

Maintaining Wellness

School Resources to Support Military-Connected Students is a project by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness an applied research center at The Pennsylvania State University and is funded by the Department of Defense Education Activity Grant number HE1254-19-0009.

For more information click on the links below:

<https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/>

<https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/>

<https://www.psu.edu/>

<https://dodeagrants.org/>

Our goal is to provide school personnel with free, evidence-based resources to support military-connected students. This training is part of our *Suicide Prevention* series.

Important Reminders

Before starting this training, please read the items below carefully and check the box in front of each item to indicate your understanding.

- The following content discusses suicide and may be upsetting to some individuals.
- Follow all district, local, state, and federal regulations. This training is **NOT** intended to replace or override existing procedures or laws.

Introduction

What is the purpose of this training?

Taking care of oneself physically and emotionally may almost sound like a cliché. We all “know” that we should eat right and take deep breaths, so why talk about it? It is important to review strategies, but to frame them in a different way. While many student support personnel are content matter experts on self-care, sometimes professionals have a way of putting undue pressure on themselves and forget that sometimes we all need support to take better care of ourselves.

Objective

The goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Develop a self-care plan to improve overall well-being.

How confident are you in your ability to do this now?

Please click on the link below to submit your response.

https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Gp3iBHlvhcTluR?modulenumber=suicide42

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below before proceeding with this training.

Answered the survey question in the link.

Clicked the arrow underneath the survey question to submit your response.

Recorded the ID number provided after you submitted your answer to the survey question. You will need it to complete the survey at the end of this training.

Research

What is most important for me to know?

When you know (cognitively) the “right” things to do to take care of yourself, there is a danger that your self-care can become another item on your To Do List. When self-care activities become action items that you feel guilty about if you do not complete them, you are merely piling more stress on yourself. Another way to characterize self-care is to consider strategies as you would maintain your car—short-term and long-term maintenance.

Short-Term Maintenance: Filling Up with Gas

Sometimes, when professionals are the most depleted, the idea of starting a new exercise program or making a major diet change seems like an insurmountable task. You may think, “I can hardly keep my head above water and now I’m supposed to go to the gym?” While diet, exercise, and other strategies are important (these will be discussed in a subsequent section), there are instances where immediate boosts to reduce stress are critical. When your car’s fuel tank indicator is on, or when the check engine light blinks, the best thing to do is immediately find a gas station or a service center. How do you know if you are low on fuel? It is good to keep in mind the following rule: Never let yourself get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired (HALT). When you are feeling that you are approaching even one of those four in HALT, you need an immediate boost. In considering speedy needs for relief, there are several important strategies to have at the ready.



Hungry

Keep “fuel” around you at all times. Make sure that you have favorite (preferably healthy) snacks in your desk or work bag at all times. Carry a reusable water bottle and make sure it is filled throughout the day.

Click on the link below for more information.

[Diet for Stress Management: Carbs, Nuts, and Other Stress-Relief Foods \(webmd.com\)](https://www.webmd.com/diet/for-stress-management-carbs-nuts-and-other-stress-relief-foods)

Angry

Practice taking space and calming yourself whenever necessary. Deep breathing and mindfulness practices should be cultivated when you are not angry or upset, but even five deep breaths and a few minutes alone with positive self-talk can calm you and keep your upset feelings from spilling over into the rest of your day.

Click on the link below for more information.

[5 Tips for Handling a Bad Mood | Psychology Today](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/healthy-living/5-tips-for-handling-a-bad-mood)

Lonely

Find your Home Team. You should have two or three colleagues, friends, or family that you can reach out to for support any time via text, phone, or in person. Do not let more than one week go by without checking in with your Home Team.

Click on the link below for more information.

[Coping with Loneliness: Finding Your Way Out of the Dark | Psychology Today](#)

Tired

Power naps in the middle of the day are not always possible, although it would be great if they were! When you are physically and emotionally tired you may have difficulty sleeping or may even feel “wired” or agitated. Despite these feelings, it is important to practice good sleep hygiene and at least have periods of rest when you can.

Click on the link below for more information.

[What is Sleep Hygiene? - Sleep Foundation](#)

Long-Term Maintenance:

Regular Service and Oil Changes

It can be tempting to think that you can care for yourself in a series of easy, quick-win strategies. Sometimes those strategies are necessary, but they are not a replacement for building capacity within yourself to deal with the responsibilities of work and personal life. When you can build some of these strategies into your life, you may not require as many emergency self-care measures. If you find that you are struggling with burnout to the degree that you cannot incorporate more intentional self-care, you may want to consider reaching out for counseling or formal support. It may be helpful to think about investing in your health from several vantage points.



Emotional/Psychological Well-Being

Bolstering your emotional wellness includes strategies that support your mental resources to cope more successfully. Although personal counseling can be one way to develop your psychological well-being, there are other strategies that can support your emotional health. Empirically supported strategies include:

Mindfulness practices

Daily meditation and relaxation have been consistently shown to support mental well-being. Learning to meditate can be done in formal practice with instructors or can be cultivated independently via online instruction or smartphone apps. Other mindfulness practices can include movement-based practices such as yoga, Ta’i Chi, or Qigong.

For more information click on the link below.

[Best Meditation Apps \(healthline.com\)](#)

Care and compassion to self

Just like on airplanes, before you help someone else with their oxygen mask, you must secure your own. This principle is true for compassion as well. Strategies to support and develop a sense of self-compassion may include gratitude journals, kindness meditations, volunteer work, and small acts of self-kindness each day (e.g., favorite cup of tea, relaxing with a book).

For more information click on the link below.

[Self-Compassion \(self-compassion.org\)](https://self-compassion.org)

Remembering and doing what you love

There have been activities, people, and places that brought you joy throughout your life that are outside of your role as an educational professional. Although work can be all-consuming, it is critical to always return to those activities, relationships, and destinations that nurture you. Connect with friends, visit home or other places, ride your bike, hike, or engage in hobbies that recharge you. You are more than your job.

For more information click on the link below.

[16 Hobbies That Will Improve Your Quality of Life - \(daringtolivefully.com\)](https://daringtolivefully.com)

Physical Well-Being

Taking care of your physical health supports all your endeavors. Not all people find it easy to take care of their health, yet even small improvements can have important benefits.

Diet

Eating and drinking can be a source of healing for you, or it may be contributing to your stress and fatigue. Changing one's eating habits can be a challenge as many times eating is done in a rush and without much reflection. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that to improve your diet, you reflect on your eating habits, replace some unhealthy habits with healthier ones, and reinforce your better habits.

For more information click on the link below.

[Improving Your Eating Habits | Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/eating/index.html)

Sleep

It can be disheartening to be struggling with burnout or fatigue and then find that sleep is another area where you cannot seem to find relief. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get 7-9 hours of sleep each night and practice the same sleep schedule daily.

For more information click on the link below.

[How to Sleep Better - Sleep Foundation](https://www.sleepfoundation.org)

Exercise

Research has consistently shown that physical exercise can reduce stress significantly and have great healing effects on mental health conditions. Although not everyone enjoys exercising, it is crucial for overall health and well-being. It is recommended that adults participate in 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity, or 75 minutes per week of a vigorous activity, for overall benefit.

For more information click on the link below.

[Exercise and stress: Get moving to manage stress - Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/exercise-and-stress/art-20044783)

Application

How might this look in my professional practice?

The objective of this training is to:

Develop a self-care plan to improve overall well-being.

Consider your current level of well-being. Check the boxes next to the wellness strategies below that you feel would improve your current level of well-being the most if you focused on implementing them on a regular basis.

Daily mindfulness practice (e.g., meditation and relaxation exercises)

Compassion to self (e.g., gratitude journal, kindness meditations, volunteer work, small acts of self-kindness)

Remembering and doing what you love (e.g., connect with friends, travel, visit those you care about, hike, engage in hobbies that recharge you)

Diet (i.e., reflect on your eating habits, replace unhealthy habits with healthier ones, reinforce your better habits)

Sleep (i.e., 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night)

Exercise (i.e., 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic activity, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous activity)

Implementation

How can I effectively implement this content in my professional practice?

Please review the considerations below regarding potential implementation strategies, barriers to implementation, and collaboration strategies related to this content. This will help you coordinate the next steps as you begin to incorporate the information presented in this training into your professional practice.

This information can also be found on a handout that you will be able to download at the end of this training.

Implementation Strategies

- Assess your current wellness practices and decide on one or two simple strategies that you can implement to boost your overall well-being.
- Provide opportunities during professional learning or trainings to learn about and practice self-care and coping skills

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- Some professionals feel guilty about setting limits in their work or taking time to care for themselves. It is important for administrators and colleagues to support one another in efforts to improve well-being.

Collaboration Strategies

- Choose a “buddy” to help encourage one another in self-care efforts. Simple text messages, phone check-ins or in-person conversations may help to support new habits
- Reach out to community organizations like yoga studios, gyms, meditation groups, local therapists, religious organizations, or others who may want to participate with your school for promoting wellness.

Resources

Are there any resources available to help me implement this content?

Click on the link below to download a tool that you can use to implement this content in your professional practice.

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:d916ab41-a93b-4e06-a4fc-4814276aec44>

Feedback

How can I help improve this training?

The objective of this training was to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Develop a self-care plan to improve overall well-being.

Answer the questions in the link below to let us know how well this training increased your confidence in your ability to accomplish this objective. Once you have answered all of the questions, click the blue arrow button underneath to submit your responses.

https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d771mLr9ZgW3kyx?modulenumber=suicide42

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below.

Answered all of the survey questions above. You may have to scroll to see all of the questions.
Clicked the arrow underneath the last survey question to submit your responses.

Additional Readings

Where can I learn more about this content?

The following resources were used to create this training. If you would like more information about the information presented in this training, we encourage you to start here.

Trauma Sensitive Schools Online Professional Development. (2020, April 14). Retrieved November 10, 2020, from <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma/modules>

Well-Being Concepts. (2018, October 31). Retrieved November 02, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this training. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at schoolresources@psu.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this training. This is the last training in the Suicide Prevention series. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at schoolresources@psu.edu.

Return to the module directory

Click on this button to return to the module directory.

<https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/modules/>