

A Guide to Self-Care

Support and Services available to Home-Start Employees and Volunteers



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Authorship

This guide was prepared by Robyn Smith, BA(Hons) student studying Education and Social Services at the University of Strathclyde during her 12 week placement with Home-Start Renfrewshire & Inverclyde in the Autumn/Winter of 2022.

Purpose of this Guide

This guide aims to inform employees and volunteers about self-care, with particular focus on the services that Home-Start offer.

The nature of the work that employees and volunteers undertake at Home-Start can be emotional and stressful. Exposure to events and situations such as abuse, poverty, addiction, and mental and physical illnesses can be traumatic for individuals who support families regularly. However, by practicing self-care, individuals can set up their own barrier of protection and encourage others around them to do the same.

If an employee or volunteer feel they would benefit from support,
they can access the

Counselling Helpline

0117 934 2121

Choose Option 1 – Counselling Support

When phoning this number, choose OPTION 1 for access to a confidential counselling service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year available to all Home-Start employees and volunteers.

This service is provided on behalf of Home-Start UK by Care First Personal Counselling who are members of The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and are covered by their code of Ethics and Practice.

Counselling Helpline

What is the service?

DAS UK is the service that provides the counselling helpline and is made up of DAS Law and DAS Legal Expenses Insurance Company. They provide these service to organisations, such as Home-Start, across the UK.

To access the counselling helpline you must be an employee or volunteer of Home-Start. You can also access the service if you are over the age of 18 and immediate family and living in the same household of an employee or volunteer.



The counsellors providing this service all are professionally trained and experienced counsellors who are members of the British

Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. They adhere to strict confidentiality and codes of ethics and treat individuals with respect, empathy and acceptance.

The service is available 24 hours a day, all year round and can be accessed as often as you require it. Some reasons individuals may call are due to stress, poor health, depression or bereavment.



The telephone number:

0117 934 2121

Choose Option 1

Your right to access is through 'Home-Start'

How useful is this service ?

What to expect

When calling the phonenumber, the first thing you will hear is an automated answering machine which will direct you into the right service you need, at this point choose Option 1. Once through you should not wait long before being put through to a counsellor. They will briefly explain a confidentiality statement that ensures you're aware that any information shared will be kept in confidence with the exception of any information that may cause harm to you.



Call the helpline

Automated answering machine

Wait to be put through to a counsellor

Confidentiality statement

Speak to a counsellor



After this, you will be asked some general questions about what you're preferred gender is, if you have any disabilities, if you take any medication or if you have had any suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming someone else.

The service was very useful, and supported the individual who originally felt very anxious stating:

"I felt like I had something heavy sitting on my chest, it was like an overwhelming sense of dread."





Through speaking to a trained professional, who was very empathetic and respected what the individual had to say, they stated:

“I didn’t expect to feel so emotional, but in such a good way. After the call finished I felt so accomplished that I actually spoke about something that I would usually store away.”

Overall, the service was very beneficial for the individual who felt heard and understood. It can be used for both personal and work related situations or events that are negatively impacting your life. The service is a great starting point to exploring why your situation or event is impacting you and can offer helpful information on how to combat this. The counsellor will reiterated that the service can be used as much as required but that there is however a separate/new contact following the first 6 sessions of telephone counselling, if an individual requires further support.



Defining Self-Care

Self-care has had a number of meanings and because of this it makes defining the term difficult. It has many distinct but interconnected factors (Miller et al., 2020). It is a multidimensional and multifaceted process of purposefully engaging in activities that aim to promote the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals (Doraciak et al., 2017).

Self-care has always existed, however it referred to everyday activities such as eating and grooming and involved taking care of your body (Laposhka and Smallfield, 2019).

The practice is essential in both our everyday life and our professional life, engaging in this should not be seen as a 'treat' or a 'luxury' but as an essential component to our whole life (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2011).

There is a long lasting conception that self-care is only physical activities such as going to the gym, yoga and walking. However, it is so much more. In contemporary understanding of the term, it is made up of different aspects such as psychological, social and spiritual (Miller et al., 2020).

There are a range of activities and practices that can be done for self-care such as having hobbies, engaging in extracurricular activities, and seeking personal therapy (Doraciak et al., 2017). These activities and many more will be discussed later in this booklet.



Why is it important?

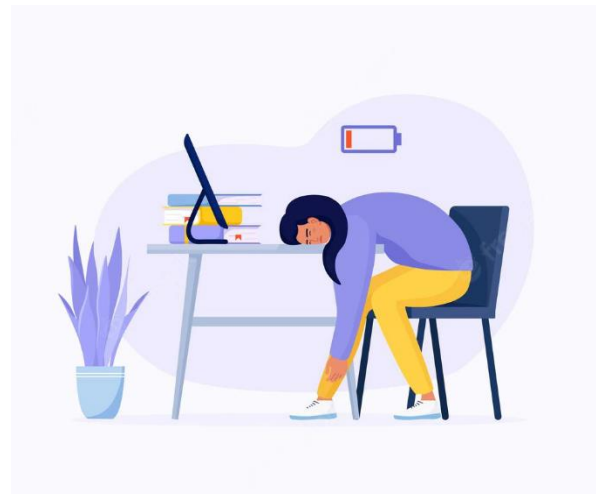
Self-care is an essential component of our lives and we need it to protect both our mental and physical wellbeing. Not practicing self-care can have a negative impact on your body (Kearney et al., 2009).

Burnout is a very common syndrome that is the effect of not practicing self-care. It is characterised as being emotionally exhausted, being a cynic and having depersonalisation, having a sense of ineffectiveness and a lack of personal accomplishment. This can be due to various factors including a heavy or stressful workload, frustration, inability to achieve work goals and a feeling of powerlessness. This can be seen in individuals as changes, for example changes in the individuals thinking, behaviour and feelings (McCormack & Cotter, 2013).

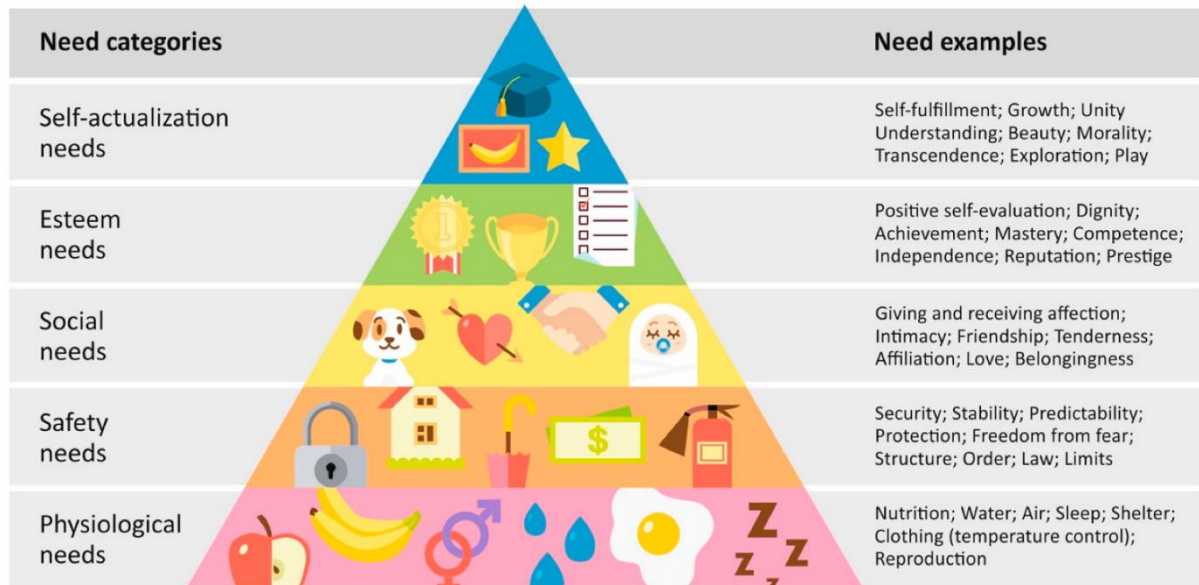
Keep an eye out for some of the signs of burnout:

- › Wanting to work alone and being isolated
- › Having an appearance of being weighed down
- › Distracted
- › Having an appearance of being at breaking point

(McCormack & Cotter, 2013)



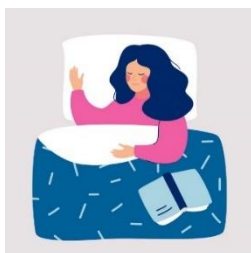
Theory That Supports Self-Care



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory as shown above, explores the five basic needs that are required for optimal existence. The lower levels - known as the deficiency needs - are physiological, safety, and social. These are the basic needs we must meet before we can progress into the growth needs which are esteem and self-actualisation (Noltemeyer et al., 2012).

When looking at these, you can begin to see that self-care fits into this theory quite easily. Here are some examples:

Being well rested and getting enough sleep is a form of self-care



Meeting up with friends and socialising is a form of self-care



Being proud of yourself and your achievements is a form of self-care



Positive and Negative Impacts of Self-Care

Self-care can have a range of benefits and overall the practice allows you to build your own resilience and make you better able to handle stressful and emotional situations.

According to Circle Health Group (2022), some of the benefits include improved physical health, a reduction in stress and anxiety, a boosted self-esteem, protection of mental health and improved relationships. However, the list is not exhaustive and self-care will improve every individuals life in different ways.



In spite of this, its crucial to know what the consequences of not participating in self-care are. The Canadian Mental Health Association (2021) state that the consequences include having low energy levels, being impatient, physical symptoms, difficulty staying concentrated, sleep distruption, relationship strains, and depression.

Mordue et al. (2020) state that we should look for the little things that we can do and begin building on taking care of ourselves.



Practical Examples of Self-Care

Like most things, self-care is individual and what some may include in this, will be different for others. Some individuals may not know where to start with self-care which can be daunting so here are some examples.

Sleep

The best thing to start with is getting enough quality sleep. A good sleep can reduce negative feelings that are often experienced when stress is placed on an individual. The consequences of not having good sleep can be poor concentration, being rash, and being volatile. Some things to consider when trying to sleep well is establishing routines, sleeping at regular times, meditating, and being in a relaxing environment (Mordue et al, 2020).



Excercise

A big aspect self-care is exercise and being active. The benefits of exercise cannot be overstated, it has been shown to reduce stress and mood disorders and improve mental function. This doesn't mean just going to the gym, it can be going for a walk with a friend, doing yoga, and just taking time to stand up and stretch (Mordue et al., 2020).



Time for self

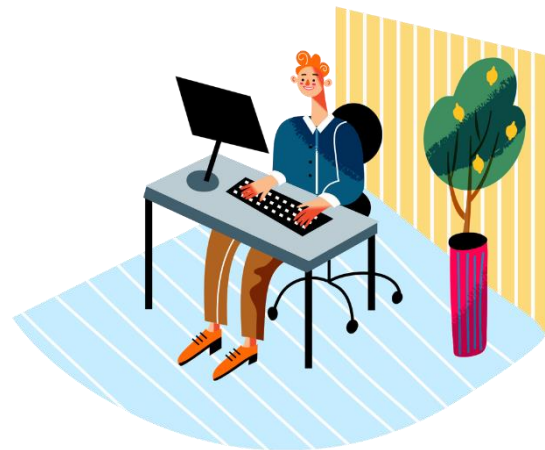
Another form of self-care could simply be setting aside time in the day to do the activities that you want to. This could be trying a new hobby, finally reading a book you've been looking forward to, listening to a podcast, or pampering yourself (Health Coach Institute, 2022).



Professional self-care

It is important to remember that to be able to look after others, you must first look after yourself. This is why knowing what professional self-care is and how to do it. Miller and Grise-Owens (2020) state that it is not an optional add-on or a bandage to be used in an emergency, but a vital part of growing and surviving in your professional life.

Some things to consider doing for professional self-care is keeping your work life and personal life separate, taking breaks throughout the day, and if you spend a lot of time at a desk standing up and moving around (Iowa's Area Education Agencies, 2020).



Review of Theory

Maslow

So why does Maslow matter? Well his theory suggests that the more we satisfy our needs then the better our psychological and mental health will be (Lester, 2013).

With this in mind, think about self-care. The idea of self-care is that we engage in practices and activities that allow us to reflect, be aware of ourselves and adapt to our constantly changing needs. By doing this we are protecting and promoting good mental health and wellbeing and ultimately allowing ourselves to be the best version of ourselves (Doraciak, 2017). When you look at the two this way, you can see why this theory is key to understanding self-care.



However, it is important to remember every theory will have strengths and weaknesses. For example, it has been proved that these needs are not organised in a hierarchy and that satisfying growth needs doesn't need to start with satisfying the lower needs (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). This could be shown through an individual living in poverty or a disadvantaged area where they might not have access to nutritional food or are in debt but still are able to have healthy and loving relationships and self-esteem.



Abulof (2017) took the opportunity to ask the younger generation to talk about the needs that they experience. They found that they are beginning to

doubt their own ability to meet the lower needs of the pyramid but that they are continuing to satisfy their growth needs. This reiterates the idea that growth needs can be met even if lower needs are not.

Another point to consider when discussing Maslow is that he focused on the individuals, but the hierarchy of needs should focus not only on individuals but how societal effects can impact on how they are fulfilled, such as unemployment, social isolation, homelessness, and discrimination (Tay,. Et al 2011).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

This theory was developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan which identified three psychological needs; autonomy, competence and relatedness. It looks at human motivation and personality with a focus on two factors – people’s innate growth tendencies and the innate psychological needs of these same individuals (Prentice et al., 2019).

This can look like exercising because of the value you have for the health benefits or a child completing their chores because of their understanding of the value of responsibility (Sheldon et al., 2003).



Gagné (2014) looks at both SDT and Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs. They state that SDT differs from Maslow’s theory as SDT does not consider all of the needs to be basic needs. They instead say that these needs are ‘need substitutions’ that is a result of basic needs being prevented from being satisfied.

An example of this is that people do not consider and work towards increasing their self-esteem when their needs are being consistently met.

However, if their basic needs are not being met, they become more concerned with their search for self-esteem (Gagné, 2014).

Other Useful Contacts

Here are a list of some useful contacts if you feel you need to talk to someone other than the Home-Start Counselling Service :

- › **Samaritans** – call 116 123 or email

jo@samaritans.org. This is a free, confidential

support organisation for anyone struggling with suicidal thoughts. It is open 24/7.



- › **Shout** – text **Shout** to 85258 to be supported through text messaging. They provide a free, confidential text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. They are open 24/7.



- › **Breathing Space** – call 0800 83 85 87. They are a confidential helpline for anyone living in Scotland that feel low in mood, depressed or anxious. They are open Monday to Thursday 6pm to 2am and all weekend.



- › **NHS 24 Mental Health Hub** – call 08454 242 4 24 or NHS 111 for free. This is a health advice and information service for people with mental health or physical health concerns and is open 24/7.



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- › **SAMH** – call 0344 800 0550 or email info@samh.org.uk. They provide a support line for people needing information or a chat about mental health and is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.



- › **Age Scotland** – call 0800 12 44 222. They provide a confidential helpline for older people, their carers, and families living in Scotland. It is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



- › **Advice Direct** – call 0808 800 9060 or email advice@advice.scot. They offer advice and support with debt, employment, welfare, and consumer advice for people living in Scotland. It is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



- › **Scotland Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline (SDAFMH)** – call 0800 027 1234 or email helpline@sdafmh.org.uk. This service offers a confidential helpline for people living in Scotland that experience domestic abuse or forced marriage. They are open 24/7.



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- › **Know the Score** – call 0800 587 5879 or use the online webchat on <https://www.knowthescore.info/ways-to-talk-to-us/>. They offer a confidential helpline for people in Scotland that need advice about drug use or are concerned about their drug use. It is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm and Saturday to Sunday, 10am to 4pm.



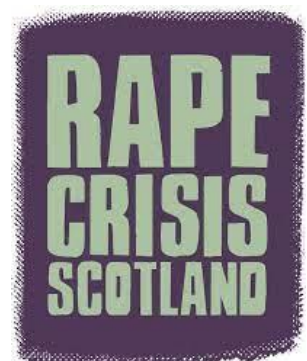
- › **Scottish Families affected by Alcohol and Drugs (SFAD)** – call 0808 10 10 11 or email helpline@sfad.org.uk. They offer a helpline for families in Scotland that are



**Scottish
Families**
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

concerned about another family member's alcohol or drug use. It is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 11pm.

- › **Rape Crisis Scotland** – call 0808 01 03 02 or text 07537 410 027. They provide a confidential helpline for anyone of any gender or sexual orientation in Scotland over the age of 13 who has been affected by sexual assault violence or sexual assault. It is open every day, 6pm till midnight.



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