

Muscogee County School District Wellness Sessions

Session Title: Prioritizing & Practicing SELF-CARE

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Organization: Pastoral Institute

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What Is Self-Care

- The practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health.
- The practice of taking an active role, initiative, in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, particularly, especially, most importantly, during periods of stress.
- Recognizing the relationship we have with ourselves and prioritizing it.
- Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. It is HOLISTIC, all encompassing.

Myths about Self-Care

- Self-care is indulgent or hedonistic (Self-care practices the need to support health and wellness NOT self-soothing, self-medicating)
- Self-care is selfish (you cannot pour from an empty vessel, depleted emotional reserves, wasted time, and best self for others)
- Self-care is a one-time experience (ongoing practice, takes time to develop this habit)
- Self-care is time-consuming (as little as 10 minutes per day)
- Self-care is not expensive. (be as simplistic or extravagant as you want)
- Self-Care is optional (It is ESSENTIAL)
- Self-Care is Feminine (burnout does not discriminate)

Why is Self-Care Essential?

- Better productivity. When you learn how to say “no” to things that over-extend you and start making time for things that matter more, better focus and improved mental clarity.
- Improved resistance to disease. There is evidence that most self-care activities activate your parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). What this means is that your body goes into a restful, rejuvenating mode, helping it to fortify its immune system.
- Better physical & mental health. Similarly to the previous point, with better self-care often comes fewer colds, cases of flu and upset stomachs, as well as improved mood, decreased anxiety, and improved stress management.
- Enhanced self-esteem. When you regularly carve out time that’s only about being good to yourself and meeting your own needs, you send a positive message to your subconscious. Specifically, you treat yourself as if you matter and have intrinsic value.
- Increased self-knowledge. Practicing self-care requires thinking about what you really love to do. The exercise of figuring out what makes you feel passionate and inspired can help you understand yourself a lot better. (goal setting, priorities, decrease overcommitting)
- More to give. When you are good to yourself, you might think you’re being selfish. In truth, self-care gives you the resources you need to be compassionate to others.

Self-Care for Educators

One of the main reasons self-care is essential for educators is – Educators are usually engaged in trauma adjacent work, work with students impacted by trauma run the risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress, also referred to as compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma. Teachers are busy, but sacrificing healthy routines to make room for the needs of others only makes us less effective at what we do.

What might self-care look like for an educator?

Self-Care starts at Home

- Meal planning, drinking water, exercising, prioritizing sleep, and practicing meditation
- Create routines, that allow your to-do list to get done while also preserving some “me time.”
- Try not to do school work after 7pm or commit to no devices after 10pm.
- It’s ok to say “no” sometimes. You can’t do it all, nor should you.
- Stay on top of your needs by taking a mindful minute a few times a day and ask yourself: What does my body need right now? What does my mind need right now?

Build HEALTHY Emotional Boundaries

- Identify what you WISH you could do versus what you can actually do.
- You cannot eradicate or prevent all suffering for your students. However, you can show up each day for them.
- Support your students, advocate for them, and love them.
- Daily Affirmations: Morning, "I will provide a loving and safe environment in my classroom today." – Afternoon, "I have done good work today. I will let the stress and worry go until tomorrow."

Build a strong peer network

- Cultivate a school culture where supporting each other is the norm.
- Building and relying upon small support groups, staff teams or work/home friendships can help make the work more manageable.
- Remain a positive resource, rather than a breeding ground for negativity (Good Vibes ONLY)

Incorporate self-care into the classroom:

- The quiet game
- Journal exercise
- Meditation time
- Brain breaks
- More physical activity
- Take a BREAK

Online Resources

<https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/self-care-for-teachers/>
<https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/self-care-for-teachers/>
<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-12-18-to-manage-stress-teachers-need-to-prioritize-themselves-start-with-self-care>
<https://www.thelawofattraction.com/self-care-tips/>
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/3-misconceptions-of-self-care_b_5922280fe4b07617ae4cbd6e
<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>