmasked gatherings while at the same time navigating workplaces mandating the vaccine, masks indoors, continued social distancing, etc.)
The veil of moving on (vaccine increased confidence for some and increased anxiety for others).

Grief, loss of life, unemployment, turnover are all still present and growing across the world. Often, we forget we are dealing with both the aftermath and ongoing issues directly and indirectly through human interaction, (i.e. road rage, workplace conflict, work with clients, personal lives, fatigue, isolation)

In this time, more people are seeking individual therapy to deal with issues magnified by COVID (most agencies and private practitioners seeing a 60-75% referral increase, and capacity reached).

Folks are facing issues they have not had the time “to sit with” and examine prior to COVID that forced a global “slowing down”. Work seeped into home life and vice versa through telecommunications.
The Psychiatry Advisor Journal reported a 18-30% increase of arrests and calls related to domestic violence compared to previous periods.

New VARIANTS = prolonged chronic stress and management

Unemployment reached 14.8 % by April 2020 versus 4.2% by Nov 2021. This still consists of 6.9 million people (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Anti-anxiety medications have increased 34% compared to 14.8% insomnia meds and 18.6% for anti-depressants.

Across the U.S. 60% psychiatrists saw new patients with anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and substance use dxs. “All are leading conditions to be exacerbated by the pandemic”.

COVID STATS AND OUR MANY REALITIES
WHAT INSPIRES THIS WORK AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Maintenance of well-being and connecting to JOY

Shifting the conversation to the Whole Person Approach

Consistency versus Perfectionism
WHOLE PERSON APPROACH

- Broadening our definition and therefore the possibilities of self-care and access.
- Utilizing healthy boundaries to remain whole.
- Holding space for ourselves and others.
- This illuminated our need for connection and community.
- We need to incorporate community care in a way that makes sense for the individual. What can be tailored to their needs? What role do they play in care?
- We can still utilize an equity lens on self-care in which inclusivity of all people regardless of status, race, disability, class and gender identity are at the center.
SELF-CARE STARTS WITH SELF-TALK

- Your beliefs and language matter.
- Would you speak to a client, friend, or child like this?
- Self-compassion can encourage and guide your self-care.
- Whose voice is this? To whom do these limiting beliefs belong?
- Toxic positivity and performing “happiness”
THE 5 REALMS OF SELF-CARE

MENTAL  EMOTIONAL  SPIRITUAL  PHYSICAL  SOCIAL
Additionally, self-care is made up of deliberate decisions. This includes:

- Saying No
- Occasionally staying at home
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Asking for what you need
- Forgiveness
SELF-CARE, COPING AND VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

• Coping as the activity (in the moment) and self-care as long-term maintenance. They make up your strategies and toolbox.

• Visualization helps positive thinking because in the moment, you cannot distinguish what IS versus what is imagined.

• The Inner Child as connections to exploration, joy, lack of inhibitions and liberation can help guide your creativity for self-care, envisioning healing, etc.
INNER CHILD VISUALIZATION

• Sit comfortably.
• Hand on heart or on top of legs. Remove shoes if this provides more comfort.
• If imagining yourself as the inner child causes problems or disturbance please use a favorite childhood character, an image of children in your family or a childhood best friend instead. This is YOUR visualization.
• Follow my voice as we consult with the inner child.
REFLECTIONS ON INNER CHILD

• When you reopen your eyes, jot down some immediate thoughts, words, images that come to mind.

• Throughout life we sacrifice many parts of our selves (i.e. roles changing, “old talents”, core beliefs may shift about who we are).

• Has this changed your thoughts on both your self-care and in general?

• Inner work as part of the process in developing and maintaining self-care.
BUILDING YOUR TOOLBOX

Consult your senses (What do you like to hear, see, touch, taste and smell)

What can you utilize right at home?

TIME. What can be categorized in daily, weekly and monthly intervals?

A vital part of maintaining self-care is identifying the signs of burnout and exhaustion.
We can attempt to utilize tools when we are in “crisis” or exhaustion. The goal is to access them before we are in desperation. We achieve this by integrating these practices into our lives. One preventative measure is to check-in on how you are functioning and understanding your unique signs for “tapping out”, “burnout, etc. Do you feel:

More irritable than usual

Tension

Physical pain (stomach/backpain)

Short-tempered, angered easily

Withdrawing from others

Loss of motivation or inspiration

Increased need for sleep
How will I know I am tapping out?

Do you feel:

- Trouble concentrating
- Increased negative self-talk
- Increased pessimism
- Feeling “scattered” and/or paralysis
- Finding multiple ways to distract yourself to “check out”
- Need to alter your state via substance use, smoking, etc.
- Changes to eating habits or appetite.
YOUR OWN ASSESSMENT

YOU CAN ACCESS A FULL AND FREE SELF CARE ASSESSMENT AT THERAPISTAI.com

• Divide your paper into five blocks
• Label them according to the 5 realms of self-care (Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, Social, Physical)

• Write what you do under each corresponding category to meet that need

• Which block has the least number of responses?
• What makes this aspect harder to tend to?
  Does it take more energy, time, or effort?

• Are these limiting beliefs related?
• Who can you enlist to help you?
VARIOUS SPACES: YOU DO NOT LIVE IN A VACUUM

Community Care

Shared workspace

Personal Space
COMMUNITY CARE

- This ideal was a practice of most Black activist groups throughout history. It was a means to collectively bypass capitalism and systems of oppression while creating safety, providing resources and uplifting the community.

- COVID has sparked in depth conversation on expanding communal/community care and what this could look like moving forward.

- It forces us to ask what can we control.

- We have witnessed groups pulling resources, funding, sharing ideas, providing support to one another in new ways.

- Shifting this lens to collective care can be exploratory.

- How do you implement this in your own life? Where have you seen this occur?
COMMUNITY CARE

“People committed to leveraging their privilege to be there for one another in various ways” – Nakita Valerio

- Communal meals
- Gathering and distributing resources, products, homemade goods/clothes etc.
- Sharing child-rearing, it takes a village mentality
- Cleaning parties for new residents, new parents, etc.
- Holistic doctors treating community members
- Leaning on others for support (consistent)
- It is ongoing and not necessarily based on the individual initiating or asking
SHARED WORKSPACE AND COMMUNITY CARE

• Have this become an active part of work practice and dialogue as we return to in-office work.

• Envision shared workspace as a collective effort that can tap into multiple interests, talents, visions, etc.

• Share ideas with one another and be open to feedback. Are you actively seeking feedback across different identities/needs amongst staff?
**SHARED WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY CARE**

- Creating flexible ERGS (employee resource groups) that are vital to any DEI, self and community care work initiatives. These should all receive the same support and leadership buy-in.

- Possibility of a self-care room, cubicle, closet, shelf – Make it work for you and your co-workers and always keep access at the center.

- Utilize talented staff that can provide in-house trainings and share their expertise. Part of community care is being SEEN and sharing knowledge.

- Discussing and inquiring if your agency has self-care funds/resources that can be used for these efforts.

- Leaving encouraging notes behind for one another

- Attending community events together as a team and representative of your agency
CREATING SANCTUARY:
DO YOU HAVE A SPACE?
CREATING SANCTUARY

• Creating sanctuary can also utilize the imagination in meditation and visualizations as we experienced earlier.

• Create a playlist, noise cancelling headphones

• Base your playlist on different moods you may feel

• If you can designate a space, utilize yoga mats, area rugs to hold as “sacred space”

• Greens, beige, white and blue are soothing colors

• Play with fabrics, soft/low lighting in your space

• Candles, aromatherapy, incense, essential oils for mind-body connection and healing properties. Weighted, soft or heated blankets or sleeping masks.

• Keep the area clutter free

• Some choose to listen to content, paint, draw, journal or just rest in the space.
RITUAL, PRACTICE AND REST!

Do not underestimate the power of building ritual and routines related to your self care.

Consistency over perfectionism

Do you have ancestral connection to rituals? How can this be implemented? If not, how can you create your own?

The goal is not more consumerism but you may feel compelled to purchase items that support your self care.

We need to normalize rest, opportunities for rest/grounding
TAKE AWAY

• Failure is information to work with!

• Self-care can be both person and community centered.

• Professionals could benefit from the very work they do to improve clients’ wellness if they shift their lens to include themselves as the “whole person”

• You are not married to any decision with self-care. You are human and your needs can/will change. What worked last year might not work now or five years from now.

• Open yourself up to content and research. With more information, we may see significant changes to the world of self-care, accessibility and tools.

• It takes continued inner work and healthy questioning/exploration to progress in all things self-care and coping.
### Social Media/Internet

- The Omega Institute, eomega.org
- The Nap Ministry
- Explore Reiki
- Therapistaid.com
- Explore Wayne Dyer, Abraham Hicks

### Podcasts:

- Selfie by Kristen Howerton
- Brown Girl Self Care by Bre
- Self Care IRL by Ty Alexander
- Self Care to Success by Cindy Bautista-Thomas and Ancy Lewis

### Books

- Brene Brown, Atlas of the Heart
- Charles Vogl, The Art of Community: Seven Principles for Belonging
- John Purkiss, The Power of Letting Go
- Suzanne Falter, The Extremely Busy Woman’s Guide to Self-Care
CONTACT HABEN ABRAHAM, LCSW

• Email: habraham@wheelerclinic.org
• Business Website: www.habencoaching.com