

# The Four R's of Self-Care

This brief guide on the topic of self-care highlights four key words that we believe are central to the counselor's emotional, physical and spiritual well being: Rest, Replenishment, Repentance and Restoration. We encourage you to use it as a guide for reflection, journaling, and discussion.

## REST

The biblical priority for rest is not only seen in God's own resting in Genesis, but also in Jesus' commitment to regularly rest as a way of life and as a necessity for ministry. He often retreated both privately and communally with his disciples for rest, prayer and solitude:

*Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to [his disciples], 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (Mk 6:31-32)*

Receiving God's care for us must be a priority for caregivers! And there are ways that God can care for us that can only take place within the context of rest. We must therefore commit to set aside times for rest and take tangible steps to sustain the plan consistently over time.

Remember these key principles and questions. Discuss them with your friends, colleagues and mentors this month:

- Treat resting times as seriously as other appointments; make them a habit. Q: What are some practical ways to maintain that discipline - daily, weekly, yearly? What are your restorative spaces?
- Make resting time social. We need the help of others to maintain this discipline. Q: How can your community help you deepen this time?

## REPLENISHMENT

Knowing what replenishes us is vital for self-care, and replenishment must be multidimensional in order to be effective. Here's one definition of replenishment:

*To fill something up again, to restore to the former level or condition, to supply abundantly, to make full or complete again as by supplying what is lacking, to fill again or anew.*

There are several dimensions of replenishment, such as spiritual or physical replenishment, but for this guide, we wish to highlight *recreation*. Here are some questions to consider:

- What activities did you enjoy as a child?
- What activities do you simply enjoy doing?
- How are your unique qualities reflected in your interests and hobbies?

Recreation is one way God cares for and replenishes us!

## REPENTANCE

What does repentance have to do with self-care? How does repentance restore us back into joy? At the center of self-care is *soul care*. The heart of the matter is that nothing burdens us down as much as those inner drives and pursuits that take the place of God in our lives. When that happens, we need to realize that our greatest need is for the deep rest of our soul in God. Early church father, St. Augustine, came to understand this well and famously wrote in his Confessions:

*Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee.*

Repentance turns our restless hearts back to God, so that we can delight in our identity in Christ. It is this daily life practice of soul care that allows God to graciously confront our lives with truth and expose the “work under the work,” the intentions driving our work and the ways we ask it to be the foundation of our identity, our worth, meaning and purpose. King David also understood this and in his penitential Psalm 51, he states, “You delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.” Then he goes on to praise, “Restore unto me the joy of your salvation.”

Meditation and repentance:

- What are the heart issues that may be causing me to feel overworked, anxious, restless, or depleted?
- What am I most afraid of in regards to my work? What am I doing with those fears?
- What is it that I really need/want, that I may not think God can/will provide?

Renewal reflections and prayers:

- Approval – Can I trust in Christ as the source for my identity and purpose as a counselor?
- Control/Security – Can I trust in Christ and his perfect sovereignty over every chapter, phase, timing, and pace of my work with clients?
- Power/Success – Can I trust in Christ over the results and fruits? In any other area of life or ministry, can I give over to him any need for status and power in leadership?
- Comfort/Pleasure – Can I trust in Christ when things are painful and uncomfortable? Can I release any destructive or unhealthy coping tools and turn to him and his people for true comfort and peace?

Finish with a word of praise that, no matter where your heart is, Christ simply is and will be trustworthy and faithful.

## RESTORATION

The topic of self-care includes the important topic of burnout. Burnout recovery requires a re-creation, a rebuilding of your sense of vision. Such vision is manifest from a new sense of identity and purpose in Christ. Such a vision is grace-soaked and kingdom-sized.

Therefore, it is vital for counselors to periodically renew and restore their sense of vision. As Proverbs 29:18 states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” This is certainly true of counseling, as a loss of vision can often lead counselors to a loss of passion for their work.

- What does it mean to have a sense of vision for this work? And how do you restore this vision when it becomes dim?

The answers are so unique and personal to each caregiver that we encourage you to talk with other caregivers this week, and ask: What have you done to maintain or restore your sense of vision for our work?