

# Ethics and Self-care:

## Why is professional self-care an ethical practice?

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# Center for Innovative Training in VR



The **Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation (CIT-VR) at The George Washington University** is focused on developing innovative methods to train VR personnel to support the work of State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies in delivering high-quality rehabilitation services and to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The Center is funded via a five-year grant, i.e., October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2024, from the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration under the Innovative Rehabilitation Training Program (CFDA 84.263C).

# Center for Innovative Training in VR

## The CIT-VR is designed to:

- ✓ Assess the training needs of State VR agencies,
- ✓ Survey graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling to review current curricula and identify gaps and needs,
- ✓ Develop and disseminate trainings, both online and in-person,
- ✓ Disseminate training modules and/or resources developed by Technical Assistance Centers related to the mission of the Center,
- ✓ Develop and maintain Communities of Practice (CoP),
- ✓ Offer webinars on a variety of topical areas, and
- ✓ Offer other learning modalities.

# Center for Innovative Training in VR



**In Year 1 of the project, CIT-VR will select 10 state agencies to receive access to online training modules for their personnel that focuses on core components of the rehabilitation process including:**

- ✓ Basics of VR: Overview of the State-Federal Program
- ✓ Eligibility Determination
- ✓ Conducting a comprehensive assessment
- ✓ Developing an Individualized Plan for Employment
- ✓ Job development and placement
- ✓ Case closure

# Today's Presenters



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WASHINGTON  
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WASHINGTON, DC

**Dr. Rob Froehlich – LPC, CRC; GW CRCRE Project Director**  
Rehab Counselor Educator 20+ years; self care and ethics training/publications in VR settings 15+ years; CRC Ethics Committee member.

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THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
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WASHINGTON, DC

**John Walsh, M Ed, CRC – CIT VR Project Director**  
30+ years experience in provision of VR services both as a counselor and an administrator, and most recently coordinating the provision of technical assistance and training to State VR agencies ; narrator/interviewer today.

# Webinar Learning Objectives

- 
- ✓ Understand the relationship between counseling codes of ethics and self-care.
  - ✓ Discuss how self-care concepts relate to professional performance, to colleagues within the work setting, and to the ethical provision of rehabilitation counseling services.
  - ✓ Describe a process for developing a self-care plan.

# Why is self-care an ethical practice?



# Professional Self-Care

No matter the discipline, as professionals we can become overwhelmed, feeling isolated on our own island.



Continuing education (including webinars like this) allows professionals facing similar challenges to gather to compare best practices, etc. and provides a community of support.

**This is even more important during periods of change.**



# Seeking Support or Self-Care Is Not Selfish or Abnormal

It is ethical! CRCC Code of Ethics

<https://www.crc certification.com/code-of-ethics-3>

✓ **Avoids professional burn out/impairment**

(Sections D.1.e Monitoring Effectiveness; D.3 Functional Competence – Impairment)

✓ **D – Professional Responsibility**

Rehabilitation counselors engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities.

# ACA Code

**Like Section D of the CRC Code, ACA's Section C – Professional Responsibility states:**

- ✓ ...Same verbiage as the CRC Code on this topic.



**self-care activities improve  
emotional, physical, mental, and  
spiritual well-being**

# Counselors & Rehabilitation Counselors



**Self-care is a training consideration and focus area.**

## **CACREP Standards and self-care:**

- ✓ Curriculum
  - CORE AREA: Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice
    - 11 –” self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role”

Our codes and training clearly tell us we should engage in self-care.

**But what exactly is self-care?**






# Some Topical Reading

What follows is a reading list and references for all of the articles mentioned in this training.


The list is also included in the resources section on the [webinar web page](#).

- ✓ Articles included are some more recent and innovative approaches looking at this topic.
- ✓ The topic of Self-Care and Ethics is not new by any stretch, but this grouping of articles should provide some relevant and contemporary inquiries into the topic.

# Reading List

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- ✓ Alarcon, G. M. (2011). **A meta-analysis of burnout with job demands, resources, and attitudes.** Journal of vocational behavior, 79(2), 549-562.
  - ✓ Bradley, N., Whisenhunt, J., Adamson, N., & Kress, V. E. (2013). **Creative approaches for promoting counselor self-care.** Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 8(4), 456-469. Includes discussion of ACA Code of Ethics (earlier version) as relates to self-care
  - ✓ Hendricks, B., Bradley, L. J., Brogan, W. C., & Brogan, C. (2009). Shelly: **A case study focusing on ethics and counselor wellness.** The Family Journal, 17(4), 355-359.
  - ✓ O'Sullivan, D., & Bates, J. K. (2014). **The relationship among personal and work experiences: Implications for rehabilitation counselor well-being and service provision.** Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education, 28(1), 45-60.
  - ✓ Posluns, K., & Gall, T. L. (2019). **Dear mental health practitioners, take care of yourselves: A literature review on self-care.** International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 1-20.
  - ✓ Richards, K., Campenni, C., & Muse-Burke, J. (2010). **Self-care and well-being in mental health professionals: The mediating effects of self-awareness and mindfulness.** Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 32(3), 247-264.
  - ✓ Tabaj, A., Pastirk, S., Bitenc, Č., & Masten, R. (2015). **Work-related stress, burnout, compassion, and work satisfaction of professional workers in vocational rehabilitation.** Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 58(2), 113-123.
  - ✓ Warren, J., Morgan, M. M., Morris, L. N. B., & Morris, T. M. (2010). **Breathing words slowly: Creative writing and counselor self-care—the writing workout.** Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 5(2), 109-124.

# Operationally Defined & 'De-Mystified'



Definition – Both Codes (ACA and CRC) note self-care as:  
**“activities to maintain and promote counselors’ own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities”**

*It is merely taking the time to take care of our own needs, not at the exclusion of others, but to enhance our ability to work with others.*

Self-care is a broad term referring to any actions or experiences that enhance or maintain counselors’ well-being (Eckstein, 2001).



# More definitions



The term self-care refers not only to an engagement in various practices but also to **having a caring attitude or ‘being’ caring toward oneself.**

(Kissil and Niño 2017).

From Posluns and Gall article (2019)

# Mindfulness and Self-Care

**Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke (2010) – some mixed results:**

- ✓ A survey of mental health professionals (N = 148) revealed that "mindfulness is a significant mediator between self-care and well-being."
- ✓ Frequency of self care activities relates to enhanced well being, without requiring a state of mindfulness

# More on Mindfulness and Self Care



Counseling Today (Dec 21, 2016) Cultivating a Practice of Mindfulness

**Yoga, breathing exercises, suggestions for multiple simple mindful exercises**

## Notice 5 Things Activity:

1. Pause for a moment.
2. Look around and notice five things that you can see.
3. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.
4. Notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body.



# Why Self Care?

**Self care activities are intended to moderate or avoid ‘Burnout’.**

Continuum:

- ✓ Vicarious Traumatization, Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout on one side
- ✓ Frustration, sadness, being cranky, tired, etc. on the other (daily hassles)

**“Research has demonstrated that burnout can result in anxiety, depression, drops in self-esteem, substance abuse, decreased performance, and increased health problems.” (Alcorn, 2011)**

# Overview of Survey



In preparation for the webinar, we sent a short survey out to a convenience sample of VR administrators, Rehab educators and training professionals.

**What came through loud and clear is the empathy the respondents have relative counselors as well as their agreement on the need to focus on this topic in VR.**

**We'll be infusing some responses from our webinar survey throughout...**

This training deals with professional self-care and ethics in the vocational rehabilitation setting.

**How do you see these topics as related, and what would you hope to learn about these topics?**



# Survey – Reflections on topic and ‘What Do You Want To Know?’



Importance of giving staff the "permission" to care for themselves.



Techniques to manage burnout.



Concerns that many professionals are caught between work, children, and aging parents.



VR professionals are being asked to do more with less. Concern this could lead to potential ethical ‘shortcuts.’

# Speaking of More with Less

## O'Sullivan & Bates (2014)

- ✓ The findings indicate that burnout and flourishing are strongly related to each other and may have implications for client outcomes.
- ✓ Caseload size is also contributing to burnout levels.



**Can you tell us a bit more  
about Self-Care and the  
counseling literature?**



# Alacorn (2011)

Conducted a meta-analysis of burnout with job demands, resources, and attitudes (published in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*)

**Results suggest that higher demands, lower resources, and lower adaptive organizational attitudes are associated with burnout.**

- ✓ Organizational attitudes are things like job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment.



# Bradley, Whisenhunt, Adamson, & Kress (2013)

*“In 2004, the ACA conducted a study exploring the prevalence of impairment among ACA members. The study showed that **63.5% of counselors** knew a counselor who they would consider **impaired** (ACA, 2010a). Of those counselors considered to be impaired, the participants shared that supervisors (54.3%) and colleagues (64.2%) were aware of the counselors’ impairment (ACA, 2010a). Additionally, 75.5% of the counselors responding to the survey reported that they believed that impaired counselors pose a risk to the counseling profession (ACA, 2010a).”*

# Bradley, Whisenhunt, Adamson, & Kress (2013) continued

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) used the term “flow” to describe the experience of being **fully engaged in the creative moment** (p. 110).

- ✓ During flow, the creator is so completely involved in the creative process that concerns and fears fade from direct awareness.

**This function of the creative experience may be helpful for professional counselors who find themselves taking ownership of their clients’ issues.**

- ✓ Externalization can also take the form of containment or compartmentalization.



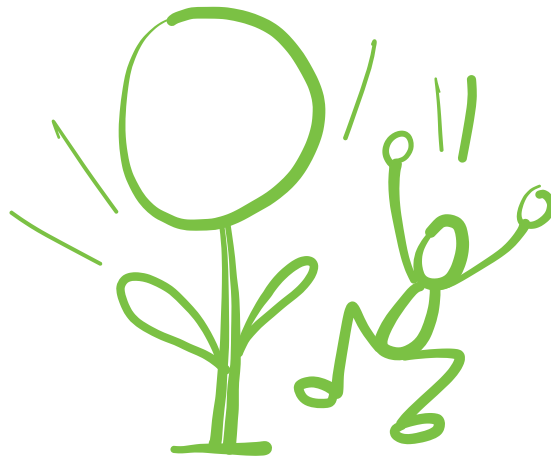
# More from Bradley, Whisenhunt, Adamson, & Kress (2013)

**Little Changes are a Big Deal**

**Every Plant Needs Water**

**Scrapbook Journaling**

- ✓ Self-care is entirely individualized!



# Self-Care Is Individualized

## Physical –

- ✓ Anything from taking chair push up breaks to running a marathon;
- ✓ nutrition/eating – may have very different goals from watching what I eat to having food that comforts me

## Spiritual –

- ✓ Could vary all the way from being very involved in organized religion all the way to ‘be open to not knowing’ or ‘have experiences of awe’ or ‘try at times to not be in charge or the expert’



# Warren, J., Morgan, M. M., Morris, L. N. B., & Morris, T. M. (2010)

## Breathing words slowly: Creative writing and counselor self-care—the writing workout

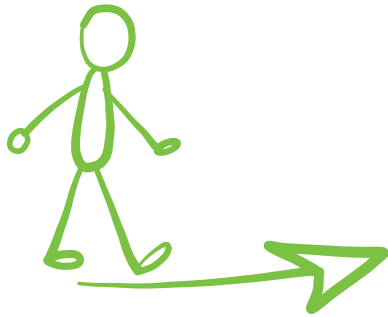
- ✓ **Warm Up** – pen, paper, place, no set goal
- ✓ **Sprint** – 5 minutes; no interruption
- ✓ **Sit-ups** – a) to do list; b) what to do with a square of molding clay
- ✓ **Yoga** – write about troubling (experience, emotion) that could lead to loss of presence
- ✓ **Relaxation** – experience of clear mind; write whatever is meaningful



# Posluns and Gall (2019)

Grand-daddy/Grand-momma of lit reviews on self-care in my opinion.

Broken down into these categories:



- ✓ Awareness
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Physical Health
- ✓ Social Support
- ✓ Spirituality



# Article on Self-Care Treatment Plan



Shelley: A case study focusing on ethics and counselor wellness (Hendricks et al 2009)

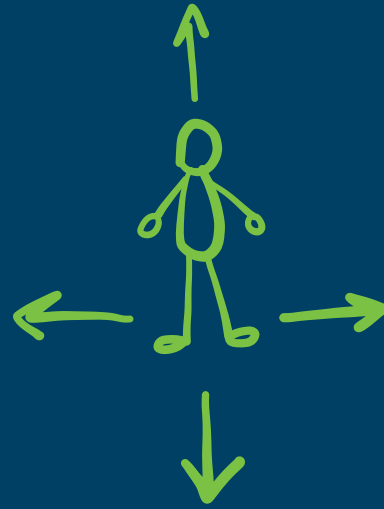
**“The wellness treatment plan is written in conjunction with a physician, a cardiologist, who suggests simple ways to assess and monitor wellness.”**

**Brief overview of scenario... major focus on working with both a counselor and a cardiologist to get her physical needs addressed so she can make forward progress on all her other needs.**

# Cranky or Burned Out... How Can I Tell?

## Being Neighborly...

- ✓ After providing support...
  - Am I able to describe my feelings toward the situation?
  - Do my emotional reactions match the content I'm working with?
  - Am I able to find some joy in other activities that are unrelated to the situation at hand?
  - Am I perseverating on the topic or can I let it go?



**So how do I get myself started  
on a path toward addressing  
my self-care needs?**

# Survey

What do you want to know about developing a self care plan?



It's important to infuse strategies for self care environments with restrictions on time and resources.



How do you put together a plan? and Implement?



It's so tough to implement self care when exhausted emotionally, but even more important during those times!

# Spheres of Self Care



**Tip!** Get these from the Resources section of Webinar web page!

## Self Care Assessments:

- ✓ <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/self-care-assessment.pdf>
- ✓ <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/self-care-assessment.pdf>
- ✓ <https://www.nami.org/getattachment/Extranet/Education,-Training-and-Outreach-Programs/Signature-Classes/NAMI-Homefront/HF-Additional-Resources/HF15AR6SelfCare.pdf>



# Components of a Self Care Plan

Physical

Psychological

Emotional

Spiritual

Relationship

Workplace/Professional

Overall Balance

Additionally – what other areas are relevant to you?

# Self Care Plan: Many Different Formats



**Umatter – Princeton University initiative**

**<https://umatter.princeton.edu/about>**

**Reach Out.com**

**<https://schools.au.reachout.com>**

**Tip! We've included a few different formats for your consideration. Get these from the Resources section of Webinar web page!**

# Survey: Suggestions for Getting Started



**Looking at ways to take mini breaks during the day**

**Leveraging employee resources such as:**

- ✓ employee assistance, wellness programs, etc.

**Learning strategies for small steps toward self care: e.g.**

- ✓ Take a walk at lunch and not eat at your desk
- ✓ Having a plant in their office etc.

**Taking time off**

**Quick meditation breaks, find a quiet space**

**Supportive managers and leadership who understand the value and importance of self-care**

**Work culture that values positive support**

- ✓ Break room breaks that include fun activities.
- ✓ Perhaps a "leave it at work" board where they move an object before they leave to assure they leave work behind.
- ✓ Focusing on the "Why", the mission of VR, and client service.



# CNBC Article and Time off



Bankrate survey of 2600 people... **13%** will take fewer than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their allotted days; **4%** aren't planning on taking any.

Project: Time Off – Americans gave up **212 Million vacation days** in 2017.

Glassdoor – **29%** of employees who did take time off were contacted by colleagues on a work related matter.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/26/only-28percent-of-americans-plan-to-max-out-their-vacation-days-this-year.html>

In VR, as well as more globally, professionals have continually increasing demands that can take a toll personally.

# What do the codes say about our interdependent nature as Rehabilitation Professionals?

# CRC Code



**D3 Functional Competence – a – Impairment –**

**Rehabilitation counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment, provide consultation and assistance when colleagues or supervisors show signs of impairment, and intervene as appropriate to prevent harm to clients.**

# ACA Code



## C2g – Impairment –

**Counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment and provide consultation and assistance when warranted with colleagues or supervisors showing signs of impairment and intervene as appropriate to prevent imminent harm to clients. (Also applies under F5b – Supervisees/Students)**

# Survey: Reaching Out to Others

- ✓ Sometimes more effective coming from a peer as opposed to a manager.
- ✓ Sometimes checking in regularly with folks allows someone who is struggling to verbalize what they are feeling.
- ✓ Finding ways to address a colleagues' apparent struggle without the colleague feeling like you are being critical of them and/or their performance.
- ✓ Having an office culture of assistance may be helpful.

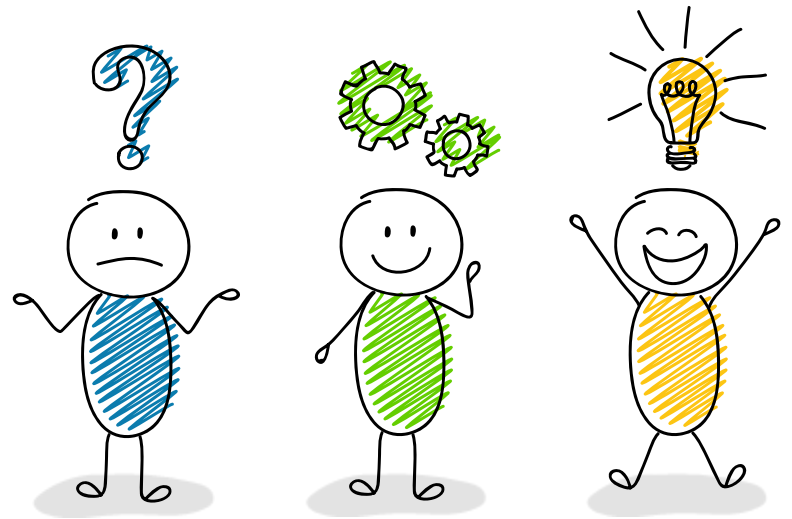
# Remember - Individualized

Sometimes we become hyper focused on policies and procedures and process.

This is true not only in VR, but in the U.S. world of work overall. As we become a more litigious society, we also become more fearful.

Sometimes what's needed is a neighborly approach... supportive but not intrusive.

**One size does not fit all.**



**Ignoring is not an option**

# Simple Gestures



Remember to be neighborly...

Think about a time when you were feeling particularly overwhelmed.

What did you need?

What did you want those around you to know?

How could others have been helpful to you?



# Wrap Up Discussion

## Self-Care is an Ethical Practice.

Self-Care encompasses an array of activities that meet the individual's personal needs.

We are a community within the rehabilitation and counseling arena. It is necessary (and ethical) for community members to care about one another.

Self-Care can start small... even small progress can pay big dividends... for you... your clients... and your colleagues!

**Start your journey today.**



# Contact Us



**Center for Innovative Training**  
in Vocational Rehabilitation

## John Walsh

Project Director

Center for Innovative Training in VR (CIT-VR)

**The George Washington University**

[jcwalsh@gwu.edu](mailto:jcwalsh@gwu.edu)

267-961-3148

## Rob Froehlich

Project Director

Center for Rehabilitation Counseling,  
Research, and Education (GW CRCRE)

**The George Washington University**

[rfro@gwu.edu](mailto:rfro@gwu.edu)

804-794-6667