

Caring for Yourself

In your role, you often face challenges in working with children and young people (child) and their families. This can be due to working with disadvantage, complex issues and trauma, a large caseload and organisational pressures. Casework involves being purposeful, empathic, flexible and dedicated. This can take a lot of energy. It is therefore important that you make sure that you care for your emotional and physical wellbeing. Practising self-care helps maintain mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. It also helps you work more effectively with children.

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

Caring for yourself is about investing in your emotional wellbeing and mental health. It is about refuelling yourself for the short and long term. In the short-term this means finding ways to cope with short term challenges like meeting a work deadline. In the long-term, it means that you are able to practice self-care, manage stress and the responsibilities and demands of your role.

Good self-care helps caseworkers cope, achieve balance, reduces anxiety and improve mood and confidence. You can maintain healthy wellbeing at work by doing regular activities and practices such as mindfulness to ensure your emotional needs are being met. Caring for yourself needs planning and practice.

Mindfulness is the practice of paying close attention to the present, what you are experiencing in your body, mind and in the external world.
(Beyond Blue 2020)

How to Practice Self-Care

Caring for yourself means ensuring your mind, body and brain stays healthy. Siegel (2011) explains self-care through his 'keeping a healthy mind' concept, a range of essential mental activities.

Keeping A Healthy Mind



1. sleep time – allows you to consolidate your daily learning (past and present), it is good for your mind, immune system and metabolism
2. exercise time –enables your brain to grow and make connections
3. concentration time (i.e. paying close attention to one task at the time, this makes the brain healthier, sharper and clearer
4. connecting time – connecting with your peers, managers and other colleagues helps you gain more emotional balance and understanding that translates to gratitude, generosity and kindness
5. play time – being playful, spontaneous and fun keeps your brain young and the connections in the brain to keep growing
6. down time – relax to recharge your brain
7. time in–quietly focusing on internal sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, which helps integrate the brain.

Activities to Support Self-Care

Some great ways to care for yourself at work are:

- when you get to work, grab a cuppa to make the transition from home to work
- in between tasks/interaction with families, take three deep breaths (notice your breath as you inhale and as you exhale, place your hand on your belly when you do

this so you feel the sensation in your body, if your mind wonders, focus on your hand on your belly again and feel your breath), pause, then continue your work

- take other mindful moments – do some mindfulness: listen to an app, do some stretches, or go for a walk
- have a cuppa with your colleagues
- ensure you take your lunch break – your brain, mind and body need food and air
- go for a walk so you feel the sun on your skin
- do a (mini) meditation session
- before and after a home visit/meeting, listen to music you like and jam to the song
- on the way home – walk or change your drive home and enjoy the scenery.

Some great ways to care for yourself after work at home are:

- unplug for an hour and do something you enjoy
- go for a walk, run or do other exercise you like
- listen to a mindful exercise on your tablet
- have a good laugh (with friends or watch a comedy)
- take a nap or a bath
- if you enjoy writing, write about your day in a journal
- read a book
- get some good sleep time (use mindfulness if you can't sleep).

For further information see factsheet [Understanding Resistance in Practice](#).

Reference:

Siegel, D. (2020). The Healthy Mind Platter. Mind Your Brain. Available: https://www.drdansiegel.com/resources/healthy_mind_platter/?campname=thank-you-page&camplink=HMP-signup#activities