The Role of Staff-Care in Effective Leadership

A Step-By-Step Guide for Prioritizing ‘Staff-Care’

Step 1: SELF CARE: Ask yourself, “How am I ‘Being’ while I am ‘Doing’?”
- ‘Staff-Care’ starts with our own self-care as leaders
- Self-care includes thinking broadly about various aspects of life:
  - Spiritual
  - Mental
  - Emotional
  - Physical
  - Workplace/Professional

**Exercise:** Share the Wellbeing Assessment for Care Providers with your team. Invite them to take 10-15 minutes to complete the activity, noting the various ways they care for themselves. Open the discussion, asking them: What do you notice? Are there areas that might require more focus?

Step 2: STAFF CARE: Ask yourself and your team, “How are we practicing ‘staff-care’ within our team/organization currently?”
- As a team/organization, do we emphasize the importance of self-care? Staff-care?
- How are we addressing varying needs of employees in this ‘new normal’? Furloughed vs. not furloughed? Remote vs. on-site?
- How are we supporting a healthy work-life balance at this time?
- How are we building on trust?
- How are we ensuring all voices are heard?

**Exercise:** Set aside time as a team to talk about the idea of ‘self-care’ and ‘staff-care’. Ask for input on these topics from each team member. Examine issues listed above (e.g. self-care, communication, stress) along with any other issues that are affecting the team dynamics. Document key points from the discussion.

Step 3: STAFF CARE: Ask yourself and your team, “How can we, as a team, better promote ‘staff-care’ moving forward?”
- What are some new or innovative ways we might encourage members of our team to focus on self-care?
- How could we support team members who may be struggling?
- How could we celebrate successes as a team?
- How could we find opportunities in the face of challenges or obstacles?

**Exercise:** Using the findings from the above exercise, brainstorm strategies for building more focus on ‘self-care’ and ‘staff-care’ into the normal routine. Pick 1-3 of these to incorporate into individual and team routines over the next 3 months. At the end of this period, evaluate your results and determine whether you will continue with the same strategies and/or incorporate new strategies as a team.
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Wellbeing Assessment for Care Providers

Rate the following areas in terms of how frequently you do them:
0 - Never  1 - Rarely  2 - Sometimes  3 - Often

Spiritual Self-Care
  ____ Find spiritual connection or community
  ____ Practice Being vs. Doing
  ____ Spend time in nature
  ____ Cultivate optimism and hope
  ____ Be open to not knowing
  ____ Identify what is meaningful to you and notice it in your life
  ____ Practice gratitude
  ____ Experience inspiration (read books, listen to music, go to an uplifting event)
  ____ Sing, pray, meditate
  ____ Have experiences of awe
  ____ Find meaning from difficult situations
  ____ Align your values with your actions
  ____ Contribute to causes in which you believe
  ____ Practice Loving Kindness meditation (show compassion to yourself and others)

Mental (Psychological) Self-Care
  ____ Practice Mindfulness – stay in the present moment (decrease worry)
  ____ Maintain calm presence at work
  ____ Maintain calm presence in personal life
  ____ Maintain self-validation at work (positive self-talk, self-confidence)
  ____ Maintain self-validation in personal life
  ____ Make time for self-reflection: journal, therapy, talk with a friend/colleague
  ____ Read literature that is unrelated to work
  ____ Do something at which you are not an expert or in charge
  ____ Share with others different aspects of yourself
  ____ Practice receiving from others
  ____ Say no to extra responsibilities when possible
  ____ Take time away from phones ... take a social media/technology break
  ____ Eliminate toxic words: should, try, can’t, could have, but
  ____ Focus on what you want, not on what you don’t want
  ____ When faced with a stressful situation: Stop, Breathe, Notice, Reframe, Choose

Emotional Self-Care

  ____ Practice Responding instead of Reacting
  ____ Notice triggers (people, situations, events) and create strategies to minimize their effect
  ____ Monitor the energy of your emotions and cultivate emotions that fuel you
  ____ Release anger in healthy ways (anger is like acid, it needs to be neutralized)

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Wellbeing Assessment for Caregivers

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Express kindness to yourself (smile in the mirror, words of support, do something you love)

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Spend time with others whose company you enjoy

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Stay in contact with important people in your life

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Allow yourself to cry

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Find things that make you laugh

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Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out

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Play with animals, children

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Practice forgiveness

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Physical Self-Care

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Consciously breathe deeply and fully throughout the day

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Notice body needs - do a 30-second Body Scan

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Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)

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Eat healthy foods, 5-6 times a day (low calorie, high nutrition)

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Drink 48-64 oz of water a day

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Get enough sleep (6-8 hours)

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Exercise regularly (30 min aerobic at least 3x per week)

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Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing or do other physical activity you enjoy

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Get massages, practice yoga, Tai Chi or Qi Gong

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Release muscle tension: Tense/Relax, Progressive Muscular Relaxation, Self-Massage

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Get preventative medical care as well as when needed

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Take time off when sick

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Wear clothes you like

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Take time off without checking in at work: Day trips, mini-vacations, vacations

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Workplace or Professional Self-Care

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Get regular supervision and consultation

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Have a peer support group

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Take time to connect with co-workers (especially if virtual)

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Set limits with clients and colleagues

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Make quiet time to complete tasks

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Identify projects or tasks that are exciting/rewarding

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After 90-120 minutes of focused activity take a 5-minute stretch/refocus break

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Balance your caseload so that no one day or part of a day is “too much”

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Stop and eat lunch

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Arrange your workspace so it is comfortable and comforting

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Start a meeting with success stories

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Remember to use the skills/tools that you teach your clients to use (e.g. CBT)

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Spend 5-minutes at the end of your day writing down your successes

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Have practices (rituals) to start/end your workday and transition to home and family

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Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest

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Frequently reconnect with your purpose about the work you do

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Recognize ‘intrinsic guilt’ for ‘not doing enough’ … and let it go!

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Allow time to turn off cameras and step away from the computer

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Take time off and really BE OFF! (No emails, phone calls, etc.)

(Modified Version from Transforming the Pain, by Karen Saakvitne and Laurie Perlman)

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