Stress Management & Self-Care

The ABCs of Self-Care

A. Awareness
- Manage level and amount of exposure to stressful situations
- Manage physical and mental health, treating mental health as seriously as physical health

B. Balance
- Set limits and boundaries with self and others
- Get adequate rest, relaxation, and recreation by finding activities that rejuvenate your body and mind

C. Connection
- Maintain interpersonal relationships
- Build relationships outside of academia since not everyone abides by the academic culture of sacrificing time and personal resources

How to Find Time By Learning to Say No

Why we say YES
- Cultural values suggest that participants say yes to every activity
- People may lack a clear vision of where they are headed and what activities may help them
- Research states that dopamine is injected into the system when saying yes; later when doing the activity it is absent
- Individuals hear people say yes and thus lack scripts for how to say no

Reasons to say NO
- Challenge an unhealthy academic culture of sacrifice and lack of self-care
- Create space for activities that are more worthy of time, energy, and attention
- Normalize boundary setting and show that you have a vision and your time has value
- Give others a chance to shine and participate in activities or leadership positions
How to Say No

It's difficult to say no. At times, this is because you are surrounded by others who may have a difficult time setting boundaries. This can make saying no an act of bravery. A few tried and true ways to say no are listed below:

- “That sounds like a great opportunity but I can’t take on any additional commitments at the moment.”
- “Thanks for thinking of me. Unfortunately, I need to pass at this time.”
- “I’m going to let someone else handle that while I prioritize another aspect of the event.”

Buying More Time By Hedging

Hedging buys time if you need to check your schedule or need to continue considering the offer of additional work or responsibilities. Our one piece of advice is don’t hedge or say maybe if you really want to say no. A few ways to hedge are listed below:

- “What is the time commitment for that?”
- “Let me check my list of commitments and get back to you.”
- “Can you tell me what the overall plan looks like and the time frame for completion?”
- “Can I think about it? What date do you need to know my answer by?”

Short List of Activities and Actions that Can Relieve Stress

- Avoid caffeine
- Get a physical exam
- Open yourself to new experiences
- Surround yourself with positive thoughts

- Avoid substances for sleep or stress
- Improve sleep habits
- Practice mindful breathing
- Take a hike outdoors

- Cut activities that no longer make sense
- Indulge in activities like coloring
- Protect personal space
- Take charge of your life

- Decrease negative self-talk
- Listen to music
- Read a book
- Take time-outs during the day

- Eat healthy
- Maintain daily routine and schedule
- Review obligations periodically
- Talk to someone when worried

- Exercise
- Meditate
- Spend time with friends and family
- Utilize humor and laughter

Works Consulted

Coloring Pages Clip Art (http://www.coloring-pages.ws/index.php); Elizabeth Kleinfeld’s IWCA Workshop “The Art of Self-Care: A Workshop for Tired, Stressed-Out, Over-Committed Writing Center Folks”; Fast Company (https://www.fastcompany.com/9026494/ask-yourself-these-questions-before-saying-yes-or-no-to-anything); National Traumatic Stress Network Self-Care Model; WikiClipArt (https://wikiclipart.com/)