



FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Caregiver Self-Care

**DEB GEE, LMFT
DECEMBER 2024**

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Intro & Housekeeping

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Training overview

- What is “self-care”?
- Trauma & trauma & vicarious trauma
- Our nervous system
- Regulation & co-regulation
- Mindset
- Dimensions of Self
- Ideas & Plans
- Q&A

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Let's start this off right...

- pinky toe awareness exercise
- smell the flower, blow out the candle exercise

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What is “self-care”

- the *conscious* act of doing something that we know will improve our mental/spiritual/physical state, allowing us to better remain engaged and present in life
- basically a fancy way to manage stress by increasing resilience
- be sure it’s something that supports your nervous system, not just something you do to escape from the present

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Self-care, continued

- oxygen mask analogy
- it is a skill, so it can be learned and improved upon
- it is easier to learn, and therefore use in adulthood, when modeled for us as children

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Self-care, continued

- practice it regularly
- normalize it in your household
- once it's second nature, you can access it even when emotionally triggered **this is the ultimate goal**

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Trauma & trauma

- external events or conditions that overwhelm our nervous system, making us able only to protect ourselves rather than problem-solve in the moment
- trauma response is maladaptive now, but it wasn't then
- "big T" vs "little t" trauma

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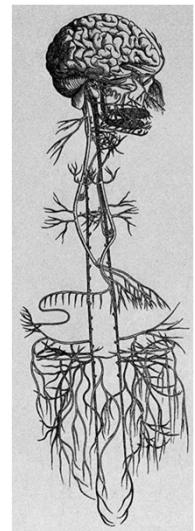
Vicarious trauma

- sometimes referred to as “secondary trauma”
- it feels a lot like compassion fatigue or burnout
- anyone can “catch” it but past trauma makes it likely

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Our nervous system

- determines how safe it is to be vulnerable in any and all environments
- the opposite of vulnerability is defensiveness
- is primal, conditioned over time and usually unconscious
- literally reduces our ability to do much but protect ourselves



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Our nervous system, continued

- trauma survivors often have difficulty regulating and may fight, flight or freeze in response to smaller amounts of stress
- if you have personally experienced trauma and/or you have experienced secondary trauma, self-care and regulation may not feel natural and you may struggle to do it

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Regulation

- what does it mean to be “regulated”?
- it is the state in which a person can access all of their skills and resources so they can think, feel and communicate most effectively in the moment
- the more you do it, the easier it becomes
- the physiological experience of being regulated can be very uncomfortable for people who have not been supported in it

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Co-Regulation

- co-regulation is when one regulated nervous system helps another to calm and function at it's best
- children, in particular, need us to help them regulate
- emotion regulation is not an automatic process :(
- teach, model, normalize

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Controlling your child's
behavior is not indicative
of good parenting.

Regulating your own
behavior - despite your
child's - is.

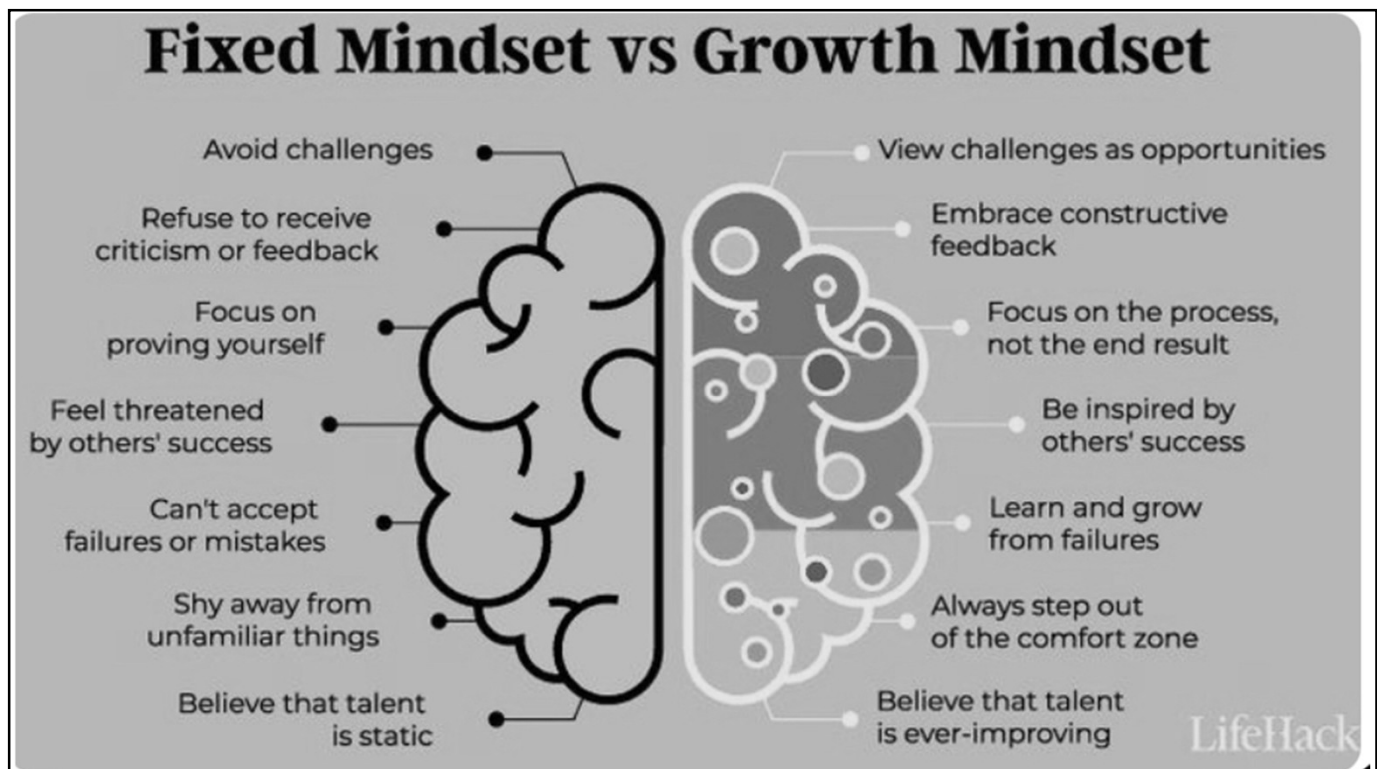
a place  within me

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When's a good time to self-care?

- have something(s) you do daily for yourself
- have something(s) you do weekly or monthly
- have something(s) you do annually or on a regular schedule otherwise
- ultimately being able to do this in the present moment

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Self-care of your wholeness in all dimensions: Physical

- see medical professionals for preventative and follow up care
- get enough sleep
- take prescription meds, vitamins/supplements as appropriate
- limit use of caffeine, alcohol, weed, etc.

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Self-care of your wholeness in all dimensions: Mental

- learn new things
- build routines
- organize your space
- organize your day
- challenge harmful and unhelpful thoughts

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Self-care of your wholeness in all dimensions: Emotional

- have a small number of people you trust to reach out to when having a particularly tough day
- practice more self-regulation skills
- go to therapy
- learn the function and vocabulary of emotions

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Self-care of your wholeness in all dimensions: Spiritual

- practice in a way that helps you feel more connected and grounded
- find like-minded people who model the way you would like to be
- get out in to nature, really observe it
- pray and/or meditate

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Things to remember about self-care

- some is better than none, more is better than some
- what works for one person, may work less, or not at all, for another person
- what works for you may change over time and circumstance

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Things to remember about self-care, continued

- figure out things you need to do alone, with your partner and with the family
- communicate regularly about where you are in your regulation, asking others as well (make this a natural part of family life)
- encourage one another to take the time to care for themselves and reinforce this by modeling it

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Some self-care ideas

- looking at photos
- planning next vacation/outting
- practicing karate, judo, yoga etc.
- getting dressed up
- drawing or painting
- playing an instrument

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Self-care ideas, continued

- watching movies, tv shows, YouTube
- listening to music or podcasts
- spending time in nature
- connect with your network (the person kind)
- look at the stars
- spend time with pets

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Self-care ideas, continued

- notice or document things you are grateful for
- sing
- do breathing and mindfulness exercises
- stretch
- garden
- declutter

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Let's practice: self-regulation

- 5/4/3/2/1 (sight/sound/feel/smell/taste)
- box breathing exercise
- mindfully in the moment

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Are there any self-care/regulation stories you'd like to share?

Would you like to set an intention to become more conscious of your state and to do more self-care?

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Questions & Answers

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**WE JUST WANT TO SAY...
THANK YOU!**

Website: www.redwoods.edu/foster

Facebook: Foster/Kinship Care Education Program-College of the Redwoods

Phone: (707) 476-4455

Email: foster-kinship@redwoods.edu

Thank you!

Feel free to contact me: debgeemft@gmail.com