

SELF -CARE TIPS FOR ADVOCATES: TAKE CARE OF YOU!

1. **Educate yourself on vicarious trauma:** Research this topic and register for a training if possible so you can better understand it and be able to recognize the signs in yourself and your colleagues.
2. **Recognize your triggers:** If you're an advocate and an overcomer, hearing people who do not have Lived Experience talk about the "facts" and experiences of Mental Health and Criminal Justice could be a trigger. OR you could be the recipient of a gaslighting tactic. Be prepared by learning some grounding techniques. You can find some examples here: [*Grounding Techniques: Examples & How They Help*](#)
3. **Open up to other Peer advocates:** Talk to those that can understand how hard this work can be, people who can validate your feelings, and support you doing what you need to do for yourself.
4. **Maintain outside friendships:** Work friends don't have to be your only friends. Get together with friends from other areas of your life to provide balance.
5. **Sign up for advocacy training:** New advocates can be more susceptible to burnout and vicarious trauma than seasoned advocates. It could be because seasoned advocates have more experiences and resources to rely on in their work. Continue to build connections and attend training whenever you can.
6. **Debrief when possible:** Ask your manager, a mentor, or another advocate to debrief a heavy meeting, hearing, etc., with you so you can learn what worked and how you might approach challenges in the future.
7. **Adjust your expectations:** As much as you'd like to, you're not going to be able to get everyone as active as you, change every Board member's mind, or always get the results you advocate for. Sometimes success in advocacy doesn't look like what we envision. Be sure to step back and remind yourself this a marathon, not a sprint.
8. **Set boundaries:** Advocacy is your work—maybe your passion—but it is not your life. Boundary ideas; institute a no-email-after-7 policy, turn your phone off on the weekends, and do whatever you need to do to have a life outside of work.
9. **Join a support group:** Learn from your peers and swap coping tools in a group setting.
10. **Talk to a therapist:** If feelings become overwhelming or are causing you anxiety, depression or PTSD, seek professional one-to-one counseling. No shame in seeking professional support!
11. **Go outside:** Get out of the office, your house, off the computer at least once a day and go outside. Eat outside, shop on your lunch hour, or take a lap around the block for a break.
12. **Exercise:** A great stress reliever, working out keeps both body and mind fit.
13. **Get creative:** Express yourself through journaling, painting, glass-blowing or any number of Groupon-inspired artistic endeavors.
14. **Nourish your spirit:** Connect with something greater than yourself, whether that's going to church, meditating, or communing with nature.
15. **Become a mentor:** Taking new advocates under your wing may sound like added work, but keep in mind, the more competent they become, the more they can take off your plate.
16. **Remember your wins:** Keep a feel-good file where you store kudos and success stories. Take a peek whenever you start feeling like the work is hopeless.