

WHAT IS A “SELF-CARE STRATEGY AND WHY SHOULD LEADERS GO FIRST?”

As leaders we must take care of ourselves first – and there are a few reasons why this should be.

Firstly, we must provide certainty for our teams, and to do that we have to be able to manage our own state. How we show up matters to others around us. As leaders we must consistently show up physically and mentally strong. That gives confidence to others and provides them with certainty, which is a key leadership responsibility.

Secondly, it is important that we lead by example and that we are unflinching with the advice we give to others. Leaders must consistently role model good self-care strategies

The leaders I work with do an incredibly challenging job – most of them work in children’s services or mental health services. The work is unpredictable, and they must protect themselves against vicarious trauma – they must be empathetic to best guide and support children and families, while still insulating themselves so they can remain professional and objective – not an easy balance.

Leaders should ensure self-care is on the agenda at all their team meetings, ensuring staff know what the core elements are and encourage each of them to come up with their own individualised self-care strategy.

What are the key elements of a good self-care strategy?

A recent article by the chair of the Irish Psychological Society summed this up well when he advised that we must first cover the basics - sleep, healthy food, regular exercise, and social contact.



- Sleep – practice good sleep habits. Develop a regular sleep pattern and switch off laptops and phones an hour before bedtime
- Food – become more aware of what you eat and guard against snacking and eating high sugar fast foods
- Exercise - Do whatever works for you but get moving – preferably outside
- Social contact – ensure you maintain contact with friends and family and particularly people who make you feel better. Reduce contact with anyone who drains your energy

I have one other suggestion for self-care – practice **gratitude**. Take just 10 minutes at the end of every day for reflection – Ask yourself what are you grateful for today? And where did you make a difference?

For more information on CORE leadership skills please visit my website at www.lynnpeyton.com/core