How to Care for Each Other: Providing Support to Helpers

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Adapted from:
Self-Care for Advocates, Activists, and Accomplices
Enedelia Saucedo, PhD & Arlene Rivero, PhD
And
Coping with Racism & Discrimination (UCSC Counseling & Psychological Services)
Today’s focus:

• Racial Trauma
• Taking care of self
• Being an effective ally
Racial Trauma

• Racial Trauma is Real
• The cumulative effects of racism on an individual's mental and physical health
• Linked to anxiety, depression, and PTSD

• https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201509/the-link-between-racism-and-ptsd
Reminders about Self-Care

• What we need for self-care is highly individualized and this needs to be acknowledged and respected
• No universal recipe or cookbook
• What we need often varies over time
• Understanding possible reactions is important. They may vary from numbness, sadness, irritability, anxiety and physical symptoms like headaches, back and neck pain etc.
• May depend on each person’s experiences and history with trauma in general and racial trauma in particular
Learn From Your Past

Ask yourself the following*:

• What kinds of events have been most stressful for me?
• How have those events typically affected me?
• To whom have I reached out for support?
• What have I learned about myself during difficult times?
• Was helpful for me to help someone else going through a similar experience?
• Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
• What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

*Perhaps these are also questions we ask those we are helping*
Self-Care and Culture

• Culture as a strength rather than a barrier!

• A person’s culture can impact how they communicate feelings and deals with adversity.

• How does your culture cope? What did you see growing up? What were you taught and told about how to get through tough times?

• How do cultural factors impact self-care?

• How do cultural factors impact your care of others?
Ways to reduce your stress

• Body: nutrition, exercise, deep breathing, dance, physical intimacy…

• Mental/Emotional: laugh, music, get creative, play…

• Spirit: meditation, prayer, nature…

• Connection: talk to someone… (be strategic about who that person is)

• Disconnection: from media or toxic culture

• Seek professional mental and medical help if needed.
  • Employee Assistance Program

(From a collectivistic perspective, caring for others is caring for self.)
Tips for Being an Effective Ally

• Get educated
• Speak up
• Know the difference between intent and impact
• Challenge the behavior, not the person
• Be willing to make mistakes
• Allowing space for others to process with you