

10 Self-Care Tips for Providers Working with LGBTQ+ Clients

As behavioral health professionals providing care to people experiencing anti-LGBTQ+ bias, racism, and other forms of discrimination and injustice, it is extremely important to develop self-care and stress management plans to safeguard your own mental health and wellbeing. Our clients need us to be refreshed and restored if we are going to be agents of therapeutic care and effectiveness. Self-care is not selfish! In fact, it is essential to prevent burnout.

After repeated exposures to LGBTQ+ biases and outright attacks on LGBTQ+ individuals and their rights, you may experience fatigue, depression, anxiety, discouragement, and hopelessness during and after sessions with LGBTQ+ clients, especially without intentional self-care. These symptoms of secondary traumatization may manifest in different ways, such as dreading a session with a client or dwelling on tragic incidents discussed during a session with a client. If you are a provider who is in the LGBTQ+ community or who belongs to another group experiencing discrimination, you may also feel increased minority stress or be worried about your own safety and wellbeing. This tipsheet provides some strategies to help combat these feelings and restore hope for the future.



1 Assess and address strong emotions when you have them.

- Dial a friend! Do you have someone who you can talk to when feeling hopeless about your work? A supervisor or a partner or friend? You don't have to go into any specifics about the client in order to receive support.

2 Develop a plan to manage your stress, such as identifying symptoms of stress and practicing relaxation techniques.

- What has worked for you in the past when you are feeling overwhelmed, sad, or angry about what you encountered in your clinical interactions with clients?
- Be intentional about self-care, including making sure you are prioritizing the time to fit this into a busy calendar.

3 Take breaks when you need them to avoid burnout.

- Put time on your schedule for self-care breaks, whether it is 5-10 minutes of meditation between patients or ensuring you have time for a walk on your lunch break.





4 Check out different strategies for managing stress to know which work best for you.

- Practice being a self-aware clinician and take note of your response to a stress reduction technique. Keep the ones that work and discard the ones that don't.

5 Access peer support!

- Join professional support groups, such as clinical coaching groups
- Are there opportunities to foster a peer supervision group with colleagues who are also working with individuals experiencing discrimination and injustice in their lives?

6 Be kind to yourself when you do not have all the answers.

- By making yourself available to clients experiencing discrimination and adversity related to their identity, you are part of the change we need to see in the world.

7 If you are spiritual or religious, seek faith communities that are supportive and affirming of LGBTQ+ people.

- There are many religious organizations that embrace the LGBTQ+ community which can be found here: <https://lgbtqfamilyacceptance.org/faith-based-resources/>.
- Seek out those who are connected and aligned with your spiritual beliefs and who hold similar values. Community is so important!





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Identify boundaries that help you protect your energy.

- You alone can't change the world that your LGBTQ+ clients face, and it is important to know your limitations. That doesn't mean you aren't a positive force for change in your client's lives.
- In fact, by remaining open to hearing about the challenges your LGBTQ+ clients are facing, you ARE a change agent in their lives.

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If you are developing clinical symptoms that go beyond what can reasonably be expected to improve using the tips above, consider getting clinical help.

- Does your employer have an employee assistance program?
- Do you know where you can access therapeutic supports that are affirming and designed to care for clinicians?
- Use resources like 988 to seek support if you are experiencing a crisis.

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Remind yourself that good things are happening in the world.

- Seek good news and stories from your community and surround yourself with positive affirmation.
- Find time to be with the people you love and who affirm the good you are doing in the world, or bask in the unconditional love of a pet.



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