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Ageing Well

WP3/ A1- Activity 2

Module F: Compassion Fatigue and the Importance of
Self-Care

Institute of Development (IoD)

Lesson Plan 2: Self-Care Strategies to prevent compassion
fatigue and increase self-compassion





Overview of the module

This module provides caregivers with essential self-care strategies to prevent compassion fatigue and foster self-compassion. By focusing on practical self-care techniques such as mindfulness, emotional regulation, time management, and boundary-setting, caregivers will learn to integrate these practices into their daily routines. Through discussions, guided exercises, and personalized planning, participants will develop skills to reduce stress, enhance resilience, and maintain well-being, ultimately leading to more effective caregiving.

Objective:

To educate caregivers on the importance of self-care and provide practical strategies for integrating self-compassion, time management, and boundary-setting into daily caregiving routines.

Duration: 60 minutes in total (including all activities)

Activities:

1. Introduction to Self-Care (12 minutes)
2. Guided Mindfulness Exercise (15 minutes)
3. Group Discussion on Self-Care Techniques (15 minutes)
4. Developing a Self-Care Plan (18 minutes)

Materials needed:

For Activity 1: Infographic, whiteboard, markers.

For Activity 2: Yoga mats or comfortable seating, audio equipment

For Activity 3: Handouts on self-care techniques, whiteboard, pens or pencils



For Activity 4: Worksheet, pens or pencils.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will:

- o Understand the importance of self-care and self-compassion in preventing compassion fatigue.
- o Learn practical strategies for time management, boundary-setting, and emotional regulation.
- o Develop a personalized self-care plan tailored to their caregiving needs.
- o Recognize the value of setting personal boundaries to improve resilience and maintain well-being.

List of sources and references related to the activity:

Neff, K. D. (2011). *Self-compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself*. William Morrow.

Raab, K. (2014). Mindfulness, self-compassion, and empathy among health care professionals: A review of the literature. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 20(3), 95-108.



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Activity 1: Introduction to Self-Care



ACTIVITY 1: Introduction to Self-Care

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

This activity introduces caregivers to the concept of self-care, focusing on its role in preventing compassion fatigue and enhancing self-compassion. Effective self-care can help caregivers manage stress, avoid burnout, and maintain their physical and emotional well-being. During this activity, participants will explore essential self-care strategies such as boundary setting, time management, and self-compassion. These skills empower caregivers to manage caregiving demands without compromising their health.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Introduce the importance of self-care as a preventive measure against compassion fatigue.
- o Discuss key self-care strategies that can help manage caregiving stress.
- o Identify and address common barriers to self-care.

Materials Needed:

- o Infographic summarizing self-care strategies (self-compassion, boundary setting, time management).
- o Whiteboard with markers.

Duration of the activity: 12 minutes



Description of the process of the activity:

Step 1: **Overview of Self-Care**

- **Instruction:** Begin by providing an overview of the concept of self-care in the context of caregiving. Emphasize that self-care is crucial not only for personal health but also for caregiving effectiveness.
- **Facilitator's Note:** Clarify that self-care is a necessity rather than a luxury, helping caregivers stay resilient in challenging roles.

Step 2: **Present the Infographic**

- **Instruction:** Show an infographic that visually summarizes key self-care strategies, with emphasis on self-compassion, time management, and boundary-setting techniques.
- **Tip:** Allow participants a moment to review and ask questions about the strategies on the infographic.

Step 3: **Group Discussion**

Discussion Prompts:

- “What self-care strategies do you currently use, and how do they help you manage stress?”
- “What barriers have you experienced in trying to prioritize self-care?”

Facilitator's Role: Encourage open sharing and provide guidance on overcoming common barriers to self-care.



Infographic

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR CAREGIVERS

SELF-COMPASSION
Be kind to yourself and avoid self-criticism. Acknowledge your efforts and forgive yourself for any perceived shortcomings.

TIME MANAGEMENT
Organize your tasks and prioritize essential caregiving duties while ensuring time for personal needs.

BOUNDARY SETTING
Set clear limits with others regarding your availability and what you can realistically handle.

MINDFULNESS
Practice mindfulness techniques to reduce stress, such as deep breathing or meditation, to stay present in the moment.

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE
Incorporate physical activities like walking, stretching or yoga to maintain physical health and relieve tension.

Remember, self-care is essential for maintaining your physical and mental well-being, and it's important to prioritize taking care of yourself in your daily routine.



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Activity 2: Guided Mindfulness Exercise



ACTIVITY 2: Guided Mindfulness Exercise

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

This activity centres on guided mindfulness as a self-care technique. Mindfulness, particularly self-compassion-focused meditation, helps caregivers manage stress by fostering a sense of calm and emotional resilience. By practicing mindfulness, caregivers can become more attuned to their needs, promoting emotional well-being and reducing compassion fatigue. This exercise introduces participants to a mindfulness meditation that emphasizes self-compassion, guiding them to acknowledge and care for their own needs as they do for others.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Practice mindfulness to enhance emotional resilience and self-awareness.
- o Recognize the role of self-compassion in reducing caregiver stress.
- o Reflect on how mindfulness can improve well-being in caregiving roles.

Materials Needed:

- o Yoga mats or comfortable seating.
- o Audio equipment for guided mindfulness.

Duration of the activity: 15 minutes



Description of the process of the activity:

Mindfulness Meditation

- **Preparation for the Meditation**

1. **Set the Environment:**

- Ensure the space is quiet, comfortable, and free from distractions. Dim the lights if possible to create a calming atmosphere.
- If participants are seated on chairs, encourage them to sit upright with their feet flat on the floor and hands resting on their lap. If using yoga mats, participants can lie down or sit cross-legged, ensuring they are comfortable.

2. **Initial Breathing:**

- Ask participants to close their eyes if they feel comfortable doing so. Instruct them to take three slow, deep breaths, inhaling deeply through the nose, holding briefly, and exhaling fully through the mouth.
- Encourage them to focus on the sensation of the breath entering and leaving the body, helping to bring awareness to the present moment.

- **Step-by-Step Meditation**

1. **Grounding Awareness (1-2 minutes):**

- Begin by guiding participants to bring their attention to their feet and feel the ground beneath them.
- Gradually move the awareness up through their body—ankles, legs, torso,



arms, neck, and head—paying attention to any areas of tension or relaxation.

- Encourage participants to notice how each part of their body feels, without judgment, simply observing and letting go.

2. Deepening Breath Awareness (1-2 minutes):

- Invite participants to return their focus to the breath. Instruct them to breathe naturally and gently through the nose, paying attention to the rhythm of their breathing.
- Encourage them to notice the rise and fall of their chest or abdomen with each inhale and exhale, becoming aware of the calming rhythm.

3. Connecting with Self-Compassion (2-3 minutes):

- **Instruction:** Guide participants to think of a recent caregiving moment that felt challenging or stressful. Ask them to bring this situation to mind in a gentle, non-judgmental way.
- **Self-Compassion Prompt:** Encourage them to acknowledge any difficult emotions associated with this experience, such as frustration, exhaustion, or worry. Remind them to observe these feelings with kindness, as if they were comforting a friend.
- Say something like, “Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up, knowing that it’s okay to experience these emotions. Offer yourself the same compassion you would offer to someone else.”

4. Sending Compassionate Intentions (2 minutes):

- Instruct participants to place a hand on their heart or another place that feels comforting if they wish. Invite them to take a few breaths, directing warmth and compassion toward themselves.
- Offer phrases to silently repeat: “May I be kind to myself,” “May I find peace in this moment,” “May I offer myself the compassion I need.”



5. Visualizing Support (1-2 minutes):

- Invite participants to imagine being surrounded by a warm, comforting light or presence that offers them unconditional support and understanding. This can be a soft glow, a place they feel safe, or the image of someone who has been supportive to them.
- Encourage them to sit with this sense of support, breathing deeply and absorbing the comfort and compassion from this visualization.

6. Closing the Meditation (1 minute):

- Gently instruct participants to bring their awareness back to their breath and their body, noticing how they feel in the present moment.
- Invite them to take a few deeper breaths, wiggle their fingers and toes, and, when ready, slowly open their eyes.

- **After the Meditation**

- **Reflection Prompt:** Ask participants to take a few moments to reflect on how they feel and encourage them to carry this self-compassion with them into their caregiving role.

Prompt 1: “Take a moment to notice how you feel after this meditation. Did any particular emotion or thought stand out for you during the exercise?”

- **Example:** “As you reflect, you might consider if practicing self-compassion helped you feel a sense of relief or calm. Or perhaps you became aware of certain emotions you hadn’t noticed before, like tension or stress. Feel free



to share any insights that came up for you.”

Prompt 2: “How do you think carrying this sense of self-compassion could change your approach to caregiving?”

- **Example:** “Think about how taking just a few moments for self-compassion could help you respond with more patience or resilience during challenging caregiving moments. How might this influence the way you care for others as well as yourself?”
- **Optional Sharing:** If participants feel comfortable, invite them to share any observations or insights they experienced during the meditation.



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Activity 3: Group Discussion on Self- Care Techniques



ACTIVITY 3 Group Discussion on Self-Care Techniques

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

This activity allows caregivers to explore various self-care techniques in a supportive group setting. Through discussion, participants can share their own experiences with self-care and learn new strategies. The focus includes practical techniques like time management, boundary setting, and emotional regulation, which can help caregivers prevent compassion fatigue and maintain work-life balance. By brainstorming as a group, participants can gain inspiration and insight into achievable self-care practices.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Discuss a range of self-care techniques applicable to caregiving.
- o Encourage sharing of effective self-care practices among participants.
- o Identify practical self-care strategies that can be implemented in daily routines.

Materials Needed:

- o Handouts on self-care techniques (time management, boundary setting).
- o Whiteboard and markers.
- o Pens or pencils.

Duration of the activity: 15 minutes in total



Description of the process of the activity:

Step 1: **Divide into Small Groups**

Instruction: Divide participants into small groups and distribute handouts summarizing various self-care techniques, including time management and boundary setting.

Facilitator's Note: Encourage participants to discuss which techniques they find most helpful or are interested in trying.

Step 2: **Group Brainstorming**

Instruction: Have each group brainstorm self-care techniques they would like to incorporate. Participants should consider practical ways to implement these in their routines.

Discussion Prompts:

- “What self-care strategies have you found effective?”
- “Which techniques do you feel would be most beneficial for your well-being?”

Step 3: **Compile Strategies**

Instruction: Reconvene as a whole group and have each group share one or two strategies they discussed. Compile a list of self-care strategies on the whiteboard that participants can implement in their caregiving routines.

Facilitator's Note: Emphasize that even small, consistent changes in self-care can have a meaningful impact on well-being.



Reflective Journaling (Optional, 3 minutes)

Additional Activity: Introduce a brief journaling exercise where participants reflect on a caregiving moment when they could have practiced more self-compassion.

- **Prompt:** “Think of a time during caregiving when practicing self-compassion might have helped you manage stress or avoid feeling overwhelmed. Take a few moments to write about this experience and consider how you could apply self-compassion in similar situations in the future.”



Handout for Practical Self-Care Strategies for Caregivers

☀️ Self-Compassion

- 💬 **Positive Affirmations:** Start each day with a kind thought about yourself. *“I am doing my best.”*
- 🧡 **Gratitude:** Reflect on one positive caregiving moment daily.
- 🧘 **Self-Kindness:** Show yourself the same care you give others.

🕒 Time Management

- ✅ **Prioritize Tasks:** Focus on urgent and important activities first.
- 📅 **Use Tools:** Plan your day with apps or a physical planner.
- ✂️ **Break Down Tasks:** Divide big tasks into small, manageable steps.
- 🔄 **Stick to Routines:** Maintain consistent caregiving and self-care schedules.

🔒 Boundary Setting

- 🚫 **Learn to Say “No”:** Politely decline tasks that stretch your limits. *“I can’t right now but can help later.”*
- 🗣️ **Communicate Clearly:** Set expectations with others about your capacity.
- 🕒 **Protect Personal Time:** Dedicate 10 minutes daily for uninterrupted “me time.”

💧 Emotional Regulation

- 🧘 **Deep Breathing:** Use the 4-7-8 technique to calm your mind.
- 📖 **Journaling:** Write down your feelings to process and release stress.
- 🌅 **Visualization:** Imagine a peaceful moment to reduce anxiety.



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Activity 4: Developing a Self- Care Plan



ACTIVITY 4: Developing a Self-Care Plan

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity:

This activity supports caregivers in creating personalized self-care plans that incorporate strategies like self-compassion, time management, and boundary setting. By creating a plan, participants can set realistic goals to integrate self-care into their daily lives. Developing this plan helps caregivers take proactive steps to manage their well-being, encouraging consistency and accountability in self-care practices.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Enable caregivers to create a customized self-care plan.
- o Encourage setting achievable self-care goals and strategies.
- o Foster accountability and consistency in self-care through goal setting.

Materials Needed:

- o Worksheet: “Personalized Self-Care Plan” (optional, or participants can use blank paper).
- o Pens or pencils.

Duration of the activity: 18 minutes in total



Description of the process of the activity:

Creating the Self-Care Plan

- **Instructions**

Each participant creates a self-care plan that includes at least three strategies. These strategies should focus on:

- **Self-compassion** (ways to show kindness to oneself),
- **Time management** (balancing caregiving with personal needs),
- **Boundary-setting** (maintaining limits to prevent burnout).

Participants will categorize each strategy as a daily, weekly, or monthly action, depending on what feels achievable and beneficial.

Participants fill out the worksheet, detailing how, when, and how they will measure the success of their chosen strategies.

Worksheet: “Personalized Self-Care Plan”

Self-Care Plan Worksheet

Self-Care Strategy	How I Will Implement It	When I Will Implement It	How I Will Measure Success
Strategy 1			
Strategy 2			
Strategy 3			



1. Daily Self-Care Strategies

These are small, manageable actions that participants can do each day to promote ongoing well-being. Examples could include:

- **Self-compassion:** “Start each day with a positive affirmation or a self-compassionate thought.”
- **Time management:** “Spend 5 minutes in the morning planning the day’s caregiving and personal tasks.”
- **Boundary-setting:** “Set aside 10 minutes for uninterrupted ‘me time,’ even if it’s a short break.”

Participants write their daily strategies and commit to repeating them each day. Encourage them to reflect at the end of each day on whether they achieved these actions.

2. Weekly Self-Care Strategies

These are slightly larger goals that can be revisited each week to maintain balance and well-being. Examples might include:

- **Self-compassion:** “Jot down one or two things I’m grateful for in my caregiving role to reinforce positive self-regard.”
- **Time management:** “Plan a weekly schedule to balance caregiving duties and personal activities.”
- **Boundary-setting:** “Choose one caregiving task to delegate to a family member or colleague.”

Participants write down their weekly goals and choose a day to review their progress on each strategy. This can help in tracking consistency and adjusting as needed.



3. Monthly Self-Care Strategies

Monthly goals encourage participants to reflect on long-term self-care and ensure they're staying aligned with their well-being goals. Examples could include:

- **Self-compassion:** “Reflect on caregiving moments that were challenging and recognize ways I showed resilience.”
- **Time management:** “Review my overall schedule and make adjustments to allow more time for personal interests or hobbies.”
- **Boundary-setting:** “Identify any new boundaries I need to set, such as limiting overtime hours or saying no to additional responsibilities when feeling overwhelmed.”

Participants are encouraged to use the end of the month to review their monthly strategies, adjust as needed, and set new goals for the following month.

Reflection Prompt 1: “Which strategies were easiest to maintain, and why?”

Reflection Prompt 2: “What challenges did I encounter, and how can I adjust my plan to overcome these?”

Setting Accountability

Instruction: Encourage participants to consider sharing their self-care plan with a trusted colleague or friend to build accountability.

Facilitator’s Note: Remind participants that accountability can enhance motivation and consistency.



Group Sharing

Instruction: Invite a few volunteers to share a strategy from their self-care plan and how they plan to track their progress.

Facilitator's Note: Reinforce that this plan is personal, and encourage participants to review and adjust their strategies regularly as needed.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will:

- o Understand the importance of self-care and self-compassion in preventing compassion fatigue.
- o Learn practical strategies for time management, boundary setting and emotional regulation.
- o Develop a personalised self-care plan.
- o Practice assertiveness through boundary-setting techniques.



Worksheet: “Personalized Self-Care Plan”

Self-Care Plan Worksheet

Self-Care Strategy	How I Will Implement It	When I Will Implement It	How I Will Measure Success
Strategy 1			
Strategy 2			
Strategy 3			