

BEYOND SELF CARE: CREATING HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ADVOCACY ENVIRONMENTS AND PRACTICES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Advocates for survivors of violence in a legal setting face many harrowing challenges and frustrations. It is difficult to see the impact of violence, watch survivors struggle with poverty, lack of resources, and isolation. Working in the court setting can also cause advocates to feel powerless at times. How can advocates remain healthy in this context, especially during Covid-19 isolation? Many of us have been told to breathe or take a bath when we are stressed out, but these can feel like tiny solutions to a larger problem.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR SELF CARE:

- **Pace Yourself.** Don't fall into the trap of trying to do too much to the point where you can't help anyone, you are not in this work alone.
- **Leaving Work at Work.** Find your own way to separate your work and home life, to make sure that you have time to decompress.
- **Mindful Self-Compassion.** When encountered by negative self-talk, be conscious of it, acknowledge the reality of the issue, and consciously replace the negative self-talk with a positive one.
- **Transparency.** When you feel overwhelmed, be clear with your coworkers and supervisors about what kind of validation and support you need.
- **Know Your Limits.** Don't feel bad or afraid about referring clients. Be real with survivors about your availability, there is no way that advocates can be available 24 hours a day.



ADVOCATES ON THE WEBINAR SAID:

- Be intentional about your time and space. Create a designated space for work and establish rituals around beginning and ending of work time.
- Have an accountability partner. Whether it's a close friend or colleague, helping to hold each other accountable for practicing self care can make it easier to commit to.
- If it can be done safely, meet up with other advocates or friends from work to destress and spend time intentionally discussing topics outside of work.

Working from home can be a contributing factor for frustration, isolation, and other mental health issues. Use these strategies to help curate a sustainable self care practice.

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Some advocates said they were feeling more drained at the end of the day than when they were working in their offices, and said they wished managers were more flexible with remote work.

Advocates shared some of the things they wish will be maintained going forward, including the four-day workweek, and continuing to establish connections with advocates in different spaces via Zoom.

Improving our working from home environment is crucial! Some ideas for doing this include: having rituals for starting and ending work (such as lighting a candle, playing a song, etc.), going for a walk or a bike ride at the end of the day, low lighting in the office. It's about shifting our mindset and being intentional!



SPOTLIGHT

There are many apps available today that can help you curate a sustainable self care practice. Some examples are: Calm, Aura, Insight Timer, and Relax Melodies.

These are just a few of the available apps. Explore the various options and determine which may be most helpful for you.

STRATEGIES FOR SELF CARE

- Self-Regulation Exercises
 - Do breathing exercises such as belly breathing or square breathing.
 - Expand your gaze
 - Relax your face and jaw
 - Practice 5 sense mindfulness by noticing 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can touch, and 1 thing you can smell.
- Practice Gratitude
 - What am I grateful for? How does my work impact this feeling?
 - Writing down your gratitudes or keeping a gratitude journal have been shown to increase resiliency in individuals.
- Well-being activities
 - Practice cardio 3 times a week for 30 min or break it in to smaller chunks.
 - Do integrative activities that require your focus such as yoga, puzzles, or writing.
 - Find joy inducing activities such as gardening, hiking, or playing with kids.