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# School Counselor Self-Care Practices as Mitigating Factors Regarding Professional Burnout

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Abstract

As the needs of students change, the responsibilities of educators change as well. Growing

awareness for childhood mental health, increased focus on academic success, and a drive for

career preparation mean that the role of a school counselor is ever changing and may come with

many stressors and challenges that may then lead to professional burnout and decreased efficacy

as a counselor. To maintain focused and effective care for students, it is important that

counselors monitor their mental health and take interventive and preventative measures to ensure

they are able to best care for themselves and their students. This issue is not localized to school-

based counselors alone but is relevant to all counselors regardless of setting. As the world

changes, clients face new and changing concerns and rely on counselors for support and

guidance. This responsibility, along with other personal and professional factors, can put

significant strain on a counselor that can lead to issues such as burnout. With burnout

experiences increasing in recent years, it is important that counselors be informed about the issue

and ways in which it can be prevented and lessened. Self-care is one such way. By learning to

identify needs and respond by caring for one's emotional, mental, physical, and social health, a

counselor will find that the addition of individual and personalized supports into his or her

routine may greatly lessen the likelihood of burnout and improve overall health.

*Keywords:* burnout, counselors, school counselors, self-care

Contents

**Introduction**

As the need for school counselors grows and understanding and expectations of the profession shift, the demands and responsibilities of the position change as well. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) defines the role of a school counselor as an individual who, after completing adequate training and meeting licensure requirements, creates, maintains, and delivers comprehensive counseling programs to meet the needs of all students. Through collaboration with students, parents, teachers, staff, and other stakeholders, they work to create an environment that is safe and supportive and to make data driven changes to benefit all members of a school community. They provide direct and indirect services to students at the individual and group levels in the areas of academic, personal/social, and career development while adhering to ethical standards set by ASCA and other counseling associations (ASCA, n.d.). The purpose of this paper is to identify ways in which the many demands of the counseling profession alongside personal stressors and life experiences can contribute to professional burnout or job exhaustion. In recent years, the subject of professional burnout has become more widespread and there are a variety of lenses through which researchers view the issue and potential preventative measures. Through the course of this paper, the topic of burnout will be discussed in terms of its significance to counseling and other helping professionals, identification and measurement, typology, and influencing factors. Once the issue of burnout has been explored, the subject of counselor self-care will be discussed in terms of relevance to counseling professionals, types of self-care and areas of focus, and suggestions for the usage of self-care practices in preventing and lessening the burden of burnout.

**Review of Literature**

**Burnout**

Burnout, as defined by Demerouti, Mostert, and Bakker in 2010 (as cited in Rzeszutek & Schier, 2014), is "a multidimensional syndrome consisting of physical and emotional exhaustion, a decreased sense of personal accomplishment, and a tendency to evaluate oneself and one's work negatively" (p. 574). A psychological condition, burnout is often experienced by those who work closely with other people and may present in many ways including emotional overextension, the development of negative feelings toward oneself and one's work, and feelings of discontent toward personal growth and efficacy as a professional (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1986). It is a concern prevalent among several disciplines in health care and other helping professions (Rzeszutek & Schier, 2014). In 2012, it was approximated that burnout was experienced at a high level by 21-67% of mental health workers (Morse, Salyers, Rollins, Monroe-DeVita, & Pfahler, 2012). This is a large jump from 1993 research indicating that 35% of practicing school psychologists were experiencing burnout extreme enough to harvest thoughts of leaving the profession altogether (Huebner, 1993). Research indicates that the issue of burnout and job exhaustion is not only widespread but growing and that its effects are felt and seen in the work environment as well as in the personal lives of those impacted. When examining the concept of burnout, there are many factors to consider. Among these are typology, influencing factors, assessments aimed at identification and measurement and impacts on counselors and other helping professionals.

**Counseling Professionals.**

An effective counselor is the first key to impactful and meaningful work with clients. In order to meet client needs and pave the way for effective conversation, a counselor must present him/herself as professional, motivated, and empathetic. He or she must also maintain a high level of interest in the clients' specific needs and concerns. As the need for school counselors grows,

the workloads, caseloads, working hours, and office environments of those in the profession change as well. These changes, combined with a wide variety of responsibilities and the need to often step into multiple professional roles may make school counselors more vulnerable to burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005). In an ever-changing field, a sense of growth and improvement is also vital. Resent research has identified a correlation between professional development efforts and counselor burnout. As a counselor strives to improve his or her practice, they tend to feel more confident, view themselves more positively when compared to others, and in turn experience lower levels of burnout (Tanrikulu, 2012).

A counselor experiencing burnout may struggle to form and maintain a strong therapeutic alliance with clients. If a client walks into a session with an uncomfortable atmosphere, this may well hinder the efficacy of the counseling experience overall. If they do not feel that their counselor is not present and motivated, they may feel frustrated, discouraged, and ambivalent about their own goals. Regardless of how many times a client and counselor have met, burnout may present a variety of barriers during the time spent together. In some cases, burnout may lead to a lack of empathy from the counselor. If a client feels that his or her counselor "doesn't care", they may be less inclined to share and may even feel that there is no point continuing to seek out help and support from this source. If a counselor is detached, the client may think that nothing will come of any future sessions and may choose to terminate care early. A client who terminates early may continue to struggle with his or her concerns and may experience additional strain as well. Over time, a counselor may find that complaints pile up and business goes down. Burnout in the helping professions may in time lead to decreased job attendance, higher rates of turnover, and an increase in burnout and dissatisfaction for other employees (Maslach et al., 1986).

On a personal level, a counselor may find that burnout impacts other areas of his or her life. If dissatisfied or upset with his or her job, a counselor may bring this feeling home and may discover that friends and family tune into these feelings and that this in turn has lasting impacts on daily life and relationships. According to Maslach et al. (1986), professional burnout may lead to self-reported concerns such as depleted energy, sleeping troubles, substance abuse, and other personal issues beyond the workplace. Issues such as these will then inevitably impact an individual's experience while at work, creating a cyclical effect. If a counselor's practice is struggling, this can create financial problems as well that heavily impact home life. Increased pressure and responsibility financially, interpersonally, and professionally, especially when combined with a career that is already considered to be emotionally demanding may in turn lead to other serious and potentially long-lasting health concerns. A counselor, without any support or treatment, may experience increased depression, anxiety, and exhaustion among other presenting concerns.

**Identification and Measurement.**

Identifying burnout as quickly as possible is necessary in addressing the issue well and ensuring that a counselor receives as much help as possible. In identifying burnout, self-awareness, help from others, and testing are commonly identified as key pieces of the puzzle. A counselor will likely notice when he or she is feeling worn down, detached, or overwhelmed, but may not consider it "extreme enough" to merit intervention or may be unwilling to admit to the severity of the problem. Family members and colleagues may notice changes but might not recognize them as problematic until the issue has grown to a point where professional intervention is necessary. To aid in the identification of burnout among professional counselors, several assessments are commonly used.

### *The Counselor Burnout Inventory.*

The Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI), examines five dimensions to determine a counselor's burnout: Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Client, and Deterioration of Personal Life. Initial research on the CBI included the subscales self-esteem and job satisfaction in an attempt to align to the existing MBI-HSS burnout scale, which did not relate specifically to those in the counseling field. A Likert-type scale is used with this test to guarantee questions are easily understood and responded to (Lee, Baker, Cho, Heckathorn, Holland, Newgent, Ogle, Powell, Quinn. Wallace, & Yu, 2007). Though still relatively new, the CBI has been well-received and often referenced. The authors caution however, that further research is needed to ensure the CBI as an effective measurement tool for counselors working with diverse ethnic groups, counselors in differing fields, and counselors practicing in different geographic locations. Also noteworthy is the fact that, as the CBI is a self-report test, results may be skewed by a variety of personal variables (Lee et al., 2007).

### *The Maslach Burnout Inventory.*

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is intended for use with individuals working in education, human services, and other professions where human interaction is high, often stressful, and may lead to a higher incidence of professional burnout. This assessment includes 22 questions dived among 3 subscales targeted at measuring burnout in the areas of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Through the administration of this assessment, which can be delivered to a group or self-administered, respondents are asked to reflect on a seven-point scale their thoughts and feelings related to perceived overextension, the empathy and care shown to the people they work to help, and how effective and competent they view themselves to be. Higher scores in the first two subscales,

emotional exhaustion and depersonalization indicate greater burnout for respondents while lower scores in the personal accomplishment scale indicate the same. Initial examinations found the MBI to be both a reliable and valid measure that remained stable over time. The creators noted that results from this assessment may be useful in identifying the needs of a group and environment as a whole and that this may help in selecting specific and purposeful interventive measures (Maslach et al., 1986). More recent research has agreed with these validity measures and has also reported positive discriminant validity, suggesting that the MBI can help to differentiate to some extent between burnout and other mental concerns such as anxiety and depression (Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001).

**Typology.**

Burnout is experienced by helping professionals in a multitude of positions and work environments. From counselors to doctors and everyone in between, all occupations have unique stressors and demands which may put physical, mental, or emotional strain on employees. Though burnout may be experienced differently from person to person, there are several types of "burnt out" workers that seem to fall into specific categories. While research on burnout typology is limited, Lee, Cho, Kissinger, and Ogle (2010) have begun to examine and define, through the use of cluster analysis and the CBI (Lee et al., 2007), three types of counselor burnout. Counselors who scored low on all subscales of the CBI (Exhaustion, incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Client, and Deterioration in Personal Life) were considered well-adjusted. This first cluster exhibited low burnout experience and comprised 36% of test subjects. The second cluster identified counselors as disconnected. These 33% of subjects exhibited medium scores for Exhaustion, Negative Work Environment, and Deterioration in Personal Life and high scores on Incompetence and Devaluing Client subscales. These

counselors did not express extreme burnout but seemed to be separated from clients and may not be practicing effectively. Finally, the third cluster, containing 28% of the test subjects, was characterized by low to moderate Incompetence and Devaluing Client scores and the highest scores in Negative Work Environment, Exhaustion, and Deterioration in Personal Life subscales. The authors describe these individuals as persevering clients; they may be experiencing burnout but are able to continue providing adequate client care (Lee et al., 2010).

**Influencing Factors.**

Each individual, experiencing burnout in a unique way, may also point to a unique combination of countless possible factors. Although there are many potential triggers, research has indicated several common contributors to the issue of burnout which include but are not limited to a professional's attitudes, work-related stress, work environment, and perception of support. Negative attitudes towards one's work may play a key role in the development of job exhaustion. A professional who harbors negative perceptions of his or her colleagues may in turn begin to resent the workplace and workload as a whole. They may feel that they lack cohort support and may not seek out help when it is needed. If a counselor feels negatively about his or her client and chooses to continue with care anyway, they may not provide the same quality of care as they would to another. While this might not be conscious, they may begin to resent this counselor-client relationship. On a personal level, a counselor who feels negatively about him or herself may find a that this belief perpetuates negative self-image and doubts about one's efficacy in the future. It may become difficult to give excellent care, as they don't believe such a thing is possible for them to achieve. Jupp and Shaul (1991) continue this thought and expand upon it, stating that work stress correlates significantly with burnout (Jupp & Shaul, 1991).

The concept of work related secondary traumatic stress (STS) appears in a great deal of recent literature. Secondary stress, according to Stamm (as cited in O'Halloran & Linton, 2000) is "an outcome or risk that is related to engaging empathetically with another's traumatic material" (O'Halloran & Linton, 2000, p.355). Research indicates that symptoms are similar between clients and counselor where this is concerned; both may experience increases stress, hyperawareness, fatigue, depression, and other presenting concerns. A 2011 article in Counselor Education and Supervision also notes secondary traumatic stress as a major factor, specifying that counselors working with individuals experiencing borderline personality disorder (BPD) may often experience extreme stress and, in turn, burnout from the difficulties this disorder presents (Miller, Iverson, Kemmelmeier, MacLane, Pistorello, Fruzzetti, Watkins, Pruitt, Oser, Katrichak, Erikson & Crenshaw, 2011).

In careers where work related stress is common, positive work environments can play large roles in helping employees feel safe, capable, and cared for. Careers in counseling often come with high expectations, the need to fill a variety of roles, and the need to put in many hours. These factors may all contribute to a counselor's perception of his or her work environment and may in turn serve to protect from or lead to burnout. It has also been indicated that professionals with more years of work experience are more resistant to burnout (Lim, Kim, Yang, & Lee, 2010). In a school setting, counselors may find that role conflict, large caseloads, expectations to perform noncounseling duties that lessen available time for direct services, and the need to understand and adapt to ever changing laws and regulations are contributing factors to burnout as well (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014).

Counselors working with a team may find that the relationships they form with coworkers have an impact on their feelings towards work and their ability to provide effective

and ethical services. Opportunities to collaborate and share workloads with other counselors offers a chance to share responsibility while working with another professional who can directly relate to the issues and stresses that their specific job entails. Speaking with someone who understands the duties and responsibilities of a counselor can also provide an outlet for any negative feelings and thoughts without fear of judgment. The benefits of a close and positive working relationship with administration and supervisors cannot be overlooked. Research by Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema (2005) found that counselors who believed themselves to have a good relationship with their supervisor were less likely to suffer from burnout. They also found that, despite working conditions that may otherwise lead to burnout, counselors who were given independence at work, were provided with feedback about their performance, or received support from colleagues were also far less likely to burn out (Bakker et al., 2005). Though there are many job-related factors that may contribute to counselor burnout it is important to note that external and personal factors may also lead to stress, fatigue, overextension, negative self-perception, and other beliefs and feelings known to increase the likelihood of burnout.

**Self-Care**

The American Counseling Association (ACA) code of ethics states that, to practice counseling and serve clients effectively and ethically, a counselor must "engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being" (ACA, 2014, p. 8). Counselors in school settings must, according to the 2016 ASCA Ethical Standards, "partake in professional development opportunities, be attuned to their own physical and mental wellness, seek necessary supports, and seek consultation from other professionals as needed" (ASCA, 2016, p. 7). Self-care practices for counseling professionals are activities and behaviors intended to alleviate the negative experiences, feelings, and reactions

that come from working closely with clients (Williams, Richardson, Moore, Gambrel, & Keeling, 2010). These actions are not to be seen as indulgences, but rather as purposeful necessary measures intended to help counselors best meet the needs of their clients.

### Counseling Professionals.

As mentioned above, an effective counselor is key to meaningful and impactful work with clients. If a counselor is burning out or is unable to fully connect with clients, little progress may be made, rapport may be damaged, and clients may feel that they are not being treated ethically. Beyond a counselor's skillset, theoretical background, and training is their overall wellness. Wellness, here used as a holistic term, provides counselors with a foundation for work that encourages clients to build, fix, and maintain their own wellness and health. Counselors act as guides and models for their clients and may find that nonverbal actions and behaviors such as not attending to one's physical health, not setting healthy boundaries, and not fully engaging when face-to-face with a client may result in a message that is just as strong as those shared verbally. Examining, rating, and maintaining wellness is not something a counselor can do on occasion, but is a process that must be continued throughout their careers (Venart, Vassos & Pitcher-Heft, 2007). When viewed this way, a counselor's self-care practice becomes just as vital as a strong educational background or desire to help others

### Types.

Self-care looks different for each person. The practices, beliefs, and behaviors that serve to support one counselor will likely not be entirely helpful for another. Despite the innumerable ways in which a counselor can support his or her wellbeing, self-care as a general topic can be narrowed down into several categories. For the sake of this research, this paper will focus on

self-care practices in four categories: emotional, physical, mental, and social. Emotional self-care will refer to actions and practices that help a counselor to identify their emotions, notice changes in how they are feeling, accept negative emotions in a healthy manner and maintain emotional stability. Physical self-care will refer to practices that allow counselors to be aware of and maintain physical bodily fitness. Mental self-care will focus on practices that encourage counselors to consider their mental health, their coping skills, and the ways in which they process and view the demands of the counseling profession. Social self-care will center on the ways that counselors can maintain their well-being through interactions with others.

**Self- Care as a Mitigating Factor to Burnout**

### Emotional.

The idea of mindfulness as an emotional self-care practice has become increasingly popular in recent years. Mindfulness practices encourage individuals to take part in deeper level introspection, offering counselors a chance to connect with their own emotions, examine their emotional health, identify areas in need of additional support, and take active steps towards improvement. This opportunity for emotional awareness, combined with the fact that mindfulness practices place extreme importance on consciousness and awareness in the present moment as well as concentrating on sensations, thoughts, and emotions without judgment or filter, it is thought to be especially useful in allowing counselors to de-stress and center themselves when the mind feels chaotic or overwhelmed. Christopher and Maris (2010), in *Counseling and Psychotherapy Research,* set out to examine the impacts of mindfulness practices such as meditation, Qi Gong, and yoga on counselor burnout. After conducting qualitative research, the authors reported several favorable participant responses. Student participants, after completing a mindfulness course, reported physical, emotional and

interpersonal changes. Notably, yoga participants reported an increase in mental clarity and concentration, meditation participants reported an increase in emotional awareness and management as well as an increased sense of relaxation, and Qi Gong participants reported increased energy. In relation to work, participants reported being more comfortable with silence, more aware of the therapy process, and a shift in the way they viewed therapy. Students also reported that they became less fearful of being incompetent, increased self-trust, and a greater ability to tolerate ambiguity in session. Though findings appear positive, the authors note that qualitative research does not provide a clear idea of the magnitude of results and suggest that future quantitative research could further validate findings (Christopher & Maris, 2010). Though not concrete, mindfulness can provide additional support to professionals seeking to lessen the strains of burnout.  Counselors who are mindful of leaving work at the office and of creating a work/ personal life divide may find that this helps remove stress outside of the job and provides some relief at the end of each day.

**Mental.**

Mental self-care differs from emotional in that, rather than highlighting emotional wellness and striving for emotional stability, it encourages counselors to take part in practices that bring focus to mental health, coping skills and strategies, mental focus, organization, and the ways in which they understand and ultimately respond to the demands of the counseling profession. A counselor who is mentally healthy is insightful, able to focus, aware of how their thoughts impact and are influenced by their reality and is capable of changing thoughts and attitudes to combat negative thinking patterns and increase mental stamina (Venart et al., 2007).

Remaining energized and focused can be difficult when faced with some responsibilities associated with the counseling profession. Professionals can remain stimulated by challenging

themselves to continue learning. This may include furthering their education within the counseling profession but could also be as simple as picking up a new hobby or skill that will provide an additional outlet for stress over time. Despite one's mental focus and motivation, the serious topics shared by clients and coworkers can take a serious toll on a counselor's mindset. It may be easier to fixate on the pain and suffering of clients rather than on the good that is in their lives. To avoid being discouraged, counselors may attempt to reframe their thoughts and remind themselves of positive and uplifting memories and results. Coaston (2017) suggests keeping physical reminders of positive outcomes, notes of gratitude, and personal and professional successes in one specific place where they can be easily accessed in times of need.

Activities such as writing and journaling may act as a method of identifying one's concerns, organizing thoughts and worries, and externalizing potentially painful feelings without a need to share them verbally with another. By putting words to paper, a counselor is able to permit their own struggles, express their thoughts freely, and keep a physical record that can be referred to in the future if the need arises. Writing can be mindful or mindless, organized or chaotic. It can be kept to oneself or shared with another. Though simply writing thoughts down may not be helpful for all, the innumerable alternatives to traditional journaling suggest that there may well be a method of self-expression for everyone (Coaston, 2017).

It would be ill advised to discuss counselor mental self-care practices without mentioning the importance of receiving help when it is needed. This may simply mean creating and maintaining strong collaborative relationships where thoughts and feelings may be freely shared but could also extend to counselor's receiving their own mental health treatment from a professional counselor. At times a counselor may find that they are in need of help from someone who understands in a way few others could. In situations like these, reaching out for

help and taking steps to maintain a healthy mind helps not only the counselor, but his and her clients and loved ones as well.

**Physical.**

Physical wellness is important to counseling professionals because a lack of care in this area can lead to additional stress, exhaustion, physical pain, and mental and emotional dysregulation. Common focuses when considering physical self-care include but are not limited to monitoring and maintaining physical wellness, maintaining a sense of calm in the body, ensuring adequate sleep, eating nutritious meals, and participating in physical activity (Venart et al., 2007). As noted above, physical activities such as yoga and Qi Gong often result in benefits to a counselor's overall health. Activities such as running, walking, swimming, or hiking may also have similar effects. Physically, activities such as these may result in increased energy, stamina, and decreased physical pain from a job that often involves sitting for large portions of the day. Mentally, they may increase feelings of happiness, may provide a needed break from focus on one's work, and provide opportunities for self-reflection and noticing the physical state of one's body. Regular exercise, combined with adequate sleep, allows a body to reset and recharge overnight to prepare for the next day. Insufficient rest increases the likelihood of illness, leads to poor decision making, and decreases self-control (Venart et al., 2007).

When it comes to eating for health, the needs of each individual will differ according to factors such as age, gender, activity level, and other potential health needs. To maintain physical wellness through nutrition, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)recommend that an individual maintain "overall healthy eating patterns, including vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, protein foods, and oils—eaten within an appropriate calorie level and in forms with limited amounts of saturated

fats, added sugars, and sodium" (USDA, 2015, p. 36). It is important to note that the benefits of

adequate nutrition cannot be expected from supplemental sources such as caffeine and sugary

processed foods.

**Social.**

Social relationships are often identified as being key factors in the improvement and

enrichment of one's life. According to Myers and Sweeney (2004) "isolation, alienation, and

separation from others generally are associated with all manner of poor health conditions and

greater susceptibility to premature death, while social support remains in multiple studies as the

strongest identified predictor of positive mental health over the lifespan" (Myers & Sweeney,

2004, p. 4). Caring for oneself from a social perspective depends a great deal on personal

preferences, schedules, and needs and may include the formation and maintenance of romantic

relationships, friendships, relationships with family members, relationships formed with

colleagues, and supervisory relationships. Healthy relationships with family and friends are often

viewed to have a buffering effect on burnout. However, as reported by Venart et al. (2007), these

relationships may suffer and break apart if those involved are no longer able to listen and

respond to each other in a supportive manner (Venart et al., 2007). For this reason, it is important

that counselors put energy into spending time with the people who are important to them and

communicate their needs to those they view as supports. It is important to note that when

discussing family as a source of social support, the terms does not strictly refer to those related

through blood or marriage but can also refer to individuals who are considered family regardless

of relation (Myers & Sweeney, 2004).

Collaborating with colleagues and peers who also work in the helping professions offers counselors a chance to work together and share some of the emotional weight of the job. According to Barlow and Phelan (2007), these relationships encourage those involved to learn from each other, combine talents and strengths, and grow and develop along with an ever-changing profession. Opportunities for colleague support may occur during the work day, but sources also suggest the formation of peer support groups for the specific purpose of sharing struggles, successes, and providing support (Barlow & Phelan, 2007; Venart et al., 2007). As discussed above, support within the workplace does not always come solely from other employees but may come from supervisors as well. Research by Evans and Payne (2008) found that several New Zealand school counselors reported that supervisor support was vital to their wellbeing while others felt that the input from colleagues was sufficient. As not all positions will include supervision, Venart et al. (2007) suggest counselors seek supervision from a knowledgeable and qualified outside source.

## Discussion

The concepts of counselor burnout and counselor self-care are multifaceted, difficult to separate, and highly individual. What leads to burnout for one counselor could leave another unaffected and adequate care practices for one may be insufficient or ineffective for another. Though several ideas for self-care were mentioned above, it is important to remember that there are many more ways in which an individual can care for themselves and help to support their personal and professional growth and success. An area of self-care not mentioned above but still worthy of note is that of spiritual care. Spiritual self-care refers to a counselor's beliefs about their spiritual selves, that is, "the capacity and tendency present in all human beings to find and construct meaning about life and existence and to move toward personal growth, responsibility,

and relationship with others" (Myers & Williard, 2003, p.149). Often these beliefs are supported through social support networks such as religious communities, but can also be connected to through meditation, physical activity, time spent in nature, and other personal practices. When it comes to identifying the potential for burnout and implementing self-care practices that may have a buffering effect, it is vital to remember that this is not a one-time process but rather a continuous process that should be evaluated, repeated, and changed as a counselor grows, changes jobs, or encounters new challenges in life. Burnout is a serious concern for those in the helping professions. It not only impacts individuals on a personal level, but carries over to relationships, work life, and can seriously impact the people who depend on them for services and care. For this reason, counselor self-care is an ethical requirement that helps to ensure that counselors are able to provide the best care possible to their clients while caring for themselves as well.

## Author's Note

Self-care is a concept that has hovered in the back of my mind since my time as an undergraduate student majoring in psychology. The fact that self-care practices differ wildly between individuals was fascinating to me and I became focused on creating a routine for myself that would help support me as an individual and as a counselor. Through my time in the Winona State counseling program I have had an opportunity to see firsthand what burnout looks like in a counselor. I have seen how it impacts their lives both personally and professionally and have considered at length the impact it can have on their clients as well. Knowing that I was about to enter a profession where burnout is a very real possibility further motivated me to examine the ways in which I care for myself and, in turn, care for others.

When considering the topic for this paper, I encountered an article on self-care in a magazine that shifted the way I viewed my personal practices. Personally, self-care used to mean getting adequate sleep, eating nourishing meals, staying hydrated, and partaking in activities that were enjoyable and could be considered treats or rewards. After reading this article, which aimed to switch views of self-care from an indulgence to a discipline, I began looking at activities that, while obviously beneficial, were also hard work. Since encountering this piece, my personal thoughts on self-care have not changed, but the ways in which I strive to ensure that I care for myself have. I pay closer attention to what I am doing, I aim for more exercise and movement, and I don't let myself opt out of activities that are good for me simply because I don't enjoy them. I have also begun logging and keeping a journal of my self-care practices and reflecting on how they impact me day to day both mentally and physically. In the end, my interest in this topic has brought my own personal self-care to the forefront of my thoughts during my time in our program, especially during the fulfillment of practicum and internship and I feel that my research has helped me to hone my own practices and create a plan that will help to sustain me once I have graduated and joined the workforce.

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