**Start the New Year with Self-Care**

FCNs, like so many RNs, often put self-care at the end of our “to-do” list. I’ve received many calls from FCNs these past two years who love their roles but are stressed by the divisions in their faith communities and by the changes this pandemic has caused in their ministries and personal lives. Some have left their positions because of compassion fatigue and burnout.

We all know that self-care is an essential part of our health and that no one else can “do self-care” for us. Many spiritual traditions urge us to strive for health and balance in our lives. In Buddhist text we read, “Health is the greatest possession. Contentment is the greatest treasure.” Christian and Jewish scriptures state: “Guard yourself and guard your soul very carefully.” (Deuteronomy 4:19)

How can you begin this new year with plans to “guard yourself and your soul” from compassion fatigue and burnout?

1. **Do a whole-person health assessment on yourself**! You’re great at assessing the health of your clients—but when’s the last time you’ve looked at yourself? How is your physical health? Your emotional, social, financial and spiritual health? Be honest with yourself. Is your life “out of balance?” Do you feel tired all the time, irritable with those you love the most, do you dread making visits or find yourself lacking in empathy and compassion? Do you often put off fun and laughter because you’re too busy?
2. **Make note of the areas of your life that are out of balance.** Think about what you need to do less of and what you need to do more of. (This is the “intervention” part of your nursing process!) If you need to have more fun and laughter, think of specific ways to enjoy those pleasures of life. (Watching a funny movie once a week; watching children play; reading jokes or just simply laughing more; take a bubble bath; get a massage.

A physician I once worked with prescribed laughter for his patients. On a prescription pad he would write: “Stand in front of the mirror 3 times a day and laugh for 15 seconds!” Even fake laughter works to increase your endorphins!

1. **Be gentler with yourself**. Listen to your self-talk and expectations. Are you treating yourself as your own best friend or a critical stranger?
2. **Set boundaries on your ministry**. If you are regularly putting in more hours than you’re paid for or volunteering more than you want, talk with your supervisor and set limits. Remember, as FCNs, we’re role models for staff and members. We need to “do as we say.”
3. **“Unplug!”** Turn your phone off. Stop watching the news. Sit in quiet contemplation and see yourself from God’s loving perspective.

There is an amazing resource for self-care you can access at https://olgaphoenix.com/self-care-wheel/. Make it your resolution to add two self-care actions to your life in 2022.