

@ Home

Soul Care Transcript

Episode 2

Brooke:

In this episode of at home, we will discuss how we can promote mental well-being in long term care communities with elders, staff and ourselves through something we call soul care. Judy Miller, RN, pastor and PEAK consultant is here to help us break down what types of soul care there are, how a self-care relates to person-centered care, and how to get started in practicing mental well-being and the value of taking care of your own mental health as a caregiver.

If you or somebody you know is struggling mental health issues, you're not alone. In the description of this podcast, you can find a list of resources so that you or someone you know can seek help.

Judy, are you ready?

Judy:

Yeah, thanks, Brooke. It's good to be here today to talk about an important topic but often forgotten. The stress and change of the last year and a half take intentional work to maintain a sense of well-being. Stress and burnout rates are at an all-time high for workers in long term care communities. Self-care is vital for building resilience towards stressors in life that you can't eliminate. When we take steps to care for our mind, body and soul, you'll be able to live your best life. When we care well for ourselves, it enhances our ability to care for our families, and to care for those who depend on us in the workplace. Unfortunately, however, many of us view self-care as a luxury rather than a priority. Consequently, they're left feeling overwhelmed, tired, and ill equipped to handle life's inevitable challenges. It's typical for individuals working in a field that focuses on caring for others to unintentionally neglect themselves. We all know the importance of self-care. It's the concept which involves taking care of yourself so that you can be healthy, do your job and support friends and loved ones is imperative for your overall well-being it is essential to living a long and fulfilled life.

Brooke:

Yeah, I really agree with that Judy. I think that we can all agree that this year has not been easy, and especially on caregivers and people who work in long term care and just people in general. And yeah, I think self-care gets overlooked in many ways. And it's difficult to even decide like what kind of self-care is and what's important for you and how it can work in your daily life.

I'm wondering what are some areas that are important in self-care?

Judy:

Well, one of the areas is physical self-care, and that includes how you're fueling your body, how much sleep you're getting, how much physical activity you're doing, and how well you're caring for your physical needs, and that includes your medical needs. Physical health is more than just exercise. And there's various ways to stay active outside of a dedicated exercise time. Look for ways that are part of your usual routine, such as maybe taking the steps instead of an elevator,

parking in the further a spot, or it may be simply taking time to schedule that much needed doctor's appointment. When it comes to physical self-care ask yourself the following questions to assess whether there might be some areas in your life that might need to be improved.

Such as, are you getting adequate sleep?

Is what you eat or your diet fueling your body well?

Are you taking charge of your medical health needs?

And are you getting enough physical activity or exercise?

Another area is social self-care, because socialization is key. But often it's hard to make time for friends and it's easy to neglect your relationships when life gets busy. There are four patterns of belonging that are important to us. The public belonging is those who we have identity with example is like being part of the Kansas City Chief's Kingdom. You have T-shirts and clothes that look alike, cheer for the same team and we have something in common to talk about. The social connection is where we begin to share snippets of our life with others testing to who we want to develop a deeper relationship. In personal belonging we begin to start sharing some of the private experiences and feelings and thoughts. People in our personal space are considered our close friends that we start to live life with. Healthy individuals have an intimate belonging with a few individuals in which we share our most private experiences, feelings and thoughts. These people know all there is to know about us. They maybe even know us better than we know ourselves. Close connections are important to your well-being. The best way to cultivate and maintain these close relationships is to put time and energy into building them. There isn't a certain number of hours you should devote to your friends, or work, or to work on your relationships, everyone has slightly different social needs. The key is to figure out what your social needs are and to build enough time into your schedule to create an optimal social life that meets your needs to belong, your needs to be known and cared for by others. To assess your social self-care, consider these questions.

Are you getting enough face to face time with your friends?

What are you doing to nurture your relationship with friends and family?

Do you have one or two people in your life that you can be honest with and who love and accept you for who you are?

The way you think and the things that you're filling your mind with will greatly infuse influence your psychosocial well-being. Mental self-care includes doing things that keep your mind sharp, like puzzles, or learning about a subject that fascinates you, you might find reading books, or watching movies that inspire you, fuels your mind. Mental self-care also involves doing things that help you stay mentally healthy. Practicing self-compassion, and acceptance, for example, helps you maintain this healthier inner dialogue. Here are a few questions to consider when you think about your mental self-care.

Are you making enough time for activities that mentally stimulate you?

Are you doing proactive things that help you stay mentally healthy?

Brooke

Yeah. What is soul care and how does it differ from self-care?

Judy

That's a good question. We talked about self-care and offered some self-evaluating thoughts, and they are important. But sometimes in practice, it feels like some of those things are just going to make me busier when I don't need one more thing to do. So, there is more to self-care than wine spritzers and bubble baths. There's more to your mind, body and being than nutrition, exercise and fitness. So that's where soul care comes in. Encouragement to practice, self-care is often ineffective, without understanding our inner self, understanding of secondary trauma or other internal barriers. Soul care is the act of caring for and getting in touch with your spiritual and emotional self, or to put it in another way, soul care is a general restoration of your mental well-being. You need to feed not just your mind and body but your spirit. Nurturing our spirit, however, doesn't have to involve religion. It can involve around anything that helps you develop a deeper sense of meaning, understanding and connection. We all have this desire to connect with something that that is bigger than ourselves. So, while self-care is care for our physical body, soul care is asking ourselves how are you and waiting long enough for your recent highs and lows to respond with a reflection of your inner self. It is listening to your feelings and responding carefully and thoughtfully. It's knowing your limitations and nurturing your needs. Those who practice soul care take time to reflect inward. They make both a space and a place to care for themselves. And a major aspect of soul care involves asking yourself tough questions. Those who practice this form of self-compassion and acceptance, don't just resign to their fate. They explore their feelings and get to the root of the problem. It's being aware of what triggers you, what triggers emotions, and asking the deeper question of why is that happening in me. Soul cares for all people, it's not just for those who feel weak or who are spiritually oriented, secondary trauma, the emotional and psychological toll of hearing or seeing another person's experience firsthand can affect us. And this past couple years caregivers have experienced such trauma, seeing how COVID negatively affected the elders that that you care for and the choices that you once were empowered to provide for them have been taken away.

Brooke:

Judy, I know in one of the first parts you said caring for yourself is more than wine spritzers and bubble baths, which is really nice sometimes, but there is more to your mind, body, and well-being than that. How could someone incorporate this soul care into their everyday lives other than wine spritzers and bubble baths?

Judy:

Okay, well, we'll cover - give you a few thoughts into that. You can read literature on soul care; many books can help walk you through the process. Meditative practices can help you look inward, particularly guided meditations. And you can work with a life coach or a therapist. Faith based leaders are also great for general guidance, oversight and support. Soul care looks different for all of us. Journaling is one practice that I have found very helpful. It is an intentional time before the rush of the day to pause, to create space to listen and reflect. It gets a creative space to write down my deep feelings, my anxieties, my prayers. I also find this time very helpful to reflect on the day that's ahead of me, what needs to be accomplished, who am I meeting with and the places that I need to be. This intentional focus, it really helps me have space to write down a strategy that guides the priorities for my day. One simple practice, that can be helpful is making a list of the things that you are grateful for in your life and this can help you start thinking about focusing on what you have and what's going right in your life. Our minds can get so full of negativity and focusing on what we don't have, and the lack and problems in our life. So, this

phrase comes to me as, what you focus on is what you get. For some of us, our inability to love ourselves, makes us our own worst enemy. Learning to receive the love that God of the universe has for us. And learning to love ourselves can be very difficult. An important aspect of authentic self-love is self-forgiveness. As uncomfortable as it is, sometimes that means actually sitting down and writing out the things that you need to forgive yourself for, all the things that are holding you back, the things that are keeping you awake at night. So just identifying those things and writing them down on paper can help you identify them and maybe give you a peace of mind. A helpful symbolic symbol, can of getting rid of those things you can actually like tear up your list and throw it away or burn it. So yeah, every time you catch yourself talking, talking down to yourself, try to replace that with a positive thought that you believe to be true, or look for an opportunity to learn and grow. For instance, if you find yourself frustrated with a task at work, and it's evolving into this negative self-talk, like I'm not smart enough for this, reroute those thoughts into something more like: What can I learn from these roadblocks? Where can I grow? Similarly, when inevitable negative thoughts about others come up-no matter how they arise- try interrupting those thoughts with more gentle, positive perspectives. Showing love, patience, and understanding to others will help you do that same thing for yourself. So however soul care looks for you, in your quest to be your best self, don't forget to do the work on your soul because that's where personal transformation and being a happy, healthy self begins.

Brooke:

Thank you, Judy, for taking the time to join our podcast @ Home and for sharing your knowledge on soul care and self-care. Taking care of yourself mentally is just as important as taking care of yourself physically. What Judy touched on today doesn't just apply to person-centered care and long-term care communities. Soul care is important for improving the mental health of us each individually so that we can continue to live our best lives and do the things that we love to do. If you have topics or questions you want us to talk about or answer send us an email. Be watching for another podcast in October!

Resources:

[Caregiver Self-Assessment Questionnaire](#)

National Suicide Prevention Hotline:

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

1-800-273-8255

Spanish Speaking: 1-888-628-9454

For Deaf & Hard of Hearing: 1-800-799-4889

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline:

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Crisis Text Line:

To reach a crisis counselor, text Kansas to 741741.