

# Self-care: Resources for Psychology Graduate Students

Based on a workshop provided by :  
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# Disclaimer:

The original presentation was meant to be a peer-based discussion, and the spirit of this presentation was to initiate a discussion as well as provide possible resources.

The authors are not experts in self-care and advise students with physical or mental health concerns to contact relevant professionals. Additionally, please consult with a medical professional before engaging in any physical activity or nutrition plan.

The information provided here may not be up-to-date and neither the authors of the presentation nor the Psychology Graduate Student Caucus make guarantees about any of the strategies or resources listed below.

# What is self-care and why is it important?

- Self-care: Any intentional actions you take to care for and maintain your physical, mental and emotional health.
- Self-care decreases stress and helps people cope with professional and personal stressors
- Self-care acts as a buffer for the psychological challenges that can help cause professional burnout and impairment.

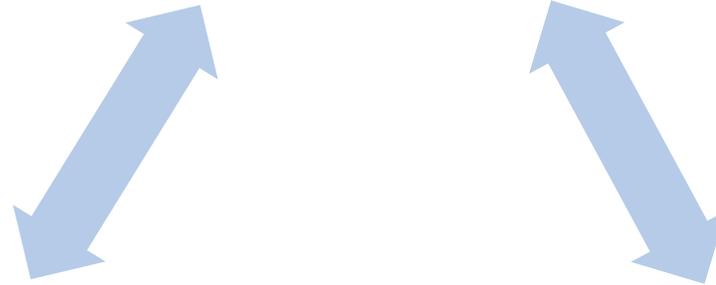
GRAD  
SCHOOL



STRESSFUL



Stress



Self-Care



Experience in  
Grad School

“I don’t have time for this other stuff.”

- Often graduate students feel like they don’t have enough time to take good care of themselves
  - “I need to manage my time better.”
  - “If only I wasn’t such a procrastinator, wasting time on X, Y, or Z.”
- Grad student guilt is common – feeling guilty when you’re doing things that aren’t work-related

“I’m too exhausted and I feel guilty.”

- Often the problem isn’t time, it’s not enough ENERGY leftover for self-care!
- This could be physical, mental, spiritual, or emotional energy
- The body, mind, spirit, and emotions are important sources of energy which can be drained and exhausted when we don’t attend and care for them

# 1) Physical Energy

- Adequate nutrition
  - Sleep – related to perceived stress (Myers et al., 2012)
  - Exercise - linked to better self-schema and stress management
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- Must attend to your body's most basic needs
  - Physical energy has a huge impact on other energies!

# Resources: Physical Health

- Health and Counselling Services at SFU
- Look for eye doctors, dentists etc. that give additional discounts through the SFU grad student health plan

- Recreation:

## SFU:

- Fitness Centre (weight room and cardio equipment)
- Drop-in sports
- Aquatic Centre (lane swim and dive tank during Drop-in Swim)
- Squash, Racquetball, and Tennis Court Bookings
- Nature trails around SFU
- Group fitness: Trial Week Schedule

## Local

- Gyms, fitness centres, yoga studios, hiking, rock climbing, paddling, walk
- MEC: for inexpensive courses on hiking, running, cycling
- Free yoga classes and running groups at Lululemon
- Meet-ups for group activities

## 2) Emotional Energy

- Negative emotions (e.g., irritability, impatience, anxiety) decrease your ability to think clearly and focus on the task at hand
- This includes your work but also your self-care activities
- E.g., if you're stressed about an email from your supervisor for the entire time you're at yoga, that act of self-care probably won't have the relaxing and centering effect you want it to
- To get a handle on your emotions, the first step is to pay attention to them and how they impact you throughout your day
- For example, pay attention to events that tend to be emotional triggers
- Awareness will help you make changes to your reactions or the situation itself and renew your emotional energy
- E.g., receiving email while working on something else

# Resources: Mental Health

- At SFU
  - Counselling services
  - Mindfulness: Tuesdays starting September 9<sup>th</sup> (MBC Videoroom, Burnaby), drop in
  - Laughter Yoga: Fridays Mondays 1:30-2:20. To register, visit the SFU Recreation Website (course code 8930) or phone 778-782-4142), drop in
- Apps and Websites:
  - <http://www.sfu.ca/students/health.html> (audio recordings, take wellness wheel quiz, sign-up for newsletter)
  - Mindset
  - Guided mindfulness activities: <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22&oTopID=22>
  - Anxiety BC

# Resources: Relationships

- Build and maintain intimate, friend, family, community relationships
- Get to know your fellow graduate students!
- Social support is associated with reduced anxiety and seems to buffer against work-related stressors
  
- Graduate Student Society
  - GSS Lounge (MBC 2212) for free coffee Mon-Thurs 9am-3:30pm
  - Get involved with your Graduate Caucus and attend their events
- APEX Professional Development Certificate Program
- Meetup.com – e.g., hiking, brunch, every hobby imaginable
- Tips to increase your social support network:  
<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/wellness-module-3-social-support.pdf>

### 3) Mental Energy

- Ability to focus and concentrate
- Multitasking actually decreases productivity !!!
- Distractions (e.g., checking social networking sites) can add up to 25% more time to any one task
- Structure your day such that you tackle difficult tasks when you're at your best
- E.g., the night before, identify your biggest challenge for the next day and tackle it first thing rather than at the end of the day when you can't put it off any longer

# Resources: Work Environment

- Ergonomic work station
- Clean, organized
- Adequate lighting
  - f.lux – adjusts brightness of computer display to time of day
- Noise level: music, coffee shop, silent study area
- Minimize distractions and potential interruptions
  - Time Tracker – Chrome extension (free), keeps track of how much time you spend on different sites
  - Tomato-timer.com – timer to work using the Pomodoro technique, time management strategy devised by Francesco Cirillo

## 4) Spiritual Energy

- Meaningful, purposeful activities that are consistent with your core values
- How do you know if you're doing meaningful, purposeful work?
  - Which areas of your life are the most important? e.g., family, friends, religion, volunteerism, sport
  - Which activities do you do well and enjoy the most? What activities make you feel engaged, fully absorbed, and inspired?
  - Activity #1: Core Values
- A greater sense of being true to one's core values, satisfaction, and wellbeing provides positive energy and motivation to tend to other energy sources

# Resources: Personal Development

- Professional:
  - Attend conferences, lectures
  - Writing groups
- Vancouver Public Library: lots of different book clubs and events
- Volunteer: <http://govolunteer.ca/>
- SFU Interfaith Centre is located in AQ 3200
- New fitness goal
- Pursue a new hobby or activity, or pick back up with one that you haven't done for a while

Thank you!