

## 15 Ways Social Workers can look after themselves:

1. **Reduce Stress** Social workers face numerous stresses on the job. The first step of self-care is to reduce stress. This might mean cutting back on work hours or switching to a less stressful job. Also it is important for social workers to reduce stress in other aspects of their lives. For example, caring for an elderly parent or having marital conflict are both stressors that need to be managed. Perhaps getting some help caring for a parent or going to couples therapy might help with these two stressors.
2. **Practice Relaxation** There are many ways to relax. It is important to keep some of these in your toolbox. For example, progressive muscle relaxation is a great way to relax tense muscle. For this, you tense muscle groups and relax them, moving through your whole body. Yoga, Tai Chi, or breathing exercises are other ways to relax.
3. **Avoid Compassion Fatigue** When you give too much at work, you may end up feeling exhausted. Manage your time well so that you have breaks within your day. Talk to coworkers about difficult clients. Make time for yourself.
4. **Assertiveness** Saying yes all the time can lead to burnout. Set appropriate boundaries at work and at home.
5. **Exercise** Exercise is a great stress reliever. Thirty minutes of vigorous exercise at least three times a week is helpful for managing stress. Find a workout buddy or exercise alone. Listen to your favorite music while working out.
6. **Know and Respect Your Limits** We are not superhuman. We all have limits. Know what your boundaries are. Recently I was doing weekend shift work. It became exhausting and stressful. Now I won't do either. What are your limits?
7. **Spend Time with Friends and Family** Having a supportive network of friends and family is crucial to a sense of wellbeing. Schedule time with your support network regularly. Try combining activities. For example, you can combine exercise and social time to use your time wisely.
8. **Share with Coworkers** Sometimes you hear difficult stories at work. Share the burden with co-workers. You do not have to hold in someone else's pain. Schedule regular debriefs with co-workers.

9. Take Care of Yourself Each Day Do one self-care activity each day. Have a hot bath. Drink a cup of chamomile tea. Treat yourself to a massage. Find ways to unwind and relax.
10. Create a Nurturing Work Space Create an office environment that is calm. Put plants in your office. Play relaxing music in the background. Put inspirational posters on the walls and pictures of friends and family on your desk.
11. Seek Personal Therapy Social workers need support too. Find someone to talk to that is a good listener.
12. Accept that we are Human Social workers make mistakes sometimes. If a client doesn't change their life for the better, it is not your fault. Do the best you can and then leave it at that.
13. Delegate When your workload is too great, get help. Maybe you can give some of your clients to another social worker. You can also delegate at home. Hire someone to clean your house to take it off your plate or have a friend help you with a home project.
14. Practice Good Time Management Organize your time well so that you have a balanced life. Schedule in down time, alone time, exercise and social time.
15. Eat Healthy Take time to eat right. Follow the Canada Food Guide or make up your own meal schedule. This will give your body more energy