

Harvard/MGH Trauma Programs Self-Care Pocket Card

TOP PRIORITY: FIRST, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND LOVED ONES

Working long hours of intense work is stressful - check-in with loved ones as often as possible

- 1. MISSION:** Understand the mission and your role in executing the mission. While you help people; do no harm to yourself. Inadequate achievement of mission goals can lead to moral distress and burnout!
- 2. SKILLS:** Make sure you have the skills and knowledge to fulfill your role in the mission, if you need support, ask for help from your leadership and team immediately.
- 3. SELF CARE:** Take care of the basics; eat well, exercise (do some basic stretching and simple exercises), and make sure to get a good night's sleep. Try deep breathing, listening to music, reading, and other ways to relax. Most importantly, create a safe place and self-care plan for yourself and your family.
- 4. PEER SUPERVISION:** It is essential you work as a team; develop the "buddy system" of checking on one another, and make sure you have good supervision at least once a week. Crisis work can cause confusion and fear; get support from your supervisor and peers.



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5. EMPATHY: Regulate your empathy towards those you are helping, as finding the balance between empathy for others and taking care of yourself is critical. If you feel you are getting overwhelmed, step out of the situation and calm yourself down – check in with your buddy. At the end of the day allow yourself to calm your mind and stop thinking about all of the tragic and terrible things you experienced that day.

6. REFLECTION: Consider keeping a personal memento, such as, a family picture, a religious medal, or a picture of a special animal in your pocket. Think of all the positive things and goodness in your life and try to develop a sense of gratitude. Don't be afraid to ask yourself for the energy and courage to do this important work. A daily written journal of your thoughts and feelings of the day can be helpful.

7. MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION: Learn deep breathing and practice it as often as needed for 5 minutes each time. Make a small special place in your home or office as a special safe place of peace. This could be a place for meditation, prayer, or guided thoughts (this does not have to be religious) to the higher principles and sacred things in your life. Be mindful, focus on being present in the moment. Appreciate your life, including family, friends, and nature with the wonderful plants and animals with whom we share this earth.

8. NATURE: Try to spend a little bit of time each day in nature, if that is not possible, look at nature videos (many beautiful ones exist). Listen to frog and bird songs, if possible, keep a plant in your office especially one with a flower. Keeping a nature journal can be very helpful.

9. MONITOR: Assess the state of your self-care each day. Use this card as a checklist. Notice the joyful moments in your day. If you feel depressed, anxious, and/or you have trouble sleeping, or have nightmares, see your doctor and/or a mental health specialist.

10. DIGNITY: Always treat every person, including yourself, with great respect and dignity! Even in the most stressful moments, try to touch the heart of those you are caring for. Try to remember the Golden Rule!



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