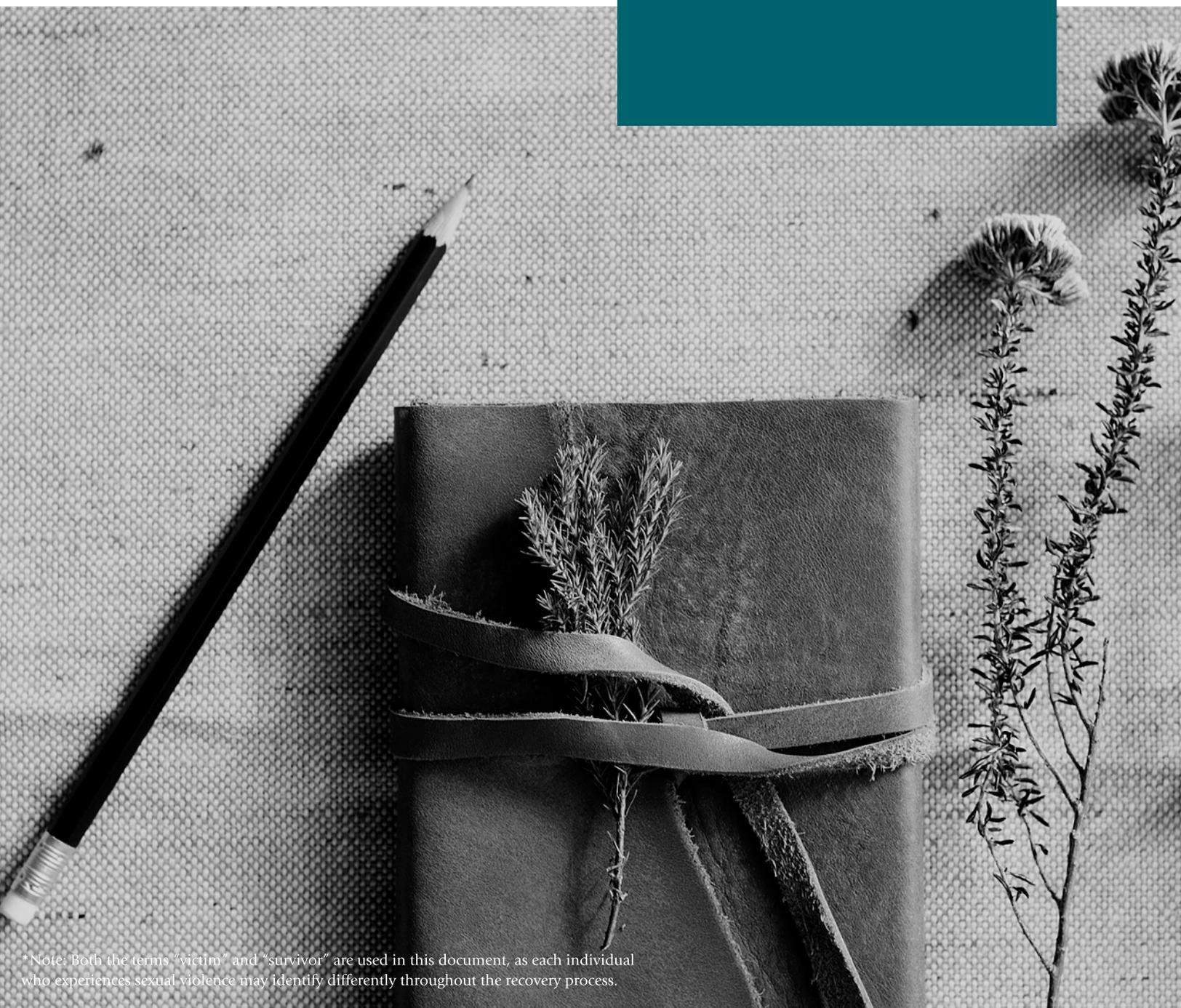


STAFF WELLNESS PROMOTION

PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE WITHIN
VICTIM/SURVIVOR* SERVICES

ENHANCING VICTIM
SERVICES PROJECT



*Note: Both the terms "victim" and "survivor" are used in this document, as each individual who experiences sexual violence may identify differently throughout the recovery process.

INTRODUCTION

In the anti-violence movement, we encounter some of the world's harshest stories, and are witness to some of its most inspiring resilience. This can deplete service providers physically, mentally, and emotionally. In this field it is essential, for the sake of wellbeing, to regularly practice rituals of self-care. Wellness and self-care can be defined in many ways but ultimately refers to regular intentional activities that focus on managing stress and finding a balance with the important things in our lives. Wellness can be broken down into different components, and helpers in the anti-violence field can address each area to ensure they are serving themselves as well as they are serving victims/survivors. Wellness is practiced differently by each of us. We encourage you to make space in your lives and your workplaces for individual and collective wellness activities.

This toolkit aims to provide basic information on how to practice self-care in and outside of the office. It provides practical guidance on how to implement self-care efforts and utilize resources that can be shared to support staff members' individual needs. In the first section, we share ways to make wellness a priority within the office. In the following sections, we provide examples of themes, activities, and resources that can be used by staff individually or practiced together in the office.

See SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness for more information on how to promote holistic self care

<https://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative/eight-dimensions-wellness>



MAKING WELLNESS ACTIONABLE

Making wellness a priority in the workplace can help keep the staff feeling supported and energized to do difficult but meaningful work. By committing to and encouraging self-care, we limit the amount of stress and unpredictable challenges that those working in trauma can face. Below is a way to incorporate wellness into the foundation of the office, setting standards as a team and as individuals. It's important to give structure to these efforts, even if they are relatively simple, to create consistency month-to-month.

- 1 Select one "Wellness Theme" to focus on per month. This could be a topic such as mindfulness, burnout, or self-compassion that will be incorporated into office conversation & culture throughout the month.
- 2 Incorporate a brief introduction (20 minutes or so) to the monthly Wellness Theme during your first staff meeting of the month.
- 3 Offer (at least) one hour-long activity per month to practice a Wellness Theme activity together. Make sure this is during a day/time that is accessible for your staff.
- 4 Make sure to get these activities on the calendars of your staff, so they can plan ahead (i.e., not book clients, etc.).
- 5 Encourage staff to take 15-minute breaks throughout their week to practice the Wellness Theme activity individually or collectively (e.g., brief meditation/yoga sessions; walking meetings).
- 6 Consider providing small incentives for those who participate in Wellness Theme activities. You could even hold competitions to encourage staff to regularly incorporate the practice into their routine throughout the month.
- 7 Encourage communication with input from staff regarding Wellness Themes. You could begin holding quarterly "Wellness Committee" meetings to solicit input/feedback, or something as simple as asking via email what Wellness Themes or activities staff are interested in exploring. It will be important to ask for feedback at least quarterly once you begin holding activities. What could be done better/more efficiently in future?
- 8 Staff are generally excited at the prospect of leading activities, so give them the opportunity to share their skills/interests through making this option available! Would they be interested in leading a yoga session? Are they passionate about the therapeutic possibilities of art, & would they want.

BURNOUT & VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Giving focus to wellness in the workspace is important for many reasons, including the prevention of developing emotional and physical distress from the work. Validating, preventing, addressing, and transforming experiences of burnout and vicarious trauma is essential within victim service provision.

As committed as we are to ending violence, working with survivors of trauma can be emotionally taxing and physically exhausting— it can affect our day-to-day lived experiences and perceptions.

Burnout is often defined as the physical response to stressors on the job that can occur during times of limited resources or overwhelming responsibilities. Vicarious trauma can show similar symptoms of burnout and also extends into an individual's personal life and world view. Effects of vicarious trauma can mimic the symptoms of PTSD and create long-term difficulty for those in the field. The resources below can help address burnout and vicarious trauma in the workplace. Consider pairing an article and activity or two together to explore the theme throughout the month.

Burnout Resources

[Job Burnout: New Directions in Research and Intervention.](#)

This article gives a solid overview of the factors at play in job burnout. "Job burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and is defined here by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and sense of inefficacy.

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1467-8721.01258>

[Creative ways to minimize burnout and encourage self-care among social sector employees.](#)

Check out this article that gives some simple yet profound tips for encouraging self-care to minimize burnout.

<https://www.nonprofithr.com/creative-ways-minimize-burnout-encourage-self-care-among-social-sector-employees/>

[Are you showing signs of burnout?](#)

This survey tool allows individuals to identify and assess their symptoms of burnout.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/testareyouburnedout2_edited_10092.pdf

[What to do about burnout: identifying your sources.](#)

This handout walks individuals through common causes of burnout, gives them space to reflect on related experiences, and helps them think through next steps.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/what-to-do-about-burnout_edited_82038.pdf

[Preventing burnout.](#)

This handout gives a fairly in-depth overview of burnout prevention strategies.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/preventing-burnout_edited_81785.pdf

Vicarious Trauma Resources

Self-care and trauma work.

This handout discusses common signs of burnout and vicarious trauma for anti-violence workers, and suggests a number of management strategies.

http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publication_NSVRC_Overview_Self-Care.pdf

Vicarious Trauma- excerpt from Understanding and Addressing Vicarious Trauma.

This handout discusses who is at risk for experiencing vicarious trauma, suggests coping strategies, as well as methods for transforming and nurturing the self.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/vicarious-trauma-handout_85433.pdf

Understanding and Addressing Vicarious Trauma- Reflection Questions Workbook.

This workbook includes thoughtful questions around the topic of vicarious trauma, provides a space for individuals to process the concept, and has the potential to spur dialogue in the workplace.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/vt_reflections-workbook_85636.pdf

Vicarious Trauma: What can managers and organizations do?

This handout considers how organizational culture might exacerbate or mitigate vicarious trauma, and provides suggestions for improving practices.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/vicarious-trauma-handout_for-managers_85189.pdf

Transforming Vicarious Trauma: Tips for Caregivers.

This handout provides 10 strategies that individuals can practice to prevent vicarious trauma at the individual level.

<http://www.leapsf.org/pdf/Tips-for-Self-Care-LEAP-VT-Curriculum.pdf>

General Self-Care Resources

The following are resources that can be integrated into general self-care practice. Consider focusing on one activity, or pair a few together throughout the month. Accompany them with related videos, activities, or resources you find online.

The University of Buffalo School of Social Work shares self-care activities and exercises related to healthy eating, physical fitness, reducing stress and more. See their full website here:

<https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/self-care-assessments-exercises/exercises-and-activities.html>

Tips for increasing physical activity.

This document provides tips for increasing physical activity.

<https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/exercises/tips-for-increasing-physical-activity.pdf>

Stress management.

The following activity encourages individuals to practice “Stress Journaling” to help work through stressors that may be bothering them.

<https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/exercises/stress-journaling.pdf>

You really need to relax: Effective methods.

The following document walks individuals through effective methods to enhance “relaxation response” such as progressive muscle relaxation, visual imagery, deep breathing, meditation, and yoga.

<https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/exercises/effective-methods-for-relaxation.pdf>

Self-Care in Social Work provides an array of resources, worksheets and assessments to support the wellbeing of those in the social work field. See their full website here:

<http://www.selfcareinsocialwork.com/>

Sources of Stress.

This worksheet helps individuals identify personal and organizational sources of stress.

<http://www.selfcareinsocialwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WORKSHEET-1.pdf>

Self-Care Basics.

The following worksheet goes over self-care strategies related to lifestyle choices and workplace adaptations.

<http://www.selfcareinsocialwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WORKSHEET-2.pdf>

Self-Efficacy.

This worksheet walks individuals through the judgements we make about our self-efficacy, or our perception of our abilities.

<http://www.selfcareinsocialwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Worksheet-5.pdf>

Self-Compassion

Those in caregiving professions often do not show themselves the same level of compassion and care they show their clients. Cultivating a practice of self-compassion is important for overall wellness, and preventing experiences of burnout and vicarious trauma. Select a few activities and make this your Wellness Theme for a month!

[Kristen Neff - Resilience and Self-Compassion.](#)

This valuable 25+ minute Youtube video features Dr. Kristin Neff, Associate Professor at University of Texas Austin, as she discusses her pioneering research into resilience and self-compassion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyjLKgfV7Sk>

[Professional Quality of Life Scale.](#)

The following "PROQOL" measures an individual's level of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue.

http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_3-2012.pdf

[Self-Compassion Break.](#)

This short activity asks participants to think of and process a stressful life situation, through practicing recognition and self-kindness.

<http://self-compassion.org/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

[Changing your Critical Self-Talk.](#)

This activity asks participants to recognize when they are being self-critical and encourages finding ways to reframe observations of the self.

<http://self-compassion.org/exercise-5-changing-critical-self-talk/>

Mindfulness, Meditation, & Yoga

Cultivating a practice of mindfulness and meditation can provide you with space to think, and to breathe through feelings of stress and overwhelm. It will teach you to quiet your mind, and find calm and relaxation within the stress you encounter day-to-day. Incorporate a few of these practices in a monthly Wellness Theme to encourage and intentional and restful mind.

[How to Practice Mindfulness.](#)

This brief article provides suggestions for mindfulness practice and making space for yourself.

<https://www.mindful.org/how-to-practice-mindfulness/>

[A 5-Minute Breathing Meditation to Cultivate Mindfulness.](#)

Check out this mindfulness practice if you need to decompress and you're short on time.

<https://www.mindful.org/a-five-minute-breathing-meditation/>

[Guided Mindfulness Meditation Series.](#)

Check out this 10-minute guided meditation with Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of mindfulness-based stress reduction.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HYLYuJZKno>

Mindfulness apps

[Stop, Breathe & Think.](#)

This is a free meditation app for your phone that provides education on mindfulness and meditation, and a range of guided meditations.

<https://app.stopbreathethink.org/>

[InsightTimer.](#)

This free app provides guided meditations for stress reduction, emotional balance, and acceptance. Users can choose a range of meditations or sounds to promote relaxation and healing.

<https://insighttimer.com/>

[Calm.](#)

Maximize your meditation library with another free app that has guided meditations for mindfulness beginners to enhance performance, reduce anxiety, and working on resilience.

<https://www.calm.com/>

Practicing yoga can do wonders for your body and mind. From getting a full body exercise, to something more restorative, regular yoga practice can be a valuable addition when incorporated into your overall wellness routine. Hold yoga sessions throughout one month, either led by a staff or community members, or even just using the follow YouTube channel.

[Yoga with Adriene.](#)

This YouTube channel is an incredible resource for free yoga, with a range of focuses, including yoga for productivity. Check out the “playlists” tab to find videos that appeal to you, here:

https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene/playlists?disable_polymer=1

[Global Yoga Academy.](#)

Take this free yoga app with you anywhere! It includes flow classes for every level of yogi, focused on increasing strength, balance, & flexibility.

<https://globalyogaacademy.com/>

Local Resources

There are a variety of fitness classes on Rutgers University campuses that you/your staff could incorporate into wellness practice. Encourage employees to check out the classes that interest them, or choose a class or two each month to attend as a group!

[Check out these Rutgers New Brunswick Fitness & Wellness Classes.](#)

<http://recreation.rutgers.edu/fitness-wellness/classes/>

[Check out these Rutgers Newark Fitness & Wellness Classes.](#)

http://rutgersnewarkathletics.com/documents/2017/9/5//2017_Fall_Non_Credit_Rec_Classes_Schedule.pdf?id=3351

[Check out these Rutgers Camden Fitness & Wellness Classes.](#)

<http://recreation.camden.rutgers.edu/activity-classes>

CONCLUSION

We hope this toolkit can serve as an individual and collective catalyst for wellness practice.

Our commitment to the anti-violence movement necessitates a commitment to caring for ourselves, because we ourselves are valuable, and because it will allow our work to be sustainable. This commitment works best when integrated into the very structure of our organizational priorities, with leadership serving as a model, and with staff encouraged to take time out when needed to engage in self-care practice. The resources highlighted in this toolkit provide a starting point for your office to incorporate wellness activities when needed that can keep valuable members of the team ready to serve students in need. We intend for this tool to inspire positive and creative responses from those in this helping field to stay productive and balanced. It is the role of each person involved in service provision to identify and engage in self-care activities regularly to maintain an effective response to victims/survivors. Making this task a priority helps ensure that everyone is receiving the care they deserve.



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Appendix A

Example Wellness Initiative

Do an initial introduction of your Wellness Initiative by emphasizing the importance of prioritizing self-care in the workplace. How can your workplace culture become more conducive to self-care? Ask staff to complete the following worksheet to get a conversation going about self-care strategies:

Self-Care Basics.

<http://www.selfcareinsocialwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WORKSHEET-2.pdf>

After completing this activity, ask questions such as:

1. What are some of the challenges your staff are experiencing?
2. What activities are your staff interested in participating in?
3. Does anyone have specific skills or areas of interest they would be interested in contributing?



Month



Wellness Theme: Mindfulness & Relaxation

Potential activities/resources to include:

1. You Really Need to Relax: Effective Methods.

<https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/exercises/effective-methods-for-relaxation.pdf>

2. How to Practice Mindfulness.

<https://www.mindful.org/how-to-practice-mindfulness/>

3. A 5-Minute Breathing Meditation to Cultivate Mindfulness.

<https://www.mindful.org/a-five-minute-breathing-meditation/>

Encourage staff to use meditation apps throughout the month, and give them time to celebrate their outcomes during a staff meeting.

Month

Wellness Theme: Recognizing & Preventing Burnout

Potential activities/resources to include:

1. Are you showing signs of burnout?

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/testareyouburnedout2_edited_10092.pdf

2. What to do about burnout: identifying your sources.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/what-to-do-about-burnout_edited_82038.pdf

3. Preventing burnout.

http://www.headington-institute.org/files/preventing-burnout_edited_81785.pdf

Encourage staff to incorporate some preventative activities into their monthly routine! This could include regular exercise, making sure they are getting 8 hours of sleep each night, etc. and give them time to celebrate their outcomes during a staff meeting.

Month

Wellness Theme: Practicing Self-Compassion

Potential activities/resources to include:

1. Kristen Neff - Resilience and Self-Compassion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyjLKgfV7Sk>

2. Professional Quality of Life Scale.

http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_3-2012.pdf

3. Self-Compassion Journal.

<http://self-compassion.org/exercise-6-self-compassion-journal/>

Encourage staff to make regular entries into their self-compassion journal throughout the month, and give them time to celebrate their outcomes during a staff meeting.