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Self Care



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Did you know.....



Working parents may find themselves "running on empty" if they don't take time out for self-care. They run the risk of falling into a rut if they never give themselves a break and keep working until they are exhausted. Since parents, in particular single parents, are the foundation for the family, it is critical that they take time to focus on their own well-being-to practice self-renewal-in order to have the strength to meet the demands of work and family life. In this workshop, Eugenia L. Reeves, LCSW, an outpatient counselor at the Carle Pavilion in Champaign, Illinois, facilitated parents in exploring techniques for keeping themselves performing at peak levels at home and on the job.




What is involved in self-care? It is useful to look at four dimensions of people's lives in thinking about our range of needs, as well as some activities or techniques that may be readily available for replenishing ourselves. The group was asked to think about people's intellectual, spiritual, emotional/social, and physical needs and to generate ways people might care for themselves with respect to those needs. The intellectual dimension is defined as the need to expand one's mind. Spirituality includes uplifting or inspirational aspects of one's life including those that relate to the core value system. The emotional/social aspect involves learning about oneself, especially through relating to others. The physical dimension is concerned with taking care of one's body. According to Ms. Reeves, it is essential to renew ourselves in these four realms, and each person is responsible for self-renewal.




A brainstorming session resulted in a list of possible activities and techniques that relate to the different dimensions.

Activities and techniques for meeting physical needs:




- getting massages
- exercising
- eating right
- getting enough sleep and/or taking "power naps"
- avoiding too much television
- walking or biking to work
- incorporating family exercise
- maintaining a sex life

Activities and techniques for meeting intellectual needs:



- going to the library
- taking continuing education classes or workshops
- watching documentary and other informative programs on television
- listening to radio programs
- searching the Internet
- talking with other people about ideas
- reading newspapers, magazines, and journals
- participating in creative arts activities
- writing
- thinking
- teaching



playing
participating in volunteer work

Activities and techniques for meeting spiritual needs:

participating in organized religion through churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.
visiting a natural area of beauty
attending a performing arts event or museum
meditation
being a part of social groups
eating out and cooking at home
having a workout followed by a deep bath while listening to music
participating in volunteer work
going to the library
watching a sunrise or sunset

Activities and techniques for meeting emotional/social needs:

spending time with friends
spending time alone
deciding what is a waste of time
having fun with old and new friends
taking a weekend alone with a spouse
working on flexibility to incorporate social activity
talking with friends as a "sounding board" and for help with coping with pressures
prioritizing activities and seeking balance
listening to oneself and conducting an inner dialogue
gardening
journaling

There was some overlap in some of the categories. For instance, a visit to the library was suggested as an activity that might address both intellectual and spiritual needs. Certainly the categories are not mutually exclusive. One activity might meet a number of needs. While this set of activities and techniques represents the thoughts of the workshop participants, this exercise can be used by anyone interested in increasing their own attention to self-nurturing.

Ms. Reeves concluded the session by challenging the participants to write down their goals for activities for self-renewal and personal growth in each of the four dimensions.

A partial reading list that was suggested by the presenter includes:

Chodron, Pema. (1994). Start where you are. Boston: Shambhala.
Covey, Stephen R. (1990). The 7 habits of highly effective people. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Price, Reynolds. (1994). A whole new life. New York: Atheneum.
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