During challenging times when our expertise as psychologists is so needed, self-care is essential. We suggest the expansion of the practice of self-care beyond personal care to our communities and the lens with which we view our work. Self-care is as multifaceted as the various psychologists and students in our field, settings in which we work, and individuals we encounter. A shift towards broadening the definition of self care and weaving it throughout the practice of psychology was evidenced in presentations on ethics, diversity, supervision and clinical skills, at the 2017 CPA Conference. Here, we will explore two aspects of individual and collective self-care: an orientation towards post-traumatic growth and the benefits of inclusive communities.

Due to the nature of our work, an encounter with vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue or burnout may be inevitable. Therefore, we need to actively nurture our resilience. Two of the hallmarks of compassion fatigue and burnout are a sense of helplessness and negative world-view. Alternatively, we can intentionally orient our lens toward "post traumatic growth" by recognizing that strengths and unexpected growth are possible following trauma.

For example, Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) report that patients with PTSD often report healing paradoxes, that “their losses have produced valuable gains...i.e.: ‘I am more vulnerable, yet stronger.’”(p.1). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) created the Post-traumatic Growth Inventory that measures the positive effects following trauma, or as Rendon (2012) notes, “the flip side” of PTSD. These include "New Possibilities, Relating to Others, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change, and Appreciation of Life." Therefore, we may be able to counter hopelessness and helplessness with positive expectations and explorations for resilience even as we do the genuinely painful work of addressing trauma. In addition, we can utilize this as a model to recognize and enhance our own resilience.

Engendering healthy professional communities and relationships also enhances our resilience. Collegial camaraderie, clinical excellence, functional systems and our own self-growth necessitates us embracing inclusivity. This process...
can be both rewarding and challenging. In the past, diversity research focused on problems (Shore, et al., 2011). Fortunately, Shore et al. (2011) note that the field is moving towards focusing on the potential value of diversity.

Ferdman (2016) notes that inclusive groups work to incorporate both similarities and differences. He acknowledges that group inclusivity is not necessarily comfortable, as differences need to be navigated and the power dynamic may shift. However, this skill-building endeavor can enrich our personal and professional experience and inevitably support our self-care. Further, to build these skills, Ferdman suggests that “you learn about yourself and your identities in relationship to others” and “expect and engage positively with differences” (p. 69).

As with individual and professional self-care, collective self-care is not a one-size fits all proposition. Ferdman (2017) posits that there are paradoxes of inclusivity that we, as psychologists can understand and grapple with as we do with those of our clients and students. For example, he cites that group inclusion could focus on similarities, encouraging members to become more alike each other or emphasize differences, encouraging members to follow their own paths.

To truly develop resiliency as a psychologist, we must cultivate the strengths afforded us through collaboration, inclusivity, and a growth-oriented approach to our challenging and rewarding occupation. Through developing a multi-faceted view of self care, we can begin to feel the lift of hope collectively and individually, while better meeting the challenges of the profound work we do.

REFERENCES


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