



Second Edition

Counselor *Self-Care*

Gerald Corey
Michelle Muratori
Jude T. Austin II
Julius A. Austin



American
Counseling
Association

WILEY



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2461 Eisenhower Avenue, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314

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Dedication

*To my grandchildren, Kyla, Keegan, and Corey,
who remind me to be in the moment.*

—Gerald Corey

*To the memory of my father, Edmund Muratori,
and in gratitude to my mother, Vera Muratori.*

—Michelle Muratori

*To our parents, Jude Sr. and Lorraine Austin,
for their love, patience, and sacrifice.*

—Jude and Julius Austin





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Preface

Self-care for counselors and therapists has been a salient topic in the mental health professions for many years. However, in 2018 when the first edition of *Counselor Self-Care* was published, we thought a book that prioritized self-care and emphasized its importance was long overdue. This impression was validated when we presented on this topic at professional conferences and spoke with many attendees who were eager to share their own challenges with self-care. Little did we know then that all of our lives were about to be disrupted in significant ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic, undue police violence, and threats to democracy have challenged society in recent years. These disturbing trends and stressors have produced profound changes and new challenges for everyone in the helping professions. The pandemic caused counselors to shift their work with clients to online venues, interrupting a long tradition of in-person counseling sessions. It also resulted in teaching and supervision transitioning to online formats. The demand for mental health services skyrocketed as people experienced social isolation, anxiety, and depression, and helping professionals have been tested in unprecedented ways, sometimes beyond their limits. In this environment, it is imperative that we sustain and strengthen our self-care practices. We hope this second edition of *Counselor Self-Care* will assist you in engaging in self-reflection regarding your own self-care successes and challenges and motivate you to prioritize your self-care needs.

The four of us continue to have a keen interest in the importance of self-care for counselors. We are convinced of the motivational value in presenting these ideas to students and professionals through the personal narratives in this book, and we encourage you to take an honest look at how you are caring for yourself and providing care for the clients you serve. We offer diverse perspectives on self-care with the objective of encouraging counselors and counselor trainees to evaluate their present level of self-care and consider specific changes they want to make in attending to all aspects of wellness in their personal life. We four are involved in professional work in different settings and are at different stages in our careers. Individually and collectively, we strive to offer a balance of challenge and support as you consider ways to enhance your personal and professional life through self-care.

This book does not present an exhaustive review of the empirical and scholarly literature on self-care. Instead we invite you to take a personal self-care journey with us. We have set the tone by revealing our own self-care journeys, and you will hear our voices in every chapter. We also invited 39 guest contributors—from new professionals and graduate students to seasoned professionals—to share their experiences and thoughts about various aspects of self-care, including what challenges them the most. The guest contributors from the first edition were invited to update their essays, and seven new contributors were added in this second edition. We focus on relevant themes in self-care that stimulate thoughtful reflection and encourage discussion of practical and useful ideas. The ideas are presented in a conversational and personal way, and we continually asked ourselves how we could inspire you to want to take positive actions, building on the resources you already possess and acquiring new self-care practices that will work for you in all aspects of your life.

We are all unique individuals and have had varied life experiences, so there isn't one optimal formula for self-care. With this in mind, we invite you to live vicariously through our experiences and those of our contributors as we examine our struggles and triumphs with self-care. Some of these stories and ideas may strike a chord in you, lead to new insights, and inspire your growth (or determination to change). The personal narratives included here may evoke a range of reactions—empathy, sadness, laughter, anger, surprise—all emotions you are likely to encounter on a personal journey. We hope you

enjoy this second edition of *Counselor Self-Care* as much as we have enjoyed creating it for you.

This book can be used as a supplement in a wide range of courses in the counseling field and related helping professions. *Counselor Self-Care* (Second Edition) is an ideal supplementary resource for both master's and doctoral programs in counseling. It has been intentionally written to be a practical and personal book, relevant not only for graduate students but for professionals at all phases of their career. New professionals and seasoned professionals alike must develop self-care practices that will enable them to carry out their professional roles effectively.

New to the Second Edition

- Seven new guest contributors provide essays on a variety of topics, including self-care practices for healing from grief, self-care for those who provide grief counseling, staying committed to practicing self-care, global self-care practices, permission to be yourself, creating balance among chaos, making self-care nonnegotiable, reflecting on midcareer issues, and self-care planning.
- Significant changes in the delivery of mental health services occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we discuss this shift in the delivery of mental health services, along with the increased demand for services, and how these changes have contributed to empathy fatigue and counselor burnout.
- Increased attention has been given to self-care themes in counselor education, especially in the transition from in-person classes to teaching virtually.
- Developing self-care strategies to cope with the stressors around COVID-19 is a new topic, and every chapter has some commentary on the special challenges to self-care in a postpandemic era.
- More than 50 new references have been cited that address current issues in each chapter.
- All four coauthors have updated their personal experiences pertaining to various aspects of self-care. We speak to students in a personal and conversational way, and students will hear our voices throughout the book.
- This revised edition has underscored the link between self-care and competence. Making a commitment to self-care and wellness is a pathway to competent professional practice.

- Considerable attention has been given to meeting the challenges of developing resilience in the face of increased sources of personal and professional stressors.

Overview of the Book

Chapter 1: Taking Care of Yourself offers a rationale for adopting self-care practices as a requisite for competent professional practice. Self-care as an ethical mandate is emphasized, as is taking active steps to acquire and maintain wellness in all aspects of living. The concept of wellness is presented as a life-long journey that has implications both personally and professionally, and therapeutic presence is discussed with a focus on wellness. A key message of this chapter is how caring for yourself is a must if you are taking care of others. Empathy fatigue and counselor burnout, managing empathy fatigue, preventing burnout, and happiness as a foundation of self-care are highlighted. Guest contributors present a range of narratives on topics such as reflections on wellness, managing empathy fatigue, finding happiness, and a psychiatrist's therapeutic presence.

Chapter 2: Seasons of a Career illustrates how and why self-care is essential at all the stages of one's professional career: early career, midcareer, and late career. In this chapter, each coauthor describes key experiences and lessons learned at different career stages, and guest contributors share their experiences with self-care during their early career, midcareer, and late career.

Chapter 3: Self-Care in Graduate School is written largely from the perspectives of Julius Austin and Jude Austin, who discuss their experiences in their master's and doctoral programs and what they learned from their journeys about self-care and becoming counseling professionals. Guest contributors also share their experiences during their graduate programs. Topics include committing to self-care, setting boundaries, coping with anxiety, reflecting on motivations for becoming a counselor, maintaining self-worth, and practicing self-care during the dissertation process.

Chapter 4: Personal and Professional Stressors addresses how counselors and counselor educators have been affected by and have navigated the personal and professional stressors they have experienced. Guest contributors illustrate ways they deal with stressors and share their perspectives on wellness and grief, healing from grief, self-care for grief helpers, and taking time to smell the roses.

Chapter 5: Strategies for Managing Stress presents a wide variety of routes to stress management: meditation, mindfulness, relaxation, yoga, Pilates, tai chi, experiencing nature, sound nutrition, exercise, recreation, religion and spirituality, and service to others. This chapter is full of ideas for self-care from a holistic perspective. There is no one right way to practice self-care; many different strategies can be used to deal effectively with stress and to achieve wellness. Topics by guest contributors include keeping well with global self-care practices, meditation as a route to self-care, and cognitive behavioral strategies in managing stress.

Chapter 6: Establishing Personal and Professional Boundaries focuses on our successful and unsuccessful experiences setting boundaries at home and at work. Creating healthy work-life boundaries is explored, and our guest contributors share their ideas on establishing good boundaries, both personally and professionally.

Chapter 7: Relationships With Self and Others focuses on self-compassion, embracing the self, finding ways to nourish oneself through solitude and connections with others, developing forgiveness for self and others, taking time to form meaningful relationships, and mentorship. The section on mentoring has been expanded, and guest contributor topics include research on self-compassion, men's groups as a path to self-care, and self-care for mentors.

Chapter 8: Finding Meaning in Life highlights the relationship between meaning in life and self-care. The existential approach is explored as a way to find meaning in life, and qualitative studies with undergraduate and graduate students are presented. Guest contributors describe ways they create meaning for themselves and how this is connected to self-care.

Chapter 9: Creating a Realistic Self-Care Plan highlights the importance of designing a realistic action plan to enhance your self-care practices. The emphasis is on making an honest evaluation of your self-care and then deciding how you can make key changes in living. Guest contributors describe their personal strategies for designing and implementing self-care action plans.

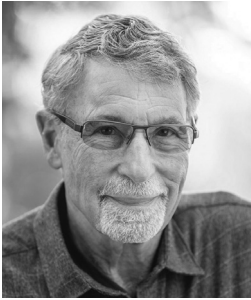


Acknowledgments

Counselor Self-Care is the result of a team effort. It is a collaboration between four coauthors and our guest contributors who have brought their influence to the development of this book. We appreciate the work of Marianne Schneider Corey, who was a reviewer and consultant for us at various stages of development of the first edition of this book. We are grateful for the involvement of Carolyn Baker, the publisher at the American Counseling Association. Carolyn encouraged us along the way and contributed her expertise by reviewing the entire manuscript, providing insightful comments and suggestions, and offering support and guidance throughout the evolution of this project. A special note of thanks to the manuscript editor, Kay Mikel, who made sure the presentation was clear, practical, personal, and effective. Our gratitude goes to the 39 guest contributors for their inspiring and honest personal stories about their experiences with self-care. You can learn more about them in the About the Guest Contributors section. We also acknowledge readers who have embraced the first edition of this book. These readers have encouraged us at our conference presentations and guest lectures on this topic. Many of the ideas and concepts discussed in this second edition were sparked by conversations with readers and conference attendees who share a passion for self-care.



About the Authors



Gerald "Jerry" Corey, EdD, ABPP, is professor emeritus of human services and counseling at California State University at Fullerton and is a distinguished visiting professor of counseling at the University of Holy Cross in New Orleans, where each semester he teaches intensive courses in counseling theories, group counseling, and ethics. He received his doctorate in counseling from the University of Southern California in 1967. He was awarded an honorary doctorate in humane letters in 1992 from the National Louis University. He is a Diplomate in Counseling Psychology, American Board of Professional Psychology; a licensed psychologist; and a National Certified Counselor. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (Division 17, Counseling Psychology; and Division 49, Group Psychotherapy), a Fellow of the American Counseling Association, and a Fellow of the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW). He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Mental Health Counselors Association in 2011 and received the Eminent Career Award from ASGW in 2001. Jerry was the recipient of the Outstanding Professor of the Year Award from California State University, Fullerton, in 1991. He received the Thomas Hohenshil National Publications Award at the American Counseling Association's

Virtual Conference in 2021. He is the author or coauthor of 16 textbooks in counseling currently in print, along with more than 70 journal articles and book chapters. Several of his books have been translated into other languages. *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* has been translated into Arabic, Indonesian, Portuguese, Turkish, Korean, and Chinese. *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* has been translated into Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian. *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions* has been translated into Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. With his colleagues, Jerry has conducted workshops in the United States, Germany, Ireland, Belgium, Scotland, Mexico, Canada, China, and Korea with a special focus on training in group counseling.

The following six books are published by the American Counseling Association:

- *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions: A Practical Guide*, Third Edition (2021, with Robert Haynes, Patrice Moulton, and Michelle Muratori)
- *Personal Reflections on Counseling* (2020)
- *The Art of Integrative Counseling*, Fourth Edition (2019)
- *ACA Ethical Standards Casebook*, Seventh Edition (2015, with Barbara Herlihy)
- *Boundary Issues in Counseling: Multiple Roles and Relationships*, Third Edition (2015, with Barbara Herlihy)
- *Creating Your Professional Path: Lessons From My Journey* (2010)

The following publications by Gerald Corey are with Cengage Learning:

- *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Eleventh Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2024)
- *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, Eleventh Edition (2024, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Cindy Corey)
- *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*, Tenth Edition (and *Student Manual*) (2023)
- *Becoming a Helper*, Eighth Edition (2021, with Marianne Schneider Corey)
- *Groups: Process and Practice*, Tenth Edition (2018, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Cindy Corey)

- *I Never Knew I Had a Choice*, Eleventh Edition (2018, with Marianne Schneider Corey and Michelle Muratori)
- *Group Techniques*, Fourth Edition (2015, with Marianne Schneider Corey, Patrick Callanan, and J. Michael Russell)
- *Case Approach to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Eighth Edition (2013)



Michelle Muratori, PhD, recently left the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (JHU-CTY) after working there for 20 years. She served as the assistant director for student support and was also an adviser for the CTY Scholars program, a college readiness program for high-ability precollege students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and a senior counselor for SET, a program that served exceptionally able middle school and high school students. Michelle earned her MA in counseling psychology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and her PhD in counselor education from the University of Iowa, where she developed her research and clinical interests in gifted education. Her graduate research on the academic, social, and emotional adjustment of young college entrants earned her recognition from the Iowa Talented and Gifted Association, the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Mensa Education and Research Foundation and Mensa International, Ltd. At the University of Iowa, Michelle also earned the Howard R. Jones Achievement Award, the Albert Hood Promising Scholar Award, and the First in the Nation in Education (FINE) Scholar Award.

Since 2005, Michelle has been a faculty associate in the Johns Hopkins School of Education in the Master of Science in Counseling program. Passionate about training counselors, she plans to transition to full-time teaching as a counselor educator. In 2014, she was honored with the Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association Excellence in Teaching Award. Michelle regularly presents at national conferences in counseling and gifted education. In addition to the American Counseling Association, she is a member of the Association

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Michelle has authored or coauthored the following books:

- *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions*, Third Edition (with Gerald Corey, Robert Haynes, and Patrice Moulton), American Counseling Association, 2021
- *Coping Skills for a Stressful World: A Workbook for Counselors and Clients* (with Robert Haynes), American Counseling Association, 2020
- *I Never Knew I Had a Choice*, Eleventh Edition (with Gerald Corey and Marianne Schneider Corey), Cengage Learning, 2018
- *Early Entrance to College: A Guide to Success*, Prufrock Press, 2007

Michelle has also contributed articles to a variety of publications in the counseling and gifted education fields.



Jude T. Austin II, PhD, LPC-S, LMFT, NCC, CCMHC, is an assistant professor in the Master of Arts in Counseling program at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and serves as the program's clinical mental health counseling track coordinator. He is also in private practice in Belton, Texas, working with individuals, couples, families, and groups. His research focuses on counselor education pedagogy, specifically finding ways to help counseling students develop therapeutic presence in session. He has served as a keynote speaker, presenter, and trainer for local, regional, and national conferences. He was also a 2021 American Counseling Association Virtual Conference keynote speaker. He is the coauthor of *Surviving and Thriving in Your Counseling Program* (2020) and *Doing Counseling: Developing Your Clinical Skills and Style* (2023), both published by the American Counseling Association, and *The Counselor Educator's Guide: Practical In-Class Strategies and Activities* (2021), published by Springer. He has also contributed articles to a variety of publications in the counseling field.



Julius A. Austin, PhD, LPC, NCC, is an assistant professor in the counseling program at Grand Canyon University and is in private practice in Lafayette, Louisiana, working with individuals, couples, families, and groups. He has served as a keynote speaker, presenter, and trainer for local, regional, and national conferences. He was also a 2021 American Counseling Association Virtual Conference keynote speaker. He is the coauthor of *Surviving and Thriving in Your Counseling Program* (2020) and *Doing Counseling: Developing Your Clinical Skills and Style* (2023), both published by the American Counseling Association, and *The Counselor Educator's Guide: Practical In-Class Strategies and Activities* (2021), published by Springer. He has also contributed articles to a variety of publications in the counseling field.





About the Guest Contributors

Our guest contributors have added immense vitality and meaning to this book, providing a diversity of thoughts, experiences, and perspectives. The contributors include graduate students in counseling (both master's and doctoral level), counselor educators, licensed professional counselors, social workers, clinical and counseling psychologists, marriage and family therapists, psychiatrists, rehabilitation counselors, and mental health practitioners. We greatly appreciate their honesty, courage, and wisdom in sharing their experiences.

Randy Alle-Corliss, MSW, LCSW, was a clinical social worker at Kaiser Permanente for 26 years. He also taught part-time for about 30 years at California State University, Fullerton, in the Human Services Department, focusing on counseling theories and fieldwork courses. He retired in 2020 and moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Jasmine T. Austin, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Texas State University.

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Angela D. Coker, PhD, LPCC, NCC, is an associate professor of women's studies in the College of Arts and Letters at San Diego State University, president (2022–2023) of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), and a practicing LPCC in California.

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Thomas Jackson, MD, is a psychiatrist who works with a variety of patients with a wide range of problems in Palm Desert, California.

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Kellie Kirksey, PhD, is a licensed clinical counselor, a certified rehabilitation counselor, a holistic wellness consultant, and an approved clinical supervisor. She has practiced and taught in the counseling field for more than 25 years and has focused her work in the areas of multicultural counseling, social justice, integrative counseling, and wellness.

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Chapter 1



Taking Care of Yourself

It's not selfish to love yourself, take care of yourself, and to make your happiness a priority. It's necessary.

—Mandy Hale



Whether you are a student in the helping professions or a seasoned mental health practitioner, taking care of yourself is critical to your professional success. Incorporating self-care in our lives is a prerequisite to being competent mental health practitioners. Although we are indoctrinated with this advice early in our professional training, many of us say we simply do not have time to take care of ourselves. This begs the question, “Can we afford *not* to take care of ourselves?” To successfully meet the demands of our professional work in a volatile world facing unprecedented challenges and changes on many fronts, it is essential that we attend to our physical, psychological, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs.

The recent coronavirus pandemic changed our relationship to counseling as a profession and has influenced how we do our work. Although counselors do not manage medical emergencies, seemingly overnight we became first responders for clients and communities burdened with urgent new psychological issues. Clinics rushed to train staff on telecounseling procedures, new protocols were drafted, community clinics spent savings on computer hardware and software, private practices went virtual and operated from the homes of clinicians,

counselor training programs rushed to secure internship sites and to update syllabi, and supervisors made tough ethical calls for supervisees needing hours and clients needing support. Beyond the practical, procedural, and technical efforts, counselors listened to clients experiencing unique pressures, marriages straining with effort, and families attempting to implement new lifestyle options. We heard their anger, fear, exhaustion, hope, and loss as the coronavirus turned lives upside down.

Counseling professionals are compassionate people who strive to help others; however, we cannot provide nourishment to others if we are not nourishing ourselves. Similar to the flight attendant's instructions to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others, if we don't heed this requirement, we will run out of "oxygen" and not be able to help anyone else. Ideally, our self-care should mirror the care we provide to others, but too often we fail to lean in and treat ourselves with the same level of care. Having knowledge about self-care is important—putting what we know into action can be challenging.

When teaching an introductory counseling course several years ago, I (Michelle) assigned a self-care project to underscore the importance of practicing good self-care from the very beginning of counselor training. I hoped my students would formulate individual self-care goals that they were invested in pursuing and that they would be inspired to continue these practices after the semester ended. I believed I was teaching my first-year graduate students something valuable, but they taught me something unexpected and fascinating: this "self-care project" was more stressful for many of my students than any of their other assignments! A number of students struggled to identify or formulate an achievable self-care goal, and the scope of their ideas varied widely. Some plans seemed too ambitious: one student aspired to challenge himself to climb a mountain during the semester. Others seemed stunningly lacking in ambition: one student wanted to exercise *one* minute a day! I intended for this assignment to be enjoyable, but what I recall most is that it proved to be burdensome for a number of students. Based on this experience and others, including my own resistance to certain forms of self-care, I wondered, "Why is it so hard for us as helpers to take care of our 'self' when we are so passionate about helping others take better care of themselves?" As we worked on the first edition of *Counselor Self-Care*, the four of us often found ourselves reflecting on this question.

Devastating developments and trends have emerged since the first edition of this book. The COVID-19 pandemic has dis-

rupted economies around the world and stalled the educational progress of students of all ages, and threats to democracy have rocked our own society to its core. These developments have challenged the well-being of virtually everyone. As Boring-Bray (2021) noted, “It’s no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on our mental health. Since the start of quarantine in 2020, rates of anxiety, depression, burnout, grief, and beyond have skyrocketed.” Counselors are not immune to mental health issues, and many counselors have seen their own personal struggles reflected in their clients’ experiences. When we consider the professional hazards involved in caring for others in the postpandemic era, counselor self-care becomes especially important (Rokach & Boulazreg, 2022). In this second edition, we provide support and offer some new ideas for you to consider as you engage in introspection regarding your own self-care successes and challenges. It is imperative that we strengthen our self-care practices so we can meet these challenges.

Relevant literature is cited throughout the book, but by design we have taken a more personal approach to support you in your own self-care journey. We showcase a collection of experiences and highlight literature that can help you develop a model and plan for self-care that works best for you. We discuss self-care for helping professionals from many different perspectives in the hope of inspiring you to improve your commitment to and practice of self-care. Each chapter is filled with firsthand accounts of the many ways counselors and counselor trainees (sometimes successfully and sometimes less so) take care of themselves.

Take a few minutes right now to think about the things in your life that threaten your wellness and your effectiveness as a counselor or as a graduate student. Identify what you need in this moment to feel healthy, both personally and professionally. As you read, be mindful of how the stories in each chapter influence your feelings, your thoughts, and your behaviors related to self-care.

This chapter is devoted to some key topics at the heart of counselor self-care—the importance of adopting a wellness perspective and its influence on maintaining therapeutic presence, wellness and self-care as buffers against empathy fatigue, and the pursuit of happiness as a foundation for self-care. This discussion provides the foundation for the chapters that follow. First, however, we turn our attention to the fundamental principle that self-care is not a frivolous indulgence; it is, in fact, our ethical responsibility. We must take care of ourselves so

we are well equipped to put the metaphorical oxygen mask on our clients and students who need our assistance and who are depending on us to be well for them.

Self-Care as an Ethical Mandate

Self-care is the collection of positive actions that promote wellness and effective coping. Stated broadly, “self-care includes routine positive practices and mindful attention to one’s physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual selves in the context of one’s personal and professional lives” (Wise & Barnett, 2016, p. 210). Self-care can be both an approach to prevention and an intervention for counselors to attend to their physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual well-being (American Counseling Association, 2014; Stebnicki, 2008). Some researchers have focused on the negative effects of self-care omission and found that ignoring self-care can lead to impairment, empathy fatigue, and compassion fatigue (Stebnicki, 2008). Perceived negative outcomes of not attending to self-care may not be sufficient to motivate self-care behaviors because the incentive is avoidance rather than wellness (Plath & Fickling, 2022). If we neglect taking care of ourselves, our professional work will suffer. If we are drained and depleted, we will not have much to give to those who need our time and our presence. We must be willing to take steps to protect our effective functioning if we are to provide our clients with the competent services they deserve (Wise & Barnett, 2016). Norcross and VandenBos (2018) emphasize the fundamental basis underlying the need for counselor self-care: “Self-care is not a narcissistic luxury to be fulfilled as time permits; it is a human requisite, a clinical necessity, and an ethical imperative” (p. 15).

Amanda Connell, a counseling intern, took to heart the advice she received in graduate school about viewing self-care as an ethical mandate. Although Amanda has multiple demands on her personal and professional life, she is finding a way to *make time* to care for herself.



A Lifelong Struggle for Self-Care

Amanda Connell, MS

Despite my clear understanding of the importance of self-care, achieving my goals in this area remains a lifelong struggle. My life