Self-care and Mindfulness in a Time of Transition
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The topic of self-care is in the news. Some might even practice it. Self-care must be taken seriously for individual health, the health of families, and the health of coworkers and make it part of a new work/life regimen. What really is selfcare? How do we address it? How do we work it into an already busy life?

Self-care falls into several categories within a person’s life. These categories generally include areas of workplace/professional; physical; psychological, emotional, spiritual; and relationships. Each area is discussed below.

- **The Workplace/Professional Arena** involves activities that enable a person to work at a consistently professional level with clients and colleagues. Examples of this include possibly engaging with a more experienced colleague but also maintain healthy boundaries.

- **The Physical Arena** involves activities aimed at maintaining or improving physical health. Think about maintaining a regular sleep routine and aim for a healthy diet. Get some exercise and stay hydrated.

- **The Emotional Arena** promotes activities that allows one to safely experience the full range of emotions. Consider writing down three good things that you did each day. Watch a movie or do something else you enjoy (while maintaining physical distancing). Have a Zoom or other social media group meeting with friends (not colleagues) and talk with a supportive friend or family member about positive coping strategies and/or current work and life demands.

- **The Spiritual Arena** encompasses a sense of perspective beyond the day-to-day of life. Activities in this arena might include reflective practices like meditation or yoga. Consider going to a church/mosque/temple or reflect with a close friend for supportive discussion.

- **The Relationship Arena** is about maintaining healthy, supportive relationships, and ensuring diversity in relationships, and include those individuals not connected to work people. Prioritize those close relationships that are meaningful in your life (partners, family, and children). When possible, attend the special events of your family and friends, even if it is via social media platforms (if it is not possible, ask for photographs or videos to be sent over via email or other media platform). Even if you are working from home, maintain a schedule (as much as possible).

- **The Psychological Arena** should encourage activities to promote clear-headedness and intellectual engagement to meet the professional challenges found in professional and personal life. Options might include engaging in a non-work hobby and making time for relaxation. Turn off your email and work phone outside of work hours which is difficult with work-at-home regimen. Engage with supportive friends and family. Practice mindfulness.
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So, what is this “mindfulness” everyone is talking about? Simply put, it is being fully attuned to what is happening now. Not focusing on the future. Not focusing on the past. It is being fully aware as to what is happening right now. Right now.

A simple example of not being mindful is something everyone has done at one time or another. How often when driving does one arrive at a destination, not fully aware of how he or she got there? This is a classic example of not being mindful as to what is happening in there here-and-now.

The challenge is being mindful in uncertain, turbulent times. People tend to focus on how things used to be. Or worry about how things are going to be. Worry and anxiety can be lessened and even eliminated if focus is placed on what is happening in the “right now”. How exactly can that be accomplished?

- **Be Mindful of the Environment**

  Take stock of what is close at hand. Too often individuals are working at a desk or table, unaware of things around them. Look out the window. Open the door. Take a walk. Just step outside, even if just a moment. Feel the sun. Feel the wind. Walk in the grass barefoot (if safe to do so).

- **Be Mindful of Breathing**

  Be aware of breathing. Not necessarily of breathing rate, but rather the act of breathing. What does the air feel like filling the lungs? Can it be felt entering the nostrils and exiting through the mouth? This is a great thing to focus on when needed to reengage and bring one back to the present.

- **Be Mindful of One’s Body**

  Is one’s body tense or relaxed? If a position is changed, how does that affect the feel of one’s body? What position is the most comfortable? What position tends to promote fatigue? What position tends to promote an energetic state? What does it feel like to get up and walk around?

- **Be Mindful of Friends and Family**

  It is easy to become so engrossed in a task or event at hand that one forgets to nurture close relationships. In an environment of physical distancing, remember that it does not mean social distancing. When feeling lonely or disengaged, this is the time to reach out to those close relationships.

- **Be Mindful of Inner Thoughts and Feelings**

  Stop. Ask “What am I feeling right now?” In times such as these, too often days are spent on autopilot or in front of a screen, relatively unaware of inner thoughts and feelings at that moment. Recognizing and accepting those ever-flowing images and ideas running through the mind and soul is one concrete way to return to the moment.
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• Be Mindful of Actions

Love on a pet, for example. What does that feel like? If it is a cat or a dog, what does the fur feel like between the fingers and on the palm of the hand? What is the reaction or the pet? What is the reaction of the pet when you stop? What emotions does that bring up?

These are examples of how self-care can be used in times of stress and transition. Mindfulness can bring a person back to the reality of the present…of the here-and-now. Existing in a time of transition does not have to be frightening or unsettling. Anchoring to the present is a way of possibly making that transition easier. Anxiety and worry about the future can be lessened if the focus is placed in the present not the past or the future. Transition and change are always hard, but it is where we are right now that is important. The future will follow.

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