

Self-Care Tips When Supporting Others in Need

1. Be Aware Of Your Own Emotional Responses

- Confronting others' difficult experiences may trigger memories and feelings that recall your own experiences. Be aware of what these might be.
- Talk about your responses with friends, trusted colleagues or a professional support group.

2. Manage Stress

- Learn about and be aware of your stress level and take precautions against exceeding your own limits.
- Use relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing, meditation); exercise is also very helpful.
- Recognize your personal limitations; set limits with patients/students, families and colleagues.
- Use the support of colleagues and the workplace to help manage stress.

3. Maintain A Balance Between Your Professional And Personal Life

- Spend time with family and friends.
- Take breaks during your workday and use vacation days.
- Stay connected with social and community networks.
- Engage in pleasurable activities unrelated to work (writing, art, music, sports, etc.).
- Seek therapy if your work is negatively impacting your self-esteem, quality of life or relationships.

4. Be On The Alert For Immediate Stress Responses

- Physical Reactions (fatigue, sleep disturbance, headaches, upset stomach).
- Emotional Reactions (feeling overwhelmed, helpless, vulnerable; suicidal thoughts).
- Behavioral Reactions (isolation, withdrawal, mood swings, irritability, changes in alcohol or drug use).
- Cognitive Reactions (disbelief, feelings of “numbness”, ruminating on events, problems with memory, concentration, decision making or problem solving).

Acknowledgement: This information is adapted from “Self-Care for Providers” at the Health Care Toolbox: Your guide to helping children and families cope with illness and injury, www.healthcaretoolbox.org.