

SANE AUSTRALIA

SANE Australia Mental Health Meet-Up

Date: 06/05/2021

Topic: How and Why We Take Care of Ourselves

Description: Self-care allows us to cope with the day-to-day and is an important part of preventing relapse and recovery. Taking care of ourselves not only helps us with our mental health concerns but can greatly impact our overall wellbeing.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Hi everyone! Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about how and why we care for ourselves. This is a new peer support service we are trialling. Because of this, we really value your thoughts on how it goes, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this event for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can find the survey here now: https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW Tonight, peer support workers @Girasole and @TideisTurning will be facilitating an interesting discussion around the topic of self-care. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both-taking care of ourselves is relevant and important for everyone. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation may be heavy in nature as we talk about mental health struggles. @Otter, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together and expand our ideas of self-care. Lastly, just so you're aware, the transcript of this group will be made available for download afterwards on SANE's Peer Support website.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

We will be starting the discussion shortly, and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join 🙋🏻

TideisTurning (PSW)

Welcome @Kimberley_cptsd & @Shaz51 . Glad to have you with us this evening 🙋🏻

Kimberley_cptsd

Thanks :D

Girasole (Peer Worker) **To start off the conversation tonight, we're curious: how would you define self-care?**

Kimberley_cptsd looking after your needs first and respecting your limitations

TideisTurning (PSW) To my mind, self care, most simply, is caring for yourself. It's doing what you need to take care of yourself and your health and wellbeing so that you can be the best you can. It's restorative, rejuvenating, recharging and most importantly, individual.

Kimberley_cptsd well said

Girasole (Peer Worker) **I'd consider self-care to be anything you could do that would look after yourself and address your needs. Relatedly, in order to practice good self-care, I think you need to be quite attentive to what your needs are. It requires an amount of self-awareness- or perhaps other people in your life who could indicate that you might need something, if you might struggle with self-awareness.**

Girasole (Peer Worker) **We'll be talking tonight about the ways we take care of ourselves. It might be helpful, though, to first consider the reasons why we might do this. Why do you think it might be important to care of yourself?**

Kimberley_cptsd so I can continue to function and not have a nervous breakdown or psychosis . we cannot depend on other people to take the role of care for us because no one knows our limitations or emotional health as well as we do

Girasole (Peer Worker) **If I don't take care of myself, that stress of unwellness can progressively build up, to the point I'm unhappy, or overwhelmed, or in crisis. I don't want to spend my life being unwell or overwhelmed- I want to be happy! I want to experience everything that life has to offer. Being attentive to my needs means that I can be as well as possible. Also, learning to value my needs has just led to better things in my life ,Ä better relationships, better living situations, better jobs. It can impact your whole life.**

Kimberley_cptsd im just learning about self care and self awareness now with my psychologist. so this is a very timely chat for me haha

TideisTurning
(PSW)

I think for me, a big reason is so that I can be the best I can be.

**Girasole (Peer
Worker)**

Doing things to take care of ourselves well can be helped a lot by having a self-care mindset. Have a look at this diagram for reference: <https://i1.wp.com/mfwconsultants.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Self-Care-Iceberg-Watermarked.png?w=1800&ssl=1> Does this resonate with you? If so, how? Have you found that if your self-esteem has improved, your ability to take care of yourself has also improved? Do you struggle with self-care, and might this be related to low self-esteem or not really valuing your needs?

Shaz51

Hello @girasole again :

**Girasole (Peer
Worker)**

Hey @Shaz51! Glad you could join :)

TideisTurning
(PSW)

It's a new(er) concept for me, but it makes a lot of sense. It's something I'd say is a constant work in progress for me.

Shaz51

I used to think self care had to be big but am learning small self care is much better

Kimberley_cptsd

this is first time ive heard of self care mindset. but yeah it makes sense to me to

**Girasole (Peer
Worker)**

This can be tricky because in order to do something well and truly for yourself (which might be hard!), it needs to come from an understanding that you and your wellbeing matters; you and your needs are important- and not only are they important, they need to be treated as a priority! If you've ever had formative or traumatic experiences which made you feel like you, your needs, and your wellbeing didn't matter, this can take a while to overcome. It definitely helps in practicing self-care if you value yourself first. I've come a long way in valuing my needs, but even now it's still a work in progress! And it will probably continue to be, if I'm realistic.

Kimberley_cptsd

i use to feel guilty about doing self care and thinking people will think im lazy but now i dont care what people think. i know my body and needs now through self awareness. so i guess i have grown a self care mindset. haha

Shaz51 With me I just stay busy and I forget about me

TideisTurning (PSW) That sounds tough @Shaz51. I know when there's lots going on for me, it can become harder to remember to take care of myself, but I've also learnt that it's really important!

Shaz51 Same here @girasole , still learning too here

Girasole (Peer Worker) **Self-care is a skill which can be practiced; everyone can get better at it (I know I could!). If you struggle with taking care of yourself in any way, be assured that this is not necessarily fixed; having a growth mindset to self-care, that is, treating it as a continual learning opportunity, can be helpful Have you ever found that you've got better at self-care over time? What has that looked like for you? If not-how might you like to get better at looking after yourself?**

Kimberley_cptsd i think of my anxiety signs as like a traffic like. i check in with myself at a few different parts of the day where am i sitting.. at green, orange or red. if orange signals start i need to do self care

Kimberley_cptsd to get bak to green

TideisTurning (PSW) What a concept @Kimberley_cptsd . Brilliant!

Kimberley_cptsd yeah ive done one paper my list of orange signals and red. ive grouped them and stuck them on my fridge at home so i see it when i go to the fridge n check in with myself haha

Kimberley_cptsd and i also put on there a list of activities and things i can do to get back to green.

Kimberley_cptsd things that work for me personally

Shaz51 Yes @kimberley_cptsd , @tideisturning , with me my aches and pains are my signs I need self care

TideisTurning
(PSW)

Hi @Gwynn!! Glad you could make it

Girasole (Peer Worker)

I've definitely had to think about self-care more as I've had more demands in my life. I went from barely thinking about it at all, to now where I think about it every day. I can generally recognise and respond to when I need to rest, socialise, do nice things out of the house, have time by myself, etc. I want to get better, though, at doing ,” harder” forms of self-care (we'll talk about that in the next question :))

Shaz51

Hello @gwynn

Kimberley_cptsd

i find i have early signs and if i let them go i get another set of signs. then another. for me if i feel my muscles spasming its just before I collapse basically. but if i start feeling listless, bored, frustrated...i know ah.. time for self care. and the more u let pass the more self care u need to do to get back to green.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Hey @Anastasia @Gwynn and @Joel! Great to have you join :)

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Self-care is often thought about as just pleasant things like bubble baths, face masks, and massages. If we're to take self-care as a broader understanding of looking after ourselves as a whole, actions of self-care might be difficult, unpleasant, or challenging! For instance: having a tough conversation to resolve a conflict with someone; managing time well so that stressful tasks don't build up (especially if those tasks aren't fun to do at the time); establishing boundaries in or ending a toxic relationship; saying no to things. What do you think are some challenging but necessary forms of self-care for you?

Kimberley_cptsd

self care is tough when it means putting boundaries up with family members

Shaz51

@girasole, our biggest self care is saying no to jobs , we are self employed and we used to say yes to every single job but not now which has been good for my husband's MI

- TideisTurning (PSW) For me, it can be things to take care of my physical health that are hardest but also incredibly necessary and important. Things like going to see specialists and doing what they tell me like stretching- it's not always pleasant, so I'm not necessarily inclined to do it, but I've also learned that it's so much better after the fact when I do manage it.
- Girasole (Peer Worker)** **Resolving conflict is a big one for me. Confronting conflict is inherently neither easy nor enjoyable,Äì it can be so much more comfortable to just avoid it. But I definitely see how resolving conflict would remove a source of stress and make a situation just one less thing to worry about. It would be an act of self-care to resolve it. But of course that can be challenging- we might need additional support to do it. It's not easy to do- but it's also not impossible.**
- Kimberley_cptsd self care for me can be turning off my social media for a while or even blocking certain contacts from contacting me for a week or so
- Shaz51 Yes @tideisturning, yes my health and seeing specialists too is a big oV±e for me too
- Girasole (Peer Worker)** **In the context of professional mental health support, there can be challenges as we might struggle to open up to a new clinician; to talk about our mental health, traumas, etc. One way we could look after ourselves is planning in advance what we want to say and not say, and think about how we might manage the process, e.g. with support from other people, in order to keep us safe and well. Do you have ways you look after yourself in these kinds of environments? What does that look like? If not-what are some things you think might be helpful to manage these potentially stressful or triggering situations?**
- Kimberley_cptsd going with a trusted friend or family member helps, or writing down some dotpoints what u want to say beforehand. ive tried both and its been very good. especially making the dotpoints.
- Kimberley_cptsd if your talking to someone online, like telehealth... if u have too much axiety you can even just chat over voice without video for a few sessions. thats what i did when i started talking to a psychologist because i had some delusions and social anxiety that made talking to someone face to face too confronting to start

can hold me accountable. My needs might be that I need to connect with other people's self-care isn't necessarily a solitary thing. Does this resonate at all with you? Talk us through if you think it'd be good to have a more social/community-based framework for self-care

- Bpdsurvivor My self-care and recovery revolves around helping others and being with others
- Bpdsurvivor Being my myself, looking after myself, actually frustrates me
- Gwynn For me, getting back to volunteer work was a key motivator in my recovery - being back with 'my' kids and helping them have fun, achieve and grow
- TideisTurning (PSW) For me, I've had a lot on my plate for a little while now, and I've had some very dear people in my life regularly reminding me that I need to take care of myself through it all too- sometimes, I need that. It's not only a reminder either. For me, it's also like validation and permission that it's ok to put myself first sometimes, because that is definitely not something that comes naturally to me.
- Gwynn Sometimes, too, I need to be reminded to do stuff for myself.
- Kimberley_cptsd i have a list of truths. i told my housemates where this list is to. if im out and starting to panic i can call them and ask them to read it to me. hearing them from another person say them is very reassuring when you start having negative delusional thoughts. so yeah i think others can be involved in self care. personally , im more of on introvert so i recharge more doing things alone. but they can definitely help us
- Shaz51 Sorry @tideisturning, had to go and help my mum , what helps me is research, writing down notes for the specialists
- Gwynn The individualistic model has been the founding principle of the NDIS, for example, but it has its limitations - such as the lack of a built-in peer approach and learning from each other what works.
- TideisTurning (PSW) All good @Shaz51! That's a great strategy

Shaz51 Problem I have @tideisturning, @girasole, @otter is that everyone thinks I am ok , shaz is right

Gwynn That's it's own kind of burden, Shaz.

Gwynn *its'

Bpdsurvivor I guess everyone is okay until they are not

Girasole (Peer Worker) @Shaz51 :heart: :heart: :heart:

Otter (Moderator) Group therapy and support groups can be so helpful! It's so powerful to find a room of people, virtual or otherwise, that you watch grow with you, and overcome things you may be struggling with over time, and are rooting for you to keep learning to love yourself and heal!

TideisTurning (PSW) That's tough @Shaz51 @bpdsurvivor- sometimes it can seem that way. I'm slowly learning for myself that there can be warning signs I just hadn't noticed before & it's not as sudden as I might've once thought

Bpdsurvivor Group therapy was so daunting for me. But in retrospect, it did me a world of good.

Girasole (Peer Worker) Next question: Are there things you're proud of in your self-care and recovery journey? Have you gotten better over time at learning to look after yourself? We'd love to hear all about it!

Bpdsurvivor I was just contemplating the need for people to have people in order to change. Today I learnt a few new things, and I know I wouldn't have learnt them if I weren't around people

Kimberley_cptsd before i had my breakdown i was so not self aware. but now i can 'hear' my bodys cues for rising anxiety and i learnt to love them and honor them

TideisTurning (PSW) For me, it's still a bit of a work in progress. But proud of? Umm, I guess the moments when I do practice self care. When I do put myself first, listen to my own needs and attend to them. When I do what I need to. Because doing those things doesn't always come naturally to me, and so I feel like it's more of an achievement when I manage it.

Girasole (Peer Worker) **I'm proud that I've become more attuned to my needs over time, and have been able to take care of myself better as a result. I'm particularly happy that I've become more attuned to my body's need for rest, it's very easy to get swept up in our capitalist society's values of work over and above rest and leisure. I actually had to go and live in an entirely different country and culture, where rest and leisure were much more valued, to come to actually appreciate it, and realise how much I needed it. I now think about my needs, how I'm feeling, and self-care every single day**

Bpdsurvivor I'm amazed at how far I've come in terms recovery. As a young adult, I never thought I'd live to see this day. Now, I wouldn't regret my journey whatsoever

Gwynn I'm proud now that I see self-care as something important.

Bpdsurvivor That sounds great @girasole

Bpdsurvivor My recovery was about getting to know and appreciate myself - to know what works and doesn't work. To know the warning signs. To know when to slow down. To know when to push and challenge myself.

Shaz51 For me @girasole, is that my husband and I are taking cues from each other if we need to have some self care, an afternoon off and to rearrange our week

Gwynn that's so awesome, Shaz! :D

Girasole (Peer Worker) **Have you learned anything helpful from others experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what did you learn?**

Bpdsurvivor Life

Girasole (Peer Worker) I've learned that there's so much to be learned from others and their stories and journeys! :heart:

Bpdsurvivor that life is about constantly learning - learning what our needs are, and how these needs continually change

Kimberley_cptsd never heard the phrase self care MINDSET before. love it

Otter (Moderator) I'm learning to treat whatever comes up in me with more compassion than fear. I think I've built more actual actions of self-care into my routine too - sometimes I get caught up in thinking about what I want to change or what I need to do so much that I neglect to actually do it! But as they say, you can act your way into thinking better, but sometimes it can be much harder to think your way into acting better

Bpdsurvivor Also, that self-care doesn't mean you are self-ish

TideisTurning (PSW) My biggest takeaway was the traffic light system from you @Kimberley_cptsd! & the self care mindset too. Definitely an awesome concept I'll take with me

Shaz51 I have learnt that we are not alone, and to have the support of others here and on the sane forum, and to continue learning daily

Gwynn I just loved being in the room and being with people discussing recovery - it was something that was never mentioned when I was in hospital!!!

Girasole (Peer Worker) **@BPDSurvivor I love your acknowledgment that life and our needs will continually change, and that it's a constant learning process - so true!**

TideisTurning (PSW) And we are also better for having your lovely support @Shaz51!

Girasole (Peer Worker) Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish soon? If so, what might you do? :blush:

Bpdsurvivor Relax as I read through the day's events on the SANE forums

Shaz51 A nice big cup of coffee @girasole

Kimberley_cptsd bubble tea for me :D

Gwynn take a shower :D

Bpdsurvivor @kimberley I had my bubble tea this arvo already!

Bpdsurvivor I could've waited to have mine with yours lol

Kimberley_cptsd hahaha @bpdsurvivor. cant live without my bubble tea

TideisTurning (PSW) For me, I think taking a moment to appreciate some of the great things that have happened lately, including the privilege of being part of this discussion!

Girasole (Peer Worker) We'd like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Peer Group Chat. As we're trialling this service, we'd love to hear any feedback you may have. It will only take a few minutes to complete. Please click this link: https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW

Girasole (Peer Worker) Here are some further resources we recommend having a look at: Self-care mindset: <https://i1.wp.com/mfwconsultants.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Self-Care-Iceberg-Watermarked.png?w=1800&ssl=1> Developing a growth mindset (to apply to self-care as a learnable skill): <https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/develop-a-growth-mindset/>

Kimberley_cptsd thanks all . chat in a fortnight. Byebye

Bpdsurvivor Thanks for tonight. And thanks for the resources. I'll definitely look into them! Have a great night!

Bpdsurvivor Also, @girasole, thanks for the tag as a reminder. I made it just in time

Girasole (Peer Worker) **Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion. If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here You can also suggest questions for us to discuss in future topics <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/online-mental-health-meet-up>**

Shaz51 All done @girasole, survey done

Gwynn Thanks everyone!

TideisTurning (PSW) Thanks @Kimbereley_cptsd , @bpdsurvivor @Shaz51

TideisTurning (PSW) Thanks @Gwynn

Otter (Moderator) Thanks everyone, that was so lovely to be a part of <3

Girasole (Peer Worker) **Thanks so much everyone for joining and having such a great discussion together! Looking forward to the next one :blush:**

Shaz51 Thanks @otter see you soon