

Mindfulness and Self-care for Outreach Workers

*"We have been called to heal the wounds
To unite what has fallen apart
And to bring home
Those who have lost their way."*

St. Francis of Assisi

Some modest proposals ...

- ◆ When you awaken, express gratitude for the new day ... for having a home ... for your health ... friendships ... for your work ... your clients
- ◆ Eat a nourishing breakfast
- ◆ Offer a gift of hospitality to those you meet throughout the day by "creating a free and friendly space" for them (Henri Nouwen)
- ◆ Consider that caring for others is also a way of caring for yourself
- ◆ When caught up in a stressful situation ask, "what is the most important thing right now?"
- ◆ Practice new ways of seeing – "you can look at a scar and see hurt, or you can look at a scar and see healing." (Sheri Reynolds)
- ◆ Offer yourself to others in your "emptiness" as well as your "fullness"
- ◆ Try drinking water or fruit juice instead of carbonated beverages. Monitor your intake of alcohol, caffeine, salt, and sugar.
- ◆ Talk out loud (preferably with someone else!) about your daily experiences in outreach
- ◆ Express appreciation for the work of the "support staff" in your organization ~ receptionists, janitors, data entry, administrators
- ◆ Reflect on the root meaning of the word "care" ... to lament, to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with
- ◆ Create a personal mission statement related to your work

- ◆ Identify the ways in which your work both depletes and feeds you personally
- ◆ Imagine yourself a biographer when writing your chart notes, recording some part of another person's story
- ◆ Before you pick up that ringing phone or dial to make a call ... take a deep, renewing breath
- ◆ Choose things that inspire you – art, flowers, fresh fruit, sayings, pictures of people – to decorate your workspace (if you have one)
- ◆ Invite students from a local massage school to come practice their skills on staff and clients in your work setting
- ◆ Start a “wit and wisdom” file
- ◆ Do one thing at a time
- ◆ Permit yourself time to be silent
- ◆ Consider that “a rose withholds its scent from no one ... a tree does not discriminate to whom it provides shade” (Anthony DeMello)
- ◆ Be forgiving
- ◆ Remember, it's the little things that count
- ◆ Do things outside of work that nurture you. Try out new activities.
- ◆ If you feel a little too busy ... stop and take 10 conscious, deep, diaphragmatic breaths
- ◆ If you feel moderately busy ... stop and take 20 conscious, deep, diaphragmatic breaths
- ◆ If you are excessively busy and feel overwhelmed ... stop and take 30 conscious, deep, diaphragmatic breaths
- ◆ After taking deep breaths, pause when finished and feel the energy you have generated
- ◆ Create a rhythm of action and contemplation in your workday
- ◆ When you go to bed at night, express gratitude for the day you were given ... for having a home ... for your health ... friendships ... for your work ... your clients