

Seven Dimensions of Self-Care

by Amy Chang Radosevich, MA, ACSM, ACE, AFAA



I recently came across an article on Self-Care Tips for Fitness Professionals and thought that a lot of the content apply to just about anyone who has a busy and demanding schedule. If you are someone that tends to prioritize caring for others over yourself, be sure to read on.

Many people chose fitness as a career because they are passionate about helping others get fit and healthy. It's a giving profession just like nurses, social workers, teachers, counselors etc. While we can get immense satisfaction and reward from helping others thrive, the constant act of giving could be draining if we don't take time to care for our own needs and recharge.

Some of the challenges caretakers face include:

- ability to create work-life balance
- ability to establish clear boundaries: being constantly "on" via phone, email, text and social media and is never "off the clock"
- tending to others' needs before our own
- feeling selfish or guilty about saying "NO"

Without proper self-care, all these challenges can make us feel burnout over time and make us less capable of helping others in the end. Tamara Grand, PhD, author and certified personal trainer puts it best, "Self-care is the act of putting on your own 'oxygen mask' before reaching out to help others adjust theirs."

Taking care of oneself is more than just our physical being, but also our mental and emotional self. The International Council on Active Aging provided a list of Seven Wellness Dimensions to help achieve balance in our lives and surroundings.

- Emotional - coping well with life challenges and behaving in trustworthy and respectful ways
- Intellectual - pursuing intellectually stimulating activities to keep our minds alert and engaged
- Physical - lifestyle that maintain or improve health and functionality for independent living
- Professional - using our skills to provide value for society and ourselves

- Social - creating a supportive network of family and friends
- Spiritual - having meaning and purpose in life that aligns with our personal values and beliefs
- Environmental - respecting nature and its resources

By engaging in a variety of activities that fit within each of these dimensions on a regular basis, we are setting a great foundation for a well balanced and meaningful life that will keep us energized and passionate to continue to help others.

Most of us have our To-Do-List or a chart to track our chores. We can use the same concept and track our Self-Care practices to make sure we are not neglecting any of the dimensions. Here's an example:

Monday

Emotional - watched funny movie

Physical - did strength workout

Environmental - took shorter shower due to drought

Tuesday

Intellectual - read nutrition article

Social - met friend for coffee

Spiritual - meditated

Professional - attended continuing education seminar

So between Monday and Tuesday, all Seven Wellness Dimensions have been addressed. Of course, since each individual is unique, you will have to find activities that specifically nourishes YOU in all these dimensions. Investing time in these self-care activities will ultimately help us be better at caring for others. So, if you need to say "NO" to a request that conflicts with one of your self-care activities, just say "NO." Any sense of selfishness or guilt should vanish when we can see how our self-care practices are actually benefiting not only ourselves but the greater whole.

Give these practices a try and remember the more you take care of yourself, the more you have to give to others!

References

Cartwright, M. 2014. Go With Your Gut. IDEA Fitness Journal, July Issue.