

Self-care strategies for those who teach

(adapted from suggestions by Dr. C. Figley, director of the Florida State University Traumatology Institute)

Physical

- Practice tension release through periodic deep-breathing, muscle relaxation and regular exercise. Take periodic breaks when writing/reading.
- Get adequate sleep by using good sleep-promoting practices (i.e. no alcohol, vigorous exercise or over-stimulating activities in the few hours prior to sleep).
- Ensure proper nutrition: eat *small, frequent* meals with protein and low-glycemic, antioxidant-rich foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

Psychological/spiritual

- Sustain a balance between work and play.
- Plan for regular relaxation.
- Ensure frequent contact with nature and other calming stimuli, i.e. music.
- Find ways to express yourself creatively.
- Develop effective personal skills in the following areas: assertiveness, stress reduction, interpersonal communication, cognitive restructuring (this includes positive self-talk), and time management.
- Use meditation, prayer, and/or mindfulness (become intentionally aware of your thoughts and actions *in the present moment* and determine their value – especially whether *negative* mental narratives about yourself, others or the present or future are legitimate – they often are not!) as calming tools.
- Develop effective methods for self-assessment and self-awareness.

Social/interpersonal

- Strengthen your social supports by identifying at least two people who will be highly supportive when called upon.
- Know when and how to secure the help you need (both personal and professional) when you need it, i.e. calling your supervisor or a colleague to process a difficult student situation.
- Become involved in some form of social activism to address the social injustice in the world.

Professional

- Maintain a balance between work and home, devoting sufficient time and attention to both without compromising either.
- Adhere to appropriate boundaries in relationships, including avoiding over-involvement with students.
- Get the support you need at work through use of peer support, mentoring and reflective supervision.
- Generate work satisfaction by noticing, remembering and celebrating the joys and achievements of your work.