

A Healthy Outlook

Self-Care: What Is It And Why Is It Important?

The term “self-care” is very popular right now, but what does it mean? Why and how should you make it a priority in your life?

Self-care means you are proactively taking care of your physical and emotional needs to protect against overwhelming stress. Stress is not always bad. A little bit of stress can help you stay focused, energetic, and able to meet new challenges in the workplace. Too much stress can leave you feeling worried, drained, and overwhelmed. When stress exceeds your ability to cope, it stops being helpful and starts causing damage to your mind and body.

When you feel overwhelmed, you may become angry, irritable, or withdrawn. You also may experience the following:

- Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed
- Apathy, loss of interest in work
- Problems sleeping
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Stomach problems
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of sex drive
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

Some tips for practicing self-care include the following:

- **CONNECT WITH FRIENDS** and family members. A strong and connected social and family life is important for overall mental health.

- **NOURISH YOURSELF** with healthy foods and try to reduce junk food, caffeine, and alcohol.
- **EXERCISE.** Getting your heart rate up is an effective way to boost your mood and increase your quality of rest.
- **DO NOT SKIMP ON SLEEP.** The better rested you are the less stressed you will be.
- **PRIORITIZE WHAT IS IMPORTANT.** Take a hard look at your schedule and find ways to cut back on unnecessary tasks to have room for activities you find satisfying.
- **SEEK HELP** if your thoughts and feelings become overwhelming. Therapy or counseling can be helpful.

You also can seek assistance though your Employee Assistance Program. Feel free to contact us at 240-314-1040 for a consultation or to set up an appointment. ●

“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.”

Etty Hillesum

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Multigenerations at the Workplace

As we know, the U.S. population is living much longer and staying healthier than ever before. For various reasons, more retirement-age people are continuing to work, well into their 70s and beyond. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in 1994 the median age of U.S. workers was 37.7; it climbed to 40.3 by 2004 and to 41.9 by 2014. It is expected

to be 42.4 by 2024. The BLS predicts the percentage of workers over 55 will grow 4 percent annually, faster than the rest of the workforce. However, in pure numbers, younger generations of workers already outnumber their predecessors.

As a result, for the first time in history, the workplace demographic is now spanning four to

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Multigenerations at the Workplace

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five generations: Traditionalists (born 1922–1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1995), and the newest group on the horizon—Generation Z (1996–present). What this means is that a 20-year-old new hire could find themselves working next to an individual who is 50 plus years older. And new survey research supports this concern—of companies polled, 58 percent of their managers said they were experiencing conflict between older and younger employees (Iden, 2016).

The term *generation gap* was coined originally for use in families like Archie Bunker's. But, today this expression may have the most relevance at work. With the diverse values, experiences, and work styles among those of

different generations, there is a great potential for misunderstanding, frustration, lost opportunities, and even conflict that can occur. These differences are exacerbated by the many changes that are taking place in the U.S. workforce.

With that in mind, here are some tips about how to get along in the multigenerational workplace:

- Do not treat difference as "bad."
- Be flexible in approaches regarding communication, reward, and change.
- Keep an open mind in regard to being in authority and responding to authority.
- Stay on top of technology and get proficient at the basic tasks your job demands.
- Recognize the values and perils of the tried and true.

- Develop a curiosity for things unfamiliar to you.
- Avoid characterizations based on age.
- Be careful about cultural and historical references—do not assume everyone knows what you are thinking or why.
- Listen, ask questions, and paraphrase before answering.
- If that older/younger worker was right in the first place, say so!

If you want to learn more about this topic, be sure to sign up for the "Multigenerations at Work: How are We Doing?" workshop on PDO. It will take place April 21 at 15 W. Gude Drive in the Hoffman Room from 10:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m. ●

Coping With the Death of Your Pet

When a person you love dies, it is natural to feel sorrow, express grief, and expect friends and family to provide understanding and comfort. Unfortunately, you do not always get that understanding when a pet dies. Some people still do not understand how central animals can be in people's lives and some people may not get why you are grieving over "just a pet."

● Members of the Family

People love their pets and consider them members of their family. Caregivers celebrate their pets' birthdays, confide in their animals, and carry pictures of them in their

wallets. So, when your beloved pet dies, it is not unusual to feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your sorrow.

Animals provide companionship, acceptance, emotional support, and unconditional love during the time they share with you. If you understand and accept this bond between humans and animals, then you already have taken the first step toward coping with pet loss—knowing that it is okay to grieve when your pet dies.

Finding ways to cope with your loss can bring you closer to the day when memories bring smiles instead of tears.

● What is the grief process?

The grief process is as individual as the person, lasting days for one person or years for another. Typically, the process begins with denial, which offers protection until individuals can realize their loss.

Some pet owners may try bargaining with a higher power, themselves, or even their pet to restore life. Some feel anger, which may be directed at anyone involved with the pet, including family, friends, and veterinarians. Caregivers also may feel guilty about what they did or did not do, and they may feel that it is inappropriate to be so upset.

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Coping With the Death of Your Pet

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After these feelings subside, people may experience true sadness or grief. They may become withdrawn or depressed. Acceptance occurs when they embrace the reality of their loss and remember their animal companion with decreasing sadness.

● Coping With Grief

While grief is a personal experience, you need not face loss alone. Many forms of support are available, including pet bereavement counseling services, pet-loss support hotlines, local or online Internet bereavement groups, books, videos, and magazine articles.

Here are a few suggestions to help you cope:

Acknowledge your grief and give yourself permission to express it.

- Do not hesitate to reach out to others who can lend a sympathetic ear.
- Write about your feelings, either in a journal or a poem.
- Call your veterinarian or local humane society to see whether they offer a pet-loss support group or can refer you to one.
- Prepare a memorial for your pet.

● Children

The loss of a pet may be a child's first experience with death. The child may blame themselves, their parents, or the veterinarian for not saving the pet. And they may feel guilty, depressed, and frightened that others they love may be taken from them.

Trying to protect your child by saying the pet ran away could cause your child to expect the

pet's return and feel betrayed after discovering the truth. Expressing your own grief may reassure your child that sadness is okay and help them work through their feelings.

● Seniors

Coping with the loss of a pet can be particularly hard for seniors. Those who live alone may feel a loss of purpose and an immense emptiness. The pet's death also may trigger painful memories of other losses and remind caregivers of their own mortality. What's more, the decision to get another pet is complicated by the possibility that the pet may outlive the caregiver, and hinges on the person's physical and financial ability to care for a new pet.

For all these reasons, it is critical that senior pet owners take immediate steps to cope with their loss and regain a sense of purpose. If you are a senior, try interacting with friends and family, calling a pet-loss support hotline, or even volunteering at a local humane society.

● Other Pets

Surviving pets may whimper, refuse to eat or drink, and suffer lethargy, especially if they had a close bond with the deceased pet. Even if they were not the best of friends, the changing circumstances and your emotional state may distress them. However, if your remaining pets continue to act out of sorts, there could actually be a medical problem that requires your veterinarian's attention.

Give surviving pets lots of tender loving care and trying to maintain a normal routine is good for them and for you.

UPCOMING EVENTS

● Caregiver Support Group

To support our caregivers, MCPS EAP offers a Caregiver Support Group, designed to provide helpful resources and establish connections among the caregivers within our MCPS community. The meetings are held from **4:15 P.M.**

TO 5:30 P.M. AT 45 WEST GUDE DRIVE. Guest speakers present on important topics related to caring for a loved one. *All are welcome to attend. For more information or to register, please call 240-314-1040.* ●

● Getting Another Pet

Rushing into this decision would be unfair to you and a new pet. Each animal has a unique personality and a new animal cannot replace the one you lost. You will know when the time is right to adopt a new pet after you give yourself time to grieve, and then carefully consider the responsibilities of new pet ownership, paying close attention to your feelings.

When you are ready, remember that your local animal shelter is a great place to find your next special friend.

Humane Society of the United States. (n.d.). Coping with the death of your pet. July 12, 2019, from <https://www.humanesociety.org>. Used with permission. ●

