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Practicing what we preach: Self-Care as an avenue for effective practice

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Abstract

Sport psychology practitioners face unique challenges associated with the nature of their profession, resulting in potential negative consequences to their personal and professional wellbeing. To engage in a positive professional experience, practitioners must learn how to face and overcome these challenges, by developing a clear understanding of their self-care needs and integrating effective self-care practices in their lives. Scholars have recently developed a sport psychology specific definition of Self-Care which forms the basis of the recommendations made in this chapter about why self-care is important for SPPs, how self-care works, why intended outcomes of self-care are important from the outset, the barriers sport psychology practitioners may face, and practitioners may choose to develop and engage in a self-care plan.

Practicing what we preach: Self-Care as an avenue for effective practice

Introduction

As sport psychology practitioners (SPPs), we dedicate our working hours to facilitating our clients' thriving in the pursuit of performance (Poczwardowski, 2019). To continue providing effective and ethical psychological support, practitioners may consider learning to tend to their wellbeing, with an intention toward thriving and subsequent professional performance (McCormack et al., 2015). The following chapter will make a case for the importance of self-care for SPPs, including the embedding of self-care into the foundation of ethical professional practice. As will be explored later, it is impossible to be prescriptive in the types of self-care activities practitioners should engage in. Instead, in this chapter, we will explore the nuanced challenges of the SPP environment, how these nuances affect self-care needs, and the barriers to practicing self-care that practitioners may experience. The nascent research in this area has begun to explore the mechanisms that underpin effective self-care practices, so we will delve into how these findings may be applied when developing a self-care plan. For the most part, the work we present in the chapter is grounded in scholarly efforts aimed to be globally and culturally inclusive, however we recognise that the existing knowledge is heavily grounded in Westernized worldviews. For this reason, we believe it is paramount to highlight how cultural SPPs' context and background and their cultural intersectionality play an important role in the individual conceptualization of self-care as well as in the implementation of their self-care practices (readers are referred to Chapter 12 for further guidance on broaching culture and diversity in sport, exercise and performance psychology practice). Above all, in this chapter we aim to make it clear to neophyte and experienced practitioners alike that the payoff associated with effective self-care is worth the conscious and purposeful endeavor.

Sport Psychology's Unique Challenges

The work of psychology practitioners is associated with both personal (e.g., emotional exhaustion) and professional (e.g., impairment) challenges (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004). These challenges may negatively impact an individual's personal and professional wellbeing if they are unable to manage or prepare for them effectively. Consequently, this may negatively influence SPPs' professional effectiveness (Cropley et al., 2010; 2016).

Evidence suggests that due to a complex interplay of workplace conditions and stressors (Acker, 2012), mental health practitioners experience a variety of career-related challenges (Malinowski, 2014), ranging from relationship difficulties to psychological isolation and loneliness (Norcross & VandenBos, 2018), as well as emotional exhaustion (Baker, 2003; Rupert & Dorociak, 2019). While SPPs experience some of the same career-related stressors as "traditional" mental health practitioners, they also face additional unique professional challenges. These challenges include SPPs' roles (e.g., dual relationships, scientist-practitioner), non-traditional working environments (e.g., hotel lobbies, during air travel) and conditions (e.g., quick meetings during breaks or within fast-paced competition), and ambiguous ethical and professional boundaries (e.g., room sharing on extended trips). These demands differentiate the professional experience of SPPs from those experienced by mental health professionals working in more traditional environments (Andersen et al. 2001; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019; Stapleton et al., 2010; Waumsley et al., 2010).

Self-Care Is Our Responsibility

Similar to other psychology practitioners, SPPs are mandated by the ethical guidelines of their profession to maintain the highest ethical standards (Barnett et al., 2007) while reaching their fullest potential (Knapp et al., 2017). Given that the neglect of pursuing professional mandates would be unethical, it is incumbent on practitioners to engage in self-care practices that promote personal and professional wellbeing (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). Practitioners who fail to care for their wellbeing could experience higher

levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Butler et al., 2017; Santana & Fouad, 2017), while also potentially engaging in practices that are harmful to their clients (e.g., abandonment), themselves (e.g., addictive behaviors), and possibly the profession (e.g., loss of competence; Barnett et al., 2007).

For this reason, practitioners must assume the personal and professional responsibility to develop and maintain their own wellness (e.g., Venart et al., 2007) and to engage in self-care as an ethical imperative (e.g., Norcross & VandenBos, 2018; Wise et al., 2012). Additionally, engaging in self-care may protect practitioners from negative outcomes whilst fostering personal flourishing and promoting good practice outcomes (Wise et al., 2012; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). For practitioners who do engage in self-care, evidence suggests that they are more likely to experience greater wellbeing (Colman et al., 2016). This may be a result of lower levels of stress and negative affect; combined with higher levels of positive affect, flourishing, self-rated academic and clinical performance (Zahniser et al., 2017), compassion satisfaction (Butler et al., 2017), quality of life (Goncher et al., 2013) and professional wellbeing and practice outcomes (Rupert & Dorociak, 2019).

Although the construct of self-care has received considerable attention within general psychology literature (e.g., Baker, 2003; Dorociak et al., 2017), the body of research detailing how SPPs experience self-care is still relatively young (Quartioli, Etzel, et al., 2019). An initial exploration of the self-care construct in globally situated SPPs recently provided novel insights into how SPPs understand and experience self-care (Quartioli, Etzel, et al., 2019). According to these initial findings, self-care can be described as grounded in one's values and characterized by the engagement in activities aimed to support physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and social health. While these results offer an initial understanding of self-care in the context of the sport psychology profession, they do fall short of providing a coherent and shared definition of the construct.

Understanding Self-Care for Sport Psychologists

While there is emerging evidence that SPPs generally perceive self-care to be important in their professional and personal lives, the lack of a clear conceptualisation of self-care has limited the ability of researchers to advance our understanding of self-care in SPP populations (Dorociak et al., 2017; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019). To contribute to the development of a clear and coherent conceptualization of self-care within the sport psychology context, Quartiroli, Wagstaff, and Thelwell (2021) shared a definition of Sport Psychology Self-Care (SPSC) consensually co-constructed and agreed upon by a panel of globally situated SPPs across the career-span development.

Box 1: Definition of Self-Care

SPSC is the purposeful engagement in activities grounded in one's values. It involves prioritizing, developing, preserving, protecting, monitoring and restoring holistic (i.e., physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and emotional) health, wellbeing and satisfaction with work and life.

(Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021)

This new definition provides a solution to the lack of consensus that existed within the general and sport psychology literature on self-care. This definition does not aim to standardise self-care but instead highlights the rooted individual nature of its practices (and challenges) while providing a shared language to describe self-care. The possibility of a shared language is especially valuable for professional organizations, credentialing bodies, and training programs to contribute to highlighting the value of SPSC for SPPs. At an individual level, clarity on self-care for SPPs will encourage current and future SPPs to focus on proactively engaging in practices that foster their health and wellbeing as foundations of ethical and effective practice.

Core to the newly developed definition of SPSC is the idea that SPSC is grounded in one's values. In addition to highlighting the individual nature of SPSC, the salience of one's values also indicates the importance for SPPs to reflect upon and explore their values. That self-care should be grounded in one's values impedes the possibility for researchers to prescribe unified and standardized practices and strategies that support SPSC. However, it encourages SPPs to engage in reflective and explorative efforts aimed to develop one's awareness of their own values. The development of such awareness may then represent the foundation for SPPs to explore, develop, and implement practices aimed to support their SPSC, and consequently their wellbeing, health, and potentially professional practice.

Moreover, this sport psychology specific definition highlights how self-care occurs through deliberate engagement in activities aimed at prioritizing, developing, preserving, protecting, monitoring, and restoring one's health, wellbeing, and life satisfaction. While somewhat wordy, these diverse set of foci of self-care are important given the numerous ways self-care relates to positive life outcomes. These foci are not necessarily goals or aims that must be reached concurrently or in a specific order. Instead, they represent the possible reasons to engage in SPSC practices.

Considerations at the Outset

To best foster effective self-care, SPPs need to consider the intention behind incorporating self-care into their lives. The way they choose to approach this bears significance due to what is referred to in the literature as the 'plurality of purpose' of self-care (Quartiroli et al., 2021). Indeed, the purpose of self-care may be to promote good outcomes such as restoring health and wellbeing and improving satisfaction, or it could be to protect against adverse outcomes such as burnout and professional impairment. While the decisions to engage in self-care proactively or reactively are not mutually exclusive, it appears that depending on their stages of professional development, SPPs lean more toward one or the

other. Early career SPPs seem more likely to engage in self-care practices only as a response in the face of adversity and challenge when they already feel tired or are experiencing some form of physical or emotional deficit. Conversely, in the later stages of their professional journey, SPPs report being proactively invested in self-care, developing and maintaining self-care practices and strategies aimed to support their personal and, consequentially, professional journey (Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019). Moreover, in addition to their stage of professional development, it appears that the tendency for SPPs to feel a greater affinity for and to have more experience with the restorative and reactionary role of self-care can be linked to the uncertain and unpredictable nature of professional challenges unique to the early stages of a psychology professional's journey (Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). Engaging in reactive self-care practices can have an important impact in helping SPPs to adjust to their work-life balances (Quartiroli et al., 2021; Waumsley et al., 2010). However, scholars are developing a body of evidence that stresses and highlights the importance of a more proactive exploration, development, and implementation of self-care practices and strategies that serve to foster self-care throughout the entire professional developmental continuum (Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019).

The deliberate decision to engage in self-care is fundamental to the development of effective practice. The intention of the activity must be aimed towards observing, preserving, safeguarding, prioritising, developing, and restoring one's own health, wellbeing, and life satisfaction. For example, neophyte practitioners have described how they prioritised and deliberately engaged in self-care actions that met their daily functioning needs because they attributed those actions as being important to their overall health and wellbeing (Martin et al., 2021). These types of behaviors could include but are not limited to good sleep hygiene, attention to nutrition, regular physical activity, and making time to be in nature. Like the work practitioners perform with the clients they serve, examining one's motivations and what

leads them to the decision to practice (or not practice) certain skills may lead down a myriad of avenues weighing up benefits and challenges. Practitioners understand that here is where some of the most valuable work potentially lies, as this is where there is the space to address mechanisms that no longer work for their clients and create the potential for change.

Applying this in a reflective manner may allow practitioners to do the same for themselves.

Engaging in Self-Care

While it is recognised that SPPs must engage in self-care, both through scholarship (e.g., Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019) and anecdotally, the main questions posed by SPPs are precisely *what is* self-care, *how to* engage in self-care, and *how often* engage in self-care.

While early on in their professional development, SPPs seem to seek out easy-to-follow instructions related to self-care practices, however, self-care does not and cannot work in a prescriptive manner (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021).

Engaging in self-care is a deeply individual endeavor and self-care practices are not universal and cannot be reduced to a finite list, one-size-fits-all, set of prescriptive recommendations. Instead, SPPs are encouraged to look inwards to their own personal values and needs to understand, develop, and implement practices that fit such values and needs. This personal exploration also enables SPPs to engage in practices that will be sustained across their career span and contribute to long-term successful engagement in self-care. Through self-discovery, awareness, and reflection, SPPs can develop a clear understanding of what their values are and consequently develop self-care strategies and practices that align with them. It is only by engaging in this process that SPPs can start conceptualising and developing their self-care plan, and it is only by extending this process throughout one's career span that this plan can be adapted, modified, adjusted, and maintained.

How Does Self-Care Work?

Regardless of the self-care practices and strategies developed and implemented by SPPs, recent research data suggest that effective SPPs' self-care practices are underpinned by a set of foundational mechanisms (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019). Comprised of self-awareness, self-reflection, psychological flexibility, and interconnection of one's self-care practices, these mechanisms serve to build the foundations of self-care practices that are underpinned by an understanding of oneself, an understanding of one's needs in relation to self-care as well as an appreciation for the holistic nature of self-care.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the most salient of these mechanisms as it enables a practitioner to understand their own personal needs and to develop and implement subsequent self-care skills and techniques that serve to meet these needs. Moreover, for the practitioner with established self-care, greater levels of self-awareness may improve their ability to evaluate, and sense-check how aligned their existing self-care practices and personal needs are. Since self-care practices evolve alongside career maturation and the new challenges and demands that may come with that, it is important that not only neophyte practitioners explore their self-awareness to best generate self-care practices that meet their needs, but that SPPs across the career span maintain levels of self-awareness that afford them an insight into in how existing self-care practices meet their evolving needs.

Self-reflection

Self-reflection is the key to integrating all these considerations into a coherent and effective self-care practice. Reflections on one's own personal story, on the purpose of self-care, on core personal values, and our awareness of the self are key to deliberate engagement in effective self-care. Self-reflective exercises allow practitioners to review, plan, and refine their self-care practices and goals. They have been reported by practitioners to hugely influence their understanding and awareness of their self-care needs (Martin et al., 2021), and

some scholars have even discussed the perception of self-reflection as a form of self-care (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2021). It is of paramount importance that practitioners across the career span develop self-reflection and meta self-reflection skills so that they may explore, become aware of, and monitor their own personal values, professional beliefs, and subsequent effective and intentional self-care practice. The first of these steps may be for the practitioners to engage in a deliberate exploration of self and their own journey. While there are a variety of approaches to this practice, we recommend SPPs to engage in a modified version of the McAdams' Life Story (McAdams, 2001). The Life Story Interview promotes self-exploration of authenticity, fundamental beliefs and values, and visions for the future. See Table 1 below.

Grounded in this process of self-exploration, SPPs may choose to engage in reflective exercises focused on developing some clarity about their own individual values. Deliberately engaging in this process of self-reflection may lead SPPs to develop an in-depth understanding of the main values leading their life as well as a greater awareness of their adherence to these values in their day-by-day. Finally, as presented in the definition offered in Box 1, a clear understanding of one's value represents a principal bedrock for the development, implementation, and maintenance of self-care. In Box 2 we offer a few suggestions in terms of reflective questions that may facilitate SPPs to engage in this reflective experience.

Box 2: Reflective questions on Values

What is most important to me?

Am I living in line with my values?

How have my values changed over time?

How are my values integrated into the way I care for myself?

Does my self-care address my holistic health and wellbeing?

Finally, grounded in their newly developed in-depth understanding and awareness of themselves, their journey, and their own values, we encourage SPPs to engage in further reflective exercises focused on their own current approach to self-care. These reflective experiences may also guide the SPP to develop a greater awareness of their engagement in self-care practices and of the challenges and barriers they perceived as hindering their self-care and limiting their engagement in self-care practices (See Box 3).

Box 3: Reflective questioning on self-care

What does self-care mean to me?

What makes self-care important in my journey?

How does self-care fit my life?

How do I embrace self-care?

What is my self-care practice like?

How did it come to be this way?

What aspects would I like to improve?

What nourishes and/or constrains what I do?

Adapted from Anderson et al. (2004)

Psychological flexibility represents another foundational mechanism underpinning effective self-care across a practitioner's career span. Here, we refer to elements of flexibility present in both the practitioner and the self-care plans that they develop. Given the uniqueness of their working lives in comparison to other psychology professionals (Andersen et al., 2001; Stapleton et al., 2010), it is important that SPPs develop and maintain an element of flexibility in experiencing and implementing their self-care practices. For example, SPPs often travel with teams abroad, to training camps or competitions, facing the expectation for them to be always available (Williams & Andersen, 2012). In these situations, it is important for SPPs to anticipate that the same self-care practices that are employed on a weekly basis

cannot be continued whilst working away and that instead, alternative or modified practices may need to be implemented (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019). In such a case, SPPs must then exercise a degree of flexibility in both their thinking toward the likelihood of engaging in their regular self-care and in the formulation of their self-care plan whilst away. A self-care plan that has room to be modified and is adaptable, as well as a SPP who understands the need for such flexibility, is far more likely to experience more positive outcomes for their personal and professional well-being than self-care plans that are rigid or immovable.

Interconnection of one's self-care practices

The final underpinning mechanism of self-care is the interconnection of various self-care skills and techniques. Self-care cannot be effective as one technique or approach in isolation. Rather, several interconnected skills, techniques, or approaches will better serve a SPP in developing a self-care practice that is holistic in nature (Martin et al., 2021). This is not to say that self-care practices must require a multitude of elements, but it is important that self-care practices are varied and tend to the individual's emotional, physical, social, and psychological needs. Simply relying on one single self-care practice may not be sufficient to prepare a practitioner with the requisite resources to conduct their role in an ethical and competent manner (Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). Given the many possibilities and combinations of self-care activities, it is important for SPPs to explore how they select the self-care practice activities that are most relevant to their personal and professional needs and how these practices are implemented in a coherent, holistic, and effective manner.

Barriers to Implementing a Self-Care Plan

While the body of evidence relating to the benefits of developing a self-care practice is compelling, SPPs have reported that there are challenges that hinder the implementation of self-care practices as well as the development of effective self-care plans (Quartiroli, Etzel, et

al., 2019; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). Primarily, extrinsic factors associated with the uniqueness of the sport psychology profession may pose a significant challenge to self-care. Having to seek and remain aware of professional opportunities, coping with unsupportive professional environments, and continually striving to meet clients' expectations and needs make it paramount that SPPs devote time and energy to their self-care (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021).

In addition to the specific professional factors, SPPs may also experience a series of barriers to their self-care that limit their ability to live a healthy lifestyle. Among these hindering factors, SPPs list a lack of personal and professional social support, a lack of time, a lack of self-compassion, and awareness of their own self-care needs. Finally, SPPs also perceive their conscious or unconscious tendency to professionally over-commit, combined with their inability to set reasonable personal and professional boundaries; as hindering to their self-care by sacrificing themselves and their own lives for their professional journey. Similarly, to self-care practices, this list of challenges potentially faced by SPPs, is not meant to be a finite list. SPPs reported encountering most of these challenges at one stage or another. As such, SPPs who are considering exploring their self-care for the first time may use these reports as a way to prepare for possible bumps in the road ahead (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). However, SPPs must engage and sustain the abovementioned self-explorative journey so that, in addition to identify their own most beneficial self-care practices, they can also identify potential unique challenges present in their lives and consequentially adapt these practices

The Payoff

With multiple challenges and barriers to overcome, as well as the deliberate, conscious engagement required for effective self-care, aspiring and neophyte SPPs might wonder if it is worth giving all the necessary effort. The simple conclusion from the research

is yes. Investigations from both general psychology and sport psychology have shown the positive effects of engaging with self-care (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019; Rupert & Dorociak, 2019). SPPs who engage in self-care report greater wellbeing and positive affect in their personal life, as well as improved quality and effectiveness in their professional practice, leading to an improved professional experience. More broadly, engaging in self-care practices is associated with increases in wellbeing, compassion satisfaction, and quality of life and decreases in stress and negative affect (Dorociak et al., 2017; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, et al., 2021; Rupert & Dorociak, 2019).

Despite the many challenges and work-related stressors, most practitioners can manage such pressures well enough to function competently and to ensure for themselves a long-lived and positive career (Quartiroli & Etzel, 2012; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a; 2019b). Scholars have argued that those psychology practitioners able to sustain a long-lasting and effective career have learned to attend to the personal self, as well as the professional one, allowing them to experience their professional journey positively (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013; Tod, 2007). Exploring this parallelism between personal and professional life in SPPs, Quartiroli and colleagues highlighted the inextricably interrelated relationship existing between SPSC and SPPs' professional quality of life (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, et al., 2021). Practitioners along the career development spectrum have described how taking care of themselves is paramount for the enjoyment of their professional experiences, and in not doing so, there is a negative impact on SPPs' ability to embrace their work meaningfully and positively and to provide effective services to their clients (Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, et al., 2021).

The Self-Care Plan

The processes of developing awareness about oneself and their values, about what self-care is in one's life, about what makes engaging in self-care relevant in one's journey,

about identifying the self-care practices that, as grounded in their personal values, would fit the individual SPP's journey, and about the factors limiting their implementation could be brought together in the act of developing a self-care plan.

While it is possible for practitioners to identify different models to develop a self-care plan, as described throughout this chapter, we believe that self-care is a *purposeful engagement in activities grounded in one's values* and therefore an intimately personal journey. For this reason, we believe that offering a prescriptive approach to the development of a self-care plan is neither useful nor necessary, and instead, it may become potentially detrimental to the process of self-exploration needed by SPPs to develop the foundational awareness of themselves, their journey, their values, and their worldview on self-care. For this reason, in Box 4 we tried to bring together in a more succinct manner what we presented throughout the chapter in the hope that this will help the readers to begin the self-exploratory journey needed to develop their own self-care.

Conclusion

Based on the results of our scholarly efforts, we can conclude that SPPs should consider engaging in self-care as it is beneficial in a multitude of ways (e.g., greater wellbeing, higher levels of positive affect, flourishing, compassion satisfaction, quality of life, professional wellbeing, and practice outcomes). Failing to engage in self-care may lead to SPPs experiencing negative outcomes, which may result in engaging in practices that are harmful to clients, themselves, their reputations, or the profession. For this reason, practitioners must take on the personal and professional responsibility to develop and maintain their own wellness by actively – and not just retroactively - engaging in self-care.

Box 4: Bringing it all together – the beginning of a self-care plan

1. Reflections on one's journey – See Table 1
2. Reflections on one's values – See Box 2
3. Reflections on one's self-care – See Box 3

Finally, to develop a self-care plan grounded in one's values and to be able to bring together a series of practices that can be assimilated within each other and in the individual's life, it is important for SPPs to also consider how the outcomes of these reflections may be integrated. Some examples of possible higher-level reflective questions are:

Keeping in mind my life story, my values, world views...

1. *How does my understanding of self-care fit my past, present, and future journey?*
2. *What am I currently doing to support my wellbeing?*
3. *What self-care practices can I implement to prioritize my wellbeing?*
4. *How can I develop self-care practice that align with who I am and my values?*

Considering what presented in this chapter...

1. What can I do to realign my life to my values?
2. How can I engage in self-care practices that align with who I am and my values?
3. How can re-assess my current journey to integrate these reflections?
4. What areas of my own journey need to be the primary focus of my personal work?
5.

Being grounded in personal values, self-care should be intrinsically driven and individual in nature, and must become a foundational aspect of SPPs' personal and professional journey. For this reason, as already indicated, instead of directing SPPs to a prescriptive list of *ready-to-go* practices that they must engage in, we strongly encourage them to engage in a variety of self-exploratory activities that may enable them to develop the required self-awareness of their core personal values, critical to the development of effective and individualized self-care practices. By engaging in this process, SPPs may be able to identify and decide for themselves which specific activities are beneficial for them. By engaging in this process, SPPs will also become more aware of the potential unique set of

challenges and barriers they may face or are already facing which hinder their own self-care, considering them as part of the development of their individualized self-care practices. This process can be applied across the career span, from neophyte practitioners developing a self-care plan for the very first time through to experienced and expert SPPs seeking to revisit, re-evaluate and sense-check their established practices.

We acknowledge that the scholarly work we referred to throughout the chapter and in which we ground our work and the suggestions for reflective exercises as well as for developing a self-care plan offered in this chapter aimed to keep in consideration cultural differences. However, it is important to highlight that many of the constructs and activities we present here may be heavily influenced by westernized approaches to practice and life and may not be directly transferable to other cultural contexts and backgrounds. We recognise the importance of humbly engaging in an exploration of self that also keeps in consideration the cultural self. While we understand self-care as intimately personal and therefore unique for each individual, we also recognise that the cultural context and background of the single SPPs as well as their cultural intersectionality play an important role in their personal development as well as in the conceptualization of self-care and in the implementation of their self-care practices.

Take home message

From what the research to date allows us to conclude, the bottom line is that self-care must be grounded in one's personal values. To identify one's values and to identify how to best meet one's self-care needs, practitioners are encouraged to purposefully engage in the process of reflection and actively seek to develop their self-awareness so that they may be better equipped to prioritize, develop, preserve, monitor, and restore their holistic health, wellbeing, and satisfaction within their professional and personal lives. Armed with this information, it is likely that practitioners will be able to better identify the types of self-care

that will be the most meaningful and impactful for them. To illustrate this with an example of how core values may be translated into meaningful self-care practices: SPPs who perceive love and compassion to be personal values may look to tailor their self-care to include activities, behaviors and intentions that are driven by that value, such as dedicating time to spend with loved ones and engaging in self-compassionate practices. It is important that these practices are congruent with one's values and fit one's personal and professional journey. While self-care is somewhat *aspirational*, as any individual may strive toward it, SPPs must keep in mind that self-care practices must be realistic and practical as they need to fit a professional life that is already characterized by intrinsic and unique challenges.

An individual's self-care, similar to a mosaic or tapestry, is a unique and complex expression of one's personal values, self-care needs, and a myriad of behaviors, intentions, and activities that are guided by and serve to align with such values and needs. To gain clarity upon the arrangement, frequency, and intensity of their self-care practices, SPPs are encouraged to purposefully dedicate time and attention to self-exploration through reflection to maximize self-care's potential positive and protective effects.

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Table 1. *McAdams Life Story Interview Outline – Modified.*

Interview Component	Description
Life Chapters	<p>When I bring to mind the story of my life, the distinct chapters that would make up the book telling my story are... (Provide a title and a brief summary of the plot.)</p> <p>The end of one chapter and the beginning of the next is marked by...</p>
Key Scenes	In an especially significant scene in my life...
High Point	(What happened, how did you feel, what were you thinking about, who else was there?)
Low Point	
Turning Point	
Positive Childhood Scene	This scene stands out in my life story
Negative Childhood Scene	because... (Why did you choose it? What might it say about who you were or are now?)
Vivid Adolescent Scene	
Vivid Adult Scene	
One Other Important Scene	
Life Challenge	<p>The most significant challenge I have faced in my life is...</p> <p>It came to be because...</p> <p>I have addressed/understood/coped with this by...</p>
Future Script	<p>When thinking about the next chapter in my life, I see...</p> <p>I am heading towards...</p> <p>My goals are...</p> <p>I plan to achieve them by...</p>
Ideological Setting	When thinking about my beliefs about life
Religious	and the world, my most important personal,
Political	spiritual, or ethical values are...
Most Important Value	I came to these values by...
	My most important values around politics and/or social relationships are...

Interview Component	Description
Life Theme	I developed these through...
	Looking broadly, I think the most important value in life is ... because...
	Thinking back over this exercise, do you see a theme or motif that runs through the story of your life? What might it be?

Adapted from McAdams & Guo, 2014

According to the Study of Lives Research Group at Northwestern University website, the Life Story II protocol is free to use and does not require explicit permission. Researchers should feel free to adapt that instrument, or any of the other interview protocols, to the specific needs of their own projects.