SPECIAL ISSUE ON SELF-CARE

The Balancing Act of Self-Care

Eva M. Gordon, LMSW

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MSW Student, Fordham University

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Program Manager for Membership and Fund Development

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The Balancing Act of Self-Care

Eva M. Gordon, LMSW

As a therapist, many of my clients are Black women trying to figure out how to care for themselves and care for everyone else. Is caring for myself more important than caring for others? When caring for others, where do I find time to take care of my needs? As a Black woman, I have asked myself the same questions and it’s a balancing act for me as well. However, these questions could be true for all people and not just Black women.

So, what is self-care? I define self-care as a balance between caring for yourself and others. This balancing act is so hard for many of us, because we help others at the risk of ignoring our own well-being. In the midst of helping everyone, we do not want to deny ourselves love either. My clients have asked me, and I have asked myself, “How do I help others and myself at the same time?” The answer is realizing you have the power to make a decision. We all have the power to decide who, what, when, where, why, and how to help ourselves and others. It is our individual right to choose when to help others, based on our own needs and desires. I do feel that as social workers, we can provide healthy tools to help ourselves and others decide between meeting our own needs and the needs of others.

Self-care will always be something that we need to think about, especially in our present and uncertain political times. I had some clients who felt uneasy about the current national leadership of our country. I advised them to face their fears by creating goals they would like to achieve to ease their stress. Society does not have to be perfect for us to be healthy. Our health depends upon us taking action and not waiting for someone to tell us what to do.

When we set personal and professional goals, we are taking healthy steps in practicing self-care. Goals with achievable steps and deadlines keep our heads above water, when we feel like we are drowning. Goals with deadlines and action steps also allow us to focus on our needs and desires, so we can improve our quality of life. This prevents us from relying on others to define our self-worth. If you want to lose ten pounds in 30 days, think about keeping a food diary, increasing your water intake, or how many times a week you can exercise? Think about small steps to achieve your goals. I have done this for myself and clients, and it has been very helpful. One challenge is getting help to achieve these goals. The help can come in the form of an accountability partner, or someone to remind you about drinking water or writing in your food diary.

Another challenge could be getting help to support your self-care goals. I realize I do need to ask for help more often to achieve my goals. It is important to realize that people are not meant to live in isolation, but with companionship and in communion with others. There is strength in asking for help, mainly the courage to be vulnerable to others. When you ask for help, see who is willing to help you in your struggles. This is a good indicator to see who is also worth helping as well. Love is a two-way street and it is important that love is given and received. The goal is not to be needy, but to have support in improving your quality of life.
Self-care is an essential part of every human species, as we all need time to replenish our emotional spirits. However, I have noticed as we start to gain more responsibilities with work, family, school and other activities we neglect the opportunity to replenish our energies.

As social workers, we are the workers who wear multiple hats inside and outside of work. We are always quick to help others but tend to ignore the importance of caring for ourselves.

Self-care for many years has been taboo, a word which many might describe as the “unspoken word.” How dare we think of such things! We have way too many deadlines, cases we must review, visits and most importantly, documentation to complete. So we ask where do I find the time to take care of me? Sometimes, I wish we could have an on and off switch, so we can pause work demands, but we must remember we are human and it’s a job.

While obtaining my MSW, I had a great opportunity to learn different techniques such as deep breathing for 5 minutes while sitting down at work or going for a walk. Personally, I like to take a whole personal day to re-group and restore my emotional and mental spirit. This allows me to go back in with a fresh outlook, especially when approaching challenges.

Being a social worker has taught me to understand when to say “I need a day for me” or it’s ok for some "me time." Asking to take time and taking the time are two different things. We are constantly telling our clients “it’s ok to take a break” or “give yourself time”, that we often forget about ourselves.

My most important take away is that if we are not in a healthy place ourselves we won’t be able to provide the best of our services to the clients we serve.
Be Intentional and Mindful of Self-Care

Set a Date with Yourself!

Cherdonna Epps-Gardner
MSW Student, Fordham University

In a profession where we are in demand and give of ourselves relentlessly, we must take intentional moments to refuel. Every year many people make New Year’s resolutions and many fall short of their goals, but not without reason. Life’s demands take each of us on a journey that sometimes keeps us occupied with stuff. Let us be intentional with our goal this year, to be mindful of needed self-care.

Set a date with yourself. I have found that carving out time on my calendar for myself has helped. My date with self is biweekly, and I have a friendly reminder alerting me that my day is approaching (in case I try to forget). Your “me time” may not work best biweekly. You may be more comfortable with a daily, weekly, or monthly schedule. There is no right time to start; in this case, I would say like Nike “Just Do It.” Set a reoccurring date with a reminder on your electronic calendar, and if you are like me and still use a hard copy, place a smiley face on your day. Something to brighten your day when you look at the calendar.

My dates with myself are most often inexpensive. From quality baths with a great book, a trip to the museum, Jazz lounges, or even something as simple as sitting in the sauna at my neighborhood Y, have been some of my outlets. Road trips, making deliberate time to catch up with those I have been missing because of hectic schedules, or simply taking myself out for a meal, are some of the ways in which I relax, regroup, and find my center of balance again.

To effectively give of ourselves to the micro, mezzo, and macro systems that we serve, we must have clear minds. Being aware of our positionality is important just as much as being aware of our fatigue. We are a population of people who give of ourselves, and require refueling which comes from our deliberate acts of self-care. Remember your best you is focused, devoted, reliable and reenergized, so that you never forget why you do what you do.

Here’s to our commitment in the New Year for self-care. Here’s to being an agent of change for our clients and most of all for our well-being. Here’s to restoring and building bridges. Here’s to learning something new while teaching someone something new. Here’s to another successful year of Social Work.

Happy New Year! May your new chapter be filled with love and self-care!
Reframing Self-Care

Shari Jones
MSW Student, Fordham University, NASW- NYC Events and Projects Coordinator

In the field of social work, practicing self-care can be a foreign concept. There are plenty of memes on social media making light of practitioners who are overwhelmed and on the brink of burnout; often under the guise of coming with the territory of helping others. In the last CURRENTS Newsletter, NASW-NYC President-elect Ben Sher highlighted self-care actions to combat compassion fatigue, such as “getting enough sleep, some form of daily exercise, humor, escape by shutting off the things that give us access to our worries, such as email or smart phones, eating healthy and consistently taking time off.” (https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/naswnyc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/currents/2017/Currents_Dec_17.pdf)

As a social work student at Fordham University, I did a group project during my enrollment in the Staff Development and Supervision elective course on self-care practices of private practitioners and public agency practitioners. Our research highlighted the role of agency culture on the emphasis of self-care in different practice settings. Factors included looking at practitioners’ prioritization of self-care and the agencies’ target population. We discovered that these two factors affected the self-care practices of practitioners. In public agencies where practitioners had less control over their caseloads and dealt with severely traumatized populations, practicing self-care was found to be minimal. For private practitioners, who had more control of their schedule due to being self-employed and who reported dealing with clients who were more hopeful, self-care practices were also found to be minimal as they had the pressure of taking in more clients to make ends meet (Schwartz, Tiamiyu and Dwyer, 2007).

The theory vs. practice theme over the course of my social work instruction has weighed on my understanding of self-care. It is hard to be offline, when you’re expected to be on-call at the clinic. It is hard to take days off when your livelihood is dependent on meeting with clients. My Macro Practice and Leadership concentration has led to an advocacy lens, as a form of practicing self-care. Dignity and worth of a person, includes caretakers in society. The NASW Code of Ethics includes responsibilities to the profession, social work colleagues, and professional setting.

As advocates for the most vulnerable populations in society, we should also analyze any disconnect between the standards of the profession, and workplace expectations of social work practitioners. Reframing self-care as a professional responsibility moves away from the idea that it is optional or allotted to those who make time for it. Supporting self-care initiatives in the workplace with visual reminders and implementation of agency practices contribute to the professional positive culture and evidence our responsibility to our peers and profession.

Below is a link to a self-care poster that I keep up in my office space as a reminder to myself and colleagues that self-care is “not just an add-on activity, but a state of mind.”


References
NASW-NYC Celebrates the 11th Annual Leadership Awards Dinner

Joe Barker, LMSW
NASW-NYC Program Manager for Membership & Fund Development

On December 7th, 2017, NASW-NYC held its 11th Annual Leadership Awards Dinner, where social workers from across the field came together to honor the leaders in our profession. Each of these leaders have shown a dedication to the values and ethics of social work, and also held a true commitment to doing their work with a lens that incorporates an understanding of Race, Diversity, and Intersectionality.
Leaders were honored in one of four categories. Previous years saw leaders in each of the following categories: Emerging, Mid-Career, and Top Leadership Awards, with the latter recognizing social workers who have been a change agent across systems. This year a new category was introduced. The Silver Leadership Award was introduced to recognize those who were selected and have been practicing in the field for more than twenty-five years. Emerging Leaders have been in the field from three to ten years, and Mid-Career social workers are those who have served for ten to twenty-five years. NASW-NYC was proud to recognize and honor twenty-nine awardees across these categories.
Although our invited guest speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito was unfortunately forced to cancel, she sent her regret which was shared with all 450 attendees at the dinner. In her written letter, read at the event Ms. Mark-Viverito noted “I want to commend your organization for its remarkable dedication to addressing some of the most challenging issues of our time: poverty, racial inequality, mental health, and individual and family well-being affecting anyone from our youth to our seniors.”

Ms. Mark-Viverito also commented on the importance of social workers in this time and age by saying “Now, as our country faces unprecedented tests of leadership, it becomes more important than ever for us to continue coming together to fight for social change and to make the American Dream a reality for everyone who calls this city and this nation home.”

NASW-NYC is proud to have been joined by so many wonderful social workers, their families, and our colleagues to celebrate leadership among social workers in New York City. Congratulations to all the honorees. To view the full list of honorees, visit our website.

To view more pictures of the dinner please click here
Updates from NASW-NYC Committees

**Disabilities Task Force**
Co-Chairs: Marva Mariner, Sonia Singh and Iris Miller-Smith

The Disabilities Task Force (DTF) was formed in 2015 to raise awareness and to educate social workers to work with and among people with disabilities.

With an impassioned Steering Committee comprising the following three Co-chairs Marva Mariner, Sonia Singh and Iris Miller-Smith; Secretary - Valerie Capili; Consultants- Marianne Ardito & Nancy Miler; Professional Development - Laura Kleinman, Arlene Goodman; Public Relations- Consuelo Senior; Social Media- Elizabeth Kenney- The Task Force have remained true to its mission to educate and empower Social Workers.

As a result, the Task Force invited many notable speakers from various organizations to share their knowledge and hands-on experiences. Some of the many organizations that were represented included but are not limited to Alzheimer’s Association, MOPD and United Spinal Association with topics ranging from Disability Etiquette, Emergency Preparedness for PWD, Services for Autism, Dementia and Alzheimer’s & Brain Health.

The 2018 agenda looks forward to us being more visual, not only will we continue our meetings, but we look forward to more community involvement through advocacy and volunteerism- watch for our Facebook page. For the first quarter we will have a panel discussion on the Affordable Care Act, its impact on seniors with disability; Pooled Trust and Medicaid recipients. For the second quarter we will touch on very hot topics such as affordable/accessible housing, as well as, PWD and the criminal justice system.

DTF welcomes all Social Workers to our meetings which is held on the second Monday of Jan, April, July and October @ 6pm. Contact DTFnaswnyc@gmail.com

**Disaster Trauma Committee**
Chair: Madelyn Miller

**January 19, 2018 Meeting**

This Disaster Trauma Committee meeting was particularly moving. Like all meetings during the past year, and before that, during the campaign, we framed discussion in the political context of this time and its human impact, including discussion of the confluence of current disasters, so often revealing existing inequities. We focused on the collective trauma and collective loss of continuing devastation in Puerto Rico, realities facing DACA recipients/Dreamers, recent disparagement of Haitians, Africa, and Salvadorians, termination of TPS, the Muslim ban, impact on diaspora communities, each informed by evident racism.

Importantly, we began the meeting introducing ourselves by our own or our families’ stories of arriving in this country. We imagined that none of our relatives had papers for their desperate journeys. We considered not only the traumas along the way, the layers of loss, the isolation, and fear, but also the resourcefulness and perseverance brought to those crossings and to each step forward. Each of us needed to tell our stories, filled with emotion, some carried across the generations. Acknowledging that our histories informed our commitments and engagements, we remarked how essential, privileged, and empowered it felt to be social workers at this moment in time, responding directly to clients and communities, including those enduring wrenching fears of deportation or who arrived to this city with one suitcase and tentative hope.

All social workers are welcome to join the Disaster Trauma Committee, for collegial support, ongoing learning,
and discussion on disasters in global context, related trauma and loss issues, recognition of both vicarious trauma and vicarious resilience, and attention to enhancing our resourcefulness through our connections, sense of community, and social justice work. Bi-monthly meetings are listed on the Calendar of Events on the NASW-NYC website www.naswnyc.org

**Committee on Healthcare**

Co-Chairs: Christine Rollet and Martine Baron

In 2017, the Committee on Healthcare was resurrected partly because healthcare had taken a central stage in Congress with the threats of undoing progress made through ACA (“Obamacare”): losing the ability of becoming insured through subsidies, re-instituting pre-existing conditions as an exclusion factor from private insurance plans and getting rid of the mandates (i.e. pushing healthy persons to join insurance plans through threats of penalties). We all know the results: banning pre-existing conditions stayed but mandates were eliminated among other changes. We can now expect significant increases in premiums. The Congressional Budget Office, a non-partisan advisory body to Congress, agreed that premiums would increase and millions of Americans would lose health insurance because of prohibitive costs. This will perpetuate the glaring inequalities in access to healthcare.

The Committee therefore turned to proposals for medical insurance provided by a government fund (as is the case for Medicare or the V.A. for instance) while maintaining the delivery of services by the private sector. The Committee endorsed the New York Health Act (NYHA) that would provide health care for all New York State residents. The NASW-NYC Board endorsed the recommendation of the Committee and joined the long list of supporters (associations, unions, religious entities, etc.) of NYHA that the NYS Assembly resoundingly approved 3 years in row, as well as 31 senators (32 are needed for a majority in NYS Senate!).

A well-attended forum was organized by the Committee in October 2017 to present NYHA and the concept of single-payer. A working group focuses on how to promote the NYHA. The Committee also discussed the important new mode of payment under Medicaid which NYS mandated NYC to adopt (DSRIP). It is still experimental but it will become a permanent structure in 2020 and it has implications for social workers that were identified. The Committee’s report will be issued next month. A co-chair, Martine Baron was elected.

In 2018, the Committee plans to join the Campaign for NY Health’s Lobby Day on May 30 in Albany to support NYHA and attempt to convince senators who oppose NYHA. The Committee also will examine the issues around the opioid epidemic e.g. treatments, training. Social workers are encouraged to come to meetings to join in the discussion and become active. The Committee continues to meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm at 50 Broadway, Suite 1001, New York, NY 10004.

**Committee on Immigration and Global Social Work**

Co-Chairs: Shreya Mandal, Christiana Best- Giacomini, and Eric Levine

This newly formed committee consists of colleagues who have expressed concern for the needs and interests of immigrants here in the United States and for the issue of immigration and refugees globally. We seek to sustain welcoming communities that embrace our immigrant neighbors and plan to demonstrate support and compassion and to advocate for human rights, justice and equity on behalf of immigrant communities. Our concern for immigrant communities reflects our commitment to the protection and expansion of civil and human rights for all. At this early stage, the Committee is proposing to work in these areas of focus:
• To educate the NASW community through continuing education workshops about diverse immigrant communities and organizations and the issues affecting them, by offering ongoing training, education and best practices.

• To develop an immigration toolkit for social workers working with immigrant communities, that includes policy information and tools, documents, resources, videos and a historical timeline of immigration that promote knowledge, competency and skills of social workers to deepen their understanding of immigrants’ rights, historical oppression, and new and developing immigration policies.

• To advocate on behalf of immigrants and our colleagues working with immigrant communities, including potentially advocacy for laws, policies and programs that lead to justice and opportunity for all immigrant groups. Activities include: issue response and policy statements, issue alerts, protests and actions, coalition building and collaborations, joint events, working with PACE, public testimony.

• To provide support and a safe space for social workers to dialogue about the systemic and institutional racism they are experiencing as immigrants and/or as practitioners, educators, advocates and activists working with and on behalf of immigrants and refugees, through a community of practice. This space will be available for discussion, problem-solving, healing and collaborative support to enhance resourcefulness, hope and facilitate a shared vision.

The Committee welcomes all inquiries and invites interested Chapter members to join the effort to sustain a welcoming community that embraces our immigrant neighbors and advocates for civil and human rights and justice on their behalf. For more information, please contact the co-conveners of the Committee: Shreya Mandal, shreyam76@gmail.com, Christiana Best, cbest@usj.edu and Eric Levine, Eric.Levine@touro.edu.

Committee on Narrative Practice
Co-Chairs: Ann Burack Weiss and Christiana Best- Giacomini

Mission Statement
To honor the stories that shape the professional and personal experience of social work practice.
To engage and inspire new social workers.
To advocate for social justice through story.

The Committee on Narrative Practice introduces social workers to the potential and the power of narrative social work.

Narrative social work practice honors the stories that shape the professional and personal experience of social work practice, highlighting the human connection between client and worker and the stories they bring into their encounter. The reciprocal nature of that contact has the potential to unite case to cause – the advancement of the goals of racial and social justice – that are at the heart of the social work profession.

Across all social work settings, populations, and disciplines, in traditional and non-traditional contexts, agency practice, and private practice, as well as in supervision, teaching, research, and administration, narrative practice can uniquely enhance our work and its meaning. By respecting the stories that infuse and inform our many roles, i.e. from our bearing witness to clients’, communities’, as well as our own experiences of profound uncertainty, fear, and turmoil in the midst of our political climate, to our engaging in social justice advocacy, it is those stories that unite us all.

Please join this year’s meetings as we acknowledge the current political context, and the essential need
for many multicultural and diverse voices, as we support clients in telling their stories so that they and we, in turn, can translate their power to impact policy decisions. Meetings will continue to feature the wide reach of narrative practice, underlining the transformative nature of story, relational engagement, and human connection. We look forward to your contributions to the conversation. All social workers are invited. You may find the meeting schedule on the Calendar of Events on the NASW- NYC website www.naswnyc.org.

**Nursing Home Committee**
Chair: Wayne Orlowitz

The topic for discussion continues to focus on the implementation of requirements for skilled nursing facilities that participate in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. NASW-NYC Nursing Home Committees will also be scheduling future meetings on the impact of managed care on nursing and rehabilitation facilities and the Section Q program. It is important that social workers who are interested or involved attend the future meetings so as to address social work practice in nursing homes and promote education, professional development and advocacy for nursing home social work practice. Next meeting is February 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 6pm at the Chapter office.

**Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)**
Chair: Kelsey Reeder and Dori Brail

The SOGIE Collective is working hard to engage the LGBTQ community with a special focus on creating space for and elevating the voices of Trans/Gender Non-Confirming (TGNC) Social Workers. With a change in branding including logo, mission statement, and goals, the Collective has set its sights on 2018 with a mix of both fun activities, such as a screening of the movie Pariah in February, and community events that speak to and/or affect Queer and Trans Social Workers.

**Social Workers of European Descent Against Racism (SWEDAR)**
Chair- Justin Lioi

SWEDAR is a collective of white NASW-NYC members who meet to better understand and expose white supremacy in the systems in which we work as well as in our personal lives.

This Committee grew out of the Coalition on Race, Diversity, and Intersectionality (CRDI) and utilizes the shared lens of “race and racism as a social construct with power and great systemic impact.”

We are a group of white social workers who are committed to regularly process how racism disconnects us from our humanity as well as take the needed steps to move toward a better understanding of our role as gatekeepers in our agencies and hold ourselves, and the structures we are a part of, more accountable in order to better serve our clients.

SWEDAR meets separately from other multi-racial groups in order to better position ourselves to organize more effectively with those groups and with other social workers of Color by not overshadowing other voices nor remaining silent.

SWEDAR meets on the 1\textsuperscript{st} Monday of each month from 6:00pm-8:00pm at the NASW- NYC Chapter office, located at 50 Broadway, Suite 1001, New York, NY 10004.
NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER

HONORS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

IT IS EASIER TO BUILD STRONG CHILDREN THAN TO REPAIR BROKEN MEN.

-FREDERICK DOUGLASS
Wes Moore
Fighting Poverty and Strengthening NYC Communities

Wes Moore is the CEO at Robin Hood, a bestselling author, and a social entrepreneur. Wes Moore will discuss his personal experiences published in his New York Times bestselling book, “The Other Wes Moore.” Moore will also share his work at Robin Hood being New York City’s largest poverty-fighting organization that finances more than 200 programs.

Marva Hammons, MSW
Serving Diverse Children and Families in Social Services

Marva Hammons, MSW from Casey Family Programs, the nation’s largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care, will discuss building communities of hope for children and families across America. She oversees the foundation’s direct practice work to improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families.
Call for Workshop Proposals to Present at
NASW-NYC 50th Annual Addictions Institute

“50 Years of Progress: Challenges and Interventions for the Future”

Wednesday, June 18, 2018
Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service
113 West 60th Street, NYC

Background:
The NASW-NYC Addictions Committee presents an Addictions Institute focusing on creating new, innovative approaches to the difficulties faced by the social work profession—grounded in scientific knowledge and is highly qualified to analyze and intervene to help society make substantial, measurable progress in the future.

Questions to Address at the Institute:
At the 50th Annual Addictions Institute, we will consider how social workers might employ empirically informed interventions to respond to the underlying devastating impact of substance use disorders has on the communities we work in.

This call for proposals is seeking from all relevant fields of practice with an intersectionality lens to include substance use disorders. This year, the focus is on research and evidenced based practices highlighting the unique role of the social worker at the micro, mezzo, and macro level. Where relevant, workshops based on skills that are interactive and experiential are preferred. Workshops are to be 2 hours in length, with at least one presenter being a licensed social worker.

**For clinical presentations, a LCSW is required.

Deadline for Submission for prospective presenters is February 16, 2018

Potential Workshop Topics:
- Advanced clinical skills and supervision**
- Behavioral Health
- Evidence-based practices
- Harm Reduction/Medication Assisted Treatment
- Child Welfare
- The impact of poverty, incarceration and trauma in communities of color
- LGBTQ Services
- Veterans
- Micro (neuroscience)
- Mezzo (community and organizational structure)
- Macro (policy changes)
there is more than one way

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More information is available at PPSC.ORG

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