Self-Care After an Overwhelming Event

It is common to have reactions to difficult events, such as disasters, the death of a friend or serious injury to a loved one.

Our reactions to difficulty fluctuate based on personal experiences, and so to does our ability to cope. That’s why self-care requires a uniquely personal approach.

What is self-care? Self-care is taking concrete steps to feel healthy and comfortable. These actions aim to help us feel better both physically and emotionally.

The self-care steps we need to take are often found in our past: What has worked before? How did you cope during past tough situations? Remember, you didn't get this far in life by accident; you have a proven track record of getting through challenges.

Physical self-care

Think about a time when you felt physically healthy, and ask yourself the following questions:

1. How were you sleeping? Did you have a sleep or nap pattern that made you feel more rested?

2. What types of food were you eating? What meals made you feel healthy and strong?

3. What types of exercise did you enjoy? Were there any particular activities that made you feel more energized?

4. Did you have certain routines? What did you do to start the day off right or wind down at the end of the day?

Emotional self-care

Emotional self-care means different things to different people. The key is being in tune with yourself. Think about a time when you felt balanced and grounded, and consider asking yourself the following questions:

1. What fun or leisure activities did you enjoy? Were there events or outings that you looked forward to?

2. Did you write down your thoughts in a journal or personal notebook? If so, how did this help?

3. What inspirational words were you reading or listening to? Did you have a particular book or author for inspiration?

4. Who did you spend time with? Was there someone, or a group of people, that you felt supported with?

5. Where did you spend your time? Was there a special place where you felt comfortable and grounded?
We communicate everyday. We do so verbally over the phone, in one-on-one conversations, and in larger group meetings. We also communicate non-verbally via emails, memos, and texts. Regardless of how it’s done, the better we communicate, the more credibility we have with our customers, colleagues and managers. The following is a helpful communication check-list for effective communication:

- **Be Clear.** Whether writing or speaking, be clear about your goal or message. What is the purpose in communicating with this person?

  Bad example: “Hi John, I wanted to write you about Daniel, who’s working in your department. He’s a great asset, and I’d like to talk more about him when you have time.”

  In the example above, the reader/listener does not know what the goal of the future meeting is about.

- **Be Concise.** Stick to the major point(s) and keep it brief. The reader/listener doesn’t want to weed through several sentences when 2 or 3 sentences could have gotten the message across. Get rid of adjectives and check to see if you’ve made the same point several times in different ways. Limit filler words like “for instance”, “you see”, “basically”, or “I mean.”

- **Be Correct.** Your communication is correct when it is appropriate to the audience, reader or listener. Do the technical terms used fit the audience’s knowledge? Check for writing and grammatical errors. Are you using proper names and titles? Are names spelled correctly?

- **Be Coherent.** When communication is coherent, it has a logical flow, thoughts are connected and relevant to the topic.

  Bad example: “Traci, a quick reminder about the report you finished last week. I gave it to Michelle to proof, and she wanted to make sure you knew about the department meeting we’re having this Friday. We’ll be creating an outline for the new employee handbook.”

  In the above example, the topic changed and the reader/listener is left uncertain about the report.

- **Be Courteous.** Courteous communication that is friendly and open. There are NO hidden insults, sarcasm, jabs or passive-aggressive tones.

  Bad example: “Jeff, I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate how your team always monopolizes the discussion at our weekly meetings. I have a log of projects, and I really need time to get my team’s progress discussed as well. Thanks to your department, we haven’t been able to do that.”

  Good example using the W.I.N. approach: **When** (describe the problem as a situation, not the other person) turns aren’t taken during meetings, **Impact**, little to no time is left for others to discuss. **Need** I need time for my team at the progress meetings.

  This example limits bad feelings and unproductive conflicts. Taking the time to check our communication is worth the extra effort.

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**What Makes a Good Counselor?**

Chances are the decision to see a counselor for a job or personal problem was not an easy one to make. Now that the decision has been made, you schedule an appointment and meet the counselor for the first appointment. How do you know if your counselor is good for you?

1) **Specializes** in what you need. A grief counselor is very different than a conflict resolution or parenting specialist.

2) **Easy to talk to.** These counselors stay away from jargon and don’t talk above you. As a client this allows us to “connect” and feel comfortable, even when expressing difficult things.

3) **Doesn’t overshare.** Sometimes counselors give personal information about themselves in order to normalize or elicit a change. However, if done too often the focus no longer becomes you as the client.

4) **Sense of humor.** Being able to point appropriately humorous situations and appreciate a good laugh.

5) **Authentic.** Do you truly feel listened to and treated as a unique individual? A good counselor avoids using a “one size fits all” approach. Instead, their approach is tailored to you.

6) **Assigns homework.** Much of the real work occurs outside of counseling sessions.
Have you ever been in a chaotic situation but instead of becoming overwhelmed, you rose to the occasion, kept your cool and focus? If you have, you were using your wise mind. The **Wise Mind** concept was created by Dr. Marsha Linehan and is at the center of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Dr. Linehan explains that our mind can be viewed as having three parts, the **Emotional** (thoughts based on distressing feelings) the **Reasonable** (rational and logical), and the **Wise Mind**. The emotional mind is impulsive and driven by intense feelings and a sense of urgency. An example of this is saying something hurtful to a loved one in the heat of the moment. The reasonable mind is fact based and concrete. We use that part of our mind when we are following complex instructions, directions or tasks; like following a recipe, solving a math problem or navigating from a map. The **Wise Mind** is the coming together and overlap between emotional and reasonable mind. The wise mind is aware of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations but also weighs the facts, looks for different perspectives, options, choices, and gives thought to short and long term consequences.

If you’ve ever been in an argument over something trivial, there was probably a part of you that knew arguing wasn’t helping…that was the wise mind talking. The worksheet below illustrates these three states of mind. It also has questions to help you uncover and use your wise mind more effectively.

### Emotional Thoughts

Based on and driven by our opinions and personal interpretations of events. What went through my mind? What disturbed me? What am I reacting to? What’s the worst thing about that, or worst thing that could happen? What do I want to do or to happen? What am I feeling?

### Rational Thoughts

Based on factual evidence. What would be more reasonable? What am I thinking I should do? What advice would I give to a friend, or what would a caring friend say to me? Is this really as important as it seems? What evidence is there about what I think is likely to happen? What are the facts?

### Wise Mind

Stop. Take a deep breath. What does the Wise Mind make of this? What’s the bigger picture? What will the consequences of my reaction be? (short and long term) What’s going to be the best response to this situation—best for me, for others, for the situation? What will be most helpful and effective, all things considered?
Your Child’s New School Year: Check up

The new school year is well underway and now may be a good time to assess how your child is doing. The following tips may help areas that need attention get back on track.

- Harness technology. If your child’s school doesn’t have an existing online homework program, you may want to consider one of the many free mobile device apps.
- Refresh your rules about screen time for the school year. What’s allowed and when?
- Visit the school’s website if available. Typically, the website has information on who to contact, special events, testing dates, student resources, and a school calendar.
- Review school’s disciplinary policies. Schools usually cite expectations and consequences in a student handbook. Policies may include details about attendance, fighting, and bullying.
- Create an in-box for your child to leave things that need your attention, like permission slips and school notices.
- Side-step power struggles at home over homework by using positive phrasing, “Yes, you can go outside after your homework is done”, rather than “You’re not going outside until you homework is finished.” Agree with request first, then identify how the child can get what they want.
- Create an after-school schedule that allows for relaxation, play and study. Try not to overschedule.
- Touch base with your child’s teachers regularly to troubleshoot issues early on.

City of Milwaukee Events and Reminders

- Not feeling well? Visit the Workplace Clinic (841 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI. 53202 (Zeidler Municipal Building) for no cost onsite health care services. Call 414-777-3413 for information or to schedule an appointment.
- Wellness Your Choice Milwaukee. November 20, 2017 is the last day to schedule health appraisal appointments. Contact Workforce Health at 414-777-3410 with questions or help registering for the wellness portal.
- Health4Me™ is a United Health Care (UHC) mobile app that provides instant access to your family’s critical health information, anytime/anywhere. Find a physician, check the status of a claim or speak directly with a healthcare professional.

Advice For Those Newly Sober

Congratulations! You’ve decided to stop drinking or using. Regardless of how you got to this point, here are some tips that may help early on in sobriety.

1. Know why you are choosing to be sober. List out all the reasons why you are no longer drinking or using. When it gets tough, look back at the original reasons as a reminder to continue.

2. Use your support group. These are the people you lean on moving forward.

3. Find a healthy activity, hobby or outlet. You will have extra free time now so fill it with good things.

4. Do the work. After a few weeks sober, you will be tempted to think you have it licked...you don’t. Keep going to self-help support groups (AA/NA) meeting and treatment appointments with your providers.

EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

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