

## Walking the Talk

CCAPS Newsletter  
October 2008

*Written by Dr. Eric Klingensmith*

*with contributions from many college mental health professionals*

As mental health professionals, it is often assumed that we practice what we dispense about self-care. In reality, this is not often the case-- not because we don't know the value of self-care, but that we simply don't have the time.



Be that as it may, after thousands of hours of research and observations out in the wild fields of counseling center preserves, there is evidence that somewhere out there colleagues are practicing what they preach. So, here are some of the great minds of the Commission, plus colleagues, sharing their wisdom and what they do to take care of themselves. Sit back, relax, read, enjoy, and smile for a few moments...have a great year. *Eric*

\* One of my favorites is to take at least one Saturday a month to spend the day in PJ's watching reality TV marathons.

*Stacey Pearson, University of Michigan*

\* It's important for me to have balance and have a contrast to my work life--to play with my daughter, listen to live music, and go out dancing. In particular, I've found that being creative and making things with my hands has become really important to me. So much of our counseling center work is intangible, and we're not sure when we're done sometimes. I have found great satisfaction in being able to complete a project--it's an item that is obviously done, I can hold it, and I can show it to others--unlike most of what I do at work. And, "She who laughs, lasts."

*Sue Stock, Roosevelt University Counseling Center*

\* I spend some time playing with my dogs - they think I am fabulous, no matter how rotten my day has been. Plus, who could stay in a bad mood looking into all of those sweet eyes (I have 4 dogs!) and watching their tails wag a hundred miles/minute??!!

*Jodi K. Caldwell, Georgia Southern University*

\* Have a place you can go and people do not know you are a counselor. I have started volunteering at the local animal shelter in the past year, and the other volunteers, staff, and customers only know me as 'Jamie who volunteers with the cats.'

*Jamie Justus, University of Texas at Austin*

\* A light-hearted book to forget my worries helps me relax.

*Stacey Baisden, Grand Valley State University*

\* After finding my exercise plans consistently squeezed out by "more important things" throughout the day, I've gotten into the habit of scheduling times for yoga, the gym, etc. on my calendar. As a result, I find I am more likely to do for myself what I do for others with whom I have an appointment -- I show up.

*Elana Bizer, LMSW, Counseling & Mental Health Center - The University of Texas at Austin*

\* It just so happens that I recently compiled something on this subject. Modeling Wellness and Self-Care in the Work Place

- Take short walks during the day
- Work as a team – collaborate, consult, back each other up as needed
- Flexible schedules

 [What is this?](#)

- Celebrating birthdays and special days together
  - Giving "Kudos" awards via a staff newsletter
  - Casual days
  - Staff retreats ---that combine team-building, fun AND more serious topics
  - Mutual provision of social support among colleagues
  - Use of good natured humor and fun in daily interaction
  - Eating lunch with colleagues
  - Professional development seminars on self-care
  - Small staff library with books on self-care topics
  - Honest and direct communication
  - Create an environment that is accepting and supportive within the limits of your mission.
  - Interact with students and others consumers in a welcoming way that sets a positive and respectful tone for all
  - Create opportunities for quiet and or uninterrupted work time
  - Comp time
  - Yoga training sessions for staff
  - Workout plans for each staff member
  - Staff massages
  - Share 'News and Goods' to start our meetings
  - Team building events include physical activity
  - Provide healthier choices and a variety of foods at celebrations
  - Each staff person has a balance ball for working at their desk
  - Relaxing music in the office
  - Outside of the office social gatherings
- Sharon Mitchell, University at Buffalo*

\* "Remember to laugh, and to laugh often!" =)  
*Grace A. Chen, California State University, East Bay*

\* My words of wisdom regarding self-care are, "Each day make time for lunch...preferably with a colleague or friend."  
*Dwaine S. Campbell, Wayne State University*

\* What has been really helpful for me has been joining CURVES Fitness Center and making myself go right after work at least three times a week. I find it gives me an energy boost and helps me clear my head.  
*Paula A. Rosenberg, Parsons: The New School for Design - School of Fashion*

\* I have a relaxation CD by Joel Levey from self-guided.com. It includes a power nap track that is absolutely refreshing. On those long days when I am booked solid with individual sessions and getting pulled in a hundred different directions, I can spend 20 minutes of my lunch hour relaxing my mind. The added benefit is that I am equally alert for the afternoon. The thing about self-care is that regardless of what you choose to do, it has to be done purposefully and with intent.  
*Kristi Casey-Hart, Dalton State College*

\* I believe in "quests" for my relaxation – I'm always on a quest for a new improv comedy club to make me laugh, the best piece of key lime pie or coconut cake, the best taco or burger dive restaurant, the best steak house, etc. I love to escape into a good movie (especially at a drive-in). There also has to be a pitcher of freshly brewed sweet tea in my fridge at all times and the sci-fi channel or cartoon network on the TV. Of course there is the healthy stuff too, like working out, biking, and fencing (when I can).  
*Eric Klingensmith, Grand Valley State University*

\* Make sure to take some time (5-10 minutes) outside a day. It does a mind and a body good ;-). I tried to do something just for me at least once a day ;-~) to help practice self care. I also do workshops for trainees on self-care to help keep me accountable and remind me to practice self-care. I also make sure to laugh and to watch a comedy to help if necessary.  
*Chanda C. Corbett, CCAPS Chair of ACPA*

\* Being able periodically to close my office door for 5 minutes, even for a brief, power-nap during that time. Having coworkers willing to share a good laugh several times a day.  
*Wayne Kinzie, Grand Valley State University*

\* Certain channels on tv...like the Home and Garden and the food channels help me de-escalate and relax. Volunteering my time.

**Hariett Singelton, Grand Valley State University Counseling Center**

And last but not certainly least, this came in just under the wire and with good reason...

\* Before this weekend, I would have responded that my major way of coping is to do things that are NOT like my work life even though I enjoy my work very much. Travelling...travelling...being with my family...playing my French horn in a brass choir...gardening...small stakes poker with my friends...fine food (cooking AND eating!), just to name a few!

After dealing with Hurricane Ike (and the evacuees from other hurricanes), I realized that my self-care & coping comes from an INTERNAL mindset that I was poignantly reminded of by this past weekend's disaster. My mindset is to remember all that I am SO blessed to have in my life, and I try to make a point of remembering that, and thinking of specific examples, on a daily basis. Today I feel blessed (with a bit of survivor guilt, too), that when the hurricane finally tracked inland, it came in slightly east of its predicted path. So we were spared the worst of the destruction and permanent loss... or just the plain inconvenience of being safe, being without water, power, cell-phones, the internet, gasoline and easily available food! My mindset of being what I call and "optimistic pragmatist" has served me well...I always HOPE for the best, but I try to be prepared for and accept it when that doesn't happen! As Bev Sills, the late opera star said when Carol Burnet asked if she was really as ALWAYS happy as she seems, Ms. Sills said "I'm not always happy, but I'm ALWAYS cheerful." I think that's a good way to keep a positive mindset which is the basis for good self-care.

I must say, it was therapeutic this morning just to write all of this down... (HA! And yet another tip...write it down so you can see it and think about it!)

*Kerry Hope, Texas A&M University*

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